

# A Long Time in Politics

*The relevance of Icelandic techniques of  
time reckoning for our understanding of the  
medieval Icelandic world view*

Benjamin Allport



Master of Philosophy Thesis in Viking and Medieval  
Norse Studies

UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

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# Summary

The topic of the medieval Icelandic world view during the Commonwealth period has attracted many scholars in recent years; most can agree that this seemingly autonomous, remote island society, asserting its independence from Norway at the same time as it was inextricably connected to it, is a unique phenomenon in a period in which the authority of kingship was beginning to dominate Europe.

This study attempts to join the ranks of previous considerations of Icelandic world views, but does so from a position that has not yet been extensively explored; that Icelandic historiographers were able to use the reckoning of the annual progression of time to carefully construct texts that reflected their understanding of the world and their position in it. By pursuing an analysis of four key medieval Icelandic historiographical texts based primarily on the use of annual chronologies, drawn from all over the medieval world, this thesis will test whether this approach can indeed take its place among existing scholarship.

The analysis first considers *Íslendingabók*, the earliest surviving example of Icelandic historiography, and reveals the intricacy of the way in which its author, Ari *fróði*, wove the use of different chronologies together to create an Icelandic identity which emphasised its autonomy and at the same time was keenly aware of its cultural heritage. The next two sources, the *Konunga sögur* compilations *Fagrskinna* and *Morkinskinna*, explore the involvement of Icelanders at the Norwegian court and, through the use of personal chronologies relating to the lives of individual kings, emphasise the significance of the relationships that courtly life involved, and altogether reveal the Icelandic engagement in the Norse sphere. The final text, Sturla Þórðarson's *Hákonar saga Hákonar*, manipulates local chronologies from throughout Norwegian territories to incorporate Iceland into the Norwegian context following its recent submission.

This study also considers Icelandic perceptions of those outside of the immediate Norse sphere, and in particular has revealed an intriguing level of Icelandic identification with the English, perhaps due to an awareness of shared historical and cultural origins.



# Foreword

The process of researching and writing this project has been at times fun, frustrating, rigorous but ultimately rewarding, and part of a unique Master's degree experience, shared, as it was, between Iceland or Norway. Ultimately, the process of writing this thesis and the course of the past two years would not have been as rewarding as it was without the guidance and support of numerous people to whom I am greatly indebted; there are too many to list, so I will satisfy myself with singling out a few honourable mentions:

First and foremost, Karl G. Johansson, whom I must thank for his constant assistance and enthusiasm for my project. I must also thank Jón Viðar Sigurðsson for pointing me in the direction of time reckoning and for his advice early on in the planning process.

Thanks also go to Terje Spurkland, Haraldur Bernharðsson and the other coordinators of the Viking and Medieval Norse MA for dreaming up this degree and realising it so effectively.

I am forever indebted to the members of the Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic department in Cambridge for starting me down a path from which I have no desire to deviate; particular thanks go to Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, for her constant support and for introducing me to VMN, facilitating my desire to study abroad, and to Fiona Edmonds, for her willingness to provide references at the drop of a hat.

Finally, I must thank friends and family, and particularly my parents, Dave and Lil, my sister, Jen and my brother-in-law, Jim, for managing to appear interested when I talk for hours about typology.



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# 1. Introduction

Our perception of the narrative and cultural history of Norway from the Viking Age to the thirteenth century is almost entirely shaped by Icelandic sources, which far outnumber the narrative sources from mainland Norway itself, many of which even acknowledge their debt to their Icelandic material - Theodoricus Monachus, for example, makes it clear in the prologue of his history that he has been influenced by the ‘ancient poems’ of Icelanders, among whom ‘the remembrance of these matters is believed to thrive.’<sup>1</sup> Icelanders seem to have been relied upon for the creation of narrative historiography, just as they were for the production of skaldic poetry at the court of the Norwegian kings.<sup>2</sup> Consequently much of our knowledge of early Norwegian history has been transmitted to us through an Icelandic textual context. Furthermore, the preponderance of literature that was produced in Iceland during the Icelandic Commonwealth era - the period from the establishment of the *Alþing* in 930 to the submission to Norway in 1262-4 - reveals a political and cultural state of affairs which seems unique for the period. While on the one hand the commonwealth seems indicative of an independent, autonomous society which was able to make its own decisions by an elective process, an idea which many of the sources seem keen to assert, it is also abundantly obvious from the preoccupations of the *Íslendingasögur* that Norway loomed large in Icelandic perceptions of the world, even to the extent that Kirsten Hastrup has suggested that, to some degree, Icelanders viewed themselves as Norwegians living abroad (although they still perceived themselves as an independent category of Norwegian identity),<sup>3</sup> and that in many ways they were dependent on Norway for their survival (both the conversion in AD 999-1000 and the submission in 1262-4 might be seen as the result of Norwegian threats to cut vital supply lines to the island).<sup>4</sup>

Consequently, the analysis of Icelandic historiographical material, which appears to have had its origins in the early eleventh century,<sup>5</sup> has the potential to offer a fascinating insight into Icelandic perceptions of their relationships with Norway, and of their place in the world.

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<sup>1</sup> McDougall and McDougall, *Theodoricus Monachus*, Prologue, p. 1

<sup>2</sup> Gunnar Karlsson, *Iceland's 1100 Years*, p. 62

<sup>3</sup> Hastrup, ‘Defining a Society’, 86

<sup>4</sup> Byock, *Medieval Iceland*, p. 141; see also Byock, *Feud in the Icelandic Saga*, p. 34 and Gunnar Karlsson, *Iceland's 1100 Years*, pp. 79-85 etc

<sup>5</sup> Hastrup, ‘Defining a Society’, 87-8

Recent years have seen a steady growth in scholarship which aims to understand these relationships, which have been considered in some way or another by numerous scholars; any attempt to explore further facets of these issues must build upon ideas put forward by Hastrup, Sverre Bagge, Pernille Hermann, Jón Viðar Sigurðsson and Sverrir Jakobsson, to name only a few.<sup>6</sup> These analyses have considered numerous aspects of Icelandic historiographical writing which can be seen to shed light on the Icelandic identity and world view; legal definitions of identity, characterisation of Icelanders and non-Icelanders in the saga corpus and the prioritisation and structure (including typology) of historiographical information etc. This investigation aims to test these themes using a body of evidence which has been touched upon but never comprehensively analysed for this purpose; the various chronologies used by Icelandic scholars as a means of reckoning time in their narratives and of structuring and adding chronology to their historiographical accounts of Icelandic and world history. The aim of analysing this material is to resolve two key lines of inquiry. Firstly, to what extent can the Icelandic methods of time reckoning reveal Icelandic perceptions of their place in the world during the Commonwealth period, and, secondly, what can they reveal about Icelandic attitudes to and relationships with Norwegians in this period.

The study of time reckoning occupies a broad swathe of medieval cultural history; as in many other areas of sociology, it was in the medieval period that burgeoning Christian traditions of time reckoning and the concept of time were thrown into contact with their pre-Christian equivalents, resulting in a tangle of conflicts and the creation of new approaches. The Christian world view brought with it a particular fascination with the calculation and regulation of time; the topic of *computus* was of particular interest to early medieval scholars such as the Venerable Bede, whose two treatises on the reckoning of time, composed in the seventh to early eighth century, were widely disseminated throughout Medieval Europe, and seem to have been known to some Icelandic authors.<sup>7</sup> As the period progressed computistical tracts became a benchmark of collections of encyclopaedic material and other miscellanies, as Icelandic compilations such as *Hauksbók* attest.<sup>8</sup> The concept of time expounded by Bede and his predecessors was tied in to the Christian conception of the universe; time was an

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<sup>6</sup> See, Hastrup, 'Defining a Society'; Bagge, *Society and Politics*; Hermann, 'Who were the Papar?'; Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, 'The Norse Community' and 'Kings, Earls and Chieftains'; and Sverrir Jakobsson, 'Strangers in Icelandic Society', '*Hauksbók*' and *Við og veröldin*

<sup>7</sup> Wallis, *Bede: The Reckoning of Time*, p. xvii; Sturla Þórðarson, for example, makes reference to Bede's '*Aldarfarsbók*' in his version of *Landnámabók*, which Sverrir Tómasson takes to be a reference to *De temporum ratione*; Sverrir Tómasson, 'Old Icelandic Prose', p. 82

<sup>8</sup> *Hauksbók* lists among its contents a translation of Bede's *Prognostica temporum*; Sverrir Jakobsson, '*Hauksbók*', p. 26

absolute, linear progression, proceeding ‘from the eternal to the eternal’<sup>9</sup>, with Creation at the one end and Apocalypse at the other. As such ideas spread throughout Europe they came into contact with the ‘Greco-Roman’<sup>10</sup> and so-called ‘rural agricultural’<sup>11</sup> concepts of time, which was perceived by both to be cyclical, defined by certain recurring annual phenomena or activities, such as harvest periods and hay-making, as well as a broader sense that time was a repeating process.<sup>12</sup> The interactions between these two opposing concepts of time are fascinating in their various manifestations throughout late antique and medieval history, although they are largely beyond the scope of this study.<sup>13</sup> Rather, this study will consider a second opposition in medieval concepts of time: the concept of abstract time versus the concept of time that is ‘immanent’ in actions and events and cannot be abstracted from them, of which Sverre Bagge suggests the latter perception has been lost in the modern day due to our use of abstract dating methods (Anno Domini, for example) which do not relate to our own experience, and are arguably maintained only for convenience.<sup>14</sup>

It is this understanding of time as inextricably linked to events which gives rise to the function of time reckoning as a means of expressing the world views of those that utilise them; the diversity of methods with which it is possible to date an event - whether it is to the day (with, for example the liturgical ‘þetta var Láfranzmessu aptan’<sup>15</sup> or the Roman ‘þat var hinn níu Kal. Maii’),<sup>16</sup> to the year (where by it might be by the reign of the king; ‘Á inu tvítjanda ári ríkis Haralds konungs Sigurðarsonar’),<sup>17</sup> or to some notable event; ‘Þat vas sex tegum vetra eptir dráp Eadmundar konungs’),<sup>18</sup> or even to the era (‘þat vas sjau tegum vetra ens níunda hundraðs eptir burð Krists’)<sup>19</sup> - allows the writer to choose those chronologies to present a particular viewpoint or an ideology. It should be noted, therefore, that although

<sup>9</sup> Powell, ‘*Primstav and Apocalypse*’, p. 23

<sup>10</sup> Haug, ‘The Icelandic Annals as a History Source’,

<sup>11</sup> Powell, ‘*Primstav and Apocalypse*’, p. 2

<sup>12</sup> Gurevich, ‘Space and Time’, 49

<sup>13</sup> Such themes in an Icelandic context have been considered by Powell and Anton Gurevich, among others, although there is perhaps room for a more comprehensive and updated study which treats the individual regions of Scandinavia in their proper context as much as is possible, rather than extrapolating out from the Icelandic data, as seems to have been the norm thus far. See Powell, ‘*Primstav and Apocalypse*’; and Gurevich, ‘Space and Time’

<sup>14</sup> Bagge, *Society and Politics*, p. 49; Leofranc Holford-Strevens gives an interesting appraisal of this situation in which he considers the extent to which Anno Domini dating, and in particular its modern secular ret-con as ‘Common Era’ dating, is ultimately meaningless; see Holford-Strevens, *The History of Time*, p. 126

<sup>15</sup> *Fagr*, ch. 57, p. 266; ‘That was the eve of St Lawrence’s Day’, Finlay, *Fagrskinna*, ch. 57, p. 212

<sup>16</sup> *Hák*, vol. I, ch. 14, p.190; ‘that was on the ninth of the kalends of May’, Dasent, *The Saga of Hacon*, vol 1, ch. 11, p. 18

<sup>17</sup> *Mork*, vol. I, ch. 53, p. 299; ‘In the twentieth year of king Haraldr Sigurðarson’s rule’, Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, ch. 49, p. 261

<sup>18</sup> *Ísl*, vol. 1, ch. 3, p. 9; ‘That was sixty years after the killing of Edmund’, Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, ch. 3, p. 5

<sup>19</sup> *Ísl*, vol. 1, ch. 1, p. 4; ‘That was 870 years after the birth of Christ’, Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, ch. 1, p. 3

sources may display a knowledge of genealogies from numerous different contexts, even particularly far afield,<sup>20</sup> it is specifically the use of this information as a means of dating events that are of interest to this study, although the use of genealogy would contribute to a broader study of Icelandic European awareness. Although the above examples highlight that Icelandic scholars were willing to present dates accurate to the day, sometimes even the time of day,<sup>21</sup> this thesis intends to focus almost entirely on concepts of time as they related to the recording of the passage of years, as opposed to the construction of the day and the calendar. Although these last two factors are crucial for our understanding of the Icelandic perspective of the daily passage of time and cyclical nature of the year, revealing fundamental elements of the workings of Icelandic society (as Hastrup and Avery Powell have noted, for example, with reference to the Icelandic month names and the activities associated with them, as well as the liturgical construction of the day and the year),<sup>22</sup> they were less obviously used as a structuring tool in Icelandic narratives and were more established as a native method of timekeeping. The consideration of hours, days and months in Icelandic sources were based (as they are today) on the concept of the annual cycle, whereas yearly chronologies are based on an annual progression and inextricably bound to the linear concept of time, hence their use as a tool which can be used to create chronological structure. Within the remit of this study, therefore, ‘chronologies’ are to be regarded as different means of measuring the annual progression of time based on a broad range of criteria, including those related to specific epochs or those that are based on a succession of events (for example the accession of kings), the definition of which will be defined in more detail below. The initial task of this thesis will be to explore the broader context of this linear aspect of time-reckoning throughout the medieval world; this will take into account the relationship between concepts of time and the consciousness of history as it seems to be represented by medieval scholars, for which the scholarship of Hans-Werner Goetz will be particularly invaluable.<sup>23</sup> The study will then consider aspects of how these ideas translated into an Icelandic context, before defining some methods of measuring the count of years and the media in which these methods of reckoning

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<sup>20</sup> *Morkinskinna*, for example, displays detailed genealogical information about the kings of Sicily, and *Íslendingabók* contains a series of genealogies at its conclusion; Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, ch. 61b, p.321; Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, pp. 13-14

<sup>21</sup> *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* includes one date to ‘Mánadagsmorgininn í gagndögum’, *Hák*, vol. 2, ch. 277, p. 111; ‘Monday morning in the Gang-days’, Dasent, *The Saga of Hacon*, vol. 2, ch. 239, p. 241

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Hastrup, ‘Calendar and Time Reckoning’; Powell, ‘*Primstav* and Apocalypse’

<sup>23</sup> See Goetz, ‘The Concept of Time’

appear. Besides Goetz, this summary will build upon the work of scholars such as Faith Wallis, Leofranc Holford-Strevens, Aaron Gurevich, Gerd Weber and Sverre Bagge.<sup>24</sup>

Having established some context for the study it will then be necessary to analyse a series of Icelandic written sources to collate data on the types of time reckoning methods used in these sources. Although the methods of time reckoning have been commented on in various contexts as part of general analyses on the Icelandic perception of time, there has been little attention paid to trying to systematically document the types of methods of recounting the years that have been used. Most analyses of Icelandic time reckoning thus far have been focused on trying to establish the concept of time in Medieval Iceland<sup>25</sup>, and have often focused primarily on the Icelandic calendar and the ordering of the day and the year. The closest to a systematic study that has been made at present was undertaken by Bagge in his consideration Snorri's chronology in *Heimskringla*,<sup>26</sup> which was restricted to this single collection of *Konunga sögur* and only went into specific detail about a couple of the sagas contained within it - namely *Óláfs saga helga*, *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, *Haralds saga ins hárfagra* and the sagas dealing with the civil war era. Powell also makes some mention of the methods of time reckoning utilised in a single Icelandic saga, *Gísla saga Surssonar*, yet this analysis is restricted to this non-historiographical example.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, there is definitely room for a comprehensive study on the subject, however in the interests of space this study will choose to focus on a few specific texts which offer a good opportunity to analyse both the evolution of attitudes throughout the Commonwealth period and the types of historiographical material that this period provides. In this respect the analysis will allow the individuality of each text to be considered, in the hope of creating a more detailed overall impression of how attitudes varied.

The difficulty with this study is clearly in selecting the range of sources that will be taken into account, given the size of the corpus available; the investigation will be restricted to historiographical sources which are directly related to the key concept under discussion - Icelandic world views and perceptions of their relationships with Norway - and which can be

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<sup>24</sup> See Wallis, *Reason and Reasoning*; Holford-Strevens, *The History of Time*; and Gurevich, 'Space and Time'; Weber, *Intellegere historiam*'; and Bagge, *Society and Politics*

<sup>25</sup> See Hastrup, *Calendar and Time Reckoning*; Powell 'Primstav and Apocalypse'; Gurevich, 'Space and Time'

<sup>26</sup> Bagge, *Society and Politics*, pp. 32-56

<sup>27</sup> Powell, 'Primstav and Apocalypse', pp. 62-3; Elizabeth Ashman Rowe has also presented some considerations of the link between annals and certain historiographical sagas, although she has not analysed in particular detail the importance of the various chronologies that are used; see Ashman Rowe, 'Saga History or Annalistic History?'

said to represent a broad chronological range throughout (and shortly after) the Commonwealth period. Defining historiography in an Icelandic context is problematic, however: in his consideration of historical consciousness, Goetz makes the point that one aspect of medieval historical consciousness is the consideration of historiography as a distinct genre, known as *'historia'*,<sup>28</sup> characterised by, as Isidore of Seville puts it, 'the narration of facts for the purpose of historical knowledge',<sup>29</sup> and consequently suggests that medieval scholars (such as Isidore) distinguish this definition from certain other types of texts which were based on historical matters but had some other intention. In Icelandic literature, terminologically speaking, this is not the case; as Sverrir Tómason points out, Icelandic texts substituted *'saga'* for *'historia'*, and although the historical nuance of this term is recognised even in modern Icelandic, ultimately this term is best understood purely as 'that which is told in prose' and does not distinguish between fact and fiction<sup>30</sup> - this results in a certain ambiguity, therefore, in the definition of certain Icelandic sagas as historiographical, especially given the range of material on offer.

Both in terms of chronology and of genre, however, Ari fróði Þorgilsson's *Íslendingabók* would seem to be a key place to start. This text, thought to have been composed in the early twelfth century, is not a saga and is widely considered to represent the birth of Icelandic historiographical composition (as, for example, Hastrup has argued).<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the text abounds with references to different chronologies which are an integral feature of its structure. *Íslendingabók* presents its historiographical material in a different format to the narrative-driven sagas which make up the majority of the Icelandic corpus of historiographical material, and has the advantage of being written from a completely different perspective, one which Gunnar Karlsson acknowledges to be 'sceptical' towards Norwegian crown authority<sup>32</sup> and which, according to Hastrup, is indicative of the view that Icelanders saw themselves as an autonomous subset of Norwegians. The analysis of this key text shall be the starting point of this discussion and will provide the framework within which the investigation will continue.

Many Icelandic sources highlight a relationship to Norway: it is a frequent port of call for many of the saga characters - particularly the Norwegian court. As this study will attempt to

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<sup>28</sup> Goetz, 'The Concept of Time', p. 141

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142

<sup>30</sup> Sverrir Tómason, 'Old Icelandic Prose', p. 72

<sup>31</sup> Hastrup, 'Defining a Society', 87-8

<sup>32</sup> Gunnar Karlsson, *Iceland's 1100 Years*, p. 65

focus on Icelandic attitudes towards Norway as part of a broader world view, it makes sense to restrict the analysis to sources that are primarily focused on Norwegian events, specifically the *Konunga sögur*. This category of sagas is considered by many reflect the earliest manifestation of the saga genre<sup>33</sup> and their content seems to be primarily historiographically driven - largely conforming to Goetz's definition of the term<sup>34</sup> - as opposed to the more literary *Íslendinga sögur*. The earliest of these sagas predate the submission to Norway in the second half of the thirteenth century, and consequently make for an interesting comparison with those that came immediately after this epochal moment in Icelandic history. Their limitations should, however, be recognised; they are somewhat limited by the fact that they are primarily concerned with documenting the lives of Norwegian kings, and consequently one might expect that the chronologies within them will be dominantly Norwegian. Bagge suggests, for example, that Snorri's use of chronology in *Heimskringla* was entirely determined by his subject matter.<sup>35</sup> However, the probable predominance of Norwegian chronologies merely serves to emphasise those instances when chronologies from other contexts were applied and raise interesting questions as to why they were used.

The most well-known of the *Konunga sögur* is *Heimskringla*, which is generally accepted to have been composed and compiled by Snorri Sturluson.<sup>36</sup> Snorri represents an important figure in this period, and is recognised as being an important player in the gradual process by which Iceland was brought under Norwegian control (although he died many years before this was actually brought about).<sup>37</sup> Given Snorri's known close-ties to the Norwegian crown it is not difficult to gain an understanding of his motivations and attitudes, ideas which seem to be reflected in the in the construction of *Heimskringla*. The general consensus is one of a man who 'was not directly opposed to the introduction of royal power in Iceland...[yet] could at least see both sides of the argument.'<sup>38</sup> For the purpose of trying to determine Icelandic relationships with the Norwegians, then, the factors which shaped Snorri's perceptions have

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<sup>33</sup> Grønlie, 'Saint's Life and Saga Narrative', 5

<sup>34</sup> Goetz, 'The Concept of Time', p. 143; Goetz defines historiography by the following criteria: by subject (*res gestae and memorabilia gestae*), by claims to reflect the truth, by examination of the past and origins, by intention to hand down the *res gestae* of the past to posterity and by the specific manner of representation (in chronological order). Even given the more ambiguous nature of the sagas the *Konunga sögur* seem to largely meet these criteria, to varying degrees, and these intentions are often expressed in the prologues to the work (see, for example, Finlay, *Snorri Sturluson*, pp. 3-6),

<sup>35</sup> Bagge, *Society and Politics*, p. 50

<sup>36</sup> Even if Snorri's authorship is doubted, the association of *Heimskringla* with his name is such that our perception of the historical Snorri Sturluson is integrally bound to the 'Snorri Sturluson' that is referred to when one talks of the authorship of *Heimskringla*.

