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Power and Political Communication. Feasting and Gift Giving in Medieval Iceland

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Power and Political Communication. Feasting and Gift Giving in Medieval Iceland

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Abstract

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The present study has a double primary aim. Firstly, it seeks to analyze the sociopolitical functionality of feasting and gift giving as modes of political communication in later twelfth- and thirteenth-century Iceland, primarily but not exclusively through its secular prose narratives. Secondly, it aims to place that functionality within the larger framework of the power and politics that shape its applications and perception.

Feasts and gifts established friendships. Unlike modern friendship, its medieval namesake was anything but a free and spontaneous practice, and neither were its primary modes and media of expression. None of these elements were the casual business of just anyone. The argumentative structure of the present study aims roughly to correspond to the preliminary and general historiographical sketch with which it opens: while duly emphasizing the contractual functions of demonstrative action, the backbone of traditional scholarship, it also highlights its framework of power, subjectivity, limitations, and ultimate ambiguity, as more recent studies have justifiably urged. It emphasizes action as discourse.

for Bragi (1975-1998)

friend and role model

Table of Contents

PART THREE

Managing Bonds in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Iceland and its Sagas

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PART ONE

Feasting and Gift Giving as Modes of Political Communication in Medieval Europe

Chapter 1

I Friends

Feasting and gift giving were fundamental modes of political communication in medieval Iceland. Any exploration of the political narratives that twelfth-, thirteenth-, and fourteenth-century Iceland left behind soon produces references to *veizlur* and *gjafir*, "feasts" and "gifts," with *vinir* and *vinátta*, "friends" and "friendship," probably lurking close by. These feasts, gifts, and friendships are echoes of a political discourse widespread in pre-modern Europe. Although they bear the unmistakable marks of the specific and the individual – as do all historically particular things by their nature -, they also speak to discursive and ideological traditions extending further back than those habitually labeled medieval, to which they are closely related. These traditions unmistakably link formal hospitality and exchange with *amici* and *amicitiae*.

The present study has a double primary aim. Firstly, it seeks to analyze the sociopolitical functionality of feasting and gift giving as modes of political communication in later twelfth- and thirteenth-century Iceland, primarily but not exclusively through its secular prose narratives. Secondly, it aims to place that functionality within the larger framework of the power and politics that shape its applications and perception. Unlike modern friendship, its medieval namesake was anything but a free and spontaneous practice, and neither were its primary modes and media of expression. None of these elements were the casual business of just anyone. The argumentative structure of the present study aims roughly to correspond to the preliminary and general historiographical

sketch with which it opens: while duly emphasizing the contractual functions of demonstrative action, the backbone of traditional scholarship, it also highlights its framework of power, subjectivity, limitations, and ultimate ambiguity, as more recent studies have justifiably urged. It emphasizes action as discourse.

There are two particular polarizing concepts that have served decisively to redefine our modern notion of friendship from what it probably meant to most medieval people: the modern state and the free market. In societies where power has been institutionalized beyond the imagination of the medieval mind, and in which modes and media of disinterested exchange of goods occupy ideological as well as real positions thoroughly alien to medieval societies, the conceptualizations of social and political ties are bound to be profoundly reshaped and transformed. To the mind brought up in a world in which the state and the market have virtually established themselves as the natural and normative base-structures of society, with their institutionalized impersonality promoted as one of their greatest virtues, friendship is primarily private in nature. But to those brought up in a world where the exercise of power was far more personal and less centralized than is the case today, there could be no clear divide between the "private" and the "public."[1] Medieval Europe knew abstract institutions and offices of power, but society in its totality, the polity of men, was nevertheless seen as holistically consisting of, and practically being brought into existence by, personal ties of men. It was a world in which an institutionalized public sphere, with its characteristic monopoly of force – "government" or "administration" in statist parlance –,[2] had not yet exiled personal ties and friendship to the private. It was a political culture that placed the highest value on personal and social ties, which were not seen to be more private in nature than the society that they formed.[3] This way of thinking appears foreign to modern minds, that commonly associate the intermingling of political authority and personal friendship with corruption.

The friendship we speak of in the political culture of post-Roman and pre-modern Europe gains meaning and context both in terms of the overall political development of the period as well as its cultural and philosophical origins. The former refers to the way in which politics was exercised and thought of in societies lacking political structures of the type or level (non-qualitatively) that we customarily describe by means of concepts of

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[1] An early critique of the application of modern constitutional and legal historical concepts to pre-modern political culture, such as the dichotomous "private-public" binary is Otto Brunner, *Land und Herrschaft. Grundfragen der territorialen Verfassungsgeschichte Südostdeutschlands im Mittelalter*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Geschichtsforschung und Arkivwissenschaft in Wien 1 (Baden: Rohrer, 1939), transl. from rev. 4th ed. (Vienna et al.: Rohrer Verlag, 1959) as Land *and Lordship. Structures of Governance in Medieval Austria*, transl. Howard Kaminsky and James Van Horn Melton (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).

[2] Max Weber's classic, and ritually cited, definition of "state" was that it was a territorial monopoly of coercive force.

[3] On the centrality of personal bonds and associations in early medieval political culture, see Gerd Althoff, *Verwandte, Freunde und Getreue. Zum politischen Stellenwert der Gruppenbindungen im früheren Mittelalter* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990), transl. as *Family, Friends and Followers. Political and Social Bonds in Early Medieval Europe*, transl. Christopher Carroll (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

statehood. The latter obliges us to recognize the Greco-Roman traditions and theoretically identifiable base-types of friendship.

The Roman legacy provided medieval Europe not only with its language of record but also a comprehensive range of philosophical and political terms and concepts. Throughout the Middle Ages, political thought was discussed and articulated in learned circles through the use of Greco-Roman philosophical discourse.[4] This became particularly pointed during the high and late Middle Ages when Platonic political discourse became more directly known, and when the reintroduction of the original works of Aristotelian political philosophy complemented Ciceronian rhetoric in the creation of an applicable language of political theory. However, the rediscovery of Plato and Aristotle was not so much a revolution in basic modes of political thought as it was a major advancement in the conceptualization and expression of these thoughts.[5] Most conceptual categories of Platonic (overwhelmingly) and Aristotelian philosophy were known to late antique and early medieval intellectuals seeking to think theoretically about politics; they were broadly diffused within Greco-Roman intellectual culture and they permeated those works directly handed down to post-Roman Europe. This likewise applies to numerous concepts central and dear to Platonic and Aristotelian discourse, including the Latinized and customary term for friendship, *amicitia*.

Greece, Rome, and their medieval heirs knew about private friendship, a category extending beyond what we would identify as a political framework.[6] Greek culture articulated positive views on friendship based on emotional closeness, verging on homoeroticism, from modern standpoint. Generally, however, friendship was felt to be subject to reciprocity and honor, and as such invoking revenge rather than forgiveness. Thus, it was ultimately social, as honor is by definition. This is equally true for friendship

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[4] The application of classical discourse to medieval political theory is well illustrated in Antony Black, *Political Thought in Europe 1250-1450*, Cambridge Medieval Textbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), esp. 7-10 on how political thought "emerged out of theology, law, Ciceronian rhetoric and Aristotelian philosophy," (2) and *passim*.

[5] The profound, or even revolutionary, changes in political thought accompanying the emergence of statehood, which framed prominent debates on the relationship between secular and ecclesiastical authority, were *expressed* in Aristotelian discourse rather than actually *driven* by its reintroduction. Aristotelian political discourse was frequently adopted by ideologically opposite camps, and can therefore hardly be seen as primary agent of change in itself, cf. Antony Black, *Political Thought in Europe 1250-1450*, 11. The agency of the reintroduction, and thereby the transferability of theory through discourse from ancient to medieval contexts, is primarily associated with Walter Ullmann's notion of "ascending" and "descending" political principles: see Walter Ullmann, *Principles of Government and Politics in the Middle Ages*, 4th ed. (London: Methuen, 1978); Walter Ullmann, *Medieval Political Thought*, 3rd ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975), esp. 159-173.

[6] On friendship in classical Greece (private, philosophical, sociopolitical), see David Constan, *Friendship in the Classical World*, Key Themes in Ancient History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Lorraine Smith Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Gabriel Herman, *Ritualised Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Horst Hutter, *Politics as Friendship. The Origins of Classical Notions of Politics in the Theory and Practice of Friendship* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1978); cf. Hans-Joachim Gehrke, "Freundschaft. I. Sozialgeschichtlich," *Der Neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike* 4, eds. Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider (Stuttgart et al.: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 1998).

as a philosophical concept (*philía*/*amicitia*) in classic ethics, where its social and political aspects bring it manifestly beyond the modern concept of friendship. While Plato was the first to offer systematic, if largely inconclusive, analysis of friendship as a philosophical concept (Lýsis), Aristotle was the first to present a holistic theory on its nature and function (primarily Nicomachean Ethics). Although both give space to its modern private, such as relations to goodness, moral values, happiness, and personal fulfillment, it remains thoroughly framed by sociopolitical dimensions. This is particularly true of Aristotle – the more influential of the two on the subject and subsequently its standard point of departure –, who put friendship squarely within his anthropological observation of man's natural inclination to enter social and political bonds (man as "political animal"), i.e. to forming society. For Aristotle, then, friendship not only belongs to the political sphere, it constitutes it.

The Greek interpretation of friendship as a fundamental element of politics was given its fullest expression in Roman political philosophy and rhetoric by Cicero, whose contribution to medieval political discourse was significant. In Roman culture in general, *amicitia* and *amicus* stood for what would now be known as "alliance" and "ally": political ties between aristocratic equals as well as hierarchical relationships between protectors and patrons and their subordinates and clients.[7] Such friendship involved obligations of reciprocal support, in trials, elections, and in the discharge of political duties. Consequently, *amicitia* could be thought of in terms of political alliances, that need not necessarily be compromised by personal dislike or even hatred. Under Augustus, high rank and imperial favor found expression through *amicitia*, notably via a title (*amici Augusti*). At a more abstract level, alliances (*foederati*) of states or kings with the Roman State or Empire (usually involving subordination towards Rome) were expressed in terms of friendship (*amici populi Romani*).

Discourse is not the same as theory, however, and concepts are invariably modified over time. Comparison of medieval bonds and *amicitia* with earlier patterns of obligation is important and illuminating, but ultimately medieval practices must be pursued within their own cultural context. A common analytical approach is to distinguish between two basic types of medieval friendship: personal and political. The former refers to relationships involving emotions, familiarity, and intimacy; reciprocity is seen as either absent or secondary to altruism, humility, love, and gratitude. Essentially, this was a medieval religious ideal, and differs significantly from sociopolitical relationships, in which such emotional elements are either completely absent or secondary to issues of reciprocity. Such friendship is brought about through acknowledgement of mutual rights

[7] On friendship in Roman culture (private, philosophical, sociopolitical), in addition to Horst Hutter, *Politics as Friendship* and David Constan, *Friendship in the Classical World*, see P. A. Brunt, *The Fall of the Roman Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); cf. Barbara von Reibnitz, "Freundschaft. II. Philosophisch," *Der Neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike* 4, eds. Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider (Stuttgart et al.: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 1998) and Ernst Badian, "Amicitia," *Der Neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike* 1, eds. Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider (Stuttgart et al.: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 1996).

and obligations, and this remains our subject.[8] Coming to terms with the way it functions in medieval political culture is essential, and can be linked to the absence or at least the relative weakness of the power of the state.

More eagerly than is now the case, it used once to be assumed that in the absence of modes of power exercised by the state, individuals were left to manage political situations that were essentially defined by two fundamental types of relationship – towards family and lordship. These were seen as somewhat inflexible, and brought about by the limited power of the state. Other types of relationship were thus seen to be secondary and of less sociopolitical importance, with the result that little attention was paid to pro-active and flexible networking. Another presumption is that some substitute for the modern state can and must be detected in political cultures that do not exhibit any obvious state infrastructure. That alternative must preferably be one that has as overwhelming and central a presence and systematic character as does its counterpart in modern society. Both of these presumptions are at best misleading to the point of misrepresentation; at worst they are simply wrong. Medieval society knew many kinds of linkages and active networking, and such bonds did not necessarily amount to some coherent and overarching system equivalent to that of the modern state. This is critical for an understanding of medieval friendship and the politics of bonding.

Clusters of concepts were used in medieval society to refer to political associations or governmental bodies, often without seeking to suggest any clear distribution of power within them – terms such as *universitas*, *corpus*, *civitas*, *regnum*, *commune*, and *dominium*. Particularly generic were *civitas, corpus, communitas,* and *universitas*, the first used generally for any type of civic community or state, while the other three were commonly used for a variety of groups and associations, such as villages, monasteries, and guilds of all types. In the context of such groups and communities and also, more generally, of civic order, equality and rank were both in due recognition, the latter as being inherent to all human society, and attracted equally generic terms, such as *status*, *ordo*, *honor*, *dignitas*, or *gradus*.[9] Although bonds of all sorts could be persuasively argued for with reference to stock arguments from relevant discourse, they were rarely seen as hollow structures or empty phrases; bonds were generally seen as intrinsically moral, and even sacral. Beyond the contexts of family and lordship, however, there was room for a greater variety of bonds, notably within ideologies and mentalities relating to blood, sacral order, and morality. All levels of society knew co-operative affiliations that served to aid peaceful communication, political or otherwise, by providing sources of help, protection,

[8] Cf. Gerd Althoff, "Freund und Freundschaft. 2. Historisches," *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* 9, ed. Rosemarie Müller, 2nd ed. (Berlin et al.: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 576-577. The idea of personal friendship was also promoted in medieval thought, but mainly via the ethical and theological concept of *amicitia spirituali* among monks and clerics, which grew out of the concept of *caritas*. Its discourse found prominent expression in men such as Peter the Venerable and Bernard of Clairvaux, who themselves derived much of it from Augustine. In this sense, the twelfth century has been labeled "the age of friendship." For general discussion, see Brian Patrick McGuire, *Friendship and Community. The Monastic Experience, 350-1250*, Cistercian Studies Series 95 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1988).

[9] For discussion of these and related terms, see, e.g., Antony Black, *Political Thought in Europe 1250-1450*, 14-24.

and support for its participants.[10] These were bonds of friendship, and among them were sworn affiliations or alliances, *coniurationes*, and guilds. They existed outside of or supplementary to familial ties and hierarchical relationships, and their function and historical development is a crucial chapter in the history of pre-modern political culture.[11]

The historical development of *ad hoc* sworn friendships is by no means clear. The consolidation and centralization of power under the Carolingians included their attempt to monopolize and control political oaths: their general use was prohibited and an oath of fealty to the ruler became mandatory.[12] Not least was this directed against aristocratic *coniurationes*, which were typically formed around particular political objectives, such as rebellion.[13] Sworn aristocratic alliances were otherwise most urgent at times of sociopolitical instability and upheaval, or simply as a result of social decentralization. Active networking thrives in the complete absence or partial weakness of statehood.

Guilds, on the other hand, may appear as more permanent configurations of sworn friendship, although not categorically distinguishable from other types of co-operative associations. The differences may lie as much in modern perception as in medieval reality. During the nineteenth and well into the twentieth centuries, guilds were viewed primarily through the twin lenses of legal and constitutional history. Accordingly, they were approached principally as constitutional phenomena within the boundaries of real political history, which basically meant fitting them into the developmental scheme of the institutional and administrative roots of modern – that is, state - constitutional arrangements of power. Viewed in this way, guilds emerged as phenomena in their own right, characterized by their formal oaths, formal meals and meetings, and, during the high and late medieval periods, by the emergence of internal administrative structures. The logical conclusion was to treat different types of guilds as, for the most part, separate phenomena. This also meant associating the history of guilds almost exclusively with villages and towns, while linking *coniuratines* primarily to the rise of municipalities and other corporate entities, that would gradually be subsumed by centralizing states.[14] It is

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[10] Cf. Gerd Althoff, *Verwandte, Freunde und Getreue*, 65ff.

[11] Medieval friendship in its sociopolitical context has been pursued with particular distinction by German scholars. The best introduction remains Gerd Althoff, *Verwandte, Freunde und Getreue*, whose central chapter on *amicita* also appears in *Debating the Middle Ages. Issues and Readings*, eds. Barbara Rosenwein and Lester K. Little (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998) as "*Amicitiae* [Friendships] as Relationships Between States and People." More recent is Verena Epp, *Amicitia. Zur Geschichte personaler, sozialer, politischer und geistlicher Beziehungen im frühen Mittelalter*, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 44 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1999). Cf. also *Friendship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Julian Haseldine (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1999), including Althoff's "Friendship and Political Order."

[12] Robert Scheyhing, *Eide, Amtsgewalt und Bannleihe. Eine Untersuchungen zur Bannleihe im hohen and späten Mittelalter*, Forschungen zur deutschen Rechtsgeschichte 2 (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1960), 29ff.

[13] Gerd Althoff, *Verwandte, Freunde und Getreue*, 91-95. For oaths and sworn friendships, see citations below. The fact that pre-Carolingian sources rarely employ the term *coniurationes* for groups of conspirators invokes questions about oaths rather than about the existence of rebellious alliances. On early medieval conspiracies and rebellions against rulers, see Konrad Bund, *Thronsturz und Herrscherabsetzung im Frühmittelalter*, Bonner Historische Forschungen 44 (Bonn: Rohrscheid, 1979).

[14] Antony Black, *Guilds and Civil Society in European Political Thought from the Twelfth Century to the Present* (London: Methuen, 1984); Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Gilden als Soziale Gruppen in der Karolingerzeit,"

certainly the case that the distinctive features of guilds need not be rejected completely, and there is some validity to the approach outlined above: guilds as such emerged no later than the late eight century, when Carolingian capitularies identify them as a special type of association (with reference to their insistence on oaths).[15] Additionally, co-operative associations may not all have responded to comparable historical circumstances in identical fashion, and may thus have been configured in somewhat different ways. Nonetheless, the modern obsession with excessive systematization, categorization and differentiation runs the risk of ignoring the common sociopolitical functionality of such phenomena. Guilds shared major characteristics with other sociopolitical alliances of medieval society.[16] Rigid systematization of medieval bonds is hard to achieve when set against the terminological complexity of the sources: *gilda*, *gelda* or *gildonia* were not exclusive terms and nor are they distinguished from such more inclusive terms as *confratria*, *consortium*, *fraternitas*, *societas*, *coniuratio* or, indeed, *amicitia*.[17] The institutional character of the guild, and of other co-operative alliances for that matter, can hardly be separated from the institutional character of *amicitia* in general; a single, if sometimes broad, discourse of friendship served to express the *formulae* of mutual obligations that men in particular relationships and associations owed to each other. The discourse was broad in the sense that the rights and dues were general in character – *amicus amicis, inimicus inimicis* –, and yet specific in that it expressed political bonds akin to pacts or treaties, and were thus in a sense institutions.[18] The *formulae* varied, but just as

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Das Handwerk in vor- und frühgeschichtlicher Zeit. Bericht über die Kolloquien der Kommission für die Altertumskunde Mittel- und Nordeuropas in den Jahren 1997 bis 1980 1, eds. Herbert Jankuhn et al., Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981); Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Die mittelalterliche Zunft als Forschungsproblem," *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte* 118 (1982); Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe 900-1300*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), xiv-xlv.

[15] Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Gilde. 1. Begriff - 4. Zur Herkunft der G.," *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* 12, ed. Rosemarie Müller, 2nd ed. (Berlin et al.: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 102-104.

[16] For discussion of the medieval guild as both a special type of association and as representative of broader sociopolitical linkages, associated with friendship and belonging as much to social history as to constitutional theory, see, in addition to the works cited above, Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Die mittelalterlichen Gilden: Ihre Selbstdeutung und ihr Beitrag zur Formung sozialer Strukturen," *Soziale Ordnungen im Selbstverständnis des Mittelalters* 1, ed. Albert Zimmermann (Berlin et al.: De Gruyter, 1979); Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Conjuratio und Gilde im frühen Mittelalter. Ein Beitrag zum Problem der sozialgeschichtlichen Kontinuität zwischen Antike und Mittelalter," *Gilden und Zünfte. Kaufmännische und gewerbliche Genossenschaften im frühen und hohen Mittelalter*, ed. Berent Schwineköper, Vorträge und Forschungen 29 (Sigmaringen: J. Thorbecke, 1985).

[17] Pierre Michaud-Quantin, *Universitas. Expressions du mouvement communautaire dans le Moyen-Age latin*, L'Église et l'État au Moyen Age 13 (Paris: J. Vrin, 1970); cf. Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Gilde. 1.Begriff - 4.Zur Herkunft der G.," 102.

[18] The difference is essentially one of level rather than quality, as Gerd Althoff notes when maintaining that "the bond of friendship did not really have what might be described as an institutional character, unlike co-operative unions such as guilds and municipalities", before he proceeds to minimize the difference by claiming: "Nevertheless, both types of bonds did try to provide the same thing: a guarantee of peace, protection and help in all areas of life. In this sense, co-operative unions were simply an elaborate form of friendship." Gerd Althoff, *Verwandte, Freunde und Getreue*, 66-67. Though Althoff's unit of measurement

amici were synonymously referred to as *collegae*, *socii* or *fratres*, so were such bonds expressed in terms other than *amicitia* alone.[19] Friendship was a very wide-ranging and inclusive concept in medieval society, eluding systematic definition and description while exercising major influence and real presence.

The prominence of friendship in medieval Europe was not due to politicocultural *translatio* of any sort, whether from classical antiquity, Germania, or elsewhere. The medieval guild, as an expression of association and friendship, used to be a particular favorite of historicist structuralism, generating the notion of "Germanic continuity." The eminent German historian Otto von Gierke famously and influentially argued for the Germanic origins of corporatist political principles in medieval and early modern political culture, detecting structural equivalences between old-Germanic *Genossenschaften* and medieval and early modern corporatist associations based on notions of fellowship, such as guilds or communes of towns and villages. He thus saw the modern state rising from a dialectical medieval and early modern political culture of, on the one hand, Germanic corporatist principles, enshrined in the Germanic *commune* or *Gemeinde* and projected through guilds and communes, and, on the other hand, Roman absolutist and authoritarian principles, expressed through the discourse of Roman civil law and hierarchization of power. From this viewpoint, medieval political culture reveals a tension between the associative character of the Germanic *Rechtsstaat* and Roman individualist notions of absolutism and hierarchy.[20] Sweeping structural interpretations such as Gierke's easily transform particular phenomena into mere formulations of general principles, and the immediate application of friendship in medieval societies loses its meaning and importance. The function of medieval friendship rose primarily from the circumstances of general medieval political culture, and there was nothing intrinsically Germanic or Roman about it.

Gierke's juxtaposition of *Herrschaft* and *Genossenschaft* as diametrical opposites speaks to chronic methodological difficulties when dealing with power in relation to human bonds. Political theorists, past and present, tend to distinguish between vertical and horizontal bonds, thus making virtually all political communities dialectic by nature. This unnecessarily constricted viewpoint can lead the assumption that predicaments concerning conflicting loyalties were chronic and unwelcome symptoms of an inherent sociopolitical dysfunction within pre-modern society. In fact, however, medieval people

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was that of regular meetings and/or statutes, one can as easily refer to the political formality of alliances in terms of "institution."

[19] Gerd Althoff, "Freund und Freundschaft. 2. Historisches," 579.

[20] Otto von Gierke, *Das deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht* 1. *Rechtsgeschichte der deutschen Genossenschaften*, 2. *Geschichte des deutschen Körpeschaftsbegriff*, 3. *Die Staats- und Korporationslehre des Altertums und des Mittelalters und ihre Aufnahme in Deutschland*, 4. *Die Staats- und Korporationslehre der Neuzeit* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1868-1913). Vertical and horizontal political dualism is under review throughout the work, although the specifically German and Roman categorization of it is mostly set out in the third volume. On Gierke's dialectic, and its historiographical background, see Gerhard Dilcher, "Genossenschaftstheorie und Sozialrecht: ein 'Juristensozialismus' Otto v. Gierkes?" *Quaderni fiorentini per la storia del pensiero moderno* 3-4 (1974-1975); Hans Boldt: "Otto v. Gierke," *Deutsche Historiker* 8, ed. Hans-Ulrich Wehler (Göttingen: Vandenhoek-Reihe, 1982).

generally found it advantageous to construct a plurality of bonds. This served to enhance their political options rather than limiting them, and represented a common strategy for creating social and political freedom of maneuver. In short, it sought to multiply an individual's "legitimate" options. Friendship was emblematic of just such networking.

Friendship was formal. Without extrapolating from Tacitus beyond his Roman ethnographic observation and suggesting proto-Germanic blueprint, it is worth noting the formality that he assigns to the friendships of his subjects: "Suscipere tam inimicitas seu patris seu propinqui quam amicitias necesse est [*One is obliged to take over the feuds as well as the friendships of one's father or kinsmen*]."[21] Analogous transfer of bonds, highlighting their formality, was all but unknown to medieval political culture.[22] Similarly, the state of friendship is commonly recognized in medieval sources by explicit if generic phrases, such as *facti sunt amici*, and the like. The classic *formulae* of obligations were equally general: *consilium et auxilium*, friends were expected to honor their obligations to the best of their abilities and in accordance with what could reasonably be expected, they should treat each other *per rectum*, and so on.[23] The willful open-endedness of the *formulae* did, however, make it rather unproblematic, in theory if not always in reality, to turn one's *amicus* into *inimicus*. There were plenty of opportunities to feel violated and to claim that your friend had not acted "honorably," "rightfully," or "duly" in any given case. In addition, "conflicting loyalties" might offer "legitimate" violation as a possible course of action. "Highest loyalty," *fidem contra omnes*, thus remained on the royal agenda as an

[21] *Cornelii Taciti Germania*, ed. Heinrich Schweizer-Sidler (Halle: Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1871), 43. On the different roles assigned to such descriptions in later scholarship, see Klaus von See, *Deutsche Germanen-Ideologie vom Humanismus biz zur Gegenwart* (Frankfurt: Athenäum Verlag, 1970); on Tacitus specifically, see Anne K. G. Kristensen, *Tacitus' germanische Folgschaft*, Historisk-Filosofiske meddelelser 50:5 (Copenhagen: Kongelige videnskabernes selskab, 1983).

[22] Without equating friendship and the quasi-constitutional relationship of *goðar* and *þingmenn* – although they apparently could complement each other –, it may be observed, however, that the latter was certainly perceived of as simultaneously institutional and personal. As property it was transferable through commercial exchange, gift, or inheritance, yet it consisted (theoretically, at least) of voluntary bonds of men. The idea strikes the modern mind as contradictory, but to the medieval mind acculturated by fundamentally different perceptions of human bonds it will have appeared quite normative. It allegedly contradictory character of property-yet-power is famously spelt out in Kristinna laga þáttur: "Ef maðr a goðorð oc þarf eigi þat til tiundar at telia. vellde er þat enn eigi fe [*If one owns chieftaincy, then it shall not be counted towards the payment of tithe. It is power, not property*];" *Grágás* [Ia]. *Islændernes Lovbog i Fristatens Tid, udgivet efter det kongelige Bibliotheks Haandskrift*, ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen (Copenhagen: Berlings Bogtrykkeri, 1852), 232, [Ib], 75, 206 (quotation); *Grágás* [II] *efter det Arnamagnæanske Haandskrift Nr. 334 fol., Staðarhólsbók*, ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1879), 47, 79; *Grágás* [III]. *Stykker, som findes i det Arnamagnæanske Haandskrift Nr. 351 fol. Skálholtsbók og en Række andre Haandskrifter*, ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1883), 44. Cf. also *Grágás* [IV]. *Lagasafn íslenska þjóðveldisins*, eds. Gunnar Karlsson et al. (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1992), 36, 58, 153.

[23] On the uses of terms and *formulae* describing friendships, their variety as well as problematic aspects, see, e.g., Luitpold Wallach, "Amicus amicis, inimicus inimicis," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 52 (1933): 614-615; Wolfgang Fritze, "Die fränkische Schwurfreundschaft der Merowingerzeit. Ihr Wesen und ihre politische- Funktion," *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Germanistische Abteilunge* 71 (1954); Reinhard Schneider, *Brüdergemeine und Schwurfreundschaft. Der Auflösungsprozess der Karolingerreiches im Spiegel der Caritas-Terminoligie in den Verträgen der karolingische Teilkönige des 9. Jahrhunderts*, Historische Studien 388 (Lübeck: Matthiesen Verlag, 1964); Verena Epp, *Amicitia*.

attempted way round this, much as property disputes in high and late medieval Europe turned on "highest right," *maius ius*, instead of absolute ownership in the modern sense.[24] Navigating successfully the conflicting demands of loyalties and obligations could be quite an art, precisely because bonds were neither fixed nor objective. *Nihil negare amicis* was one of the formulas recorded by Widukind of Corvey, but apparently that was more an ideal than a reality.[25] Formulaic demands of one friend to another are widely represented in Old Icelandic sources, such as Hávamál 43:

Vin sínom
scal maðr vinr vera,
þeim oc þess vin;
enn óvinar síns
scyli engi maðr
vinar vinr vera.[26]

[*Man should be a friend to his friend, to him and his friends; but man should not be a friend to his friend's enemy*.]

Predictably, modern scholarship on pre-modern friendship has focused on the political culture of post-Roman and pre-Gregorian Europe. It has convincingly demonstrated that the application of *amicitia* was subject to larger frameworks of power, ultimately reflecting relative political rank and status. It was important and necessary for those above to contract and sustain strong bonds with those below them, yet without implying political equality of any sort. Indeed, all manifestations of such bonds should serve to reinforce existing hierarchies rather than flatten them out. "Quid est amicitia [*What is friendship*]?" was Pippin's question to Alcuin; "Æqualitas amicorum [*Equality*

[24] Framing the discourse on *amicitia* in conventional terms could lead to multiple responsibilities and conflicting loyalties. Kings and rulers bonding with each other routinely restricted their loyalties by references to *pro posse suo*, *pro viribus regni*, *salvo honore regni*, and the like. The formula *per rectum* was widely used for confirming a friendship (*ero amico meo amicus, sicuit per rectum amicus esse debet suo amico*) as well as oaths of fealty, such as the oath of loyalty to Charlemagne in 802. Kings and lords promoted the precedence of vassalage over other ties of loyalty, with varying success. On *formulae*, see, e.g., Peter Rassow, *Honor imperii. Die neue Politik Friedrich Barbarossas, 1152-1159* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1961); Günter Rauch, *Die Bündnisse deutscher Herrscher mit Reichsangehöringen von Regierungsantritt Friedrich Barbarossas biz zum Tod Rudolfs von Habsburg*, Untersuchungen zur deutschen Staats- und Rechtsgeschichte, n.F. 5 (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1966); Gerd Althoff, *Amicitiae und Pacta. Bündnis, Einung, Politik und Gebetsgedenken im beginnenden 10. Jahrhundert*, Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae Historica 37 (Hannover: Hahn, 1992); cf. Gerd Althoff, *Verwandte, Freunde und Getreue*, 8-10, 66ff. For a broadly-based discussion of *maius ius*, particularly in high and late medieval Europe, see Janet Coleman, "Property and poverty," *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c.350-c.1450*, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1988).

[25] Cf. Gerd Althoff, "Freund und Freundschaft. 2. Historisches," 579.

[26] *Edda. Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern* 1. *Text*, 5th ed., eds. Gustav Neckel and Hans Kuhn, Germanische Bibliothek, Fourth Series, Texte (Heidelberg, Carl Winter – Universitätsverlag, 1983), 23.

among friends]," was his reply.[27] Therein lies the contradiction. While friendship was couched in terms of a discourse of equals it was rarely meant to reflect or promote political equality in practice, least of all when applied by kings or other political heads. Correspondingly, friendship was greatly appreciated by those who sought to secure "upward" friendships. Kings happily did without it, *as long as* other means of promoting hierarchy were available and viable.

The Merovingians and the Carolingians manifestly – and, up to the reign of Louis the Pious, rather successfully – forged *amicitia* only with a select few, and rarely with local magnates. Primarily, they exercised it *ad hoc* amongst themselves, such as Guntram and Childebert did in 587, as described by Gregory of Tours. Otherwise, its uses were overwhelmingly confined to the aristocracy, both secular and clerical. Pippin, the Mayor of the Palace, and Archbishop Chunibert of Cologne reaffirmed their ties in the early seventh century through *amicitia*, as described in Fredegar's Chronicle, and others also found it useful. Apparently, the early Carolingians were more exposed to its uses than their predecessors, though never extensively. There are scattered references to special friends of the king (*amici regi*) under both Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, but the formality of these relations and their exact character is difficult to determine. Until Louis the Pious, foreign rulers were the only ones regularly and continuously made and remade *amici* by the Carolingians, through the reciprocal exchange of gifts. The nascent Papal State also enjoyed special bonds of *amicitia*.[28]

The situation changed after Louis the Pious. The political transformation of the Empire rendered kingship and lordship institutionally weaker than before, and power became much more territorial, decentralized, and personal, compared with the heyday of Charlemagne. As a consequence, the king and the aristocracy cooperated increasingly through the language of friendship. The exception became the rule, and remained so towards the end of the tenth century. The failure of Charles the Simple to rule according

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[27] Alcuin, "Pippini regalis et nobilissimi juvenis Disputatio cum Albino scholastico," *Operum pars septima. – Opera didascalica. Patrologia latina* 101, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris, 1863), 978.

[28] *Gregorii episcopi Tvronensis libri historicarvm X*, eds. Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum 1:1 (Hanover: MGH, 1951), IX, a. 20; Anna Maria Drabek, "Der Merowingervertrag von Andelot aus dem Jahr 587," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 78 (1970); *Fredegarii et aliorvm Chronica. Vitae sanctorum*, ed. Bruno Krusch, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum 2 (Hanover: MGH, 1888), IV, a. 85; cf. Gerd Althoff, *Verwandte, Freunde und Getreue*, 68-74. The ties forged between King Pippin and Pope Stephen II in 754 have attracted a good deal of attention. Although their framework is certainly based on friendship, they stand as a classic example of the difficulties faced by modern observers when seeking fully to understand the nuances in such relationships. This is not least due to the particular combination of bonds involved, *amicitia* and *compaternitas*. Key readings, important to scholars of medieval friendship in general, include Wolfgang Fritze, *Papst und Frankenkönig. Studien zu den päpstlich-fränkischen Rechtsbeziehungen von 754 bis 824*, Vorträge und Forschungen, Sonderband 10 (Sigmaringen: J. Thorbecke, 1973), 63ff; Anna Maria Drabek, *Die Verträge der fränkischen und deutschen Herrscher mit dem Papsttum von 754 bis 1020*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 22 (Vienna at al.: Böhlau, 1976), 13ff; Arnold Angenendt, "Die geistliche Bündnis der Päpste mit den Karolingern (754-796)," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 100 (1980); Thomas F. X. Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter. The Birth of the Papal State, 680-825*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 254-276.

to the traditional Carolingian pattern, denying the aristocracy explicit friendship while rigorously promoting lordship and fidelity of vassalage, appears emblematic. The man he befriended in 921, King Henry I, operated very differently, becoming the *primus inter pares* in political networking. He actively promoted formal ties of *amicitia* inside and outside his kingdom, repeatedly having them supplement and reinforce existing bonds, and thus ensuring that he became lord, kinsman, and friend to some of his allies. However, he was keenly aware of the subjectivity of bonds and proved himself exceptionally skilled in making, breaking, and manipulating them. Count Herbert of Vermandois, who imprisoned his lord Charles the Simple, was much like his *amicus* Henry in this respect.[29] They all lived their political lives at a time when active networking had become very important, to the detriment of more formal modes of rulership and political communication.

During the 1930s and the 1940s, scholars began seriously to question some of the fundamental assumptions of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century legal and constitutional approaches to the history of power, which by and large had meant tracing, or constructing, the medieval origins of the modern state. The traditional emphasis on institutional and legal aspects of power related to both the teleological political ideology of the national state, itself seen as the normative and largely inevitable product of historical evolution, and the Hegelian *Trennungsdenken* of separating clearly between State and Society. It identified "public" and "private" spheres of operation for each, and promoted the former as a set of institutionalized and bureaucratic apparatuses of administration for the service and security of the latter's civil freedom. The historical rise of the modern State was thus regarded as most welcome since its ultimate function was to safeguard the bourgeois-liberal playground of the individual, that is Society. By the same token, the rise of the modern state put an end to age of "private" warfare, anarchy, and lack of compatible (state) modes of managing power.[30] New scholarly approaches came not only in the form of Otto Brunner's groundbreaking Land und Herrschaft, warning against anachronistically approaching pre-modern political cultures through modern conceptual categories of law and power,[31] but also through the introduction of the notion of a medieval *Personenverbandstaat*. Coined by Theodore Mayer, this concept met the

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[29] Reinhard Schneider, *Brüdergemeine und Schwurfreundschaft*, 178ff; Peter Classen, "Die Vorträge von Verdun und von Coulaines 843 als politische Grundlagen des westfränkischen Reiches," *Historische Zeitschrift* 196 (1963); Gerd Althoff, *Verwandte, Freunde und Getreue*, 74-86; Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751-987* (London et al.: Longman, 1983), 306-313; Janet L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, The Medieval World (London et al.: Longman, 1992), 256-264.

[30] Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgelichen Gesellschaft*, Samlung Luchterhand 25 (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1962); Manfred Riedel, "Der Begriff der 'bürgerlichen Gesellschaft' und das Problem seines geschichtlichen Ursprungs," *Staat und Gesellschaft*, ed. Ernst Wolfgang Böckenförde, Wege der Forschung 471 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976); Manfred Riedel, "Der Staatsbegriff der deutschen Geschichtsschreibung des 19. Jahrhunderts in seinem Verhältnis zur klassisch-politischen Philosophie," *Der Staat* 2 (1963); James Van Horn Melton, "The Emergence of 'Civil Society' in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Central Europe," *Language, History, and Class*, ed. Penelope Corfield (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1991).

[31] Its first two chapters are implicitly (the first) and explicitly (the second) written against the tradition of *Trennungsdenken*.

apparent need to substitute the State as an analytical category with a comparable entity of human relations.[32] Although its ideological underpinnings were soon found to be suspect,[33] it rightly drew attention to actors vis-à-vis institutions. Most importantly, it brought together social and political perspectives.

The change from a traditional emphasis on institutions and bureaucratic perspectives towards actors, experiences, social norms, and orality is deeply reflected in the prominent topics and debates of more recent medieval scholarship. Among them may be named the challenges to the traditional concept of feudal society and hierarchical relations,[34] feud and conflict management,[35] wide-ranging inquiries into the less positive

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[32] Theodor Mayer, "Geschichtliche Grundlagen der deutschen Verfassung," Schriften der hessischen Hochschulen, Universität Gießen 1 (Gießen: Töpelmann, 1933).

[33] The promotion of State and Society as an organic whole fed into the national-socialist notion of Reich, which otherwise was not exclusive to national-socialists. The notion itself, central to the idea of *Personenverbandstaat*, suggests immanent obligations towards authority. On the promotion of *Personenverbandstaat*, see Adolf Waas, *Herrschaft und Staat im deutschen Frühmittelalter*, Historische Studien 335 (Berlin: Ebering, 1938); Otto Brunner, *Land und Herrschaft*; Heinrich Mitteis, *Der Staat des hohen Mittelalters. Grundlinien einer vergleichenden Verfassungsgeschichte des Lehnszeitalters* (Weimar: Herm. Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1940). See also Theodore Mayer, "Königtum und Gemeinfreiheit im frühen Mittelalter," *Deutsches Archiv* 6 (1943).

[34] As expressed in two closely related and dominant debates. The first involves the "feudal revolution," the legacy of Carolingian administrative institutions, and the development of medieval lordship. Its roots lie in Georges Duby's revision of Marc Bloch's interpretation of feudalism, developed further through the work of scholars such as Jean François Lemarignier, Pierre Bonnassie, Jean-Pierre Poly and Eric Bournazel; the ideas of Dominique Barthélemy brought him into a "feudal revolution" debate with Thomas N. Bisson and others. The second important debate involves serious challenges to the concepts and constructs of "feudalism" and "feudal society," together with demands for retreat from hierarchically dominated interpretive perspectives of medieval political culture. Launched by Elizabeth A. R. Brown's seminal paper on the subject, it was followed by Susan Reynolds' important contributions. Key studies in relation to both debates include Georges Duby, "Recherches sur l'évolution des institutions judiciaries pendant le Xe et le XIe siècle dans le sud de la Bourgogne," *Le Moyen Age* 52 (1946) and 53 (1947), transl. as "The evolution of judicial institutions," *The Chivalrous Society*, transl. Cynthia Postan (Berkeley et al.: University of California Press, 1977); Jean-Pierre Poly and Eric Bournazel, *La mutation féodale, X^e^-XII^e^ siècles*, Nouvelle Clio 16 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980), transl. as *The Feudal Transformation 900-1200*, transl. Caroline Higgitt, Europe Past and Present Series (New York et al: Holmes and Meier, 1991); Dominique Barthélemy, *La société dans le comté de Vendôme de l'an Mil au XIVe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1993); Dominique Barthélemy, *The Serf, the Knight, and the Historian* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009); Thomas N. Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century. Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); the former debate appeared in concise form in the pages of *Past and Present* 1994-1997 (Bisson, Barthélemy, Stephen D. White, Timothy Reuter, Chris Wickham); Elizabeth A. R. Brown, "The Tyranny of a Construct: Feudalism and Historians of Medieval Europe," *American Historical Review* 79 (1974); Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe 900-1300*; Susan Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals. The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[35] Principal studies include *Conflict in Medieval Europe. Changing Perspectives on Society and Culture*, eds. Warren C. Brown and Piotr Górecki (Aldershot et al.: Ashgate, 2003), see in particular the editor's "What Conflict Means: The Making of Medieval Conflict Studies in the United States, 1970-2000"; *The Settlement of Disputes in Early Medieval Europe*, eds. Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Stephen D. White, *Feuding and Peace-making in Eleventh-Century France*, Variorum Collected Studies (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Frederic L. Cheyette, "Suum Cuique Tribuere," *French Historical Studies* 6 (1969/1970); Patrick J. Geary, "Moral Obligations and Peer Pressure: Conflict Resolution in the Medieval

aspects of state-building and its experiences,[36] the juxtaposition of orality and literacy as mental and cultural constructs,[37] and a growing interest in and understanding of the dynamics and fluidity of sociopolitical networking. This last topic, fundamental to the larger context of feasting and gift giving as modes of political expression, owes its greatest debt to the scholarship deriving from Karl Schmid and the German response to structuralism. Developing initially in the 1960s, it took issue with treating medieval groups, classes, or strata as historical actors in themselves, that is as structures. Instead, it approached them as discourses or idioms employed by historical actors for enforcing social norms and mediating social and political self-perception. One primary implication is that medieval group formation was a cultural and ideological phenomenon yet securely situated within the boundaries of social history. Secondly, it encourages the idea of treating pre-modern bonds of disparate types as elements of a single if broadly defined culture of networking. Lastly, it opposes the idea of interpreting medieval sociopolitical culture as objective, fixed, and *a priori* received sets of bonds vis-à-vis subjective group construction and *ad hoc* applications of social and political discourses to relations and obligations.[38] The logical conclusion is the rise of ritual and contractual modes of managing bonds as major topics in medieval scholarship. Consequently, there are few

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Aristocracy," *Georges Duby. L'écriture de l'Histoire*, eds. Guy Lobrichon and Claudie Duhamel-Amado, Bibliothèque du Moyen Age (Brussels: De Boeck Université, 1996); Patrick J. Geary, "Vivre en conflit dans une France sans état: Typologie des méchanismes de règlement des conflits, 1050-1200," *Annales ESC* 41 (1986), rev. and transl. as "Living with Conflicts in Stateless France: A Typology of Conflict Management Mechanisms, 1050-1200," *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Arnoud-Jan A Bijsterveld, "Eergevoel en conflictbeheersing in aristocratische en geestelijke kringen in de twaalfde-eeuwse Nederlanden," *Millennium* 11 (1997), transl. as "In Honour Bound: Give and Take," Do ut des. *Gift Giving,* Memoria*, and Conflict Management in the Medieval Low Countries*, Middeleeuwse Studies en Bronnen 104 (Hilversum: Verloren, 2007).

[36] The experience of power, more often than not negative, is central to the debate on the "feudal revolution." Further, see Thomas N. Bisson, *Tormented Voices. Power, Crisis, and Humanity in Rural Catalonia, 1140-1200* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), a work that represents a contrast with his mentor's classic and essentially positive take on state-building, Joseph R. Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970). Negative by-products of state-building are made evident in dissent and heresy scholarship, most prominently and convincingly by R. I. Moore, as in his *The Formation of Persecuting Society. Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950-1250* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

[37] The basic study is Michael T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record. England 1066-1307*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993). Also widely discussed is Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy. Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

[38] Collected studies, including his seminal 1957 "Zur Problematik von Familie, Sippe und Geschlecht, Haus und Dynastie beim mittelalterlichen Adel. Vorfaragen zum thema 'Adel und Herrschaft im Mittelalter'," are Karl Schmid, *Gebetsgedenken und adliges Selbstverständnis im Mittelalter. Ausgewählte Beiträge. Festgabe zu seinem sechzigsten Geburtstag* (Sigmaringen: J. Thorbecke, 1983). For the application of theoretical and methodological notions, see *Die Klostergemeinschaft von Fulda im früheren Mittelalter* 1-5, ed. Karl Schmid, Münsterische Mittelalter-Schriften 8 (Munich: W. Fink, 1978). On Schmid and the *Freiburgkreis* extending from Gerd Tellenbach, see in particular Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Gruppen in der Gesellschaft. Das wissenschaftliche Oeuvre von Karl Schmid," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 28 (1994).

more vigorously debated topics among medievalists today.[39] The present study relates to it.

Medieval Iceland was stateless society *par excellence* until the thirteenth century. Unsurprisingly, the scholarship it has attracted has been profoundly shaped by broader trends within the medieval field.[40] Most emblematic of the anthropological and sociological emphases that developed during the 1970s and 1980s, with their focus on sociopolitical bonding and friendship, was the reorientation of the debate towards feud and conflict management. Among the most notable contributions to this discussion is William Ian Miller's magisterial Bloodtaking and Peacemaking, published in 1990 and drawing significantly on his earlier writings. Significantly, it offers an unprecedented reconfiguration of the debate concerning medieval Icelandic sociopolitical ties, promoted in a context free from conceptual straightjackets involving the state. Its rise against the traditional Phillpottian conceptual framework of kinship and ties was profoundly novel within the field at the time, and echoed Schmidtean principles on kinship and friendship as active discourses.[41] While friendship has become a standard topic within medieval

[39] See notes 88 and 89.

[40] For a historiographical overview of twentieth-century historical scholarship on medieval Iceland, see Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, "Allir sem sjá líta þó ekki jafnt á: sagnaritun um íslenskar miðaldir fram um 1300," *Saga* 38 (2000); Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, "Noen hovedtrekk i diskusjonen om det islandske middelaldersamfunnet etter 1970," *Collegium Medievale* 18 (2006).

[41] Eight years prior to Miller's publication was Jesse Byock's Feud in the Icelandic Saga. It developed significant new approaches, further expanded in his Medieval Iceland (1988) and Viking Age Iceland (2001). The first of these three volumes forms the foundation for much of the second, which itself is largely incorporated in the third. The principal novelty of Byock's work was the way in which it applied the sagas of Icelanders to social and political historical analyses, a logical response to changing currents in medieval studies in general, as well as to the work being done in the field of Icelandic studies in the 1970s by scholars such as Preben Meulengracht Sørensen (Saga og samfund). Its other chief novelty was the way in which it broke away from political history as institutional or constitutional history, bringing feud into the realm of political networking and assigning to it mechanistic aspects that operate outside a framework dominated by formal constitutional structures. Miller explored these notions, but in a different way. Byock's interpretation of the culture of sociopolitical bonds is more conservative than it is novel: its central approach explicitly as well as implicitly reinforces traditional takes on – and, to an extent, conceptions of – kinship ties, as developed influentially at the beginning of the last century by Bertha Phillpotts (Kindred and Clan in the Middle Ages and thereafter), herself working out of traditional legal and constitutional traditions. Miller's many virtues include his markedly broader consideration of social and political networking, convincingly accommodating wider dimensions and greater dynamics in the making and breaking of bonds. He strikes what seems to be a fairer balance without promoting clan-based sociopolitical ties. This particular aspect feeds into Miller's analysis of conflict management, intelligently informed by commanding legal, anthropological and sociological knowledge. Bloodtaking and Peacemaking drew more skeptical responses than its more traditional counterpart, mostly for being too kinship-oriented and applying feuding models derived from research on unilineal kinship cultures to bilineal Iceland. Miller's approach is certainly open to challenge, yet some of the criticism he received reproduced his arguments in a manner which was itself not above criticism. William Ian Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking. Feud, Law, and Society in Saga Iceland* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990); Jesse L. Byock, *Feud in the Icelandic Saga* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Jesse L. Byock, *Medieval Iceland. Society, Sagas, and Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Jesse L. Byock, *Viking Age Iceland* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2001); Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, *Saga og samfund. En indføring i oldislandsk litteratur*, Berlingske leksikonbibliotek 116 (Copenhagen: Berlingske forlag, 1977); Bertha Surtees Phillpotts, *Kindred and Clan in*

Scandinavian scholarship,[42] its communicative modes have, on the other hand, been undeservedly neglected as a topic *per se*. This is certainly not to suggest that the two can or should be disjoined, only that equal sense must be made of both. Feasting and gift giving have, with a few notable exceptions,[43] received relatively superficial attention, with

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the Middle Ages and thereafter. A study in the Sociology of the Teutonic Races, Cambridge Archaeological and Ethnological Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913). Miller's interpretation was promoted earlier in series of important articles: William Ian Miller, "Justifying Skarphéðinn: Of Pretext and Politics in the Icelandic Bloodfeud," *Scandinavia Studies* 55 (1983); William Ian Miller, "Choosing the Avenger: Some Aspects of the Bloodfeud in Medieval Iceland and England," *Law and History Review* 1 (1983); William Ian Miller, "Avoiding Legal Judgment: The Submission of Disputes to Arbitration in Medieval Iceland," *American Journal of Legal History* 28 (1984); William Ian Miller, "Dreams, Prophecy and Sorcery: Blaming the Secret Offender in Medieval Iceland," *Scandinavia Studies* 58 (1986); William Ian Miller, "Ordeal in Iceland," *Scandinavian Studies* 60 (1988); William Ian Miller, "Beating up on Women and Old Men and other Enormities: A Social Historical Inquiry into Literary Sources," *Mercer Law Review* 39 (1988). For a critique of Miller involving favorable comparison with Byock, see Helgi Þorláksson, "Hvað er blóðhefnd?" *Sagnaþing helgað Jónasi Kristjánssyni sjötugum 10. apríl 1994* 1, eds. Gísli Sigurðsson et al. (Reykjavik: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1994).

[42] Growing influence from historical anthropology from the 1970s onwards, and with structuralism on the rise, facilitated the emergence of friendship as a viable research topic within medieval Scandinavian studies. Kåre Lunden's Økonomi og samfunn (1972) was a seminal work in this respect. For a growing appreciation of friendship, bonds, and networking, in addition the above-cited studies on conflict management, see, e.g., Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Goder og maktforhold på Island i fristatstiden* (Bergen: Universitetet i Bergen, Historisk Institutt, 1993), transl. as *Chieftains and Power in the Icelandic Commonwealth*, transl. Jean Lundskær-Nielsen, The Viking Collection, Studies in Northern Civilization 12 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1999); Christer Winberg, *Grenverket. Studier rörande jord, släktskapssystem och ståndsprivilegier*, Skrifter utgivna av Institutet för rättshistorisk forskning, Serie 1: Rättshistorisk bibliotek 38 (Stockholm: Nordiska Bokhandeln, 1985); Kirsten Hastrup, *Culture and History in Medieval Iceland. An Anthropological Analysis of Structure and Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Torben Anders Vestergaard, "The System of Kinship in Early Norwegian Law," *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 12 (1988); Lars Ivar Hansen, "Slektskap," *Holmgang. Om førmoderne samfunn. Festskrift til Kåre Lunden*, eds. Anne Eidsfelt et al. (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, Historisk Institutt, 2000); Lars Hermanson, *Släkt, vänner och makt. En studie av elitens politiska kultur i 1100-talets Danmark* (Göteborg: Historiska Institutionen i Göteborg, 2000); Lars Hermanson, *Bärande band. Vänskap, kärlek och brödraskap i det medeltida Nordeuropa, ca 1000-1200* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2009); Eva Österberg, *Vänskap – en lång historia* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2007); *Vänner, patroner och klienter in Norden 900-1800*, eds. Lars Hermanson et al., Ritsafn Sagnfræðistofnunar 39 (Reykjavik: Háskólaútgáfan, 2007), in particular the editors' "Inledning: Vänner, patroner och klienter," Lars Hermanson's, "Vänskap i det edstagande samhället – ett rituellt perspektiv. Norden och Europa ca. 900-1200," and Jón Viðar Sigurðsson's, "De vennlige Islendingene og den uvennlige kongen;" Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Den vennlige vikingen. Vennskapets makt i Norge og på Island ca. 900-1300* (Oslo: Pax forlag, 2010).

[43] Recent and important is William Ian Miller, *Audun and the Polar Bear. Luck, Law and Largesse in a Medieval Tale of Risky Business*, Medieval Law and its Practices 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), advancing many of his earlier observations. From an altogether different perspective, Hanne Monclair has attempted to trace the development of political leadership in thirteenth-century Iceland as supposedly reflected in changing patterns of feasting and gift giving among the elite: Hanne Monclair, *Lederskapsideologi på Island i det trettende århundret. En analyse av gavegivning, gjestebud og lederskapsfremtoning i islandsk sagamateriale*, Acta humaniora 160 (Oslo: Unipub AS, 2004). Gift giving was studied earlier still, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but squarely within the confines of legal and constitutional history, cf. Frederik Peter Brandt, *Forelæsninger over den norske retshistorie* 1-2 (Oslo: Damm, 1880-1883); Karl von Amira, *Nordgermanisches Obligationenrecht* 1. *Altschwedisches Obligationenrecht*, 2. *Westnordisches*

their complexities under-explored. More seriously, their contractual functionality is repeatedly rehearsed without much real concern for its larger framework of power.

II Demonstrating Bonds through Action

The fundamental transformation of medieval society in the period conventionally denoted as high medieval – marked by the advent of modernization or even the birth of Europe[44] – was not least expressed in the institutionalization of power, secular as well as ecclesiastical. Any student of medieval Europe knows by experience the immense difficulties in achieving meaningful understanding when crossing these historical boundaries, and seeking to engage with the profoundly unfamiliar past that lies behind them. Such engagement requires the abandonment of those conceptual categories that have been constantly promoted through modern experience. In effect, it means thinking away the modern state. It means thinking away the bureaucratic modes of modern society and the fundamental occupation and functionality that it grants to text and textuality in terms of power – in broad terms, its legitimation, execution, organization, or communication. In the well-known phrase of Michael Clanchy, it means avoiding being prejudiced in favor of literacy and the literate mentality,[45] and open to different modes and media for perceiving and actualizing social and political reality. It includes coming to terms with how societies that are predominantly oral are capable of constituting agreements, contractually establishing obligations, and enacting transactions without the use of or primary reliance on texts. As Clanchy demonstrated better than most, this is a matter of mentality and culture rather than of technological backwardness. The absence or marginalization of written law did not constitute lawlessness; the absence of a state monopolization of governance, judicial authority, and coercive force did not constitute anarchy; and the absence or marginalization of textual communicative modes of expressing power did not constitute political cultures that were blind, deaf, and mute.

Pre-modern Iceland was basically no different in its applications of rituals and demonstrative modes of expression than societies of a roughly similar nature or those that were perfectly analogous to it. The assumption is not that rituals or ritualistic behavior autonomously generates itself in identical forms throughout separate cultures, but rather

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Obligationenrecht (Leipzig: Veit & comp., 1882-1895); C. Gunnar Bergman, *I. Om gåfva och gengåfva i äldre germansk rätt. II. Kyrkan och den medeltida svenska testamentsrätten* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1909); Max Pappenheim, "Über die Rechtsnatur der altgermanischen Schenkung," *Zeitschrift für Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Germanistische Abteilung* 53 (1933); cf. Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Den vennlige vikingen*, 18. See also Lars Hamre, "Gåve," Magnús Már Lárusson, "Gåve. Island," Stig Iuul, "Gåve. Danmark," and Gerhard Hafström, "Gåve. Sverige," all, with further references, in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformationstid* 5 (Copenhagen et al.: Rosenkilde og Bagger et al., 1960).

[44] There is a powerful synthesis in Robert Ian Moore, *The First European Revolution, c. 970-1215*, The Making of Europe (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000).

[45] Michael T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, cf. 7-11 ("Being Prejudiced in Favour of Literacy," and Part II, 185-334 ("The Literate Mentality").

that comparable modes of sociopolitical functionality tend to be cultivated for comparable purposes. Rituals are not timeless Platonic forms or ahistorical structures immune to historical contexts, but comparable historical phenomena within comparable social, political, and cultural contexts. They often assume most basic and concrete forms, such as an oath. Contracting friendship by oath is considered traditional in Old Icelandic sources. It established fictive kinship, *fóstbræðralag*, as supposedly outdated rituals such as blood-mixing and *ganga undir jarðarmen* would have done earlier (both may well have been antiquarian imaginings of the thirteenth century). Its public avowal had a potentially double valency, as it invariably invoked the supernatural or the divine.[46] Those involved *svǫrðusk í brœðralag* and became *svarabrœðr*.[47] The oath was otherwise marginal to the political culture of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Iceland, and primarily applied *ad hoc* for subjection or in the context of defeat. Another generic mode of expression was the practice of exchange through feasting and gift giving. The medieval sagas are full of such moments, and this again points us towards early medieval society for illumination and comparison, in terms of both its pre-modern context and modern scholarship.

Among the reasons why the Investiture Controversy became so controversial was that it revolved around ritual that was real rather than merely symbolic. As rituals of transaction generally, investiture with objects brought about the transfer of power conferred. It thereby unmistakably identified and rendered visible actual sources of power; to call the act symbolic would be too superficial a designation.[48] Actualizing

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[46] Ólafur Lárusson, "Edsformular. Island," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformationstid* 3 (Copenhagen et al.: Rosenkilde og Bagger et al., 1958).

[47] For further terminology, coupled with citations, see Fritzner under "bræðralag" (1: 204), "fóstbróðir" (1: 465) "fóstbræðralag" (1: 465), "eiðbróðir" (1: 295), "eiðr" (1: 295-296), "svarabróðir" (3: 609), and "eiðsvari" (1: 296), in Johan Fritzner, *Ordbog over det gamle norske sprog* 1-3, rev. ed. (Kristiania: Den norske forlagsforening, 1886-1896). In a political context, a useful example is the *brœðralag* sworn between King Magnús góði of Norway and King Hörða-Knútur of Denmark in the early eleventh century, a friendship established in the context of pressure from the leading men in both camps for prevention of immanent conflict (widely reported in the sources: The Roskilde Chronicle, Theodoricus, Saxo, Adam of Bremen, Knýtlinga saga, Ágrip, Morkinskinna, Fagurskinna, and Heimskringla); see, e.g., *Heimskringla* 3, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, Íslenzk fornrit 28 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1951), 12-13, cf. 13 n. 2. A further example is the sworn *brœðralag* of King Haraldur gilli of Norway and King Eiríkur eimuni of Denmark in the early twelfth century, cf. *Heimskringla* 3, 282. The Gulaþingslög understand *eiðbrœðr* as being able to demand compensation in respect of each other, something not found in Grágás (although the institution of a *félag* is possibly analogous in this sense, with acknowledgement of mutual rights). *Norges gamle Love indtil 1387* 1, eds. Rudolf Keyser and Peter Andreas Munch (Christiania: Chr. Gröndahl, 1846), 80; *Grágás* [Ia], 172-174, 228-229; *Grágás* [II], 73-74, 338-339; *Grágás* [IV], 54-55. For an overview of sworn friendship, with extensive literature, see Dieter Strauch, "Schwurfreundschaft," *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* 27, ed. Rosemarie Müller, 2nd ed. (Berlin et al.: Walter de Gruyter, 2004); also Olav Bø, "Fostbrorskap," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformationstid* 4 (Copenhagen et al.: Rosenkilde og Bagger et al., 1959).

[48] Denying royal investiture was tantamount to denying the pontifical and sacral characteristics of kingship promoted through Carolingian and Ottonian royal ideology, since the investor was understood to be the source of power transferred through the investment. In this sense Gerd Tellenbach noted long ago that the struggle over investiture was the struggle for correct "Weltordnung." Royal sacrality was enacted through rituals, among them rituals of investiture. For an introduction emphasizing the efficacy of the ritual of investiture and its consequential centrality within the debate, see Maureen C. Miller, *Power and the Holy in*

transfer of power and property through ritual surrender of objects – stick or staff (scepter and crosier), knife, spear, sword, turf – was commonplace in pre-modern Europe. It represented a signature by act, stored in memory. The textualization of both was a complex mental process; when the signature was transformed into text and memory into parchment, people still continued to produce objects rather than documents as proof of validation.[49] The logic is that of demonstrative modes of sociopolitical communication and of memory as custom, *consuetudo*, and the mental categories represented are those of orality and marginal statehood. Landnámabók's depictions of ritualistic modes of generating ownership by settlement, *at nema land*, are called to mind.[50] King Magnús's memorable surrender of power by stick, *teinn* or *reyrsproti*, in 1046 is equally typical in this respect, performed in the native social language of pre-modernity.

Medieval friendship and its *formulae* invariably existed outside of documented agreements. Formality was achieved through action, typically involving exchange, and by rule the obligations it generated were not fixed by written treaties. Charles the Bald, for example, made a written agreement of friendship with his magnates in 843, but its *formulae* of obligations were entirely generic. It is not until as late as the twelfth century in the Empire that more comprehensive formulations of mutual obligations of friendship between king and princes assume the written form of actual contracts.[51] Demonstrative action remained the norm. Wherever one browses in medieval narratives, friendship is inextricably associated with feasting and gift giving. Wherever there is *amicitia* there is very probably *convivium* or other expressions denoting formal sociability and exchange.[52] Gregory of Tours almost routinely attaches oaths, feasts, and gifts to the formation of friendship, reconciliation, truces and peaceful relations. He reports that King Clovis of the Franks and Alaric of the Goths faced each other neutrally on an island in the Loire, where they "comedentes pariter ac bibentes, promissa sibi amicitia, pacifici discesserunt [*ate and drank together, promised each other friendship, parted in peace*]."[53] Similarly, the childless King Gunthram adopted his nephew Childebert as heir and ruler though the ritual

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the Age of the Investiture Conflict. A Brief History with Documents, The Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston et al.: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005); see also Gerd Tellenbach, *Libertas. Kirche und Weltordnung im Zeitalter des Investiturstreites* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1936). On royal sacrality and rituals in a post-Gregorian atmosphere, see Geoffrey Koziol, "England, France, and the Problem of Sacrality in Twelfth-Century Ritual," *Cultures of Power. Lordship, Status, and Process in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. Thomas N. Bisson, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

[49] Michael T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 253-293.

[50] Dag Strömbäck, "Att helga land: studier i Landnáma och det äldsta rituella besittningstagandet," *Festskrift tillägnad Axel Hägerström den 6. september 1928, av filosofiska och juridiska föreningarna i Uppsala* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells boktryckeri, 1928), 198-220; cf. also Sveinbjörn Rafnsson, "Hvað er Landnámabók?" *Saga* 46:2 (2008): 184-185.

