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Disertační práce

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Fast Goes the Fleeting Time: The Miscellaneous Concepts of Time in Different Old Norse Genres and their Causes

Rychle prchá pomíjivý čas: Rozdílné pojetí času v různých žánrech staroseverské literatury a jeho příčiny

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Prohlašuji, že jsem disertační práci napsala samostatně s využitím pouze uvedených a řádně citovaných pramenů a literatury a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

V Praze dne 2. 9. 2019 ……

Mgr. Kristýna Králová

Abstrakt

Práce se zabývá otázkou počítání a vnímání času u starých Severanů. Na základě studia různých děl a žánrů ukazuje, jak vypadaly původní předkřesťanské představy o čase a jak se změnily v závislosti na společenském vývoji, konkrétně co se týká příchodu křesťanství a nástupu feudalismu.

Staroseverské představy o čase jsou v práci rekonstruovány na základě literární analýzy vybraných prozaických i poetických děl. V jednotlivých textech jsou zkoumány použité způsoby datace, typy časových údajů a v případě narativních textů také vlastnosti narativního času, které jsou ukázány skrze analýzu vycházející z konceptů *uspořádání*, *trvání* a *frekvence* definovaných Gérardem Genettem.

Primární literatura je v práci rozdělena do tří skupin. První skupina zahrnuje díla, v nichž jsou patrné stopy staroseverského předkřesťanského vnímání času, kromě *Písňové* a *Snorriho Eddy* jsou sem zařazeny tzv. ságy o dávnověku a rodové ságy. Druhá skupina obsahuje vybrané texty, které přejímají cizí způsoby počítání času, jež se na Island rozšířilo především vlivem církve a skrze různá učená pojednání. Vedle staroislandského komputistického textu známého jako *Rím I*, v němž jsou představena mimo jiné latinská jména měsíců, jsou do této části práce zařazeny raně islandské historiografické texty, *Kniha o Islanďanech* a *Kniha o záboru země*, které poskytují zajímavou ukázku kombinace cizích způsobů datace s domácími. Krátce jsou pojednány také středověké datační formule užívané skandinávskými panovníky a biskupy, jež se dochovaly v severských diplomatářích. Třetí skupina primárních textů zahrnuje staroseverské královské ságy a ságy o biskupech, v jejichž případě se cizí počítání a chápání času výrazně promítá do samotné narativní struktury ság a mísí s domácí praxí.

Klíčová slova

staroseverská literatura, staroseverské ságy, Písňová Edda, Snorriho Edda, rodové ságy, ságy o dávnověku, královské ságy, ságy o biskupech, Íslendingabók, Landnámabók, Rímbegla, počítání času, datace, vnímání času, narativní čas

Abstract

The thesis is concerned with time reckoning and time perception in Old Norse culture. Based on the analysis of various prosaic and poetic works or genres I show what the domestic pre-Christian images of time most probably looked like. I also investigate in what respects the original images of time have changed depending on social development, namely as regards the arrival of Christianity and feudalism to the North.

Old Norse images of time are reconstructed by analysing the temporal structure of primary sources. I examine the systems of dating and time indications used in the texts, as well as the properties of narrative time. The last mentioned is achieved based on the categories of *order*, *duration* and *frequency* defined by Gérard Genette.

The primary sources are divided into three groups in the thesis. The first group is comprised of works that include traces of the pre-Christian understanding of time. Besides *Poetic Edda* and *Snorri's Edda*, I have also included the so-called legendary and family sagas in this group. The second group is comprised of different types of texts, all of which adopt foreign ways of time reckoning that spread to Iceland especially through the influence of the Church and through various learned treatises. Besides the Old Norse computistical treatise known as *Rím I*, which introduces for instance the Latin names of months and their duration, I am concerned with two early historiographical works, *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*. Both of these works show an interesting combination of foreign systems of dating with local ones. I also briefly analyse the dating formulas used by the Scandinavian kings and bishops and contained in the medieval documents from the Scandinavian *diplomataria*. The third group of primary sources includes the so-called kings' and bishops' sagas on the basis of which I examine how foreign time reckoning and perception affected the narrative structure of sagas and was blended with local practice.

Keywords

Old Norse literature, Old Norse sagas, Poetic Edda, Snorri's Edda, family sagas, legendary sagas, kings' sagas, bishops' sagas, Íslendingabók, Landnámabók, Rímbegla, time reckoning, dating systems, time perception, narrative time

Content

List of abbreviations

Alm = *Alvíssmál*, ed. G. Jónsson

Ari, *Íslb* = Ari Þorgilsson, *Íslendingabók*, ed. J. Benediktsson

Bós = *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs*, ed. G. Jónsson; B. Vilhjálmsson

D.I. = *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, ed. J. Sigurðsson; J. Þorkelsson

D.N. = *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, ed. Chr. C. A. Lange; Carl R. Unger

Eb = *Eyrbyggja saga*, ed. E. Ól. Sveinsson; M. Þórðarson

Eg = *Egils saga Skallagrímsonar*, ed. F. Jónsson

Eir = *Eiríks saga rauða*, ed. G. Storm

Fsk = *Fagrskinna*, ed. F. Jónsson

GBp = *Guðmundar saga biskups*, ed. S. Karlsson

Gísl = *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, ed. F. Jónsson

Gr = *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, ed. G. Jónsson

Gunnl = *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, ed. S. Nordal; G. Jónsson

Gt = *Guta saga*, ed. Ch. Peel

Gylf = *Gylfaginning*, ed. G. Jónsson

Heiðr = *Hervarars saga ok Heiðreks*, ed. G. Turville-Petre

Hdl = *Hyndluljóð*, ed. G. Jónsson

Hrafnk = *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*, ed. J. Jóhannesson

JBp = *Jóns saga ins helga*, ed. S. Steingrímsson; Ól. Halldórsson; P. Foote

Laxd = *Laxdæla saga*, ed. E. Ól. Sveinsson

LBp = *Lárentíus saga biskups*, ed. G. Á. Grímsdóttir

Ldn = *Landnámabók*, ed. J. Benediktsson

Nj = *Brennu-Njáls saga*, ed. E. Ól. Sveinsson

Odd, *ÓT* = Odd Snorrason, *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, ed. Ól. Halldórsson

Ragn = *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, ed. G. Jónsson; B. Vilhjálmsson

Rb = *Rímbegla*, ed. N. Beckman; Kr. Kålund

Skáld = *Skáldskaparmál*, ed. G. Jónsson

Snorri, *HHarð* = Snorri Sturluson, *Haraldz saga harðráða*, ed. F. Jónsson

Snorri, *Hák* = Snorri Sturluson, *Hákonar saga góða*, ed. F. Jónsson

Snorri, *HHár* = Snorri Sturluson, *Haraldz saga ins hárfagra*, ed. F. Jónsson

Snorri, *MS* = Snorri Sturluson, *Magnússona saga*, ed. F. Jónsson

Snorri, *MBer* = Snorri Sturluson, *Saga Magnús konungs berfætts*, ed. F. Jónsson

Snorri, *HSv* = Snorri Sturluson, *Hálfdanar saga svarta*, ed. F. Jónsson

Snorri, *ÓH* = Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga ins helga*, ed. F. Jónsson

Vkv = *Vǫlundarkviða*, ed. G. Jónsson

Vsp = *Vǫluspá*, ed. G. Jónsson

Vþm = *Vafþrúðnismál*, ed. G. Jónsson

Vǫls = *Vǫlsunga saga*, ed. G. Jónsson; B. Vilhjálmsson

Yngl = *Ynglinga saga*, ed. F. Jónsson

Introduction

Although several works about Old Norse people's time understanding have already been written, the topic is still far from being fully investigated. The research scope of the majority of these works is often too narrow, because their authors try to reconstruct Old Norse time perception based on the study of a single genre or even a single work of Old Norse literature. The results obtained through an analysis of such a limited choice of primary sources are arguable. However, there are also certain studies that exceed the border of one literary genre and examine the issue of Old Norse time perception from a broader perspective. I introduce these studies in more detail in the first chapter where I describe the current state of research and where I also explain in what matters this thesis differs from them. Generally speaking, I do not always fully agree with their authors' methodological approach to the research of Old Norse time perception as well as some of their conclusions that might seem too straightforward.

In my thesis, I will base the investigation of time perception in Old Norse society on the thorough study of a broad scale of genres. Contrary to my original intentions, I decided not to reduce the scope of the primary sources to saga literature, but I have examined other genres as well, including works of such diverse character as is for example *Poetic Edda*, a collection of mythological poems, or *Íslendingabók*, a historiographical text that describes the settlement and early history of Iceland. A detailed description of the primary sources can be found in the second chapter of the thesis.

I believe that only such a broader scope of the primary sources can reveal the surprising variety of time reckoning and perception present in different Old Norse works or genres. While some genres seem to be firmly grounded in domestic pre-Christian time understanding, others are strongly influenced by foreign time reckoning and perception that spread to Scandinavia together with Christianity and various learned treatises, especially historiographical and computistical literature from continental Europe. Concerning this fact, I will try to answer the following questions in the thesis: What were the characteristic features of the local pre-Christian Old Norse time reckoning and perception? How different was domestic (heathen) time understanding from the continental European (Christian) practice? How is the arrival of new time reckoning reflected in Old Norse literature? What aspects of the local and foreign images and concepts of time do Icelandic authors blend in their works?

Unfortunately, Old Norse people never described their ideas about time directly, but answers to the aforementioned questions can be found through the analysis of the temporal structure of their literary works. The analysis of the dating systems and time indications used in

these works can give us an idea of how Old Norse people reckoned time, while the analysis of narrative time can help us to reconstruct their time perception. However, one cannot focus solely on the narrative analysis of Old Norse works when studying local time understanding. It is also necessary to pay attention to the social background of these works, especially to the political and religious changes happening in medieval Scandinavia, due to their great impact on domestic time reckoning and perception. I took this fact into consideration when working out the methodology of my research, a more thorough description of which is included in the third chapter.

The primary aim of this work is to contribute to the research of Old Norse time perception. Furthermore, the thesis makes a more general effort to broaden the knowledge of time perception in the Middle Ages. As a work that examines the topic of time understanding in a certain medieval society it represents a piece of the puzzle that can be placed into a complex and heterogeneous picture depicting medieval images of time. I believe that similar studies of time understanding in ancient or medieval civilisations contain deep meaning for contemporary people, because they show us alternative ways of time reckoning and understanding. Studying time in Old Norse society is especially interesting because it offers a possibility to observe how original pre-Christian time perception, preserved in certain Old Norse works, has been blended with foreign concepts of time.

1. Current state of research

According to my observations, three different approaches have prevailed in the previous research of Old Norse time perception. In this thesis, I will call them the "physical," "literary" and "sociological" approaches. As I will describe in the following chapter, each of these approaches seems to focus on different aspects of Old Norse time understanding and involves different methods of reconstructing it.

1.1. Physical approach

The scholars who employ the "physical" approach to the studies of Old Norse time perception are not as much interested in the narrative temporal structure of the primary sources as in the various dates and other time indications which the textual materials include. Based on these dates they try to reconstruct systems of the reckoning of time in Old Norse society and the local pre-Christian calendar.

Behind one of the earliest efforts to reconstruct the Old Norse calendar stands the German historian Gustav Adolf Bilfinger whose two-volume work from 1899 is focused on Old Norse (the first volume) and Old Germanic (the second volume) time reckoning.[1] A similar study has been done by the Austrian astronomer Friedrich Karl Ginzel who wrote an extensive three-volume work on calendars and chronologies in different ancient cultures, including a chapter devoted to Old Germanic, Nordic and Celtic time reckoning.[2] Furthermore, in the first half of the 20th century, a shorter study of Old Norse time reckoning was carried out by the Swedish linguist Natanael Beckman.[3] Beckman tried, among other things, to reconstruct the Old Norse calendar and described various types of datation used in Old Norse texts. His study about medieval Scandinavian time reckoning includes, for example, information about the sequence of months in the calendar, their names and duration.[4] Finally, one can mention the study of Old Norse-Icelandic time reckoning carried out by the Icelandic scholar Guðmundur Björnsson.[5]

Among the more recent studies can be mentioned a work called *Tímatal* written by the contemporary Icelandic scholar Árni Björnsson that also includes a detailed description of the Old Norse calendar, among others the names of months, number of weeks or number and

[1] Bilfinger. *Untersuchungen über die Zeitrechnung der alten Germanen* (1899).
[2] Ginzel. "Altgermanische (nordische) und keltische Zeitrechnung" (1914).
[3] Beckman. "Isländsk och medeltida skandinavisk tideräkning" (1934).
[4] Ibid, p. 70.
[5] Björnsson, Guðmundur. "Um íslenzka tímatalið" In: *Skírnir* 89 (1915), p. 263-302.

names of days.[6] Björnsson also wrote a study about one of the Old Norse winter months called *Þorri* and its relation to the heathen feast *þorrablót*, mentioned among others in *Flateyjarbók*.[7] However, in this study he focuses especially on the reception of this feast in the second half of the 19th century when it started to be celebrated by Icelanders again as a manifestation of the national romantic movement. His work is therefore of more interest for those who study the modern reception of Old Norse culture.

Another thorough description of the Norse calendar and its historical development was done by the Swedish mathematician Svante Janson.[8] Worth mentioning is also a short study by Þorsteinn Vilhjálmsson, an Icelandic professor of physics, and interested in Old Norse literature and culture as well, who investigates the very beginnings and formation of the local calendar.[9] According to Vilhjálmsson, the existence of a calendar was not only important for the farmers who used it as a tool to organise their activities, but also for travellers who used the calendar to organise their voyages. The author further discusses this assumption in his study of Old Norse time reckoning in relation to travel and navigation.[10]

The scholarly works that apply what I have called "physical" approach examine mostly non-narrative Old Norse genres, such as encyclopaedic and computistical works (*Rímbegla*) or historiographical works (Ari Þorgilsson's *Íslendingabók*). If their authors mention narrative sources like sagas, then it is only with the intention of collecting time indications from these narratives (e.g. the names of months mentioned in certain sagas) and incorporate them into the final image of Old Norse time reckoning. For instance, Beckman refers to the *Sturlunga saga* in his aforementioned study only to show that its narrator uses the Old Norse month *gói* for dating an event mentioned in the story. Based on this, Beckman tries to determine the exact time when the event depicted in the saga happened.[11] This approach is similar to the one applied by the 19th century Icelandic scholar Guðbrandur Vigfússon (1827-1889) in his work entitled *Um tímatal í Íslendinga sögum í fornöld*. Vigfússon analysed the time indications used in the sagas with the sole aim of obtaining an exact chronology of the events described in the stories and determining the exact years when these events happened.[12]

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[6] Björnsson. "Tímatal" (1990).
[7] See Björnsson, Árni. *Þorrablót*. Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1976.
[8] Janson. "The Icelandic Calendar" (2011).
[9] Vilhjálmsson. "Time-reckoning in Iceland before Literacy" (1993).
[10] Vilhjálmsson. "Time and Travel in Old Norse Society" (1997).
[11] Beckman. "Isländsk och medeltida skandinavisk tideräkning", p. 34.
[12] Vigfússon, Guðbrandur. "Um tímatal í Íslendinga sögum í fornöld" In: *Safn til sögu Íslands og íslenzkra bókmenta að fornu og nýju* 2, København; Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka bókmentafélag, 1856.

In this thesis, I have decided not to follow in the footsteps of the scholars applying the "physical" approach. I certainly do not doubt their contribution to the studies of Old Norse time reckoning; on the contrary, I consider their results very valuable. Thanks to their efforts one can learn about the Old Norse calendar and domestic time reckoning. One can also appreciate their contribution to the knowledge of the exact years and even days when certain historical events described in sagas or other Old Norse texts took place. On the other hand, the knowledge of the exact dates of the narrated events, the accurate knowledge of the number of months in the local calendar or the number of days in each month are not of much help when one wishes to uncover the way Old Norse people understood time. This approach cannot answer such questions as how the people perceived the change of the seasons or the change of generations or whether they understood time as cyclical or linear, or whether they understood the relations between the past, present and future the same way as we currently do. For this reason, I prefer a different approach to the research of Old Norse time perception which I will call the "literary" approach and which is based on the analysis of the temporal structure and the narrative category of time in Old Norse texts.

1.2. Literary approach

The "literary" approach to the primary sources is very different from the "physical" one. First of all, the scholars are especially interested in the narrative texts (mainly sagas) which they do not perceive only as possible sources of exact time indications, but rather as the main targets of the analysis. The "literary" approach concentrates on the study of the narrative temporal structure of primary sources.

Only a few works concerning Old Norse time perception that can be included in this group have been written so far, the most extensive being the work by the German scholar Hartmut Röhn *Untersuchungen zur Zeitgestaltung und Komposition der Íslendingasögur*, written in 1976. In this study, Röhn analyses the narrative structure of several family sagas with the primary focus on narrative time. He pays special attention to the problem of how much the sagas depict events chronologically. One study concerning narrative time in sagas has been written by the Dutch scholar Maarten C. van den Toorn who was, like Röhn, concerned with family sagas.[13] In this study, he analyses both narrative time (*Zeit*) and grammatical time (*Tempus*) in the narration. Van den Toorn also deals with the temporal structure of family sagas

[13] Van den Toorn. "Zeit und Tempus in der Saga" (1961).

in two other articles, however only briefly.[14] A short study of narrative time in family sagas has been done also by Vésteinn Ólason in one of the chapters of his book *Dialogues with the Viking Age*.[15] Besides these works, a short article examining the temporal structure of one family saga, namely the *Gretti's saga*, has been written by Jamie Cochrane.[16]

As regards the research of the temporal structure of family sagas, one can also mention a study done by Carol J. Clover called *Scene in Saga Composition* that also partially touches on the issue of narrative time.[17] Clover examines the narrative structure of family sagas which, according to her observations, consist mostly of scenes that are all constructed following the same pattern. This means, among other things, that the narrative temporal structure of the scenes is homogenous. I will mention some of Clover's conclusions concerning time in scenic description later in the chapter dealing with narrative time in family sagas.

Lastly, I would like to mention that at present a work by Heather O'Donoghue that will deal with the passage of time in family sagas is being prepared for publication. According to the information I found online, the book, called *Narrative in the Icelandic Sagas: Meanings of Time in Old Norse Literature*, will be published by I. B. Tauris in 2020.

All of the aforementioned works concentrate mostly on the analysis of the temporal structure of family sagas. So far, almost no research of the temporal structure of other saga types has been done, except for some minor studies. For instance, in *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas* in the chapter called "Time" Carl Phelpstead claims that "different kinds of time can be seen as characteristic of different kinds of texts."[18] He suggests using M. M. Bakhtin's concept of the *chronotope* when examining the temporal structure of various sagas, namely to connect the differences in time with the different spaces where the various saga genres take place. Phelpstead tries to apply this concept in the case of legendary sagas, though only briefly. I have myself also performed a brief analysis of narrative time in legendary sagas, as well as in kings' sagas, as a part of my diploma thesis that dealt with the narrative category of time in Old Norse saga literature. However, the diploma thesis was primarily focused on the research of time in family sagas.[19]

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[14] Van den Toorn. "Zur Struktur der Saga" (1958); "Saga und Wirklichkeit" (1957).
[15] Ólason. *Dialogues with the Viking Age* (1998); chapter "Telling the Tale".
[16] Cochrane. "Passing Time and the Past in *Grettis Saga Ásmundarsonar*" (2009).
[17] Clover. "Scene in Saga Composition" (1974).
[18] Phelpstead. "Time" (2017), p. 192.
[19] Králová, Kristýna. *Analýza času jako narativní kategorie ve staroseverských ságách* [Analysis of Time as a Narrative Category in Old Norse Sagas]. Dipl. thesis. FF UK (2012). The thesis was later published with some minor adjustments: see Králová. *A po celou zimu byl klid* (2014).

The only aspect of narrative time that has been examined more thoroughly by scholars also in other genres than family sagas is so-called *foreshadowing*. Foreshadowing, a literary prediction of the future, is contained in all different saga types, most often in the form of dreams that foretell the future destinies of the saga heroes. Much has already been written about foreshadowing, dreams and destiny in Old Norse saga literature. However, the majority of scholarly works concentrate on the research of dreams and other types of foreshadowing in a particular saga genre, predominantly in family and kings' sagas.[20] Only a small number of studies cross the borders between saga genres and reflect on differences in the form and content of dreams in various saga types.[21] Moreover, these reflections are often limited to only short comments on the existence of such differences, and possible causes of this heterogeneity are not fully investigated. For example, in his short study of dreams in sagas Lars Lönnroth states that dreams in family sagas are in certain respects different from dreams in legendary sagas and *Edda*.[22] This statement is, as the author writes, based on the compilation of dreams in Old Norse literature put together by Georgia Dunham Kelchner.[23] Kelchner herself makes the observation that dreams in family and legendary sagas differ.[24] However, neither Lönnroth nor Kelchner examine this interesting observation in detail. As an attempt to continue in the efforts of these scholars, I wrote an article in which I analysed dreams and other kinds of foreshadowing in three different saga types, namely in family, kings' and legendary sagas.[25] In this thesis, I further examine foreshadowing in sagas, as a part of the research of their temporal structure. When dealing with foreshadowing in legendary, family and kings' sagas,

[20] The following works primarily concentrate on the research of dreams in family sagas: Haeckel. *Die Darstellung und Funktion des Traumes in der isländischen Familiensaga* (1934); Hallberg. *The Icelandic Saga* (1962); Turville-Petre. "Dreams in Icelandic Tradition" (1972). The most extensive work focusing mainly on the study of dreams in kings' sagas was written by Hans-Werner Löbner: *Reden und Träume als strategische Elemente der Geschichtsschreibung des Mittelalters*. *Eine Untersuchung am Beispiel der Reden und Träume der Sverris Saga* (1992). An analysis of dreams in both family and kings' sagas can be found in the doctoral thesis of Gerhard Loescher *Gestalt und Funktion der Vorausdeutung in der isländischen Sagaliteratur. Studien zur Interpretation der Isländersagas* (1956).

[21] Probably the most complex of these works are Alexander Argüelles's doctoral thesis about dreams and dream symbolism in the different saga types (Argüelles. *Viking Dreams: Mythological and Religious Dream Symbolic in the Old Norse Sagas*, 1994), the extensive compilation of dreams in the various Old Norse genres (both prosaic and poetical) by Georgia Dunham Kelchner (Kelchner. *Dreams in Old Norse Literature and Their Affinities in Folklore*, 1935) and the very first study of dreams in Old Norse literature in general, the doctoral thesis by Wilhelm Henzen (Henzen. *Über die Träume in der altnordischen Sagalitteratur*, 1890).

[22] "Dreams in the *Edda* and the *fornaldarsögur* are not only generally shorter and simpler than dreams in family sagas, but the content of the dreams is also different." (Lönnroth. "Dreams in Sagas", p. 456).

[23] Kelchner. *Dreams in Old Norse Literature and Their Affinities in Folklore* (1935).

[24] Ibid, p. 23.

[25] Králová. "What did the Future hold for them? Different Types of Foreshadowing in Various Saga Genres" (2017).

(subchapters 6.3.; 7.3.; 11.3.), I use minor parts of my article modified to better fit the purposes and goals of the thesis.

Between the "literary" and "physical" approach stands the doctoral thesis written by the Icelandic scholar Ólafia Einarsdóttir, *Studier i kronologisk metode i tidlig islandsk historieskrivning*.[26] In this extensive work Einarsdóttir describes the systems of dating used in various Old Norse genres; besides the early historiographical work *Íslendingabók*, she examines also the temporal structure of different saga types, especially kings' sagas. On the one hand, Einarsdóttir tries to find or verify the exact dates of various important events in Icelandic history, depicted in the examined works, for example of the acceptance of Christianity by the general Icelandic assembly,[27] on the other hand she analyses the narrative structure and images of time present in sagas.

Although the works of some of the aforementioned scholars are dated further back, their authors have made numerous interesting observations concerning Old Norse time reckoning and perception that are still respected today. As regards narrative time and dating systems in sagas, it is especially the works of Van den Toorn, Röhn and Einarsdóttir that are often referred to by current scholars dealing with similar issues. These works have also become my main source of inspiration concerning the methods of how to examine the temporal structure of Old Norse narratives. Nevertheless, I have decided not to restrict myself solely to the literary analysis of the primary sources in my thesis. I would also like to put the temporal structure of the examined texts into connection with their sociological background. Let me describe this approach, one that has already been applied by a few scholars in the past as well, in more detail in the following subchapter.

1.3. Sociological approach

The scholars applying what I will call "sociological" approach to the research of Old Norse time perception are not primarily interested in the texts themselves from the narratological point of view, unlike the scholars applying the "literary" approach. The "sociological" approach stands close to the scientific disciplines of historical sociology and social anthropology representing what one could call an "anthropological turn" in the research of Old

[26] Einarsdóttir. *Studier i kronologisk metode i tidlig islandsk historieskrivning* (1964).

[27] Einarsdóttir's work is often mentioned in connection with the author's recounting of the year when Christianity was accepted in Iceland. For a long time, many scholars have thought that the new faith was accepted by the general Icelandic assembly in the year 1000, but Einarsdóttir has claimed that this important event had happened already in 999 (Einarsdóttir. *Studier i kronologisk metode*, p. 107-126). This is certainly a very significant result, but it unfortunately seems to overshadow, at least in the eyes of some scholars, many other interesting ideas concerning Old Norse time reckoning Einarsdóttir introduced in the aforementioned study.

Norse time perception. The major concern of the researchers is neither time represented by dates, years and calendars, nor time as a narrative category, but time as a social construct imprinted in the minds of Old Norse people. The research scope within this approach is usually not restricted to textual sources, but includes other kinds of sources as well, for instance archaeological findings.

The "sociological" approach is especially typical for the works of the Russian medievalists M. I. Steblin-Kamenskij[28] and A. Y. Gurevich.[29] Both scholars study the close connection of certain Old Norse time indications with the social context and daily life in Old Norse culture. For example, Gurevich tries to evaluate the fact that the Old Norse word *ár*, "year," also meant "harvest," "crop" or "abundance."[30] Thus, *ár* was not an abstract time indication that would only refer to a certain period of time, but the word was also filled with specific positive content related to the agricultural sphere. Steblin-Kamenskij analyses Old Norse time perception based on the study of sagas, especially the so-called family sagas. Like Gurevich, he understands the study of time as part of the broader studies of Old Norse people's mentality and psychology. He is not as interested in studying the development of local time reckoning, but merely in examining the images of time present in people's minds.

Another scholar who may be included into the "sociological" group is Paul C. Bauschatz, the author of the famous book *The Well and the Tree* in which he examines time perception and the concept of fate in early Germanic society.[31] The book consists of several essays linked by a central thesis that life of the early Germanic peoples was dominated by their conception of the past, especially by a strong belief that the past influences the present. Through detailed analysis of various manifestations of Germanic culture, such as mythology, burial rites, literature and language, Bauschatz makes an effort to confirm this theory. Bauschatz's approach to the research of Germanic time perception is based on the idea that the way that a certain culture understands time can be discovered from its different social or cultural aspects: besides the literary and mythical images of time, also from various traditions.

Lastly, I would like to mention a book written by Anthony Winterbourne called *When the Norns Have Spoken*.[32] Similar to Bauschatz, the author attempts to reconstruct a spatio-temporal Germanic cosmogony and cosmography and the central theme of the book is the

[28] Steblin-Kamenskij. "Tidsforestillingene i islendingesagaene" (1968); Steblin-Kamenskij. *The Saga Mind* (1971, English transl. 1973).
[29] Gurewich. "Space and Time in the Weltmodell of the Old Scandinavian Peoples" (1969); Gurewich. *Categories of Medieval Culture* (1972, English transl. 1985).
[30] Gurewich. "Space and Time in the Weltmodell", p. 48.
[31] Bauschatz. *The Well and the Tree: World and Time in Early Germanic Culture* (1982).
[32] Winterbourne. *When the Norns Have Spoken* (2004).

relationship between time and fate as expressed in myth. The author comes forward with many inspiring ideas concerning, for example, Old Norse perception of the past, present and future. I find especially interesting the fourth chapter called "Spinning and Weaving Fate," in which Winterbourne deals with the concept of the three Norns in Old Germanic mythology and their relations to the past, present and future.

As I have mentioned earlier, I would like to primarily follow the "literary" approach in this thesis, i.e. the approach based on the analysis of time indications and narrative time in Old Norse literature. However, I am well aware of the fact that this approach may be too narrow, restricted to the borders of literary work. Therefore, I would like to combine the narrative analysis of the primary texts with the "sociological" approach and take a broader look at the sources within their social background as well. My aim is not only to describe the temporal structure of the primary sources, but especially to examine what it tells us about the way Old Norse people reckoned and understood time. I believe that some of the works or genres contain traces of domestic pre-Christian time understanding, while others are strongly influenced by foreign time reckoning and perception that arrived to the North together with Christianity and continental European literature, such as the hagiographies or various learned treatises. I would like to demonstrate that these influences led to certain fundamental changes in local time reckoning and understanding that transformed together with the religious and political development of Old Norse society. I will give a more thorough description of my methodology in the third chapter of the thesis. But before that, I would like to shortly introduce the primary sources I will later be dealing with.

2. Primary sources

The Old Norse literature surviving up to the present day is rather extensive and of a very diverse nature. It consists of a broad scale of works and genres beginning with mythological poems rooted in the pagan times and ending for instance with bishops' sagas that have distinct Christian features in their essence. In the previous chapter summarizing the current state of research, I mentioned that many scholars who have dealt with "temporal issues" in Old Norse literature and culture analyse only certain types of works. Those with the "physical" approach choose genres that contain the most traces of Old Norse time reckoning, calendar and systems of dating; those with the "literary" approach choose mostly the family sagas that, to some extent, resemble modern novels and thus represent promising subjects for a narrative analysis. Maybe the only exception is the aforementioned dissertation by Óláfia Einarsdóttir who analyses the systems of dating in historiographical works side by side with sagas. I would like to follow her example and examine a broader scale of genres in this thesis. I believe that if one intends to study time perception in Old Norse society, one should not restrict the choice of the primary sources to only a single genre (or even a single work). It is especially the comparison of the temporal structure of different works and genres that can lead to interesting results. This assumption is made based on the results of my aforementioned diploma thesis where I dealt with the temporal structure of family, kings' and legendary sagas. The comparison of these three saga types revealed the existence of great differences concerning the images of time contained in the narrations. Here, I would like to further examine the temporal structure of these sagas and include other works and genres as well, both prosaic and poetic, including mythological poems and various non-narrative texts.

Although the temporal structure of each examined work and genre is specific, there are also certain similarities, based on which I have divided the primary sources into three groups. The first group is comprised of genres that are, in my opinion, rooted in pre-Christian Old Norse time perception and reckoning. Among these genres would belong the eddic myths and the legendary and family sagas (See 2.1.). Subsequently, I examined several works that adopt foreign concepts of time reckoning and, in a way, introduce them into Old Norse practice. Within this second group of primary sources, I examine the computistical treatise called *Rím I*, two early Icelandic historiographical works known as *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók* and the dating formulas included in charters from the Norwegian and Icelandic *diplomataria* (See 2.2.). Lastly, I studied how the new reckoning and perception of time penetrates domestic saga

literature, namely in the case of kings' and bishops' sagas which I have placed into the third group of primary sources. As I will demonstrate, foreign influences are apparent not only regarding the dating systems and time indications used in these sagas, but also within the inner temporal structure of the narratives (See 2.3.). Let me now introduce the three groups of primary sources more in detail.

2.1. Traces of domestic time perception in Old Norse literature

The works examined within this first group of primary sources will be the so-called *Poetic Edda*, *Snorri's Edda* and two saga genres, namely legendary and family sagas. I will now introduce these works only briefly, as more thorough descriptions will be included in the introductory parts of the chapters dealing with the particular sources.

Poetic Edda, a compilation of mythological and heroic lays, has been preserved in an anonymous medieval manuscript known as *Codex Regius* written around 1270.[33] However, the poems most likely originated in much older times. Terry Gunnell for instance states that "the manuscript's contents may well have ancient, pagan roots" and that this material "is likely to have existed in oral tradition long before it came to be recorded."[34] The myths contained in *Poetic Edda* have also survived in prose form in the so-called *Snorri's* or *Prose Edda* written around 1220 by the Icelandic writer and historian Snorri Sturluson.

Some of the stories about legendary heroes have been preserved within legendary sagas (*fornaldarsǫgur*) as well. The most famous one is probably the *Vǫlsunga saga* telling of Sigurð the Vǫlsung, also known as Sigurð Fáfnisbani, an Old Norse parallel to Siegfried from *Nibelungenlied*. Although legendary sagas were written mostly in the first half of the 14th century, the stories depicted in them are often rooted in the Old Germanic lore. As Torfi Tulinius writes, "the oldest manuscripts containing *fornaldarsǫgur* are from ca. 1300,"[35] but as with both the *Eddas* they include stories situated in a much older time, namely in the legendary past (*fornǫld*).

As regards family sagas (*Íslendingasǫgur*), also known as the sagas of Icelanders, the events depicted in them take place in historical time. The sagas usually describe events from the first century after the settlement of Iceland (ca. from the middle of the 10th century to the middle of the 11th century). However, the narrators often begin by describing events that

[33] Gunnell. "Eddic Poetry", p. 82. Some of the eddic poems are contained in other manuscripts as well, for instance in AM 748 4to, a small collection of mythological poems, or in *Hauksbók*. Parts of the eddic poems are also included in *Snorri's Edda* and in some of the sagas.
[34] Ibid, p. 83.
[35] Tulinius. "Sagas of Icelandic Prehistory", p. 449.

happened during the settlement itself (ca. 870-930).[36] Thus, the stories partially take place in the time before the arrival of Christianity to Iceland and they significantly precede the era when the sagas were written down (the 13th and 14th century).

As one may notice, all the aforementioned texts are, at least with regard to their content, rooted in the pagan past more or less distant from the High Middle Ages when they were written down. Therefore, one might assume that these texts mirror, at least to some extent, the original pre-Christian time perception. This is also the assumption that I will employ in this thesis. However, I am aware of the fact that this assumption could be exposed to the possible objection that the texts preserved in High or Late Medieval manuscripts cannot reflect pre-Christian time understanding. Let me deal with this issue in the following subchapter.

2.1.1. Pre-Christian time in medieval manuscripts?

The fact that the manuscripts containing the aforementioned textual sources originate from a medieval Christian background may lead to the assumption that these sources reflect the Christian perception of time rather than the pre-Christian domestic one. The scribes who wrote the texts down were Christian and they were often working in the milieu of medieval monasteries and Church schools. However, in Iceland the situation concerning medieval literary production was somewhat specific. For instance, there were also two secular schools where manuscripts were produced and texts were written in the native language. These and other facts which I describe more in detail in the subchapter dealing with the arrival of Christianity to Iceland (See 3.2.1.), indicate that religious influence on local literature was lesser here than in continental Europe, as can be seen, among others, in the texts included in the first group of primary sources. I certainly do not claim that Christianity and the High Medieval era had no influence on these texts. The only textual sources that are considered to have remained completely unchanged during the transmission from the oral to the written form, due to the complicated metrics that fixed their content, are skaldic poems.[37] However, the texts I have included in the first group are considered at least partially rooted in the previous oral tradition of storytelling that produced them long before they were written down. As Terry Gunnell notes, scholars have long discussed the possible Christian influences in *Poetic Edda*,

[36] See Ólason. *Family Sagas*, p. 101.

[37] Diana Whaley writes that: "The only variety that is now believed to have survived more or less intact into the literate era is skaldic verse, preserved by its tight and intricate metre in a way that even legal formulae and genealogies could not match" (Whaley. "A Useful Past", p. 167). Unfortunately, skaldic poetry is not a particularly rich source when it comes to using time indications of any kind, therefore I decided not to include it into the thesis.

but: " (…) it remains probable that the majority of the mythological poems have deep roots in the period before Christianity was formally declared in Iceland in 999/1000."[38] The Christian scribes might have influenced the final shape of the poems and myths, but the core of their content lies in pre-Christian times. The same could be claimed about *Snorri's Edda* that contains prose versions of these myths. Legendary sagas are also partially rooted in a mythical layer; they take place in the legendary past and narrate the fates of legendary heroes.

The situation is more complicated in the case of family sagas; lengthy discussions have been led about the time and way of their origin among Old Norse scholars since the 19th century. Through the whole 19th and the first half of the 20th century the question of the oral versus written origins of the sagas was debated by many. The Swiss medievalist Andreas Heusler (1865-1940) labelled the two different approaches to this issue as *Freiprosa* (free-prose) and *Buchprosa* (book-prose) theories.[39] The first of them considered sagas to be a result of the previous tradition of storytelling, where the role of the scribes was basically reduced to writing the stories down. The second approach emphasized the role of the scribes as that of individual authors imprinting various new features into the stories: "The book-prose theory emphasized the importance of literary intertextuality, borrowings from particular authors, and the potential influence of European Latin culture; whereas the free-prose theory, and more recently formalism, laid greater stress on the role of oral tradition in accounting for apparently related passages in different sagas."[40] The 19th century's Old Norse scholarship, under the influence of romanticism, favoured mostly the free-prose theory uncritically viewing the sagas as true images of the originally orally transmitted stories from the Old Norse past. This approach changed towards the end of the 19th century and in the first half of the 20th century when the book-prose theory found the support of Icelandic scholars who considered it to be evidence of highly developed domestic literary production and the existence of sagas was used as one of the arguments supporting Iceland's claim for independence from Denmark.[41]

The current scholarly approach does not adhere to the above mentioned theories any longer. Gísli Sigurðsson summarizes the new tendencies in this field of saga studies as follows: "The most interesting new direction in saga studies and orality comes when we move away from the old argument about whether and if the texts were based on an oral tradition, and

[38] Gunnell. "Eddic Poetry", p. 94.
[39] Heusler, Andreas. *Die Anfänge der isländischen Saga*. Berlin: Verlag der Königl. Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1914.
[40] Sigurðsson, "Orality and Literacy", p. 285-286.
[41] Ibid, p. 286.

simply accept the need to read them as the product and reflection of such a tradition."[42] The American historian Jesse L. Byock writes: "The [family] sagas are an ingenious development, the product of a long tradition of storytelling which responded, in both pre-literate and literate times, to the particular needs of Iceland's insular population."[43] The Danish scholar of Old Norse literature Pernille Hermann sees the written form as a medium that could preserve the oral tradition, i.e. the stories that were originally remembered were later fixed in written form to prevent their disappearance from people's memory.[44] Certainly, medieval scribes made some changes to the stories, but the basic narrative structures, including, as I believe in the case of family or legendary sagas, also narrative time, were probably excluded from any fundamental changes. Diana Whaley, a student of early medieval studies, sums up the opinion of many contemporary scholars that the oral tradition is not present in the saga literature word-for-word, but merely in a form of certain mental or social structures from the past: "Scholars have found more and more evidence to confirm the long-held suspicion that the sagas reveal more about the time of composition and about their author's view of the past than they do about the past which is narrated, and that what can be discovered has less to do with "facts" and more to do with attitudes, "mentality" and social structures."[45] Although the final shape of sagas has been influenced by the milieu of High Medieval society, they include at the same time older social and cultural patterns interwoven with the narration. When compared to annals or chronicles, family sagas may be an inaccurate or less reliable source of historical facts, but they are a priceless source of information for those who wish to obtain an image of the patterns behind everyday life in the society of the Viking Age. Regardless of their origins, these sagas are considered valuable evidence about the social and mental structures within early Old Norse culture.

