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Kingship and the Giants

1. Introduction

Much attention has been given to beliefs surrounding the Germanic king. Most scholars agree that tradition endowed the ruler with more than human status and that he possessed a lesser or greater measure of divinity. And so the name *Sacred Kingship* was given to the institution.¹ One element of sanctity was recognized in the descent of the monarch, for royal houses would trace their lineage to a god. The first Yngling king was the son of Freyr and of Gerðr (YGS ch. 10) and the Hlaðir jarls originated in the union of Óðinn and Skaði (*Háleygjatal*, str. 3, 4). The royal families of the English, such as those of Kent, Essex, or East Anglia, saw Woden as their ultimate progenitor (*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, ch. 2).

Another aspect of sacredness was found in the belief that the king had an effect upon the land, and that he could provide the blessings of fruitfulness and riches. Snorri declares that "... the Svíar are accustomed to ascribe both famine and abundance to the king." (YGS, ch. 43; ... svá sem Svíar eru vanir at kenna konungi bæði ár ok hallæri.) And the land flourished in jarl Hákon's reign. (*Fagrskinna*, ch. 14; ... jarl Hacon var rikr oc toc at æfla blot med mæiri freko en fyrr hafðe veret. þa batnaðe bratt arfærð oc com aftr korn oc silld. grere iorðen með blome. Jarl Hácon was powerful and performed the sacrificial rites with more eagerness than had been done before; then fruitfulness soon increased; corn grew again and herring returned; the earth bloomed.) The failure of a sovereign to assure well-being often was traced to his negligence in, or even hostility to, the worship of the

¹ James Frazer (1912) claimed to have found a universal pattern, especially apparent in archaic societies; here the king is identified with the fertility of the earth. Such a king might be ritually killed to assure the fruitfulness of the land. Among the scholars assuming the numinous nature of Germanic kingship to varying extent are de Vries 1956, Ström 1954, Höfler 1952, 1959; a review of the writings concerning Germanic kingship was composed by Rory McTurk 1975.

gods. Harvests failed and fish vanished in the reign of the sons of Eiríkr who destroyed the sacred places. (*Fagrskinna*, ch. 13: oc gierðe hallære mikit um þæira daga. firir þui at af tok silld fiski oc allt siofang. korn spilltiz. þetta kende lannz folket guða sinna ræiði oc þui er konungarner leto spilla blotstaðum þæira. In those days there was great famine; herring vanished and fishing stopped; corn rotted; this the people attributed to the wrath of the gods because the kings destroyed their sanctuaries.) We may understand that the king was vitally involved in the performance of religious ritual as a sort of priest. In this form also he stood as an intermediary between man and the superhuman. It has furthermore been assumed that at one time the king was ritually killed to assure the prosperity of his domain (Ström 1954, 33–56).

Some scholars contested the existence of a "Sacred Kingship" among the Germanic nations. Walter Baetke asserts that the superhuman aspect of the ruler did not originate in the Germanic but in the Christian era. Baetke 1964 points out that the texts which inform us about Norse kingship were composed in Christian time and were strongly influenced by the teaching of the Church. The nouns *gipta*, *gæfa*, and *hamingja*, related to the king's luck, did not exist in this meaning in heathen times. Hallberg 1973, however, found that the cited words are rare in Christian texts and appear more often in sources related to Germanic concerns. Baetke's view was accepted by such scholars, as Martin 1990 and Lönnroth 1986. It was the medieval Church which anointed and, in this way, bestowed charisma on the sovereign. But even Baetke accepts the king's religious function and thus his special position before the deities.

It was observed in recent time that in certain skaldic poems a king's conquest of a land was visualized in erotic terms, as an embrace and conquest of a woman (Ström 1983, 67–68; see also Davidson). The image prevailed among the poets of jarl Hákon's court. The poem *Háleygjatal* names the jarl as him²

² *Háleygjatal* 15, Eyvindr skáldaspillir, skj 62,15:
þeims alt austr/ til Egða býs/ brúðr Val-Týs/
und bøgi liggr.

Hákonardrápa 6, Hallfrøðr Óttarsson, skj 148,5:
Breiðleita gat, brúði/Báleygs at sér teygða,
stefnir stöðvar hrafna/ stála rikismöllum.