[51] The oldest example in the Empire would be the pact between Frederick Barbarossa and Duke Berthold IV of Zähringen. See Gerd Althoff, *Verwandte, Freunde und Getreue*, 75, 89-90.

[52] Research on feasting in its various medieval contexts is well represented in *Feste und Feiern im Mittelalter. Paderborner Symposion des Mediävistenverbandes*, eds. Detlef Altenburg et al. (Sigmaringen: J. Thorbecke Verlag, 1991), including Gerd Althoff, "Fest und Bündnis," 29-38. See also *Das Fest. Eine Kulturgeschichte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Uwe Schultz (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1988).

[53] *Gregorii episcopi Tvronensis libri historicarvm*, II, a. 35.

surrender of power and the exchange of solemn promises; they then "munducantes simul atque bibentes dignisque se muneribus honorantes, pacifici discesserunt [*ate and drank together, bestowed each other gifts as the occasion demanded, parted in peace*]."[54] Gregory's phrasing is programmatic in its typicality. Analogous examples are routine throughout his text and in comparable narratives.[55]

Feasting and gift giving was friendship in practice, a staged performance. As friendship in general, its demonstration could be resentfully undertaken and driven by pure political necessity or pressure. Thus, Henry did not attempt to hide his resentment when sharing a table with Gregory at their *commune convivium* at Canossa in 1077.[56] It was not uncommon for the aristocracy to orchestrate peace against the king's will, thereby compelling him into publicly declaring friendship with those against whom he would otherwise have fought. Nithard reports how Louis the German and Charles the Bold appealed to the *populus* present at their Strasbourg Oaths in 842, and how that *populus* – meaning the aristocracy – made peaceful relations between the two a prerequisite for its continued support. Charles was likewise left with no alternative course of action when in the following year he entered into *amicitia* with his aristocracy, who themselves had previously forged its alliance through similar bonds. By subjecting the king to their cooperative unity they sought to limit his opportunities for military operation.[57] Feasting and gift giving not only signalled relationships but also demonstrated them literally. Even the most concise references to feasts commonly include a brief reference to the sharing of roof, dish, table, or bed. For Strasbourg it was thus observed that "Una domus erat illis convivii et una somni [*They ate under single roof and shared a single bed*]."[58] Drafting friendship involved some display of intimate sociability.

Regino of Prüm observes how in 931 Henry I tended his extensive political network of *amicitiae* by exchanging gifts and attending *convivia* with the counts and bishops throughout Franconia.[59] Adam of Bremen extended the observation beyond the boundaries of civilization, ethnographically noting: "Denique, sicut mos est inter barbaros, ad confirmandum pactum federis opulentum convivium habetur vicissim per VIII dies [*As is customary among the barbarians, the Danes tie their agreements through*

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[54] *Gregorii episcopi Tvronensis libri historicarvm*, V, a. 17. Their meeting was likewise at a river, this time the "Stone Bridge."

[55] On these and other examples, see, e.g., Gerd Althoff, "Der frieden-, bündnis- und gemeinschaftstiftende Character des Mahles im früheren Mittelalter," *Essen und Trinken in Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, eds. Irmgard Bitsch et al. (Wiesbaden: VMA-Verlag, 1997); Gerd Alhoff, "Fest und Bündnis." On sworn friendship, see Wolfgang Fritze, "Die fränkische Schwurfreundschaft der Merowingerzeit."

[56] *Vita metrica s. Anselmi Lucensis episcopi auctore Rangerio Lucensi*, eds. Ernst Sackur et al., Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores 30:2 (Hanover: MGH, 1934), 1224.

[57] Cf. Gerd Althoff, *Verwandte, Freunde und Getreue*, 74-75.

[58] *Nithardi Historiarum Libri IIII*, ed. Ernst Müller, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum 44 (Hanover: MGH, 1907), III, a. 6. On the language of aristocratic and royal friendship, including further examples of sharing bed and board, see C. Stephen Jaeger, *Ennobling Love. In Search of a Lost Sensibility*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 11ff, 128-133, *passim*.

[59] *Reginonis abbatis Prumiensis chronicon cum continuatione Treverensi*, ed. Friedrich Kurze, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum 50 (Hanover: MGH, 1890), a.931.

splendid feasting lasting eight days]."[60] Comparable observations serve to underline the impression that formal exchange serves as a primary means of cementing bonds. Friends might thus regenerate and sustain their friendship by regular and recurring demonstrations of its importance, through invitations to feasts. As the anonymous Annals of Fulda spell out, the brothers Louis the German and Lothar I strove to secure their *familiaritas* in 847 by successive instances of hospitality and exchange of gifts: "Hic annus a bellis quievit, quem Hlutharius et Hludowicus mutua familiaritate transegerunt; nam uterque eorum ad domum alterius invitatus conviviis et muneribus regiis honoratus est [*This year was free of wars, and Louis and Lothar spent it in close company. Each was invited to the other's home for feasting and bestowing of royal gifts*]."[61] On a more general level, the cementing of bonds through convivial banqueting lay at the heart of guilds and various other lay communities and associations, much to the moralizing disapproval of authorities such as Hincmar of Reims and Alcuin of Tours, who deplored their culinary and alcoholic excesses. That said, however, clerical unions and confraternities frequently embraced communal banquets or meals as important social activities within their own communities.[62] Each of these bodies might further extend their ties with the outside world by inviting important guests to formal feasts, as when Conrad I was received at St Gall in 912 and emerged as a *frater conscriptus*.[63] But whatever the substance behind the moralizing judgments of clerics, these communal banquets hardly reached the level assigned by Tacitus to the feasts of his subjects: they feasted for the express purpose of debating political issues while drunk, thereby facilitating the emergence of appropriate decisions during subsequent periods of sobriety.[64]

The communal and social force of exchange is deeply rooted in Western civilization. Classical antiquity, on both its Greek and Roman sides, appreciated the sociopolitical function of hospitality and gift giving. Among the Romans, *convivium* was generally open-ended in terms of hospitality, although it was also specifically applied to feasting. While Roman *convivia* were mostly confined to aristocratic circles – huge and extravagant banquets were the exception rather than the rule among the Romans[65] –, the Greeks practiced feasts on a broader social and political scale. Consequently, classical Greece applied a richer yet less definitive terminology to its practice of hospitality and

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[60] *Magistri Adam Bremensis Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, ed. Bernhard Schmeidler, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scroptores rerum Germanicarum 2 (Hanover: MGH, 1917), III, a. 18.
[61] *Annales Fuldenses sive Annales regni Francorum orientalis*, ed. Friedrich Kurze, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum 7 (Hanover: MGH, 1891), a.847.
[62] See, e.g., Theodor Helmert, "Kalendae, Kalenden, Kalande," *Archiv für Dimplomatik, Schriftgeschichte, Siegel- und Wappenkunde* 26 (1980).
[63] Joachim Wollasch, "Kaiser und Könige als Brüder der Mönche. Zum Herrscherbild in liturgischen Handschriften des 9. bis 11. Jahrhunderts," *Deutsches Archiv* 40 (1984).
[64] *Cornelii Taciti Germania*, 46.
[65] On feasting in Roman antiquity, see Christoff Neumeister, *Das antike Rom. Ein literarischer Stadtführer* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1991), 170-183; cf. also Gerhard Binder, "Gastmahl. II. Rom," *Der Neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike* 4, eds. Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider (Stuttgart et al.: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 1998).

banquets.[66] Its *syssítion* and *sympósion* certainly represent a contrast to the feasting among political *optimates*, yet it could easily be winched up to the extended and "public" level it achieved in Sparta, where it promoted social and political equality as well as effectively circumscribing citizenship. As such, it embraced social, political, administrative, and economic functions at once, which in itself is a larger theme within the traditions of feasting and gift giving in Western societies overall. The blurring of "public" and "private" is equally detectable in the Greek tradition of *hestiátores*, particularly as it was practiced in Athens, where annually ten of its wealthiest citizens hosted a feast for the entire community.

The image of sociopolitical ties being contracted and upheld through the sharing of resources, food, drink, time, and company, seems to have been widespread in pre-modern Europe. Perhaps it reaches its heights within the confines of the Anglo-Saxon hall and its band of warriors.[67] There was an archetypical communal feast, however, instituted by Jesus Christ himself. There were many novel aspects to this, but his choice of meal as an expression of community was not one of them. It was a gesture easily comprehensible to his contemporaries and to the average medieval Christian. Before the individualization of Christianity in the later medieval and reformation eras introduced parallel church benches, and before reformed theology stripped the individual naked of most previously accepted means of claiming grace, salvation was an intimately social and communal enterprise.[68] That an everlasting feast stood at its center is hardly surprising.

III Field and Framework of Social Action

The growth of scholarship on medieval feasting and gift giving in the latter half of the twentieth century was primarily, although not exclusively, focused on the socio-integrative function of exchange. Considering the steady abandonment of traditional legal and constitutional analytical frameworks of power, this was logical: if pre-modern political culture was fundamentally made up of constellations of alliances and ties, antedating the structural rigidness of state apparatuses and the organizational sway of market economics, then what "glued" society together? Equally logical was the late 1950s adoption of analytical concepts of social action developed by anthropologists and ethnographers some

[66] On feasting in Greek antiquity, see Pauline Schmitt-Pantel, *La cité au banquet. Historie des repas publics dans les cités grecques*, Collection de l'Ecole française de Rome 157 (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1992); cf. also Pauline Schmitt-Pantel, "Gastmahl. II. Griechenland," *Der Neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike* 4, eds. Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider (Stuttgart et al.: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 1998).

[67] For an insightful discussion of *gebeorscipe*, *symbel*, and the festive image of the mead hall in Anglo-Saxon England, stressing its social and political dimensions, see Stephen Pollington, *The Mead Hall. The Feasting Tradition in Anglo-Saxon England* (Ely, Norfolk: Anglo-Saxon Books, 2003).

[68] Powerfully delineated in John Bossy, *Christianity in the West 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

decades earlier. Well into the 1990s, medieval gift giving was predominantly explored through social anthropological models of integrative exchange.

Although medieval historians have entered into dialogue with later anthropologists and sociologists who have engaged with this venerable theme – Lévi-Strauss, Turner, Geertz, Gouldner, Sahlins, Douglas, Graeber[69] –, their gaze has ultimately been fixed on the theoretical framework established by earlier canonists – Simmel (occasionally), Malinowski, and Mauss.[70] Malinowski's Kula ring has served to inspire scholars, but it is Mauss's Essai sur le don that has enjoyed scriptural status. Mauss argued, on basis of his analysis of the Northwest American potlatch and Melanesian gift giving practices, that gift giving as a reciprocal system of distribution and redistribution in archaic societies constituted a Durkheimian elemental principle. As such, it revolved around the principle of reciprocity, involving gift, reception, and counter-gift. As applied to medieval contexts, it established "gift," "gift economy," and "reciprocity" as central concepts, readily embodying primary agency within models of social integration. More recently, however, this analysis has been critically reassessed by historians, who have suggested that it embodies a rather once-sided perception of exchange as a virtually autonomous agent of integration, effortlessly applied, and objectively realized. Recent reassessment has endeavored not so much to deny the declarative and integrative functionality of exchange as to stress its framework of limitation, its subjectivity, and its competitive impulses. It plays assertion against cooperation, status against equality, aggression against harmony. The gift is no longer a passive stabilizer, but an intimately political and double-faced discourse.

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[69] Preoccupation with the social implications of exchange in later anthropology and sociology has been extensively examined. See, for example, Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté*, Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine, Psychologie et sociologie (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1949), transl. as *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, rev. ed., transl. J. H. Bell at al. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969); Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Alvin Ward Gouldner, *For Sociology. Renewal and Critique in Sociology Today* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), esp. 226-290; Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1972); Mary Douglas and Baron C. Ishergood, *The World of Goods. Toward an Anthropology of Consumption* (New York: Basic Books, 1979); David Graeber, *Toward an Anthropology of Value. The False Coin of Our Own Dreams* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), which offers valuable discussion of context. Although social cohesion and solidarity lie at the heart of the sociological traditions of Durkheim and Weber, neither scholar never developed explicit gift giving theories; a notable recent attempt to establish a dialogue between them is Aefke E. Komter, *Social Solidarity and the Gift* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[70] Georg Simmel, *Philosophie des Geldes* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot Verlag, 1900); for the Kula ring, see in particular Bronislaw Malinowski, "Kula; the Circulating Exchange of Valuables in the Archipelagoes of Eastern New Guinea," *Man* 20 (1920), and more fully Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the western Pacific. An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*, Studies in Economics and Political Science 65 (London: G. Routledge & Sons, 1922); Marcel Mauss, "Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques," *Année Sociologique* 1, Second Series (1923-1924), transl. as *The Gift. The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, transl. W. D. Halls (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990); on Mauss, see Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Introduction à l'oeuvre de Marcel Mauss* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950), transl. as *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, transl. Felicity Baker (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987).

The weight of Georges Duby's characterization of an early medieval "gift economy" carries the greatest gravitational force in early studies on the medieval gift. In Guerriers et paysans, its classic presentation, gift exchange rises from being merely central to socioeconomic activity to becoming the fundamental element of an entire socioeconomic system:

> Society as a whole was shot through with an infinitely varied network for circulating the wealth and services occasioned by what I have called "necessary generosity" (*les générosités nécessaries*): gifts of dependants to their protectors, of kinfolk to brides, of friends to party-givers, of magnates to kings, of kings to aristocrats, of all the rich to all the poor, and lastly of all mankind to the dead and to God. True, we are here dealing with exchanges, and there were plenty of them. But it is not a question of *trade*.[71]

The categorical opposites of giving and trading are thus seen to reflect fundamental differences between medieval and modern mentalities. To stress the point, Duby cites Mauss in support, indeed the only authority directly quoted in the chapter. Duby's interpretation of the early medieval economy as operating on the basis of regularized and *de facto* mandatory transfers of goods and services whose presentation and form nevertheless suggested voluntary social action (gifts, *eulogiae*), was clearly informed by the Maussian notion of reciprocity and the social implications of exchange. With society drawing "a considerable proportion of what was produced into the heavy traffic" of "necessary generosity," economic activity was channeled through the ultimately mental constructs of gift giving, thus prohibiting clear distinctions between economic, social, political, and cultural aspects of a societal totality. The gift economy is an encompassing societal type. The crucial link in the chain of circulation finally brought the mental implications of economic activity beyond the mundane matter of manifesting social and political relations – although these were important – and effectively beyond the grave; gifts flowing through kings were seen as flowing through "the natural mediator of the entire folk and the powers above," thus ensuring prosperity, fertility, harvest, and health. Closing the circle, the destruction of products through sacrifices recognized the dead as a major category of consumers.

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[71] Georges Duby, *Guerriers et paysans, VII-XII^e siècle. Premier essor de l'économie européenne*, Bibliothèque des histories (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), transl. as *The Early Growth of the European Economy. Warriors and Peasants from the Seventh to the Twelfth Century*, transl. Howard B. Clarke, World Economic History (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), 56. The explication of the gift economy is characteristically to be found under "Mental Attitudes" (48-72), specifically 48-57 ("Taking, Giving and Consecrating"); the quotations in the latter part of the paragraph are to 51. The argument for custom serving to transform gifts into obligatory payments in pre-modern society extends at least back to Bloch, cf. Marc Bloch, *La société féodale* 1. *La formation des liens de dépendance*, 2. *Les classes et le gouvernment des hommes*, L'évolution de l'humanité 34 (Paris: Michel, 1939-1940), transl. as *Feudal Society* 1. *The Growth of Ties of Dependence*, 2. *Social Classes and Political Organization*, transl. L. A. Manyon (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), 206.

In the 1980s and into the 1990s, the circulation of wealth through supernatural and sacral paths remained a major preoccupation of anthropologically informed scholarship in relation to gift giving.[72] Lay aristocratic donations of landed property to religious houses arguable represent a category of gift exchange unsurpassed in the medieval west, whether in terms of sheer value or socioeconomic and cultural breadth of implications. Studies of these matters on both sides of the Atlantic became properly receptive to the notion of gift economy and the supernatural consumer, though prominently led by American scholars working on tenth- through twelfth-century French material. Their worthy objective was to substitute general slogans of religious motivation with fuller explanations and analyses of the process in its totality, probing equally its socioeconomic and religiocultural mechanisms. Importantly, it strove to illuminate the medieval understanding, articulation, and conceptualization of the practice itself, by donors and receivers alike. The tone had already been set somewhat, without explicit application of anthropological models, by Philippe Jobert, arguing that from the mid seventh century onwards the Merovingian culture of donations *pro anima* effectively articulated almsgiving in terms of spiritual trade. Alms were traded on a give-and-take basis against salvation, and understood as gifts and counter-gifts.[73] Full and explicit application of the gift as a reciprocating mode of communication gratis Mauss, came, however, in Stephen D. White's influential Custom, Kinship, and Gifts to the Saints, a wide-ranging study of monastic donations in high medieval western France. White concluded that the symbiotic relations of monasteries and their communities of donors, cemented through the flow of property and spiritual functions, served as a mechanism for social integration that encompassed "economic, legal, moral, aesthetic, religious, mythological and socio-morphological" dimensions. It thereby constituted a total social phenomenon.[74] With Cluny as her point of departure, Barbara Rosenwein reached similar conclusions when analyzing aristocratic gifts to religious houses and their patron saints in the tenth and eleventh centuries. In her own phrase, aristocratic donations of landed property functioned as "social glue" by establishing intimate ties between the lay elite and the spiritual mediators of society.[75] The notion itself further resonates through comparable

[72] The best introduction to medieval gift giving scholarship, variously drawn on below, remains Arnoud-Jan A. Bijsterveld, "The Medieval Gift as Agent of Social Bonding and Political Power: A Comparative Approach," *Medieval Transformations. Texts, Power, and Gifts in Contexts*, eds. Esther Cohen and Mayke de Jong, Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions, Medieval and Early Modern Peoples 11 (Leiden et al.: Brill, 2001), expanded as "The Medieval Gift as Agent of Social Bonding and Power" with "Afterword: the Study of Gift Giving since the 1990s," Do ut des. See also Jürgen Hannig, "*Ars donandi*: Zur Ökonomie des Schenkens im früheren Mittelalter," *Armut, Liebe, Ehre*, ed. Richard von Dülmen, Studien zur historichen Kulturforschung 1 (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1988).

[73] Philippe Jobert, *La notion de donation. Convergences, 630-750*, Publications de l'Université de Dijon 49 (Paris: Les Belles lettres, 1977).

[74] Stephen D. White, *Custom, Kinship, and Gifts to Saints. The* Laudatio Parentum *in Western France, 1050-1150*, Studies in Legal History (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), quoted to 4.

[75] Barbara Rosenwein, *To be the Neighbor of St Peter. The Social Meaning of Cluny's Property, 909-1049* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989). Important and similarly oriented as Rosenwein and White are Constance Brittain Bouchard, *Sword, Miter, and Cloister. Nobility and the Church in Burgundy, 980-1198*

studies of medieval *memoria* culture, the commemoration of the dead through prayer and liturgical formalities. As Patrick Geary and others have taught us, the process of exchange and communication between the secular and the sacred, especially between dynastic families and individual monasteries, were of the greatest importance in forging, maintaining, and reconstructing group identity, not least political identity.[76] As is the general tendency with gifts, landed property rarely washed off the collective identity of its previous owners.[77]

The identification of donations and spiritual services as wheels in a sociopolitical machine, and thereby assigning to the early medieval monastery fundamental social and politicocultural functions, may in part be attributable to the socioeconomic inflection of ecclesiastical history in the later twentieth century.[78] Leading authorities, such as Richard Southern, would ultimately interpret the forms and functions of medieval ecclesiastical institutions, and the outlook of medieval Christendom in general, in terms of broader socioeconomic developments and their profoundly contextualizing impacts.[79] Perhaps the most typical example, an important item on every graduate student's reading list, is Lester K. Little's application of the gift economy as an explanatory framework around his socioeconomic interpretation of urban religious movements. Little argues that the rise and function of mendicant orders can best be understood as the moral reaction of a guilt-ridden class of urban merchants, brought about by the accelerated transition from a "gift

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(Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987) and Constance Brittain Bouchard, *Holy Entrepreneurs. Cistercians, Knights, and Economic Exchange in Twelfth-Century Burgundy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[76] Patrick J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance. Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), esp. 23-80; Patrick J. Geary, "Échanges et relations entre les vivants et les morts dans la société du haut moyen age," *Droit et cultures* 12 (1986), transl. and rev. as "Exchange and Interaction between the Living and the Dead in Early Medieval Society," *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Megan McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints. Prayer for the Dead in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); on *memoria* and social identity, see primarily Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Memoria und Memorialüberlieferung im früheren Mittlealter," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 10 (1975); Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Memoria und Memorialbild," *Memoria. Der geschichtliche Zeugniswert des liturgischen Gedenkens im Mittelalter*, eds. Karl Schmid and Joachim Wollasch, Münsterische Mittelalter-Schriften 48 (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1984); Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Memoria und Gesellschaft und in der Kultur des Mittelalters," *Modernes Mittelalter. Neue Bilder einer populären Epoche*, ed. Joachim Heinzle (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1994); Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Memoria als Kultur," *Memoria als Kultur*, ed. Otto Gerhard Oexle, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 121 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995).

[77] On the "cultural biography" and "historical identity" of objects, see Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Annette B. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions. The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); cf. also Annette B. Weiner, "Inalienable Wealth," *American Ethnologist* 12 (1985).

[78] Social determination of religious manifestations is strongly associated with the scholarship of Marie-Dominique Chenu; see Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century. Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*, transl. Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968). On the earlier input by Herbert Grundmann, and its Italian responsiveness, see *Debating the Middle Ages*, 302-303.

[79] See Richard W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, The Pelican History of the Church 2 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970).

economy" to a "profit economy."[80] Summarizing the essential characteristics of the gift economy, he presents it unmistakably as a societal type:

> In a gift economy, goods and services are exchanged without having specific, calculated values assigned to them. Prestige, power, honour, and wealth are all expressed in the spontaneous giving of gifts; and more than just expressed: these attributes are attained and maintained through largess. The act of giving is more important than the thing given. However, this act is less free than the connotation of "giving" suggests, because one gift obliges the recipient to make a counter-gift.

Within the historical context of Europe, Duby and Little identified the symbolic and social uses of wealth in the form of gifts as primarily Germanic in character, with treasure burying as a striking example. Supposedly, these peculiarly Germanic traits were exposed to Roman and Christian currents between the eighth and eleventh centuries, diverting permanent storage of wealth from the ground to the monastery. Its antithesis is the profit economy, developing in the central Middle Ages and marking the transition from high medieval to (early) modern. Little describes its urbanization, growing social stratification, specialization, and commercialization in Durkheimian terms – a transition from "mechanical" to "organic" solidarity. Coinciding with Marc Bloch's shift from the first "feudal age" to the second, it saw minting of coins instead of treasure burying, thawing of wealth previously frozen in monastic depositories, growing mobility of people and products, the rise of banking and monetary modes of commercial exchange, and the birth of *homo oeconomicus*:

> It marked the emergence of a wholly different attitude, one that calculated values to see whether any particular activity or transaction would be profitable. It marked the promotion of commerce and industry from their status as marginal activities to the level of key elements in European economic life. Finally, it marked the recognition of money as tool instead of as treasure.

In sum, it marked the end of exchange as central social force.

In addition to citing Mauss, Malinowski, and Duby, Little drew on the work of the British historian and numismatist Philip Grierson. Grieson initially introduced Mauss into the dialogue of medievalists in his classic 1959 article on dark age commerce.[81] Its larger context was the debate between formalists and substantivists then prominent within economic anthropology. It turned on the question of whether economy as system should ultimately be interpreted in terms of profit motives and market forces, or whether non-commercial modes of exchange demanded a separate and principally different analytical

[80] Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 3-18 for characteristics and contrasts of gift economy and profit economy, and *passim*; quotations in the paragraph are to 4 and 18, respectively.

[81] Philip Grierson, "Commerce in the Dark Ages: A Critique of the Evidence," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series 9 (1959).

framework. The latter and substantivist position was most robustly argued by Hungarian political economist Karl Polanyi, articulating pre-modern economics thoroughly embedded in society and culture.[82] To comparable effect, Grierson applied Mauss in stressing the distinction between commercial exchange of commodities, on the one hand, in which the commodity exchanged holds central position while the social relations of seller and buyer are of little or no relevance – the exchange is essentially for profit –, and non-commercial exchange of objects, on the other hand, in which the calculated value of the object or service exchanged is at best of only marginal relevance – the exchange is essentially for articulating social relations or power. Polanyi relied on similar conceptual separation when arguing for a non-market economics of "redistribution," in which social relations and prestige were the stuff of substance.[83] In this sense, the gift economy is the legitimate offspring of economic substantivism.[84] It supplies the background to the single most influential contribution to the study of gift giving in medieval Scandinavia, Aaron Gurevich's "Wealth and Gift-Bestowal" from 1968.[85]

Gurevich's application of Mauss and Malinowski to Viking Age gift giving, and his substantivist approach to exchange as means of social communication, put him at the forefront of anthropologically inspired medievalists, inside and outside the field of medieval Scandinavian studies. Brief but crisply argued, the study still makes a rich and rewarding read. Although Gurevich drew on Vilhelm Peter Grønbech, who more than half a century earlier had noted the social implications of gift exchange among medieval Scandinavians, his emphases and anthropological positioning were all his own.[86] The crux of his argument is that gift giving ultimately operated within a religio-psychological mental framework; that in the absence of modern concepts of property, and operating within the cosmic notion of the inseparability of man, nature, and the supernatural, the transfer of objects was seen to be "deeply affected by various phenomena of a magic,

[82] Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation. The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1944). On the formalist-substantivist debate in general, see David Graeber, *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value*, 1-12, esp. 9-12.

[83] On a more limited or micro level, Polanyi identified the reciprocal economics of gifts (particularly between social peers) and the economic unit of the household.

[84] The term itself has been used flexibly in reference to an alleged pre-modern societal type or more generally to the social and mental implications of gift exchange as culturally separate from those commercial transactions, pre-modern or modern, that did or did not co-exist with market economics. The sociology of the modern gift has thus been pursued in the context of ideas relating to the gift economy, as for example in David J. Cheal, *The Gift Economy* (London: Routledge, 1988). Commercialization and industrialization have commonly been seen to generate a peculiarly modern separation of gifts and commodities, i.e. a private gift economy and a public market economy, although the boundaries are often blurred. See, in particular, Chris A. Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities*, Studies in Political Economy (London: Academic Press, 1982).

[85] Aaron Gurevich, "Wealth and Gift-Bestowal among the Ancient Scandinavians," *Scandinavica* 7:1 (1968).

[86] See Vilhelm Peter Grønbech, *Vor folkeæt i oldtiden* 1. *Lykkemand og niding*, 2. *Midgård og menneskelivet*, 3. *Hellighed og helligdom*, 4. *Menneskelivet og guderne* (Copenhagen: V. Pios Boghandel, 1909-1912). Neither Grønbech's nor Johan Hovstad's early attention to the sociopolitical elements of friendship and gifts stimulated much response. Johan Hovstad, *Mannen og samfunnet. Studiar i norrøn etikk* (Oslo: Samlaget, 1943). Cf. Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Den vennlige vikingen*, 18-19.

religious and ethical nature."[87] It generated obligations from the receiver, primarily through the gift's quasi-magical and religiopsychological inalienability: luck, prosperity, and the shadow of the giver's persona were felt to be shared in what Gurevich termed the "religious, magical fetishization of social links." Apart from framing the loyalty of retainers to leaders, it triggered the social mechanism of gift-bestowal and largesse, generating the bonds of society. The action unfolds in similar terrain to that explored by Duby, where a culture of treasure burying is subject to the pre-modern logic of symbolic, social, and religiosupernatural principles of exchange, and where profit-economic and material yardsticks are absent. It was, Gurevich claims, through feasting and gift giving "that the socio-psychological unity of social groups was positively and patently established".

The argument requires something of a leap of faith from the modern reader. For one thing, Gurevich was seeking to analyze not pre-modern practices of exchange and social action, but quite explicitly and decisively the Germanic and *pre-Christian* mentality. The attempt to export its principles across ages and cultures, for example into twelfth- and thirteenth century Iceland, immediately raises warning flags. It likewise runs into serious text-critical problems (though, in fairness, these would not have seemed as significant in the 1960s as they may today) in its carefree application of thirteenth-century material to the reconstruction of ninth- and tenth-century pagan sentiments and psychological dispositions. Even further, it extrapolates generally from a highly selective set of examples, drawn from very limited range of sources. Yet, the presentation is full of insights and subtle observations. He thus specifically notes the double nature of reciprocity, its potential for offence and aggression, if only to argue for its ultimately integrative function. At the bottom of it all lay Gurevich's conviction that gift exchange represented a fundamental means of tying society together.

In recent years, the integrative functions of exchange have not so much been rejected as recast. Much of it has to do with a reassessment of whether the gift economy as an encompassing phenomenon stands empirical scrutiny, and whether the sociopolitical implications of exchange necessarily configure extensive socioeconomic mechanisms to be thought of as a societal type. The latter point is particularly pronounced within the field of political ritual, the natural habitat of feasting and gift giving. Studies on pre-modern political ritual and demonstrative modes of sociopolitical communication have traditionally engaged with feasting and gift giving without much concern for or conviction in respect of their allegedly extensive economic functions, quite apart from their configuration at the level of an economic system. As a field *per se*, political ritual has traditionally, and continues to be, pursued with particular distinction within German academia, in later years most prominently under the leadership of Gerd Althoff.[88] Its

[87] Aaron Gurevich, "Wealth and Gift-Bestowal among the Ancient Scandinavians," 129. The two remaining quotations in the paragraph are to 136 and 139, respectively.

[88] Althoff's core readings include Gerd Althoff, *Die Macht der Rituale. Symbolik und Herrschaft im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2003); Gerd Althoff, *Amicitiae und Pacta*; Gerd Althoff, *Verwandte, Freunde und Getreue*; Gerd Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter. Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997). There were early and powerful voices among Anglophone scholars as well: see, for example, Geoffrey Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor.*

preoccupation with pre-state modes of political communication and its framework of cultural norms and "rules of the game," *Spielregeln*, has focused predominantly on king, court, and aristocracy, while also appreciating the wider social significance of ritual behavior. For the most part, it appears immune to the possibly dwindling worth of the gift economy as an encompassing type. Critical assessment of the "ritual school" has focused rather on its functionalist tendencies, and its allegedly mistaken tendency to reify rituals to the level of autonomous agents or objective structures.[89]

Regardless of adherence to or rejection of a proper gift economy, there seems general agreement that modernization, primarily in the form of the emergence of the state and the market, fundamentally transformed the original and pre-modern context of feasts and gifts. The socioeconomic germination of the later eleventh and twelfth centuries routinely marks an analytic watershed for students of donations, commonly operating within implicit or explicit frameworks of gift economy versus profit economy.[90] For sociopolitically and culturally focused students of ritual, conflict management, and demonstrative modes of communicating power, the high and late medieval transformation of political and governmental structures marks the shift.[91]

Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992). For a comprehensive overview offering extensive bibliography (Carl Schmitt, Percy Ernst Schramm, Eberhard Straub, Ernst Kantorowicz, Peter Brown, Richard Trexler, etc.), see Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual. Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 161-261, esp. 203ff.

[89] See primarily Philippe Buc's sharp, witty, erudite, and overstated *The Dangers of Ritual* and Geoffrey Koziol's angry response: Geoffrey Koziol, "The dangers of polemic: Is ritual still an interesting topic of historical study?" *Early Medieval Europe* 11:4 (2002); replied with Philippe Buc, "The monster and the critics: a ritual reply," *Early Medieval Europe* 15:4 (2007).

[90] Summarized in Arnoud-Jan A. Bijsterveld, "The Medieval Gift as Agent of Social Bonding and Power," 22-27, 32-39.

[91] Despite fundamental differences in terms of modern and medieval mentalities, and social and political realities, the medieval alterity should not be overstated or exaggerated. Emphasizing the social centrality of exchange in no way demands the total removal from the stage of institutions and administrative apparatuses. It must also be acknowledged that the social implications of exchange and gestures are obviously not alien to modern society. The issue is variously addressed in the literature already cited, but additional and important items include, e.g., William Ian Miller, "Requiting the Unwanted Gift," *Humiliation. And Other Essays in Honor, Social Discomfort, and Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Jonathan Parry, "*The Gift*, the Indian Gift, and the 'Indian Gift,'" *Man* 21 (1986); The "spirit" of gifts and objects is explored in Maurice Godelier, *L'Énigme du don* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1996), transl. as *The Enigma of the Gift*, transl. Nora Scott (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999); also influential has been Lewis Hyde, *The Gift. Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (New York: Random House, 1983). Timothy Reuter's call for caution should also be noted: "the study of the archaic and ritualised elements of pre-Gregorian culture may lead to an implicit misreading of the post-Gregorian world… The attractive modernity of a John of Salisbury or an Heloise, the apparent rationality and secularity of a Roger II or Henry II, the introspectiveness and religious sensibility of an Anselm of Canterbury or a Bernard of Clairvaux can all seduce us into seeing them as having been much closer to us than they actually were. The alterity of European culture in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, both sacred and secular, is badly in need of rediscovery and re-emphasis." Timothy Reuter, "Pre-Gregorian Mentalities," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 45 (1994), rpt. in Timothy Reuter, *Medieval Polities and Modern Mentalities*, ed. Janet L. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 99.

In his recent reevaluation of Merovingian and Carolingian gift giving practices and its scholarship, Florin Curta took the logical step of combining the two aspects of criticism, probing both its conventional depiction of gift economy and its emphasis on the integrative functionality of gifts as ritualized action.[92] In his wide-ranging analysis of gift giving practices between *c*. 500 and *c*. 900, though excluding charitable and diplomatic gifts to and from the Frankish kings, Curta asks whether they formed "a constellation of practices with sufficient societal impact to justify the phrase 'gift economy'?"[93] The answer is bluntly negative.[94] His stated aim and argument is

> to circumscribe the area of social action in which gift giving practices were recurrent and to shift the emphasis from what has too often been viewed as their exclusively social 'use' to the use various actors made of gifts in specific situations, and thus to reevaluate gift giving as a political phenomenon, instead of an economic strategy for maintaining social stability.

Consequently, gift giving should "be treated as a category of power and as a political strategy." We are effectively up against a tyranny of construct, since the "stronger the idea of an early-medieval 'gift economy,' the greater the emphasis on mutuality." The warning seems sound, but it remains questionable as to whether absolving the gift from its gift economy serves also to absolve it completely from the social uses of bonding. Indeed, there appears little room for combination or readjustment in Curta's terms:

> Gift giving was not about social bonds or glue; it was a form of surrogate warfare in which assertive aristocrats engaged when competing with each other for power. As a consequence, gifts circulated within a restricted circle of individuals in Merovingian and Carolingian societies; gift giving was not part of a general production and distribution network.

Therefore it must be acknowledged that

> Merovingian and Carolingian gift giving was primarily about politics, not economics, although the two spheres of social activity were certainly not

[92] Florin Curta, "Merovingian and Carolingian Gift Giving," *Speculum* 81:3 (2006). Changing perspectives are also detected in Lorenz Sebastian Benkmann, "Schenken als historisches Phänomen. Gewandelte Sichtsweisen zum mittelalterlichen Schenken im Gang der Forschung," *Moderne Mediävistik. Stand und Perspektiven der Mittelalterforschung*, ed. Hans-Werner Goetz (Darmstadt: Primus, 1999).

[93] Florin Curta, "Merovingian and Carolingian Gift Giving," 677. The remaining quotations are to 677 and 698-699.

[94] As Chris Wickham stresses in his recent and massive socioeconomically oriented treatment of the early medieval Mediterranean, gift and market economies must each be treated as ideal types rather than historical realities; they are rarely if ever realized in pure form, and much pre-modern economic activity encompasses both elements to varying degrees. Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages. Europe and the Mediterranean 400-800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 694-697. On blurred boundaries between theoretically separate modes of exchange, see, e.g., Richard Hodges, *Primitive and Peasant Markets*, New Perspectives on the Past (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988).

> completely separate. Merovingian and Carolingian Francia had no gift economy, but Merovingian and Carolingian political economy can only be understood in terms of gift-giving practices that often took a public, almost ceremonial form.

There is much to learn from Curta's repositioning, if not its ultimatum between the political and the social, and the aggressive and the integrative. Its rejection of the gift economy as a major interpretive framework and its ultimately political framework of exchange prove recurring themes throughout our study.

Which brings us back to Mauss and some concluding historiographical remarks. Curta discusses larger themes currently prominent within exchange theory, notably the management of meaning inherent to the act of exchange. Growing interest in the competitive and aggressive nature of exchange, its political framework of struggle for power and prestige, and its socially and politically destabilizing potential, has directed the focus onto its discursive subjectivity. The theme itself is not entirely novel. By the 1980s, William Ian Miller had shown how the management of meaning was central to the practice of exchange in the Icelandic saga, analyzing how the format of exchange was ultimately subjective, negotiable, and ideological.[95] The overall concern, aimed against the reification of exchange as structures vis-à-vis discourse, is sharply put by Gadi Algazi in his introduction to a recent and seminal volume addressing the overall topic:

> The study of gift-giving in premodern European societies has all too often been associated with the tendency to artificially archaize their image. But gifts are not the secret key leading us back to an archaic world of shared meanings and pre-established harmony. … Instead of presuming to decree in advance what such transactions "really" were by excluding those which do not conform to an ideal image of The gift or subsuming them prematurely under some fixed general scheme of 'The Gift,' it is the process of the *management of meaning* involved in such processes that we have sought to explore.[96]

The anthropological concept of the gift, the Maussian Gift in its conventional sense, and its applicability to Western society in general and medieval culture of bonds in particular, is now found to be suspect.[97] The issue is less with Mauss himself, however, than with the way in which his theoretical framework has been bent to the needs of historians. Medievalists have overwhelmingly emphasized the integrative mechanism of gift exchange, and quoted Mauss in support of that position, despite Mauss himself having firmly rooted his understanding of its reciprocal principles within the parameters of the

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[95] William Ian Miller, "Gift, Sale, Payment, Raid: Case Studies in the Negotiation and Classification of Exchange in Medieval Iceland," *Speculum* 61 (1986), cf. chapter three of *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*.
[96] Gadi Algazi, "Introduction: Doing Things with Gifts," *Negotiating the Gift. Premodern Figurations of Exchange*, eds. Gadi Algazi et al., Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 188 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 12.
[97] See in particular Patrick J. Geary, "Gift Exchange and Social Science Modeling: The Limitations of a Construct," *Negotiating the Gift*; Beate Wagner-Hasel, "Egoistic Exchange and Altruistic Gift: On the Roots of Marcel Mauss's Theory of the Gift," *Negotiating the Gift*.

potlatch, the venue of aggressive social and political contest. For sure, it facilitated social ties through reciprocity, but ultimately it never sought a balanced relationship between equals. Its principal objectives were to ensure the everlasting indebtedness and humiliation of the receiver. The lesson is simple: the social implication of exchange must always be carefully read against its background of power and assertion. With or without Mauss, that is exactly what the Icelandic saga suggests for medieval Iceland.

IV Preliminary Note on Layout

The stated double aim of the present study, set out at the very outset of the discussion, leads now to three further chapters in two separate parts. The Icelandic saga, it must be admitted, proves itself to be an exceedingly malleable resource when assigned the task of illuminating the ideology and practice of gift exchange within the culture that produced it and consumed it. For the most part, it speaks the same language throughout and across traditional genres.

Framing the study chronologically to the later twelfth and thirteenth century is both logical and conventional. It roughly circumscribes the period of contemporary sagas, which places Sturlunga saga at the forefront of action. However, there is a conscious effort to draw on the overall saga corpus, especially the kings' sagas and the sagas of Icelanders, in addition to Sturlunga. The king's sagas inform the bulkiest chapter of the three, literally set apart on its own and effectively serving as ballast for the overall dissertation. It incorporates the weightiest part of the study's methodological considerations of source application, as well as hammering out its larger framework of interpretation. The final part, compromising chapters three and four, rests heavily on its shoulders. Their treatment is mostly thematic, which sometimes necessitates plowing the same field twice but hopefully in order to reap a greater harvest in the end. Discussion of individual sources, their limitations and historiographical background, have not been separated from their logical locations throughout the study. They appear as they become pertinent.

PART TWO

Power and Hospitality in the Kings' Sagas

Chapter 2

I Political Culture and the Kings' Sagas

Adam of Bremen famously noted in his late eleventh-century chronicle on the archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen, as a peculiar phenomenon, that Icelanders recognized no king other than the law,[1] a state of affairs that the papal legate Cardinal William of Sabina no less famously singled out as an unnatural state of affairs (*ósannligt*) when

[1] "Apud illos non est rex, nisi tantum lex [*There is no king among them, only law*]." The statement stands in a scholion to Adam's interpretation of the Icelandic bishops and their quasi-royal status: "Episcopum suum habent pro rege; ad illius nutum respicit omis populus; quicquid ex Deo, ex scripturis, ex consuetudine aliorum gentium ille constituit, hoc pro lege habent [*They hold their bishop as king; the people all respect his will; what he upholds has the force of law, regardless of whether it is derived from God, from scripture, or the customs of other people*]." *Magistri Adam Bremensis Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, ed. Bernhard Schmeidler, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scroptores rerum Germanicarum 2 (Hanover: MGH, 1917), IV, a. 35. Neither did lack of formal royal status prevent Haukdælir and Oddaverjar from promoting certain of their most prominent members to such status in all but name (particularly Bishop Gissur Ísleifsson and Jón Loftsson), though more in retrospect than during their actual lifetime, cf. Ármann Jakobsson, *Í leit að konungi. Konungsmynd íslenskra konungasagna* (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 1997), 290-300. On the Haukdælir and Oddaverjar "clique" and their handling of episcopal power, see Ármann Jakobsson, "Byskupskjör á Íslandi: stjórnmálaviðhorf byskupasagna og Sturlungu," *Studia theologica islandica* 14 (2000). The Oddaverjar, royal identity, and literary production are discussed in, e.g., Einar Ól. Sveinsson, "Nafngiftir Oddaverja," *Bidrag till nordisk filologi tillägnade Emil Olson den 9. juni 1936* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerups Förlag, 1936); Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Sagnaritun Oddaverja. Nokkrar athuganir*, Studia Islandica 1 (Reykjavík: Heimspekideild Háskóla Íslands, 1937); Bjarni Guðnason, *Um Skjöldungasögu* (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1963), 243-283, esp. 272.

attending the coronation of King Hákon gamli in 1247.[2] Things would change soon enough. Whatever the possible causal connection, the prolific interest of Icelandic writers in producing sagas about Norse kings faded out at much the same time as – or even a bit before[3] – they acquired one. The richest narratives on Scandinavian kings belong to kingless Iceland.

Norse kings and kingdoms stood at the center of learned and literate Icelandic culture from its very stirrings in the early twelfth century:[4] kings were central to the early *auctores* Sæmundur and Ari fróði, material was being developed on the two Ólafur figures, stemming ultimately from the eleventh century, and Eiríkur Oddsson's now lost Hryggjarstykki, which has been dubbed the "first saga," is reported by the creators of Morkinskinna and Heimskringla to have told of King Haraldur gilli and his sons, Magnús blindi and Sigurður slembir. Although the scope and nature of Sæmundur's, Ari's, and Eiríkur's treatments remain largely obscure it is nevertheless evident that they did not approach the level of the sagas produced towards the end of the twelfth century and the beginning of the next.[5] Rich narratives on kings – the kings' sagas proper – appeared over

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[2] "hann kallaði þat ósannligt, at land þat þjónaði eigi undir einhvern konung sem öll önnur í veröldunni [*he felt it was an unnatural state of affairs that this land served no king whereas all others in the world did*]." *Hakonar saga. Icelandic Sagas and Other Historical Documents Relating to the Settlements and Descents of the Northmen on the British Isles* 2, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon (London: Eyre and Spottiswood, 1887), 252.

[3] With Heimskringla in existence by around 1230 (1241 *terminus ante quem*) there was little activity in the field, in terms of original sagas; Knýtlinga saga most probably closes the sequence while Sturla Þórðarson was yet to produce his authorized accounts of Hákon gamli and Magnús lagabætir. While it is quite possible that Knýtlinga saga was put together as late as 1300, Peter Erasmus Müller convincingly if inconclusively assigned it to Ólafur hvítaskáld, who, according to annals, died in 1259. This suggested authorship was later confirmed and advanced by Sigurður Nordal and Bjarni Guðnason, among others. Peter Erasmus Müller, *Sagabibliothek med Anmærkinger og indledende Afhandlinger* 3 (Copenhagen: I. F. Schultz, 1820), 123ff.; Sigurður Nordal, "Sagalitteraturen," *Nordisk kultur* 8. *B. Litteraturhistorie*. *B. Norge og Island*, ed. Sigurður Nordal (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1952), 226; Bjarni Guðnason, "Formáli," *Danakonunga sǫgur*, Íslenzk fornrit 35 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1982), clxxix-clxxxiv. *Islandske Annaler indtil 1578*, ed. Gustav Storm, Det norske historiske Kildeskriftfonds Skrifter 21 (Oslo: Grøndahl og Søns Bogtrykkeri, 1888), 27 (*Annales Reseniani*), 67 (*Henrik Høyers Annaler*), 134 (*Annales regii*), 192 (*Skálholts-Annaler*), 330 (*Gottskalks Annaler*), 382 (*Flatø-annaler*).

[4] This need seem neither peculiar nor surprising, cf. Diana Whaley, "A useful past: historical writing in medieval Iceland," *Old Icelandic Literature and Society*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), esp. 179-182.

[5] Enormous scholarly energy has been devoted to the riddle of Sæmundur and Ari; for an overview of the kings' sagas, with further citations, see Theodore M. Andersson, "The Kings' Sagas (*Konungasögur*)," *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature. A Critical Guide*, eds. Carol J. Clover et al., Islandica 45 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 1985), 198-211; Ármann Jakobsson, *Í leit að konungi*, 16-47. Crucial discussions of Ari and Sæmundur include those by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Om de norske kongers sagaer*, Skrifter utgitt av Det Norske videnskaps-akademi i Oslo 2, Hist.-filos. klasse 1936:4 (Oslo: J. Dybwad, 1937), 30-47; Björn Sigfússon, *Um Íslendingabók* (Reykjavík: Víkingsprent, 1944), 11-19; Gabriel Turville-Petre, *Origins of Icelandic Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1953), 81-87, 93-100; Svend Ellehøj, *Studier over den ældste norrøne historieskrivning*, Bibliotheca Arnamagnaeana 26 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1965), 15-25, 28-35, 47-53; Sverrir Tómasson, "Hvað skrifaði Sæmundur fróði? Konunga ævi eða veraldarsögu?" *Í garði Sæmundar fróða. Fyrirlestrar frá ráðstefnu í Þjóðminjasafni 20.maí 2006*, eds. Gunnar Harðarson et al. (Reykjavík: Hugvísindastofnun Háskóla Íslands, 2008), 47-59. On Hryggjarstykki, see in particular Bjarni Guðnason, *Fyrsta sagan*, Studia Islandica 37 (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1978).

a remarkably narrow timeframe; perhaps only some fifty years passed between their emergence around 1180 and the creation of Heimskringla around 1230.[6] The early works in this burst of literary activity is remarkable for its stylistic, geographical, and chronological variety and breadth: Gunnlaugur Leifsson and Oddur Snorrason at Þingeyrar drew on hagiographic traditions for their sagas dealing with Ólafur Tryggvason, though the author of the Oldest Saga of Ólafur helgi may have been less so inclined,[7] Sverris saga and Orkneyinga saga touch on contemporary history,[8] Skjöldunga saga and Jómsvíkinga saga have the legendary aura of *fornaldarsögur* about them,[9] and Færeyinga saga is essentially a

[6] The only post-Heimskringla works are probably Knýtlinga saga and Sturla Þórðarson's accounts, cf. note 3.

[7] Gunnlaugur and Oddur originally wrote in Latin, Gunnlaugur around 1200 but Oddur a bit earlier; Gunnlaugur's work is lost but that by Oddur survives in translations. The traditions relating to Ólafur Tryggvason have recently been thoroughly reviewed, with discussion of previous scholarship, in two studies: Sveinbjörn Rafnsson, *Ólafs sögur Tryggvasonar. Um gerðir þeirra, heimildir og höfunda* (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 2005); Ólafur Halldórsson, "Formáli," Íslenzk fornrit 25 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2006), lxxx-clxxxiv. The so-called Oldest saga of Ólafur helgi, preserved only in fragments, was believed to represent a preliminary hagiographic stage of the saga's development until Jonna Louis-Jensen argued in 1970, to the general satisfaction of later scholars, that the last two of the surviving eight fragments belong not to the Oldest saga but to a twelfth-century miracle collection on Ólafur helgi. This conclusion effectively renders unsustainable the traditional scheme of saga development, most powerfully upheld by Sigurður Nordal; whereas Sigurður emphasized an organic development of the medieval saga from its hagiographic origins to the secularized artistry of Snorri Sturluson (and later to its decline under continental literary influence), with the Oldest saga as a crucial stage in that development, the saga is now regarded as both younger and more secular. There are no longer valid arguments for a date earlier than around 1200 or for an overriding hagiographic framework. Most recent scholarship has broken decisively from the older tradition of the linear development of the saga and now favours a much more open, experimental, and non-deterministic developmental model. Jonna Louis-Jensen, "'Syvende og ottende brudstykke': Fragmentet AM 325 IVa 4to," *Opuscula* 4, Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana 30 (1970); see also Jónas Kristjánsson, *Um Fóstbræðrasögu*, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, Rit 1 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1972), 156-163. Sigurður specifically dealt with the sagas of Ólafur helgi in Sigurður Nordal, *Om Olaf den helliges saga. En kritisk undersøgelse* (Copenhagen: Gad, 1914); his grand vision of literary development is most fully presented in Sigurður Nordal, "Sagalitteraturen." For an overview emphasizing diversity in style and subject matter, see Theodore M. Andersson, "The Kings' Sagas (*Konungasögur*)," 212-216. For a recent and masterful interpretation of the emergence and development of the medieval Icelandic saga, see Theodore M. Andersson, *The Growth of the Medieval Icelandic Sagas (1180-1280)* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

[8] Sverris saga stems from Karl Jónsson's Grýla, the start of whose composition is generally assigned by scholars to 1185-1186, but the extent of the saga's dependence on that work, and the identity of who was responsible for the completion of the saga, are matters that are still much debated. The saga appears, nevertheless, to be closely associated with Karl, who died in 1212 or 1213. For a recent overview, see Þorleifur Hauksson, "Formáli," Íslenzk fornrit 30 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2007), v-xc, esp. xxii-xxiv, liii-lxiv. See further note 20. Orkneyinga saga is preserved in a mid-thirteenth-century revised version (certainly post-Heimskringla), scattered among the sagas of King Ólafur Tryggvason and King Ólafur helgi in Flateyjarbók, with variously named precursors (Jarla saga or sögur) extending back to around 1200, perhaps even earlier. This leaves open the question of whether reference should be made to different versions of a single saga or to separate sagas. An early date is advocated by Finnbogi Guðmundsson, "Formáli," Íslenzk fornrit 34 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1965), vii-ix, xc-cviii. Skepticism about Orkneyinga saga mirroring Jarla sögur has been voiced, e.g., by Sverrir Tómasson, "Veraldleg sagnaritun 1120-1400. 5. Konungasögur," *Íslensk bókmenntasaga* 1, ed. Vésteinn Ólason (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1992), 389-390.

[9] Bjarni Guðnason, the foremost student and editorial reconstructor of Skjöldunga saga, assigned the work to Páll Jónsson, bishop in Skálholt 1195-1211, a suggestion that has enjoyed widespread acceptance. For

work of secular provincial history.[10] Among early works are the Norwegian Latin synoptics, Theodoricus's Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium and Historia Norwegiae, and the vernacular Ágrip.[11] A new stage was reached, however, with Morkinskinna, Fagurskinna, and Heimskringla, compendia produced perhaps in just a decade between 1220 and 1230 that effectively established a Norwegian royal history from its inception up to King Sverrir's ascendency in 1177.[12] With Morkinskinna and Heimskringla in particular, though also to a considerable extent with Fagurskinna, an unprecedented breadth and depth is achieved with regard to the depiction of the dynamics of the political culture in which their stories are set; the modes and mentality of political action become examinable and approachable. The political culture of the Norwegian kings as represented in these sagas revolves around giving and getting, and *veizlur* duly take their place at the heart of such narratives.

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overall discussion of the saga, its author, the legendary characteristics it may have acquired from European literary models, and the role of Danish royal-historical material in early Iceland, see Bjarni Guðnason, *Um Skjöldungasögu*; cf. also Bjarni Guðnason, "Formáli." Jómsvíkinga saga dates from around 1200 and no later than 1230, cf. Ólafur Halldórsson, "Jómsvíkinga saga," *Medieval Scandinavia. An Encyclopedia*, ed. Phillip Pulsiano, Garland Encyclopedias of the Middle Ages 1, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities 934 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 343-344.

[10] As with Orkneyinga saga, Færeyinga saga is to be found distributed among the Ólafs saga material in Flateyjarbók, but it was originally written within the first two decades of the thirteenth century, cf. Ólafur Halldórsson, "Formáli," vii-lxxx, esp. vii-viii, lxxi-lxxvi. Orkneyinga saga, Færeyinga saga, and Jómsvíkinga saga are difficult to categorise within an inflexible model of saga genres. This itself testifies to the literary openness of the early sagas. They are variously treated alongside the kings' sagas proper.

[11] Theodoricus and Ágrip have been more or less unproblematically dated to 1177-1188 and to *c*. 1190, respectively, whereas Historia Norwegiae is more problematic, having been written possibly as late as 1220. There can be little doubt that they are all much indebted to older Icelandic tradition. Moreover, Ágrip is preserved in a thirteenth-century Icelandic manuscript. The contribution of these works to subsequent literary tradition is considerable. In particular, see Svend Ellehøj, *Studier over den ældste norrøne historieskrivning*, 175-276; Tor Ulset, *Det genetiske forholdet mellom Ágrip, Historia Norwegiæ og Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium. En analyse med utgangspunkt i oversettelseteknikk samt en diskusjon omkring begrepet "latinisme" i samband med norrøne tekster* (Oslo: Novus, 1983); Gudrun Lange, *Die Anfänge der isländisch-norwegischen Geschichtsschreibung*, Studia Islandica 47 (Reykjavík: Menningarsjóður, 1989); Bjarni Guðnason, "Theodoricus og íslenskir sagnaritarar," *Sjötíu ritgerðir helgaðar Jakobi Benediktssyni 20. júlí 1977* 1, eds. Einar G. Pétursson et al., Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, Rit 12 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1977); Asgaut Steinnes, "Ikring Historia Norwegiæ," *Historisk tidsskrift* 34 (1946-1948); Bjarni Einarsson, "Formáli," Íslenzk fornrit 29 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1985), v-lix.

[12] The research history for Morkinskinna, Fagurskinna, and Heimskringla is remarkably uneven, whether the discussion relates to textual and philological issues, general literary criticism, or historical scrutiny; there are a few careful studies of Morkinskinna and Fagurskinna, whereas scholarship on Heimskringla is voluminous and varied. Among many important contributions to the debate, we may identify those by Gustav Indrebø, *Fagrskinna*, Avhandlinger fra Universitetets historiske seminar 4 (Oslo: Grøndahl, 1917); Ármann Jakobsson, "Um uppruna Morkinskinnu: Drög að rannsóknarsögu," *Gripla* 11 (2000); Ármann Jakobsson, *Staður í nýjum heimi. Konungasagan Morkinskinna* (Reykjavík: Hákólaútgáfan, 2002); Alfred Jakobsen, "Om Fagrskinna-forfatteren," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 85 (1970); Theodore M. Andersson and Kari Ellen Gade, "Introduction," *Morkinskinna. The Earliest Icelandic Chronicle of the Norwegian Kings (1030-1157)*, trans. and eds. Theodore M. Andersson and Kari Ellen Gade, Islandica 51 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000); Bjarni Einarsson, "Formáli;" Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, "Formáli," Íslenzk fornrit 26-28 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1941-1951); Diana Whaley, *Heimskringla. An Introduction*, Viking Society for Northern Research Text Series 8 (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1991).

For a long period the kings' sagas served Norway to a greater extent than Iceland as historical documents. Their foremost historical application was associated with nineteenth- and early twentieth-century *quellenkritischen* efforts to establish the factual basis of early Scandinavian political history. As such they were primarily regarded as descriptive historical narratives, provided that they were used carefully.[13] A ground-breaking shift in approaches to the kings' sagas as historical sources was heralded at the beginning of the twentieth century when Halvdan Koht proposed that Heimskringla's depiction of early Norwegian political culture was as much a reflection of early thirteenth-century conceptions as of earlier historical reality. Koht maintained that Heimskringla should be seen as the work of a conscious author, Snorri Sturluson, whose perception of the past was shaped by his own contemporary political and social environment.[14] The suggestion is somewhat analogous to the emergence (at much the same time) of the saga "author" within literary criticism, and the subsequent preoccupation of the "Icelandic school" with sagas as literary artifacts.[15] In its wider context, this interpretative shift was in tune with the growing "textualization" of sources during the twentieth century.[16] On the historical side this generally meant approaching medieval texts primarily as works that

[13] This approach finds fullest expression in the works of the two giants of nineteenth-century Norwegian medieval scholarship, Rudolf Keyser and his pupil Peter Andreas Munch ("den norske historiske skole"): see Rudolf Keyser, *Norges historie* 1-2 (Oslo: Malling, 1866-1870) and Peter Andreas Munch, *Det norske folks historie* 1-4 (Oslo: C. Tønsberg, 1852-1859). For an historiographical overview, see Otto Dahl, *Norsk historieforskning i det 19. og 20. århundre*, 4th ed. (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1990), 43-74; Sverre Bagge, "The Middle Ages," *Making historical culture. Historiography in Norway*, eds. William H. Hubbard et al. (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1995).

[14] Halvdan Koht, "Sagaenes opfatning av vår gamle historie. Foredrag i den norske historiske forening 24de november 1913," *Historisk tidsskrift* 5:2 (1914). Koht developed his views in an atmosphere marked by the increasingly prominent historical revisionist criticism of the Keyserian and Munchian traditions, most prominently led by the Weibull brothers and of great importance for kings' saga and indeed other saga scholarship; see, e.g., Lauritz Weibull, *Kritiska undersökningar i Nordens historia omkring år 1000* (Copenhagen: J. L. Lybecker, 1911); Lauritz Weibull, *Historisk-kritisk metod och nordisk medeltidsforskning* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1913); Curt Weibull, *Saxo. Kritiska undersökningar i Danmarks historia från Sven Estridsens död till Knut IV* (Lund: Berlingska boktryckeriet, 1915).

[15] On the Icelandic School and bookprose see principally Theodore M. Andersson, *The Problem of Icelandic Saga Origins. A Historical Survey* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 65-119; for an overview, see Carol J. Clover, "Icelandic Family Sagas (*Íslendingasögur*)," *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature*, 241-253; see, too, the introductory anthology by Else Mundal, *Sagadebatt* (Oslo: Universitets forlaget, 1977), and Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson, "Íslenski skólinn," *Skírnir* 165 (1991). The term itself, "íslenski skólinn," was coined by Hallvard Lie, cf. Hallvard Lie, "Noen metodologiske overveielser i anl. av et bind av 'Íslenzk fornrit,'" *Maal og minne* (1939): 97. The traditional if outdated and somewhat oversimplifying trajectories of *Freiprosa* vs. *Buchprosa* are largely the creation of Andreas Heusler, cf. Andreas Heusler, *Anfänge der Isländischen Saga*, Abhandlungen der Königl. preuss. Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Classe 1913:9 (Berlin: Königliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1914), 97; see also Vésteinn Ólason, "Íslendingasögur og þættir," *Íslensk bókmenntasaga* 2, ed. Vésteinn Ólason (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1993), 44-45.

[16] For orientation see Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text. The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography*, Parallax Re-Visions of Culture and Society (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 3-43, esp. 29ff; John E. Toews, "Intellectual History after the Linguistic Turn: The Autonomy of Meaning and the Irreducibility of Experience," *American Historical Review* 92 (1987); illuminating entries are to be found in *Practicing History. New Directions in Historical Writing after the Linguistic Turn*, ed. Gabrielle M. Spiegel, Rewriting Histories (New York: Routledge, 2005).

reflected their own cultural and societal environment rather than the past realities they purport to describe. Among the effects of this developing perspectives was the growing confidence with which scholars summoned a wider range of sources in order to illuminate the culture of power in later Commonwealth Iceland. It was, of course, from just that time and place that the overwhelming majority of Norse texts derive, notably the sagas.[17]

Given the variety of treatment and subject matter between different subtypes of sagas, and indeed between individual sagas, such works obviously lend themselves differently to the task. However, the difference in applicability is determined not only by the witness, as it were, but also, to a great degree, by the interrogator. The sagas respond differently to different forms of questioning. If political culture stands as shorthand for the institutional or quasi-institutional nature of chieftains and chieftaincies, as was central to the legal and constitutional historical tradition, then the kings' sagas shed somewhat limited light. If the central questions under discussion include how many chieftains there were at any given time, why their number changed, and which were the formal or quasi-formal obligations shared between chieftains and their followers, then depictions of past Scandinavian kingdoms will serve less well than sagas that tell of a past Icelandic culture in which chieftains and chieftaincies were prominent.[18] Norway of the past was not Iceland of the present, as saga authors knew well. But nor were they worlds apart. If the notion of political culture is shorthand for a culture of power in a more general yet inclusive sense, including the way in which power is perceived, communicated, legitimized, utilized, manipulated, demonstrated, called for, generated and regenerated through the discourse of words and behavior, and if that culture of power is understood to originate and function in human interaction, political, social, and cultural, then the kings' sagas glow with meaning. If central questions include how power in medieval Iceland was communicated and demonstrated through acts such as feasting and gift giving, then there is every reason to assume that the abundant depictions of and preoccupations with such behavior across subtypes of sagas – in our case primarily across contemporary sagas, Sagas of Icelanders, and the kings' sagas – speak to a general and fundamental understanding of their implications. Iceland and Norway were not worlds apart; indeed, their political cultures shared many basic traits. As in reality, so too in the sagas. It is, above all, this aspect of the political culture *of the sagas* that stands trial as witness to the political culture and mentality of the society that produced them and

[17] The reorientation is strikingly evident in Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, *Saga og samfund. En indføring i oldislandsk litteratur* , Berlingske leksikonbibliotek 116 (Copenhagen: Berlingske forlag, 1977).

[18] Hence the recent standard narrative on the subject, Jón Viðar Sigurðsson's Chieftains and Power, draws heavily on sagas of Icelanders, largely to the exclusion of the kings' sagas; see Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Goder og maktforhold på Island i fristatstiden* (Bergen: Universitetet i Bergen, Historisk Institutt, 1993), transl. as *Chieftains and Power in the Icelandic Commonwealth*, transl. Jean Lundskær-Nielsen, The Viking Collection, Studies in Northern Civilization 12 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1999), esp. 17-38 for source criticism on the sagas of Icelanders and law. An alternative and thoroughly conservative constitutional and legal-historical approach is Gunnar Karlsson, *Goðamenning. Staða og áhrif goðorðsmanna í þjóðveldi Íslendinga* (Reykjavík: Heimskringla, 2004). This most recent study (though it draws extensively on previous articles) is virtually untouched by the anthropological and sociological perspectives of studies on aspects of power. It generally keeps the sagas of Icelanders – let alone the kings' sagas – at arm's length.

consumed them: basic perceptions of the nature of power and its communication through political action.

