Across the North Sea and Back Again

A Comparative Study between the Cults of St. Olav and St. Edmund

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(Pictured together, from left to right, is St. Olav, identifiable by his battle-axe and St. Edmund, King of East Anglia, with the arrow of his martyrdom. This is a fourteenth century depiction of the royal martyr saints on a rood screen in Catfield Church, Norfolk)
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Abstract

The medieval cult of saints community was a dense, pervasive network that spread across the vast expanse of Latin Christendom. Saints were international in nature and as such could be easily transported to other geographical regions and integrated into the local culture. This thesis comparatively analyses the cults of St. Olav and St. Edmund and their respective primary hagiographical texts. The aim of this study is to determine to what extent Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson constructed his twelfth century text, Passio et miracula Beati Olavi, with reference to the hagiographical motifs surrounding the cult of St. Edmund and its central manuscript, Passio Sancti Edmundi. The interconnectedness of the cults of these royal martyr saints will be discussed in relation to dynastic promotion and royal patronage, their portrayal as both saints and warriors, shared miracles and exile.
Foreword

First and foremost, I must thank my supervisor, Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, for the constant support throughout the writing of my Master’s thesis. It would not be the finished product it is today without his insightful comments and expert guidance through the cult of saints genre. Any mistakes that remain are my own.

Additional thanks are owed to my friends and family who have encouraged me during the whole process. Finally, a special mention must be given to my girlfriend. Her patience, thoughtfulness and constructive advice have been invaluable throughout this whole endeavor.
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1 Introduction

This thesis serves to examine the transmission of royal missionary saints between Norway and England during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, focused on the cult of St. Olav and the cult of St. Edmund. It is evident that during this period the cult of saints was being exported to new areas, as Christendom expanded north and east. The expansion of the cult of St. Olav from Scandinavia to England fit hand in hand with the extension of Christianity around the year 1000. It is important to further emphasise that unlike certain saints that remained localised in their communities, the cult of St. Olav crossed both cultural and geographical barriers. Furthermore, Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell have stated that ‘the life of a saint was closely intertwined with the community, and above all community had a territorial dimension’. This demonstrates that although saints were restricted to their communities, these communities were often vast and extended across geographical confines.

An avenue increasingly emerged across the North Sea during the eleventh century that allowed for the exchange and dissemination of the cult of royal saints. Dr Edvard Bull writing in 1912 on the connection between the cult of St Olav and England noted that ‘there can therefore scarcely be any doubt but that this worship reached England from Norway, and that owing to the lively traffic between the two countries not only has Norway been influenced from England, but also England from Norway’. This sense of active borrowing and constant interaction between the cult of St. Olav and English royal missionary saints is a central theme that will be continuously touched upon throughout this investigation.

1.1 Historiography and Comparison

The main sources that will be analysed during this thesis are the hagiographical texts at the centre of each saint’s cult. St. Olav’s life and miracles are recounted in a number of vernacular texts such as the Old Norwegian Homily Book, the Legendary Saga of St Olaf, in

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Snorri Sturluson’s separate Óláfs saga Helga and in Heimskringla. However, the primary text that the thesis will use explore the cult of St. Olav is Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson’s Passio et miracula Beati Olavī. In particular, the edition translated by Devra Kunin and edited by Carl Phelpstead, titled A History of Norway and The Passion and Miracles of the Blessed Óláfr. This hagiographical text has been specifically selected as no other work illustrates the interconnectedness of the cults of St. Olav and St. Edmund in quite the same way. This is due to Eystein’s authorship. As the second Archbishop of Nidaros, elected in 1161, Eytsein was in the prime position to promote Olav’s cult and strengthen the Church and the fragile, newly Christianised kingdom of Norway. Moreover, Eystein’s exile to England, between the years 1180-1183, and subsequent residency at the abbey of Bury St Edmunds, provided him with the perfect opportunity to pen the rest of Passio Olavi whilst incorporating key hagiographical motifs from the cult of St. Edmund.

Passio Olavi was composed in Latin, as opposed to the other vernacular texts surrounding Olav’s cult. This increased its accessibility to the medieval cult of saints community and allowed for greater dissemination and diffusion throughout Latin Christendom during the latter twelfth century. Therefore it seems natural that a text written with the intention of an international readership would spread beyond its geographical boundaries, across the North Sea and actively borrow hagiographical topoi from an English royal martyr saint such as Edmund. In addition to Passio Olavi, this study will examine Snorri Sturluson’s thirteenth century text Heimskringla. Snorri’s greater objectivity in Heimskringla, due to its later composition in relation to Olav’s death and the lack of Christian overtones and ecclesiastical propaganda, allowed for a different perspective on the blessed martyr’s cult. This rang especially true when considering Olav’s recorded miraculous intercessions and in comparison to the miracles surrounding the cult of St. Edmund.

When considering the cult of St. Edmund the primary hagiographical text this study used for hagiographical comparison was Abbo of Fleury’s text Passio Sancti Edmundi translated in Lord Francis Hervey’s edition of Corolla Sancti Edmundi: The Garland of St Edmund, King and Martyr. I chose to use Abbo’s Latin version as opposed to the later revision and translation of the text in Abbot Ælfric’s homily Lives of Saints for a number of reasons. Firstly, Abbo’s composition of Passio Sancti Edmundi was written around the years 985-987

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while he was at the Abbey of Ramsey in England, in what he considered as exile.\(^5\) This is significant as it was the earliest comprehensive hagiographical text centred on the cult of St. Edmund as Ælfric’s translation of Abbo’s text was published some decades later. Moreover, since this thesis is a comparative study between the two cults of saints, it is essential to pin down what is actually comparable and to compare like with like. C. Wickham aptly summarises this issue when he states that ‘the sorts of documentation provided by different parts of medieval Europe were hugely diverse; it is hard even to identify points of comparison if the material at your disposal is too different’\(^6\). With the crucial issue of comparison in mind, Abbo’s text is far more suitable to use in this discussion as it was written in Latin and therefore appealed to the same audience as *Passio Olavi*. Furthermore, Abbo’s *Passio Sancti Edmundi* was far more hagiographical in nature than Ælfric’s version. Francis Hervey, in his edition of Abbo’s text, addresses this when he notes that ‘pruned and curtailed by Ælfric, with excellent judgement, the narrative makes far less exacting demands upon our capacity of belief’\(^7\).

What makes Abbo’s *Passio Sancti Edmundi* ideal for comparison with *Passio Olavi* is that it accentuated the narrative surrounding Edmund’s miracles and was far less concerned with accurately detailing and chronicling the chronology of events that led up to the East Anglian king’s death and beyond. For that, it would be preferable to view the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Both Abbo and Eystein emphasised the hagiographical aspect surrounding the cult of these royal martyr saints above all else. Since both hagiographers wrote their texts with the same purpose, it makes the notion of interchange and borrowing even more convincing as they composed their hagiographical texts to promote their own respective cult centres. Abbo undertook an exile of his own which also would have related to Eystein’s experience as the destination of both their flights was the same location, Bury St Edmunds. Therefore, this thesis has tried to select and utilise the most relevant sources for comparative testing that will produce the most accurate findings in regards to hagiographic similarities between *Passio Olavi* and *Passio Sancti Edmundi*. However, due to the unique and diverse nature of the cults of saints literature in this period, no conditions for comparison will ever exist without exactly ideal.


1.2 Historical Context

It is possible to observe during the eleventh and twelfth centuries that there was an intimate connection between the English and Norwegian Churches that facilitated contact. It is poignant that it occurred in a period in which the cult of St. Olav was making progress. Bruce Dickens accentuates that bishops as well as priests from England played a large part in the establishment of Christianity in Norway. For example, the first bishop of Stavanger was an Englishman, and his cathedral dedicated to St. Swithun of Winchester.

The manner of King Olav’s death at the battle of Stiklestad in 1030 allowed for his cult to vigorously spread across Europe and in particular to England. The martyr-cult aspect of the cult of St. Olav seems to have been influenced to an extent by English hagiographical models for describing a martyr king. Olav’s death, and subsequent martyrdom, can be seen as drawing upon ‘the tradition of murdered Anglo-Saxon royalty’ with earlier English examples including Oswald of Northumbria (d. 642) and Edmund of East Anglia (d. 869.). It did not take long after Olav’s death for him to be associated with these Anglo-Saxon royal saints; thus strengthening cultural ties with England and propagating the appeal of the cult of St. Olav to wider audiences beyond Scandinavia. Hagiographical motifs were used to emphasise this connection to cultic topoi as ‘Olav’s nails and hair, like St. Edmund’s, continued to grow’. This active borrowing of well-established cultic themes aided in popularising the cult of St. Olav and displayed that the tradition of royal missionary saints opened a channel between of lively exchange between England and Norway during this period.

Moreover, the martyr-cult aspect of the cult of St. Olav was influenced by an English hagiographical model in the form of Thomas Becket. For example, Thomas Becket, who died in 1170, can be drawn in comparison to St. Olav depicted in Passio et miracula Sancti Olavi on account of strong similarities in the motif of premeditated flight and exile as a necessary preparation for martyrdom. This comparison holds weight as the author of Passio Olavi, most likely Archbishop Eystein of Trondheim, composed the text around the same time as Becket’s death.

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9 Ibid., p. 54.
10 Bartlett, Why can the Dead Do Such Great Things?, p. 56.
death and most certainly would have been aware of that fact. Additionally, Eystein formed a
physical connection with the community identity of English royal sainthood while he was in
exile in England for three years from 1180 before returning to Norway in 1183. For example,
Frederick Metcalfe notes that during this exile as ‘Eystein surveyed the richly jewelled shrine
of St. Edmund, his heart would doubtless be over the North Sea, and fixed lovingly on the not
less splendid shrine of his national saint, St. Olav in Trondhjem’. 12 This is pertinent as it
suggests that Eystein himself discussed and dwelled upon the striking points of resemblance
between the miracles of the two martyr-saints and ample opportunity to explore the local
cults. Metcalfe also contends that it is likely that Archbishop Eystein would have left a copy
of *Passio Olavi* at the house of the Abbot of Bury St. Edmunds. 13 As a result, one can
determine that there was a more tangible connection with the cult of St. Olav and that of
English royal saints than just passive borrowing of cultic hagiographical motifs.

This study aims to stress the interconnected nature of the cult of saints in early medieval
Western and Northern Europe. While still acknowledging, and in no way diminishing what
Alan Thacker argues is ‘the distinctiveness of its various regional and provincial
manifestations’. 14 St. Olav’s cult quickly gained recognition after 1030 and was one of, if not,
the most important cult in the Nordic world. This rapid production of Olav’s cult is
exemplified with recognition from the chronicler Adam of Bremen writing in the 1070s in his
*Ecclesiastical History*:

*So Olav, king and martyr as we believe, met such an end. His body was buried with fitting
honour in the great city of his kingdom, Trondheim, where today, through many miracles and
cures that are performed by him, the Lord deigns to show how much merit he is in heaven,
who had such honour on earth. His feast-day on 29 July is commemorated in perpetuity by all
the peoples of the northern ocean, the Norse, Swedes, Götar, Samlanders, Danes and Slavs*.

However, it is necessary to note that although Adam of Bremen made a point of telling his
local readers in the see of Hamburg-Bremen that as far north as Trondheim a local martyr
king was still performing miracles; that one cannot use this testimony solely as evidence of a

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13 Ibid., p. 54.

14 Alan Thacker, ‘Loca Santorum: The Significance of Place in the Study of the Saints, in Local Saints and Local

15 Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* 2. 61, pp. 300-302.
popular cult.\textsuperscript{16} This is an extremely important point as a cult’s popularity is not determined by an individual or a set of individuals, but rather by a community as Janet Nelson holistically concludes that ‘even if the initiative in promoting a saint’s cult was usually clerical, popular acceptance was essential to its success’\textsuperscript{17} However, although Adam of Bremen recognised the cult of St. Olav, one must be aware that he was eager to emphasise Bremen’s major role in the mission in the north. Consequently, Adam’s own political agenda in \textit{Gesta} most likely superseded that of spreading the cult of St. Olav. Even though liturgical texts concerning St. Olav may have been circulating during this period it is unknown whether these would have been able to Adam in the metropolitan church in Bremen. Nonetheless, the extract above serves to highlight that the cult of St. Olav gained importance both in Norway and abroad and that it had reached an international community unfettered by geographical borders.

\section*{1.3 Dynastic Promotion}

The first chapter of this thesis will focus on how the cult of St. Olav aided dynastic promotion through cooperation between the Church and the royal office. This section will follow a chronological pattern starting with the nascent emergence of St. Olav’s cult, a year after his death in 1031, focusing on the figure of the Englishman Bishop Grimkell, largely responsible for founding the cult. Bishop Grimkell is significant in the overall discussion in this thesis as he represents the beginning of hagiographical exchange between Norway and England. Grimkell acted as a tangible, corporeal conduit through which the cult of St. Olav crossed the expanse of the North Sea, disregarding geographical confines, and in turn incorporating the blessed martyr into the English hagiographical community. This set the hagiographical stage for Eystein’s later foray into the realm of English royal martyr saints, during his stay at Bury St Edmunds and increased his awareness of an Anglo-Saxon hagiographical model. Next discussion will turn to St. Olav’s son, Magnus the Good. It will focus on his returned from exile soon after his father’s death and how through endorsement of the newly established cult of St. Olav, Magnus eventually ascended to the Norwegian throne in 1035. Examining


Magnus the Good’s use of the dynastic promotion of his father’s cult to bolster his own legitimacy is particularly interesting. It emphasises that the emergence of cults of saints, such as St. Olav’s, often occurred during times of instability and unrest and were consequently crucial in securing ascendance to the royal office because dynastic patronage of a saint. Finally, Eystein’s role as a legislator will be explored in conjunction with the coronation of King Magnus Erlingsson in 1163/64 and how King Magnus’s promotion of St. Olav’s role as rex Perpetuus Norwegiae strengthened his legitimacy to rule. Conversely, King Magnus Erlingsson’s rival, Sverre Sigurdsson, also drew upon the cult of St. Olav to augment his own legitimacy through dynastic patronage. This enquiry into dynastic promotion of St. Olav’s cult is significant as it indicates that saintly patronage was a battlefield between hopeful ascendants to royal office during this period. Moreover, it seems that dynastic patronage of a royal martyr saint was a mandatory prerequisite as cultic association had become embedded in Norwegian monarchial culture.

1.4 Martial and Spiritual Kingship

A key chapter in this thesis is the debate surrounding the duality of sainthood and how both St. Olav and St. Edmund personified, potentially irreconcilably, martial and spiritual kingship. Øystein Ekroll notes that ‘Like Olav, Edmund died as a true Christian without resisting’.