<sup>37</sup> Sverrir Tómason, 'Old Icelandic Prose', pp. 101-111

<sup>38</sup> Gunnar Karlsson, *Iceland's 1100 Years*, p. 80

effectively been understood by historians.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, Bagge has already provided some analysis of Snorri's use of time reckoning, however a study of different *Konunga sögur* can test his conclusions in a different context. *Heimskringla* will therefore not be subject to detailed analysis, although its influence will not be overlooked. Instead, this discussion will focus on *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna* - compilations of a similarly broad scope (covering a large chronological period and thus offering more potential data than the saga of a single king might) - and what they can reveal about Icelandic attitudes in the half-century before the submission to Norway. For a point of contrast, the investigation will also include an analysis of Sturla Þórðarson's *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, a saga that was commissioned by the titular King's son, Magnús, not long after the submission had taken place.<sup>40</sup> This is an important contribution to the corpus, written by an important Icelandic chieftain and member of the Norwegian court who had been a player in the events leading up to the submission and was writing about the king who had overseen it. *Hákonar saga* also stands out as being worthy of analysis due to construction which, as Elizabeth Ashman Rowe notes, is profoundly influenced by Iceland's annalistic tradition;<sup>41</sup> consequently it is a text in which regular chronology plays a key role. This results in a source which offers the prospect of a glut of data - despite the fact that it covers the course of only one reign - and of stylistic comparison with these quintessential examples of 'saga history'.<sup>42</sup>

Once the data from these sources has been collated it will be analysed to determine whether there are observable trends in the methods used by Icelanders to record the passage of time in their historiographical works. A great deal of scholarship makes a connection between the sagas, Ari's writing and the Icelandic annals, with Bagge commenting that *Íslendingabók* is 'essentially annalistic';<sup>43</sup> the consensus seems to be that the annalistic format represents one of two fundamental elements of Icelandic historiography, the other being genealogy.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, there will be some limited comparison between the sources in question and the Icelandic annals, before the study draws the sources together to address the key aims.

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<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Guðrún Nordal, 'Snorri and Norway'

<sup>40</sup> Sverrir Tómasson, 'Old Icelandic Prose', p. 120

<sup>41</sup> Ashman Rowe, 'Saga History or Annalistic History?'

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Bagge, *Society and Politics*, p. 32

<sup>44</sup> Sverrir Jakobsson, '*Hauksbók*', p. 29

## 2. Historiography, time and methods of time reckoning in the medieval context

### 2.1 Concepts of time and historiography in medieval Europe

It would be unwise to delve too deeply into a study of Icelandic methods of time reckoning without some consideration of the progression of scholarly thought on the issue in the wider medieval European context. As Sverrir Jakobsson states, chronological aspects of Icelandic literary culture seem completely indebted to this context;<sup>45</sup> the use of progressive chronologies is largely dependent on the Christian linear interpretation of time and universal history. The vast array of historiographical (or partially historiographical) material which was composed and copied throughout the medieval period in Iceland suggests a very developed historical consciousness inherent in Icelandic society - a suggestion that even external scholars of the time appreciated.<sup>46</sup> It is difficult to imagine, therefore that concepts of time and means of measuring time would not also play a significant role in Icelanders' construction of their history; Hans-Werner Goetz suggests that a historical consciousness is defined by three specific elements: a consciousness of the historical nature of the world, including a consciousness of the mutability of history and the historic authenticity of events; a conception of history, which 'covers a mental act of organising the amorphous mass of historical information and knowledge into a systematic process';<sup>47</sup> and a specific interest in history, which closely combined past, present and future. Goetz concludes that historical consciousness is 'inconceivable' without a conscious concept of time;<sup>48</sup> time was crucial as a means of providing the systematic structure that historical thinking required.

This much was recognised by the medieval scholars themselves; Hugh of St Victor of Paris, for example, describes three 'circumstances of historical fact'; *personae* (persons, ie those

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<sup>45</sup> Identified as the 'Catholic hegemonic' context by Sverrir Jakobsson; Sverrir Jakobsson, '*Hauksbók*', p. 23

<sup>46</sup> as the previous quotation from Theodoricus Monachus, and further references from medieval scholars, such as Saxo Grammaticus, would seem to support; see *Saxo Grammaticus: History of the Danes*, preface, p. 5; 'The diligence of the men of Icelandi must not be shrouded in silence...they pursue a steady routine of temperance and devote all their time to improving our knowledge of others' deeds'.

<sup>47</sup> Goetz, 'The Concept of Time', p. 140

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

performing the action), *loca* (the place where the action occurred) and *tempora* (the time when it occurred)<sup>49</sup> - thus time is considered a central aspect of presenting historical fact - as Hugh puts it 'you will find the order of time in the sequence of events'.<sup>50</sup> The works of both of these authors are likely to have been familiar to Icelandic historiographers;<sup>51</sup> Icelandic scholars were building on a well-established medieval European foundation. It should be noted that the means of measuring the progression of time in historiography were socially determined and thus can impact upon the interpretation of historical progression - thus indicating the relevance of an analysis of these means.

This recognition of the value of time led to a situation in which, as Goetz puts it 'installation of historical events in their temporal and chronological frame...became the more genuine task of medieval historiography'.<sup>52</sup> This is demonstrated by the emergence of annals as an historiographical medium, springing from the occasional comments on events found in British Easter tables,<sup>53</sup> and by the development of chronicles which (unsurprisingly) provided a chronological framework to their material but also added subdivisions into different chapters or 'periodisations' representing different reigns or eras. Marianus Scotus adopted such an approach in his *Chronicon*, devoting a chapter to each emperor in a way which is strikingly similar to the sagas divisions found in the compilations of *Konunga sögur*. This led to the development of two chronological systems; incarnation dating and the registering of reigns, which were related inasmuch as it was felt that historical correctness was based on successfully incorporating the latter into the former and formulating them into a continuous chronology. This is highlighted by various medieval texts which placed the reigns of various different kings and emperors and incarnation dating in parallel, such as the *Chronica* of Frutolf of Michelsberg.<sup>54</sup> Inherent in this presentation, and in the linking of absolute time with the chronology of reigns, was the idea that history was a 'continuum' characterised by periodical 'translations' of power; thus the power of the Roman empire was translated into the Byzantine empire and thence into the Frankish and Holy Roman empires; in the perception of the medieval historiographical mind-set, it had not come to an end. Similarly a particular peoples might change their geographical location, their name for themselves and even their language and still be considered the same people; as Goetz notes, Spanish history

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142; Goetz would further add the action itself; *negotium*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144

<sup>51</sup> Sverrir Tómason, 'Old Icelandic Prose', p. 72

<sup>52</sup> Goetz, 'The Concept of Time', p. 145

<sup>53</sup> Haug, 'The Icelandic Annals as a Historical Source', 264

<sup>54</sup> Goetz, 'The Concept of Time', pp. 147-9; incidentally this method is how I have pursued my data collection for this project - see *Appendices*

was still referred to as ‘the history of the Visi-Goths’ in the thirteenth century.<sup>55</sup> This cycle of constant renewal within a linear system allowed for the possibility of repetition and the comparison of long-passed events to the present; this in turn made way for the typological interpretation that dominated medieval - including Icelandic - literature.

## 2.2 Chronology and world view in the Icelandic historiographical context

A number of scholars who have studied the transfer of these ideas into Icelandic (or, more generally, Scandinavian) historiography, have come to the conclusion that in these cultures there is a fundamental opposition between two main concepts of time. Although expressed in different ways, they fundamentally seem to agree that the opposition is between Christian clerical time on the one hand and a native tradition on the other; Sverre Bagge suggests that, at least in the context of Icelandic literature, there is a fundamental contrast between ‘primitive’ time, which is relative and cannot be abstracted from events, and ‘learned’ time, which is based on abstracted absolute chronologies which allow any event to be placed on a ‘fixed, linear timescale’.<sup>56</sup> In Bagge’s view the sagas adhere to this ‘primitive’ time, to a greater or lesser extent; thus in *Heimskringla* Snorri relies on the internal chronology of each king’s reign rather than references to absolute Christian dating, working on the principle that the events that took place during each king’s reign were in some way inextricably related to it; in his words these events ‘belong’ to that king, even if they do not take place within his realm.<sup>57</sup> Taking this view to its logical conclusion would imply that the instances where saga-writers such as Snorri refer to chronologies that are not related to the reigns of the kings which define his structure, such as the Christian incarnation dates, are to be considered instances of the abstracted ‘learned’ chronology. This would extend to the writers’ use of the reigns of kings and popes and other external continuous chronologies, such as Sturla Þórðarson’s reference to ‘Innocentii páfa’ *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161

<sup>56</sup> Bagge, *Society and Politics*, p. 49

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53; It is noticeable that this view does seem to echo Goetz’s statement about the two dominant medieval methods of chronicling time (*see above*). Crucially, Goetz makes the point that many medieval scholars strove for a ‘factual and narrative’ unity between these two, something which Bagge seems less inclined to imply.

<sup>58</sup> *Hák*, vol. 1, ch. 1, p. 171; ‘Pope Innocent’, Dasent, *The Saga of Hacon*, vol. 1, ch. 1, p. 1

While the significance that Bagge attributes to the reign of the king seems to be justified due to its use as a unit of chronology in the other *Konunga sögur* compilations, the polar opposition between the two approaches implied by this line of reasoning does not seem entirely realistic, because if the events of a particular king's reign are said to 'belong' to him, even those beyond his influence, then references to other kings and reigns must imply that the events in some way 'belong' to these kings as well. This suggests that the opposition of 'primitive' and 'learned' time is not as much of a fundamental dichotomy as Bagge indicates.<sup>59</sup> The use of these external chronologies undoubtedly abstracted them from their original contexts, and yet the implication of their appearance is that they were, for whatever reason, considered relevant, as their mention in the text involved them in the narrative to a certain degree. It is already evident that the concepts of 'primitive' and 'learned' time could be combined for structural purposes, as Bagge himself acknowledges and as Elizabeth Ashman Rowe argues with regard to the annalistic content of sagas,<sup>60</sup> but it seems that they might be more appropriately viewed as a spectrum than as opposing poles. This study will approach the data from the angle that no reference to a particular chronology is irrelevant.

Sverrir Jakobsson also concludes that there are two types of historiographical writing, although he seems more inclined to argue that they can be mixed,<sup>61</sup> however, his argument takes a slightly different approach, stating that the opposition is between 'clerical' time, expressed by chronicles and chronologies, etc, and 'aristocratic' time, expressed by genealogy.<sup>62</sup> This opposition similarly implies the importance of information such as the reigns of kings, etc, although it focuses less on the idea of the reign of a king as an important chronological unit and rather on the succession of kings and their origins. Sverrir uses this distinction to make the argument that Icelandic literature expresses a world view which is largely defined by these two approaches, and yet ultimately that they gradually merged to the extent that by the time *Hauksbók* was assembled in the fourteenth century a synthesis of clerical and aristocratic thinking had been achieved - expressed by a respectively religious and secular conception that the East represented the centre of the world and that the Icelandic élite was connected to that centre genealogically. The idea of this genealogical connection

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<sup>59</sup> It should be acknowledged that Bagge's analysis of *Heimskringla* does not take the use of non-Christian external chronologies into account, a decision which may have affected his conclusions.

<sup>60</sup> Ashman Rowe, 'Saga History or Annalistic History?'

<sup>61</sup> Sverrir Jakobsson, '*Hauksbók*', p. 29

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

was not unusual in the medieval consciousness,<sup>63</sup> and the interpretation of the chronologies used by the Icelanders must be understood in this context. Gurevich also emphasises the importance of genealogy, although he identifies this as ‘family/kinship’ time<sup>64</sup> - this adds an interesting facet to the discussion as it may cast light on some of the more personal relationships that are displayed in the use of specific chronologies. As a side-note; while Gurevich feels that the kinship/family time he describes is part of the ‘archaic mind [which] is ‘unhistorical’ and is a feature of pre-Christian chronologies,<sup>65</sup> the sense that genealogy could lead back to the Middle East is undoubtedly influenced by the aforementioned sense in medieval Christian historiography that there was a single continuum of world history characterised by certain shifts - in this case a migratory shift westwards.

## 2.3 Varieties of ‘chronology’

This investigation focuses on the use of distinct chronologies; methods of dating by events or progression of events that place the date in a context, the knowledge of which is necessary for the dating to be significant. There are various types of chronology, although undoubtedly the most common that will be seen in this paper are based on regnal years and successions. As indicated, the paper largely avoids the use of sub-annual chronologies which are based on the cyclical progression of the year - seasons, specific days, etc - except when their use is valuable for the construction of more general points. Such sub-annual dating systems are characteristic of the types of dating used by ‘peasant communities’, as Leofranc Holford-Strevens points out,<sup>66</sup> although their use is also related to liturgical structures.<sup>67</sup> Regnal years are merely one way of establishing annual chronology, yet this method was one of most widespread in the historiography of the medieval period;<sup>68</sup> it seems to have gained traction in

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<sup>63</sup> Indeed it is the appearance of this phenomenon in Iceland was the result of influence from the British tradition of the Brittonic people being descended from Trojans or Romans transmitted via Geoffrey of Monmouth, a recognised source for Icelandic historiographical thinking; see Sverrir Tómason, ‘Old Icelandic Prose’, p. 73

<sup>64</sup> Gurevich, ‘Space and Time’, 50-1

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 50; In all, Gurevich’s views are perhaps somewhat dated in their approach to pre-Christian concepts of time - many of the arguments he makes about the importance of regularly repeated events could equally be applied to the typological approach in Christian scholarship, discussed above.

<sup>66</sup> Holford-Strevens, *The History of Time*, p. 108

<sup>67</sup> This raises interesting questions about the function of liturgy on a local level which, sadly, are beyond the remit of this paper

<sup>68</sup> Holford-Strevens, *The History of Time*, p. 112

Europe in the late antique period, being used by the Byzantine emperors from Justinian, who adopted it in AD 537.<sup>69</sup>

Regnal year chronologies can apply theoretically to any holder of a specific office. They are thus distinct from eponymic chronologies that apply to holders of an office with a fixed term using the formula ‘when *x* was [title of office]’,<sup>70</sup> such as Roman consular dating. When this formula occurs in the sources under discussion, it is usually a non-specific reference to the reign of a particular authority figure and gives no indication of the internal chronology of that reign. The other most significant form of chronology for the purposes of this study is the era. This is a chronology in which years are numbered perpetually from a single starting point (as, for example, regnal years do with the succession of a new monarch). This starting point is an epoch, and the use of the term in this study should be understood in this context. The most obvious form of era chronology is the Christian Anno Domini dating, referred to by Ari *fróði* as ‘almanntali’,<sup>71</sup> which became widespread after its use by the sixth-century scholar Dionysus Exiguus for the construction of Easter tables, although it did not become universal until at least the eleventh century.<sup>72</sup> Other types of era dating include perpetuated reigns which continue to measure the years of a reign after the death of the ruler, such as the era of Diocletian.<sup>73</sup> Dating from the death of a ruler could be considered a variation of this for, although such dates should not be understood as eras in the same sense as a perpetuated reign, they also date from a specific epoch. A final form of dating to consider is personal dating, which is based on the years of a specific individual’s lifetime, as such chronologies do make an appearance in the sources.

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110

<sup>71</sup> *Ísl*, vol. 1., ch. 10, p. 26; ‘common method of reckoning’, Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, ch. 10, p. 12

<sup>72</sup> Holford-Strevens, *The History of Time*, p. 124-5

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120

### 3. Methodology: *Íslendingabók* as a template for chronological analysis

*Íslendingabók* is a natural place to begin this investigation due to the abundance of material that it provides with its ten short chapters. First and foremost the text is notable for its construction of a very elaborate chronology which, suitably for our purposes, refers to numerous different chronologies taken from all over the medieval world - for example, after describing Bishop Gizurr's death, Ari states that '*á því ári enu sama obiit Paschalis secundus páfi...ok Baldvini Jórsalakonungr...En tveim vetrum síðarr varð aldamót. Þá hófðu þeir Eysteinn of Sigurðr verit sjautján vetr konungar.*'<sup>74</sup> This density of information makes it an ideal exemplar upon which to base the analyses of the other texts under consideration, thus *Íslendingabók* will be used to establish the criteria that will be used for the remainder of the investigation. Furthermore, *Íslendingabók*, composed between 1122 and 1133, is 'the first surviving written history of the Icelanders'<sup>75</sup> and is therefore as close as we are likely to get to the inception of Icelandic historiographical composition. Written by a renowned scholar (cited as an authority in numerous sources from the *First Grammatical Treatise*<sup>76</sup> to Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*, in which he states that Ari was 'forvittr...námgjarn ok minnigr')<sup>77</sup> it also reflects a perspective from over a century before Iceland finally submitted to Norwegian rulership in 1262-4 and long before the period in which agents of the Norwegian king became a commonplace feature of the Icelandic political landscape.<sup>78</sup> Ideologically speaking, Kirsten Hastrup argues that this text was written at a time when Iceland was forging a new identity for itself, highlighted by the first recording of the Icelandic law in written form which is described in Ari's text itself.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, the text gives a very positive impression of the Icelandic commonwealth during Ari's lifetime; we are told, for example, that the writing of the laws and the passage of certain homicide laws associated with it were

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<sup>74</sup> *Íslendingabók*, p. 25; 'in the same year Pope Paschal II died... as did Baldwin kng of Jerusalem... and Philip the king of the Swedes... And two years later a new lunar cycle began. Eysteinn and Sigurðr had then been kings in Norway for seventeen years', Grønlie, *Íslendingabók: Kristi Saga*, p.13

<sup>75</sup> Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, pp. ix, xiii-xiv.

<sup>76</sup> 'that sagacious (historical) lore that Ari Þorgilsson has recorded in books with such reasonable understanding', Hreinn Benediktsson, *The First Grammatical Treatise*, pp. 208-9

<sup>77</sup> *Prologus*, *Heimskringla*, pp. 6-7; 'wise... eager to learn and retentive', *Heimskringla*, pp.4-5

<sup>78</sup> Gunnar Karlsson, *Iceland's 1100 Years*, ch. 1.13, pp.

<sup>79</sup> 'our laws should be written down in a book' etc, Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, ch. 10, p. 12

met with unanimous approval. The text itself is linked to the emergence of Icelandic cultural identity, creating a history for Iceland that was uniquely Icelandic and attempted to distinguish the Icelanders from their (primarily) Norwegian ancestors.<sup>80</sup> Consequently, it is clearly a text that cannot be ignored in the following discussion.