During the 1960s and, in particular, the 1970s, saga scholarship moved decisively from traditional *Quellenkritik* towards literary analysis with a structuralist or text-critical inflection or, on the historical side, towards social and political principles that could be uncovered through anthropologically oriented analysis. The Sagas of Icelanders, having been gradually marginalized or even exiled as historical documents, were reintroduced as storehouses of sociopolitical insight. Questions of factual correctness were sidelined while the texts were increasingly used as historical blueprints of sociopolitical fundamentals.[19] While the applicability of the kings' sagas to their contemporary political culture depends largely on a reconfigured framework of inquiry such as this, early debate ran mostly along different trajectories than it does today; Koht's suggestion that the sagas should be categorized according to their authors' demonstrable political ideologies, and Egil Nygaard Brekke's similar approach to Sverris saga, were met with skepticism by Frederik Paasche and Hallvard Lie, respectively, both of whom felt that the sagas were every bit as much historical narratives as they were authorially constructed narratives projecting contemporary political convictions.[20] The abandonment of the broader framework of the

[19] This was particularly evident in relation to issues of feud and conflict management, cf. Part One and its cited entries. The *locus classicus* of early Icelandic political culture, written largely out of normative sources, with little use made of the sagas of Icelanders, is Jón Jóhannesson, *Íslendinga saga* 1. *Þjóðveldisöld* (Reykjavík: Almenna bókafélagið, 1956). It is only fair to acknowledge, though, that while Jón's study operates within the critical perspectives of the Icelandic school, and indeed represents its most significant achievement, it does not explicitly deny the possible historicity of the sagas; it simply avoids addressing the issue. The stark juxtaposition of *Freiprosalehre* and *Buchprosalehre* may imply that historicity only became problematic with the emergence of the Icelandic school, whereas in fact skepticism, if not in the focused, central, and programmatic form developed by the Icelandic school, has featured in discussion since at least the time of Árni Magnússon (who found the dubious historicity of Njála to be "eitt Argument til ad Sæmundr Fródi se ei hennar Author, því af honum er ad vænta meire greindar," cf. Jón Helgason, "Athuganir Árna Magnússonar um fornsögur [*Árni argued that Sæmundur fróði was too intelligent to have been the author of Njála*]," *Gripla* 4 (1980): 63-64, quoted to 64. As with Jón and the sagas of Icelanders, the Icelandic school recognized the possible existence of oral traditions behind the sagas, but did not know how to deal with such notions, cf. Jónas Kristjánsson's celebrated exchange with Jón as quoted in Jónas Kristjánsson's, "The Roots of the Sagas," *Sagnaskemmtun. Studies in Honour of Hermann Pálsson on his 65th Birthday, 26th of May 1986*, eds. Rudolf Simek et al. (Vienna: Hermann Böhlaus, 1986), 187 (see 184-187 for a discussion of perceptions of saga historicity 1600-1950). The classic statement of the Icelandic school's issues with authorship and historicity is Sigurður Nordal, *Hrafnkatla*, Studia Islandica 7 (Reykjavík: Sigurður Nordal, 1940).

[20] Fredrik Paasche, "Tendens og syn i kongesagaen," *Edda* 17 (1922); Egil Nygaard Brekke, *Sverre-sagaens opphav, tiden og forfatteren*, Skrifter utgitt av Det Norske videnskaps-akademi i Oslo 2, Hist.-filos. klasse 1958:1 (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1958); Hallvard Lie, "Egil Nygaard Brekke. Sverre-sagaens opphav," *Historisk tidsskrift* 40:2 (1960); cf. note 14. The implications of Koht's proposal are evident in, e.g., Johan Schreiner, *Tradisjon og saga om Olav den hellige*, Skrifter utgitt av Det Norske videnskaps-akademi i Oslo 2, Hist.-filos. klasse 1926:1 (Oslo: J. Dybwad, 1926); Gudmund Sandvik, *Hovding og konge i Heimskringla*, Avhandlinger fra Universitetets historiske seminar (Oslo: Akademisk forlag, 1955); cf. Sverre Bagge, *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 2. In much the same spirit as the Weibulls, the eminent historian Edvard Bull bleakly noted in 1931 that one must "opgi enhver illusjon om at Snorres mektige historiske epos har noen dypere likhet med det som faktisk skjedde i tiden mellem

debate as being anachronistically embedded in a modern separation of history and literature has, on the other hand, only served to advance the use of sagas as key sources for late twelfth- and early-thirteenth-century social, political, and cultural thinking. Koht's initial observations have been carried forth most markedly and eclectically by Sverre Bagge in his analysis of society and politics in the world of Heimskringla, a thematically broad study while restricted to a single saga.[21] Somewhat narrower in its thematic concerns, though treating virtually the entire field of kings' sagas, is Ármann Jakobsson's study of kingship and the literary presentations of its ideological priorities. Unlike early studies on political ideology in the sagas, such as that by Koht, Ármann emphasizes the common and overriding principles that make up the frame: diverse as the sagas may be in form and historical subject matter, and despite ideological nuances between individual sagas, they project a largely holistic perception of the fundamentals of kingship and power.[22] Thus, as with the Sagas of Icelanders, the kings' sagas have been seen as expressing fundamental ideas about power and political behavior that transcend considerations of factual correctness, and reverberate throughout the saga corpus.

Among these socially and politically reverberating representations are feasts and gifts. The more they are analyzed across the entire corpus of sagas, poetry and beyond, the more they seem to speak with a single voice. Their presentation takes place within a single conceptual frame throughout. This need not surprise us: the texts' common denominator is the political culture of marginal statehood. As to the king's sagas themselves, their commonality is not lessened by the way they share stage design, costumes, and plot, for, unlike the Sagas of Icelanders which almost never tell the same story twice, the kings' sagas recycle each other's stories repeatedly.[23]

The rationale behind the present chapter's analysis of the sociopolitical culture of the kings' sagas needs to be augmented by an explicit double reminder. Firstly, the ubiquitous presence of these works within early thirteenth-century Iceland can easily be missed when the many sagas and texts of subsequent decades are surveyed. With Heimskringla set down on parchment by *c*. 1230, these works dominated their literary environment. Nor were they produced *ex nihilo*, for texts may be said to be social animals; they draw nourishment from their social environment and suffocate in a cultural vacuum. If texts produced and consumed in early thirteenth-century Iceland are made to bear witness to its sociopolitical *Weltanschauung*, as they certainly can be, then the kings' sagas must occupy a central place. No other subtype, except for hagiography, is demonstrably older, and the emergence of the medieval Icelandic saga is effectively the emergence of the kings' sagas. Secondly, their conceptualization of what was effectively the political universe known to them is indispensible for us when approaching their own political mentality. That fact that the kings' sagas play out on a larger and more dynamic political stage than did Icelandic politics only increases their value in this respect.

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slaget i Hafrsfjord og slaget på Re." Edvard Bull, *Det norske folks liv og historie gjennem tidene* 2. *Fra omkring 1000 til 1280* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1931), 9.

[21] Sverre Bagge, *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla*.

[22] Ármann Jakobsson, *Í leit að konungi*, esp. 265ff.

[23] As contrasted by Theodore M. Andersson, "The Kings' Sagas (*Konungasögur*)," 197.

II Power and Hospitality

As generally in the sagas, feasting in the kings' sagas is an aristocratic practice for managing bonds, communicating interest, and claiming status. In other words, it is fundamentally a language of power. As such it was a clearly recognizable and cognitive sociopolitical practice, and, consequently and unsurprisingly, primarily engaged in by those who were politically active. These were the *optimates* and *potentes* generally, the king and his men, petty lords and chieftains, prominent aristocrats, and, depending on circumstances, occasion, and context, the more viable of *bændr*, "farmers."[24]

The complexity of the feast lies less in its vagueness of demarcation than in its dynamic range of functions. Although it is necessarily an approximate category with regard to hospitality and festive occasions in general, it nevertheless carries a distinctive badge, missed neither by saga characters nor saga audience. The feast is unmistakably identifiable by its dynamic functionality, its recognition as a venue of sociopolitical interaction, and its centrality as basic expression of power. As such it emerges as a fundamental element in the political narratives of the sagas, whether the discussion relates to the kings' sagas, contemporary sagas, sagas of Icelanders, or other works. Working through these sources gradually reveals their basic logic and commonalities. This does not mean, of course, that one can easily make sense of every feast encountered. Feasts will repeatedly become visible to the observing eye as parts of the stage design rather than as items within the narrative sequence itself, as when the unfolding of events carries the storyline from the front of the hall to the back and then outside, without the feast that was taking place ever becoming the focus of attention. Necessarily, feasts can occupy the entire spectrum of observance; some are merely alluded to or appear fleetingly, leaving us with little sense as to the details of who is hosting whom and why; others leave a handful of clues, coincidently perhaps, to be carefully assembled and interrogated for indications as to their particular contexts. It is as if we are watching the doors on a stage that never open during the course of the play, and yet we are somehow able to comprehend what lies behind them on basis of their surroundings and the action that takes place in front of them. On the other hand, there are the many feasts throughout the corpus that are, to greater and lesser degree, objects of attention, integral parts of the narrative sequence, links in the chain of events. In such instances we achieve a fuller sense of the perceived implications and functions of such feasts, as well as of their ideological framework. Again, this does not mean that the saga narrator bends over backwards to help his modern reader, by pausing in order explicitly to explain the nature and rationale of feasting and its connotations (a wholly illogical demand, of course). Descriptions of and references to feasts are pointed and reserved, in true saga style. Often enough, however, there are explicit observations concerning desired or anticipated effects, such as when it is stated clearly that feasts are held for the purpose of contracting friendships or sealing

[24] Although the most powerful aristocrats were no ordinary farmers they still identified themselves as *bændr*, a term that in itself has nothing to do with "peasantry" in the conventional sense of that word.

agreements. Bonds were made and remade through demonstrative action, and the sources describe them in these terms. The significance of such feasts is further identifiable by their recurrence in comparable contexts and circumstances, and the continuous application from one text to another of what is essentially the same discourse. As a result, feasts rarely appear where least expected and frequently occur when they might well be expected to. Anyone spending time with the sagas develops a nose for such moments.

Feasting is fundamentally a form of hospitality. Though importance of the phenomenon in medieval society has attracted scholarly attention, this has frequently taken the form of regionally or topically specific studies rather than more holistic treatments across medieval societies. The most notable and important among the latter is Hans Conrad Peyer's Von der Gastfreundschaft zum Gasthaus.[25] Peyer, who for the most part confined his discussion to Continental sources and concentrated particularly on the high and late medieval German lands, sketched five archetypes of medieval hospitality, tracing their often overlapping representations: *Herrschaftsgastung*, *Gastfreundschaft*, *Gastlichkeit ohne Verpflegung*, *Liebesgastlichkeit*, and *gewerbliche Gastlichkeit*.[26] Our eyes remain fixed on the first two. *Liebesgastlichkeit*, "charitable hospitality," encompasses the charitable act of providing food and shelter to the poor and the powerless, a role that was primarily undertaken by religious houses and became an increasingly urban practice. *Gewerbliche Gastlichkeit*, "commercial hospitality," signifies any kind of paid lodging and provisions, most prominently at taverns, inns and the like, which, as with poverty, was associated primarily if not exclusively with the social and economic settings of rising urban centers. Neither of these archetypes overlaps with the category of feasting in any real sense, whether in relation to medieval representations, discourse, or general perception. The latter is essentially a commercial exchange while the former is a religiously conceived and perceived service towards less fortunate members of society.[27] Similarly, medieval people on the move were variously accommodated or hosted without recourse to a specifically elevated or socially demarcated reception or feast, despite such hospitality being quite closely governed by social norms and not being subject to monetary payment. Such hospitality would normally be *ohne Verpflegung*, and routinely

[25] Hans Conrad Peyer, *Von der Gastfreundschaft zum Gasthaus. Studien zur Gastlichkeit im Mittelalter*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica Schriften 31 (Hanover: Verlag Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1987).
[26] Hans Conrad Peyer, *Von der Gastfreundschaft zum Gasthaus*, 1-20, *passim*.
[27] Although hosting and feeding the poor was a virtue central to Christian teaching, and remained an important aspect of medieval monasticism, the blurred lines and overlapping complexities were evident in the way that monastic hospitality extended far beyond such idealism, and involved not so much lords and protectors but travelers of many kinds. For discussion of the financial, administrative, and social implications of monastic hospitality, see, in particular, Julie Kerr, *Monastic Hospitality*. *The Benedictines in England, c. 1070-c. 1250*, Studies in the History of Medieval Religion 32 (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2007); Jutta Maria Berger, *Die Geschichte der Gastfreundschaft im hochmittelalterlichen Mönchtum. Die Cistercienser* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999). An important introduction to the development of hospitality in medieval Europe, including its commercialized forms and responses to varying types of travelers and visitors (not least pilgrims), can be found in the essays collected in *Gastfreundschaft, Taverne und Gasthaus im Mittelalter*, ed. Hans Conrad Peyer, Schriften des Historischen Kollegs, Kolloquien 3 (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1983).

involve shelter, fire, drink for the guest, and fodder for his horse.[28] The *veizla* of the sagas, and of the reality behind them, is framed by what are essentially the archetypical opposites of a single practice, ranging from the politically unequal reception of the higher by the lower, *Herrschaftsgastung*, to the explicitly demarcated and almost ritual-like feasting of political equals, *Gastfreundschaft*.[29]

Feasting was anything but a free and spontaneous practice, even if it tended to be presented and acted out as being so. It was framed and limited by custom, and extensively shaped by the social and political position of host and guest. Political superiors, such as kings, frequently enjoyed hospitality that was variously promoted as being freely rendered yet expected, positively offered yet compulsory. The level of obligation differed from case to case and context to context, as did the explicitness with which it was stated. While feasting was pursued by political equals or near-equals within the general restrictions of social norms and applicability of political language, it could easily, as in the king's case, carry obligations embedded in custom on the level of being law. So would the king routinely be a guest at feasts which were quite explicitly obligatory contributions in kind towards his movable court. Due to the apparent irreconcilability between modern notions of feasting as a fairly unrestricted and voluntary phenomenon and such compulsory hosting, scholars have occasionally been tempted to distinguish rather clearly between politically obligatory hospitality, on the one hand, and less restrictive feasting, on the other, identifying the former as "guesting" or the like (correlative to German *Gastung*), and the latter as "feasting."[30] Such a distinction is problematic in at least two crucial

[28] On the customary norms of "simple hospitality", see, in addition to Hans Conrad Peyer's monograph, Leopold Hellmuth, *Gastfreundschaft und Gastrecht bei den Germanen*, Sitzungsberichte der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philisophisch-Historische Klasse 440 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1984). Since hospitality was largely dictated by the social and political positions of host and guest it looms large in studies on travel and mobility in medieval societies, cf. Norbert Ohler, *Reisen im Mittelalter*, 4th ed. (Munich: Artemis Verlag, 2004), esp. 124-137, 146-173.

[29] The German labels are as transparent in the original as they are bland in translation. Translations include "simple hospitality" for *Gastlichkeit ohne Verpflegung*, "sovereignty hospitality" for *Herrschaftsgastung*, and "hospitable friendship," "primitive hospitality," and "archaic-ritual hospitality" for *Gastfreundschaft*, in addition to the more straightforward and obvious renditions of the others, cf. Alban Gautier, "Hospitality in pre-viking Anglo-Saxon England," *Early Medieval Europe* 17:1 (2009): 25-26.

[30] Cf., e.g., Katharine Simms, "Guesting and Feasting in Gaelic Ireland," *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 108 (1978). The social and political functions of hospitality in medieval northern societies, not least in the context of kingship, lordship, kinship, and tributary feasting, have received valuable if by no means extensive treatment, and offering illuminating comparison for medieval Norway. See generally Leopold Hellmuth, *Gastfreundschaft und Gastrecht bei den Germanen*. On Ireland, the Gaelic coyne and livery, and the late medieval coshering see, in addition to Simms, Catherine Marie O'Sullivan, *Hospitality in Medieval Ireland, 900-1500* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004). On tributary feasting in the context of Irish and Welsh kinship and lordship, see especially Thomas Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 337-411, esp. 350ff; cf. also Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Ireland, Scotland and Wales, *c*. 700 to the Early Eleventh Century," *The New Cambridge Medieval History* 2. c.*700*-c.*900*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 53. The most important recent work on Anglo-Saxon England is Alban Gautier, *Le festin dans l'Angleterre anglo-saxonne, V^e^-XI^e^ siècle*, Histoire (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2006), whose main conclusions are outlined in Alban Gautier, "Hospitality in pre-viking Anglo-Saxon England." On England, in addition to Monastic Hospitality (cf. note 27), see Julie Kerr, "The Open Door: Hospitality and Honour in Twelfth/Early

respects. Firstly, it relies on categorization that is primarily modern and artificial, and therefore must not be applied too rigidly despite its usefulness in framing discussions on medieval feasting. Individual feasts were necessarily subject to particular circumstances and contexts no less than general frameworks and characteristics, and the level and combinations of political obligations and social restrictions shaping them varied more than any firm categorization can satisfactorily take into account. Secondly, at least in the case of the sagas and other Old Norse-Icelandic sources, describing festive hospitality, whether obligatory or otherwise, under categorically separate labels clearly contradicts their medieval discourse. Terminology is fundamental. It carries conceptual implications that shape our perception of the phenomena under discussion. The sagas present the whole spectrum of *Herrschaftsgastung* and *Gastfreundschaft* with a single and holistic discourse of *veizlur*. This is exactly why "feast" can only serve as a tentative translation of the term: it has no modern equivalent that embraces its nuances and implications. *Veizla* encompasses what medieval people saw as variants of a single if broad phenomenon, and it links elements that the modern mind is thoroughly acculturated into regarding as quite separate. It underlines the point that anthropologists and sociologists have been striving to teach us for more than a century: giving and receiving in pre-modern and pre-market societies were ultimately social and political acts, which implied obligations or assertions, communicated power, and mostly elude satisfactory comparison with the modern, and somewhat idealistic, notion of feasts and gifts as principally private, altruistic, and disinterested practices. The medieval *veizla* is in this sense a conceptual category somewhat alien to the modern mindset and its vocabulary.

The terminology and discourse of the sagas effectively relieves the modern observer from the otherwise distressingly arbitrary task of identifying when the sharing of food and drink with guests was generally seen to have assumed the form of feasting proper; feasts rarely escape our gaze simply because the sagas make it clear to us that we are present at one. Just as with any such category, medieval or modern, its boundaries were not absolutely fixed, yet the sagas assign to it distinguishing labels and descriptive characteristics. Analyzing them is illuminating. The generic term is *veizla*, occasionally used in compound forms denoting cultic, religious, or calendric settings, as *blótveizla*, "sacrificial feast," *jólaveizla,* "Christmas feast," and *páskaveizla* "Easter feast." Additionally, Fagurskinna uses *veizluerfi*, "funeral feast," and Hákonar saga herðibreiðs uses *brullaupsveizla*, "wedding feast," for feasts otherwise labeled *veizla* or its equivalent throughout, in addition to *erfi* and *brullaup* or *brúðkaup*.[31] The basic use of *veizla* nevertheless accommodates a few well-known interchangeable or supplemental basic

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Thirteenth-Century England," *History* 87 (2002); Julie Kerr, "Food, Drink and Lodging: Hospitality in Twelfth-Century England," *Haskins Society Journal* 18 (2006); Julie Kerr, "'Welcome the coming and speed the parting guest': hospitality in twelfth-century England," *Journal of Medieval History* 33 (2007).

[31] For references to *jólaveizlur* and *páskaveizlur* see below; for references to *blótveizlur* see Part Three; for references to *erfi* see below and Part Three. For *veizluerfi* see *Fagrskinna – Nóregs konunga tal*, ed. Bjarni Einarsson, Íslenzk fornrit 29 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1985), 124. For *brullaupsveizla* in Hákonar saga herðibreiðs, see *Heimskringla* 3, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, Íslenzk fornrit 28 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1951), 369. The term also appears in Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar (as *brúðlaupsveizla*), cf. *Hakonar saga*, 90.

terms, of which by far the most common is *boð*, "invitation," and derivatives thereof. Hákonar saga góða describes the king's final feast at Fitjar on Storð simultaneously as *veizla* and *boð*,[32] and Ólafs saga helga combines these terms when describing the fatal invitation from Þórir Ölvisson to King Ólafur helgi.[33] However, even if *boð* is used interchangeably with *veizla* throughout much of the saga corpus,[34] and very occasionally without *veizla* for what is clearly a feast, it is nevertheless markedly more open-ended than *veizla* in terms of hospitality: it basically means being received or accommodated by invitation, for longer or shorter periods, during which no form of feasting, *veizla*, need be involved.[35] Its usage is notably associated with wedding feasts.[36] It appears with qualifying

[32] *Heimskringla* 1, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, Íslenzk fornrit 26 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1941), 182-183.

[33] *Heimskringla* 3, 300.

[34] The combination of *veizla* and *boð* is peculiarly characteristic of the sagas of Icelanders; representative examples include *Brennu-Njáls saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 12 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1954), 9, 21-22, 32-33, 45 (the term *veizla* does not appear in all manuscripts, though, cf. *Njála* 1. *Udgivet efter gamle håndskrifter*, ed. Konráð Gíslason (Copenhagen: Det kongelige nordiske oldskrift-selskap, 1875), 64), 276-277; *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, Íslenzk fornrit 2 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1933), 80-83; *Finnboga saga*, ed. Jóhannes Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit 14 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1959), 302-306, 309-311; *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, ed. Björn K. Þórólfsson, *Vestfirðinga sǫgur*, Íslenzk fornrit 6 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1943), 50-56 (*boð* on 56); *Þorskfirðinga saga*, ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson, Íslenzk fornrit 13 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1991), 197; *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*, ed. Jóhannes Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit 14, 374, 376-377; *Harðar saga Grímkelssonar*, ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson, Íslenzk fornrit 13, 9-12, 29-31; *Laxdæla saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 5 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1934), 11-13, 17-18, 65-66, 73, 80, 130, 134-135, 138-144, 201-203, 207; *Svarfdæla saga*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson, *Eyfirðinga sǫgur*, Íslenzk fornrit 9 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1956), 165-168; *Víga-Glúms saga*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson, *Eyfirðinga sǫgur*, 17-19; *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*, eds. Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson, *Borgfirðinga sǫgur*, Íslenzk fornrit 3 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1938), 187. Also noteworthy is Fljótsdæla saga, traditionally dated to the sixteenth century but more recently assigned to the fourteenth (cf. Stefán Karlsson, "Aldur Fljótsdæla sögu," *Sagnaþing helgað Jónasi Kristjánssyni sjötugum 10. apríl 1994* 2, eds. Gísli Sigurðsson et al. (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1994)), cf. *Fljótsdæla saga*, ed. Jón Jóhannesson, *Austfirðinga sǫgur*, Íslenzk fornrit 11 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1950), 215-216, 235, 238-239, 291. Instances outside the genre are remarkably few and far between, e.g. *Jómsvíkinga saga*, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson (Reykjavík: Prentsmiðja Jóns Helgasonar hf., 1969), 158-168, cf. *Flateyjarbók* 1. *En samling of norske konge-sagaer med indskudte mindre fortællinger om begivenheder i og udenfor Norge samt annaler*, eds. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and C. R. Unger (Oslo: P. T. Mallings forlagsboghandel, 1860), 177-183 (*boð* on 178); *Stjörnu-Odda Draumr*, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon, *Nordiske Oldskrifter* 27 (Copenhagen: Det nordiske Literatur-Samfund, 1860), 119; *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* 2, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson, Editiones Arnamagnæanæ A:2 (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1961), 146-147 (*boð* not in all manuscripts, though, cf. n.147 and *Flateyjarbók* 1, 419). The legendary sagas offer only a fewinstances of *veizlur*, cf. *Völsunga saga*, eds. Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda* 1 (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfan Forni, 1943), 8; *Bósa saga og Herrauðs*, eds. Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda* 2 (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfan Forni, 1944), 484, 490; *Sturlaugs saga starfsama*, eds. Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda* 2, 320-321; *Yngvars saga víðförla*, eds. Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda* 3 (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfan Forni, 1944), 364. On Sturlunga's terminology see Part Three.

[35] Guests were (ideally) invited, *boðið*, to feasts, and all feasts were in that sense a *boð* by definition. *Veizlur*, whether also identified as *boð* or not, are commonly and throughout the entire corpus discussed in terms of their stated invitational character, cf. *fyrirboðsmenn*, *boðsmenn*, and similar terms. *Boð* and *vera*/*dvelja*/*sitja* in or at someone's *boði* are terms otherwise not specifically associated with feasts.

prefixes throughout the corpus,[37] notably as *jólaboð*, "Christmas reception/invitation,"[38] *vinaboð*, "reception/invitation of friends,"[39] *mannboð*, "reception/invitation of men,"[40] and, prominently, *heimboð*, "home reception/invitation."[41] Additionally, feasting

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[36] Unsurprisingly, cf. note 34, these are to be found in the sagas of Icelanders, cf. *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, eds. Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, Íslenzk fornrit 13, 135-136, 150-155; *Finnboga saga*, 302-306, 309-311; *Flóamanna saga*, ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson, Íslenzk fornrit 13, 319; *Þorskfirðinga saga*, 197; *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*, 374, 376-377; *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, eds. Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson, *Borgfirðinga sǫgur*, 89; *Hænsa-Þóris saga*, eds. Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson, *Borgfirðinga sǫgur*, 32-35, 46; *Hallfreðar saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 8 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1939), 150; *Harðar saga Grímkelssonar*, 9-12, 14, 29-31; *Kjalnesinga saga*, ed. Jóhannes Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit 14, 6; *Kormáks saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 8, 226-228; *Laxdæla saga*, 5, 9, 11-13, 17-18, 51, 65-66, 80, 130, 138-139, 201-203, 207; *Reykdæla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, ed. Björn Sigfússon, Íslenzk fornrit 5 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka fornritafélag, 1940), 191-192; *Svarfdæla saga*, 165-168; *Þorsteins saga hvíta*, ed. Jón Jóhannesson, *Austfirðinga sǫgur*, 17-18; *Vatnsdæla saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 8, 85-87, 116-119; *Víga-Glúms saga*, 67-68, 85; *Brennu-Njáls saga*, 9, 21-22, 32-33, 45, 87-90, 160, 162, 225, 247; *Fljótsdæla saga*, 215-216, 235, 238. The use is not exclusive to the genre, though, cf. *Stjörnu-Odda Draumr*, 119; *Flateyjarbók* 1, 306; *Bósa saga og Herrauðs*, 484, 490; *Sturlaugs saga starfsama*, 320-321; *Yngvars saga víðförla*, 364. Compared to other genres, wedding feasts and marital arrangements are mentioned with particular frequency in the sagas of Icelanders, which may partly if not wholly explain the difference in labeling. The general association of *boð* and weddings was noted by Fritzner, cf. Johan Fritzner, *Ordbog over det gamle norske sprog* 1, rev. ed. (Kristiania: Den norske forlagsforening, 1886), 161.

[37] The above-cited combinations of *boð* and *veizla* in Heimskringla are indeed the only two instances in that work; there are none in Fagurskinna. However, the various shadings of the term make absolute judgments impossible, cf., e.g., *Heimskringla* 2, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, Íslenzk fornrit 27 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1945), 198, cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga. Den store saga om Olav den hellige efter pergamenthåndskrift i Kungliga biblioteket i Stockholm nr. 2 4to med varianter fra andre håndskrifter*, eds. Oscar Elbert Johansen and Jón Helgason (Oslo: Norsk historisk kjeldeskrift-institutt, 1941), 297, or *Heimskringla* 1, 177.

[38] Employed by Snorri in Ólafs saga helga, cf. *Heimskringla* 2, 81-82 (cf. *Flateyjarbók* 2. *En samling of norske konge-sagaer med indskudte mindre fortællinger om begivenheder i og udenfor Norge samt annaler*, eds. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and C. R. Unger (Oslo: P. T. Mallings forlagsboghandel, 1862), 53, and *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 118 (not explicitly called *veizla* here, but clearly comparable with other so-labeled arrangements, whether at Sarpsborg, as here, or at other royal residences)), 179 (with *jólaveizla*, cf. also *Flateyjarbók* 2, 184- 185, linking *veizlur*, *jólaboð*, and *vinaboð*, and *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 264), 194 (*veizla*, *jólaboð*, and *vinaboð* brought together, cf. also *Flateyjarbók* 2, 226-227 and *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 289-290), 296 (again at a royal residence and without a *veizla*, cf. also *Flateyjarbók* 2, 291 and *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 458). There are no such references in Ágrip, Morkinskinna, and Fagurskinna. The term is also found in Sturlunga saga and in the sagas of Icelanders, cf. Part Three.

[39] *Heimskringla* 2, 178, 194 (cf. note 37 on both). For Sturlunga and the sagas of Icelanders, which also employ the term, see Part Three. It does not feature in Ágrip, Morkinskinna, or Fagurskinna. The term finds an echo in *vinaveizla* in Þorgils saga skarða, cf. *Sturlunga saga* 1, eds. Jón Jóhannesson et al. (Reykjavík: Sturlunguútgáfan, 1946), 106.

[40] *Heimskringla* 1, 273 (with *veizla* and *erfi*). For wedding feasts (with *boð*) see also *Mariu saga. Legender om jomfru Maria og hendes jertegn. Efter gamle haandskrifter*, ed. C. R. Unger, Det norske oldskriftselskabs samlinger 11-12, 14, 16 (Oslo: Brögger & Christie, 1871), 129; *Homiliu-bók. Isländska homilier efter en handskrift från tolfte århundradet*, ed. Theodor Wisén (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerups Förlag, 1872), 14 (a feast); *Vatnsdæla saga*, 63.

[41] *Fagrskinna*, 357 (*veizla* attended at the host's *heimboði*); *Heimskringla* 1, 25-26 (combined with *veizla*, cf. *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar udgivet efter håndskrifterne*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel – Nordisk Forlag, 1931), 135), 109-111 (with *veizla*), 205-206; *Heimskringla* 2, 198, cf. *Flateyjarbók* 2, 230 and *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 297; *Heimskringla* 3, 279. The term is particularly prominent in the

descriptions are variously accompanied by lesser and looser terms relating to sociability and hospitality, as with *fagnaðr*, "festivities,"[42] *samsæti*, lit. "together-sitting,"[43] *samkunda*, "get-together/lit. convention,"[44] and *kynni*, *kynnissókn, kynnisvist*, or *kynnisleit* "visit,"[45] each implying degrees of formality if not feasting. Funamentally, however, the sagas almost invariably use the term *veizla* for those occasions when feasting or banqueting is described for more than a line or two of text, or when its true identity is made unmistakable for the sake of context.

Since *veizla* comes from *veita*, "to grant/confer," it easily encompasses the whole range of *Herrschaftsgastung* and *Gastfreundschaft* without signaling any qualitative judgment as to obligation or free agency. At its most basic it descriptively denotes a grant or conferment by one person to another, which is essentially what festively and formally granted hospitality, a feast, is.[46] The straight-forwardness of the term, and its frequent

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sagas of Icelanders, as surveyed in Part Three. Otherwise see, for example, *Flateyjarbók* 2, 134 (with *veizla*); *Jómsvíkinga saga*, 70, 79 (with *veizla*), 101 (in the context of *veizlur*), 128; *Knýtlinga saga*, ed. Bjarni Guðnason, *Danakonunga sǫgur*, Íslenzk fornrit 35 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1982), 156, 252, 285 (combined with *veizla* in all three cases); *Orkneyinga saga*, ed. Finnbogi Guðmundsson, Íslenzk fornrit 34 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1965), 193; *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, 121 (combined with *veizla*), 131. There are surprisingly few clear instances in the legendary sagas, cf. *Örvar-Odds saga*, eds. Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda* 1, 292 (possibly as *veizla*); *Gautreks saga*, eds. Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda* 3, 29-30 (probably as *veizla*). *Heimboð* abound in sagas of Icelanders and contemporary sagas, as surveyed in Part Three.

[42] *Heimskringla* 1, 109-111 (combined with *veizla* and *heimboð*); *Heimskringla* 1, 287 (descriptive); *Heimskringla* 3, 247 (descriptive); as honorably rendered hospitality in, e.g., *Strengleikar. An Old Norse Translation of Twenty-one Old French Lais, edited from the Manuscript Uppsala De la Gardie 4-7 – AM 666 b, 4°*, eds. Robert Cook and Mattias Tveitane, Norrøne tekster 3 (Oslo: Norsk historisk kjeldeskrift-institutt, 1979), 242.

[43] Among the many descriptive terms applied to King Haraldur harðráði's and King Magnús góði's reconciliation feast in Haralds saga Sigurðssonar, cf. *Heimskringla* 3, 99. The term is otherwise infrequently applied to feasts.

[44] Employed in Ágrip for cultic feasting, cf. *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sǫgum*, ed. Bjarni Einarsson, Íslenzk fornrit 29, 3, cf. also *Flateyjarbók* 1, 564. *Samkunda* needs not denote *veizla*, but clearly does on many occasions, cf., e.g., *Postola sögur. Legenderiske fortællinger om apostolernes liv* [,] *deres kamp for kristendommens udbredelse samt deres martyrdød*, ed. C. R. Unger (Oslo: B. M. Bentzen, 1874), 916; King Hákon Magnússon's amendment of 1303 in *Norges gamle love indtil 1387* 3, eds. Rudolf Keyser et al. (Oslo: C. Gröndahl, 1849), 67 ("ueidzlur eda adrar samkonder"), cf. also 1 (1846), 39 and 2 (1848), 138; *Jómsvíkinga saga*, 161 ("dýrlegum veizlum og samkundum"); *Flateyjarbók* 1, 283 ("uæitzslum ok samkundum"); *Finnboga saga*, 290 (with *veizla*). It is used by Gissur Þorvaldsson (or the hand of Sturla sagnaritari) at Flugumýri, applied to the wedding feast itself, cf. *Sturlunga saga* 1, 483.

[45] *Heimskringla* 2, 198 (*kynni*) and 196 (*kynnissókn*), cf. *Oláfs saga hins helga*, 297 and 293; *Víga-Glúms saga*, 27-29 (*heimboð* and *kynni*, but hardly a *veizla* despite formalities); *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, 272 (*kynni* as formal hospitality).

[46] *Veizla* likewise refers to "help" or "support," such as in *liðveizla*. The word is explored in Johan Fritzner, *Ordbog over det gamle norske sprog* 3, rev. ed. (Kristiania: Den norske forlagsforening, 1896), 899-900. As to terminology it should be noted that *gisting*, correlative to *Gastung* and guesting, is known in Old Icelandic, although is rarely the term of choice when it comes to denoting festive hospitality. It appears in Haralds saga gráfeldar in Heimskringla, albeit with no circumstantial detail: "Hákon jarl fór einn vetr til Upplanda ok á nǫkkura gisting [*Earl Hákon went to Upplönd a certain winter and received some* gisting];" *Heimskringla* 1, 212. Its best known use is in Konungsskuggsjá, descriptive of the king's *gestir* and their enforced hospitality: "oc heita þeir gestir oc fa þeir þ*at* nafn af fiolskylldri syslo þviat þeir gista margra manna hibyli oc þo æigi

employment in the sagas, rarely leaves the saga audience in doubt as to the nature of the occasion, but encourages them to gauge the dynamics of the social and political factors that shape the particular event, the level of obligation or spontaneity involved, its success or failure, and to appreciate the details of its specific historical or narrative circumstances. On the other hand, and to be specifically noted, *veizla* became a legal terminus in the thirteenth century, drawing on what was already the customary vocabulary for that which was held of the king and conferred by him (actually or nominally), whether the reference was to lands, offices, income-generating rights and revenues, or any combination thereof. Lands, offices, and rights so acquired and held were branded *veizlur*, "that which is granted or conferred," and were thought of, in legal terms, as *beneficia*, which was indeed the Latin term as and when needed.[47] As such, the king's *veizlur* became quantifiable by their annual yield or revenue, normally measured by their equivalent worth in silver marks. In turn, lands held in this way became, again in legal terms, *veizlujarðir* and those holding them *veizlumenn*.[48] However, this rather distinct and legally oriented use of the term *veizla* rarely causes confusion, not least since holding *veizlur* of the king usually entailed holding *veizlur* for him as well: the *lendir menn*, "landed men," holding *veizlur* of the king, inevitably owed him regular hospitality and upkeep.[49] The fact that feasting served as the primary mode of contact between the king and his local followers is no surprise; it is a very familiar way of managing bonds in pre-state societies. In the sagas, the status of landed men is primarily political, and only marginally fiscal or administrative; they are the king's local allies, men of great dynastic presence and local authority. Their primary identity is not as fiscal administrators and their hospitality is not presented as mere fiscal transactions. They drew their primary income not from the king's lands, which they appear to have held for political rather than economic reasons. Only in extraordinary circumstances was the grant of *veizla* conferred explicitly for the fiscal upkeep of the

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allra mæð vinatto [*and they are called* gestir *and derive their name from the multiplicity of tasks they perform while they* gista *in the houses of many men, and not always for their friendship*];" cf. *Konungs skuggsiá*, ed. Ludvig Holm-Olsen, Gamelnorske tekster utgitt av Norsk kjeldeskrift-institutt i samarbeid med Gammelnorsk ordboksverk 1 (Oslo: Kjeldeskriftfondet, 1945), 41.

[47] *Veizla* as a legal terminus is stamped out in the oldest Norwegian law, Gulaþingslög, preserved in thirteenth-century manuscripts; its textual and material ancestry is debatable and unclear in many respects. It speaks of holding "lond at veiðzlu konongs [*lands as conferred by the king*]," cf. *Norges gamle love indtil 1387* 1, 72 ("Um veizlu iarðer"), 101. It was picked up in the late-thirteenth-century Landslög as well, cf. *Norges gamle love indtil 1387* 2, 39; see also King Hákon Magnússon's 1302 Oslo amendment and King Magnús Eiríksson's 1320 Bergen amendment, cf. *Norges gamle love indtil 1387* 3, 50, 149. *Veizla* as a royal grant is treated most fully in Hirðskrá, "The Law of the Court," a late-thirteenth-century text in its preserved form (see further below), cf. *Hirdskråen. Hirdloven til Norges konge og hans håndgangne menn etter AM 322 fol*, ed. Steinar Imsen (Oslo: Riksarkivet, 2000), 86, 94-99, 132, 170. Konungsskuggsjá (*c.* 1260) employs the term, cf. *Konungs skuggsiá*, 41.

[48] Gulaþingslög speaks of *veizlujarðir*, cf. *Norges gamle love* 1, 85 ("En ef maðr selr veiðzlu iorð sina. þa verðr hann þiofr af [*but if a man sells his* veizlujǫrð *then he becomes a thief thereof*]"), 47, 72. Landslög, King Magnús lagabætir's Bjharkøy Law (Old Town Law or By-Lov), and the Hirðskrá speak of *veizlumenn*, cf. *Norges gamle love* 2, 43 ("handgengnir menn oc ueitzlu menn [*retainers and* veizlur men]"), 207; *Hirdskråen*, 132 ("lenðir men oc væizlu|menn [*Landed men and* veizlur men]"). Neither term appears in the sagas (*veizlumaður* appears, but in an entirely different meaning and context).

[49] For basic literature on the term itself, see note 110.

grantee, and then only as an *ad hoc* and temporary arrangement.[50] Equally, retaining or losing *veizlur* was much more a barometer of royal favor and friendship than of fiscal capacity.

The objectivity of the term *veizla* as a formal rendering of hospitality is evidenced by its use to denote both friendly banqueting and enforced hospitality. Even when taking place under threat of outright violence or even death, *veizla* remains the proper term. There was little shortage of threats and violence when, in the wake of King Haraldur hárfagri's death and King Eiríkur blóðöx's departure for England, the Eiríkssynir fought for political (re)establishment in Norway. Snorri's depiction of their ultimate attempt, Guðröður's arrival from England, is instructive:

> Siglir Guðrøðr suðr til Víkrinnar. En þegar er hann kom til lands, tók hann at herja ok brjóta undir sik landsfólk, en beiddi sér viðtǫku. En er landsmenn sá, at herr mikill var kominn á hendr þeim, þá leita menn sér

[50] Only when elite political refugees are temporarily granted *veizlur* are they explicitly noted as forming the very basis of maintenance. Thus, Hákonar saga góða in Heimskringla notes, in the context of escalating enmities between King Hákon and King Haraldur Gormsson of Denmark, that Gunnhildur and the Eiríkssynir were accommodated through grants of *veizlur* upon their arrival in Denmark from England: "Fekk Haraldr konungr þeim veizlur í ríki sínu svá miklar, at þau fengu vel haldit sik ok menn sína [*King Haraldur granted them such* veizlur *in his kingdom that they could comfortably sustain themselves and their men*]." *Heimskringla* 1, 162. It is further reported in Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar in Heimskringla that King Haraldur Gormsson later said to one of the Eiríkssynir, King Haraldur gráfeldur, that he should "taka þar af sér veizlur, svá sem þeir bræðr höfðu fyrr haft þar í Danmǫrku [*receive such* veizlur *from him as the brothers had previously held in Denmark*]," but this time with false intentions; *Heimskringla* 1, 236. Similar phrases are used for the accommodation of Earl Eiríkur Hákonarson in Sweden by King Ólafur (Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar in Heimskringla: "Veitti Óláfr konungr þar jarli friðland ok veizlur stórar, svá at hann mátti þar vel halda sik í landi ok lið sitt [*King Ólafur granted the earl an asylum and great* veizlur *so that he could comfortably sustain himself and his men there*]." *Heimskringla* 1, 337), and of Kristín Sigurðardóttir Jórsalafara in Denmark by King Valdimar, following the death of King Ingi at the hands of Hákon herðibreiður (Magnúss saga Erlingssonar in Heimskringla: "ok fekk henni veizlur þar með sér, svá at hon fekk þar vel haldit sína menn[*and granted her* veizlur *with him so that she could comfortably sustain herself and her men there*]." *Heimskringla* 3, 405). Exceptional but noteworthy in this context is King Ólafur kyrri's gift of land and its income-generating rights to Skúli konungsfóstri, as *veizlur*, cf. *Morkinskinna*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 1932), 283-284; *Fagrskinna*, 296-297; *Heimskringla* 3, 197-198. The political rather than financial framework of *veizlur* is underscored in the king's debate with powerful magnates such as Erlingur Skjálgsson over their appointment, even when the financial aspect is duly recognized (neither Ágrip nor Fagurskinna employs *veizlur* in respect of Erlingur's position; Fagurskinna speaks of *ørendi* while also speaking of him as *lendr*; Ólafs saga helga in Heimskringla, on the other hand, speaks of *veizlur*), cf. *Ágrip*, 27; *Fagrskinna*, 145, 166, 182; *Heimskringla* 1, 304-307; *Heimskringla* 2, 28-30, 39, 77-79, 192-206, 235, cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 58-61, 96-99, 111-113, 286-289, 293-297, 302, 306-308, 360-361, 379, 381, 456-457, 481-485, and *Flateyjarbók* 2, 51-52, 197-199, 233-234, 308-310. Consider also the framework of Blóð-Egill's *veizlur* in Borgundarhólmur as presented in Knýtlinga saga (the only reference to *veizlur* as grants in the saga), cf. *Knýtlinga saga*, 153-154ff. For other references to *veizlur* as grants in Ágrip and the compendia alone see *Ágrip*, 38; *Fagrskinna*, 103-104, 110, 322-323, 348; *Morkinskinna*, 337 ("Sigurþr hafþi eN eystra lut landz til forreþa beþi at veizlom oc scottom [*Sigurður was assigned control over the eastern part of the kingdom, including its* veizlur *and taxes*]," which could be understood as the king's right to utilize obligatory hospitality, but which is more naturally understood as the king's authority over grants), 376; *Heimskringla* 1, 137, 248; *Heimskringla* 2, 27, 175-176, 211, 226, 306-307, 333-334, 346; *Heimskringla* 3, 35-37, 120, 122, 130, 133, 282-283.

griða ok sætta ok bjóða konungi, at þingboð skyli fara yfir land ok bjóða honum heldr viðtǫku en þola her hans, ok váru þar lǫgð frest á, meðan þingboð færi yfir. Krafði þá konungr vistagjalds, meðan sú bíðandi skyldi vera. En bændr kjósa hinn kost heldr, at búa konungi veizlur þá stund alla, er hann þurfti, til þess, ok tók konungr þann kost, at hann fór um land at veizlum með sumt lið sitt, en sumt gætti skipa hans. En er þetta spyrja þeir bræðr, Hyrningr ok Þorgeirr, mágar Óláfs konungs, þá samna þeir sér liði ok ráða sér til skipa, fara síðan norðr í Víkina ok koma á einni nótt með liði sínu þar, sem Guðrøðr konungr var á veizlu, veita þar atgǫngu með eldi ok vápnum. Fell þar Guðrøðr konungr ok flestallt liðit hans, en þat, er á skipunum hafði verit, var sumt drepit, en sumt komsk undan ok flýði víðs vegar. Váru þá dauðir allir synir Eiríks ok Gunnhildar.[51]

[*Guðröður sailed south to Víkin. And immediately upon arrival he proceeded to harry and subjugate the people, and demanded acclamation for himself. But when the people saw that they were facing a great army, they then sued for peace and reconciliation, and made an offer to the king that they would send an assembly summons throughout the land, offering him acclamation rather than trying to confront his army, and things were put on hold while the assembly summons went round the land. The king then demanded a maintenance fee during the waiting period, but the farmers opted rather to hold* veizlur *for the king for as long as he needed, and the king accepted this; he journeyed through the land attending* veizlur *with some of his men while others guarded his ships. And when the brothers Hyrningur and Þorgeir, King Ólafur's kinsmen, became aware of this they assembled a troop and arranged for ships, and then traveled north to Víkin and arrived one night together with their troop where King Guðröður was attending a* veizla*, and attacked with fire and weapons. King Guðröður fell there and almost all of his men, but of those who had been with the ships some were killed, but some escaped and fled in all directions. With this, all the sons of Eiríkur and Gunnhildur were dead*.]

Not only is violently pursued hospitality described with casual ease as *veizlur* but it is also juxtaposed with *vistagjald*, "maintenance fee," which serves to highlight the contributory context of the arrangement. However, *vistagjald* only appears in the context of warfare or armed struggles, and as an *ad hoc* maintenance through force of arms. Burdensome economic violence of this sort was an inseparable part of medieval warfare; visiting armies were rarely a sign of economic prosperity. It is notable, nevertheless, how frequently

[51] *Heimskringla* 1, 334-335, cf. also *Flateyjarbók* 1, 432-433. Oddur Snorrason's earlier Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar puts a different spin on it, for moralizing effect, with the fatal feast presented as part of a game of deception on behalf of Þorgeir and Hyrningur; see *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar eptir Odd munk Snorrason*, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit 25 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2006), 286-288.

exacted contributions assume the form of *veizlur* instead of *vistagjǫld*.[52] Obligatory contributions *in natura* tend to take the form of *veizlur* instead of blatantly exacted payments. As in Guðröður's case, when confronted with the choice of making compulsory payments or fighting the farmers choose to manage the situation through hosting arrangements rather than finding supplies or money which might have served as a straightforward payment. When Snorri remarks earlier, in Haralds saga gráfeldar, that "árferð spilltisk í landi [*the season went bad throughout the land*]" in the days of Gunnhildarsynir "því at konungar váru margir ok hafði hverr þeira hirð um sik. Þurftu þeir mikils við um kostnað, ok váru þeir inir fégjǫrnustu [*because there were many kings, each maintaining a court. Covering their costs was a burden and they yielded to no-one in coveting wealth*],"[53] then we may safely assume that such forced exactions mainly took the form of obligatory *veizlur*, aside from other taxation. Another of the Eiríkssynir, King Erlingur, was indeed confronted and killed while feasting in Þrándheimur, where his harsh exactions had made him very unpopular:

> Ok um vetrinn sǫmnuðusk bændr saman ok fá lið mikit, stefna síðan at Erlingi konungi, þar sem hann var á veizlu, ok halda við hann orrostu. Fell Erlingr konungr þar ok mikil sveit manna með honum.[54]
>
> [*The farmers recruited in the winter and assembled a great force, then headed for where King Erlingur was attending a* veizla *and confronted him in battle. King Erlingur fell there and a mighty troop of men with him*.]

We are not told how many men King Erlingur felt necessary to take with him for such *veizlur*, but no less than a "mikil sveit" died with him. The farmers appear less than enthusiastic in their role as hosts.

The obligatory sharing of resources through formal hospitality is by definition a contribution in kind. From such a narrow perspective it may seem tempting to make sense of *Herrschaftsgastung* in general by seeing it as a raw and blatant form of taxation, ultimately and primarily carried out for that purpose. Indeed, there are instances, such as Guðröður's above-cited arrival in Víkin, where the contributory potential of *veizlur* is particularly pronounced. There is a similarly notable scene in Ólafs saga helga which may be viewed in a similar light. When King Ólafur helgi seeks acclamation in Orkadalur in Þrándheimur he meets with resistance led by Earl Sveinn and the prominent magnate Einar þambarskelfir. On Einar's advice, Sveinn takes *veizlur* in Stjóradalur, in the hope that when King Ólafur arrives for a *veizla* at nearby Steinker, he will be vulnerable to the

[52] There appear to be only handful of instances. In Heimskringla, *vistagjald* is also levied by King Sigurður Jórsalafari in Smálönd, cf. *Heimskringla* 3, 264 (cf. *Flateyjarbók* 1, 432). See also *Sverris saga*, ed. Þorleifur Hauksson, Íslenzk fornrit 30 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2007), 206.

[53] *Heimskringla* 1, 203-204. The financial burden of multiple courts is also an issue in Fagurskinna, cf. *Fagrskinna*, 98.

[54] *Heimskringla* 1, 220-221. In Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar we note that Earl Hákon Sigurðsson, who had fled to King Haraldur Gormsson in Denmark, secretly urged his "friends" to kill King Erlingur in order to safeguard his return to power in Þrándheimur, cf. *Heimskringla* 1, 232-233.

kind of attack from which there will be no escape. King Ólafur duly arrives for the *veizla*, but is too tactically adroit for the trap to succeed:

> Óláfr konungr, þá er hann kom til Steinkera, tók hann upp veizluna ok lét bera á skip sín ok aflaði til byrðinga ok hafði með sér bæði vist ok drykk ok bjósk í brot sem skyndiligast ok helt út allt til Niðaróss.
>
> [*When King Ólafur came to Steinker he seized the* veizla *and had it carried to his ships and boats and took with him supplies of food and drink, hurried away as quickly as possible and proceeded all the way to Niðarós*.]

In this instance the *veizla* really does seem to be a moveable feast, since it is involves not the act of hosting and accommodating but quite simply the raw consumables. Again, the circumstances are those of warfare; both camps exact maintenance while simultaneously seeking to prevent each other's access to resources. When King Ólafur hurriedly escaped confrontation in Niðarós, Sveinn and his men seized "jólavistina alla, en brenndu húsin ǫll [*all the Christmas supplies and burned all the houses*]."[55] Although warfare and open conflict are common scenes of action in saga and society they cannot be thought of as a constant and normative state of affairs. The usurpation, plunder, seizure, and economic violence involved in such circumstances tend to highlight the contributory functions of *veizlur* at the expense of their otherwise more political purpose.

At the opposite end, there is a memorable passage in Haralds saga gráfeldar in which Snorri engages in wordplay with bleakly sarcastic effect. King Sigurður slefa arrives at the farm of Klyppur hersir, a magnate from a very prominent aristocratic family in Hörðaland

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[55] *Heimskringla* 2, 51-53, 57; quotes to 53 and 57. Earl Sveinn was previously at Steinker, where he likewise loaded his ship with "drykk ok vist, svá sem skipit tók við [*such drinks and supplies as the ship could carry*]," cf. 52. Cf. also *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 83-87 and *Flateyjarbók* 2, 39-41. This usage of *veizla* as a term is rare but not unique. Fagurskinna offers similar phrasing for the event, where King Ólafur becomes aware of Earl Sveinn at Steinker while the latter is about to take *jólaveizla* there; Sveinn moves on while Ólafur makes visit to Steinker: "Óláfr konungr tók alla jólaveizluna, er Sveinn <jarl> hafði búit sér [*King Ólafur seized the entire* jólaveizla *which Earl Sveinn had prepared for himself*]." *Fagrskinna*, 172-173, quote to 173. Likewise, a planned wedding feast in Hákonar saga herðibreiðs comes to nothing when the groom, Ormur Ívarsson, flees to Sweden following the death of King Ingi at the hands of King Hákon: "En þeir Hákonar menn tóku upp brullaupsveizluna ok stórmikit hlutskipti annat [*But Hákon and his men seized the* brullaupsveizla *and much more booty*]." *Heimskringla* 3, 369. Morkinskinna offers a third example when noting: "Oc þat er sagt eitt sinn at þeir spurþo at G. scylldi taca veizlo at mags sins. heldo a vorþo. oc komo til veizloNar oc drapo mennina er veita scylldo. en settoz sialfir oc neytto veizloNar [*It happened one time that they learned that Gregorius was to accept* veizla *at his kinsman. They went on guard, and then attended the* veizla*, killed those hosting it, and sat down themselves to consume the* veizla]." *Morkinskinna*, 452. A division of the act of presentation and the material presented also emerges when payment is made in lieu of *veizla* as *veizlufé* or *veizlugjǫld*, normally because the one to whom hospitality is due is unable to attend in person, or because other special circumstances demand such an arrangement. See, e.g., *Fagrskinna*, 65 ("bað konung taka sjálfan veizluna eða veizlufé [*asked the king to attend the* veizla *in person or otherwise accept* veizlugjǫld *in lieu of it*]"); *Heimskringla* 2, 107 ("tók veizlugjǫld norðan ór Dǫlum ok víða um Heiðmǫrk [*exacted* veizlugjǫld *from Dalir in the north and widely around Heiðmörk*]"), cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 155 and *Flateyjarbók* 2, 68.

and apparently not among the Eiríkssynir's political followers.[56] Given the context, King Sigurður deliberately arrives while Klyppur is absent:

> Klyppr var þá eigi heima, en Álof, kona hans, tók vel við konungi, ok var þar veizla góð ok drykkjur miklar. ... Konungr gekk um nóttina til hvílu Álofar ok lá þar at óvilja hennar. Síðan fór konungr í brot.[57]
>
> [*Klyppur was not home, but his wife, Álof, received the king well; there was a good* veizla *and much drinking. ... The king went to Álof's bed in the night and lay there against her will. Then the king left*.]

The description of how the king and his men proceed is typically spare, and correspondingly effective: they feast, drink a good deal, rape Klyppur's wife, and leave. Snorri's sees fit only to remark, coolly but no doubt with a smile on his face, that the men were received *vel*, "well," and that it was *góð veizla*, "a good feast." Indeed it must have been, if the demands of accommodation as regards food, drink, and housing flawlessly met the expected standards of hospitality. Unsurprisingly, King Sigurður lost his life not long afterwards via a thrust from Klyppur's sword. The multiple and grave insult inherent in the rape itself is obviously important, ranging as it does from the particularly intimate and personal psychological blow to the publically pronounced dishonor of having failed to protect one's household. What must be stressed, however, is the political statement inherent in the forced hospitality. It proves to be a recurring theme.

Insisting upon *veizlur* was ultimately a political act. Carrying it out required access to power, and that in turn made the exaction of hospitality a real and visible measure of its strength. Power was never, and could never be, sustained to any real or lasting degree by brute force alone. It was accrued, fed, practiced, and legitimized through complex factors and means, both economic, social, political, and cultural. Although political strikes and upkeep under conditions of war easily assumed the form of outright violence, as just cited, the obligations to host those who were political superiors generally rested on elements other than violence alone. Violence was never far from the scene, however;

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[56] Klyppur (Þorkell klyppur in Historia Norwegiae, Ágrip, and Fagurskinna) was the grandson of Hörða-Kári, and thus a close relative of Erlingur Skjálgsson. The prominence of the Hörða-Kári family was later promoted not only through the historical presentation of Erlingur in the kings' sagas but also through Icelandic genealogical literature, real or creative (and demonstrably inconsistent). Among later notables claiming descent was Bishop Klængur Þorsteinsson in Skálholt (*b*.1152-1175), in his case through Klyppur. A late and independent saga, possibly from the fourteenth century, deals with Klyppur's brother, Þórðar saga hreðu, which is evidently wholly removed from past historical events. See *Historia Norwegie*, eds. Inger Ekrem and Lars Boje Mortensen, transl. Peter Fisher (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2003), 84-86; *Ágrip*, 13; *Fagrskinna*, 102-103; *Heimskringla* 1, 304; *Biskupa ættir*, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, *Biskupa sögur* 3, Íslenzk fornrit 17 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1998), 465; *Íslendingabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, Íslenzk fornrit 1 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1968), 7; *Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, Íslenzk fornrit 1, 40-41, 49, 242, 312-313.

[57] *Heimskringla* 1, 218-219, quoted to 218. In addition to Heimskringla, references to or accounts of the death of Sigurður slefa, with some significant variations, can be found in Historia Norwegiae, Ágrip, Fagurskinna (all three cf. note 56), Þórðar saga hreðu, and Sigurður þáttur slefu in Flateyjarbók, cf. *Þórðar saga hreðu*, ed. Jóhannes Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit 14, 163-168; *Flateyjarbók* 1, 19-21.

armed force always remained the political method of last resort. Among the most obvious examples of feasting on the edge of legitimate authority and violence are those connected with the hard-won conquests of the kingdom by the two Ólafur figures. Consider the presentation of King Ólafur helgi's success and its immediate association with extensive feasting.[58] When seeking acclamation in Orkadalur in Þrándheimur he is faced with "bóandasamnaði, ok hǫfðu þeir meirr en sjau hundruð manna [*a mass of farmers; they had more than seven hundreds of men*]." Armies are drawn up, on the assumption that battle will occur. Ólafur's drawn out and elaborately recited claim for legitimate succession in Þrándheimur on grounds of Earl Hákon's previous surrender of overlordship is then cut short by an ultimatum:

> kom þar at lokum, at hann bauð bóndum tvá kosti, þann annan at ganga til handa honum ok veita honum hlýðni, sá var annarr at halda þá við hann orrostu. Síðan fóru bændr aptr til liðs síns ok sǫgðu sín ørendi, leituðu þá ráðs við allt fólkit, hvern þeir skyldu af taka. En þótt þeir kærði þetta um hríð milli sín, þá kuru þeir þat af at ganga til handa konungi. Var þat þá eiðum bundit af hendi bónda. Skipaði konungr þá ferð sína, ok gerðu bændr veizlur í móti honum.[59]
>
> [*finally, he rendered the farmers two options, either that they receive him and submit to him, or that they face him in battle. The farmers then retreated to their crowd and brought their message, and consulted the entire army as to which they should opt for. And although they debated the issue for a while, it transpired that they chose to submit to the king. This was subsequently confirmed by oaths on behalf of the farmers. The king then organized his route and the farmers made* veizlur *for his reception*.]

Two things stand out here. One is that the local aristocracy practically negotiates among itself concerning the options of feasting with the visitor or facing him in mortal combat; shortly thereafter they find themselves hosting *veizlur* for the same figure whom they had earlier seriously considered defying with weapons. The other is the explicit link made between feasting and the exercise of authority. Words of acceptance are one thing, acting them out is another. The local aristocracy proves its acceptance and subordination through a demonstrative act of hospitality. While contracting bonds through action, it also underscores, as such acts commonly do, the political unevenness of the parties. There is every reason to assume, therefore, that the priority of feasting had all to do with power and little to do with empty stomachs, although filling those was in and of itself a worthy enough task. This is not to deny the economic or fiscal implications of mandatory hospitality but to highlight its social and political functions.

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[58] On the presentation of King Ólafur helgi in medieval sources, see most recently Sverre Bagge, "Warrior, King, and Saint: The Medieval Histories about St. Óláfr Haraldsson," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 109:3 (2010); cf. also Sverrir Tómasson, "Ólafur helgi eilífur konungur," *Heimskringla 3. Lykilbók*, eds. Bergljót S. Kristjánsdóttir et al. (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1991).

[59] *Heimskringla* 2, 51-52.

The political world of the sagas demands constant displays and proof of authority by those claiming to exercise it, and it was essential for kings to live up to these requirements. Showing the king at work often means showing him at feasts. In Haralds saga Sigurðssonar, exacting hospitality is emblematic of what it means to exercise royal authority:

> Magnús konungr ok Haraldr konungr réðu báðir Nóregi inn næsta vetr eptir sætt þeira, ok hafði sína hirð hvárr þeira. Þeir fóru um vetrinn um Upplǫnd at veizlum ok váru stundum báðir samt, en stundum sér hvárr þeira. Þeir fóru allt norðr til Þrándheims ok til Niðaróss.[60]
>
> [*King Magnús and King Haraldur jointly ruled Norway the winter following their reconciliation, and each maintained his own court. They journeyed through Upplönd attending* veizlur *during the winter, sometimes jointly and sometimes apart. They went all the way north to Þrándheimur and to Niðarós.*]

The clause is typical in its simplicity: joint rulership is announced and then displayed in action. The kings feast because that is what kings do. That this is Snorri's only mention in the saga of either king, jointly or separately, enjoying obligatory *veizlur* only highlights the reference.[61] Morkinskinna puts it clearly when King Haraldur harðráði gets tough with the Upplendingar by means of widespread arson, with the latter maintaining that the king has violated privileges granted them by his brother, King Ólafur helgi, and thus resisting:

> Eftir þat vegdv beenðr sialfom sér oc helldv laug eftir konungs orþom oc aull hans boþ en hann hetti þa at brenna bę́i þeira. Oc eftir þat er settvz aull vandreþi þeira þa toc Haralldr konungr þar veizlur aVplaundom…[62]
>
> [*The farmers then yielded to the king's aggression and honored the law by his words and all his demands, and he stopped burning their farms. And when all their troubles had been cleared the king took* veizlur *in Upplönd…*]

The irrelevance of friendship in the modern sense is explicit when it comes to demonstrating power through feasts.

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[60] *Heimskringla* 3, 102.
[61] Morkinskinna includes further references not included by Snorri, cf. *Morkinskinna*, 99-101, 103-104 (variously obligatory it would seem, as marked below), 109-110 (level of obligation unclear), 120-124 (offered by a landed man, yet as spontaneously as an unexpected royal visit can allow), 133-136 (again (un)expected arrival at a landed man), 152-153 (in Oslo), 187-194 (obligatory and forced), 195 (recurring but hardly obligatory as contribution). Cf. also *Flateyjarbók* 3. *En samling of norske konge-sagaer med indskudte mindre fortællinger om begivenheder i og udenfor Norge samt annaler*, eds. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and C. R. Unger (Oslo: P. T. Mallings forlagsboghandel, 1868), 265, *passim*.
[62] *Morkinskinna*, 187-189ff, quoted to 189.

We may consider further the use of force and the framework of legitimate action in the case of King Ólafur helgi. There is little sense of mutual affection when he, in the king's name, exacts *veizlur* in Upplönd while simultaneously enforcing Christianity with ruthless brutality:

> suma rak hann brot ór landi, suma lét hann hamla at hǫndum eða fótum eða stinga augu út, suma lét hann hengja eða hǫggva, en engi lét hann óhegndan, þann er eigi vildi guði þjóna. Fór hann svá um allt þat fylki. Jafnt hegndi hann ríka ok óríka.
>
> [*some he exiled, some he had maimed by hand and foot or had their eyes plucked out, some he had hung or beheaded, and he spared none from punishment who refused to serve God. Thus he treated the entire region. He punished equally the powerful and the poor*.]