However, the exact opposite is in fact the case for both Olav and Edmund. Although, both Olav and Edmund did die as Christian martyrs against pagan enemies, they were not compliant. Susan Ridyard contends that Abbo of Fleury, who was commissioned to write a Passio of Edmund, did not intend to present Edmund as a peace king or as an unresisting victim. Rather he makes quite clear his belief that Edmund had a considerable reputation as a warrior. Consequently, we can see that Abbo’s Edmund was a warrior king cast in a traditional Christian-heroic mould. This is mirrored in Olav’s death at Stiklestad as he is depicted fighting pagans with sword in hand and most definitely resisting. Sverre Bagge emphasises this point he maintains that ‘very few royal saints were killed in battle, and none of the sources except Passio Olavi state that King Olav was fighting pagans or heretics’.

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18 Ibid., p. 175.
However, it is arguable that *Passio Olavi* contains more of a liturgical message to combat heresy than an actual physical aspect:

‘Clad in the breastplate of faith, girded with the sword of the spirit which is the word of God, in honour and dishonour, evil report and good report, with the armour of righteousness…he willingly put himself in the way of dangers, not refusing to accept martyrdom if it was God’s will’.\(^{21}\)

Another feature which Eystein drew upon from the cult of St. Edmund was the concept of Edmund as *rex Christianissimus*. In martyrdom Edmund was presented as the personification of idealised Christian kingship. This motif is also evident in the cult of St. Olav as he is presented in *Passio Olavi* as a wise and just ruler, *rex iustus*. This suggests that perhaps Eystein was influenced by Hugh of St. Victor’s *De Sacramentis* which gave weight to the cult and a greater sense of legitimacy as this was one of the seminal liturgical texts of the Church.\(^{22}\) Additionally, prior to his position as second archbishop of Nidaros, Eystein had studied in Paris, most likely at the monastery of St. Victor.\(^{23}\) This demonstrates that Eystein had access to the same hagiographical body of literature which shaped the cult of St. Edmund and in turn the cult of St. Olav through this process of active borrowing. It is evident that England felt an interest in St. Olav that went beyond merely the conventional. Perhaps the cult of St. Olav was so quickly accepted and integrated in the community of English hagiography since like Edmund’s cult, Olav’s Office symbolised the vindication of his cause and the ultimate victory of Christian over pagan which rang true as a central motif amongst English royal martyr-saints.

### 1.5 Miracles

During this period it was common for the hagiographer, by skilful selection and combination of *topoi*, was able to highlight the distinguishing characteristics of the cult which he wished to portray. It seems that Eystein interweaved some of the elements contained within the legends of St. Edmund into the legends of St. Olav.\(^{24}\) Similar elements which are found in *Passio Olavi* include the account of miracles such as the old blind man who regained his eyesight,

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and the well-preserved body and hair and nails that continued to grow after death.\textsuperscript{25} The miraculous feat of bodily incorruption will play a major role in the comparative analysis of the miracles incorporated in the cults of St. Olav and St. Edmund since it was a fairly unique and distinctive hagiographical motif. This subsequently suggests that Eystein assimilated these motifs surrounding the cult of St. Edmund into the cult of St. Olav. Additionally, St. Edmund was known in Norway before 1150, not long after the death of St. Olav and before the appointment of Eystein and Archbishop of Trondheim. The Church of Hovedøya Cistercian Abbey in Oslo, which was most likely built around 1100, was dedicated to St. Edmund.\textsuperscript{26} This infers that St. Edmund’s cult and miracles would have been known to Eystein, before his exile to Bury St Edmunds. The overall aim of this section is to highlight the overlap in hagiographical motifs between the two saints. Furthermore, the intention is to critically dissect whether in fact these miracles in \textit{Passio Sancti Edmundi} seemingly caused a direct line of influence and integration in Eystein’s composition of \textit{Passio Olavii}. Or on the other hand, whether these hagiographical themes originated from other sources in the medieval cults of saints community and to what extent did these external influences coincide and combine to actively inform Eystein during his composition.

\section*{1.6 Eystein’s Exile}

The final section of this thesis will concentrate on the specific dating of \textit{Passio Olavii} in relation Eystein’s English exile and how his residency at Bury St Edmunds led to the hagiographical incorporation of saintly motifs surrounding the cult of St. Edmund. Since the cult of St. Olav became more localised and well-known in England including reference in contemporary litanies, it gives more weight to the theory that Archbishop Eystein, during his exile in England between 1180 and 1183, may have been working to promote the cult of St. Olav and in return assimilated and borrowed motifs and \textit{topoi} of English royal saints during this period. This thesis will focus largely upon to what extent Eystein’s composition of his seminal work, \textit{Passio Olavii}, was influenced by English hagiography. Paul Binski highlights that Eystein was ‘staunchly pro-Becket, as his flight from King Sverre to England was


\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., p. 175.
ominously and deliberately reminiscent of Becket’s flight from Henry II’.\textsuperscript{27} Moreover, since Eystein’s exile echoes that of Becket, it indicates that St. Thomas’ cult commanded substantial authority, second only to Olav’s, in Scandinavia as a whole.\textsuperscript{28} Therefore Eystein would have been aware of these English hagiographical models for martyrdom and martyr-kings. Becket’s death in 1170 would have coincided with the period of \textit{Passio Olavi}’s composition. This most definitely follows the overarching trend at the time of placing martyrdom at the centre of the cult. Susan J. Ridyard aptly concludes that ‘cults did not simply develop: they were developed. And their development owed less to divine acknowledgement than to successful advertising’.\textsuperscript{29} This statement can be directly applied to Eystein as he undoubtedly developed the cult of St. Olav with reference to the English royal martyr-saints as his \textit{Passio Olavi} contains a number of striking themes and images which can be well understood with reference to English hagiography. This active borrowing or ‘advertising’ by Eystein is particularly relevant when considering the cult of St. Edmund. During Eystein’s exile it is reported that he spent a few months between the years 1181-1182 in residence at Bury Abbey and showed much interest in the cult of St. Edmund of Bury, presumably as it was a royal cult akin to that of St. Olav.\textsuperscript{30}


\textsuperscript{29} Ridyard, \textit{The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England}, p. 5.

2 Dynastic Promotion

2.1 Introduction

This section of the thesis will focus on how the cult of St. Olav was adopted to further strengthen dynastic ties and in turn support a ruler’s legitimacy both in eleventh and twelfth century Norway. This chapter will begin with an analysis of the foundation of the cult of St. Olav and the key figure of the Englishman Bishop Grimkell who was essential in establishing Olav as a saint both in Norway and internationally. Secondly, this chapter will explore how following St. Olav’s death at Stiklestad in 1030, Olav’s son, Magnus the Good, returned from exile and promoted his late father’s cult to strengthen his claim to the throne and attain kingship. Lastly, this section will discuss Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson’s role as a legislator and the central role he played in both strengthening the royal office and the Church in the middle of twelfth century.

2.2 Bishop Grimkell

A character which was central to founding and disseminating the cult of St. Olav was the Englishman Bishop Grimkell. His role in raising awareness to Olav’s cult on the international stage, particularly in regards to England will be examined in this study. Grimkell is an important figure since he declared Olav Haraldsson a saint, one year after his death, 3 August 1031. Grimkell, one of those English prelates that Olav supposedly brought to Norway, was reportedly the individual who opened the grave and found Olav’s body to be incorrupt, wounds healed and hair and nails had continued to grow. Grimkell can be seen as a corporeal conduit through which the cult of St Olav expanded and in turn was integrated into English hagiographical culture. Lenka Jiroušková further compounds this view when stating that ‘both the liturgical as well as the historiographical interest in the saintly King Olav, testified to in written tradition, first arose outside Norway. The earliest traces of the first cult of Olav, which seems to have been initiated by Grimkell, lead to England’. This is

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significant as it suggests that Grimkell played an important role in the establishment of the veneration of Olav as a saint which is more striking in this context since he was an Englishman and not Norwegian. Consequently, it is not at all surprising that the cult of St. Olav had been firmly established in England within a generation of the saint’s passion.\(^{33}\)

It is central to this discussion to explore Grimkell and the early cult of St. Olav in England. The oldest English liturgical sources related to St. Olav are dated from around the year 1050 and the most notable source of these is the *Leofric Collectar* which contains the St. Olav Office.\(^{34}\) This directly relates to Grimkell as it is inferred that since he undoubtedly played such an essential role in founding the cult of St. Olav, that he is also most probably the compiler of the first Office of St. Olav as maintained in the *Leofric Collectar*.\(^{35}\) *Leofric* was bishop of Exeter during this period and consequently would have been one of Grimkell’s ‘colleagues and close neighbours’.\(^{36}\) Since Grimkell had the company of clerics such as *Leofric* and was a member of the king’s council, the *witenagemot*, where men regularly gathered form nobles down to courtiers, it is possible to contend that Grimkell could have used his influence with these renowned individuals and nobility to spread the cult of St. Olav which had already gained notable prestige.

It is pertinent to note that the Office of St. Olav was not unlike the one established later around 1160 or 1170 by Eystein, the second archbishop of Nidaros. The *Leofric Collectar* focused on the period between Olav’s death and the formation of the church province of Nidaros in 1153. Thus, this collection is important in analysing how St. Olav was exported across the seas to England and why his early cult established itself so prominently during a period in the 1050s where there was already a rich community of the cults of English royal martyr-saints and not in his own country. Eyolf Østrem emphasises this sentiment when remarking that ‘it may seem odd with such a widespread celebration in England, while the Norwegian celebration was so sparse’.\(^{37}\) This emphasises that perhaps the existing church organisation in England was more favourable to facilitate the dissemination of the early cult of St. Olav than their loosely organised Norwegian counterparts which lacked fixed bishoprics during the first century after St. Olav’s death at Stiklestad.


\(^{36}\) Østrem, *The office of Saint Olav*, p. 32.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., p. 30.
St. Olav also appears in an early English litany, which was also donated to Exeter Cathedral by Bishop Leofric (1050-1072), known as the *Leofric Psalter*. This source is particularly interesting as he stands together with a number of English royal martyr-saints such as St. Oswald, king of Northumbria, St. Edmund, King of East Anglia and St. Edward the Martyr, king of England. Gunilla Iversen states that ‘most of these English saints had been persons in a royal position and were either newly established as saints in the eleventh century or re-established in connection with translations during this period’. This is significant as it emphasises that the cult of St. Olav was already linked to English royal martyr-saints by contemporaries during this period. Furthermore, this litany shows that St. Olav clearly was clearly compatible with the community of English hagiographical figures during this period since he too was deemed a martyr and his cult played upon dynastic and nationalistic themes to help its establishment. However, what is interesting is that it seems that amongst Anglo-Saxon saints there was ubiquity, and persistence in their cults, in that once established, they would continue to garner attention in conjunction with the frequency in which royal cults emerged. This widespread dissemination of the cult of St. Olav from Norway indicates that the importance of a cult at its principal centre may to some extent be established and that both the geographical and the chronological aspects of its transmission form that centre can be traced, by reference to liturgical sources, such as English litanies in this instance.

Overall, it is possible to conclude that Grimkell had a significant impact on the early cult of St. Olav. The Office of St. Olav, which Grimkell most likely founded, became localised in England through numerous means both in physical and liturgical fashion. Moreover, the tangible aspect of the Office of St. Olav is prominent throughout England during this period as at least fifteen churches are known to be dedicated to him. Moreover, it is necessary to accentuate that the early cult of St. Olav was overwhelming international in nature. During the eleventh century in Norway there is no sign of fixed church organisation or centralised liturgy which emphasises that the church lacked power and was unable to celebrate or use the Office of St. Olav, regardless of its presence at the time. The cult of St. Olav had crossed the North Sea and remained and flourished in England until after the establishment of the archbishopric.

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of Nidaros in 1153 when it developed into a dynamic and major cult centre, not only in Scandinavia, but throughout Latin Christendom.

### 2.3 Magnus the Good

Susan Ridyard aptly notes that when ‘the political power of the Crown was weak, the church sought to bolster royal authority by the creation of the saint king; where the monarchy was strong, the saintly ruler was conspicuously and deliberately absent’.\(^{41}\) This theory is important and can be directly applied when examining the cult of St. Olav. In the years following Olav’s death it is evident that there was a vacuum of power present in the Norwegian monarchy.

The struggle for the Norwegian throne between Magnus the Good, Olav’s son, and Sweyn of Denmark perfectly signifies how St. Olav’s cult was utilised for political purposes. The second instance of dynastic promotion in the second half of the twelfth century which will be covered later in this chapter is centred on the wake of the formation of new Office liturgy for St. Olav, around 1152/1153, when Nidaros was established as an archbishopric. King Magnus Erlingsson drew upon the cult of St. Olav to strengthen his legitimacy to the throne against his opponent Sverre Sigurdsson. Likewise, Sverre also utilised the cult of St. Olav to legitimise his claim to the Norwegian throne as St. Olav plays a significant role in Sverris saga.

A central theme in this notion of dynastic legitimacy is that in Scandinavia royal influence over the Church was pronounced and that it had a major hand in creating a new Office for St. Olav following his death at Stiklestad in 1030. Furthermore, Frank Barlow contends that at the time of Magnus, even more at the time of Olav, before the first wave of reform around the middle of the eleventh century, the national churches were generally at the hands of the kings.\(^{42}\) Therefore, in the case of Magnus the Good, we can infer that perhaps that the expression of piety and reverence towards Olav was not as much in the manner of father to son, but rather less on an individual and personal level and more for the purpose of forming a dynasty and establishing legitimacy to rule.\(^{43}\) St. Olav’s greatest enemy and now his son’s Magnus, Knut, was a great promotor of the church, both in England and in his native

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Denmark, which had had a Christian king since 960 or so, two generations before Olav Haraldsson was born.\textsuperscript{44}

It is ironic that the cult of St. Olav took such a foothold and flourished in England, even though it is arguable that Knut did more for Christianity, and the Church, than Olav Haraldsson ever did. Nonetheless, it is almost impossible to compare Knut and Olav in this manner as Olav died as a martyr who fought and died in battle, whereas Knut succumbed to old age. However, as Trondheim was just emerging as a centre of urbanisation and culture during the early cult of St. Olav, it is evident that Magnus through royal power promoted Olav’s cult to enhance his Norwegian identity as opposed to his main opponent, the Danish king Knut.\textsuperscript{45} This displays that the cult of St. Olav was important as it had political ramifications and rulers found it expedient to promote his cult in order to ease dynastic tensions.