Hákonardrápa contains yet more images:
147,3; Sannyrðum spenr sverða/ snarr þiggjandi viggjar/
barrhaddaða byrjar/ biðkvón und sik Þriðja.

under whose arm Valtýr's bride
all the way from the Agðermen's dwellings,
now lies.

Hákonardrápa (str. 6) declares

The steerer of the harbour's steeds
had success in luring to him
Báleygr's broadfaced wife
with the steel's imperial speech.

The image is based on the myth in which the earth — *jörð* — is Óðinn's wife (gyl 9). By embracing Óðinn's wife the ruler is equated with Óðinn, the highest of the gods. Folke Ström assumes that the recurrent image is more than a poetic metaphor, for it encapsulates an article of faith; in this the king is wedded to the land in a "Sacred Marriage" (Ström 1983, 69–70). Ström finds a parallel in Irish tradition; here also sovereignty is achieved by uniting with a woman who personifies the earth. Ström believes that a ritual marriage might at one time have formed part of the ceremonies of installing the Germanic king. The woman of the Irish tradition is queen Medbh; and the enthronement ceremony carries the name 'wedding of the king'.

The bold possessor of the breeze's stallion/entices
under him/ Þriði's waiting wife, pineneedle-haired,/
with the vindicating words of swords.

147,4; Því hykk fleyanda frakna, /ferr jörð und men-
þverri/itra eina at láta/ Auðs systur mjök traudan.

Therefore I consider the lavish flinger of wealth/
very reluctant/ to abandon his glorious (consort);
Jörð submits to the diminisher/ of the neckring.

148,5; Rád lukusk at sá siðan/ snjallráðr konnungs
spjalli/ átti einga dóttur/ Ónars viði gróna.

Then the marriage was arranged/so that the intimate
of the king,/ shrewd of counsel,/ took possession of
Ónar's only daughter,/ grown with forest.

2. The impact of giants on the concept of human kingship

While scholars have fully noted the ruler's close relation to the super-human they have not noted, surprisingly, that the "divine" ancestor or bride is frequently not a godhead but a member of the race of giants, the staunch and unremitting enemies of cosmic order. This fact is never hidden. Gerðr, ancestress of the Yngling kings, is the daughter of Aurboða and Gymir, both giants. Skaði, the "shining bride of the gods", was fathered by the giant Piazzi whose death was caused by the Æsir. Jörð, the beloved of Óðinn and of kings, was begotten by the giant Ónarr. The descent of Norwegian princes is traced to the giant Fornjótr and his family in some accounts. The information is given in two short narratives: *Hversu Noregr byggðist* and *Fundinn Noregr*. The first is contained in *Flateyrbók* as introduction to the *Saga of Óláfr Tryggvason*; the second forms the introduction to the *Orkneyinga Saga*.

Gro Steinsland was the first to probe this puzzling feature (Steinsland 1991). She sees it as a vital element in the concept of royal rule. Kingship arises, in her view, in the meeting and blending of opposing powers: giants and gods uniting and creating a new kind of creature, i.e., the young king. Steinsland furthermore believes that the giant bride, cowed and subjugated by a god, symbolizes the land in its wild, uncultivated form, to be tamed by a male master (Steinsland 1991, 120–21). Steinsland, in her turn, points to instances in Celtic and also in Middle Eastern patterns. Germanic tradition differs in this, however, that the union is forged between enemies. The ominous meeting also determines the king's fate and the manner of his death (Steinsland 1991, 195–99).

By pointing to the role of the family of giants in the shaping of royal rule Steinsland has clearly added a new dimension to the concept of Germanic kingship and also a new dimension to the image of the giants. In this paper I will further probe the new vista.