In the light of this fact, attempts similar to the one performed by Guðbrandur Vigfússon in the aforementioned study in which he tries to count the exact dates of events depicted in sagas, seem to be pointless. As Steblin-Kamenskij writes: "Det er helt fremmed for ættesagaene å stille begivenhetene inn i en abstrakt kronologisk ramme. Derfor kan en vitenskapelig analyse, i dette fall en kronologisk tabell over hendingene, ikke hjelpe oss til å forstå psykologien i det verk vi analyserer, men vil tvertimot fordunkle den."[46] It is not the exact dates of the narrated events that one should primarily look for when analyzing the time in sagas, but merely the

[42] Ibid, p. 299-300.
[43] Byock. "The Family and Sturlunga Sagas", p. 157.
[44] Hermann. "Fortid og forandring", p. 393-395.
[45] Whaley. "A Useful Past", p. 166.
[46] Steblin-Kameskij. "Tidsforestillingene i islendingesagaene", p. 356.

social and mental structures that stood behind original domestic Old Norse time perception. I believe that especially family and legendary sagas maintain these structures as a relic from pre-Christian society. I fully agree with the opinion expressed by Jesse L. Byock who describes family sagas as a treasury of information from a remembered rather than invented past: "A treasure trove of culturally reinforcing information, the sagas reinvigorated the actions of ancestors by employing a remembered rather than invented past."[47] A part of what Byock calls "remembered past" would be, I believe, also certain narrative temporal structures, as for example time indications, foreshadowing and other images of time typical for local time perception that penetrated the stories about the people and events of the pre-Christian past.

2.2. Foreign systems of time reckoning arrive in the North

Side by side with the genres rooted in domestic pre-Christian time perception, numerous texts strongly influenced by foreign continental European time reckoning and understanding originated from Old Norse literary production. The images of time maintained in these texts differ diametrically from what one can find in the aforementioned first group of primary sources including both *Eddas*, and family and legendary sagas. The second group of texts uses very different ways of time reckoning that arrived to Old Norse society together with Christianity and through various learned treatises, especially the Latin historiographical and encyclopaedic or computistical literature. Through these works, for instance Bede Venerabilis' *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*[48], new systems of time reckoning, the Anno Domini dating system and the Julian calendar were introduced to the learned Icelanders. It is however important to realize that foreign images of time did not replace the domestic ones all of a sudden; on the contrary, both "times" have long coexisted. The arrival of the new time reckoning to Iceland created the need to combine the foreign dating systems with local practice. Into the second group of primary sources, I have decided to include various kinds of texts, mostly non-narrative, that adopt the foreign reckoning of time, but at the same time achieve its partial synthesis with the domestic tradition.

[47] Byock. "Social Memory and the Sagas", p. 314. The study is primarily devoted to *Egils saga Skallagrímsonar*, but its conclusion includes also observations about family sagas in general.

[48] This work is crucial as concerns time reckoning used in medieval historiographies, as Beda was the first who began to use the Anno Domini dating systems for fixing the events in time, which was later adopted by other historians as well: "Det var Beda, der først benyttede Kristi fødsel som udgangspunkt for datering i historisk litteratur, og hans kirkehistorie indeholder utallige årtalsangivelser. Som følge af Bedas store indflydelse vandt brugen af årstal efterhånden indpas i middelalderen" (Einarsdóttir. *Studier i kronologisk metode*, p. 29).

Firstly, I will examine the Old Norse computistical treatise called *Rím I* which is a part of the compilation known as *Rímbegla* or *Rímtal*. This work, dating from around 1180,[49] is probably the only medieval Scandinavian treatise dealing directly with the topic of time, although it primarily concentrates on the description of foreign reckoning of time, namely the Roman calendar. However, while the author describes foreign ways of time reckoning or Latin time indications, he sometimes refers also to the Icelandic calendar and mentions certain Old Norse time indications as well. Secondly, I will examine the dating systems used in the so-called *Íslendingabók* (written between 1122 and 1133) and *Landnámabók* (originating in the beginning of the 12th century, surviving in manuscripts from 13th century), historiographical writings dealing with the time of Iceland's settlement and the land's early history. The reason I have decided to include these works into the thesis is to show how their authors, especially the author of *Íslendingabók*, Ari Þorgilsson, achieve combining the domestic and foreign systems of dating. Lastly, I will examine some of the dating formulas that can be found in the Icelandic and Norwegian *diplomataria*. These collections of medieval letters and other documents are valuable sources when it comes to the research of dating systems used by Scandinavian kings and bishops or archbishops.

2.3. Blending of times: changes in the temporal structure of sagas

Within this third group of primary sources I will analyse two saga genres, namely the kings' and bishops' sagas. Most of these sagas are influenced by foreign time reckoning and perception and their narrative temporal structure is in many aspects different from that of family or legendary sagas. The differences are not only apparent regarding the dating systems and time indications used in the narrations, but also certain properties of narrative time.

Contrary to family and legendary sagas, most of which are probably based on the previous oral tradition, kings' and bishops' sagas do not have such deep roots and the time span between their origins and their being written down is not as vast. While the temporal structure of family and legendary sagas comes in many aspects out of the original local time understanding, kings' and bishops' sagas take on some of the foreign concepts of time reckoning and perception. The temporal structure of these saga genres is also strongly influenced by certain social changes that took place in medieval Scandinavia between the 11th and 13th century, namely the transformation from heathenism to Christianity and from gentile society to feudalism. The temporal structure of kings' sagas (ca. the middle of 12th century to the middle of 13th century),

[49] Vilhjálmsson. "Time and Travel", p. 106.

stories about the lives and deeds of Scandinavian kings, is influenced by the consolidating of feudalism and royal ideology in Old Norse society. The temporal structure of bishops' sagas (ca. the first half of 13th century to the middle of 14th century), biographies of the Icelandic bishops, is partially similar to that of kings' sagas with the difference being that the kings and monarchy are not the centre of attention, but rather the bishops and the Catholic Church.

Before I describe the methodology of my research, let me enumerate the chosen primary sources in the following table and summarize what temporal aspects will be analysed in the particular works or genres:

The primary sources:	**What will be analysed:**
Group I:	**Traces of domestic time perception**
Poetic Edda; *Snorri's Edda*	cosmogonic time; Old Norse time indications
Legendary sagas	the legendary-heroic past; foreshadowing
Family sagas	domestic time perception within the narratives about Icelanders; Old Norse time indications; foreshadowing
Group II:	**Arrival of foreign time reckoning in the North**
Rím I	Old Norse computistical treatise
Íslendingabók; *Landnámabók*	combinations of foreign dating systems with domestic ones
charters from *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* and *Islandicum*	dating formulas used by Scandinavian kings and bishops/archbishops
Group III:	**Blending of times: Transformations of time reckoning and perception in sagas**
Kings' sagas	new time concepts within the narratives; the feudalization of time
Bishops' sagas	new time concepts within the narratives; the Christianization of time

3. Methodology

As Old Norse people did not write any works about their perception of time, one can only try to reconstruct the way they understood it through analysing various manifestations of their culture that reflect their perception or reckoning of time indirectly. These manifestations can be of very different natures, besides the numerous textual sources, as for instance sagas, myths or historiographical works, one can also take into account archaeological findings or runic inscriptions on stones or other objects which also occasionally mention the flow of time. In this thesis I have decided to primarily focus on literary sources and to examine works and genres of various types in order to achieve a more complex image of Old Norse time understanding. Due to this decision I had to face the problem of finding a methodology suitable for the examination of primary sources of such diverse nature. I finally decided, besides studying the dating systems and time indications in these texts, to undertake their narrative analysis that would concentrate on different aspects of the narrative category of time. Alongside this analysis, I have also tried to view the primary texts from an outside perspective and connect the results of their narrative analysis with the social background that surrounded them. Let me now describe these two research methods, which I will call "synchronic" and "diachronic," in more detail.

3.1. Synchronic analysis

I take on the term "synchronic" from linguistics (*synchronic linguistics*) where it means an analysis of a language's properties at a certain moment in time.[50] I will use this term similarly, with the meaning of "a narrative analysis of Old Norse literary works' temporal structure where the primary sources are seen as contemporary isolated entities." Within this synchronic approach I intend to examine the following aspects concerning the temporal structure of the primary sources: Firstly, I will examine the dating systems which the authors or narrators use to fix the depicted events in time, secondly, I will investigate what types of time indications are most frequently used in each examined work or genre (See 3.1.1.), and finally, I will analyse the characteristic features of the narrative category of time (See 3.1.2.). This analysis will be done only in the narrative texts, that is sagas, and not in the case of the eddic poems or non-narrative writings included in the second part of the thesis, which are not suitable subjects for this kind of analysis. The analysis will be based on a comparison of *narrated time* (time of a

[50] As a Czech philosopher who also studies functional models of language, Jiří Raclavský, writes: "A *synchronic* investigation of language deals with a language or its parts studied as a fixed phenomenon existing at a given moment of time" (Raclavský. "A Model of Language in a Synchronic and Diachronic Sense", p. 1).

story) with *narrative time* (time of a discourse) based on the three concepts established by the French narratologist Gérard Genette – *order*, *duration* and *frequency*.

3.1.1. Systems of dating and time indications

In contemporary Western culture, we use only one dating system, namely the Anno Domini, also known as the Christian era,[51] that reckons years beginning with the birth (incarnation) of Jesus. Old Norse sources show much greater variety in this respect – the dating system most familiar to us, Anno Domini, appears in Old Norse literature as well, but it can only be found in some genres and certainly cannot be labelled the prevalent one. A similar variety of dating systems is typical also for many other ancient or medieval cultures before Anno Domini gained a firm position in the Christian world's time reckoning. However, all different kinds of dating systems can be basically divided into two types according to the fact of if they use a time scale or not. Some systems of dating might be considered *absolute*, as they fix events into exact moments in time on a certain time scale, while some systems remain *relative* as they do not use any objective timeline to which all events relate.

Ólafia Einarsdóttir, who examines the occurrence of these two basic dating systems in Old Norse literature, calls the first of them *lærd kronologi* (which she translates into English as "learned chronology") and the other *folkelig kronologi* (which she translates as "popular chronology").[52] The first is a chronology based on a certain time scale with a clearly specified starting point to which the narrated events relate through abstract time indications (years). On the contrary, the latter mentioned chronology uses non-abstract time indications for dating events – a certain event is fixed in time by its relation to another event. In the words of Einarsdóttir herself: "Den grundlæggende forskel mellem disse to former for tidsfæstelse ser forfatteren i, at der i lærd kronologi gøres brug af en *tidsskala*, hvorimod folkelig tidsfæstelse blot sker ved hjælp af indbyrdes tidsafstande."[53] The Danish anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup notes that these two chronologies are sometimes labelled as *extrinsic*, i.e. based on an external

[51] The Christian era was devised by Dionysius Exiguus in A.D. 525 and popularized by Bede (see for example Wallis. "Chronology and Systems of Dating", p. 385). As the Czech historian Marie Bláhová writes, to the greater expansion of the Christian era contributed especially Bede's work *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (732) in which the author converted the years from the foundation of Rome to the Christian era. This work influenced medieval historians and the new dating system had spread into Western European chronicles already by the 8th century (Bláhová. *Historická chronologie*, p. 326).

[52] Einarsdóttir. *Studier i kronologisk metode*, p. 143; 349.

[53] Ibid, p. 143. In the closing part of her book Einarsdóttir translates this claim into English: "The author sees the fundamental difference between these two forms of dating in the use of a *time scale* in learned chronology, whereas popular dating is done only by means of time intervals" (ibid, p. 349).

timeline, and *intrinsic*, i.e. a chronology that takes an internal view of events.[54] According to her, a third type of dating should be added to Einarsdóttir's dualistic division, namely the *intrinsic absolute* chronology which would stand between the *learned/absolute* chronology (or *extrinsic absolute*, as Hastrup calls it) and *popular/relative* chronology. The *intrinsic absolute* chronology, as Hastrup defines it, uses a time scale, but this time scale is based on the local background, i.e. it is of an intrinsic character. Well-known examples of such chronologies would be, according to Hastrup, the Roman imperial and consular scale.[55] In my opinion, it is possible to add the dating based on the regnal years of any ruler (*anni regni*), or alternatively his age, or the years of a bishop's or archbishop's episcopate (*anni pontificatus*) as well, because such time scales are also rooted in the local milieu. Similar systems of dating certainly represent an effort to fix the narrated events into a specific, *absolute* moment in time, but the timelines they use are not entirely abstract, in the meaning of independent of local events. On the contrary, using for instance a king's age or regnal years means to refer to his life and the events from his life (such as his birth, coronation or death).[56] In the Old Norse context, Hastrup mentions dating according to the succession of the Icelandic lawspeakers and the years of their office used in Ari's *Íslendingabók* that I will describe later.[57]

In the thesis, I will follow Hastrup's division, i.e. the division of the *absolute extrinsic*, *absolute intrinsic* and *relative* chronology. Into the first group of chronologies, *absolute extrinsic*, I will include all systems of dating that refer to an abstract timeline independent of local events which "runs in the background" of the stories, for instance the Anno Domini dating system or the Anno Mundi era that reckons years from the creation of the world. Into the second group, *absolute intrinsic*, would belong the chronologies that use a timeline based on local events, for instance the dating based on the regnal years of the Scandinavian kings or earls, reckoned from the day of their accession, or the years of the local bishops' or archbishops' episcopates. And finally, the third group comprises *relative* chronology where events are dated through their mutual temporal relations, and a specific type of relative chronology, namely dating based on *genealogies* that uses genealogical chains as timelines.

In addition to these dating systems I will also examine various other time indications in the primary sources and their role in narration. The time indications that appear in Old Norse literature are of a very diverse character, some of them being of pagan origins, others relating

[54] Hastrup. *Culture and History in Medieval Iceland*, p. 47.
[55] Ibid, p. 251.
[56] I mentioned this fact already in my diploma thesis, where I describe the issue more in detail (Králová. *A po celou zimu byl klid*, p. 116-117).
[57] Hastrup. *Culture and History*, p. 47-48.

to the Christian liturgical calendar. Some indications refer to natural phenomena, as for instance the changing of the seasons; others to various social or cultural events, for example the holding of assemblies or different pagan or Christian feast days. Besides that, one can find many indefinite time indications in the texts as well, such as "once upon a time," "back then" or "after that" (*einu sinni var þat*, *þá, eptir þat*). Below, I will examine the character of time indications used in different Old Norse works or genres in order to determine which are predominant in which genres and why.

3.1.2. Narrative time and Genette's categories

As mentioned before, the analysis of the mutual relationship between *narrated time* (the time of the story)[58] and *narrative time* (the time of the discourse/the time of the narrative)[59] in the primary sources will be interpreted according to three concepts established by Gérard Genette. The concepts were originally defined in his study *Discours du récit* and they are translated into English as *order*, *duration* and *frequency*.[60] I believe that Genette's structuralist narratological analysis of time can be applied to almost any kind of narrative, although it must be taken into consideration that it is based on the contemporary perception of time that has certain qualities. Old Norse understanding of time was very different from the contemporary one in many aspects which one must take into account when working with modern narratological concepts and performing narrative analysis of primary texts. For instance, as regards the *order* concept that examines the chronology of narrated events, one must realize that chronology in the minds of Old Norse people did not have to be connected with an image of a timeline, but for instance with an image of genealogies.

Let me now introduce the three aforementioned concepts more in detail. The *order* concept deals with the sequencing of narrated events in the narrative. The sequencing can either be chronological or, unlike the real order of events, non-chronological and interrupted for instance by retrospective narration.[61] As regards the *order* concept, what is especially interesting to

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[58] Also called *story time*. The term denotes the time span of a story (http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/node/106.html, 15. 3. 2019). The German term *erzählte Zeit* introduced by Günther Müller in his study *Erzählzeit und erzählte Zeit* from 1948 is also well-known and Genette refers to it in his work (Genette. *Narrative Discourse*, p. 33).

[59] Also called *narrating time* or *discourse time*. The term determines the time a narrator needs to tell the story (http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/node/106.html, 15. 3. 2019). Müller calls it *Erzählzeit*.

[60] *Discours du récit* forms a part of Genette's *Figures III* (1972). The study has been translated to English under the title *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1980). Besides the concepts of *order*, *duration* and *frequency* that relate to the temporal structure of a narrative, Genette defines the concepts of *mood* and *voice* that relate to the narrator.

[61] The *order* concept studies "connections between the temporal *order* of succession of the events in the story and the pseudo-temporal order of their arrangement in the narrative" (Genette. *Narrative Discourse*, p. 35).

examine concerning Old Norse literature is how the inner chronology of narration is achieved. In the previous subchapter I already indicated that in Old Norse texts different types of chronologies based on local time scales (*absolute intrinsic* chronologies) or universal timelines (*absolute extrinsic*) can be found. However, the *order* of narrated events does not have to be achieved only through situating these events on a certain time scale, but can also stem from other principles, as is the case with *relative* chronology, which puts the events into mutual temporal relations, or *genealogical* chronology.

The *duration* concept expresses the difference between the real duration of the narrated events and the time it takes the narrator to tell the events.[62] Usually, narrating an event takes much shorter time than its original duration did. The question is in how much the narrative time is shortened when compared to the narrated time. This depends on how detailed the narration about a certain event is. The Czech literary scientist Lubomír Doležel writes: "The *narrated time* is transformed into the *narrative time* in the way that the narrator chooses certain events from the story that will become a part of the narration. Some parts of the story can be narrated in detail, while other parts may be depicted only briefly in the narration or completely omitted from it."[63] Generally, it can be claimed that the more detail a story is narrated in, the closer the narrative time gets to the narrated time. The relation between the narrative time and narrated time in the category of *duration* shows which moments of the narration are most important. In the important parts of the story the narrative time slows down and the narration is more detailed. On the contrary, when nothing interesting happens in the story the narrative time accelerates and the reduction of the story, when transferred into the narration, is larger.

It is especially interesting to compare the temporal structure of different Old Norse genres within this concept. For instance, in family sagas there is usually a great difference between the narrated time and the narrative time as to the *duration*. The narrator often skips long periods of time in narration in which nothing important happens and on the contrary gives a very detailed scenic description of the significant actions such as combats and lawsuits. Unlike this, the narrative structure of kings' or bishops' sagas usually does not include such extreme "jumps in time" followed by detailed, nearly dramatic scenes. In these saga genres the level of reduction of the narrated time to the narrative time is often more cohesive. It is also interesting to study which motifs and events gain the most space in the sagas by slowing the narrative time down.

[62] The *duration* concept studies "connections between the variable *duration* of the events or story sections and the pseudo-duration (in fact, length of text) of their telling in the narrative" (Genette. *Narrative Discourse*, p. 35).
[63] Doležel. *Schéma narativního času*, p. 258.

Finally, within the *frequency* concept, how many times an event occurs to how many times it is narrated is compared.[64] This concept is closely related to the overall narrative structure of the story, as it depends on the fact of if the narration has one main storyline or rather a multitude of storylines that penetrate each other and narrate the same event from different points of view, as is the case for instance in Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs Dalloway*. The narrative structure of Old Norse literature does not contain such experiments within the concept of *frequency*, as there is usually one narrator depicting each event just once, even when the story splits into more narrative lines following the actions of more people or families participating in the same conflict. However, what can be analysed within the *frequency* concept is *foreshadowing* that often appears in various genres of Old Norse literature, especially in sagas. I am aware of the fact that foreshadowing, as for instance prophetic dreams, can be considered *prolepsis* (flash-forward), because the events that are depicted within narrative time in foreshadowing are yet to come in narrated time in the future. However, I think that in the case of sagas, foreshadowing is not meant to be a narrative "jump" into the future. On the contrary, in foreshadowing the predestined future reveals itself in the present. Foreshadowing takes place in the present, as a kind of "prelude" to the foreshadowed event. Therefore, it does not break the chronology of narration: what rather happens here is that a certain event that occurs only once in the story (narrated time) keeps reminding the narratee of itself when being foreshadowed in the narration (narrative time). Let me add at this point that some events are even foreshadowed repeatedly in sagas. Thus, foreshadowing could be interpreted as one of the modes of *frequency*, namely the one Genette calls *repeating narrative*, i.e. narrating many times what happened once.[65] In the case of foreshadowing, what happens is that one event is depicted twice in the narration, first in the form of foreshadowing (dream, prophecy etc.) and afterwards when it really happens in the story. Therefore, I have decided to include the issue of foreshadowing into the thesis as well. I will examine the form and content of foreshadowing in sagas in order to show what it might tell us about Old Norse time perception.

[64] The *frequency* concept studies "relations between the repetitive capacities of the story and those of the narrative" (Genette. *Narrative Discourse*, p. 35).
[65] Genette. *Narrative Discourse*, p. 115. As Genette adds: "This type of narration where the recurrences of the statement do not correspond to any recurrence of events, I will obviously call *repeating* narrative" (Ibid, p. 116).

3.2. Diachronic analysis

The term "diachronic" I also take on from linguistics where it marks the study of a language viewed in the context of its development throughout history.[66] I would like to use this term in a similar meaning, namely for the analysis of Old Norse texts seen against the background of the social, political and religious structures that surrounded them. While the "synchronic" analysis remains in the sphere of narratology, the "diachronic" analysis is closer to the field of historical sociology. I believe that the aforementioned observation I made in my diploma thesis, namely that the temporal structure of different Old Norse saga genres is not homogenous, can be at least partially explained by certain social changes occuring in Old Norse society. What I particularly have in mind is first of all the transition from paganism to Christianity and secondly the transition from a gentile society to a society based on the feudal system.

3.2.1. The arrival of Christianity in the North

The Christianization of Scandinavia was a gradual and long process. The first missionaries began to arrive to the North in the first half of the 9th century from Western Europe. The most well known of them is perhaps St. Ansgar (801-865), Archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen, called the Apostle of the North, who stood, among others, behind the building of the first churches in Denmark and Sweden.[67] Besides the missionnaries, the new religion was spread into the Scandinavian countries by the local upper social classes, namely kings and earls. In Denmark, it was Harald Bluetooth (died ca. 985) who accepted Christianity and raised the famous Jelling stones in Jutland. In the runic inscription on one of the stones he called himself the person who made the Danes Christian. However, as Jens Peter Schjødt points out, this certainly did not mean that the old pagan religion ended in Denmark, to use his own words, "overnight," to say nothing of the other Scandinavian countries.[68] On the contrary, the old and new religions had long coexisted in the society: "Og vi ved også, at selv om en person opfattede sig selv som kristen, så forkastede han ikke uden videre troen på, at de gamle guder kunne træde til i bestemte situationer, ligesom man ikke forkastede de gamle ritualer, som ofte blev videreført i et kristent regi."[69] The arrival of Christianity to Scandinavia did not mean a sudden turn of the old religion into a new one, but rather a continuity where many aspects of the old religion

[66] "A *diachronic* investigation of language concerns the development of language or its parts over time." (Raclavský. "A Model of Language in a Synchronic and Diachronic Sense", p. 1).
[67] Campbell. "Anschar", p. 544-545. See also Schjødt. "Aspekter ved kristningen af Norden", p. 376-377.
[68] Schjødt. "Aspekter ved kristningen", p. 377.
[69] Ibid.

passed onto or were adapted by Christianity.[70] However, there was one aspect that changed radically with the introduction of the Christian culture to Scandinavia – the activities of its representatives started the transmission from the oral to the written tradition.

In Iceland, Christianity was accepted by the general assembly, Alþing, in the year 1000 or 999, as is now rather believed based on the recalculation of this date performed by Einarsdóttir.[71] However, the acceptance of the new religion did not mean an immediate end of paganism and some heathen practices, and worship of the heathen gods was allowed to continue for several years.[72] Later in the 11th century, the first Icelandic bishopery was established in Skálholt (1057), followed by the bishopery at Hólar in 1107. Concerning the power of the local bishops, Byock writes: "The two bishops were often prominent and prestigious men; however, beyond governing the internal life of the Church, these religious leaders exercised little real authority."[73] Unlike the situation in continental Scandinavia, the ecclesiastical power did not have much influence on secular issues in Iceland. On the contrary, Byock emphasizes the fact that: "Chieftains and influential farmers met at the assemblies and regulated almost all points of contention between the Church and lay society. Virtually nowhere in medieval Europe, especially in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, did laymen exercise as much control over the Church as they did in Iceland."[74] Originally, the Icelandic Church was subordinated to the Achbishop of Bremen and later to Archbishop of Lund. But as Turville-Petre and Olszewska state: "Both Lund and Bremen were far removed from Iceland, and probably the Archbishops knew little about conditions there. They did not often interfere in Iceland's affairs."[75] More likely than centres of power, the Icelandic bishoperies functioned as cultural, i.e. literary and scholarly, centres.

The question important for the aims of this thesis is of course in how much the Church influenced the form and content of Old Norse-Icelandic literature and especially the structures beyond it. One of the specific features of medieval Icelandic literary production is that it was not limited to the religious environment of the Church schools or monasteries.[76] Besides the schools located at the aforementioned episcopal seats in Skálholt and Hólar, there were also two secular schools in Iceland situated on farms in Oddi and Haukadal. Nevertheless, many

[70] As regards the time reckoning, this process is well visible especially in the case of the pagan feast days that were included in the Christian calendar, for instance the most important heathen feast *jól* was turned into Christmas.
[71] Alþing was the general Icelandic assembly founded in 930 and held regularly every summer.
[72] Turville-Petre, Olszewska. "Preface", p. ix.
[73] Byock. "Governmental Order", p. 34.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid, p. x.
[76] The first Icelandic monastery was founded in 1133.

Old Norse works are anonymous and we do not know whether their writers studied in the Church or secular schools. Many of them were probably clerics, but certainly not all of them. We know the names of some secular authors, for instance Snorri Sturluson, the author of many kings' sagas and the well-known *Snorri's Edda*, or the aforementioned Ari Þorgilsson, called Ari the Wise, who was both a priest and a chieftain. Snorri was educated in Oddi and Ari in Haukadal where he had been taught by a priest, but also by a chieftain: "Ari opholdt sig således i Haukadal til han var godt tyve år gammel. Her har han fået sin uddannelse, antagelig en lægmandsuddannelse hos den berejste Hall og en lærd uddannelse hos præsten Teit."[77] The genres and topics of Old Norse literature were neither implicitly religious nor Christian. The Icelandic writers also recorded the pagan history of their country, mythology and other stories surviving in the oral tradition. As the Czech scholar Helena Kadečková writes: "Thanks to the late acceptance of Christianity, that in addition happened in a non-standard way and tolerated at first the private worshiping of pagan gods, have the pagan lays and the events of the pagan past still remained in vivid memory of the people in the time when the Icelanders began to acquire the written form of literature."[78] The lesser influence of the Church manifested itself also in the fact that many authors, including priests, were writing in vernacular. As Pernille Hermann points out, for Iceland the early production of literature written in the domestic language was typical: "Sammenlignet med de øvrige nordiske lande begyndte man på Island tidligt at skrive litteratur på folkesproget."[79] The exceptionally rich production of secular literature in Iceland was probably brought about by the fact that manuscript writing was not only performed in monasteries.

On the other hand, the learned Icelanders were well acquainted with the religious and historiographical Latin literature from continental Europe. The medieval obsession with annals, computistical literature or Easter tables also arrived to the North and led to the formation of the local annalistic and other historiographical literature or computistical treatises that contained foreign ways of time reckoning as the AD dating system, the Roman calendar or the Christian liturgical calendar. As already mentioned, local and foreign time reckoning and perception have long coexisted in Old Norse literature and were, to some extent, blended by the narrators. However, in some genres the traces of domestic pre-Christian time perception remained more visible, while from the others they almost disappeared, as I will show in what follows.

[77] Einarsdóttir. *Studier i kronologisk metode*, p. 15.
[78] Kadečková. "Předmluva", p. 6.
[79] Hermann. "Fortid og forandring", p. 392.

3.2.2. The increase of royal power

The original form of Old Norse society was the so-called gentile or kin-based society (in modern Icel. *ættasamfélag*). Power did not lie in the hands of a single person, but was shared by the representatives of free farmers who met regularly at various assemblies. In the whole of Scandinavia, the tradition of assemblies developed into a very elaborate system. Every year several local assemblies were held in each country's districts, for instance the spring assembly (*várþing*) that was to be attended by all free farmers from each particular district: "All local farmers and *goðar* (chieftains) were required to attend the *várþing* and together they participated in disputes, resolutions, and alliances."[80] Besides the spring assembly there were two other assemblies, the summer and autumn assembly. While the autumn assembly could be attended by all free farmers as well, the summer assembly, which at the same time served as a law-making court (*lǫgþing*), was usually only open to chosen representatives of the various districts. In continental Scandinavia we encounter the gradual centralization of power into the hands of a few noble families whose members were allowed to attend this assembly. The gentile society was gradually changing here into the feudal system with a king and the royal family standing in the foreground of society. As the Norwegian historian Knut Helle claims: "Mot slutten av 1200-tallet står kongen som rettssamfunnets opprettholder: han sørger for påtale og straff etter loven og er den høyeste dommer, han utbedrer loven og skaper ny rett. Samtidig er kongen samfunets militære leder."[81]

In Iceland, which was settled from Norway from the end of the 9th century to the first quarter of the 10th century, the situation was a somewhat special one when compared to continental Scandinavia. The settlers also established local assemblies, which, as Byock writes, "had been the major forum for meetings of freemen and aristocrats in the old Scandinavian and Germanic social order."[82] However, Icelanders made certain changes to the Scandinavian concept of assemblies; above all, they "excluded overlords with coercive power and expanded the mandate of the assembly to fill the full spectrum of the interests of the landed free farmers."[83] In this way, they prevented the centralization of power into the hands of overlords.

As already mentioned, around the year 930 the general assembly for the whole country known as *alþing* was established and held once per year. Alþing was held in summer and it was an analogue to the continental Scandinavian *lǫgþing* with the difference that it could be

[80] Byock. "Governmental Order", p. 31.
[81] Helle. *Norge blir en stat*, p. 160.
[82] Byock. "The Icelandic Althing", p. 3.
[83] Ibid.

attended by all free Icelandic farmers, not only the chosen representatives of nobility. As Stephen Pax Leonard writes: "One is hesitant to use the word 'national' in this very early context, but the *alþingi* embraced all Icelanders who had a right to attend (*eiga þingreitt*)."[84] This right was had by basically all free men who were not outlawed. This system of governing the country that, according to Byock, shows "unusually strong proto-democratic and republican tendencies" lasted until the year 1264 when Iceland lost its independence to Norway.[85] I believe that the late arrival of feudalism to Iceland, when compared to continental Scandinavia, and this avoiding the centralization of power into the hands of the overlords and the kings, influenced the local time reckoning and understanding to some extent, as I will show later in the thesis.

[84] Leonard. *Language, Society and Identity in Early Iceland*, p. 104.
[85] Byock. "The Icelandic Althing", p. 1-2.

Part I: Traces of domestic time perception in Old Norse literature

In the following four chapters I will examine the temporal structure of Old Norse works and genres that seem to be rooted in the pre-Christian domestic time perception (both *Eddas*, legendary and family sagas). Although these texts are preserved in manuscripts from the 13th and 14th century, they relate to much older times, as I have already mentioned in the chapter introducing the primary sources. The eddic poems and legendary sagas narrate events that happened in the mythical or legendary-heroic past, the stories of family sagas often begin in the time when Iceland was being settled by Norwegians (the second half of the 9th century), or even earlier. In my opinion, all these genres contain several features characteristic for time reckoning and perception in pre-Christian gentile Old Norse society. In this first part of the thesis, I would like to reconstruct an approximate image of time as it originally could have been perceived by Old Norse people.

4. Time in *Poetic Edda*

I will begin with an analysis of time indications and images of time presented in *Poetic Edda*, a compilation of Old Norse mythological poetry. As stated earlier, eddic lays have mostly been preserved in the manuscript known as *Codex Regius* (around 1270).[86] The anonymous lays contained in the manuscript can be divided into mythological and heroic according to their content. The mythological lays depict the history of the world from genesis to the end, mythical wisdom and morals and the many adventures of gods who often fight against giants. While giants seem to embody chaos and disruption, gods are presented as the guardians of the world's order and balance. The heroic lays narrate that which I will call the legendary-heroic past: the time of legendary heroes such as Sigurð Fáfnisbani or Helgi Hundingsbani. These heroes represent the Germanic heroic ideal – they avenge the injustice caused to them at any price and always accept their inevitable tragic fate without hesitation.

Concerning the research of Old Norse time perception, the mythological part of *Poetic Edda* is much more interesting than the heroic one. Especially the poem called *Vǫluspá* (*Seeress's Prophecy*) offers a valuable insight into the character and typical features of Old Norse cosmogonic time, as it depicts the very beginning of time and its subsequent division into different time units. The images of time depicted in *Vǫluspá* will be therefore the main concern of this chapter, but several examples from other eddic lays will be mentioned as well. The primary aim is to define the basic frame of cosmogonic time from its beginning to end (or another beginning depending on the way one interprets the last strophes of *Vǫluspá*, as I will show later). The specific features of Old Norse cosmogonic images of time will be compared with the concept of time that stands in the roots of Christian time perception, namely the one defined by St. Augustine in the eleventh book of his *Confessions*. Augustine's short, but comprehensive treatise about time represents the only compact theory of time written in the Middle Ages, as the issue of time was not a common topic of theological discussions.

4.1. The beginning of time

As already mentioned, the mythical explanation of how time, or more precisely time reckoning, was created by gods can be found in the poem *Vǫluspá*. In this very first poem of the eddic compilation a seeress reveals, on the demand of the highest god Óðinn, the history of the

[86] Some of the eddic poems can also be found in other medieval manuscripts and their extracts have been preserved in *Snorri's Edda* or various types of sagas as a part of the prosimetrum, as stated before. Stanzas written in the eddic metres can be found in runic inscriptions as well.

world, from its creation to the final battle of the gods with giants, *ragnarǫk*, and the world's renewal. The placement of *Vǫluspá* at the beginning of *Poetic Edda* in the modern editions is based on the original sequence of the poems in the aforementioned medieval manuscript of *Codex Regius*. The Czech translator and editor of *Poetic Edda*, Helena Kadečková, notes that the medieval scribe "began with the mythological poems which he arranged according to the importance of their content. The leading one is *Vǫluspá*, a fundamental poem about the genesis, existence and end of the world (…)."[87] The seeress, *vǫlva*, opens her speech by asking her audience, the descendants of the god Heimdall, i.e. the humans, to listen carefully to what she is going to say. She continues by giving the reason why she has decided to reveal the world's history – Óðinn has asked her to narrate the ancient stories that she bears in her mind (*forn spjǫll fira, þau er fremst of man*; translated by Carolyne Larrington: "living beings' ancient stories, those I remember from furthest back").[88]

After describing the creation of the world of humans *Miðgard* (*Vsp* 4), the seeress tells the audience about the creation of the sun, moon and stars that preceded the creation of humans (*Vsp* 5):

Sól varp sunnan, sinni mána,	From the south, Sun, companion of the moon,
hendi inni hægri um himinjǫður;	threw her right hand round the sky's edge;
sól þat né vissi, hvar hon sali átti,	Sun did not know where she had her hall,
stjǫrnur þat né vissu, hvar þær staði áttu,	the stars did not know where they had their stations,
máni þat né vissi, hvat hann megins átti.	the moon did not know what might he had.[89]

The tracks and movements of the celestial bodies were originally undetermined and chaotic, until the need for the creation of the basic time units was fulfilled by the council of gods (*Vsp* 6):

Þá gengu regin ǫll á rǫkstóla,	Then all the Powers went to the thrones of fate,
ginnheilǫg goð, ok um þat gættusk;	the sacrosanct gods, and considered this:
nótt ok niðjum nǫfn of gáfu,	to **night and her children** they gave names,
morgin hétu ok **miðjan dag**,	**morning** they named and **midday**,
undorn ok **aftan**, árum at telja.	**afternoon** and **evening**, to reckon up in years.[90]

[87] Kadečková. "Předmluva", p.11.
[88] *The Poetic Edda*. Transl. C. Larrington, p. 4.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.