Gabor Klaniczay observes that Knut’s son, Sweyn, the new governor of Norway, likewise supported the cult of Olaf, presumably for the same reasons that his father supported Edmund’s in England.\textsuperscript{46} Nevertheless, it seemed that the promotion of the cult of St. Olav for Knut and Sweyn was counterproductive as they did not possess the Norwegian identity to enhance their claim as king and as such were somewhat detached; whereas Magnus associated his seat of power with the centre of Olav’s cult. It is pertinent to accentuate the rapidity in which the cult of St. Olav gained recognition, even amongst his enemies the Danes. This indicates that Olav’s cult circulated without restriction across Scandinavia during the middle of the eleventh-twelfth centuries. Furthermore, Metcalfe states in his introduction to \textit{Passio et miracula Beati Olavi} that Snorri remarks with sly gravity, ‘many believed that Olaf must be a Saint, even among those who had persecuted him with the greatest animosity’.\textsuperscript{47} The promotion of the cult of St. Olav from Magnus the Good and the lack of traction developed by Knut’s dynasty in endorsing the sanctity of their former enemy, eventually led to Magnus’ successful accession to the throne in 1035.

\textsuperscript{44} Lindow, ‘St. Olaf and the Skalds’, p. 107.
\textsuperscript{46} Gábor Klaniczay, \textit{Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe} (Cambridge, 2002), p. 98.
Klaniczay further contends that the Anglo-Saxon model of fostering a close alliance between the new ruling dynasty of a Christian kingdom and the local church was influential in shaping eleventh and twelfth century Scandinavia. He accentuates that ‘these cults typically started during the strife surrounding the succession, and subsequently they were instrumental in securing the ascendance of the branch of the dynasty that tried to capitalise on the patronage of these cults’. This model can be specifically applied to the rise of St. Olav’s cult and the unrest surrounding the legitimacy of the newly crowned King Magnus Erlingsson in 1163/64.

### 2.4 Eystein’s Role as Legislator

Sverre Bagge states that ‘Olav was known as a legislator, thus corresponding to the Christian ideal of the just king. Olav’s successors could use their relationship to the Holy King as a supplement to military power.’ This concept Olav as rex iustus resonates in this period as the weak nature of the monarchy led to rulers promoting cults of saints, such as Olav’s in order to bolster legitimacy. Furthermore, the ideological basis of the Law of Succession was the Christian doctrine of rex iustus, however this dogma had no real impact on royal succession as ‘if it had been practised, it would hardly have reduced the importance of dynastic succession; it is difficult to imagine an assembly, even if dominated by the bishops, rejecting the king’s eldest son as morally unqualified’. Archbishop Eystein promoted the cult of St. Olav in Norway following the independence the Church had acquired following the establishment of the archbishop of Nidaros in 1152/53. Moreover, it is necessary to examine how in 1163/64, with the coronation of Magnus Erlingsson, both the Church and Crown appropriated the cult of St. Olav in order to enhance their own political and ecclesiastical agenda.

It is interesting to also view Eystein’s role as legislator after 1152/1153 since his period as archbishop largely coincided with Magnus Erlingsson’s success as well as his defeat. Øystein Ekroll emphasises that Magnus had a close relationship with Eystein who crowned him as

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51 Antonsson, St. Magnus of Orkney, pp. 103-104.
king when he was only a child, and supported him until his death in battle with Sverre Sigurdsson.\textsuperscript{52} Eystein’s alliance with Magnus clearly led to one of his greatest political successes in the privileges issued in connection with King Magnus Erlingsson’s coronation in 1163/64: the Law of Succession (1163 or 1164) and Magnus Erlingsson’s privilege to the Church in approximately 1170.\textsuperscript{53} In particular, the promises expressed in the Letter of Privileges are of note as they state that Magnus acknowledged St. Olav as the ultimate ruler of the realm, \textit{rex Perpetuus Norvegie}, while simultaneously representing himself as St. Olav’s vassal on earth.

In this respect, future kings were only the representative and tenant of the saint, holding the kingdom and receiving their crown in exchange for homage to the martyred king St. Olav. This is significant as royal descent was necessary to claim the throne and by ‘receiving’ his crown directly from St. Olav, Magnus asserted his divine right to kingship as well as avoiding the sensitive issue of his arguably weak hereditary claim to the throne.\textsuperscript{54} This served to bolster Magnus’ claim to legitimacy as his claim to the throne was only through his mother, a daughter of king Sigurd the Crusader.\textsuperscript{55} This discussion surrounding coronation and legitimacy is also stressed by Snorri Sturluson in his seminal thirteenth century text \textit{Heimskringla}, detailing a conversation between Archbishop Eystein and one of King Magnus’ councillors, Erling Skakki:

‘King Magnus’ mother is the daughter born in wedlock of a king and queen; therefore King Magnus is the son of a queen and a lawful wife. But if you [Archbishop Eystein] will crown him king, then no one will be able with right to take the kingship from him...Now here in the land is an archbishopric and it is a great honour and dignity for our land. Let us now increase its power still more and have a crowned king, no less than the Englishmen or the Danes’.\textsuperscript{56}

This text from \textit{Heimskringla} shows that Magnus Erlingsson’s anointment and coronation served to compensate for his somewhat weak claim to the throne as he lacked royal patrilineal descent from the previous King Sigurd, who died in 1130. Moreover, Eystein’s direct endorsement of Magnus aimed to bring stability and security to the royal office on a national


\textsuperscript{54} Antonsson, \textit{St. Magnus of Orkney}, pp. 103-104.

\textsuperscript{55} Ekroll, ‘The Shrine of St Olav in Nidaros Cathedral’, p. 155.

level, following the thirty years of civil war and promote the king’s prestige on an international level. However, it seems that Eystein’s support was mutually beneficial as an increase in influence to his newly founded archbishopric would in turn increase his own power and authority as archbishop and consequently that of the cult of St. Olav. This displays Eystein’s role as a legislator as the Church consolidated and expanded its autonomy from the monarchy which had begun with the establishment of the archbishopric of Nidaros in 1152/1153. Antonsson fittingly observes that in the years 1163/1164 the cult of St. Olav provided ‘a bridge between the interests of regnum and sacredotium’. This infers that the cult of St. Olav acted as an indicator for the relationship between the Church and the monarchy. Subsequently, Eystein had the ability to place the cult of St. Olav at the centre of proceedings with the pressing matter of royal legitimisation.

Even with the fall of Magnus Erlingsson at the Battle of Fimreiti in 1184 to Sverre Sigurdsson, whom Eystein had staunchly opposed, both factions still claimed to have the support and patronage of St. Olav. The cult of St. Olav’s vital utilisation even during civil war emphasises how central and anchored in Norwegian monarchical culture it had become. It is evident that Sverre also drew upon the cult of St. Olav to legitimise his claim to the Norwegian throne through the role St. Olav played in Sverris saga. It is clear that a pivotal event in the saga is after Sverre is informed of his true patronage, that he is the son of King Sigurd Haraldsson. St. Olav appears to Sverre in a dream and consequently promises to aid him in the conflict and struggle against the incumbent king of Norway, Magnus Erlingsson. Moreover, Olav in this dream calls Sverre ‘Magnus’ and asks him ‘to wash in the same water’. This adoption of the name ‘Magnus’ refers to King Magnus the Good and the well-known idea of vir magnus. This indicates that the purpose of Sverris saga was to create an image of a leader that was virtuous and fit to rule which was accomplished through dynastic links to the cult of St. Olav.

57 Antonsson, St. Magnus of Orkney, p. 104.
58 Ibid., p. 213.
59 Sverris Saga etter Cod. AM 327 4o, ed. By Gustav Indrebø (Kristiania, 1920), pp. 4-5.
60 Ibid., p. 4.
3 King, Martyr and Warrior

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on the hagiographical similarities between the cult of St. Olav and the cult St. Edmund. Discussion will be centred on the theory that Archbishop Eystein actively borrowed English hagiographic motifs when compiling *Passio Olavi*, particularly that of the cult of St. Edmund. Firstly, Eystein’s ties to the cult of St. Edmund, pre-dating his exile, will be highlighted and analysed. Thereafter, this chapter will explore the shared theme of royal martyrdom and to what extent both saints were simultaneously portrayed as both idealised Christian kings and as warriors celebrated for their martial kingship. Seeing as the typical martyr was executed or murdered without resistance, the cults of combatant martyr-kings, slain in battle, were very rare and therefore a significant link between Olav and Edmund. Lastly, this section will engage with the problematic definition of sainthood and martyrdom and that it was difficult as a hagiographer to reconcile the notion of the unresisting Christ-like victim and the warrior king. Ridyard aptly argues states that ‘the hagiographer, by skilful selection and combination of *topoi*, was able to highlight the distinguishing characteristics of the cult which he wished to portray’. This can be directly related to Eystein as his six months at Bury St Edmunds will have provided him with examples of hagiographical motifs to develop both *Passio Olavi* and the cult of St. Olav. During the twelfth century it seems that the most beloved of the British saints lived on in memory, sometimes more so amongst the Nordic peoples than in their country of birth. This was certainly true when considering St. Edmund.

3.2 Eystein and Bury St Edmunds Pre-exile

Since the death of St. Edmund’s in 870 his popularity persisted in England and Denmark until the end of the Middle Ages. Evidence of Edmund’s connection with Norway clearly is

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visible from the existence of a church dedicated to the English martyr King Edmund on the island of Hovedøya before the arrival of Cistercian monks in 1147.\textsuperscript{65} Nyberg contends that Eystein would have almost undoubtedly been aware of the English martyr saint despite the distance from Nidaros. Eystein would have been well acquainted with the Cistercian house Hovedø, on the island of Hovedøya, for he had been parish priest in Konghelle in the Oslo diocese in the 1150s, before nomination to the archiepiscopal see.\textsuperscript{66} Therefore it is logical to assume that Eystein would have already been familiar, perhaps intimately, with the cult of St. Edmund and the hagiography surrounding it before his exile in 1180. Moreover the introduction of Frederick Metcalfe’s 1881 edition of *Passio Olavi* explicitly reveals the connection between the hagiographic work on St. Olav and England. Metcalfe notes that while Eystein was exiled in England he ‘surveyed the richly jewelled shrine of St. Edmund, and his heart would doubtless be over the North Sea, and fixed lovingly on the not less splendid shrine of his national saint, St. Olav in Trondhjem’.\textsuperscript{67}

### 3.3 Emergence of cult of saints

There are many similarities one can draw upon when considering both St. Olav and St. Edmund. The emergence of the cult of St. Olav began almost immediately after his death at Stiklestad in 1030, and therefore only a decade or two after the conversion of the country, which is in parallel to the adoption of St Edmund by the Danes in East Anglia very soon after their conversion.\textsuperscript{68} Furthermore, numismatics proves that within twenty years of St Edmund’s death in 870, King Alfred promoted his cult and that it flourished in the Danelaw.\textsuperscript{69} It is necessary to note the haste in which Olav was canonised just a year and five days after his death.\textsuperscript{70} Moreover, very swiftly after Olav’s death he became associated with hagiographical

\textsuperscript{67} *Passio et miracula Beati Olavi*, ed. Frederick Metcalfe (Oxford, 1881), pp. 53-54.
topoi similar to that of Anglo-Saxon royal saints and was immediately deemed a martyr. Similarly, although Edmund was never officially canonised, he was very much considered a local saint of East Anglia soon after his death as Aron Gurevich accentuates that medieval parishioners considered saints to be ‘their own property’. Therefore sanctity at a local level did not require papal ratification. Miracles surrounding the cults of St. Olav and St. Edmund were steeped in political ramifications. The speed in which these kings were declared martyrs gives weight to the fact that rulers found it expedient to promote their cults to alleviate dynastic and religious conflicts. This is evident in the adoption of St Edmund by the Danes in East Anglia very soon after their conversion to Christianity.

3.4 rex Christianissimus

Edmund and Olav are both royal martyr saints which adhere to the concept of rex Christianissimus. Christianisation on a personal level through external cultural influence is visible in King Olav Haraldsson’s baptism in northern France. Both saints are depicted as the personification of an idealised Christian king and the development of their cults represent the vindication of his cause and the ultimate victory of Christian over pagan. This portrayal of Christianity over paganism is evident in Abbo of Fleury’s Passio Sancti Edmundi when Edmund turns to the messenger of the Danish pagan chieftain and exclaims:

‘Know, therefore, that for the love of this earthly life Eadmund, the Christian king, will not submit to a heathen chief, unless you first become a convert to our religion; he would rather be a standard-bearer in the camp of the Eternal King’.  

This ideal of the Christian king is also apparent in Passio Olavi:

‘The martyr of Christ chanced to come into that district to preach God’s grace to the unbelieving people. When the enemies of the truth learnt this, they summoned a wicked council and gathered together against the Lord and his anointed’.

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These extracts demonstrate that both the cult of St. Olav and St. Edmund were born of religious and political conflict. Both texts were used to promote the conversion and early establishment of Christianity in both Norway and Denmark as it seemed that ‘martyrdom was in effect the sole form of saintliness until the late twelfth century’. Additionally, Erik Hoffmann identifies kings killed in battle against heathens as one of four types of Germanic royal saint, hagiographic *topoi* which both saints would fulfil. He avers that the cults of saints served the needs and aims of the secular authority and that the sanctification of a killed king would be an effective manner of legitimising one’s dynasty and rulership in a nascent society of Christian kingship. However, Olav was assimilated to this model although there would have been Christians and pagans on both sides at the battle of Stiklestad. Hoffmann himself recognised the connection between St. Olav and Anglo-Saxon royal saints as he lists the shared motifs and concludes that the English models clearly influenced the hagiography of St. Olav.

3.5 Royal martyrdom

Both Olav and Edmund share the familiar trope of being a royal martyr saint which neatly fits into the surrounding hagiographical historiography. However, what is interesting and wholly unique is that both these possessed a warrior king nature and were martyred in battle. Robert Bartlett emphasises this uncommon occurrence, especially when combating pagans, when stating that ‘before the eleventh century, the title of ‘martyr’ was rarely given to those who died fighting in battle, even against non-Christians. Oswald of Northumbria, killed in battle against pagans in 642, is only an apparent exception, for he was not treated as a martyr until c. 1000’. Moreover, we begin to find that during the course of the eleventh century there is a more prominent use of martyr terminology and language relating to those that died in battle under the banner of Christianity.

Collin Morris contends that before the First Crusade there is a rich history of Christians who died in warfare against pagans or unbelievers and received heavenly rewards, but such heroes

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78 Ibid., p. 80.
had not been labelled as martyrs. Consequentially, greater use of martyr terminology became more prevalent after 1050 where it seems to have been assimilated as part of the Western dialogue on the cult of saints. Admittedly, in the context of the Crusades and fallen Christian heroes it would have been extremely difficult to for a cult to develop without the presence of bones or relics as the bodies of the dead were lost in distant foreign lands. Jonathan Riley-Smith also emphasises that the designation of martyr had altered during the middle of the eleventh century. He states that Pope Leo IX had expanded the definition of ‘martyrdom’ to those who simply were slain in defence of justice and specifically referred to those fallen Christian soldiers in the defeat of his forces by the Normans in the battle of Civitate in 1053.