The main components in the relation between kings and giants are

2.1 Marriage to a giantess

We note several instances in which a royal family is engendered through marriage with a giantess. Freyr married Gerðr and their son

Fjölfnir was the first of the Yngling kings (YGS, ch. 10; the marriage is also noted in *hyn str.* 30 and in *gyl* 37). The Hlaðir jarls, rulers of the northern parts of Norway, descended from Skaði and Óðinn (*Háleygiatal*, str. 3,4; YGS, ch. 8), and their son Sæmingr was ancestral to the mighty jarl Hákon. King Hölgí of Hálogaland married Thora, the daughter of king Gusir of the Bjarms and Finns, who is a giant in some texts (Saxo, III, 65; *Ketils saga hængs*, ch. 3). And these too are thought to be ancestral to the Hlaðir jarls (Steinsland 1991, 225; Ström 1983, 76–77).³ Hljóð, the daughter of the giant Hrimnir, married king Völsi and from them came the family of Völsung kings (*Völsunga s.*, ch. 2).

Steinsland assumes that in such matings the future king acquires the lordship of the land, and she points to the Irish and Mediterranean examples. We must observe, however, that in the Germanic instances the human ruler never wishes to govern or possess the land in which the giantess is stationed. Moreover, it is not hers to give, for unlike Medbh, the Irish queen, or Inanna of Sumer, ‘queen of heaven’, she is not a sovereign woman. Gerðr dwells in Gymisgarðr, the manor of her father Gymir, Skaði in Prymsheimr, ruled by Þiazi before his death. Neither of her two husbands (Njörðr and Óðinn) have any wish to govern or inhabit this domain. Thora lives in her father’s country in Bjarmaland. We are not told where Hljóð had her station, but after marriage she resides in king Völsi’s court.

It is true that in kennings where the earth — Óðinn’s beloved — is embraced by the ruler he does wish to conquer and possess the land. These images come from two poems only (*Hákonardrápa*, *Háleygiatal*), both composed in the same environment: jarl Hákon’s court. To show that these kennings are based on an underlying faith Folke Ström cites only the following: foreign analogues from widely differing cultures and a postulated marriage between Þorgerðr Hölgabrúðr, a mighty spirit, and king Hölgí of Hálogaland (Ström 1983, 75–6). This evidence does not suffice to establish a religious pattern. We may note, moreover, that Norse myth does not contain a great goddess of the earth. The goddess Freyja, the most important of the female divinities, is a creature of the air, as shown by her ‘feather garment’.

³The scenario in which a king marries a giant’s daughter is found elsewhere in the Norse texts; king Haraldr hárfagri marries Snjófríðr, daughter of Svási (Svaði) who dwells to the north of Dofri, *Haralds s. hárfagra*, ch. 25 (HSK), and king Svafhlami marries Friðr, the daughter of the giant Þiazi, *Hervarar s. Appendix A* (U edition).

Þorgerðr Hölgabrúðr, the fierce protectress of jarl Hákon, is drawn in the form of a valkyrie. The earth — Jörð — is not a figure in her own right; she is never more than the daughter, bride, sister, or mother of another being; she is not, like Medbh or Inanna, personification and symbol of royal rule.

The earth is also defined as: 'flesh of Ymir', 'floor of the wind's hall', 'sea of the animals'; these images show her as a not yet anthropomorphic being (*Skáldskaparmál* 24 in Snorri); the adjectives of *Hákonardrápa*: 'broadfaced', 'pineneedle-haired' point to the same aspect and not to the figure of a ritual performance. It is true that also outside of the circle of jarl Hákon's court the earth is visualized as Óðinn's bride in skaldic poetry. We find *Hergaut's vina* — Hergaut's friend (Bragi Boddason skj 2, 5, 8); *Svölnis ekkja* — Svölnir's wife (Þjóðólfr ór Hvini, skj 17,15,7); *Bors niðjar beðja* — Borr's son's bedmate (Egill Skallagrímsson, skj 47,21,7); *Pundar beðja* — Pundr's bedmate (*Konungatal*, skj 576,9,2). While in these kennings the earth is Óðinn's wife it is never stated that she was embraced by a human king.

It is not a giantess but a giant to whom governance is given. Sometimes the two, the realm and its sovereign, share a name, as in the case of Dumbur of Dumbshaf, Hörðr of Hörðaland, or Rúgalfr of Rogaland (HvN, ch. 1). The coincidence of names may be due to the learned constructions of the chroniclers in which the ruler becomes the eponymous spirit of the region. Even so, the phenomenon affirms the deep affinity between the male master and his realm.

