

Ideology and Structure in Heimskringla.

HEIMSKRINGLA
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There was a time when kings' sagas were considered "objective" in their treatment of Norse history, but that time now appears very distant. The modern historian tends to see a work like Heimskringla as an assemblage of untrustworthy anecdotes based on dubious sources and arranged to suit the saga-writer's 13th century perception of the world. The literary critic, on the other hand, tends to see the same work as an autonomous literary structure, shaped by the imagination of an artist. However different their approaches may be, both the historian and the critic have thus drawn attention away from the historical subject matter, the raw material, of Heimskringla to the manner in which this raw material was transformed and patterned.

So far, however, little has been done to analyze the political ideology implied in the structure of the kings' sagas and thus to relate literary analysis to the study of social and intellectual history. Ideology, if at all studied, has been sought in prologues, political speeches and other rhetorical departures from strict storytelling - not in the storytelling itself, i.e. in the narrative unfolding of plot and action. The structural studies of sagas carried out during later years have, on the other hand, not been very much concerned with the social context and political implication of the saga text, and they have centered almost exclusively on the family sagas, not on the kings' sagas.

Yet the kings' sagas should be ideal as test cases for the kind of structural analysis currently en vogue among younger Marxist critics in Scandinavia. What other texts could possibly give the critic a better opportunity to uncover basic social and political conflicts of 13th century Scandinavia, the period when Old Norse clan society was being drastically transformed by the feudal system and by the strong central government of kings like Hákon Hákonarson? It is indeed not necessary to be a Marxist in order to interpret the narrative patterns in Heimskringla as symbolic reflections of the great ideological and military struggle which led to Iceland's loss of independence and the imposition of Norwegian kingship, especially since we know that Snorri Sturluson was actively involved in this struggle. Although Snorri did not personally invent and probably did not even write all the kings' sagas attributed to him, there is every reason to suppose that the general organisation of the narrative in Heimskringla was undertaken in accordance with his interests as a chieftain and as a member of the Norwegian hirð. More generally, we may expect all kings' sagas, whether by Snorri or by others, to reproduce in narrative form the problems of kingship and feudalization as experienced by Icelandic farmers and chieftains whose traditional clan culture was about to disintegrate together with their political independence.

On the other hand, kings' sagas were written to accommodate several social groups whose interests were by no means identical. In some cases the texts were evidently commissioned by the kings themselves and intended to glorify the Norwegian crown; even when they were not, they could not very well be written in such a way as to offend living rulers and their representatives in Iceland, of whom there were many among the Icelandic chieftains. The church had important interests at stake, particularly in connection with the sagas about Olaf the Saint

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and Olaf Tryggvason, who were believed to have introduced the Christian faith. At the same time, it was necessary, in presenting the various conflicts between the kings and their subjects, to make the story acceptable to an Icelandic audience of independent farmers unwilling to let themselves be subjugated either by kings or chieftains or priests. Under these circumstances we can hardly expect any kings' saga to take a clear stand for or against any of the more important social groups or power blocks. Ideology will manifest itself in apparent "mediation" between conflicting norms, in semi-mythical "solutions" to problems that are in fact insoluble, and in various subtle undercurrents whose ideological function may not have been conscious to the saga-writers themselves.

I shall now try to illustrate these general statements by taking a closer look at one famous episode in Heimskringla, the so-called "Friðgerðarsaga" which forms part of Óláfs saga helga and deals with the conflict and subsequent reconciliation between Olaf the Saint and Olaf of Sweden. I have chosen this episode for two reasons. First of all, the story obviously centers around some of the most fundamental problems of medieval government and kingship, culminating in the famous speech at the Uppsala Thing by Torgny the Lawman, a speech often interpreted as Snorri Sturluson's political testament. As we shall see, however, Snorri's own ideology cannot be identified with that of any one character such as Torgny the Lawman but must be derived from the dialectics of the narrative structure as a whole. The second reason for my choice is that divergent versions of the same story can be found in earlier kings' sagas, thus enabling us to draw conclusions some conclusions about the manner in which Snorri - or his scribes (the question of authorship is really quite irrelevant in this case) - transformed the traditional narrative material to suit his interests and adjust it to the political climate of the Sturlung Age.

Let me begin by recapitulating the "Friðgerðarsaga" as told in the Legendary Saga of Olaf the Saint, which probably in its general outline represents the accepted version of the story as it was told around 1200, i.e. one generation before Snorri's Heimskringla version. We shall then see what Snorri makes out of this traditional story.