The desire to create a national identity was foremost amongst Ari's motives in composing the text, and chronological structure seems to have played a part in this; Pernille Hermann argues convincingly that the broad structure of the text reflects Christian typologies in order to divinely legitimise Icelandic history,<sup>81</sup> suggesting that the narrative takes on a tripartite typological structure based on the epochal events of the Landnám, the formation of the *Alþing* and the coming of Christianity, which correspond to the three eras of Christian salvation history - *ante legem* (before the law), *sub lege* (under the law) and *sub gratia* (under grace).<sup>82</sup> It is plain that, on a macrocosmic scale, Ari's use of chronology was laden with meaning which underlies the motives of his history. It should come as no surprise, then, that *Íslengingabók* offers plenty of material on a more microcosmic scale which seems to imply Ari's 'patriotic' tendencies.<sup>83</sup>

In particular, Ari draws together a series of intertwining chronologies from all over the Christian world, whether they be the reigns of Norwegian kings, popes or kings of Jerusalem, while at the same time he consistently ties events to the progression of Icelandic lawspeakers. This is valuable for the purposes of the present analysis as it makes it possible to categorise these chronologies based on the broadness of the level of world perception they entail. For example, references to the lawspeakers can be categorised as involving a purely Icelandic-based perception, whereas references to kings of Jerusalem are the result of a perception encompassing the Christian world view, for which Jerusalem was the centre.<sup>84</sup> The array of chronologies that Ari employs can be compared to a point that Hastrup makes about the world view expressed in the Icelandic law codes such as *Grágás*; she points out that these law codes recognised three tiers of what she calls 'taxonomic space', based on certain specific criteria. Primarily there is a distinction between Icelanders and *útlendir menn* - anyone residing outside of Iceland and not subject to Icelandic law - Hastrup describes this as a

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<sup>80</sup> Hastrup 'Defining a Society', 87-8

<sup>81</sup> Pernille Hermann, 'Who were the *Papar*?', pp. 148

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 150-1

<sup>83</sup> Although ideally this term should be avoided, as Hastrup argues; Hastrup, 'Defining a Society', 91

<sup>84</sup> Sverrir Jakobsson, *Við og Veröldin*, p. 365

‘politico-geographical definition of boundaries.’<sup>85</sup> Secondly, there is a linguistic distinction between those who speak the *dǫnsk tunga* (i.e. Old Norse), who are eligible for political office in Iceland without the three years residency required by others, and those who do not.<sup>86</sup> Finally, there is a special position accorded to ‘people of Norway’ (*Noregsmenn*), who are entitled to certain rights and benefits that are not available to others.<sup>87</sup> Hastrup expresses these levels of legal inclusivity in the following diagram:

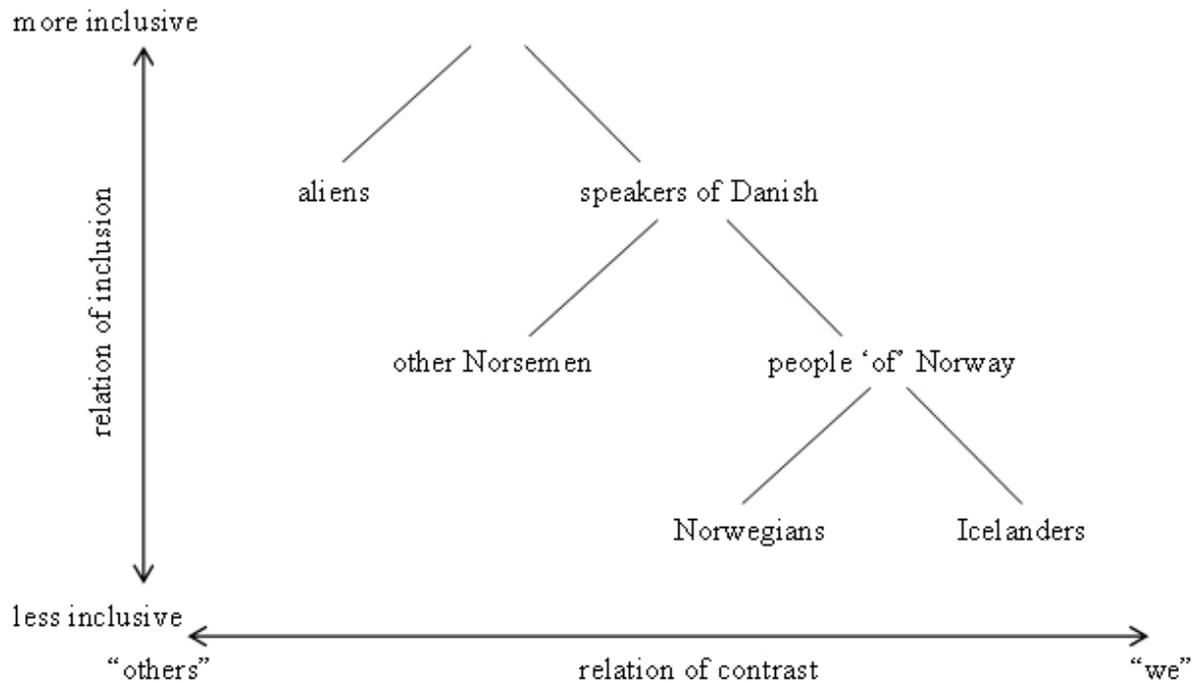


Figure 1: Chart depicting levels of legal inclusivity in *Grágás*, taken from Hastrup, ‘Defining a Society’, 87

Although primarily based on the Icelandic law code *Grágás*, this framework of different levels of identity seems to accord well with suggestions put forward by Sverrir Jakobsson; for example, he notes that saga characterisations of foreigners grew less favourable the more linguistically removed from ‘Danish’ the character was.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, he comments that there may have been different perceived ‘centres’ of Icelandic world view based on various social factors - secular aristocrats might have perceived Norway or Scandinavia as the centre, whereas Christian learned tradition (and subsequent secular origin myths such as Snorri

<sup>85</sup> Hastrup, ‘Defining a Society’, 85

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 86; ‘The collectivity of Norsemen was apparently seen as forming some kind of unity vis-à-vis the larger world, and this distinction, which was formulated in terms of language, was of relevance in various passages of the law, notably in clauses dealing with homicide and rights to claim inheritance on Icelandic soil’

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 86

<sup>88</sup> Sverrir Jakobsson, ‘Strangers in Icelandic Society’, 151-2

Sturluson's *Heimskringla*) placed the centre in the middle east.<sup>89</sup> Subsequently, there seems to be a good basis for using similar criteria to categorise the chronologies referenced by Ari, who refers to kings of Jerusalem and England, kings of Norway and Sweden and the tenures of various Icelandic bishops and lawspeakers. However, to these categories I would add two further categories: firstly, for the sake of clarity, I will draw a distinction between the incarnation dating referenced by Ari as the 'common method of reckoning',<sup>90</sup> which is based on widespread Christian learning, and chronologies which seem to indicate a knowledge of world events beyond Scandinavia. The final category I wish to add is one somewhat related to the category of Icelandic chronologies, yet it reflects the personal chronologies that are inserted by Ari - in other words, events related to the events of his own life, or to the personal timelines of the Icelandic figures he talks about, such as in chapter nine, when Ari dates the death of Bishop Ísleifr by stating that 'þar vas ek þá með Teiti fóstura minum, tolf vetra gamall'<sup>91</sup> when this occurred. Such chronologies may have important implications for our understanding of the individual relationships of the authors and Icelanders in general. Furthermore, these dates may be important in analysing Gurevich's concept of 'kinship/family' time, in which personal chronologies reflect a local perception or interpretation of the passage of time.<sup>92</sup> Consequently, we end up with six different categories by which to classify the dating references in *Íslendingabók*; Christian incarnation dating, 'worldwide' chronologies, chronologies of 'Danish'-speaking peoples, Norwegian chronologies, Icelandic chronologies and personal chronologies.

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<sup>89</sup> Sverrir Jakobsson, 'Hauksbók', p. 27

<sup>90</sup> *Íslendingabók Kristni saga*, p. 13; 'En hann adaðisk á qðru ári konungdóms Fóku keisara, fjórum vetrum ens sjaunda hundraðs eptir burð Krists at almannatali' *Íslendingabók Landnámabók*, p. 26

<sup>91</sup> *Íslendingabók Landnámabók*, p. 21; 'I was there with Teitr my foster-father at the time, and I was twelve years old', *Íslendingabók Kristni saga*, p. 11

<sup>92</sup> Gurevich, 'Time and Space' pp.50-1

## 4. Chronology and *Íslendingabók*

At first glance, the chronologies referred to by Ari in *Íslendingabók* are pretty much exactly what one would expect to see given the assumption that Icelandic identity was defined in many ways by its differing relationships to the parts of the outside world; just as *Grágás* demonstrates Hastrup's multiple levels of 'inclusion', Ari's use of chronologies displays a more intimate familiarity with events taking place closer to home than to those taking place further away and thus refers to them more frequently. For example, Ari dates events by the reigns of Norwegian kings on nine separate occasions (although occasionally providing information about more than one Norwegian king in the process), whereas he only links events to the reign of a pope three times, and to the king of Jerusalem once.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, the chronologies from closer to home seem to display a more consistent awareness of events; Ari is able to relate certain events to both contemporary and previous Norwegian kings, highlighting that he has an awareness of the lengths of time between the reigns of the kings he mentions. When it comes to his references to the Mediterranean chronologies, however, Ari does not indicate an awareness of the progression of each chronology beyond that which is immediately necessary for his comparison; in other words, he is aware that the event he is dating took place in a particular year in the reign of a particular king, but makes no attempt to ground the reign within its own context - we hear nothing of the reigns of the previous or succeeding kings. It is worth noting that this same lack of information is found in Ari's single reference to the king of Sweden dying - in fact, overall there seems to be very little reference to Scandinavian events beyond those relating to Norway (such as Óláfr Tryggvason's conflicts with the other Scandinavian kings at the time of the Icelandic conversion in 1000), which, at least at first glance, serves the purpose of indicating the importance of the latter in Icelandic perceptions. Unsurprisingly, the most consistent continuous chronology found is the succession of Icelandic lawspeakers, who form the structural backbone of the text from the point at which they are first mentioned until the text's conclusion.

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<sup>93</sup> See Appendix 1

## 4.1 Chronology and structure in *Íslendingabók*

If one thing is clear from *Íslendingabók* it is that Ari was a master of manipulating his chronologies for structural purposes, an attribute which may not have been given the attention it deserves or been too readily dismissed as ‘essentially annalistic’. Ari utilises his chronological material in a very specific style which seems to create a hierarchy of events based on the amount of chronologies which are found associated with it - for example, the death of Hallr, Ari’s informant, is dated by the death of bishop Ísleifr alone (‘[Hallr] hafði fjóra vetr ens tíunda tegar, þá es hann andaðisk, en þat vas...tíunda vetri eptir andlát Ísleifs biskups’),<sup>94</sup> whereas the conversion to Christianity is dated to the reign of King Óláfr Tryggvason, the death of King Edmund of the Angles and the birth of Christ: ‘Óláfr fell et sama sumar...Þat vas þremr tegum vetra ens annars hundraðs eptir dráp Eadmundar, en þúsundi eptir burð Krists at alþýðu tali.’<sup>95</sup> This creates a number of clusters of chronological information throughout the text - the most notable of which is in the conclusion of the text, where we are given a lengthy summing up of the status of the world at the death of Gizurr Ísleifsson:

‘Á því ári enu sama obiit Paschalis secundus páfi fyrr en Gizurr byskup ok Baldvini Jórsalakonungr ok Arnaldus patriarcha í Híerúsalem ok Philippus Svíakonungr, en síðarr et sama sumar Alexíus Grikkjakonungr; þá hafði hann átta vetr ens fjórða tegar setit at stóli í Miklagarði. En tveim vetrum síðarr varð aldamót. Þá hófðu þeir Eysteinn ok Sigurðr verit sjautján vetr konungar í Norvegi eptir Magnús fõður sinn Óláfsson Haraldssonar. Þat vas tuttugu vetrum ens annars hundraðs eptir Óláfs Tryggvasonar. en fimm tegum ens þriðja hundraðs eptir dráp Eadmundar Englakonungs, en sextán vetrum ens sétta hundraðs eptir andlát Gregórius páfa, þess es kristni kom á England, at því es talit es. En hann andaðisk á ǫðri ári konungdóms Fóku keisara, fjórum vetrum ens sjaunda hundraðs eptir burð Krists at almannatali. Þat verðr allt saman tuttugu ár ens tolfra hundraðs.’<sup>96</sup>

<sup>94</sup> *Ísl*, vol. 1, ch. 9, p. 21; ‘[Hallr] was ninety-four when he died; and that was...the tenth year after the death of Bishop Ísleifr’, Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, ch. 9, p. 11

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 7, pp. 17-18; ‘Óláfr Tryggvason fell the same summer...That was 130 years after the killing of Edmund, and 1000 years after the birth of Christ by the common method of reckoning’, Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, ch. 7, p. 9

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 10, pp. 25-6; ‘In the same year Pope Paschal II died before Bishop Gizurr, as did Baldwin king of Jerusalem and Arnulf Patriarch in Jerusalem, and Philip king of the Swedes and, later the same summer, Alexius king of the Greeks; he had then sat on the throne in Miklagarðr for thirty-eight years. And two years later a new

Several chronologies run throughout the text, however, and are key to its progression - for example, the death of King Edmund of the Angles is referenced from beginning to end - and a consistent and absolute chronological progression is provided from the foundation of the *Alþing* by the succession of the lawspeakers; each is named and the length of their office provided.

Often the progression of lawspeakers is the only information with which Ari's readers are presented - in chapter 9, a large part of the account is given over to nothing more than a list (punctuated by a reference to the death of King Haraldr in England).<sup>97</sup> This reflects the structural use of the lawspeakers to record the passage of 'empty time', as Sverre Bagge refers to it in his analysis of *Heimskringla*. Furthermore, the lawspeaker chronology is rarely related thematically to the narrative,<sup>98</sup> thus it forms a partially abstracted dating structure which provides the text with its chronicle-esque format. Once more, this reflects a conscious decision on Ari's part to choose an absolute system which is reflective of an Icelandic perspective. He is clearly aware of the Christian absolute dating system, and even considers it to be the 'almanntali',<sup>99</sup> yet still chooses to refer to it only in conjunction with turning points in Icelandic history. This clearly indicates a perception of Icelandic history as a largely self-contained microcosm, with its own seminal events and its own progression of time acting as what Weber describes as a typological reflection of Christian salvation history.<sup>100</sup> Only occasionally does Ari feel the need to link this progression to the overall Christian chronology, however by doing so, and with the other chronologies he makes use of, he is grounding this Icelandic microcosm in the actual progression of world history, an idea which chimes well with Weber's argument. Interestingly, this echoes Sverrir Jakobsson's consideration of *Hauksbók*, which in his view was intended to contextualise the progression

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lunar cycle began. Eysteinn and Sigurðr had then been kings in Norway for seventeen years after their father Magnús, son of Óláfr Haraldsson. That was 120 years after the fall of Óláfr Tryggvason, and 250 years after the killing of Edmund, king of the Angles, and 516 years after the death of Pope Gregory, who brought Christianity to England, according to what has been reckoned. And he died in the second year of the reign of the Emperor Phocas, 604 years after the birth of Christ by the common method of reckoning. That makes 1120 years altogether', Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, ch. 10, p. 13

<sup>97</sup> 'Gunnar the Wise had taken up the office of lawspeaker when Gellir left off, and he held it for three summers. Then Kolbeinn Flosason held it for six; the summer he took up the office of lawspeaker, King Haraldr fell in England. Then Gellir held it a second time for three summers; then Gunnarr held it for a second time for one summer; then Sighvatr Surtsson, Kolbeinn's sister's son, held it for eight', Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, ch. 9, pp. 10-11

<sup>98</sup> Exceptions being the foundations of the *Alþing* and the conversion and other events, which took place at the *Alþing*.

<sup>99</sup> *Ísl.*, vol. 1., ch. 10, p. 26; 'common method of reckoning', Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, ch. 10, p. 12

<sup>100</sup> Weber, '*Intellegere historiam*', p. 103; Weber actually applies this terminology to Nordic mythology, but it is also appropriate in the context of Ari's work.

of Icelandic and Scandinavian history within the ‘Catholic hegemonic world view’.<sup>101</sup> While Sverrir argues that attempts to do this only became fully developed in the fourteenth century,<sup>102</sup> the example of *Íslendingabók* seems to indicate a very sophisticated example of this procedure at the very birth of Icelandic literary tradition.

Ari’s use of chronology is reflective of the medieval typological understanding of the coming of Christ. As previously as discussed, Hermann notes that the structure of *Íslendingabók* focuses around three key events - the settlement of Iceland, the establishment of the *Alþing* and the conversion to Christianity - which themselves reflect the tripartite typological interpretation of the Bible (the creation, the bringing of the Law of Moses and the coming of Christ), and it is at these points in the text that we are given some of the most significant clusters of chronological information.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, Weber points out that the ability of historiographers to adapt their own national histories to reflect biblical typology was in part dependent on the idea that the ‘coming of Christ’, while a fixed point in world salvation history, was also symbolically represented by the conversion to Christianity in national histories - thus allowing treatment of pre-conversion events as ‘pre-Christian’, even if they occurred after or concurrently with the actual life, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.<sup>104</sup> Key to this idea was the concept that Christianity was spreading from the world’s centre to its extremities. Consequently, the moment of the coming of Christ becomes later and later in national histories as they get further away from Jerusalem. It is therefore significant that Ari concludes his national history with a passage in which he effectively dates the course of Christianity as it spreads out from Jerusalem. This tally, which is in a formulaic style found elsewhere in Icelandic literature,<sup>105</sup> grounds these national events in the course of human history and simultaneously reinforces the typological overtones of the text as a whole.

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<sup>101</sup> Sverrir Jakobsson, ‘*Hauksbók*’, p. 23

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34

<sup>103</sup> At the conversion to Christianity, for example: ‘Teitr gave us this account of how Christianity came to Iceland. And Óláfr Tryggvason fell the same summer according to the priest Sæmundr... That was 130 years after the killing of Edmund, and 1000 after the birth of Christ by the common method of reckoning’, Finlay, *Íslendingabók: Kristna saga*, ch. 7, p. 9

<sup>104</sup> Weber, ‘*Intellegere historiam*’, pp. 99-102

<sup>105</sup> A similar cluster is found in *Hákonar saga* vol 1, 1 kap, p. 171; As Powell argues, a similar effect is also achieved in *Gísla saga Súrssonar* by the reference to external events; Powell, ‘*Primstav* and Apocalypse’, pp. 62-3

## 4.2 Ari's use of chronology in the construction of Icelandic identity

As suggested, Ari refers to his chronologies with different degrees of consistency depending on their geographical origin, with those most divorced from the Icelandic context being the least used. Even the examples of Norwegian chronology suffer from this lack of consistency; Ari dates events by the reigns of six different Norwegian kings, and although he provides genealogical information for each (linking Óláfr Tryggvason, Óláfr Haraldsson and Haraldr Sigurðarson back to Haraldr *hárfagri*), he makes no attempt to document the succession of kings between them, essentially naming them out of context.<sup>106</sup> This is of particular interest because it seems likely that Ari would have been aware of the succession of Norwegian kings; Snorri references a vernacular *Noregskonungatal* (list of the kings of Norway) drawn up by Ari,<sup>107</sup> and *Íslendingabók* itself highlights Ari's familiarity with the genealogy of each of the Norwegian kings he mentions. Therefore this would seem to be a deliberate omission.

One conclusion that could be drawn from this is that Ari was trying to avoid using a continuous Norwegian chronology for a text which essentially expressed the development of an Icelandic identity, yet on its own this conclusion complicates the issue because, in that case, why would Ari use Norwegian chronologies at all? Although Ari does not rely on the Norwegian kings for an absolute chronology, he does refer to them at each of the most important stages of the development of Icelandic society; at the *landnám*, Hrafn Hoengsson's selection as the first Icelandic lawspeaker, the conversion to Christianity and the death of Skapti Þóroddson, who established the Fifth Court of the *Alþing*, and the deaths of bishops Ísleif Gizurarson and Gizurr Ísleifsson.<sup>108</sup> There is no avoiding the conclusion that Ari was consciously linking Icelandic events to a Norwegian chronology to a greater extent than any of the other non-Icelandic chronologies he drew upon. Furthermore, if the quantity of references is anything to go by he places a particular importance on the reigns of Haraldr

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<sup>106</sup> The one exception to this is found in chapter 10 when he refers to the joint kings Eysteinn and Sigurðr and notes that they had 'been kings in Norway for seventeen years after their father Magnús, son of Óláfr Haraldsson'. This however is primarily genealogical information; we are told nothing about the length of Magnús's reign, or of the kings who came before him - it just so happens that these Eysteinn and Sigurðr were the only Norwegian kings Ari mentions, after Haraldr *hárfagri*, who had received the throne from their father.

<sup>107</sup> Sverrir Tómason, 'Old Icelandic Prose', p. 99; Finlay, *Snorri Sturluson*, p. 4

<sup>108</sup> See Grønlie *Íslendingabók*; the settlement: 'in the days of Haraldr the Fine-Haired', ch. 1, p. 3; Hrafn Hoengsson: 'one or two years before Haraldr the Fine Haired died', ch. 3, p. 5; the conversion: 'King Óláfr, son of Tryggvi...brought Christianity to Norway and to Iceland', ch. 7, p. 7; Skapti's death: 'thirty years after Óláfr Tryggvason fell', ch. 8, p. 10; Ísleifr's death: 'eighty years after the fall of Óláfr Tryggvason', ch. 9, p. 11; Gizurr's death: '120 years after the fall of Óláfr Tryggvason', ch. 10, p. 13

*hárfagri* and Óláfr Tryggvason; Haraldr is mentioned on three occasions, and furthermore we are informed of the length of his reign, whereas Óláfr's death is used as an epoch to date the death of Skapti, Ísleifr and Gizurr. Jón Viðar Sigurðsson would suggest that this is a consequence of Iceland being part of the Norwegian nationwide 'time-zone' that was established by the accession of Haraldr *hárfagri*; following his successes he became the most important secular ruler in the Norse world<sup>109</sup> and consequently formed the focus of an ideological common identity.<sup>110</sup> This may be true to a certain degree, but *Íslendingabók* goes some way to making the picture more nuanced. The reign of Haraldr *hárfagri* is indeed the starting point for Ari's chronology, yet it should be remembered that Iceland was largely settled from Norway (and for ideological reasons this was often portrayed as a consequence of Haraldr's brutality)<sup>111</sup> - the use of Haraldr in this context was not so much an acknowledgement of his power but of his agency in the origins Icelandic society, however he was not so significant as the starting point of Icelandic history that Ari felt it necessary to refer to him at any point following the establishment of the *Alþing*, at which point the continuous native chronology of Icelandic lawspeakers begins.

The Norwegian kings continued to play a role in the development of Icelandic society, and most of the instances in which Ari refers to the Norwegian kings can be explained in this context; Úlfljótr brought the laws from Norway<sup>112</sup> and Óláfr Tryggvason 'kom kristni...á Ísland'.<sup>113</sup> This was clearly Ari's most important epoch, a typological turning point in Icelandic history, and ideologically speaking it may have been important to connect a king to this event; in *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* Sturla Þórðarson relates the opinion of the visiting Cardinal William that Iceland should be subjected to Norwegian rule; 'því að hann kallaði þat ósannligt at land þat þjónaði eigi undir enhvern konung sem öll önnur í veröldin'.<sup>114</sup> This statement of crown authority coming from a cardinal clearly aligns the Church with royal secular authority and suggests that Ari may have emphasised the connection between King Óláfr and the conversion to lend it legitimacy; to some degree the connection itself may have been more important than the fact that the king was Norwegian. As the text describes, this

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<sup>109</sup> Jón Viðar defines the 'Norse World' as 'Norway and its colonies', including Iceland, Orkney, the Faroes, etc. For the sake of convenience this definition will be applied throughout this study; Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, 'The Norse Community', p. 59

<sup>110</sup> Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, 'The Norse Community', p. 60-61

<sup>111</sup> Byock, *Viking Age Iceland*, pp. 82-4

<sup>112</sup> although it should be noted that this is not actually dated at all other than with the statement 'when Iceland had been widely settled', Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, ch. 2, p. 4

<sup>113</sup> *Ísl.*, vol. 1, ch. 7, p. 14; 'brought Christianity...to Iceland', Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, ch. 7, p. 7

<sup>114</sup> *Hák.*, vol. 2, ch. 301, p. 136; 'for he called it unfair that that land should not be subject to some king like all others in the world', Dasent, *The Saga of Hacon*, vol. 2, ch. 257, p. 262

conversion took place in the same year that Óláfr died, and the fact that the deaths of bishops Ísleif and Gizurr are dated by this death connects these two architects of the Icelandic religious establishment to the birth of Icelandic Christianity; it is not necessarily an indicator of Ari's dependence on the Norwegian 'time-zone'. The linking of Óláfr's death with that of Skapti Þoroddson cannot be so easily explained, however it should be noted that this occurred in the same year as the death of Óláfr Haraldsson, the impact of which (given his subsequent canonisation) undoubtedly echoed throughout the Norse world; similarly the reference to the death of Haraldr Sigurðarson in 1066 may hint at the importance of this event in the Icelandic consciousness. It should be noted that this does not necessarily imply that Ari saw Icelanders as culturally different to Norwegians; he may have seen them as a branch of Norwegian culture that had been allowed to develop in a different context. There is no doubt that Norwegian events would have impacted on the Icelandic world, however in *Íslendingabók* the picture is more complex than simply an ideological acknowledgement of Norwegian dominance in the Norse sphere.