We may point to yet other giant kings and their dominions: Gusir of Finnmark and Bjarmaland, Dofri of Dofrafjall, Geirrøðr of Jötunheimr. King Snær had three daughters and one son; the son Þorri inherited Gotland, Kvenland, and Finnmark; no land was given to the daughters. When king Öskruðr died his daughters inherited the loose property and his sons inherited the land. Þorri had two sons and one daughter; his son Nórr inherited the land which is now called Norway, and his son Górr inherited the coastal strip and the islands where later the sea kings reigned. Úlfr, Ylfingr, and Hildir competed for the kingship over Risaland.⁴

It is quite clear that in Norse tradition a male giant holds the lordship of a terrain. He is the personification and the spirit ruler of the

⁴ In order of citation: *Ketils s. hængs*; *Kjalnesinga s*; *Þorsteins þ. bæjarmagns*; HvN; *Egils s. einhenda*; HvN; *Orvar Odds s*. It would be very difficult to give all the examples that could be given.

countryside. When a king marries a giant's daughter and takes her to his home he establishes a dynastic tie with the sovereign forces of the North. This dynastic relation has a counterpart in human history. When Haraldr hárfagri wished to extend his power over northern Norway he encountered the resistance of jarl Hákon Grjóttgarðsson of the Trondelag. Haraldr married Hákon's daughter Ása and formed an alliance with her father. The alliance worked, in fact, in favor of the Hlaðir jarls. They retained their powers over northern Norway, including the Trondelag, and they nominally held the southern parts in liege to the king of Denmark (Jones, 87). We may observe that in the Norse texts human kings do not marry the daughters of the gods. A god is not shown in close alliance with a specific region of the land. He does not inhabit a territory which bears his name. The gods erected a stronghold for themselves and surrounded it with sturdy walls. The giants did not need to build a dwelling, for theirs is the entirety of the land, its caves, its pastures, and its mountainside.

I dispute Steinsland's assumption that the meeting of gods and giants is of absolute necessity to creating the persona of the king. The royal family of Denmark, Skjöldungar, descended from a union of god and goddess: Óðinn's son Skjöldr and the goddess Gefion (YGS, ch. 5). And the rulers of Norway descended from Fornjótr and his family of giants alone (HvN). I also contest Steinsland's finding that the dubious fashion of the king's origin is the reason for his dishonorable death, such as those enumerated in *Ynglingatal* (Steinsland 1991, 227–37). All kings must die, and some die in an honorable and others in a dishonorable manner. Yet they have all sprung, in Steinsland's view, from the same blend of forces.

2.2 Descent from giants

In the instances cited here, in which a male engenders children on a giant bride, the ruler springs, at least partially, from the giant's race. We note, moreover, that the sons of the giant Fornjótr shared the sovereignty over the northern provinces and islands. From them have come the Buðlungar, Skjöldungar, Bragningar, Öðlingar, Völsungar, Niflungar. Adam of Bremen declares that jarl Hákon had sprung from the Yngling kings and from a troll (HvN, ch. 1; Adam II, 22, as cited by Storm 1885, 133).

We must also realize that giant origin is not always evident in a royal line. Anglo-Saxon rulers trace their families to Woden. One

genealogy of Norwegian kings begins with Burr, king of the Turks, and another with Adam (HvN, chs. 4, 6). Faulkes 1978–79 presents a number of learned genealogies, with royal families descending from Óðinn, from Adam, or the kings of Troy. He does not include the accounts of descent from Fornjótr; however, these too are testimony to medieval, Germanic thought. Margaret Clunies Ross 1983 sees Fornjótr and his family as elemental forces of the environment; she assumes that they were taken into the royal family by learned men.

2.3 The fostering and friendship of a giant

A giant's teaching and protection may be instrumental in shaping the future king. Haraldr hárfagri bears the by-name *Dofraföstri*; *Hálfðanar þ. svarta* tells the tale. Precious objects had vanished from king Hálfðan's store and his men were looking for the thief. One day they found the giant Dofri near the treasury, and they seized and brought him before the king. Dofri was shown no mercy and he was fettered with heavy chains. Haraldr, the king's son, freed the captive and was banished from the court in punishment.

