

FJODOR USPENSKIJ

## The Category of Affinity (*Mágsemð*) in the Old Norse Model of Family Relations

It would appear impossible to imagine a description of Scandinavian society in the saga epoch without such notions as 'the kinship consciousness', 'kinship traditions', and 'kinship, clan ethics'. The role of and respect for family and ancestors in that epoch were undoubtedly great, and cannot be overestimated. However, few instances have been described wherein familial and kinship relations are manifested in everyday practice. The domestic cult and ancestors is so universal that it is practically impossible to point out spheres where it is not present. Yet, for this very reason, it is difficult to identify the spheres where it is fully manifested.

I intend to discuss the meaning of the term *mágr* / *mágar* (often translated as 'relative by marriage') and the limits of this notion. I note at

---

Uspenskij, F., Professor of Russian State University of Humanities, Moscow; Senior Researcher in the Institute for Slavonic Studies (Russian Academy of Sciences). "The Category of Affinity (*Mágsemð*) in the Old Norse Model of Family Relations", *ANF* 122 (2007), pp. 157–180.

**Abstract:** In the present paper the question of the meaning of the term *mágr*, *mágar* (often translated as 'relative by marriage') and of the limits of this notion is discussed. The word *mágr* in the Old Icelandic meant a very wide sphere of relations much exceeding the traditionally accepted notion of affinity. In particular, *mágar* may be called a stepfather and a stepson, relatives of the concubine, the parents of the girl and her fiancé or her lover. The category of *mágr* remains very general: this term quite regularly designates any kind of non-blood relations between men acquired through women, the relations between *mágar* being symmetrical and with no regard to the generation hierarchy (both father-in-law and son-in-law are called *mágr*). During the lifetime of one or two generations, it was easy for several men to recognize their being *mágar* to each other, because one of them was married to the daughter of the other or they were married to two sisters, or one was a stepson of the other. However, when the characters were separated by great distance in space or in time, often the memory of their relations presented only as much as was reflected in the language. The paper considers a number of mythological and saga personages, for whom the attribute *mágr* is — for different reasons — a significant characteristics.

**Keywords:** Affinity, Marriage, *mágr*, non-blood relations between men acquired through women.

once that I have no intention of discussing here the etymology of terms of family relations in the Germanic languages<sup>1</sup>. Primarily, I will be concerned with how a number of quite different relations between people were recognized in terms of affinity and were adjusted to familial categories in Scandinavia during the eleventh through thirteenth centuries.

Kinship relations were not merely important for Scandinavians of that epoch; it would be more exact to say that there were no relations outside of kinship. Perhaps there is some exaggeration in this assertion, but it should be emphasized that all relations between people were seen through the prism of kin.

Any connection between two relatives is conditioned by the term of affinity which describes it. One might say that these designations help to establish the order of interpersonal relations. A kinship system may determine, or even create, some very complex connections by choosing some very exact or very general term of affinity to describe the relationship between any given pair of individuals.

The designation of a person by his blood- or non-blood relations to others is the sphere where phenomena of poetic language are blended with those of ordinary usage. For example, in *Hárbarzlióð* Thor, after meeting the boatman and exchanging some abusive remarks, introduces himself with the following words:

*Segia mun ek til nafns míns, // þótt ek sekr siak, // ok til allz øðlis: // ek em Óðins sonr, // Meila bróðir, // en Magna faðir, // þrúðvaldr goða: // við Þórr knáttu hér dæma!* (Hrbl. 9).

The boatman's answer is most laconic:

*Hárbarðr ek heiti // hylk um nafn sialdan* (Hrbl. 10).

Thus, Thor tells his real name acting, in my view, as any other man of the world of the kinship system would. First, he gives the most important information: his family connections. Only afterwards does he tell his own name, which seems a secondary and almost unnecessary piece of information. By contrast, an individual who would tell only his own name would seem to wish not to announce but to conceal who he was, and would hence appear suspicious and potentially dangerous.

<sup>1</sup> The etymology of the term in question (Goth. *mēgs* 'son-in-law', 'daughter's husband'; Old English *mæg*, Old Frisian *mēch*, Old Saxon and Old North German *mēg*) is not so far established. For details, see: Vries 1977: 375.

It is becoming a scholarly commonplace that, in narrative genres where genealogy figures prominently, the family connections of a personage largely determine his fate and personal characteristics. As a rule, the saga usually tells us first that he is “the son of X”, “the grandson of Y”, and “the great-grandson of Z”. For modern readers, these characteristics are of minor importance in comparison with the man’s personality and his deeds. However, from the viewpoint of the kin-conscious saga-writer the most important information is the description of family connections. It is these connections that predetermine the person’s character, deeds, and, to some extent, his name. Of course he is not necessarily named after one of the direct ancestors that the writer has listed; if he is not, he is given the name either of his father’s brother or of a great-grandfather. Thus, if the family connections of the personage have been characterized, then almost all has been said about him and, in some sense, the mention of the referent’s name is equivalent to a periphrastic description of his family connections.

This model is most strongly manifested in poetic language, where periphrastic description becomes canonical as one of the accepted designations of the referent. In fact, here we can argue from numerous skaldic and Eddaic instances of kenning formation using terms of affinity, as well as from Snorri’s description of this kind of kenning formation:

*Enn eru þau heiti, er menn láta ganga fyrir nöfn manna; þat kollum vér viðkenningar eða sannkenningar eða fornöfn. Þat eru viðkenningar, at nefna annan hlut réttu nafni ok kalla þann, er hann vill nefna, eiganda eða svá, at kalla hann þess, er hann nefndi, fòður eða afa; ái er enn þriði. Heitir ok sonr ok arfi, arfuni, barn, jòð ok mógur, erfingi; heitir ok bróðir, blóði, barmi, hlýri, lifri; heitir ok niðr, nefi, áttungr, konr, kundr, frændi, kynstafr, niðjungr, ættstudill, ættbarmr, kynkvisl, ættbogi, arfkvæmi, afspringr, höfuðbadmr, ofsköpt. Heita ok mágar, sífjungar, hleyta-menn ... (SnE., 65 (67): 144).*

One example of *viðkenning* formation according to Snorri’s model is the kenning, widespread in skaldic poetry, of Thor: *Ulls mágr*<sup>2</sup>. *Mágr*, as has already been mentioned, indicates relation by marriage. It is, however, well known that Thor and Ullr were not married to two sisters and were not father-in-law and son-in-law to each other. Thor is

---

<sup>2</sup> This kenning occurs, for example, in the verse of Eysteinn Valdason (SnE.: 80) and in the poem *Hauströng* by Þjóðólfr enn hvinverski.

known to be the husband of the goddess Sif, Ullr's mother, but he was not Ullr's father; in other words, Thor was Ullr's stepfather. In other kennings these relations were reflected in a more familiar form: in skaldic poetry Thor could be called "Sif's friend" *Sifjar rúni* or "Ullr's stepfather" *Ullar gulli*. Respectively, Snorri recommends that Ull be called "Thor's stepson" *stjúp Þórs, stjúpsonr Þórs* (SnE.: 31, 84).