According to Legendary Saga, Olaf the Saint had started to collect taxes in border areas between Norway and Sweden, areas previously considered part of the Swedish king's dominion. Olaf the Swede retaliated by attacking his rival's people, and soon the conflict had grown to the point where nobody dared to travel between the two countries. The Norwegians found the situation intolerable and asked Olaf the Saint to achieve peace. The king then sent a ship to Iceland to ask Hjalti Skeggjason - a chieftain celebrated for his wisdom - to come and help him. Hjalti then went to Norway, but instead of going to the king, he visited one of the king's foremost vasalls, Björn the Marshal, and persuaded him to travel with him directly to the Swedish king. When Hjalti and Björn arrived at the court of Olaf the Swede, Hjalti claimed to have arrived in order to deliver taxes which would otherwise have been collected by Olaf the Saint. Pleased by Hjalti's feigned loyalty, Olaf the Swede invited them to stay, and Hjalti soon won the confidence of the king and of his daughter, Ingigerd. After a while Hjalti succeeded in convincing both Olaf the Swede and Ingigerd that they had everything to gain from a marriage alliance with Olaf the Saint. Hjalti then travelled back to Norway, and

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a peace meeting between the Olafs was arranged at Göta älv, the river between the two countries. They decided at this meeting that Olaf the Saint would marry Ingigerd later in the year.

Before the wedding could take place, however, Olaf the Swede decided to break off the deal. This decision was made one day when he had been bragging to his daughter about his exploits in birdhunting. Ingigerd then put her father down by pointing out that his birdhunting was nothing compared to the accomplishments of her future husband, Olaf the Saint, who was reputed to have conquered eleven kings in one morning. Olaf the Swede became so enraged at this comment that he swore that Ingigerd would never marry Olaf the Saint, and a little later he gave her away in marriage to the Russian king, Jaroslav. When Olaf the Saint heard about this, he was deeply humiliated and depressed. He was then visited by Olaf the Swede's second daughter, Astrid, who had been brought up away from the court as fosterdaughter of a wise old chieftain. She now told Olaf the Saint that she had been sent to him with valuable gifts from Ingigerd. In compensation for his loss and humiliation, Astrid furthermore - at Ingigerd's instigation - offered herself as bride with asking her father's consent. Olaf the Saint now cheered up at the prospect of getting even with Olaf the Swede under such pleasant circumstances, and soon he celebrated his wedding with Astrid.

As can be seen from this plot summary, the "Friggversaga" was a traditional Icelandic feud story of the kind we find both in family sagas and in mythical-heroic sagas. As told in the Legendary saga, the story is a semi-mythical morality about pride, humility and compensation. Its heroes are Hjalti Skeggjason and Astrid, who both succeed in making enraged monarchs swallow their pride and accept a reasonable compromise when victory is not possible. Hjalti's negative contrast is provided by Björn the Marshall, who is less successful as a mediator. Astrid's negative contrast is provided by Ingigerd, who is just as proud as her father and therefore tends to provoke his anger. There is hardly any pretense at realism in describing the conflicts - one never learns, for example, where the Swedish court is located, and the whole story of Hjalti's mission is patently absurd, since there would be no reason for the Norwegian king to send for an Icelandic chieftain in order to achieve peace with Sweden. Most of the point lies in presenting epigrammatic lines such as Ingigerd's to her father ("You do not need to praise your hunt so much, for it would seem to be worth very little to the man who captured eleven kings in one morning") or Astrid's to Olaf the Saint ("The most noble is the one who serves"). Parts of the narrative can be seen as simple anecdotal frames for such lines, which emphasize moderation and humility in solving conflicts.

Of the two kings Olaf the Swede appears somewhat more overbearing and unreasonable than Olaf the Saint, but there is no great difference between the two. None of them is very clearly individualized or identified with particular values apart from that of representing royal power combined with hurt pride. Their function in the story is primarily to constitute a problem for their own followers, who want peace between Norway and Sweden, but do not want to be disloyal to their monarchs. Attention is focused on how the problem is solved through the mediation

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of outsiders: one Icelandic chieftain (Hjalti) and one princess who has been brought up as fosterdaughter of a chieftain (Astrid). The moral of this is obvious: kings and their subjects are better served by independent chieftains than by the proud aristocrats and obedient sycophants surrounding the throne. What moral could be more in the interest of the Icelandic chieftain class trying to legitimize their power in relation to the farmers and their independence in relation to the Norwegian kings?

In Heimskringla this basic story has been expanded to such an extent that it may be difficult to perceive its structure. Various new characters and events have been added and presented with a wealth of detail which gives the story an entirely new dimension of realism and historicity. Elements of the plot which in older versions were concentrated in one brief dialogue with only two protagonists are here developed into long sequences of dramatic scenes with main characters, subordinate characters, scenic descriptions and stage directions, the narrator's reflections and explanations about the government of Sweden and Norway and so on. In addition, the narrative is several times interrupted as the narrator moves to another and apparently quite unrelated narrative about Olaf the Saint's simultaneous conflicts with King Hrørek in Norway. Through such padding and expansion, the "Friðgerðar"-story, which in Legendary Saga covers only six chapters, has been stretched out over no less than thirtyeight chapters in Heimskringla. Even if we disregard the parallel story about King Hrørek - which, as we shall see, should not be disregarded - the sheer bulk of the narrative may be said to have increased enormously: from about 10 to about 60 average pages in a modern book.