With the king thus meting out "stórar refsingar þeim, er eigi vildu hlýða hans orðum [*major punishment to those refusing to heed his words*]" throughout his route between feasts, the five petty kings of the region, the Upplendingakonungar, enter into an alliance, muster an army to fight him off, and recruit some of the more viable aristocrats of the region in a plot to secure his assassination. Reportedly, their famously sudden and humiliating defeat became one of King Ólafur's most cherished trophies.[63] His confiscation of ships and horses in the midst of the episode further underscores the *ad hoc* and bruising use of power. Irrespective of whether the Upplendingar want Ólafur as their king or not, however, we may note that they do not question the king's authority *per se* in demanding hospitality in the form of *veizlur*; it is the extent to which it is pursued beyond conventionally agreed limits that offends them, alongside, obviously, the overbearing religious violence of this particular king. His religious demands are seen as crossing the boundaries of conventional authority, and the local farmers are thus correspondingly reluctant to accept that authority and those demands in name at the *þing* and in action at *veizlur*. As he progressed through Hörðaland in the spring of 1023 *at veizlum* and in pursuit of his missionary campaign, he was not greeted with warmth as his *þing* with the farmers in Vörs makes apparent:

> Kómu þar bændr fjǫlmennt ok með alvæpni. Bauð konungr þeim at taka við kristni, en búendr buðu bardaga í mót, ok kom svá, at hvárirtveggju fylkðu liði sínu.[64]
>
> [*The famers arrived in numbers and fully armed. The king ordered them to accept Christianity but the farmers offered battle instead; it thus came about that each drew up his army*.]

[63] For the Upplönd episode see *Heimskringla* 2, 100-107, quoted to 101, cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 146-155, and *Flateyjarbók* 2, 63-68.
[64] *Heimskringla* 2, 206-207, quoted to 206, cf. *Flateyjarbók* 2, 235.

King Ólafur then moved "norðr í Sogn ok tók þar veizlur um sumarit [*north to Sogn and took* veizlur *there during the summer*]," again accompanied by *þing* meetings with the local farmers:

> Bændr sóttu þingit með her manns alvápnaðan. Konungr bauð þeim kristni, en búendur æpðu í móti ok báðu hann þegja, gerðu þegar gný mikinn ok vápnabrak.
>
> [*The famers arrived to the thing as a fully-armed force. The king invited them to accept Christianity but the farmers yelled against it and told him to shut up, and instantly made a great noise and crash of arms.*]

Despite having recruited *þegn* and *þræll* for the occasion, the farmers give in when devastated by the king's widespread arson.[65] Of course, there were also trusted allies in these regions, such as Ketill on Hringunes in Upplönd,[66] but the fierce opposition of many, and the conflict it brought about, necessarily pushed some of the hospitality of proclaimed customary obligations towards the boundaries of rather naked violence and overbearing conduct.

Despite such extremes of conflict, the link between lordship and hospitality is unmistakable. Power and feasting belong together. The obligation of hosting political superiors was a norm of political communication in medieval Scandinavia as in many or even most pre-modern European political cultures.[67] It permeated political thought and practice, and expressed, asserted, and refreshed social and political ties up and down the political strata. Kings, counts, lords, bishops, and others of their kin routinely commanded hospitality from their political inferiors as an inseparable element of practicing their authority.[68] The style and structure of governance, commonly and abstractly brought under the rubric of itinerant kingship, largely revolved around such obligatory hospitality, just as the itinerant kingship of the kings' sagas largely revolves around the king's *iter* and his demands for *veizlur*. The normality and applicability of communicating power through feasting, as is that of giving and receiving in general, is never questioned in the sagas. It made the social and political world go round. However, negotiating the limits of power,

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[65] *Heimskringla* 2, 207-208, quoted to 207, cf. *Flateyjarbók* 2, 235.
[66] Cf. note 63.
[67] Also widely known outside Europe, of course, cf. John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936–1075, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, Fourth Series 21* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 45-46, with references to Clifford Geertz and others; Hans Conrad Peyer, *Von der Gastfreundschaft zum Gasthaus*, 11, including helpful references to older literature and lexicons; Hans Conrad Peyer, "Das Reisekönigtum des Mittelalters," *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 51 (1964), rpt. in *Könige, Stadt und Kapital. Aufsätze zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialgescichte des Mittelalters*, eds. Ludwig Schmugge et al. (Zurich: Verlag Neue Züricher Zeitung, 1982), 111-115.
[68] For the Scandinavian context, see Birgitta Odén, "Gästning. Sverige," Niels-Skyum-Nielsen, "Gästning. Danmark," and Halvard Bjørkvik, "Gästning. Norge," all in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformationstid* 6 (Copenhagen et al.: Rosenkilde og Bagger et al., 1961), esp. 2-4, 7-11, 13-17.

whether metaphorically or literally, frequently led to a stiff process of political adjudication.

The ways in which hospitality was exacted depended on host of disparate factors, some intrinsic to the political culture of relative statelessness and some contingent on historically specific circumstances. In terms of power in general, hospitality was by its nature the object of contest, and was thus spared automatic and objective systematization or exemptions from force and violence. For manifold reasons, however, it was in the ultimate interest of all involved to regularize hospitality as far as possible, and to channel it into an acknowledged and workable framework of political interaction. In that context, political legitimacy and limits were key issues. Quite apart from making *Herrschaftsgastung* generally practicable, explicit regularization served simultaneously as the legitimizing discourse of both the power inherent in exacting hospitality, as also the limits curbing it. Even in contexts where force – or, from the opposite viewpoint, defenselessness – was particularly pronounced in shaping the exaction of hospitality, it was normally promoted, by the powerful and the records they produced, as conforming to "custom." The political disintegration of post-Carolingian Europe led to the emergence of banal lords in the eleventh century, who rather unrestrainedly transformed their exercise of *bannum* until it involved the virtual territorialization of unchecked political and judicial control around their fortresses. Among their foremost weapons of economic and political assertion was the levying of the tallage (*taleia*/*talleata*), essentially a fee of protection and security superimposed territorially on tenants, allodial farmers, and monastic institutions alike. That tallage frequently assumed the form of obligatory hospitality towards the castellan and his circle of men. Although bracketed within the traditional military right of demanding board and lodging (*gîte et albergue*), it was quickly styled as "customary," as also were the sets of novel rights and prerogatives of banality.[69] In this context, *consuetudines*, *usatges*, or *usatica* were not intended primarily to imply customs in the conventional sense of something practiced from times immemorial, but as that which adheres to general consensus and collective agreement, and draws its legitimacy from the

[69] Post-Carolingian lordship, and the current scholarly debate on its development and characteristics, receives extensive and up-to-date treatment in Thomas N. Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century. Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). On banal lordship, castellans, and castellanies, see further and generally, e.g., Jean-Pierre Poly and Eric Bournazel, *La mutation féodale, X^e^-XII^e^ siècles*, Nouvelle Clio 16 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980), transl. as *The Feudal Transformation 900-1200*, transl. Caroline Higgitt, Europe Past and Present Series (New York et al: Holmes and Meier, 1991), 9-45; Georges Duby, *L'économie rurale et la vie des campagnes dans l'occident médiéval (France, Angleterre, Empire, IX^e^-XV^e^ siècles*) 1-2. *Essai de synthèse et perspectives de recherches*, Collection historique (Paris : Aubier, 1962), transl. as *Rural Economy and Country Life in the Medieval West*, transl. Cynthia Postan (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968), esp. 197ff.; Dominique Barthélemy, *L'ordre seigneurial, XI^e^-XII^e^ siècle*, Nouvelle historie de la France médiévale 3 (Paris: Le Seuil, 1988); Marc Bloch, *La société féodale* 1. *La formation des liens de dépendance*, L'évolution de l'humanité 34 (Paris: Michel, 1939), transl. as *Feudal Society* 1. *The Growth of Ties of Dependence*, transl. L. A. Manyon (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), 248-254, 2. *Les classes et le gouvernment des hommes* (1940), transl. as *Social Classes and Political Organization*, 359ff, esp. 394-407. Cf. also Hans Conrad Peyer, *Von der Gastfreundschaft zum Gasthaus*, 171ff.

fact of being observed through action by all involved.[70] So it was conceived, or at least promoted, by the higher orders of society, which probably reflects inadequately the attitudes of the lower orders. Wherever hospitality served as one of the standard ways through which power could be communicated, and in whatever manner it so became, its regularization remained in the interest of high and low alike, and thus retained its place on the agenda. The peasants of the villages and the procurators of the monasteries, now faced with burdensome and forced visits by their territorial lords, had few options but to secure the limited rights they could realistically hope to defend by negotiating for the regularization and limitation of novel yet customary dues. In the case of banal lords, offers of converting services in kind into fixed and permanent payments were well received. Seigniorial lords might even pursue their custom of hospitality with limited restraint – violence, that is – in order to facilitate such arrangements.[71] Securing privileges of exemption from obligations of hosting, often by transformation into payment or taxes of one sort or another, is a very common theme in high and late medieval European political history, pursued increasingly by villages, towns, religious institutions, and comparable entities.[72]

Complaints against misuse and violent pursuit of obligations were likewise an inseparable element of their existence and practice. This sprang partly from a frequent inability to resist the power of the mighty, who not uncommonly sought to extend their powers to the limit, and partly from the fact that establishing these limits was a perpetual, subjective, and exceedingly strenuous process of political negotiation and renegotiation, whether by word, action, or both. However, warlords of castles, their bands of *milites*, and others engaged in the somewhat arbitrary uses of force, soon began to meet with increasing resistance in the tenth and eleventh centuries, from emerging peace movements, lay and ecclesiastical, that sought to promote public peace, the regulation of armed forces, and curbs on the capricious exercise of power and violence. This initially popular movement, spreading from southern France, turned into a widespread royal and princely initiative connected with pacification and policing in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Supplemental to the *pax* and *treuga dei*, kings and princes evermore successfully consolidated their administration of criminal justice through pragmatic means such as legislation and coercive discipline. Not only did they arrive at better

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[70] *Consuetudo*, "custom," is not the easiest medieval term for the modern student to comprehend, especially as it was incorporated into diplomatic and legal discourse towards the end of the tenth century and from the eleventh century onwards. Little needs to be said about its conventional, and greatly valued, sense of practices that extend beyond memory, and the legitimizing implications it carried as a consequently. However, "customs," such as those of banal lordship, were not necessarily understood to be particularly old; they primarily denoted rights or prerogatives, which, as such, could be bought, sold, inherited, or given, and drew their legitimacy from a proclaimed consensus and observance of all vis-à-vis from higher (royal) promulgation or ratification of law. For introductory remarks and further references see, e.g., Jean-Pierre Poly and Eric Bournazel, *La mutation féodale, X^e^-XII^e^ siècles*, 28-34.

[71] Jean-Pierre Poly and Eric Bournazel emphasize the banal custom of hospitality as being naked violence aimed primarily at facilitating the establishment of permanent dues, which may be true in many instances. As generally with the tallage, its deployment by lords could be harsh and arbitrary. Jean-Pierre Poly and Eric Bournazel, *La mutation féodale, X^e^-XII^e^ siècles*, 31.

[72] Hans Conrad Peyer, *Von der Gastfreundschaft zum Gasthaus*, e.g. 148ff, *passim*.

positions than before via granting and protecting privileges, such as exemptions from political and fiscal dues towards local lords and magnates, but they also gradually criminalized supposed breaches and violations against the social order, such as violations of privileges from hospitality, thereby making them the subject of their own jurisdiction and power. *Malae* or *pravae consuetudines*, "bad customs," became crimes against public order.[73] Legislation for and proclamation of public peace, *Landfrieden* in the Empire, invariably sought to curb violently and arbitrarily pursued hospitality, especially in respect of privileged cities and towns. Issues such as enforced entry into the private residences of the politically weak and threats to hospitality had already been addressed as early as in Carolingian capitularies. From the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, cities and towns, notably in Spain and Italy, recruited the support of princes, kings, and emperors in hindering and explicitly forbidding enforced hospitality by overpowering visitors.[74] Although services and dues in kind were increasingly eliminated through payments or conversion to taxes, especially from the twelfth through to the fourteenth centuries, it was more than anything their regularization and stabilization through adjudicative

[73] The thorny issue of "public" and "order" in relation to the post-Carolingian development of lordship and its "good" and "bad" customs – the nature and exercise of banal power, basically – lies at the heart of the on-going debate concerning the "feudal revolution," cf. note 36 of chapter 1.

[74] Generally on the Peace and Truce of God, the rise of peace-keeping associations, and the political implications it generated, see, e.g., *The Peace of God. Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000*, eds. Thomas Head and Richard Landes (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Hartmut Hoffmann, *Gottesfriede und Treuga Dei*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica Schriften 20 (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1964). To what extent, if any, the peace movements spreading from southern France under the rubric of *pax* and *treuga dei* served as models for the royal legislation of *Landfrieden* in the Empire remains a matter of dispute. The centrality of the legislative activity to the tightening of royal judicial powers in the Empire, however, is not in doubt. Benjamin Arnold, *Medieval Germany 500-1300. A Political Interpretation*, European History in Perspective (London: Macmillan, 1997), 151-157; Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution. The Formation of Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 493-502. Already in 958 King Berengar II issued privileges for Genoa, which expressly forbade enforced hosting in the city by dukes, margraves, and other aristocratic notables; similar privileges were secured by Kings Henry II, III, and IV for numerous other cities, e.g., Mantua and Savona in 1014, Pisa in 1081, and Cremona in 1114. The criminalization of forced hospitality was gradual; when Frederick Barbarossa legislated against arson and other household injuries and violations in 1186, enforced hospitality (*hospitari violenter*) was to be punished only if it caused evident damage (inflicting fire being capital crime). In the course of the high Middle Ages, the qualification of damage lost importance and enforced hospitality became in and of itself as much a breach of public peace as breaking and entering (*domum invadere*). The development was broadly similar in French territories and England. King Henry I issued notable privileges of exemption from obligations of hospitality for London in 1132, with further tightening in 1155: the pursuant of enforced hospitality should forfeit his life as would a housebreaker. Similar privileges followed for numerous other cities and towns, freeing them from obligations of quartering. These and further examples are rehearsed in Robert von Keller, *Freiheitsgarantien für Personen und Eigentum im Mittelalter. Eine Studie zur Vorgeschichte moderner Verfassungsgrundrechte*, Deutschrechtliche Beiträge 14:1 (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1933), 157ff; Hans Conrad Peyer, *Von der Gastfreundschaft zum Gasthaus*, 192-199. Similarly, prohibitions of violent entries and enforced hospitality became subject to royal protection and legislation by *c.*1280 in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. In Norway, King Hákon háleggur's 1303 amendment refers back to the arrangements of 1281, and advocates the development of taverns, "Taffer(n)ishus," cf. *Norges gamle love indtil 1387* 3, 136-137; Jerker Rosén, "Våldgästning," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformationstid* 20 (Copenhagen et al.: Rosenkilde og Bagger et al., 1976).

agreements on their scope and limits that lay closest to the heart. It embraced the communication of power through itinerant kingship no less than did the policing of castellans, petty lords beating up on peasants and monks, and aristocrats imposing themselves on city burgers.

Snorri's Ólafs saga helga is a *tour de force* in political adjudication. A vitally important and explicit issue in other compendia, the constant process of negotiating the limits and scope of power and its practice between king and aristocracy is dramatized to hair-rising effect in Heimskringla. It comes as no surprise that the politics of giving, receiving, and sharing, constitutive as they were in claiming, expressing, exercising, and legitimating power and hierarchy, emerge as scenic constants in the political drama of the sagas. Although the sagas explore the nature of kingship in depth through shades and subtleties of detail (the nature of office and title, royal virtues and vices, etc.[75]), their image of the king at work is fairly straight-forward in that his stock-activates, for want of a better phrase, are very limited, with feasting, giving, and receiving prominent among them. Whether servicing Christianity, dispensing justice by law and force, pacifying the kingdom, tuning his power to that of others, or tending any of the other generic tasks that generally make up his day, the king is invariably at feasts, or moving from one such occasion towards another. Communicating and adjudicating power was the constant business of kings, and so were feasts among their primary venues of operation. Feasting is in and of itself a form of political negotiation.

Royal perambulation between *veizlur* represents political action of such normality, which is so firmly embedded within medieval Scandinavia, that the modern saga audience's lurking fetishism for systematically differentiating their levels of obligations is nowhere near satisfiable. Of course, this is partly because the sagas treat many feasts without bringing their fullest context into full and equal focus, as already noted, and overwhelmingly, one comes to feel, because the saga world poorly conforms to the perceptual preconditions of treating feasts and gifts as objective structures vis-à-vis modes of discourse. Obviously, there were acknowledged and conscious variations in both the level and intensity of feasting obligations, from the voluntary to the forcible, but, all the same, *veizlur* were ultimately perceived of as variants of an archetypal mode of communication. To what extent and exactly in which way each feast was subject to forces of obligation is by rule of thumb of secondary concern in saga presentation, relative to the normality of pursuing them within reasonable limits of authority. This is the focal point of adjudication: the reasonable limits of power between those enjoying access to it, and how it is shared and negotiated among such people. As long as *veizlur* conformed to what king and aristocracy felt agreeable and proper to their relations and limits of power, then the feasts' differing levels of obligation made limited impact on their general conceptualization and presentation as consensual arrangements. The sagas hold no reservations about the practice of *Herrschaftsgastung* as such; on the other hand, they engage, quite enthusiastically at times, in the debate as to its limits, and indeed the debate as to the limits of royal power in general. The saga audience therefore becomes keenly aware of the double fact, that as the king travels about his kingdom he repeatedly attends

[75] See most comprehensively Ármann Jakobsson, *Í leit að konungi*.

feasts hosted by his political allies or subordinates, based on the belief that such feasts correspond to the legitimate demands of custom and the inherent features of royal lordship, and that despite the practice's general acknowledgement its limits and scope are far from set and beyond dispute. Though royal lordship is never disputed, its limits frequently and fervently are.

Explicit regularization of the royal itinerancy surfaces in every kings' saga, and Morkinskinna, Fagurskinna, and Heimskringla all provide valuable observations about it and episodes illustrating it. Among them is the frustratingly short account in Morkinskinna of King Ólafur kyrri's long reign (1066-1093), lasting twenty-seven years yet stretching only a few pages. Its centerpiece is the king's administrative transformation of the court. The account's brevity and substance are retained in both Fagurskinna and Heimskringla, helping to create the overall impression that King Ólafur was, rightly or wrongly, primarily remembered for and credited with administrative novelties of court and rule. Apparently, the transformation of the court entailed its expansion, which consequently tilted the balance of power by reasserting limits:

> Olafr konvngr toc með ser .c. mala m . . . . . [*lacuna*] voro hirþmenn hans. en forN lɑg voro til þess at konvngr scylldi hafa .lx. hirdmanna. hann hafþi oc lx. gesta. en aþr hofðo konvngar haft xxx. hann hafþi iafnan .lx. þeira manna er at borþi voro oc a vistom oc at veizlom. oc voro þo eigi handgengnir. voro þeir imiNna ifirleti. flvttv þeir þat er konvngr þurfti e. armenn hans e. foro icɑpferþir. oc voro scylldir íallt konvngs starf. Bøndr spurþv konvng fyrir hveria soc hann hefþi meiri hirþ vm sic. eN iner fyRi konvngar hofðo haft. en hann svaraþi aþa lvnd. letzc vera þvi miMni firir raz maðr en hans faþir. at eigi fecc hann betr stillt e stiornat rikino. við .cc. manna. en Haralldr konvngr við ix tigo e. .c.[76]
>
> [*King Ólafur took one hundred* [mála] . . . . . [lacuna] *were his retainers, but customary law prescribed that the king should only have sixty retainers. He also had ninety* gestir *whereas previous kings only had thirty. He always kept sixty men at his table who stayed with him and feasted with him without belonging to his retinue; they were held in lower esteem. They transported whatever the king or his stewards needed, or made commercial journeys on his behalf, and they were obligated to perform the king's work. The farmers asked the king why he sustained a larger court around him than previous kings had done. He answered to the effect that he was so much less of a statesmen than his father that he could not control the realm better with two hundreds of men than King Haraldur did with ninety or a hundred.*]

The aristocracy is evidently concerned, but the king's hum-hah? answer cuts short further details on their concerns. The genuine understanding is that the king and his itinerant

[76] *Morkinskinna*, 290.

court are to be hosted to feasts by the local aristocracy and its farmers, and that its framework is the dialectic product of customary consensus, the obligation being inseparable from the acceptance of lordship. Snorri's reworking of the passage is noticeable. Whereas neither Morkinskinna nor Fagurskinna, in their marginally different wordings,[77] work up the farmer's concerns beyond the general and the curious, Snorri amplifies the king's answers in order to add an element of tension and skepticism:

> Óláfr konungr hafði hundrað hirðmanna ok sex tigu gesta ok sex tigu húskarla, þeira er flytja skyldu til garðsins þat, er þurfti, eða starfa aðra hluti, þá sem konungr vildi. En er bændr spurðu konung þess, fyrir hví hann hefði meira lið en lǫg váru til eða fyrri konungar hǫfðu haft, þá er hann fór á veizlur, þar sem bændr gerðu fyrir honum – konungr svarar svá: "Eigi fæ ek betr stýrt ríkinu ok eigi er meiri ógn af mér en af fǫðr mínum, þótt ek hafa hálfu fleira lið en hann hafði, en engi pynding gengr mér til þessa við yðr eða þat, at ek vilja þyngja kostum yðrum."[78]
>
> [*King Ólafur maintained a hundred retainers and sixty* gestir *and sixty servants, whose duty was to transport to the residence whatever was needed or perform any other service that the king requested. And when the farmers asked the king for what reason he maintained a larger retinue than customary law prescribed or previous kings had had, when attending* veizlur *that the farmers had prepared for him, the king answered: "I do not exercise tighter control and nor do I pose a greater threat than my father did, even if I maintain twice as many retainers as he did; I neither intend this for your torment and nor do I wish to impose harsh terms on you."*]

It is noteworthy that *ógn*, *pynding*, and *þungir kostir* have entered the discussion. Hosting the king and his court is not simply a matter of financial burdens but evidently one of power; the growing size of the traveling court violates customary appropriateness by its implications of forcible pursuit and permanent threat, and the farmers want none of it.

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[77] "Óláfr konungr hafði með <sér> hundrað hirðmanna, en forn lǫg váru til þess, at konungr skyldi hafa eigi meira en sex tigu hirðmanna. Hann hafði <auk> sex tigu gesta, en faðir hans hafði þrjá tigu, ok enn sex tigu manna þeira, er eigi váru handgengir ok í minna yfirlæti. Fluttu þeir þat, er konungr þurfti eða ármenn hans, eða fóru kaupferðir ok váru skyldir í alt konungs starf. Ok þá er bændr spurðu konunginn, fyrir hverja sǫk hann hafði meiri hirð en fyrr hafði verit, þá svaraði hann á þá lund, lézk vera því minni ráðamaðr en hans faðir, at eigi fekk hann betr stillt eða stjórnat ríkinu með tvau hundruð manna en Haraldr konungr með níu tigu manna eða hundrað [*King Ólafur kept a hundred of retainers with him, yet customary law stated that the king should have no more than sixty retainers. Additionally, he kept sixty* gestir*, whereas his father had kept thirty, and a further sixty men not belonging to his retinue and held in lower esteem; these transported whatever the king or his stewards needed or they undertook commercial journeys, and were obliged to perform all the king's work. And when the farmers asked the king on what account he maintained a larger court than there had previously been, he answered to the effect that he felt himself to be that much less of a statesman than his father had been so that he could not maintain control of the realm with two hundred men any better than King Haraldur did with ninety men or a hundred*]." *Fagrskinna*, 301.

[78] *Heimskringla* 3, 207.

The ability of the local aristocracy and farmers to resist the king on this matter must have varied a great deal, depending on circumstances, but accepting it quietly will not have been popular. However, even if kings and rival claimants departed from custom in times of conflict, there always remained the long-term interest of all in nurturing a sense (if only an approximate one) of demarcation between the reasonable practice of lordship and *Herrschaftsgastung*, on the one hand, and outright tyranny and lawlessness, on the other. The extent to which individual kings were willing or able to push customary limits depended on a host of factors, many of which were particular to the king in question and the political circumstances in which he operated. The ability to recruit support varied as much as did the enthusiasm with which followers and subjects received and accommodated rule and cause. The limits of hospitality were thus dictated by skills of political networking and charismatic leadership no less than by received custom. Kingship in the sagas, as lordship in general, is very personal and individual.

The customary norms framing the *iter* and its *veizlur* had most to do with the size of the traveling court, along with frequency of returns and duration of stays. Few passages highlight more effectively the various issues at stake than the Fagurskinna description of King Haraldur hárfagri's soured relationship with Atli mjói:

> Þá er Haraldr hafði tekit fǫðrleifð sína, þá gaf hann Atla mjóva jarlsnafn ok þvílíkar veizlur, sem áðr hafði hann haft af Hálfdani feðr hans. En þat var Sygnafylki ok Fjalir; hans hǫfuðbú var á Gaulum. Haraldr konungr, þá er hann tók veizlur ok eigi var ófriðr, hafði með sér sex tigu hirðmanna, ok fyrir talðir allir tignarmenn ok ótalðir allir, er þjónuðu at veizlum. En fyrir sakar starfs ok nauðsynja mátti hann eigi komask eptir ætlaðri stund at taka veizlur í Sogni af Atla jarli sínum. Sendi til menn sína at taka veizlur, ok var svá þrjú sumur, at hann tók eigi sjálfr. Konungs menn buðu með sér frændum sínum ok vinum ok tóku veizlur aukit hundrað manna. Þeir þágu illa ok gørðu við drykkju marga óspekð. Fjórða sumar þá er konungs menn kómu til veizlu, rak Atli jarl þá á braut með ósæmð ok vildi eigi hafa ofsa þeira, bað konung taka sjálfan veizluna eða veizlufé. Þessir menn fundu Harald konung at veizlu norðr í Þrándheimi á Hlǫðum með liði sínu at Hákonar gamla ok sǫgðu hónum sína svívirðing. Konungr varð reiðr, er hann frá þessi tíðendi. Hákon beiddisk þá léns af konungi yfir Sygnafylki með þeim hætti, sem Atli jarl hafði, ok þat veitir konungr hónum.
>
> [*When Haraldur had succeeded to his inheritance he awarded Atli mjói an earl's title and such* veizlur *as he had previously held from his father Hálfdan; these were Sygnafylki and Fjalir, his residence was at Gaular. King Haraldur kept sixty retainers when attending* veizlur *in peacetime, including all people of rank but excluding those servicing the* veizlur. *But because of business and obligations he could not accept the* veizlur *in Sogn from his earl Atli at the intended time. He sent his men to accept them on his behalf, and for three summers he did not accept them in person. The*

king's men invited their kinsmen and friends along with them, and attended the veizlur *with an enlarged hundred. Their manner of attendance was bad and their behavior while drinking was unruly. The fourth summer of their attendance, Earl Atli drove them away in disgrace and wanted none of their overbearingness, asked the king to attend the* veizla *in person or otherwise accept payment in lieu of it. These men found Haraldur with his retainers at a* veizla *with Hákon gamli north in Þrándheimur at Hlaðir, and reported the disgrace they had endured. The king became angry upon receiving this report. Hákon then asked the king for Sygnafylki as a benefice for himself, as held by Earl Atli, and the king made the grant.*]

As things turned out, though, Hákon lost his life in battle against Atli at Fjalir in Stafanessvogur.[79] The paragraph is packed with key issues: Atli has an earldom and local standing conferred on him by the king as *veizlur*, that is as a grant; an inherent aspect of his political representation is the regulated obligation of hospitality towards his superior ally; its regulations are set by limits of size and apparent frequency; the centrality of exacting hospitality as an instrument of power is underscored by the care with which the king avoids neglecting its continued exercise, even when not able to act in person; significantly, the recognition of the king being able to exercise his right through representatives accentuates the function of obligatory hospitality as a political instrument; finally, the juxtaposition of *veizla* and *veizlufé* highlights the former as a matter of obligation. The form of violations is typical for the sagas: it has neither to do with frequency of visits nor the duration of stay, but only the size of force and the way in which the feast is received. Frequency and duration were certainly subject to limits, but their violation is rarely the primary cause of dispute in the sagas. Remarks such as the following from Ólafs saga helga are relatively few:

> Þá er Óláfr konungr hafði sent þá Bjǫrn austr á Gautland, þá sendi hann aðra menn til Upplanda með þeim ørendum at boða veizlur fyrir sér, ok ætlaði hann at fara þann vetr at veizlum yfir Upplǫnd, því at þat hafði verit siðr inna fyrri konunga at fara at veizlum inn þriðja hvern vetr yfir Upplǫnd. Hóf hann ferðina um haustit ór Borg.[80]
>
> [*When King Ólafur had sent Björn and his men east to Gautland, he sent other men to Upplönd charged with ordering* veizlur *to be prepared for him. He intended to survey Upplönd for* veizlur *during that winter because it had remained customary among previous kings to survey it for* veizlur *every third winter. He started his journey from Borg in the autumn*.]

There are further remarks on King Ólafur and Upplönd:

[79] *Fagrskinna*, 65.
[80] *Heimskringla* 2, 100, cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 147, and *Flateyjarbók* 2, 63-64.

> En eigi var þá svá langt liðit, síðan er hann hafði þar farit at veizlum, sem lǫg stóðu til eða vanði konunga hafði verit.[81]
>
> [*But insufficient time had past since he last surveyed the region for* veizlur *as prescribed by law or had been customary among kings*.]

The reason behind the rarity may simply be that the royal *iter* was not fixed. Where and when kings moved about had much to do with who they were individually, where their core areas of support lay, and what governmental tasks demanded their attention at any given moment. Simply put, itinerant kingship was a general characteristic of political practice extensively shaped by particular and differing circumstances. Accordingly, judging whether kings stepped beyond acceptable boundaries must largely have been *ad hoc* rather than by a simple measurement against previously fixed quota. The fundamental issue was *how* hospitality was pursued. It had least to do with willingness, freedom, and spontaneity as such, for these were commonly marginal or absent, and all to do with fostering a sense of limits and cooperation. It was the precondition on both sides for generating legitimacy of authority and resistance, regardless of whether the king initially left the local community any real option but to accept him. Lordship in general was hardly acceptable when habitually brutal and arbitrary, and even when *veizlur* followed violent subjection there is every reason to assume that they were framed by adjudication. The author of Fagurskinna does not elaborate on how exactly King Haraldur's men *þágu illa*, but with *óspekt* and *ofsi* there is perhaps little need for elaboration. This otherwise vivid image is glossed with the fact that their number went far beyond custom. Unlike frequency and duration, the issue of numbers figures prominently in saga discourse as part of the adjudicative framework of feasting.

The size of feasts offered to itinerant courts in medieval Europe is, in the majority of cases, hard to determine with accuracy. Actual figures mostly stem from late medieval sources, whose projections onto previous ages have won little credence with modern scholars, who have regarded them as exaggerated or at times unreal and fantastic. For all we can see, the sizes of itinerant courts was not, on average, unreasonably large. The itinerant courts of early and high medieval Carolingian and German kings will routinely have involved hundreds but not thousands of retainers, and may at times have been as small as three hundred; those of the French, Aragonese, Sicilian, and English kings may have been somewhat smaller on average, perhaps between three and five hundred at most, while those of lesser kings and the more prominent secular and ecclesiastical lords frequently may not have surpassed a hundred people.[82] Comparatively, then, there is little

[81] *Heimskringla* 2, 297.

[82] There is no modern scholarly consensus on the matter. Depending on the circumstances, the size of the king's entourage varied greatly, and the average or conventional size is hard to determine. For even the most powerful kings, the size of their retinue may have dropped below a hundred men in tight situations while rising to some fifteen hundred or more on other occasions. On this difficult subject see, in particular, Carlrichard Brühl, *Fodrum, gistum, servitium regis. Studien zu den wirtschaftlichen Grundlagen des Königtums im Frankenreich und den fränkischen Nachfolgestaaten Deutschland, Frankreich und Italien vom 6. bis zur Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts*, Kölmer historische Abhandlungen 14: 1-2 (Köln: Böhlau, 1968), 168-171.

reason to assume that the itinerant court of the medieval Norwegian king was as a rule excessively large. As noted, the sagas are content to note that King Ólafur kyrri doubled the size of the court in the latter half of the eleventh century, bringing it up to two-hundred-and-forty men compared with the hundred-and-twenty that his father favoured. Fagurskinna leaves open the number of lesser retainers and servants supplementing King Haraldur hárfagri's fixed circle of sixty *hirðmenn*, but it appears that bringing hundred-and-twenty people in total to an obligatory feast grossly violated customary norms. The sagas, therefore, seem content that whereas later kings enlarged their retinues to the explicit reluctance and grudging skepticism of their hosts, there remained from the very earliest of times a general consensus of there being limits – expressed with (*forn*) *lǫg*, *vanði* or *venja*, *siðr*, *siðvenja*, and the like[83] – , and that these curbed the size of the king's retinue to a number that could be counted in tens rather than hundreds. The cumulative sense is that feasts were hardly much bigger on average. The sagas commonly note the presence of the *hirð* without normally indicating its exact size,[84] but when they do so it conforms, or is made to conform, to its allegedly customary size. Haralds saga hárfagra reports that the king's ally, Earl Rögnvaldur of Mæri, "tók hús á [*made a visit to*]" Haraldur's political opponent, King Vémundur in Firðafylki, "ok brenndi konung inni með níu tigu manna [*and burnt him inside along with ninety men*]."[85] Whether the ninety covers only the king's men or the total number of people present is unclear; perhaps it is the combination of sixty *hirðmenn* and thirty *gestir* which Ólafs saga kyrra implies could accompany the king at feasts.[86] Ólafs saga helga describes courtly arrangements in Niðarós in this way:

> Hann hafði með sér sex tigu hirðmanna ok þrjá tigu gesta ok setti þeim mála ok lǫg. Hann hafði ok þrjá tigu húskarla, er starfa skyldu í garðinum, slíkt er þurfti, ok til at flytja. Hann hafði ok marga þræla.[87]

Cf. also John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany,* 58; Hans Conrad Peyer, *Von der Gastfreundschaft zum Gasthaus*, 156-157.

[83] Cf., e.g., *Heimskringla* 2, 49 (*siðvenja*), 100 (*siðr*), 102 (*lǫg*), 191 (*siðvenja*), 297 (*lǫg* and *vanði*), cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 81, 146, 148, and *Flateyjarbók* 2, 64; *Heimskringla* 3, 207 (*forn lǫg*).

[84] King Hákon góði "hafði hann þar hirð sína [*had his court with him there*]" when being feasted at Storð on Fitjar, as he also did when feasting at Birkiströnd on Fræði in Sunn-Mæri, cf. *Heimskringla* 1, 177, 182-192, quoted to 182. Ynglinga saga reports that King Sölvi of Jótland surprised King Eysteinn in Sweden when attending a feast there, "ok tók hús á konungi ok brenndi hann inni með hirð sína alla [*paid the king a visit and burned him indoors with his entire court*];" *Heimskringla* 1, 60. King Hálfdan is likewise caught off guard when feasting, at Vingulmörk on this occasion, and calls his retainers to arms, "bað hirðmenn sína vápna sik;" *Heimskringla* 1, 87. King Sigurður munnur "reið at veizlum í Vík austr með hirð sína [*rode east with his court to* veizlur *in Víkin*]," in the phrase of Haraldssona saga, which echoes Morkinskinna; *Heimskringla* 3, 325; *Morkinskinna*, 442. Halldórs þáttur Snorrasonar in Morkinskinna also relates how King Haraldur harðráði "qvaddi til siþan hirþina [*Then summoned his court*]" when feasting in or around Oslo; *Morkinskinna*, 152-153, quoted to 153. Otherwise, the court's presence at the king's feasts is implicitly obvious enough.

[85] *Heimskringla* 1, 106-107, quoted to 107.

[86] Cf. notes 76, 77, and 78.

[87] *Heimskringla* 2, 72-73, quoted to 73, cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 103-104, and *Flateyjarbók* 2, 48.

> [*He had with him sixty retainers and thirty* gestir*, and prescribed their maintenance and conduct. He also had thirty servants who should service the residence as needed and the transport towards it. He also held many slaves*.]

Pinning down its size, however, yields no final result: the local aristocracy were always present in some numbers.

We may note the subtle Fagurskinna qualification that King Haraldur hárfagri, "þá er hann tók veizlur *ok eigi var ófriðr*, hafði með sér sex tigu hirðmanna."[88] The size of the king's following no doubt rose and fell on occasions, more particularly the former when warfare imposed its demands. When Ólafur helgi sets out to win Norway he seeks acclamation as he moves about, exacts *veizlur* for the double purpose of maintenance and name recognition, and recruits men to his growing army:

> Þá hóf Óláfr konungr þegar ferð sína ok lét bjóða upp veizlur fyrir sér, þar sem konungsbú váru. Fór hann fyrst um Haðaland, ok þá sótti hann norðr í Guðbrandsdala. Fór þá svá sem Sigurðr sýr hafði getit, at lið dreif til hans svá mart, at hann þóttisk eigi hálft þurfa, ok hafði hann þá nær þrimr hundruðum manna. Þá endusk honum eigi veizlurnar, sem ákveðit var, því at það hafði verit siðvenja, at konungar fóru um Upplǫnd með sex tigu manna eða sjau tigu, en aldri meirr en hundrað manna. Fór konungr skjótt yfir ok var eina nótt í sama stað.[89]
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> [*Then King Ólafur made his journey immediately and ordered* veizlur *to be prepared for him where there were royal farms. He first surveyed Haðaland, and then he proceeded north to Guðbrandsdalir. It then happened as Sigurður sýr had predicted, that twice the size of force he needed was drawn to him, and he then had close to three hundreds of men. The* veizlur *proved insufficient for him as originally planned since it had been customary for kings to survey Upplönd with sixty or seventy men, but never with more than a hundred. The king swiftly made his way and stayed one night in each place.*]

The limits, though firm, are thus not too rigidly set. The passage cannot be understood otherwise than that the king brings his three enlarged hundreds to the *veizlur* in question, which consequently necessitates an accelerated itinerary. The *ad hoc* breaches of customary limits are visible throughout the king's procedure of subjection, where his army of three or four enlarged hundreds apparently accompanies him for *veizlur* when deemed necessary, and where *veizlur* are demanded in greater numbers and for longer periods than was customary. When debating amongst themselves whether to accept or fight, the kings of Upplönd indeed pointed out that Ólafur brought greater "fjölmenni, er

[88] Cf. note 79.
[89] *Heimskringla* 2, 49, cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 81.

lǫg váru til [*more people than the law prescribed*]."[90] Although the sagas depict the king leading sizeable armies they rarely bother to detail the practical arrangements of their upkeep, such as how many out of those accompanying the king attend a given feast. Perhaps numbers were not too tightly fixed in such circumstances.[91]

As noted before, any state of armed conflict was never economically positive for local communities, who ultimately had to provide for the armies in their regions. Worst, it could turn particularly nasty when rival claimants sought to reinforce their authority through scrupulous observation of their "rights," effectively doubling the burdens of those on the ground. One can almost hear the tormented voices of the farmers of Rogaland when, following the battle of Svöldur in 1000, Earl Eiríkur and powerful magnate Erlingur Skjálgsson upheld their rival claims the hard way:

> Eiríkr jarl lét sér ekki líka, at Erlingr Skjálgsson hefði svá mikit ríki, ok tók hann undir sik allar konungseigur, þær er Óláfr konungr hafði veitt Erlingi. En Erlingr tók jafnt sem áðr allar landsskyldir um Rogaland, ok guldu landsbúar opt tvinnar landsskyldir, en at ǫðrum kosti eyddi hann jarðarbyggðina. Lítit fekk jarl af sakeyri, því at ekki heldusk þar sýslumennirnir, ok því at eins fór jarl þar at veizlum, ef hann hefði mikit

[90] Cf. *Heimskringla* 2, 100-107, at 102, cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 146-155, and *Flateyjarbók* 2, 63-68. The irregularity brought about by circumstances is made evident: "Óláfr konungr fór at veizlum útan um Raumaríki ok allt með þvílíkum hætti sem fyrr var sagt. En er veizlur endusk eigi fyrir fjǫlmennis sakir, þá lét hann þar bændr til leggja at auka veizlurnar, er honum þótti nauðsyn til bera at dveljask, en sums staðar dvalðisk hann skemr en ætlat var, ok varð ferð hans skjótari en á kveðit var upp til vatsins [*King Ólafur proceeded to* veizlur *along the outermost parts of Raumaríki and in much the same way as previously described. However, when the* veizlur *did not suffice because of his retinue's size he had the farmers extend the* veizlur *by additional contributions when he thought it necessary to stay longer while making shorter stops than originally anticipated at other places; his trip to the lake turned out to be quicker than had been planned*];" *Heimskringla* 2, 103-104.

[91] Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar recalls the king feasting with his *hirð* and recruited army, it seems, on Ögvaldsnes on Körmt, making a total of nearly 360 guests: "Óláfr konungr fór, er váraði, út eptir Víkinni ok tók veizlur at stórbúum sínum ok sendi boð allt um Víkina, at hann vill lið hafa úti um sumarit ok fara norðr í land. Síðan fór hann norðr á Agðir. Ok er á leið langafǫstu, þá sótti hann norðr á Rogaland ok kom páskaaptan í Kǫrmt á Ǫgvaldsnes. Var þar búin fyrir honum páskaveizla. Hann hafði nær þrjú hundruð manna [*When spring arrived, King Ólafur proceeded out and along Víkin and took* veizlur *at his own major farms. He sent a message throughout Víkin than he intended to levy an army that summer and head for the north. Then he went north to Agðir. Well into the Lenten fast he proceeded north to Rogaland and arrived in Ögvaldsnes on Körmt on Easter Eve; a* páskaveizla *was prepared for him there. He had nearly three hundreds of men*];" *Heimskringla* 1, 311-312. Though King Ólafur's army is not fixed in size, it apparently matches local opposition forces. At one point it occupied thirty ships to transport it, and apparently most of these forces resided on board ship while the king attended *veizlur* in Niðarós, cf. *Heimskringla* 1, 315. His namesake's army must likewise have varied in size and not always been accommodated in the same manner, sometimes joining him for *veizlur* and sometimes not. The *bóandasafnaðr* he faced in Orkadalur numbered some seven hundreds of men in all, but the saga does not make clear if Ólafur's apparently equal-sized army was accommodated in total or part in the ensuing *veizlur*, cf. note 59. Without offering further details, Ólafs saga helga notes that "Ǫnundr Svíakonungr reið þann vetr [1025-1026] yfir Vestra-Gautland ok hafði meirr en þrjá tigu hundraða manna [*Önundur king of Sweden rode that winter throughout Vestra-Gautland and had with him more than thirty hundreds of men*]." Obviously, no single feast or even a handful of feasts could serve such a crowd all at once. *Heimskringla* 2, 234, cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 359.

> fjǫlmenni. … Eiríkr jarl orti fyrir því ekki á at berjask við Erling, at hann var frændstórr ok frændmargr, ríkr ok vinsæll. Sat hann jafnan með fjǫlmenni, svá sem þar væri konungshirð. Erlingr var opt á sumrum í hernaði ok fekk sér fjár, því at hann helt teknum hætti um rausn ok stórmennsku, þótt hann hefði þá minni veizlur ok óhallkvæmri en um daga Óláfs konungs, mágs síns.[92]
>
> [*Earl Eiríkur was not content with Erlingur Skjálgsson holding such powers, and transferred to himself all the royal property King Ólafur had previously conferred on him. Erlingur exacted revenues throughout Rogaland equally as before and the farmers thus repeatedly paid their revenue doubly, otherwise he devastated their farmlands. The earl only collected fines in small amounts since the bailiffs met with unworkable conditions, and he only travelled for* veizlur *if accompanied by a large band. … Earl Eiríkur steered clear of fighting Erlingur since his kinsmen were great and many, and he himself powerful and popular. He always kept many retainers as if it were a king's court. Erlingur repeatedly undertook summer harrying expeditions and accumulated wealth, for he maintained his habits of largesse and nobleness, even if his* veizlur *were smaller in size and revenue than in the days of King Ólafur, his kinsman…*]

The actual number of the earl's *mikit fjǫlmenni*, which accompanies him on feasts, is unclear, but Erlingur, who is also reported as sitting with *fjǫlmenni* comparable in size to the king's court, is noted as holding ninety retainers at all times and two-hundred-and-forty when the earl draws near.[93] The implication seems to be that feasting under such stressful circumstances demanded no less than ninety men, and even a few more. Otherwise, the sagas abound in qualitative references to the size of feasts without identifying exact numbers, and even those feasts involving the king and greater magnates do not seem to have been unduly crowded.[94]

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[92] *Heimskringla* 2, 28-29, cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 59-60, and *Flateyjarbók* 1, 537.
[93] *Heimskringla* 2, 29, cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 60, and *Flateyjarbók* 1, 537.
[94] King Hálfdan svarti attended a Christmas feast in Haðaland in the presence of *mikit fjǫlmenni*, cf. *Heimskringla* 1, 91-92. According to Haralds saga gráfeldar, the size of Sigurður Hlaðajarl Hákonarson's retinue depended on circumstances: "Sigurðr jarl fór um haustit inn í Stjóradal ok var þar á veizlum. Þaðan fór hann út á Ǫgló ok skyldi þar taka veizlur. Jarl hafði jafnan mikit fjǫlmenni um sik, meðan hann trúði illa konungum. Með því at þá hǫfðu farit vináttumál með þeim Haraldi konungi, þá hafði hann nú ekki mikla sveit manna [*In the autumn, Earl Sigurður went into Stjóradalur and attended* veizlur there. *He then went out to Ögló and intended to attend* veizlur *there. But since words of friendship had passed between him and King Haraldur, he no longer kept a large retinue with him*]." The absence of a large retinue, of course, led to his death by burning "með ǫllu liði sínu [*along with his entire troop*]" at the hands of King Haraldur; *Heimskringla* 1, 206-207. King Guðröður Bjarnason in Víkin is slain at a feast, "ok mart manna með honum [*and many men with him*];" *Heimskringla* 1, 214. While wintering in Sarpsborg with "fjǫlmenni mikit," King Ólafur helgi threw "mikit jólaboð [*great* jólaboð];" *Heimskringla* 2, 81, cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 118, and *Flateyjarbók* 2, 53. While sitting *fjǫlmennr* in Sarpsborg, King Ólafur helgi receives his bride-to-be, Ástríður, and Earl Rögnvaldur, who bring to the wedding feast "nær hundraði manna [*nearly a hundred men*];" *Heimskringla* 2, 132-146, at 146, cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 195-210. When Hárekur of Þjótta

Coming to terms with the practice of *veizlur* and itinerancy in saga and society obliges us to acknowledge the basics of their conglomerated functions of communicating power, managing resources, and framing the mechanisms through which authority was asserted and maintained. Although the sagas treat itinerant kingship principally as a mode of governance they are keenly aware of its economic implications. While separating these aspects is primarily an academic convenience, largely at odds with medieval perceptions of what itinerant lordship was and meant, it allows us a convenient perspective from which to view the fundamental issues of power and resources. Despite the economic implications of *veizlur* they were not tools with which kings amassed property or filled their pockets. They could serve as channels through which resources were mobilized in the king's favor, providing him with substantial proportions of the economic fuel which he needed in order to operate. However, even if the king stood at the top of the pyramid of sustenance, he was not simply the straightforward receiver of other people's resources. His economic and fiscal standing was ultimately framed by the management of political relations, which brought the economic underpinning of his kingship firmly within the realm of real power, reinforcing the symbiosis of socioeconomic and sociopolitical relations and practices.

The historian's weapon of choice, comparison, leads us to the post-Roman German kingdoms and their practice of kingship. Itinerant kingship (*Reisekönigtum*), characterized by the king's extensive perambulation throughout his realm (*Umritt*) as a basic mode of governance, was an important feature of Merovingian and Carolingian rulership alike, and emblematic of that of the East Frankish kings and their Ottonian and early Salian successors.[95] Although the Merovingian and Carolingian kings resided periodically at favored semi-capital residences, they were extensively mobile in their political practices and spent prolonged periods more or less on the move between various residences, accompanied by their courts. The royal perambulation became virtually ceaseless under the Ottonians and early Salians, who typically stayed no more than a few days or, at the very most, a month-and-a-half in one place, and whose rulership relied markedly less on an institutional infrastructure than careful management of political ties

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hosted King Ólafur helgi at a feast, and became one of his men, a "allmikit fjǫlmenni [*considerable crowd*]" is present; *Heimskringla* 2, 176, cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 259, and *Flateyjarbók* 2, 183. Yet again, King Ólafur helgi has "fjǫlmenni mikit [*a great crowd*]" when moving through Upplönd, which may have been a safety measure since it pushed customary limits of periodic returns; *Heimskringla* 2, 297.

[95] On itinerant kingship, somewhat generally but primarily in the German lands, see principally Hans Conrad Peyer, "Das Reisekönigtum des Mittelalters;" John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936–1075, esp. 45-84;* Benjamin Arnold, *Medieval Germany, 500-1300*, 126-179, esp. 130-131, 158-174; Benjamin Arnold, *Princes and Territories in Medieval Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 47-50, *passim*; Eckhard Müller-Mertens, *Die Reichsstruktur im Spiegel der Herrschaftspraxis Ottos des Großen. Mit historiographischen Prolegomena zur Frage Feudalstaat auf deutschen Boden, seit wann deutscher Feudalstaat?* Forschungen zur mittelalterlichen Geschichte 25 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1980); Carlrichard Brühl, "Die Herrscheritinerare," *Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto Medioevo di Spoleto* 29 (1985); Wolfgang Metz, "Tafelgut, Königsstrasse und Servitium Regis in Deutscheland vornemlich im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 91 (1971); Ferdinand Opll, *Das Itinerar Kaiser Friedrich Barbarossas (1152-1190)*, Forschungen zur Kaiser- und Papstgeschichte des Mittelalters 1 (Vienna: Böhlau, 1978); Hans Conrad Peyer, *Von der Gastfreundschaft zum Gasthaus*, 146-199.

and governance *in persona*. Accordingly, itinerant kings and their courts were wholly reliant on local maintenance for house, food, and fodder throughout vast parts of their dominions, which in itself was not only an administrative and organizational feat but also a fiscal one. How itinerant kings – Carolingian, Ottonian, Salian, Norwegian, and others – came successfully to access local resources in the form of festive receptions and upkeep lies overwhelmingly in the way they shared or negotiated power with their respective aristocracies. As a permanent feature of kingship it lay much less, if at all, in violence and threat.[96]

Germanic kingship in post-Roman Europe was above all the practice of lordship and leadership over military aristocracies within a predominantly natural economy of peasants. It embraced and fostered various ideological trends towards its legitimacy, spheres of function, and stabilization, which are variously seen as typically Germanic or typically Roman, depending on our fondness for labels. Military leadership by kings elevated above ordinary mortals was anything but alien to Germanic cultures, while its sacral aspects, reconfigured in Christian terms, reached unprecedented levels of political embodiment and ideological sophistication in the Frankish kingship.[97] What Germanic

[96] Along with analysis of itinerancy among the Carolingians and their successor states there is stimulating work on English itinerancy and the court. For an introduction and historiographical remarks, see Nicholas Vincent, "The Court of Henry II," *Henry II. New Interpretations*, eds. Christopher Harper-Bill and Nicholas Vincent (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007). The power and image of its aristocracy is brought together in David Crouch, *The Image of Aristocracy in Britain, 1000-1300* (London: Routledge, 1992), and David Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility. Constructing Aristocracy in England and France 900-1300* (Harlow: Pearson/Longman, 2005). Extremely helpful in understanding the political and cultural centrality of the medieval court is Malcolm Vale, *The Princely Court. Medieval Courts and Culture in North-West Europe, 1270-1380* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[97] For basic discussions of early medieval kingship and its rationale (including its theocratic aspects), with further references, see, e.g., Patrick Wormald, "Kings and kingship," *The New Cambridge Medieval History* 1. c.500-c.700, ed. Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Janet L. Nelson, "Kingship and royal government," *The New Cambridge Medieval History* 2; P. D. King, "The barbarian kingdoms," *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c.350-c.1450*, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751* (Longman: London, 1994), esp. 55-70; Janet L. Nelson, *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe*, History Series 42 (London: Hambledon Press, 1986); Pierre Riché, *Les Carolingiens. Une famillie qui fit l'Europe* (Paris: Hachette, 1983), transl. as *The Carolingians. A Family who Forged Europe*, transl. Michael Idomir Allen, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), esp. 303-311; James M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship in England and on the Continent. The Ford Lectures delivered in the University of Oxford in Hilary Term 1970*, Ford Lectures 1970 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Joseph Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought, 300-1450* (London: Routledge, 1996), 16ff; cf. also Benjamin Arnold, *Medieval Germany, 300-500*, 126ff. The thesis of pre-Christian Germanic sacral kingship, at least as revolving around descent from the gods, had its scholarly origins and heyday in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; it has experienced steady decline or significant modifications in recent decades, certainly in relation to ideas about descent from the gods. A fairly recent overview on sacral aspects of kingship in medieval Scandinavia and the Viking Age, with historiographical orientation, is Eric Christiansen, *The Norsemen in the Viking Age*, Peoples of Europe (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 135-167. Also helpful are Rory McTurk, "Sacral Kingship in Ancient Scandinavia. A Review of some Recent Writings," *Saga-Book* 19 (1974-1977) and Rory McTurk, "Scandinavian sacral kingship revisited," *Saga-Book* 24:1 (1994). For a more skeptical but convincing discussion, see Anthony Faulkes, "Descent from the Gods," *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 11 (1978-1979); for a recent

kingship and its culture of power ultimately boiled down to, however, was the political principle of giving and receiving. Without it, power was ill-gained. While Germanic kings drew eclectically on Roman legacies of institutional government and taxation, it was their cooperation with the landed aristocracy that formed the backbone of their power, and it was that same aristocracy to whom they themselves belonged in all but name. They were *primi inter pares*, although very powerfully so. Resources flowed through their hands through the support of those who in turn reaped benefits and shared in the spoils. Power was increased and extended primarily by sharing it out and negotiating for its recognition.[98] The royal fisc, from which itinerant German kings drew much of their fiscal capacities, was largely made up by the landed estates of the kings themselves and their dynastic houses, which in turn were principally acquired, sustained, and managed through giving and receiving. The crucial point is this: the fiscal underpinning of early medieval kingship and governance had less to do with private or absolute ownership of resources than with the ability to mobilize and manage them. Successfully translating the economic resources of the royal fisc into viable political authority ultimately depended upon sharing its uses with the aristocracy, on whose political cooperation the realization of power and governance hinged. The ways in which German and Scandinavian kings alike secured customary rights of local hospitality, and the fiscal relations sustaining it, is typical of this adjudicative principle. Common to their political realities was their limited ability in effectively crushing and removing local political elites, and the correspondingly urgent need of satisfactorily accommodating the same groups within their growing webs of power.

Just as itinerant kingship is an abstract shorthand for basic characteristics of governmental practices, so did particular manifestations and developments from England to the Continent and to Scandinavia display considerable variations of form and intensity. Among the basic themes, however, on which individual variations were composed, was the constant subjection to restrictions on routes, locations, and services due. Admitting its logic and practicality is easy enough. Hosting political superiors and their retinues, not to mention kings and their itinerant courts, tended to be expensive enterprises, with the local aristocracies only able to choose *how* to carry them out rather than *whether* to. Customary obligations of hosting itinerant kings were no doubt established gradually, becoming tightly interwoven in the fabric of political relations over periods of time. However, historians are often unable to see past the privileges granted by kings or other lords to towns, ecclesiastical institutions, and the like, for their exemptions from obligatory dues and services, most commonly those of hospitality.[99] From the king's point

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and different perspective see Olof Sundqvist, *Freyr's Offspring. Rulers and Religion in Ancient Svea Society*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Historia religionum 21 (Uppsala: Universitet, 2002).

[98] Cf., e.g., Eric J. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire. Kingship and Conflict under Louis the German, 817-876*, Conjunctions of Religion and Power in the Medieval West (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 163, 186-230; Hanna Vollrath, "The Western Empire under the Salians," *The New Cambridge Medieval History* 4:2. c.*1024*-c.*1198*, eds. David Luscombe and Jonathan Riley-Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), esp. 54.

[99] For England, see Alban Gautier, "Hospitality in pre-viking Anglo-Saxon England." For general discussion, see Hans Conrad Peyer, *Von der Gastfreundschaft zum Gasthaus*, *passim*.

of view, securing his prerogative of upkeep and political operation and governance in person throughout his dominions, and enshrining it by custom and law, was of fundamental importance. From the local magnates' point of view, devising mechanisms fit for meeting such seemingly unavoidable obligations without unacceptable losses of power or fiscal imposition was, similarly, a key concern. The adjudicative result was a politically symbiotic management of resources between king and aristocracy. Their cooperative alliance is written all over medieval Norwegian kingship and the kings' sagas' interpretations of it. Similarly, it shines through the otherwise complex structures of relations within the German royal itinerancy – which is probably the best documented and certainly the most thoroughly researched of all medieval itinerant rulerships –, in particular as practiced between the late ninth and early eleventh centuries.

The chief resources of the German king were the various renders of the royal fisc, and the dues and services from episcopal and abbatial churches, notably in the form of hospitality but also in kind and, very occasionally, in cash. Core possessions of the fisc included its initial and significant Carolingian foundations, to which the Liudolfings and the Salians contributed substantially in the early tenth and early eleventh centuries, respectively.[100] Sustaining and expanding the fisc remained an adequately successful procedure since it was ultimately framed by the mutual understanding of king and aristocracy that it should be earmarked for the material sustenance of kingship and governance. By mapping the royal fisc as far as sources permit and carefully examining the movements of king and court, historians have in the past thirty or so years revealed how unevenly the king surveyed his kingdom, and how thoroughly his *iter* was shaped by the uneven distribution and density of the fisc. In the best interests of all, it concentrated on regions rich in royal holdings while passing through others rather more restrictedly. It made Saxony the *imperatoris coquina* in the tenth century, and the Rhineland the *maxima vis regni* by the eleventh, as famously phrased by Otto of Freising.[101] Eckhard Müller-Mertens has shown, in his groundbreaking study of the German itinerancy, how the royal perambulation was focused on core areas of royal property (*Basislandschaften*, in Otto the Great's time being Saxony, the Franconian Rhineland, and lower Lotharingia) while passing through transit zones (*Durchzugsgebiete*) of lesser but earmarked resources for royal upkeep. The result was a carefully regulated and restricted *iter* that operated in the fiscal interests of king and local political elites alike, and as meticulously prepared and planned as far in advance as possible. Consequently, these adjudicative arrangements facilitated a virtual network of royal palaces and manors which served as semi-capital residences (*sedes regni*) and focal points of governmental activity.[102] Assigning their local

[100] On the royal fisc in Germany, and its form and function as a medium for fiscal and political relations of king and aristocracy, see principally Benjamin Arnold, *Princes and Territories in Medieval Germany*, 53-59, *passim*; Benjamin Arnold, *Medieval Germany, 300-500*, 158-174, esp. 158-160. More generally see Janet L. Nelson, "Kingship and royal government," 385ff. See also notes 95 and 105.

[101] *Casus monasterii Petrishusensis*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores (in Folio) 20 (Hanover: MGH, 1868), 645-646, at 646. *Ottonis Episcopi Frisingensis gesta frederici seu rectius*, ed. Franz-Josef Schmale, transl. Adolf Schmidt, Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters 17 (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1965), 152.

[102] Eckhard Müller-Mertens, *Die Reichsstruktur im Spiegel der Herrschaftspraxis Ottos des Großen*; Eckhard Müller-Mertens and Wolfgang Huschner, *Reichsintergration im Spiegel der Herrschaftspraxis Kaiser Konrads*

control and management offered the king extensive opportunities for political networking with his aristocracy, yet probably not on a par with those created by the determined forging of links between king and altar.

By far the most prominent method utilized by the German kings in managing and mobilizing resources, which greatly facilitated the necessary political support for fiscal expansion, was the way in which they provided lavish endowments for ecclesiastical institutions. Their symbiotic relations with key episcopal churches and monasteries extended far beyond fiscal concerns and fully embraced the cultural, religious, social, and political totality of *rex et sacerdos*.[103] In terms of finances, however, the king's donations returned in the form of services and dues owed to him by those institutions, which in turn allowed him a physical presence and an intimately personal rulership within ecclesiastical and secular spheres alike.[104] The closeness of cooperation drew further nourishment from the protective role assigned to the secular over the sacred, culminating in, among other things, royal privileges of judicial immunity. Indeed, the protective role of medieval kings was commonly promoted as a primary justification for obligatory upkeep and services throughout their kingdoms. As such they were seen as customary and rarely put down in writing. When they do appear in charters and diplomas, however, usually in context of their exemption or reduction, they typically come under the heading of *servitium* or *servitium regis*. Primarily in France, the obligation to host assumed the technical term of *gistum* (*gîte*), while *fodrum* or *fodrum regis*, from old Frankish *fodar*, "fodder (for horses),"

II, Forschungen zur mittelalterlichen Geschichte 35 (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1992); cf. John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936–1075, 60-68. Frankfurt, Magdeburg, and Dortmund were important already in the tenth century, and Nuremberg rose to prominence in the eleventh, apparently all owing much to their economic surroundings. Tilleda and Quedlinburg were important, too. It was not about economics alone, however: the Staufen seem to have rebuilt the palaces of their Carolingian and Salien predecessors primarily for symbolic reasons, drawing on cultural capital for legitimacy, as it were. They integrated new palaces as well on grounds of their own economic expansion (notably at Hagenau, Eger, Wimpfen, and Ulm), cf.* Benjamin Arnold, *Medieval Germany, 300-500*, 159-160.

[103] "Theocratic" or "sacerdotal" kingship, specifically its promotion among the Ottonians and Salians and its practical implications for governance, have been much debated. In addition to much of the literature already cited in note 97, see, e.g., Karl Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in Early Medieval Society. Ottonian Saxony* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), esp. 75-107 for background; cf. also Karl Leyser, "Ottonian Government," *English Historical Review* 96 (1981); Horst Fuhrmann, "Rex canonicus – Rex clericus," *Institutionen, Kultur und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter. Festschrift für Josef Fleckstein zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Lutz Fenske et al. (Sigmaringen: J. Thorbecke, 1984); Friz Kern, *Gottesgnadentum und Wiederstandsrecht im früheren Mittelalter. Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Monarchie*, Mittelalterliche Studien 1:2 (Leipzig: K. F. Koehler, 1914); Janet L. Nelson, "Royal Saints and Early Medieval Kingship," *Sanctity and Secularity. The Church and the World. Papers Read at the Eleventh Sumer Meeting and the Twelfth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, Studies in Church History 10 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973); Timothy Reuter, "The 'imperial church system' of the Ottonian and Salian rulers: a reconsideration," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33 (1982); Benjamin Arnold, *Medieval Germany, 300-500*, 133-145.