Broadly speaking, there are other examples in the sagas where stepfather and stepson are both called *mágr*. Moreover, these relations are completely symmetrical: not only is the stepfather his stepson's *mágr*, but also the stepson can be called the *mágr* of his stepfather<sup>3</sup>. It should be noted, that, as a rule, these usages pertain to adults of legal age, not to the relation between an adult and a child. Thus, the connection indicated by the term *mágr* is genuinely symmetrical.

For example, in a number of sagas Sigurd the Swine (*Syr*), the king of Hringaríki, who married Asta Guðbrandsdóttir after the death of Harald *grenski*, is called the *mágr* of Saint Olaf:

*þá tók inn helgi Óláfr við Nóregis ríki... Hann var enn fyrsta vetr lengstom með Sigurði magi sínom á Upplöndom (Ágr. 24: 26)<sup>4</sup>.*

There are cases when the term *mágr* refers to a stepson, as in the story of how Svein Forkbeard sends ambassadors to Olav the Swedish, his *mágr*:

*Snimma um varit sendi Sveinn konungr menn i Svíþjóð a fund Olafs Svíakonungs mags síns (CF: 158).*

It should be noted that Olaf's mother, Sigrid the Imperious (*Stórráða*), was married to the king of the Danes after the death of her husband, Erik the Victorious, the father of Olaf of Sweden. Thus, Olaf undoubtedly was Svein Forkbeard's stepson.

In the Old-Icelandic tradition the events of a later period of Danish history (the 12<sup>th</sup> century) are described in similar words. Ríkisa, the daughter of the Polish prince Boleslaw III and the Russian princess

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Eitt sinni er þeir ræddozc við magarnar Olafur (the Saint) oc Sigurðr (the Swine) þa rænna at þeim synir Sigurðar Halfdan oc Haralldr (ÓHLeg. 27: 27).*

<sup>4</sup> Compare also: *þann vetr andaðiz Sigurðr syr magr hans (SÓH 58: 63); Olafur ... fær um haustet a Upplönd a Ringa ríki til Sigurðar syr, fostra síns og mags (ÓHLeg. 22: 23); i for varo með Svæini hinir mesto höfðingjar i landeno: Ærlingr Skjalgsson oc Æinar þambascælvir. Magr Svæins hann atte Berglioto, dottor Hakonar ríka ... Samnaðe Olafur konungr ser liði oc fecc ser langskip oc með hanum Sigurðr syr magr hans (ÓHLeg. 24: 24).*

Sbyslava was married three times. She first, married Magnus, the son of the Danish king Nils. From this marriage she had a son named Knut. Her next husband was the prince of Minsk Volodar' Glebovich (i.e. the son of Gleb), by whom she gave birth to Sophia, the future queen of Denmark and the wife of Valdemar the Great. After being divorced from Volodar' Glebovich, Rikisa married the Swedish king Sverkir.

It was Knut Magnusson, the son of Rikisa and Magnus Nilsson, who was twice characterized as *mágr* in *Knýtlinga saga*. He is called *mágr* of the king Valdemar the Great because he was married to the uterine sister of Knut, Sophia, Volodar's daughter<sup>5</sup>, and he is called *mágr* of the Swedish king Sverkir because he was Knut's stepfather:

*Hann (Knútr konungr) fann í Gautlandi Sørkvi Karlsson, mág sinn — hann átti Rikizu, móður Knúts konungs — ok beiddi hann líðsafla (Knýtl. 108: 237).*

Thus, *mágr* rather regularly signifies 'stepfather' or 'stepson'. Strictly speaking, such a connection may be defined precisely as a relation acquired through marriage, because it emerges when the mother of one participant in the relationship marries the other participant. It is characterized this way in the Icelandic code of law known as *Grágás*, where among close relations by marriage (*ná mágar*) not only the husband of the daughter or sister but also the stepfather (mother's husband) is mentioned<sup>6</sup>. Such "definiton", however, is completely alien to many kinship systems outside of the Scandinavian world (of Russian in particular). Here it is impossible to imagine the designation of a stepfather or stepson as a relative by marriage. The relationship of stepfather and stepson is not included in any more general category either in Old Russian or in modern Russian kinship terminology because the Russian stepfather is neither blood relation nor relative by marriage.

Among Scandinavians, non-blood relationship of any kind between men may be designated as *mágr*, and it is evidently opposed to blood relationship. It is significant that, within the *mágr* category, the positions of the participants are only weakly differentiated. For the stepson / stepfather relationship, which does not take the central place in this category, there are the special terms *stjúpfadir*, *stjúpsonr*, and

<sup>5</sup> *Peir létu þá vígja sík báðir til konunga, Valdimarr ok Knútr konungr, mágr hans (Knýtl. 111: 245)* "Then, they were both anointed kings, Valdemar and Knut king, his *mágr* (wife's brother)".

<sup>6</sup> See, for example: (Grg. 1: 47, 62, 158, 201); compare: (Grg. 1: 160).

*stjúpr*<sup>7</sup>. As for such important relations as 'daughter's husband' (son-in-law), 'wife's father' (father-in-law), and 'wife's brother' (brother-in-law), there are actually no special terms for them. They are expressed by the general term *mágr*, or, in legal texts, by descriptive, periphrastic constructions like 'wife's father'.

Thus, the Old Norse category of affinity (non-blood relation) is distinctly opposed to the category of blood relation; it is relatively homogeneous and in logical order includes all family connections that a man can acquire by his own marriage or the marriage of his relatives.

Let us now consider the kennings we cited at the beginning of this paper from the viewpoint just set forth. We may recall that Thor in skaldic poetry could be designated by the kennings 'Ullr's *mágr*' or 'Sif's husband', while Ullr, according to Snorri, may be called 'Sif's son', without Ullr's father or his blood relations being mentioned at all. From my perspective, in a certain sense they should not be mentioned.

This assumption, strange at first sight, is supported by the inner form of the name *Sif* which means literally 'relative, kinswoman'. The plural form of this word, as a rule, refers not to blood relations but to relatives by marriage<sup>8</sup>, i.e., *sifjar* or *sifjungr* may and often does signify the category of affinity *mágr*, *mágar* (cf. the abovementioned *viðkenning* definition in the "Younger Edda": *heita ok mágar, sifjungar* ...). However, as extant texts show, the notions *sifjar* and *mágar* are close but not completely identical.

It should be noted, first of all, that the word *sif* is of the feminine gender and in the Singular it is used only as the name of the goddess. Thus, *Sif*, whose place and function in the pantheon of gods is not very well known, may be regarded as a personified notion of non-blood relations, relations through a woman, relation by marriage, and affinity by agreement. Thus it becomes clearer why her son is not a blood relative to any of the gods of his sex. Ullr is the son of the Relative by Marriage, and he remains in the position of the eternal Relative by Marriage, a stepson, having no father. The masculine term *mágr* complements the feminine term *sif* in the mythological plot.