Let us then look closer at some of the changes to see what they have done to the implied value system and ideology.

First of all, the reason for the conflict between the two Olafs is dealt with much more extensively in Heimskringla and in such a way as to make it perfectly clear to the reader that Olaf the Saint but not Olaf the Swede was entitled to collect taxes in the border area. Thus Heimskringla takes a definite stand for one of the kings against the other while Legendary Saga does not, aiming its moral against both of them. Furthermore, Heimskringla builds up Olaf the Swede's image as that of a tyrant, while Olaf the Saint is pictured as just king. This is primarily done by presenting a succession of scenes in which Olaf the Swede expresses himself in impatient invectives and expletives, refusing to listen to the advice of well-meaning councillors, while Olaf the Saint does exactly the opposite, i.e. expresses himself in careful and well-balanced language, patiently listens to the advice of his councillors, and so on.

But the most important change in the Heimskringla version affects other characters than the kings. Astrid's and Hjalti Skeggjason's roles as peace negotiators have thus been radically diminished, and their functions within the narrative have been taken over by several new characters who all, with varying success, try to bring about a reasonable settlement between the two Olafs. Among these negotiators, Bjørn the Marshal is the first to accept the task, after having been asked to do so by the Norwegian farmers and after having been

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ordered by his feudal lord, Olaf the Saint, to go to Sweden on a diplomatic mission. Hjalti Skeggjason, who has been asked by the king to come from Iceland to Norway, joins Björn on the trip, together with an Icelandic skald Sigvat, and they first go to Västergötland in Western Sweden, where they solicit support from the Norwegian wife of the Swedish earl, Ragnvald. She persuades her husband to give his support, and it is agreed that Hjalti should first go to Uppsala to prepare the way for a more formal diplomatic mission led by Earl Ragnvald and Björn the Marshall. When Hjalti arrives in Uppsala he ingratiates himself with Olaf the Swede by offering revenue from Norway, but he miserably fails when he tries to suggest a settlement with Olaf the Saint. The king's daughter, Ingigerd, is next involved by Hjalti in trying to soften her father's hostility towards his Norwegian rival, but Olaf the Swede only reacts with fury, and nothing is accomplished. The next persons to be involved as negotiators are some Icelandic skalds at the Swedish court, who try to help Hjalti in arranging a match between Ingigerd and Olaf the Saint, but no progress is made, and Hjalti finally sends word back to Earl Ragnvald that he should now come to Uppsala with the rest of the people left behind in Västergötland.

At this point the narrative is interrupted for a detailed report on the uprising of King Hrørek and other local dignitaries in Norway against the government of Olaf the Saint. Before this seemingly unrelated story has been concluded, the narrator again returns to Uppsala for a description of the manner in which Sweden is divided into administrative districts, each under the leadership of a lawman representing the farmers of the local Thing. This description serves the function of preparing the reader for the introduction of Torgny the Lawman, who is said to be the most powerful of the lawmen, one of the wisest men in Sweden, and - as it will soon turn out - the person who will succeed where everybody else has failed in swaying the mind of Olaf the Swede in the direction of peaceful settlement. After a chapter describing the arrival of Earl Ragnvald, Björn the Marshal and the rest of the party from Västergötland at a farm outside Uppsala, where they are joined by Hjalti and Ingigerd, we are now told how Earl Ragnvald solicits support from Torgny the Lawman, who is described throning in his high seat as a venerable old patriarch of tremendous stature as he receives the travellers in his home. Torgny now promises to help them, but he makes some ironic comments about the failure of all these prominent guests to accomplish the task they have set up for themselves:

"Ye have curious dispositions who are so ambitious of honour and renown, and yet have no prudence or counsel in you when you get in any mischief. Why did you not consider, before you gave your promise to this adventure, that you had no power to stand against King Olaf? In my opinion it is not a less honourable condition to be in the number of farmers, and have one's words free, and be able to say what one will, even if the king be present. But I must go to the Uppsala Thing, and give thee such help that without fear thou canst speak before the king what thou findest good." (ch. 79)

In this speech the narrator makes explicit a set of values which underlies the organisation of the "Friðgerðar saga". The point is namely that the independent

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rough farmer, whose roots are in the old rustic clan society, will be more effective in dealing with a king like Olaf the Swede than the aristocratic courtier or vassal can ever be. By multiplying the number of negotiators, Heimskringla stresses the extreme difficulty of the peacemaking task and at the same time sets up a system for comparing different approaches to it, beginning with the feudal loyalty and politeness of Björn the Marshal and ending with the salty toughness of Torgny the Lawman. Between these two extremes, the other negotiators are placed along a scale based on their distance from the Norwegian court and its ideals. As Icelanders, Hjalti and the skalds are further away from the court of Olaf the Saint than Björn, but they are still closer to it than Earl Ragnvald and his wife, who in their turn are closer to it than Torgny. Distance in this case implies not only independence and strength but moral qualities such as honesty, courage, foresight, reliability, and a stoic contempt for the vanity of aristocratic refinement.