Take, for example, the references to Haraldr *hárfagri*. As stated, Ari ceases to use him as a dating mechanism as soon as Iceland is granted a continuous native chronology, however Ari continues to refer back to him in the form of genealogical descriptions. *Íslendingabók* is chronological in structure for the most part but ends with a lot of genealogical material, supporting Sverrir Jakobsson's view that these were the primary forms of historical writing in the medieval Catholic world, but that the two could be merged.<sup>115</sup> Indeed, Ari even hints that an early version of *Íslendingabók* contained far more genealogical material.<sup>116</sup> Sverrir suggests that chronology was indicative of a clerical framework of history and that genealogy was associated with an aristocratic framework,<sup>117</sup> yet it seems that in *Íslendingabók* Ari plays with these different frameworks to create a new layer of meaning. Most obviously, genealogical information is used to emphasise the Scandinavian (largely Norwegian) pedigree of various Icelanders (including Ari himself, who, as Sverrir points out, links himself back to the 'Turks' in the manner which became typical of Icelandic aristocrats linking themselves to the Catholic hegemonic world view.)<sup>118</sup> However, while highlighting these Scandinavian origins of the Icelanders, Ari uses chronology to imply Icelandic identity and development, if not independence, from their Norwegian origins. Thus the narrative is

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<sup>115</sup> Sverrir Jakobsson, '*Hauksbók*', p. 34

<sup>116</sup> Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, ch. 1, p. 3

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29

<sup>118</sup> Sverrir Jakobsson, '*Hauksbók*', p. 30

initiated in Ari's foreword with the genealogy of Haraldr *hárfagri* and we are informed that the settlement of Iceland took place in his days. The first absolute date, however, is not related to this information at all - rather we are told that the settlement took place in the year that 'Ívarr Ragnarssonr loðbrókar lét drepa Eadmund enn helga Englakonung; en þat vas sjau tegum vetra ens níunda hundraðs eptir burð Krists.'<sup>119</sup>

There are numerous theories as to why Ari would choose to begin his history with a link to this chronology. Typologically, the reference to the Edmund's martyrdom links the *landnám* to Christianity at the genesis (I use the term advisedly) of Icelandic history, performing a similar function to the description of the Irish *papar* (monks who inhabited Iceland before the Norse arrived).<sup>120</sup> A connection is made between the martyrdom of Edmund and the sacrifice of Jesus, whose birth is referenced immediately afterwards, and sin in the form of murder is inserted into the picture. Yet what was the significance of this particular chronology? Grønlie notes that several of Ari's patrons claimed descent from St Edmund,<sup>121</sup> whereas Ólafía Einarisdóttir suggests that the link to Ragnar *loðbrók* is more significant.<sup>122</sup> This latter possibility seems unlikely however, given that there are three specific call-backs to the martyrdom of St Edmund throughout the text,<sup>123</sup> and yet in each instance only the king himself is mentioned - Ívarr is mentioned only in the first instance, thus he does not seem to be the most significant figure in connection with this date. Instead it seems likely that this is an attempt by Ari to begin his history with a chronology that is not related to the Norwegian Icelandic origins. The date is relevant given the genealogical links with his sponsors, and suggests from the outset of the text that Ari does not intend to be dependent on a Norwegian chronology (even though he is prepared to include such chronologies to acknowledge the Norwegian role in Icelandic history); in this sense he presents a new Icelandic perspective which is capable of combining different chronologies, recognises the importance of other cultures and asserts its own. It seems likely that the use of an external dating reference here resulted from the absence of any existing Icelandic chronology - none were available until the

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<sup>119</sup> *Ísl*, vol. 1, ch. 1, p. 4; 'Ívarr, son of Ragnarr *loðbrók*, had St Edmund, king of the Angles, killed; and that was 870 years after the birth of Christ', Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, ch. 1, p. 3

<sup>120</sup> Hermann, 'Who were the *Papar*?', p. 148

<sup>121</sup> Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, p. 16, note 11

<sup>122</sup> Ólafía Einarisdóttir, *Kronologisk metode*, p. 65; 'Ragnar lodbrog og hans sønners vikingebudrifter tilhørte islændingenes nationalhistorie fra tiden op til og under nybyggerperioden. For Ari og hans samtid stof Ragnar lodbrog derfor som en kendt historisk skikkelse'

<sup>123</sup> These are in chapters 3, 7 and 10

establishment of the *Alþing* brought with it the succession of lawspeakers.<sup>124</sup> This is supported by the fact that this English dating reference is next referred to at the foundation of the *Alþing* where it provides the tenure of the first lawspeaker with its only absolute grounding; although Haraldr *hárfagri* is mentioned in connection with this, the date is not given the same absolute credence - we are told that it was ‘sex tegum vetra eptir dráp Eadmundar konungs’, but only that it was ‘vetri eða tveim áðr Haraldr enn hárfagri yrði dauðr’.<sup>125</sup> It is interesting to note that this chronology is used throughout the entire text at the key moments which are otherwise noteworthy for the use of Norwegian chronologies, and suggests a greater importance placed upon this English chronology than has previously been supposed; this is an unexpected example of contrast with the model of an increased knowledge of Scandinavian chronologies over those beyond Scandinavia and it may reveal that this model is too simplistic, although this idea must be tested with regard to the other sources under consideration.

As Ari’s account progresses we see the appearance of an increasing number of chronologies which are based firmly in Icelandic society, particularly in chapters nine and ten; this is exactly what we would expect as the account draws closer to Ari’s own time and more data becomes available to him. It also serves to reinforce the impression that, as Icelandic society is becoming more sophisticated, it is better able to add its own chronologies to the panoply of external ones that are on offer, consolidating the impression of a unique Icelandic perspective which was central to Ari’s use of chronology. In particular, we start to hear more of the chronology of Icelandic bishops, such as Ísleifr Gizurarson and his son, Gizurr Ísleifsson (‘þat sumar, es Gizurr byskup hafði einn vetr verit hér á landi,’<sup>126</sup> ‘þá es Gizurr hafði alls verit byskup sex vetr ens fjórða tegar’).<sup>127</sup> The use of such chronologies differs from the

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<sup>124</sup> To refer back to typology only momentarily, the innovation of an absolute and continuous chronology at the point at which the law is recorded (typologically aligned with the establishment of the law of Moses) fits nicely with the perception of Moses as the first historian, an idea which is expressed in *Heimslýsing ok Helgifræði*, part of the *Hauksbók* compilation, to name an alternative Icelandic example; Sverrir Jakobsson, ‘*Hauksbók*’, p. 27

<sup>125</sup> *Ísl*, vol. 1, ch. 3, p. 9; ‘sixty years after the killing of Edmund...one or two years before Haraldr the Fine-Haired died’, Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, ch. 3, p. 5; This lack of specificity ties into the initial dating of the settlement of Iceland vaguely to Haraldr’s reign, which is stated to be based on ‘the reckoning of wise men’, a move which Ari might have made to distance himself from information he was unsure about. While Ari’s imprecise reference to Haraldr’s death might be regarded as a product of the uncertain tradition that he was working with, it was nevertheless his decision not to be more assertive in associating the precise year of Haraldr’s death with the foundation of the *Alþing*, and therefore I feel it is justified to treat this imprecision as a deliberate move on Ari’s part

<sup>126</sup> *Ísl*, vol. 1, ch. 10, p. 22; ‘the summer that Bishop Gizurr had been in the country for one year,’ Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, ch. 10, p. 11

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 10, p. 25; ‘when Gizurr had been bishop for thirty-six years in all,’ Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, ch. 10, p. 13

consistent chronology of the lawspeakers; instead, specific bishops are referred to in much the same way as the kings of Norway, as a means of dating historically important Icelandic events. Indeed, the death of Ísleif Gizurarson takes on the same epochal characteristics as King Óláfr Tryggvason, being used as a date twice in chapters nine and ten (‘tíunda vetr eptir andlát Ísleifs byskups’, ‘tveim vetrum eptir þat es Ísleifr andaðisk’).<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, the entire final chapter essentially becomes a biography of Gizurr Ísleifsson, beginning and ending with dates relating to his career. This use of these bishops’ chronologies serves to heighten their status, placing them on a level with the chronologies of the Norwegian kings; one might even argue that, chronologically speaking, the bishops are thereby imbued with the same role and authority in Icelandic society.

Throughout *Íslendingabók* there are numerous references to ‘personal’ chronologies which relate specific events according to the year in which they occurred in a personal timeline. Datings such as these are provided throughout the various sources presently under analysis, and largely follow this example of providing the age of the Norwegian king in question. This is somewhat interesting, given that the age of the king is somewhat independent of the regnal year chronologies, however it is perhaps more unusual that *Íslendingabók* is populated with some many examples of personal chronologies that are not related to kings, but to individual Icelanders, not all of whom are given much of a role beyond this use of their life - Hallr, for example, has his entire life briefly summarised from his baptism at the hands of Þangbrandr; ‘En Hallr sagði oss svá...at Þangbrandr skírði hann þrevetran... En hann...hafði fjóra vetr ens tíunda tegar, þá es hann andaðisk.’<sup>129</sup> Ari even uses his own life as a chronology on several occasions (‘ek vas...tolf vetra gamall’).<sup>130</sup> Primarily the motivations here should be seen as part of Ari’s overall effort to indicate his reliability; the indication that an element of the history was related to him via a first-hand account, or was even observed by him directly, undoubtedly adds authority to his narrative. Yet a comparison with other sagas that are related by key players in the events involved - such as *Hákonar saga* - highlights that the abundance of these personal chronologies in Ari’s material is unusual. This could be part of an effort to make the link from macrocosmic to microcosmic complete - he is relating events down to the lives of individual Icelanders, not just Icelandic history. The use of his own chronology in this regard seems to perform the function of reaffirming his own position in

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, chs. 9-10, p. 21; ‘the tenth year after the death of Bishop Ísleifr’, ‘two years after Ísleifr died’, Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, chs. 9, 10, p. 11

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 9, p. 21; ‘And Hallr...told us that Þangbrandr had baptised him when he was three years old...And he...was ninety-four when he died’, Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, ch. 9, p. 11

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*; ‘I was twelve years old’, Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, ch. 9, p. 10

world history. However, it also implies a personal interpretation of events, at the very least these examples serve as a warning against trying to establish a homogenous 'Icelandic' attitude; Ari reveals the extent to which events could be interpreted from a personal framework which was based around individual connections.

## 5. Chronology and the *Konunga sögur*

Analysis of *Konunga sögur* poses a difficulty as these texts are largely concentrated on the reign of the kings of Norway, and thus one would expect Norwegian chronologies to feature heavily within their structures, as is indeed the case. However this does not mean that the specific ways in which chronology are used cannot reveal interesting facets of the attitudes of the writers, and indeed the predominance of Norwegian subject-matter in Icelandic historiography itself indicates its role in Icelandic concepts of identity. Although the use of chronologies beyond the Scandinavian, when it does occur, is of interest to this discussion, on the whole the value of the *Konunga sögur* is in their individual treatment of Norwegian kings and what they can reveal about Icelandic Norwegian relationships. Ármann Jakobsson argues that the primary function of the *þættir* found throughout the text of *Morkinskinna* is to shed light on these relationships.<sup>131</sup> *Fagrskinna* also represents an interesting case, given the debate about its origins; conclusions that it was a Norwegian product of an Icelandic author<sup>132</sup> place it in a context that is of great value for our understanding of interactions between the two cultures.

*Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna* belong to the same tradition of *Konunga sögur* compilations as *Heimskringla*, composed during the closing decades of the Commonwealth. In both cases the names of the texts are derived from the manuscripts in which they survived; these names - ‘*Morkinskinna*’ meaning ‘rotten parchment’ and ‘*Fagrskinna*’ meaning ‘fair parchment’ - were attached to them to set them apart by Þormóður Torfason (also known as Torfæus) in the seventeenth century.<sup>133</sup> Unlike *Heimskringla* which is famously (and not unproblematically) linked to Snorri Sturluson, neither of these compilations have established authors, but there is little doubt that they all belong to the same stage in the development of the *Konunga sögur*. *Morkinskinna* is described by Theodore Andersson and Kari Ellen Gade as ‘the first compendious collection of Norse kings’ sagas’,<sup>134</sup> an earlier form of which is generally assumed to have been a major source for both *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla* (this is particularly apparent in passages in *Fagrskinna* which echo *Morkinskinna* word for word), and may have been compiled at some point between 1217 and 1222 (*Heimskringla* is

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<sup>131</sup> Ármann Jakobsson, *Staður í nýjum heimi*, pp. 332-4

<sup>132</sup> Finlay, *Fagrskinna*, p. 15

<sup>133</sup> Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, p. 5

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1

attributed to between 1225 and 1235).<sup>135</sup> The manuscript which gave the text its name can be dated by palaeography to the late thirteenth century.

*Fagrskinna*, on the other hand, does not survive in modern manuscripts, although it was also named for one of the two manuscripts it had occupied until both burned up in the Copenhagen fire of 1728. Alison Finlay describes the author of the text as a ‘conservative arranger of earlier written sources’,<sup>136</sup> including *Morkinskinna* and a host of extant and non-extant sources such as *Ágrip* and *\*Hryggjarstykki* - both of which may also have been sources for *Morkinskinna*.<sup>137</sup> It is also thought that *Fagrskinna* was a source for *Heimskringla* due to the similarity of certain passages, although it has been suggested that they merely shared sources; in any case, the consensus thus far has been to date *Fagrskinna* as slightly older than *Heimskringla*, to around 1220.<sup>138</sup> One of the most interesting aspects of *Fagrskinna*’s authorship, however, is that both manuscripts and certain other local traditions indicate that it was put together in Norway, possibly at Niðarós.<sup>139</sup> This has led to a continuing debate as to whether the author was Icelandic or Norwegian,<sup>140</sup> however to an extent this is not important; by its relationships to other contemporary texts it is clear that this text was a product of the milieu that is understood by modern scholars to be Icelandic. This discussion will largely follow Ármann Jakobsson in accepting that the saga belongs to an Icelandic tradition and reflects Icelandic ideas even if it was not produced in Iceland.<sup>141</sup>

*Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, on the other hand, represents a completely different form of the kings’ saga, from the very end of the era of their production. The saga was composed by Sturla Þórðarson, the nephew of Snorri Sturluson and a fellow contender for being one of the most significant scholarly politicians of medieval Icelandic history; he was a prolific author, penning *Íslendinga saga*, the longest part of *Sturlunga saga*, and having numerous other works attributed to him, serving as lawspeaker a mere decade before Iceland’s submission to Norway, before becoming part of the Norwegian court in 1263, bringing the law-code *Járnsiða* to Iceland in 1271 and serving as the judiciar of Iceland and later for the North West for the remainder of his career. Sturla’s *Hákonar saga* was commissioned by the titular

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<sup>135</sup> Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, p. 66

<sup>136</sup> Finlay, *Fagrskinna*, p. 2

<sup>137</sup> Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, pp. 72-7

<sup>138</sup> Finlay, *Fagrskinna*, p. 17

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16

<sup>141</sup> Ármann Jakobsson, *Í leit að konungi*, p. 309

king's son, King Magnús Hákonarson, and may have been intended to win favour at court following treason charges in 1263.<sup>142</sup>

## 5.1 The structural use of chronology in the *Konunga sögur*

Sverre Bagge has discussed at length the structural aspects of chronology that are apparent in *Heimskringla*;<sup>143</sup> *Fagrskinna* and *Morkinskinna* essentially follow the same approach of utilising both abstract and interior regnal dating but strike the balance between the two of them in different ways. Both have a structure based around a fairly limited array of specific dated references which form a loose framework between which there is a fairly limited chronological progression, largely expressed in the passage of seasons and years. This is particularly apparent in *Morkinskinna*, due to the abundance of *þættir* within its structure which are often abstracted from both the narrative and the chronology; in some cases, for instance, episodes such as these only inform us that the events described took place ‘in the time of King X’ (a type of eponymic dating), with no context provided within the reign itself - it is hard to tell if these *þættir* even fit chronologically with the events described before and after them in the text.<sup>144</sup> This mishmash of data and lack of dating leads Andersson and Gade to conclude that the *Morkinskinna* composer’s ‘most palpable authorial characteristic is a consistent lack of interest in chronology’, and he considers most of the dates used to be later interpolations from *Ágrip* or other sources.<sup>145</sup>

While it is true, however, that there are definite limitations to the chronological efforts made in the compilation, there is some vestige of a systematic element in the data that survives; for example, references to specific years in particular chronologies tend to accompany major shifts in a power balance in Scandinavian that involves the subject of the saga. Thus, the conflict between King Magnús and Sveinn Ástriðarson (described as jarl by the former and king by himself, as the text notes),<sup>146</sup> is dated to Magnús’s twentieth year, Magnús and Haraldr’s attacks on Denmark take place when they had ruled for two years, Magnús *berfætr*’s ill-fated attack on the British Isles takes place ‘er [hann] hafði ráðit landinu níu

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<sup>142</sup> Sverrir Tómason, ‘Old Icelandic Prose’, p. 120

<sup>143</sup> Bagge, *Society and Politics*, pp. 32-48

<sup>144</sup> See, for example, Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, ch. 83, p. 366

<sup>145</sup> Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, pp. 74-7

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 7, p. 127

vetr',<sup>147</sup> and so forth. This also applies to dynastic developments; Óláfr Magnússon's death takes place 'á þrettánda ári' of his joint reign with his brothers,<sup>148</sup> the claims of Eysteinn to rule with his Ingi and Sigurðr are pressed when they 'höfðu verit sex vetr konungar'.<sup>149</sup> We must conclude, therefore, that if all of these dates were later interpolations, then they were still intended to use chronology as a means of adding structure to the text.

*Fagrskinna* broadly seems to follow this trend and indeed makes use of regnal dating more frequently; the deaths of non-Norwegian Scandinavian kings, for example, are more frequently linked to the Norwegian king's regnal year.<sup>150</sup> Interestingly, the author of *Fagrskinna* does not see any problem with dating events by the regnal years of Hákon jarl; Bagge notes that Snorri neglects the chronology for the reigns of those that weren't of Harald hárfagri's dynasty in *Heimskringla*, attributing this to a belief that their reigns lacked legitimacy.<sup>151</sup> The *Fagrskinna* author does not appear to have agreed with this - which might make sense if it was indeed written in Niðarós, in the heartlands of the former power base of the jarlar of Hlaðir.

*Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, in contrast to the compilations, favours the 'annalistic' aspect of historiography and takes it to a level which structures the narrative strictly within a chronological format;<sup>152</sup> from the moment that Hákon becomes king the saga becomes a chronicle in which the passage of each year is marked retroactively with the stock phrase 'þessi var [nth] vetr ríkis Hákonar konungs'<sup>153</sup> (or variations thereupon). This effectively keeps the narrative grounded within its remit as the saga of this specific king's reign, even when events tend to meander from both the king's actions and the geographical location of his activities. It is notable that this system is almost completely consistent,<sup>154</sup> to a much greater degree than is apparent in *Heimskringla*.<sup>155</sup> As *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* was composed by Snorri Sturluson's nephew it is probably unsurprising that he utilises a similar

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<sup>147</sup> *Mork*, vol 2, ch. 63, p.63; 'when [he] had ruled the land for nine years', Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, ch. 59, p. 309

<sup>148</sup> *Mork*, vol 2, ch. 76, p. 113; 'in the thirteenth year', Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, ch. 69, p. 334

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 103, p. 213; 'had possessed the title of king for six years', Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, ch. 95, p. 389

<sup>150</sup> The death of King Høfða-Knútr, for example, takes place 'in the seventh year of the reign of King Magnús', Finlay, *Fagrskinna*, ch. 47, p. 173

<sup>151</sup> Bagge, *Politics and Society*, p. 55

<sup>152</sup> Ashman Rowe, 'Saga History or Annalistic History?'