Consequently, by the time Eystein was archbishop in 1161 and had begun to write Olav’s hagiographical text in later years, the terminology encompassing martyrdom had changed significantly since the saint’s death in 1030. This meant that a cult centred on a royal martyr killed in the heat of battle was no longer omitted, but rather a rarity or an exception to the rule. The connection of royal martyrdom between Olav and Edmund must have seemed extremely viable and relatable to Eystein to use Edmund as a reference point when composing Passio Olavi. It is well known that St. Olav was slain in the heat of battle while bearing arms at Stiklestad in 1030 and shortly martyred almost immediately and gained sainthood locally just a year later.

There are conflicting narratives as to whether Edmund was indeed killed in battle, or even martyred for that fact. Dorothy Whitelock notes that the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle does not explicitly state that Edmund was killed in battle, but rather the wording suggests a possibility that he was slain in the aftermath of the military defeat. Moreover, Antonia Gransden has contended that although Edmund may have fallen in battle, the king may not have been martyred at all. Gransden quotes the phrase ‘Þone cining of slogan’ from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which translates as ‘the king has been killed’. Thus the phrase does not have any mention of martyrdom, which would ‘consign the whole of Abbo’s martyrdom narrative to the realm of hagiographical fantasy’. This explanation is not convincing as The Anglo-

Saxon Chronicle had its limitations including minimal information of anything hagiographical in nature.

Furthermore, A. P. Smyth contends that ‘when dealing with events outside Wessex, the Chronicle is concerned not with details but with basic issues – the laconic noting of the deaths of kings and the outcomes of major battles’. In this context it seems that Abbo’s Passio Sancti Edmundi is a more reliable source to determine whether Edmund should indeed be portrayed as a warrior king similar to Olav. There is no hagiographical purpose for Abbo in omitting such a battle as Ridyard emphasises that to die in battle against paganism was a well-trodden path to achieve sanctity. During this period it was of great importance that the king was declared a saint almost immediately after death in order to expound the cult at a local level, at least initially. Therefore a battle involving Edmund would have actually aided Abbo’s hagiographical agenda.

### 3.6 Warrior King

It is clear that Abbo did not intend to depict Edmund as an unresisting victim and that he possessed a reputation as a warrior and was celebrated for his martial kingship. Whitelock observes that ‘hagiographical writers would not be averse to depicting Edmund as all along an unresisting victim’.

Contrary to this notion, Abbo emphasises in Passio Sancti Edmundi that Edmund was a capable warrior, not unaccustomed to warfare. This is evident in Edmund’s reply to his bishop to submit to the heathen Viking demands:

‘And what do you advise? That in life’s extremity, bereft of my comrades, I should besmirch my fair fame by taking to flight? I have always avoided the calumnious accusations of the informer: never have I endured the opprobrium of fleeing from the battlefield, realising how glorious it would be to die for my country; and now I will of my own free will surrender myself, for the loss of those dear to me has made light itself hateful.’

This text demonstrates that Edmund was not an unresisting victim and touted as an experienced warrior of his time and more than willing to die for his country in the image of a heroic Christian warrior king.

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87 Whitelock, ‘Fact and fiction’, p. 221.
88 *Corolla Sancti Edmundi*, p. 27.
St. Olav was equally depicted as a king that participated in warfare and was a common figure on the battlefield, not shying away from bloody conflict. Olav was like many of his social equals as he engaged in Viking activity. Snorri Sturluson emphasises in *Heimskringla* that King Olav was extremely well armed with a golden helm, shield, spear in one hand and an extraordinarily sharp sword at his waist.\(^89\) Olav is not seen as a victim, but as an adversary to be feared in the thick of battle according to Sigvat the Skald:

> ‘With shield in his hand he dyed
> His Sword in the blood of the men,
> When the troops of the bonders
> Made for the dear king.
> And the prince who was eager
> In the head play of the irons,
> Let the red brown swords
> Fall on the crowns of the Tronds’.\(^90\)

Additionally, Abbo accentuated that the story of Edmund death had been recounted to him by the man who had been his armour-bearer on the day of his martyrdom:

> ‘You had in your youth learned the history from a broken-down veteran...declared on his oath that, on the very day on which the martyr laid down his life for Christ’s sake, he had been armour-bearer to the saintly hero’.\(^91\)

A king who had no intention of participating in battle or combat to any degree would have had no need to be accompanied by an armour-bearer to face the heathen horde. Edmund’s warrior reputation is emphasised and although he eventually surrendered, it is clear that he bore arms as Abbo states ‘projectis armis capitur’ which translates as ‘his weapons thrown aside’.\(^92\) Consequently, it is clear that Edmund fulfilled the role of a warrior king, much like Olav. Rebecca Pinner also argues for Edmund’s military prowess. She contends that Edmund’s martial kingship was, to which his sword and banner pertain, was an element of his sanctity actively promoted by the abbey at Bury.\(^93\) Furthermore, Pinner indicates that the physical presence of the sword and banner owned in life by the king suggests that the abbey ‘sought to promote his knightly valour both pre- and post-mortem’.\(^94\) It is evident that Edmund must have been an active military figure prior to his martyrdom. Furthermore, the depiction of a warrior king who falls in battle and gradually comes to be represented in terms of a struggle between Christian and pagan is a central theme in both *Passio Sancti Edmundi* and *Passio Olavi*.

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\(^89\) *Heimskringla*, p. 445.
\(^90\) Ibid., p. 454.
\(^91\) *Corolla Sancti Edmundi*, p. 9.
\(^92\) *Corolla Sancti Edmundi*, pp. 32-33.
Øystein Ekroll notes that ‘like Olav, Edmund died as a true Christian without resisting’. However, when examining both texts, it is evident that Edmund and Olav are portrayed as a warrior king cast in traditional Christian-heroic mould and mostly definitely not compliant. In *Passio Olavi* St. Olav is depicted as:

‘Clad in the breastplate of faith, girded with the sword of the spirit which is the word of God, in honour and dishonour, evil report and good report, with the armour of righteousness on the right hand and the left’. Similar terminology is present in the portrayal of St. Edmund in *Passio Sancti Edmundi*:

‘...for you will not find me lacking the armour of Christian principles’.

It is evident that the combination of spiritual and martial terminology demonstrably links these saints together in their shared experience facing paganism and representing the idealisation of Christian kingship. Perhaps it is possible to speculate that Eystein took inspiration from Abbo and actively borrowed the wording, especially in respect to ‘the armour of righteousness’ and ‘the armour of Christian principles’ as the imagery is almost identical.

### 3.7 Duality of sainthood

It is apparent that in medieval northern Europe there was an enduring fascination with the notion of the suffering leader and the slain temporal ruler of which Edmund and Olav are prime examples. Moreover, Vauchez suitably notes that ‘victims become martyrs, hence saints, since, in the popular mind, these two notions overlap and there are no other saints than those who died a violent death on behalf of justice’. It is necessary to discuss that there was no simple definition of what it was to be a saint in this period. It is difficult to reconcile the image of both Olav and Edmund as warrior kings and victims.

A legend of indeterminable date concerning St. Olav aptly summarises the duality of sainthood which faced saints during this period. It recounts that ‘Olav and his brother Harald

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94 Ibid., p. 150.
97 *Corolla Sancti Edmundi*, p. 31.
Hardruler raced their ships to Trondheim to win the crown of Norway. Even though Olav took the time to take part in a church service, he sailed faster than Harald. It was said that his ship sailed so amazingly fast that it reached the destination before the arrow he shot from his bow during the voyage.\textsuperscript{100} This legend is depicted in a fourteenth century wall painting in the parish church at Skamstrup, Denmark.

The authenticity or reality of the legend itself is of little importance. However, the message it represents is very useful in outlining that sanctity was not confined to purely monastic individuals. Olav exercising his naval and martial expertise as well as portraying his piety and devotion to Christianity emphasises that a saint could embody many qualities, even if they seemed discordant and conflicting. Many kings during this period also filled the role of primary war-leader which would suggest they were unlikely candidates as royal saints due to lives encompassing violence and sex, however many of these rulers did achieve sainthood. The role of military command and the duty to perpetuate their dynasty for future generations was fused with sanctity bestowed by sainthood.

Snorri Sturluson in his passage on St. Olav in \textit{Heimskringla} describes the King Olav’s early life which gives no indication of the saint-to-be:

‘\textit{When Olav Haraldson grew up, he was no tall, but of middle height, thick set and strong…He was skilled in all kinds of sports; he could handle well the bow and shoot marvellously with the hand bow; he swam well and was deft with his hands…He was called Olav Digre (Stout)…he was developed in both strength of body and mind}’.\textsuperscript{101}

This description highlights that Olav was powerful and stocky in his youth and called Olav the Stout as a result. These strong physical traits and leadership merits indicate that like most of his contemporaries he engaged in Viking activity which consisted of raiding and fighting for fame and fortune. Lindow emphasises the saint’s dual nature as he emphasises that Olav first sailed on a warship at the age of twelve and that piracy and bloodshed were inherent parts of his life.\textsuperscript{102} Nonetheless, Vauchez implies that sainthood is not absolute in definition, but rather embodies an ever-changing category which demands intercession from ecclesiastical authorities and worshippers in equal measure.


\textsuperscript{101} \textit{Heimskringla}, p. 218.

\textsuperscript{102} Lindow, ‘St. Olaf and the Skalds’, pp. 105-106.
4 Miracles

4.1 Introduction

The parallels between the cults of St. Olav and St. Edmund are multi-faceted. There was a strong connection between sanctity and the corporeal nature of sainthood embodied by these miracles. In particular, the hagiographical motif of trimming of the hair and fingernails after death seems uncommon among recordings of saintly miracles and even more so when solely considering royal martyr saints. The hagiographical motifs of corporeal incorruption and miraculous healing will be extensively examined in this chapter as the primary evidence for Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson drawing influences from the miracles surrounding the cult of St. Edmund in Abbo’s Passio Sancti Edmundi for use in his own hagiographical text Passio Olavi. A central theme in this section will be the notion that imitation, emulation and borrowing was rife throughout the hagiographical community. Moreover, it was not uncommon at all in this period for hagiographers to actively borrow elements of other cults in order to incorporate them in their own work. Further discussion will focus on the importance of Trondheim as the centre for the cult of St. Olav and why in particular this location was significant in regards to the Christianisation of Norway. Analysis will then turn to the earliest recorded miracles of the cult of St. Olav found in Þórarinn Loftunga’s poem Glælognskviða, composed in 1032. This raises the question to what extent did Eytsein utilise pre-existing vernacular texts, such as skaldic poetry, to inform his composition of Passio Olavi. Lastly, the imagery of Olav and Edmund as undying, eternal patron saints of their respective regions and nations will be compared to examine how their saintly identity was constructed and perceived.

4.2 Context

One of the most distinctive components of sainthood in the Middle Ages was the fact that they are reported to have performed thousands of miracles, both in life and after death. These recorded miracles following the king’s martyrdom depicted the saintly identity of the cult. Alison Finlay states that ‘martyrdom was in effect the sole form of saintliness until the

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late twelfth century’. Miracles concerning the saintly relics of Olav and Edmund, immediately following their deaths, were a requirement to fulfil the nature of a cult of saints in this period. Miracles and rituals surrounding a saint’s cult served many functions. As well as legitimising a saint’s claim to sanctity, miracles worked to further the ‘social and political health of the community’. Each hagiographic piece of work was an ‘exercise in persuasion’, and its aim was to persuade and convince the audience that its subject was a saint which explains the immediacy and urgency of such works after a saint’s death. These hagiographical topoi integrated miracles into a continuous narrative of the mystical confederacy between a saint and his or her remains. Moreover, Bartlett emphasises that ‘miraculous power had been part of the Christian conception of sanctity from the earliest days’ and that miracles were a central tenet of Christian dogma as Jesus commanded his disciples to ‘Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils’ (Matthew 10:8). Subsequently, the miracles of Olav and Edmund were expounded directly after death in Norway and Denmark respectively. The miraculous feats of incorruption and healing were utilised in a religious manner to facilitate the Christianisation of both countries.

4.3 Abbo of Fleury and Passio Sancti Edmundi

Abbo of Fleury (d. 1004) was one of the leading scholars of the second half of the tenth century in Europe and educated in Paris and Orléans. In 985, having been unsuccessful in an attempt to obtain the abbacy of Fleury, Abbo consented to come to England to teach at Ramsey Abbey and remained there until 987 where he exerted extensive influence on English learning, both through texts and disciplines which he brought with him from France, and through students whom he educated at Ramsey.

It was probably during this two year stay at Ramsey that Abbo composed the text Passio Sancti Edmundi. Supposedly he regarded his time spent in England as an exile. Since Eystein

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107 Bartlett, Why can The Dead Do Such Great Things?, p. 334.
was also in exile in England for a similar amount of time, perhaps there was parity between the two authors that extended hagiography and made the North Sea connection between Edmund and Olav a natural occurrence. Antonsson notes that ‘in the minds of learned medieval writers the experience of physical exile was a catalyst for spiritual progression in the careers of these Viking Age rulers’.\(^\text{109}\) This trend certainly seems applicable to both Eystein and Abbo in that ‘exile’ provided the catalyst for production of the seminal texts behind the establishment of their own cult of saints respectively. It seemed that exile provided a fruitful interchange between the chronicler and the location as Duggan emphasises that travel allowed for interaction with new peoples, ideas and experiences, both cultural and religious, along with influential contacts.\(^\text{110}\) There was a long history of exile in Latin Christendom which resonates with my study. Both Eystein and Abbo spent time in England, in particular East Anglia and exile played a significant role in the life of St. Olav which is presented as an integral part of the road for his martyrdom.

However, it is curious that the monks at Ramsey Abbey commissioned Abbo to compose *Passio Sancti Edmundi* since Edmund’s cult was centred on the rivalling neighbour monastery of Bury. It seemed that Ramsey had a reputation and particular reverence for the cults of royal martyr saints. Consequently, it would not have been out of place that Edmund was enthusiastically commemorated at Ramsey.

### 4.4 Hagiographical Borrowing

It was not uncommon at all in this period for hagiographers to actively borrow elements of other cults in order to incorporate them in their own work. This form of saintly appropriation was a steadfast standard for any author to build upon the tradition and prestige of their hagiographical predecessors and thriving Christian communities. Antonia Gransden contends that Abbo himself emphasises the parallel between St. Edmund and St. Cuthbert, saying that if anyone doubts the incorruption of St. Edmund’s body, he should remember the case of St. Cuthbert since there is such strong resemblance between the legends.\(^\text{111}\) The cults of both St.

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Cuthbert and St. Edmund served the same purpose in bolstering the monarchy by acting as Christian strongholds against the heathen invasion from Scandinavia.