So far the Heimskringla story may be said to develop and expand a theme which was implicit also in the older version represented by Legendary saga. The tone of the narrative appears to become more aggressively antiroyalistic, however, as we arrive at the climax of these peacemaking efforts: the Thing meeting in Uppsala, where Olaf the Swede is forced to accept the settlement and agree to the marriage of Ingigerd and Olaf the Saint. The meeting is described with a graphic realism and a wealth of detail totally absent from Legendary saga, but each detail is symbolic of the power relations and the hierarchy of values established through the previous narrative. The Swedish king is pictured at one side of an open plain surrounded by his court. "Right opposite to him sat Earl Ragnvald and Torgny in the Thing upon one stool, and before them the earl's court and Torgny's house-people. Behind their stool stood the community of farmers, all in a circle around them. Some stood upon hillocks and heights, in order to hear better". (ch. 80). The scene is presented as ominous, filled with potential threats against the king from a mass of farmers who can be seen as an extension of Torgny's silent strength.

Björn the Marshal speaks first, conveying the peace offer of Olaf the Saint, but he is immediately shouted down by Olaf the Swede who refuses to listen and orders him to be silent. Earl Ragnvald then tries to convey the same message; he is allowed to finish his speech, but he is then bitterly reproached by the king, who makes it clear that he has no intention to make peace with his Norwegian namesake. Finally Torgny stands up, and all the farmers arise as he begins to speak. The sequence Björn - Ragnvald - Torgny thus emphasizes the seemingly anti-feudal hierarchy of values, giving the independent rustic chieftain maximum build-up at the expense of marshal and earl.

In his speech Torgny begins by reminding the king of the virtues of his royal ancestors who conquered many lands in the East and thus enlarged Sweden for the benefit of their people. These kings are said to have listened to good advice from their subjects, and the loyalty of these subjects is strongly emphasized. "But the king we have now got allows no man to presume to talk with him, unless it be what he desires to hear." Torgny continues by pointing out that no previous

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Swedish king has made claims on Norwegian land, and that Olaf in making such claims "brings war and distress on many a man." It is now the will of the farmers that the king make peace with Norway and marry his daughter to Olaf the Saint. They are also willing to follow him if he wants to reconquer the areas in the East which have been lost to the enemy. But - and here, at long last, Torgny presents the simple but forceful argument which immediately makes the king change his mind:

"If thou wilt not do as we desire, we will now attack thee, and put thee to death; for we will no longer suffer law and peace to be disturbed. So our forefathers went to work when they drowned five kings in a morass at the Mora-thing, and they were filled with the same insupportable pride thou hast shown towards us. Now tell us, in all haste, what resolution thou wilt take." (ch. 81)

And as Torgny comes to the end of his speech, the farmers show their approval with clash of arms and shouts until the king gives in to their demands, recognizing that "All Swedish kings have allowed the farmers to participate in the decisionmaking whenever they wanted to" (svá hafa gort allir Svíakonungar, at láta boendr ráða með sér öllu því, er þeir vildu).

It is no wonder that Torgny's speech has been interpreted as an indirect expression of Snorri Sturluson's Icelandic independence and opposition to kingship in general. A speech of this kind, delivered by a spokesman of common farmers, would of course have been unacceptable within the feudal court culture of medieval Europe, and yet it is here presented as if to deprive kingship and aristocracy of all holiness and give sanction to popular uprisings against the high and mighty. One should not, however, overemphasize the revolutionary message of this passage. After all, Torgny never questions the king's right to lead and command as long as he follows the laws and the traditional customs of his country. One of these customs, which both Torgny and the narrator seem to respect, is the one which allows farmers to speak their mind bluntly at the Thing and thus to participate in the decisionmaking. But the later development of the narrative shows that this right should not be construed as a general right to depose unpopular kings and take over the government.

Immediately after these events, the narrator returns to the story about King Hrørek's surprising against Olaf the Saint, i.e. the story whose first half was inserted for no apparent reason right before the introduction of Torgny. The reader now begins to suspect that this story functions as a sort of thematic parallel to the "Friðgerðarsaga", but in order not to make my analysis too confusing I shall deal with the second part of the "Friðgerðarsaga" before I turn to the Hrørek story.