The gods created time reckoning with the intention to obtain order in the human world. The division of time into various units is presented as an important element that prevents the human world from declining back into the original cosmogonic chaos. *Miðgarð* is constituted not only by certain spatial borders, the meaning of the name itself being "mid-yard," i.e. an enclosed space in the middle,[91] but also by the exact flow of time. The flow of time has also been enclosed into certain borders acquired by creating time reckoning and time indications. The basic division of time is into day and night, while the day is, in the quoted strophe, further divided into morning (*morgin*), noon/midday (*miðjan dag*), mid-afternoon (*undorn*) and evening (*aftan*). Time reckoning was created by the gods for people and it was linked to the human sphere from its very beginning. Concerning this fact, it is worth mentioning that the Old Norse name for the human era itself, *verǫld*, includes a reference to time – *verr* means "man" and *ǫld* means "time," "age" or "epoch," but also "cycle" or "period." Furthermore, the word *ǫld* alone can stand for "men" or "people."[92] Gurevich mentions several examples from eddic lays where the term *ǫld* means people and emphasizes the close connection between the concept of time and of organic life in Old Germanic culture.[93]

The aforementioned fact that time reckoning was created by the gods does not mean that they have full control over the flow of time. On the contrary, Old Norse gods are, along with humans, exposed to its effects and they can avoid growing old only through eating the apples of eternal youth. The consequences of losing these apples are shown in the myth about the kidnapping of their keeper and guardian, the goddess Iðunn. In this very first myth narrated in *Snorri's Edda* in the part called *Skáldskaparmál* (*Skáld* 2-3) we can read that "the Æsir were badly affected by Iðunn's disappearance and soon became grey and old."[94] The inability of the gods to release themselves from the flow of time completely, that is to resist it without eating the apples, might come from the fact that they only created time reckoning, and not time itself. This is very different from the Christian images of the beginning of time present in Augustine's *Confessions*. According to Augustine, the flow of time is solely connected to the human world, while God himself is not subordinated to it. While humans live in time (*tempus*), God exists in eternity (*aeternitas*), or it is maybe better to say that *God himself is eternity*. Time was created by God together with the human world and had not existed earlier: "Thou hast made all things;

[91] See Cleasby-Vigfússon. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, p. 426.
[92] Ibid, p. 763.
[93] Gurevich. *Categories of Medieval Culture*, p. 96.
[94] Sturluson. *Edda*, p. 60.

and before all times Thou art: neither in any time was time not," writes Augustine (XI, 16).[95] As the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur notes, by stating that God has created all different times Augustine excludes the possibility that there could have existed any times before the creation of the human world and its time.[96] If such times existed they would also have to have been created by God "since God is the maker of all time" and thus "a time before all creation is unthinkable."[97] Christianity has raised God above time, and the Christian God is not subordinated to its flow, contrary to Old Norse gods. Iðunn's apples may prevent the gods from getting old, but cannot save them from dying. The "eternity" provided to them by eating the apples is thus only partial: an eternal youth, but not an eternal existence. As I will show later in this chapter, the gods, whose death is predetermined, cannot stop the flow of time to avoid their destiny. Although they stand behind the division of time into time units, their own lives are temporal and governed by time.

In Old Norse cosmology, time reckoning was created together with the human world and for humans, but time itself seems to precede this world. The flow of time affects not only the humans, but also the gods and other beings within the mythological sphere. In eddic poems one can find even a few remarks on the existence of time before the creation of the world. For instance, in *Vafþrúðnismál* (*Vþm* 29; 35) it is stated that the giant Bergelmi, whose family line survived after the gods killed the giant Ymi and his ancestors,[98] was born "uncountable winters before the earth was made" (*ǫrófi vetra áðr væri jǫrð of skǫpuð*).[99] John Lindow calls this period before the creation of the universe "the distant past," while the period of creation, that is the creation of the cosmos, time reckoning and humans, would be "the near past."[100] However, Lindow's point of view lies in the time when most of the myths take place, that is "the mythological present."[101] If one moves the point of view to historical time, which will be the case in this thesis, one must name the various periods of time differently. The time before the creation of the world might be called "the pre-cosmogonic past" and the time when the adventures of the gods take place simply "the mythical past."

[95] *The Confessions*, p. 234.
[96] Ricoeur. *Time and Narrative I.*, p. 25.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Later on, the world of humans *Miðgard* was created by the gods from the corpse of Ymi.
[99] *The Poetic Edda*. Transl. C. Larrington, p. 41. It is interesting to notice that time before the creation of the world is counted in winters, not in summers. Counting time in winters is one of the features typical of Old Norse time reckoning.
[100] Lindow. *Norse Mythology*, p. 40.
[101] Ibid.

4.2. The essential role of night and the moon

Let me now return to the topic of time reckoning as depicted in eddic myths. I have already mentioned that the first created time units described in *Vǫluspá* are connected to day and night. It may only be a minor detail, but one can notice that in the aforementioned stanza 6, describing the creation of time reckoning, night seems to be paid more attention than day. Not only it is mentioned first among the basic time units, but two different expressions are used in connection with it. Night (*nótt*) is mentioned together with *niðar*, the plural form of *nið*, that stands for nights with a waning moon. While *nótt* was a general term for night as the opposite of day, *nið* was used for the wane of the moon or moonless nights, i.e. the new moon phase when the moon is not visible to the eye.[102]

In another poem from *Poetic Edda*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, *nið* is presented as the opposite of *ný* (*Vþm* 25):

Vafþrúðnir kvað:	Vafþrúðni said:
"Dellingr heitir, hann er Dags faðir,	"Delling he is called, he is Day's father,
en Nótt var Nǫrvi borin;	and Night was born of Nǫrr;
ný ok nið skópu nýt regin	**new moon and dark of the moon the beneficent Powers made**
ǫldum at ártali."	**to count the years for men.**"[103]

To give people a tool to reckon time (*ǫldum at ártali*) the gods created *ný* and *nið*, two complementary moon phases. Whereas *nið* was a term for the new moon or the wane of the moon, by *ný* "the ancients seem to have meant the waxing or even the full moon."[104] As Cleasby and Vigfússon point out, the names for these two moon phases (that is the new moon and the full moon) are used alliteratively as terms opposite to one another in Old Norse literature.[105] Let me add that Old Norse perception of time in general seems to underline the alternation of what one could call "contrast time periods." *Ný* and *nið* would be only one example of these complementary pairs, while among the others would be "day" and "night" or the other basic time units, enumerated in the aforementioned fifth strophe from *Vǫluspá*, "morning" and "midday" versus "afternoon" and "evening." An important complementary pair within Old Norse time perception is also "winter" and "summer," as I will mention later.

[102] Cleasby-Vigfússon. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, p. 454.
[103] *The Poetic Edda*. Transl. C. Larrington, p. 41.
[104] Cleasby-Vigfússon. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, p. 459.
[105] Ibid.

However, the phrase *ný ok nið* can also have a certain meaning as a whole. A nice example of this can be found in the *Guta saga* that depicts the early history of the Gotlanders. Although this chapter deals with the images of time in *Poetic Edda*, I think that this particular example should be mentioned here because it shows that referring to the moon phases was a common part of Old Norse time reckoning. In the beginning of the saga we read that some of the Gotlanders travel to the Byzantine Empire where they intend to settle down. They ask the emperor permission to stay in the land for a certain period of time and to express the length of this period they use the phrase *ný ok nið*. However, it soon shows up that the emperor understands the meaning of this phrase and the time span it covers somewhat differently than the settlers (*Gt* i):

Þar baddus þair byggias firir af grika kunungi **um ny ok niþar**. Kunungr þann lufaþi þaim ok hugþi, et ai maira þan ann manaþr vari. Siþan gangnum manaþi, vildi hann þaim bort visa. En þair annsuaraþu þa, **et ny ok niþar vari e ok e**, ok quaþu, so sir vara lufat. Þissun þaira viþratta quam firir drytningina um siþir. Þa segþi han: "Minn herra kunungr! Þu lufaþi þaim byggia um ny ok niþar. Þa ir þet e ok e, þa matt þu ai af þaim taka." So bygþus þair þar firir ok enn byggia (…)

There they asked permission of the Byzantine emperor to live **"for the waxing and waning."** The emperor granted them that, thinking that this meant no more than a month. After a month had passed, he wanted to send them on their way. But they answered then **that "the waxing and waning" meant "for ever and ever"** and said that was just what they had been promised. This dispute of theirs came at last to the notice of the empress. She then said: "My lord emperor, you promised them that they could settle for the waxing and the waning of the moon. Now that continues for ever and ever, so you cannot take that promise away from them." So there they settled and still live.[106]

The editor and translator of *Guta saga*, Christine Peel, writes that the phrase *ný ok nið* was used as a legal term in the oldest laws, while in other law texts "month" was used for the same time period.[107] This is also the interpretation of this phrase (i.e. a month) that the Byzantine emperor favours and he understands *ný ok nið* as the period of time between the new moon and

[106] *Guta Saga*. Transl. Ch. Peel, p. 5.
[107] Ibid, p. 26.

the full moon. Another meaning, used by the Gotlanders, is "forever," that is for all the new moons and full moons ever.[108]

As regards the different phases of the moon one can also mention *skarða mána*, "the crescent moon," also to be found in *Poetic Edda*, this time in the heroic lay, *Vǫlundarkviða* (*Vkv* 6):

Þat spyrr Níðuðr, Níára dróttinn,	Níðuð heard, lord of the Níárar,
at einn Vǫlundr sat í Ulfdǫlum;	that Vǫlund sat alone in Wolfdales.
nóttum fóru seggir, neglðar váru brynjur,	By night men journeyed, their corslets studded,
skildir bliku þeira við inn skarða mána.	their shields glinted in the waning[109] moon.[110]

This scene from the lay about the blacksmith Vǫlund where men are riding in the light of the crescent moon has awakened the interest of the Swedish scholar Natanael Beckman. According to him, the reference to the moon phase in this scene of a night ride does not have poetic, but merely practical reasons. In his opinion, the crescent moon can be understood as an important time indication and the warriors have chosen this particular moon phase to ride out to attack their enemies on purpose.[111] It is hard to say how true this could be, but what seems to be certain is that the moon and its different phases played an important role within Old Norse culture as regards time reckoning. In another eddic poem, *Alvíssmál*, the moon itself is called *ártala*, "the year-counter" or "the year-teller" (*Alm* 14):

Alvíss kvað:	Alvís said:
"Máni heitir með mǫnnum, en mylinn með goðum,	"Moon it's called by men, and ball by the gods,

[108] In some of the contemporary Scandinavian languages one can still find the relics of the ancient division to *ný* and *nið* including the phrase *ný ok nið*. For instance, the Danish noun *næ* or Norwegian *ne* (with the origins in Old Norse *nið*) mean, quoting from *Den danske ordbog*, "periode hvor månen aftager fra fuldmåne til nymåne". (https://ordnet.dk/ddo/ordbog?query=n%C3%A6, 12. 12. 2017). It's opposite *ny* (with the origins in Old Norse *ný*) means "periode hvor månen tiltager fra nymåne til fuldmåne." (http://ordnet.dk/ddo/ordbog?query=ny, 12. 12. 2017). The two nouns can be used together in the phrase *i ny og næ*, or in Norwegian *i ny og ne*, that can be translated as "from time to time." (https://www.ordbogen.com/da/search#/auto/ordbogen-daen/i%20ny%20og%20n%C3%A6, 3. 6. 2019).

[109] Larrington's translation is "the waning moon." However, the crescent moon can both appear when the moon is waning and waxing.

[110] *The Poetic Edda*. Transl. C. Larrington, p. 99.

[111] "Man kan ju vilja häri se en blott poetisk utsmyckning, men det är nog även ett korrekt återgivande av de förhållanden, varunder ett sådant tåg plägade ske. (…) De där givna exemplen visa, att man ofta låtit beräkningar av månens hjälp bestämma sina planer av hithörande slag" (Beckman. "Inledning", p. cxxxii). According to Beckman, the reason behind attacking the enemies during the half-moon could be that it neither was fully light, like during day or during the full-moon, nor complete darkness, as during the new moon. As he claims, people planned attacks on their enemies with regard to the moon phases (Ibid, p. cxxxiii).

kalla hverfanda hvél helju í, skyndi jǫtnar, en skin dvergar, **kalla alfar ártala**."	in hell it's the whirling wheel, the giants call it the hastener, the dwarfs the shiner, **elves call it counter of years.**"[112]

The moon is called *ártali* also in *Snorri's Edda* (*Skáld* 69) in the chapter where various poetic metaphors (*heiti*) for heaven, the sun and moon are enumerated:

Tungl: máni, ný, nið, **ártali**, mulinn, fengari, glámr, skyndir, skjálgr, skrámr.	Moon: lune, waxer, waner, **year-counter**, clipped, shiner, gloam, hastener, squinter, gleamer.[113]

In *Vafþrúðnismál* both the moon and the sun are described as the means to reckon time in the human world (*Vþm* 23):

Mundilfari heitir, hann er mána faðir ok svá Sólar it sama; himin hverfa þau skulu hverjan dag **ǫldum at ártali**.	Mundilfari he is called, the father of Moon and likewise of Sun; they must circle through the sky, every day **to count the years for men**.[114]

Similar to many other ancient cultures, Old Norse time reckoning was originally based on the lunar calendar, or more precisely the lunisolar calendar. As Ginzel writes, this is a feature inherited from the Old Germanic tradition: "Man wird als Dauer des Monats die Zeit von einem Neulichte des Mondes bis zum nächsten angenommen haben, wie allgemein bei den nach dem Lunisolarjahre rechnenden Völkern."[115] He also emphasizes the role of night within Germanic time reckoning: "Mit dem Gebrauche des Lunisolarjahres stimmt überein die Gepflogenheit der Germanen, die Tage nach Nächten zu zählen; dieser Usus hat sich trotz des Überganges zu den julianischen Sonnenjahr sehr lange in deutschen Mitteralter erhalten."[116] I have already mentioned that Old Norse time and its flow seems to consist of an alternation of contrast time periods, complementary to each other, like morning and evening, day and night,

[112] *The Poetic Edda*. Transl. C. Larrington, p. 107.
[113] Sturluson. *Edda*. Transl. A. Faulkes, p. 134.
[114] *The Poetic Edda*. Transl. C. Larrington, p. 40.
[115] Ginzel. *Handbuch*, p. 57.
[116] Ibid.

new moon and full moon. As regards day and night, night was probably the more important one in this pair and day was understood as complementary to night. Both night and day are portrayed as mythological figures in *Poetic* and *Snorri's Edda* (*Vþm* 25; *Gylf* 10), but in *Snorri's Edda* (*Gylf* 10) one can read that Night was the older of the two, as she was the mother of Day. The moon and sun are presented as mythological beings as well, but contrary to night and day they are siblings (*Vþm* 23; *Gylf* 11).

Furthermore, night had also another important role than that of a time unit within Old Norse perception of time. Night was the time when the future could reveal itself to people (or gods) in their dreams. In *Alvíssmál*, night is called *draumnjǫrun* (*Alm* 30), which is a compound made from the words *draum* ("dream"), and Njǫrun, which, according to some scholars, was a name of a goddess. Freely translated the compound would thus mean the "goddess of dreams."[117] The role of dreams in Old Norse mythology is essential. The end of the human world, *ragnarǫk*, is for instance preceded by the dreams of the god Baldr in which he foresees his own death. Dreams and various other types of foreshadowing are also a typical feature of many Old Norse sagas as I will show later in the thesis. In contrast to Christian medieval ideas, night was the time when one's fate could manifest itself in the form of a prophetic dream. This brings me to the question of how the past, present and future were related to each other in Old Norse perception.

4.3. The relations between the past, present and future

Contemporary man usually perceives the past as something closed and non-repeatable, the present as the only really existing moment of time and the future as something that nobody knows until it becomes present. Such a perception of time is to a great extent based on the thoughts of St. Augustine and the way he understood time. The basic nature of time according to Augustine is movement (the flow of time) and change: time is constantly flowing forward as the present changes into the past. As Augustine writes, even the current hour is not entirely present, because "whatsoever of it hath flown away, is past; whatsoever remaineth, is to come" (XI, 20).[118] The present in Augustine's conception thus shrinks to a bare moment, the moment when the future is becoming the past: "If an instant of time be conceived, which cannot be divided into the smallest particles of moments, that alone is it, which may be called present. Which yet flies with such speed from future to past, as not to be lengthened out with the least

[117] The strophe is also quoted in *Snorri's Edda* (*Skáld* 78).
[118] *The Confessions*, p. 236.

stay. For if it be, it is divided into past and future" (XI, 20).[119] The fact that time is constantly flowing and changing is also the main difference between time and eternity which is omnipresent. As Augustine writes: "But the present, should it always be present, and never pass into time past, verily it should not be time, but eternity" (XI, 14).[120]

Augustine's concept of the relations between the past, present and future is very different from what one encounters in Old Norse mythology. The major source of information as regards this issue is again the aforementioned poem *Vǫluspá*. In the poem, the seeress introduces the three maidens called Norns, goddesses of fate, who are often interpreted as personifications of the past, present and future (*Vsp* 20):

Þaðan koma meyjar margs vitandi	From there come girls, knowing a great deal,
þrjár ór þeim sæ, er und þolli stendr;	three from the lake standing under the tree;
Urð hétu eina, **aðra Verðandi**,	**Urð one is called**, **Verðandi another** –
- skáru á skíði, - **Skuld ina þriðju**;	they carved on a wooden slip – **Skuld the third**;
þær lǫg lǫgðu, þær líf kuru	they laid down laws, they chose lives
alda bǫrnum, ørlǫg seggja.	for the sons of men, the fates of men.[121]

Among many other scholars, the figures of the Norns have awakened the interest of the American religionist Paul C. Bauschatz, author of the well-known book *The Well and the Tree* that deals with the perception of time in early Germanic culture. In the first essay of the book, Bauschatz examines the motif of the Norns together with the motives of the well and the tree also known from both *Poetic* and *Snorri's Edda*. In *Vǫluspá* we read about the world-tree Yggdrasil, the roots of which connect all the existing nine worlds. Close to the tree lies the so-called Urð's Well (*Urðarbrunnr*) named after one of the Norns. According to Bauschatz, it is Urð, the goddess of the past, who is of the highest importance among the three Norns and her connection to the well suggests that the well represents the events and actions of the past. As he also suggests, all events that have ever happened, all actions of every creature from all the existing worlds flow into the well in the form of dew which falls from the world-tree Yggdrasil. Thus, the well (i.e. the past) is constantly being filled up: " (…) the past is constantly increasing and pulling more and more time and events into itself; it alone has any

[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid, p. 235.
[121] *The Poetic Edda*. Transl. C. Larrington, p. 6.

assured strength or reality. Because of this, time is ever-changing, growing, and evolving."[122] Simultaneously, the Norns water the tree with waters of the well, as one can read in *Snorri's Edda* (*Gylf* 16):

Enn er þat sagt, at nornir þær, er byggja við Urðarbrunn, taka hvern dag vatn í brunninum ok með aurinn þann, er liggr um brunninn, ok ausa upp yfir askinn, til þess at eigi skuli limar hans tréna eða fúna.	It is also said that the Norns that dwell by Urð's well take water from the well each day and with it the mud that lies round the well and pour it up over the ash so that its branches may not rot or decay.[123]

The power of the past contained in the well maintains the existence of the tree and thus also of the whole universe and, at the same time, it can flow through the tree into the present reality and influence it. Let me add that Bauschatz's theory that the past can influence the present would find support in many sagas. Especially in family sagas one encounters scenes where the saga's characters seek the advice of their deceased forefathers and visit burial mounds where they fall asleep or sometimes stay overnight. During sleep, the wisdom and experiences of their forefathers can come to them and help them solve their present problems. Gurevich writes: "The ancestral graves and burial grounds were placed near the farmsteads of the living. The dead and the living were not two separate worlds but rather one world where the past, the present and the future went hand in hand and really coexisted."[124] He also mentions the belief that a forefather could be reborn in one of his descendants and in this way the past could be revived.

According to Bauschatz, the past is seen as dominant within Old Germanic time perception in general: "The past, as collector of events, is clearly the most dominant, controlling portion of all time. (…) The past is experienced, known, laid down, accomplished, sure, realized. The present, to the contrary, is in flux and confusion, mixed with irrelevant and significant details."[125] Bauschatz describes the Old Germanic time as binary, i.e. as a time that can be divided into the *past* and *nonpast*, not into the past, present and future: "What we nowadays call the 'future' is, within the structure of this Germanic system, just more of the nonpast, more

[122] Bauschatz. *The Well and the Tree*, p. 142. According to Bauschatz, the constant growing of the past must lead to one inevitable conclusion – one day the "container" of the past will become full and the universe will end, which is also why *Vǫluspá* is concluded with *ragnarǫk*, the end of the world.
[123] Sturluson. *Edda*. Transl. A. Faulkes, p. 19.
[124] Gurevich. "Space and Time in the Weltmodell", p. 51.
[125] Bauschatz. *The Well and the Tree*, p. 139.

flux, more confusion."[126] In my opinion, one cannot so strictly reject the existence of the future in early Germanic time perception. After all, there are three Norns and Skuld who is supposed to represent the future is one of them. Instead of doubting the existence of the future, one can rather ask if it was, in the minds of Old Norse people, as strictly divided from the present as it is in the mind of contemporary man. According to the eddic myths, another role of the Norns, besides watering the tree, lies in predicting the fates of humans. As one can see from various Old Norse sources, *Vǫluspá* and other eddic poems not being an exception, the future could manifest itself in the present in the form of foreshadowing. The principle of foreshadowing is based on the fact that one's future is, in a way, omnipresent and can be experienced in the form of dreams, premonitions etc. The future within Old Norse perception is predestined and lies in the "distant present," but it remains unknown unless it reveals itself in the form of foreshadowing.

In his aforementioned study *When the Norns Have Spoken*, Anthony Winterbourne also examines the relations between the past, present and future within Old Norse perception. Like Bauschatz, Winterbourne considers the past to be the dominant period of time. Furthermore, he suggests that even the predestined future is rooted in the past. Concerning this fact, he points out that the names of the Norns do not have to be interpreted as past, present and future, but rather as Fate, Being and Necessity and states that: "In this recasting of the names, the *past* has become fate – *not* the future."[127] Predestined fate thus lies in the past and what constitutes the future is the necessity that this predestined fate will be fulfilled. One's fate has already been defined in the past and cannot be changed either by the activities of men or gods who exist in time: "The nontemporal reality of the truth laid down by the Norns cannot be altered by the temporal activities of the gods."[128] Contrary to the Norns, people and gods are both subjected to the flow of time and therefore cannot change their fate. What they can do is either deny it or heroically accept it.

The idea of predefined fate runs through the whole of *Vǫluspá* and culminates by depicting the motif of *ragnarǫk*, the final battle between the gods and giants after which the human world will end. The whole second half of the poem can be characterized by a threatening atmosphere of the world and people gradually approaching an inevitable tragic fate. However, the final strophes of the poem leave the hope that a new world will be created after the destruction of the

[126] Ibid.
[127] Winterbourne. *When the Norns Have Spoken*, p. 86.
[128] Ibid, p. 89.

old one. I will take a more detailed look at these final strophes, which might also bear witness to Old Norse time's cyclicity, in the following subchapter.

4.4. *Ragnarǫk* and the cyclical time of the world

Within this subchapter I would like to discuss the question of cyclicity of Old Norse cosmogonic time. Many scholars see the main proof of time's cyclicity in the final strophes of *Vǫluspá* that describe the events after *ragnarǫk*. The eddic poem *Vǫluspá* does not end with the scene of the world's decline but continues by depicting its subsequent resumption. The earth emerges from the sea again covered with green grass and life continues on it, symbolized by an eagle flying in the sky and hunting fish, as the seeress foresees (*Vsp* 59):

Sér hon **upp koma ǫðru sinni**	She sees, **coming up a second time**,
jǫrð ór ægi **iðjagrœna**;	earth from the ocean, **eternally green**;[129]
falla forsar, flýgr ǫrn yfir,	the waterfalls plunge, an eagle soars above them,
sá er á fjalli fiska veiðir.	over the mountains hunting fish.[130]

While describing the new world the seeress uses the expression *ǫðru sinni*, where *ǫðru* is a form of the adjective *annarr*, meaning "the other" or "the next," and *sinni* an adverb of time that means "a time" (used for example in the expression like "the first time," "each time" etc.). The expression can be translated as "a second time," "another time" or "again." The use of this expression while describing the new world's creation is often interpreted as one piece of evidence that indicates the cyclicity of Old Norse cosmogonic time. Sigurður Nordal for instance writes: "Allgemein gesagt, ist dieser Abschnitt über die wiedererstandene Welt zum großen Teil Wiederholung der Darstellung des Weltbeginns und der ersten Zeit des Götterlebens."[131] Nordal refers here to the fourth stanza of *Vǫluspá* where the creation of the old world is described: the gods lifted the world up from a gap (the so-called *ginnungagap*), the sun began to shine on it and the earth was covered with green grass. Same as the old world, the new world is lifted up, this time from the ocean, and covered with green grass again. John Lindow compares the motif of lifting the world up in the beginning and end of the poem and writes that "the cosmos might be formed and reformed on multiple occasions by rising from the

[129] Finnur Jónsson translates the adjective *iðjagrœnn* as "light green" (*lysegrön*) or "again and again green" (*atter og atter grön, som stadig grönnes påny*) (Jónsson. *Orbog over det Norsk-Islandske Skjaldesprog*, p. 317).
[130] *The Poetic Edda*. Transl. C. Larrington, p. 11.
[131] Nordal. *Völuspá*, p. 108.

sea".[132] The English medievalist Ursula Dronke also underlines the cyclic character of time in *Vǫluspá*, as regards the parallels between the old and new world: "In *Vǫluspá* a cyclic chronological structure is finely worked out from the beginnings of the cosmos to its disintegration and renewal. (…) The Norse poet appears to emphasize the identity of the old and the new, the past and the present, as in a cycle of nature."[133] Same as Nordal, Dronke states that the re-establishing of the world seems to copy the process of the creation of the old world described in the first strophes of the poem.

After the world is renewed, the gods who have survived the final battle meet and return to the seat of their forefathers. In the grass they find *again* a relic of the old times, the golden playing dice of the gods from the old world (*Vsp* 61):

Þar munu **eftir** undrsamligar	There will be found **again** in the grass
gullnar tǫflur í grasi finnask,	the wonderful golden chequers,
þærs **í árdaga** áttar hǫfðu.	those which they [= the gods] possessed **in the bygone days**.[134]

The time indication used in the end of this strophe, *í árdaga*, "in the days of yore" or "in the bygone days," refers to the time when the dice were owned by the old kins (*áttar*) of gods and indicates that the new generation of gods will re-establish their rituals. This indication most probably refers to the very beginning of the poem (*Vsp* 3) where the seeress uses the expression *ár var alda*, "in times of yore," when describing the time when the old human world was created. The gods who have survived *ragnarǫk* recall this old world that then becomes a memory and goes into the past. In another eddic poem, *Vafþrúðnismál*, one can also read about the beginning of the new generation of people that, just as it had happened in the old world, descends from one initial couple. In the old world this couple was Ask and Embla and in the new one it is Líf and Lífþrasi/Leifþrasi (*Vþm* 45; *Gylf* 53).

All of the aforementioned strophes imply the cyclicity of cosmogonic time: the world is created *a second time*, the dice are found *again*, the gods renew the old social structures and rituals by returning to their seat with the playing dice from the bygone days and a new mankind arises from the first couple. However, the rejoicing atmosphere of the world's revival is slightly disturbed by the last strophe of the poem (*Vsp* 66):

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[132] Lindow. *Norse Mythology*, p. 43. Lindow also refers to an article by Jens Peter Schjødt, who expresses the opinion that time as depicted in *Vǫluspá* is cyclical as well: Schjødt, Jens Peter. "Völuspá – cyklisk tidsopfattelse i gammelnordisk religion" In: *Danske studier* 76 (1981), p. 91-95.
[133] Dronke. *The Poetic Edda*, p. 101.
[134] *The Poetic Edda*. Transl. C. Larrington, p. 11.

Þar kemr inn dimmi dreki fljúgandi,	There comes the shadow-dark dragon flying,
naðr fránn, neðan frá Niðafjǫllum,	the gleaming serpent, up from Dark-of-moon Hills;
berr sér í fjǫðrum, flýgr vǫll yfir,	Níðhǫgg flies over the plain, in his pinions
Niðhǫggr nái. Nú mun hon sǫkkvask.	he carries corpses; now she will sink down.[135]

This mysterious last strophe is contained in the both manuscripts in which *Vǫluspá* has been preserved to the present day, i.e. in the aforementioned *Codex Regius* from the second half of the 13th century and in the so-called *Hauksbók* from the middle of the 14th century. This might indicate that the strophe was an original part of the poem and not added subsequently to it by the medieval scribes. The question arises as to what could be the meaning of the strophe and how it should be interpreted. Many scholars have taken up this issue and expressed different opinions on the meaning of the strophe. Some assume that the arrival of the dragon foreshadows the future destruction of the new world. A supporter of this theory is for instance Terry Gunnell who writes about the final passage of *Vǫluspá* as follows: " (…) the final strophes detail the surfacing of a new world, and the appearance of a new generation of gods accompanied by the serpent Níðhǫgg, whose presence underlines the potential for further destruction."[136] Such interpretation of the last strophe would imply the cyclicity of cosmogonic time, because the fate of the old world would repeat itself in the new world with the same evil ending. In the new world, the dragon Níðhǫgg would take over the role of the wolf Fenri and snake Miðgardsorm that represent latent evil in the old world.

According to Dronke, the presence of the dragon in the end of the poem does not necessarily imply that the destruction of the world will repeat. She reminds the readers of the other occurrence of the serpent Níðhǫgg in *Vǫluspá* in strophe 39 where he feasts on corpses of murderers and other sinners in the old world before *ragnarǫk*. A similar vision of Níðhǫgg can be found in *Snorri's Edda* (*Gylf* 52) where the dragon punishes sinners in the afterlife.[137] Based on these two other occurrences of the dragon in both *Eddas*, Dronke states that the dragon from the last strophe of *Vǫluspá* feasts on those who died during *ragnarǫk*: "The dragon that eats the corpses in the realm of punishment flies up from the lightless landscape to take away from the last battlefield the dead that are its appointed food."[138]

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[135] Ibid, p. 12.
[136] Gunnel. *Eddic Poetry*, p. 85.
[137] *Þar kvelr Níðhǫggr nái framgengna*. "There Níðhǫgg torments the bodies of the dead." (Sturluson. *Edda*. Transl. A. Faulkes, p. 56).
[138] Dronke. *The Poetic Edda*, p. 60.

The last verse of the strophe, *Nú mun hon sǫkkvask* ("Now she will sink"), would, according to Dronke, relate to the seeress, *vǫlva*, who, after the *séance* is over, descends to her own world.[139] However, not all scholars share Dronke's opinion that the last verse relates to the seeress. For instance, the Icelandic scholar Finnur Jónsson is of a different opinion, suggesting that this last line of the poem is related to the dragon.[140] This theory is based on the fact that one of the manuscripts where *Vǫluspá* can be found contains the pronoun *hann* ("he"), while the other contain *hon* ("she") in the last verse (*nú mun hann/hon sǫkkvask*).[141] Concerning this version of the last line Jónsson claims: "Sætningen har man så tolket som betegnede, at nu er alt ondt og al ødelæggelse til ende."[142] The American scholar of Old Norse mythology, Lee M. Hollander, who examined the last line of the mysterious strophe as well, is of the same opinion. According to him, this line does not relate to *vǫlva*, but rather to the dragon: "The interpretation of this stanza has been much debated. If the reading of the main manuscript: 'now *she* will sink' be retained, with some editors, the meaning must be that the seeress is about to disappear again, having completed her prophecy. (…) But adopting the reading above [=now *he* will sink], it must mean the evil dragon who is seen on his usual flight, carrying corpses, but who will sink out of sight in the new order of things."[143]

It is hard to decide which reading of the last strophe of *Vǫluspá* is the correct one. If it is the dragon who sinks after appearing during the final battle it would imply that he disappears from the new world as the last relic of *ragnarǫk*. If it is rather *vǫlva* who sinks in the end of the poem, after having told all she knows about the history of the world, it would suggest that the dragon still exists in the new world as a symbol for its potential future destruction. This interpretation fits well into the aforementioned Old Norse tradition of foreshadowing because it implies that the fate of the new world is already predestined and foreseen by *vǫlva*. If one accepts this interpretation, one may also consider it another proof of time's cyclicity.

An important proof indicating that cosmogonic time is cyclical is also the fact that time reckoning in the new world starts anew. The eddic myths depict what happens with the symbols of time reckoning – the sun, moon and stars – during *ragnarǫk*. In *Vǫluspá* we read that the sun turns black and the stars vanish from the sky (*Vsp* 57). In *Snorri's Edda* (*Gylf* 51)

[139] Ibid, p. 61.
[140] Jónsson. *Völu-spá*, p. 19-20; 33-34.
[141] See *De gamle Eddadigte*, ed. F. Jónsson, p. 20.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Hollander. *The Poetic Edda*, p. 13.

we read that the sun is swallowed by a wolf[144], the moon is caught by another wolf[145] and the stars disappear from the sky.

However, the old sun, before it is destroyed, gives birth to a daughter which will replace her mother in the new world (*Vþm* 47)[146]:

Eina dóttur berr alfrǫðull,	Elf-radiance[147] will bear a daughter,
áðr hana fenrir fari;	before Fenrir destroys her;
sú skal ríða, þá er regin deyja,	she shall ride, when the Powers die,
móður brautir, mær.	the girl on her mother's path.[148]

The rebirth of the sun refers to the aforementioned stanza 6 of *Vǫluspá* that describes how the gods created the basic time units in the beginning of the old world and symbolizes a new beginning of time reckoning. Time itself does not end with the world's destruction, only time reckoning disappears together with humans, for whom it was originally created, but at the beginning of the new world it renews or restarts itself. Furthermore, the cosmogonic order is renewed as well, because the gods determine the movements of celestial bodies, just as they did in the beginning of the old world. The daughter of the Sun shall ride the same road or path as her mother.

Time, as depicted in *Poetic Edda*, seems to be superior to the world: it flows *before* it, *after* it and even *above* it, meaning *above* the gods, who are same as humans in being subordinated to the flow of time (although they have the power to at least partially release themselves from it). The creation of the world leads to the creation of time reckoning, a necessary condition for obtaining order in the world. Without celestial bodies and basic time units, the human world would decline into chaos. With the end of the world, the celestial bodies are destroyed, but they are renewed together with the new world and time reckoning continues.

Let me add that although time itself is independant of the human world, humans and their activities fill time with certain content. First of all, people are the primary reason time reckoning has been created, so as to organize their activities in time. Secondly, time is filled with human lives and events predestined by the Norns. The predestined fates of all people and

[144] This wolf is called Skoll in another part of *Snorri's Edda* (*Gylf* 12).
[145] The wolf is called Hati and Mánagarm (*Gylf* 12).
[146] This passage can also be found in *Snorri's Edda* (*Gylf* 53): "She shall ride, when the powers die, the maiden, her mother's road." (*Sú skal ríða, er regin deyja, móður brautir mær*) (Sturluson. *Edda*. Transl. A. Faulkes, p. 57).
[147] A poetic metaphore (*heiti*) for sun.
[148] *The Poetic Edda*. Transl. C. Larrington, p. 44.

the whole world wait to be fulfilled in the future or, depending on the way one understands it, in the distant present. However, to be fulfilled, fate must realize itself in time. Humans and the human world thus seem to stand at the intersection of time and fate.

5. Time in *Snorri's Edda*

Snorri's Edda was written around 1220 by Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241), a well-educated Icelandic nobleman, and survives in several medieval manuscripts.[149] In his work Snorri narrates Old Norse myths in prose form (hence its other name, *Prose Edda*). It is probable that his main intention with *Edda* was to record pagan mythology and the heritage of his ancestors that was slowly disappearing from people's memory. Here I will refer to two sections of *Snorri's Edda*, the so-called *Gylfaginning* ("The Tricking of Gylfi") and especially *Skáldskaparmál* ("Poetic Diction").

Gylfaginning depicts a dialogue between the legendary king Gylfi and the god Óðinn, of whom the king asks various questions, among others about the history of the world from its creation to its end and renewal. In *Skáldskaparmál*, Snorri enumerates different skaldic metaphors, the so-called *heiti* and *kennings*, many of which originated in Old Norse mythology. This part of *Snorri's Edda* would also serve as a handbook for skalds who would draw inspiration from the myths as well as the various poetic metaphors based on the mythical core. As Hermann writes: "Bogen kunne fastholde historierne i hukommelsen og dermed understøtte skjalde digtningens fortsatte eksistens i den kristne midderalder."[150] It might come as a surprise that in *Skáldskaparmál* can also be found a passage called *Heiti stundanna* ("Metaphors for times") where Snorri enumerates Old Norse time indications. In the following subchapter I would like to examine this interesting passage and the reason why Snorri might have decided to include it into his work.

5.1. Snorri's *Heiti stundanna*

Let me begin by explaining the principle behind the creation of *heiti*. This type of poetic metaphor is based on using a certain word in replacement for another. In skaldic poems, *heiti* are often used as poetic replacements for certain common nouns, such as man and woman, ship, battle or sea. For instance, man or woman can be referred to by different kinds of tree-names. Some *heiti* work on the principle of *pars pro toto*, i.e. a part representing the whole, for example when mentioning a part of the ship with the meaning of the whole ship. This might also be the case of *heiti stundanna* where different time units ("parts of time") are enumerated that together constitute the concept of time (*Skáld* 78):

[149] As Orton writes: "The work survives in a number of medieval manuscripts, the earliest dating from the early part of the fourteenth century" (Orton. "Pagan Myth and Religion", p. 308).
[150] Hermann. "Fortid og forandring", p. 395.

Þessi eru nǫfn stundanna: ǫld, forðum, aldr, fyrir lǫngu, ár, misseri, vetr, sumar, vár, haust, mánuðr, vika, dagr, nótt, morginn, aftann, kveld, árla, snemma, síðla, í sinn, fyrra dag, í næst, í gær, á morgun, stund, mél.	These are words for times: age, formerly, period, long ago, year, season, winter, summer, spring, autumn, month, week, day, night, morning, evening, nightfall, early, betimes,[151] late, at once, day before yesterday, next, yesterday, tomorrow, hour, while.[152]

The general meaning of the noun *stund*, used in the title and beginning of this passage, is "a certain length of time" (usually a shorter length like "a while").[153] However, the time indications mentioned in the list are of a very diverse nature. Besides the indications that mark certain intervals of time of different length, there are indications referring to the seasons and times of the day; some of the indications refer to the past, some to the future; some of them are adverbs (*árla*, *snemma* or *síðla*) and one of them even expresses frequency (*í sinn*). At first sight, Snorri's list may seem like a random gathering of time units. However, the idea that Snorri would just write down different time indications that first came to mind is unlikely. When examining the list more carefully, one notices that he has arranged the indications according to a certain order. The list begins with the longest periods of time, *ǫld* and *aldr* ("age" or "period") and proceeds to the shortest ones which are *stund* and *mél* ("while"). The term *ǫld*, mentioned first at the top of the list, could perhaps also stand for time itself (i.e. represent the general concept of time). These longest and shortest intervals of time form the frame of Snorri's list. The indications included within this frame are mostly arranged based on their complementarity: *sumar* is complementary to *vetr*, *vár* to *haust*, *nótt* to *dagr*, *morginn* to *aftann* and *kveld*, *árla* to *síðla*, *í gær* to *á morgun*. In the previous chapter, I mentioned that the image of time as based on contrast units complementary to each other was probably one of the characteristic features of Old Norse time understanding. This "dualistic" nature of time is also distinctly visible in Snorri's list of time indications.