<sup>153</sup> *Hák*, vol. 1, ch. 57, p. 226; 'this was in the [nth] year of King Hákon's reign', Dasent, *The Saga of Hacon*, vol. 1, ch. 54, p. 51

<sup>154</sup> The exceptions being for the 3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> years of his reign - although in the last two instances this is due to the previous year being erroneously repeated. See *Appendix 4*

<sup>155</sup> For a discussion of this see Bagge, *Society and Politics*, p. 37

style, and his stricter appropriation of an annual chronology further conforms to expectation given that Sturla is also known for his composition of the *Resens annáll*.<sup>156</sup>

The most obvious form of ‘worldwide’ dating present in the king’s sagas is not based on yearly chronologies or the reigns of kings at all, but on sub-annual dates - references to events taking place on specific days. Although only tangentially related to the premise of this investigation, it is worth briefly commenting upon their distribution in this source material. Although specific dates are common to each of the sources under discussion, particularly when associated with the date that someone died,<sup>157</sup> our *Konunga sögur* in particular use specific information regarding the day upon which certain activities took place to highlight the significance of those events. It is therefore interesting to see which events were graced with a specific date, and how such specific dates were identified. Most of the specific days that are mentioned are saints’ days, as well as certain Christian calendar events such as Christmas and Easter. The latter emphasises the Icelandic adoption of the clerical framework. Although the death of a particular character might well be accompanied by a specific date, such as the death of Edward the Confessor ‘fimmta dag jóla’,<sup>158</sup> the main role of named days within all of the kings’ sagas analysed is to add suspense to the narrative - notable episodes, for example, include Haraldr harðráði’s activities in England in 1066, for which the detail extends as far as providing the exact weekdays of certain events, or the descriptions of King Hákon’s military activities in Denmark in *Hakonar saga*.<sup>159</sup>

Both *Morkinskinna* and *Hakonar saga* demonstrate a similar use of chronological clusters to rank the importance of events to *Íslendingabók*, however in *Morkinskinna* such instances are very rare and stand out in a text from which a coherent sense of chronology is largely lacking - on such example is the characterful description of the death of King Hørdaknútr in *Morkinskinna*, which notes that

‘Þessi atburður varð á sétta ári Magnúss konungs, er Hørða-Knútr fekk bana er bæði var þá orðinn konungr yfir Danmørk ok Englandi. Tveimr vetrum fyrr hafði andazk Haraldr konungr bróðir hans vestr í Englandi, sonr Knúts ins ríka, er þeir høfðu konungdóm tekit eptir fōður sinn. En síðan tók Hørða -Knútr England eptir

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<sup>156</sup> Ashman Rowe, ‘Saga History or Annalistic History?’

<sup>157</sup> King Hákon Hákonarson apparently died on the Sunday morning (just past midnight) after the mass-day of St Lucy the virgin, which was on a Thursday; Dasent, *The Saga of Hacon*, ch. 330, p. 367

<sup>158</sup> *Fagr*, ch. 58, p. 274; ‘on the fifth day of Christmas’, *Fagrskinna*, ch. 58, p. 218

<sup>159</sup> See Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, ch. 49-50, pp. 261-274; and *The Saga of Hacon*, ch. 285-294, pp. 293-315

Harald ok átti tvá vetr hvárttveggja ok Danmörk. En eptir lát Høřða-Knúts it sama vár var tekinn til konungs í England Játvarðr inn góði...Játvarðr var vígðr til konungs páskadag inn fyrsta.<sup>160</sup>

In Sturla's *Hákonar saga* this tendency is even more marked by its appearance at the very beginning of the text (mirroring Ari's largest cluster at the end of *Íslendingabók*); once again, this instance gives a tally of chronologies which follow a progression from the wider Christian context to the Scandinavian one, expressed as a move from east to west - 'zooming in from the macrohistorical down to the microhistorical', as Avery Powell puts it.<sup>161</sup>

‘Á dögum Innocentii páfa, þess er hinn þriði var með því nafni í postolligu sæti...Þá var liðit fra holdgan várs herra Jesu Christi tólf hundruð ok þrír vetr. Þá váru keisarar yfir Rómaborgarríki Philippus af Sváfa út á Púli en Ottó, son Heinreks hertuga af Brúnsvík, fyrir norðan fjall...Þá var konungr yfir Danmörk Valdimarr Valdimarsson en Sörkvir Karlsson í Svíþjóð, Jón Heinreksson í Englandi er kallaðr var *sine terra*. En Hákon Sverrisson var konungr í Nóregi. Þat var einum vetri eftir andlát Sverris konungs.<sup>162</sup>

*Fagrskinna*, while possessing more instances of dating than *Morkinskinna*, follows this hierarchical system of chronology cluster to a far more limited degree; most events are not granted more than one specific date. One exception to this is the information accompanying the narrative about Óláfr Haraldsson's time fighting in Western Europe before he gained the throne:

‘Í þann tíma, er Óláfr var vestr í Peitulandi, andaðisk Eiríkr jarl Hákonarsonr vestr á Englandi, áðr en Óláfr kæmi et síðara sinni til Englands. Á því ári váru liðni

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<sup>160</sup> *Mork*, vol. 1, ch. 5, p. 46; ‘this event took place in the sixth year of Magnús's reign. It was the death of Hákon [Knútr], who had become king of both Denmark and England. Two years earlier his brother King Haralds had died west in England. He was the son of King Knútr the Great, and at that time the brothers had succeeded to the throne after their father. After Haraldr's death, Hákon [Knútr] became heir to England and ruled both countries for two years. But the same spring that Hákon [Knútr] died Edward the Good (Confessor) became king...Edward was annointed king the first day of Easter.’ Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, ch. 4, p. 111; While Theodore Andersson suggests that this level of detail may indicate an interpolation from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the fact remains that there must have been a perception of this means of adding import to events by adding a cluster of dates amongst those through whose hands the text passed; Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, p. 74

<sup>161</sup> Powell, ‘*Primstav* and *Apocalypse*’, p. 63

<sup>162</sup> *Hák*, vol. 1, ch. 1, p. 171-2; ‘In the days of Pope Innocent, who was the third with that name in the apostolic chair...then there had passed from the incarnation of our Lord Jesu Christ M.CC. and three winters. Then were emperors over the Roman Empire, Philip of Suabia out in Apulia, and Otho son of Henry Duke of Brunswick north of the Alps...Then was king over Denmark Waldemar Waldemar's son, but Sörkver Karl's son in Sweden, John Henry's son in England who was called Lackland, but Hacon Sverrir's son was king in Norway. That was one winter after the death of king Sverrir’, Dasent, *The Saga of Hacon*, ch. 1, p. 1

fjórtán vetr frá falli Óláfs Tryggvasonar. Tveim vetrum áðr hafði Eiríkr jarl farit  
ór Nóregi til Englands.’<sup>163</sup>

This excerpt is notable for being entirely based on Norwegian chronologies, and indeed the few other examples that might be considered clusters also follow this pattern, thus implying to a certain degree that the composer of *Fagrskinna* felt that there was a less compelling need to relate the events of Norwegian history to the overall progression of world history. There is, in fact, only one set of dates which relies on a chronology from further afield than England, and this is when describing Haraldr Sigurðarson’s time at the Byzantine court, which is provided with a number of non-specific regnal dates; we are told that ‘Þá réð Miklagarði Zóe dróttning en ríka...ok réð með henni þá sá maðr, er hét Mikael kátalaktús’, and a short while later we are told that ‘þá var Mikjáll konungr í þann tíma’.<sup>164</sup> The dates present an intriguing insight into Scandinavian perceptions of the Byzantine political situation, particularly this definition of Zóe as the queen of Miklagarðr and the secondary status accorded to her husband - this undoubtedly derives from the tradition that is found in *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla* in which Haraldr has several interactions with the empress, who is depicted as a powerful ruler, as the nickname ‘in ríki’ suggests.<sup>165</sup> This shift at least demonstrates a broader awareness of external chronologies than is suggested by the rest of the text, and reflects the composer’s skill in transplanting Haraldr Sigurðarson completely from a Norwegian context into a Byzantine one, however it is so isolated that one doesn’t get the sense that its aim was to ground the narrative in world history.

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<sup>163</sup> *Fagr*, ch. 27, p. 170; ‘At that time when Óláfr was west in Poitou, Jarl Eiríkr Hákonarson died west in England, before Óláfr came to England for the second time. In that year twenty-four years had passed since the fall of Óláfr Tryggvason. Two years before, Jarl Eiríkr had left Norway for England’ Finlay, *Fagrskinna*, ch. 27, p.136

<sup>164</sup> *Fagr*, ch. 51, pp. 228, 231 ‘at that time there ruled in Miklagarðr Queen Zóe in ríka...and with her at that time ruled the man who was called Mikael kátalaktús’, ‘Mikjáll was king at that time’ Finlay, *Fagrskinna*, ch. 51, pp. 183, 185

<sup>165</sup> See Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, ch. 9, pp. 130-4; It is possible that the two dates in *Fagrskinna*, while both in reference to the same chronology, derive from different traditions - this may be indicated by the change from referring to the empress as clearly the more powerful individual to referring to the emperor, and is corroborated by the alternate spelling and nickname of Mikael kátalaktús/Mikjáll

## 5.2 The choice of chronologies in *the Konunga sögur*

One advantage of the fact that the *Konunga sögur* immerse themselves in a particular area and period is that they often reveal evidence of more local traditions which might add complexity to our understanding of Icelandic relations. It is logical to assume that individual Icelanders might have particular ties to different parts of Norway, Scandinavian or beyond as a consequence of Iceland's origins as an immigrant society and continued interaction with Norway (as the sagas attest), and thus one would expect scraps of information to crop up which stem from individual and local historical traditions. Although there are not as many examples of this as one would like, there are some indications of a mixture of different traditions making their way into the *konunga sögur*. An obvious example is the somewhat isolated reference to the death of Jarl Rǫgnvaldr of Orkney ('Þat var einum vetri eptir fall Rǫgnvalds Brúsasonar')<sup>166</sup> which appears in both *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna* and is something of a non-sequitur in both cases, where it is used to date King Magnús and King Haraldr's expedition against King Sveinn Úlfsson (Sven Estridsson). While we can assume that many of these similarities stem from the compilations' shared textual history, *Morkinskinna* also notes that this had taken place when Magnús and Haraldr had both ruled Norway for two years, thus grounding the event within the context of the saga, whereas in *Fagrskinna* this information is omitted, thus abstracting this episode to the extent that in the English translation it was felt necessary to insert a footnote stating that Rǫgnvaldr died in 1046.<sup>167</sup>

This particular example may indicate that this was an event of particular significance for those that were compiling the sagas, an idea which ties in well with our understanding of personal relationships within the Norse world; such relationships have been understood to be at work in sagas such as *Orkneyinga saga*, which A. B. Taylor suggests was commissioned by the Oddaverjar family, who had close connections to the Jarls of Orkney.<sup>168</sup> Interestingly, *Orkneyinga saga* also chooses to mention an absolute date at this point, stating that the killing occurred 'Í þenna tíma...gaf Magnús konungr honum hálfan Nóreg' to Haraldr

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<sup>166</sup> *Fagr*, ch. 54, p. 248; 'that was one year after the death of Rǫgnvaldr Brúsason', Finlay, *Fagrskinna*, ch. 54, p. 198

<sup>167</sup> Finlay, *Fagrskinna*, p. 194, footnote 564

<sup>168</sup> Taylor, '*Orkneyinga saga*', pp. 400-1

Sigurðarson,<sup>169</sup> before mentioning the very expedition which is dated by Rognvaldr's death in the *Konunga sögur*; it is subsequently revealed that Rognvaldr's killer Þorfinnr met with King Magnús while he was on this expedition to arrange a truce.<sup>170</sup> The fact that the association between these two events was strong enough to be abstracted from its original context in both *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna* seems to indicate the impact that both events had, at least from an Icelandic perspective. On its own it stands as a satisfying example of an Icelandic incorporation of chronologies from the wider Norse world into their narratives, indicative of the ties that existed between these areas of Norwegian influence.

Interestingly, *Hákonar saga* also reveals several examples of what appear to be highly localised chronology, demonstrating an awareness of local custom and folk memory as opposed to the chronologies of particular rulers. On several occasions the saga makes reference to particular seasons that were considered notable enough to be given names - for example, when describing the fourth winter of Hákon Hákonarson's life the saga notes that 'en Birkibeinar kölluðu Seleyjavetr, því at þeir lágu í Seleyjum lengi um haustit'.<sup>171</sup> Furthermore, the summer after earl Hákon was killed was apparently known as 'Vágsbrúarumar'.<sup>172</sup> Overall the saga abounds with a knowledge of chronology which vastly outstrips *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna*, something which must be attributed to the fact that its author was both acquainted with the king whose life he had been commissioned to compose. On the one hand this uneven reflection of dates throughout these examples of *Konunga sögur* reflects the personal preference and importance attributed to various different chronologies by the various authors as an aspect of their individual approach, yet it also casts light on a facet of the Icelandic use of chronology which is not immediately apparent; the extent to which personal ties and local information must have shaped the development of the Icelandic perception of historiography, whether or not the exact sources of these information can be verified.

*Morkinskinna* is renowned for cobbling together many different episodes and verses into its overall structure, an approach that on the whole reduces the impact of any chronology it might attempt to impose. One upshot of this, however, is to reveal that the perceived authority of skaldic poetry extended to chronological matters. Sverrir Tómason suggests that

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<sup>169</sup> *Ork*, ch. 30, p. 75; 'about the time that Magnus ceded half the kingdom', Hermann Pálsson and Edwards, *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 30, p. 71

<sup>170</sup> Hermann Pálsson and Edwards, *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 30, pp. 71-74

<sup>171</sup> *Hák*, vol. 1, ch. 7, p. 182; 'the Birchshanks call it the Selisle winter, because they lay in the winter long in Seljarisles', Dasent, *The Saga of Hacon*, ch. 4, p. 10

<sup>172</sup> *Hák*, vol. 1, ch. 13, p. 188; 'Voe Bridge summer', Dasent, *The Saga of Hacon*, ch. 10, p. 16

Snorri ‘consider[ed] poets’ verses to be equal in value to eyewitness accounts,<sup>173</sup> and although we are deprived of any prologue expressing similar sentiments in *Morkinskinna*, the abundance of skaldic material within the compilation suggests a similar attitude; Ármann Jakobsson argues that in some instances the poetry was elevated to the same status as the *þættir* which comprised much of its bulk.<sup>174</sup> Although we cannot imagine that chronologies made it into skaldic poetry too often given the nature of their composition,<sup>175</sup> there are three separate instances in *Morkinskinna* where the compiler explicitly comments on the fact that Skaldic poetry has provided a particular date - which, given the overall amount of specific chronological references in the text itself, is not an inconsiderable proportion. All of these skaldic references refer to the personal chronology of King Magnús - especially the first two, which refer to his age specifically: ‘Hér vísar svá til, sem heyra má, at Magnúsi Ólafssyni væri sá inn ellifti vetr’<sup>176</sup> - whereas the third refers to an event taking place ‘næsta sumar eptir andlát Magnúss konungs’.<sup>177</sup> In each instance the name of the skald is listed, adding to the sense that this information is held to be authoritative. The two references to Magnús’s age both come from verses by a poet identified as Arnórr, whereas the final verse is from a skald named Bølverkr. These verses seem to provide a framework for Magnús’s career within the context of the saga; Arnórr provides the saga’s only references to Magnús’s age before he gained the throne, and the only references to his age during his reign, and Bølverkr concludes with the reference to Magnús’s death.

This chronology based on Magnús’s age is largely abstracted from the saga itself, which otherwise only provides references to the chronology of Magnús’s reign. This naturally begs the question as to whether there is any significance in the use of the skaldic information to describe the king’s personal chronology. This may be indicative of the role of the skald at the court of the king; if the relationship between king and skald was held to be personal by the Icelandic compilers (which, given the association of Icelanders with role, is not unlikely)<sup>178</sup> then it might seem only natural that the chronologies they provided were held to be authoritative when describing the king’s life, as opposed to merely his reign. Unfortunately, the fact that this phenomenon is lacking elsewhere in the text means that this argument

<sup>173</sup> Sverrir Tómason, ‘Old Icelandic Prose’, p. 106

<sup>174</sup> Ármann Jakobsson, *Staður í nýjum heimi*, p. 331

<sup>175</sup> Vésteinn Ólason, ‘Old Icelandic Poetry’, p. 30

<sup>176</sup> *Mork*, vol. 1, ch. 2, p. 23; ‘the indication is... that Magnús Ólafsson was eleven when he came to Norway’, Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, ch. 1, p. 99

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 33, p. 188-9; ‘the summer after King Magnús’s death’, Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, ch. 30, p. 194

<sup>178</sup> Vésteinn Ólason, ‘Old Icelandic Poetry’, p. 30

cannot be definitively pursued. At any rate, however, this example seems to support our broader understanding of the importance of personal relationships between Icelanders and the Norwegian court in the period when this saga was compiled, and indeed this ties in with *Morkinskinna*'s broader aim of exploring these relationships in anecdotal terms.<sup>179</sup> In this respect the author does not seem as disinterested in the chronology as Andersson and Gade claim, but uses it to aid the character assessment of the Norwegian kings.<sup>180</sup>

When assessing the 'worldwide' chronologies provided by the *Konunga sögur*, it is notable that the chronologies of the kings of England or events associated with England (which admittedly, have some overlap with the 'Danish' speaking world, given the fact that England was ruled by a number of Danish kings in the eleventh century) are dominant. Although most often these are referred to in connection with events that are about to unfold in these locations (most notably with Haraldr *harðráði* Sigurðarson's ill-fated expedition to England in 1066), they nevertheless display a knowledge of the rulers of England that is not to be found in examples of the Norwegian kings' activities elsewhere - for example in the descriptions of the death and succession of Edward the Confessor, Harold Godwinsson and William of Normandy, which are specific to the point of providing specific days upon which the events took place:

*Morkinskinna*:

‘Á inu tvítjándá ári ríkis Haralds konungs Sigurðarsonar andaðisk Játvarðr konungr góði vestr í Englandi inn fimmta dag jóla, ok sjaunda dag jólanna tóku Englismenn til konungs Harald Goðinason...Haraldr var vigðr til konungs í Lundunum í Pálskirkju inn átta dag jólanna’<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Ármann Jakobsson, *Staður í nýjum heimi*, pp. 331, 334

<sup>180</sup> Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, p. 1; Ármann Jakobsson, *Staður í nýjum heimi*, p. 334

<sup>181</sup> *Mork*, vol. 1, ch. 53, p. 299; ‘In the twentieth year of Haraldr Sigurðarson's rule, King Edward the Good (the Confessor) dies west in England on the fifth day of Christmas. On the seventh day the English took as their king Harold...Harold was anointed king in London at St. Paul's on the eighth day of Christmas’, Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, ch. 49, p. 261

*Fagrskinna*:

‘Á nítjándá ári ríkis Haralds konungs andaðisk Játvarðr góði á Englandi fimmta dag jóla, en setta dag jóla tóku Englar til konungs Harald...Hann var vigðr til konungs í Lundúnum í Pálskirkju átta dag jóla’<sup>182</sup>

This detail may hint at an English source for this information, as Andersson and Gade suggest with regard to *Morkinskinna*.<sup>183</sup> Furthermore, there is some slight evidence of different traditions for this event (although scribal error should not be overruled); *Fagrskinna* later claims that ‘þá hafði Haraldr konungr verit hálfan tíunda mánuð’<sup>184</sup> - specific information that is not present in *Morkinskinna*. Even more obviously at variance, *Morkinskinna* claims that Harold’s death at the battle of Hastings took place ‘tólf mánuðum eptir fall Haralds konungs Sigurðarsonar’,<sup>185</sup> whereas *Fagrskinna* correctly identifies that the battle took place only ‘nítján nóttum eptir fall Haralds konungs Sigurðarson’.<sup>186</sup>

Both *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna* make use of English chronologies which are not so immediately bound up in the events that they are relating. For instance, *Fagrskinna* describes the death of Harold Godwinsson when he had ‘then been king for nine and a half months’ and also relates it to the death of Harald Sigurðarson, despite the fact that the Scandinavian part in the events in England in 1066 were over. *Morkinskinna* attaches to the notice of Harold’s death information about the reign of King William I, before noting that ‘Eptir [Vilhjálmr] var konungr Vilhjálmr rauði, sonr hans, fjórtán ár...Þá var Heinrekr bróðir hans konungr’.<sup>187</sup> Furthermore, later in the narrative the compiler of *Morkinskinna* notes that ‘þá var Stefnir konungr á Englandi’ at the time when England was ravaged by King Eysteinn.<sup>188</sup> Such information is not typically provided when similar raids abroad are described; for example, the final activities of Magnús *berfættr* in Ireland, Scotland and Wales are not

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<sup>182</sup> *Fagr*, ch. 58, p. 274; ‘In the nineteenth year of the reign of King Haraldr, Játvarðr góði (Edward the Good, the Confessor) died in England on the fifth day of Christmas, and on the sixth day of Christmas the English accepted Haraldr (Harold)...He was consecrated as king in London in St Paul’s Church on the eighth day of Christmas’, Finlay, *Fagrskinna*, ch. 58, p. 218

<sup>183</sup> Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, p. 74

<sup>184</sup> *Fagr*, ch. 75, p. 293; ‘Haraldr (Harold) had been king for nine and a half months when he died’, Finlay, *Fagrskinna*, ch 75, p. 234

<sup>185</sup> *Mork*, vol. 1, ch. 56, p. 329; ‘took place twelve months after the death of Haraldr Sigurðarson’, Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, ch. 52, p. 277

<sup>186</sup> *Fagr*, ch. 75, p. 293; ‘nineteen days after the fall of Haraldr Sigurðarson’, Finlay, *Fagrskinna*, ch 75, p. 234

<sup>187</sup> *Mork*, vol. 1, ch. 56, p. 329; ‘[William] was followed on the throne by his son William Rufus, who ruled for fourteen years...then his brother Henry...succeeded him as king’, Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, ch. 52, p. 277

<sup>188</sup> *Mork*, vol. 2, ch. 105, p. 219; ‘King Stephen was the king in England’, Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, ch. 97, p. 392

granted a similar level of detail, beyond noting that Magnús had amicable relations with King Muirchertach of Connacht.<sup>189</sup> To clarify, although both episodes chose to name a local king, only in the former instance was this presented as a means by which to date the journey; for the latter episode we are told only that the expedition took place ‘þá er Magnús konungr hafði ráðit landinu níu vetr’.<sup>190</sup> The key point to be made here is that there seems to have been an expectation by the composer of the saga that the chronology of the kings of England would have been sufficiently known by his audience to make this kind of reference, thus indicating that an awareness of English events may have been commonplace in contemporary Iceland. This idea would seem to correspond to the use of English chronology found in *Íslendingabók*, and indeed elsewhere in the Icelandic sources.