The report about Torgny's speech at the Uppsala Thing may be said to conclude the first act of the "Friðgerðarsaga" in that the goal of the peace negotiators now appears to have been reached, i.e. Olaf the Swede has finally promised to make peace and marry his daughter to Olaf the Saint. All the negotiators can

therefore now return to their respective homes after having reported the happy news to the Norwegian court. The second act derives its dramatic conflict from Olaf the Swede's quarrel with Ingigerd after the birdhunting, a quarrel which Heimskringla reports according to the same traditional pattern as Legendary saga. In this version, however, Olaf the Swede brags about having caught five heath-cocks (orrar), to which Ingigerd replies: "It is indeed a good morning's hunting, to have got give heath-cocks, but it was still better when Olaf, King of Norway, took five kings and subdues all their kingdoms". This contains a hidden pun, for the word orri, heathcock, is associated with orrosta, battle, in the poetic language, and the kings subdued by Olaf the Saint are King Hrørek and his associates, whose cocky but unseccessful uprising against the Norwegian king has just been described in the inserted parallel story. Infuriated by his daughter's scorn, Olaf the Swede calls off the marriage and decides to give her away to King Jaroslav of Russia. This represents a double treachery, since it means not only that he is breaking his promise concerning peace with Norway, but also that he is not going to make any effort to win back Sweden's old areas in the East, as Torgny had urged him to do. The stage is thus set for a new confrontation between the king and the farmers, and it is this confrontation which constitutes the main theme of the second act, not - as in Legendary saga - the peacemaking efforts of Astrid.

Before the confrontation is described, the narrator deals with Olaf the Saint's marriage to Astrid. In this version Astrid is pictured not as a heroine, but as a secondrate substitute for Ingigerd, and it is not she herself, but the Icelandic skalds and Earl Ragnvald who bring about the match to reconcile Olaf the Saint with the humiliation of having been betrayed by Olaf the Swede. By repeatedly stressing Ingigerd's superiority over Astrid, however, Heimskringla again makes it clear that the Norwegian and Icelandic negotiators have not quite succeeded in their task of achieving an honorable solution for the Norwegian king. Furthermore, Earl Ragnvald is said to have been humiliated and almost killed by his lord, Olaf the Swede, as a result of his matchmaking activities. In this way it is possible again to cast the common farmers of Sweden in the roles as saviors, and this is exactly what Heimskringla does. The second act of the "Friðgerðarsaga" thus repeats the pattern of the first act, a pattern which may be said to consist of the following three stages: 1) Olaf the Swede slights Olaf the Saint; 2) Members of the Norwegian hirð plus Earl Ragnvald fail to achieve a satisfying settlement; 3) Swedish farmers step in and solve the problem.

In the second act Torgny the Lawman has disappeared and been replaced by a new character, Emund the Lawman of Västergötland. It is he who is to lead the uprising previously foreshadowed in Torgny's speech. In contrast to Torgny, Emund is not pictured as a venerable patriarch but as a deceitful and unreliable person (undirhyggjumaðr ok meðalmaðr trúr). This shift from Torgny to Emund represents a significant ideological change in the text, and it is expressive of the ambivalence and inner tension of Heimskringla whenever conflicts between king and farmers are treated.

Emund is sent to Uppsala by the farmers of Västergötland to prevent a war be-

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tween Norway and Sweden from breaking out. On his way through the country he holds meetings with several "men of consequence" who all agree that Olaf of Sweden has acted "against law and custom", an indication that Emund and his confederates are prepared to start an uprising if that is necessary to achieve their goal. When he arrives at the Uppsala Thing, Emund salutes the king who asks him what news he is bringing. Instead of telling the king bluntly and directly about the potential uprising, such as Torgny had done at the previous Thing meeting, Emund proceeds to tell stories about events which he claims recently took place in Western Sweden. Each of these stories contains an allegory about the foolish and illegal behavior of Olaf the Swede, but the political message is so well hidden that the king at first does not understand it. The third and last of these subversive stories is presented as a legal case which Emund asks the king to judge:

"There were two noble-born men of equal birth, but unequal in property and disposition. They quarrelled about some land, and did each other much damage; but most of the damage was done by him who was the more powerful of the two. This quarrel, however, was settled, and judged of at a General Thing; and the judgement was, that the most powerful should pay a compensation. But at the first payment, instead of paying a goose, he paid a gosling; for an old sow he paid a suckling pig; and for a mark of stamped gold only a half mark, and for the other half mark nothing but clay and dirt; and moreover threatened, in the most violent way, the people whom he forced to receive such goods in payment. Now, sire, what is your judgement?"