[104] Already in the late nineteenth century, Julius Ficker argued that the property of the church was treated in law as well as in practice as assets of the king; Julius Ficker, *Über das Eigenthum des Reichs am Reichskirchengute*, 2nd ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967); cf. Benjamin Arnold, *Power and Property in Medieval Germany. Economic and Social Change c.900-1300* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 76.

was employed north of the Alps from the Frankish period into the high Middle Ages for the obligatory feeding of the king's and the court's horses. South of the Alps in the high Middle Ages, *fodrum regis* rather corresponded to the narrower transalpine *servitum regis*, that is hospitality and upkeep. As fiscal contributions, the *servitia* were primarily attached to ecclesiastical institutions.[105] Consequently, the episcopal churches and royal monasteries of Germany became not only the primary loci of political networking between the greater noble families and the royal court but also the focal points of fiscal relations and management of resources.[106] The arrangements allowed the local secular aristocracy more easily to avoid hosting the king on their own estates, or taking on *servitia* more directly, which, as they were all-too-well aware of, could potentially carry the seeds of (honorable) ruin.

The rationale of Continental itinerant kingship and its culture of *Herrschaftsgastung* is strongly echoed in medieval Norway, although its exact form and development remained its own. A fundamental observation is that a predominantly military kingship, strongly bent on judicial and governmental elaboration, successfully forged and tightened political and fiscal relations with local elites, whose political accommodation and adjudicative cooperation facilitated the accumulation of royally demarcated resources, a fisc. Sources do not permit much elaboration on the specifics of the early accumulation of royal fiscal capacity in Scandinavia, but the broader strokes are unmistakable: seizure and confiscation through plunder, military campaigns of various sorts, and the overcoming of

[105] As an umbrella-term, *servitia* encompassed varieties of services owed to the king by ecclesiastical institutions, towns, or other entities (material, military, or political support), as well as renders or assets drawn from the royal fisc (estates, forests, etc.). Such services extended from book production on demand to maintaining roads and bridges. Although much of the ecclesiastical *servitia regis* evidence is poorly documented, they have been subject to thorough research. On *servitium regis*, *gistum*, *fodrum*, their political, cultural, and governmental implications, and the concept of residences within itinerant kingship, see Carlrichard Brühl, *Fodrum, Gistum, Servitium Regis* 1-2; Alfred Haverkamp, *Herrschaftsformen der Frühstaufer in Reichsitalien*, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 1 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1970-1971); Wolfgang Metz, *Das Servitium Regis. Zur Erforschung der wirtschaftlichen Grundlagen des hochmittelalterlichen deutschen Königtums*, Erträge der Forschung 89 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978); Wolfgang Metz, "Quellenstudien zum Servitium regis (900–1250)," *Archiv für Diplomatik* 22 (1976): 187–272; 24 (1978): 203–291; 31 (1985): 273–327; 38 (1992): 17–68; Bruno Heusinger, *Servitium Regis in der deutschen Kaiserzeit. Untersuchungen über die wirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse des deutschen Königtums, 900–1250 (*Berlin: de Gruyter, 1922); John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936–1075;* Wolfgang Metz, "Tafelgut, Königsstrasse und Servitium Regis in Deutscheland vornemlich im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert;" Meinrad Weikmann, "Königsdienst und Königsgastung in der Stauferzeit," *Zeitschrift für Bayerische Landesgeschichte* 30 (1967); Hans-Jürgen Rieckenberg, "Königsstrasse und Königsgut in liudolfingischer und frühsalischer Zeit (919-1056)," *Arkiv für Urkundenforschung* 17 (1941-1942); Walter Schlesinger, "Bischofssitze, Pfalzen und Städte im deutschen Itinerar Friedrich Barbarossas," *Aus Stadt- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte Südwestdeutschlands. Festschrift für Erich Maschke zum 75. Geburtstag*, Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für geschichtliche Landeskunde in Baden-Württemberg B:85 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1975); Benjamin Arnold, *Power and Property in Medieval Germany*, 75-116, with further references; Hans Conrad Peyer, "Das Aufkommen von festen Residenzen und Hauptstädten im mittelalterlichen Europa," *Könige, Stadt und Kapital*.

[106] The former as demonstrated in C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness. Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 939-1210*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).

enemies were lucrative sources of wealth for military kings on the rise, to which their own dynastic estates and assets offered valuable supplements. Likewise, administering justice and peace became an early and growing source of income. Judging from King Knútur mikli's charter of endowment to the cathedral in Lund in 1085, which is generally accepted as the oldest Scandinavian charter preserved, the Danish king had substantial estates at his disposal, many of which he appears to have acquired as payments or fines through the administration of peace and order.[107] He also seems to have held annual income from tenements in towns, some of which emerged as important royal residences and mints (Lund, Roskilde, Odense, Slagelse, Ringsted, Viborg).[108]

The details of the early formation of the Norwegian royal fisc are likewise obscure, even if its logic is not. Political support thrived on the principle of redistribution, and so the king had to give out in order to take in. For an ambitious king, striking the balance was tricky but essential. There has long been the suspicion that one of the key factors contributing to the downfall of King Ólafur helgi, who in the early eleventh century probably became the first military king to achieve overlordship over (roughly) the geographical unity of Norway, was his allegedly hard-pressed confiscatory policy in Þrándheimur, employed as political weapon against his opponents. A clue would lie in sections of Frostaþingslög dealing with *atfǫr* or *heimsókn* (assault involving housebreaking), which apparently better facilitated the legal rights of resisting proprietary encroachment.[109] For the king to establish permanent access to resources was a process that invariably left him no options but to accept restrictions and political accommodation. The royal fisc was thus anything but a fixed set of property over which its nominal owner, the king, exercised unrestricted authority. Some of it he fully controlled, while over most of it his control was marginal and restricted. Its key feature was the *konungsbú*, "royal farm," towards which the king's *iter* was channeled, as well as other assets earmarked for the crown in one way or another.[110]

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[107] *Gåvobrevet 1085. Föredrag och diskussioner vid Symposium kring Knut den heliges gåvobrev 1085 och den tidliga medeltidens nordiska samhälle*, eds. Sten Skansjö and Hans Sundström (Lund: Lund University Press, 1988), 14-15.

[108] Inge Skovgaard-Petersen, "The Making of the Danish kingdom," *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia* 1. *Prehistory to 1520*, ed. Knut Helle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 181-182.

[109] *Norges gamle love indtil 1387* 1, 172-173; Andreas Holmsen, *Nye studier i gammel historie* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1976), 101-119; cf. Claus Krag, "The Early Unification of Norway," *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia* 1, 195.

[110] Reconstructing the royal fisc has proved a painstaking and largely unsuccessful project. The classic and most ambitious attempt is that of Asgaut Steinnes, who sought to recover a virtual system of farms tied to royal administration and upkeep, most prominently the so-called *húsabœir*. While severely short of telling sources, the thesis presupposes a constitutional and legal framework within which to understand what are now seen rather as non-fixed sets of customary rights, prerogatives, and practices. Subsequent studies, most notably those of Andreas Holmsen and Halvard Bjørkvik, have shifted the focus to the flow of resources through royal hands in the form of confiscations and donations. For Bjørkvik, to a much greater extent than Holmsen, this methodology revived the possibility of estimating (at least roughly) the extent of the medieval fisc, and something of its basic outlook. Among the outcomes from Bjørkvik's research is his attempt to identify major *konungsgarðar* from the early twelfth century and before (cf. note 132). *Veizlur* as obligatory hospitality have mostly been pursued within the framework of the fisc and the king's chances of generating income. For a basic discussion of the fisc, crown finances, royal farms, and *veizlur* as fiscal phenomena, see

The expansionist kings of the ninth, tenth, and early eleventh centuries seem to have acquired nominal hold of various estates, mainly through military confiscation, which they concurrently meted out to local magnates, either as rewards for political support or simply to strike the balance. As a mark of its political ties to king and court, this otherwise marginally interconnected group of local magnates became known as *lendir menn*, "landed men," no later than the time of King Ólafur helgi. They held and managed their royal farms primarily as symbols of fealty and friendship to the king, which again allowed them to reconfigure their strongly independent local position and prestige. In turn, the king was able to get his foot in the door, and firmly to establish his right of local presence through hospitality, and he generated a forum from which further to expand his power and influence. In the absence of statehood, *lendir menn* and *veizlur* hardly constituted a clear-cut system, but through the growth of governmental infrastructure and administrative apparatuses, primarily from the later twelfth century on, they gradually assumed the form of legal and constitutional termini. The early number of landed men is a matter of debate, ranging in estimate from forty to hundred or even more by 1100, but then being reduced to some ten or fifteen by King Sverrir towards the end of the twelfth century and remaining at or a little above this level for the remainder of the thirteenth century.[111] King Sverrir is likewise credited with expanding a new system of local administrative units and representatives, *sýslur* or *lén* and *sýslumenn*, "sheriffs," which quickly eclipsed and absorbed the administrative character progressively assumed by landed men in previous decades. In the thirteenth century, *lendr maðr* became a distinctly noble title of the highest courtly strata.[112] However, the title's primary identity long remained its

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Asgaut Steinnes, *Gamal skateskipnad i Noreg* 1-2, Avhandlinger utgitt av Det norske videnskaps-akademi i Oslo 2, Hist.-philos. klasse 1, 3 (Oslo: Dybwad, 1930-1933); Asgaut Steinnes, "Utskyld," *Historisk tidsskrift* 36 (1953); Asgaut Steinnes, *Husabyar*, Historisk tidsskrift (Oslo: Grøndahl & Son, 1955); Andreas Holmsen, "Problemer i norsk jordeiendomshistorie," *Historisk tidsskrift* 34 (1948); Halvard Bjørkvik, "Kronans finanser. Noreg," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformationstid* 9 (Copenhagen et al.: Rosenkilde og Bagger et al., 1964); Halvard Bjørkvik, "Kungsgård. Noreg," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder* 9; Halvard Bjørkvik, "Jordejendom. Norge," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformationstid* 7 (Copenhagen et al.: Rosenkilde og Bagger et al., 1962); Halvard Bjørkvik, "Det norske krongodset i mellomalderen. Ei skisse," *Historisk tidsskrift* 40 (1961); Halvard Bjørkvik, "The Norwegian Royal Lands in the Middle Ages," *Collegium Medievale* 5:1-2 (1992); Jerker Rosén, "Krongods. Norge," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder* 9; Nils Hallan, "Det elste krongodset i Trøndelag," *Historisk tidsskrift* 37 (1954-1956); Ebbe Hertzberg, "Lén og veizla i Norges sagatid," *Germanistische Abhandlungen zum LXX. Geburtstag Konrad von Maurers*, ed. Oscar Brenner (Göttingen: Dietrich, 1893); Grethe Authén Blom, *Kongemakt og privilegier i Norge inntil 1387*, Scandinavian University Books (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1967); Halvard Bjørkvik, "Veitsle," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformationstid* 19 (Copenhagen et al.: Rosenkilde og Bagger et al., 1975); Halvard Bjørkvik, "Gästning. Norge," also with an overview of obligatory hospitality for royal ombudsmen and bishops, primarily as reflected in late thirteenth- and fourteenth-century legal sources; Per Sveaas Andersen, *Samlingen av Norge og kristningen av landet 800-1130*, Handbok 2, Norges historie (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977), 294-299.

[111] On lendir menn, see note 138.

[112] From 1277, landed men were to be called *barónar*, "barons," a status which brought with it the honorary prefix *herra*, "Lord/Sir." Barons were appointed until 1308. For an overview, see, e.g., Knut Helle, "The Norwegian kingdom," *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia* 1, 380-384; cf. also Per Sveaas Andersen, "Syssel. Norge," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformationstid* 17 (Copenhagen et

attachment to crown land and its services, the foremost of which involved playing host to the king and his travelling court at feasts. The Hirðskrá, in its late thirteenth-century form attached to King Magnús lagabætir, represents the fullest description of the *lendr maðr* as a legally defined rank and title, assigning it the minimal attachment of *fimmtán marka veizla*, "of fifteen marks" of silver.[113] To what extent the Hirðskrá represents its now lost predecessors remains unclear, however.[114] Suffice it to say that by the time the kings' sagas were written, landed men in the kingdom will have numbered some fifteen or twenty in total, while the number of particularly prominent royal farms assigned them may have been rather more.[115]

Landed men are assigned a very prominent role in the sagas. However, the king's itinerancy between *veizlur* easily extends beyond estates of the fisc and those held by landed men, its course pending circumstances and occasion. The sagas show only a marginal interest in categorically differentiating between *Herrschaftsgastung* at royal farms and elsewhere, whereas their interest in its in relation to customary restrictions and acceptable intensity is unmistakable. The practice requires no more than stock phrases denoting a normative state of affairs. Some of them make the obligation explicit, others are more neutral, even when the feasting referred to is implicitly obligatory beyond all doubt. King Hálfan svarti *þiggr, fer til*, and *tekr veizlu* at Þengilstaðir in Haðaland, apparently a royal farm; King Hákon góði *tekr veizlu* at Fitjar on Storð, another royal farm; King Braut-Önundur of Sweden *fer at veizlum* having put *bú* of his own in each region of his kingdom; King Haraldur hárfagri *lætr búa veizlur fyrir sér* at Þoptar, a royal farm in Guðbrandsdalir, and *hefr veizlu* as a host at an unnamed farm in Upplönd; King Eiríkur blóðöx *tekr veizlu* at Sölvi, a royal farm at Norð-Mæri; King Hákon góði *hefr jólaveizlu* at the royal farm at Hlaðir, which Sigurður Hlaðajarl *býr fyrir hann*, he has a *boð* at his royal farm Birkiströnd on Fræði, and he *tekr veizlu* at Fitjar; King Ólafur Tryggvason *tekr veizlur* at his *stórbú* in Víkin, *páskaveizla* is *búin fyrir honum* on the royal farm at Ögvaldsnes on Körmt; King Ólafur helgi's *ármenn* manage his farms and *skulu gøra veizlur á móti* the king, while he *lætr bjóða upp veizlur fyrir sér* where there are royal farms in Haðaland and Guðbrandsdalir; King Magnús góði is *á veizlu* on the royal farm at Haugar in Veradalur; King Ólafur kyrri *tekr veizlu* at the royal farm Haukbær in Ranríki, as does King Sigurður

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al.: Rosenkilde og Bagger et al., 1972) and Per Sveaas Andersen, "Sysselmann," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder* 17.

[113] "þa gevær ko*no*ngr ho*no*m fullkomlega með guðs miskun oc trausti með lænðz manz sømð oc sli|kum væizlu*m* sem byriar til lænðz|manz rettar. en þat er fimtan ma|rka væizla [*The king then grants him – truly with God's mercy and trust, with the honor of a landed man, and with such* veizlur *as befits a landed man's rank – a* veizla *worth fifteen marks*];" *Hirdskråen*, 86.

[114] Hirðskrá in its present form dates from 1273-1277, having previously been traced back to the earlier times of King Ólafur helgi in one form or another, and then strongly associated with King Ólafur kyrri, King Sverrir, and King Hákon gamli. In all likelihood it gradually assumed the shape and character of written law as the *hirð* gradually became an abstract constitutional entity, predominantly from the later twelfth century onwards. For a recent reassessment see Steinar Imsen, "Innledning," *Hirdskråen*, esp. 24ff; cf. also Didrik Arup Seip, "Hirdskrå," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder* 6.

[115] "Vacant" *konungsbú* were assigned to *ármenn*, "stewards", local administrators of lower rank than *lendir menn*. However, *lendir menn* might likewise have *ármenn* operating as their assistants or substitutes for the hands-on management of their royal farms. *Ármenn* are widely present in the kings' sagas. See Per Sveaas Andersen, "Årmann," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder* 20.

Jórsalafari at an unnamed royal farm in Þrándheimur, and while the latter *er á veizlu* at an unnamed royal farm on Jaðar, he is found with his brother and king Eysteinn *á veizlum* at their unnamed royal farms in Upplönd, as is Eysteinn when he dies on royal farm Hússtaðir in Raumsdalur; and Sigurður's stay at an unnamed royal farm is simply termed a *veizla*.[116] Much the same phrasing is used for explicitly or implicitly obligatory feasts, even when violently enforced, by king, earls, or other lords, some possibly or very likely at royal farms, others explicitly not: *taka veizlur*, *vera* or *fara at* or *á veizlum*, *gøra veizlu í móti* the king, the king dispatches envoys *með þeim ørendum at boða veizlur fyrir sér*, *veita veizlu*, *taka veizlur er fyrir eru gørðar*, or variations thereof.[117] As for the numerous feasts thrown *ad hoc* for various purposes, many of which stand completely outside any fiscal communication and upkeep, there is much the same usage: in addition to *bjóða*, *veita* and *þiggja veizlu*, to be *á* or *at veizlu* is most simply a generic term for attending feasts, whatever their particular framework.[118]

In sum, the kings' sagas' presentation of and discourse on feasts does little to isolate their fiscal mechanism of redistribution and upkeep from their inseparably political framework. The impression is strong: *veizlur* ultimately have to do with bonds of power and their management.

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[116] *Ágrip*, 3, 41; *Fagrskinna*, 58, 84-85, 365-366; *Morkinskinna*, 365, 395; *Heimskringla* 1, 63-64, 91-92, 126-127, 141, 163-164, 177, 182, 311-312; *Heimskringla* 2, 49, 193, cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 81, 288, and *Flateyjarbók* 2, 63-64, 198; *Heimskringla* 3, 24, 262, 264.

[117] *Fagrskinna*, 65; *Morkinskinna*, 152, 178, 187-189, 442; *Heimskringla* 1, 206-207; *Heimskringla* 2, 52, 100-101, 176, 191, 205-208, 235, 237, 240, 297-299, cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 85, 87, 147, 151, 259, 285, 288, 309, 359, 361, 364, 369, 459, and *Flateyjarbók* 2, 40-41, 63-65, 183, 198, 234, 243, 245, 292-293; *Heimskringla* 3, 102, 207, 259.

[118] Morkinskinna notes in respect of Sigríður Hranadóttir, wife of the landed man Ívar of Fljóðar, who is present at a certain feasts: "Þar var hon aveizlo [*she was there on* veizla]." *Morkinskinna*, 365. The stock phrases collected here out of Ágrip, Fagurskinna, Morkinskinna, and Heimskringla can easily be traced in other sagas as well, with minor variants; see, e.g., *Knýtlinga saga*, 137 (*hafa veizlu*), 149-150, 156 (*búa fyrir konungi veizlu*, *sækja til veizlu*), 160, 171 (*boða upp fyrir sér veizlur*), 175, 177-178, 180, 185-186, 204, 236, 242 (*búa veizlu í móti*), 249 (*búa veizlu fyrir*), 251-252 (*búa veizlu í móti*), 285-287 (*búa veizlu í móti*); *Færeyinga saga*, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit 25, 68, 94, 97; *Jómsvíkinga saga*, 64-72 (*gøra veizlu*), 78, 84, 86, 89, 96, 102, 104-111 (*sækja veizlu*), 122-124 (*hafa veizlu*), 141, 154, 156-161, 169-170 (*halda veizlu*), 204. Phrases denoting envoys being sent in advance to arrange for upcoming *veizlutǫkur* point not only to matters of obligation but also to basic practicalities: enforced or not, properly arranging the reception of king and court, bishop, or any lord, was a major business requiring weeks or even months of notice. Taking care of such matters saved much trouble for all concerned, and made the overall process more agreeable, for want of a better phrase. Normally, there would be someone at court specifically charged with overseeing feasting schedules and preparing notices identifying standard demands in terms of food and upkeep, such as the *mansionarius* for the Carolingians, the *Kämmerer* for the Staufen, the *superior magister hospitii* for the French court, or the *hosteller maior* for the Aragonese court. Should kings fail to make proper arrangements in time they could easily run into trouble, as even King Otto the Great learned the hard way, cf. Hans Conrad Peyer, *Von der Gastfreundschaft zum Gasthaus*, 154ff.

III Feasting, Politics, and Power Broking

Itinerant kingship and its culture of hospitality has long been seen as the antithesis of statehood.[119] The early modern state developed its roots in the revolutionary societal changes of the high Middle Ages, which transformed the stage on which politics were played.[120] In Scandinavia as much as throughout Europe, government was increasingly conducted through bureaucratic means, expanding administrative apparatuses and its offices, codification of law, centralization of legislation as well as of judicial and executive authority. The written word and abstract institutions became the foremost media of power. Its social and economic backdrop was that of monetarization, urbanization, and kings forging stronger links with markets and trade. One of the major implications for royal power, alongside the ever-increasing costs of war and military management, was the growing need and desire to transform services and dues of all sorts, many of which were intimately linked with itinerant government, into fixed payments or taxes. Although it was not until the fourteenth century that kings had generally arrived at the level of successfully trading political favors for permanent taxes, the process of transforming dues and services into fixed payments had already gained real momentum during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[121] As the product and manifestation of fundamentally changing economic and political realities, kings increasingly concentrated their operative framework on fewer capital residences, which tended to tie them closer to focal points of trade, markets, and money. Indeed, this parted with some major characteristics and functions of itinerant kingship.

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[119] As Horst Fuhrmann notes, when discussing the papal curia's expansion of central administration under Pope Urban II, not least in terms of finances: "Compared with the rationalistic bureaucracy of the papal central administration the itinerant kingship of Germany looks very primitive." Horst Fuhrmann, *Deutsche Geschichte im hohen Mittelalter Von der Mitte des 11. bis zum Ende des 12. Jahrhunderts*, Deutsche Geschichte 2, Kleine Vandenhoeck-Reihe 1438 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), transl. as *Germany in the High Middle Ages c.1050-1200*, transl. Timothy Reuter, Cambridge Medieval Textbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 76.

[120] Most cogently argued and illustrated by Robert Ian Moore, *The First European Revolution, c.970-1215*, The Making of Europe (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000).

[121] In England, the crucial step was the conversion of the wool subsidy into a permanent tax in the 1360s; in France, the salt tax (*gabelle*) and *aides* were levied in 1356 for six years, and in 1363 the *fouage* became virtually the first tax to be levied in what was formally peacetime; in Castile, the *alcabala* had developed into a permanent and major source of crown income by the end of the fourteenth century. Everywhere, political accommodation of the aristocracy was the *sine qua non* of the growth of royal income and taxation. State-building, the establishment of permanent taxes, and the political cooperation of kings and aristocrats is succinctly surveyed in Hillay Zmora, *Monarchy, Aristocracy and the State in Europe 1300-1800*, Historical Connections (London: Routledge, 2001), esp. 8-21 on taxation. Grants of privileges and the transformation of services and dues into fixed payments were welcomed by many who had grown tired of occasional but recurrent misuses by needy kings, bishops, and others lords, who exacted hospitality and upkeep like bands of thieves. For a wide-ranging discussion of these developments see Hans Conrad Peyer, *Von der Gastfreundschaft zum Gasthaus*, esp. 148-150, 205ff, *passim*. However, fixing services and dues as taxes did not necessitate a shift to monetary payments in all cases, as is evident from fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Norway, cf. Halvard Bjørkvik, "Gengärd. Norge," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformationstid* 5 (Copenhagen et al.: Rosenkilde og Bagger et al., 1960).

Curiously, and captivatingly, the kings' sagas were produced just before father and son King Hákon gamli and King Magnús lagabætir brought Norwegian state-building to an altogether unprecedented level in the mid and later thirteenth century. The attachment of kings to prominent residences had, however, began much earlier, and not just as the simple product of fiscal and political adjudication of itinerancy and military travel. Probably from as early as the eleventh century, the ambition for political consolidation had made kings promoters of emporia as centers of trade, economic activity, and potential nodes of political function. In 1135, Orderic Vitalis recognized Niðarós (Kaupangur), Björgvin, Túnsberg, Oslo, Sarpsborg (Borg), and Konungshella as the six most prominent costal *civitates* of the kingdom, and the kings' sagas testify to their prominence.[122] From an historical point of view, these fortified emporia became increasingly, from the later twelfth century on, the gravitational points around which the administrative and governmental structures of the kingdom were geared.[123] From the kings' sagas' point of view, however, there is less interest in the finer points of their administrative and fiscal development than in their role as a setting for courtly action, which is foremost that of feasting and political management in royal presence. In the sagas, the towns and forts serve not only as wintering stations for the delayed court but also and primarily as venues for its major feasts.[124]

Itinerant Carolingians, and in particular the Ottonians and the Salians, commonly celebrated Easter and Christmas at specifically favored residences, which therefore became particularly tied with their representation of power.[125] In a largely comparable manner the Norwegian king presided over magnificent courtly feasts at both Easter and Christmas at residences closely associated with royal power. When King Ólafur kyrri, himself credited with ambitious elaborations of the courtly feast,[126] offered Skúli konungsfóstri as a gift of gratitude the income-generating rights of a district of choice, Skúli memorably declined, using the following argument:

> Skúli þakkaði honum boð sitt ok lézk vilja beiðask af honum annarra hluta, fyrir því – "ef konungaskipti verðr, kann vera, at rjúfisk gjǫfin. Ek vil," segir hann, "nǫkkurar eignir þiggja, er liggja nær kaupstǫðum þeim,

[122] Quoted by Knut Helle, *Norge blir en stat 1130-1319*, Handbok 1:3, Norges historie (Oslo: Univeritetsforlaget, 1964), 116. On taxes in high and late medieval Norway, see Halvard Bjørkvik, "Skatter. Noreg," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformationstid* 15 (Copenhagen et al.: Rosenkilde og Bagger et al., 1970).

[123] Royal income-taking and payments on the king's behalf were increasingly focused on the nascent office of *féhirðir*, located in Niðarós, Björgvin, Oslo, and Túnsberg. Similarly, *sýslumenn*, whose fiscal, judicial, and military representation was growing, increasingly made the towns their places of operation. For a brief overview see Knut Helle, "Royal Administration and Finances. Norway," *Medieval Scandinavia*, 540.

[124] For patterns of wintering, see, e.g., the summary for King Ólafur helgi in *Heimskringla* 3. *Lykilbók*, 255.

[125] Thus, Ingelheim, Quedlinburg, and Aachen became notorious staging posts for Ottonian Easter celebrations, with Merseburg and Bamberg added by Henry II, cf. Gerald Beyreuther, "Die Osterfeier als Akt königlicher Repräsentanz und Herrschaftsausübung unter Heinrich II. (1002-1024)," *Feste und Feiern im Mittelalter. Paderborner Symposion des Mediävistenverbandes*, eds. Detlef Altenburg et al. (Sigmaringen: J. Thorbecke Verlag, 1991).

[126] Cf. *Fagrskinna*, 300-301; *Morkinskinna*, 289-290; *Heimskringla* 3, 204-206.

> er þér, herra, eruð vanir at sitja ok taka jólaveizlur." Konungr játti honum þessu ok skeytti honum jarðir austr við Konungahellu ok við Ósló, við Túnsberg, við Borg, við Bjǫrgvin ok norðr við Niðarós.[127]
>
> [*Skúli thanked him for his offer but said that he would like to ask for different things, because – "the award may be terminated when one king succeeds another. I would like, lord," he says, "to accept some farm-property nearer the towns in which you are accustomed to sit and host* jólaveizlur.*" The king accepted and conferred him farms in the east by Konungshella and by Oslo, by Túnsberg, by Borg, by Björgvin, and north by Niðarós.*]

Thus, in Skúli's estimate, prolonged royal residency in select towns, coupled with major courtly feasts at Christmas, were to be lasting features of government.[128] "Skúli" was right, in that just before the kings' sagas were produced, the king had considerably reduced his itinerancy and Björgvin had emerged as the kingdom's first *de facto* royal capital residency and administrative center.[129] In 1163 or 1164, it became the site of the first consecration feast of a Scandinavian monarch when the eight year old Magnús Erlingsson was ceremonially crowned there by Archbishop Eysteinn Erlendsson in the presence of a papal legate.[130] Niðarós, with Hlaðir just by, also became particularly charged with a royal aura, and developed as a venue for courtly feasts. Each location was ambitiously built up as a royal seat, *konungsgarðr*, with impressive halls, *veizluhallir*, and churches serving as royal burial sites.[131] It may be that a not dissimilar aura of power and tradition hung over some of the more venerable of royal farms at which feasting regularly took place:[132] following

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[127] *Heimskringla* 3, 197-198.

[128] Snorri echoes Orderic in singling out the important towns. The Fagurskinna account is slightly different; the general reference of the king being *vanr at sitja* in towns *um vetrum* is not supplemented with references to feasting or other specific activities; its references to towns are also more general: upon request, Skúli names some farmland "í Vík austr, [sumar á Hǫrðalandi], sumar í Þrándheimi, svá at í hverjum kaupstað, er konungr var, þá átti Skúli náliga enar beztu jarðir ok gnógar landskyldir til alls starfs ok kostnaðar í kaupstǫðum [*east in Vikin, some in Hörðaland, some in Þrándheimur, so that the king sat in every town, Skúli owned nearly the best farms and had plenty of revenue to cover business and costs in each town*]." *Fagrskinna*, 296-297.

[129] On the rise of Björgvin and its medieval prominence, see Knut Helle, *Bergen bys historie* 1. *Kongssete og kjøpstad. Fra opphavet til 1536* (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1982).

[130] The feast is described in *Heimskringla* 3, 397-398, cf. also *Fagrskinna*, 349-350.

[131] For a greater part of a century, from the early eleventh to the early twelfth, kings were buried in Niðarós. From the early twelfth century, the political gravity of Björgvin became stronger, yet Niðarós became the first archiepiscopal seat of the kingdom in 1152 or 1153. Still a good basic outline of the subject is Grethe Authén Blom, "Hovedstad. Norge," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder* 7; for an up-to-date survey of early Scandinavian urbanization, with further references, see, e.g., Hans Andersson, "Urbanisation," *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia* 1.

[132] There is no register of early royal farms and nor is it easy to distinguish them from other estates tied to the king. Long ago, Halvard Bjørkvik attempted to identify prominent royal farms from around 1130 and before, searching sagas and skaldic poetry, legal texts, and diploma; the search yielded some twenty one estates that could be positively or very positively identified as *konungsbú*, but in many cases the evidence is somewhat tenuous: in Víkin: Vettland (Vättland) and Haukbær/-staðir (Håkeby), both in Ranríki, and

King Hálfdan svarti's infamous drowning, after what appears to have been a Christmas feast (non-Christian, that is) at Þengilsstaðir, a royal farm on Haðaland, the sagas report that

> váru innyfli hans jǫrðuð á Þengilsstǫðum á Haðalandi, en líkamr hans var jarðaðr á Steini á Hringaríki, en hǫfuð hans var flutt í Skírnssal á Vestfold ok var þar jarðat.
>
> [*his intestines were buried at Þengilstaðir in Haðaland and his body at Steinn in Hringaríki, but his head was transported to Skírnissalur in Vestfold and buried there.*]

The respective locations were another early royal farm and an emporia.[133] Whether these details are invented or not, the sense they promoted is certainly that of an elevated and demarcated space of power and tradition through royal presence.[134] It framed much of the king's feasting, including his Christmas and Easter celebrations in favored towns and at select royal farms.[135]

In the sagas, and probably in reality as well, king and court rarely if ever feast privately, so to speak, regardless of who is hosting. On the contrary, feasts commonly

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Sæheimur (Sem) on Vestfold; in Upplönd: Steinn (Stein) in Hringaríki, Þengilsstaðir (Tingelstad) in Haðaland, and Hringisakur (Åker/Ringsaker) on Heiðmörk; Þoptar (Tofte) in Guðbrandsdalir; in Rogaland: Útsteinn (Ustein), Haugar (Gard), and Ögvaldsnes (Avaldsnes) on Körmt; in Hörðaland: Skáli (Skåle) in Kvinnahérað, Fitjar (Fitje) on Storð, Alreksstaðir (Alrekstad/Årstad), and Sæheimur (Seim); on Mæri: Hússtaðir (Hustad) in Raumsdalur, and Birkiströnd (Birkestrand), Sölvi (Selva/Selven), and Rein (Rein) on Norð-Mæri; in Þrándheimur: Hlaðir (Lade) in Strind, Hernes [mikla] ([Stora-] Hernes) in Frosta, and Haugur (Haug) in Veradalur. Certainly after 1130, and possibly much earlier, there were numerous other farms tied to the fisc in one way or another, as crown property, church farms, etc. See Halvard Bjørkvik, "Kongsgardar og kyrkjegods i norsk mellomalder. Kongen som konfiskator og donator," unpublished lecture cited by Per Sveaas Andersen, *Samlingen av Norge og kristningen av landet 800-1130*, 294-299; cf. the overview in Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Norsk historie 800-1300. Frå høvdingmakt til konge- og kyrkjemakt*, Samlagets Norks historie 1 (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1999), 78-81.

[133] Ágrip notes that following King Hálfdan's drowning, he was "færðr til Steins síðan á Hringaríki ok var þar heygðr [*then transported to Steinn in Hringaríki and buried in a mound there*]," as does Fagurskinna's B-version. Its A-version, however, divides the king's body into three, as quoted. Snorri identifies four locations: Hringaríki (Steinn) and *Hálfdanarhaugar*, "mounds of Hálfan," in Raumaríki, Vestfold, and Heiðmörk. *Ágrip*, 3; *Fagrskinna*, 58, 365-366, at 366; *Heimskringla* 1, 91-93. According to Ynglinga saga, King Hálfdan hvítbeinn was also inhumed in Skæreið in Skíringssalur/Skírnssalur, cf. *Heimskringla* 1, 75-76.

[134] The end of Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar duly lists the king's construction projects undertaken for the sake of kingdom and church; these include ambitious building projects for churches, fortresses, and feasting halls (*veizluhallir*) in Niðarós, Björgvin, Ögvaldsnes, Túnsberg, Oslo, Hringisakur, Húsabær, Víðheimur, Steig, Hof, Þoptar, and Ló. *Hakonar saga*, 358-360.

[135] The numerous saga references to the winter billeting of courtiers in towns tend to be somewhat general in nature, simply noting that king and court *sitja*, "sit" here or there, or have *vist*, "accommodation," for given periods. When viewed together, however, courtly activities are presented as a *de facto* process of feasting, with Christmas and Easter celebrations commonly labeled *jólaveizlur* and *páskaveizlur*. See, e.g., *Ágrip*, 42; *Fagrskinna*, 172-173, 346; *Heimskringla* 1, 311-312; *Heimskringla* 2, 52, 81, 179, 199ff, 296-297, cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 85, 118, 265, 297ff, 459, and *Flateyjarbók* 2, 40-41, 53, 185, 230ff, 292; *Heimskringla* 3, 365 (*jóladrykkja*), 393.

serve as major political conventions involving the local political elite. There are many references to *bændr*, *stórbændr*, *ríkir bændr*, *hǫfðingjar*, *stórmenni*, *lendir menn*, and other *boðsmenn* of local importance in descriptions to feasts.[136] Correspondingly, whenever the narrative grants us a glimpse of what happened at these feasts we commonly encounter guests of local standing. Aside from the obvious practicality of literally consuming one's income *in situ* in a natural economy by transporting people rather than food over distances, and despite the inherent social implications of fiscal relations in such an economy, we are always left with the central question as to why the king bent over backwards to feast extensively and almost continuously with politically important men throughout his kingdom, and exchanging gifts while doing so. The answer lies in the outlook of the sagas' political culture, which is that of marginal statehood and pre-modernity.

Behind the kings' sagas lies the endlessly fascinating melting pot of twelfth- and early thirteenth-century political culture in Norway, projected back onto its prehistoric and misty past. At the front we have the political relations of king and aristocracy, foremost among them landed men. Certainly in saga and most probably in reality, this was a personal matter. Many of the governmental organs and administrative offices institutionalized in the later decades of the thirteenth century drew heavily on prior titles and heritage, yet previously there had been nothing state-like about them, the statuses they presented, or the way in which people went about them. Even the king himself only acquired his famously double body in the later thirteenth century, and that only gradually. Treating the king legally as both person and crown was mired in practical difficulties and violations of traditional perceptions of political reality. A case in point, inseparable from the practice of itinerant kingship and its culture of hospitality and gift giving, was the growing need to distinguish properly between the crown's finances and the king's own purse. While Snorri sat in Reykholt producing his master chronicle of the Norwegian kings, legal experts in the royal courts of Europe, having cut their teeth on Roman law, were busy circumscribing and abstracting the crown's assets, the *bona regalia* or *bona coronae*, as distinct from the king's personal or dynastic holdings, his *bona patrimonalia*. The legal and conceptual maze so constructed, and its implications for political practice,

[136] See, e.g., *Fagrskinna*, 84-86 ("hirðmenn ok boðsmenn [*retainers and invitees*]"); *Heimskringla* 1, 88-89 (wedding: had men sent "víða um byggðina ok bauð til sín mǫrgum mǫnnum [*widely around the region and invited many men to him*"), 177 ("hafði ekki lið nema hirð sína ok bændr þá, er verit hǫfðu í boði hans [*had only his retainers and those farmers who had attended his* boð]"), 182-183 ("Hafði hann þar hirð sína ok bændr marga í boði sínu [*He had his court there and many farmers at his invitation*"), 315-316 (*ad hoc* under false pretenses, with the *hirðsveit* present: "sendi boð inn á Strind ok upp í Gaulardal ok út í Orkadal ok bauð til sín hǫfðingjum ok ǫðrum stórbóndum [*sent a message to Strind and up into Gaulardalur and out into Orkadalur, and invited chieftains and other major farmers to him*]"); *Heimskringla* 2, 79-81 (with *fjǫlmenni mikit* and "hafði mikit jólaboð, bauð til sín ór heruðum mǫrgum stórbúǫndum [*had a great* jólaboð; *invited many major farmers from the region to him*]"), 100-101 (subjection through *veizlur*: "tók veizlur uppi í náND markbyggðinni ok stefndi til sín ǫllum byggðarrmǫnnum [*took* veizlur *close to the forest settlement and bid to him all its men*]"), 146 (*fjǫlmenn* courtly feast turned into wedding: "hafði þá ok til sín stefnt ór heruðum mǫrgu stórmenni [*had then also bid to him many great men from the region*]"), 176, 179 ("hafði veizlu mikla um páska ok hafði marga bæjarmenn í boði sínu ok svá bændr [*had a great* veizla *at Easter and invited many townsmen as well as farmers*]"), 296 ("hafði jólaboð mikit, ok var þá komit til hans mart stórmenni [*had a great* jólaboð*, and many a great man joined him there*]"), 297 (*lendir menn* and *ríkir bændr*).

were alien to the political world of the kings' sagas, as they effectively remained to Scandinavian political culture well into the thirteenth century.[137] It is the king in person, as the embodiment of power, who interacts with his aristocracy and farmers in the sagas, and shares resources and power with them through recognized and traditional procedures. In the absence of bureaucratic machinery and overriding legislative authority, the king relies on the constellations of political alliances mustered and maintained through personal attention. The origins of titles stemming from the early constructions of political relations between king and aristocracy remain obscure in many respects, but they were certainly not the labels of institutionalized and legally demarcated offices in any meaningful sense until the later twelfth century at the earliest, and, more likely, the thirteenth.[138] The promotion of the king's foremost local allies as landed men no doubt

[137] Achieved with difficulty in legal theory, it stirred up fiercest disputes in practice. Thus, in 1125, the Staufen brothers Duke Frederick II of Swabia and Conrad claimed the Salian inheritance as nearest relatives by blood to the deceased Emperor Henry V, while the new Emperor elect, Lothar III, claimed it as crown property. Their claim played upon disentangling dynastic property, *Hausgut*, from crown property, *Reichsgut*, a distinction which had its origins in legal circles from the early eleventh century and was alien to Germanic traditions. Understandably, dynastic shifts soon higlighted the issue. See Benjamin Arnold, *Power and Property in Medieval Germany*, 86; cf. also Herwig Wolfram, *Konrad II, 990-1039. Kaiser dreier Reiche* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2000), transl. as *Conrad II, 990-1039. Emperor of Three Kingdoms*, transl. Denise A. Kaiser (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 190-194. Apparently, Bishop Hincmar of Rheims was familiar with the concept from seventh-century Spanish legislation, but did nothing with it, cf. Janet L. Nelson, "Kingship and empire," *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, 224. For the Scandinavian context see, e.g., Jerker Rosén, "Iura regni," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder* 7; Halvard Bjørkvik, "Jordejendom. Norge," 667-668; Jerker Rosén, "Krongods. Norge;" Halvard Bjørkvik, "The Norwegian Royal Lands in the Middle Ages," esp. 8-14, 22-23; Klaus von See, *Königtum und Staat im skandinavischen Mittelalter*, Skandinavische Arbeiten 19 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 2002), 19-20; for rich discussion of crown property in Sweden, Upsala öd, and royal power, see Philip Line, *Kingship and State Formation in Sweden 1130-1290*, The Northern World 27 (Brill: Leiden, 2007), 268-296.

[138] However, analyzing their early transformation represents among the most important preoccupations of Norwegian medieval scholarship from the nineteenth century and into the second half of the twentieth. Much of it requires a leap of faith in respect of the sources, extrapolating institutional characteristics and administrative mechanisms from words or phrases in skaldic poetry, or projecting later saga material and legal texts back onto the past. On the debate concerning *jarlar*, *hersar*, and, in particular, *lendir menn* and their number, function, and development, see principally Arne Bøe, "Jarl," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder* 7, with references to previous literature; Sølvi Bauge Sogner, "Herse," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder* 6, also with references to previous literature; Arne Bøe, "Lendmann," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformationstid* 10 (Copenhagen et al.: Rosenkilde og Bagger et al., 1965); Peter Andreas Munch, "Om de saakaldte 'Lendirmenn' i Norge, en historisk Undersögelse i Fædrelandets ældre offentlige Ret," *Samlinger til det norske Folks Sprog og Historie* 5 (Oslo: Et Samfund, 1838); Konrad Maurer, *Altnorwegisches Staatsrecht und Gerichtswesen*, Vorlesungen über altnordische Rechtsgeschichte 1 (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Nachf., 1907); Gustav Storm, "Om Lendermandsklassens Talrighed i 12. og 13. Aarhundrede," *Historisk tidsskrift*, Second Series 4 (1882); Asbjørn Øverås, "Lendmannsklassa i Noreg i det 12. hundradåret," *Syn og segn* 35 (1929); Ebbe Hertzberg, "Lén og veizla i Norges sagatid;" Sven Tunberg, *Studier rörande Skandinaviens äldsta politiska indelning* (Uppsala: K. W. Appelbergs boktryckeri, 1911); Torkel Aschehoug, *Statsforfatningen i Norge og Danmark indtil 1814*, Norges offentlige Ret 1 (Oslo: Feilberg & Landmark, 1866); cf. overview in Per Sveaas Andersen, *Samlingen av Norge og kristningen av landet 800-1130*, 277-289; Claus Krag, *Norges historie fram til 1319* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2000), 77-80; Claus Krag, *Vikingtid og rikssamling 800-1130*, Aschehougs

carried the seeds of transforming alliances into legally defined offices of representation, and already in the twelfth century landed men, alongside *ármenn* and later *sýslumenn*, assumed local military, judicial, and fiscal administrative responsibilities. However, there is always the pitfall of highlighting such characteristics by projecting later and legally defined conceptions onto the past, and reading governmental and constitutional organs and mechanisms into the sagas rather than out of them. The kingdom of the sagas is foremost a constellation of political bonds, not a constitutional body of administrative machinery. It is the venue of political adjudication between king and aristocracy, although increasingly unevenly achieved, and carried out by means characteristic of pre-state political cultures. As long as the king lacked any real power and means of effectively governing *over* rather than in cooperation *with* the local aristocracies, it could hardly be any other way.

By the time the kings' sagas were produced, however, the king had clearly made significant progress in tightening his grip on matters. The sagas actively engage in dialogue with and interpretation of major contemporary points of political contention, such as the king's promotion of new men as administrative personnel, men of humble origin and owing their rise to the king's favor, who now claim political standing alongside those from the older dynastic aristocracies. Heimskringla has thus been interpreted as being politically conservative in its advocacy of a strong and traditional dynastic aristocracy as the precondition for effective monarchy.[139] However, it was not just Snorri: the kings' sagas in general promote very strongly the idea of kingship based on political recruitment from webs of aristocratic alliances. There its limits lay. As a rule of thumb, successful kings in the sagas are those skilled in balancing their relations with the aristocracy; to cross that line was a recipe of disaster. In Heimskringla, the tug of war finds its most memorable expression in the person of landed man and magnate Erlingur Skjálgsson.[140]

Norgeshistorie 2 (Oslo: Aschehoug & Co., 1995), 148-151, 182-188; and, very pointedly, Klaus von See, *Königtum und Staat im skandinavischen Mittelalter*, esp. 18-40, 65-101.

[139] The extent to which such advocacy is voiced in Heimskringla, and the kings' sagas in general, has been the subject of debate, cf. note 20. See further Diana Whaley, *Heimskringla,* 98-101; Ármann Jakobsson, *Í leit að konungi*, 280.

[140] The rise of new men around the king is primarily associated with King Sverrir, who was himself just such a person despite his claims to royal descent. Sverris saga is full of comments concerning power and humble origins, not least with regard to Birkibeinar themselves: "þeir inir sǫmu ok verit hǫfðu verkmenn en sumir ránsmenn eða ribbungar [*some of them who had been servants and some thieves and mobsters*]," or "sýslumenn yðrir, þeir er þér hafið tekit af stafkarls stig [*your bailiffs, whom you have recruited from vagrancy*];" *Sverris saga*, 65, 178, cf. also 155, *passim*. Compare the words of Erlingur Skjálgsson in Ólafs saga helga in Heimskringla, addressed directly to the king: "Svá hinu ǫðru skal játa, at ek geri þat lostigr at beygja hálsinn fyrir þér, Óláfr konungr, en hitt mun mér ǫrðigt þykkja at lúta til Sel-Þóris, er þrælborinn er í allar ættir, þótt hann sé nú ármaðr yðarr, eða annarra þeira, er hans makar eru at kynferð, þótt þér leggið metorð á [*I shall also profess that I willingly bow my head to you, King Ólafur. I find it difficult, however, to bow to Sel-Þórir, who is descended from slaves on all sides, even if he is now your steward, or to those others who are his equals in status, despite you awarding them rank*];" *Heimskringla* 2, 193, cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 288, and *Flateyjarbók* 2, 198; or the words of the landed man and magnate Hárekur of Þjótta, also in Ólafs saga helga: "en þó gerðu ekki svá inir fyrri hǫfðingjar, at minnka várn rétt, er ættbornir erum til ríkis at hafa af konungum, en fá þá í hendr bóandasonum þeim, er slíkt hafa fyrr ekki með hǫndum haft [*but previous*

The impact of personal contact mattered the most. Itinerancy provided kings not only with platforms for ideological and symbolic representation, dispensation of justice and law, military recruitment and defense, fiscal capacity, and immediate political involvement, but also with the level of sociability and visibility indispensible for the management of political bonds in pre-state society. The practical aspects of government were framed by ritualized means of political communication, most prominently feasting and gift giving. Through them bonds were made and remade. They gave expression to the political proximity of the king, *Königsnähe*, on which the aristocracy drew heavily in its political existence, while reinforcing the politicocultural status of the king himself.[141] In any pre-state political culture the definition of levels between ritualization and *Spielregeln*, on the one hand, and institutional framework of government and written devices, on the other, will always provoke debate;[142] there can be no doubt, however,

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lords did not diminish our rights, which we are assigned to enjoy of the king on account of birth, and hand them over to peasant sons who have never meddled with such things];" *Heimskringla* 2, 211, cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 320, and *Flateyjarbók* 2, 237. On the political era of King Sverrir see Claus Krag, *Sverre. Norges største middelalderkonge* (Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co., 2005); further and specifically on Sverris saga and its interpretation of kingship, see Sverre Bagge, *From Gang Leader to Lord's Anointed. Kingship in* Sverris saga *and* Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar, The Viking Collection, Studies in Northern Civilization 8 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1996), 15-88.

[141] Two aspects of the king's necessary mobility not specifically under analysis but of some importance are military arrangements and royal ascendancy, *konungstekja*. Customary rights of upkeep and lodging in the context of military provisions are known from classical Antiquity as well as from the Middle Ages; they often entailed verified permits, passport of sorts (*diplomata* or *tractoriae*), for hospitality in strategic locations. The locations of *konungsbú* along Norway's western coast have thus been seen as strategically located with regard to military fleets, cf. Halvard Bjørkvik, "Veitsle," 632; for England and the Continent, see Alban Gautier, "Hospitality in pre-viking Anglo-Saxon England," 35; Hans Conrad Peyer, *Von der Gastfreundschaft zum Gasthaus*, 150, *passim*. Regarding the latter, the Norwegian king customarily had to be "given" a king's name at the local *þing*, which in turn necessitated moving from one *þing* of acclamation to another. By the early twelfth century, however, Eyraþing in Þrándheimur had emerged as the most important of these *þing*s. In the kings' sagas, kings travel extensively for acclamation. See, e.g., Per Sveaas Andersen, *Samlingen av Norge og kristningen av landet 800-1130*, 275. Eriksgata in Sweden, although not traceable with certainty back before the later thirteenth century, may have originated primarily as a royal election itinerary; Philip Line, *Kingship and State Formation in Sweden 1130-1290*, 200-205. For insights into ritualized royal presence, the logic of its "grand theater of state," not least in the context of itinerancy, see primarily Sergio Bertelli, *Il corpo del re. Sacralità del potere nell'Europa medievale e moderna*, 2nd ed. (Florence: Ponte alle grazie, 1995), transl. as *The King's body. Sacred rituals of power in medieval and early modern Europe*, transl. R. Burr Litchfield (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 36-37, *passim*.

[142] The thrust of this long-standing debate among medievalists is directed towards the field of Carolingian and Ottonian political culture and government. Some of its relevant literature has already been cited in the present and previous parts (Brühl, Peyer, Bernhardt, Althoff, Leyser). The following items should also be noted: Karl Leyser, "Ottonian Government," *English Historical Review* 96 (1981); Gerd Althoff, *Die Ottonen. Königsherrschaft ohne Staat*, Kohlhammer Urban-Taschenbücher 473 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000); Hagen Keller, "Zum Charakter der 'Staatlichkeit' zwischen karolingischer Reichsreform und hochmittelalterlichen Herrschaftsausbau," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 23 (1989). For an alternative interpretation of Carolingian government, downplaying the classic depiction of itinerant kingship while giving added weight to institutionalized administration and the written word, see Rosamond McKitterick, *Charlemagne. The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), esp. 137-291; for a similar view of the Ottonians, see David Bachrach, "Exercise of royal power in early medieval Europe: the case of Otto the Great 936-73," *Early Medieval Europe* 17:4 (2009).

considering the anthropologically and sociologically informed historical inquiries made into the political reality of medieval Europe in recent scholarship, that demonstrative behavior was a fundamentally important and central instrument for exercising power. In the kings' sagas for sure, where even the largest conflicts and political issues are overwhelmingly analyzed and conceptualized as matters of personal action,[143] feasting and gift giving serve as primary political instruments. Kingship and governance are thus inseparable from the management of friendship and political ties, which makes the feasts and gifts that appear on every other page (or leaf) of the sagas an entirely predictable feature.

Haralds saga hárfagra includes a particularly vivid example of making and breaking bonds through feasts and gifts; it is worth quoting in full. The scene is set in the distant past, where King Haraldur hárfagri and King Eiríkur of Sweden compete for political support among the local elite in Vermaland. Needless to say, they are both *á veizlum* throughout:

> Áki hét maðr. Hann var ríkastr bóndi á Vermalandi, stórauðigr ok þá gamall at aldri. Hann sendi menn til Haralds konungs ok bauð honum til veizlu. Konungr hét ferð sinni at ákveðnum degi. Áki bauð Eiríki konungi ok til veizlu ok lagði honum inn sama stefnudag. Áki átti mikinn skála ok fornan. Þá lét hann gera annan veizluskála nýjan ok eigi minna ok vanda at ǫllu. Hann lét þann skála tjalda allan nýjum búnaði, en inn forna skála fornum búnaði. En er konungar kómu til veizlunnar, var skipat Eiríki konungi í inn forna skála ok hans liði, en Haraldi konungi í inn nýja skála með sitt lið. Með sama hætti var skipat borðbúnaði ǫllum, at Eiríkr konungr ok hans menn hǫfðu ǫll forn ker ok svá horn ok þó gyllt ok allvel búin, en Haraldr konungr ok hans menn hǫfðu ǫll ný ker ok horn ok búin ǫll með gulli, váru þau ǫll líkuð ok skyggð sem gler. Drykkr var hvárrtveggi inn bezti. Áki bóndi hafði verit fyrr maðr Hálfdanar konungs. En er sá dagr kom, er veizlan var ǫll, bjoggusk konungar til brautferðar. Váru þá reiðskjótar búnir. Þá gekk Áki fyrir Harald konung ok leiddi með sér son sinn, tólf vetra gamlan, er Ubbi hét. Áki mælti: "Ef þér, konungr, þykkir vináttu vert fyrir góðvilja minn, er ek hefi lýst fyrir þér í heimboði mínu, þá launa þat syni mínum. Hann gef ek þér til þjónostumanns." Konungr þakkaði honum með mǫrgum fǫgrum orðum sinn fagnað ok hét honum þar í mót fullkominni sinni vináttu. Síðan greiddi hann fram stórar gjafar, er hann gaf konungi. Síðan gekk Áki til Svíakonungs. Var þá Eríkr konungr klæddr ok búinn til ferðar, ok var hann heldr ókátr. Áki tók þá góða gripi ok gaf honum. Konungr svarar fá ok steig á bak hesti sínum. Áki gekk á leið með honum ok talaði við hann. Skógr var nær þeim, ok lá þar vegrinn yfir. En er Áki kom á skóginn, þá spurði konungr hann: "Hví

[143] For discussion of Heimskringla in this context, see Sverre Bagge, *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla*. In this, as in many other respects, Heimskringla's allegedly individual touch vis-à-vis that of Fagurskinna or Morkinskinna is open to question, cf. Theodore M. Andersson, "The Politics of Snorri Sturluson," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 93:1 (1994).

skiptir þú svá fagnaði með okkr Haraldi konungi, at hann skyldi hafa af ǫllu inn betra hlut? Ok veiztu, at þú ert minn maðr." "Ek hugða," segir Áki, "at yðr, konungr, ok yðra menn myndi engan fagnað skort hafa at þessi veizlu. En er þar var forn búnaðr, er þér drukkuð, þá veldr þat því, at þér eruð nú gamlir. En Haraldr konungr er nú í blóma aldrs, fekk ek honum af því nýjan búnað. En þar er þú minntir mik, at ek væra þinn maðr, þá veit ek hitt eigi síðr, at þú ert minn maðr." Þá brá konungr sverði ok hjó hann banahǫgg, reið braut síðan.[144]

[*There was a man named Áki. He was the most powerful farmer in Vermaland, wealthy and, at this point, old. He sent his men to King Haraldur and invited him to a* veizla*. The king promised attendance on a given day. Áki likewise invited King Eiríkur to a* veizla*, and made it the same day. Áki had a great and ancient hall. Now he had a new feasting hall built, no smaller in size and elaborately made in every respect. He had it all hung with new tapestry, and the older one with older tapestry. When the kings arrived for the* veizla *King Eiríkur and his retinue were then assigned the ancient hall, and King Haraldur with his retinue the new hall. Tableware was similarly assigned, with King Eiríkur and his men given ancient vessels and horns, yet gilded and finely made, while King Haraldur and his men received new vessels and horns, completely gilded, cut, and colored as glass. The drinks were equally good. Áki had previously been King Hálfdan's man. And when the final day of the* veizla *was over, the kings prepared to leave. Horses were made ready. Áki then walked before King Haraldur and led his twelve year old son, Ubbi, by his hand. Áki spoke: "If you find the goodwill I have expressed through this* heimboð *worth a friendship, lord, then bestow it on my son. I give him to you as a servant." The king thanked him for his conviviality with many fair words, and declared his true friendship to him. He then produced great gifts which he gave the king. Then Áki walked over to the king of Sweden. King Eiríkr was dressed and ready to leave; he was rather unhappy. Áki gave him some good items; the king said little in reply and mounted his horse. Áki walked along and spoke with him. The woods were near and the road passed through them. When Áki came to the woods, the king asked him: "Why did you divide the feast between Haraldur and me in the way you did, assigning him all the better part? And you know that you are my man." "I thought," Áki responded, "that you, king, and your men, had not been spared any convivial hosting at this* veizla*. The reason, however, for there being ancient gear where you had your drinks is that you are now old. Haraldur, on the other hand, is in the prime of life, and therefore I assigned him the new gear. But since you remind me that I am your man, then I am equally*

[144] *Heimskringla* 1, 109-111.

sure that you are mine." The king drew his sword and struck him a deadly blow, then rode away.]

Although the transfer of Áki's political support from one king to another is set in the Norwegian past it probably only took place in early thirteenth-century Reykholt. Effectively ahistoric to the modern audience, its idealized presentation reads as a blueprint for demonstrative behavior: bonds are broken and made through public and visual expression – that is, "ritual" – which is comprehensible to saga characters and audience alike. It needs little elaboration as it collects fundamental elements of contracting bonds into a single image: the formal and staged feast, the exchange of gifts, the affirmation of friendship, and the expression of relative status and loyalty through symbolic service (the son's shift of households).

Snorri's presentation speaks volumes. Its conceptual basis is indeed presented in many an Icelandic saga, where feasts and gifts are the language of friendship and bonds. It is to their contracting functions and uses in twelfth- and thirteenth-century political culture that we now turn more fully.

PART THREE

Managing Bonds in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Iceland and its Sagas

Chapter 3

I Making Friends in the Icelandic Saga

In 1046, King Magnús góði and his uncle Haraldur harðráði established a dual kingdom in Norway through impressive feasting and gift giving. They came to this arrangement by very different routes, though, and not as friends. It was King Ólafur helgi, Haraldur's half-brother and Magnús's father, who brought them together. Some sixteen years earlier, on July 29 1030, Ólafur had failed to reclaim his kingdom from an alienated aristocracy, backed by King Knútur ríki of Denmark – his North Sea empire was then at its height –, and he lost his life when confronting a massive force at Stiklarstaðir in Þrándheimur. However, if the Norwegian aristocracy expected that Danish authority would as usual be asserted by the native earls then they were to be sorely disappointed: Knútur quickly established his own son, Sveinn, as king of Norway, and he, under the tutelage of his English mother Alfífa (Ælfgifu), strove to implement and expand law and governance based on English models, much to the disapproval of the locals.[1] Knútur's own death in

[1] Already before his death, Knútur ríki's grip was slipping. On Knútur's Scandinavian politics, Sveinn's rule, and the *Alfífulög*, see most recently Timothy Bolton, *The Empire of Cnut the Great. Conquest and the Consolidation of Power in Northern Europe in the Early Eleventh Century*, The Northern World 40 (Brill: Leiden, 2009), 241ff, esp. 275-316; cf. also Peter Sawyer, "Cnut's Scandinavian empire," *The Reign of Cnut. King of England, Denmark and Norway*, ed. Alexander R. Rumble, Studies in the Early History of Britain (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1994). On the political background to King Ólafur helgi's defeat and the reintroduction of his dynastic line, see, e.g., Claus Krag, *Vikingtid og rikssamling 800-1130*,

1035, and the subsequent collapse of the Danish hegemony, offered a way out, but leading figures among the Norwegian aristocracy, headed by Einar þambarskelfir and Kálfur Árnason, had by then already set about recruiting Ólafur's young son, Magnús, at that time still exiled in Russia. Thus, in 1035 the eleven year old boy was made king and rightful heir to his father's kingdom by the very men who just a few years earlier had broken with his now saintly father.[2] Meanwhile, Haraldur, who had fought alongside his brother at Stiklarstaðir, enjoyed a highly successful military career as commanding officer of the Byzantine Varangian guard, and also undertook other financially and politically lucrative military exploits from Russia to the Mediterranean.[3] He returned to Sweden and Denmark in 1045 with a heavy purse, and prepared to proclaim himself king of Norway by whatever means were necessary.

Though there are differences of detail between them, the sagas agree that a truce should be negotiated between Magnús and Haraldur, and that joint rule would subsequently be orchestrated by leading men on both sides. At an unidentified location in 1046,[4] Magnús's surrender of power and the establishment of double-kingship took place in a highly ritualized manner that involved feasting and gift giving, and is described in vivid detail in Morkinskinna, Fagurskinna, and Heimskringla.[5] The contractual effects of the event are set out in Fagurskinna:

> Þá kómu við beggja vinir ok frændr ok báru sættarboð í millum. Kom svá, at þeir frændr Magnús ok Haraldr, skyldu finnask í griðum ok var þá stefnt ok ætlat til ríkrar veizlu, þar sem Akr heitir. Skyldi Magnús konungr veita Haraldi þrjá daga með sex tigum manna hans.
>
> Enn fyrsta dag, er konungr veitti ok síðan er borð váru upp tekin, þá gengr Magnús konungr út <ór stofunni> ok þegar er hann kom inn aptr, gengu menn bæði fyrir hónum ok eptir með stórum byrðum. Menn Haralds skipuðu annan pallinn. Þá gekk Magnús konungr at fyrsta manni ok gaf þeim sverð gott, ǫðrum skjǫld, þriðja kyrtil, því næst klæði eða gull eða vápn, þeim stærri, er tignari váru. Síðan kom hann fyrir Harald, frænda sinn, ok hafði í hendi sér tvá

Aschehougs Norgeshistorie 2 (Oslo: Aschehoug & Co., 1995), 135-147, 158-165; Knut Helle, "Norway 800-1200," *Viking Revaluations. Viking Society Centenary Symposium 14-15 May 1992*, eds. Anthony Faulkes and Richard Perkins (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1993), 10-11.

[2] The accession of Magnús góði no doubt played a significant role in the promotion of his father's holiness, cf. Staffan Hellberg, "Kring tillkomsten av Glælognskviða," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 99 (1984): 18-22. See otherwise note 58 of Chapter 2.

[3] Sigfús Blöndal, "The last exploits of Harald Sigurdsson in Greek service," *Classica et mediaevalia* 2 (1939); cf. Sigfús Blöndal, *Væringjasaga. Saga norrænna, rússneskra og enskra hersveita í þjónustu Miklagarðskeisara á miðöldum* (Reykjavík: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja, 1954), 108-168.

[4] Morkinskinna and Fagurskinna speak of Skjaldarakur and Akur, respectively, which may or may not have been a single location in Víkin. Theodoricus, however, locates the feasts in Upplönd at lake Mjörs, which may suggest Hringisakur. Heimskringla is silent on the matter. *Theodorici monachi historia de antiquitate regum norwagiensium*, ed. Gustav Storm, Monumenta Historica Norwegiæ. Latinske kildeskrifter til Norges historie i middelalderen (Oslo: Norsk historisk kjeldeskrift-institutt, 1880), 54-55; cf. note 5.

[5] *Morkinskinna*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 1932), 93-97; *Fagrskinna – Nóregs konunga tal*, ed. Bjarni Einarsson, Íslenzk fornrit 29 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1985), 243-246; *Heimskringla* 3, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, Íslenzk fornrit 28 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1951), 97-101.

reyrteina fagra ok mælti: “Frændi, hváran teininn vilið þér þiggja af oss at gjǫf?” Þá svarar Haraldr: “Þann er oss er nærri.” Þá mælti Magnús konungr: “Með þessum reyrsprota gefum vér yður hálft Nóregsveldi með ǫllum skǫttum ok skyldum ok allri eign ok með þessum formála, at þú skalt <vera> jafnréttr konungr í ǫllum stǫðum sem ek.”