<sup>7</sup> The term *gulli*, which occurs, as far as I know, only once in the work of skald Eiliv Godrunarson, stands apart from the latter. In the song of praise devoted to Thor, there is a kenning *gulli Ullar*, which, proceeding from the etymology (Vries 1977: 182) and standard kennings of Thor 'Ullr's *mágr*', is translated by the specialists in skaldic poetry as 'Ullr's stepfather' (LP: 208; Meissner 1921: 253).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. (Cleasby 1874: 526).

It may be that the name of the goddess *Sif* constitutes a peculiar point of confluence between language and myth, the point where they intersect. An element of language gives birth to the mythological plot, and it is the relative sparseness of this plot that allows it to follow its linguistic nature. In other words, there is nothing in this plot except an embodied explanation of the meanings contained in the word. There is a goddess that can be a wife and have a son, but her name itself is such, that her son is not a son but a non-blood relative for her husband.

It may be that precisely this representation of the goddess *Sif* is the most archaic. At any rate, Snorri gives as one of the kennings of earth — ‘Sif’s mother-in-law’ (*sværa Siffar*) (SnE., 22 (24): 92). It is important that this kenning is absent in the skaldic texts we know, while the term ‘mother-in-law’ occurs neither in skaldic poetry nor in the family sagas. We find it only in Eddaic poetry where it is used in the *Atlamál in grænlenska*. In the scene of his quarrel with Guðrun, Atli says:

*Sværo létstu þína sitia opt grátna* (Am.: 96).

The term in question, ‘mother-in-law’, occurs sporadically also in *þula* (LP: 555), in late hagiography (HMS 1: 24, 195), and twice in the thirteenth-century Old-Icelandic exposition of some chapters from the Old Testament (St.: 343, 421). It is also mentioned by Snorri; the author of the “Younger Edda” even found it necessary to explain the meaning of the word:

*Snør heitir sonar-kvæn; sværa heitir vers móðir* (SnE., 66 (68): 145).

Thus, ‘mother-in-law’ is designated by the word *sværa*, which has a reasonably reliable Common Germanic and Indo-European etymology (Vries 1977: 571). This word has been preserved to this day in many languages. Hence, we can see that in the Germanic languages a habitual differentiation of family relations within the category of non-blood relations existed, and that this differentiation was to a great extent eliminated in the Old-Icelandic.

There was a similar situation with the rare word *snør* (*snor*) ‘daughter-in-law, son’s wife’. It is used in extremely limited contexts, in just the same bookish texts where the word *sværa* ‘mother-in-law’ occurred (*þula* (LP: 525), “Younger Edda” (SnE., 66 (68): 145), the exposition of the Old Testament (St.: 420, 421, 426), and *vitae* of continental saints (HMS 1: 195)).

Moreover, like the word *sværa*, the word *snør* figured in the “Elder Edda”. In its terminological meaning it is once used in *Guðrúnarhvöt*, in another case it is used as a proper name. In this latter case *snør* is a revived personification of family relations. This is unambiguously indicated by the plot, wherein *snør* is used as a proper name. I refer to the *Rigsþula* where it is said that the man (*Karl*) brought to his parents’ home a wife named Daughter-in-law (*Snør*):

*Heim óko þá // hanginluklo, // geitakyrtlo: // gipto Karli; // Snør heitir sú* (Rþ: 23).

Such an identity of name and family function in the poetic tradition is characteristic not only of *Sif* (Non-blood relative), but also of *Snør* (Daughter-in-law). Apparently, as early as in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, an educated person knowing, in particular, the “Elder Edda”, understood the meanings of the words *sværa* and *snør* and if necessary could use them to archaize or stylize the text in a story about events taking place outside of Iceland.

Why then does the word ‘mother-in-law’ appear in Snorri’s composition in the very kenning where the name *Sif* is used?

It is possible that Snorri recollected the word *sværa* and composed this kenning himself. If this was the case, this means that he tried to underline the difference between non-blood relations pertaining to *Sif* and deriving from her. On the other hand, it is conceivable that Snorri used an existing skaldic kenning that has not been preserved in extant skaldic verse, which is even more valuable, because it places *Sif* in a very archaic cultural layer in terms both of language and of myth. It is interesting that in the Prologue to the “Younger Edda” the family situation in question is presented somewhat differently: *Sif* and *Thor* are given a son *Lorridi*, who becomes the ancestor of the *Aesir*, though in that genealogy there is somehow no place for *Ullr*:

*Í norðrhálfu heims fann hann (Trór / Þór) spákonu þá, er Sibil hét, er vér köllum Sif, ok fekk hennar. Eigi kann ek segja ætt Sifjar; hon var allra kvinna fegrst; hár hennar var sem gull. Þeira sonr var Lórríði, er líkr var feðr sínum; hans son var Einríði ...* (SnE.: 6).

*Ullr* is not *Lorridi*’s brother; neither is he the founder of some branch of the family. Moreover, he is incompatible with such a euhemeristic vision of the world and lives in a different mythological space. In this



mythological space Sif and Thor have a daughter Trud (SnE.: 80, 186). It is noteworthy that, on the one hand, she is never called 'Ullr's sister' and, on the other hand, she is the daughter and not the son of Thor and Sif, i.e., she is the bearer of another valence for the formation of the male relations by marriage and not blood relations.

Thus, Ullr's role in the family system is *mágr* and his family relations with other men are only non-blood relations. It should be noted that the term *mágr* generally indicates family relations (but only non-blood relations) between men, i.e., family relations between men acquired through women. As we have already seen, the scope of these connections is wider than the typical one for modern men.

The unifying power of this category is exhibited not only in the case of some mythological personages. It may be said that the mythological and everyday perceptions of the word *mágr* are more or less symmetrical. In other words, the language arranges the mythological and everyday-life spaces of non-blood family relations in a similar fashion. I have already mentioned the usage of *mágr* in the sagas. This word also appears in inscriptions executed in the Younger Futhark. Here, the impossibility of differentiating the relations designated by this term is clearly exhibited. As a rule, given the laconic and formulaic character of the text, it would have been impossible for even medieval (to say nothing of modern) readers to determine what exactly the non-blood family relations were between the *mágar* mentioned in those inscriptions:

**ketil setti stein þena ebtir fin mak sin** (NI 4: 6 N° 272) "Ketil raised this stone in honour of Finn, his *mágr*".

... **ri(st)i s(t)inþinsi iftir ... mak s(i)n** (NI 3: 196 N° 237) "and raised this stone in honour of his *mágr*"<sup>9</sup>.

Apparently, those who ordered these inscriptions were not at all embarrassed by this fact. For them the word *mágr* bore all the necessary and sufficient information about their relations to the deceased.

Returning to the theme of stepson / stepfather, we should note that we have one runic text that allows to assume that the *mágr* mentioned in it was the stepfather of the man who ordered the inscription. I am speaking of a Danish inscription from *Gunderup* from the Viking Age:

---

<sup>9</sup> Cf. also: (DR 1 N° 289, 69, 324).