As he was wandering in cold and hunger through the wilderness he was met by Dofri and the latter took him to his home. The giant instructed the five year old child in knowledge and in skills. When the boy was ten years old his mentor announced that the king had died, implying that the death had been no accident: "Your father is dead and I was not far." (*Hálfðanar þ. svarta*, 455; *fadir þinn er dauðr ok var ek ekki fjarre*.) Dofri also declared that it was now time for young Haraldr to assume the kingship over Norway and that he would help him in his needs: "I shall be of help to you and shield you in your battles." (*Hálfðanar þ. svarta*, 455; *skal ek ok þer j lidsinne vera ok j bardogum med þer*.) Indeed it seemed to men that Dofri had come to Haraldr's aid when he won his victory at Trondheim. (*Hálfðanar þ. svarta*, 461; *er monnum þotti sem Dofri yrde honum driugr j radum*.) A very similar scenario is encountered in the Eddic poem *Grimnismál*. In this poem it is Óðinn who is tortured and who is consoled by the king's son. Here too the visitor announces that the boy shall rule his father's land (see Motz 1996).

According to this account it was Dofri who urged Haraldr to leave his hair uncut until he had obtained the rule of his domain. Dofri's help to young Haraldr is also noted in other sources and *Bárðar s.*

Snæfellsáss declares that Dofri had effected Haraldr's ascendance to the throne of Norway (ch. 1.)⁵

The fosterage of Haraldr is ascribed to the sorcerer Finnr in *Hálfðanar s. svartu* (ch. 8). Finnr is tortured for stealing food from the king's table; he, also, is released by the king's son. In Finnr's dwelling the boy is taught the accomplishments befitting a king, until he is ready to assume his position. According to Saxo Grammaticus king Gramr sent his son Hading to the giant Vagnhofth for his education, and the prince received the giant's teaching and the giant's daughter's love (Saxo I, 20). The name Vagnhofth has a counterpart in the Norse name Vagnhöfði and that of his daughter in Harðgreipa. The king sent another of his sons to the giant Hafli and he too has a counterpart in the Norse texts. The giant Bárðr had a dream in which Óláfr Haraldsson was sent to Dofri's cave to be tutored. Later the boy became sole ruler over Norway (*Bárðar s. Snæfellsáss*, ch. 1).

The cited instances affirm that kingship sometimes is achieved through the fosterage and friendship of a giant. We know, on the other hand, that a young Germanic hero may also be fostered and protected by a female member of the giants' race. Illugi carries the name *Gríðarfóstri* — fosterling of Gríðr — and Hálfðan carries the name *Brönufóstri* — fosterling of Brana. These and others had met the spirits in the travels of their youth and had spent a period of time in the giantess' cave. In this way they would gain a lifelong and protective friend. I have presented a systematic survey of the young man's cave adventure (Motz 1993, 60–64). The fostering giantess aids the man in his development, in shaping his manhood and his future fate. The male giant's fosterage, on the other hand, bestows the sovereignty of the land.

It must be pointed out, however, that giants are not alone in teaching and making kings. Young Konr of *Rígsþula* is instructed in the craft of kingship by Rígr–Heimdallr and Óttarr of *Hyndlóljóð* (both are Eddic poems) learns of his genealogy from the goddess Freyja.

* * *

Let us summarize that by linkage with the giant's race, through marriage or descent, through fosterage and friendship, a human may

⁵ . . . efdi Dofri hann síðan til konungs yfir Nóregi; it is said to be reported in a certain *Saga Haralds konungs Dofrafóstra*. The relation between Haraldr and Dofri is also noted in *Kjalnesinga saga*.

be fitted for the royal office. The question still remains why members of a hostile and savage group, intent on destroying the order of the gods, should assist in creating a sacred institution. While the texts emphasize the evil nature of the race a closer look reveals that giants were also seen as wise and gifted creatures and as benefactors of gods and men. We learn from Eddic myth that life originated in a giant, and that the gods received some of their most precious possessions from the race, such as the mead of poetry and the stone wall of their dwelling. Giants might even be recipients of cultic worship (Steinsland 1986; Motz 1979–80).

If the chroniclers of the Middle Ages were allowed to trace the descent of ruling princes to a family of giants there must have existed, at least in some quarters, a belief which honored giants as the legitimate rulers of the regions of Germanic settlement (Motz 1979–80). And a dynastic relation had to be established with the spirit owners of the land.