The diversity of indications on Snorri's list led me to pose myself the following question – if a similar list of time indications was made by a modern man, how different would it be from Snorri's? The first possibility is that contemporary man would feel the necessity to write an

[151] Cleasby and Vigfússon translate the adverb *snemma* as "early," synonymous with *árla* (Cleasby-Vigfússon. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, p. 574). Faulkes translates this adverb by an archaic English expression "betimes" that also means "early," but in the sense "before the usual or expected time" (https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/betimes, 21. 7. 2019).
[152] Sturluson. *Edda*. Transl. A. Faulkes, p. 144.
[153] Cleasby-Vigfússon. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, p. 599.

essay about the nature of time and time perception, which was certainly not typical for Old Norse people. If he were to decide to only enumerate the time indication he knows, his list would probably be longer than Snorri's, as he would divide time into smaller pieces. The week would be divided into seven days, the days into hours, the hours into minutes and seconds. Time, in the contemporary perception, has become more abstract and fragmented, or one could perhaps say more "controlled," as every moment of it is perceived as a separate time unit. In Snorri's list, all moments of time shorter than morning or evening fall into the embrace of *stund* and *mél* that could be loosely translated as "a while." However, these "whiles" can be of very different lengths. The noun *mél/mel* can be used for a very short period of time, as is the case in the phrase *á því meli* ("at that moment"), but also for a quite long period, as a few days or weeks. In the case of *stund*, the period of time can be of a various length as well. Let me add that the term *stund* can also be used as the meaning of time in general. An example of this might be the name of Snorri's list of time units *heiti stundanna* itself, but many other examples can be found in sagas where *stund* is often connected with the verb *að líða*, "to pass" in the phrase *líða stundir*, "time passes."[154] Contrary to St. Augustine's description of time as a sequence of moments where the present moment is precisely defined by its separation from the past and the future, the Old Norse time seems to be more flexible, as it does not always stay closed within the borders of a certain time unit and can flow over it, like in the case of *stund* and *mél*.

In the previous chapter, I mentioned that night and various moon phases played a special role in Old Norse time reckoning. Snorri's list contains only one name for night, *nótt*, but it is followed by a strophe lifted from the aforementioned poem *Alvíssmál* from *Poetic Edda* (*Alm* 14) where various metaphors for night are enumerated.[155] The importance of night might also be related to its potential as a component of the Old Norse world-view – as I have stated before, night is a time when prophetic dreams occur and reveal the future (hence the origins of the aforementioned metaphor for night *draumnjǫrun*, which Snorri also quotes). The list made by contemporary man would definitely not contain so many names for night; on the contrary, he would probably mention night only once. For contemporary man who does not reckon time by nights, nor believe in foreshadowing, night does not play such a crucial role anymore.

Let me add at this point that in another part of his *Edda*, *Gylfaginning*, Snorri portrays night as a mythical being and enumerates her husbands and children. As I have already

[154] For examples see Cleasby-Vigfússon. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, p. 599.
[155] The various names for night can be found also in *Skáldskaparmál* 69 in the chapter called *Himins heiti, sólar ok tungls* ("Metaphors for heaven, sun and moon").

mentioned, one of Night's sons is Day, whose role in time reckoning is complementary to hers. First when Day is born, the highest god, Óðinn, involves him and his mother in the reckoning of time (*Gylf* 10). This is another example of time's complementarity where night cannot be used as a time unit without the existence of its opposite, day:

Þá tók Alfǫðr Nótt ok Dag, son hennar, ok gaf þeim tvá hesta ok tvær kerrur ok sendi þau upp á himin, at þau skulu ríða á hverjum tveim dægrum umhverfis jǫrðina.	Then All-father took Night and her son Day and gave them two horses and two chariots and set them up in the sky so that they have to ride around the earth every twenty-four hours.[156]

Let me now move on to another time indication in Snorri's list that is certainly worth mentioning, as it definitely would be missing in the list made by contemporary man. It is the term *misseri* that is usually translated as "a season," although it does not have the same meaning as the term season does nowadays (i.e. the four seasons of a year).[157] Old Norse people originally divided the year into only two seasons: "From ancient times the Northmen divided the year into two seasons, winter and summer, and reckoned the passage of time in winters."[158] The examples of this bipolar division can be found in various Old Norse texts, maybe most noticeably in family sagas where the narrators often remind the audience of the alternation of summer or winter, while spring and autumn are sometimes understood merely as transitory periods between these two seasons. As regards the mythical background of the bipolar division of year, Langeslag claims that it can be found in the aforementioned poem *Vafþrúðnismál* (commonly dated from the 10th century) from *Poetic Edda* (*Vþm* 26-27). In this poem, the god Óðinn asks the mythical being Vafþrúðni various questions, among others, he wishes to know "from where winter and the warm summer first came among the deities" (*hvaðan vetr of kom eða varmt sumar fyrst með fróð regin*). As Paul S. Langeslag points out, winter and summer (*Vetr* and *Sumar*) are understood here as personifications of the two seasons of the year, depicted as "gods that govern seasonally and thus giving rise to the extremes within the climate system."[159] The myth about the origins of winter and summer is

[156] Sturluson. *Edda*. Transl. A. Faulkes, p. 14.
[157] Sometimes, the term is translated as "a semester" or "a half-year." However, as Cleasby and Vigfússon note, "to derive this old true Teutonic word from Latin *semester* is inadmissible, for the sense of a period of six months is not the original one" (Cleasby-Vigfússon. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, p. 431).
[158] Kristjánsson. *Eddas and Sagas*, p. 133.
[159] Langeslag. *Seasons in the Literatures of the Medieval North*, p. 39-40.

present also in *Snorri's Edda* (*Gylf* 19), where Óðinn explains "why is there such a great difference between the warmth of summer and the cold of winter"[160]:

Svásuðr heitir sá, er faðir Sumars er, ok er hann svá sællífr, svá at af hans heiti er þat kallat svásligt, er blítt er. En faðir Vetrar er ýmist kallaðr Vindlóni eða Vindsvalr. Hann er Vásaðar son, ok váru þeir áttungar grimmir ok svalbrjóstaðir, ok hefir Vetr þeira skaplyndi.

Svásuð is the name of the one that is father of Summer, and he is so blissful in his life that it is from his name that what is pleasant is called *sváslig* [delightful]. And Winter's father is called either Vindlóni or Vindsval. He is Vásað's son and members of this family have been grim and cold-hearted, and Winter inherits their nature.[161]

The bipolar division of year seems quite natural when one considers the long winters typical for Northern Europe followed by short-lasting, but intense summers. Brynjulf Alver expresses the opinion that it was typical for pre-Christian Scandinavia in general and Icelanders brought it from their former homeland, Norway.[162] The original division of year into winter and summer is another example of a complementary or dualistic nature of Old Norse cosmogonic time. Let me add that winter was the dominant one in this pair, as it could also represent the whole year, based on the *pars pro toto* system. As Einarsdóttir writes: "De forskellige tidsenheder – som f. eks. år – opfattes her efter det såkaldte pars pro toto system, hvorefter en bestemt del af året i folks bevidsthed kommer til at repræsentere hele året. (…) I Norden regnedes med to årstider, sommer og vinter, af hvilke vinteren var den, der repræsenterede året."[163] There are many examples in sagas where time is reckoned in winters, for instance as regards the age of the saga characters, as I will discuss later on.

As Ginzel claims, together with the Julian calendar, the four seasons concept was introduced to the learned society and integrated into the local calendar: "Durch die Bekanntschaft mit dem julianischen Kalender resp. durch dessen beide Äquinoktien und Solstitien wurde die rohe Vierteilung des Jahres kalendarisch festgelegt."[164] However, in the minds of common people the bipolar division of year was probably still long alive (see the

[160] Sturluson. *Edda*. Transl. A. Faulkes, p. 20.
[161] Ibid, p. 21.
[162] Alver. *Dag og merke*, p. 11. However, Ginzel makes an observation that the bipolar division of year was typical also for other nations and tribes living in the Northern lands as well, for instance the Indian tribes from North America, the Inuit or some Siberian tribes. (See Ginzel. "Altgermanische (nordische) und keltische Zeitrechnung", p. 55).
[163] Einarsdóttir. *Studier i kronologisk metode*, p. 158-159.
[164] Ginzel. "Altgermanische (nordische) und keltische Zeitrechnung", p. 56.

passage about *primstav* calendars in chapter 8). Snorri mentions all four seasons in his list as well, but it is interesting to notice that they are not arranged in the order that is commonly used nowadays, i.e. from spring to winter. Snorri's arrangement is as follows: *vetr*, *sumar*, *vár*, *haust* ("winter, summer, spring, autumn"). From this way of arranging the seasons, one can still sense the old bipolar division of year to winter and summer understood as the most important seasons and opposite to one another. Winter, which had a special role in Old Norse time reckoning, as it could also represent the whole year, is mentioned first, before summer. Subsequently, spring and autumn are mentioned as a second pair of opposite seasons. Later in *heiti stundanna* Snorri also explains how long the particular seasons last:

Frá jafndægri er haust, til þess er sól sezt í eykðarstað. Þá er vetr til jafndægris. Þá er vár til fardaga. Þá er sumar til jafndægris.	From the equinox it is autumn until the sun sets in the position of none. Then it is winter until the equinox. Then it is spring until the moving days. Then it is summer until the equinox.[165]

This is an almost computistical-like passage that, maybe somewhat unexpectedly, appears in a work narrating Old Norse myths. As a matter of fact, the whole passage of *heiti stundanna* gives the impression of a brief "computistical commentary" on local time reckoning. It begins with the list of the basic Old Norse time indications, continues by mentioning various metaphors for night that played a central role in local time reckoning, and ends by explaining the principle of a year's division into four seasons. In the last part of the passage Snorri also enumerates Old Norse names for months, as I will describe in the following subchapter.

One may ask whether Snorri included the time indications into *Skáldskaparmál* because he was afraid that they were about to disappear from social memory, the same as the poetic metaphors contained in *Edda*? This is certainly not the case, as many of them are basic time indications like day and night or morning and evening that could not so easily disappear from common usage. I believe that one rather witnesses here an attempt to view time as an abstract concept, as a quantity that can be divided into different units. The aim of Snorri's list might have been to show the richness of Old Norse time perception through emphasizing the diversity of local time indications. Although the list is far from containing all Old Norse time indications, because of its relative brevity, it shows various "modes" of domestic time perception. Time is understood here not only as *duration*, that is as an interval of different lengths (beginning with an "era" or "age" and ending with a "while"), but also as *frequency*

[165] Sturluson. *Edda*. Transl. A. Faulkes, p. 144.

(the adverb *í sinn*, "at once"), *sequence* (for instance *árla* and *síðla*, "early" and "late"), or *transformation* (the changing of seasons). Time is both *static* and *dynamic*. Based on the aforementioned principle of *pars pro toto*, all these temporal modes together constitute the Old Norse concept of time.

5.2. The names of months and the connection of time with its content

As mentioned before, Snorri completes his list of metaphors for time by enumerating Old Norse names for months:

Haustmánuðr heitir inn næsti fyrir vetr, fyrstr í vetri heitir gormánuðr, þá er frermánuðr, þá er hrútmánuðr, þá er þorri, þá gói, þá einmánuðr, þá gaukmánuðr ok sáðtíð, þá eggtíð ok stekktíð, þá er sólmánuðr ok selmánuðr, þá eru heyannir, þá er kornskurðarmánuðr.	Harvest-month is the name of the last one before winter, slaughter-month is the name of the first one in winter, then it is frost-month, then ram-month, then *Þorri*, then *Góa*, then single-month, then cuckoo-month and seed-time, then egg-time and lamb-fold-time, then it is sun-month and shieling month, then there is hay making, then it is the month of corn-reaping.[166]

This passage is very important as concerns pre-Christian Old Norse time perception and as such it has already caught the attention of scholars in the past. Natanael Beckman, Svante Janson and Bryjulf Alver have for instance discussed how far the Old Norse names of months could have been used in daily life by Old Norse people, or if they are merely a learned construct. Alver, who studies the origins of the names mentioned by Snorri,[167] states that they certainly are of domestic origins, but he admits that it is hard to say whether they were commonly used by the people: " (…) materialet er så lite at der er uråd å avgjera om desse namna verkeleg har vore nytta av folk flest – eller om det berre er poetiske nemningar hos dei einskilde diktarane."[168] Beckman has noticed that these names of months only very rarely appear in Old Norse literature. He managed to find only a few examples of their occurrence in various genres, especially in family sagas and law texts.[169] As he adds, the names of months are never used by the narrators to fix the narrated events in time, i.e. the events are never situated

[166] Sturluson. *Edda*. Transl. A. Faulkes, p. 144-145.
[167] See Alver. *Dag og merke*, p. 12-18.
[168] Ibid, p. 12-13.
[169] Beckman. "Isländsk och medeltida skand. tideräkning", p. 32-34.

onto a certain day of a month.[170] Also Janson writes that: "Dating by giving an Icelandic month and day, for example *1 Harpa*,[171] has never been used in Iceland."[172] This fact suggests, as he adds, that fixing events into an exact moment in time was not a characteristic future of pre-Christian Old Norse time reckoning.

I share the opinion that the Old Norse names of months were not created with the purpose of fixing events onto a certain day in a certain month. Contemporary man perhaps too automatically supposes that naming the months must be motivated only by the effort to fix events in time. This was apparently not the case with Old Norse months. The system of the nomination of days of the month arrived to Iceland later from continental Europe and was used by learned Icelanders, for instance, in Icelandic annals or in the dating formulas in medieval charters (see chapter 10). The Roman calendar and the Latin names of months were known to the learned Old Norse society of the 13th century, as one can say for example based on the local computistical literature (see chapter 8). In the computistical treatise nowadays called *Rím III*, the Latin names of months are called simply *manada heiti* ("heiti for months").[173] A different term is used in the *Clements saga*, which belongs among the earliest Icelandic translations of the Latin lives of saints, where the Latin months are called *bókmánaþir*, "book-months." The narrator uses this term when explaining the origins of the Latin names for July and August in the first chapter of this saga:

Af þessum keiserum tveim hafa nanm tekit **bókmánaþir** tveir Julius ok Augustus.	It is these two emperors after whom the two of the **book-months**, July and August, got their names.

The fact that the Latin names of months were labelled as the "book months" gives evidence of their use in Old Norse learned society. As Alver states: "Truleg dekkjer denne nemninga ein realitet, for di månadsinndelinga og datering av dagane høyrde heime i lærde krinsar og truleg

[170] Beckman finds the only exception where an event is dated by using a particular day within an Icelandic month in *Sturlunga saga*: *Þat var tíðinda enn síðasta dag í gói, þá váru þriár vikur til páscha* ("It happened on the last day of Gói, three weeks before Easter.") (Beckman. "Isländsk och medeltida skand. tideräkning", p. 34). I found a mention of the month *Gói* in *Óláfs saga helga* (Snorri, *ÓH* lxxvii): *Svíþjóðu var þat forn landzsiðr, meðan heiðni var þar, at hǫfuðblót skyldi vera at Upsǫlum at gói [...]* ("As long as there was paganism in Sweden, there was also the old custom of holding the main sacrifices in Uppsala in Gói […]").

[171] The month *Harpa* is not mentioned in Snorri's list. This month name is documented first from ca. 1600, together with the month name *Skerpla*, and their origins are discussed by the scholars (See for instance Janson. "The Icelandic Calendar", p. 8).

[172] Janson. "The Icelandic Calendar", p. 9. As Janson adds, the same opinion was expressed by Guðmundur Björnsson in his aforementioned article *Um íslenzka tímatalið*.

[173] *Þessi ero manada heiti: ianuarius, februarius, marcius [...].* "These are *heiti* for months: January, February, March […]" (*Alfræði íslenzk II*., p. 181).

ikkje har hatt noko å seia for vanlege folk før dei prenta kalendrane var komne allment i bruk."[174]

On the other hand, Old Norse names of months could have been in popular usage at the same time and earlier because they came out from the domestic background and were based on the social life and habits of the local people. While in the Roman calendar months were mostly called after gods or just based on their sequence,[175] Old Norse names of months were obviously defined by their content. The months mentioned by Snorri are mostly connected to various phenomena or activities that have occurred or used to be done regularly in particular periods of year. Some names refer to natural phenomena (like frost-month or sun-month), others relate for instance to activities within the agricultural sphere (like harvest-month or the period of hay-making). As Hastrup points out, agricultural and other social activities were closely related to the aforementioned bipolar perception of year: "In the summer half-year, beginning mid-April, most months were named after economic activities. During winter, from mid-October, most months had noneconomic names."[176] She adds that while in summer most of the activities were connected to production, winter was the time of various rituals. Let me add that this dualistic nature of Old Norse social activities is well visible also from saga literature, especially from family sagas, in which characters often act or travel in summer and rest in winter, as I will show later in the thesis.

The fact that the Old Norse months were mostly named after their content reveals one important feature of local time perception. Time was not only understood as an abstract concept without any relations to the activities that took place in it; on the contrary, it was constituted by these activities. The content in fact defined time, and in the case of Old Norse months even gave it a name. The close connection of time with its content in Old Norse (and Old Germanic) culture has been noticed and described already by Gurevich and Steblin-Kamenskij. For instance, Gurevich writes that: "The year – indeed, time in general – was not construed simply as duration, but rather as a plenitude of some concrete content, a content which is always specific and determinate."[177] Steblin-Kamenskij also expresses the opinion that

[174] See Alver. *Dag og merke*, p. 12.
[175] As the German religionist Jörg Rüpke states: " (…) the Republican calendar was preceded by a calendar with twelve genuinely lunar months, six of which incorporated the names of gods, while six bore numeric names." (Rüpke. *The Roman Calendar from Numa to Constantine*, p. 23). An exception would be the name of April. The Czech historian Marie Bláhová claims that the name of this month, in Latin *Aprilis*, was probably derived from the verb *aperire*, "to open," because in this month the tree-buds open (Bláhová. *Historická chronologie*, p. 83).
[176] Hastrup. "Calendar and Time Reckoning", p. 65-66.
[177] Gurevich. *Categories of Medieval Culture*, p. 95.

time "forms a unity with events, and is inseparably linked with them (…)."[178] As Gurevich adds, time was originally closely tied to periodically repeated activities and its flow was rotating rather than linear.[179] The rotating of natural and social activities, apparent among others in the names of months, can be interpreted as another trace of time's cyclicity.

Contemporary man perceives time as "empty," as a duration or flow that can be filled with human activities. However, if not filled, it will not stop flowing, as it is independent of these activities. In Old Norse perception time was "full"; it existed only within certain activities and it was closely connected to its content. The names of months enumerated by Snorri are not the only trace of this full time in Old Norse literature. I have especially found distinct traces of time's connection with its content when analysing the temporal structure of legendary and family sagas, as will be discussed later in what follows. Before I move on to sagas, let me summarize the results of the two chapters dealing with images of time in the *Eddas*.

[178] Steblin-Kamenskij. *The Saga Mind*, p. 130. Steblin-Kamenskij primarily deals with the images of time in family sagas that also reflect the original connection of time with its content.
[179] Gurevich. *Categories of Medieval Culture*, p. 95.

Summary I A: Time in *Eddas*

Both *Poetic* and *Snorri's Edda* contain valuable sources of information that can help us reconstruct pre-Christian Old Norse time perception and reckoning. First of all, based on the eddic myths, one can determine the frame of Old Norse cosmogonic time – from the creation of time reckoning in the very beginning of the human world until the renewal of time after *ragnarǫk*. According to the myths, time itself was not created by the gods, contrary to the Christian concept of God as a creator of all times. Time, as perceived in the myths, flows both *above* people and gods, although the latter can avoid its flow by eating Iðunn's apples. However, it is the gods who stand behind the division of time into various time units created for people as a tool to reckon time and with the purpose of obtaining order in the human world. The end of the human world also means the end of time reckoning bound to this world, symbolized by the destruction of the celestial bodies. However, together with the emergence of a new world from the sea a new time reckoning begins as well, symbolized by the birth of a new sun. This moment seems to be the start of a new cycle in which the history of the old world will repeat.

The eddic myths are often referred to when examining Old Norse time's cyclicity, especially concerning the last strophes of *Vǫluspá.* The creation of the new world, described by the seeress at the end of the poem, is markedly similar to the creation of the old world. The seeress even mentions that during the process of creation certain events happen *again*. Furthermore, the very last strophe that includes the mention of the dragon can be interpreted as an indication of the repetition of the world's evil fate, *ragnarǫk*. Besides *Vǫluspá*, the hints that point to the cyclical nature of time can be traced back to the Old Norse names of months mentioned in *Snorri's Edda*. The fact that the names are based on certain periodically repeated winter and summer phenomena and activities might suggest that time was understood as a permanent rotation of them.

The names of months on Snorri's list mirror also another characteristic feature of Old Norse time perception, namely the close connection of time with its content. Originally, time was not seen as "empty," that is as an abstract time scale, a bare succession of days, months and years, distant from the events that take place in them. On the contrary, Old Norse time was "full," i.e. connected with certain type of activities and constituted by events happening in it. Besides being full, time was also "complementary" or "dualistic," as it was originally based on the pairing of complementary time indications. The most fundamental pairs, those that stood at

the very beginning of time, were night and day and winter and summer. Their importance for time reckoning can be seen also in the fact that they are all depicted as mythical figures in the *Eddas*. As it seems, one of the figures in each pair was the dominant one (night or the moon and winter), while the other was the complementary one (day or the sun and summer). Night and the moon played a crucial role in time reckoning, as regards the various moon phases. Night was also connected to the concept of fate and foreshadowing. Winter was the season that could represent the whole year, as time was originally counted in winters. Let me add that the bipolar division of the year into winter and summer seasons (*misseri*) seems to be one of the features of the local time understanding that did not so easily disappear under the influence of Christianity and new time reckoning.

Despite the existence of these complementary pairs of time units, Old Norse time was in fact less fragmented than time as contemporary man perceives it. Contemporary man divides time into units of a precisely defined length and encloses its flow into the strict borders of the seconds and minutes measured on his watch. In accordance with the medieval Christian concept of time defined by St. Augustine, the present has shrunk to a bare moment in time, the moment when the future becomes the past. Old Norse time seems to be more flexible and the present much broader, as is for instance apparent in the case of *stund* and *mél* that can embrace time periods of various lenghts. The broader present, as perceived by the Old Norse man, is mutually connected both with the past and the future. The events of the past become a part of Urð's well, the water of which nourishes the world tree Yggdrasil. Thus, the past nourishes the present, which can be interpreted as the knowledge and experiences of the forefathers passing on to the present generations. The predetermined future is distant in time, but at the same time omnipresent, as it can manifest itself in the present in the form of foreshadowing.

6. Time in legendary sagas

In the previous two chapters I dealt with the *Eddas* that, in my opinion, reflect Old Norse pre-Christian time understanding and reckoning. In the following two chapters I will move on to the sagas, namely to legendary and family sagas that contain traces of the original domestic time perception as well. Sagas are narrative material and the analysis of their temporal structure can be carried out by applying the three of the categories defined by Gérard Genette in his aforementioned study *Discours du récit*. Besides applying these categories (*order*, *duration* and *frequency*), I will also examine the systems of dating and the time indications most frequently used in the narration.

Although the earliest extant manuscripts of legendary sagas (*fornaldarsǫgur*), also called mythical-heroic sagas, come from the end of the 13th century,[180] most of the stories are probably much older and rooted in the oral tradition. The term *fornaldarsǫgur* is a modern invention used to name this saga genre for the first time by the 19th century Danish scholar Carl Christian Rafn.[181] In Old Norse one encounters the similar term *fornsaga*, but the meaning of this compound was "a tale of remote times" in general. The term was not solely used to label the stories that we nowadays call legendary sagas, but also other stories that took place in the distant past. The general meaning of the adjective *forn* is "of yore" or "remote in time" and as Cleasby and Vigfússon note, it was "often used of the heathen times with the old mythical lore."[182]

Legendary sagas are usually further devided into several subgenres according to their content. The most frequently used division is into three groups: sagas narrating the lives of legendary heroes, sagas about famous Vikings (both groups are considered rooted in older narrative layers like the eddic myths) and fairytale-like sagas that are of a younger origin and not connected to the ancient tradition.[183] In my thesis I will examine almost exclusively the first

[180] Torfi H. Tulinius writes that: "The oldest manuscripts containing *fornaldarsǫgur* are from c.1300." (Tulinius. "Sagas of Icelandic Prehistory", p. 449). It is hard to determine when the first legendary sagas were written down, because the oldest manuscripts are not preserved, but it was probably in the 13th century, the same as family sagas. In any case, according to the editors of the anthology *Fornaldarsagornas struktur och ideologi* dealing with legendary sagas, the genre flourished for a few centuries: "Det står dock utom allt tvivel att sagorna har förblivit en produktiv och populär genre i flera hundra år" (Jakobsson, Lassen, Ney. "Inledning", p. 8).
[181] Tulinius. "Sagas of Icelandic Prehistory", p. 447.
[182] Cleasby-Vigfússon. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, p. 165.
[183] See Jakobsson, Lassen, Ney. "Inledning", p. 8. This division, used by many contemporary scholars, was made by Helga Reuschel (Reuschel, Helga. *Untersuchungen über Stoff und Stil der Fornaldarsaga*. Bühl-Baden: Konkordia, 1933).

type of legendary sagas. The most well-known saga that belongs in this subgenre is probably *Vǫlsunga saga* which narrates the same matter as certain heroic lays from *Poetic Edda*. The story of the saga's main hero, Sigurð the Vǫlsung (Sigurð Fáfnisbani), can be found also in the German *Nibelungenlied*, although with several differences including among others the name of the hero himself, who appears here as Siegfried. Nevertheless, *Nibelungenlied* is evidence for the pre-Christian origins of this matter in the Old Germanic milieu. Apart from *Vǫlsunga saga* I will also examine *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* and *Hervarars saga ok Heiðreks* in this chapter. I also use a few references to *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs*; although it belongs rather to the group of the fairytale-like legendary sagas, it contains certain traces of the heroic subgenre as well.

Contrary to family sagas, the main characters of legendary-heroic sagas are not "ordinary" men, but legendary heroes, who experience quite extraordinary adventures. The heroes often leave Scandinavia to foreign lands that are sometimes portrayed as distant and exotic. Typical for legendary sagas is also the use of supernatural elements in the narration. Supernatural beings such as dwarfs, dragons, giants, *Álfs* or Valkyries appear, and magic and spells are used. The time of the action is set in the distant past (*fornǫld*, "the olden time").[184] Contemporary scholars call this period of time differently, for instance the "fictional past"[185] or "indefinite past."[186] In my thesis I will use the terms "legendary-heroic past" or "heroic past," as the primary focus of these sagas lies in depicting the fates of legendary heroes and the motif of heroism. In the following chapter I would like to examine the characteristic features of the legendary-heroic past (*fornǫld*) as depicted in legendary sagas.

6.1. The legendary-heroic past: Between the mythical past and historical time

It is usually claimed that the legendary-heroic past lies in the time before Iceland was settled from Norway in the last third of the 9th century. This is true, but not entirely, for some of the family or kings' sagas, that are considered to take place in historical time, also depict events that occured before the settlement of Iceland. Some family sagas begin by narrating the lives and actions of the saga characters (or their ancestors) in the time before they arrived in Iceland[187] and some kings' sagas tell of the historical kings who reigned before the settlement of Iceland.[188] Therefore, it is perhaps better to claim that legendary-heroic time lies in an even

[184] Cleasby-Vigfússon. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, p. 165.
[185] Cochrane. "Passing Time and the Past", p. 198.
[186] Koht. *The Old Norse Sagas*, p. 146.
[187] This is for instance the case of *Egils saga Skallagrímsonar* or *Eyrbyggja saga*.
[188] *Hálfdanar saga svarta* (*Hálfdan the Black's saga*) for instance narrates the life of the king who reigned over Norway from about the year 839 to about 860.

more distant past than before the settlement of Iceland, namely before the first historical kings started to rule the Scandinavian countries. However, one should certainly not imagine an exact border separating historical time from the legendary-heroic past at a certain definite moment of time, such as a certain year.

Contemporary man, who imagines the flow of time in the shape of a linear time scale, tends to divide different historical periods by certain approximate dates that mark the end of one period and the beginning of another on this time scale. The various periods follow one after the other on this scale strictly divided by certain dates. In Old Norse culture, the perception of the past was probably different in this respect. There was no exact temporal border between the legendary-heroic past and historical time, but they were divided rather by their specific content. The legendary-heroic past, the time of heroes and supernatural beings, was situated on the "edge" of historical time. The passage between these two times seems to be more gradual, not a sudden jump on a time scale, but rather a shift from one "layer" of time to another. Furthermore, there was a firm bond between the legendary-heroic past and historical time in the form of genealogies.

Genealogies play a significant role within Old Norse time reckoning in general and they are an essential part of the temporal structure of many works or genres. In family sagas, one can for instance encouter extensive genealogies of the members of prominent Icelandic families, and in kings' sagas royal genealogies of the Scandinavian kings, as I will show later in the thesis. The heroes of legendary sagas are not far behind the historical persons in this respect, as their genealogies are often quite elaborate. These "heroic" genealogies can often reach far into the future, sometimes even into historical time. There are several examples in legendary sagas where the genealogies of the legendary heroes or kings are connected with historical time through their offspring. For example, in *Ragnar's saga* (*Ragn* xviii) one can read that the grandchild of Ragnar's son Sigurð Snake-in-the-Eye was the Norwegian king Harald Fairhair (ca. 850-932):

En frá Sigurði orm í auga er mikill ættbogi kominn. Hans dóttir hét Ragnhildr, móðir Haralds ins hárfagra, er fyrstr réð ǫllum Noregi einn.	And from Sigurð Snake-in-the-Eye descended a great family line. His daughter was called Ragnhild and she was the mother of Harald Fairhair who was the first to reign over the whole of Norway.

The next-to-last chapter of *Hervarar's saga* (*Heiðr* xv) includes a rather extensive family line of one of the saga heroes named Angantý,[189] "from whom family lines of kings are sprung," as the narrator states (*ok eru frá honum komnar konunga ættir*). This final genealogical section of the saga follows the family line of the Swedish kings until Ǫnund Ólafsson, who ruled in Sweden in 1022-1050, and his brother Eymund, who ruled only shortly until ca. 1060. When mentioning one of the kings, Ívar inn víðfaðmi, Ívar the Wide-grasping (also translated as Ívar the Wide-fathoming or Wide-embracing), the narrator refers to the kings' sagas, where his story is narrated, and thus strengthens the bond between legendary-heroic and historical time:

Ívarr inn víðfaðmi kom með her sinn í Svíaveldi, sem segir í konunga sǫgum […]	Ívar the Wide-grasping came to Sweden with his army, as is told in the sagas of the kings […][190]

Obviously, this genealogical section from *Hervarar's saga* has no story-building function, as it could easily be removed from the saga without disrupting the plot. It is possible that similar connections of the legendary-heroic past with historical time through royal genealogies could have served as a gloryfication of the Scandinavian kings whose family trees were presented as being full of great ancestors. At the same time, the genealogies could have ascertained the kings' right to rule the country, as they represented a bond of traditions, a continuation of both family and national heritage passing from one generation to another and in historical time taken over and protected by the kings.

As I mentioned in the chapter dealing with *Poetic Edda*, the connection of the past and present seems to be very important within Old Norse time perception in general. In the myths this connection is even presented as one of the fundamental principles on which the universe itself funtions, as one can say based on the aforementioned concept of Urð's well and the world tree Yggdrasil. Just as the events of the past are accumulated in the waters of the well that nourishes the world tree, the names of the legendary heroes are accumulated in the genealogical chains that lead to historical time and historical persons. The names of heroes and the stories about their deeds, meaning legendary sagas themselves, form a firm and constant layer of the heroic past that precedes historical time.

[189] The family line is only included in one of the preserved manuscripts of the saga, namely in the version U, not in the versions R and H.
[190] *The Saga of King Heidrek*. Transl. Ch. Tolkien, p. 59.

The legendary-heroic past was, in a way, eternal, because the stories about heroes were preserved in people's memory, and their fame was supposed to last forever. When predicting how long a hero's fame will last, the narrators of legendary sagas often use the phrase *meðan verǫldin/heimrinn stendr* ("as long as the human world shall stand"). Peter Hallberg, who has studied the occurrence of this phrase in several legendary sagas, considers it to be a characteristic trait of the genre's diction: "It has a touch of irreality, and conforms with the trend towards exaggeration and 'subjectivism' – so different from the typical restraint and understatement of family sagas."[191] The future renown of Sigurð the Vǫlsung is for instance predicted four times in *Vǫlsunga saga*: shortly before the hero is born (*Vǫls* xii), when Sigmund, the father of Sigurð, foretells that his son's name "shall live as long as the world shall stand" (*ok hans nafn mun uppi, meðan verǫldin stendr*), then approximately in the middle of the saga after slaying of the dragon Fáfni (*Vǫls* xix), in the chapter describing Sigurð's appearance (*Vǫls* xxii), and finally in the ultimate part of the saga following the hero's death (*Vǫls* xxxii). In all four cases the narrator uses the aforementioned phrase "as long as the world shall stand" when mentioning the time span of the prophecy. Thus, Sigurð's fame exceeds the border of the legendary-heroic past, stretching into historical time and even to the very distant future, namely the end of the world.

As I have shown, the legendary-heroic past can reach out into historical time, mainly through genealogies, but also through the positive foreshadowing of the heroes' fame. This concerns the connection of the legendary-heroic past with the historical time that follows it. But one may also ask what precedes the legendary-heroic past, or in other words, how far back into the past the genealogies of legendary heroes might reach. The most distant "point" where the genealogies begin is most often the figure of Óðinn, who is commonly portrayed as a distant ancestor of the legendary heroes. For instance, *Vǫlsunga saga* begins with an introduction of a man called Sigi, who is a son of Óðinn, as the narrator states. A descendant of this Sigi from the fourth generation is the main hero of the saga, Sigurð the Vǫlsung. As regards *Ragnar's saga*, Óðinn is said to be a distant forefather of Ragnar's son Sigurð Snake-in-the-Eye, whose mother was Áslaug**,** a daughter of Sigurð the Vǫlsung (*Ragn* ix). In *Hervarar's saga* (*Heiðr* i) Óðinn is presented as the father of the king Sigrlami, a forefather of the hero Angantý. However, Angantý's family line goes even further into the past, namely to the giant Ymi, who is presented as a distant ancestor of his father, Arngrím the Berserk.

[191] Hallberg. "Some Aspects of the Fornaldarsögur", p. 28.

The genealogical connection between the gods and legendary heroes is emphasized also in an eddic lay called *Hyndluljóð*. In this poem the seeress Hyndla is asked by the goddess Freya to recount the ancestors of a man called Óttar, all being legendary heroes, and as Freya states, having descended from the gods (*Hdl* 8):

Senn vit ór sǫðlum	Let's contend from our saddles!
sitja vit skulum	We should sit down,
ok um jǫfra	and talk of
ættir dæma,	princes' lineages,
gumna þeira,	**about those men**
er frá goðum kvámu.	**who are descended from the gods**.[192]

Afterwards, Hyndla enumerates a great number of heroes together with their relatives, among others also Sigurð the Vǫlsung, or Gunnar and Hǫgni, the brothers of his wife.

Through genealogies, the legendary-heroic past is rooted in the mythical past. One could perhaps claim that the myths are a *limit* of the heroic stories, the most distant point of the genealogies, where the heroic past turns into the mythical past. The legendary-heroic past (*fornǫld*) is thus a liminal position between mythical and historical time. The same as the mythical past being a limit of the heroic past, the heroic past is a limit of historical time, as the genealogies of historical persons can lead back to legendary heroes. However, one should perhaps not imagine these different "times" as following one after the other on a linear timescale, but rather as vertical layers placed above each other and maybe even partially overlapping with each other on their outer edges.

6.2. Systems of dating and time indications in legendary sagas

Although legendary sagas are situated in the distant legendary-heroic past, the narrators usually do not begin the narration with vague phrases similar to the one known from fairytales, "once upon a time." On the contrary, one notices a tendency for a more precise fixing of the stories in time. In the beginning of legendary sagas, the narrators often refer to the regnal period of a certain Scandinavian king. A similar method of fixing the stories in time is used in family sagas, as I will show in the following chapter. However, while in family sagas the narrators

[192] *The Poetic Edda*. Transl. C. Larrington, p. 246.

mention historical kings, in legendary sagas it is legendary Norse kings they refer to, as in the following example from *Ragnar's saga* (*Ragn* iii):

Í þann tíma réð fyrir Danmǫrku Sigurðr hringr. Hann var ríkr konungr ok er frægr orðinn af þeiri orrostu, er hann barðist við Harald hilditǫnn á Brávelli ok fyrir honum fell Haraldr, sem kunnigt er orðit of alla norðrálfu heimsins.	In that time Sigurð Hring reigned over Denmark. He was a mighty king and had achieved fame for the battle in which he fought against Harald Wartooth at Brávellir. And Harald fell in the battle, as is known in the whole northern part of the world.

According to Van den Toorn, this fixing of stories into the regnal periods of legendary kings is a very inventive solution of how to date events that happened in the pre-historical past: "Interessant ist es zu sehen, wie die Verfasser der Fornaldarsǫgur die Schwierigkeit, dass ihre Werke Erzeugnisse der Phantasie und daher historisch unbestimmbar sind, gelöst oder umgangen haben."[193] However, although similar references to legendary kings ilustrate the effort of narrators to fix the sagas in time, they remain only relative time indications. The regnal periods of the kings are not used as a time scale in this saga genre, contrary to kings' sagas. There is no abstract timeline running in the background of legendary sagas to which the narrated events would be connected. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the temporal relations between the narrated events remain completely unclear.