(A) : tuki : raisþi : stini : þqisi : auk : karþi : kub(l) : þausi : aftaba : mak  
 : sin : þaikn : kuþan : auk : (B) : tufu : muþur : sina : þau : lika : baþi : i :  
 þaum : hauki : |abi : uni : tuka : fiar : sins : aft : sik (DR 1: 180 N<sup>o</sup> 143)

“Toki raised this stone and made this memorial sign in honour of his *mágr* (= stepfather?); Abbe (Ebbe) kind man and his mother Tova. Both lie in this barrow. Abbe (Ebbe) left his property to Toki after his death.”

The specific character of the Scandinavian notion *mágr* is not, however, limited to stepfather / stepson connections; the category appears to be much wider.

First, the relationship of *mágar* often required only an engagement or agreement to marry, rather than a marriage. This point is significant, inasmuch as the connections implied by the application of *mágr* to two free adult men were, in general, contractual relations. Such relations exist insofar as they are in the interest of the participants. That is why many conflicts in the family sagas are based on situations where the *mágr*-relations cease to be in the interest of some individual.

Remarkable in this respect is an episode in *Hænsa-Þóris saga* where the father of a young girl arranges her engagement to the son of a noble Icelander, Blund-Ketill. Not long before the described engagement, Blund-Ketill has been burnt to death on his estate. Not all the characters involved are aware of this. Ketill’s son, Hersteinn, with his friends and servants comes at night to a certain man, Gunnarr, and asks for his daughter in marriage. The description of this proposal makes it seem more like blackmail — the visitors sit down on both sides of Gunnarr and sit on his cloak while speaking. Gunnarr gives his consent and the young girl is betrothed to Hersteinn without being present. Only after they have come to an agreement do the visitors inform Gunnarr that Ketill has been burnt to death in his home. Gunnarr is very much upset, and the next morning, taking the fiancé and his friends with him, he rides to the foster-father of the girl, Þorðr Gellir, at whose home she lives.

Without saying a word about the burning of Blund-Ketil, Gunnarr tells Þorðr Gellir about Hersteinn’s proposal and persuades Þorðr to betroth the girl. At first, Þorðr does not want to, because this is exceeding his commission, but Gunnarr is persistent and, in the end, Þorðr betrothes the girl for the second time to Herstein. Immediately after the second betrothal they tell Þorðr that the fiancé’s father has been burnt to death in his home. Þorðr’s reaction is quite negative —

“This engagement wouldn’t have been arranged so fast if I were aware of everything beforehand; and you can think that this time you have exceeded me in finesse and wit. However, it is not clear to me whether you have rights to decide on the matter as you like.” — he says. Gunnarr, the girl’s own father, replies with apparent relief at the solution to this complicated situation:

*Gunnarr mælti: “Þar er gott til trausts at ætla sem þú ert enda er þér nú skylt at veita mági þínum en vér erum skyldir at veita þér fastnaðir konuna ok þetta var allt við þitt ráð gert (HP, 11).*

Moreover, a contractual agreement and, hence, *mágr*-relations could exist not only on the basis of the legal marriage: the relatives of a woman who was, with their consent, made someone’s concubine were also considered *mágar*. As we know, this practice was most widely accepted in Iceland in the Sturlunga Age. It was precisely at that time and in this way of acquiring *mágar* that the “contractual side” of the category in question was most fully manifested. A girl could be given as a concubine for the sake of making an alliance and her position could be as unstable as the alliance itself. If the situation changed, she could return to her parents and marry some other man. In any case, her children did not have full family rights. The institution of concubinage was, hence, an institution of non-blood relations that was never convertible to a blood kinship relation.

On the other hand, as we shall see, *mágr*-relations sometimes appeared without any agreement but, nevertheless, became an integral part of a person’s family connections. It should be emphasized once more that the term *mágr* united, as opposed to differentiating, all family connections acquired through a woman, including, in particular, connections that had never been sanctioned by a treaty. The “semantic capaciousness” of the word *mágr* allowed for a play on the word based on the manipulation of what might be called its reputable and disreputable meanings. Let us clarify this point.

In the kings’ sagas, at least three individuals are given the nickname *konungs mágr*. The first is the husband of Sverrir’s daughter (the son-in-law of the king) Einar Konung’s *mágr* who was also known as Einar Prestr (Priest) (Sv. 178: 190; CF: 387; Bp. I: 498; Flat. II: 697; III: 3; An. IV: 122 sub anno 1205; cf. An. VIII: 325 sub anno 1205). A second is Gregorius Andersson, the son-in-law of the king Hakon Hakonarsson who lived in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (An. IV sub anno 1246). However, we are

most interested in the third case: the noble Norwegian bond Arni from Stóðreim (CF: 337, 343; Flat. II: 573; Fms. VII: 230).

Arni married Ingrid, the widow of the famous Norwegian king Harald Gilli who had been killed by the conspirators in the arms of his concubine. Ingrid was of the Swedish royal family, the granddaughter of king Ingi Steinkelsson the Old. In her marriage with king Harald Gilli she gave birth to a son named *Ingi* in honour of his maternal great grandfather. Ingi was the only legitimate offspring of his father, thus, naturally he inherited the title of the king after his father's death. His mother's new husband, Arni of Stóðreim, was given the nickname *konungs mágr*. This title may have emphasized Arni's connection with Ingi, to whom he was a stepfather:

*Ingridr dróttning var gipt Arna á Stóðreimi; hann var síðan kallaðr konungsmágr* (Hkr. III: 371).

As we have seen, the term *mágr* is readily used to describe the family connection between a stepson and a stepfather. In this case, Arni was not Ingi Humpback's first stepfather: before being Arni's wife his mother had been married to Ottar Birting. Snorri mentions that Ingi was Ottar's *mágr* but this term was not included in Ottar Birting's nickname:

*Sigurðr konungr var ekki mikill vinr hans ok þótti hann alt hallr undir Inga konung, mág sinn* (Hkr. III: 369).

As for Arni *konungs mágr*, a different, or additional, interpretation of his nickname is possible.

Family connections acquired by men through women in the Old Icelandic sagas could be understood not only pragmatically but also ironically. First, as already noted, someone could become the *mágr* of another man without desiring to do so or knowing that it had happened. This term could designate not only a man who got legally married to someone's kinswoman but also one who had sexual relations with her without the sanction of her family and clan. Here, we shall give only two examples from *Njálssaga*.

One of the chapters of *Njálssaga* tells about the plans of the next attack on Gunnar of Hliðarendi. Gunnar's enemies ask some Norwegians staying at the farm Sand Ravine to join them. The Norwegians refuse and the hostess addresses one of them, saying:

*Illla hefir Guðrún dóttir mín brotit odd af oflæti sínu ok legit hjá þér, er þú skalt eigi þora at fylgja bónda þinum ok mági (Nj. 61: 138).*

We should emphasize that in the saga nothing has been said so far about Gudrud's marriage with the Norwegian, or of any plans for such a marriage. It is not by chance that the Norwegian replies — *Fara mun ek með bónda þinum, ok mun hvárgi okkar aþtr koma* — and in his reply it is not his connections with other participants of the situation that are actualized, but the relations between the host of the farm, Egil, and the hostess, his wife. Nonetheless, the Norwegian is forced to obey and go fighting against Gunnar.