Moreover, the manner of Edmund’s martyrdom emulates prominent hagiography. Death by arrow was not unique to Edmund. This trope is famously associated with St. Sebastian which Abbo remarks himself:

‘...as if practising at a target, pierced his whole body with arrow-spikes...And thus, all haggled over by the sharp points of their darts, and scarce able to draw breath, he actually bristled with them, like a prickly hedgehog or a thistle with spines, resembling in his agony the illustrious martyr Sebastian’.\(^{112}\)

Similarly Gransden highlights that Abbo took inspiration from the legend of St. Denis, who was the patron saint of the abbey of St. Dennis, as well as the kings of France.\(^ {113}\) Since Edmund was a king, this royal connection would have appealed to Abbo in his construction of his hagiographical model. In Hilduin’s legend of St. Denis is saved as miraculously the lions lie down peacefully and similarly in Abbo’s *Passio Sancti Edmundi* his followers find St. Edmund’s head guarded by a wolf.\(^ {114}\) The miracle of wild creatures acting as guardians over the saint’s body has stark resemblance to one another which indicates that Abbo was well aware of common place hagiographical *topoi* when creating the cult of St. Edmund and employed many of them himself.

Rebecca Pinner notes that such borrowing occasionally caused confusion as to which saint was depicted. For example, she remarks that it is unclear whether the image on the roodscreen at Stalham, in Norfolk, is St. Edmund or St. Sebastian.\(^ {115}\) It can consequently be argued that Abbo’s *Passio Sancti Edmundi* was a patchwork of borrowings from well-known hagiographies, which Abbo adapted as he thought fit. Therefore, this active borrowing by Abbo can easily be imagined by Eystein when he resided at Edmund St Bury as it seems that this was a common practice in the profession of a hagiographer throughout the previous centuries. It seems that Abbo’s style reflects the wider horizons of the continent and Latin Christendom and he purposely set himself in common hagiographical traditions as he was

\(^ {113}\) Gransden, *Legends*, p. 86.
\(^ {114}\) Ibid., p. 86.
\(^ {115}\) Rebecca Pinner, *The Cult of St Edmund in Medieval East Anglia* (Woodbridge, 2015), p. 16.
well acquainted with the rhetoric. Furthermore, Ridyard states that cults of saints did not simply develop due to divine designation, but were developed actively by individuals. Contemplative devotion was riddled with the construction of piety and the saintly identity often arose from a variety of sources sewn together to construe a sense of collective worship. John Arnold tackles this issue when stating that ‘the making of a saint…could involve a curious collision between elite and popular ideas, politics and desires’. Undoubtedly a cult of saint’s was created to serve a specific function by differing social groups. Therefore it is difficult to singularly define a ‘cult of saints’ as its coherency became often distorted depending upon the context through which it was viewed. The act of borrowing common hagiographical motifs from venerated saints clearly displays that the saint-making process was strewn with complexity emphasising the versatile nature of the saintly image during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The multiplicity of patchwork origins surrounding both St. Edmund and St. Olav overwhelmingly indicates that the cult of saint’s conception was not limited by geographical region, but rather espoused interconnectedness. Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn’s studies working within the cult of saints’ literature accentuates the importance of such connections. They contend that miracle collections ‘became the vehicles for linking regional cult centres to larger economic and political networks. By using their saint to enhance their prestige, the sponsoring institutions also enhanced their power and authority’. Saintly communities demanded and thrived upon these connections revered pilgrimage sites and their saintly patrons as it allowed hagiographers such as Abbo and Eystein to bridge secular arenas and articulate their own clerical agenda.

### 4.5 The MiraculousFeat of Incorruption

St. Olav and St. Edmund both shared the miraculous feat of incorruption of their mortal remains after death in their respective hagiographical dedications. The motif of the uncorrupted body as a sign of holiness is well known in hagiographical literature. This

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concept was significant in Christian doctrine as it linked to notion of resurrection which placed importance on corporeal preservation. Caroline Walker Bynum contends that ‘the claim that all or part of a saint remained incorrupt after burial was an important miracle for proving sanctity’. Moreover, bodily death and were seen as a connection to original sin with exception to the sanctified body. The lack of corruption symbolised this inversion as the individual’s devout earthly deeds following Christ’s teachings led to such preservation.

Abbo reminds his readers of the sacral union between a saint and his remains with regard to the cult of St. Edmund:

‘It is fully proved in his [St Edmund’s] case (as in that of all the other saints who already reign with Christ) that though his spirit be in the enjoyment of heavenly glory, yet it has the power to revisit the body and is not by day or night far separated from the place where the body lies, in union with which it had earned the joys of blessed immortality, of which even now it has the fruition’.

As mentioned previously, incorruption was not solely a unique hagiographical motif as demonstrated by the case of St. Cuthbert. Additionally, the motif of the uncorrupted body was well known in Germanic tradition, supposedly the first king whose body was resistant to decay was Charlemagne. The story goes that in the year 1000 Emperor Otto III uncovered the remains of Charlemagne at Aachen and upon doing so discovered the nails of the deceased king had grown and ordered them to be cut. Thus, it is evident that there was a rich body of hagiographical literature surrounding the incorruptible body as it was crucial in the legitimisation of sanctity and the establishment of a cult. Charlemagne was the most well-known king in the whole of Western Christendom and revered across Scandinavia and in particular Norway. Therefore, Þórarinn loftunga’s poem Glaelognskviða, composed in 1032, first documenting Olav’s sanctity and incorruptible body, would have been aware of the hagiographical motif of Charlemagne’s growing hair and nails.

Contemporary audiences would recognise the connection between the legendary king and St. Olav which in turn aided the foundation of the cult of St. Olav and the establishment of Trondheim as a prominent pilgrimage site in Northern Europe.

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122 Corolla Sancti Edmundi, p. 55.
saint was regarded as a sign of grace and the reflected the hope for resurrection. Snorri Sturuslon emphasises in *Heimskringla* the veneration which both Olav and Norway held for Charlemagne when Sigvat the Skald ordered Olav’s son Magnus to be christened:

“Sigvat said: ‘I would dare counsel thee to christen the child rather than that I should wake the king; I will take any ill words for it, but give the child a name’. This they did, and the child was baptised and called Magnus... The king said: ‘Why didst thou have the boy called Magnus? It is not a name in our race’. Sigvat answered: ‘I called him after King Karlamagnus [Charlemagne], whom I knew to be the best man in the world’... The king was very glad then. The boy grew up, and as he advanced in age he soon gave good promise’.”

This text accentuates that Charlemagne was extremely well-regarded in Norway during this period and personally seen as Olav’s greatest role model. It is clear that the proponents of Olav’s cult would emphasise this sacral tie to Charlemagne to promote dynastic legitimacy for Olav’s son Magnus during a time of political uncertainty. However, it is necessary to note that although Olav and Charlemagne shared a royal connection, Charlemagne was never canonised and did not become a saint, unlike Olav. This allusion to the sanctity through the shared hagiographical motif of the uncorrupted body certainly bolstered the cult of St. Olav. Nevertheless, Olav’s saintly status allowed him to become more than an earthly king and even surpass the ‘best man in the world’, Charlemagne.

Moreover, Robert Folz’s hagiographical study discusses twenty-eight kings and twelve queens who were the object of a saintly cult between the sixth and thirteenth centuries which stresses the fusion of royalty and sanctity which led to the creation of major cults during this period. Due to Olav’s violent past, one would think of him as an unlikely candidate for sainthood, especially compared to Charlemagne, but he fit this striking royal pattern exceptionally well. The link with Charlemagne allowed Olav’s image to become accessible to a community which stretched beyond the borders of Norway and Scandinavia, it appealed to the whole of Latin Christendom as Olav was represented in the hagiographical vernacular. In a way Olav could act as a dynastic saint for his son Magnus, a local saint for Trondheim and a pseudo-universal saint for Western Christendom. Additionally, as a royal saint Olav transcended earthly kingship and became an undying champion of Norway. By end of the

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second half of the twelfth century St. Olav was revered as *rex perpetuus Norvegiae*, ‘the perpetual king of Norway’.

There is a distinctive aspect which connects the miracles of Edmund and Olav. Abbo asserts that Edmund’s body was cared for by a holy woman called Oswen, who cut its hair and nails every year:

‘This venerable woman [Oswen], either from some divine intuition, or from excess of devotion, made it her constant practice to open the sepulchre of the blessed martyr year by year, at the anniversary of the Lord’s Supper, and to trim and pare his hair and nails’.128

This miracle is directly paralleled in by Snorri Sturluson writing in the first half of the thirteenth century in *Heimskringla* where Olav’s body was cared for in an identical way by Bishop Grimkell who decided to open the coffin a year after the burial:

‘They who had seen King Olav when he fell found a great difference in that his hair and nails had grown almost as much as they would have done if he had been alive in this world all the time since his fall…The bishop took care of King Olav’s relics and he cut his hair and nails, for both these grew as they did when he was alive in the world’.129

In both instances it was stated that the nails of the royal martyr were directly cut by the clergy or devout individuals and the cutting of the saintly fingernails became an annual ritual. These details may indicate that, although the tradition of the uncorrupted body was well documented at this time, the cult of Olav and Edmund were specifically and actively connected by contemporary chroniclers. The hagiographical motif of trimming of the hair and fingernails after death seems uncommon among recordings of saintly miracles and even more so when solely considering royal martyr saints. Furthermore, Folz also shows that healings always account for the majority of a royal saint’s miracles and this is certainly true of the miracles of St. Olav.130 Therefore, the author modelling his saint with such a distinct hagiographical motif, would have be seen as definitely and deliberately drawing a comparison with other well-known saints sharing the same miraculous feats. Such a link would not have escaped the attention of the contemporary audience of hagiographical texts produced during this period.

128 *Corolla Sancti Edmundi*, p. 47.
129 *Heimskringla*, pp. 468-469.


4.6 Healing Miracles

In Passio Olavi one of St. Olav’s most notable miracles is that of a healing nature when the blood of the martyr, after burial, mixed with water and subsequently cured an old man of blindness:

‘Accordingly, when the time of his martyrdom had passed and the royal attendants had washed his most holy body in a certain house, the water, mixed with the blood that had flowed from the wounds of the blessed martyr, was thrown out through the door of the house. Now a certain blind man, passing by the same house, fell down in a place that was still wet with the bloodstained water. And when he put his fingers, wet with the water, to his eyes again, at once the darkness was cleared away, and he regained his former sight’. 131

Øystein Ekroll mentions a similar healing miracle of St. Edmund soon after his death. He remarks that ‘Edmund was then buried and a little wooden chapel built above his grave…One evening, an old blind man and a small boy come to the chapel, and believing it was a barn they settled there for the night. During the night the room was filled with light, and the next morning the old man has recovered his eyesight’. 132

However, the inclusion of this ‘miracle’ has been surrounded in controversy. Contemporary hagiographer Hermann the Archdeacon, writing in the late eleventh century, an authority on the cult of St. Edmund, did not insert the incident in his work De miraculis sancti Edmundi since it would have meant the location of the saint’s first cure was not at the cult centre itself, Bury, but at the chapel in the woods where Edmund had been before his body was moved. 133 The result would have meant pilgrims were diverted from Bury to a rival cult centre. This emphasises that the actuality and accuracy surrounding saintly miracles held less importance during this period than the influence which came from controlling and regulating such relics in furthering the hagiographer’s own agenda.

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When discussing miracles one must address how long after the saint’s martyrdom the miracle occurred, as well as a primary distinction between those miracles which took place in the presence of the relics or shrine and those which did not. Miracles served as a way to advertise the power accessible at such shrines as Bury and Trondheim. Additionally, the distinction between the classifications of miracle is important as most recorded miracles were of healing nature. Saints, more or less, were seen as doctors before the advent of modern medicine. Miraculous intercession through healing feats was a common way for many saints to gain popular cultic veneration by a community of believers and illustrated the saint’s special status. Such miracle working appealed to the laity in endorsing a saint as hagiography was perceived as a key source of medieval medicine during this period. The ratio of posthumous miracles to those accomplished in a saint’s lifetime is 3:1 according to the detailed statistical analysis of medieval miracles undertaken by Sigal, published in 1985.\textsuperscript{134}

Miracles performed from beyond the grave were the norm during the eleventh and twelfth centuries and were often the evidence necessary to bestow canonisation and sainthood. The relationship between the saint and his remains is well documented and frequently expressed in hagiography. The prevalence of certain miracles undoubtedly aided the patrons of such cults and the overseers of their saint’s shrine. Rebecca Pinner emphasises that the frequency of miracles, especially concerning the preservation of Edmund’s body. This attests to the fact that the monks at Bury placed a high value upon this component of Edmund’s sanctity and posthumous miraculous intercession. Moreover, the physical prestige of Edmund’s relics came to benefit the site of Bury as they claimed to possess the whole corpse and espoused the lack of bodily decay. This was in part to exercise control over such sacral remains to extend their spiritual and clerical prominence over local and rival monastic institutions. Pinner states that ‘the claim that body was intact was doubly significant as it indicated Edmund’s chastity and was also a special signifier of his special merit’.\textsuperscript{135}

Many of Edmund’s recorded healing miracles occurred long after his death in 1169/70, but were associated with the sanctity and proximity of his shrine. This is evident in Thomas Arnold’s compilation of miracles in the \textit{Memorials of St Edmund’s abbey} and in mid fifteenth century ‘at Lyng, a woman from Kent who is both blind and deaf recovers her sight and

\textsuperscript{134} Bartlett, \textit{Why can the Dead Do Such Great Things?}, p. 342.
\textsuperscript{135} Pinner, \textit{The Cult of St Edmund}, p. 118.
hearing after she is advised to travel to St Edmund’s chapel’. The miraculous occurrences in Lyng, Norfolk, are an interesting case study. From 1286/87 it seems that there was a dedicated chapel to St. Edmund and a tangible connection to the saint, under the influence of the prioress of St. George’s, as at this time the prioress was granted permission to hold an annual fair at Lyng to celebrate the Feast of St. Edmund. This demonstrated that perhaps the miraculous nature of saint’s and their sanctity could be accessed and called upon without direct interaction with the primary shrine, in this case the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds. The miracles at Lyng signify that Edmund’s saintly patronage was disseminated on a large scale at local level in England. This can be viewed in parallel to adoption of St. Edmund, on an international level, in Norway and Scandinavia as a whole. Although, Arnold’s accounts indicate that although the majority of these miracles took place at a chapel dedicated to St. Edmund, or within a small nearby radius, some are credited to St. Edmund which possessed distant, non-local origins.