Instead of an abstract timeline the narrators use genealogies of the saga characters in order to constitute what one could call "a genealogical net" spread throughout the legendary past. The stories narrated in legendary sagas are situated into this net of heroes' forefathers, relatives and descendants. Furthermore, through genealogies a mutual connection between these stories can be achieved. The narrator for instance mentions that a certain character from a particular saga appears in another saga as well, or that he or she is in a family relation with someone from another saga. For example, at the end of *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs* (*Bós* xvi) one reads that Herrauð had a daughter called Þóra which was supposed to marry a man who would rescue her from her room guarded by a snake. Subsequently, we are told that this man was Ragnar loðbrók. After mentioning this fact, the saga ends and the story about the rescue of Þóra is narrated in another saga, namely *Ragnar's saga* (*Ragn* iii-iv). Thus, through the character of Þóra a connection between *Bósa saga* and *Ragnar's saga* is created. *Ragnar's saga* is connected to *Vǫlsunga saga* in a similar way, namely through Áslaug, the daughter of Sigurð

[193] Van den Toorn. "Zeit und Tempus in der Saga", p. 143.

and Brynhild. In the very beginning of *Ragnar's saga* the death of Sigurð and Brynhild is mentioned and their daughter Áslaug, three years old at that time, is introduced. Áslaug later plays an important role in the saga, as she becomes Ragnar's second wife.

The connection between legendary sagas can be achieved also through important or well-known events that happened in the legendary past, for instance great battles. The Battle of Brávellir, in which the legendary kings Sigurð Hring and Harald Wartooth fought and the latter was killed, is mentioned for example in *Bósa saga*, *Ragnar's saga* and *Hervarar's saga* (*Bós* ix; *Ragn* iii; *Heiðr* xv).[194] According to the narrator of *Hervarar's saga*, this battle belongs to the most renowned battles depicted in the old tales:

Þessar orrostur hafa í fornum sǫgum frægastar verit ok mest mannfall orðit ok sú, er Angantýr ok hans bróðir bǫrðusk á Dúnheiði.	This battle, and that which Angantý and Hlǫd his brother fought on the Danube Heath, are the most renowned in the ancient tales with the greatest count of slain.[195]

Let me now take a look at the other time indications in legendary sagas used to obtain the inner chronology of narration. Generally, it can be said that there are not as many time indications in legendary sagas as in the other saga genres examined in this thesis. As I will show later, in family, kings' or bishops' sagas almost every scene is introduced (or ended) by a certain time indication, definite or indefinite, but at least the narrator mentions in which season the depicted event happened. In legendary sagas, scenes without any time indication prevail and the flow of time is not followed very carefully. For example, the most frequent opening phrase of scenes in *Vǫlsunga saga* is a simple *nú er* (*þat*) *at segja* ("and now (it) should be told") or *nú er þat sagt* ("and now it is told [by the people]"). Concerning the occurrence of the adverb *nú* in *Vǫlsunga saga* it is wort mentioning that it can be found at the beginnings of almost all the chapters with only a few exceptions. The frequent occurrence of this adverb implies the frequent usage of the present tense. What one encounters here is the so-called historical present; that is the present tense used instead of the past tense when narrating past events, or in the words of Willibald Lehmann, one of the scholars who have studied the historical present in sagas, *Präsens pro Präterito*.[196]

[194] The battle is also mentioned in other sources, for example in *Sǫgubrot af nokkrum fornkonungum*, a fragmentary saga about some of the legendary Scandinavian kings, or in the extensive work *Gesta Danorum* written by the medieval Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus.
[195] *The Saga of King Heidrek*. Transl. Ch. Tolkien, p. 60.
[196] Lehmann. *Das Präsens historicum*, p. 5.

The use of the historical present in Old Norse sagas, especially in family sagas, but in the other genres of Old Norse literature as well, has been examined by many scholars so far.[197] According to Carl C. Rokkjær, the increased use of the present tense seems to be typical for popular or entertaining literature: "Præsensformernes forekomst i de forskellige prosagenrer viser en klar forskel mellem sagligt-videnskabelige fremstillinger (ingen eller lidt præs.) og populær-oplysende eller rent underholdende litteratur (meget præs.). Brugen af præs. i en episk beretning om noget fortidigt hører nok fra starten det folkelige fortællesprog til (…)."[198] As Rokkjær also observes, a typical feature of what he calls "det folkelige fortællesprog" (which could be translated as "the popular narrative language"), is the frequent use of various short adverbs of time like *nú* ("now"), *þá* ("then"), *síðan* ("since") of *eptir þat* ("after that").[199] Such indefinite time indications are indeed often to be found in legendary sagas together with *í þann tíma* ("at that time"), *eitt hvert sinn* ("once"), *ein dag* ("one day"), or *því næst* ("thereafter"). I have found similarly vague time indications in other saga genres as well, but certainly not in the same amout as in legendary sagas. For legendary sagas in general, a certain "indefiniteness" of the narrative temporal structure is typical. Concerning this, Bröndsted writes about "fairytale-like timelessness" (*märchenartige Zeitlosigkeit*).[200]

Even as regards the changing of the seasons, something that is so frequently mentioned in family sagas, it only rarely appears in legendary sagas. If the narrators of legendary sagas refer to the seasons at all, then it is almost exclusively to winter and summer. This might be a trace of the original Old Norse division of the year into two seasons (*misseri*), summer season being the time of action, like sea voyages or battles, and winter season the time of rest. In general, winter is more frequently mentioned in legendary sagas than summer, because it is also used for reckoning years, for example when giving the age of the saga characters. The narrator of *Hervarar's saga* also mentions the winter pagan feast *jól* (Yule), the celebration of winter solstice.[201]

On the other hand, among frequently used time indications belong the different times of the day, such as morning (*morgin*) and evening (*kveld* or *aftan/aptan*). The contrast between day and night seems to play an important role in legendary sagas. Night is the time when

[197] Among these scholars belong especially Willibald Lehmann (*Das Präsens historicum in den Íslendinga sǫgur*, 1939), Ulrike Sprenger (*Præsens historicum und Praeteritum in der altisländischen Saga. Ein Beitrag zur Frage Freiprosa-Buchprosa*, 1951), M. C. van den Toorn ("Zeit und Tempus in der Saga", 1961) and Carl C. Rokkjær ("Om tempusblandingen i islandsk prosa indtil 1250", 1963).
[198] Rokkjær. "Om tempusblandingen", p. 212. Rokkjær also made a list of different Old Norse genres arranged into four groups according to the amount of the historical present they contain (Ibid, p. 207-208).
[199] Ibid, p. 212.
[200] See Bröndsted: *Dichtung und Schicksal.*
[201] Chapter ii in the R manuscript, chapter iii in the H manuscript and chapter iv in the U manuscript.

supernatural or scary events usually take place. The she-wolf that kills the brothers of Signý, daugter of the king Vǫlsung, always attacks at midnight (*Vǫls* v). Hervǫr's boat lands by the island Sámsey,[202] where several burial mounds are located, at the moment when the sun goes down and Hervǫr stays on the island overnight trying to get the sword Tyrfing of her deceased father and comes back to her ship at sunrise (*Heiðr* iii-iv). Night is also the time when prophetic dreams come to the heroes of legendary sagas and reveal their future destinies, as in the case of the king Atli from *Vǫlsunga saga* who dreams about his death and the death of his sons (*Vǫls* xxxiii). A similar connection of night with supernatural events and prophetic dreams appears also in family sagas, as I will show in the next chapter.

6.3. Specific features of narrative time in legendary sagas

Let me now proceed to the analysis of the characteristic features of narrative time in legendary sagas. As regards Genette's category of *order*, one can state that the order of the narrated events is generally chronological. However, it is not as strictly chronological as for instance in the case of family or kings' sagas, because the narrators of legendary sagas sometimes use *analepsis* (flashback). This has already been noted by Van den Toorn who writes that: "In einer späteren Entwicklungsphase ist jedoch ein Übergang zu diesem Verfahren [= the disruption of strictly chronological narration] zu bemerken, namentlich in Fornaldarsagas (…). Hier erzählen mehrere Personer ihre *æfisaga*[203]: sie greifen damit auf die Vergangenheit zurück und entstellen den natürlichen Ablauf der Zeit, wie wir ihn sonst aus den Sagas kennen."[204] As Van den Toorn observes, the chronological order of the narration may be disrupted in the moments when the characters narrate the story of their lives. In *Vǫlsunga saga* it is for instance Sigurð's caretaker Regin who describes how his family got the cursed treasure into their possession and how his brother turned into a dragon (*Vǫls* xiv). Similarly, Valkyrie Brynhild briefly tells Sigurð of her past and explains why Óðinn put her to sleep on a mountain (*Vǫls* xx). Legendary sagas usually have one main storyline following the adventures of the main characters, while similar *æfisagas* that are additional to this line can be narrated in flashbacks, which are otherwise very rare in Old Norse literature, and thus the narrator keeps the main storyline more cohesive. However, it is not always so. Let me mention an example from *Ragnar's saga* where the narrator does not tell of the childhood of Ragnar's second wife Áslaug in a flashback, although he certainly could have, but describes it at the very beginning of the saga. Afterwards

[202] The island is nowadays known as Samsø.
[203] *Æfisaga* = a lifestory or biography.
[204] Van den Toorn. "Saga und Wirklichkeit", p. 196.

he "jumps" over to Þóra, who is rescued by Ragnar and becomes his first wife. Áslaug appears again in the fifth chapter of the saga when she meets Ragnar for the first time. Later in the saga, when she tells Ragnar about her childhood (*Ragn* ix), the narrator only states that she narrates everything that had happened before (*ok nú segir hún allt, sem farit hafði*). A possible explanation for the fact that Regin's or Brynhild's *æfisagas* are narrated in flashbacks, but Áslaug's not, could be that their stories belong to the mythical past rather than the legendary-heroic past, that is to the "time of gods" rather than "time of heroes."

The next category defined by Genette is that of *duration*, which compares the difference between the real duration of the narrated events (i.e. their duration in narrated time) with the time it takes to narrate them (i.e. their duration in narrative time). Usually, the real duration of the events is reduced in the narration; Genette calls this situation when narrative time is reduced when compared to narrated time *summary*.[205] What can differ is the level of reduction – a certain event can be narrated in a few chapters or paragraphs, but also in a few sentences or words. Concerning legendary sagas, one notices that the periods of narrated time that do not play any significant role in the main storyline are mostly omitted from the narration completely. Genette calls such a phenomenon when a certain period of narrated time is completely missing in the narration *ellipsis*.[206] The period of time often omitted from legendary sagas is the winter season when the saga characters stay in one place, resting, for example (*Heiðr* vi; *Heiðr* xii):

Heiðrekr nam þar staðar ok dvaldist með konungi **um vetrinn**.	In this land Heiðrek rested, and dwelt with the king **over winter**.[207]
Þenna vetr sátu þeir Humli ok Hlǫðr um kyrrt.	**All that winter** Humli and Hlǫð remained quiet.[208]

The winter season is commonly omitted also in family sagas, as I will show in the next chapter. However, in legendary sagas the narrators frequently omit even much longer periods of narrated time. For example, at the beginning of *Vǫlsunga saga* almost ten years of narrated

[205] Genette refers to *summary* as an intermediary form of narrative movement that can be of variable tempo. (Genette. *Narrative Discourse*, p. 94). The tempo of *summary* can vary, because the level of reduction can be higher of lower.
[206] Genette refers to *ellipsis* as an extreme form of narrative movement and claims that within *ellipsis* "a nonexistent section of narrative corresponds to some duration of a story" (Genette. *Narrative Discourse*, p. 93; 94).
[207] *The Saga of King Heidrek*. Transl. Ch. Tolkien, p. 23.
[208] Ibid, p. 52.

time is omitted in the narration two times. During these years Sigmund, the father of Sigurð, lives in the forest and waits until the sons of his sister (one of them being also his son) grow up (*Vǫls* vi; *Vǫls* vii). In most cases it is not defined how long periods of time have been omitted in an *ellipsis*. For instance, after Hervǫr gets the sword Tyrfing on Sámsey, the narrator states that she stayed on the island for a certain unspecified time and that nothing is told of her subsequent travels until she came to King Guðmund of Glasisvellir (*Heiðr* iv). Similar passages, i.e. *ellipsis* of an unspecified length, are related to the aforementioned general indefiniteness of the legendary-heroic past. The sagas are set into a basic temporal frame, defined by the reign of a certain legendary king and the genealogies of legendary heroes, but inside this frame time becomes a loose sequence of scenes from the lives of heroes.

Summary and *ellipsis* in legendary sagas alternate with *scenes*. As already mentioned, in *summary* narrative time is reduced when compared to narrated time, that means it flows faster, and in the case of *ellipsis* is it reduced completely, so it suddenly jumps forward. On the contrary, in *scenes* narrative time slows down and gets closer to narrated time, the result of which being their overlapping.[209] The events depicted scenically in legendary sagas are mostly related to the main heroes, their lives, deeds and adventures. Time seems to exist only when the heroes are active. Otherwise, when they are inactive, i.e. undertaking no heroic deeds, as for example when Sigmund hides himself in the forest or when Hervǫr stays at Sámsey after getting Tyrfing, the narrator uses an *ellipsis*. Time seems to stop flowing because it has no content to be filled with. As I have stated before, Old Norse "full" time was comprised of its content, which holds true also in the case of legendary-heroic time which is concentrated on heroic actions.

Let me move onto the last Gennette's category of *frequency* that compares the number of occurrences of a certain event in the story and in the narration. In my opinion, this category might embrace the frequent occurrence of foreshadowing in sagas. All saga genres contain foreshadowing, but it differs to a great extent in the various genres. If one for instance compares foreshadowing from legendary and family sagas with that from kings' and bishops' sagas, one finds many fundamental differences as regards both its form and content. Most legendary sagas are rich in foreshadowing. In *Ragnar's saga* one can for example find various omens, as when Ragnar's sons Eirík and Agnar prepare their ships because they intend to attack Sweden and Agnar's ship accidentally slides from the round timber and kills a man

[209] Genette refers to *scene* as an intermediary form of narrative movement (opposite to *summary*) and adds that it is most often in dialogue, which realizes conventionally the equality of time between narrative and story (Genette. *Narrative Discourse*, p. 94).

(*Ragn* x). According to the people, this event foreshadows a bad end of the planned expedition. Later on, the evil foreshadowing comes true when the army of Ragnar's sons loses the battle in Sweden and both brothers are killed.

In *Vǫlsunga saga* one encounters many prophetic dreams that predict future tragic events, for example the dreams of Kostbera, the wife of Hǫgni, which occur before he rides with his brother Gunnar to the king Atli's court, where both of them are killed (*Vǫls* xxxiv). Dreams in legendary sagas are often symbolic, the most commonly used symbols probably being various objects, for instance weapons, or animals.[210] The occurrence of animals in dreams is probably related to the Old Norse belief in *fylgjur*, namely the belief that each person has his/her own *fylgja*, a guardian spirit who follows and protects him/her and who often takes the form of an animal. Georgia Dunham Kelchner writes that "these symbolic images relate primarily to pre-Christian thoughts and partake of the heathen conception of the unknown."[211] As she observes, these dream motifs are often to be found in Old Norse folklore too, and they are most likely products of the original native tradition. Let me add that the animal *fylgjur* also appear in dreams from family sagas where the saga characters commonly dream about their enemies in the forms of animals.[212]

The omens and prophetic dreams are based on the fact that the future is predetermined and reveals itself in the present. However, one can also find another kind of foreshadowing in legendary sagas that, on the contrary, requires the possibility of changing the future, namely a curse. A typical motif appearing in legendary sagas is that of a cursed object, for example the ring and treasure of the dwarf Andvari in *Vǫlsunga saga*[213] or the sword Tyrfing in *Hervarar*

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[210] Dream symbolism in sagas has been studied by many scholars in the past and several enumerations of the dream symbols were made as a result of these studies. An extensive survey of dreams in sagas was first conducted by Georgia Dunham Kelchner in *Dreams in Old Norse Literature and Their Affinities in Folklore* (1935). Her predecessor in this field of study was Wilhelm Henzen whose dissertation *Über die Träume in der altnordischen Sagalitteratur* (1890) Kelchner often refers to in her work. The results of their research have been summed up by Gabriel Turville-Petre in *Dreams in Icelandic Tradition* (1972). Later in the 20th century, Alexander Argüelles wrote a dissertation about symbolism in various saga genres (*Viking Dreams: Mythological and Religious Dream Symbolic in the Old Norse Sagas*, 1994).

[211] Kelchner. *Dreams in Old Norse Literature*, p. 17.

[212] Contrary to family sagas, in legendary sagas it is often supernatural animals that the heroes see in their dreams. Kelchner writes: "Other animals, some fabulous and some foreign, make their appearance, and even such as we are accustomed to from the historical sagas may assume a brilliance and splendor consistent with retreat from the stern requirement of reality" (Kelchner. *Dreams in Old Norse Literature*, p. 23). Two examples of this can be found in Guðrún's dreams in *Vǫlsunga saga* that foretell the arrival and the slaying of her future husband Sigurð (*Vǫls* xxv). In the first dream she sees him as a beautiful hawk with golden feathers, in the second as a large stag with golden hair, exceeding all other animals in his greatness. Just as the legendary heroes exceed the common people in their magnificence, their *fylgjur* are special.

[213] The motif of Andvari's ring is very popular among the modern adaptations of Old Norse literature, the most famous one being undoubtedly Richard Wagner's cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Wagner draws inspiration from both *Vǫlsunga saga* and *Nibelungenlied*. The dwarf who puts a curse on the ring that later brings misfortune to its owners is in Wagner's work called Alberich, the same as in *Nibelungenlied*.

saga ok Heiðreks that Hervǫr gets from her deceased father Angantýr.[214] Both the ring and the sword can be understood as symbols of the curse put on the heroes of the sagas, Sigurð and Hervǫr. As the cursed objects pass into the hands of the heroes' descendants, the curse is passed on with them and pursues the current owner of the item. Thus, in legendary sagas an evil fate can be transmitted from one person to another; this is something one does not find in either family, kings' or other types of sagas. This kind of fate is not ascribed to a man from the moment of his birth (i.e. predestined by the Norns), but comes to him from without, while the initiators of interventions into man's fate are mostly supernatural beings or heathen gods. As regards the interventions of gods, let me mention an example from *Hervarar's saga* where Óðinn, in the form of a hawk, puts a curse on King Heiðrek after he has attacked him and cut off his tail feathers (*Heiðr* x). However, there are many more examples of Óðinn (or other heathen gods) influencing the lives of the legendary heroes in various ways.[215] This fact becomes very interesting when considering that gods hardly ever appear in connection with foreshadowing in family sagas. However, they quite often intrude into the lives and destinies of legendary saga heroes. In regard to legendary sagas Bröndsted writes the following: " (…) Hinter und über dem Menschenleben wird das Einwirken von Göttern, Riesen und Zwergen geahnt."[216]

The Icelandic scholar Sverrir Jakobsson explains the increased presence of the supernatural and magic in legendary sagas by the fact that these sagas take place in the distant past.[217] He compares the temporal distance of legendary sagas that narrate events from the legendary-heroic past to the spatial distance of the so-called chivalric sagas[218] that depict the adventures of knights in distant lands: "Lighederne mellem fornaldarsagaerne og riddersagaerne beror derfor på, hvordan middelalderens islændinge betragtede tid og rum. Det, som var langt væk i tid, kunne minde om det, som var langt væk i rum."[219] According to Jakobsson, both of these saga genres are opened to a certain "otherness" (*anderledeshed*).[220]

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[214] In the beginning of *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* the king Svafrlami captures two dwarves and will not set them free until they make a sword for him (*Heiðr* ii, in the H and U manuscripts of the saga). The dwarves make the sword, but they place a curse on it that brings great misfortune not only to the king himself but also to several generations of his descendants.
[215] For the occurences of Óðinn in legendary sagas see Lassen. *Odin på kristent pergament*.
[216] Bröndsted. *Dichtung und Schicksal*, p. 218.
[217] Jakobsson. "Den eksotiske fortid", p. 230.
[218] The genre of chivalric sagas begins circa in the second fourth of the 13th century and includes both the Old Norse translations of French chivalric literature and original domestic adaptations of chivalric motifs.
[219] Jakobsson. "Den eksotiske fortid", p. 222.
[220] "De to genrers slægtskab ligger således i deres delte anderledeshed" (Jakobsson. "Den eksotiske fortid", p. 222).

I agree with Jakobsson that the legendary-heroic past is very different from historical time depicted for example in family or kings' sagas. However, I would not explain this dissimilarity only by the temporal distance of the legendary past from historical time, but also by its aforementioned liminal position between historical time and the mythical past. The supernatural beings from the mythical past or the heathen gods can penetrate the legendary past and intervene in the fates of the legendary heroes. Furthermore, the curses they put on them (or on the objects they own) can spread throughout the legendary past as the evil fate pursues not only the heroes but their relatives and descendants as well. Thus, foreshadowing can overcome the border between the different temporal layers (the mythical past and legendary past).

On the other hand, as I mentioned before, foreshadowing can overcome the border between the legendary past and historical time as well. The aforementioned positive prophecies that predict the future fame of the heroes can spread to the very end of the human world. Let me mention for instance the following example from *Vǫlsunga saga* where the future glory of Sigurð is predicted (*Vǫls* xxii):

Ok þá er taldir eru allir inir stærstu kappar ok inir ágæztu hǫfðingjar, þá mun hann jafnan fremst taldr, ok hans nafn gengr í ǫllum tungum fyrir norðan Grikklands haf, **ok svá mun vera, meðan verǫldin stendr**.	[…] and whenas folk tell of all the mightiest champions, and the noblest chiefs, then ever is he named the foremost, and his name goes wide about on all tongues north of the sea of the Greek-lands,[221] **and even so shall it be while the world endures**.[222]

As his fame spreads throughout continental Europe (or more precisely north of the Mediterranean Sea), Sigurð becomes what one might call a universal hero. The narrator does not restrict the images of his fame to a specific place or time, but rather allows them to become universally relevant through their ambiguity. Sigurð's adventures will be known basically anywhere and at any time.

[221] The Mediterranean Sea.
[222] *The Volsunga saga*. Transl. W. Morris and E. Magnússon, p. 114.

Summary I B: Legendary-heroic time

Legendary sagas take us back into the time of heroes from the legendary past (*fornǫld*) stretched between the mythical past on one side and historical time of medieval Scandinavia on the other side.

The myths seem to border the legendary-heroic past from one side. Legendary sagas are rooted in the mythical past, but at the same time the narrators refer to it as to something that precedes the legendary past. The gods or the giants are presented as the distant relatives of the legendary heroes and if the characters of legendary sagas tell of their past that lies in mythical time, they do so in retrospective narration that is separated from the main narrative line. However, gods or supernatural beings from the mythical past can intervene in the legendary past and influence the fates of heroes.

As regards the relation of the legendary past with historical time, they were certainly perceived as separated from each other as well as fundamentally different based on their content. But on the other hand, they were also partially connected through genealogies. The family lines of the legendary heroes often lead forward to the historical Scandinavian kings and, as I will show later in the thesis, similar genealogical connection can be found also in kings' or family sagas, where it is applied the other way around, i.e. the family lines of historical persons (Scandinavian kings or "common" Icelanders) lead back to the legendary heroes.

This connection of the mythical past with the legendary past and the legendary past with historical time confirms the theory I mentioned in the chapter dealing with *Poetic Edda*, namely that the past was not perceived as enclosed by the Old Norse people, but on the contrary it was believed to have certain influence on the present and, in a way, it might have still continued within it. The past could stretch itself into the present especially in the form of genealogical chains that represented a bond of national or social heritage which passed on from the forefathers to their descendants. The legendary past can reach out into historical time also through a certain kind of foreshadowing, namely the predictions of the future fame of the legendary heroes that refer to a very distant moment of the historical time, namely the end of the human world.

One may ask if the legendary-heroic past as depicted in sagas is only a literary construct or rather a reflection of how this period of time was really perceived by Old Norse society. I am rather inclined to the second possibility, that is, in my opinion the literary images of the

legendary-heroic past are based on the belief that this period of time, the time of heroes, really existed, but it was very different from historical time. The legendary-heroic past might have been understood as a transitional, liminal phase between the mythical time of gods and historical time.

7. Time in family sagas

Family sagas, also called the sagas of Icelanders (*Íslendingasǫgur*), apart from fragments that have been dated to the second half of the 13th century, have been preserved especially in manuscripts from the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries.[223] However, the events described in these sagas mostly take place in the 10th and the first half of 11th century, in the time after the Icelandic Commonwealth was established (930). The introductory chapters of some sagas depict events of Iceland's settlement from Norway (circa 870-930).

The majority of manuscripts containing family sagas were written down by anonymous scribes, but the question remains whether these sagas should be considered literary works or rather the results of the previous tradition of storytelling. I have already discussed the problem of orality versus literacy with regard to family sagas earlier in the thesis (See chapter 2.1.1.). The contemporary view of family sagas does not strictly adhere to either of these two possibilities. However, many scholars incline to the theory that these sagas are at least partially based in an older tradition.

The subject of family sagas is the life and affairs in Iceland in the Viking Age, especially the blood feuds between members of prominent Icelandic families. Several scholars have studied the structure of family sagas in order to find some general tendencies as to their form and content. A well-known study of family saga structure was done by Theodore M. Andersson, who claims that most of the family sagas can be divided into six narrative units that are based on their content following the local feuds and that resemble the structure of a drama.[224] According to him, the narration follows the feuds from their very begginning (a conflict of individuals), through their gradual escalation (the conflict proceeds to the "family level," as more people get involved in it), a great culmination in the form of combat and killings, and to a final reconciliation.

Van den Toorn divides family sagas into two basic types that he calls *Entwicklungsaga* ("development saga") and *panoramische Saga* ("panoramic saga"). While the first type has a coherent composition with one main narrative line that follows the life and fate of one hero (e.g. *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, *Gísla saga Súrssonar*), the second type follows the lives and fates of more characters, for example of a certain family or people living in certain place (e.g.

[223] Ólason. "Family Sagas", p. 102. However, as Ólason adds, "there are good reasons for believing that the majority of family sagas (…) were composed during the 13th century. (Ibid).

[224] Andersson. *The Icelandic Family Saga*, p. 5. Andersson calls these units *introduction* (information about the place and time of the action and introduction of the characters), *conflict* (the origins of the feud), *climax* (gradation of the feud in the form of killings or fighting), *revenge* (revenge of the other side involved in the feud), *reconciliation* (actions done in order to settle the conflict) and *aftermath* (a possible short note about the future fates of the characters).

Eyrbyggja saga, *Laxdæla saga*), and has rather an episodic structure. However, as Van den Toorn adds, some sagas are a mixture of both types of narration, as for example *Brennu-Njáls saga* that has a main narrative line following the fates of Njál, his friend Gunnar and their families, but there are also several sidelines attached to this story.[225]

In what follows, I will work with various types of family sagas, both the ones that concentrate primarily on the fates of one hero or several families, among others with *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*, *Brennu-Njáls saga* and *Laxdæla saga*. As with the legendary sagas, I will examine the systems of dating and time indications used in family sagas and the characteristic features of narrative time as regards the aforementioned three categories of *order*, *duration* and *frequency*.

7.1. The importance of genealogies and the connection of the past with the present

I have already mentioned the importance of genealogies for domestic Old Norse time reckoning and perception in the previous chapter dealing with legendary sagas. Similar to legendary sagas, family sagas do not make use of any *absolute* dating system,[226] since there is no unifyng timeline attached to the events narrated in the stories. The fixing of these events in time happens partially through *relative* chronology, based on the dating of a certain event by its relation to another event, and partially through *genealogical* chronology, being itself a specific type of relative chronology. I will deal with relative chronology in family sagas later, after describing the role of genealogies in this saga genre.

While legendary sagas include genealogies of legendary heroes, family sagas contain genealogies of the "common" Icelanders that appear in these stories. The genealogies of the saga characters serve as a kind of a "net" or "chain" which unfolds in the background of the narration and onto which the narrated events are situated. They can be found especially at the very beginning of the sagas or in the moments when new characters enter the narration and are introduced which usually involves their genealogies (minimally a mention of their parents). The example cited below from the beginning of *Egil's saga* belongs to one of the shortest genealogies to be found in family sagas (*Eg* i):

Úlfr hét maðr, sonr Bjálfa ok Hallberu, dóttur Úlfs	There was a man named Úlf, the son of Bjálfi and of Hallbera, the daughter of Úlf the

[225] Van den Toorn. "Zur Struktur der Saga", p. 147-149.
[226] Neither *absolute extrinsic*, based on a universal timeline, nor *absolute intrinsic*, based on a certain local timeline.

ens óarga. Hon var systir Hallbjarnar hálftrǫlls í Hrafnistu, fǫður Ketils hængs.	Fearless. She was the sister of Hallbjǫrn Half-troll from Hrafnista, the father of Ketil Hæng.[227]

As one can see, the genealogies do not only have to be "vertical," following the ancestors of the saga heroes, but they are often "horizontal" as well, following their siblings or the children of these siblings. So it is in this short genealogy from *Egil's saga* where the narrator goes two generations backwards to Úlf's parents and grandfather and afterwards returns, through mentioning Hallbera's brother Hallbjǫrn and his son Ketil, to the present of the saga (i.e. the generation of Úlf).

These enumerations of forefathers and relatives of the saga characters, the so-called *langfeðgatal*,[228] are often much more extensive and they commonly take a few paragraphs or even a whole chapter (or chapters) in the saga. In the modern translations of family sagas, the more extensive genealogies have frequently been shortened or completely omitted from the narration. The reason behind this was that the modern audience might consider the family lineages of the Old Icelanders too lengthy, as well as redundant, because they do not play any role in the plot. On one hand, I understand this concern of the translators, but on the other hand I think that the absence of genealogies in translations makes it impossible for the modern readers to realize how crucial they were for Old Norse people, especially as regards their perception of time.

Similar enumerations of forefathers served as an important tool for orientation in time, because based on them the saga audience was able to place the saga characters in their appropriate position in the genealogical chains, and thus also to fix the whole saga in time. Secondly, the genealogies represented a bond between the past and present. Through genealogies the saga characters are often connected with their forefathers who arrived from Norway among the first settlers of Iceland. Thus, the time when family sagas take place is connected with the very beginning of Icelandic history. However, the genealogies sometimes reach even much further into the past, namely into the legendary-heroic past. In the first chapter of *Njál's saga* one can for instance find a genealogy of a man named Hǫskuld that goes back to Ragnar loðbrók:

[227] *Egil's saga*. Transl. B. Scudder, p. 8.
[228] The word *langfeðgatal* is a compound of the nouns *langfeðgar*, "agnate-forefathers" or "ancestors from the father's side" and *tal*, a "tale," "list" or "series" (Cleasby-Vigfússon. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, p. 373; 624).

Maðr er nefndr Hǫskuldr; hann var Dala-Kollsson. Móðir hans hét Þorgerðr ok var dóttir Þorsteins ins rauða, Óláfs sonar ins hvíta, Ingjaldssonar, Helgasonar. Móðir Ingjalds var Þóra, dóttir Sigurðar orms-í-auga, Ragnars sonar loðbrókar.

A man was called Hǫskuld; he was the son of Dala-Koll. His mother was called Þorgerð and she was the daughter of Þorstein the Red, the son of Óláf the White, the son of Ingjald, the son of Helgi. The mother of Ingjald was Þóra, the daughter of Sigurð Snake-in-the-Eye, the son of Ragnar loðbrók.

It is not only Hǫskuld, but also other characters from *Njál's saga* that are claimed to be distant offspring of Ragnar loðbrók, namely Þorlaug, the wife of Guðmund inn ríki, Snorri goði and Eyjólf Bǫlverksson (*Nj* cxiii; *Nj* cxiv; *Nj* cxxxviii). As regards Eyjólf Bǫlverksson, he is chosen by the men called Flosi and Bjarni to protect their matter at the assembly, because of his kinship with Ragnar, which they consider a sign of Eyjólf's qualities (*Nj* cxxxviii):

[…] þú hefir marga þá hluti til, at engi er þér meiri maðr hér á þinginu. Þat er fyrst, at þú ert ættaðr svá vel sem allir eru, þeir er komnir eru frá Ragnari loðbrók.

[…] you have many qualities that show that there is no man greater than you here at the assembly. First of all, you are so well-born, as all those men who are sprung from Ragnar loðbrók.

Eyjólf's genealogical connection with a legendary hero is highly valued by Flosi and Bjarni, because they automatically expect that the descendants of a hero as great as Ragnar must be great men themselves. A connection with the famous heroes from the legendary past is considered an advantage by the saga characters, because of the belief that the ancestors can inherit the qualities of their forefathers. Here one encounters once again a trace of the myth about Urð's well, namely of the vision that the past can influence the present, or perhaps can be even revived or partially repeated in the present.

7.1.1. The connection with the present of the saga audience

As I have shown, the time when family sagas take place, i.e. the Viking Age, can be connected with the legendary past through genealogies. However, on its other edge it can also reach the present of the medieval saga audience. This connection happens partially through genealogies as well. Diana Whaley, a scholar of early medieval studies, states that the family lineages and names mentioned in sagas passed down from one generation to another, the same as important

events like feuds: "The remembered hurts or triumphs of neighbourhood feuds must have provided the cue for many stories, as did place names and personal names, including colourful nicknames or given names passed down from grandfather to grandson. And names, of course, constitute the most fundamental type of oral tradition: genealogy (…)."[229] Whaley counts the feuds and genealogies depicted in family sagas among what she calls "landmarks in the physical or social environment where the past penetrates the present."[230] Nevertheless, the genealogies or stories about feuds are not the only examples of these landmarks and Whaley mentions also burial mounds and other visible antiquities, the "physical" reminders of the Viking Age.

In my opinion, another item on Whaley's list could be things, especially weapons that often passed on through generations and thus also represent the continuity of time and traditions. Let me mention for example Gísli's sword *Grásíða* (later remade into a spearhead), the sword *Ættartangi* mentioned in *Vatnsdæla saga* that is passed from a father to his son and has the word *ætt* ("family" or "kin") in its very name, or Gretti's sword *Jǫkulsnaut* or his spear. These famous weapons can also function as a link between narrated time (i.e. the Viking Age depicted in sagas) and the time of the saga audience. Jamie Cochrane, who has briefly examined the temporal structure of *Gretti's saga*, points out that the reference to Gretti's spear is "entirely functionless within the plot of his story" and its inclusion into the narration is "specifically for the purpose of creating a relationship between the 'now' of the story and the 'now' of its fourteenth century performance".[231] As described in *Gretti's saga*, the spear had been lost and then found again "in the end of the days of the lawman Sturla Þórðarson" (*á ofanverðum dǫgum Sturlu lǫgmanns Þórðarsonar*), that is in the last third of the 13th century, which is also the time (or shortly before the time) when the saga was written down (*Gr* xlix):

Spjótit þat, sem Grettir hafði týnt, fannsk eigi fyrr en í þeira manna minnum, er **nú** lifa; þat spjót fannsk á ofanverðum dǫgum Sturlu lǫgmanns Þórðarsonar ok í þeiri mýri, er Þorbjǫrn fell, ok heitir þar **nú** Spjótsmýrr […]	The spear which Gretti had lost was never found until within the memory of men **now** living. It was found in the later days of Sturla the Lawman, the son of Þórð, in the very marsh where Þorbjǫrn fell, **now** called Spearmarsh.[232]

[229] Whaley. "A Useful Past", p. 168.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Cochrane. "Passing Time and the Past", p. 197.
[232] https://sagadb.org/grettis_saga.en2, 25. 6. 2019.

Another type of connection of the Viking past with the present of the saga audience that I have found in family sagas is through certain locations where the sagas take place. The narrators sometimes mention that the names of these locations, for instance the farms where the characters live, have remained the same till the moment of narration. Let me mention two examples from *Laxdæla saga* where the narrator draws a connection between the names of the characters and the names of a firth and a farm (*Laxd* ix; *Laxd* x):

Bjǫrn hét maðr; hann bjó í Bjarnarfirði ok nam þar land; **við hann er kenndr fjǫrðrinn**. Sá fjǫrðr skersk í land norðr frá Steingrímsfirði […]	A man named Bjǫrn had settled in Bjarnarfjǫrd, which cuts into the land north of Steingrímsfjǫrd **and is named after him**.[233]
Hrappr hét maðr, er bjó í Laxárdal fyrir norðan ána, gegnt Hǫskuldsstǫðum; **sá bœr hét síðan á Hrappsstǫðum; þar er nú auðn**.	A man named Hrapp lived north of the Laxa river, across from Hǫskuldsstaðir. **His farm, later called Hrappsstaðir, is now deserted**.[234]

In his aforementioned work on the historical present in sagas, Lehmann claims that similar references to place names often contain the present tense. As regards the two aforecited examples, the present is used in *við hann er kenndr fjǫrðrinn* and *þar er nú auðn*, ("the firth is named/known after him" and "it is now deserted"). Lehmann considers such examples to be a special kind of the historical present and calls it *Präsens in Ortsbezeichnungen* ("the present in place names").[235] The use of the present tense underlines the temporal bond between the Viking Age (the time when family sagas take place) and the time of narration (the present of the 14th century audience).