[*Then friends and kinsmen from each side interceded and mediated between them. It came about that the two kinsmen, Magnús and Haraldur, should meet under a truce, and a great* veizla *was arranged at a place called Akur. King Magnús should host Haraldur and sixty of his men for three days.*

During the first day when the king hosted, and after the tables were removed, King Magnús left the hall, but when he returned there walked men both before and after him with great burdens. Haraldur’s men occupied the second bench. Then King Magnús went to the outermost man and gave him a good sword, the next a shield, the third a tunic, then clothes or gold or weapons, greater gifts for those of greater rank. Then he came before his kinsman, Haraldur, holding two beautiful reed sprigs in his hand, and spoke: “Kinsman, which of these reed sprigs would you like to accept as a gift from us?” Haraldur answered: “The one closer to us.” Then King Magnús spoke: “With this reed sprig we give you half the realm of Norway with all taxes and dues and property and with the declaration, that you shall be equal to me as king in every respect.”]

There are in fact some necessary exceptions, King Magnús goes on to explain, but having identified them the ritual continues, with roles reversed:

Þá stóð Haraldr upp ok þakkaði vel frænda sínum sæmð ok góða gjǫf, ok váru þá allir kátir. At liðnum þeim þrimr dǫgum hefir Haraldr konungr veizlu búna með ǫllu liði sínu, bauð Magnúsi konungi með sex tigum manna ok veitti af kappi miklu. Enn fyrsta dag sinnar veizlu valði hann gjafar ǫllum Magnúss konungs mǫnnum, ok kom þar þá inn margr fásénn gripr, er síðan var gefinn. Þá er ǫllum var gefit nema Magnúsi konungi, lét Haraldr taka stóla tvá. Hann settisk á annan ok bað Magnús konung sitja á ǫðrum. Þá váru bornar inn <í stofuna> margar tǫskr stórar ok breidd niðr <í hálminn> klæði, ok lét Haraldr konungr þá upp lúka féhirzlunum ok mælti til Magnúss konungs: “Þér veittuð oss fyrra dag mikit ríki, er þér hǫfðuð áðr unnit með sæmð af óvinum yðrum ok várum, tókuð oss til samlags með yðr. Var þat vel gjǫrt ok sómasamliga við oss. Nú er hér í annan stað at sjá. Vér hǫfum verit í útlǫndum ok stundum í <nǫkkurum> mannhættum áðr en vér hǫfum samnað þessu gulli, en nú skulum vér skipta í tvá staði, skulu þér frændi eiga hálft gullit með því, at þér vilið, at vér eigim hálft landit með yðr.”

Lét Haraldr konungr þá bera upp allt gullit, en síðan skipta millum sín. Þykir nú þetta hverjum manni mikil furða er sér, at í Norðrlǫnd skal svá mikit gull vera komit.

[*Then Haraldur stood up and warmly thanked his kinsman for the honor and good gift, and all were then merry. When the three days had passed, King Haraldur prepared a* veizla *with all his men, inviting King Magnús with sixty of his men and he hosted enthusiastically. The first day of his* veizla *he chose gifts for each of King*

Magnús's men, with many a rare item on display. When all had received gifts except King Magnús, Haraldur then had two chairs brought. He sat on one and invited King Magnús to sit on the other. Numerous large bags were then carried into the hall and a cloth spread over the straw. King Haraldur had the treasures opened and spoke to King Magnús: "You conferred on us a great realm the other day, which you had previously won with honor from your enemies and mine, and accepted us as your companions. That was honorably and well done in respect of us. Now to the other side. We have stayed abroad and sometimes been in great danger before collecting this gold together, which we now divide equally. You shall own half the gold, kinsman, just as you wish us to own half the realm with you."

King Haraldur had the gold unpacked and divided it between them. Everyone witnessing it thought it a great wonder that so much gold had entered the north.]

The gold is duly divided, but the underlying discontent between the two parties remains visible through the symbolic meaning of the objects exchanged:

Nú kom upp staup eitt mikit sem mannshǫfuð, tók Haraldr konungr upp ok mælti: "Frændi, hvar er þat gull, er hér skal í móti þessum knapp?" Þá svarar konungrinn: "Svá hefir ófriðr hagat ok stórir leiðangrar, at náliga allt gull ok silfr er gefit hirðmǫnnum, ok er nú eigi meira gull í várri varðveizlu en hringr þessi," tók af hendi sér hringinn ok fekk Haraldi. Hann leit á hringinn ok mælti: "Þetta er lítið gull, frændi, þeim konungi, er á tvinni konungsríki, ok enn munu sumir ifask í, hvárt þér eiguð þenna hring." Þá svaraði Magnús konungr áhyggjusamliga: "Ef vér eigum eigi þenna hring at réttu, þá veit ek eigi, hvat vér hǫfum rétt fengit, því at Ólafr enn helgi konungr gaf mér hringinn at enum øfsta skilnaði." Þá svaraði Haraldr konungr hlæjandi: "Satt segið þér, konungr, faðir yðvarr gaf yðr hring þenna ok tók áðr af várum feðr fyrir litla sǫk. Ekki var þá smákonungum gott í landi, er faðir yðvarr var sem ríkastr."

[*There was a goblet the size of a man's head. King Haraldur lifted it and spoke: "Where is that gold, kinsman, to equal this knob?" The king then answered: "Conflict and great military expeditions have made it so, that nearly all gold and silver has been given to retainers, and there is no gold left in our possession aside from this ring." He took the ring from his hand and gave it to Haraldur. He examined the ring and spoke: "This is a small gold object, kinsman, for the one who owns two kingdoms, and yet some will doubt whether you own this ring." King Magnús responded anxiously: "If we do not justly own this ring then I do not know what we have justly received, for King Ólafur helgi gave me this ring upon our final parting." King Haraldur responded, laughing: "You speak the truth, king; your father gave this ring, but he seized it previously with little cause from our father. It was not pleasant for the petty kings when you father was at the height of his power."*]

The scene closes with those devastating remarks and with supplementary oaths:

> Nú skilðu þeir veizlu með því, at tólf enir ríkustu menn af hvárs liði unnu sættareiða <í milli konunganna> ok skilðusk síðan með vináttu. Stýrðu báðir ríkinu um vetrinn í Nóregi, ok hafði sína hirð hvárr.
>
> [*They ended the* veizla *by having the twelve greatest men on each side swear oaths of reconciliation between the kings, and then parted in friendship. Both ruled the kingdom in Norway that winter, and each had his own court*.]

With the unexpected death of King Magnús the following year, their uneasy co-rulership and *vinátta* only had to survive a single winter.

The implications of these gestures are as unambiguous to the modern reader as they will have been to medieval eyes. Most basically, they enact *sætt* and *vinátta* through performance, drafting not with ink but eyes, ears, and memory; objects rise to actual representation by transcending their material worth, as a kingdom becomes both staff and ring, classic symbols of power and property.[6] The objects exchanged are symbolic but the *act* of exchange *is* the contract itself. The scene in its entirety, a fine depiction of the demonstrative actions of exchange, is to be understood politically as it creates relations and obligations by turning enemies into friends. Its elements are few but distinct. Its declared function is further reinforced by the way it provides the dynamic and narrative framework for the dual kingdom's saga: it is trailed by a series of episodes in which the kings' uneasy co-rulership is repeatedly tested to the point of destruction. The contrast is between publically enacted friendship, embodied in mutual feasts and gifts, and genuine political enmity, revealing itself in the process.

This unusually detailed feasting scene is presented in more or less identical form in all three compendia, yet Snorri cannot resist giving it an additional spin. Minor details aside, its prelude is the same in Morkinskinna and Fagurskinna:[7] Haraldur's initial proposal for joint rulership is turned down by Magnús and his trusted men; Haraldur and the exiled earl of Denmark, Sveinn Úlfsson, proceed in alliance to conquer their respective kingdoms, both now held by Magnús; facing their alliance and plunder in Denmark, however, he slips a message to Haraldur indicating that he is willing to accommodate him in Norway; arriving in Norway, Haraldur successfully proclaims royal name in Guðbrandsdalir and Upplönd before truce and reconciliation are arrived at between the two, and the festive establishment of co-rule proceeds. Both sagas carefully note that Þórir of Steig, a young magnate in Guðbrandsdalir, was the first to grant Haraldur a king's name in Norway, accompanied by spectacular gifts and with promises of future royal favor. According to tradition, then, the formal establishment of the double-kingship was preceded by hostile encounters between the two kinsmen, and with Haraldur already carrying a king's name through his own efforts. For dramatic and narrative effect,

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[6] For an illuminating sketch, see Heinrich Fichtenau, *Lebensordnungen des 10. Jahrhunderts. Studien über Denkart und Existenz im einstigen Karolingerreich* 1-2, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 30 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1984), transl. as *Living in the Tenth Century. Mentalities and Social Orders*, transl. Patrick J. Geary (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 45-48. For context and additional examples, see, e.g., Michael T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record. England 1066-1307*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993, 253-293.

[7] *Morkinskinna*, 87-93; *Fagrskinna*, 237-243.

however, Snorri prefers that they embark on their co-rulership with a clean slate, thereby foregrounding an initial bonding sequence followed by dramatic episodes of discontent.[8] In so doing, he downplays earlier skirmishes between the two, with Magnús inviting Haraldur to join him as soon as he learns of his return from the east, and with the latter already plundering in Denmark by then. Editing out the acclamation in Guðbrandsdalir and Upplönd nevertheless left Snorri with a bleeding chunk – the Þórir episode –, which he inserted rather awkwardly between the successive feasts: only *after* King Magnús has established Haraldur's joint kingship through feasting and gift giving does Þórir, in the form of an announcement at King Magnús's own assembly, grant Haraldur a king's name. As a result, Þórir's gifts from Haraldur are strangely prominent in Heimskringla. Another detail shared by Morkinskinna and Fagurskinna but omitted by Snorri is the sealing of the deal by means of oaths. The basic conclusion to be drawn from Snorri's editing is that he was confident in depicting a sincere attempt at forging political relations which took the form "only" of giving and receiving, unaided by any previous acclamation or supplemental oaths. While the notion is widespread in the corpus, including Morkinskinna and Fagurskinna, it is worth explicitly highlighting Snorri's instincts and inclinations in this matter, if these are ever in doubt.[9]

The idea of making and sustaining a friendship under pressure echoes Theodoricus's Historia de antequitate, which clearly states that Magnús and Haraldur were given no option in the matter by the aristocracy; they were compelled to cooperate for the sake of peace.[10] Images of forced display and the cultivation of bonds through feasting are also unmistakable in Magnúss saga blinda og Haralds gilla:

> Þá er þeir hǫfðu verit tveir konungar þrjá vetr Magnús ok Haraldr, sátu þeir inn fjórða vetr báðir norðr í Kaupangi, ok veitti hvárr ǫðrum heimboð, ok var þó æ við bardaga búit með liðinu.[11]
>
> [*When Magnús and Haraldur had jointly served as kings for three winters they stayed the fourth north in Kaupangur. Each hosted the other at a* heimboð*, yet they were constantly on the verge of battle*.]

King Magnús struck shortly thereafter, but only with the explicit approval of his *vinir* and *ríkismenn*, "friends" and "statesmen." When violating the advice of these *vitrir menn*, "wise men," further on, however, the eminent landed man Sigurður Sigurðarson fittingly read

[8] *Heimskringla* 3, 90-97.

[9] Whether and to what extent Snorri may be perceived as the "author" of Heimskringla in its present form, and thus the passage's true editor, is of course open to debate, cf. Jonna Louis-Jensen, "Heimskringla – Et værk av Snorri Sturluson?" *Nordica Bergensia* 14 (1997), but hardly affects our main argument or Heimskringla's representativeness on the issue. On Snorri, Heimskringla, and the perennial issue of medieval authorship, see also, e.g., Jon Gunnar Jørgensen, "'Snorre Sturlesøns Fortale paa sin chrønicke.' Om kildene til opplysningen om Heimskringlas forfatter," *Gripla* 9 (1995); Alan J. Berger, "Heimskringla and the Compilations," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 114 (1999).

[10] *Theodorici monachi historia de antiquitate regum norwagiensium*, 54-55.

[11] *Heimskringla* 3, 279.

him an angry and memorable lecture on the basics of political adjudication and the aristocratic framework of royal power: without his landed men the king was nothing.[12]

Establishing reconciliation through demonstrative exchange in the presence of insistent witnesses – a major theme in medieval political reality – found its way into Icelandic texts long before the first saga: Ari fróði's Íslendingabók (*c.*1130) already spells it out. In its concise form and reserved style it outlines, in a rather propagandist way, how an ordered society can be established by means of aristocratic hegemony and episcopal leadership.[13] Its centerpiece is arguably the conversion episode, the longest of ten short chapters and the only one exhibiting dramatic representation, albeit still in somewhat limited fashion. It culminates in Ari's single direct speech, assigned the Lawspeaker Þorgeir Ljósvetningagoði, and outlining the political philosophy and effectiveness of conflict management through submission to arbitration. Before his speech, in which tearing asunder the law is made to seem tantamount to dissolving society itself, Þorgeir footnotes his theoretical position with an actual exemplum:

> Hann sagði frá því, at konungar ýr Norvegi ok ýr Danmǫrku hǫfðu haft ófrið ok orrostur á miðli sín langa tíð, til þess unz landsmenn gørðu frið á miðli þeira, þótt þeir vildi eigi. En þat ráð gørðisk svá, at af stundu sendusk þeir gersemar á miðli, enda helt friðr sá, meðan þeir lifðu.[14]
>
> [*He related that kings in Norway and Denmark had carried out warfare and battles against each other for extended periods, until the farmers made peace between them, even if they themselves did not want it. But it was arranged, and they were soon sending precious items between themselves, and the peace lasted for as long as they lived*.]

Social order is achieved by forcing those at odds into contracting bonds of reconciliation through recognized and binding means, in this instance by the mutual exchange of gifts. Ari uses neither *gjǫf* nor *gefa*, "gift" and "give," which in itself is not significant. The translator of Oddur Snorrason's Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar in AM 310 4to, working in the mid or late thirteenth century and rephrasing the episode,[15] renders it straightforwardly: "En eptir þat sendi hvárr þeira ǫðrum gjafir [*but thereafter each sent the other gifts*]."[16] This echoes Kristni saga, from roughly the same period, which adds that the exchange was recurrent ("sendusk gjafir á millum á fára vetra fresti" [*exchanged gifts every few winters*])

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[12] *Heimskringla* 3, 279-285.

[13] On Ari's agenda in Íslendingabók, see, e.g., Sverrir Tómasson, "Helgisögur, mælskufræði og forn frásagnarlist," *Skírnir* 157 (1983): 137-140.

[14] *Íslendingabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, Íslenzk fornrit 1 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1968), 14-18, at 17.

[15] There is no hope of guessing the original phrase, not least since divergence among extant translations is considerable. Whether, and then to what extent, Oddur may have edited Ari's episode into his Latin original remains unanswered. AM 310 4to is often but not conclusively dated to *c.*1250 or later, but may have drawn on an earlier version; it was very possibly written in Norway. For a brief overview of scholarship, see Ólafur Halldórsson, "Formáli," *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar eptir Odd munk Snorrason*, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit 25 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2006), cxliii-clii, esp. cxlvi-cli; cf. note 7 in Chapter 2.

[16] *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar eptir Odd munk Snorrason*, 247.

and that it generated lifelong *vingan*, "friendship."[17] The speech is amplified again in Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar hin mesta (*c.*1300), where the kings "gerðuz fyrir goð uilia sinna rað giafa ok undir manna kiærir vinir. ok sendu huarir oðrum giafar ok gersimar [*became dearest friends because of the well-intentioned demands of their councilors and retainers, and sent each other gifts and splendid objects*]."[18] The understanding is certainly that demonstrative action not only brings its original intention into being but also involves actual obligations. Though the political logic of Þorgeir's arbitration and the period he spends under the cloak have been much analyzed, the contractual mode of his anecdote has attracted little discussion.[19]

Forced commitment to friendship by feasting and gift giving in the face of enmity and feud receives particularly powerful and dramatic treatment in Laxdæla saga, where Ólafur pái in Hjarðarholt and Ósvífur at Laugar eagerly employ such elements as vehicles of pacification against the growing discontent of their young people – but in vain. Prior to the escalation of hostilities there were solid bonds of friendship between the two men, consolidated through recurring feasts:

> Vinátta var ok mikil með þeim Ólafi ok Ósvífri ok jafnan heimboð, ok ekki því minnr, at kært gerðisk með inum yngrum mǫnnum.[20]
>
> [*There was great friendship between Ólafur and Ósvífur and habitual* heimboð*, and no less of it since friendship was warming among the younger ones*.]

The enmity of Kjartan and Bolli, with its personal twists and peculiarities, ultimately needs to be seen in the context of the inter-dynastic struggles for power and prominence masterfully delineated in the saga's initial chapters. It carries with it a definite sense of

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[17] *Kristni saga*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Biskupa sögur 1, Íslenzk fornrit 15:2 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2003), 35-36. If Kristni saga predates Laxdæla saga, as has been argued, then it almost certainly predates AM 310 4to as well; whether its rephrasing of Ari predates that of AM 310 4to, on the other hand, is unclear. See Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, "Formáli I. Kristni saga," *Biskupa sögur* 1, Íslenzk fornrit 15:1, cxxix-clv, esp. cliv-clv; Sveinbjörn Rafnsson, *Sögugerð Landnámabókar. Um íslenska sagnaritun á 12. og 13. öld*, Ritsafn sagnfræðistofnunar 35 (Reykjavík: Sagnfræðistofnun Háskóla Íslands, 2001), 148-154.

[18] *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* 2, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson, Editiones Arnamagnæanæ A:2 (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1961), 195.

[19] The conversion has lost its capital C, and is now rarely approached on Ari's terms as an historical "event." However, his presentation of it has for the most part continued to be understood in terms of political logic and arbitration, although there have also been notable contributions from religious and religiohistoric perspectives as well. See especially Konrad Maurer, *Die Bekehrung des Norwegischen Stammes zum Christenthume, in ihrem geschichgtlichen Verlaufe quellenmäßig geschildert* 1 (Munich: C. Kaiser, 1855), 411-443; Björn M. Ólsen, *Um kristnitökuna árið 1000 og tildrög hennar* (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka bókmenntafélag, 1900); Einar Arnórsson, "Kristnitökusagan árið 1000," *Skírnir* 115 (1941); Sigurður Nordal, *Íslenzk menning* 1 (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1942), 200-203, 224-227; Jón Jóhannesson, *Íslendinga saga* 1. *Þjóðveldisöld* (Reykjavík: Almenna bókafélagið, 1956), 151-166; Dag Strömbäck, *The conversion of Iceland. A survey*, transl. Peter Foote, Viking Society for Northern Research Text Series 6 (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1975); Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson, *Kristnitakan á Íslandi*, 2nd ed. (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 1999), esp. 77-88, 116-152; Jenny Jochens, "Late and Peaceful: Iceland's Conversion through Arbitration in 1000," *Speculum* 74 (1999).

[20] *Laxdæla saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 5 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1934), 112.

unavoidable feud and showdown, which duly occurs with Bolli's killing of Kjartan. With Bolli's transfer from Hjarðarholt to Laugar as Ósvífur's son-in-law, hostilities develop within the framework of earlier bonds of alliance. Though the feasting and gift giving continues, it now serves disparate agendas:

> Þeir Óláfr ok Ósvífr heldu inum sama hætti um heimboð; skyldu sitt haust hvárir aðra heim sækja. Þetta haust skyldi vera boð at Laugum, en Óláfr til sækja ok þeir Hjarðhyltingar. … Líðr nú þar til, er haustboðit skyldi vera at Laugum. Óláfr bjósk til ferðar ok bað Kjartan fara með sér. Kjartan kvazk mundu heima vera at gæta bús. Óláfr bað hann eigi þat gera, at styggjask við frændr sína; – "minnstu á þat, Kjartan, at þú hefir engum manni jafnmikit unnt sem Bolla, fóstbróður þínum. Er þat minn vili, at þú farir. Mun ok brátt semjask með ykkr frændum, ef þit finnizk sjálfir." Kjartan gerir svá sem faðir hans beiðisk…[21]
>
> [*Ólafur and Ósvífur maintained their habits of* heimboð*; each visited the other biennally in the autumn. This autumn there was a* boð *at Laugar to be attended by Ólafur and the men of Hjarðarholt. … Now comes the time when the* haustboð *is to take place at Laugar. Ólafur made himself ready and asked Kjartan to go with him. Kjartan said he would stay home and look after the farm. Ólafur bade him not to generate enmity towards his kinsmen; – "remember, Kjartan, that you have loved no-one as much as you have Bolli, your foster brother. It is my wish that you go. Things will quickly settle between you kinsman once you meet in person." Kjartan did as his father bade…*]

Compelling Kjartan to attend the feast proves to be a problematic move, however, since his attendance necessarily leads to his being cornered by events. Bolli's own strategy for extracting Kjartan's symbolic agreement to the current state of affairs immediately drives the two in opposite directions, the former pursuing the role of host with obvious enthusiasm in the face of the latter's visible reluctance; Ólafur is shown as a consciously upbeat presence on the sidelines:

> Bolli gekk í móti þeim Óláfi ok synir Ósvífrs ok fagna þeim vel. Bolli gekk at Kjartani ok minntisk til hans. Kjartan tók kveðju hans. Eptir þat var þeim inn fylgt. Bolli er við þá inn kátasti. Óláfr tók því einkar vel, en Kjartan heldr fáliga. Veizla fór vel fram.[22]
>
> [*Bolli and the sons of Ósvífur went out towards them and greeted them well. Bolli went up to Kjartan and kissed him. Kjartan received his greeting. After that they were led inside. Bolli was then the merriest. Ólafur reacted very favorably, but Kjartan gave little response. The* veizla *proceeded well enough*.]

Kjartan's attempt at shrugging it all off comes to nothing when he is effectively put on the spot by Bolli, who forces a reaction; again, Ólafur remains close by:

[21] *Laxdæla saga*, 134.
[22] *Laxdæla saga*, 135.

> Bolli átti stóðhross þau, er bezt váru kǫlluð; hestrinn var mikill ok vænn ok hafði aldregi brugðizk at vígi; hann var hvítr at lit ok rauð eyrun ok topprinn. Þar fylgðu þrjú merhryssi með sama lit sem hestrinn. Þessi hross vildi Bolli gefa Kjartani, en Kjartan kvazk engi vera hrossamaðr ok vildi eigi þiggja. Óláfr bað hann við taka hrossunum, – "ok eru þetta inar virðuligstu gjafar." Kjartan setti þvert nei fyrir. Skilðusk eptir þat með engri blíðu, ok fóru Hjarðhyltingar heim, ok er nú kyrrt.[23]
>
> [*Bolli had a stud of horses which was claimed to be the best; its horse was big and fair and had never failed at fighting; the stallion was white with red ears and forelock. There were also three mares with the same color as the horse. Bolli wanted to give these horses to Kjartan, but Kjartan said he was not much of a horse person, and had no wish to accept them. Ólafur asked him to accept them, – "and these are most honorable gifts." Kjartan gave him a straight "no." They then parted with no warmth, and the men of Hjarðarholt went home, and things now stayed quiet*.]

The logic of symbolic action frames Bolli's ultimatum: either Kjartan accepts the gift, thereby acknowledging friendship, or he turns it down, which is tantamount to declaring enmity. Just as feasting, giving, and receiving are the visual tokens of friendship, they are correspondingly the acts and gestures that are withheld from one's enemies. Similarly, the feasts that follow, with no hint of dwindling enthusiasm by the heads of household, become sites for hostility and humiliation among those who are meant to be reconciled:

> Þeir Óláfr ok Ósvífr heldu sinni vináttu, þótt nǫkkut væri þústr á með inum yngrum mǫnnum. Þat sumar hafði Óláfr heimboð hálfum mánuði fyrir vetr. Ósvífr hafði ok boð stofnat at vetrnóttum; bauð þá hvárr þeira ǫðrum til sín með svá marga menn, sem þá þætti hvárum mestr sómi at vera. Ósvífr átti þá fyrri boð at sækja til Óláfs, ok kom hann at ákveðinni stundu í Hjarðarholt. Í þeirri ferð var Bolli ok Guðrún ok synir Ósvífrs.[24]
>
> [*Ólafur and Ósvífur kept their friendship, despite some irritation between the younger ones. That summer, Ólafur hosted a* heimboð *two weeks before winter. Ósvífur also hosted a* heimboð *at the start of winter; each invited the other with as many men as each thought most honorable. Ósvífur attended first, and arrived on time in Hjarðarholt. Bolli, Guðrún, and the sons of Ósvífur made that trip*.]

Seating arrangements and theft push matters to the brink as hope turns into despair. Mutual hospitality then comes to an end as the last "heimboð til Lauga at vetrnóttum [*invitation to Laugar for the start of winter*]" turns sour: a second theft leads to outright hostility and open feud ("fullkominn fjándskapr [*full enmity*].") "Takask nú af heimboðin [*invitations are off*]," the saga remarks.[25] Before spring arrives Kjartan is dead.

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[23] *Laxdæla saga*, 135.
[24] *Laxdæla saga*, 139.
[25] *Laxdæla saga*, 142, 144, 146.

The intended functions of feasting and gift giving as well as the failure to superimpose them effectively are neatly caught in Snorri's brief sketch in Ólafs saga helga of the political struggles among the Orcadian aristocracy.[26] As a textbook example of conflict management it traces the dispute over political leadership among the sons of deceased Earl Sigurður of the Orkneys. It highlights the relentless bully Einar, who appropriates two-thirds of the earldom for himself while leaving a third to his non-confrontational brother Brúsi and ignoring his half-brother Þorfinnur, grandson of Scottish king Melkólmur (Malcolm) and earl of Katanes. Einar's tyranny and unpopularity facilitates the rise of the young and popular Þorkell, whom the farmers duly draft in as their political spokesman. Incurring the wrath of Einar, however, he understandably seeks to cultivate the friendship of Þorfinnur of Katanes, and "var þar lengi síðan ok elskaði at jarli [*stayed there long afterwards and loved the earl*]."[27] Later, when Þorfinnur and Þorkell prepare to seize the disputed third of the earldom by military force, the passive Brúsi assumes his role as mediator and ensures that Þorfinnur receives his claimed third by virtually handing over his own third to Einar as a kind of appeasing compensation. When Einar nevertheless proves treacherous thereafter it is time for Þorfinnur and Þorkell to increase the pressure and ally themselves with a worthy figure known for his keen interest in local involvement – the king of Norway. They establish *vinátta* and become *vinir* by means of gifts:

> Þorfinnr jarl fór austr til Nóregs, ok kom á fund Óláfs konungs ok fekk þar góðar viðtǫkr ok dvalðisk þar lengi um sumarit. En er hann bjósk vestr, gaf Ólafr konungr honum langskip mikit ok gott með ǫllum reiða. Þorkell fóstri rézk þá til ferðar með jarli, ok gaf jarl honum þat skip, er hann hafði vestan haft um sumarit. Skilðusk þeir konungr ok jarl með kærleikum miklum.[28]
>
> [*Earl Þorfinnur went east to Norway and met with King Ólafur. He was well received and made an extended stay during the summer. King Ólafur gave him a large and excellent longship, fully equipped, when he prepared to go west. Þorkell fóstri took on the trip with the earl, and the earl gave him the ship that he had brought west in the summer. The king and earl parted with great warmth*.]

Einar assembles an armed troop, but again Brúsi attempts reconciliation in the familiar way, namely by creating *sætt* and *vinátta* through oaths and mutual *veizlur*:

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[26] It can be found in its entirety in *Heimskringla* 2, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, Íslenzk fornrit 27 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1945), 158-174, with the episode in question on 160-166, cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga. Den store saga om Olav den hellige efter pergamenthåndskrift i Kungliga biblioteket i Stockholm nr. 2 4to med varianter fra andre håndskrifter*, eds. Oscar Elbert Johansen and Jón Helgason (Oslo: Norsk historisk kjeldeskrift-institutt, 1941), 229-255 and *Flateyjarbók* 2. *En samling of norske konge-sagaer med indskudte mindre fortællinger om begivenheder i og udenfor Norge samt annaler*, eds. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and C. R. Unger (Oslo: P. T. Mallings forlagsboghandel, 1862), 177-182.

[27] *Heimskringla* 2, 162.

[28] *Heimskringla* 2, 165. Þorkell arrived in previous autumn as their representative, and "var þar um vetrinn með konungi í kærleikum miklum [*was there in the winter with the king in great cordiality*]." The king then invited Þorfinnur to his court with "vináttumál;" 164.

> Brúsi jarl fór til fundar við þá báða bræðr ok bar sætt á milli þeira. Kom enn svá, at þeir sættusk ok bundu þat eiðum. Þorkell fóstri skyldi vera í sætt ok vináttu við Einar jarl, ok var þat mælt, at hvárr þeira skyldi veita ǫðrum veizlu, ok skyldi jarl fyrri sækja til Þorkels í Sandvík. En er jarl var þar á veizlu, þá var veitt it kappsamligsta. Var jarl ekki kátr.[29]
>
> [*Earl Brúsi went to meet both brothers and mediated between them. Yet again it came about that they were reconciled and confirmed that with oaths. Þorkell fóstri should be reconciled and in friendship with Earl Einar, and it was declared that each should host a* veizla *for the other, and that the earl should visit Þorkell at Sandvík first. And when the earl attended the* veizla *it went ahead most convivially . The earl was not cheerful.*]

Einar's joylessness reveals his limited interest in honoring the obligations being established. Moreover, when Þorkell's men become aware of designs on their lord's life Þorkell swiftly strikes the earl dead as he sits by fire in the hall. He then hurries to Norway, where King Ólafur helgi greets him enthusiastically: "Lét konungr yfir verki þessu vel [*the king esteemed the deed highly*]."[30]

Turning enmity to friendship through demonstrative action constitutes a significant theme in the saga corpus; feud and conflict are typically, though not always, brought to an end through mechanisms involving feasts and gifts. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the eventual settlement of prolonged conflicts, stretching over episodes or even whole sagas, commonly takes the form of a demonstrative finale, in which order is restored and bonds of reconciliation are sealed with feasts and gifts. The classic farce that is Bandamanna saga offers just such a finale. Following a comic dispute, the chief protagonists bring matters safely to rest in a joyful scene of marriage, feasting, gift giving and friendship. Oddur, the original target of the allied chieftains, and his father, Ófeigur, form lasting bonds with the two *bandamenn* aiding reconciliation, Gellir and Egill:

> [Oddur] býsk við veizlu ágætligri; skortir eigi efnin til. Kemr Gellir þar með dóttur sína, ok þar kom Egill ok fjǫlði manna. Fór veizlan sem vinir myndi kjósa.[31]
>
> [(Oddur) *prepared the finest* veizla*; there was no shortage of supplies. Gellir arrived with his daughter and Egill came there and many men. The* veizla *proceeded as friends would wish.*]

The feast ends with *góðar gjafir*, "good gifts," and with Egill needing just a little extra encouragement to be completely satisfied – somewhat reminiscent of his namesake and great-grandfather Skalla-Grímsson.[32] The Möðruvallabók redaction describes the feast as

[29] *Heimskringla* 2, 165.
[30] *Heimskringla* 2, 166.
[31] *Bandamanna saga*, ed. Guðni Jónsson, Íslenzk fornrit 7 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1936), 358-359.
[32] As noted by Guðni Jónsson, cf. *Bandamanna saga*, 359, n.1.

skǫrulig, "generous:" "þóttusk menn eigi betra brullaup þegit hafa hér á landi. Ok er veizluna þraut, þá eru menn út leiddir með stórgjǫfum [*they felt they had never enjoyed a better wedding feast in this land. And when the feast was brought to close, people were escorted away with great gifts*]." With the little extra inducement thrown in "líkar Agli stórvel, ok binda sitt vinfengi [*Egill was greatly pleased, and they tied their friendship*]."[33]

A comparable scene with its own comic twist is the memorable reconciliation at the end of Valla-Ljóts saga, in which Valla-Ljótur and Guðmundur ríki resolve their saga-long dispute through the language of gifts. The two are about to face off at the alþingi when Ljótur seeks the aid of Skafti Þóroddsson, best known for his record-holding term as lawspeaker, 1004-1030. Skafti is requested to carry an object of reconciliation between the two. At an earlier and more hostile encounter, Guðmundur had come close to killing his foe with a spear-throw; he is now presented with the same spear in an altogether unexpected and redefined context:

> "Nú vil ek, at þú færir Guðmundi spjótit." Skapti bað hann fara með sér. Ljótr kvað svá vera skyldu, – "ok má ek vel sjá hann." Guðmundr heilsaði Skapta. "Hví sýndisk þér at veita Ljóti gǫngulið?" Skapti kvað svǫr bera til, – "ok ekki er þat til óvinfengis gjǫrt við þik, en spjót þetta vill Ljótr, at þú hafir, ok kvað þik sent hafa." Guðmundr svarar: "Svá var þat þér sent, Ljótr, at ek ætlaða þat til lítilla sæmða þér." Ljótr svarar: "Síðan svá hefir til snúizk, þá geri ek mér þat ekki til fjár spjót þetta." Hann kvazk þat gjarnan vilja, – "en sverð þetta skaltu hafa;" – þat var gersemi mikil. Þá mælti Ljótr til Guðmundar: "Þigg af mér sverð þetta, en send mér eigi annat spjót þess háttar, en lúkum svá málum okkrum, at þú þykkisk halda ǫllum sóma þínum, ok lúkum svá fjándskap okkrum. "Svá skal vera," sagði Guðmundr.[34]
>
> [*"I want you to give Guðmundur the spear." Skafti asked him to accompany him. Ljótur said he would, – "I may as well see him." Guðmundur greeted Skafti. "Why did you judge it fit to march alongside Ljótur?" Skafti said there were reasons, – "it was not to attract your enmity, but Ljótur wanted you to have this spear, and claims that you sent it." Guðmundur responded: "It was sent to you, Ljótur, in a manner not intended for your honor." Ljótur answered: "But since it turns out to be so, I will not make any charge for that spear." He said that he was keen for this to be the case, – "and accept this sword from me;" – it was a most precious item. Then Ljótur said to Guðmundur: "Accept this sword from me, but do not send me another spear of that kind, and let us put an end to our disputes in a manner you deem fit for your honor, and thus put an end to our enmity. "It shall be so," said Guðmundur.*]

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[33] *Bandamanna saga*, 359. Its other main redaction, quoted above, is GkS 2845 4to (Konungsbók). Bandamanna saga is anomalous in the corpus as farce, comedy, or satire; on its structure and context, literary and cultural, see Hallvard Magerøy, *Studiar i Bandamanna saga. Kring gjerd-problemet*, Bibliotheca arnamagnæana 18 (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1957); John Lindow, "A Mythic Model in *Bandamanna saga* and its Significance," *Michigan Germanic Studies* 3 (1977); Carol J. Clover, "The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode," *Speculum* 55:3 (1980).

[34] *Valla-Ljóts saga*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson, *Eyfirðinga sǫgur*, Íslenzk fornrit 9 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1956), 257.

The road to honorable reconciliation is paved with good gifts, and the saga comes to an end.

Other sagas that conclude their major disputes with feasts and gifts include Laxdæla saga and Finnboga saga ramma. In the former, the extended conflict carried along the axis of Ólafur pái vs. Þorleikur, Kjartan vs. Bolli, and Ólafssynir vs. Bollasynir, is brought to an end through the reconciliation orchestrated by Snorri goði, and confirmed with mutual gifts:

> frá því er sagt, at fé galzk vel, ok sættir váru vel haldnar. Á Þórsnessþingi váru gjǫld af hendi innt. Halldór gaf Bolla sverð gott, en Steinþórr Óláfsson gaf Þorleiki skjǫld; var þat ok góðr gripr; ok var síðan slitit þinginu, ok þóttu hvárirtveggju hafa vaxit af þessum málum.[35]
>
> [*it is reported that payment was made in full and the terms of the reconciliation were properly honored. Payment was made at Þórsnessþing. Halldór gave Bolli an excellent sword, and Steinþór Ólafsson gave Þorleikur a shield—this was a precious item. Then the assembly was brought to an end and each was felt to have emerged more honorable from these matters than before*.]

The younger Finnboga saga ramma adheres to a similar conceptual model in its finale, where foes become friends through arbitration and gifts:

> Gerði Brandr féskuld nökkura á hendr þeim bræðrum, ok guldu skjótt ok röskliga. Er svá sagt, at síðan hafi þeir haldit vináttu sinni, ok skiptust þeir Jǫkull ok Finnbogi gjöfum við.[36]
>
> [*Brandur fined the brothers, and they paid swiftly and fairly. It is reported that they maintained their friendship since then and Jökull and Finnbogi have exchanged gifts*.]

The mediator, Brandur örvi, then follows suit and is reconciled with Finnbogi in much the same way:

> "Nú man eg eigi minna launa lífgjöfina en heita þér fullkominni minni vináttu ok málafylgd, við hvern sem þú átt eða þínir synir, ok skal okkra vináttu aldri skilja, meðan vit erum báðir uppi." Finnbogi þakkaði honum sína fylgd ok öll sín ummæli með fögrum orðum. Hann gaf Brandi gripi þá, sem honum hafði gefit Jón Grikklandskonungr. Var þat hringr, skjöldr ok sverð. Þakkaði Brandr honum stórliga vel, ok skiljast þeir þá allir með inum mesta kærleik ok blíðu.[37]

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[35] *Laxdæla saga*, 208-211, quoted to 211.
[36] *Finnboga saga*, ed. Jóhannes Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit 14 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1959), 337-338, quoted to 338.
[37] *Finnboga saga*, 338-339, quoted to 339.

[*"Now I will repay your gift of life with nothing less than declaring to you my complete friendship and support, whomever you or your sons are up against, and our friendship shall never fail while we both live." Finnbogi thanked him with fair words for his support and affirmation. He gave Brandur the items that Jón the king of the Greeks had given him—a ring, a shield, and a sword. Brandur thanked him effusively, and they parted with the greatest warmth and cordiality.*]

The basic logic of these examples is reflected in numerous smaller instances and episodes throughout the sagas, where visual tokens of friendship frame publically announced bonds of reconciliation and the elimination of hostilities, real or potential. In Hreiðars þáttur heimska, King Haraldur harðráði correctly understands Hreiðar's presentation of the infamous gilded silver pig as a plea for mercy and reconciliation, before realizing its mockery:

> Her er nv gripr er ec vil gefa þer setr aborþit fire hann. en þat var svin gjort af silfri oc gyllt. Þa melti konvngr er hann leit asvinit. Þv ert hagr sva at tratt hefi ec set iafnvel smiþat meþ þvi moti sem er. … s. konvngr at hann mon taca settir af honom.[38]
>
> [*"Here is an object I would like to give you," and puts it on the table in front of him; it was a pig made of gilded silver. The king spoke when he observed the pig: "Your level of skill is such that I have hardly come across comparable craftsmanship." … The king said he would accept his reconciliation*.]

In Reykdæla saga og Víga-Skútu Áskell goði works tirelessly to resolve the tensions created by his unruly and troublesome kinsmen, not least by promoting reconciliation through precious gifts:

> býðr nú enn Áskell sætt fyrir þetta. En Steingrímr sagði, at jafnan hafði hann sæzk, ok kvað þá enga sætt halda vilja ok sagði, at nú mun ekki verða af sættinni, ok kvað eigi mega þá verr verða en áðr, þá er þeir váru sáttir kallaðir. Ok nú vill Áskell gefa Steingrími þrjá gripi, sverð ok skikkju ok gullhring, ok váru þat miklar gersemar, en hann vildi engan þiggja.[39]
>
> [*Áskell offers reconciliation yet again on this account. Steingrímur then said that he had always willingly accepted reconciliation while they had no intention of honoring any; said that reconciliation was now off the table, and that this would prove no worse than when they were previously deemed to be in peace. Áskell then wanted to give Steingrímur three items, a sword and a mantle, and a golden ring, precious items, but he refused to accept any of them*.]

[38] *Morkinskinna*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 1932), 135.
[39] *Reykdæla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, ed. Björn Sigfússon, Íslenzk fornrit 10 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1940), 181-184, quoted to 183-184.

The list of feasts, gifts, and reconciliations in the sagas may be extended almost *ad infinitum*, leading from the so-called "Ingólfs þáttur" in Glúma, where Ingólfur and Glúmur confirm their everlasting friendship through gifts,[40] to Þorsteinn fagri's gift of a gilded spear to the young Brodd-Helgi in Þorsteins saga hvíta, the only gift mentioned in the saga and linked to reconciliatory efforts,[41] and beyond.[42]

Behind such individual instances lay the general principle of reciprocity, culturally conditioned and consciously promoted. It reflected maxims such as "ser giof til lavna [*gift expects reward*]" in Snorri's Háttatal,[43] Gísli's variant of the same in Gísla saga when reminding Geirmundur that "sér æ gjǫf til gjalda [*gift expects repayment*]."[44] or Hávamál's "glíc scolo giold giofom [*gifts determine rewards*]."[45] It should not be overlooked, however, that feasts and gifts held no agency in and of themselves, but were consciously deployed

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[40] Ingólfur failed to heed Glúmur's advice while he was a member of his household, and his behavior was seen as a cautionary tale concerning *þrályndi*, "stubbornness." On his return from abroad, Ingólfur returns to Glúmur, respects his leadership and support, and gives him splendid gifts – a tapestry, a mantle, and some stallions – to underline their *vinfengi* (described thus in the Vatnshyrna fragment). *Víga-Glúms saga*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson, *Eyfirðinga sǫgur*, 42-49, gifts on 48-49.

[41] A scene from the end of the saga. Þorsteinn had killed Helgi's father, Þorgils, in a feud; he is then reconciled with the boy's grandfather, Þorsteinn hvíti: "Ok er þeir kumpánar gengu út, lék sveininnn Helgi Þorgilsson sér at gullreknu spjóti, er Þorsteinn fagri hafði sett hjá durunum, er hann gekk inn. Þorsteinn fagri mælti við Helga: 'Viltu þiggja at mér spjótit?' Helgi ræzk þá um við Þorstein hvíta, fóstra sinn, hvárt hann skyldi þiggja spjótit at Þorsteini fagra. Þorsteinn hvíti svarar, bað hann þiggja víst ok launa sem best [*And when the fellows came out the boy Helgi Þorgilsson was playing with a gilded spear that Þorsteinn fagri had left by the door when he went inside. Þorsteinn fagri said to Helgi: "Would you like to accept this spear from me?" Helgi consulted his foster-father, Þorsteinn hvíti, on whether he should accept the spear from Þorsteinn fagri. Þorsteinn hvíti replied that he should certainly accept the spear and reciprocate in full*.]," cf. *Þorsteins saga hvíta*, ed. Jón Jóhannesson, *Austfirðinga sǫgur*, Íslenzk fornrit 11 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1950), 16-18, at 17.

[42] *Njála*, for example, repeatedly makes use of the motif of gifts, in a variety of contexts, e.g.: Hrútur generously forgives a mocking young boy by giving him a golden ring: "Hrútr dró fingrgull af hendi sér ok gaf honum ok mælti: 'Far braut ok leita á engan mann síðan.' Sveininn fór í braut ok mælti: 'Þínum drengskap skal ek við bregða æ síðan' [*Hrútur took a gold ring from his finger, and gave it to him and said: 'Go away, and offend no man hereafter.' The boy went away and said: 'Your nobleness will remain with me for ever.'*]," cf. *Brennu-Njáls saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 12 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1954),28-29, at 29; Hrútur arbitrates reconciliation between Höskuldur and Ósvífur, sealing it with a gift (mantle), cf. 39-40; Hrútur orchestrates reconciliation between the reluctant Höskuldur and Þórarinn Ragabróðir: "Hrútr mælti: 'Gerum vit góða ferð hans; hann hefir víst mikils misst; ok mun þat vel fyrir mælask, ok gefum honum gjafir, ok sé hann vinr okkarr alla ævi síðan.' Ok fór þetta fram, at þeir gáfu honum gjafir, bræðr [*Hrútur said: "Let us make his trip worthwhile, his loss is surely great, and it will meet with appreciation; let us give him gifts and he will be our friend for ever." This was done, and the brothers gave him gifts*.]," cf. 51-52; Earl Hákon at Hlaðir is reconciled with the Njálssynir through his son Eiríkur and Kári, with gifts dispensed at their departure, cf. 223; Njáll supplements compensation payments with gifts (gown and boots), though not with the desired effect, cf. 312-314.

[43] *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar udgivet efter håndskrifterne*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel – Nordisk Forlag, 1931), 228.

[44] *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, ed. Björn K. Þórólfsson, *Vestfirðinga sǫgur*, Íslenzk fornrit 6 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1943), 52.

[45] *Edda. Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern* 1. *Text*, 5th ed., eds. Gustav Neckel and Hans Kuhn, Germanische Bibliothek, Fourth Series, Texte (Heidelberg, Carl Winter – Universitätsverlag, 1983), 24.

as means of communication in the social and political arena. The politics of relationships – in effect, the culture of power in medieval Iceland – were complex and not easily summarized;[46] its demonstrative framework was, however, a common language of exchange, normally that of feasts and gifts. Friendship, whether involving real or imaginary kin, was constructed and reconstructed through culturally acknowledged and recognizable means, to which Hávamál bears eloquent witness (41, 42, 44, 46):[47]

Vápnom oc váðom
scolo vinir gleðiaz,
þar er á siálfom sýnst;
viðrgefendr oc endrgefendr
erost lengst vinir,
ef þat bíðr at verða vel.

Vin sínom
scal maðr vinr vera
oc gialda giof við giof;
hlátr við hlátri
scyli hǫlðar taca,
enn lausung við lygi.
...
Veiztu, ef þú vin átt,
þann er þú vel trúir,
oc vill þú af hánom gott geta:
geði scaltu við þann blanda
oc giofom scipta,
fara at finna opt.
...
Þat er enn of þann,
er þú illa trúir
oc þér er grunr at hans geði:
hlæia scaltu við þeim
oc um hug mæla,
glíc scolo giold giofom.[48]

[46] Among the most notable recent contributions to this broad and massive topic area are those dealing with the politics of marriage and concubinage, cf. Auður G. Magnúsdóttir, *Frillor och fruar. Politik och samlevnad på Island 1120-1400*, Avhandlingar från Historiska institutionen i Göteborg 29 (Göteborg: Göteborgs Universitet, 2001); Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir, *Property and Virginity. The Christianization of Marriage in Medieval Iceland 1200-1600* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2010), cf. also Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir, *Konur og vígamenn. Staða kynjanna á Íslandi á 12. og 13. öld*, Sagnfræðirannsóknir - Studia historica 12 (Reykjavík: Sagnfræðistofnun Háskóla Íslands and Háskólaútgáfan, 1995). See also Guðrún Nordal, *Ethics and Action in Thirteenth-Century Iceland*, The Viking Collection, Studies in Northern Civilization 11 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1998).
[47] For Hávamál 43, also relevant, see Chapter 1.
[48] *Edda. Die Lieder des Codex Regius*, 23-24.

[*Friends should cheerfully exchange weapons and clothes, decorating one another. Givers and re-givers remain friends the longest, if friendship is meant to be at all.*

One should be the friend of one's friend, and repay gift with gift, laughter with laughter, but treachery with lies.
…
Know, if you have a friend whom you fully trust and from whom you want good things: socialize with him, exchange gifts with him, and meet him often.
…
Again, on the one you distrust and whose character you suspect: laugh with him and hide your thoughts, gifts determine rewards.]

Several matters catch the eye in these apparently transparent and frequently cited verses. In particular we note that friendship is defined through action: obligatory bonds are formed and framed by mutual and continuous hospitality and the exchange of gifts. These are the hallmarks of friendship. Further, friends should display their friendship by carrying their gifts – clothes and weapons. Personal affection is no prerequisite for friendship, however, for the obligations that constitute it are in no sense altruistic. Friendship involves obligation, and reciprocal behavior is the key element; gift breeds gift, support breeds support, hostility breeds hostility. Last but not least, friendship is not so much the objective mentality of psychological repayment but more that conduct which is subjectively and deliberately enacted in order to achieve particular results.

The Hávamál presentation of giving and receiving as the epitome of friendship belongs to a set of generic descriptions that is drawn on repeatedly and with relatively minor variations throughout the saga corpus. Those firm friendships that will stand the test of time are generally expressed through mutually recurring and regularized feasting and gift giving, such as exists between Ólafur pái and Ósvífur in Laxdæla, and no less famously between Gunnar and Njáll in Brennu-Njáls saga. At one point the two friends about to be put to the test:

> Þat var siðvenja þeira Gunnars ok Njáls, at sinn vetr þá hvárr heimboð at ǫðrum ok vetrgrið fyrir vináttu sakir. Nú átti Gunnarr at þiggja vetrgrið at Njáli, ok fóru þau Hallgerðr til Bergþórshváls.[49]
>
> [*It was the habit of Gunnar and Njáll that each accepted* heimboð *and winter truce from the other biennially at winter for the sake of friendship. Now it was Gunnar's turn to accept winter truce from Njáll, and he and Hallgerður went to Bergþórshvoll*.]

The saga later describes the careful cultivation of friendship between Höskuldur Hvítanessgoði, and Njáll and Njálssynir, with much the same elements:

> Ok svá var dátt með þeim ǫllum, at engum þótti ráð ráðit, nema þeir réði allir um. Bjó Hǫskuldr lengi í Ossabæ svá, at hvárir studdu annarra sæmð, ok váru

[49] *Brennu-Njáls saga*, 91.

> synir Njáls í ferðum með Hǫskuldi. Svá var ákaft um vináttu þeira, at hvárir buðu ǫðrum heim hvert haust ok gáfu stórgjafar. Fer svá fram lengi.[50]
>
> [*Things were so cheerful between them that none felt that decisions were valid unless everyone made them together. Höskuldur lived in Ossabær for a lengthy period and each guarded the honor of the other, with the Njálssynir accompanying Höskuldur on his travels. Their friendship was so intense, that every autumn each invited the other to his home and exchanged lavish gifts. This went on for a long time*.]

The Njálssynir play host and bestow gifts, "ok mæltu til vináttu [*and pledged friendship*];" Höskuldur reciprocates with *veizla* and gifts, and "mæltu þá hvárir, at engir skyldu komask í meðal þeirra [*both pledged, that no-one should come between them*]."[51]

Presumably, recurrent *veizlur* and *heimboð*, whether hosted repeatedly and one-sidedly by a politically superior or rotating between equals or near-equals, might be fixed to whatever season or frequency was thought fit. In Valla-Ljóts saga we learn how the brothers Halli, Böðvar, and Hrólfur enjoyed political support from Guðmundur ríki in their disputes with Ljótur, stating that "Guðmundr helt boð fjǫlmennt eitt sinn á Mǫðruvǫllum, ok var Halli þar, sem at hverju boði ǫðru, því er Guðmundr helt [*Once, Guðmundur hosted a large feast at Möðruvellir and Halli was there, as he always was at every one of Guðmundur's feasts*]." Although one of these is explicitly identified as taking place in the autumn, there are no further details as to the timing of the others.[52] Nor does Ynglinga saga's account of feasts and friendship between Fjölnir and Frið-Fróði offer any such detail: "Þeira í millum var heimboð og vingan [*there was mutual feasting and friendship between them*]."[53] The following passage from Finnboga saga ramma is generically typical in its presentation of feasting, gift giving, and befriending:

> Svá er sagt, at vinskapr mikill var með þeim Ásbirni ok Þorgeiri goða ok mágsemd. Gerði hvárr öðrum veizlur, ok skiptust þeir góðum gjöfum við. Ok svá berr at eitthvert haust, at Ásbjörn bauð Þorgeiri, mági sínum, til sín, ok hann kemr með marga menn, ok tók Ásbjörn við honum vel með mikilli blíðu. Var þar veizla hin bezta.[54]
>
> [*It is reported that there was great friendship and kinship between Ásbjörn and Þorgeir goði. Each hosted the other at* veizlur*, and they exchanged good gifts. One autumn that Ásbjörn invited Þorgeir, his kinsman, to his home, and he arrived with many men; Ásbjörn received him well with great warmth. It was a most excellent* veizla.]

[50] *Brennu-Njáls saga*, 247-248.
[51] *Brennu-Njáls saga*, 276-277.
[52] *Valla-Ljóts saga*, 238-243, at 238.
[53] *Heimskringla* 1, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, Íslenzk fornrit 26 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1941), 25-26, at 25.
[54] *Finnboga saga*, 260.

The passage is not clear as to whether all the feasts in question are held in the autumn. Normally, however, recurrent feasts in the sagas of Icelanders are *haustboð*, "autumn feasts," celebrating the start of winter and the formal change of season, *vetrnætr*, "winter nights."[55] It appears that the mutual feasts of Ólafur and Ósvífur in Laxdæla and of Höskuldur, Njáll, and the Njálssynir in Njála are *haustboð*.[56] Þorbjörn Vífilsson in Eiríks saga rauða holds a "haustboð, sem hann átti vanða til, því at hann var stórmenni mikit. Kom þar Ormr frá Arnarstapa ok margir aðrir vinir Þorbjarnar [haustboð*, as was his custom, because he was a great man. Ormur from Arnarstapi was in attendance and many other friends of Þorbjörn*]."[57] Arnkell goði in Eyrbyggja saga "hafði… inni haustboð mikit, en þat var vanði hans, at bjóða Úlfari, vin sínum, til allra boða ok leiða hann jafnan með gjǫfum út [*hosted a grand* haustboð*, and it was his custom to invite his friend, Úlfar, to all* boð *and to give him gifts on his departure*]."[58] Similarly, Vatnsdæla saga observes that Þorsteinn Ingimundarson at Hof hosted a *vinaboð* every autumn, as did his namesake and grandfather mutually with Ingjaldur in Hefni: the two had *vingott*, "good friendship," and held "vinaboð saman á hverju hausti. … heldu uppteknum hætti um heimboð ok veizlugørðir [vinaboð *together every autumn. … continued their practice of* heimboð *and feasting*]."[59] Víga-Glúmur was another who appears to have invited his kinfolk to a *heimboð* each autumn.[60]

Let us step back for a moment. In Gísla saga, whose recurring *haustboð* are particularly famous scenes, we find the following account:

> Ok líðr nú svá sumarit, ok kemr at vetrnóttum. Þat var þá margra manna siðr at fagna í þann tíma ok hafa þá veizlur ok vetrnáttablót, en Gísli lét af blótum, síðan hann var í Vébjǫrgum í Danmǫrku, en hann helt þó sem áðr veizlum ok allri stórmennsku. Ok nú aflar hann til veizlu mikillar…[61]

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[55] By the time the sagas were written, *vetrnætr*, "winter nights," referred sometimes to the last two days of summer, Thursday and Friday at the end of its twenty-sixth week, and sometimes to the first days of winter, October 10th-16th in the Julian calendar. See, e.g., Magnús Már Lárusson, "Første vinterdag, sommerdag," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformationstid* 5 (Copenhagen et al.: Rosenkilde og Bagger et al., 1960); Sam Owen Jansson, "Året och dess indelning," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformationstid* 20 (Copenhagen et al.: Rosenkilde og Bagger et al., 1976).

[56] Gunnar and Njáll, on the other hand, are said to feast only in the winter, without any further details. Einar Ól. Sveinsson maintains that "Orðatiltækið *þiggja vetrgrið* táknar þiggja vetrarboð, veizlu að veturnóttum," cf. *Brennu-Njáls saga*, 90, but there is no conclusive evidence for this. Reykjabók's variant "sækja vetr at Njáli [*spend the winter at Njáll's*]," (91) however, would denote *vetrnætr*, as in Hákonar saga góða: "Um haustit at vetri var blótveizla [*There was a* blót *in the autumn at the time of winter (nights)*];" *Heimskringla* 1, 171. *Vetrgrið* is used in Egils saga and does not refer to *haustboð* at *vetrnætr*, cf. *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, Íslenzk fornrit 2 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1933), 122. If Gunnar and Njáll held *haustboð* then the key word is *vetr*.

[57] *Eiríks saga rauða*, ed. Matthías Þórðarson, Íslenzk fornrit 4 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1935), 204.

[58] *Eyrbyggja saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 4, 87, cf. *sæmilegar gjafir* on 89 (shield and sword).

[59] *Vatnsdæla saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 8 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1939), 17-18, 89-90, quoted to 17-18, 89.

[60] *Reykdæla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, 221.

[61] *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, 36; on *haustboð* in the saga, see 36-56.

> [*The summer passed and the winter nights arrived. It was a widespread custom in those days to celebrate at this time, and hold* veizlur *and sacrifices at winter nights. Gísli had ceased sacrificing since his stay in Vébjörg in Denmark, yet as before he held* veizlur *and maintained grand habits. He now assembles resources for a great* veizla…]

This presumed *translatio convivii* is worth noting. Religiously framed feasting outgrows its original setting and is born again with just as much sociopolitical vigor and relevance. The religious associations of the numerous *haustboð* in the sagas, also marked *at vetrnóttum*,[62] are rarely mentioned, and few such feasts are linked to particular religious or cultic functions.[63] Instead, their primary unifying feature and function in saga presentation is to serve as sociopolitical networking spaces for friends and relatives. Needless to say, the two aspects are mutually reinforcing rather than exclusive. Saga discourse on *haustboð* essentially resembles any other regular, recurrent, or *ad hoc* feasting undertaken in order to establish and sustain relationships. The principal function of feasts, in saga and society, is to map and declare who is a friend of whom, and, by extension, who owes obligations to whom. The presentation of feasts draws attention to explicit acknowledgements of friendship and the standard farewell gifts confirm these relationships.[64] Recurring *jólaveizlur* and *jóladrykkir*, "Christmas feasts" and "Christmas drinking," much less

[62] Cf. *Vápnfirðinga saga*, ed. Jón Jóhannesson, *Austfirðinga sǫgur*, 29-30; *Eyrbyggja saga*, 98; *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, 50; *Víga-Glúms saga*, 18-19.

[63] This is not to deny their previous cultic aspects but to highlight their literary presentation; see, e.g., *Víga-Glúms saga*, 18-19 (*dísablót*, *vinir*); *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, 106-111 (*dísablót*); *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, 36-56 (*vinir*, *félagar*, *mágar*, *góðar gjafir*); cf. also *Heimskringla* 1, 57-58 (*dísablót*), 171-172 (*blótveizla at vetri*); *Heimskringla* 2, 177-179 (*veizlur at vetrnóttum*). On *dísir* and *dísablót* at *vetrnætr*, see Terry Gunnell, "The Season of the *Dísir*: The Winter Nights and the *Dísarblót* in Early Scandinavian Belief," *Cosmos* 16 (2000). On *blót* and sacrificial feasts generally, see Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson, *Blót í norrænum sið. Rýnt í forn trúarbrögð með þjóðfræðilegri aðferð* (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 1997). Wider perspective, emphasizing the gift giving logic of sacrifice, is given in Britt-Mari Näsström, *Blot. Tro og offer i det førkristne Norden* (Oslo: Pax forlag, 2001). A more practical reason for concentrating feasts in the autumn may have been that they followed the harvest and slaughter season. Numerous wedding feasts are *haustboð*, possibly for the same reason; examples from the sagas of Icelanders include *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, eds. Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson, *Borgfirðinga sǫgur*, Íslenzk fornrit 3 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1938), 82, 86-88; *Valla-Ljóts saga*, 235; *Vatnsdœla saga*, 85-87, 116-119; *Laxdœla saga*, 128-130; also in younger sagas such as *Víglundar saga*, ed. Jóhannes Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit 14, 72-73, and *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*, ed. Jóhannes Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit 14, 377. The wedding at Flugumýri in 1253 was at *vetrnætr*, cf. *Sturlunga saga* 1, eds. Jón Jóhannesson et al. (Reykjavík: Sturlunguútgáfan, 1946), 481-494.

[64] For *haustboð* in the sagas of Icelanders, whether reccurent or not, see further, e.g., *Vápnfirðinga saga*, 29-30; *Eyrbyggja saga*, 32-33 (cf. AM 309 4to; *góðar gjafir*, *vinir*), 98-99 (*gjafir*, *vinir*); *Hallfreðar saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 8, 142; *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, 178-179; *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, ed. Guðni Jónsson, Íslenzk fornrit 7 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1936), 123-124; *Króka-Refs saga*, ed. Jóhannes Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit 14, 135 (*vinir*). More generally in the corpus, see, e.g., *Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, Íslenzk fornrit 1 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1968), 184; *Melabók AM 106. 112 fol*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske boghandel – Nordisk forlag, 1921), 96, cf. *Skarðsárbók. Landnámabók Björn Jónssonar á Skarðsá*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, Rit Handritastofnunar Íslands 1 (Reykjavík: Háskóli Íslands, 1958), 96 (host kills all with *fjǫlkyngi*); *Kristni saga*, 8-9; *Morkinskinna*, 120-124.

frequent in the sagas of Icelanders than are *haustboð*[65] and wedding feasts,[66] generally belong to the same idiom.

The cumulative image emerging from all these examples truly captures the sociopolitical functionality of exchange. Despite its basis in truth, however, this image inevitably simplifies, generalizes, and idealizes. Hávamál captures perfectly the essence of friendship precisely because it is an idealized sketch, free from circumstantial restraints and an actual historical setting. Ideally, friendship is freely and voluntarily entered into and practiced. In its purest form it presupposes unrestrained equality, which is indeed how its discourse promotes it. However, as feasts and gifts are explored on a case by case basis, with due regard to their particular contexts, a much more complex picture develops. The constellations of social and political ties that effectively made up the culture of power

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[65] For *jólaveizlur* in the sagas of Icelanders, see *Víga-Glúms saga*, 4-6, 8 (among Norwegian aristocrats: "Vinátta var þar mikil í millum þeira bræðra ok Vigfúss, ok hǫfðu sinn vetr hvárir jólaveizlu meðǫðrum [*There was great friendship between the brothers and Vigfús, and each hosted the other successively at* jólaveizla]," 10-11 (*gjafir*); *Valla-Ljóts saga*, 243-244; *Eiríks saga rauða*, 220-221 (turned into a wedding); *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, 62-63, 71 (*vinir, góðar gjafir*); *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*, eds. Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson, *Borgfirðinga sǫgur*, 180 (*vinganarheit*); in younger sagas as well, cf. *Bárðar saga Snœfellsáss*, eds. Bjarni Vilhjálmsson and Þórhallur Vilmundarson, Íslenzk fornrit 13 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1991), 133-136 (*vinátta*, *vingast*), 142-145 (parody, gift); *Þórðar saga hreðu*, ed. Jóhannes Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit 14, 172, 200-201. For *fornaldarsögur*, see, e.g., *Hálfdanar saga Brönufóstra*, eds. Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda* 3 (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfan Forni, 1944), 344-345 (turned into a wedding; *góðar gjafir*); *Sturlaugs saga starfsama*, eds. Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda* 2, 317-318. Such distinction as there is between *jólaveizla* and *jóladrykkja* is unclear; the latter term is used interchangeably with *jólaveizla* in Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa, but is otherwise rarely used in the sagas of Icelanders, cf. *Fóstbræðra saga*, ed. Guðni Jónsson, *Vestfirðinga sǫgur*, 226-228; *Laxdœla saga*, 217 (in context of *vinir, gjafir*). Eyrbyggja also speaks of *jólaǫl*, cf. *Eyrbyggja saga*, 148. Exactly what religious or cultic aspects a proposed pre-Christian *jólaveizla* would embrace is neither clear to modern scholars nor of much interest to saga authors (with a few exceptions, notably Snorri's depictions of *blót* among Þrændir in Heimskringla). The sense of "drinking Christmas," *drekka jól*, comes through strongly, though. If Haraldskvæði is really a ninth-century work, then Þorbjörn hornklofi's observation that King Haraldur "Úti vill jól drekka [*wants to drink Christmas out (at sea)*]," is the oldest on record, cf. *Fagrskinna*, 61; for an overview, see Lily Weiser-Aall, "Jul," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformationstid* 8 (Copenhagen et al.: Rosenkilde og Bagger et al., 1963), esp. 7-9.