In the attack, when Gunnar kills Egil, the Norwegian is reproached again:

*Alls vesall ert þú, Þórir austmaðr! er þú sitr hjá; nú er veginn Egill húsbuandi þinn ok mágr (Nj. 63: 142).*

After this reproach for not observing social and family ethics the Norwegian rushes to fight and is killed by Gunnar. As for the girl Gudrud, who was the cause of this episode, she marries another Norwegian who had stayed at home and did not go to fight with Gunnar of Hliðarendi.

Another episode in *Njálssaga* shows that one could become the *mágr* of another man even without his knowledge. This is the story of Hrapp the Murderer. Having appeared with under scandalous circumstances in Norway, Hrapp begins courting a girl called Gudrun, the daughter of an important Norwegian, Gudbrand of the Valley. Learning of this courtship, Gudbrand appoints him a bodyguard to look after the girl. However, the lovers manage to meet in a hazel-wood, and the bodyguard finds them lying in the bushes. There is a fight between Hrapp and the bodyguard, and the latter is killed.

In persuading Hrapp to run away after the murder, Gudrun confesses to being pregnant. Then Hrapp goes to Gudbrand, the girl's father, and the following conversation between them ensues:

Gudbrand asked: "Why is your pole-axe covered with blood?"

"I have cured Asvard of a pain in the back".

"It was hardly with a kind heart," said Gudbrand, "apparently, you killed him."

"Right", said Hrapp.

"Why?" asked Gudbrand.

"To your mind it must be trifle," said Hrapp, "He wanted to cut off my leg." "And what have you done?" asked Gudbrand.

"What I have done was not his business at all", said Hrapp.

"Nevertheless, tell what it was".

Hrapp said: "If you want to know, I slept with your daughter, and he did not like it".

Gudbrand said: "Servants! Catch and kill him!"

"Little do you respect me, your son-in-law", said Hrapp (lit. *Allitt lætr þú mik njóta mágsemðar* (Nj. 87: 191)).

Hrapp manages to escape. He hides in the local forest, sets Gudbrand's heathen temple on fire, and on his way back meets his "brother-in-law". In a fight, he inflicts a fatal wound on Thrand, the girl's brother, and again he emphasizes the relations of affinity existing between them: "I could have killed you, however, I won't do it. I will do you, my brother-in-law, more honour than you and your father did to me" (lit. *Kosti á ek nú at vega þik, ok vil ek eigi þat; skal ek meira virða mágsemð við þik en þér virðid við mik* (Nj. 88: 193)).

In these cases (especially in the story of Hrapp) the point is not the affinity acquired by marriage but the ironic understanding of the actual situation. It is interesting that in all the examples of this kind the *mágr*-relations are not contractual, as they usually are. This is rather a rare case when affinity is actually considered equivalent to blood family relations because it is obligatory, regardless of the person's being unaware of it. Plainly speaking, a man may be someone's father or brother without knowing it, and his unawareness does not cancel the fact. In the same fashion, sexual connection with a woman makes a man *mágr* of her blood relatives, even if they do not yet know about it.

Furthermore, the ironic idea of affinity through a woman and undeclared *mágr*-relations could be used with good effect and carried through to the logical end. Two men could be called *mágar* if they married or formed a sexual connection with one and the same woman. My somewhat lengthy digression into *Njálssaga*, has been intended to demonstrate that Arni of Stóðreim could be called *konungs mágr* not only because he was the stepfather of Ingi Scramback but also because of his marriage to the widow of the king Harald Gilli. Such mocking characterizations of men who have had the same kind of connection with the same woman are even reflected in juridical sources. Here is one example of this sort of unusual and rare irony in Old-Norwegian law. It concerns the right of free men and emancipated slaves

to murder a man who has been caught in the bed of his kinswoman, whether daughter, niece, or sister, etc. This right was given to men in all Scandinavian countries, but only Borgarthing Law tells what a slave should do in such a situation:

*Nv a þræll vigh vm kono sina ok dottor sina. Ef han tækr man i hia henni, þa skal han ganga til brundz ok taka span fult vatz ok slætta a þau ok biðia hæilan sofua magh sin* (Borgartingslovens Kristenret 15: 66) "A slave has the right to murder for his wife or daughter. If he has caught a man with her he should go to the well, get a pail of water, and pour it out on them wishing a good sleep to his *mágr*".

It cannot, thus, be excluded that the nickname *konungs mágr* originally had a mocking character, and in everybody's opinion Arni was *mágr* not only to Ingi Scramback but also to the first husband of his wife, king Harald Gilli.<sup>10</sup> The possibility of making a pun on this term, the possibility of irony or some other wordplay, in our opinion, is due to the fact that the category *mágr* is internally homogenous and, at the same time, fits almost any relation that men can acquire through women.

Another illustration of the homogeneity of the *mágr*-category may be the fact that, in principle, Arni could be called the *mágr* of another king: the grandfather of his wife Ingrid, the Swedish king Ingi the Old. As already noted, not only is the *mágr*-category homogeneous (i.e., 'father-in-law', 'brother-in-law', 'son-in-law' are not specially differentiated within the category) but the indicated connections that derive from this homogeneity are two-sided. If X is *mágr* to Y, then Y, respectively, is *mágr* to X; while if X is father-in-law to Y, in this family relation model, this connection is not symmetrical and Y is X's son-in-law.

The Scandinavian model of affinity is organized on a different principle than the model of blood relations, and is different from the model of affinity, for example, of Russians of the same epoch. In fact, while

<sup>10</sup> Apparently the mocking nickname containing the element *mágr* was registered in *Kumlbúa þátr*. There a certain Høskuld married to a woman called Steinverr, has the nickname *mágsefni* that can be translated as 'future *mágr*, almost *mágr*'. Most likely, Høskuld's nickname was meant to be insulting because in the *þátr* it was said that Þorstein Þorvarðsson had seduced Høskuld's wife and she gave birth to a child (*Þorstein Þorvarðsson mágr Þorfinns á Bakka er átti Helgu Þorgeirsdóttur systur ábóta; hann fífldist at Steinvöru konu Høskulls mágsefnis, hann átti við henni eitt barn*) (Kþ.: 129). It should, however, be noted that in other Old-Icelandic and Old-Norwegian texts the term *mágsefni* is used as completely neutral (see, for example: St.: 122; DN 6: 65, N° 69).

the model of blood relations implies, first of all, a rigid hierarchy of generations, it is completely absent in the affinity model of the Scandinavians. If we proceed from what the language suggests, adult men come into *mágar*-relations on equal terms, regardless of superiority in age or belonging to a younger or older generation. Affinity appears to be one of the most important means of mastering the world of the kinship system.