For example, Pinner highlights that ‘the Wainfleet miracles, Matildis of Westchester has the use of her hand and arm restored after praying in the chapel, and a child from York who appears drowned is restored after his parents make a vow to St Edmund’. This accentuates that sainthood, especially of royal martyrs, was popular amongst the laity as the often healing miraculous intercessions extended to these regional communities beyond the cult centre which in turn increased devotion to these saints, such as Edmund, at a local level. It is meaningful to focus upon the collections in which these miracles are recorded. In Hermann’s De Miraculis the proportion of healing miracles which occurred in the presence or vicinity of Edmund’s relics is between 80 and 100 per cent. This significantly differs in regards to Thomas Arnold’s edition of Memorials, copied by the Bodley scribe. In this text, approximately only 9 per cent of these healing miracles occurred at the cult centre of Bury, meaning that an overwhelming majority, 86 per cent, took place far removed from the primary shrine and Edmund’s saintly relics. It seems likely that these miraculous accounts were compiled by various authors in churches dedicated to Edmund across England and eventually distributed to the cult centre at Bury. The miraculous focus of Edmund’s cult was most likely a combination of both the primary shrine at Bury St Edmunds and a strong local

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137 Pinner, The Cult of St Edmund, p. 186.
138 Ibid., p. 187.
139 Ibid., p. 184.
and regional devotion. It is important to analyse and acknowledge the differing data points and understand that they provide a more holistic approach to *miracula*.

When it comes to the cult of St. Olav it also seems that healing was the most prominent miraculous manifestation. This was certainly true in the case of St. Olav. Similarly, the large majority of miracles attributed to St. Olav occurred posthumously. However, many of his healing miracles are recorded right after his death at Stiklestad in 1030 or shortly thereafter around the following century. For example, the restoration of the old blind man’s sight through the contact with Olav’s blood as previously mentioned. Since *Passio Olavi* was compiled before Eystein’s death in 1188, it is fair to say that all the miracles recorded within originate from around the mid-twelfth century. Another noticeable difference is that many of the healing miracles credited to St. Olav transpired directly at the saint’s primary shrine or sepulchre in Nidaros cathedral in Trondheim, right at the epicentre of the cult.

*Passio Olavi* contains details of the miraculous healing of the two blind individuals and a mute on St. Olav’s day:

“Now in the year when the church of the blessed martyr Olav was newly invested with archiepiscopal honour...three invalids who had come from a great distance, suffering from afflictions. Together they had come to the church of the blessed martyr...among them a certain blind man was found worthy, on the eve of Saint Olav’s day, to be comforted by the joy of sigh. The following day...a certain dumb man received the grace of speech. In addition to these, there was a certain woman from the distant parts of Sweden who had chosen to travel to the abode of the holy martyr to pray there...she was found worthy to receive the longed for joy of sight which she had been without for a full thirteen years”.

This passage is significant in a number of ways. Firstly, it states that the miracle occurred in the year the church of Olav received archiepiscopal honour. This clearly dates this miraculous intercession to the years 1152/1153 and subsequently confirms the location as the shrine of St. Olav in Nidaros cathedral. Miracles happening at the primary shrine of St. Olav are a common theme throughout *Passio Olavi* which differs from those associated with St. Edmund as local and regional functionality of the cult seems to play a larger role. Additionally, referencing the great distance, travelled from remote regions, to visit the church of the blessed martyr infers the importance of Trondheim and Nidaros cathedral as a site of pilgrimage and

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140 *A History of Norway*, p. 51.
connects the notion of pilgrimage with miraculous healing. Undoubtedly this account acts as a form of propaganda to promote the cult of St. Olav and the ecclesiastical institution surrounding it, as well as the newly granted status of the archdiocese in Northern Europe. Consequently, this newly established archbishopric may be the reason there is a disparity between the locations of miracles between the saints. Edmund’s recorded miracles were more widespread, at a local level, often away from Bury. Whereas the miracles attributed to Olav were in contrast, more centralised in nature and mainly focused on the royal martyr’s primary shrine in Nidaros cathedral. Moreover, Eamon Duffy emphasises that the principal location for the devout to worship St. Edmund was at their local chapel and not the cult centre at Bury.¹⁴¹

The differing political circumstance in which each cult was placed during this period inevitably determines how such miracles were utilised and conveyed in textual form and through the agenda of hagiographers. Overall, there are some noticeable differences in the locus of Edmund and Olav’s miracles in relation to their primary shrine. Furthermore, it questions the resulting extent to how far their saintly identity was perceived to differ according to proximity to the saint’s shrine and the amount of time after death the miracle occurred. However, Edmund and Olav were not completely dichotomous when it came to miracula as this thesis has already strongly drawn upon the remarkable point of likeness these two saints share in the hagiographical motif of the incorruption of their mortal remains.

4.7 Nidaros and Christianisation

Thus, one must consider why Eystein would have chosen this motif in particular which deliberately draws parallels between the cult of St. Olav and that of St. Edmund. One explanation could be that Eystein utilised this well recognised motif to strengthen the power of the church through the promotion of the cult of royal saints. Nelson emphasises that ‘for royal saints, manipulated by the living, provided not just a model but a yardstick of kingly conduct and performance in office’.¹⁴² Since the clergy had a monopoly over sanctity, Eystein

utilised his archiepiscopal support of the cult of St. Olav, through institutional promotion of Olav’s shrine in Christ Church in Nidaros, in order to solidify the newly founded archdiocese of Nidaros established in 1152/53 which covered Iceland, Greenland, the Faroes, Orkney and Shetland, the Hebrides and the Isle of Man, as well as Norway.

The existence and success of a cult of saints required the approval and intervention of ecclesiastical authorities. The construction of the cathedral was a great monument in glory to St. Olav, but also a means to obtain wealth and secular power. This is evident as the cult of St. Olav was important in enhancing the status of Norwegian royal authority, both on a national level and abroad, promoting the city of Trondheim as a centre of pilgrimage in the Nordic region. Such reverence brought a combination of spiritual and economic advantages to the archdiocese. Furthermore, Bagge contends that ‘the existence of local saints is likely to have been an important factor in strengthening the position of Christianity in the population’.

An inseparable part of the process of conversion was the foundation of new martyrs for the Christian faith. Furthermore, the promotion of these early cults of saints were inherently tied to this gradual Christianisation process, seen clearly through the establishment of the saint’s cult in conjunction with the ecclesiastical administration and infrastructure which grew alongside it in the form of a bishopric. A prime example of this would be the cult of St. Olav centred on the newly established archbishopric of Trondheim with the saint’s primary shrine located in Nidaros cathedral.

However, it is necessary to analyse why Eystein centred the cult of St. Olav on Trondheim explicitly and not elsewhere in Norway. Since there were considerable regional differences within Norway the adoption of a saint such as Olav allowed for the dissemination of a ‘Christian cultural zone’.

The position of Trondheim in central Norway was utilised as a point to further unification of the whole country through the establishment of Christianity and the suppression and conversion of traditionally pagan regions such the northern provinces of

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Trondelag and Hordaland. Lindow notes that because the locus of the cult and the pilgrim site were in centre of Trondelag, where many of Olav’s opponents resided in life, local pride may have kindled amongst them and converted them into supporters of Olav in death and consequently Christianity. Thus, Trondheim served as a base to gradually spread Christianisation throughout northern Norway which still contained steadfast strongholds of paganism amongst the Sami people in the second half of the twelfth century. However, the accuracy and extent of reported pagan cult practices in the north should be subjected to scepticism as these sources were solely comprised of Christian rhetoric and the author’s personal agenda.

When using the term ‘Christianisation’ for this process in Northern Europe and Norway, it is necessary to clarify that this designates a conversion or transformation from what Bartlett states was ‘a world of indigenous European paganism to medieval Christian Europe’. Norway became part of the framework of Latin Christendom as a result of gradual spread of Christianity. Contact and communication became even more fertile between similarly Christian states and allowed for the facilitated dissemination of hagiography due to the interconnectedness of dense networks and the resultant cultural and institutional ties. This is applicable to the cult of St. Edmund and Olav as saints are seen as international and consequently easily transportable to other geographical regions and cultures for assimilation.

Narratives such as Passo Olavi were written long after the period of Christianisation had occurred and undoubtedly embellish the role of missionary kings such as Olav. However, it does clearly indicate that native clerical missionaries, such as Eystein, played a substantial role in instituting Christianity at a local level. The establishment of a cult of saints was a compromise and continuous dialogue between clerical authorities and the laity. Overall, Eystein chose the motif of the uncorrupted body as it had a strong hagiographical tradition

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that accentuated the interconnected nature of the cult of saints during this period. The cult of St. Olav resonated with a greater expanse of Latin Christendom and garnered legitimacy being associated with well-established hagiographical tropes which connected to that of English royal martyr saints such as St. Edmund. The establishment of Christianity in the British Isles and in Franica in the tenth century made Norway more susceptible to the influence and spread of Christianity, from both indigenous inhabitants and Christian rulers. St. Olav became that crucial focal point to facilitate the culmination of the gradual process of Christianisation in Norway. Never before had a Scandinavian saint possessed so much power and impact in the cult of saints’ community throughout Latin Christendom.

4.8 Glælognskviða

The earliest evidence for the incorruption of Olav’s body was not in Latin ecclesiastical texts, but in skaldic poetry composed soon after his death in 1030 and postdates the translation of Olav’s remains in 1031. Þórarinn Loftunga’s poem Glælognskviða, composed in 1032 about Swein Algivason, documents St. Olav’s earliest recorded miracles including the continued growth of Olav’s hair and nails and healing of the blind in its fourth and seventh stanzas respectively:

‘There he lies
Whole and pure,
The high-praised king,
With his body,
And there may
Hair and nails
Grow on him
As when he lived’.

‘A host of men
Where the holy
King doth lie
Kneel for help.
Blind and dumb
Seek the king,
And home they go,
Their sickness healed’.

This is especially significant as it is the first text proclaiming Olav’s saintliness, very soon after his death. Furthermore, this material confirms that the motif of the incorrupt body was already popular and well used in Northern Europe during this period and accentuates that initially the cult of St. Olav was first promoted through skaldic poetry. Eystein would have

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153 Heimskringla, p. 469.
154 Ibid., p. 469.
been aware of this text and its hagiographical significance as a record of Olav’s miracles would have been kept at his shrine as evidence of his sanctity and to provide edificatory material in support of his cult.\footnote{A History of Norway, p. xxxiii.} It is interesting that the miracle of the incorruption of Olav’s mortal remains in Glælognskviða are not in the miracle list of the ecclesiastical tradition, although the restoration of the sight to the blind by Olav’s blood in Passio Olavi is closely related to the healing described in Pórarinn Loftunga’s poem. John Lindow contends that ‘the very first miracles surrounding Olav may have lacked sufficient interest to be included in the official ecclesiastical tradition as the years passed…in part because miracles in Norway would have been of less international interest than ones that occurred in Ireland, Denmark, Russia, England or even in Iceland’.\footnote{Lindow, ‘St. Olaf and the Skalds’, p. 114.}

Although, the miracle of bodily incorruption did not officially enter the ‘ecclesiastical tradition’ it is clear that it was not due to lack of international interest. As previously discussed this hagiographical motif was well documented and prevalent among many major cults of saints in Western Europe, including St. Cuthbert and St. Edmund in England and the continued posthumous nail growth of Charlemagne around the year 1000, just before the death of St. Olav. Therefore this would suggest that this miraculous tradition was not as obscure as Lindow has proposed. Clearly, Eystein drew upon this motif when constructing the cult of St. Olav during the latter twelfth century. It is likely that he borrowed from popular cults of saints which utilised the miracle of the incorrupt mortal remains as well as promoting pre-existing hagiographical material surrounding Olav’s cult, which Glælognskviða represents. Additionally Russel Poole highlights that during Olav’s lifetime, Sigvat the Skald composed poems which emphatically associated St. Olav with Christ.\footnote{Russel Poole, ‘How Olaf Haraldsson Became St Olaf of Norway, and the Power of a Poet’s Advocacy’, in Margaret and Richard Beck Lectures: Icelandic Symposium – University of Victoria (Accessed: 15/01/2017)} This infers that there was a rich source of hagiographical literature already readily available to Archbishop Eystein.

Conversely, Glælognskviða could have been influenced by the cult of St. Edmund even though one might assume the poem was composed independent of Anglo-Saxon sources due to its skaldic origins. The cult of St. Edmund was extremely popular in Denmark and Norway. Alison Finlay notes that it is intriguing that the cult was adopted very soon after death, not only by English survivors in East Anglia, but by their Danish Viking conquerors and other

\footnote{A History of Norway, p. xxxiii.}
\footnote{Lindow, ‘St. Olaf and the Skalds’, p. 114.}
\footnote{Russel Poole, ‘How Olaf Haraldsson Became St Olaf of Norway, and the Power of a Poet’s Advocacy’, in Margaret and Richard Beck Lectures: Icelandic Symposium – University of Victoria (Accessed: 15/01/2017)}
Scandinavian rulers.\textsuperscript{158} Since Edmund’s cult was born from political and religious conflict is understandable that it would suit a multitude of propagandist and rhetorical purposes. The English utilised Edmund’s cult as opposition to Danish rule. The Danes exploited the cult soon after their conversion to Christianity to facilitate the transition and legitimise it by adopting an Anglo-Saxon royal martyr saint.

The popularity of royal martyr saints was inextricably linked with the essential role played by English clerics in the conversion of Scandinavian countries. This is evident as right up until the middle of the twelfth century most bishops in Scandinavia were either English or German, and the church organisation in Norway paralleled that of Anglo-Saxon England.\textsuperscript{159} Furthermore, Gransden contends that it seems possible that the Bury monks adopted Canute as their putative founder and that as a result there was a ‘boom in the cult of St. Edmund which, the liturgical calendars show, occurred in the 1020s’.\textsuperscript{160} This suggests that the Danes had integrated St. Edmund into their own hagiographical community prior to the composition of Glælogsksviða in 1032. Additionally Norwegian ecclesiastical records indicate that during the period 1050-1150 there was a church dedicated to St. Edmund.\textsuperscript{161} St. Edmund clearly had support which originally stemmed from Denmark and made its way into Norway which preceded the death Olav and the establishment of his cult soon after. Christine Fell supports this argument as she contends that since Vikings were responsible for the martyrdom of St. Edmund, it was only natural that the cult became early established among them, passing to Norway and then Iceland.\textsuperscript{162} Subsequently, it is possible to surmise that the origin of St. Olav’s hagiographical motif of the uncorrupted body was still linked to the cult of St. Edmund at least to a certain degree, if not prominently.

Overall, one can conclude that Eystein did not use St. Edmund’s account as his sole influence when composing \textit{Passio Olavi} and most likely utilised earlier vernacular texts such as Glælogsksviða. The integration hagiographical motifs which originated in vernacular texts and then written in Latin would have allowed Eystein to make these \textit{topoi} accessible to whole of Latin Christendom during this period. The striking similarities between the hagiographical

\begin{footnotesize}
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158 Finlay, ‘Chronology, Genealogy and Conversion: The Afterlife of St Edmund in the North’, p. 54.
159 Ibid., p. 58.
\end{footnotesize}
accounts of Edmund and Olav suggest that Eystein actively borrowed and adopted *topoi* from Abbo when composing his own seminal text. It is necessary to highlight that Eystein most likely took inspiration from numerous sources when constructing the cult of St. Olav.