And to this underhanded question, Olaf the Swede naively gives an answer which actually judges himself to lose his own throne unless he makes peace with Olaf the Saint:

"He shall pay the full equivalent whom the judgment ordered to do so, and that faithfully; and further, threefold to his king; and if payment be not made within a year and a day, he shall be cut off from all his property, his goods confiscated, and half go to the king's house, and half to the other party." (ch. 94)

Emund now takes witnesses to this judgment and mysteriously leaves. The narrator at this point does not reveal where Emund is going but we later learn that he has gone to organize the uprising among the farmers. Meanwhile, Olaf the Swede is drinking merrily with his men, not suspecting what is about to take place. After some time, however, Emund's stories begin to bother him, and he calls in his councillors to ask them if they have been able to detect hidden messages in these stories. Wisest among these councillors are three old brothers, Arnvid the Blind, Thorvid the Stammerer and Freyvid the Deaf. They interpret the allegories for him. The noble-born man who paid his rival a gosling for a goose and a sucking pig for a sow thus represents Olaf the Swede who promised Ingigerd to Olaf the Saint but instead gave him Astrid, whose heritage was much less noble, since "her mother was but a slave-woman, and besides of Vendish race".

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When the three old brothers have explained all the nasty allusions in the stories told by Emund the Lawman, they inform the king of the uprising which is now about to break out. In a speech, Freyvid the Deaf pictures the uprising as a catastrophe which the king has brought upon himself but which still should not be condoned by honorable men:

"All Swedes desire to have the ancient laws and their full right", says Freyvid the Deaf. "Look but here, sire, how many chiefs are sitting in council with you. I think, in truth, we are but six whom you call your councillors: all the others, so far as I know, have ridden forth through the districts to hold Thing with the people; and we will not conceal it from you, that the message-token has gone forth to assemble a Retribution-Thing (refsibing). All of us brothers have been invited to take part in the decisions of this council but none of us will bear the name of traitor to the sovereign; for that our father never was."

The king now realises that he has acted wrongly, and he implores the three old brothers to help him keep his kingdom and his "parental heritage" without having to fight his own people. The three brothers then go to the Retribution-Thing, where Emund the Lawman is maneuvering to bar the whole present dynasty from the government and to have a new king elected by the farmers themselves, not necessarily a man of noble descent. Through their skillful diplomacy, however, Arnvid the Blind, Thorvid the Stammerer and Freyvid the Deaf succeed in keeping the throne within the old dynasty. The noblest-born of Olaf the Swede's sons, Onund Jacob, is elected king instead of his father, after a discussion about legitimacy and noble descent thematically related to the previous comparison between Ingigerd and Astrid. Emund the Lawman is incensed at this outcome of the Retribution-Thing, but he can do nothing to sway the minds of the farmers, who after all turn out to be loyal to the old royal family of Sweden. When Onund Jacob becomes king, he furthermore makes an agreement with his father, so that he can remain king over the country as long as he lives, provided that he be reconciled with Olaf the Saint and with everybody else who had taken part in the peace negotiations. The uprising of the farmers has thus not led to revolution but instead confirmed the stability and vitality of the old kingship. And so, at long last, Olaf the Swede meets Olaf the Saint at a meeting where they are fully reconciled. Olaf the Swede is then "mild in manner and agreeable to talk with" (ch. 94)

Looking back at the structure of the "Frisöarsaga", we can now see that it tries to mediate between two conflicting norms: the norm of feudal kingship and the norm of the independent farmer. The first norm says that the country must be ruled by kings belonging to one specific royal family with roots in the mythical past and surrounded by a certain sacred nimbus. Authority sieves down from these kings through a complicated feudal hierarchy of earls, marshals, etc., and within this system it is the duty of the common farmer simply to obey his superiors and to suffer the wars brought down upon him by the inability of kings and nobles to make peace between themselves. The second norm says, on the contrary, that all authority emanates from the common farmers, who have a right to choose their own leaders and depose kings whose actions are not in accordance with the interests

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of the people. While the first norm is associated with the court and represented by the kings and their councillors, the second norm is associated with the Thing meeting and represented by characters such as Torgny the Lawman or Emund the Lawman.

The real heroes of the story, however, are not the most consistent representatives of either norm but rather those who try to achieve a compromise between the two. Unlike Emund the Lawman, who is pictured simply as a subversive rascal, Torgny the Lawman thus shows a certain amount of loyalty to the king and to the feudal system by openly speaking his mind in front of Olaf the Swede and by offering to follow him in battle if he will turn against Sweden's traditional enemies and not against Norway. On the feudal side, among the king's councillors, Arnvid, Thorvid, and Freyvid likewise achieve a special and heroic status by recognizing the need to respect Thing decisions and the wishes of the farmers. Torgny as well as the three old brothers are typical mediating figures, whose views on government and kingship turn out to be roughly identical, even though they are presented in one case as "the view of the independent farmer" and in the other case as "the view of the royal councillor". The ideology which they have in common can be summarized in these points: 1) the legitimacy of inherited power as represented by the royal family of Sweden, 2) the legitimacy of blunt and direct speech - in contrast to allegory, conspiracy and deceit - as a method by which the common farmer can achieve justice directly from their king. 3) the necessity of trying to correct the behavior of a tyrant who endangers the welfare of his people, 4) a certain amused contempt for the inefficiency and artificiality of the new feudal nobility of the court.