7.2. Time indications in family sagas

As several scholars have noticed before, family sagas contain a great amount of time indications and the narrators keep an eye on the flow of time almost constantly.[236] First of all, one can notice frequent references to historical Scandinavian (mostly Norwegian) kings that

[233] *The Saga of the People of Laxardal*. Transl. K. Kunz, p. 284.
[234] Ibid, p. 285.
[235] Lehmann describes this type of the historical present as follows: "Es nennt und benennt Örtlichkeiten, die in der Saga vorkommen und zu des Erzählers Zeit bestanden, für ihn also dauernde Gültigkeit besaßen" (Lehmann. *Das Präsens historicum*, p. 5).
[236] For instance, Hartmut Röhn claims that*:* "Häufung von Zeitangaben und zeitlich fixierten Handlungsschritten machen dem Leser ständig das Vergehen der Zeit bewußt" (Röhn. *Untersuchungen zur Zeitgestaltung und Komposition der Íslendingasögur*, p. 136). Van den Toorn mentions the large number of time indications in family sagas in the beginning of his article "Zeit und Tempus in der Saga".

appear usually in the introductory chapters of sagas, often in the very beginning. As with all the other time indications in family sagas, these references remain relative, because the narrator never mentions the year of a king's reign in which the narrated events took place. For instance, in the following example from *Gísla saga Súrssonar* the narrator situates the story into an unspecified time at the end of King Hákon the Good's life (*Gísl* i):

Þat er upphaf á sǫgu þessi, **at Hákon konungr Aðalsteinsfóstri réð fyrir Nóregi; ok var þetta á ofanverðum hans dǫgum**. Þorkell hét maðr; hann var kallaðr skerauki; hann bjó í Súrnadal ok var hersir at nafnbót.

This story begins **at the time when King Hákon, foster-son of King Athelstan of England, ruled Norway and was near the end of his days**. There was a man named Þorkel, know as Skerauki, who lived in Súrnadal and held the title of hersir.[237]

Family sagas always begin by a similar proper introduction, including usually a reference to a Scandinavian king, the place of the action and the names of the characters that appear in the first chapter (or chapters) of the saga, often accompanied by shorter or longer enumerations of their forefathers and other relatives. It is interesting to compare these characteristic beginnings of family sagas with the beginnings of some modern novels. While modern authors commonly begin their narration *in medias res* (examples 1, 2 and 3), the saga narrators always fix the stories both temporally and spatially (examples 4 and 5):

1. Mrs Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself. (Virginia Woolf. *Mrs Dalloway*)

2. "What we want," said Harris, "is a change." At this moment the door opened, and Mrs. Harris put her head in to say that Ethelbertha had sent her to remind me that we must not to be late getting home because of Clarence. (Jerome K. Jerome. *Three Man on a Bummel*)

3. It was late evening when K. arrived. The village lay deep in snow. (Franz Kafka. *The Castle*)[238]

4. It was in the days of King Harald Fair-hair, son of Hálfdan the Black, sun of Gudrǫð the Hunting King, son of Hálfdan the Mild and Meal-stingy, son of Eystein Fart, son of Óláf Wood-carver, King of the Swedes, that a man named Hallfreð brought his ship to Breiðdal in Iceland, below the

[237] *Gísli Sursson's saga*. Transl. M. S. Regal, p. 500.
[238] Kafka, Franz. *The Castle*. Transl. Anthea Bell. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

district of Fljótsdal. On the ship were his wife and his son, who was named Hrafnkel. He was then fifteen years of age, promising and able. (*Hrafnk* i)[239]

5. A man called Ketil Flat-nose, the son of Bjǫrn Buna, was a powerful hersir in Norway and came from a prominent family. He lived in Raumsdal in the Raumsdal district, between South More and North More. Ketil Flat-nose was married to Yngvild, the daughter of Ketil Ram, a man of good family. They had five children: one of their sons was Bjǫrn the Eastener, another Helgi Bjólan. One of their daughters, Þórunn Hyrna, was married to Helgi the Lean. […][240] During Ketil's later years King Harald Fair-hair grew so powerful in Norway that no petty king or other man of rank could thrive in Norway unless he had received his title from the king. (*Laxd* i-ii)[241]

The saga narrators would surely consider the aforementioned introductions of the modern novels insufficient. Virginia Woolf does not tell the reader who Mrs Dalloway is, nor who her forefathers or relatives are, nor where exactly she lives, Jerome K. Jerome introduces four different people in the first paragraph of his novel without stating anything at all about their relations. One can only guess that Mrs. Harris is the wife of Harris and Ethelbertha and Clarence might be their children, but they might be their friends as well, or Clarence could perhaps be a dog etc. Kafka does not even mention the full name of the hero, or the name of the village in which he has arrived. On the contrary, the narrators of *Hrafnkel's saga* and *Laxdæla saga* inform the audience about the names of the heroes, the fact that they had a wife, how many children they had, where they lived and which king ruled over Norway. The narrator of *Hrafnkel's saga* even mentions a short royal genealogy that includes six generations of kings and goes back to the legendary past. The last king in this royal family line, that is, the most distant one, Óláf trételgja (Óláf Wood-carver or Tree-carver), is one of the Swedish legendary kings (*Yngl* xlvi-xlvii).

It may seem amusing, from contemporary man's point of view, that a seemingly simple event (a man named Hallfreð arrives to Iceland) is dated in such a complicated way in *Hrafnkel's saga*, that is by enumerating six generations of kings. Nevertheless, one must realize that from the viewpoint of the saga narrator this event is crucial. Not only that Hallfreð is the father of the saga's main hero, Hrafnkel, but he also belongs to the first Norwegians that arrived in Iceland. Thus, it is not just the arrival of one man that is so elaborately dated in the

[239] *The Saga of Hrafnkel*. Transl. T. Gunnell, p. 438.
[240] The genealogy of Ketil's family continues by naming his other two daughters, their husbands and children, and includes also the name of one grandchild and some even more distant ancestors.
[241] *The Saga of the People of Laxardal*. Transl. K. Kunz, p. 276.

saga, but also the beginnings of Iceland's settlement. Through the reference to the Scandinavian king the narrator forms a connection between local Icelandic history with "the greater history" of continental Scandinavia. This is also the main reason why similar references to kings are included in family sagas in general. Clearly, they are not a necessary part of the plot, because leaving them out of the narration would not affect it at all. Their presence in the sagas can be explained by the narrators' efforts to include the stories into a more universal temporal frame. In the case of the aforestated example from *Gísli's saga*, the narrator refers even to the English king (Athelstan; in Old Norse Aðalstein). Let me add that these references remain only relative, because it is not stated in what years of the kings' reign the stories depicted in sagas happened.

As I have shown, family sagas never begin *in medias res* and nor do the scenes included in them. As with the rest of the saga, every scene is introduced with some kind of time indication. Scene as a basic narrative unit of the family saga has been described by Carol J. Clover, who claims that all scenes have the same structure which she describes as follows: "The scene opens with a preface, moves to the dramatic exchange or encounter and ends with a conclusion."[242] The preface and conclusion form the frame of the scene. The preface prepares "the stage" for the scene, it informs the audience about the place and time of the action,[243] and the conclusion depicts, usually very briefly, the characters leaving the "stage."

The time indications that appear in the prefaces, that is the introductory parts of the scenes, can be of various natures. The most frequently used are probably references to the seasons. Winter and summer play the most important role, just as in legendary sagas, but one finds references to the other two seasons, autumn and spring, in family sagas as well. However, autumn and spring are often perceived only as transitive periods between the two main seasons of the year, the winter and summer seasons (*misseri*). In such cases the narrator uses the verbs *at vára* and *at hausta* that Cleasby and Vigfússon translate as "to become spring" and "to draw near autumn."[244] Sometimes, the narrator does not even mention that there was any spring or autumn, as for instance in the following example from *Gísli's saga* (*Gísl* x):

Ok líðr nú svá sumarit, ok kemr at vetrnóttum.	Summer drew to a close and the Winter Nights began.[245]

[242] Clover. "Scene in Saga Composition", p. 59.
[243] Sometimes, the preface also includes an introduction of the characters acting in the scene, in the case that they were not introduced earlier in the saga.
[244] Cleasby-Vigfússon. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, p. 241; 686.
[245] *Gísli Sursson's saga*. Transl. M. S. Regal, p. 512.

Both winter and summer are filled with certain characteristic content. Winter is presented as a more passive or calmer period of the year when the saga characters often stay in one place and rest. They interrupt their journeys or other activities and remain in one place or they return home and stay with their relatives. What one might consider the peak of the winter season as depicted in family sagas is the aforementioned pagan midwinter feast *jól*. The feast later became Christianized and applied to Christmas.[246]

The verb frequently connected to winter is *at vera* ("to be" or "to stay"), usually following the pattern "A stays at B in winter" or "A stays at B with C in winter," for example (*Eg* i):

Þat var nǫkkur sumur, er þeir lágu í víking, en **váru heima um vetrum** með feðrum sínum. Hafði Þórólfr heim marga dýrgripi ok færði fǫður sínum ok móður.	They went raiding for several summers, **spending the winters at home** with their fathers. Þórólf brought many precious things back to give to his parents.[247]

The whole winter period is frequently skipped in the narration, because nothing interesting happens concerning the plot.

Although usually passive, winter was probably considered the dominant half of the year, because it could also represent the whole year, as I have already mentioned earlier. The same as in legendary sagas, the age of the characters from family sagas is counted in winters, not in years. Furthermore, the flow of time is counted in winters. Let me mention at least two examples out of the many (*Gunnl* vi; *Gísl* xxi):

Gunnlaugr svarar: "**Ek em nú átján vetra**."	Gunnlaug answers: "**I am now eighteen winters [old]**."
Svá er sagt, at Gísli var **þrjá vetr** í Geirþjófsfirði, en stundum með Þorkatli Eiríkssyni, en **aðra þrjá vetr** ferr hann um allt Ísland […]	It is said that Gísli spent **three winters** at Geirþjófsfjǫrd, staying some of the time with Þorkel Eiríksson. Then he spent **another three winters** journeying around Iceland […][248]

[246] Cleasby-Vigfússon. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, p. 326.
[247] *Egil's Saga*. Transl. B. Scudder, p. 9.
[248] *Gisli Sursson's Saga*. Tranl. M. S. Regal, p. 530.

However, winter is not only a period of rest or staying at home with relatives and celebrating *jól*, but its arrival can bring about negative feelings as well, because it is a time of long nights and darkness. Night in family sagas is often connected with a hidden danger, as Jiří Starý writes: " (…) evening and night is not only the time when the enemies attack, but also the time when the restless dead (*draugar*) come alive and ghostly revelations make their appearance in scary visions."[249] It is in time of the encroaching winter and nights growing longer that the nightmares of Gísli make their appearance, as one can read in his saga (*Gísl* xxiii), "and the dreams appeared again, as the nights grew longer" (*ok kemr nú á þref um draumana, þegar er lengir nóttina*).[250] In these dreams, ones literally full of blood, Gísli's bad dream-woman (*draumkona en verri*) comes to him and disturbs his sleep. In *Eyrbyggja saga*, the dead relatives of the saga characters appear as revenants in the winter time and come to sit with the living by the fireplace (*Eb* liv-lv). In the same saga, the man known as Þórólf Lame-foot (*Þórólf bægifóts*) scares the people living in the district when appearing as a revenant for one winter, but the situation calms down again with the beginning of summer (*Eb* xxxiv):

Eptir dauða Þórólfs bægifóts þótti mǫrgum mǫnnum verra úti, þegar er sólina lægði; en er á leið sumarit, urðu menn þess varir, at Þórólfr lá eigi kyrr […] Svá váru allir menn hræddir við aptrgǫngur Þórólfs, at engir menn þorðu at fara ferða sinna, þó at ørendi ætti, um vetrinn. **En er af leið vetrinn, váraði vel** […]	After the death of Þórólf Lame-foot many people thought it was not good to stay outside after the sunset. And when the summer was almost over, it became clear that Þórólf does not rest in peace […] All men were so scared from Þórólf's haunting that they did not dare to go anywhere in the winter, even though they had some private matters to deal with. **And when the winter passed, it became a nice spring** […]

While in winter men usually stay on land, either home or abroad, in summer they sail out. The active summer period usually includes various transfers of the saga characters, both on the sea and land, some men sail abroad, others come back to Iceland, and people ride to the spring and summer assemblies. Summer as a time indication is often connected with the verb *at fara* ("to go"). A common opening of a new scene or a chapter happens by a sentence following the pattern "A went to B in summer," for example (*Eg* i):

[249] Starý. "Sny starých Seveřanů", p. 175.
[250] See also Hallberg. *The Icelandic Saga*, p. 86.

En er Þórólfr var á tvítugs aldri, þá bjóz hann í hernað. Fekk Kveldúlfr honum langskip. Til þeirar ferðar réðuz synir Berðlu-Kára, Eyvindr ok Ǫlvir […] ok **fóru um sumarit í víking** ok ǫfluðu sér fjár ok hǫfðu hlutskipti mikit.	When Þórólf was twenty, he made ready to go raiding, and Kveldúlf gave him a longship. Kári's sons Eyvind and Ǫlvir joined him […] **In the summer they went raiding** and took plenty of booty which they shared out among themselves.[251]

The approaching summer half of the year often means preparation for the assemblies, especially the general assembly Alþing that is presented as the peak of the summer season in many family sagas. The narrator never forgets to point out that an assembly is getting near or that the men are preparing themselves to attend it (*Nj* vii; *Gunnl* iii; *Eg* lvi):

Nú líðr til þings framan.	Now it draws near towards the time of assembly.
Um sumarit bjóst Þorsteinn til þings […]	Þorstein was preparing himself for the assembly in summer […]
Líðr af vetrinn, ok kemr þar, er menn fara til Gulaþings.	Winter passed and the time has come when men ride to Gulaþing.[252]

The time of an approaching assembly is often a restless and tense time in which the saga characters prepare for lawsuits. The tension often passes onto their relatives or neighbours as well, because the assemblies do not always solve the conflicts, but on the contrary deepen them and result in involving more people from the family or neighbourhood in the feuds. Let me mention one example from *Eyrbyggja saga*. One of the conflicts depicted in this saga is a conflict between Steinþór from Eyrr (and his people) and *goði*[253] Snorri defending the sons of Þorbrand. There is a temporary truce between the enemies during winter, but as spring approaches, people from the district begin to be afraid that the conflict will further escalate if not solved at the assembly (*Eb* xlvi):

Steinþórr fór heim á Eyri um morguninn, ok var	Steinþór rode home to Eyr in the morning, and

[251] *Egil's Saga*. Transl. B. Scudder, p. 9.
[252] Gulaþing, assembly in Guli (nowadays known as Gulen), was a Norwegian assembly and the main hero of the saga, Egil Skallagrímsson, attends it while he is in Norway.
[253] *Goði* was, basically speaking, a chieftain of the local area.

atfaralaust með mǫnnum um vetrinn þaðan í frá. En um várit, er leið at stefnudǫgum, þótti góðgjǫrnum mǫnnum í vant efni komit, at þeir menn skyldu missáttir vera ok deildir við eigast, er þar váru gǫfgastir í sveit […]

there did not occurr any conflicts between the men during the winter. But in the spring, when the days of summons were approaching, the people of good will thought it was a difficult situation that the most noble men in the district should be at enmity and having quarrels with each other.

Another example is from the beginning of *Njál's saga* (*Nj* v-vi). One of the narrative lines the saga follows is the unhappy marriage of Hrút and Unn. Unn intends to get divorced, but this intention must be presented at the assembly. As spring and thus the time of assembly approaches, the relation between the couple is more and more tense (*Nj* vi):

En þá er vetraði, þá dró til vanða með þeim, ok var þess verr, er meir leið á várit.

But when the winter came, the difficulties in their relationship began and the situation was getting ever worse, as the spring was approaching.

Summer and winter represent two complementary halves of the year that one might perhaps call "active" and "passive" or "a period of action" and "a period of rest." As I have described above, both of these periods are usually connected to certain types of events or actions. The narrator commonly refers to periodically repeated events within the social sphere, such as travelling, sea expeditions and assemblies in the summer season or visiting relatives, resting and feasting in the winter season. Although the general course of the narrative is linear, it is set into a cyclical background.

An interesting fact is that if the narrator accidentally forgot to mention that the summer season had passed into the winter season or vice versa, it would not matter at all, as the audience would recognize this fact from the activities of the saga characters. This is a nice example of the aforementioned close connection of time with its content, or more precisely with the human activities that take place in it. Winter and summer are not "empty" time indications, but they are filled with certain specific content.

While examining time indications in family sagas, I was also interested in finding out, to what extent the Christian liturgical calendar is used in the stories. I have encountered a few

references to Easter in *Njál's saga* and *Laxdæla saga*, among others in the following statements (*Nj* clvii; *Laxd* xlviii):

Jarl kom með allan her sinn **at pálmadegi** til Dyflinnar […]	The earl arrived with the whole army in Dublin **on Palm Sunday** […]
Kjartan sitr inn **fjórða dag páska** á Hóli; var þar in mesta skemmtan ok gleði.	Kjartan spent **the Wednesday following Easter**[254] at Hól, where there was plenty of entertainment and feasting.[255]

In *Eyrbyggja saga* I found a reference to the fasting time before Christmas. However, as the narrator adds, in the time the story of this saga is supposed to take place, the fasting tradition was not yet held by the people (*Eb* liii):

Var þá komit at jólafǫstu, en þó var þann tíma eigi fastat á Íslandi.	Then the Yule-fast[256] had begun, but in that time people did not fast in Iceland.

Generally, it can be claimed that there is only a minor amount of Christian time indications in family sagas. As I will show later in the thesis, this is very different from kings' sagas and especially from bishops' sagas that contain numerous references to the liturgical calendar, that is to various Christian feast days or masses. The narrators of family sagas do not insert these time indications into the stories, as they have probably perceived them as a part of a different time, namely the Christian time, and therefore as something that did not belong in the Viking past depicted in family sagas.

7.3. Specific features of narrative time in family sagas

Let me begin with examining family sagas as regards the Genette's concept of *order*. Contrary to modern novels, events narrated in family sagas are organised strictly chronologically. As Van den Toorn states: "Anders als in dem modernen Roman drückt die Saga die Zeit auf dieselbe Weise, wie sie empfunden worden ist, Vorgänge A, B, C, D usw. werden mithin in der gleichen Folge A, B, C, D usw. ausgedrückt und nicht mit raffinierten Umstellungen wie C, A,

[254] Literally translated "the fourth day of Easter."
[255] *The Saga of the People of Laxardal*. Transl. K. Kunz, p. 368.
[256] Advent.

B, D usw. wie sie im Roman nicht ungewöhnlich sind."[257] What is interesting to examine is how this strict chronology is achieved in the narration.

There is no universal timeline in the background of family sagas to which all narrated events would be situated (as for example a regnal period of a certain king); on the contrary, what one might call "a plurality" of timelines is typical for them. Family sagas usually consist of more narrative lines "running" next to each other and intertwined with each other. Each narrative line seems to run in its own timeline. This is not only true for sagas like *Laxdæla* or *Eyrbyggja* that tell us about the fates of several Icelandic families that lived in the same district, but also for sagas that concentrate on the life story of a single man such as *Egil's saga* or *Gísli's saga*. Although these sagas usually have one main storyline that follows the life of the main hero, they often contain many side episodes narrating the actions of the other people that play some role in the story, for example the hero's enemies. In every narrative that follows several storylines, there is always necessarily a situation when these lines overlap. The narrator has two basic possibilities of how to deal with this situation. The first possibility is to follow one of the storylines and then at some point use *analepsis* in order to depict the events from the second storyline. The second possibility is to depict both storylines in the form of a parallel narrative; that is to jump from one to another and avoid flashbacks. This possibility is the one the narrators of family sagas always choose.

The events narrated in the various storylines are arranged in chronological order through the aforementioned *relative* chronology that establishes the time of an event by its relation to another event. When two storylines penetrate each other in the narrative, the narrator always makes the audience aware of this fact by mentioning the temporal relation between these two lines. Let me take a look at an example of this inner narrative chronology from *Laxdæla saga*. At the end of the chapter lxvii we are told that a man named Þorgils Hǫlluson was slain by his enemy Auðgísl Þórarinsson at Alþing. The narrator continues by stating that goði Snorri, the local chieftain and one of the main characters of the saga, was informed about this incident and that the killing was peacefully atoned. Afterwards, in the following chapter another storyline begins, focusing on the meeting of Snorri with a man calked Þorkel Eyjólfsson. The first sentence of this chapter is a nice example of how two different storylines can be connected fluently by involving relative chronology (*Laxd* lxviii):

[257] Van den Toorn. "Zeit und Tempus", p. 141. Let me add that the anachronic narrative can be found not only in modern literature, but already in the very beginnings of the European literature as well, namely in Homer's *Odyssey*.

Þat sama sumar, er Þorgils Hǫlluson var veginn, kom skip í Bjarnahǫfn; þat átti Þorkell Eyjólfsson.	The same summer that Þorgils Hǫlluson was slain a ship owned by Þorkel Eyjólfsson arrived in Bjarnarhǫfn.[258]

The narrator uses the temporal link between these two events to clarify their chronological relation and, at the same time, to create a passage between two storylines. The narrated events in family sagas are always arranged in chronological order through relative chronology like pieces of a puzzle.

The narrator's effort to avoid *analepsis* is also apparent when it comes to the introduction of new characters into the narration. In modern novels, new characters are usually introduced at the moment they first appear in the narration. The narrator interrupts the narration in order to introduce the characters and eventually also describes their previous life or actions. For instance, Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* begins with a morning scene in the house of Stepan Arkadyevich and his wife. Afterwards, Stepan leaves to work and later that day he meets his friend Levin and talks to him (the fifth chapter). In that moment, the narrator inserts a short passage into the story where he describes who Levin is, how he had lived up to this moment and how he had become a friend of Stepan. Then the interrupted dialogue between Levin and Stepan continues.

This is very different from the following example from *Hrafnkel's saga*. In the beginning of the saga (*Hrafnk* iii) a man called Eyvind, the brother of Sám, Hrafnkel's main enemy, is introduced. Subsequently, the narrator states:

[…] en Eyvindr gerðisk farmaðr ok fór útan til Nóregs ok var þar um vetrinn. Þaðan fór hann ok út í lǫnd ok nam staðar í Miklagarði ok fekk þar góðar virðingar af Grikkjakonungi ok var þar um hríð.	Eyvind became a merchant. He went abroad to Norway, and was there for the winter. From there he went to other countries, and stopped in Constantinople where he gained great honour from the King of the Greeks. He stayed there for a while.[259]

Afterwards, the narration returns to Hrafnkel and his narrative line. Eyvind appears again in the saga much later, in the chapter xvii, where we read:

[258] *The Saga of the People of Laxardal*. Transl. K. Kunz, p. 402.
[259] *The Saga of Hrafnkel*. Transl. T. Gunnell, p. 439.

Þess er getit, at skip kom af hafi í Reyðarfjǫrð, ok var stýrimaðr Eyvindr Bjarnason. Hann hafði útan verit sjau vetr.	It is told that one summer a ship came in from the sea into Reyðarfjǫrð, and the skipper was Eyvind Bjarnason. He had been abroad for six years.[260]

Although Eyvind first acts in the narration in the seventeenth chapter, he is already introduced in the third chapter of the saga. In a modern novel, Eyvind would probably be introduced in the seventeenth chapter when first acting in the story after his arrival from abroad. However, that would suppose the use of flashback in order to explain that Eyvind is a brother of Sám, the son of Bjarni, and that he had become a merchant which was the reason why he sailed abroad.

The narrators of family sagas strictly avoid similar retrospective diversions that would break the chronological order of the narrative time. The introduction of new characters in family sagas is based on another method: the narrator introduces the characters before they act in the narration, that is before the beginning of the scenes where they first appear. These introductions are situated into the "empty" moments of narration, for example between two scenes or into the moment when the narrative line is interrupted, because nothing interesting is happening in the story. As Hartmut Röhn writes: "An Ruhepunkten der Handlung, vor dem Beginn neuer Phasen oder in 'Lücken,' die sich im chronologischen Ablauf der Erzählung ergeben, werden ganze Gruppen von Personen eingeführt, die in der nachfolgenden Handlung wichtig werden."[261] Let me add that the newly introduced characters do not always have to appear already in the next scene, but they sometimes appear a much longer time after they were introduced into the narration, like in the aforementioned case of Eyvind.

The fact that the saga characters are introduced before (and sometimes quite long before) they act in the narration obviously caused the Old Norse audience no major difficulties. Keeping the information about new characters in their memory and calling them back to mind later in the moment when they act in the saga was probably easier for the audience than following the chronological interruptions of scenes, i.e. introducing the characters in flashbacks and then returning back to the "present" of the narration. The reason behind this might be the fact that Old Norse people perceived the stories of sagas on the background of genealogies. In their minds they probably placed the new saga characters and their relatives into a large genealogical net directly at the moment these persons were introduced in the saga. Later, when

[260] Ibid, p. 456.
[261] Röhn. *Untersuchungen zur Zeitgestaltung und Komposition*, p. 146.

the characters began to act in the narration, the audience only assigned the scenes and episodes in which they appeared into a particular place within the genealogical nets.

For the modern reader, who does not build an imaginary genealogical net on the background of the stories he reads, but rather a chronological timeline, it is more acceptable when a character is introduced in flashback at the moment when he or she first appears in the narration. The reader usually does not place the characters into a genealogical net that he would keep in his mind during reading a novel. On the other hand, he does not mind the fact that a scene is interrupted by introducing the new characters and narrative time returns to the past and then jumps back to the present. He is capable of following these jumps in the chronological order of the narration through situating them on an imaginary time scale.

When comparing these different methods of introducing the new characters used by the saga narrators and modern authors it is interesting to examine the modern adaptations of sagas. I have for instance found a very expressive example of the difference between Old Norse and contemporary time perception in a Czech adaptation of *Njál's saga* written by Julius Zeyer. Although his novel called *V soumraku bohů* ("In the Twilight of Gods", 1897) is supposed to imitate the narrative style of family sagas, he adapted the method of introducing the new characters in order to suit better the modern readers' time perception. In the second chapter of *Njál's saga* the narrator depicts a dialogue between two brothers, Hǫskuld and Hrút. Hǫskuld says to his brother that it is the time for him to marry. He has already chosen a wife for him, namely Unn, the daughter of Mǫrd Fiddle. The narrator does not have to interrupt the dialogue between the brothers in order to introduce Unn and her father, because he has already done so in advance in the first chapter of the saga. Zeyer solves the necessity of introducing the new characters somewhat differently, namely through *analepsis*. When the brothers are talking about Hrút's future wife, Hǫskuld says that he has chosen a woman called Unn, daughter of a man called, in Zeyer's adaptation of the saga, Thorstejn (Zeyer's version of the Old Norse name Þorstein). Afterwards, Hǫskuld claims: "Thorstejn is my friend. I know the story of his life, and that life is not an ordinary one […] I could tell you about it till sunrise […]."[262] Subsequently, Zeyer uses *analepsis* and depicts the fates of both Thorstejn and Unn in approximately twenty pages of the novel. Then he finally returns to the interrupted dialogue between Hǫskuld and Hrút. Although this jump in time is extensive, it is certainly a more acceptable solution for the modern reader than if the new characters were introduced before

[262] Zeyer. *V soumraku bohů*, p. 10. (My translation).

and he would not know exactly where to situate them on the chronological time scale that he imagines in the background of the narration.

Let me now move on to the second of Genette's categories of the temporal narrative structure, namely the category of *duration* that concerns the time it takes to narrate an event, i.e. the time dedicated to the particular event in the narration with the real duration of the event. As I have already mentioned in the chapter dealing with legendary sagas, narrated time is usually more or less summarized in the narration. The narrators of family sagas also use *summary* to a great extent, which comes as no surprise because the periods of narrated time depicted in these sagas are usually very long and must be significantly reduced. The parts of sagas that enumerate the forefathers and relatives of the characters are especially noticeably summarized. The names and sometimes also the deeds of several generations are narrated in a few chapters or paragraphs. For example, the introductory part of *Eyrbyggja saga* includes a summary of the fates of four generations of Icelanders (*Eb* i-xii) in twelve short chapters.[263] In the case of such extreme summary, that which remains in the narration is basically a list of names of the forefathers (the aforementioned *langfeðgatal*). Thus, narrative time is concentrated in the names of the people from the past and quickly moves forward together with the changing of generations.

In the main parts of the sagas the level of summary is lower than in the introductory parts, but it still remains relatively high. Long periods of narrated time, like a half-year, a year or even a few years, are often completely omitted from the narration in *ellipsis*. Let me mention an example from *Njál's saga* where one can find a scene depicting how Njál became the foster-father of a boy called Hǫskuld (*Nj* xciv). Subsequently, the narrator uses an *ellipsis* and omits the whole period of Hǫskuld's childhood from the narration completely. In the next scene where Hǫskuld appears he is already an adult and searches for a wife (*Nj* xcvii). Steblin-Kamenskij writes that this extensive interval of narrated time is left out of the narration because nothing interesting happened during this time.[264] This is very unlikely, because in such a long

[263] In the beginning of the saga we read about the Norwegian man known as Ketil Flat-nose (the first generation). Ketil leaves Norway because of his conflicts with the king Harald Fairhair. Subsequently, narrative time jumps forward and many years of narrated time are omitted from the narration. The narrator tells us about Ketil's son Bjǫrn (the second generation) who is already an adult and who also gets involved in a conflict with the Norwegian king. Therefore, he leaves to Iceland and later on his friend Þórólf also comes to Iceland. The narrator then enumerates Bjǫrn's sons (the third generation) and he narrates very briefly the lifestory of Þórólf's son Þorstein (also the third generation). Afterwards, he mentions Þorstein's son Þorgrím (the fourth generation) and his sons, among whom was also Snorri goði (the fifth generation), one of the main characters of the saga. In this moment the introductory part of the saga ends and it is followed by the main part that happens in the lifetime of Snorri and ends with his death.

[264] Steblin-Kamenskij. *The Saga Mind*, p. 130-131.

period of time surely many local conflicts would have occurred. What Steblin-Kamenskij should have added is that no conflicts that would be crucial for the story of *Njál's saga* happened. Therefore, the narration continues first in the moment when the grown up Høskuld proposes to Hildigunn, which is crucial as regards the plot of the saga. Hildigunn says that she will only marry Høskuld if he becomes a *goði*, a local chieftain. Njál helps his foster-son to become a *goði*, which later causes problems because his new *goðorð*[265] interferes with the *goðorð* of a man called Mørð Valgarðsson who decides to avenge this and convinces Njál's sons to kill Høskuld. This deed, together with others, later leads to the burning of Njál and his sons in their house.

The *ellipsis* in family sagas are usually caused by the fact that nothing is happening as regards the feuds the particular saga depicts. Between the different phases of the conflict, when one or the other side involved acts in some way, "empty" periods of time occur. One side for example kills somebody from the other side and the time of waiting for revenge or for the assembly where the conflict could be solved is omitted from the narration (*Gísl* xiv; *Eb* xxxvi):

Ok er þat er gǫrt, ferr hverr heim til síns heimilis, **ok var nú allt kyrt**.	When it was over, [i.e. Véstein who had been killed, was buried], everyone went back to his own home **and all was quiet again**.[266]
Sá orðrómr lagðist á, at Snorri goði hefði þenna mann sendan til høfuðs Arnkatli. Snorri lét þetta mál eigi til sín taka ok lét hér rœða um hvern þat er vildi, **ok liðu svá þau misseri, at eigi varð til tíðenda**.	There was rumoured that Snorri goði sent that man to kill Arnkel. Snorri did not pay any attention to this rumour and let the people talk about whatever they wished. **And so passed that season without any events**.

As already mentioned, the part of the year that is most often omitted in the narration is the winter season. In this period of the year the saga characters usually stay at home resting and their activities involving conflicts or travelling are temporarily interrupted. The narrators hardly ever depict the events of everyday life; as Van den Toorn notices, it is only very rarely described in sagas how the characters eat, drink, sleep or work on the farm: "Wir sehen die Figuren in der Saga gewöhnlich nie essen und trinken, schlafen oder arbeiten, es sei denn, dass diese Handlungen eine bestimmte Funktion in der Geschichte haben. Statt dessen erscheint es

[265] *Goðorð* was the area of *goði's* influence.
[266] *Gísli Sursson's Saga*. Transl. M. S. Regal, p. 518.

uns, als ob sie ihr Leben meistens mit Kämpfen oder auch mit Besuchen an der Thingstätte füllen."[267] Everyday life is not considered action in family sagas, but rather a static phase present in the background of the sagas which does not fill narrative time with any content (= any action) and it is therefore summarized or omitted in *ellipsis*.

On the contrary, when this static phase is interrupted by some action, the narrator uses scenic narration. One could perhaps claim that family sagas (or large parts of them) consist of accumulated *scenes* used when depicting action and alternating with *ellipsis*. All important moments of the story are depicted scenically, through the detailed description of the heroes' motions and dialogues. I have already mentioned the study of the scene in sagas done by Clover in which she divides the scene into the preface, main part and conclusion. The main part of the scene might remind us of a dramatic scene or even, as Clover claims, of a "miniature drama,"[268] mainly because of the use of dialogues. As Hallberg states, in family sagas (the same as in legendary sagas) the dialogues constitute circa 30 percent of the narration.[269] According to some scholars the main purpose of scenes and dialogues in family sagas is to show the personalities of the characters. The narrator hardly ever describes the feelings and thoughts of the saga heroes and the only way to present their personalities is through their actions, behaviour and speech.[270] Another important role of scenes in sagas might be to make the narration more dramatic. The scenic narration with its high dramatic potential is an important literary means that helps attract the attention of the audience. Furthermore, the narrator often switches to the present tense in scenes, which is considered a special type of the historical present. Lehmann calls it *das szenische Präsens*[271] and Rokkjær suggests calling it *the dramatic present* and describes it as follows: "Her [i.e. in the scenic description] har forfatterne – bevidst eller ubevidst – benyttet en stil der accepterer hist. præs. som et dramatiserende, anskueliggørende virkemiddel."[272] When using the present time in scenes, the overlapping of narrative time with narrated time is complete and the actions are depicted as taking place directly before the eyes of the audience. Narrative time in family sagas does not flow in an even pace, month by month, year by year; on the contrary, its pace changes radically

[267] Van den Toorn. "Saga und Wirklichkeit", p. 195-196.
[268] Clover. "Scene in Saga Composition", p. 61.
[269] Hallberg. "Some Aspects of the Fornaldarsögur", p. 2.
[270] Hartmut Röhn for example writes that: "Die so entstehenden Szenen streben die Verfasser an, um die Personen der Handlung agierend und reagierend vorführen zu können" (Röhn. *Untersuchungen zur Zeitgestaltung und Komposition*, p. 135). Also Margaret Jeffrey states that one of the main funtions of dialogues in sagas is to show the personalities of the saga heroes (Jeffrey. *The Discourse*, p. 85). Robert Cook claims: "The center of interest in the Sagas of Icelanders is their realistic portrayal of character" (Cook. *The Sagas of Icelanders*, p. 88).
[271] See Lehmann. *Das Präsens Historicum*.
[272] Rokkjær. "Om Tempusblandingen", p. 216.

based on human activities. The active "dynamic" phases, described in *scenes*, alternate with the inactive "static" phases, omitted in *ellipsis*. When filled with action, time slows down markedly; when there is no action, it jumps forward.

Let me now continue with the category of *frequency*, which compares the number of occurrences of an event in narrated time and narrative time. As I have explained, in sagas the number of occurrences is not even in the case of foreshadowing. In family sagas, as in legendary sagas, one encounters a great deal of foreshadowing. Apart from prophetic dreams, (as Hallberg counts, there is on average three or four dreams per saga),[273] the narrators mention numerous premonitions, omens or warnings. The content of foreshadowing in family sagas is almost always negative, as the most commonly predicted event is the death of the saga characters, or alternatively a fight which, nevertheless, also leads to the deaths of many people involved.[274] If no foreshadowing was found in the oral tradition predicting the deaths of the saga heroes, it was sometimes artificially inserted into the saga. For example, as Einar Ólafur Sveinsson and Wilhelm Heizmann point out, one of the dreams preserved in *Njál's saga*, dreamt by a man called Flosi and predicting the deaths of many saga characters, is taken from Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*.[275]

Apart from being negative, the content of foreshadowing in family sagas is usually symbolic and ambiguous. The saga characters sometimes propose different interpretations of a foreshadowing. This is for instance the case with one dream from *Laxdæla saga*, in which Guðrún's fourth husband Þorkel sees himself with such a large beard that it covers the whole of

[273] Hallberg. *The Icelandic Saga*, p. 81.

[274] Margarete Haeckel points out that there are only two examples of dreams that predict something positive in family sagas: "Es sind nur zwei Beispiele zu nennen in denen der Traum Gutes voraussagt" (Haeckel. *Die Darstellung und Funktion des Traumes*, p. 61). These examples are namely the dreams in the first chapter of *Hrafnkel's saga* and in the seventh chapter of *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja*. However, in the case of *Hrafnkel's saga* the dream includes a warning for Hrafnkel to move out from his house which he does just before a landslide comes down on the building. Thus, what is positive is not the dream itself, but rather the fact that Hrafnkel avoids death in the landslide. As regards *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja*, a positive dream cannot only be found in the seventh chapter, but also in the sixth chapter and in the both cases it is a dream about a beautiful tree, full-grown and with large roots. The image of the tree in these dreams symbolizes the birth of a child. Similar 'tree-dreams' are often to be found in kings' sagas as well where they predict the birth of a king and his future life, as I will show later in the thesis.

[275] Sveinsson. *Njáls saga*, p. 15; Heizmann: "Die verleugnete Intertextualität", p. 53. The original occurrence of the dream, i.e. the one included in *Dialogues* (Book I, Chapter 8), is not exactly a dream but rather a mysterious experience that happened to St. Anastasius, Abbot of an Italian monastery in Suppentonia. One night Anastasius hears a voice coming from on top of a rock, calling out his name and the names of some of the other monks. A short time later all the men called out by the voice die. In chapter cxxxiii of *Njál's saga*, we find a dream with content almost identical to that of St. Anastasius's vision. A man named Flosi dreams that he is standing under a peak and sees a man wearing a goatskin, an iron staff in his hand, emerging from inside the peak. The man is calling out the names of Flosi's friends. Later on in the story, all the men die in the order in which their names had been called out by that mysterious man from the peak. (See also Králová. "What did the Future hold for them?", p. 26-27).

Broadfirth (*Laxd* lxxiv). Subsequently, Þorkel and Guðrún give each other different explanations of the dream: he claims that it foretells a future gain in power, whilst she believes that it instead prophesies his death as the result of him drowning in the firth, which later proves to be the correct interpretation of the dream.