Taking into account the varying sources it seems that the establishment of the cult of St. Olav stemmed from two distinct paths. The first being the Anglo-Saxon element encompassing the community of English royal martyr saints such as Edmund and hagiographical influences taken from example of Latin Christendom during this period such as Charlemagne. The other path is closer to home and consists of Skaldic and Icelandic sources which represent the grassroots response to the growing significance of local sainthood during the first half of the eleventh century. Glæolognskviða demonstrates that the cult of St. Olav was not solely rooted in the Latin vernacular. Eystein drew upon two distinct communities in both a geographical and hagiographical sense. However, this contrast does not indicate a irreconcilable dichotomy, but a patchwork which tied together into a continuous narrative in the establishment of the Cult of St. Olav and the composition of *Passio Olavi*. Creation of a cult of saints during this period could never be achieved in isolation. The construction itself is purely artificial and actively and purposely developed for to fit the founder’s personal and political agenda. This is not to say that the interconnected nature of these cults overall diminishes their distinctive regional and provincial manifestations.\(^{163}\)

### 4.9 Eternal Sainthood

It was a common phenomenon that emerging episcopal institutions became the main focus for cults of saints in Western and Northern Europe. The establishment of a local or regional saint was imperative in forging the identity and independence of new founded archbishopric such as Trondheim. St. Olav acted as the patron saint for Trondheim and helped foster a group identity amongst cathedral communities across Northern Europe and Norway in particular.\(^{164}\) Christian centres in Western Europe invariably impacted the early, emerging cult of saints in

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Scandinavia and only gradually did these saints gain recognition of a local and national level. However, St. Olav quickly surpassed the title of local sainthood and officially became the national saint of Norway by the middle of the eleventh century and the most renowned saint in the whole of Scandinavia. This is evident through the coronation of Magnus Erlingsson in 1163/64 and his subjugation as an earthly vassal to St. Olav who was proclaimed rex perpetuus Norvegie. Klaniczay states that ‘coronations thereafter served as homage to St. Olav in which they would receive the crown as a gift in exchange for their avowed willingness to make the required sacrifice to their feudal lord’.\textsuperscript{165}

King Olav’s death won him eternal life and subsequently ‘both royal and religious power in Norway began to be defined around the royal martyr St Olav’.\textsuperscript{166} St. Olav served as a symbol for ecclesiastical authorities to utilise for their own political agendas and for rulers to establish legitimacy and longstanding continuity during their kingship. St. Olav’s cult was so far reaching and pervasive within Europe. This is supported by Adam of Bremen’s statement in 1070 when he mentions the miracles and healings taking place in Trondheim where St Olav’s shrine was kept and that Olav’s feast day on 29 July was commemorated by all the peoples of the North Sea. Therefore, Olav’s cult in this context must be viewed as ‘universal’ in nature. This is significant as previously in the beginning of the eleventh century the cult of saints in Scandinavia was initially restricted to the import of foreign saints. Bagge emphasises that the specificity of Norway should not be exaggerate and that the position of the Church increasingly conformed to the rest of Europe.\textsuperscript{167} The lack of specificity certainly applied to the formation of cults of saints as cathedral communities mirrored each other across the North Sea during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Olav’s title as rex perpetuus Norvegie is actually paralleled by Edmund’s perceived guardianship of East Anglia following his death in 869/870. Like Olav, Edmund acted as a symbol of the region of East Anglia and as a patron saint for England. Pinner accentuates that particularly in an East Anglian context, due to its former autonomy, Edmund was ideally

\textsuperscript{165} Gábor Klaniczay, Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe (Cambridge, 2002), p. 98.


\textsuperscript{167} Bagge, ‘The Kingdom of Norway’, p. 163.
positioned to offer the protection that in life he had been unable to provide.\textsuperscript{168} Custodianship of their provincial regions and respective countries by both Olav and Edmund suggest that perhaps in the construction of Olav’s cult, Eystein took reference from England’s revered and long-established native saints. The death of these royal martyr saints acted as a symbol of both unification and Christianity. The potential for Olav to serve as the patron saint of a country, and even Scandinavia as a whole, showed that the authority of blessed saint’s cult had far exceeded just local veneration.

Similarly, Edmund by the latter part of the twelfth century had garnered national status and devotion. However, Dawn Marie Hayes notes that ‘before 1170 England lacked a really popular national shrine…St Edmund was of limited interest’.\textsuperscript{169} 1170 and years following would have potentially been around the time Archbishop Eystein had begun to compile his seminal work \textit{Passio Olavi}. Hayes ’contention that the cult of St. Edmund only imprinted itself on England’s ecclesiastical radar after 1170 coincides with this theory of interconnectedness between Olav and the East Anglian King. Eystein’s exile to England, between the years 1180-1183, would have been at height of Edmund’s popularity. Consequently, Edmund would have been an ideal hagiographical model to use for appropriation when writing \textit{Passio Olavi}.

The eleventh century hagiographer, Hermann the Archdeacon, discusses in the beginning of his work, \textit{De miraculis sancti Edmundi}, Edmund’s persisting monastic patronage even after death:

‘The patron of the East Anglian region…winning from the Almighty the reward that no king after him, save God himself, should rule those regions’.\textsuperscript{170}

Here the imagery of the eternal king and the notion of homage and vassalage are immediately recognisable in the identity of the cult of St. Olav. Perhaps Eystein drew upon this feature of saintly patronage when establishing the Olav’s cult as the benefits of a perpetual posthumous ruler are plentiful in regards to its political usefulness for the surrounding monastic community. Abbot Baldwin commissioned Hermann to compose \textit{De miraculis} which updated the legend of St. Edmund to enhance the prestige of Bury as a pilgrimage site and his own

\textsuperscript{169} Dawn Marie Hayes, \textit{Body and Sacred Place in Medieval Europe, 1100-1389} (New York, 2003), p. 93.
\textsuperscript{170} \textit{Hermannii archidiaconi liber de miraculis sancti Eadmundi}, in \textit{Memorials of St Edmund’s abbey}, ed. T. Arnold, vol. 1, p. 28.
church. Edmund being presented as the protector of the East Angles allowed for Baldwin to monopolise dominion over the locus of the royal martyr’s cult for his own purposes and monastic propaganda. Baldwin used Hermann’s text to expand his own monastic influence into surrounding dioceses as Edmund’s patronage over all of East Anglia meant that he controlled the revenue generated by the influx of pilgrims at the expense of rivals in the surrounding areas such as Bishop Herfast.\textsuperscript{171}

5 The Dating of *Passio Olavi* and Eystein’s Exile

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on the debate surrounding the composition of *Passio Olavi* and my supposition that archbishop Eystein completed the majority of his writing during his three year exile in England, greatly influenced by his residency at the abbey of Bury St Edmunds. The text *Passio et Miracula beati Olavi* is the earliest recorded hagiographic work on St. Olav including his passion and miracles. It is preserved in two Latin manuscripts dating from this period. The longer redaction of the text is in the form a single manuscript from around the year 1200 known as the Oxford manuscript from Corpus Christi College and originally discovered in Fountains abbey, Yorkshire. It has been well established that Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson is the author of the Oxford manuscript *Passio et Miracula beati Olavi*. Taking this into account, it is only logical that this work must have been composed during the archiepiscopal reign of Eystein, between 1161 and his death in 1188 as this a text to which he has added material. Moreover, since *Passio Olavi* was a foundational text for the establishment of Olav’s cult and overall for the institution of the archbishopric of Trondheim, it is highly likely that Eystein headed the project.

5.2 Exile and Martyrdom

Lars Boje Mortensen emphasises Eystein’s essential involvement when stating that ‘the spread of the work in copies and a translation towards the end of his [Eystein’s] reign or just after bear the stamp of the institution he promoted. It would make very little sense if he had not cared about the shape, diffusion and use of the *Passio et miracula beati Olavi*’. With such personal investment tied into the construction of *Passio Olavi* and the fact that copies were only found towards the end of his archiepiscopal reign or after his death; it suggests that Eystein would have finished composing the text in the 1180s. This is likely as many of the hagiographical motifs St. Olav portrays in *Passio Olavi* have stark connections with those

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miracles displayed in the hagiography of St. Edmund. This would suggest that Eystein included his experiences during his exile in England between the years 1180-1183 as he primarily visited the abbey of Bury St Edmunds during his stay. Haki Antonsson emphasises the contemporary resonance of the motif of exile in *Passio Olavi*. Exile is well entrenched in Latin tradition and plays a prominent role in the story of St. Olav. Olav was forced into exile in Russia in 1028 as he faced rigid opposition due to his efforts to further Christianity in Norway. Antonsson notes that ‘Olav’s Russian exile is presented as an integral part of his road to martyrdom’. Moreover, *Passio Olavi* accentuates that Olav’s exile was a necessary component in order to prepare for his return and preordained martyrdom:

‘He stayed there for some time, and left the inhabitants with a model of upright life and a famous recollection of his piety, charity, kindness and patience. At length, refined by the fire of persecution and exile, found acceptable and worthy to sustain greater trials, prompted by divine inspiration, he returned by way of Sweden to his native land.’

This account of exile is especially significant as there are notable spiritual and biblical congruence with same shared martyrdom and exile experienced by Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury. The adoption of scriptural passages by Eystein in the composition of *Passio Olavi* was similar to those used by Becket’s biographers’. This highlights that Olav’s flight had purpose for the advancement of his spiritual journey and that his departure was equally as justified as that of Becket. Furthermore, following Knut the Great’s death in 1035 Olav’s son Magnus returned from exile in Russia to claim the Norwegian throne at the age of eleven and later firmly establish his father’s cult during his reign. Exile provided Magnus the Good with an opportunity to learn foreign customs and the languages of other people which in turn prepared him for his future rule and awareness of the necessity for cross-cultural interaction and exchange which was at the core of establishing a cult of saints.

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5.3 Eystein’s departure from Norway

Evidently the motif of exile is an essential element of this text and links directly to the author of Passio Olavi in the Oxford Manuscript, Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson. Eystein has personal motive to draw so strongly upon the theme of exile. This was due to his own imposed exile to England during the years 1180-1183 following King Sverre Sigurdsson’s decisive victory over King Magnus Erlingsson to secure Trøndelag in the spring of 1179. Furthermore, it is possible to speculate that Eystein’s time in England altered his perspective and enhanced his pragmatism in politics in regards to reconciliation with King Sverre. Arne Odd Johnsen echoes this viewpoint as he contends that Eystein’s exile was beneficial in convincing him to be more appeasing towards Sverre, with whom he made peace with in 1183, following his return to Norway.176

Exile was unavoidable for Eystein, especially since he had supported the defeated King Magnus. The Archbishop Eystein stood in special relation to King Magnus Erlingsson, as a guardian of St. Olav’s relics, as he personally crowned him in 1162 in Nidaros cathedral.177 The importance of exile within religious life and monastic communities during this period was substantial. An exiled individual was both physically and spiritually excluded. Also, the use of exile as a literacy device was prominent technique to often signify disunity among political elites or between the realms of the ecclesiastical and the secular. Many ecclesiastical figures during the eleventh and twelfth centuries were subject to exile and amongst them archetypical figure of the banished archbishop rings true. Eystein Erlendsson, archbishop of Trondheim, Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury and Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury all fall into this category.

5.4 Dating of Passio Olavi

Such a strong emphasis on exile in Passio Olavi might suggest that the composition of the text was completed during Eystein’s three year period in England. However, an allusion to this motif alone is not a steadfast indicator for the dating of this text. The exact date of Passio Olavi’s composition has not yet been determined with absolute certainty. With that said, Erik Gunnes, the leading authority on the subject, has contended that Eystein originally composed

176 Arne Odd Johnsen, Om erkebiskop Øysteins eksil 1180-1183 (Trondheim, 1951), p. 17.
the *vita* of the text during the 1160s and then later revised the text at some point after the years 1176/1178, most probably during his exile in England. The revised composition of contained the added *miracula* that was only present in the longer version of *Passio Olavi*. Additionally Antonsson states that the ‘dating of the work, in its present form, can now be narrowed to the years c.1173-1188’. Conversely, Inger Ekrem argues that the shorter *vita* is the original and that this redaction was later expanded into a later revision of the text. Additionally, Ekrem and Mortensen both have reservations as to whether Eystein was the sole author of *Passio Olavi*. However, whether Eystein was solely responsible for the composition is not greatly important as he would have at least approved its production or had an integral role as ‘project leader’.

Nevertheless, Gunnes’ contention for dating of *Passio Olavi* seems most convincing. It is reasonable to assume that Eystein began to compose *Passio Olavi* at the beginning of his term as archbishop during the 1160s and then subsequently completed an extensive expansion of the text during his exile in England between 1180 and 1183.

### 5.5 Bury St Edmunds

Eystein stayed a large proportion of his time at Bury St Edmunds during his exile. The monk-chronicler Jocelin of Brakelond of the Bury St Edmunds provides an accurate timeframe for Eystein’s stay at the abbey:

> ‘During the vacancy in the abbacy, Eystein, archbishop of Norway, stayed with us in the abbot’s lodgings, receiving ten shillings daily from the incomes of the abbacy, by the order of the king’.  

Anne Duggan states that Eystein remained at the abbey sometime between Abbot Hugh’s death (14 November 1180) and Abbot Samson’s election (21 February 1182). Since

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Eystein stayed at the residence of the abbot at King Henry II’s guest it is possible to further narrow the specific length of his stay. As a result of Abbot Hugh’s death in 1180, the Abbot’s subsequent income was in the King’s possession during this vacancy and as such the Exchequer Rolls reveal the recorded expenditure for Eystein’s residency for the two successive years, 1180-1181 and 1181-1182. In Pipe Roll 27 Henry II for the year 1180-1181, it states that:

‘And in maintenance of the archbishop of Norway £35, from the vigil of Saint Laurence [9 August 1181] to the day of Saint Luke the Evangelist [18 October 1181], that is 70 days by the king’s writ’.184

Furthermore in the following year, 1181-1182, Pipe Roll 28 Henry II it states:

‘And in payment to the archbishop of Norway, £59 10s. For 17 weeks, by the king’s writ’.185

Overall, this works out to a payment of ten shillings per day for a period of 189 days from 9 August 1181 to 14 February 1182, a grand total of £94 10s.186 This corresponds well with the dating offered by Jocelin of Brakelond’s account. 189 days of Eystein’s almost three year exile was spent at the abbey of Bury St Edmunds which amounted to the longest recorded time spent at any religious house or institution while he was in England. Therefore it is not difficult to imagine that Eystein would have been influenced by the cult of St. Edmund during his prolonged stay at Bury and borrowed some of the cult’s hagiographical motifs to insert into his own revision of Passio Olavi which centred upon miracula. The discovery the of Oxford manuscript at the Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire around the year 1200 and the subsequent diffusion of the text suggests that Eystein was perhaps promoting the cult of St. Olav during these years of exile. Moreover, Frederick Metcalfe suggests that during these years in exile, from August 1881 to February 1182, Eystein may have carried a copy of Passio Olavi along with him, or sent it, upon his return to Norway to Bury St Edmunds and that of the Fountains Abbey.187

5.6 The cult of St. Edmund

It would seem natural that Eystein took inspiration in composing Passio Olavi from such a vibrant English cult centre as Bury and experiencing the wealth and status of episcopal sees as well as actively participating in an active ecclesiastical community. Laura Napran accentuates this connection as she states that ‘in the cases of churchmen, the international ties between monastic foundations effectively created a bond which transcended political boundaries’.\(^{188}\) It seems that the manuscript left at Fountain’s Abbey is a sign of ecclesiastical exchange and also a gift for his stay. Perhaps the intention was to establish Olav’s cult in England, but also to emphasise the hagiographic association with St. Edmund. Undoubtedly, St. Olav would have been regarded as a Christian king who met a violent death and was bestowed the title of martyr which would have resonated deeply with the cult of St. Edmund and the cult of saint’s culture developing in England during the twelfth century.