The narrative development, however, appears to favor the norm of feudal kingship at the expense of the more democratic norm of the farmers. The Retribution-Thing assembled by Emund the Lawman is not presented as a legitimate meeting but as a subversive conspiracy which must be quelled by the representatives of the king: before justice can be achieved. The holiness of kingship and the mystery of royal power are further emphasized at the very end of the "Friðgerðarsaga", where Olaf the Swede and Olaf the Saint at last meet to settle their dispute about the border areas between their two countries:

"The kings came to the agreement between themselves that they would cast lots by the dice to determine who should have this property, and that he who threw the highest should have the farm. The Swedish king threw two sixes and said King Olaf (the Saint) need scarcely throw. He replied, while shaking the dice in his hand, "There are still two sixes on the dice, and it would be easy for God, my lord, to let them turn up in my favor." Then he threw and had sixes also. Now the Swedish king threw again and had again two sixes. Olaf king of Norway then threw and had six upon one dice, but the other split in two, so as to make seven eyes in all upon it; and the farm was adjudged to the king of Norway. We have heard nothing else of any interest that took place at this meeting; and the kings separated having reached agreement with each other." (ch. 94)

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The function of this last scene is to show that both kings by virtue of their royal heritage have a particular kind of luck or hamingja which not only makes them throw several sixes when they place dice but also makes them destined to rule their respective countries. In Olaf the Saint this luck is particularly strong because he is followed by God's grace, a Christian theme emphasized several times throughout the saga. More specifically, Olaf the Saint's hamingja appears as a theme in the "Frisgerðarsaga" at its beginning, as Björn the Marshal and Hjalti Skeggjason leave Norway to achieve peace with the Swedish king. It is then implied that their mission will be graced by the king's luck or hamingja, at least in the long run. We are here, in the last chapter of the episode, witnessing the prophecy come true, and it is thus very appropriate that the luck motif is repeated in the dice incident with its discreet hint of underlying supernatural forces steering the course of history. Through the narrative, the rebellious, independent farmer has shown himself to be a potent and at times beneficial force in the political struggle to achieve peace and justice, but it is nevertheless, to judge from structure, the king, i.e. the just king, the rex iustus, not the tyrant, who in the end is the most potent, beneficial and deserving of supernatural protection among all actors in the political game.

The norm of feudal kingship is more obviously expressed in the parallel story about Hrørek's uprising, a story used in Heimskringla in much the same fashion as the allegories told by Emund the Lawman, i.e. as a method to ^{clarify} the ideological pattern of the "Frisgerðarsaga" and at the same time obscure its real significance for those who listen to it.

King Hrørek is one of several local kings in Norway whose power and independence are diminished through the strong rule of Olaf the Saint. His attitude to the Norwegian Olaf parallels that of Emund the Lawman to the Swedish Olaf, i.e. he is prepared to lead an uprising of various dissatisfied local groups to achieve freedom. While planning this uprising, Hrørek is unfavorably contrasted to his brother Hring, who is prepared to trust Olaf the Saint's hamingja and thus to accept him as the highest ruler of Norway, even though he admits that he and Hrørek by virtue of their noble heritage have about the same right to rule as Olaf himself. Hring thus plays a mediating role comparable to that of Torgny the Lawman or the three old councillors of Olaf the Swede. His judgment of the political situation soon turns out to be correct, for Hrørek's uprising is brutally quelled by Olaf the Saint. Hrørek himself is blinded and his most militant confederate gets his tongue cut out in punishment for their political blindness and foolish subversive talk. It is tempting to compare these two frustrated rebels to Arnvid the Blind and Thorvid the Stammerer, whose physical shortcomings are not to be seen as the fruits of folly, but as the fruits of old age and wisdom. Blindness and inability to speak clearly are thus associated with the central theme of loyalty to the king in such a way as to identify loyalty with wisdom and rebellion with folly.

Hrørek is not, however, pictured as a mere villain but as a tragic figure of heroic dimensions. After his defeat he staggers around as a blind and pathetic prisoner at the court of Olaf the Saint, but he takes every opportunity to avenge himself on his enemy. But since Olaf the Saint's hamingja makes him invincible, Hrørek is doomed to fail and to become more and more humiliated every time he makes a new attempt. Although Olaf's life is endangered several times by these

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desperate attempts to take revenge, he treats Hrørek with a certain good-humored tolerance and respect, but he is at last forced to send him in exile to Iceland. The last thing we hear about Hrørek is that he ended his life "on a small farm called Kalfskind, where there were but few neighbors". He "said that since he had laid down his kingdom he thought himself most comfortably situated here; for here he was most respected by all ... It is said he is the only king whose bones rest in Iceland" (ch. 85).