The symbols that appear most frequently in dreams from family sagas are various objects (for instance weapons or jewels) and animals, the same as in legendary sagas. The latter is probably related to the aforementioned domestic belief in *fylgjur*. Another typical feature is the repetition of a dream or other type of foreshadowing that anticipates the same event. For example, in *Gunnlaug's saga* the final fight between Gunnlaug and Hrafn for Helga is foretold even four times (*Gunnl* ii; iii; ix; xi). A saga famous for an especially high concentration of fearful dreams and escalated tension achieved by a repeated foreshadowing is *Gísli's saga*. As the time for Gísli to die approaches, his dreams become gradually more terrifying. Gísli's bad dream-woman appears in his dreams and scares him, as she for instance washes his head in blood (*Gísl* xxxiii).

Concerning the time extent of foreshadowing in family sagas, it can be claimed that only the near future is predicted here. By near future I mean the important events during the lifetime of a man – in the case of family sagas most often, his death. It is almost exceptionally the destiny of the saga characters that is predicted and not of their descendants who do not appear in the saga. Thus, the foreshadowed events are always fulfilled within the saga, and the foreshadowing never reaches beyond the scope of the narrative. Foreshadowing in family sagas is always closely bound to the plot. As a part of the story, it cannot be extracted without disrupting the compactness of the narrative. Some scholars therefore consider foreshadowing and especially dreams to be essential literary means in family sagas, used by the narrator to unify the story by predicting the narrated events. Vésteinn Ólason, for example, states that the saga narrators "make use of elements such as supernatural powers and fate to help strengthen saga structure and to create a dense and taut narrative texture."[276] This would hold true in the case of such dreams as Flosi's in *Njál's saga*, which were artificially added to the narration, but the question is if one can state the same about dreams in sagas in general. They may have a narrative role in the story, but it is more likely only a secondary effect and not the main intention of the narrator. It is probable that foreshadowing in most cases became a part of sagas simply because it already was a part of the stories. Thus, one should not associate this "natural" process with artistic intentions. As Steblin-Kamenskij or A. U. Bååth emphasize,

[276] Ólason. *Dialogues with Viking Age*, p. 99.

foreshadowing in family sagas is primarily a reflection of the Old Norse people's belief in fate.[277]

With regards to this, one can inquire about the nature of fate as presented in family sagas. As mentioned earlier, a wide variety of foreshadowing is typical for this genre, varying from a prophetic dream to a sense of grim foreboding. However, the different types of foreshadowing have a common pattern: they are based on the belief that man's destiny is already decided and sometimes manifests itself in the present. Concerning prophetic dreams, Simone Horst states the following: "Der Glaube an die Bedeutung von Träumen setzt voraus, dass man das Schicksal für vorherbestimmt hält. Die Zukunft wird nicht als etwas Offenes gesehen, sondern ihr Verlauf ist bereits festgelegt. Daraus folgt auch, dass man an seinem Schicksal nichts ändern kann."[278] The same could be said of prophecies, premonitions and omens in which this predefined destiny reveals itself to people. The fates of the saga characters are already predestined and cannot be altered by any attempts to resist or deny them.[279] Peter Hallberg writes in connection with family sagas about fatalism, through which people conceive of their existence as ruled by an inescapable and immutable necessity.[280] Dreams and other kinds of foreshadowing serve as warnings of the gradual and inevitable fulfilment of a man's tragic fate. The future can thus be understood as a distant present, because it already exists in the form of a necessity that will once be fulfilled.

[277] See Bååth. *Studier öfver kompositionen i några isländska ättsagor*; Steblin-Kamenskij. "Tidsforestillingene i islendingesagaene".
[278] Horst. *Merlin und die völva*, p. 79.
[279] Old Norse people believed that a person who is destined to soon die cannot be saved. In Old Norse language there is a specific adjective, *feigr*, used to mark a man who is fast approaching his death. This word still exists in English as *fey* or *to be fey*, in modern German as *feig*, in Danish as *fej* or *fejg* (however, in modern German and Danish the adjective is used in the altered sense of "cowardly") and in Dutch as *a veeg man* (Cleasby-Vigfússon. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, p. 149).
[280] Hallberg. *The Icelandic Saga*, p. 87-88.

Summary I C: Time in family sagas

Family sagas are of course very different from legendary sagas, because they take place in historical time, more precisely in the Viking Age. However, they also contain traces of certain features that seem to be typical for pre-Christian domestic Old Norse time reckoning and perception.

The system of dating in family sagas is based partially on *relative* chronology that puts the narrated events into mutual temporal relations, but mainly on *genealogical* chronology, a specific type of relative chronology. All characters that appear in the narration are integrated into very elaborate genealogical nets that spread in time both backwards and forward. These often rather extensive enumerations of the forefathers or other relatives of the saga characters, the so called *langfeðgatal*, play no role in the plot of the sagas. The main reason for their inclusion in the narration is the narrators' effort to create a temporal "background" of the stories. However, genealogies play an important role in family sagas not only as regards time reckoning, but also as a link between narrated time and the legendary past, as well as between narrated time and the present of the saga audience.

The temporal *order* of family sagas is strictly chronological, although there is no abstract timeline in the background of the narration to which the narrated events could be connected, contrary to for instance kings' sagas that use a timeline based on the regnal years of the Scandinavian kings in order to keep the narration chronological. Although one can often find references to Scandinavian (mostly Norwegian) kings in the introductory chapters of family sagas as well, they only remain relative, as the stories are not situated into the particular years of a king's reign. The presence of similar references in family sagas might be explained by the intent of the narrators to include Icelandic history into the "greater" history of continental Scandinavia.

The chronological order of the narration is otherwise based on an inner relative chronology of the narrated events obtained through various kinds of time indications. Most of these indications are of a cyclical nature, because they refer either to the changing of the seasons, or to regularly repeated social events, especially the gatherings of assemblies, but also for instance the winter feast *jól*. Concerning the references to the seasons in family sagas, one can notice that the traditional division of the year into two halves (*misseri*), i.e. the summer and winter half, is well defined in the stories. As regards the category of *duration*, the narrative pace is markedly determined by the alternation of these two main seasons: in summer, when activities

like sailing abroad or riding to the assemblies take place, narrative time slows down and the events are described in detail (in *scenes*), while in winter, the time of resting, narrative time accelerates and the whole winter period is often skipped over in the narration (in extreme *summary* or *ellipsis*). The same as in legendary sagas, time in family sagas is closely connected with its content and it flows only when filled with people's activities and various events (apart from ordinary events of everyday life that are in fact not considered events in family sagas). Let me add that the connection of time with its content seems to be one of the characteristic features of pre-Christian Old Norse time perception.

As regards the social background behind the temporal structure of family sagas, they are closely bound to the Icelandic aristocracy of the Viking Age that was involved in various conflicts, participated in assemblies and organized sea expeditions. What also seems to have played an important role in the time of the local aristocracy as depicted in family sagas, is the belief in fate. When examining the category of *frequency*, one observes that family sagas include a great amount of foreshadowing that reflects a belief in predestined fate. Foreshadowing in family sagas is in many respects similar to that in legendary sagas: it is based on the traditional images of fate perceived as tragic, inevitable and usually revealing itself indirectly, embodied in various symbols, as animals or objects. The belief in fate is connected to the way how Old Norse people perceived the future, namely as already predestined and existing in the "distant present". As I will show later in the thesis, these images of the future, fate and the whole concept of foreshadowing changes radically under the influence of Christianity and the new perception of time.

Part II: Foreign time reckoning arrives in the North

In the previous chapters I was concerned with works or genres that mirror pre-Christian Old Norse time reckoning and perception, namely both of the *Eddas*, and legendary and family sagas. The primary sources I will be dealing with in this second part of the thesis are very different from those examined in the first. These kinds of sources reflect the arrival of foreign time reckoning in the North, i.e. especially as regards the AD dating system, the Julian calendar and the Christian liturgical year. These new systems of time reckoning were introduced to the North through the Church and learned echelons of Norse society and they first appeared, among others, in Old Icelandic computistical treatises, historiographical works, or in the medieval charters written by Scandinavian kings and bishops. These are also the sources I will be concerned with in the second part of the thesis.

Firstly, I will shortly introduce the Old Icelandic computistical treatise known as *Rím I* (included in a compilation called *Rímbegla*). Subsequently, I will analyse the systems of dating and time indications used in two early Icelandic historiographical works, namely the so called *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*. And finally, I will examine the dating formulas in some of the charters written by the Scandinavian kings and bishops or archbishops and included in *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* and *Islandicum*.

I certainly do not claim that these sources do not contain any traces of the local time reckoning at all. On the contrary, as I will show, in all of them there can be found several references to the local dating systems or time indications. As I mentioned at the beginning of the thesis, the changes of Old Norse time reckoning or perception did not happen "overnight." The old and new concepts and images of time had blended together and long coexisted until the foreign ones, i.e. continental European, prevailed over the local ones. What I want to examine in this part of the thesis is how this transition between different times reflects itself in the aforementioned sources. Sometimes, the differences between the local and foreign time concepts are emphasized, but mostly the authors try to achieve their synthesis.

8. Time in *Rímbegla*

The Icelandic computistical work called *Rímbegla* (for the meaning of the term see the footnote)[281] or *Rímtal* (meaning "a computation," or "a calendar")[282] consists of three anonymous treatises, marked *Rím I-III*. The treatises, accessible in the second volume of the diplomatic edition *Alfræði íslenzk* made by Natanael Beckman and Kristian Kålund,[283] deal with astronomy, encyclopaedic matters and most importantly, time reckoning. The last mentioned is the main subject especially of *Rím I* and therefore in the thesis I focus on this treatise dating from around 1180.[284] All treatises are written in the native language, i.e. Old Norse, which makes them, as Einarsdóttir points out, unique.[285] The treatises represent Icelandic versions of the medieval genre known as *computus ecclesiasticus* that was devoted to "the science of reckoning time and the technique of constructing calendars (…)."[286] This type of scholarly works, originally focused on the calculation of the date of Easter, dates back to the 8th century to the treatises written by Bede Venerabilis *De temporibus* ("On Times") and *De temporum ratione* ("On the Reckoning of Time").[287] The author of *Rím I* shows good knowledge of Bede's work, but also for instance of learned Greek or even Arabic literature.[288]

Faith Wallis, a historian of medieval science, writes that: "*Computus* provided a universal framework of time-reckoning for the medieval West, but when chroniclers assigned dates to historical events, or clerks to charters, they used systems of dating that mingled local or professional custom with computistical convention."[289] This blending of computistical convention with local customs is apparent also in the case of Old Norse historiographical literature or charters written by Scandinavian bishops or kings, as I will show later in the thesis.

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[281] The English translation of the term *Rímbegla* might be "a calendar bungle." Cleasby and Vigfússon translate the word *rím* as "a computation," "a calendar" or "an almanac" and the word *begla* as "bungle" (Cleasby-Vigfússon. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, p. 500; 55). Alessia Bauer translates the term into German as "Kalender-Verpfuschung" (Bauer. *Laienastrologie im nachreformatorischen Island*, p. 82; 84). As she adds, the term *begla* appears for the first time in the late manuscripts of this work and it is supposed to express the fact that its author (or authors) blends several sources together when dealing with time reckoning.
[282] Cleasby-Vigfússon. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, p. 500.
[283] *Alfræði íslenzk. Islandsk encyklopædisk litteratur II. Rímtǫl*. Ed. N. Beckman, K. Kålund. København: S. L. Møllers bogtrykkeri, 1914-1916.
[284] The year 1180 is mentioned by Vilhjálmsson (Vilhjálmsson. "Time and Travel", p. 106). Bauer writes that: "Als terminus ad quem für die Datierung nimmt man das Jahr 1187 an, das dem erst erhaltenen Textzeugen entspricht" (Bauer. *Laienastrologie*, p. 84).
[285] Einarsdóttir. *Studier i kronologisk metode*, p. 289.
[286] Wallis. "Chronology and Systems of Dating", p. 383.
[287] Ibid.
[288] Einarsdóttir. *Studier i kronologisk metode*, p. 289; Bauer. *Laienastrologie*, p. 85.
[289] Wallis. "Chronology and Systems of Dating", p. 384. For the history of computistical literature see also: Wallis. "Introduction", p. xviii-xxxiii.

However, it can also be found in *Rím I* itself. Although its author primarily describes the time reckoning typical for continental Western Europe based on the Julian calendar and the Christian liturgical year, he includes references to the local calendar or local time indications in his work as well. The German scholar Alessia Bauer claims that the primary purpose of this blending of times is probably not to interconnect them: "Es scheint dennoch nicht das Anliegen der *Rímbegla* gewesen zu sein, beide Systeme in Einklang miteinander zu bringen."[290] The references to the local time reckoning do not seem to be included in the text in order to achieve a synthesis of the domestic and foreign concepts of time. They perhaps seem to be motivated rather by the author's effort to gather all his knowledge about time reckoning and time indications into one text in order to make his treatise about time as comprehensive as possible. The other reason behind the presence of several references to the domestic time reckoning might be his effort to bring the text closer to the readers from the local learned society. As Vilhjálmson observes, the texts contained in Beckman and Kålund's edition are, similarly to other Old Norse learned treatises, partially adapted to the local audience: "They contain mainly common European material, although in the vernacular and adapted to the Northern reader."[291] It is interesting to examine which features of the local time reckoning in particular the author of *Rím I* mentions, because they might be the features he considered especially important or characteristic for the original Old Norse time reckoning.

Several times in the treatise we are told that a year consists of two *misseri*. As I have mentioned in the chapters dealing with *Snorri's Edda* and family sagas, in Old Norse time reckoning the year was originally divided into two seasons, the summer and winter halves of the year. The author of *Rím I* calls this division *misseristal* and describes it as follows (*Rb I* 26):

Þath er **missaris tal**, ath II missere heiter ar, þat er vetr ok sumar.[292]	This is ***misseri* reckoning**, that II *misseri* are called a year, that is winter and summer.[293]

The term *misseristal* can also stand for the Icelandic calendar in general. According to Janson, this fact underlines the importance of *misseri* as a time indication for the domestic time reckoning: "The importance of the *misseri* is shown by the fact that the Icelandic calendar is

[290] Bauer. *Laienastrologie*, p. 83.
[291] Vilhjálmsson. "Time and Travel", p. 89-90. See also Kristjánsson. *Eddas and Sagas*, p. 133.
[292] *Alfræði íslenzk II*., p. 22.
[293] Janson. "The Icelandic Calendar", p. 3.

called *misseristal* in Icelandic."[294] Foreign time reckoning, including the Anno Domini dating system and Julian calendar, is called *almannatal* or *alþýðutal* in Old Norse literature (*Rb I* 67; but also Ari, *Íslb* vii; x), which might be translated as "universal reckoning." Another possible translation, used among others by Cleasby and Vigfússon, is "common reckoning,"[295] which might be, however, slightly misleading because these foreign dating systems were certainly not used by the common people, but the learned layers of the Icelandic society. The existence of the aforementioned Old Norse terms for the domestic and foreign time reckoning (*misseristal* versus *almannatal/alþýðutal*) implies the authors' awareness of the diversity of times and time reckoning.

In another part of the treatise the author operates with the term *misseri* when he mentions that the year is divided into two parts (*misseri*) that are further divided into two quarters (*mál*) each having three months. Thus, he incorporates the concept of four seasons into the original local division into two seasons (*Rb I* 3):

Ar heiter II missere. I missere ero mal II, i male ero manodr III, i manadi vikr vel svo IIII, i viku daghar VII, i dege dægr II, i dægri stunder XII.[296]	A year is two semesters (*misseri*). In each semester there are two quarters (*mál*),[297] in a quarter three months, in a month a bit more than four weeks, in a week seven days, in a day two *dægur*,[298] in a *dægur* twelve hours.[299]

The introduction of four seasons into the Icelandic reckoning of time did not mean that the original division into *misseri* would suddenly disappear from the local tradition. On the contrary, it was probably quite alive, as one can say based on its frequent occurrence in various genres of Old Norse literature. Furthermore, what one knows for certain is that this dual division of the year has remained long in the popular use in Icelanders' former homeland, Norway. One can say so based on the existence of the calendars known as *primstav*.[300]

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[294] Ibid.
[295] Cleasby-Vigfússon. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, p. 17; 19.
[296] *Alfræði íslenzk II*., p. 7.
[297] The word *mál* means "a certain portion of time." See Cleasby-Vigfússon. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, p. 416.
[298] While the Old Norse word *dagr* (pl. *dagar*) meant the astronomical day (24 hours), including both the day and night, *dægr* was the natural day (12 hours).
[299] Vilhjálmsson. "Time and Travel", p. 106.
[300] As Audun Dybdahl writes, the name *primstav*, in Old Norse *prímstafr*, is partially based on the Latin term for the new moon, *primatio Lunæ* (https://snl.no/primstav, 16. 6. 2019). It was a compound of the Old Norse words *prím*, that came from Latin and meant "the new moon," and *stafr* meaning "a staff" or "a stick," but also "written letters" (Cleasby-Vigfússon. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, p. 479; 587). In Denmark and Sweden, this type of calendar was called *rimstav* including the Old Norse word for calendar *rím* and the aforementioned word *stafr*, i.e.

Although these calendars, mostly made of wood, were based on the Julian calendar, they were usually divided into two parts, the summer and winter part. There were marks for each day of the year on the both parts, while the Christian feast days and masses were marked with special symbols. The oldest preserved *primstav* from Norway is from 1457 and the calendars were used until the introduction of the Gregorian calendar to the country in 1700 and partially even after it.[301]

After describing the concept of four seasons and twelve months, the author continues by introducing the Latin names of months. While doing that he also mentions the difference between the lunar months and calendar (solar) months, for instance (*Rb I* 8):

Augustus er ein nott ok xxx-er, tungl hans er xxix, ok verda þar II netur ath mismuna **tungls ok manadar**.[302]	August has thirty-one nights, its full moon falls on the twenty-ninth night and that makes the difference of two odd nights between **the lunar and the calendar month**.

By giving the lengths of the particular months in nights and mentioning on which night the full moon falls on the author emphasizes the difference between the domestic time reckoning based on the lunar calendar and the Julian solar calendar.

An interesting part of the treatise is also when the author mentions Old Norse names of the seven days of the week and explains their origins. Inspired by the Greek and Latin traditions, the days were originally named after the celestial bodies: the sun, moon and various planets that bore the names of the local gods. As the author states, all these names belong to what he calls *heiðnu tali*, "heathen time reckoning." While the names of Sunday and Monday, *sunnudagr* and *mánadagr*, that were named after the sun and moon, have remained the same until nowadays, the days called after Old Norse gods (from Tuesday to Friday) have changed under the Christian influence. The author enumerates the new names of these days, but connects them also with the names of Old Norse, Greek and Roman deities:

Fispena heiter Mars, þat kaullum ver Ty, er þar	Fispena is called Mars and we call him Týr, and

"a calendar stick." In Sweden, these calendars were also called *runstav*, "a runic stick," as Scandinavian runes were regularly used as calendar signs. See Cucina, Carla. "Runes in Peripheral Swedish Areas. The Early Ethnographic Literature on Calendar Staves in the Baltic Islands" In: *Apis Matina. Studi in onore di Carlo Santini*. Ed. Aldo Setaioli. Trieste: EUT, Edizioni Università di Trieste, 2016, p. 188-203.

[301] https://snl.no/primstav, 16. 6. 2019.

[302] *Alfræði íslenzk II*., p. 11.

kenndr þridiu daghur vidh. Stilbon heitir Merkurius, þat kǫllom vér Odinn, er vid hann kenndr midviku daghr. Fenon heiter Iovis, þat kaullum ver Þor, þar er vidh kenndr fimte daghur. Hesperis heiter Venus, þat kaullum ver Freyio, þar er fostu daghur vidh kendr ok kalladr frea daghr.[303]

Þriðjudagr[304] is named after him. Stilbon is called Merkurius and we call him Óðinn, and Miðvikudagr[305] is named after him. Fenon is called Iovis and we call him Þór, and Fimmtudagr[306] is named after him. Hesperis is called Venus, and we call her Freyja, and Fǫstudagr[307] is named after her and called Frjádagr.

The use of these original Old Norse names of days based on the names of the pagan gods was forbidden by the Icelandic bishop Jón Ögmundarson (died 1121) in the first third of the 12th century. As Turville-Petre and Olszewska write: "He forbade the use of such names as Thor's Day, Frey's Day,[308] for days of the week, for no doubt the pagan associations of such names were still strong."[309] Bishop Jón replaced the old names by neutral or Christian names[310] that are mentioned by the author of *Rím I* in the aforecited example. The old names were probably still in use for some time afterwards, but they were gradually retreating before the new names, until they seem to disappear almost entirely.[311] However, despite the aversion of the Church to the old tradition, the reminders of the heathen gods have remained in the names of days in some Scandinavian and Germanic languages until now: let me mention for instance *tirsdag*, *onsdag*, *torsdag* and *fredag* in Danish, *Tuesday*, *Wednesday*, *Thursday* and *Friday* in English, or *Dienstag*, *Donnerstag* and *Freitag* in German.

To sum up this chapter, I will state the following: as regards its content, *Rím I* might not be an outstanding text within the medieval genre of computistical treatises, but it is certainly worth one's attention when studying Old Norse time reckoning. Firstly, it is the oldest theoretical treatise on the topic of time written in Iceland. Secondly, although it mostly describes the foreign time reckoning, based on the Julian calendar, it also contains several valuable references to the domestic tradition, as for instance to the concept of *misseri*, the lunar

[303] Ibid, p. 63.
[304] *Þriðjudagr*, "the third day," originally called *Týsdagr* = Tuesday.
[305] *Miðvikudagr*, "the middle day of the week," originally called *Óðinsdagr* = Wednesday.
[306] *Fimmtudagr*, "the fifth day," originally called *Þórsdagr* = Thursday.
[307] *Fǫstudagr*, "the fast day," originally called *Frjádagr* = Friday.
[308] Turville-Petre and Olszewska write about Frey's day, but the day was rather named after the goddess Freya.
[309] Turville-Petre, Olszewska. "Preface", p. xii. See also Björnsson. "Tímatal", p. 74; and Lassen. *Odin på kristent pergament*, p. 93-94.
[310] Janson. "The Icelandic Calendar", p. 6.
[311] See Lassen. *Odin på kristent pergament*, p. 93-94.

calendar or the original names of days. Furthermore, it reflects the “transitional period” when the domestic time reckoning was transforming under foreign influences.

9. Time in *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*

The Julian calendar was not the only feature of foreign time reckoning introduced into Old Norse learned society in the Middle Ages. It was also the Anno Domini dating system that found its way in the North. Its arrival represented a challenge for Icelandic historians, namely to set the local history onto this universal time scale. Their efforts to connect the domestic and foreign dating systems are highly visible especially in two early works of the local historiographical literature dealing with the settlement of Iceland, *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*.

The first one of these works, *Íslendingabók* ("The Book of Icelanders"), was written by Ari Þorgilsson called *Ari inn fróði*, Ari the Wise.[312] In this book Ari recorded "a brief history of the first 250 years of Iceland, i.e. since its settlement through the foundation of Alþing, the acceptance of Christianity, the sequence of the Icelandic lawspeakers and bishops until the year 1120."[313] The first version of *Íslendingabók* was probably written between the years 1122 and 1133 and the second one in 1133.[314] According to some scholars, Ari was also the author of *Landnámabók* ("The Book of Settlements"), preserved in five medieval versions which might be the proof of its great popularity.[315] *Landnámabók* introduces the names of the first settlers of Iceland and their relatives. Its narrative style is mostly brief consisting of bare enumerations of names, but sometimes the narrator includes stories about the lives of the people he mentions in his work.

In the following chapter I would like to analyse the systems of dating used in these two works that represent, especially as regards *Íslendingabók*, a remarkable combination of local and foreign time reckoning.

9.1. Systems of dating in *Íslendingabók*

The systems of dating used in *Íslendingabók* have already been studied by Einarsdóttir in her aforementioned work *Studier i kronologisk metode i tidlig islandsk historieskrivning*. Einarsdóttir writes there that Ari uses three different datings in his book: "I *Íslendingabók* optræder der sideløbende tre typer af tidsfæstelse, som forfatteren veksler mellem i

[312] Ari the Wise (1067-1148) was a priest, chieftain and historian. He was the first man who wrote in the Icelandic language (See Turville-Petre, Olszewska. "Preface", p. xi).
[313] Kadečková. *Dějiny severských literatur*, p. 104-105.
[314] Würth. "Historiography and Pseudo-History", p. 158.
[315] Ibid. The examples from *Landnámabók* cited in the thesis come from the version preserved in *Sturlubók* (AM 107 fol.). Some of them are preserved also in *Hauksbók* (AM 371, 4to; AM 105 fol.).

fortællingens løb: årtalsdatering, datering i forhold til lovsigemandsrækken og indre relativ tidsfæstelse."[316] The first one of them, *årtalsdatering*, is the AD dating system, the second one, *datering i forhold til lovsigemandsrækken*, is a specifically Icelandic system of dating based on the functional periods of Icelandic lawspeakers,[317] and the last one is a *relative* chronology (that Einarsdóttir calls here *inner relative*) where events are dated through their relations to other events. I would like to add a fourth and fifth type of dating that appear in *Íslendingabók*, although only minorly, namely the references to the lives of Scandinavian kings (i.e. to their age or to the years of their death) and a *genealogical* chronology (which, however, also belongs to the category of *relative* chronology).

Let me now take a closer look at each of these dating systems. The first of them, the AD dating system, is used four times in the book: to date the beginning of Iceland's settlement (Ari, *Íslb* i), the conversion to Christianity (officially accepted at Alþing) (Ari, *Íslb* vii), to date the death of the Pope Gregory the Great (Ari, *Íslb* x), and finally to date the beginning of a new lunar cycle (Ari, *Íslb* x). The dates of the beginning of Iceland's settlement and conversion to the new religion are obtained through their connection with certain events from foreign history, namely Norwegian and English, which took place in the same year. The conversion is connected with the fall of the Norwegian king Óláf Tryggvason and Iceland's settlement with the death of the English king St. Edmund. As regards the reference to the Norwegian king, similar connections between Icelandic and Norwegian history are not uncommon within Old Norse literature. As I have shown, it is often to be found for instance in family sagas where the domestic events are set into the reign of the Norwegian kings. The reference to the English king is probably connected to Ari's interest in English historiographical works through which he became familiar with the AD dating system in the first place. Scholars agree on the fact that Ari learned about the AD dating through the works of Bede.[318] The same reason probably stands behind the reference to the death of Pope Gregory, who as Ari emphasizes, brought Christianity to England. And finally, the reference to the beginning of a new lunar cycle is crucial as regards time reckoning: the lunar cycle was used for the calculation of Easter tables

[316] Einarsdóttir. *Studier i kronologisk metode*, p. 42.
[317] The Icelandic lawspeaker, *lǫgsǫgumaðr*, was broadly speaking the elected chairman of Alþing, the general Icelandic assembly. One of his tasks was to open the assembly by reciting the laws that he had memorised.
[318] See for example Grønlie. "Introduction", p. xx; Einarsdóttir. *Studier i kronologisk metode*, p. 27-30. Einarsdóttir poses a question as to why exactly Ari chooses the year of the killing of St. Edmund to date the settlement of Iceland. First of all, she claims, it is a round date that lies close to the time when the first settlers arrived in Iceland. Secondly, this event might have attracted Ari's attention, because the king was slain by the Vikings. Therefore, in the eyes of the Old Norse audience, the year of his killing was perhaps not only an abstract date on an unfamiliar timeline, but a part of their own history (Einarsdóttir. *Studier i kronologisk metode*, p. 61; 70-71).

and, as Grønlie states, it is probable that Ari himself used a similar table for dating purposes.[319] It is therefore important for Ari to point out when exactly the change of the lunar cycles occurred.

As Einarsdóttir notices, Ari uses the AD time scale to form the temporal boundary of his work that stretches from 870 (Iceland's settlement) to 1120 (the new lunar cycle).[320] The dates he mentions function as basic points of orientation in time around which other events from both domestic and foreign history are gathered. For instance, the death of Pope Gregory is put into the temporal relations with the deaths of other important men including for instance the king of Jerusalem, but also an Icelandic bishop (Bishop Gizur) (Ari, *Íslb* x):

Á því ári enu sama obiit [andaðist] Paschalis secundus páfi fyrr en Gizurr byskup ok Baldvini Jórsalakonungr ok Arnaldus patriarcha í Híerúsalem ok Philippus Svíakonungr, en síðarr et sama sumar Álexíus Grikkjakonungr. […] Þat vas tuttugu vetrum ens annars hundraðs eptir fall Óláfs Tryggvasonar, en fimm tegum ens þriðja hundraðs ok eptir dráp Eadmundar Englakonungs, en sextán vetrum ens sétta hundraðs ok eptir andlát Grégóríus páfa, þess er kristni kom á England, at því er talit es. En hann andaðist á ǫðru ári konungdóms Fóku keisara, fjórum vetrum ens sjaunda hundraðs eptir burð Krists at almannatali. Þat verðr allt saman ellifu hundruð ok tuttugu ár.

In the same year Pope Paschal II died before Bishop Gizur, as did Baldwin king of Jerusalem and Arnulf patriarch in Jerusalem, and Philip king of the Swedes and, later the same summer, Alexius king of the Greeks […] That was 120 years after the fall of Óláf Tryggvason, and 250 years after the killing of Edmund, king of the Angles, and 516 years after the death of Pope Gregory, who brought Christianity to England, according to what has been reckoned. And he died in the second year of the reign of the Emperor Phocas, 604 years after the birth of Christ by the common method of reckoning. That makes 1120 years altogether.[321]

Margaret Cormack writes that in the Old Icelandic historical or ecclesiastical writings dates might have been provided when mentioning the deaths of a notable man and they were often accompanied by a list of individuals who died in the same year.[322] As she adds, the Icelandic

[319] *Íslendingabók*, p. 30.
[320] Einarsdóttir. *Studier i kronologisk metode*, p. 48.
[321] *Íslendingabók*. Transl. S. Grønlie, p. 13.
[322] Cormack. "Christian Biography", p. 36. As Cormack adds, the dates might have also been accompanied by a summary of notable events during the episcopate or lifetime of the deceased.

model for this sort of summary was established by Ari in *Íslendingabók*.[323] In these lists, Ari usually blends foreign personalities (popes and various Christian rulers) with local ones (Icelandic bishops or lawspeakers). Thus, he integrates local personalities into the "greater" world history.

This brings me to perhaps the most interesting dating system used in Ari's work, namely the one based on the functional periods of the Icelandic lawspeakers, which is also integrated within the aforementioned AD temporal frame. Although this dating is exclusively local, it might have been inspired by a foreign model. Hastrup compares this type of chronology to the Roman imperial and consular scales on which events were dated according to the years of emperors' reign or consulars' office.[324] Einarsdóttir counts this kind of dating as the *learned absolute* (*lærd*) chronology, side by side with Anno Domini, while Hastrup points out that: "The absoluteness of the lawspeaker chronology derives from internal criteria for the conceptualization of time."[325] This type of dating is to a certain degree relative because it is not based on a universal abstract timeline but local events, namely the change of the lawspeakers in office. I therefore agree with Hastrup's claim that it rather belongs to the category of *intrinsic absolute* chronologies.

As mentioned before, Ari situates these enumerations of Icelandic lawspeakers into the temporal frame constituted by the exact dates and thus builds a chronological chain, based on the sequence of the lawspeakers, which fills in this period of time. He follows their sequence very carefully, for example (Ari, *Íslb* viii):

Grímr at Mosfelli Svertingssonr tók lǫgsǫgu eptir Þorgeir ok hafði tvau sumur […] Skapti hafði lǫgsǫgu sjau sumur og tuttugu. […] En hann andaðisk á enu sama ári ok Óláfr enn digri fell Haraldssonr, Goðrøðarsonar, Bjarnarsonar, Haraldssonar ens hárfagra, þremr tegum vetra síðarr en Óláfr felli Tryggvasonr. Þá tók Steinn

Grím Svertingsson at Mosfell took up the office of lawspeaker after Þorgeir and held it for two summers[326] […] Skapti held the office of lawspeaker for twenty-seven summers. […] And he died in the same year that Óláf the Stout fell, son of Harald, son of Goðrøð, son of Bjǫrn, son of Harald the Fine-Haired, thirty years after Óláf Tryggvason fell. Then Steinn Þorgestsson took up the office of

[323] Ibid.
[324] Hastrup. *Culture and History*, p. 251.
[325] Ibid, p. 48.
[326] In the enumerations of lawspeakers time is reckoned in *summers*, not in winters. The reason behind this is that the office of lawspeaker was practised in summer when Alþing was held.

Þorgestssonr lǫgsǫgu ok hafði þrjú sumur; þá hafði Þorkell Tjǫrvasonr tuttugu sumur; þá hafði Gellir Bǫlverkssonr níu sumur.

lawspeaker and held it for three summers; then Þorkell Tjǫrvason held it for twenty summers; then Gellir Bǫlverksson for nine summers.[327]

The dating based on the offices of the lawspeakers might have been introduced by Ari as a domestic parallel to the *absolute intrinsic* chronologies used in foreign lands (e.g. based on consular or regnal years). As regards the situation in Iceland, where there was no king, Ari reached for the highest office in the country in order to create a local chronology.

Sometimes, however, Ari refers to the Scandinavian kings (to their age or their death), for example in the very beginning of *Íslendingabók* when describing the time before Alþing was established and the office of lawspeaker was introduced into the country (Ari, *Íslb* i):

Ingólfr hét maðr nórrænn, er sannliga er sagt, at færi fyrst þaðan til Íslands, þá er Haraldr inn hárfagri var sextán vetra gamall […]

It is said with accuracy that a Norwegian called Ingólf travelled from there [Norway] to Iceland for the first time when Harald the Fine-Haired was sixteen winters[328] old […].[329]

This passage might remind us of the introductory parts of family sagas that often contain references to Scandinavian kings. However, while in family sagas these references remain only *relative*, because the precise year of a king's age or reign is not given, in Ari's work they are *absolute* (*intrinsic*). The same type of references can be found in abundance especially in kings' sagas where they often serve as the main dating system (See 11.1.). The authors of kings' sagas sometimes refer to Ari's work (or the work of his contemporary Sæmund the Wise) in their effort to determine in which year of a king's reign certain events happened. For instance, Odd Snorrason in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* refers to the works of both historians (Ari and Sæmund) in order to determine when certain Scandinavian kings had assumed rule (Odd, *ÓT* xxv; Odd, *ÓT* xxv):

Þatt finnsk í frásǫgn Ara hins fróða, ok eru þeir fleiri er þat sanna, at Óláfr Tryggvason

It can be found in the account of Ari the Wise, and there are others who confirm it, that Óláf

[327] *Íslendingabók*. Transl. S. Grønlie, p. 10.
[328] Grønlie uses here the word "years," but in the original text the king's age is reckoned in winters, therefore I have changed this word in Grønlie's translation.
[329] *Íslendingabók*. Transl. S. Grønlie, p. 4.

hafi tvá vetr haft ok tuttugu þá er hann kom í land ok tók ríkit, en hann réð fyrir fimm vetr.	Tryggvason was twenty-two winters old when he came ashore and assumed rule, and that he ruled for five winters.[330]
En þessir menn samþykkja þetta með þessum hætti Sæmundr hinn fróði ok Ari hinn fróði er hvártsveggja sǫgn er trúlig, at Hákon hafi stýrt ríkinu þrjá tigu ok þrjá vetr, síðan er fell Haralldr gráfeldr.	Sæmund the Wise and Ari the Wise, who are both to be believed, agree with the calculation that Hákon ruled the realm for thirty-three winters after Harald Graycloak fell.[331]

The last system of dating Ari uses to clear the relations between the narrated events is *relative* chronology that is based on fixing events in time through their relations to other events. Einarsdóttir claims that this way of dating events was the one originally used by Old Norse people: "Den tredje type af tidsfæstelse, hvor en begivenhed i fortællingen dateres nøjagtigt i forhold til en anden begivenhed (…) repræsenterer til en vis grad den måde, man benyttede til tidsfæstelse i Aris eget samfund."[332] As I have shown, *relative* chronology is used to a great extent in the both family and legendary sagas where it represents the main dating system together with genealogies, a specific type of relative chronology.

Genealogies appear also in *Íslendingabók*, but here they seem to be subordinated to *absolute intrinsic* and *extrinsic* chronologies, namely the dating by the lawspeakers' office and AD time scale. Although genealogies do not function as the main dating system in Ari's work, contrary to the situation in family or legendary sagas, he apparently assigns great importance to them. At the very end of *Íslendingabók* he for instance enumerates the ancestors of the first Icelandic bishops and also his own ancestors. Ari follows his family line even to the legendary past, namely to the legendary King Yngvi. Thus, the emphasis on the connection of the past with the present embodied in genealogies that I have pointed out earlier in connection with family or legendary sagas can be found also in Ari's work. Although, in the case of his work one can observe that the genealogies are gradually being replaced by absolute chronologies, one can also notice that they do not lose their role as a bond of continuation between generations and certain qualities that were passed on from forefathers to their ancestors.

The fact that Ari combines so many dating systems, namely the AD era, the office periods of the lawspeakers, the references to the kings and relative chronology, makes his work unique.

[330] Odd Snorason. *The Saga of Olaf Tryggvason*. Transl. T. M. Andersson, p. 73.
[331] Ibid, p. 74.
[332] Einarsdóttir. *Studier i kronologisk metode*, p. 43.

A number of the events Ari mentions are dated in several different ways. For instance, the time of Iceland's settlement from Norway is fixed in time by referring to the reign of a Norwegian king, referring to a foreign event, namely the death of the English king St. Edmund, and by the AD dating system (Ari, *Íslb* i):

Ísland byggðisk fyrst ýr Norvegi á dǫgum Haralds ens hárfagra, Hálfdanarsonar ens svarta, í þann tíð […], es Ívarr Ragnarssonr loðbrókar lét drepa Eadmund enn helga Englakonung; en þat vas sjau tegum vetra ens níunda hundraðs eptir burð Krists, at því es ritit es í sǫgu hans.	Iceland was first settled from Norway in the days of Harald the Fine-Haired, son of Hálfdan the Black, at the time […] when Ívar, son of Ragnar loðbrók, had St. Edmund, king of the Angles, killed; and that was 870 years after the birth of Christ, according to what is written in his [Edmund's] saga.[333]

It is interesting to notice the sequence in which Ari uses the various systems of dating. He begins with the reference to the *Scandinavian* background (the reign of Harald the Fine-Haired/Harald Fairhair), then moves on to the *world* events (the death of St. Edmund) and finally mentions the *universal* AD time scale. From the well-known events Ari gradually reckons a universal time frame.