Specifically, I can present a relatively pure example of how a man without blood family connections takes root in the world of Iceland of the saga epoch, a world permeated with family relations. The example concerns Kari, the son of Sölmund, one of the main characters of *Njálssaga*. As we know, Kari came from the Hebrides<sup>11</sup>, and no living blood relatives of his have remained in Iceland. For this reason, he must exploit and actualize relations by affinity very intensively. At first, he becomes a *mágr* of Njál himself and Njál's sons. Later, a long time after Njál has been burnt, he becomes a relative by affinity to Njál's main enemy — Flosi. It is noteworthy that Kari Sölmundsson names one of his sons by marriage with Flosi's niece *Flosi* — in honour of his new friend and *mágr* (Nj., 159: 422).

It is clear that such undifferentiating terminology of affinity may bring about certain difficulties in the description of family connections, these difficulties existing not only for the reader — our contemporary — but also for 'the detached onlooker' of the ancient epoch. In particular, we have only controversial and fragmentary data on royal succession to the Swedish throne in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and of the family connections between the kings who occupied it. Part of this controversy is evidently caused by the fact that Old Norse nomenclature for relations by marriage was not transparent to Western European chroniclers.

For example, it can be safely asserted that after Olaf the Swedish (or Skötkonung), the Swedish rulers were first his legitimate son Anund-Jakob, and later his illegitimate son Eymund. Thereafter, however, follows a rather obscure period of the Swedish history. Apparently, after Eymund, a man called Steinkel ascended the Swedish throne<sup>12</sup>. It would seem very important, from the perspective of dynastic continuity, what

<sup>11</sup> Although, his father, Sölmund, the son of Þorbjorn Yarl's Warrior, was an Icelander and his grandfather had been a Norwegian who had come to Iceland from Orkney Islands (Ldn.: 120, 227).

<sup>12</sup> For the data of Steinkel's origin and personality, see, for example, Beckman 1912: 30–32; Schuck 1914: 7–9, 20–21, 31; Toll 1933.



kind of family relation connected Steinkel with the preceding king, and whether his heirs were of the family of Eirik the Victorious and Olaf the Swedish. However, the sources give different data on the subject.

The data for this period of the history of Sweden are obtained mainly from *Hervarar saga ok Heidreks* and from *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum* by Adam of Bremen. Naturally, much depends on the designations of blood relations and relations by affinity in these texts.

In *Hervarar saga ok Heidreks*, for instance, the dynastic situation observed after the death of Eymund Olavsson is described as follows: Steinkel, being a noble man and, as the saga tells us, a jarl of Sweden, came to the throne having married the daughter of Eymund, the preceding king (Herv., 16: 70). In another redaction of the saga, where Steinkel's story is largely similar to the standard version, he is married to the daughter of Anund-Jakob, and not of Eymund. In addition, there is a Swedish genealogy of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, wherein Steinkel is considered the husband of Olav Skötkonung's sister (i.e., of the aunt of Eymund and Anund-Jakob) (Bolin 1931: 198).

In any case, Steinkel was *mágr* to the three preceding kings, though in these texts the term *mágr* is not applied to him. It should be noted that *Hervarar saga* and the Swedish list of kings were recorded much later, not earlier than the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Most likely, it was the expression *mágr* or *konungs mágr* applied to Steinkel that reached the composers of these records. As we shall see, this supposition is confirmed by the text from Adam of Bremen.

We can expect that Adam's data were more reliable; however, it is rather controversial. Speaking of the death of Eymund the Old, Adam informs us that Steinkel, or *Stinkel*, as he was then called, succeeded him. And Adam, who wrote in about the seventh decade of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, notes that Steinkel was *nepos* or *privignus* to the preceding king:

*Legatis igitur tali modo a Sueonibus repulses fertur quidam, nepos an privignus Regis ignoro, prosecutus esse cum laerimis, suppliciter se commendans orationibus eorum. Nomen ei Stinkel (Adam, Lib. III 15: 156–157).*

A little later Adam mentions Steinkel once more, still calling him the *nepos* of the preceding king:

*Eodem tempore mortuus est rex Sueonum Emund, post quem levatur in regnum nepos eius Stinkel, de quo supra diximus (Adam, Lib. III 16: 158).*

What Scandinavian designations of family relations could be expressed by these Latin terms? The Latin word *nepos* could mean, as we know, quite a number of younger blood relatives: 'great-grandson', 'grandson', 'nephew', and, finally, 'descendant' in general. The derivation of the term 'stepson' (*privignus*) in Adam's description is more or less clear from the points already made in the present article: it reflects the word *mágr* as used by his Scandinavian informants. This is evident if we remember that, in different redactions of the saga, Steinkel is called the husband of king Eimund's daughter or of Anund-Jakob's daughter, and in the genealogical list he figures as the husband of their aunt, the sister of Olav Skötkonung. In other words, Steinkel's connections with each of the kings fit the category of *mágr*.

Judging by the vague construction with *an* in the Latin text, Adam's informants were not fully informed on the subject and, therefore, probably did not use the narrow and concrete terms *stjúpsonr* or *stjúpr* to indicate a stepson, as the use of these words would have excluded any vagueness and the supposition about blood relationship would have been impossible. In general, the medieval bookish tradition tended to select a certain single meaning in the vast semantic field covered by *mágr*, making this term more definite and limited in meaning than it really was. In cases of intercultural contacts and translations from one language to another, the extensiveness and the lack of differentiation of the *mágr*-category were alien to the translator. Here, the translator applies a kind of synecdoche, naming a part instead of the whole and indicating a more narrowly defined family connection included in the category of *mágr*. However, this concerns not only translations from one language to another. For example, Snorri in the "Younger Edda" sometimes uses the term *mágr* in the broad meaning used in the sagas<sup>13</sup> and sometimes finds it necessary to specify and limit the meaning. In particular, citing the skaldic example where Thor is named Ullr's *mágr*, he tells his audience to call Tor 'Ull's stepfather' (*stjúpfadir Ullar*) (SnE.: 80)<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Cf.: *sá konungr réð fyrir Uppsölum, er Adils hét. Hann átti Yrsu, móður Hrólfs kraka* [...] *Adils konungr sendi boð Hrólfi kraka, magi sinum, at hann kvæmi til liðveizlu við hann* (SnE. 41: 108).

<sup>14</sup> In the sagas stepfather and stepson can also be called by special terms (*stjúpfadir* and *stjúpsonr*) and, thus, isolated from the *mágr*-category. Cf.: *Þá kallar Óláfr til tals við sik móðurbræðr sína, Loðinn stjúpföður sinn, mága sína, Þorgeir ok Hyrming* (Hkr. 1: 361) or *Sveinn konungr tjúguskegg var at falli Óláfs konungs Tryggvasonar með þeim Óláfi sænska, stjúpsyni sinum, ok Eiriki jarli, magi sinum, (er) þeir börduz við Svöldr* (Knýt. 5: 33). It is typical that in both cases stepfather and stepson are included in the circle of relatives by marriage. In fact, the mentioned personages become sons-in-law or brothers-in-law because of the marriage with the daughter or sister of the king. The uncles on the

Adam of Bremen translates *mágr* as 'stepson', though, perhaps, another narrow meaning within the *mágr* category was intended. The appearance of the word *nepos* may have a double explanation. First, this could be an additional, explanatory translation of the word *mágr*. In other words, Adam knew that its meaning was not only *privignus* 'stepson', but included other names of family relations; he did not know exactly which ones. In this case, he unintentionally replaced the vague characterisation of affinity contained in this word by the similarly vague, indefinite characterisation of blood relation of the junior to the senior contained in the Latin word *nepos*.