The symbolism of these last lines must have been obvious to an Icelandic audience in the 13th century. For it was in Iceland that the norm of independence was most staunchly upheld against the ambition of Norwegian kings to extend their power over local Thing communities and break up the old clan culture through the imposition of a new and feudal hierarchy. By treating Hrørek with sympathy and by glorifying independent chieftains such as Torgny the Lawman, Heimskringla quite clearly appeals to anti-royalistic and anti-Norwegian sentiments in the audience. But it is also clear from the whole narrative structure that the organizing mind behind it wishes to steer his audience away from such sentiments to a more appreciative view of feudal kingship. For when everything has been said and done in this story, it is not the pathetic heroism of Hrørek or Emund the Lawman that prevails but rather the majesty and power of Olaf the Saint.

The ideology emerging from the structure of "Friðgerðarsaga" in Heimskringla is actually similar to the one presented in the Norwegian King's Mirror (Konungs skuggsjá), which is generally thought of as representing a completely different and more obviously feudal system of norms and values. What the King's Mirror says about úár, "bad season" in the social life of a country, can easily be applied to the story of the conflict between the two Olafs and also to the story of King Hrørek:

"If now a country fares so badly, that ... there are several pretenders to the throne, and such bad service is taken, that they are all given the rank and title of kings, then that country may be called a rudderless ship and a spoiled piece of land, and one may almost regard it as totally destroyed, for it is sown with the seeds of strife and conflict ... Then each of these chieftains collects in his treasury that revenue which is the least useful to the country, and that is jealousy.... Then crime will increase, for God avenges his wrath in such a way, that he sets a wheel of discord, turning around the axis of conflict, wherever four boundaries meet in the countries of such chieftains ... farmers and common people become ambitious and disobedient, do not respect the law and pay little compensation though they commit many crimes, and they hold subversive meetings (samveldisþing; cf. refsiping in Heimskringla), where they trust their number and force, and they choose to follow the most unfortunate course of action, for they promise each other to stick together, wise and virtuous men as well as sinners and fools..."

The only solution to this problem, according to the King's Mirror, is a strong central government under one king, who must fulfill all the requirements of a

Christian rex iustus, i.e. be tolerant, generous, humble, law-abiding, and so on. If he does not live up to the ideal, on the other hand, God is sure to punish him in the long run.

It is this ideology which Snorri Sturluson as member of the Norwegian hirð in Iceland is trying to sell to his countrymen. In order to assert himself as member of the Icelandic chieftain class against his many rivals he had to secure the economic and political support of the king for his own policy. And in order to secure this support he had to convince the farmers depending on him that the feudal monarchy with which he had allied himself had certain advantages over the free and independent state of farmers still prevailing in Iceland.

One advantage which the Icelandic farmers probably did not need much persuasion to see was the possibility of law and order. The free and independent state of Iceland was torn apart by feuds between the chieftains, feuds which in the 13th century turned into a general civil war. The Althing proceedings had in the 13th century become increasingly corrupt and dominated by a few powerful families. As an alternative to this chaos, the Norwegian kingship, which eventually took over the power in 1262, must have appeared quite attractive.

On the other hand, a long tradition of independent government and partial democracy is not easily quelled or given up. The norm of independence, i.e. the norm of King Hrørek and Emund the Lawman, appears to have found more ardid defenders as it was being threatened by the expansionist policies of Hákon Hákonarson. This was a factor which authors such as Snorri had to take into account, if they wanted to have an effect on their audience. Besides, it appears quite likely that they themselves found it difficult to make a clear political choice between the old order of independent clan society and the new order of feudal kingship.

The ideological struggle becomes more obvious the closer we come to the date of 1262. In the version of "Friðgerðarsaga" found in Legendary saga of Olaf the Saint, the struggle is still relatively unproblematic, and the ideology expressed in the text is one that still has not become influenced by the feudal thinking of the 13th century. In Heimskringla, on the other hand, the text is almost torn apart by the violent tension between the feudal norms of the Norwegian court and the rebellious opposition against these norms by independent farmers and local chieftains. Perhaps it is this tension, rising out of an increasingly impossible ambition to please both the court and the farmer, that makes Heimskringla and other kings' sagas from the classical period so dramatic and exciting. One gets the impression that Snorri Sturluson and his colleagues are acting out the conflicts of their own social class, that of the Icelandic chieftain, torn in an impossible conflict between hirð and Althing, between the king and the community of free and independent farmers.

The realistic qualities of the text, which are usually quite mistakenly attributed to Snorri's impartiality and objectivity, should also, I think, be seen as a result of trying to project the political problems of the 13th century into

a distant and hence uncontroversial past. To the author of Legendary saga, the "Friðgerðarsaga" is an entertaining fable with a comparatively simple moral and no pretense at giving a picture of political realities. To the author of Heimskringla, on the other hand, it is a story exemplifying, within a specific historical context, a variety of political attitudes and social relationships having to do with the imposition of feudal kingship on a traditional clan society.