Collections of miracles are often found in manuscripts and accompany other works, not all of them hagiographic in nature. The relative weighting of the vita and miracula in such a composition could vary in the extreme since there was no absolute template with tens of thousands of saintly miracles published during the Middle Ages. Some hagiographers such as Raymond of Capua only devoted approximately 3 per cent of his work Vita Catharinæ Senensis to Catherine of Siena’s posthumous miracles.\(^{189}\) In contrast to this assemblage, archbishop Eystein roughly divided Passio Olavi into 14 per cent Olav’s vita and 86 per cent on Olav’s miracula, both living and posthumous.\(^{190}\) Eystein’s focus on the miraculous intercessions of Olav is amplified considering that Gunnes contends this section of the text was composed during the 1180s and most probably during his three year exile.

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\(^{189}\) Raymond of Capua, Vita Catharinæ Senensis, AASS Aprilis 3 (1675), pp. 948-951.

The break between the two sections of the *vita* and *miracula* is fairly clear in *Passio Olavi* in Metcalfe’s edition of the Oxford manuscript as a heading in red marks the break:

‘After reading through what has been entrusted to us by antiquity about the life and miracles of St. Olav, we, who are illumined by his new miracles, deem it proper to commit to writing, for the memory of future generations, the deeds done to his glory which we have ourselves seen or have been proved by the testimony of truthful men’.\(^{191}\)

Metcalfe indicates that perhaps there was not unitary authorship, but the compilation of such a text would have warranted the supervision and approval of Archbishop Eystein. No finished article could have been disseminated without the strict oversight of Eystein as the ‘project leader’.

The archbishop’s close proximity to the shrine of St. Edmund during his stay would have garnered him with ample opportunity to visit Bury and read the miracles of St. Edmund in Abbo’s hagiographic work *Passio Sancti Edmundi*. For this reason, it seems highly likely that Eystein revised and retouched his own work with Edmund as a saintly model. It is difficult for anyone to model themselves on a saint as hagiographic literature just provided example to be followed by the reader. However, Bartlett notes that the only one class of person that could really take saints as a model was saints themselves.\(^ {192}\) Therefore Eystein would have felt entitled to use well-known hagiographical texts, as a source of information about these blessed martyrs, to imitate and emulate their sanctity to promote Olav’s own saintly cult. Just as saints often became the object of a cult for reasons other than their own personal piety, such as political activities or familial connections, hagiographers infused their texts with their personal and political bias.\(^ {193}\) It is essential to treat such hagiographical sources a reasonable degree of scepticism and with a critical outlook. It is undeniable that the most widespread doubts surrounding cult of saints’ literature during the eleventh and twelfth centuries was political bias instilled directly through the author.

Moreover, William A. Chaney’s well known and disputed study on Anglo-Saxon kingship implies that due to the sacral nature of kingship, Christianity simply transformed a sacral king

\(^{191}\) *Passio et miracula Beati Olavi*

\(^{192}\) Bartlett, *Why can The Dead Do Such Great Things?*, p. 511.

into a saint in a somewhat instantaneous process. Hagiographers such as Eystein demonstrated that a combination of clerical and popular acceptance was necessary to establish and promote a saint’s cult. Divine proclamation of sainthood through an innate understanding was impossible without cooperative action by the clergy and the laity. Mortensen aptly states that the national conversion of the country led to ‘a juncture in which the entire Norwegian elite, ecclesiastical and lay, committed themselves to Olav’s foundational role, a point of no return in collective memory’. This indicates an active development of Olav’s cult through the integration of the masses into a common Christian identity in the second half of the twelfth century.

5.7 Benefits of Exile

Archbishop Eystein’s temporary banishment can even be described as advantageous given the assistance and hospitality he was shown at Bury St Edmunds as well as the opportunity for cultural exchange. Duggan notes that the ‘experience of exile could be enriching, both for those who gave sanctuary and for the victim’. This was certainly relevant considering that King Henry II had been subjected to the backlash and criticism from the murder of his own archbishop Thomas Becket which resulted in the Great Rebellion of 1173-1174. Therefore, treating Eystein, a similarly exiled archbishop, hospitably would have been to wise to avoid further hostility only a decade after such furore and unrest. In terms of an international relations perspective, accepting Eystein was potentially beneficial to strengthen the ties between England and Norway. King Henry II, like King Magnus Erlingsson was not the son, but the grandson of a king. Since Eystein supported King Magnus, it would seem like a shrewd political manoeuvre to support the archbishop and therefore bolster the Norwegian king and his claim to legitimacy which in turn strengthened his own position. The willingness of other ecclesiastics to aid Eystein further demonstrates the dichotomous representation of exile. This infers that exiled ecclesiastics were a commonplace occurrence throughout Europe during this period and that exile was not always associated with punishment for bad deeds, but sometimes as a necessary component for sanctity or as part of a divine purpose.


197 Ibid., p. 112.
In this context physical exile could perhaps be viewed as providential and part of a spiritual progression akin to that of his subject matter, St. Olav himself. Eystein must have thought that it was a possibility that his exile and flight would end in martyrdom, just like the blessed saint. David Rollason highlights the benefits of exchange with the English monastic communities as he contends that ‘we need not suppose that the English did not influence the development of the cult of saints and the writing of saints’ lives in Western Europe. It is clear that they had access to a large number of hagiographical texts from which to select their models’. It is evident that Eystein’s exile allowed him to come into contact with a plethora of learned men and ecclesiastical institutions which housed an abundance of hagiographical texts and resources. With an unprecedented access to such influential hagiographical texts and saintly models, it seems unlikely that Eystein did not take advantage of the opportunity exile presented him. It is therefore reasonable to assume that Eystein appropriated hagiographical motifs from the cult of St. Edmund for use in his construction of Olav’s cult in his text Passio Olavi.

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6 Conclusion

The hagiographical connections between the cult of St. Olav and the cult of St. Edmund in the eleventh and twelfth century demonstrated that indeed an avenue had opened across the North Sea. This aqueous highway carried saintly traffic which facilitated the dissemination and incorporation of the cults of these royal martyrs saints in both Norway and England, at a local and national level. The comparative aspect of this thesis allows the reader to gain a sense of historical development and that no cult of saints ever developed in isolation. Cultural change was never wholly distinct in the hagiographical landscape of Middle Ages. The dense, pervasive network of the cult of saints community, encompassing the entirety of Latin Christendom, could only thrive and expand because of the relationships formed between cults. These links emphasised that hagiographical interchange was not restricted to localised cult centres or physical geographical boundaries.

The cult of St. Olav developed according to differing patterns over these three distinct periods of time, from the inception of Olav’s cult with Bishop Grimkell to Eystein’s ecclesiastical and institutional promotion of the royal martyr saint. This thesis presented the issue of dynastic promotion in a chronological manner to illustrate how the cult of St. Olav was utilised from just after the saint’s death in 1030, right up until the establishment of Nidaros as an archdiocese in 1152/53 and Archbishop Eystein’s later exile between the years 1180-1183. One element that remained constant throughout these periods of dynastic promotion is that they all ended up serving the same purpose. Bishops, such as Grimkell and Eystein, lent each other credibility and authority. Dynastic promotion of Olav’s cult benefitted both the ruler, who sought to bolster their claim to the royal office, and the ecclesiastics of the Church who served as the guardians of the saint’s cult and relics. Bartlett emphasises that ‘dynastic or community identity could be expressed through the adoption of a particular saint. Royal saints were a natural focus for such loyalties’. As a result this suggests that the cult of St. Olav was central to consolidating political power at this time and rulers realised the cult’s potential propaganda value to promote their own agenda. The two accounts of Magnus and Sverre aptly sum up the ambivalent relationship between the Norwegian kings and the cult of St. Olav. While the cult of St. Olav brings prestige and legitimacy to each king’s rule, the Letter of

Privileges in 1170 shows that they are but temporary rulers in the stead of Olav and that any transgressions will be punished. Overall, St. Olav’s importance seemed to stem from the cult’s ability to serve the needs of the laity, the Church and royalty simultaneously. Both St. Olav and St. Edmund fell in battle against pagan forces. Moreover, the depiction of these saints as warriors broke the conventional mould of martyrs portrayed as unresisting victims. Olav and Edmund are presented as saints who combated iniquity and heathenism whilst acting as the ideal Christian heroic model. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries these saints are presented by hagiographers as coexisting with newly founded fragile Christian kingdoms, which was certainly the case in respect of St. Olav. Furthermore, these cults of saints became engrained as part of the identity of these newly Christianised nations.

Nonetheless, the almost contradictory qualities of martial kingship and Christian victimhood raise the question of the duality of sainthood. For example, during the battle of Stiklestad in 1030, St. Olav was depicted in *Passio Olavi* as a warrior of Christ against the evil hordes of pagans. However, Bagge contends that ‘none of the sources except *Passio Olavi* state that King Olav was fighting pagans or heretics’. This highlights that there was no absolute definition of sainthood during this period.

Depictions of sainthood often differed as inevitably hagiographical texts had propagandistic overtones according to the author’s agenda. The traditional image of the passive martyr, posing no physical threat or resisting violence from their enemies does not have to a mutually exclusive concept. Paul Hayward perfectly summarises the difficulties involved with defining sainthood or presenting it as permanent and rigid model of sanctity. He states that ‘to comment on the rise and function of the cult of saints in Western Christendom is to confront an intricate complex of problems for which there will probably never be an entirely satisfactory solution’. The discussion in this thesis has shown that St. Edmund and St. Olav were inextricably linked through the martial and spiritual terminology imbued throughout their cults. The unique intercession of these seemingly immiscible saintly traits indicates that,
although it was difficult to reconcile the imagery of both Olav and Edmund as warrior kings and victims, it was indeed possible due to the collective nature of cultic piety throughout the medieval hagiographical community.

The abbey of Bury St Edmunds, with its prominence and wealth, extended the cult of St. Edmund into the daily devotional practices of the laity and cemented him as a popular, unofficial, local saint which spread beyond those regional confines of East Anglia. Likewise, Eystein made it somewhat policy to deliberately promote the cult of St. Olav in order to enhance his own archbishopric and establish Trondheim as one of the brightest beacons of Christianity in Northern Europe. It was not unusual that these individual cults of saints had strong regional and national bonds. The shared hagiographical motif of the incorrupt body is an element that unified these two cults of saints across the North Sea. In a period when many hagiographical texts were essentially a patchwork of borrowed themes and topoi, recorded miracles acted as markers of exchange and allow us to observe and analyse the interconnectedness of hagiographical communities, not confined by geographical boundaries. As tempting as it is to suggest a single influence for Eystein’s composition of *Passio Olavi*, it is necessary to acknowledge, that in actuality, stimulus came from varying sources. For example, it seems definite that Eystein was inspired by the cult of St. Edmund he resided at the abbey of Bury St Edmunds during his three year exile, 1180-1183.

However, the feat of incorruption also corresponded with Charlemagne, who was a contemporary of St. Olav and highly revered by him as well, naming his son Magnus after the famed king. Furthermore, Eystein could have partially relied upon vernacular skaldic poetry such as *Glælognskviða* which contained the earliest recorded miracles of St. Olav’s office. With certainty it is possible to state that Eystein was well aware of the cult of St. Edmund as he was a royal martyr saint who died in the heat of battle, just like St. Olav. Nevertheless, as a hagiographer during the twelfth century during the final stage of Norway’s Christianisation, part of his duty was to promote his own archdiocese as a centre of Christianity in Northern Europe. This in turn led Eystein to bolster the cult of St. Olav with links to prominent hagiographical figures such as St. Edmund and Charlemagne incorporated in the corpus of *Passio Olavi*. Therefore it is evident that the nature of contemporary hagiographic literature during the eleventh and twelfth centuries was a fluid network, much like the North Sea, which facilitated the dissemination and diffusion of texts comprised of the lives and miracles of saints.
Overall, it is reasonable to conclude that Eystein’s exile followed a long tradition of exclusion in Latin Christendom. Physical exile had become a more common occurrence during the twelfth century. Although Eystein experienced the hardships associated with banishment it seems that the benefits far outweighed these negatives. The detailed account of Eystein’s residency at Bury St Edmunds by the chronicler Jocelin of Brakelond shows that the archbishop had sufficient time with which to become accustomed with the hagiographic literature of the cult of St. Edmund. Therefore between August 1181 and February 1182 it seems highly likely that Eystein composed his miracle section of *Passio Olavi* as a revised work during his time at Bury. Eystein became embedded in the monastic community at the abbey and consequently influenced by the cult of their patron saint, Edmund. This theory fits well with Gunnes’ argument that Eystein composed the *vita* of the text sometime during the 1160s, at the beginning of his reign as archbishop, and in later years revised the hagiographical work. Furthermore, Bartlett indicates that an overwhelming 86 per cent of *Passio Olavi* comprised of *miracula*. This is significant when taking into account the numerous hagiographical connections between St. Olav and St. Edmund, from incorruption of their mortal remains to healing miracles, already documented in previous chapters of this thesis. Therefore it seems natural to contend that Eystein constructed this amended section of *Passio Olavi* using St. Edmund as a hagiographical model, actively incorporating elements of the cult of the East Anglian king into that St. Olav. The context for contact between these two royal martyr saints relies solely on how the hagiographical evidence is interpreted. Ultimately, this thesis has strived to compare like with like in a variety of ways in order to maximise cross-textual relevance and compatibility when presenting critical analysis of the hagiographical texts central to the cults of St. Olav and St. Edmund. The findings of this thesis are by no means absolute and unquestionable in their veracity, but hopefully they serve to better illuminate a small portion of the, vast and ever expanding, cult of saints field.

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204 Bartlett, *Why can The Dead Do Such Great Things?*, p. 559.
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