3. The influence of human kingship on the image of the giants

Having considered the impact of the race of giants on the concept of human kingship we shall now consider whether human kingship exercised an influence on the image of the giants. I have elsewhere traced the figures to the belief of the native peoples of the North (Motz 1984; Motz 1987 a). These assumed, as it is still assumed in some religions of modern times, that every element and aspect of the natural environment, its lakes, mountains, and beasts, is owned and governed by a superhuman creature. The numina may appear in human form but also in the shape of the beasts which they protect, and they are much respected and revered by the human population; for they may withhold or release the animals of the land and of the sea, and they control the clemency or harshness of the weather. Faith in these beings has been ascertained throughout the world for archaic types of communities, such as those of fishermen and hunters. The spirit rulers were described and discussed in recent time and received the name: Owners and Guardians of Nature (Hultkrantz 1961).

The Norse giants show many features which allow us to fit them into this configuration. The Germanic settlers assimilated to some

extent elements of native belief, and the giants were sometimes shown as the enemy to be defeated, as the chaos monsters which must be vanquished by the champion of cosmic order (a theme of Indo-European tradition),⁶ but also as older and ancestral powers, gifted with wisdom and with magic skills. Some giants were remodelled in the image of medieval society and thus they would receive the aspect of medieval kings.

3.1 Giants bear the title 'King' — *konungr* or *jarl*

Giants given the title *konungr* were: Beiti (HvN), Dumbr, Dofri, Gautr, Geirrøðr, Górr (HvN), Guðmundr, Gusir, Harðverkr, Heiti (HvN), Hildir, Hringr (HvN), Hrólfr (HvN), Hörðr (HvN), Raumr (HvN), Skelkingr, Snær, Úlfr, Ylfingr, Þorri (HvN), Öskruðr. The names of giants and their occurrences are listed in my paper (Motz 1987 b); the occurrence of a name, not appearing in the list, is given in parentheses. More names could be added.

Giants bearing the title *jarl*: Guðbrandr (HvN), Geirmundr (HvN), Agðir (*Þorsteins þ. bæjarmagns*).

3.2 Skaldic kennings periphrase giants with nouns which are also applied to human kings

Jarl — *bergjarl* — jarl of the mountain (skj 173, 122, anonymous); *stjóri* — ruler — *bergstjóri* — ruler of the mountain (skj II, 111, 2, 5, Gizurr Þorvaldsson); *gramr* — king — *hellis gramr* — king of the cave (skj II, 438, 14, 4, Einarr Gilsson); *gilja grundar gramr* — king of the stony ground (skj 18, 18, 6, Þjóðólfr ór Hvini); *Hamðis geirs gramr* — king of the stone (skj 52, 45, 7, Egill Skallagrímsson); *mildingr* — king — *hella mildringr* — king of the caves (skj 239, 2, 7, Sighvatr Þórðarson); *stillir* — king — *fjalla stillir* — king of the rocks (skj 5, 3, 3, Bragi gamli); *jöfurr* — prince, king — *heiðar hliðjofurr* — king of the cave (skj 455, 2, 5, Einarr Skúlason).

At times a giant is also defined through the actual name of a human king. Ella — king of Northumbria — *steins Ella* — Ella of the stone (skj 144, 20, 8, Eilífr Goðrúnarson); Níðuðr — king of the Njarir —

⁶ Fontenrose 1959 has systematically presented and discussed the theme which is of wide diffusion. It apparently originated in the ancient Middle East where it was first recorded. It was probably taken up by the Indo-Europeans who then brought it with them to their new homes.

grjót Niðuðr — Niðuðr of the stones (skj 16, 9, 8, Þjóðólfr ór Hvini); Endill — a sea king — *gallópnis halla Endill* — Endill of the eagle's hall (skj 140, 3, 8, Eilifr Goðrúnarson); Gestill — a sea king — *Fjalla Gestill* — Gestill of the rocks (skj 540, 4, 5, Haukr Valdisarson) Atli — a sea king — *hraun Atli* — Atli of the lava field (skj 540, 5, 2, Haukr Valdisarson).