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<sup>189</sup> Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, ch. 59, p. 310-11

<sup>190</sup> *Mork*, vol. 2, ch. 63, p. 63; ‘when Magnús had ruled the land for nine years’, Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, ch. 59, p. 309

# 6. Understanding chronology in Icelandic historiography

## 6.1 The relationship with the annals

The conclusions of Sverre Bagge and Sverrir Jakobsson about types of Icelandic historiography tend to emphasise the idea of an opposition between dating by reference to external chronologies, which is viewed as annalistic, and dating using genealogy or the chronology of a specific king's reign - even if these can be combined to a greater or lesser extent. This study has argued that the reality is more nuanced than this, in that the use of specific chronologies in the texts under discussion clearly seems on occasion to be more meaningful than merely attributing importance to an event. One way to test this hypothesis is to compare the texts in question with the Icelandic annals themselves to see if the same chronologies are given the same priority within them.

The Icelandic annals as they survive are unique amongst their medieval genre; it is thought that annalistic writing may have come to Iceland in the early thirteenth century,<sup>191</sup> while the surviving texts are even later than that. These texts are all closely interrelated, yet each in their surviving form seems to be the result of a relatively small number of authors who recorded the majority of the information in one go; in other words, none of the surviving annals in their present forms seem to have been compiled year-on-year until, in some cases, the events contemporary with each compiler were reached; *Lögmanns annáll*, for example, was completed by a number of hands, each of whom seem to have been completing the annal retrospectively from the point at which their predecessor had left off years before.<sup>192</sup> This retrospective writing is highlighted by the general proliferation of errors between the texts, including events duplicated under different years within a single annal or are inconsistent between annals.<sup>193</sup> Consequently, it is largely impossible to tell how much of the annals were recorded contemporaneously, yet it is also clear that later copyists may have added events of significance retrospectively. This invites a straightforward comparison with our texts to see if

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<sup>191</sup> Ashman Rowe, 'Saga History or Annalistic History?'

<sup>192</sup> Haug, 'The Icelandic Annals', 268-71

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 263

the chronologies found within them also appear in the annals. *Resens annáll* is particularly valuable for this comparison as it is attributed to *Hákonar saga*'s author, Sturla Þórðarson.<sup>194</sup>

Although the rigid progression of lawspeakers in *Íslendingabók* may give it an annalistic feel, this investigation has made the point that Ari was very particular in his use of specific chronologies. A comparison of *Íslendingabók* and the Icelandic annals that describe the same period is a valuable means of testing that viewpoint. It should be noted that the period covered by Ari's work predates the period in which Icelandic annalistic writings are thought to have begun by a considerable amount of time (Ari himself was writing a century before they are thought to have been introduced), thus any record of Icelandic events of note will be a later addition which might well have been made in connection with *Íslendingabók* itself. Despite this possibility, at the outset of the narrative Ari and the annals prioritise different events. Specifically, the connection between King Edmund's death and Ingólfr's first trip to Iceland is not made in several of the annals - *Resens annáll*, the *Annales Vestustissimi* (as Storm entitles it) and *Lögmanns annáll* - which mention only Edmund's death and then the initial settlement four years later.<sup>195</sup> Interestingly, Ari does not provide us with a specific date for the initial settlement, reinforcing the idea that he is drawing attention to this connection as a means of establishing a symbolic and typological inception for his history. It is also worth noting that none of the annals are as consistent as Ari in naming the succession of lawspeakers (although they are consistent in the ones that they do mention), again highlighting the importance of this chronology for Ari's purposes.

The same comparative approach can be taken with *Hákonar saga Hákonar* and *Resens annáll* specifically; the results of such a comparison may well be considered significant, given that it seems proven beyond reasonable doubt that these annals were compiled by Sturla Þórðarson himself,<sup>196</sup> thus it will be interesting to see which events have been prioritised in both. It is clear from a brief analysis that the two texts are not interdependent for their chronological information; the saga contains a good deal of material which isn't present in the annals. As already mentioned *Hákonar saga* contains dates that imply an awareness of local Norwegian

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<sup>194</sup> Sverrir Tómason, 'Old Icelandic Prose', p. 85

<sup>195</sup> In *Resens annáll*, for example, we see:  
'970 a. Fall Jatmundar Engla konongs

...

874 c. Uphaf Islanz bygðar'; Storm, *Islandske Annaler*, ch. 1, p. 15

<sup>196</sup> Jón Jóhannesson, *Gerðir landnámabókar*, pp. 134-5; (Jón notes that 'enda er *Resensannáll* vafalaust eftir einhvern Sturlunga, e.t.v Sturlu sjálfan. 1283 er þar getið andláts Þórðar prests, sonar hans, og árið eftir tók ný rithönd við í frumritinu, en það ár lézt Sturla')

chronologies, however some of this information in particular does not seem to have been transferred. Elizabeth Ashman Rowe suggests that the naming of specific seasons in Sturla's *Hákonar saga* is an aspect of his style which is more reminiscent of the annals<sup>197</sup> - in *Resens annáll* the entry for 1047 tells of 'frost vetr enn micli'.<sup>198</sup> It is curious, then, that the specific instances of this type found in *Hákonar saga* are not found in *Resens annáll*; neither the 'Seleyjavetr', the 'Vágsbrúarsumar' or 'Hákarlahaustit'<sup>199</sup> are mentioned in their corresponding years in the annals. *Hákonar saga* also seems to extend this use of local chronology to mentioning the deaths of particular bishops who are relevant to a Scandinavian context, mentioning, for example, the death of bishop Peter of Hammar in association with the 'þriði vetr hins fimmta tigar konungdóm hans'.<sup>200</sup> Again, reports such as these are something of a staple of the annals, yet although the annals abound with obits of various bishops, few of those that are named in the saga have corresponding entries. This judicious use of the different 'annalistic' material in different contexts may reveal the skill with which Sturla contextualised his material; as *Hákonar saga* is set in Norway it makes sense to use Norwegian chronologies, whereas this is less important in an Icelandic annal, part of a genre which is noted for being Iceland-centric, often describing the arrivals or departures of various individuals from an Icelandic perspective; 1246-47s 'Vtan for Þorðar Cacala' and 'Vtqvama Þorðar Cacala', for example.<sup>201</sup> Sturla reveals an impressive knowledge of localised chronologies throughout the Nordic world, and seems also to be a master of manipulating their use to suit specific contexts. What, then, of the examples of more localised chronologies within *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna*? As discussed earlier, there was not a great deal of data to draw upon in this regard, however it should at least be noted in passing that the example which was highlighted, the death of Jarl Rognvaldr of Orkney, is omitted from all of the annals in Storm's edition that cover the relevant period; thus once again we can assume that we are dealing with a local chronology revealing the personal connections which might not have been apparent in the context in which the annals or their parent documents were recorded.

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<sup>197</sup> Ashman Rowe, 'Saga History or Annalistic History?'

<sup>198</sup> Storm, *Islandske Annaler*, ch 1, p. 17; 'the great frost winter'

<sup>199</sup> *Hák*, vol. 2, ch. 196, p. 26; 'the Shark autumn', Dasent, *The Saga of Hacon*, ch. 181, p. 166. This is, however, mentioned in *Konungs annáll*

<sup>200</sup> *Hák*, vol. 2, ch. 196, p. 26; 'forty-third winter of [Hákon's] reign', Dasent, *The Saga of Hacon*, ch. 299, p.

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<sup>201</sup> Storm, *Islandske Annaler*, vol. 1, p. 26; 'Departure of Þorðr *kakali*', 'Arrival of Þorðr *kakali*'

## 6.2 Chronology and the Icelandic world view: the status of the English

To a certain degree the data collated in the course of this study has corroborated the general scholarly consensus about the nature of the Icelandic world view (in this case specifically referring to the Icelandic conception of its position and status in the world, and to the aspect Sverrir Jakobsson defines as a common mentality distinguishing between peoples and defining their place relative to one another).<sup>202</sup> As Sverrir Jakobsson has pointed out, the Icelanders clearly echoed the rest of Medieval Europe in perceiving the Middle East - to be the centre of the world. While this was originally a feature of the Christian clerical context that began to infiltrate Iceland in the eleventh century, it ultimately grew to encompass local aristocratic perceptions, which might previously have understood Scandinavia to occupy this space.<sup>203</sup> Ultimately, Sverrir sees this combination of the two world views (not entirely the replacement of one with the other) to be indicative of Iceland's complete adoption of a Christian world view; as he argues, the Icelandic world view was Christian at the core.<sup>204</sup> The use of chronologies in the texts under discussion does nothing to banish this impression, as will no doubt be clear at this stage. The use of chronologies from outside Scandinavia is not overwhelming, yet a common feature of all of them is the reference to the Middle East and the Mediterranean; in *Fagrskinna* the only reference to an external chronology is to the Byzantine empress, while the opening line of *Hákonar saga* references the current Pope. As we have observed, the use of such external chronologies serves to locate Iceland geographically and temporally within world history.

Yet there is clearly more at work here than mere attempts to link Iceland to the centre of the world, and while the Icelandic world view might have been ultimately Christian this does not stand in the way of it being nuanced as a consequence of its particular context. The nature of the 'chronological clusters' which this research has explored reveals a hierarchy; as Powell notices with regard to *Gísla saga Súrssonar* the way of grounding the events temporally involves a progression of references to chronologies from locations which 'zoom in' to the setting of the narrative. It seems reasonable to assume that this hierarchy was governed by more than just geographical proximity but was in some sense a representation of degrees of cultural alignment. Thus in *Hákonar saga* the opening passage moves from Rome to

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<sup>202</sup> Sverrir Jakobsson, *Við og veröldin*, p. 364

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Hauksbók', pp. 27-28

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, *Við og veröldin*, p. 373

Germany to Scandinavia, England and then Norway. This sense of a hierarchy bears a clear resemblance to Kirsten Hastrup's model of levels of legal proximity, however as this example indicates the distinction was more complex than simply the dichotomy between those who spoke 'Danish' and those who didn't; while Norway inevitably (especially given the subject matter of much Icelandic prose) dominates in Icelandic chronological constructions, the example above highlights the fact that the chronologies of the English kings also seem to be ubiquitous in these texts - often featuring more heavily than certain Scandinavian chronologies, particularly those of Sweden, an idea which is amply expressed by the order in which the reigns of kings were listed in the example above.

This is found to be the case in *Íslendingabók*, in which an English chronology constitutes part of the structural backbone of the text, and in the *Konunga sögur*, where knowledge of English chronology is displayed on several occasions. While undoubtedly the use of English chronology is linked to the activities of various Scandinavian kings<sup>205</sup> on English soil, the fact that these interactions were so regular in the period under analysis means that an inflated English role in the Icelandic perception of the world is exactly what we would expect. In particular, certain events clearly echoed loudly throughout the Scandinavian world, most notably the events of 1066 - including the Norman invasion, even though this took place after Scandinavian ambitions in England had been effectively quelled. It is notable that the *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna* authors felt that it was important to record the precise dates of the events which occurred in England - starting with the death of Edward the Confessor and the ascension of Harold Godwinsson to the throne, as already discussed. Not only are Haraldr harðráði's movements described in similar detail, but so too is the ultimate defeat of King Harold and the accession of William the Conqueror. This implies that the Norman invasion, as much as the death in battle of Haraldr harðráði, was perceived as an epochal moment in the history of the 'Norðrlandar' (northern lands), at least from the Icelandic perspective.

It seems likely that the interest of these authors in English chronology must go beyond merely the Norwegian kings' involvement in their history; as suggested in the analysis of the *Konunga sögur*, other parts of the world beyond Scandinavia were much less frequently subjected to such chronological detail. In *Morkinskinna*, the earliest chapters are even set within the court of King Yaroslav, but do not give any indication of the chronology of the

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<sup>205</sup> *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna*, for example, draw on the chronology of Knútr and his offspring to aid their structures, see appendices 2 and 3

kings of the Rus'. The exploits of Magnús *berfættr* in the Irish Sea are described in almost as much narrative detail in our *Konunga sögur* as those of Haraldr harðráði in England and yet very little chronological information is given, only limited genealogies.<sup>206</sup> Of the chronologies of East and West Frankia the reader gains little from all of the sources discussed except some limited references in the annals - although this is hardly surprising given the relative lack of Norwegian activity in those areas (beyond Viking activity). In *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, interactions in England are quick to name the English king, but the kings of Castile and the Franks remain nameless, even when interacting directly with the narrative;<sup>207</sup> we must deduce, therefore, that the royal successions of these areas were not viewed as significant. If information about the Byzantines is largely considered to be down to the importance of Asia Minor as both the centre of the Icelandic world view and a constant source of gainful employment for the enterprising Viking, and it therefore follows that the dominance of English chronologies indicates a significant role in the Icelandic world view (after all, England also seems to have played a similar role as a testing ground for typical Icelandic heroes such as Egill).<sup>208</sup>

One cannot help but conclude that there must have been a level of cultural identification with the English on the part of the Icelanders. At first this seems to run contrary to what one might expect given our knowledge of the settlement of Iceland, which was largely undertaken from Norway and from the Norse and Celtic populations of the northern British Isles.<sup>209</sup> Various sagas explore the Irish contributions to Icelandic society - most famously with the character of the half-Irish Olaf Peacock in *Laxdæla saga*,<sup>210</sup> and thus we might expect more references to Irish chronologies to appear. The fact that they do not might be attributed to a perception of the Irish as more alien due to their language; Sverrir Jakobsson suggests such a linguistic barrier and even notes the episode in *Morkinskinna* in which it is revealed that the prospective king, Haraldr *gilli*, is mocked for the fact that he had adopted Irish customs and spoke only broken Norse.<sup>211</sup> Although Sverrir later concludes that the language barrier was not so significant in denoting strangers in Icelandic sagas, its importance in cultural perception does seem to be indicated in this instance; it is stated in the First Grammatical Treatise that the English and the Norse 'allz...ervm æinnar tvngv', implying a perception that

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<sup>206</sup> Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, ch. 59, p. 310-11

<sup>207</sup> Dasent, *The Saga of Hacon*, vol 2, chs. 294-5, pp. 311-315

<sup>208</sup> See Scudder, 'Egils saga', pp. 3-184

<sup>209</sup> Byock, *Viking Age Iceland*, p. 9

<sup>210</sup> See Kunz, 'The Saga of the People of Laxardal', pp. 270-421

<sup>211</sup> Sverrir 'Strangers in Icelandic Society', 152

the English were in some ways more related - at least linguistically - to the Scandinavians (and consequently to the Icelanders) than other cultures - and, as noted earlier, those who spoke the same language were accorded higher legal status.<sup>212</sup>

In the light of this perceived linguistic relationship, it is perhaps easier to understand why knowledge of English chronology and its importance might be an accepted feature of Icelandic historiographical writing which is apparent from its very origins in *Íslendingabók* to its height in the thirteenth century. Evidence of this perception is provided by a particular use of chronology in *Fagrskinna*, which contextualises Haraldr *hárfagri*'s reign (and sets up the fostering of Hákon) by stating that 'Þenna tíma réð Englandi ungr konungr, Aðalsteinn góði, er þá var tignarmaðr einn enn mesti í Norðrlöndum'.<sup>213</sup> This reference is obviously significant in this case as it refers to the fact that Æþelstān was perceived as having been a particularly powerful king - an idea which is reinforced later by the note that with Edward the Confessor's death 'the kingship of the English passed out of the family of King Aðalsteinn' - and includes the English in the category of 'the northern lands', which would seem to be a deliberate attempt to group the English alongside the Scandinavians. A further instance of such an attempt may also be indicated in the final summing up of Ari's *Íslendingabok*, which gives the date of the English conversion, perhaps implying some sense of cultural continuity from that event to those he describes, which may stem from a sense of cultural heritage.

It is highly likely that this perceived cultural relationship and interest stems in some degree from historical connections; Knut Helle draws attention to the fact that good diplomatic relations with England reached a peak during King Hákon Hákonarson's reign,<sup>214</sup> the period to which *Morkinskinna*, *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla* belong and which forms the setting for *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*. England was an invaluable source of trade at a time when the Norwegian fish market was booming. But, as Helle points out, 'these connections were threads of a much wider social fabric.' He notes that England was, in effect, a cultural bridge to Scandinavian over which a great many of the social innovations from Christianity onwards passed and which Hákon used to elevate Norway to its place in European culture.<sup>215</sup> Norway, in particular, was converted from England,<sup>216</sup> from whence English ecclesiastical influences would have passed to Iceland. Sverrir Tómason notes that many early Icelandic clerical

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<sup>212</sup> Hastrup, 'Defining a Society', 85

<sup>213</sup> *Fagr*, ch. 4, p. 71; 'at that time England was ruled by a young king, Aðalsteinn góði, who was then one of the highest in rank in the northern lands', Finlay, *Fagrskinna*, ch. 4, p. 52

<sup>214</sup> Helle, 'Anglo-Norwegian Relations', 101

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 107-8

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 106

scholars were educated in England or on the continent, including St Þorlákr Þórhallson and his nephew Páll Jónsson.<sup>217</sup> Ari fróði seems to draw attention to England's role in the origins of Icelandic Christianity with both his references to the martyrdom of King Edmund, which is mentioned at key moments in Icelandic history, and with his final dating cluster, within which he includes a reference to the conversion of England: 'Þat vas...sextán vetrum ens sétta hundraðs eptir andlát Gregóríus páfa, þess es kristni kom á England.'<sup>218</sup> English influences were even to be felt in the development of Icelandic historiography; certain similarities in the annals, not to mention passages in *Morkinskinna* which Theodore Andersson and Kari Ellen Gade think were lifted from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, seem to indicate that the Icelandic annalistic tradition began with the copying of English annals. Thus it seems that there is a clear case for arguing that there were historical, ecclesiastical and cultural connections between Icelanders and the English which could well have justified a perception of cultural kinship, to a certain degree, within a widespread Icelandic world view.

### 6.3 Icelandic relationships with the kings of Norway

In *Íslendingabók* Ari acknowledges the Icelanders' Norwegian origins and continued role in Icelandic affairs, paying particular respect to Óláfr Tryggvason whom he credits with introducing Christianity to Iceland. In his perception it seems that Icelanders are indebted to their Norwegian origins, and may even be a subset of Norwegian culture, but one that has since developed largely independently. Ari also embraces a wider cultural context; he does not hesitate to acknowledge the role of the English in Iceland's development (and indeed accords it high status). The chronology of Edmund is associated with Christianity in recognition of the route by which the religion had come to Norway and England. Furthermore, Ari asserts an independent Icelandic chronology based on Icelandic lawspeakers and later elevates the chronologies of the bishops to occupy a similar status to Norwegian kings. He makes use of personal chronologies to ground the more recent events firmly in an Icelandic context and to add authority to the testimony of his sources. Jón Viðar Sigurðsson points out that the Norwegian king was the most important secular ruler of the Norse world;<sup>219</sup> Ari's references to Norway are therefore based on the realistic state of affairs

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<sup>217</sup> Sverrir Tómasson, 'Old Icelandic Prose', p. 239

<sup>218</sup> *Ísl.*, vol. 1, ch. 10, p.26; 'That was...516 years after the death of Pope Gregory, who brought Christianity to England', Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, ch. 10, p. 13

<sup>219</sup> Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, 'The Norse Community', p. 61

as opposed to an ideology. His attitude is exactly what one might expect of a scholar asserting Icelandic identity and legitimising its existence at a point when the Icelandic Commonwealth had not yet become dominated by a small number of chieftains with increasing ties to the Norwegian king.

This, however, was the context in which *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna* were composed, and both texts embrace Norwegian courtly culture, while at the same time exploring opposing ideas of the standing of Icelanders in this context.<sup>220</sup> *Morkinskinna*, in particular, establishes an intimate connection between the king and the reader through which the latter can understand the former's character, and the use of personal chronologies is a key feature of establishing this level of intimacy. Bagge notes that, in the context of *Heimskringla*, we are never provided with the birth of a king as a starting point for their chronology; he reaches the conclusion that this was not of interest to Snorri.<sup>221</sup> This seems to apply to all of the material that this paper has considered; even *Hákonar saga* begins before Hákon is conceived. Nor are the annals interested in the birth of a particular figure; the majority of individuals are only mentioned in connection with their death.<sup>222</sup> It is clear that the lifetime of a king is not considered as significant as the reign of that king for narrative purposes, thus the standard means of dating throughout the sagas is by regnal year, however both *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna* make occasional use of personal chronologies to establish an intimate connection, for example, we are told that 'Knútr var þá ungr. eigi ellri en þrettán vetra'.<sup>223</sup> The use of skaldic poetry to provide chronology in *Morkinskinna* further emphasises this point; skaldic poetry was of equivalent testimonial authority to an eye-witness report, given the role of the skald at the Norwegian court which was dependent on interaction and a personal relationship with the king.<sup>224</sup> Sverrir Jakobsson even suggests that it was at the Norwegian court that Icelandic identity was defined. It should come as no surprise, then, that the instances in which skaldic poetry are used, although limited, refer to the king's personal chronology. This can also be observed in a broader context; as Jón Viðar points out many of the *Íslendinga sögur* utilise Norwegian chronologies,<sup>225</sup> and given that interactions between the protagonists and the Norwegian kings are an established feature of the genre, these references to these

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<sup>220</sup> Andersson and Gade, *Morkinskinna*, p. 79

<sup>221</sup> Bagge, *Society and Politics*, p. 51

<sup>222</sup> Popes, for example, are often referred to in formulaic obits: '948. ba. Marinus þp. iii. ar'; Storm, *Íslandske Annaler*, ch. 1, p. 15

<sup>223</sup> *Fagr*, ch. 26, p. 167, 'Knútr was young then, no older than thirteen', Finlay, *Fagrskinna*, ch. 26, p. 132

<sup>224</sup> Vésteinn Ólason points out that the intimacy of the skald's relationship with the king was such that he might even offer criticism of the king's actions; Vésteinn Ólason, 'Old Icelandic Poetry', p. 28

<sup>225</sup> Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, 'The Norse Community', p. 61

Norwegian reigns may be intended to establish a personal relationship between the protagonists and the kings, often at the outset of the texts.