[66] For references and/or fuller descriptions, see, e.g., *Droplaugarsona saga*, ed. Jón Jóhannesson, *Austfirðinga sǫgur*, 140; *Egils saga*, 21, 105, 150, 273; *Eiríks saga rauða*, 214, 220-221; *Hallfreðar saga*, 150; *Heiðarvíga saga*, eds. Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson, *Borgfirðinga sǫgur*, 324 (*vinir*); *Kormáks saga*, ed. Einar Ól Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 8, 204, 226-228; *Ljósvetninga saga*, ed. Björn Sigfússon, Íslenzk fornrit 10, 17-19, 139; *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, 176-177, 191-193; *Vatnsdœla saga*, 16, 33, 85-87, 115-117; *Víga-Glúms saga*, 35, 67-68, 85-86; *Bandamanna saga*, 358-359; *Eyrbyggja saga*, 77; *Gísla saga*, 18; *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, 87-92; *Hœnsa-Þóris saga*, eds. Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson, *Borgfirðinga sǫgur*, 33-34; *Laxdœla saga*, 9, 11-13, 17-18, 51, 65-66, 80, 130, 138-139, 201-203, 207; *Brennu-Njáls saga*, 21-22, 32-33, 45, 74, 87-90, 160, 162, 225, 247; *Þorskfirðinga saga*, ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson, Íslenzk fornrit 13, 197; *Bárðar saga Snœfellsáss*, 135-136, 150-155; *Finnboga saga*, 302-306, 309-311; *Flóamanna saga*, ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson, Íslenzk fornrit 13, 319; *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*, 374, 376-377; *Kjalnesinga saga*, ed. Jóhannes Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit 14, 6; *Harðar saga Grímkelssonar*, ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson, Íslenzk fornrit 13, 9-12, 14, 29-31; *Svarfdœla saga*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson, *Eyfirðinga sǫgur*, 165-168; *Þorsteins saga hvíta*, 17-18. For wedding feasts in Sturlunga, see Chapter 4 (note Gissur's speech at Flugumýri: "Ætla ek at þessi samkundu skulim vér binda með fullu góðu váru félagsskap með mágsemð þeiri, er til er hugat [*I expect that by this feast we will secure our companionship in full with the kinship is establishes*]," cf. *Sturlunga saga* 1, 483).

in medieval saga and society were, self-evidently, never those of closed groups of equals. Neither was the political culture of relationships a harmonious structure, objectively perceived and passively maintained. The fact that bonds were not static, immutable, or *a priori* received, made constant resort to expressive modes of claim, assertion, and declaration the normative and necessary means of establishing, managing, and manipulating them. This is already the lesson to be drawn from our survey of *veizlur* in the kings' sagas, where sociopolitical action is subject to larger frameworks of power and authority. It therefore comes as no surprise that throughout the saga corpus, with its profusion of feasts and gifts, demonstrative action counts among the primary phenomena associated with striving competitively for status. As such it was ultimately ambiguous and subject to negotiation, as by its very nature is any social discourse. Before sketching its outlines, however, it is important to demonstrate how the principle at its core, contractual reciprocity, was a living reality in later commonwealth Iceland, as witnessed in Sturlunga saga.

II Making Friends in the Later Icelandic Commonwealth

The narrative history of late twelfth- and thirteenth-century Iceland is effectively confined to the Sturlunga compendium, supplemented with hagiographical literature and diplomata.[67] While Sturlunga unquestionably stands as a viable subcategory in terms of the period of its subject matter and authorial proximity to the events recounted, its traditional detachment from other secular narrative sagas is overwhelmingly the product of inherited and historiographically enshrined trajectories.

[67] Its compiler was probably Þórður Narfason, lawman at Skarð (*d.*1308), as first suggested by Guðbrandur Vigfússon, cf. Guðbrandur Vigfússon, "Prolegomena," *Sturlunga saga* 1. *Including the Islendinga Saga of Lawman Sturla Thordsson and other Works*, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1878), ciii-cv. The only original saga from Sturlunga that is still preserved separately is Hrafns saga Sveinbjarnarsonar (hin sérstaka), a work evidently much truncated by its editor. Þorgils saga skarða was possibly written *c.*1275 or later, but its separate version only survives in fragments (NRA 65 4to); it was apparently edited into Sturlunga's Reykjarfjarðarbók redaction towards the end of the fourteenth century, albeit much truncated, and only survives in that form. On Sturlunga as a whole, with reflections on its compositional background and history, see, for example, in addition to Guðbrandur's "Prolegomena," Björn M. Ólsen, "Um Sturlungu," *Safn til sögu Íslands og íslenzkra bókmenta að fornu og nýju* 3 (Copenhagen: Hið íslenzka bókmenntafélag, 1902); Pétur Sigurðsson, "Um Íslendinga sögu Sturlu Þórðarsonar," *Safn til sögu Íslands og íslenzkra bókmennta* 6:2 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka bókmenntafélag, 1933-1935); Jón Jóhannesson, "Um Sturlunga sögu," *Sturlunga saga* 2, eds. Jón Jóhannesson et al. (Reykjavík: Sturlunguútgáfan, 1946). On the separate saga of Hrafn, see Guðrún P. Helgadóttir, "Introduction," *Hrafns saga Sveinbjarnarsonar*, ed. Guðrún P. Helgadóttir (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). On contemporary sagas in general, both lay and ecclesiastical, see *Sturlunga saga. Skýringar og fræði*, ed. Örnólfur Thorsson (Reykjavík: Svart á hvítu, 1988); Guðrún Nordal, "Veraldleg sagnaritun 1120-1400. 3. Sagnarit um innlend efni – Sturlunga saga," *Íslensk bókmenntasaga* 1, ed. Vésteinn Ólason (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1992); Sverrir Tómasson, "Veraldleg sagnaritun 1120-1400. 4. Ævisögur biskupa," *Íslensk bókmenntasaga* 1; Úlfar Bragason, "Sagas of Contemporary History (*Sturlunga saga*): Texts and Research," *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. Rory McTurk, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture 31 (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005);

At least since the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, Sturlunga was mostly regarded as an historical chronicle of political decline and fall. For Jón Sigurðsson and the nineteenth-century cultural intelligentsia, it could only be interpreted in the context of political defeat on national scale, culminating in the *gamli sáttmáli* of 1262-1264.[68] Moreover, the legal and constitutional principles then dominant among students of medieval political culture readily led to the analysis of stateless Iceland in terms of law, courts, constitutional frameworks of power, and a supposedly public sphere for political action. As an interpretive framework, it fed the notion that the late commonwealth legal codex Grágás represented faithfully an original and public order of chieftaincies, instituted on the basis of a relatively decentralized political balance, and echoing Gierkean *Genossenschaftslehre* in its politicocultural outlook.[69] Consequently, the consolidation of power and rise of territorial lordship, gaining momentum in the later twelfth century and central to Sturlunga, was in and of itself – by definition, really – seen as decline to anarchy, disruption of normative order, and inevitably carrying the seeds of ruin. When Sturlunga was read from such a perspective, illuminated by the nationalistic conviction that Norwegian overlordship had categorically embodied complete system-breakdown, it could hardly avoid being treated as an historical account of unchecked violence, illegitimate usurpation of power, and moral decline.[70] In 1934, Jón Helgason grouped the sagas of Sturlunga together with *biskupasögur*, "bishops' sagas," under the rubric of

[68] For discussion of Jón Sigurðsson's emphasis on the historical importance of *gamli sáttmáli*, his constitutional interpretation of it, and the *sáttmáli*'s debatable importance for thirteenth-century Iceland, see Patricia Pires Boulhosa, *Icelanders and the Kings of Norway. Mediaeval Sagas and Legal Texts*, The Northern World 17 (Brill: Leiden, 2005), 87-153; cf. also Sigurður Líndal, "Utanríkisstefna Íslendinga á 13. öld og aðdragandi sáttmálans 1262-64," *Úlfljótur* 17:1 (1964).

[69] The idea of tying Grágás to customary law, and thus effectively rejecting its official and legislative character, was promoted in the nineteenth century by Johan F. V. Schlegel and, especially, Konrad Maurer, but was forcefully rejected by the more constitutionally oriented Vilhjálmur Finsen. Maurer's views lost traction while Vilhjálmur's principal framework became dominant into the later twentieth century, most notably through the work of Ólafur Lárusson and Jón Jóhannesson. Johan Schlegel, "Om den gamle Islandske Lov- og Retsbog, kaldet 'Graagaas': dens Oprindelse, Navn, Kilder, indvortes Beskaffenhed og Store Vigtighed i flere Henseender, i Anledning af dens første tryckte Udgave," *Nordisk Tidsskrift for Oldkyndighed* 1 (1832); Konrad Maurer, "Graagaas," *Allgemeine Encyclopädie der Wissenschaften und Künste* 77 (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1864); Vilhjálmur Finsen, "Om de islandske Love i Fristatstiden, i Anledning af Prof. Konrad Maurer's Artikel 'Graagaas' i Allgemeine Encyclopädie der Wissenschaften und Künste," *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie 1873* (1873); Ólafur Lárusson, "Grágás," *Lög og saga* (Reykjavík: Hlaðbúð, 1958); Jón Jóhannesson, *Íslendinga saga* 1, 53-113. For the framework's demise and new critical approaches, see Sigurður Líndal, "Sendiför Úlfljóts. Ásamt nokkrum athugasemdum um landnám Ingólfs Arnarsonar," *Skírnir* 143 (1969); Sigurður Líndal, "Lög og lagasetning í íslenzka þjóðveldinu," *Skírnir* 158 (1984); Sveinbjörn Rafnsson, "Grágás og Digesta Iustiniani," *Sjötíu ritgerðir helgaðar Jakobi Benediktssyni 20. júlí 1977* 2, eds. Einar G. Pétursson and Jónas Kristjánsson, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, Rit 12 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1977); Sveinbjörn Rafnsson, "Forn hrossreiðarlög og heimildir þeirra. Drög til greiningar réttarheimilda Grágásar," *Saga* 28 (1990). For an overview, rather conservative in tone, see Gunnar Karlsson, *Goðamenning. Staða og áhrif goðorðsmanna í þjóðveldi Íslendinga* (Reykjavík: Heimskringla, 2004), 28-59, esp. 30-40.

[70] See, prominently, Jón Jóhannesson, *Íslendinga saga* 1, 265-338; Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Sturlungaöld. Drög um íslenzka menningu á þrettándu öld* (Reykjavík: Ríkisprentsmiðjan Gutenberg, 1940).

islandske samtidssagaer, "Icelandic contemporary sagas,"[71] and thereby prepared the way for the attempt by the "Icelandic school" to separate it, in form and content, from the artistically superior categories of true saga literature, notably the *Íslendingasögur*.[72] In sum, Sturlunga has traditionally been regarded primarily as an historical document, detached from the priorities of true literature, and documenting collapse – political and mental.

The analytical framework of the Icelandic school and its nineteenth-century constitutional hinterland has been abandoned in most respects, and greatly modified in others, yet its interpretive trajectories remain powerful. The political culture of Sturlunga continues to be observed almost exclusively as one of major transformation and change, from all possible perspectives.[73] While there is absolutely no reason to object to this notion as such – the political culture of later commonwealth Iceland, and society as a whole, did indeed undergo fundamental transformations that merit detailed analysis –, there is, however, every reason to point out the lack of critical interest shown in the politicocultural continuities observable in Sturlunga saga. A case in point is the continued significance of demonstrative action in the sociopolitical field, notably that of feasting and gift giving; Sturlunga unmistakably, and no doubt appropriately, depicts this as a central feature of sociopolitical behavior and reality throughout. Despite the transformations of the period that Sturlunga depicts, and the hints of future change that it offers, the mental categories of political communication in the saga and its society are markedly and predominantly those of pre-modernity and orality, and hence staunchly traditional and conservative.

Feasting and gift giving are driven by an identical rationale across traditional saga genres, and their discourse and presentation is one and the same throughout. This is unsurprising: there is no reason to assume that political narratives produced and

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[71] Jón Helgason, *Norrøn litteraturhistorie* (Copenhagen: Levin og Munksgaard, 1934), 186-195. Treating the sagas of Icelandic bishops primarily as historical documents rather than hagiography was already the norm in nineteenth-century scholarship, cf. Guðbrandur Vigfússon, "Formáli," *Biskupa sögur* 1, eds. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Jón Sigurðsson (Copenhagen: Hið íslenzka bókmenntafélag, 1858), v.

[72] The *loci classici* are Sigurður Nordal, "Sagalitteraturen." *Litteraturhistoria* B. *Norge og Island*, Nordisk Kultur 8 (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1952), 180-181 on genres, and 181ff for Sigurður's delineation of their "organic" development; also Sigurður Nordal, "Formáli," Íslenzk fornrit 2, esp. lviii-lxx.

[73] Its major theme has traditionally been the consolidation of power and the rise of territorial lordship. See, in particular, Jón Jóhannesson, *Íslendinga saga* 1, 265-338; Björn Sigfússon, "Full goðorð og forn og heimildir frá 12.öld," *Saga* 3 (1960); Helgi Þorlákssson, *Gamlar götur og goðavald. Um fornar leiðir og völd Oddaverja í Rangárþingi*, Ritsafn Sagnfræðistofnunar 25 (Reykjavík: Sagnfræðistofnun Háskóla Íslands, 1989), 14-20, *passim*; Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Frá goðorðum til ríkja. Þróun goðavalds á 12. og 13. öld*, Sagnfræðirannsóknir 10 (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1989), 41-80; Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Goder og maktforhold på Island i fristatstiden* (Bergen: Universitetet i Bergen, Historisk Institutt, 1993), transl. as *Chieftains and Power in the Icelandic Commonwealth*, transl. Jean Lundskær-Nielsen, The Viking Collection, Studies in Northern Civilization 12 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1999), esp. 39-83; Gunnar Karlsson, "Frá þjóðveldi til konungsríkis," *Saga Íslands* 2, ed. Sigurður Líndal (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag and Sögufélagið, 1975); Lúðvík Ingvarsson, *Goðorð og goðorðsmenn* 1-3 (Egilsstaðir: [author], 1986-1987); Gunnar Karlsson, *Goðamenning*, esp. 63-86, 205-315; Gunnar Karlsson, "Valdasamþjöppun þjóðveldisaldar í túlkun fræðimanna," *Þriðja íslenska söguþingið 18.-21.maí 2006. Ráðstefnurit*, eds. Benedikt Eyþórsson and Hrafnkell Lárusson (Reykjavík: Aðstandendur Þriðja íslenska söguþingsins, 2007).

consumed simultaneously by the same group of people would promote fundamentally opposite perceptions of power and political behavior. On the contrary, it is to be expected that behind these narratives lies a more or less common and general perception of power, its sources and nature, its various applications and forms, and its culture of communication and expression, all ultimately reflecting pre-modern reality and experience, as well as its cultural dispositions. This is obviously not to say that all sagas, or texts, are essentially the same in form and content, or that sociopolitical issues and structures remained objective and undebated within their interpretations; that would run counter to our argument. Rather is it to say that the centrality of feasting and gift giving as primary modes of political communication counts among the most durable and deeply embedded features of the society and culture that produced and consumed these otherwise very disparate texts, leaving its profound marks upon them. Moreover, it is hard to distinguish between the narrative art of, say, the kings' sagas, the sagas of Icelanders, and Sturlunga saga; each developed under the influence of the other.[74] Taken together, therefore, what we encounter are not fragments of disconnected social realities, each confined to its own saga or genre, but a single and comprehensive culture of sociopolitical norms of expression, itself a living reality and as such informing the saga world in its totality.[75]

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[74] Emblematic of the "Icelandic school's" lack of interest in the literary and narrative art of Sturlunga saga, is Jón Jóhannesson's preface to the 1946 edition: "Sturlunga er ekki… listaverk. …mesti óskapnaður sem heild, og svipuðu máli gegnir um hinar einstöku sögur hennar, þótt allmikilla listrænna tilþrifa gæti á köflum. … Hið hráa og lítt melta efni, sem hefur hvorki verið stýft né fágað vegna listarinnar að neinu ráði, býr yfir ýmsum töfrum;" Jón Jóhannesson, "Um Sturlunga sögu," xii-xiii. The growing interest in its literary nature and narrative art in the later twentieth century has served, however, to blur the traditional generic boundaries of saga; cf., very selectively, Jacqueline Simpson, "Advocacy and Art in Guðmundar saga dýra," *Saga-Book* 15 (1957-1961); Rolf Heller, "Laxdæla saga und Sturlunga saga," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 76 (1961); Rolf Heller, "Studien zur Svínfellinga saga," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 79 (1964); Rolf Heller, "Hrafns saga Sveinbjarnarsonar und Isländersagas," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 92 (1977); Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, "Historiefortælleren Sturla Þórðarson," *Sturlustefna. Ráðstefna haldin á sjö alda ártíð Sturlu Þórðarsonar sagnaritara 1984*, eds. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir and Jónas Kristjánsson, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, Rit 32 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1988); Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, "Den norrøne litteratur og virkeligheden," *Collegium medievale* 2 (1989); Úlfar Bragason, "Hetjudauði Sturlu Sighvatssonar," *Skírnir* 160 (1986); Úlfar Bragason, *On the Poetics of Sturlunga* (University of California, Berkeley: Dissertation, 1986); Úlfar Bragason, "Sturlunga saga: Atburðir og frásögn," *Skáldskaparmál* 1 (1990). The most notable early exception is W. P. Ker, *Epic and Romance. Essays on Medieval Literature*, 2nd ed. (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1908), 246-274. For an overview, see Úlfar Bragason, "Sagas of Contemporary History (*Sturlunga saga*)." The larger context is the rise of literary structuralism (formalism) in the later twentieth century, cf. especially Theodore M. Andersson, *The Icelandic Family Saga. An Analytic Reading* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967) and Carol J. Clover, *The Medieval Saga* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982); for a thorough overview see Carol J. Clover, "Icelandic Family Sagas (*Íslendingasögur*)," *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature. A Critical Guide*, eds. Carol J. Clover and John Lindow, Islandica 45 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 1985), 272ff.

[75] In the larger context of the argument, it is useful to note that recent scholarship on mythology and cosmology demonstrates how social principles and mythic schemas inform and recreate each other; see, e.g., Margaret Clunies Ross, *Prolonged echoes. Old Norse myths in medieval Northern society* 1. *The myths*, 2. *The reception of Norse myths in medieval Iceland*, The Viking Collection, Studies in Northern Civilization 7, 10 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1994-1998); John Lindow, *Murder and vengeance among the gods. Baldr in Scandinavian mythology*, Folklore Fellows' Communications 262 (Helsinki: Suomalainen tiedeakatemia,

Sturlunga saga repeatedly shows political friendship created and expressed through feasts and gifts, as in the examples identified above. While the main evidence will be rehearsed in the following chapter in the context of limits, status, and power – strongly buttressing its contractual logic and genuine application in late twelfth- and thirteenth-century political culture – , our present focus is deliberately narrowed to the specific instances where enemies are made friends through recognized means.

Sturlunga's most eye-catching example of enemies turned friends through feasts and gifts can be found in Þorgils saga og Hafliða, the first saga of the compendium, following Geirmundar þáttur heljarskinns. This is no coincidence. The saga is anomalous in several respects: it is chronologically detached from the rest of Sturlunga, tracing the disputes between Hafliði Másson and Þorgils Oddason in 1117-1121, and thus set a full century before the *Sturlungaöld* itself and a generation before the initial events of Sturlu saga; its text and style strongly suggest a composition date not much before *c.*1240, making its authorship less contemporary than the rest of Sturlunga; lastly, it is strikingly structured and stylized compared to Sturlunga in general, and unusually rich in direct speech and calculated staging. A growing critical emphasis on making sense of Sturlunga's overall structure and editorial design, and a correspondingly dwindling philological emphasis on (re)constructing its original sagas, has led to the general consensus that Þorgils saga og Hafliða stands as an exemplum of conflict management.[76] As such, it almost didactically illustrates the means by which society achieves homeostasis and restores political equilibrium. Apparently, significant parts of its mechanism rest with human agency, informed by pacifist ideals and a genuine care for social order. Once mediation is realized and the saga's extended dispute is brought to its close, reconciliation is contracted and friendship implemented by socially recognizable means:

> En at luktu öllu fénu, því er gert hafði verit, gaf Þorgils Hafliða virðuligar gjafir, stóðhross fimm saman ok feld hlaðbúinn, er honum hafði gefit Sigríðr, dóttir Eyjólfs Snorra sonar goða austan frá Höfðabrekku, er átt hafði Jón Kálfsson. Þangat sótti Þorgils heimboð ok þá gaf hon honum þessa gripi alla.
>
> Hafliði mælti: "Nú sé ek þat, at þú vill heilar sættir okkrar, ok skulum vit nú betr við sjá deilunum heðan í frá."
>
> Ok þat efndu þeir, því at þeir váru ok ávallt einu megin at málum, meðan þeir lifðu.[77]

1997), cf. also John Lindow, "Bloodfeud and Scandinavian mythology," *Alvíssmál* 4 (1994). The presence of a mythic overlay in Sturlunga is argued in Guðrún Nordal, *Ethics and Action*.

[76] Stephen N. Tranter identifies an editorial stance that sought to highlight the nature of conflict and the need for able political leadership in solving it (which, apparently, the editor felt had been lacking), cf. Stephen N. Tranter, *Sturlunga saga. The rôle of the creative compiler*, Europäische Hochschulschriften 1, Deutsche Sprache und Literatur 941 (Frankfurt: P. Lang, 1987). On Þorgils saga og Hafliða, see Jón Jóhannesson, "Um Sturlunga sögu," xxii-xxv; Ursula Brown [Dronke], "Introduction," *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, ed. Ursula Brown, Oxford English Monographs (London: Oxford University Press, 1952); Guðrún Nordal, "Veraldlega sagnaritun 1120-1400. 3. Sagnarit um innlend efni – Sturlunga saga," 321-322. For context such as medieval peace movements (peace and truce of God), Icelandic and generally European, see Sverrir Jakobsson, "Friðarviðleitni kirkjunnar á 13. öld," *Saga* 36 (1998), 7-10, *passim*.

[77] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 50.

[*When the fine had been paid in full then Þorgils gave Hafliði honorable gifts, five studhorses and a laced cloak, which Sigríður from Höfðabrekka in the east, the daughter of Eyjólfur the son of Snorri goði, had given him and Jón Kálfsson had previously owned. Þorgils had accepted* heimboð *there and she then gave him these objects.*

Hafliði spoke: "I now see that you want true reconciliation between us; let us then better manage our disputes in the future."

And this they did, and were always on the same side in cases while they lived.]

The saga of Þorgils and Hafliði ends. Their grand and far-reaching dispute is not mentioned by Ari fróði, which further suggests that the saga is hardly historical and is more likely to be a fiction created in order to exemplify past order rather than present turmoil, a classic and timeless theme in itself (*laudatio temporis acti*).[78] Its application of demonstrative communication must likewise be seen as an easily comprehensible exemplum concerning the establishment of friendships and bonds.

The reconciliation of Þorgils and Hafliði was achieved by means of legendary sums of compensation, a staggering two hundreds of hundreds.[79] Gathering together such a sum created a mechanism of exchange between Þorgils, who was made to pay, and his various friends, kinsmen, and supporters, who quite literally contributed to the restoration of order. Moreover, many of these individuals consolidated their friendship with Þorgils immediately afterwards, as if to emphasize the voluntary nature of their contributions; they treated him to invitations and endowed him with *stórar gjafir*.[80] Reconciliation was thereby not carried out in clear-cut stages of raw payments followed by supplementary gifts, but rather by mobilization of wealth encompassing both media.

The logic behind the process is echoed in the even more famous reconciliation at the end of Sturlu saga, in which Jón Loftsson mediates between Hvamm-Sturla and Páll Sölvason in Reykholt in the wake of the Deildartungumál in 1181. Sturla had made devious and explicit reference to Hafliði when outrageously claiming two hundreds of hundreds from Páll, before Jón mediated the case and reduced the compensation to thirty hundreds. Then wheels began to turn: first, Jón compensated Sturla while simultaneously inviting him to a feast, awarding him *virðuligar gjafir*, "honorable gifts," and accepting his son, Snorri, in fosterage at Oddi; in return, Páll hosted Jón magnificently in Reykholt, bestowing him gifts including an ox:

> Síðan dró hann gullhring á horn uxanum ok kvað því fylgja skyldu tíu hundruð vaðmála.

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[78] Björn Sigfússon and Svend Ellehøj, among others, believed that the dispute served as the *causa scribendi* for Íslendingabók. However, this still does not explain satisfactorily why Ari fails to mention it, fond as he was of pointing out major disputes. Björn Sigfússon, *Um Íslendingabók* (Reykjavík: Víkingsprent, 1944), 39-41; Svend Ellehøj, *Studier over den ældste norrøne historieskrivning*, Bibliotheca Arnamagnaeana 26 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1965), 80-84; cf. also Jakob Benediktsson, "Formáli," Íslenzk fornrit 1, xviii-xx.
[79] *Átta tigir hundraða þriggja álna aura*, as Hafliði put it, cf. *Sturlunga saga* 1, 49; cf. Gunnar Karlsson, *Inngangur að miðöldum*, Handbók í íslenskri miðaldasögu 1 (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 2007), 273-274.
[80] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 50.

> [*He then placed a gold ring on the ox's horn and claimed that it came with ten hundreds of vaðmál.*]

The gift of *vaðmál* is effectively a payment worth a full third of Sturla's compensation,[81] but the ox, the ring, and the overall context of the exchange puts it squarely within the framework of gift giving, thus making it a social act of friendship:

> Jón þakkaði honum vel slíkar vingjafar – ok skilðust með inni mestu vináttu.[82]
>
> [*Jón thanked him warmly for such friendly gifts – and they parted in the greatest friendship*.]

Sturla was miserable about it all but had to yield. Demonstrative acts confirmed that he had indeed done so.

Sociopolitical bonds in Sturlunga, as in other sagas, are continuously made and remade on a vast scale ranging from the voluntary to the obligatory, which in itself makes reconciliation an abstract category. In terms of actual reconciliation, at least four additional *veizlur* in Sturlunga stand out. One of them is the reconciliatory *fundr*, "meeting," between the brothers Snorri and Þórður Sturlusynir in the summer of 1235, which took place at the neutral site of Sandbrekka (modern Grettisbæli). Snorri wrongly suspects a last-minute betrayal and does not arrive. He is brought back, however, and

> fundust þeir út frá Hrauni, ok fór alla vega sem bezt með þeim bræðrum. Var Þórðr undir Hrauni um nóttina, en Snorri í Hítardal. Var þá veizla búin í móti honum. Mjöðrinn var borinn í berlum undir Hraun um morgininn eftir. Töluðu þeir þann dag allan. Mæltust þeir þá allvel við ok sögðu svá, at þeira frændsemi ok vináttu skyldi aldri skilja, meðan þeir lifði báðir.[83]
>
> [*they met just by Hraun, and things went perfectly with the brothers. Þórður spent the night at Hraun (Staður undir Hrauni or Staðarhraun) and Snorri in Hítardalur. A* veizla *was then arranged for his reception. The mead was carried in barrels to Hraun the following morning. They talked for the entire day. They spoke fairly to one another and claimed that their affinity and friendship should never fail as long as they both lived*.]

[81] *Vaðmál*, a coarse woolen cloth commonly used as currency, is otherwise never given as a gift of friendship in Sturlunga. The only parallel examples would be in Þorgils saga skarða, where, first, Þorgils gives his ally Þórður Hítnesingur "at skilnaði góðar gjafir, tvau hundruð í vöru, hest ok brynju [*good gifts when they parted, two hundreds in wares, a horse and an armor*]," and, second, Bishop Heinrekur "þrjú hundruð vöru [*three hundreds in wares*];" *Sturlunga saga* 2, 206-207. The *vara* is possibly *vaðmál* in both cases.

[82] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 109-114 (episode), quoted to 114.

[83] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 386-387, quoted to 387.

In an equally typical fashion in relation to sealing bonds, Snorri accepted Sturla sagnaritari, the saga narrator himself, into his care, along with another.[84]

Talks did not go as smoothly when Snorri's son, Órækja, was reconciled with his uncle Sighvatur Sturluson that same autumn. Órækja had sent envoys in the summer "til sættaumleitanar [*pleading reconciliation*]," but was rebuffed. Once Sighvatur is ready to be reconciled, however, his *vinir* "ræddu þat fyrir Órækju, at hann skyldi ríða norðr á vald Sighvats [*advised Órækja to ride north and surrender himself into Sighvatur's power*]," which he duly did. His visit, made with only eight of his closest men, is expected and formal, and specifically termed a *veizla*:

> En er þeir kómu á Grund, tók Sighvatur við þeim forkunnar vel, ok var þar in fegrsta veizla. Skorti eigi góðan mjöð.
>
> [*Sighvatur received them affectionately, and there was a most beautiful* veizla*. Good mead was not in short supply*.]

A somewhat delayed settlement is negotiated between the two, while matters between Órækja and Sturla Sighvatsson are explicitly left unresolved. Words on the latter's arrival from abroad cut the feast short, yet the saga carefully notes that proper formalities accompanied the hurried departure: "Váru þar kveðjur skipuligar [*There were orderly greetings of departure*]."[85]

Differing frameworks of power are noticeably imposed on these scenes. The promoted sense of equality surrounding Snorri and Þórður is consciously absent in the case of Órækja and Sighvatur, despite other similarities; Órækja seeks a settlement and Sighvatur grants it as his host. The terminology is rehearsed again within an even tighter framework of power when Gissur Þorvaldsson effectively issues a settlement single-handedly in 1242 between himself, on the one hand, and Órækja and Sturla sagnaritari, on the other. The three had been involved in a fierce dispute since Gissur had had Snorri Sturluson killed less than a year before, thereby placing Snorri's inheritance, fiscal and otherwise, firmly on the agenda. Gissur's strategy for bringing matters to a conclusion involved brute force. He infamously captured Órækja and Sturla at their meeting at the Hvítá bridge in June 1242, forcing the settlement of all involved – himself, Órækja, Sturla, and Ormur Bjarnarson – into the arbitral hands of his own ally, Kolbeinn ungi.[86] The following month, on July 29, Kolbeinn rendered judgment in the formal setting of a *veizla*, hosted by Gissur himself at Bræðratunga; "var þar fögr veizla [*it was a fine feast*]." Órækja refused to attend, remaining captive, while Sturla, under Kolbeinn's guard, is present. Noticeably from our perspective, the feast emphasizes and restates the friendship of Gissur and Kolbeinn while simultaneously framing the settlement itself. The two are

[84] "Var þat þá gert til sambands með þeim, at Sturla, sonr Þórðar, skyldi fara með Snorra ok vera með honum. Þá fór ok með Snorra Páll, sonr Lofts, ok váru þeir báðir með Snorra um sumarit [*It was then arranged for the sake of their bond, that Sturla the son of Þórður should go with Snorri and stay with him. Páll the son of Loftur went with Snorri as well, and both stayed with Snorri in the summer*];" *Sturlunga saga* 1, 387.
[85] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 387-389 (episode), quoted at 387, 388 twice, and 389, respectively.
[86] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 466-469.

evidently not in complete agreement on the whole issue, as the saga notes, and they part without reaching agreement on what was to be done with Sturla – was he to be sent abroad or set free? As allies do, however, particularly having feasted together, they part "með vináttu ok gjöfum [*in friendship and with gifts*]."[87]

A final example, rich in terminology, can be found among the extensive feasting activities in Þorgils saga skarða, where the protagonist himself is reconciled with Bishop Heinrekur at Hólar. Relations between the two went through a period of turbulence when Þorgils successfully, if not quietly, rose to power in Skagafjörður in 1255, and was eventually excommunicated at the bishop's hands.[88] The process of reconciliation is described in detail in the saga, where its typical framework of mediation, insistently promoted by Þorgils and the local political elite, is challenged by the bishop's explicit dissatisfaction. Þorgils reverts to a familiar discursive strategy, reminding the bishop that "vit várum inir kærustu vinir [*we were the dearest of friends*]," before spicing it up with not-so-subtle threats, but the bishop "mælti mörg óþægileg orð við Þorgils, þau sem eigi hæfir að rita [*addressed many harsh words to Þorgils, which it would be inappropriate to report*]," although he *is* quoted as telling Þorgils to go to hell.[89] Following skirmishes in the autumn and early winter, however, the two are finally reconciled:

> Gekk þessi sætt saman. Skyldi nú hvárr þeira vera annars vinr. Skyldi biskup heimta heraðsmenn til vináttu við Þorgils, en Þorgils skyldi styrkja biskup í alla staðarins nauðsyn til réttinda. Tóku þeir at því höndum saman ok váru þá vel sáttir.[90]
>
> [*Reconciliation was thus achieved. Each of them should be the friend of the other. The bishop should encourage the local farmers to be friends with Þorgils, while Þorgils should support the bishop in enjoying all the see's lawful rights. They then shook hands on this and became fully reconciled.*]

Heinrekur then revokes the excommunication and abandons charges against Þorgils, and their friendship is then confirmed by Þorgils playing host to the bishop at a *veizla*:

> Eftir um várit fór Þorgils búi sínu í Ás í Hegranes. Innti hann þá af hendi boð þat, er hann hafði boðit Heinreki biskupi. Var þar veizla virðulig ok gjafir stórar. Hann gaf honum stóðhross þrjú ok þrjú hundruð vöru ok fingrgull ok bók góða. Skeggja gaf hann góðar gjafir ok mörgum öðrum. Skilðu þeir biskup þá vinir ok heldu þat vel síðan.[91]
>
> [*In the spring, Þorgils transferred his household to Ás in Hegranes. He then honored his previous invitation to Bishop Heinrekur. There was a fine* veizla *with*

[87] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 470-471, quoted on both pages.
[88] Cf. *Sturlunga saga* 2, 179-197 on Þorgils's arrival in Skagafjörður in the summer, his battle with Eyjólfur ofsi and Hrafn Oddsson on Þveráreyrar in July 1255, the excommunication, and Þorgils's subsequent chieftaincy.
[89] *Sturlunga saga* 2, 197ff, quotes to 198 and 198-199.
[90] *Sturlunga saga* 2, 205.
[91] *Sturlunga saga* 2, 206-207.

lavish gifts. He gave him three stallions, three hundreds in wares, a ring, and a good book. He gave good gifts to Skeggi and to many others too. He and the bishop then parted as friends and honored this well afterwards.]

Skeggi, the episcopal steward at Hólar, had previously been reconciled with Þorgils through gift giving: an ox of nine winters and a food-laden horse; "Tók Þorgils þat þakksamliga, ok varð síðan með þeim in mesta vinátta [*Þorgils gratefully accepted, and after this theirs became the greatest friendship*]."[92]

The cumulative impression is certainly of literary *formulae* that are deployed throughout the sagas in order to construct typical images and scenes of reciprocal relations and their expression. However, *formulae* are not confined to the texts. There cannot be an absolute divide between the reality *in* the text and the reality *behind it*: while they are not one and the same they are certainly linked by symbiosis and dialectic, informing and counter-informing each other. This is to restate a point already made: texts are social constructs, and must be approached as such. Given that twelfth- and thirteenth-century Icelanders actually threw feasts and gave gifts, both in reality and in the texts themselves, we should be able to identify at least something of the basic rationale behind these activities. The sagas are full of such moments, and tracing and analyzing them has been our objective. The final point is a simple one: if Sturlunga comes anywhere near to depicting actual social and political behavior then feasting and gift giving were central elements of later commonwealth political culture and practice. They were far from being isolated moments in pre-modern European culture.

[92] *Sturlunga saga* 2, 206.

Chapter 4

I Power and Limits of Action

The popular image of Vikings and medieval Scandinavians embraces the notion that they were particularly fond of feasting and gift giving. The social reality of all classes of people except for slaves and the flotsam and jetsam of society revolved around the related social actions of giving and receiving, attending splendid feasts, and showering wealth upon one another. Friendship was a general social pattern, generated and regenerated through demonstrative action. From aristocratic splendor to the hospitality of the common man, the bonds that held society together were forged by the fire, through clothes, weapons, food, and drink. Successful leaders accumulated support and loyalty by keeping an "open table," as far as their means allowed, holding extravagant banquets for friends and followers and awarding them handsome gifts.

This traditional view – a cliché, really – has a venerable and learned provenance. German renaissance humanists such as Jacob Wimpheling, Konrad Celtis, Jodocus Willichius, Sebastian Münster, and Philipp Melanchthon fostered the idea of spontaneous and all-embracing *Gastfreundschaft* as a peculiarly Germanic trait, symptomatic of the natural virtues and social simplicity of the ancient Germans. They drew on classical Roman authors such as Caesar and Tacitus, whose moralizing writings on the Germanic *Altertum* highlighted and idealized Germanic hospitality and gift exchange as a contrast to the corruptions of Roman political practices.[1] The main implications of their interpretive framework impacted profoundly on much of nineteenth- and early twentieth-

[1] Leopold Hellmuth, *Gastfreundschaft und Gastrecht bei den Germanen*, Sitzungsberichte der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philisophisch-Historische Klasse 440 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1984), esp. 5-6, 70-72, *passim*; Paul Joachimsohn, "Tacitus im deutschen Humanismus," *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum* 14 (1911); Klaus von See, *Deutsche Germanen-Ideologie vom Humanismus biz zur Gegenwart* (Frankfurt: Athenäum Verlag, 1970), 9ff. Cf. Alban Gautier, "Hospitality in pre-viking Anglo-Saxon England," *Early Medieval Europe* 17:1 (2009): 23-24.

century scholarship on early Germanic social and political culture, suggesting extravagant magnanimity by lords and leaders, unreserved largesse, and an all-embracing social mechanism lubricated by the continuous and spontaneous flow of gifts and hospitality. Despite the sources rarely supporting such a view without major qualifications, this romantic and stereotypical image of the simplicity and naturalness of Germanic friendship, reciprocity, loyalty, and honor lingers on, albeit not without modification. Recasting hospitality and gift exchange within a significantly more restricted framework of power and political practices is a prerequisite for developing a more balanced and realistic view of their functionality and applicability.

Idealizing sociopolitical action as straightforward, spontaneous, and unrestrained behavior was commonplace in medieval northern discourse itself. The image of Hrothgar's hall and the idiom of skaldic poetry, for example, create an ambiance of social simplicity and effortless generosity that should not be uncritically equated with actual sociopolitical practices. There were folktale-like anecdotes about legendary feasts and gifts whose sheer extravagance and liberality extended well beyond the realities with which later saga audiences were familiar. Landnámabók thus relates how Þorvaldur and Þórður, sons of Hjalti a Hjaltadalur settler, hosted almost fifteen hundred guests (*tólf hundruð boðsmanna*) at their father's funeral feast (*erfi*), a number that even Charlemagne might have found impressive for his itinerant court. Gifts were presented to every guest of rank (*allir virðingarmenn*), which must have meant most of those present, since according to Hauksbók and Skarðsárbók the invitation went to every notable figure in the country (*buðu ǫllum hǫfðingjum á Íslandi*).[2] The tale is echoed in Laxdæla saga, where Ólafur pái seeks to ruin financially his half-brother Þorleikur by making their father's *erfi* as outrageously expensive as possible; the invitation is extended literally to every man in the country and gifts are generously awarded to the greatest among the nearly eleven hundred guests present (*níu hundruð*). It was the second largest feast in medieval Iceland, the saga remarks.[3] Thirteenth-century audiences will have known nothing remotely resembling this in their daily lives. Neither were they acquainted through experience with the open table kept by Langholts-Þóra, Geirríður in Borgardalur, and Þorbrandur örrek, as

[2] *Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, Íslenzk fornrit 1 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1968), 238; cf. *Hauksbók. Udgiven efter de arnamagnæanske håndskrifter no. 371, 544 og 675, 4° samt forskellige papirshåndskrifter*, eds. Finnur Jónsson and Eiríkur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Det kongelige norskiske oldskrift-selskab, 1892-1896), 67, and *Skarðsárbók. Landnámabók Björn Jónssonar á Skarðsá*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, Rit Handritastofnunar Íslands 1 (Reykjavík: Háskóli Íslands, 1958), 105. Cf. *Laxdæla saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 5 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1934), 74; *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, eds. Bjarni Vilhjálmsson and Þórhallur Vilmundarson, Íslenzk fornrit 13 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1991), 171.

[3] "at ek bjóða yðr til erfis eptir Hǫskuld, fǫður várn, ǫllum goðorðsmǫnnum, því at þeir munu flestir inir gildari menn, er í tengðum váru bundnir við hann; skal ok því lýsa, at engi skal gjafalaust á brott fara inna meiri manna. Þar með vilju vér bjóða bændum ok hverjum, er þiggja vill, sælum ok veslum [*that I invite you and every chieftain to a funeral feast in memory of Höskuldur, our father, for most of the greater men have had dealings with him; it shall also be declared, that none among the greater men will leave without a gift. Here, too, we wish to invite farmers and all those willing to accept, rich and poor*]." *Laxdæla saga*, 73-75, at 74.

recounted in Landnámabók.[4] If contemporary sagas are to be taken seriously, such liberality belonged to the realm of legend.

Feasting and gift giving counted among primary expressions of power in later twelfth- and thirteenth-century Iceland. Their application, however, was much more limited than is commonly acknowledged. It is commonly assumed that feasting and gift giving were pursued on much broader, more regular, and more intensive scale than the sources allow us to conclude. Failure to acknowledge their limits serves only to downplay their importance as political instruments and confuses the nature of their utility. The contemporary sagas are consistent in their presentation of feasts and gifts as exclusive, aristocratic, politically articulate, and *ad hoc* statements. They feature frequently in the sagas, but they hardly come across as free, open, general, and unconditional practices. They communicate power and are therefore simultaneously subject to and constituent elements in its larger framework.

The limits of hospitality in later commonwealth Iceland went both ways. On the one hand, chieftains hosted *veizlur* sporadically, nuancing them to particular occasions and restricting them to select participants. On the other, unlike kings and major Scandinavian lords, Icelandic chieftains never enforced hospitality from their followers consistently or systematically. The regulated exaction of hospitality framed by custom was never an element of their leadership, let alone generally characteristic of *goði-þingmenn* relationships. Neither their fiscal reality nor their political capabilities encouraged such notions. Before turning to the former type of hospitality, however, the latter merits some discussion.

The rise of territorial lordship in the thirteenth century fostered the collection of variously enforced levies and contributions in kind (*efla* or *gera bú*, *tillǫgur*, *sauðakvaðir*), although the scale and true novelty of such practices is hard to determine.[5] Customarily,

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[4] *Landnámabók*, 102 (Langholts-Þóra "lét gera skála sinn um þvera þjóðbraut ok lét þar jafnan standa borð, en hon sat úti á stóli ok laðaði þar gesti, hvern er mat vildi eta [*had her hall erected on the high road, always with a table made, and she sat outside on a chair and encouraged guests to come in, anyone who wished to eat*]."), 127 (Geirríður in Borgardalur "sparði ekki mat við menn ok lét gera skála sinn um þjóðbraut þvera; hon sat á stóli ok laðaði úti gesti, en borð stóð inni jafnan ok matr á [*did not spare food for men and had her hall erected on the high road; she sat on a chair and invited guests in, and inside there was always a table with food on it*]."), 234 (Þorbrandur örrek "lét þar gera eldhús svá mikit, at allir þeir menn, er þeim megin fóru, skyldu þar bera klyfjar í gegnum ok vera ǫllum matr heimill [*had such a great fire hall built there, so that all passing on that side (of the valley) were to ride their pack-horses through it, and food was offered to everyone*].").

[5] Although the exaction of contributions may have reached new levels towards the middle of the thirteenth century, the lack of sources renders such judgments somewhat problematic. Furthermore, the alleged novelty of thirteenth-century contributions tends to be highlighted by the longstanding yet debatable notion that contributory income-taking was the direct result of a grossly accelerated need for operational funds by an entirely novel type of territorial lordship. Just how great that accelerations was, however, and what exactly the minimum funds for a thirteenth-century chieftain amounted to, remains open to debate, cf. Gunnar Karlsson, "Goðar og bændur," *Saga* 10 (1972); Helgi Þorláksson, "Stórbændur gegn goðum. Hugleiðingar um goðavald, konungsvald og sjálfræðishug bænda um miðbik 13. aldar," *Söguslóðir. Afmælisrit helgað Ólafi Hanssyni sjötugum 18.september 1979*, eds. Bergsteinn Jónsson et al. (Reykjavík: Sögufélag, 1979); Gunnar Karlsson, "Völd og auður á 13.öld," *Saga* 18 (1980); Helgi Þorláksson, "Stéttir, auður og völd á 12. og 13.öld," *Saga* 20 (1982). Cf. also Gunnar Karlsson, *Goðamenning. Staða og áhrif goðorðsmanna í þjóðveldi Íslendinga* (Reykjavík: Heimskringla, 2004), 175-178, 325-333.

contributions must have depended on occasion, circumstances, and the ability of individual chieftains to convince or pressure their followers into making them.[6] By the thirteenth century, contributions were principally adjudicated between chieftains and the most prominent farmers, leaving the rest of the community few options but to heed the call. Every so often, exactions were ruthlessly enforced or, when necessary, pursued as outright seizure.[7] Nonetheless, there were limits. Chieftains did not need to keep their households mobile in order to secure their upkeep and nor was their visibility and presence within their areas of influence compromised by a lack of systematically enforced hospitality. Their leadership operated on an altogether smaller stage than that of Scandinavian kings and major lords, whose activities and outlook remained well above their league. Pursuing enforced hospitality on an extensive, intensive, and regular pattern was simply beyond the power of chieftains. Demands for such hospitality remained a spasmodic mode of economic and political violence, not a normative element of commonwealth leadership.

The anomaly is Guðmundur dýri, the single chieftain in Sturlunga saga explicitly shown pursuing hospitality among his kinsmen and followers on regular basis:

> Guðmundr átti fjölða þingmanna út um Svarfaðardal ok náfrændr, ok fór hann þannig at heimboðum haust ok vár.[8]
>
> [*Guðmundur had many thingmen and kinsmen in Svarfaðardalur, and went there for* heimboð *in autumn and spring*.]

The saga remains inconclusive on the extent of the practice and its level of obligation, and the brevity and generality of the reference invites little speculation on the matter. While the practice itself escapes judgment, Guðmundur's overbearing sexual violence against his

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[6] According to Grágás, *þingfararkaup* was the only legally stipulated due, yet the sagas remain conspicuously silent on its supposed observance. *Grágás* [Ia]. *Islændernes Lovbog i Fristatens Tid, udgivet efter det kongelige Bibliotheks Haandskrift*, ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen (Copenhagen: Berlings Bogtrykkeri, 1852), 44, 63, 128, 159-160, 189; *Grágás* [II] *efter det Arnamagnæanske Haandskrift Nr. 334 fol., Staðarhólsbók* (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1879), 276, 320-321, 401; *Grágás* [III]. *Stykker, som findes i det Arnamagnæanske Haandskrift Nr. 351 fol. Skálholtsbók og en Række andre Haandskrifter*, ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1883), 173, 431; *Grágás* [IV]. *Lagasafn íslenska þjóðveldisins*, eds. Gunnar Karlsson et al. (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1992), 225, 376, *passim*. Cf. Gunnar Karlsson, *Goðamenning,* 166-169.

[7] On contributions and levies, see *Sturlunga saga* 1, eds. Jón Jóhannesson et al. (Reykjavík: Sturlunguútgáfan, 1946), 311 (*gera bú*), 342 (*láta leggja til sauði*), 389 (*kveða á fé*), 496 (*efla kost*), 525 (*efla bú*); 2, 69 (*sauðatollr*), 122-123 (*sauðakvǫð*), 196 (*halda formann með kostnaði, tillǫgr, sauðakvǫð*), 200, *passim*. For enforcment and seizure, see further, e.g., *Sturlunga saga* 1, 342, 347, 361, 363, 365, 373, 379-380, 382 (*afla til bús á vestfirzku*), 478 (*sópa til fǫngum*). Generally on chieftains and finances, see Jesse L. Byock, *Medieval Iceland. Society, Sagas, and Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 77-102; Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Goder og maktforhold på Island i fristatstiden* (Bergen: Universitetet i Bergen, Historisk Institutt, 1993), transl. as *Chieftains and Power in the Icelandic Commonwealth*, transl. Jean Lundskær-Nielsen, The Viking Collection, Studies in Northern Civilization 12 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1999), 101-119; Gunnar Karlsson, *Goðamenning*, 166-178, 316-333.

[8] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 176.

politically inferior hosts is, on the other hand, deplored.[9] By acting as someone "óeirðarmaðr mikill um kvennafar [*very unruly in his dealings with women*]," as Þórðar saga hreðu aptly puts it for King Sigurður slefa,[10] Guðmundur's political superiority is chillingly highlighted. His visits seem to have been driven more by his eagerness to exploit his political superiority than by his love of women.

The only fully comparable episode from the sagas of Icelanders is Ófeigs þáttur, a short and independent thirteenth-century tale traditionally linked to Ljósvetninga saga.[11] Clearly written against a background of the fiscal and political violence associated with enforced hospitality, it offers what may be the only example from the genre of a chieftain burdening his *þingmenn* with systematic obligations of hospitality. The figure cast in the role is Guðmundur ríki, significantly his namesake's great-great-great-grandfather through the direct male-line – *ríkr* and *dýrr* are synonyms as well, "powerful" – and like him a chieftain in Eyjafjörður.[12] It was his habit

> at fara norðr um heruð á várit ok hitta þingmenn sína ok ræða um heraðsstjórn ok skipa málum með mǫnnum. Ok stóð þeim af því hallæri mikit, er hǫfðu lítt áðr skipat til búa sinna. Hann reið opt með þrjá tigu manna ok sat víða sjau nætr ok hafði jafnmarga hesta.[13]
>
> [*to proceed to the northern districts in the spring, meet with his thingmen, deal with local governance, and arrange matters with people. This placed great financial strain on those who had by that point scarcely made provision for their households. He frequently rode with thirty men, staying seven nights in many places, and bringing as many horses.*]

Led by Ófeigur, the farmers eventually resist by giving him the taste of his own medicine. The outcome is that while the practice itself continued, the burdens it imposed became less severe. As before, the problem seems to have been not the nature of the imposition but its extent. The farmers suffer financially, yet their chieftain probably has only a limited financial stake in the events; his agenda relates more to underlining his status and

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[9] "Sá skaplöstr sótti Guðmund, at hann elskaði konur fleiri en þá, er hann átti [*Guðmundur was seized by the fault of loving other women than his own*]." *Sturlunga saga* 1, 175-176. On sexual violence, abductions, and their often political contexts, see Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, "Konur og kvennarán á Íslandi á 12. og 13. öld," *Ný Saga* 9 (1997).

[10] *Þórðar saga hreðu*, ed. Jóhannes Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit 14 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1959), 165-166.

[11] On the tale's transmission and its relation to Ljósvetninga saga, see Björn Sigfússon, "Formáli," Íslenzk fornrit 10 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1940), l-lv. On its historical and literary elements, see Hallvard Magerøy, "Guðmundr góði og Guðmundr ríki," *Maal og Minne* (1959).

[12] A genealogy can be found in *Sturlunga saga* 2, *39. ættskrá*. On Guðmundur ríki's legacy and its saga treatment, see Gísli Sigurðsson, "The Immanent Saga of Guðmundur ríki," *Learning and Understanding in the Old Norse World. Essays in Honour of Margaret Clunies Ross*, eds. Judy Quinn et al., Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe 18 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007). For an attempted historical reconstruction see Björn Sigfússon, "Veldi Guðmundar ríka," *Skírnir* 108 (1934).

[13] *Ófeigs þáttr*, ed. Björn Sigfússon, Íslenzk fornrit 10, 117.

authority through demonstrative action. Although such systematic pursuit of hospitality among followers appears unusual among the sagas of Icelanders, the *þáttur*'s theme of adjudicating the limits of political action renders to story entirely typical of the corpus overall.

Defining the limits of hospitality was less a matter of legislation than of customary assent. Aside from prescribing the limited obligations of hospitality owed to attendants of assemblies and people taking infants to be baptized, Grágás offers little guidance on the actual politics of hospitality.[14] Visitations and episcopal hospitality were a legal tradition in the making, however, and largely separate from *Herrschaftsgastung* in general. Debating the limits of episcopal itinerancy (*yfirfǫr*/*-ferð*/*-sókn*) and its associated *veizlur* was ultimately tied up with larger issues of church administration and episcopal authority. The particularities of vivid narrative episodes such as those involving Bishop Guðmundur góði were thus transcended, associated as they were with various political conflicts. This debate finds expression throughout the contemporary sagas, as with Guðmundur góði's uneasy wanderings and *veizlur* in 1220:

> Síðan fóru þeir norðr til Svarfaðardals, ok ætlaði biskup norðr í sýslu sína. En Eyfirðingar vildu eigi taka við biskupi á bæi sína ok flokk hans.
>
> [Guðmundur arrives in Reykjadalur] … Dreif þá til hans fólk margt. Bergþórr Jónsson var þar með biskupi, ok hafði hann nær tíu tigum manna. Þótti bóndum þungt undir at búa ok þolðu þó um hríð. Ferr biskup í Múla, ok tekr Ívarr við honum liðliga, ok er þar sæmilig veizla, þess er sjá mátti, at engi ástsemð var veitt af Ívari. Skilja þeir þó vel, ok fór biskup á brott…[15]
>
> [*They then proceeded north to Svarfaðardalur, the bishop intending to advance north to his see. But the farmers of Eyjafjörður refused to host him and his flock at their farms.*
>
> [Guðmundur arrives in Reykjadalur] … *People flocked to him in numbers. Bergþór Jónsson accompanied the bishop with nearly a hundred men. The farmers felt that the burdens were heavy but nonetheless endured them for a while. The bishop arrived at Múli, and Ívar hosted him impeccably. There was a respectable* veizla, *which Ívar clearly offered without affection. They parted on good terms, however, and the bishop went on his way…*]

Ívar gathers men together when a return is rumored, drawing them up for battle:

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[14] These are the two principle reasons, although there is mention of other specialized circumstances, cf. *Grágás* [Ia], 24, 27; *Grágás* [II], 26, 29, 35-36, 74, 119, 169, 211, 252f., 333; *Grágás* [III], 30, 77, 123, 173, 214, 256f, 339; *Grágás* [IV], 2, 24, 181, 199, 409-410, 443, 455. Magnús Már Lárusson, "Gästning. Island," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformationstid* 6 (Copenhagen et al.: Rosenkilde og Bagger et al., 1961), 17.

[15] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 274.

En at þeim viðrbúningi ríðr biskup í tún.

Spyrja þeir Eyjólf [who was with the bishop], hvat safnaðr þessi skal.

En Ívarr segir, at þeir skuli nú at keyptu komast, áðr þeir fái eign hans, ok segir, at nú skal fara allt saman, karl ok kýr.[16]

[*The bishop rode into the home-field as the arrangements were being carried out.*

They asked Eyjólfur what was up with the crowd.

Ívar said this time they would have to pay full price before getting hands on his property, it would be over his dead body.]

The bishop grudgingly retreated.

Aside from administrative concerns, the farmers generally appear reluctant to shoulder the fiscal burdens of such visitations or to make their services available.[17] Kristinna laga þáttur merely observes that the bishop at Hólar is to survey his entire diocese annually and his colleague at Skálholt a third of his diocese each summer, leaving practical issues of maintenance unaddressed.[18] The law further stipulates that hosts are obliged to provide horses upon request, but judging from contemporary sagas the need for cattle or sheep was considerably more urgent.[19] In the absence of an established legal framework, negotiating the maintenance of bishops and their retinue lasted throughout the Middle Ages, and conflict became even more pronounced in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[20] Depending on the host and his relationship with the bishop, though, episcopal hospitality might extend to fully-fledged feasting. Bishop Brandur Sæmundarson, who according to Guðmundar saga dýra *gisti* at every other church farm

[16] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 274-275.

[17] Widely in Sturlunga, e.g. *Sturlunga saga* 1, 272-277, 317-8, *passim*.

[18] *Grágás* [Ia], 19; *Grágás* [II], 22; *Grágás* [III], 20, 69, 113, 163-164, 207, 246-247, 288, 324; *Grágás* [IV], 16.

[19] "Bvandi sa er vist veit*ir* byskopi á at fá ho*nv*m reiþ skiótá. þan*n* dag er h*ann* ferr a bravt. Hvskarlar h*an*s oc bvar ero skyld*ir* at lia hrossa byskopi þ*ei*r er h*ann* biþr ti*l*. Sekr er sa .iij mork*vm* er syniar. ef hross a til [*The farmer hosting the bishop is obligated to provide him with a horse on the day he leaves. Those of his servants and men asked by the bishop to provide horses are obliged to do so. Refusal to do so by anyone owning a horse will result in a fine of three marks*]." *Grágás* [Ia], 19 (quoted); *Grágás* [II], 22-23; *Grágás* [III], 20-21, 69, 114, 164, 207, 247, 288, 324-325; *Grágás* [IV], 16.

[20] By the concordat of Ögvaldsnes in 1297, King Eiríkur Magnússon and Bishop Árni Þorláksson made a very general agreement as to its overall limits: the bishop at Skálholt was to survey (*vísitera*) his diocese evenly and no earlier than the Mass of Peter and Paul (June 29). *Diplomatarium Islandicum* 2. *Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn, sem hefir inni að halda bréf og gjörninga, dóma og máldaga, og aðrar skrár er snerta Ísland eða íslenzka menn*, ed. Jón Þorkelsson (Copenhagen: Hið íslenzka bókmenntafélag, 1857-1876), 325. The bishop of Hólar, on the other hand, continued to survey his diocese annually until at least the early fourteenth century. Fixing the size of the bishop's retinue and announcing in advance and in writing his planned route and proposed accommodations may have developed as late as the fifteenth century. Árni's Kristniréttur of 1275 obliges all farmers able to do so to provide twelve horses to the itinerant bishop upon request, but the extent of compliance remains unclear. *Norges gamle love indtil 1387* 5, eds. Rudolf Keyser et al. (Oslo: C. Gröndahl, 1895), 23. Payments in lieu of obligatory hospitality (*úthlutning*/*útlausn*) were known, but their history and origins are mostly obscure. On visitations in general, see Gunnar F. Guðmundsson, *Íslenskt samfélag og Rómakirkja*, Kristni á Íslandi 2 (Reykjavík: Alþingi, 2000), 110-114; Magnús Már Lárusson, "Gästning. Island," 18-19.

when perambulating his diocese, was thus invited to a feast (*boð*) at Helgastaðir that included friends and kinsmen of the hostess.[21] Otherwise, references are commonly brief and unspecific, as when Íslendinga saga mentions that Bishop Magnús Gissurarson was "at veizlu" in Vatnsfjörður in 1233, hosted by Órækja Snorrason.[22]

Although it was beyond the means of chieftains systematically to enforce hospitality among their followers or subordinates, it served them well enough as an *ad hoc* instrument of political coercion and demonstration of status. Þorgils skarði's struggle for status and acknowledgement in 1252 is a particularly pronounced case in point. The political elite in Borgarfjörður and Western Iceland took little note when he made known to them the king's orders in respect of his appointment to Snorri Sturluson's old domain; such indifference left him few options other than strong-arm measures. These primarily involved exacting contributions – gifts, that is – as a means of maintenance as well as of political acknowledgement. Having mustered *frændr*, *vinir*, and *tengðamenn* to his cause, Þorgils then made his way from one viable farmer to the next, imposing his presence and demanding gifts.[23]

His visits to the important magnates Þorleifur at Garðar and Böðvar at Bær were cautiously pursued; Þorleifur remained unresponsive ("fór með þeim heldr fáliga [*it remained rather cold between them*]) while Böðvar accepted gifts of two brown horses and a gilded red shield, thereby sealing their future friendship.[24] Others were approached less cautiously – some indeed were terrorized where necessary. The brothers Ólafur and Þórhallur at Brekka were beaten up for refusing to bow to his authority. Not only had they previously refused to demands for contributions in kind (*sauðakvǫð*), but they also made no attempt to follow the rituals of formal hospitality when Þorgils arrived: they refused to receive him outside, and thereafter left him to invite himself in, find himself a seat, and receive only casual greetings from people who made no attempt to stand up out of respect. They offered no refreshments either, the saga dutifully remarks.[25] Haukur of Álftanes was another who was under pressure, with his household terrorized and a man beaten until crawling, until Þorgils is granted self-judgment and a "viðtökur góðar [*good reception*]:"

> Gaf Haukr tvau sáld malts ok sáld korns ok sex vættir ok öxi mikla, er Þorleifr í Görðum hafði gefit Hauki. Gróa gaf Þorgilsi fingrgull. Skilðu þau lagliga.[26]
>
> [*Haukur gave two measures of malt, a measure and six weights of grain, and a great axe which Þorleifur at Garðar had given him. Gróa gave Þorgils a ring. They parted decorously*.]

[21] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 161-162.
[22] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 362-363. Cf. *Árna saga biskups*, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, *Biskupa sögur* 3, Íslenzk fornrit 17 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1998), 44 (*taka veizlu*).
[23] *Sturlunga saga* 2, 120-122ff.
[24] *Sturlunga saga* 2, 122.
[25] *Sturlunga saga* 2, 122-123.
[26] *Sturlunga saga* 2, 123-125, quoted to 125.

His visitation (and gift receiving) route thus extends throughout the region:

> Ríðr Þorgils þaðan á Hítarnes ok þaðan á Snæfellsnes ok gisti at inna meiri bónda, ok gáfu allir honum gjafir.[27]
>
> [*From there, Þorgils rode to Hítarnes and from there to Snæfellsnes. He was hosted by the leading farmers, and they all gave him gifts*.]

As so often in the corpus, there is no separation of the fiscal and sociopolitical aspects of exchange. Financially important as the gifts may have been for Þorgils, their larger context is unmistakably that of power and submission to authority.

Indeed, Þorgils ostentatiously brought Egill Sölmundarson in Reykholt to heel in the summer of 1255 through enforced *veizla* and gifts. His unexpected visit apparently alarmed the host, who ran straight for the church while still naked. Þorgils arrived at the church door moments later, and calmly asked the priest standing in front of it whether his master was at home:

> Prestr segir, at hann var heima ok þá í kirkju kominn.
>
> Þorgils mælti: "Satt muntu segja" – ok kvaðst sét hafa vesalinginn, er lauk kirkjuhurðunni, "ok sýndist sem eigi væri klæðmargr."[28]
>
> [*The priest answered that he was at home, and was inside the church.*
>
> *Þorgils spoke: "You tell the truth" – and claimed that he had seen the poor wretch closing the church door, "and looking as if he was less than fully dressed."*]

Gruesome threats are then turned into truce, self-judgment, and finally bonding through *veizla*:

> gengu þeir í stofu. Var hon vel tjölduð ok upp settir bjórar. Var þá Egill inn glaðasti ok beini inn bezti ok drukkit nökkut af alþjóð. … Var þá drukkit fast ok veizla in bezta. Tjáðu menn þá fyrir Þorgilsi, hversu vel Agli fór. Hann tók því vel ok lét sér finnast um fátt.
>
> [*they entered the main room. It was decorated with fine hangings and tapestry. Egill was at his jolliest, service was of highest order, and everyone had a drink. … Then, there was heavy drinking and the finest* veizla*. It was pointed out to Þorgils how well Egill behaved. He thought well of this but made little of it.*]

[27] *Sturlunga saga* 2, 125.
[28] *Sturlunga saga* 2, 170-173 (episode), quoted to 171, and 172 and 173 successively.