3.3 Giants bear as name an attribute of kings

Occasionally a giant is denoted with a name which also denotes a human king. Such names are Valdi, Allvaldi, Þrivaldi; *allvaldr* — 'sovereign king'. Let us note that neither skaldic kennings nor the names of giantesses describe these as sovereign beings. The female members of the family are related through kennings and through their names to warfare and to the woodland and its beasts (Motz 1981).

3.4 Giant kings resemble human kings

The archaic ruler of the wilderness may be reshaped into a medieval king. When Búi came to the mountain of king Dofri he met the giant's daughter, dressed in silk and silver and adorned with golden jewelry, her garment held by a belt of heavy silver. Her father, white-haired and white-bearded, was seated in the high seat of a stately hall and surrounded by his retainers (*Kjalnesinga s.*, chs. 13–14). His daughter dwelled in a private bower, hung with tapestries, and here she entertained her lover.

As mighty kings receive the tribute and the fealty of their chieftains so king Geirrøðr accepted the pledges of Guðmundr in his hall, as described in *Þorsteins þ. bæjarmagns* (ch. 6): Síðan stóð Goðmundr upp ok sté á stokkin fyrir sæti konungs ok strengði þess heit, at hann skal engum konungi þjóna né hlýðni veita, meðan Geirrøðr konungr lifði; later Guðmundr stood up and stepped on a log before the king's seat and pledged that he would never serve another king or offer homage while king Geirrøðr was alive.

In his hall also Geirrøðr entertained his barons with drink and games; and here, as sometimes in a human environment, the festivity erupted in violence (chs. 9, 10).

Like the human Haraldr hárfagri the giant Bárðr was educated by the giant Dofri. Bárðr was instructed in genealogy and skill of arms — *ættvísi ok vígfimi* — and possibly also witchcraft and sorcery — *galdra*

ok forneskja –, for the old giant was wise and prophetic — *margvið ok forspár* (*Bárðar s. Snæfellsáss*, ch. 1). As human kings may do king Dumbr abducted a young woman, Mjöll, the daughter of king Snær of Kvenland, to make her his bride, and Hrólfr af Bergi seized the woman Góí, the daughter of king Þorri (*Bárðar s. Snæfellsáss*, ch. 1; HvN, ch. 1).

As human kings might have to face rebellion so king Dumbr met the hostile onslaught of his subjects. They attacked and killed him with iron poles (*Bárðar s. Snæfellsáss*, ch. 2). And as a human king would offer the gift of prosperity to his nation so the giant Ármann brought blessing to Iceland; after he had settled in his home, it was easier to handle livestock and to drive it from the pasture, and if a beast was missing it would return by itself as if Ármann had called it home (*Ármanns s. in yngri*, ch. 5). The giant king Þorri was honored with sacrifices so that he would send snow for skiing at the time of hunting and thus increase the yield of game (HvN, ch. 1).

We may conclude that giants, when they are not drawn as savage creatures, eating human flesh in their caves, are drawn as stately rulers in their halls. If the spirits were reshaped in the later Middle Ages we may assume that at this time they still possessed vitality and significance in the minds of men.

* * *

This study indicates that the archaic lords and masters of the northern wilderness were remodelled by the Germanic nations to fit into the pattern of medieval society with its dynastic ties, its pursuits of war and peace, and the structure of its hierarchy. If we consider the impact on human fate, attributed in Norse tradition to the young, nubile giantess and to the aged ruler of the mountain, we may understand the prominent role of the father-daughter pair in tales about the giants.⁷ In observing the strong linkage of the family of giants with the royal office we may find little reason to assume that it was the Church which had given superhuman status to the king. It is unlikely that the Church would relate the king's charisma to the spirits of an archaic faith who, in this faith, had ruled the country long before the Germanic nations entered their terrain.

This study agrees with Gro Steinsland in recognizing the signif-

⁷ Motz 1984 b. Translations from *Hákonardrápa* are those of Daphne Davidson.

icance, attributed to the giants, in the establishment of royal rule. The study differs in its conclusion that the decisive role is held by a male rather than a female member of the family. The study also indicates that giants are not alone in bestowing the gift of sovereignty over the northern lands.

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