If it is so, Adam, in spite of his ignorance of some facts, exhibits great linguistic and cultural sensitivity. Inasmuch as the words *nepos* and *mágr* are in some sense antonyms, they are on the same plane and effectively neutralize each other. *Mágr* indicates relations of affinity in the widest sense and ignores the hierarchy of age and generations, while *nepos* suggests the broadest sort of hierarchical age-based blood relationship between men.

It may be that the construction *nepos an privignus* appears in the text for some other reason. It could be caused by a still greater inexactitude in the data given by the Scandinavian informant of Adam of Bremen. Perhaps he knew only that Eymund Olavsson and Steinkel were connected by some sort of family relationship. Not knowing what exactly this relationship was, he pointed to the two distinct varieties of family connections — blood relations and affinity. In this case he could use two words corresponding to these two varieties: *frændi* and *mágr*. Adam gave rather close translation of the first word and for the second one he chose one of its minor meanings, basing on his understanding of the ways of inheriting royal power.

However, it should be noted that, where the ruling kings are concerned, the "secondary" significance of the term *mágr* is reflected in the saga-writer's understanding of history. In *Hervarar saga*, this approach to dynastic history is expressed very clearly:

... en eftir dauða Eymundar konungs tóku Svíar hann (Steinkel) til konungs. Þá gekk konungdómur ór langfedgaætt í Svíþjóð inna fornu konunga (Herv. 16: 70).

---

mother's side are non-blood relatives of his father, and for the king himself they are, on the one hand, blood relatives; on the other hand, from the viewpoint of rigid succession through the male line, they in some sense remain "non-blood relations".

In other words, the text denies the continuity between the dynasty founded by Steinkel and that of Erik Victorious and Olav Skötkonung, i.e. the Yngling dynasty. It is precisely the text of this saga that indicates that Steinkel was married to Eymund's daughter or, in the other redaction, to the daughter of his brother, Anund-Jakob. Thus, even though Steinkel is a relative of the Ynglingar by marriage and his children are their descendants through the female line, the saga does not acknowledge them as successors to the family of the ancient kings.

This text manifests a general tendency, appearing rather early in the Scandinavian tradition, of refusal to acknowledge the succession of power through women. As a rule, noble and influential people became non-blood relatives of the king. In *Hervarar saga* Steinkel is described as one such person:

*Steinkel var fyrst jarl í Svíþjóð* (Herv. 16: 70).

The children of these *mágar* were connected by blood relations with the royal family, but this connection gave them only insignificant advantages in terms of power.

The son of a daughter or sister of the ruler could come to power as a result of political struggle, but he had no more right to power than any other noble and influential man in the country. A descendant through the female line inherited only the rights of his father's family. For the royal family of his mother, in spite of the blood relation, he remained, in some sense, like his father, a non-blood relative. Certainly, he could not succeed to power under any circumstances as long as the preceding king had living sons or brothers. It is typical that in this case the rights of the heir by the female line are inferior to the rights of an illegitimate son (Uspenskij 2004: 43–55).

It is thus not coincidental that if a man connected with the royal family only through women comes into power then we always see the start of a new dynasty. Still, in a struggle for power, the claimant to the throne could by all means underline his royal family connections. This was the case, for example, with the Danish king Svein Estridsson, and this is how the saga interprets the situation of the Swedish king Steinkel and his descendants.

Thus, from the point of view of the saga, *mágr* Steinkel is the husband of the king's daughter and, hence, his children do not continue the dynasty. By the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the saga was recorded, Steinkel's descendants had left the political arena, and the recorder of the

text had no reasons to present them as originating from the legendary Ynglingar. As for Adam of Bremen, who characterized Steinkel as Eymund's stepson or blood relation, he, apparently, defined the term *mágr* in such a way as to suggest that Steinkel's family largely succeed the Ynglingar, and in any case were not contrasted with them.

It is difficult to say whether this suggestion of links between the dynasties reflected a deliberate attempt to "antiquate" Steinkel's dynasty. Let us recall that Adam was a younger contemporary of this king and, perhaps, it was important for Adam's Scandinavian informants to demonstrate the natural order of continuity of royal power in Sweden. Such continuity, in the absence of evident heirs, could be connected by Adam with indirect but blood relations (*nepos*) or, in the Latin language tradition, with adoption (*privignus*).

In fact, we are unable to say anything about the connection between Steinkel and Eymund except that they were *mágar*, though this term was not applied to them in any source available to us. The extant data regarding this king, though very laconic, allow us to see how this connection is interpreted from two different perspectives. Adam of Bremen, the author of *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, and the composer of *Hervarar saga* come across the vast and undifferentiated semantic field of the term *mágr*. They have different approaches to its decoding and face difficulties of different kinds. Adam deals with linguistic-cultural differences in designations of family connections and the understanding of dynastic succession, while the composer of the saga faces an aspect of kinship memory that is short-lived because it is not firmly fixed in language.

Thus, it is not only the difference between the Scandinavian and East-European systems of family relations that matters. In my view, we can see here a special and, at the same time, classic example of the effect of language on reality. Indeed, the existence of the unifying language construct *mágr*, which can designate any family connection between men formed through women, seems to allow one to give an exact definition of this connection in descriptive terms. During the lifetime of one or two generations, it was easy for several men to define themselves as *mágar*, because one of them was married to the daughter of another, or they were married to two sisters, or one of them was the stepson of the other. However, when the individuals were separated by a great distance in space or in time, often their family connection was remembered only as far as it was directly expressed in language. Apparently, in the oral language tradition some evidence remained of

the fact that Steinkel had been *mágr* to Eymund Olavsson, the last representative of the ancient Swedish royal dynasty. Different sources, using this evidence may in different ways narrow and concretise the meaning of this term, unintentionally creating new historical plots.

In my opinion, it is interesting that the undifferentiated character of the category of affinity, which allows one to give the same name to stepfather, stepson, son-in-law, and father-in-law, apparently develops in the historic epoch, and this development can be verified through the written sources. The words *sværa* 'mother-in-law' and *snør* 'daughter-in-law' already occur in the "Elder Edda". Apparently, these words were known to educated people, but were used only in the rare, so to speak, "cultural" texts, such as expositions of the Old Testament or hagiographic compositions. In the sagas and skaldic poetry they are absent.

It seems that as soon as the category of affinity becomes homogeneous and undifferentiated in the language, it becomes homogeneous in traditional historical memory as well. On the other hand, the great potential of the category of affinity was originally present on Scandinavian soil: there was a special space for it in the mythological tradition. In myths it was manifested exclusively in the names and implicit features of the holders of these names, a phenomenon which once again underlines the linguistic nature of this category.