*Fagrskinna*, quite possibly written by an Icelander in Norway, highlights the extent of integration into the Norwegian aristocratic context, making no attempts to tie events to the progression of world history; for the author of *Fagrskinna* Scandinavia is the centre of the world and the ‘ideological symbol’<sup>226</sup> of the Norwegian chronology has been accepted and incorporated. Yet even here we cannot recognise a truly common identity; both of the texts to a certain degree still place Icelanders in a separate category, and indeed this is part of the function of the personal relationships between Icelanders and Norwegian kings; these relationships are not simply those of a king with his vassals, rather there is an expected acknowledgement on the part of the king that the Icelanders are not the same as their Norwegian subjects. Although within the narrative of *Morkinskinna* this is explored by the *þættir* and is highlighted by passages in which a king acknowledges the equal and independent status of Icelanders, on a chronological level it may be indicated by the complete absence of Icelandic chronologies in both texts; there is no attempt to date Norwegian events by those in Iceland. This, however, should be understood in the context of the intended audience for the sagas - if Norwegian, which seems likely to be the case for *Fagrskinna* at least, they might not know or care about these Icelandic chronologies.

By the time of the composition of *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, the desire to keep Iceland separate was essentially no longer on the agenda; Iceland was now part of the Norwegian kingdom, and furthermore the personal relationships that had characterised previous interactions between Icelanders and Norwegians were being replaced by the *rex iustus* ideology, emphasising the divine power and therefore separate nature of the king. As Jón Viðar Sigurðsson points out, the emphasis on personal leadership qualities (which Icelanders such as Hreiðarr had been happy to comment on in *Morkinskinna*) became essentially superfluous as the aristocracy developed from devolved petty rulers into a ‘service aristocracy’ which governed by proxy.<sup>227</sup> Sturla Þórðarson observes the homogenous nature of this form of rule, and Iceland’s incorporation into it. He occasionally makes use of Icelandic chronology in the same way that he also refers to other local information throughout the Norwegian reign, referring to the deaths of Icelandic bishops (‘Þar andaðisk Ormr byskup í

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<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Kings, Earls and Chieftains’, pp. 84-6

Oslo')<sup>228</sup> and to the political interactions between Icelanders and the Norwegian king (Þat sama sumar ...kom ok útan Gizurr Þorvaldsson á fund Hákonar konungs');<sup>229</sup> even though he is describing a period in which the union has not taken place, chronologically Iceland has been absorbed into the Norwegian political landscape; this can be seen with Sturla's use of personal Icelandic chronologies in contrast to Ari's - whereas Ari will relate events to the life of one of his sponsors as a means of grounding the text in an Icelandic setting, Sturla will talk of the movements of members of his family to include them in a Norwegian one.<sup>230</sup> In this respect the saga is annalistic, drawing attention to events of local interest in the way that is characteristic of the Icelandic (and other) annals, and the key difference behind the incidental information provided in *Hákonar saga* and that provided in *Resens annáll* is its focus, as one would expect the former provides more Norwegian information and the latter more Icelandic, yet neither at the exclusion of the other.

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<sup>228</sup> *Hák*, vol 2, ch. 287, p. 121; 'then bishop Worm in Oslo died', Dasent, *The Saga of Hacon*, vol. 2, ch. 246, p. 250

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*; ch. 286, p. 121; 'that same winter [sic]...Gizur Thorvald's son came also from abroad to seek king Hacon', Dasent, *The Saga of Hacon*, vol. 2, ch. 246, p. 249

<sup>230</sup> 'In the autumn before came from abroad from Iceland Snorri Sturla's son', Dasent, *The Saga of Hacon*, vol 1, ch. 55, p. 52

# 7. Conclusion

## 7.1 Summary of findings

The aim of this study has not been to overturn consensus but rather to demonstrate the value of Icelandic authors' use of chronology in adding detail to our understanding of Icelandic attitudes to the world and Norway in the medieval period. If it has had any success at all it will hopefully have been in proving that the use of chronology is not easily dismissed as merely annalistic and a feature of the trappings of an inherited Christian clerical context. As with the saga genre itself,<sup>231</sup> Icelandic authors were able to draw upon European models to present their ideas in new and meaningful ways, and this is apparent in the sources subject to the present discussion. *Íslendingabók*, in particular, reveals a skilful manipulation of chronology in order to enforce the broader function of the text; to create a national history from an Icelandic perspective that is not necessarily dominated by a Norwegian perception of events. Ari proves that he is not ideologically tied to the absolute chronology of the Norwegian kings; rather he can recognise the importance of Norwegian influence in the development of Icelandic society, he draws repeatedly on specific Norwegian kings because of the overall impact of their actions, and refers to major events that clearly echoed through the Scandinavian world. In essence his references to Norway are a practical acknowledgement of the significance of the Norwegian king within the Norse world, and of a shared cultural origin (expressed genealogically), but not of a continued shared identity; he is able to express the distinct Icelandic identity through the use of native Icelandic chronologies of lawspeakers, bishops and other significant individuals. Furthermore, the Icelandic identity that Ari creates through his use of chronology is one that is aware of a broader world context and has a firm place for itself within it. Ari locates his history within the progression of world history and uses the typological structures that give his text the legitimacy of a national history. He also acknowledges other aspect of Iceland's cultural heritage besides Norway, recognising that the Icelandic clerical and literary establishment ultimately owed a debt to the English.

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<sup>231</sup> See, for example, Grønlie, 'Saint's Life and Saga Narrative', for a recent assessment of the hagiographical roots of the saga genre.

*Íslendingabók* on its own is an argument for a deeper consideration of annual time reckoning in the Icelandic sources, but the personal connection that Ari establishes with his reader via the use of his own chronology warns of the dangers of trying to establish a uniform view of Icelandic identity and hints that a similar level of chronological usage is not going to be a ubiquitous feature of the Icelandic texts. The analysis of the rest of the source material confirms this impression and emphasises the point that each scholar should be considered in their own light and placed within our understanding of the broader context. Sverrir Jakobsson comes to a similar conclusion in his analysis of *Hauksbók*, which he argues represents only the individual world view of Haukr Erlendsson.<sup>232</sup>

The *Konunga sögur* compilations are written in a later period of Icelandic history than *Íslendingabók* and seem to embrace Norwegian courtly culture to the degree one would expect of an era in which chieftains in Iceland were becoming more powerful through Norwegian connections and basing their lifestyle on Norwegian and broader European aristocratic models.<sup>233</sup> The two compilations analysed, *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna*, are both dependent on similar traditions yet both reveal the different approaches and identity of the author. However, to a certain degree this corroborates our understanding of the relationships between Icelanders and Norwegians at the royal court in this period. The difficulty with interpreting the use of chronology in the case of these compilations, and the *Konunga sögur* in general, is that it is inevitably going to be largely focused on the chronology of the kings in question. As this research has suggested, however, even the use of different types of chronology relating to a specific king - whether it be personal or based on his reign - may be significant; in these cases, the use of personal chronology can be used to emphasise the personal relationships with the rulers which both characterise the Icelanders within the sagas and encourage the character assessment that the sagas encourage.

*Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* represents one of the last manifestations of this genre, which only serves to highlight the importance of the relationships between Icelanders and Norwegians which characterised Iceland identity in the late Commonwealth era; now that Iceland was under Norwegian control, these personal relationships were less relevant and increasingly being subsumed by the royal infrastructure which came with the adoption of European *rex iustus* ideology. The titular king had been responsible for trying to integrate Norway into European courtly culture, and while in the first instance this may actually stoked

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<sup>232</sup> Sverrir Jakobsson, *Við og Veröldin*, p. 367

<sup>233</sup> Guðrún Nordal, 'Snorri and Norway', p. 79

the enthusiasm for the kings' sagas, ultimately it brought about the end of the relationships that had defined them. Sverrir Tómason suggests that Sturla didn't really want to write these sagas but was forced to as a way of avoiding treason charges; this symbolically reflects the introduction of the impersonal lord-vassal relationship that would make the *Konunga sögur* unviable. Chronologically speaking, *Hákonar saga* reveals the integration of Iceland into Norwegian affairs, wherein Icelandic chronologies are just some of a series of national chronologies that Hákon is able to draw upon.

One thing, however, remains consistent throughout the most of the sources, discussed and that seems to be the Iceland perception of its place in broader world, regardless of their relationship with Norway. Sverrir Jakobsson argues that the adoption of the Catholic hegemonic world view is evident from the birth of Icelandic literature and this seems to be borne out in *Íslendingabók*, *Morkinskinna* and *Hákonar saga* by their various means of locating their narratives within a world chronology and which places Iceland and Norway at a remove from what is perceived to be the centre of the world. These links are made in both chronology and genealogy (although only the former has been considered in this study). Furthermore, these sources have roughly conformed to the idea, which Kirsten Hastrup applies in a legal context, that Icelanders perceived various levels of proximity which they identified with to a greater or lesser degree, however while it seems that legally there were four such levels of proximity - Icelanders, Norwegians, 'Danish'-speakers and everyone else - all of the sources discussed add complexity to this understanding, in particular suggesting that there was a closer level of identification with English culture and events, at least within the aristocratic literary and often clerical élite that produced this literature, than has necessarily been assumed previously. I believe that this study has highlighted the need to explore this relationship in greater detail.

## 7.2 Final thoughts

As this investigation has progressed it has become apparent that there is definitely room for a more comprehensive study of these areas than was afforded by the limitations of this thesis. Such a study would take into account a broader array of sources, thus allowing the possibility of weightier conclusions as opposed to the observations of certain correlations that have characterised this study. Hopefully these correlations have made the case for this broader study to be undertaken. As it stands, one of the best arguments against my interpretation is

that the use of chronologies, particularly in sources such as the *Konunga sögur*, may well have been largely determined merely by what the authors had available. However when comparing two sources that seem to have built upon very similar or identical traditions, such as *Fagrskinna* and *Morkinskinna*, it is clear that different authors prioritised the use of different pieces of chronological information to achieve their overall agenda; this can be seen in passages that are almost entirely identical yet differ in their minutiae, such as the description of Edward the Confessor's death and the succession of Harold Godwinsson. Furthermore, even if the scholars who were responsible for placing the material in its current form were only working with the data they had available, the fact that certain traditions appear to have been more prevalent than others still corroborates the idea that chronologies were considered meaningful; a larger study might take the sources and transmission of these sources into account.

Further research into this area would benefit from fully contextualising the environment of the *Konunga sögur* and expand data collection to other members of this sub-genre; it would make sense to analyse *Heimskringla* in greater depth, to take account of those aspects of time reckoning that have been raised in this discussion but were not mentioned by Bagge. Such a study, besides dealing with a broader range of *Konunga sögur*, might also take into account the sagas which deal with other parts of the Norse world - *Orkneyinga saga*, *Færeyinga saga*, *Grænlandinga saga* and *Eiríks saga rauða* - with the aim of determining how Icelanders chose to contextualise their neighbours within the Norwegian sphere of influence. It would also consider the Norwegian contributions to medieval historiography, including synoptic histories such as Theodoricus Monachus's *Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium*, the *Historia Norvegiae* and *Ágrip*; these texts approached their material from a more clearly Norwegian perspective yet were still bound up with the traditions that produced the *Konunga sögur* (many of which used them as sources), thus it would be interesting to see how they worked with similar material and how the perceptions of Icelandic-Norwegian relationships differed in the Norwegian perspective.

In summary, the use of different methods of time reckoning in Icelandic historiographical material should not be discounted from considerations of the Icelandic identity, world view and their perceptions of their relationship with Norway. Chronologies were used by authors as a way of grounding their texts within the broader European context on a microstructural level, as well as in broad typological divisions. Chronology can confirm and add the weight of evidence to our understanding of the personal nature of both historiographical composition

and of Icelandic interactions with Norway. Furthermore, they can even shed light on aspects of the Icelandic concepts of identity which have not been explored in too much depth previously, namely the Icelandic scholars' awareness of their cultural relationship with the English.

*This thesis was completed in the second year of the reign of Pope Franciscus, seven days before the feast of the Ascension. At that time Carl XVI Gustav was the king of Sweden, Margrethe II was the queen of Denmark and the queen of England was Elizabeth II. That was in the twenty-fifth year of the reign of King Harald V of Norway, MMXIV years after the birth of Christ, by the common reckoning.*

*Here the thesis ends.*

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## Abbreviations

<i>Fagr</i>	<i>Fagrskinna</i> (Ágrip, ed. Bjarni Einarson)
<i>Mork</i>	<i>Morkinskinna</i> (ed. Ármann Jakobsson [et al.])
<i>Ork</i>	<i>Orkneyinga saga</i> (ed. Finnbogi Guðmundsson)
<i>Hák</i>	<i>Hákonar saga</i> (ed. Þorleifur Haukson [et al.])
<i>Ísl</i>	<i>Ísledingabók</i> (ed. Jakob Benediktsson)

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# Appendices: Data collection

The data gathered below records individual instances of dating in the Classical Old Icelandic of their *Íslenzk Fornrit* editions. Chapter (ch.) and page references are provided for these editions. In the interests of space English translations have not been provided, although translations are provided for key points during the investigation. These data has focused on references to annual chronologies and vaguer eponymic dates ('during the reign of X'), whereas dates which are part of the internal chronology of the narrative but which aren't contextualised by reference to a chronology ('a year later'/'the following winter' etc) are not recorded. Furthermore, sub-annual dates have not been included in these tables if they are not related to an annual chronology (again, partially for reasons of space given their reduced importance to this study), although some reference is made to them during the analysis. Chronologies that appear on the same row refer to the dating of a single event. If a chronology appears to conform to two adjacent categories the cells are merged. Categories have been removed if the source contained no appropriate data.

## Appendix 1: *Íslendingabók*

ch	Incarnation dating	'Worldwide' Chronologies	Chronologies of 'Danish' speakers	Norwegian Chronologies	Icelandic Chronologies	Personal Chronologies
1	en þat vas sjau tegum (vetra) ens níunda hundraðs eptir burð Krists p. 4	í þann tíð...es Ívarr Ragnarssonr loðbrókar lét drepa Eadmund enn helfa Englakonung p. 4		Ísland byggðisk fyrst ýr Norvegi á dögum Haralds en hárfagra p. 4		þá es Haraldr enn hárfagri vas sextán vetra gamall p. 5
				En svá es sagt, at Haraldr væri sjau tegu vetra konungr ok yrði áttroeðr p. 5		
2					En þá es Ísland vas víða byggt orðit p. 6	
3					Svá hafa ok spakir menn sagt, at á sex tegum vetra yrði Ísland albyggt, svá at eigi væri meir síðan p. 9	
		Þat vas sex tegum vetra eptir dráp Eadmundar konungs p. 9		vetri eða tveim áðr Haraldr enn hárfagri yrði dauðr p. 9	Því nær tók Hrafn lögsoðu Hængssonr landnámamanns, næstr Ulfjótí, ok hafði tuttugu sumur p. 9	
					Þórarinn Ragabróðir, sonr Óleifs hjalta, tók lögsoðu næstr Hrafní ok hafði önnur tuttugu p. 9	

5					Þorkell máni Þorsteinsson Ingolfssonar tók lögsögu eptir Þórarin Ragabróður ok hafði fimmtán sumur p. 13	
					þá hafði Þorgeirr at Ljósavatn Þorkelsson sjautján sumur p. 13	
					En þat vas, es [Eiríkr enn rauði] tók byggva [Grænland], fjórtán vetrum eða fimmtán fyrr en kristni kvæmi hér á Ísland p. 14	
	en þúsundi eptir burð Krists at alþýðu tali p. 18	Þat vas þremr tegum vetra ens annars hundraðs eptir dráp Eadmundar p. 18	En Óláfr Tryggvason fell et sama sumar...Þá barðisk hann við Svein Haraldsson Danakonung ok Ólaf enn scenska, Eiríksson at Uppsölum Svíakonungs, ok Eirík, es síðan vas jarl at Norvegi, Hákonarson p. 17- 18			
8					Grímr at Mosfelli Svertingssonar tók lögsögu eptir Þorgeir ok hafði tvau sumur p. 19	
					Skapti [Þóroddsonr] hafði lögsögu sjau sumur ok tuttugu. Hann setti fimmtardómslög p. 19	
				En hann andaðisk á enu sama ári ok Óláfr enn digri fell Haraldssonr, Goðrøðarsonar, Bjarnarsonar, Haraldssonar ens hárfagra p. 19		
				þremr tegum vetra síðarr en Óláfr felli Tryggvasonr p. 19	Þá tók Steinn Þorgestsson lögsögu ok hafði þrjú sumur p. 19	
					þá hafði Þorkell Tjörvasonr tuttugu sumur p. 19	
					þá hafði Gellir Bølverkssonr nú sumur p. 19	
9				á dögum Haralds Norvegskonungs Sigurðarsonar, Halfdanarsonar, Sigurðarsonar hrísa, Haraldssonar ens hárfagra p. 20		
						Ek kom ok til Halls sjau vetra gamall...ok vask þar fjórtán vetr p. 20
						vetri eptir þat, es Gellir Þorkelssonr, föðurfaðir minn ok föstri, andaðisk p. 20

					Gunnarr enn spaki hafði tekit lögsoðu...ok hafði þrjú sumur p. 20	
				þat sumar, es hann tók lögsoðu, fell Haraldr rex á Englandi p. 20	Þá hafði Kolbeinn Flosasonr sex p. 20	
					Þá hafði Gellir í annat sinn þrjú sumur p. 20	
					þá hafði Gunnarr í annat sinn eitt sumar p. 20	
					þá hafði Sighvatr Surtssonr, systurson Kolbeins, átta p. 20	
		þá vas Leó septimus páfi p. 21				Ísleifr vas vígðr til byskups, þá es hann vas fimmtögr p. 21
				átta tegum vetra eptir Óláfs fall Tryggvasonar p. 21	En hann andaðisk í Skálaholti, þá es hann hafði alls verit byskup fjóra vetr ok tuttugu p. 21	Þar vas ek...tolf vetra gamall p. 21
					en þat vas vetri fyrr en kristni væri hér í lög tekin p. 21	En Hallr sagði oss svá...at Þandgrandr skírði hann þrevetran p. 21
		en þat vas of hátið Martens byskups p. 21				En hann gærði bú þrítögr p. 21
						ok bjó fjóra vetr ens sjaunda tegar í Haukadali p. 21
						ok hafði fjóra vetr ens tíunda tegar, þá es hann andaðisk p. 21
					á enum tíunda vetri eptir andlát Ísleifs byskups p. 21	
10				á dögum Óláfs konungs Haraldssonar p. 21	tveim vetrum eptir þat es Ísleifs byskups p. 21	
					Markús Skeggjasonr hafði lögsoðu næstr Sighvati p. 22	
					ok tók þat sumar, es Gizurr byskup hafði einn vetr verit hér á landi p. 22	
					en fór með fjögur sumur ok tuttugu p. 22	
					Ulfheðinn Gunnarssonr ens spaka tók lögsoðu eptir Markús ok hafði níu sumur p. 23	
					þá hafði Bergþórr Hrafnssonr sex p. 23	
					en þá hafði Goðmundr Þorgeirssonr tolf sumur p. 23	

					Et fyrsta sumar, es Bergþórr sagði lög upp p. 23	
					Þat vas ok et fyrsta sumar, es Bergþórr sagði lög upp p. 24	
		Þá Gregórius septimus páfi p. 24				Gizurr vas vígðr til byskups, þá es hann vas fertøgr p. 24
					En þá es hann hafði verit fjóra vetr ok tuttugu byskup p. 25	þá vas hann vetri miðr en half sextøgr p. 25
					En tólf vetrum síðarr, þá es Gizurr hafði alls verit byskup sex vetr ens fjórða tegar p. 25	
						Þá vas Þorlákr tveim vetrum meir en þrítøgr p. 25
		Á því ári enu sama obiit Paschalis secundus páfi fyrr en Gizurr byskup p. 25	ok Philippus Sviakonungr p. 25			
		ok Baldvini Jórsalakonungr p. 25				
		ok Arnaldus patriarcha í Híerúsalem p. 25				
		en síðarr et sama sumar Alexíus Grikkjakonungr p. 25				
		þá hafði hann átta vetr ens fjórða tegar setit á stoli í Miklagarði p. 25				
		En tveim vetrum síðarr varð aldamót p. 25			Þá høfðu þeir Eysteinn ok Sigurðr verit sjautján vetr konungr í Norvegi eptir Magnús fòður sinn Ólafsson Haraldssonar p. 25	
		en fimm tegum ens þriðja hundarðs eptir dráp Eadmundar Englakonungs pp. 25-6			Þat vas tuttugu vetrum ens annars hundarðs eptir fall Óláfs Tryggvasonar p. 25	
		en sextán vetrum ens sétta hundarðs eptir				

		andlát Gregórius páfa, þess es kristni kom á England p. 26				
	fjórum vetrum ens sjaunda hundraðs eptir burð Krists at almannatali p. 26	En hann andaðisk á 9ðru ári konungdóms Fóku keisara p. 26				
	Þat verðr allt saman tuttugu ár ens tolfða hundraðs p. 26					