Framed by defeat and coercion the *veizla* establishes friendship, handed out as judgment and expressed in typically generic terms:

> Egill skyldi ok engum manni veita í móti Þorgilsi, en gera honum njósn, ef hann vissi honum háska ván. Þorgils hét Agli trausti sínu, hvar sem hann kæmi því vit. … En þaðan af skyldi þeir fella saman frændsemi þeira ok fulla vináttu.
>
> [*Egill was to support no man against Þorgils, and to alert him if he became aware of any potential threat. Þorgils promised Egill his trust, as far as he could provide it. From now on they should remain kinsmen and fast friends.*]

They parted with *kærleikar*, with Egill as a gesture of submission providing two brown horses as a gift,[29] thereby bringing to a public conclusion the renegotiation of their political relations.

The exchanges between Þorgils and Egill leave little room for ambiguity. Neither does the ritual submission of the farmers in Eyjafjörður to Gissur Þorvaldsson in the spring of 1259. Complete with an earl's name, he

> reið norðr til Eyjafjarðar, ok gerði Eyjólfr ábóti veizlu á móti honum. Gengu menn vel í móti honum í Eyjafirði ok gáfu honum gjafir.[30]
>
> [*rode north to Eyjafjörður and Abbot Eyjólfur made a* veizla for him. *The men of Eyjafjörður received him well and gave him gifts*.]

At times, however, categorization is hard-pressed. Exchanges were truly "acts" of friendship and recognition in that they were meant to express consensus and bonding regardless of how uneasily these had been determined or enforced. We may consider, for example, the framework of the hospitality and gifts that enabled Þorgils Oddason to pay off his infamously huge fine:

> Ok fyrr en Þorgils kæmi heim af þingi, hafði hann eigi minna fé þegit en átta tigu hundraða af vinum sínum ok frændum, en margir buðu honum heim ór öllum sveitum, bæði norðan ok sunnan, austan ok vestan, þeir er hann vitjaði síðar, ok leystu þeir hann með stórum gjöfum á brott. Víða krafði hann fjár í Vestfirðingafjórðungi.[31]
>
> [*Before arriving home from the assembly, Þorgils had received no less than eighty hundreds from his friends and kinsmen. Many invited him home in*

[29] *Sturlunga saga* 2, 176.
[30] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 524-525, quoted to 525.
[31] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 50.

> *all parts of the country, both north and south, east and west, those whom he would visit later, and they gave him lavish gifts on parting. He demanded payments widely in the western quarter.*]

The passage hardly suggests financial relations free from political ties, carried out on principles of altruism and good-will alone. Rather, the contributions are framed by strict political obligations that are owed to the powerful leader, as the final sentence unmistakably signals. Yet, equally, they are all gifts, implying at least a degree of voluntariness.

Þorgils's accumulation of gifts from all over the country is unmistakably idealized, alluding to extensive mechanisms of exchange and a truly communal effort. The reality of social action was different. The sociopolitical application of exchange was a deliberately exclusive practice. Just as chieftains were unable to exact hospitality and gifts on any extensive and systematic basis among farmers in general, so too was their hosting and gift giving restricted to the socially and politically eminent. Sturlunga makes frequent reference to leaders forging bonds by holding feasts and giving gifts, yet nowhere does it hint at the sociopolitical spontaneity and open-endedness discernible in learned stereotypes. Indeed, Sturlunga has only a few (albeit extremely important) examples of chieftains engaging rather broadly in formal acts of exchange with their followers. Significantly, these instances relate to just a couple of chieftains, Þorgils skarði and Þórður kakali.

Þorgils saga skarða is relatively and noticeably well endowed with feasting scenes. Once promoted as leader in Skagafjörður, Þorgils embarks on cycles of mutual feasting and gift giving with his followers. The language of action is unmistakable. In the autumn of 1256, having already been reconciled with Bishop Heinrekur by a splendid feast and fine gifts, the show began:

> Aðra veizlu hafði Þorgils um haustit. Bauð hann þá til sín heraðsbóndum inum beztum. Var þá veizla fjölmenn ok veitt með inni mestu rausn. Váru ok gjafir stórar at útlausnum, ok engi fór gjaflaust í brott, sá er boðit hafði verit. Af þessari veizlu fekk Þorgils mikla virðing af bóndum.[32]

> [*Þorgils held another* veizla *in the autumn. He invited the foremost of the local farmers. There was a huge* veizla, *hosted most generously. Also, there were great gifts at the time of parting, and none of those invited left without one. Þorgils was greatly honored by the farmers for this* veizla.]

The farmers duly reciprocate:

> Buðu flestir bændr honum þá heim, ok fór hann at veizlum um vetrinn um allt herað ok þá af bóndum inar sæmiligstu gjafir. Var nú í heraði

[32] *Sturlunga saga* 2, 207, and subsequent quotation.

> gleði mikil, ok þóttust bændr þá hafa náliga himin höndum tekit, er þeir hafa fengit slíkan höfðingja.
>
> [*Most of the farmers invited him thereafter, and during the winter he attended* veizlur *throughout the area, accepting most honorable gifts from them. The district was filled with joy, and the farmers felt they had almost arrived in heaven, having secured such a leader.*]

The previous winter, Þorgils had been busy making friends in the west, also by means of feasts and gifts:

> Buðu margir menn honum heim vestr þar, ok tók hverr við honum eftir föngum inum beztum.
>
> Þá bauð honum Sturla heim, frændi hans, í Hítardal. Var þar veizla in virðuligsta. Var þar margt manna með Þorgilsi. … Gaf Sturla gjafir góðar Þorgilsi, frænda sínum, ok skilðu þeir með kærleikum miklum. Fór Þorgils á heim norðr, ok hafði hann aflat sér vini marga ok mikla sæmð.[33]
>
> [*Many in the west invited him home, each receiving him with the best provisions available.*
>
> *Sturla, his kinsman, invited him to Hítardalur. It was a most honorable* veizla*. Þorgils was accompanied by many men. … Sturla gave Þorgils, his kinsman, great gifts, and they parted with great cordiality. Þorgils went home north, having collected many friends and much honor.*]

Lastly, Þorgils reciprocated the hospitality of the leading farmers in Skagafjörður in 1257 by hosting a Christmas feast and dispensing gifts among them:

> hafði veizlur miklar og jólaboð mikit. Bauð hann þá til sín mörgum stórbóndum ok gaf þeim stórgjafir. Var þar in mesta rausn bæði sakir fjölmennis ok hýbýla.[34]
>
> [*he hosted great* veizlur *and a great Christmas feast. He invited many major farmers and gave them fine gifts. It was a most lavish occasion in terms of numbers and accommodation*.]

And so ended the cycle of exchange that had extended from early winter 1256 until Christmas 1257.

Although not conceptually atypical, these vivid scenes of friendships created between leader and followers by means of mutual feasts and gifts are, nonetheless, quite unique in contemporary sagas in terms of their scope and intensity. The bonding scenes

[33] *Sturlunga saga* 2, 207.
[34] *Sturlunga saga* 2, 216-217.

between Þórður kakali and his followers, in Þórðar saga kakala, resemble but do not quite match them. Þórður twice held magnificent feasts for his followers, without any reciprocal formal receptions. At the first of these, a Christmas feast at Mýrar in Dýrafjörður in 1243, loyal support in times of adventurous recruitment was rewarded with a demonstration of friendship:

> En at jólum bauð hann til sín öllum [inum] beztum mönnum ór Vestfjörðum. Hafði hann þá veizlu mikla á Mýrum. … En er menn fóru í brott, veitti hann mörgum mönnum gjafir. Váru þá allir meiri vinir hans en áðr.[35]
>
> [*He invited all the best men in Vestfirðir to his home at Christmas, and hosted a great* veizla *at Mýrar. … And when the left, he gave many of them gifts. All were now greater friends of his than before.*]

His accession to his father's domain in Eyjafjörður two years later, in August 1245, was likewise made an occasion for cementing the bonds with those who supported his cause. Having exacted oaths of submission from the local farmers, Þórður held a feast for his retinue at Grund and gifts were presented:

> Hann hafði veizlu fagra á Maríumessu ok gaf stórgjafir þeim, er honum höfðu norðr fylgt.[36]
>
> [*He hosted a splendid* veizla *on the Mass of St Mary, and gave great gifts to those accompanying him north*.]

The saga does not indicate whether the feast also included local farmers.

There are two particularly important points to note in these scenes. Firstly, and strikingly, the performances are closely associated with specific occasions and particular circumstances. Their contexts and presentation make it eminently clear that they are not the tip of an iceberg, mere incidental glimpses of routine practice. On the contrary, they are purposely deployed at socially and politically strategic moments. The emphasis on conviviality and friendship among Þorgils and his followers is tightly framed by his rise to power and formal acceptance in Skagafjörður, sealing by action the transition from previously unsuccessful pleas and debates to secure political bonds. Considering the initial uneasiness of the process, it comes as no surprise that the eventual forging of bonds assumes the form of a highly ritualized demonstration of friendship. Similarly, the feasts and gifts of Þórður kakali were consciously deployed for specific political ends at truly pivotal moments in his career. The earlier part of his saga is a heroic tale of a seemingly hopeless cause, with bands of followers assembled as and when possible in destitute

[35] *Sturlunga saga* 2, 40.
[36] *Sturlunga saga* 2, 70.

areas. The feast at Mýrar crowns his eventful and remarkable rise to political fame and fortune, as the author notes in some awe before proceeding to describing it:

> Þóttust þá allir skilja, þeir er í þessari ferð höfðu verit með Þórði, at hann myndi verða inn mesti höfðingi, ef hann heldi sér heilum. Þótti ok mönnum mikils um vert, er hann hafði slíkum stórflokkum saman komit í svá fátækum sveitum.[37]
>
> [*It became apparent to all those accompanying Þórður on this journey, that he would become the greatest chieftain, as long as nothing bad befell him. It was thought an enormous achievement to have recruited such great flocks of men in such destitute parts of the country*.]

Similarly, the accession to his father's domain represented a landmark in his political saga and an appropriate moment for rewarding valuable support and reinforcing ties.

Reserving feasts and gifts for particular occasions as opposed to their serving as habitual gestures of an inert social routine contributed significantly to their potency. Secondly, they were made socially exclusive. Feasting was principally an aristocratic practice, highlighting social and political selectiveness; unrestricted access to such festivities would only have dulled their communicative force. The contemporary sagas hold no examples of chieftains hosting farmers and unlimited numbers of followers; the object was never to play host to all real or potential followers – quite the contrary. Feasting in the contemporary sagas is overwhelmingly dedicated to the management of bonds between political equals or near-equals, and when bonding with followers is involved, as in the above examples, there is careful emphasis on exclusivity. Þorgils skarði hosted only *heraðsbændr inir beztu* and then re-invited *margir stórbændr*; the *flestir bændr* hosting him in return, and thereby reciprocating the initial gesture, are self-evidently those who have previously been his guests. The guest list for Þórður's feast at Grund is not disclosed, but there is nothing to suggest that it extended beyond his accompanying band of followers; when forging friendships at Mýrar he explicitly hosted only the *optimates* in Vestfirðir, *allir inir beztu menn*.

The trend is evident, and noted above for the kings' sagas as well. The sagas of Icelanders, recounting numerous lavish feasts thrown for friends and kinsmen, offer no convincing examples of chieftains reaching out to *þingmenn* and their followers in numbers, hosting them extravagantly and showering them with gifts. Hrafnkels saga offers what appears to be the only example in the genre of a chieftain hosting his *þingmenn* collectively; once Hrafnkell is temporarily overcome, his adversary Sámur proposes to succeed him through demonstrative and formal means:

> Sámr setti bú á Aðalbóli eptir Hrafnkel, ok síðan efnir hann veizlu virðuliga ok býðr til ǫllum þeim, sem verit hǫfðu þingmenn hans. Sámr

[37] *Sturlunga saga* 2, 39-40.

býzk til að vera yfirmaðr þeira í stað Hrafnkels. Menn játuðusk undir þat ok hugðu þó enn misjafnt til.[38]

[*Sámr succeeded Hrafnkell to the household at Aðalból, and hosted all who had been his thingmen to an honorable* veizla*. Sámur requested that he be their leader instead of Hrafnkell. This was accepted, although many still had mixed feelings.*]

The event is effectively a *fundr* and *viðrtaka*, "assembly/meeting" and "acclamation/succession," a quintessentially ritualistic affair. The application of formal hospitality to the occasion appears logical as a means of establishing bonds, although atypical in scope compared to other feasting scenes. Gifts are absent, though, and the saga does not speak of friendship.

As in the contemporary sagas, feasting in the sagas of Icelanders is primarily presented as a means for articulating political ties between peers or near-equals, and otherwise rarely extends beyond a fairly confined group of people.[39] This is not to deny

[38] *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*, ed. Jón Jóhannesson, *Austfirðinga sǫgur*, Íslenzk fornrit 11 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1950), 123.

[39] On feasting as a means of managing bonds among the politically competent in the sagas of Icelanders, excluding *haustboð* and Christmas feasts (for references, see Chapter 3), see, principally, *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*, eds. Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson, *Borgfirðinga sǫgur*, Íslenzk fornrit 3 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1938), 179-187 (alliances switched through elevated hospitality and gifts); *Valla-Ljóts saga*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson, *Eyfirðinga sǫgur*, Íslenzk fornrit 9 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1956), 238-240 and 242 (Guðmundur ríki, repeated *boð*, extent unclear); *Brandkrossa þáttr*, ed. Jón Jóhannesson, *Austfirðinga sǫgur*, 185-186 (Freyr summoned as *kærasti vinr* through *veizla*); *Finnboga saga*, ed. Jóhannes Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit 14 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1959), 290 (reconciliation and bonding through *veizla* and magnificent gifts), 292 (magnates and kinsmen bond through superb *veizla* and noble gifts), 305-306 (Finnbogi hosts *veizla* and gives gifts); *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, Íslenzk fornrit 2 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1933), 26 and 28-33 (*veizlur* and gifts among king as notables), 80-83 (*boð*, *veizla* among close-kin), 120-121 (Egill and Þórólfur invited to *veizla in bezta* by magnate Arnfinnur; gifts; *vinátta*), 165-166 (*veizla* among magnates), 173-174 (*veizla* among close-kin), 200-202 (*veizla* hosted by a landed man); *Vatnsdœla saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 8 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1939), 25-27, 32-33 and 44-45 (Haraldur hárfagri and Ingimundur gamli; *vinir*, *vinátta*, *heimboð*, *veizlur*, *gjafir*, *vingjafir*), 28-30 (Ingimundur gamli and magnates, *veizla*), 36 (Ingimundur's farewell; *veizla*, *vinir*, *hǫfðingjar*); *Flóamanna saga*, ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson, Íslenzk fornrit 13 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1991), 234-235 (tension-ridden *veizlur* and gifts among notables); *Eiríks saga rauða*, ed. Matthías Þórðarson, Íslenzk fornrit 4 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1935), 206-209 (context unclear); *Eyrbyggja saga* ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 4, 63-64 (*boð* among magnates, bonds negotiated with gifts; *vingjǫf*, *kærleikr*), 132 (Snorri goði's political support pleaded through *heimboð* and *sæmiligar gjafir*); *Brennu-Njáls saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 12 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1954), 6-7 (Höskuldur hosts Hrútur to *vinaboð*), 14-15 (*veizla* at court), 133-135 (status articulated through *heimboð*), 152ff (political favor returned with *heimboð* and *góðar gjafir*), 207-208 and 223-225 (Kári and Njássynir; *veizlur* and gifts at court), 248-249 (political alliance pleaded with *heimboð*, rejected), 275-276 (magnates and chieftains, *veizla*, *erfi*, *góðar gjafir*), 276-277 (Höskuldur Hvítanessgoði, Njáll, Njálssynir; *veizlur*, *heimboð*, *vinátta*, splendid gifts), 413 (*heimboð* among chieftains); *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, ed. Björn K. Þórólfsson, *Vestfirðinga sǫgur*, Íslenzk fornrit 6 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1943), 18 (chieftains, notables, mutual *veizlur* and *heimboð*; gifts), 56 (*erfi*, *vingjafir*); *Víga-Glúms saga*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson, *Eyfirðinga sǫgur*, 27-29 (brothers Glúmur and Þorsteinn; *heimboð*,

drink and convivial atmosphere to all but aristocrats and their closest men – far from it, but to highlight the functional aspect of saga hospitality when elevated to the recognizably and explicitly formal level of *veizlur*. When searching for socially more inclusive *veizlur,* even guilds and *kirkjudagar* offer fewer instances than might be expected. Guilds, the obvious candidate for egalitarian banqueting, cannot be shown ever to have been a common, or therefore important, social institution in medieval Iceland.[40] The corpus provides only three references, all from the twelfth century: in 1119 at Reykhólar, in 1148 at Hvammur, and in 1182 at Þingeyrar.[41] The latter two are brief and without detail, although it is explicitly noted that seating arrangements at Hvammur were according to rank. The oft-cited wedding feast at Reykhólar, described at length in Þorgils saga og Hafliða, is likewise a guild meeting, dedicated to Ólafur helgi and convened annually by "margir gildabræður [*many guild-brothers*]." It is referred to in the saga as a long-lost practice, however, and the feast otherwise conforms to social reality: invitations are select – "margt annat gott mannval, en þó váru Þorgils ok Þórðr mestir virðingarmenn komnir [*many other select men, yet Þorgils and Þórður were the most honorable among those present*]" – and seating arrangements are according to rank.[42] There is not much egalitarianism or openness about it.[43]

It is also easy to imagine *kirkjudagar*, "church anniversaries," as egalitarian festivities or banquets, especially if note is taken of Kristinna laga þáttur. According to it, church farmers were to celebrate the consecration anniversaries of their churches (*anniversarium dedicationis ecclesiae*) by inviting their tithe-paying farmers to a church feast. The local household and its guests who were staying the night before the feast were also to be included.[44] However, the history of actual practices should not be written from the

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kynni), 96-97 (*boð*, *veizla* rejected; false pretence); *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, eds. Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson, *Borgfirðinga sǫgur*, 57-58 (magnates, kinsmen; *veizla*, *heimboð*, *góðar gjafir*); *Laxdæla saga*, 11-13 (Unnur djúpúðga declares and ties the succession of Ólafur feilan through a major feast embracing kinsmen, friends, and all possible contenders; wedding and funeral feast; *vinir*, *veizla*, *boð*, *erfi*, *tignir menn*, *stórmannligar gjafir*), 73-75 (*erfi* made as grossly expensive as possible by Ólafur pái for the purpose of bankrupting his brother Þorleikur; open, literally everyone invited; unique; *veizla*, *gjafir*, *vinir*), 236-243 (Bolli and Guðmundur ríki; notables; *heimboð*, *veizla*, *vingask*, *félagsskapr*, *vinátta*, *gjafir*).

[40] The opposite is argued in Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, "Hugleiðingar um hreppa, bændagildi og goðorð," *Heimtur. Ritgerðir til heiðurs Gunnari Karlssyni sjötugum*, eds. Guðmundur Jónsson et al. (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 2009).

[41] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 23-27, 66-67, 130. Cf. Magnús Már Lárusson, "Gilde. Island," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformationstid* 5 (Copenhagen et al.: Rosenkilde og Bagger et al., 1960).

[42] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 23, both quotes.

[43] Farmers' guilds were important in medieval Scandinavia, however, cf. Christoph Anz, *Gilden im mittelalterlichen Skandinavien*, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 139 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998). Their functions as cooperative associations of mutual insurance were developed in Iceland primarily within the commune (*hreppr*). See further Lýður Björnsson, *Saga sveitarstjórnar á Íslandi* 1 (Reykjavík: Almenna bókafélagið, 1972), esp. 9-50; Frederik Pedersen, "A Medieval Welfare State? Welfare Provision in a Twelfth-Century Icelandic Law Code," *Northern Studies* 34 (1999).

[44] "bvandi er skyldr sa er þar býr at halda k*irki*o dag. þan*n* at iafnlengð hv*er*re v*m* siN a hv*eri*o*m* .xij. manoþo*m*. oc hiv h*an*s oc gestir. þ*ei*r er þ*ar* ero v*m* nottina aþr. oc þ*ei*r m*enn* allir er tivnd sina leggia sva þangat at byskop vill at þ*ei*r haldi þ*ar* kirkio dag [*the farmer who lives there is obligated to celebrate* kirkjudagr *at regular periods within each period of twelve months, along with his household, the guests staying the night before, and all those whom the bishop wishes to celebrate* kirkjudagr *there by payment of tithe*]."

evidence of law codes alone, and the code in question provides only a sketch of the event. The sagas do mention *kirkjudagar* occasionally but without much detail.[45] It is indeed very probable that socially ambitious church farmers turned them into, or linked them with, *veizlur* more akin to conventional feasting practices than egalitarian gatherings of fellow tithe-paying neighbors. Sturlu saga more than hints at such a framework when it notes that Jón Loftsson used the *kirkjudagr* at Oddi as a festive reception for fellow chieftain Hvamm-Sturla in order to help resolve a dispute.[46] A possible analogy is the annual feast thrown for the commemoration of Oddi's patron saint:[47]

> Þat var háttr Sæmundar, at hann hafði veizludag hvern vetr Nikulásmessu ok bauð til öllu stórmenni þar í sveit.[48]
>
> [*It was the habit of Sæmundur to host a feast each winter on St Nicholas's Mass, and to invite all the greatest men of the area.*]

The rest of this brief reference deals with how the socially select guests were seated according to rank.[49]

Taken together, the examples suggest the application of feasts and gifts to the *ad hoc* and calculated management of bonds among the politically strong and socially ambitious. There is little sense of a passive and overarching social mechanism involving high and low alike. Sturla sagnaritari caught the essentials when depicting Snorri Sturluson attending to his maze of political alliances in 1232:

> Um vetrinn eptir jól sendi Snorri orð Þórði, bróðr sínum, ok Böðvari at Stað, syni hans, at þeir skyldi koma suðr í Reykjaholt at heimboði, því at

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Grágás [Ia], 14; *Grágás* [II], 15; *Grágás* [III], 13-14, 65; *Grágás* [IV], 11. Cf. Hjalti Hugason, *Frumkristni og upphaf kirkju*, Kristni á Íslandi 1 (Reykjavík: Alþingi, 2000), 210, 326-327; Magnús Már Lárusson, "Kyrkmässa. Island," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformationstid* 9 (Copenhagen et al.: Rosenkilde og Bagger et al., 1964).

[45] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 38, 113-14, 149, 174, 247, 280, 507; *Þorláks saga byskups C*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, *Biskupa sögur* 2, Íslenzk fornrit 16 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2002), 258; *Biskupa sögur* 1, eds. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Jón Sigurðsson (Copenhagen: Hið íslenzka bókmenntafélag, 1858), 448.

[46] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 113-114.

[47] On both *kirkjudagr* and the patron saint's Mass as venues of social interaction within parishes, see Orri Vésteinsson, "Íslenska sóknarskipulagið og samband heimila á miðöldum," *Íslenska söguþingið 28.-31. maí 1997. Ráðstefnurit* 1, eds. Guðmundur J. Guðmundsson and Eiríkur K. Björnsson (Reykjavík: Sagnfræðistofnun Háskóla Íslands and Sagnfræðingafélag Íslands, 1998), 160-161.

[48] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 280.

[49] The most detailed, albeit short, reference to a *kirkjudagr* in the literature is, of course, the *veizla* held by Bishop Magnús Einarsson for his colleague at Hólar, Ketill Þorsteinsson, in Skálholt in 1145, an occasion famous for its extravagance and sheer magnificence: "Sú veizla var svá mjǫk vǫnduð at slík eru sízt dæmi til á Íslandi; var þar mikill mjǫðr blandinn ok ǫll atfǫng ǫnnur sem bezt máttu verða [*The* veizla *was hosted with such distinction that few comparable examples are to be found in Iceland. Mead was made in large quantities, and all other provisions were of the best*]." When Ketill dies at the feast while bathing, the drink proves so excellent that, coupled with words of comfort from Magnús, it made the guests "nǫkkut afhuga skjótara en elligar myndi [*somewhat quicker in getting over it than would otherwise have been the case*]." *Hungrvaka*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, *Biskupa sögur* 2, 30-31.

> hann vildi þá treysta vini sína. … En er þeir kómu suðr, þá var þar fyrir Sturla Sighvatsson, ok var þar allfögr veizla.[50]
>
> [*During the winter after Christmas, Snorri sent word to his brother Þórður and his son, Böðvar of Stað, and invited them to Reykholt for he wanted to reinforce the obligations of his friends. Sturla Sighvatsson was already there when they arrived in the south, and there was a magnificent* veizla.]

Snorri was noticeably a man of feasts and gifts. The following year, another *allfǫgr veizla* in Reykholt framed his reconciliation with his brother Sighvatur (*ásáttir*), together with a gift:

> Snorri gaf Sighvati spjót gullrekit at skilnaði ok kvað þat ófallit, at þeir skilði gjaflaust, svá sjaldan sem þeir fundust.[51]
>
> [*As they went their separate ways, Snorri gave Sighvatur a gilded spear, and said it would not do to part without gifts since they did not meet that often.*]

Aside from splendid *jóladrykkjur*, Snorri impressively hosted five weddings in Reykholt and Stafholt. He is never shown holding feasts for or exchanging gifts with *þingmenn* or common farmers in any numbers, or with other people except notables.[52] *Veizlur* and *heimboð* in Sturlunga generally unfold along similar lines.[53]

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[50] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 347.

[51] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 362.

[52] For Snorri's *jóladrykkir* and weddings, see *Sturlunga saga* 1, 271 (*brúðlaup*; Hallbera and Árni óreiða in Reykholt 1218), 302 and 304 (*brúðlaup*, *boð*, *veizla*; Ingibjörg and Gissur Þorvaldsson in Reykholt 1224, then *brúðlaup*, *boð*, *veizla*; Þórdís and Þorvaldur Vatnsfirðingur in Stafholt 1224), 315 (*jóladrykkir*), 318-319 (*brúðlaup*; Hallbera and Kolbeinn ungi in Reykholt in the winter of 1228-1229), 447 (*brúðlaup*, *boð*; Þuríður Ormsdóttir and Tumi Sighvatsson in Reykholt 1241). He is hosted (*heimboð*) by his brother Þórður at Hvammur in the summer of 1225, when plotting on Snorrungagoðorð, cf. 309, and feasts with him (*veizla*) for reconciliation at Staðarhraun in the summer of 1235, cf. 386-387. Needless to say, he attended his own wedding at Hvammur in 1199, cf. 142. Apart from taking over chieftaincies in the form of gifts (half of Lundarmannagoðorð in 1202, cf. 240, and parts of Eyvellingagoðorð very early in his career as well, cf. 243), Snorri is only reported accepting gifts from foreign notables (sends a poem to Hákon galinn and receives gift in return, cf. 269; composes Andvaka for his widow, Frú Kristín, and accepts "margar gjafir sæmiligar [*many honorable gifts*]," including "merki þat er átt hafði Eiríkr Svíakonungr Knútsson. Þat hafði hann er hann felldi Sörkvi konung á Gestilreini [*the banner of Eiríkur Knútsson, king of the Swedes, which he had when killing King Sörkvir on Gestilrein*]," cf. 271-272; stays with Earl Skúli and composes two poems for him, receives a ship and fifteen great gifts in return, cf. 278-279, and *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar udgivet efter håndskrifterne*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel – Nordisk Forlag, 1931, 251). Aside from foreign notables, Sighvatur is Snorri's only recorded human recipient, cf. *Reykjaholtsmáldagi*, ed. Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson (Reykholt: Reykholtskirkja, Snorrastofa, 2000), 10-13.

[53] The following should be noted specifically, excluding Christmas feasts, weddings, *kirkjudagar*, and guilds: *Sturlunga saga* 1, 42-44 (*virðingarheimboð* proposed and rejected), 50 (Þorgils Oddason hosts and accepts *heimboð* in the process of bringing his dispute with Hafliði Másson to an end), 76-77 (Hvamm-Sturla attends *heimboð* in Gufudalur; exact context unclear, possibly pretense), 114 (Jón Loftsson and Páll Sölvason at the

II Generating Status through Action

It was seen as an act of saintly humility when Þorlákur helgi made gifts in a socially non-restrictive fashion. Although the bishop admittedly reserved the more precious items for his elite friends, he nonetheless showed remarkable social humility in giving the lesser ones (*féminnstr búnaðr*) to the poor (*fátækir*); "hann lét þá aldregi hjá sitja þá er hann gaf gjafir sínum vinum [*he never forgot them when giving gifts to his friends*]," his hagiographer admiringly notes.[54] The juxtaposition is not merely between the rich and the poor, however, but more significantly between the powerful and the powerless, *potentes et pauperes*. The profound socioeconomic transformations of the age intensified the links between saints and the powerless in western Europe, fuelling the cults of such saintly protectors of the weak as St Nicolas of Myra.[55] Þorlákur's cult was greatly influenced by

close of Deildartungumál), 147 (Kolbeinn Tumason hosted at Svínafell in 1201 (*heimboð*), where Guðmundur góði is present, invited or not; many of his visits and wanderings before becoming a bishop are called *heimboð* or *kynnisvist*, cf., e.g., 131, 133, 146), 184 (Kolbeinn Tumason hosted (*heimboð*) by Grímur Snorrason at Hof on Höfðaströnd, friend of -Guðmundur dýri and of the family of Reynistaður; exact context unclear), 213 (mutual *heimboð* and gifts for *vinátta* between Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson and Þorvaldur Vatnsfirðingur, cf. *Hrafns saga Sveinbjarnarsonar*, ed. Guðrún P. Helgadóttir (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 23-24 (*vinfengi* and *vinfengi it bezta*)), 216 (Hrafn at *kynnisleitan* in Selárdalur; context unclear (*heimboð* in Hrafns saga, cf. 29)), 222 (reconciliation between Hrafn and Þorvaldur by *dagverðr* (*matborð* and *dǫgurðr* in Hrafns saga, cf. 37)), 274 (Ívar at Múli hosts Guðmundur góði to a *veizla*), 280 (Sæmundur's *veizludagr*), 309 (Þórður and Snorri at Hvammur, *heimboð*), 362-363 (Bishop Magnús Gissurarson hosted to *veizla* in Vatnsfjörður by Órækja; exact context unclear), 364-365 (Órækja hosts Oddur Álason at Eyri and Halldór Högnason, magnates in Vestfirðir, to *boð*; exchange of gifts, *allmiklir kærleikar*, *mestu vinir*), 386-387 (Snorri and Þórður reconcile at *veizla*; *frændsemi*, *vinátta*), 388-399 (Sighvatur holds a *veizla* for Órækja for purposes of reconciliation), 410 (Sturla Sighvatsson hosts Björn Sæmundarson to *heimboð*, steps into Björn's political affairs as a superior, gives him gifts, *kærleikar*), 470-471 (Gissur Þorvaldsson hosts a *veizla* as framework of reconciliation/judgment), 480 (Eyjólfur ofsi befriends Heinrekur Kársson by hosting a *veizla* for him; magnates present; honorable gifts; *allkært*, *blíða*), 525 (Gissur and Abbot Eyjólfur; *veizla* as mark of reception); 2, 69-70 (*veizla* and great gifts from Þórður kakali to his retinue when ascending to Eyjafjörður), 81 (Gissur Þorvaldsson ascends to Skagafjörður at the death of his ally Brandur Kolbeinsson; hosted with few men to *heimboð* by his widow; receives good gifts; *vinátta*), 90 (*veizla* marking formal switch of alliance), 119 (Þórður kakali's handful of major friends and representatives reinforce their alliance and loyalty by means of a *veizla mikil*), 142 (Þorgils skarði bonds with magnate Broddi Þorleifsson at Hof), 170-173 (Þorgils skarði's enforced *veizla* and reconciliation with Egill Sölmundarson), 206-207 (Þorgils skarði and Heinrekur Kársson are reconciled and become *vinir* through *veizla* and gifts), 207 (Þorgils skarði and *heraðsbændr inir beztu* consolidate their newly-founded leadership and alliance through mutual *veizlur,* receptions, gifts; Sturla Þórðarson hosts Þorgils to a *veizla*; hospitality as mark of power), 294 (Þorgils invited to a *veizla* and given gifts by Bishop Sigvarður in return for political aid). Cf. also previous note.

[54] *Þorláks saga byskups in elzta*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, *Biskupa sögur* 2, 80.

[55] On saints, *potentes*, and *pauperes* in western high medieval Europe, see, e.g., Robert Ian Moore, *The First European Revolution, c. 970-1215*, The Making of Europe (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), esp. 19-64.

these broader ideological currents within western Christendom,[56] and his demonstrative practice of bonding with social inferiors must be read against this background.

In societies such as those of medieval Europe, where power and status were fundamentally expressed and articulated through action and visual display, superiors refrained from gesturing equality with their inferiors. Therein lies the unorthodoxy of the saint's behavior. In virtually all pre-industrial societies one finds what can loosely and generally be called a "ruling group" or "ruling class" – *Oberschicht, ceti dirigenti*, *classe dirigeant* –, identifiable by its political preeminence, relative economic advantages, and social distinction. Referring to this group collectively as "an aristocracy" or "aristocracies" is not meant to minimize its immense chronological, regional, and cultural variations, but only to draw attention to some of the more basic tendencies of pre-modern *potentes*, *nobiles*, *principes*, *primores*, or, simply, "leading men." Leading men tended to engage in and even thrive on fierce competition, but their preeminence, or claims for it, rested fundamentally on the cultivation of social markers – in lifestyle, mentality, and conduct. Their political and social activities largely revolved around constant demonstration of their own importance, superiority, and worthiness. In other words, they spent most of their time, money, and effort in showing that they were, and ought to be, above others.[57]

Medieval Iceland fostered a political culture of leading men, *høfðingjar*.[58] As the sagas emphatically demonstrate, their struggles and claims for power and preeminence were heavily contingent on their ability to prove themselves worthy through action and outlook.[59] Accumulating power and maintaining it rested on a host of disparate factors, but among the most important was achieving social distinction through conduct and material display. Visual and behavioral expressions of power were no mere show, but parts of its very essence, its proof, and a source of its reinvigoration. Status had to be evidenced to exist, and stressing it through magnificence and distinction in housing, clothing, equipment, weaponry, horses, food, and drink was indispensible to any serious and

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[56] St Nicolas's reputation spread rapidly, and his *vita* had already been translated into Norse in the twelfth century. Hungurvaka observes that the most venerable of bishops, Gissur Ísleifsson, was in office when his relics were stolen and translated to Bari (Bár) in 1087, and that Gissur Hallsson visited the saint there in 1152. *Hungrvaka*, 22, 35. On the cult and context of St Nicolas in the north, see Karl Meisen, *Nikolauskult und Nikolausbrauch im Abendlande. Eine kulturgeographisch-volkskundliche Untersuchung*, Forschungen zur Volkskunde 9:12, Quellen und Abhandlungen zur mittelrheinischen Kirchengeschichte 41 (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1931); Sigfús Blöndal, "St. Nikulás og dýrkun hans, sérstaklega á Íslandi," *Skírnir* 123 (1949); Sverrir Tómasson, "Íslenskar Nikulás sögur," *Helgastaðabók. Nikulás saga. Perg. 4to Nr. 16 Konungsbókhlöðu í Stokkhólmi*, Manuscripta Islandica medii aevi 2 (Reykjavík: Lögberg bókaforlag, 1982); Tue Gad, "Nicolaus af Myra," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformationstid* 12 (Copenhagen et al.: Rosenkilde og Bagger et al., 1967).

[57] An historiographical overview on the "ruling groups" of medieval Europe, rich in citations, is provided in Timothy Reuter, "The Medieval Nobility in Twentieth-Century Historiography," *Companion to Historiography*, ed. Michael Bentley (London: Routledge, 1997).

[58] Although it never produced social stratification on levels comparable to contemporary Europe and its aristocracies, as carefully noted by Timothy Reuter (following Chris Wickham) in his, "The Medieval Nobility in Twentieth-Century Historiography," 178.

[59] Cf., e.g., Helgi Þorláksson, "Fé og virðing," *Sæmdarmenn. Um heiður á þjóðveldisöld* (Reykjavík: Hugvísindastofnun Háskóla Íslands, 2001); Viðar Pálsson, "'Var engi höfðingi slíkr sem Snorri.' Auður og virðing í valdabaráttu Snorra Sturlusonar," *Saga* 41:1 (2003).

competent *hǫfðingi*.[60] Feasting and gift giving stood at the heart of the social and material culture of power. Their social restrictions served to circumscribe and stratify, generating elite consciousness, while simultaneously and complimentarily exhibiting status through material splendor and sophistication.

The cultivation of status and elite relations through magnificent feasting and gift giving is nicely captured in Hungurvaka and Páls saga, promoting the social distinction of the bishops. Following his consecration, Páll gives Archbishops Absalon and Eiríkur golden rings, "ok ǫllum ǫðrum nǫkkurar gersemar, þeim er studdu embætti hans vígslu ok tignar [*and some precious items to all those others who by their support lent his office consecration and dignity*]."[61] He then returns home, having accumulated honors from King Sverrir:

> kom hann í Eyjafjǫrð, ok veitti hann þá þegar dýrliga veizlu Brandi byskupi ok ǫðrum sínum vinum, þeim er þar váru. Þá var kostr vín at drekka ok ǫll ǫnnr þau atfǫng sem bezt máttu verða. Sýndisk þat þá þegar í fyrstu sem opt urðu síðan raunir at, at hann unði þá ávallt bezt er hann gladdi vini sína sem flesta ok vandamenn í veizlum virðiligum með ástúð ok skǫrungskap.[62]
>
> [*he arrived in Eyjafjörður, and immediately hosted Bishop Brandur, and those others of his friends who were there, to a glorious* veizla. *There was wine to drink and all provision was of the best. It showed from the very start, as was repeatedly witnessed later, that he was in his true element when bringing joy to as many of his friends and kinsmen as possible by means of prestigious* veizlur, *offered with affection and generosity.*]

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[60] On the material display of thirteenth-century chieftains, with examples, see Helgi Þorláksson, "Snorri Sturluson og Oddaverjar," *Snorri. Átta alda minning*, eds. Gunnar Karlsson and Helgi Þorláksson (Reykjavík: Sögufélag, 1979). For comparison with early medieval aristocratic culture and representation of status, see primarily Heinrich Fichtenau, *Lebensordnungen des 10. Jahrhunderts. Studien über Denkart und Existenz im einstigen Karolingerreich* 1-2, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 30 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1984), transl. as *Living in the Tenth Century. Mentalities and Social Orders*, transl. Patrick J. Geary (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), esp. 50-67. Fichtenau was primarily interested in the ways in which material culture of power in the tenth century was framed by behavioral representations of rank, and expressed through gestures of all sorts. For further and extensive references to both primary and secondary literature on the subject, consult Fichtenau's original German edition. On social distinctions and markers in medieval Europe, in addition to the literature cited in Timothy Reuter, "The Medieval Nobility in Twentieth-Century Historiography," see, e.g., Timothy Reuter, "Nobles and others: the social and cultural expression of power relations in the Middle Ages," *Nobles and Nobility in Medieval Europe. Concepts, Origins, Transformations*, ed. Anne Duggan (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), rpt. in Timothy Reuter, *Medieval Polities and Modern Mentalities*, ed. Janet L. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), esp. 113 (inter-competition), 116-117 (food), 118 (clothes), 118-119 (space and buildings), *passim*. On food and cuisine as cultural practices and social markers, from antiquity to modern times and including its medieval and aristocratic uses, see Massimo Montanari, *L'alimentazione contadina nell'alto Medioevo* (Naples: Liguori, 1979), transl. as *The Culture of Food*, The Making of Europe (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1994).

[61] *Páls saga byskups*, ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, *Biskupa sögur* 2, 303.

[62] *Páls saga byskups*, 303-304.

Consuming wine is seen as particularly aristocratic. Nobles and courtiers further south preferred wine with their "noble" foods when feasting. They drank mead as well, although not considering it as "noble" as wine, whereas drinking beer was thought to be rustic and uncourtly.[63] Snorri lists it appropriately in Háttatal 25, in ascending order: *ǫl*, *bjórr*, *mjǫðr*, *vín*.[64]

Wine was rare if not unknown in early Scandinavia, and only became common in the fourteenth century.[65] The kings' sagas do not presume wine drinking at court, and Þórður kakali is the only chieftain known to have imported wine to Iceland in the thirteenth century.[66] It is mentioned again, however, when Bishop Jón Árnason arrived from Greenland and was treated to a splendid feast by his colleague at Skálholt:

> Páll byskup tók við honum með inni mestu sæmð ok veitti honum virðuliga veizlu meðan hann var, en leysti hann á braut með stórmennsku mikilli, bæði í fégjǫfum ok í annarri virðing. Jón byskup gaf mǫnnum ráð til hversu vín skal gera af krækiberjum, eptir því sem Sverrir konungr hafði honum fyrir sagt. … En Jón byskup fór til Nóregs ok síðan til Róms ok ræddi hvervetna, þar sem hann kom, rausn ok tign Páls byskups.[67]
>
> [*Bishop Páll received him with greatest honor and held a prestigious* veizla *for him during his stay. He most generously sent him away with precious gifts and other honors. Bishop Jón advised on how to make wine from crowberries, as King Sverrir had taught him. … But Bishop Jón went to Norway and then to Rome, and everywhere he went he spoke of Bishop Páll's generosity and dignity.*]

Aside from highlighting elite connections, the passage underscores how distinctive hospitality and honorable gifts serve to underpin reputation and status.

Feasting with distinction meant doing it lavishly, sophisticatedly, honorably, and impressively. The hall was to be splendid, its ornaments and decorations tasteful and fashionable, the equipment should be the finest available and provisions the best. Sturla sagnaritari carefully describes the magnificence and sophistication of the housing,

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[63] On "noble" foods and drink, see Joachim Bumke, *Höfische Kultur. Literatur und Gesellschaft im hohen Mittelalter* 1-2 (Munich: Deutschen Taschenbuch Verlag, 1986), transl. as *Courtly Culture. Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages*, transl. Thomas Dunlap (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 178-182.

[64] *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, 227.

[65] See Björn Þorsteinsson, "Vinhandel. Island," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformationstid* 20 (Copenhagen et al.: Rosenkilde og Bagger et al., 1976); cf. Grethe Authén Blom, "Vinhandel. Norge," Poul Enemark, "Vinhandel. Danmark," and Hugo Yrwing, "Vinhandel. Sverige," in the same work.

[66] *Sturlunga saga* 2, 84 (*vín mikit*). According to Árna saga, the bishop received a barrel of wine in 1277 and two more in 1279, though these were for communion. *Árna saga biskups*, 65, 76.

[67] *Páls saga byskups*, 311.

equipment, food, drink, and etiquette at the wedding at Flugumýri in 1253, before concluding:

> Var þar in bezta veizla, er verit hefir á Íslandi í þann tíma. Hefir þat lengi kynríkt verit með Haukdælum ok Oddaverjum, at þeir hafa inar beztu veizlur haldit.[68]
>
> [*It was the best* veizla *of its day in Iceland. Holding the best* veizlur *has long remained a characteristic of the Oddaverjar and Haukdœlir.*]

In contemporary saga terminology, successful *veizlur* were *sœmiligar*, *virðuligar*, *fagrar*, *allfagrar*, *dýrligar*, *miklar*, and *góðar*; they *fara allvel fram*, "proceed well," and guests are *tekit forkunnar vel*, "received superbly."[69] There is every reason to assume, therefore, that hosting distinctively and successfully required social skills, and was in fact meant to exhibit them.

The aristocratic framework of the most brilliant feasts in Sturlunga is typically presented in laconic saga style rather than through prolonged descriptions, thereby increasing the importance of such descriptive tags as there are. Describing Snorri's feasts in 1232 and 1233 as *allfagrar*, "most beautiful/fair/handsome/lavish," sufficiently emphasizes the aristocratic air surrounding them.[70] Snorri probably drew on all his resources for achieving this effect, as he must have done when hosting twice in late summer and autumn of 1224. First, he hosted the wedding of his daughter Ingibjörg to Gissur Þorvaldsson in Reykholt, with Bishop Magnús in attendance:

> At brúðlaupinu var Þórðr Sturluson ok it bezta mannval ór Borgarfirði ok sumt með Þorvaldi. Var þar in virðuligsta veizla ok með inum beztum föngum, er til var á Íslandi.[71]
>
> [*The wedding was attended by Þórður Sturluson and the choicest of men from Borgarfjörður, and some came with Þorvaldur as well. It was a most honorable* veizla *and with the best provisions in the whole of Iceland.*]

He then hosted the wedding of his daughter Þórdís to Þorvaldur Vatnsfirðingur in Stafholt, apparently not long thereafter: "var sú veizla in veglista [*the* veizla *was most generous*]."[72] Both were undoubtedly formidable displays of social distinction. As recent

[68] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 483.
[69] See, e.g., *Sturlunga saga* 1, 274, 300, 304, 347, 362, 388, 480, 483, 525, 527; 2, 40, 70, 119, 142, 172, 206-207, 216-217, *passim*; *Hungrvaka*, 30-31, 35, 37-38; *Páls saga*, 303-304, 308, 311.
[70] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 347, 362.
[71] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 304.
[72] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 304.

archaeological investigations reveal, the material framework and aristocratic splendor of Snorri's seat of power in Reykholt were indeed nothing short of spectacular.[73]

Snorri's Christmas drinking *eptir norrænum sið* reflect his aristocratic tastes and were probably meant to lend courtly charm. Similarly, gifts were to be lavish and in accordance with the receiver's status. If possible, they highlighted the distinguished social relations of the giver himself, perhaps pointing to previous gift exchange with a king or another notable. The sagas dedicate themselves to tracing and admiring the cultural, symbolic, and social capital embedded in gifts and precious objects acquired at foreign courts, for which there appears to have been a ready market among the socially and politically ambitious in Iceland.[74] Items with a venerable history behind them radiated charisma and worth, and circulated as gifts from one honorable hand to the next.[75] Although often expensive as objects, their worth was primarily symbolic.

Logically, the social networking of sharing venerable foreign objects with friends might take place upon arrival from abroad, an occasion that would in any case prompt the reinstatement of friendship. In Laxdæla saga, Þorkell Eyjólfsson makes an effort to be a generous and distinctive host when arriving from Norway with precious cargo, establishing friendship with gifts and putting his own prestige on display: "Þorkell miðlaði marga góða gripi þann vetr vinum sínum, er hann hafði út haft [*That winter, Þorkell distributed among his friends many good objects which he had brought from abroad*]."[76]

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[73] This is excellently described in Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir, "Reykholt, a centre of power: The archaeological evidence" and Guðrún Harðardóttir, "The physical setting of Reykholt according to Sturlunga saga," both in *Reykholt som makt- og lærdomssenter i den islandske og nordiske kontekst*, ed. Else Mundal, Snorrastofa, Rit 3, (Reykholt: Snorrastofa, 2006). On the symbolic or political meaning of fortresses in Iceland, see Guðrún Harðardóttir and Þór Hjaltalín, "Varnir heimilis í miðstjórnarlausu samfélagi. Hlutverk virkja og skipulags bæjarhúsa í ljósi Sturlungasögu," *Íslenska söguþingið 28.-31.maí 1997. Ráðstefnurit* 1. On the symbolic as opposed to martial significance of castles, forts, and fortified seats in high medieval Europe, see, e.g., Constance Brittain Bouchard, *"Strong of Body, Brave and Noble." Chivalry and Society in Medieval France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 15-21; Joachim Bumke, *Höfische Kultur*, 103-119; Richard Eales, "Royal Power and Castles in Norman England," *Ideals and Practice of Medieval Knighthood* 3. *Papers from the Fourth Strawberry Hill Conference*, eds. Christopher Harper-Bill and Ruth Harvey (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1990).

[74] On gifts from kings and foreign notables in the sagas of Icelanders, their impressiveness, and their social marking, see, e.g., *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*, 117, 122, 132-134; *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, 95-97 (rejected), 144-145, 147, 194-195; *Eyrbyggja saga*, 61-63 (unwisely chosen), 137-143; *Finnboga saga*, 287, 339; *Fóstbrœðra saga*, ed. Guðni Jónsson, *Vestfirðinga sǫgur*, 159, 220, 257-258, 262, 264, 266-267, 275-276; *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, 42, 50-52; *Víga-Glúms saga*, 5, 17-19, 47-49, 86; *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, 71-76, 81, 83, 89-91; *Hallfreðar saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 8, 144, 151, 155-162, 168, 177, 191, 198; *Laxdœla saga*, 25-26, 59-66, 72, 78-80, 104, 118, 131-135, 138-144, 214, 216-217, 224-225, 239-240, 243; *Ljósvetninga saga*, ed. Björn Sigfússon, Íslenzk fornrit 10, 6-7, 104; *Brennu-Njáls saga*, 20, 40, 77, 82-83, 85, 173-174, 200, 207-208, 223, 225; *Vatnsdœla saga*, 26-27, 43-45, 115. Unsurprisingly the kings' sagas represent the most productive source of evidence. Landnáma describes the entry of Hjaltasynir at an assembly thus: "váru þeir svá vel búnir, at menn hugðu, at Æsir væri þar komnir [*they were so well equipped that people though the gods had arrived*]." *Landnámabók*, 238. The Æsir were certainly impressive when it came to hosting with distinction, cf. *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, 121.

[75] In the sagas of Icelanders, e.g., *Finnboga saga*, 339; *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, 90-91; *Laxdœla saga*, 66, 72, 138, 217; *Brennu-Njáls saga*, 40, 173-174.

[76] *Laxdœla saga*, 217.

Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson likewise turns immediately to gift exchange when returning home with honors:

> Allir vinir Hrafns urðu honum fegnir, er hann kom heim, en hann valði sínum ástvinum, þeim er hann fundu, góðar gjafir. … Ok er Hrafn hafði eigi lengi heima verit, þá fór hann í Vatnsfjǫrð at heimboði Þorvalds ok þá af honum stóðhross góð. Þeir mæltu þá enn af nýju til vinfengis með sér. Nǫkkuru síðar fór Þorvaldr á Eyri at heimboði Hrafns ok þá af honum góðar gjafir, ok var þá vinfengi þeira it bezta.[77]
>
> [*Hrafn was cheerfully greeted by all his friends when he arrived home, and he chose good gifts for the beloved friends who met him*. … *Hrafn had not stayed home for long when he attended* heimboð *in Vatnsfjörður hosted by Þorvaldur, and accepted good studhorses from him. They declared their friendship yet again. A while later, Þorvaldur attended* heimboð *at Eyri hosted by Hrafn, and accepted good gifts from him; their friendship was now most excellent.*]

It may be that Hrafn is re-circulating foreign objects, although the saga does not make this clear.[78]

Re-circulating gifts with a respected history behind them was both a source of cultural and symbolic capital and a means of transmission. In Sturlunga, Gissur is shown re-circulating honorable gifts at Flugumýri and Þorgils Oddason's gifts to Hafliði are noted to have venerable ownership histories.[79] Likewise, the sword Steypir, presented as a gift when Órækja hosted magnates Oddur Álason and Halldór Högnason to a feast in 1233 and formed friendships with them, apparently took its name from King Sverrir's nephew Pétur steypir, who must have been one of its previous owners.[80] Fully appreciating and maintaining the symbolic worth of objects might otherwise require presenting their extended "genealogies," as in Egils saga:

> En at skilnaði þeira Arinbjarnar ok Egils, þá gaf Egill Arinbirni gullhringa þá tvá, er Aðalsteinn konungr gaf honum, ok stóð mǫrk hvárr, en Arinbjǫrn gaf Agli sverð þat, er Dragvandill hét. Þat hafði gefit Arinbirni Þórólfr Skalla-Grímsson, en áðr hafði Skalla-Grímr þegit af Þórólfi, bróðr

[77] *Hrafns saga Sveinbjarnarsonar*, 23-24. In Sturlunga saga, Snorri, Sturla Sighvatsson, Gissur Þorvaldsson, and Þorgils skarði all accept honorable gifts from kings, but whether they re-circulated them as gift among their friends at home it remains unclear. *Sturlunga saga* 1, 364 (Sturla accepts *sæmiligar gjafir* from King Valdimar in Denmark), 524 (Gissur accepts *stórgjafir* from King Hákon gamli); 2, 113 (Þorgils skarði accepts gifts from King Hákon gamli).

[78] On honor from foreign ventures, see also Sverrir Jakobsson, *Við og veröldin. Heimsmynd Íslendinga 1100-1400* (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 2005), 166-180, esp. 171ff for examples of the types of honor that could be acquired abroad, including references to clothes and weaponry; cf. also Sverrir Jakobsson, "Upphefð að utan," *Sæmdarmenn*.

[79] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 50, 483.

[80] *Sturlunga saga* 1, 364-365.

> sínum, en Þórólfi gaf sverðit Grímr loðinskinni, sonr Ketils hængs; þat sverð hafði átt Ketill hængr ok haft í hómgǫngum, ok var þat allra sverða bitrast.[81]
>
> [*When Arinbjörn and Egill parted, then Egill gave Arinbjörn two golden rings which King Aðalsteinn had given him, each weighing a mark; but Arinbjörn gave Egill the sword called Dragvandill. It had previously been given to Arinbjörn by Þórólfur Skalla-Grímsson, but Skalla-Grímur had received it from his own brother Þórólfur, while the sword had been given to him by Grímur loðinskinni, the son of Ketill hængur; Ketill hængur had owned the sword and carried it into single combats; it was the sharpest of swords*].

Gifts were thus no mere objects but potential biographies of relations.

However, saga presentations of magnificence, sophistication, and distinction are not to be read uncritically as raw descriptions of past reality. Not every feast and gift can be measured against idealistic aspirations and literary representations. The level of lifestyle, grandeur, and distinction in housing, clothing, equipment, food, and drink must have varied considerably from one leading man to the next, whether in daily routine or when hosting guests.[82] Many had travelled widely and attended courtly feasts, but how capable and successful they were, collectively and individually, in translating foreign models and splendor into Icelandic reality must remain speculative. Snorri, the Oddaverjar, the Haukdælir, the bishops, and some of the greatest chieftains undoubtedly achieved genuine magnificence at their finest moments, but otherwise standards must have been somewhat uneven.

"AvR maðr [*A generous man*]," Snorri observes in Skáldskaparmál, "heitir… havfþingi; her imót er sva kallat:… feniþingr, giavflati [*is called* hǫfðingi. *The opposite is called thus:… wealth-niding, gift-lazy*]."[83] Largesse was greatly admired but not without limits. Even the bishops, despite their social distinction and elite style, had to balance their grandeur and

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[81] *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, 194-195.

[82] Ambitious chieftains will have striven to maintain reasonably high standards at all times, though, but especially in the autumn when provisions were most abundant or over the Christmas season when particular luxuries might be available. Prominent households might thus achieve a high festive status for short periods while being run a little less extravagantly at other times. When Már Þormóðsson visited his kinsman Hafliði Másson "á bak jólum [*when Christmas was over*]," there was still "mannfjölði mikill ok gleði góð [*many men and good merriment*]," cf. *Sturlunga saga* 1, 28. Christmas feasts, so termed, are relatively few in Sturlunga, though, cf. *Sturlunga saga* 1, 315 (Snorri's *jóladrykkir* in Reykholt in 1226), 458-459 (Gissur's *jólaboð* in Bræðratunga in 1242, under unusual circumstances: his men sleep fully dressed, keeping weapons within reach; ends abruptly); 2, 40 (Þórður kakali's *veizla* at Mýrar in 1243), 138-142 (Heinrekur's festivities at Hólar in 1252 and 1253), 216-217 (Þorgils skarði's *jólaboð* at Miklibær in 1257). Wedding feasts must have varied as much in quality as they were many, cf. *Sturlunga saga* 1, 23-27, 66, 76, 101, 125, 142, 166, 169, 178, 223 (cf. *Hrafns saga Sveinbjarnarsonar*, 37-38), 232-235, 237, 242, 271, 299-300, 302-304, 318-319, 312, 360, 389, 447, 474 (the only double wedding in Sturlunga), 477, 481-484, 505, 527; 2, 9, 11, 70, 84, 160, 215.

[83] *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, 187. Correspondingly, Snorri uses *gjǫflund* for "largesse" in Háttatal 90, cf. 250.

generosity with fiscal prudence and common sense, as the bishops' sagas stress at repeatedly. Páls saga thus deplores Guðmundur góði's lack of fiscal sensibility:

> fundusk þeir Pál byskup ok gerðu mikla sæmð sín í milli með veizlum ok fégjǫfum. Síðan fór Guðmundr byskup til Hóla ok sat þar á stóli með óhægendum inum mestum fyrir margs sakir. Auðræði urðu brátt eigi mikil, en afvinnur þóttu varla með allmikilli stillingu…[84]
>
> [*They met, Páll Bishop and himself, and honored each other greatly by* veizlur *and wealthy gifts. Guðmundur then proceeded to Hólar and for a variety of reasons occupied his seat with great difficulties. Resources were soon diminished, and expenses were very little restricted…*]

The saga much admires Páll's aristocratic habits and splendid feasting, such as his hosting of *dýrlig veizla* for the elite's crème de la crème on the occasion of Þorlákur helgi's translation in 1198, yet his prudence (*forsjá*) is sincerely and favorably contrasted with Guðmundur's reckless spending.[85]

The issue is even more pronounced in the otherwise laudatory Hungurvaka, where the author cannot withhold his reservations in respect of Klængur Þorsteinsson's slack fiscal management. The bishop was said to be, in an important categorical distinction, "stórlyndr ok stórgjǫfull við vini sína, en ǫrr ok ǫlmusugóðr við fátæka menn [*magnanimous and munificent to his friends, and generous and charitable in almsgiving to the poor*]."[86] Then we are told, disapprovingly:

> [Church construction proved so costly,] at svá þótti skynsǫmum mǫnnum sem ǫll lausafé þyrfti til at leggja, þau er til staðarins lágu í tíundum ok ǫðrum tillǫgum. Búit þurfti í annan stað svá mikilla tillaga at hverjum misserum fyrir sakir fólksfjǫlða ok gestrisni ok annarrar afvinnu, <at> svá þótti sem þar myndi þurfa til alla lausa aura þá er staðrinn átti. Í þriðju grein hafði hann svá veizlur fjǫlmennar ok stórar fégjafir við vini sína, er bæði váru margir ok gǫfgir, at þar þurfti náliga ógrynni fjár til at leggja.
>
> [*(Church construction proved so costly,) that reasonable men thought that all assets collected by the see in tithe payments and other income had to be invested in it. Secondly, the see accumulated such costs each season because of crowds, hospitality, and other burdens, that all assets currently in its possession seemed to be needed to cover such expenditure. Thirdly, he hosted such large* veizlur *and gave his friends such large and wealthy gifts, that its expenses were felt to be almost without limit.*]

[84] *Páls saga byskups*, 313.
[85] *Páls saga byskups*, 308, 313.
[86] *Hungrvaka*, 35.

As in Páls saga, elite networking by feasting and gift giving is seen as a constituent element in the bishop's preeminence and an essential element of his status:

> Þeir váru ok hans vinir traustastir er mest váru virðir á Íslandi, Jón Loptsson ok Gizurr Hallsson. Klængr byskup átti ok gjafavíxl við ina stærstu hǫfðingja í ǫðrum lǫndum, þeim er í nánd váru, ok af slíkum hlutum varð hann vinsæll bæði útan lands ok innan.[87]
>
> [*Those who were honored the most in Iceland, Jón Loftsson and Gissur Hallsson, were likewise among his trusted friends. Bishop Klængur also exchanged gifts with the greatest leaders in other nearby countries, and from such things he became admired both abroad and home.*]

Prudence and common sense should never be overcome by unrestrained largesse, however, as the author bleakly notes when lamenting the excessiveness of Klængur's hospitality and gift giving at the cathedral's consecration in 1158: "var þat enn gǫrt meirr af stórmennsku en fullri forsjá [*as before, this was more magnanimous than fully prudent*]."[88]

Loyalty and leadership could never take the form of limitless awards, and neither before nor since were chieftains immune to budgetary constraints. Even the king's fiscal existence was ultimately framed by giving *and taking*, as the kings' sagas duly recognize, and he therefore had to make choices just like other people. Had leaders persistently and spontaneously dispensed gifts while magnanimously and endlessly accommodating their followers, they would have bankrupted themselves in record time. Hosting magnanimously and impressively depended to a considerable extent on choosing the right moments, inviting the right people, and maximizing one's fiscal, cultural and social resources. It was never just a matter of money; social competence and tactics were an important part of the equation.

At the bottom of it all, as we have argued throughout, the implications of social action rested less on objective form than negotiated meaning. Generosity was therefore less an objective measure of spending than its negotiated result. When Þorgils skarði hosted the foremost farmers at a feast *með inni mestu rausn*, dispensing fine gifts and accruing *mikil virðing*, he did so with empty pockets, *tvær hendr tómar*. As the saga makes explicit, he had just been funded by the same farmers who were now his enthusiastic recipients. The essence of the logic is most brilliantly – and not necessarily cynically – caught in Eiríks saga rauða, where the left hand graciously accepts a gift only for the right one to return it with unsurpassed generosity:

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[87] *Hungrvaka*, 37. On the bishops' "diplomatic" relations with foreign notables through gift exchange, see also 7 (Ísleifur giving Emperor Henry III a polar bear) and 29 (Magnús and King Haraldur gilli: "gaf gjafir Haraldi konungi, ok tókst þá vinfengi þeira mikit [*gave King Haraldur gifts, by which their friendship became great*]." Returning to the king after his consecration, Magnús is received with *sæmð* and *virðing*, and given many *virðuligar gjafir*.)

[88] *Hungrvaka*, 37-38 (*veizla mikil*, *dagverðr*, *veizla allvirðulig*), quoted to 38. Gifts are only for the social elite, *virðingarmenn*.

"hitt er heldr, at mér þykki uggligt, þá er þér komit annars staðar, at þat flytisk, at þér hafið engi jól verri haft en þessi, er nú koma, ok Eiríkr inn rauði veitti yðr í Brattahlíð á Grænlandi." "Þat mun eigi svá fara, bóndi," segir Karlsefni. "Vér hǫfum á skipi váru bæði malt ok korn, ok hafið þar af slíkt, er þér vilið, ok gerið veizlu svá stórmannliga, sem yðr líkar fyrir því." Þetta þiggr Eiríkr, ok var þá búit til jólaveizlu, ok var hon in sæmiligsta, svá at menn þóttusk trautt þvílíka rausn sét hafa í fátæku landi.[89]

["*it is rather that I am worried that when you go elsewhere the word will go around that you never had a worse Christmas than the upcoming one, at which Eiríkur rauði was your host in Brattahlíð in Greenland." "That will not happen, farmer," said Karlsefni. "On our ship we have both malt and grain; take from it as you please, and make from it as generous a* veizla *as you like." Eiríkur accepted, and a Christmas feast was prepared; it was done most honorably, so that people had barely witnessed such generosity in a poor land*.]

[89] *Eiríks saga rauða*, 220.

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