From the dynastic perspective, the conventional character of relations between the *mágar* is very important. In other words, the voluntary, contractual character of these relations is partially opposed to the natural, inalienable character of blood family relations. At the same time, numerous stories in literature and, apparently, in everyday life are based on maneuvering between intentional and unintentional involvement in *mágr*-relations, or on the reversibility / irreversibility of the once contracted alliance. In this respect affinity may be considered equivalent to blood family relations.

One should bear in mind that affinity is a somewhat synchronous category: in the next generation it is converted into a blood relationship. In other words, **the son of one's son-in-law becomes one's own grandson**. Yet in the world of kinship this transformation always remained incomplete. The real blood relatives were only the relatives by the male line. In particular, the heir had the maximum rights in the family of his father, not of his mother: **the son of the son** was evidently preferred to **the son of the son-in-law** or to **the son of the daughter**.

The category of affinity, thus, always has a double character. In some cases, affinity is considered equal or almost equal to a blood relation-

ship. In other cases it is opposed to it. *Mágr*-relations are one of the main ways of mastering the world, of a peculiar external expansion of the individual who draws apart the frames of his own family, frames of blood relations, acting, so to speak, by means of family connections.

## References

### Abbreviations of primary sources

- Adam: *Magistri Adam Bremensis Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*. Hrsg. von B. Schmeidler. 1917. Hannover–Leipzig.
- Ágr.: *Ágrip af Noregs konunga sögum*. Hrsg. von Finnur Jónsson. 1929. Halle. (Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek. Hft. 18.)
- Am.: *Atlamál in grœnlenska*. See: Edda.
- An. iv: *Annales regii (Konungsannáll)*. See: IA.
- An. viii: *Gottskalks Annaler*. See: IA.
- Borgartingslovens Kristenret. In: *Bruchstücke der Rechtbücher des Borgarthings und des Eidsivathing*. Bearbeitet von R. Meißner. 1942. Weimar. (Abteilung Nordgermanisches Recht)
- Bp.: *Biskupa sögur 1–2*. 1858–878. Kaupmannahöfn.
- CF: *Codex Frisianus*. 1871. Christiania.
- DN: *Diplomatarium Norvegicum 6*. Udg. af C.R. Unger & H.J. Huitfeldt. 1865. Christiania.
- DR: *Danmarks runeindskrifter 1–2*. Ved L. Jacobsen & E. Moltke. Text. 1942. København.
- Edda: *Edda. Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern*. Hrsg. von G. Neckel. Bd. 1. Text. 1936. Heidelberg.
- Flat.: *Flateyrbók 1–3*. Udg. af Guðbrandr Vigfússon & C. R. Rafn. 1860–1868. Christiania.
- Fms.: *Fornmanna sögur 1–12*. 1825–1837. Kaupmannahöfn.
- Grg.: *Grágás. Islændernes Lovbog í Fristatena Tid 1–3*. Udg. ved Vilhjalmur Finsen. 1852–1879–1883. København.
- Herv: *Hervarar saga ok Heidreks*. Ed. by G. Turville-Petre & C. Tolkien. 1956. London.
- Hkr: *Snorri Sturluson. Heimskringla 1–3*. Udg. ved Finnur Jónsson. 1893–1900/1901. København. (Samfund til Udgivelse af gammel nordisk Literatur. Skrifter 23.)
- HMS: *Heilagra manna sögur 1–2*. Udg. af C. R. Unger. 1877. Kristiania.
- Hrbl.: *Hárbarzlióð*. See: Edda.
- HP: *Borgfirðinga sögur; Hoensa-Póris saga; Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu; Bjarnar saga Hitdœlakappa; Heravíga saga; Gísls þáttur Illugasonar. Sig-*

- urður Nordal, Guðni Jónsson gafu út. 1938. Reykjavík. (Íslenzk fornrit. Bd. 3.)
- IA.: *Islandske Annaler indtil 1578*. Udg. ved G. Storm. 1888. Christiania.
- Knýtł.: *Sögur Danakonunga. Sögubrot af fornkonungum. Knýtlingasaga*. Udg. ved C. Petersen och E. Olsen. 1919–1925. København. (Samfund til utgivelse af gammel Nordisk Litteratur. Bd. 46.)
- Kþ.: *Kumlbúa þátr*. In: *Bárðarsaga Snæfellsáss, Viglundarsaga, Þorðarsaga, Draumavitranir, Völsaþátr*. Udg. ved Guðbrandr Vigfússon. 1860. Kjöbenhavn.
- Ldn.: *Landnámabók: Hauksbók. Sturlubók. Melabók*. Udg. af det Kongelige nordiske oldskrift-selskab. 1900. København.
- NI: *Norges Indskrifter med de yngre runer 1–6*. M. Olsen med hjælp i forarbejder av S. Dugge, J. Knirk, I. Sandnes. 1941–1995. Oslo.
- Nj.: *Brennu-Njáls saga (Njála)*. Hrsg. von Finnur Jónsson. 1908. Halle. (Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek. Hft. 13.)
- ÓHLeg.: *Ólafs saga hins helga*. Utg. av O. A. Johnsen. 1922. Kristiania.
- Rþ.: *Rígsþula*. See: Edda.
- SnE.: *Snorri Sturluson. Edda*. Udg. af Finnur Jónsson. 1900. København.
- SÖH: *Saga Ólafs konungs ens helga*. 1853. Christiania.
- St.: *Stjórn. Gammelnorsk Bibelhistorie*. Udg. af C. R. Unger. 1862. Christiania.
- Sv.: *Sverris saga*. Utg. ved G. Indrebø. 1920. Kristiania.

## Secondary sources

- Beckman, N., 1912: *Ur vår äldsta bok*. Utg. af N. Beckman. Stockholm.
- Bolin, S., 1931: *Om Nordens äldsta historieforskning*. Lund.
- Cleasby, R., 1874: *Icelandic-English Dictionary*. Enlarged and completed by Guðbrandr Vigfússon. Oxford.
- LP: Sveinbjörn Egilsson. *Lexicon poeticum antiquæ linguæ septentrionalis: Ordbog over det norsk-islandske skjaldesprog*. Forøget og påny udg. ved Finnur Jónsson. 1931. København.
- Meissner, R., 1921: *Die Kenningar der Skalden: Ein Beitrag zur skaldischen Poetik*. Bonn; Leipzig.
- Schück, H., 1914: *Den äldsta kristna konungalängden i Sverige*. Uppsala Universitets årskrift 1914. Program 1. Uppsala.
- Toll, H., 1933: *Emund, Stenkil och Håkan Röde*. Stockholm.
- Vries, J. de, 1977: *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. Leiden.
- Uspenskij F., 2004: *Name und Macht: Die Wahl des Namens als dynastisches Kampfinstrument im mittelalterlichen Skandinavien*. "Peter Lang", Frankfurt am Main. (Texte und Untersuchungen zur GERMANISTIK und SKANDINAVISTIK / Hrsg. von Heiko Uecker. Bd. 52.)