## Appendix 2: Morkinskinna

ch .	'Worldwide' Chronologies	Chronologies of 'Danish' speakers	Norwegian Chronologies	Icelandic Chronologies	Personal Chronologies
2					<i>Vasat ellifu allra ormssetrs hati vetra hraustr þás herskip glæsti Hǫrða vinr ór Gǫrðum</i> Hér vísar svá til, sem heyra má, at Magnúsi Óláfssyni væri sá inn ellifti vetr p. 23
5			Þessi atburð varð á setta ári Magnús konungs p. 46		
		Tveimr vetrum fyrr hafði andazk Haraldr konungr bróðir hans vestr í Englandi p. 46			
	En síðan tók Hǫrða-Knútr eptir Harald ok átti tvá vetr hvártveggja ok Danmǫrk p. 46				
	En eptir lát Hǫrða-Knúts it sama vár var tekinn til konungs í Englandi Játvarðr inn góði...Játvarðr var vígðr til konungs páskadag in fyrsta p. 46				
8					<i>Minnti ǫld hvern annan jafnþarfr blǫm hrafni - ǫrt gat hilmir hjarta - herskyldir tǫg fylldi</i> Hér vísar til at þessi vetr fyllir annan tǫg aldrs Magnúss konungs. Ok var hann it næsta vár eptir tvítǫgr at aldri pp. 76-7
27		Þat var einum vetri eptir fall Rǫgnvalds jarls Brúsasonar vestr í Orkneyum p. 165	Nú er þeir hǫfðu ráðit landinu tvá vetr báðir saman, Magnús konungr ok Haraldr konungr p. 165		

33			It næsta sumar eptir andlát Magnúss konungs p. 188		
			<i>Sumar annat skalk sunnarr</i> - <i>segik eina spó - fleini</i> - <i>vér aukum kafkróki - kaldnets furu halda</i> Þat sannar Bólverkr skáld at næsta sumar eptir andlát Magnúss konungs fór Haraldr þessa for ór landit pp. 188-9		
46	Haraldr konungr var þá konungr í Englandi p. 259				
			Ok á inu þriðja ári eptir Nizarorrostu p. 261		
51			Stúfr inn blindi...kom útan til Nóregs á dögum Haralds konungs Sigurðarsonar p. 290		
52			Þá var Haraldr konungr yfir Nóregi p. 293		
53	andaðisk Játvarðr konungr góði vestr í Englandi inn fimmta dag jóla, ok sjaunda dag jólanna tóku Englismenn til konungs Harald Goðinason...Haraldr var vigðr til konungs í Lundunum í Pálskirkju inn átta dag jólanna p. 299		Á inu tvítjándra ári ríkis Haralds konungs Sigurðarsonar		
56			ok var þat tólf mánuðum eptir fall Haralds konungs Sigurðarsonar p. 329		
	Eptir [Vilhjálmr] var konungr Vilhjálmr rauði, sonr hans, fjórtán ár...Þá var Heinrekr bróðir hans konungr p. 329				
57		Óláfr var konungr í Danmørk eptir Knútr inn helga bróður sinn p. 9			
			Um daga Óláfs konungs var ár mikit í Nóregi or margföld gæzka p. 10		
58			Þá hafði [Óláfr konungr] verit konungr í Noregi sjau vetr ok tuttugu er hann andaðisk p. 16		
59			ok höfðu frændr ráðit landinu eigi fulla tvá vetr er Hákon konungr andaðisk p. 18		
62					ok var [Sigurðr Magnússonr] þá níu vetra en mærin fimm vetra p. 51
63			þá er Magnús konungr hafði ráðit landinu níu vetr p. 63		
64					[Óláfr konungr] var eigi

				ellri en þevetr er hann var tekinn til konungs p. 71
			hann lifði eigi lengr eptir fráfall fœður síns en tólf p. 71	
65			Sigurðr konungr varð búinn að Nóregi til útfærðar þrim vetrum eptir andlát fœður síns p. 71	
70			Ok nú eptir þrá vetr frá því er Sigurðr fór ór landi átti allr lýðr honum at fagna í Nóregi p. 100	Hann var þá tvítögr at aldri p. 100
				Vetri yngri var Eysteinn konungr bróðir hans p. 100
75			Um daga þeira Eysteins konungs p. 108	
76			A þrettánda ári ríkis þeira bræðra tók sótt Óláfr konungr Magnússon ok andaðisk p. 113	
91			Þat er sagt at á [Haralds konungas] dögum kom af Íslandi til byskupsvígslu Magnús Einarsson p. 166	
103			En þeir bræðr, Ingi konungr ok Sigurðr konungr, höfðu verit sex vetr konungar p. 213	
105		þá var Stefnir konungr á Englandi p. 219		
107			Um daga þeira bræðra kom Nicolaus kardínáli p. 230	
108			Þá höfðu þeir Ingi ok Sigurðr verit konungr níttján vetr at Nóregi p. 231	

### Appendix 3: *Fagrskinna*

ch.	'Worldwide' Chronologies	Chronologies of 'Danish' speakers	Norwegian Chronologies	Personal Chronologies
1			ok á sama ári andaðisk hann p. 57	Þá er ungi Haraldr ver tíu vetra at aldri, andaðisk móðurfaðir hans p. 57
			Á sama ári sem andazk höfðu þessir tveir konungar p. 57	
3			Þat var tíu vetr, er hann barðisk til lands áðr en hann yrði einvaldskonungr at Nóregi pp. 70-1	Þá var hann meirr en tvítögr at aldri p. 70
4	Þenna tíma réð Englandi ungr konungr, Aðalsteinn góði, er þá var tignarmaðr einn enn mesti í Norðrlöndum p. 71			
5			Þá hafði hann verit þrjá vetr ok sjau tigu vetra konungr p. 74	

7			Einum vetri síðarr en Haraldr konung hafði andazk p. 75	Þá var hann nálíga tuttugu vetra, er hann kom í landi p. 76
9			Hákon tók konungdóm í Nóregi tveim vetrum síðan er faðir hans andaðisk p. 80	
			Á enu sextánda ári ríkis p. 80	
10			Á sjautjándá ári ríkis p. 81	
11			Á tuttugta ári p. 81	
13			Eptir þetta andaðisk Hákon konungr ok hafði þá ráðit fyrir Nóregi tuttugu vetr ok sex vetr p. 94	
16			Þá er Hákon hafði einn vetr ráðit fyrir Nóregi p. 113	
17			Á þrettándi ári ríkis Hákonar jarls p. 116	
22				Hákon jarl gat son þann, er Eiríkr hét, þá er hann var fimmtán vetra gamall p. 137
22			einum vetri eptir Jómsskíkingaorrostu p. 139	
26			Þá er Eiríkr jarl réð Nóregi, fekk Sveinn konungr Dana banasótt vestr á Englandi p. 166	
				Knútr var þá ungr. eigi ellri en þrettán vetra p. 167
				Eiríkr jarl...setti Hákon, son sinn, tólf vetra gaman lands at gæta p. 167
27			Í þann tíma, er Óláfr var vestr í Peitulandi, andaðisk Eiríkr jarl Hákonarsonr vestr á Englandi, áðr en Óláfr kæmi et síðara sinni til p. 170	
			Á því ári vátu liðni fjórtán vetr frá falli Óláfs Tryggvasonar p. 170	
			EnglandsTveim vetrum áðr hafði Eiríkr jarl farit ór Nóregi til Englands p. 170	
28				Jarlinn var...þá sjautján vetra at aldri p. 171
34			Þá er þrettán vetr vátu liðnir frá Nesjaorrostu p. 197	
35			Í þann tíma, er Óláfr konungr var felldr í Þrándheimi p. 201	
			Einum vetri eptir fall Óláfs konungs p. 201	
			Um Álfifu ǫld p. 202	
36	Knútr konungr Sveinssonr, er kallaðr var en gamli Knútr, var þá konungr yfir Englandi ok hafði stól sinn. Var .ar hans undirkonungr Haraldr p. 202			
		þriði var kallaðr Hǫrða-Knútr...hann réð þá fyrir Danaveldi p. 202		
41			Sveinn Álfifusonr var þá konungr í Nóregi p. 206	
47			Næsta sumar eptir fekk Sveinn Álfifusonr banasótt í Danmǫrk p. 211	
	ok þann sama vetr andaðisk gamli Knútr á Englandi, ok var hann jarðaðr í Vinncestrþ Tók þá ríki eptir hann á Englandi Haraldr p. 211			
		en í Danmǫrk var konungr		

		Hjörða-Knútr p. 211		
48	er í þann tíma var konungr bæði yfir Englandi ok Danmörku p. 215		Á setta ári ríkis Magnúss konungs andaðisk Hjörða-Knútr vestr á Englandi p. 215	
	Tveim vetrum áðr hafði andazk Haraldr, bróðir hans; tók þá allt ríki þat Hjörða-Knútr p. 215			
	Eptir andlát Hjörða-Knúts á sama ári var tekinn til konungs á Englandi Játvarðr góði...Játvarðr var tekinn til konungs páskadag enn fyrsta p. 215			
50			Á því sumri, er liðnir váru frá falli ens helga Óláfs konungs sextán vetr p. 226	
			Hafði [Magnús] verit konungr tíu vetr p. 226	
		en fimm vetr af þeim hafði hann verit konungr bæði yfir Nóregi ok Danmörku p. 226		
51	Þá réð Miklagarði Zóe dróttning en ríka...ok réð með henni þá sá maðr, er hét Mikael kátalaktús p. 228			
	Þá stýrði her Girkjakonungs Georgíus p. 228			
	Hér segir þat, at þá var Mikjáll konungr í þann tíma p. 231			
52				Þá var [Þórir á Steig] fimmtán vetra, er hann gaf Haraldí konungs nafn fyrst í Nóregi p. 243
53			Þá er Haraldr Sigurðarsonr tók konungdóm í Nóregi með Magnúsi konungi, frænda sínum, var liðit frá því, er Haraldr enn hárfagri hafði andazk, hundrað vetra tólfrætt ok tveir vetr p. 246	
54		Þat var einum vetri eptir fall Rognavalds Brúsasonar p. 248		
57			Nizarorrosta var á sextánda ári ríkis Haralds konungs p. 271	
			Á enu þriðja ári eptir Nizarorrostu p. 273	
58	andaðisk Játvarðr góði á fimmta dag jóla, en setta dag jóla tóku Englar til konungs Harald, son Goðina Úlfnaðrssonar...Hann var vígðr til konungs í Lundúnum í Pálskirkju átta dag jóla...Þá hvarf konungdómr á Englandi ór ætt Aðalsteins góða		Á nítjándra ári ríkis Haralds konungs	

	konungs p. 274			
74			Á því sama sumri næst eptir, er Haraldr konungr fell á Englandi, þá kom til Englands með her sinn Vilhjálmr bastardr Rúðujarl p. 291	
75	Þá hafði Haraldr konungr verit hálfan tíunda mánuð p. 293			
79			Þá váru liðnir frá falli Haralds konungs, fýður hans, sjau vetr ok tuttugu p. 302	
80			Á sama ári, er Magnús tók konungdóm p. 302	
			Annar vetr ríkis þeira Magnúss ok Hákonar frændanna p. 302	
81				Sigurðr...var...þá níu vetra gamall, en mærin fimm vetra p. 309
83			Þá er Magnús konungr hafði ráðit Nóregi níu vetr p. 312	
85				Óláfr...var eogo eææro em þrévetr, þá hann var til konungs tekinn. Þá var Sigurðr konungr fjórtán vetra gamall, en Eysteinn sextán vetra p. 315
86			Þá er þessir koungr þrír höfðu stýrt ríkinu þrjá vetr p. 315	
93			Á þrettánda ári ríkis þeira bræðra, Sigurðar konungs ok Eysteins konungs, tók sótt Óláfr konungr, bróðir þeira, ok andaðisk p. 320	
			en sjau vetrum síðarr fekk Eysteinn konungr sótt ok andaðisk suðr á Stimi á Hústöðum p. 320	
			Þá hafði Sigurðr konungr ráðit Nóregi sjau vetr ok tuttugu síðan Magnús berföttr, faðir hans, fell í frá p. 321	
94			Á fjórða ríkis þeira p. 322	
96				var [Ingi Haraldssonr] þá á fyrsta vetr p. 329
				Var hann þá á þriðja vetr p. 329
			Þá hafði Haraldr verit konungr sex vetr, er hann fell, fjóra með Magnúsi frænda, en tvá síðan einn saman p. 329	
97				var Sigurðr sonr hans tekinn til konungs, þá er hann var á fjórða vetri, í Þrándheimi, ok Ingi konungr var tekinn til konungs austr í Vík, þá er hann var á öðrum vetri p. 331
			Et næsta sumar eptir er Ingi var tekinn til konungs p. 331	
99				son hans fjögurra vetra gamlan p. 333
			En er þeir Ingi ok Sigurðr höfðu verit höfðingjar sex vetr p. 334	
100			En þá er tveir vetr váru liðnir frá falli Sigurðar konungs p. 339	
108			Einum vetri eptir fall Hákonar konungs p. 349	
109				Víglsa Magnúss konungs var gor ok var hann þá sjau vetra gamall p. 351

## Appendix 4: Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar

ch	Incarnation dating	'Worldwide' Chronologies	Chronologies of 'Danish' speakers	Norwegian Chronologies	Icelandic Chronologies	Personal Chronologies
1		Á dögum Innocentii páfa p. 171				
	Þá var liðit frá holdgan várs herra Jesu Christi tólf hundruð ok þrír vetr p. 171	Þá vóru keisarar yfir Rómaborgarríki Philippus af Sváfa út á Púli en Otto, son Heinreks hertuga af Brúnsvík p. 171	Þá var konungr yfir Danmörk Valdimarr Valdimarrson p. 171	En Hákon Sverrisson var konung í Nóregi p. 172		
		Jón Heinreksson í Englandi er kallað var <i>sine terra</i> p. 171	en Sörkvir Karlsson í Svíþjóð p. 171	Þat var einum vetri eftir andlát Sverris konungs p. 172		
7				en Birkibeinar kölluðu Seleyjavetr p. 182		er konungsson var á fjórða vetri p. 182
8						Þá er Hákon konungsson var sjau vetra gamall p. 183
				sumarit eftir Seleyjavetr p. 183		
11						Þá var Hákon konungsson tíu vetra p. 186
12				En hit næsta sumar eftir andlát Hákonar jarls p. 188		
				Þetta er kallat Vágsbrúarsumar p. 188		
14				Þá er liðnir vóru tveir vetr frá andláti Hákonar jarls, ok hinn þriðji var kommin p. 190		
15						Þá var Hákon konungsson þrettán vetra er Ingi andaðisk p. 190
						en Guthormr, son Inga konungs, ellifu vetra p. 190
41				Vetr þann er Slittingar vóru í Víkinni p. 214		
				Þessi var hinn fyrsti vetr konungdóms p. 214		
57				Þessi var annarr vetr ríkis Hákonar konungs p. 226		Konungr var þá fimmtán vetra p. 226
78				Þessi var hinn fimmti vetr konungdóms Hákonar konungs p. 246		
88				Þessi var hinn sétti vetr konungdóms hans p. 256		
104				Þessi var hinn sjaundi vetr konungdóms hans p. 268		
11				Þessi var hinn átti vetr		

6				konungdóms hans p. 277		
14 9				Þessi var hinn níundi vetr konungdóms hans p. 309		
17 3		á þessi ári andaðisk Honorius páfi, en Gregorius páfi kom í stað hans p. 4		Pétr erkibyskup hafði andazk annat haustit áðr p. 4		
				ok var þessi hinn ellifti vetr konungdóms hans p. 5		
17 6				ok var sjá hinn tólfti vetr konungdóms hans p. 7		
17 9				ok var þessi hinn ellifti vetr konungdóms hans p. 9		
18 2				ok var þessi hinn fjórtándi vetr konungdóms hans p. 14		
18 6				ok var þessi hinn fimmtándi vetr konungdóms hans p. 16		
18 8				ok var þessi hinn sextándi vetr konungdóms hans p. 18		
19 4				ok var þessi hinn sautjándi vetr konungdóms hans p. 23		
				Þessi var hinn átjándi vetr konungdóms hans		
19 6				Hákarlahaustit p. 24		
20 3				ok var þessi hinn níttjándi vetr konungdóms hans p. 32		
20 7				Þessi var hin tuttugandi vetr ríkis Hákonar konungs p. 36		
21 0		þá var keisari yfir Rómaborgarríki Friðrekr, son Heinreks keisara p. 38				
21 3				ok var þessi hinn fyrsta vetr hins þriðja tigar ríkis Hákonar konungs p. 40		
21 4				Var þessi annar vetr ok tuttugandi konungdóms hans p. 43		
22 5				Þetta var þriðja sumar síðan er Hákon konungr hafði vígja látit kirkjuna p. 54		
23 7				ok var þessi hinn þriði vetr ok tuttugandi konungdóms hans p. 65		
28 3			Þá andaðisk Valdimarr konungr, son Valdimar konungs Knútsson... Hann hafði þá verit konungr í Danmörk þrjátíu ok níu vetr p. 117	Þessi var hinn fjórði vetr ok tuttugandi konungdóms hans p. 117		
28 4			En annat vartit áðr drap Bjarni			

			Moysesson Játgeir skald í Kaupmannahöfn p. 118			
		Á þessu sama ári andaðisk Gregorius páfi í Róma, ok kom eftir hann Innocentius p, 118-19		Þessi var hinn fimmti vetr ok tuttugandi ríkis hans p. 119	Þetta haust hit sama tók Gizurr Þorvaldsson af lífi Snorra Sturluson í Reykjaholti á Íslandi	
28 5				ok var þessi vetr hinn sétti ok tuttugandi ríkis hans p. 119		
				ok var þessi hinn sjáundi ok tuttugandi konungdóms hans p. 120		
28 6		Í þann tíma...var Alexandr konungr í Skotlandi, son Vilhjálm Skotakonungs p. 120				
					Þat sama sumar ...kom ok útan Gizurr Þorvaldsson á fund Hákonar konungs p. 121	
28 7					át sama sumar fekk orlof til Íslands Þórðr kakali, ok átti hann þá miklar deilur við Kolbein Arnórsson þá þrjá vetr er hann sat í Vestfjörðum p. 121	
				Þar andaðisk Ormr byskup í Oslo. p. 121		
				En Björn ábóti...komsk eigi lengra en norðr í Selju ok andaðisk þar p. 121		
28 8				Þessi var hinn áttundi vetr ok tuttugandi ríkis Hákonar konungs p. 121		
28 9				ok var þessi hinn níundi ok tuttugandi vetr konungdóms hans p. 122		
29 0				Þá hafði Hákon konungr verit þrjá tigu vetra p. 123		
30 0			Í þenna tíma réð Eiríkr konungr Valdimarsson Danmörk p. 135			
					Sumar þat er Vilhjálmr	

					kardináli var í Björgyn var vigðr Heinrekr Kársson til byskups til Hólastaðar á Íslandi p. 136	
303				ok var þessi hinn ellifti vetr ok tuttugandi konungdóms hans p. 140		
			Í þenna tíma var konungr í Svíþjóð Eiríkr Eiríksson p. 140			
310				ok var þessi annarr vetr hins fjórða tigar ríkis hans p. 145		
315				ok var þessi hinn þriðji vetr hins fjórða tigar ríkis hans p. 152		
318				Þessi var hinn fjórði vetr hins fjórða tigar ríkis hans p. 154		
319		Í þann tíma var ófriðr mikill í Holmgarði. Gengu tattarar á ríki Hólmgarðskonungs p. 155				
324		[Friðrekr] var keisari níttján vetr ok tuttugu p. 159				
				þar til er þessi bók var samsett ok Magnús hafði verit tvá vetr konungr at Nóregi p. 159		
325				Á þessi sama ári hafði andazk áðr um vórit Páll byskup í Hamri p. 160		
				ok var þessi hinn fimmti vetr ok þrítugandi ríkis hans p. 160		
328			Ok er Abel konungr leitaði eftir þeim var hann lostinn öru ok fekk af því bana. Eftir hans andlát tóku Danir til konungs Kristofara p. 162			
329				Þessi var hinn sétti vetr hins fjórða tigar ríkis hans p. 162		
333				Þessi var hinn sjáundi vetr hins fjórða tigar konungdóms hans p. 168		
				Um vórit í föst andaðisk þar í Þrandheimi Pétur í Gizka p. 168		
				Þetta sama vár andaðisk Sörli erkibyskup í Þrandheimi p. 168		

33 5				Þat vár er nú var frá sagt andaðisk herra Sigurðr konungsson p. 169		
				ok Áskell byskup af Stafangri p. 169		
33 6				Var þessi hinn átjándi vetr ok tuttugandi ríkis hans p. 170		
33 9				ok var þessi hinn nítjándi vetr ok tuttugandi ríkis hans p. 172		
34 4				ok var þessi hinn fertugundi vetr ríkis hans p. 183		
35 3				Hann hafði Hákon konungr ráðit fyrir Nóregi fjóra tigu vetra ok einn vetr p. 200		
35 8				Þessi var annar vetr hins fimmta tigar ríkis hans p. 204		
35 9				ok var þessi hinn þriðji vetr hins fimmta tigar konungdóms hans p. 206		
				Þenna vetr andaðisk Petr byskup í Hamri p. 206		
36 3				ok var þessi hinn fjórði vetr hins fimmta tigar ríkis hans p. 210		
37 5				ok var þessi hinn fimmti vetr hins fimmta tigar konungdóms Hákonar konungs p. 224		
39 9	Þá var liðit frá burð ok holdgan várs herra Jesú Kristo tólf hundruð ára ok sextigi ok þrjú ár ok þrim nóttum minnr p. 265					