The blending of various dating systems in *Íslendingabók* does not give the impression of chaos, but rather seems to be well organized. Einarsdóttir writes that "de forskellige måder at angive tiden på (...) ikke alene er sideløbende, men også i indbyrdes harmoni."[334] Ari combines the local dating systems (the lawspeakers' functional periods and relative chronology) with events from world history and the AD era intentionally in order to include Icelandic history into the greater world history. As Stefanie Würth in her study of early Icelandic historiographical literature writes: "By thus bringing a specifically Icelandic calculation of time into line with an international time frame he [Ari] succeeds in integrating Icelandic history into world history."[335] Furthermore, through the combination of different chronologies, none of which is predominant, but on the contrary all used as equals, Ari creates what one might call a universal historiographical dating system. He successfully blends the domestic and foreign dating systems in his work and thus fulfils the difficult task that lies before him as a historian, namely to achieve a synthesis of these different times.

[333] *Íslendingabók*. Transl. S. Grønlie, p. 3.
[334] Ibid, p. 47.
[335] Würth. "Historiography and Pseudo-History", p. 158. World history of course means the Christian world's history in this context.

9.2. Systems of dating in *Landnámabók*

Landnámabók, "The Book of Settlements", has been preserved in five redactions, three of them being medieval.[336] According to Benediktsson, the oldest redaction of *Landnámabók* must go back to the beginning of the 12th century. This anonymous work is somewhat different in its content from *Íslendingabók*: although both of them depict the early history of Iceland, each of them emphasizes different aspects of this history. While *Íslendingabók* concentrates merely on important events, like the establishment of Alþing and laws, the acceptance of Christianity or the establishment of local bishoperies, *Landnámabók* focuses mainly on people, namely the first settlers and their families. One might also claim that *Íslendingabók* depicts local history temporally, following its most significant moments, and *Landnámabók* spatially, following the fates of the settlers in the various districts of the country, namely in the west, north, east and south quarters (*fjórðungr*) of Iceland. Depending on the content, the systems of dating in both works are also slightly different.

As I have shown in the previous subchapter, Ari in *Íslendingabók* combines various local and foreign systems of dating in order to integrate local history into world history. The author of *Landnámabók*[337] partially shows the same intention, but the main aim of his work lies in something else, namely in listing the first Icelandic settlers, their relatives, ancestors and descendants. Therefore, the temporal structure of this work is primarily based on numerous genealogical lines that stretch from the time of settlement several generations ahead, as for example in the following case (*Ldn* S172-S173):

Þóroddr hét maðr, er land nam í Hrútafirði ok bjó á Þóroddsstǫðum. Hans son var Arnórr hýnefr, er átti Gerði dóttur Bǫðvars ór Bǫðvarshólum. Þeira synir váru þeir Þorbjǫrn, er Grettir vá, ok Þóroddr drápustúfr, faðir Valgerðar, er átti Skeggi skammhǫndungr Gamlason Þórðarsonar,

A man called Þórodd took land in Hrútafjord and lived in Þóroddsstað. His son was Arnór Downy nose,[338] who married Gerða, the daughter of Bǫðvar from Bǫðvarshólar. Their sons were Þorbjǫrn, who was killed by Grettir, and Þórodd Poetaster, the father of Valgerð, who was married to Skeggi Shorthanded. He was the son of Gamli, the son of Þórð, the son

[336] *Sturlubók*, *Hauksbók* and *Melabók* (See Benediktsson. "Landnámabók", p. 373-374).
[337] Some scholars believe that *Landnámabók* was compiled by more authors, but in order not to complicate this issue I will use the term author in this subchapter.
[338] I use the translation of this nickname by Cleasby and Vigfússon (Cleasby-Vigfússon. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, p. 304).

Eyjólfssonar, Eyjarssonar, Þórólfssonar fasthalda frá Snæfjǫllum. Son Skeggja skammhǫndungs var Gamli, faðir Álfdísar móður Odds munks.

of Eyjólf, the son of Eyjar, the son of Þórólf Firmsqueeze from Snæfjǫll. The son of Skeggi Shorthanded was Gamli, the father of Álfdís, the mother of the monk Odd.

Large parts of *Landnámabók* consist of similar *langfeðgatals*, lists of ancestors and descendants of the first settlers. As Benediktsson claims, many Icelandic sagas relied on *Landnámabók* as a source for these genealogical and other biographical information.[339] Sometimes, the author of *Landnámabók* provides short narrations of lives and deeds of the settlers as well. Although these episodes do not contain many exact time indications, the flow of time is always carefully followed and reckoned in winters, for example (*Ldn* SH8):

[…] var Ingólfr þar **vetr annan**, en **um sumarit** eptir fór hann vestr með sjó. Hann var **enn þriðja vetr** undir Ingólfsfelli fyrir vestan Ǫlfusá. **Þau missari** fundu þeir Vífill ok Karli ǫndvegissúlur hans við Arnarhvál fyrir neðan heiði.

[…] Ingólf stayed there **another winter**, and in **the following summer** went west, along the sea. **The third winter** he was under Ingólf's fell, to the west of Ǫlf's river. **That season** Vífil and Karli found his high-seat post by Arnarhvál under the heath.

Just as with Ari in *Íslendingabók*, the author of *Landnámabók* strives to arrange the narrated events into chronological order and the genealogies are incorporated into the main chronological frame. This frame is connected to the greater world history through time indications mentioned especially in the first part of *Landnámabók*. For instance, when the author describes the arrival of Ingólf Árnarson, the first permanent settler in the country, in Iceland, the event is dated very elaborately, through *absolute* chronologies, both *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* (*Ldn* SH8):

Sumar þat, er þeir Ingólfr fóru til at byggja Ísland, hafði Haraldr hárfagri verit tólf ár konungr at Nóregi. Þá var liðit frá upphafi þessa heims sex þúsundir vetra ok sjau tigir ok þrír vetr, en frá holdgan dróttins átta hundruð ok sjau tigir ok fjǫgur ár.

That summer when Ingólf with his men sailed out to settle Iceland, Harald Fairhair had been king over Norway for twelve years. There had passed six thousand and seventy-three winters from the creation of the world, and from the incarnation of our Lord eight hundred and seventy-four years.

[339] Benediktsson. "Landnámabók", p. 374.

After referring to the precise year of the regnal period of the Norwegian king Harald Fairhair (*absolute intrinsic* chronology), the author mentions two years based on two different *absolute extrinsic* chronologies. Besides Anno Domini (874), he also mentions the Anno Mundi era that reckons time from the creation of the world (6073).[340] Here one encounters the very thorough attitude of the author, who uses two different foreign chronologies in order to define exactly when the settlement of Iceland began.

The author of *Landnámabók* also shows perfect knowledge of the foreign political and religious scene: as regards for example the beginning of Iceland's settlement, he situates it not only into the Pope's pontificate, but also into the regnal periods of various kings and emperors (*Ldn* S2):

Þá er Ísland fannsk ok byggðisk af Nóregi, var Adríánus páfi í Róma ok Jóhannes eptir hann, sá er enn fimmti var með því nafni í postuligu sæti, en Hlǫðver Hlǫðversson keisari fyrir norðan fjall, en Leó ok Alexandr son hans yfir Miklagarði. Þá var Haraldr hárfagri konungr yfir Nóregi, en Eiríkr Eymundarson í Svíþjóð ok Bjǫrn son hans, en Gormr enn gamli at Danmǫrk, en Elfráðr enn ríki í Englandi ok Játvarðr son hans, en Kjarvalr at Dyflinni, Sigurðr jarl enn ríki í Orkneyjum.

When Iceland was discovered and settled from Norway, Adrian was Pope of Rome, and after him John, who was the fifth[341] of that name in the Apostolic seat, Louis, son of Louis, was emperor north of the Alps,[342] and Leo and his son Alexander over Constantinople. In that time was Harald Fairhair king over Norway and Eirík the son of Eymund in Sweden, and his son Bjǫrn, and Gorm the Old in Denmark, and Alfred the Great in England, and afterwards Edward his son, and Kjarval[343] in Dublin, and Earl Sigurð the Mighty in Orkney.

After referring to the popes as the highest representatives of the Catholic Church, the author mentions significant representatives of secular power, namely the emperor of East Francia (the emperor "north of the Alps") and the rulers of the Byzantine Empire. Afterwards,

[340] The author of *Landnámabók* might have taken over the Anno Mundi era from Bede's computistical treatises *De temporibus* or *De temporum ratione* where this kind of dating is used: "These chronicles (…) are universal, not national, and based on *annus mundi*, rather than *annus Domini* reckoning" (Wallis. "Introduction", p. lxviii).
[341] There seems to be a mistake in the original text, as the Pope was probably John the VIII whose pontificate lasted from 872 to 882.
[342] The Old Norse expression *fyrir norðan fjall* literally means "north of the mountains," but in the texts it usually stands for the area north of the Alps, i.e. East Francia.
[343] Usually identified with Cerball mac Dúnlainge, the king of Ossory.

all Scandinavian kings are named and finally the kings of the "nearest" lands that the Old Norse people had frequent contact with, England, Ireland and Orkney.

As I have mentioned, similar enumerations of personalities who reigned or died in the same year are relatively common in Old Icelandic historical writings. They might, in a way, remind us of *langfeðgatal*, enumerations of Icelanders, because in both cases they are lists of names. The difference between them is that the names in *langfeðgatal* are *stretched in time*, while the lists of personalities are *stretched in space*. In the case of *langfeðgatal* the space is known (Iceland), and the time is changing, because the chains of generations are stretched from the past to the future. Furthermore, each Icelandic family has its own timeline – the genealogical tree – so we encounter here a plurality of timelines. As regards the lists of personalities, time is known, because all enumerated persons lived, reigned or died in the same year which is set onto one universal timeline (usually AD). On the contrary, the range of space is extensive, because the personalities come from various parts of the Christian world. Thus, what happens here is that time becomes a universal binding feature of different spaces and one universal timeline includes a multiplicity of people and events.

While in family sagas the genealogies function as the main dating system, in *Landnámabók* the genealogical chains of the Icelandic families are incorporated into a unifying chronological frame. The same can be claimed about the functional periods of the Icelandic lawspeakers in *Íslendingabók* that are incorporated onto an *absolute* time scale as well. Time depicted in family sagas is the time of the Icelandic gentile society, while time in *Landnámabók* and *Íslendingabók* stands between this domestic tradition and international time reckoning adopted by learned Icelandic clerics.

10. Time in *diplomataria*

The new reckoning of time found its way to the North not only through the learned treatises such as computistical or historiographical works, but it was, to some extent, also adopted by the Scandinavian kings and bishops or archbishops. It appears namely in the charters written by them, or more precisely in the dating formulas placed usually at their end. In the following chapter I would like to shortly examine some of these dating formulas included in the charters from the Norse *diplomataria*, namely from *Diplomatarium Islandicum* and *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*.

Let me begin with a definition of the term *diplomatarium* in the Norse context taken over from the *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder*:

> Diplomatarium är en i Nord. gängse benämning för vad man i de romanska länderna kallar *chartularium (cartulaire)*, i Engelsk *cartulary*, i Tysk vanligen *Urkundenbuch* eller *Codex diplomaticus*, dvs. en skriven eller tryckt samling av urkunder, företrädesvis medeltida, omfattande ett land eller en landsdel, ett stift, ett landskap, en stad, ett kloster, en släkt etc.[344]

The medieval charters of various kinds included in *Diplomatarium Islandicum* and *Norvegicum* are written either in Latin or Old Norse by people of different social statuses, but especially the local bishops, Norwegian archbishops or kings.[345] The oldest charters are usually undated, but most of the charters from the later 13th century onwards contain dating formulas. Although these formulas can have various forms, the way they are incorporated into the charters is unified. If one takes a look into the aforementioned *Kulturhistorisk leksikon* under the word "*Datering* (*datumsformel*)," one reads that: "Herved forstår man den del af slutformlen i det middelalderlige diplom, der inderholder tids- og eventuelt stedfæstelse af det i diplomet omtalte."[346] Mostly, the formulas can be found at the very end of the charters.

If a charter is written in Latin, the dating formulas mostly begin with the word *datum* used as an introductory term to the formula (*indledningsord til datumsformlen*),[347] e.g.:

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[344] *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder III.*, p. 82.
[345] Apart from the numerous papal letters concerning Norway or Iceland.
[346] *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder III.*, p. 1.
[347] The Latin word *actum* that can also be found in the medieval Scandinavian charters has the same function. Sometimes, these two terms are used together (*actum et datum*; *datum et actum*). Originally, in ancient times, there was a difference between *actum* and *datum*, as each of them was used in certain types of letters, but as regards their appearance in the Scandinavian charters from the 13th century onwards, they are used as synonyms (*Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder I.*, p. 9).

Datum Rome apud sanctam Sabinam, Nonis Januariis, anno primo.[348] (Pope Honorius IV, 1286)	**Written in Rome** near the day of St. Sabina, at the Nones of January, the first year [= of the Pope's pontificate].

If a letter is written in Old Norse, it is usually the adverb *þá* (used in the expression *þá er*) that marks the information about time in the dating formula, e.g.:

Uar þetta bref gort i Stafangre **þa er** liðnir varo j fra burðar tið vars herra Jesu Christi þushundrað vetra. tuau hundrað vetra. ix. tigi vetra oc ij. vetr […][349] (Duke Hákon V Magnússon, 1292)	This letter was written in Stavanger **when** a thousand, two hundred and ninety-two winters had passed from the time our Lord Jesus Christ was born.

As mentioned before, similar information about time usually serves as the closing of a charter. Nevertheless, sometimes the dates do not stand in the very last position in the text and they are already mentioned in its beginning. However, in this case the writer always puts a remark referring to this previously stated date at the end of the charter. In Latin, the closing formula in this case would mostly be *datum ut supra* ("dating as above"), while in Old Norse letters one often encounters the expression *a fyr sagdum dæghi oc tima* ("in the aforementioned day and time").[350] It is interesting to compare the placement of time indications at the end of charters with the way they are incorporated into the various saga genres. As regards time indications in family sagas, they are usually placed at the beginning of each chapter or scene, being a part of the prefaces that prepare the "stage" for the scenes and thus closely connected to the narrated events. On the contrary, as I will show later, in kings' or bishops' sagas time indications become independent of the narrated events and give rather the impression of separate pieces of information incorporated into the narration. In some of the kings' sagas and especially bishops' sagas, one can even find dating formulas placed at the very end of the chapters, the same as in the medieval charters.[351] This might lead to the assumption that the

[348] *D.N. 1 (first half)*, p. 71.
[349] Ibid, p. 73.
[350] For example, *D.N. 1 (first half)*, p. 89. Contrary to Latin, which uses the single term *datum*, there are two different terms in this Old Norse version of a closing formula, namely "day and time" (*dæghi oc tima*), used in the meaning of "day and year." Thus, the time scale used in the particular charter, as for instance the AD era or regnal period of a certain king, represents time in general.
[351] For example, in the first half of *Guðmundar saga byskups* (version A) time indications concerning Guðmund's age are sometimes placed at the very end of the chapters. For example (*GBp* liii): *Þa hefir Guðmundr prestr xvi. uetr ok xx*. ("Gudmunð the priest was then thirty-six winters old"). In the second half of the saga, after Guðmund

narrators of these sagas have partially adjusted the placement of the dating formulas into the narration based on the method common for the charters written by kings and bishops. I will describe the dating systems in kings' and bishops' sagas in the last part of the thesis.

While examining the dating formulas in the medieval charters, one can notice that the references to time are often connected with references to space (e.g. *Datum Rome* and *Uar þetta bref gort i Stafangre* in the two aforecited examples). If one looks back to the eddic myth about the creation of time reckoning, one recalls that time is originally not connected to a particular place in the myths, but to the human world in general. The same can be seen in legendary sagas, for instance when it comes to the aforementioned predictions of the heroes' fame that will last to the end of the human world. Later on, it becomes important *where* a certain action happens together with *when* it happens. The connection of time and space becomes crucial, partially because time reckoning might have been different when connected to a different space. The Christian writers could have used the unifying AD time scale that connected various spaces within the Christian world, but several local ways of time reckoning in the different countries also existed based for example on the regnal years of the local rulers. Besides that, information about where and when a charter was written functions, in a way, as its confirmation, providing the temporal and spatial coordinates of the writer in the moment of writing or signing the charter. Moreover, in the case of letters, mentioning the place of writing shows politeness towards its recipient who is informed of the whereabouts of the writer in this way.

10.1. Dating formulas in *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* and *Islandicum*

Let me now describe the different types of dating systems to be found in the medieval charters from *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* and *Islandicum*. As regards the first mentioned collection of charters, I have worked with the first two volumes, i.e. *D.N. 1* (the first and second halves) and *D.N. 2* (the first half), which contain letters written in the time period from 1196 to 1396. As regards *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, I have chosen examples from the first three volumes, i.e. *D.I. 1*, *D.I. 2* and *D.I. 3*, which cover the time period from 834 to 1415. However, as I mentioned earlier, the oldest charters included in these *diplomataria* are mostly undated. As regards the charters from the Norwegian *diplomatarium*, Christian Lange writes: "De ældste

is consecrated bishop, the narrator informs us about how many years he has been in his function when certain event happened. For example (*GBp* clv): *Þa hafðe Guðmundr byskup uerit xi. uetr*. ("Guðmund had then been bishop for eleven winters"). The dating formulas are sometimes incorporated into the narration and sometimes situated at the end of the chapters.

norske Breve mangle fordetmeste Angivelse af Tid og Sted; fra Midten af 13de Aarhundrede, da Datering mere og mere blev almindelig, regnedes snart fra Guds Aar, snart fra Kongens Regjerings-Tiltrædelse."[352] A similar situation can be observed in the charters included in the Icelandic *diplomatarium*. Lange's statement that the dating formulas are sometimes based on Anno Domini (*Guds Aar*) and sometimes on kings' regnal periods (*Kongens Regjerings-Tiltrædelse*) underlines the variety of the dating systems used in the charters.

When examining the charters from the aforementioned volumes of the two *diplomataria*, I concentrated on the dating systems used by the Norwegian kings, Norwegian bishops or archbishops and Icelandic bishops. The results of my research are summed up in the two tables below:

Diplomatarium Norvegicum		
Writer	**Dating used**	**Example**
Bishop/ Archbishop	1A. Anno Domini + the bishop's/archbishop's episcopate 1B. Anno Domini 1C. The Norwegian king's regnal year	1A. Datum Nidrosie. Anno domini millesimo. Cc. lx. vij. xvij. Kal. Septembris. Pontificatus nostri anno primo.[353] (Hákon, Archbishop of Nidaros, 1267) (Written in Nidaros, anno domini 1267, the seventeenth Kalends of September, the first year of our episcopate.[354]) 1B. Datum apud ecclesiam de Thrykstaðum in die Crisogini martiris anno domini m. ccc. xl. viij.[355] (Arne, Archbishop of Nidaros, 1348) (Date by the parish of Trygstad, on the St. Chrysogonus Martyr, anno domini 1348.) 1C. […] a tysdaghæn nestæ firir igangs fastu a

[352] Lange. "Hjælpemidler til Beregningen", p. xxv.
[353] *D.N. 1 (first half)*, p. 50.
[354] The term *pontificatus* in the original text stands for episcopacy in this case. See for example Heber: "The next word which the primitive church did use, as proper to express the offices and eminence of bishops, is 'pontifex' and 'pontificatus' for 'episcopacy'" (See Heber, Reginald. *The Whole Works of the Right Rev. Jeremy Taylor.* London: Ogle, Duncan and Co., 1822, p. 109).
[355] *D.N. 2 (first half)*, p. 245.

		iiii are rikis vars vyrdulighx herræ Hakonær meder gudes nad Noreghx konongs […].[356] (Bishop Håvard of Hamar, 1359) ([…] on the last Tuesday [*Týsdagr*][357] before the beginning of the fasting period in the fourth year of the reign of our magnificent Lord Hákon from God's grace the king of Norway […])
King	1A. Regnal years 1B. Anno Domini + regnal years	1A. Þetta bref var gort j Aslo kros messudagh vm haustit a niunda are rikis vars.[358] (King Hákon V Magnússon, 1307) (This letter was written in Oslo on the Cross-mass-day in the autumn in the ninth year of our reign.) 1B. Þetta bref var gort i Biorgvin þa ær liðit var ifra burð vars herra Jesu Christi m. cc. ix. tigi vætra oc vii. vætr a Katerine messo dagh. a xviij are rikis vars.[359] (King Eirík Magnússon, 1297) (This letter was written in Bergen when had passed a thousand two hundred and ninety-seven winters from the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, on the day of St. Catherine in the eighteenth year of our reign.)

[356] *D.N. 2 (first half)*, p. 282.
[357] The original Old Norse name for Tuesday, *Týsdagr*, is used in a letter written by the Norwegian bishop in the middle of the 14th century, because contrary to Iceland, the use of these old heathen names was not forbidden in Norway.
[358] *D.N. 1 (first half)*, p. 100.
[359] Ibid, p. 80.

Diplomatarium Islandicum		
Writer	**Dating used**	**Example**
Bishop	1A. Anno Domini + the bishop's episcopate 1B. Anno Domini	1A. Datum Bergis anno domini m. cc. lxxx. ix. kal. Augusti pontificatus nostri xij.[360] (Arni Þorláksson, Bishop of Skálholt, 1280) (Written in Bergen anno domini 1280, the ninth Kalends of August, the twelfth year of our pontificate.) 1B. Settum vier vort insigle fyrer þetta breff. er giort var á Holum laugardag næsta fyrer Gregorius messu. Anno Domini millesimo trecentesimo qvinqvagesimo tertio.[361] (Orm Áslákssson, Bishop of Hólar, 1353) (We set our insignia before this letter that was written in Hólar on Saturday before the mass of St. Gregory. Anno Domini one thousand three hundred fifty-three.)
King[362]	1A. Anno Domini + regnal years 1B. Anno Domini	1A. Þetta bref var gortt i biorgwin in festo sancte maurini. anno domini m. cc. ixx. vij. a xviij. are rikis vars.[363] (King Magnús Hákonarson, 1277) (This letter was written in Bergen on the feast of St. Maurinus, anno domini one thousand two hundred and seventy-seven in the eighteenth

[360] *D.I. 2*, p. 190.
[361] *D.I. 3*, p. 72.
[362] *Diplomatarium Islandicum* contains also charters written by Scandinavian kings that in some way concern the affairs in Iceland. However, the dating systems used in them are the same as in the royal charters included in *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*.
[363] *D.I. 2*, p. 159.

		year of our reign.) 1B. Datum Berge anno domini m. cc. lxx. iij. in festo assumptionis beate Marie.[364] (King Magnús Hákonarson, 1273) (Written in Bergen anno domini 1273 on the feast of the assumption of Mary.)

As can be seen, there are several systems of dating blended in the examined charters from *Diplomatarium Norwegicum* and *Islandicum*. First of all, one encounters here the AD era which is used by the representatives of the both ecclesiastical and secular power. The use of the AD dating system is otherwise rare within Old Norse literature with the exception of historiographical works. Besides the Icelandic annals, it can be found for instance in the aforementioned *Íslendingabók* whose author, Ari Þorgilsson, strives to incorporate Icelandic history into the greater world history by referring to the Christian era. As regards the medieval charters, the use of the AD system might be partially motivated by the same effort, namely to incorporate Norwegian or Icelandic domestic affairs into this universal time scale used by the Christian world. Especially in the case of charters that were intended to be sent abroad, the writers needed to fix them temporally by using this foreign time scale. Another reason behind the use of the Christian era might be the writers' recognition of the authority of the Catholic Church. As Deborah Deliyannis writes: "Naming the year after the Incarnation of the Lord gives the date a universal quality, and also a sacred one."[365] However, the Scandinavian bishops and archbishops usually use the AD dating together with the year of their episcopate and the secular rulers with their regnal year.

As regards dating by the regnal years (*anni regni*), it was first declared an official way to date documents by the Byzantine emperor Justinian, later adopted by the kings of the Lombards and the Frankish kings, and Western European rulers used it till modern history.[366] This kind of dating also spread to the North, although the oldest preserved charters written by the Norwegian kings are undated. As one reads in the *Kulturhistorisk leksikon*: "Det er først ut gjennom 1200-talet datering blir alminnelig i kongebrevene, visstnok under Magnus

[364] Ibid, p. 107. The letter is also present in *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* (*D.N. 1 (first half)*, p. 57).
[365] Deliyannis. "Year-Dates in the Early Middle Ages", p. 13.
[366] Bláhová. *Historická chronologie*, p. 317.

Lagabøter."[367] Contrary to the Christian era, dating according to the regnal years had a local character and could have served to validate the ruler's authority by naming and reckoning time after him.[368] Let me add that the *anni regni* dating system is not only used in medieval Scandinavian charters, but it found its way also into the sagas, namely into kings' sagas narrating the lives and deeds of Scandinavian kings.

The Norwegian bishops or archbishops and Icelandic bishops use the dating according to their episcopates (*anni pontificatus*), Anno Domini or a combination of the two. Dating by the episcopal periods became commonly used in continental Europe from the 10th century onwards.[369] However, it arrived much later in Norway or Iceland, where the first bishoprics were established in the 11th century and the Norwegian archbishopric in 1152/1153 in Nidaros (Trondheim). Nevertheless, as in the case of *anni regni*, one first encounters dating based on the bishops' episcopal periods in the charters from the 13th century. This type of dating penetrates the Old Norse sagas as well, namely bishops' sagas that I will be dealing with later in the thesis. However, in *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* I also found a letter written by a Norwegian bishop and dated by the regnal year of the Norwegian king Hákon IV Magnússon (see example 1C). It is possible that one witnesses here a situation which Bláhová mentions in her work about various medieval dating systems and chronologies, namely that the dating by regnal years of a certain secular ruler might be considered a demonstration of dependency on this ruler.[370] Although Bláhová mentions a case where the dating by regnal years is used by lower aristocrats, while in this case it is used by a bishop, it might be motivated similarly. The fact that the bishop uses the reckoning of time connected to the king means also the recognition of the "king's time" and thus also of his power over domestic affairs.

To illustrate the delicacies of this struggle for the power over time, I would like to mention one more example from the *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* that also mirrors the fact that the choice of dating could have played certain role in diplomacy. It is an excerpt from the correspondence between the Norwegian king Magnús Hákonarson, the Norwegian archbishop Jón of Nidaros and Pope Gregory X, which took place in the years 1273-1274. The first charter is a concordat between King Magnús and Archbishop Jón on the boundaries of the secular and

[367] Magnús IV Hákonsson, the king of Norway between 1263 and 1280. (*Kulturhistorisk leksikon I.*, p. 9).
[368] Deliyannis. "Year-Dates", p. 13. See also Fichtenau, Heinrich. "Politische Datierungen des frühen Mittelalters" In: *Intitulatio II* (1973), p. 453-548.
[369] Bláhová. *Historická chronologie*, p. 318.
[370] Ibid.

clerical authorities. The charter is dated by the AD era mentioned in its first third.[371] However, the concordat includes also a closing dating formula that contains a different type of dating:

Datum apud predictam civitatem anno et die predictis, regni vero domini Magni quarti dei gratia illustris Norwagie xi., consecrationis vero venerabilis patris Johanes Nidrosiensis archiepiscopi anno sexto.[372]	Written in the aforementioned town in the aforementioned year and day,[373] in the eleventh year of the reign of our lord Magnús the fourth, from God's grace the ruler over Norway, in the sixth year of the episcopate of our venerable Father Johanes, the archbishop of Nidaros. (King Magnús Hákonarson and Archbishop Jón, 1273)

The charter thus includes three types of dating, an international one (AD era) and two local ones (regnal year and year of episcopate). The local systems of dating represent both sides involved in the agreement, namely the king and archbishop as the representatives of secular and ecclesiastical powers.

After the concordat between the king and archbishop had been achieved, Archbishop Jón left to Lyon with a copy of the document that he brought to Pope Gregory X for his approval.[374] At the same time, King Magnús sent the concordat to the pope together with an accompanying letter. While the original charter includes the regnal year of the king and the year of the archbishop's episcopate, the letter sent to the pope is dated only as follows:

Datum Berge, anno domini mo. cco. lxxo. iiio. in festo assumptionis beate Marie.[375]	Written in Bergen, anno domini 1273 on the feast of the assumption of Mary. (King Magnús Hákonarson, 1273)

When addressing the pope, King Magnús uses the AD era, instead of the dating based on his regnal period. The reason behind this might be, apart from the fact that the AD era is universal and international, recognition of the power of the Catholic Church, which stands

[371] *[…] duxit componendum predictus rex illustris cum domino archiepiscopo anno domini m. cc. lxx. iii. in festo sancti Petri ad vincula in civitate Bergensi in hunc modum* ("the aforementioned noble king considered appropriate to become reconciled with the lord archbishop in this way in anno domini 1273 on the feast of St. Peter in Chains in the town Bergen").
[372] *D.N. 1 (first half)*, p. 57.
[373] The aforementioned reference to the AD era.
[374] Sandvik, Sigurðsson. "Laws", p. 236.
[375] *D.N. 1 (first half)*, p. 57.

behind the AD dating system, as the institution that can make decisions concerning domestic affairs in Norway.

Finally, there is a third document, namely a letter written by the pope back to Norway in which he confirms the concordat and which contains the following dating formula:

Datum Lugduni vii. Kal. Aug., anno tertio.[376]	Written in Lyon in the seventh Kalends of August, in the third year [= of the Pope's pontificate]. (Pope Gregory X, 1274)

As one can see, the choice of a dating system made by the persons involved in the whole affair (king, archbishop and pope) is not coincidental. On the contrary, the concordat between the king and archbishop, i.e. the secular and ecclesiastical power, is further confirmed by the use of the dating systems based on their regnal and episcopal periods. Their mutual recognition of each other's power is symbolized also by the recognition of time reckoning. The letter from the king to the pope includes the AD dating system, which is politically neutral as regards domestic affairs, but at the same time shows the king's recognition of the power of the Church. The pope uses the year of his pontificate to date his letter and thus expresses his authority as regards the power to decide the respective affair.

As I have shown, several systems of dating are sometimes combined in one charter, namely the AD system together with the regnal year of the king or the episcopal period of the bishop/archbishop. This is a common case not only in the Scandinavian *diplomataria*, but in diplomatic documents from continental Europe as well. As Wallis writes: "Dating clauses both in annals and in diplomatic acta are notorious for redundancy, i.e. the date is expressed according to more than one of the chronological systems (…)."[377] This blending of various chronologies might be confusing for the contemporary European man, who uses the Anno Domini time scale in his daily life and does not commonly come into contact with other dating systems (unless he travels for example to Japan where years are reckoned based on the regnal period of the emperor). However, as Jacques Le Goff notes, for the medieval man the idea of multiple chronologies was not so uncommon: "The truth was that there was no unified time or chronology. The medieval mind accepted a multiplicity of methods of reckoning time as normal."[378] Besides the AD time scale, there were various *absolute intrinsic* chronologies

[376] Ibid, p. 58.
[377] Wallis. "Chronology and Systems of Dating", p. 385.
[378] Le Goff. *Medieval Civilization*, p. 175.

based on the regnal and episcopal periods of various secular and ecclesiastical rulers, emperors, kings, earls, popes, archbishops and bishops. As Le Goff also writes: "Measures of time and space were an exceptionally important instrument of social domination. Whoever was master of them enjoyed peculiar power over society. The multiplicity of time schemes in the middle ages mirrored the social struggles of the age."[379] The struggles of the various layers of medieval society, such as the ruling classes, clergy and aristocracy, for power reflected themselves in the struggles for time as well. Each of these layers favoured its own time reckoning and its own time scale.

The establishment of bishoprics and archbishoprics in the Scandinavian lands led to the introduction of an *absolute intrinsic* chronology based on the episcopates of the local clergy. At the same time, as the original Norse gentile society transformed into a feudal society, the time reckoning based on the regnal periods of the Scandinavian kings became more and more dominant. These new types of *absolute intrinsic* chronologies began to appear not only in the charters, but penetrated kings' and bishops' sagas too, as I will show in the last part of the thesis. The references to the Scandinavian kings can be found in family sagas as well, but in this saga genre they remain only *relative*, because the narrators do not mention the exact year of the kings' reigns. In general, family sagas favour the original time of the gentile society, i.e. the time based on the genealogies of prominent Icelandic families.

[379] Ibid, p. 177.

Summary II: Foreign time reckoning arrives in the North

In the previous three chapters I intended to outline a basic image of how foreign time reckoning spread to the North from the Western Europe. The knowledge of the AD dating system, the Julian calendar and the liturgical year spread to society from "above," i.e. through the learned layers of Norse society, the ruling class and clergy. The new systems of reckoning time soon found their way into the domestic literature.

As a result of the Icelandic interest in the computistical genre, the compilation known as *Rímbegla* emerges. The treatises this compilation includes describe, among others, the Julian calendar, including the Latin names of months or their lengths, and compare this foreign time reckoning with previous Icelandic practices. However, a comparison of local and foreign practices is not the only way how Icelandic authors deal with the arrival of the new reckoning of time. The need for transition from one system of time reckoning to another arises and leads to attempts to connect the different times. This was done for instance by Ari Þorgilsson, the author of an early Icelandic historiographical work *Íslendingabók*. He blends the local dating systems, namely *relative* chronology, including *genealogical* chronology, and the office periods of the Icelandic lawspeakers with the AD era or references to the regnal periods of various Christian rulers. Through combining the different systems of dating he creates a very elaborate and complex historiographical system. At the same time, he manages to integrate domestic history within the greater Christian world history. A similar tendency is partially apparent also in *Landnámabók*, another early Icelandic historiographical work, whose author sets the *genealogical* chronologies of the Icelandic settlers into a temporal frame connected to world history.

The new systems of time reckoning were adopted also by Scandinavian kings and clergy, as one can see from the charters contained in the Scandinavian *diplomataria*. Both the kings and bishops/archbishops reckon time based either on their office (*anni regni* and *anni pontificatus*) or through the Anno Domini dating system, and sometimes also through a combination of the two. All of these dating systems come out of foreign models of time reckoning, the first two being *absolute intrinsic*, i.e. based on the local background, and the AD era *absolute extrinsic*, referring to a universal time scale. The choice of the dating system was adjusted according to who was the writer of the letter or other document, while each writer favoured his timeline. However, it seems that in some cases the dating could be adjusted also according to who was the intended recipient of the letter, in order to show recognition of his power.

What is also worth noticing concerning the medieval charters is that time "shrinks" into the dating formulas placed usually at their very ends. Contrary to the original Old Norse image of "full" time that exists within events, time becomes separated from its content and concentrated into the abstract dates and years situated on various time scales.

Part III: The blending of times: Transformations of time reckoning and perception in kings' and bishops' sagas

As I mentioned in the chapter introducing the primary sources, I divided the Old Norse works and genres analysed in this thesis into three groups. While the first group of texts (eddic myths, legendary and family sagas) contains, I believe, distinct traces of domestic pre-Christian time reckoning and perception, the other two groups are strongly influenced by foreign concepts of time. This influence is not only apparent as regards the new systems of time reckoning introduced to the North, as is the case especially with the second group of primary sources (computistical literature, historiographical literature and medieval charters), but also concerning other features of the local time understanding.

Several fundamental changes as regards Old Norse perception of time are highly visible in the temporal structure of the so-called kings' and bishops' sagas. What one can notice, among other things, is the transformation of the role of genealogies in these saga genres caused by the increasing use of various chronologies, the disappearance of the original close connection of time with its content, or certain significant changes concerning the understanding of the future and the concept of foreshadowing. Therefore, in this last part of the thesis I would like to examine these two saga genres and show some of the transformations of their temporal structures that are most noticeable when compared to family or legendary sagas. I will examine not only the systems of dating and time indications to be found in kings' and bishops' sagas, but also the characteristic features of narrative time based on the aforementioned three categories of Genette.

11. Time in kings' sagas

Let me begin with a short introduction of this saga genre. Kings' sagas (*konungasǫgur*) are situated in continental Scandinavia and depict the lives and deeds of the Norwegian, Danish or Swedish kings. While legendary sagas concentrate on legendary heroes, and the main focus of family sagas lies on the members of prominent Icelandic families, kings' sagas tell of the kings that are perceived as persons who stand at the centre of the society. As to the time of their being written down, kings' sagas are somewhat older than family sagas. Theodore Andersson writes: "Whereas the family sagas are a thirteenth-century phenomenon, the productive period of kings' saga writing falls in the century ca. 1130 to ca. 1230."[380] However, as regards the time of composition, it is probably family sagas that are older, while kings' sagas composition was probably parallel to the process of writing the narratives down.

Kings' sagas can be further divided into authorial and anonymous works, as the authors of some of them are known. Based on their narrative structure, they can be divided into biographies that follow the life of one king from his birth to death and synoptical works that depict the lives and deeds of more generations of rulers. For the purposes of this thesis I have examined different kinds of kings' sagas, namely *Fagrskinna* (anonymous and synoptical), *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, the Old Norse translation of a Latin text written by Odd Snorrason (authorial and biographical),[381] and *Heimskringla*, a compilation of kings' sagas whose author is believed to be Snorri Sturluson (authorial and both synoptical and biographical).

11.1. Systems of dating in kings' sagas

The prevailing system of dating in kings' sagas is by the regnal years of the kings (*anni regni*). Contrary to family sagas, the narrated events are situated in the particular year of a king's reign, for instance (Odd, *ÓT* xlvii; *Fsk* xlviii):

Á hinu þriðja ári ríkis Óláfs konungs lét hann gera skip mikit ok ágætligt, þvílíkt sem hit fyrra ok með þvílíkum hagleik; þetta skip var kallat Ormr hinn skammi.	**In the third year of King Óláf's reign** he had a great and splendid ship built, such-like as the former one and with such-like skill in handicraft; that ship was called The Lesser Serpent.

[380] Andersson. "Kings' sagas", p. 197.
[381] I worked with the version AM 310 4to.

A nitianda are rikis Harallz konongs andaðezk Iatvarðr goðe a Englande fimta dag iola. en setta dag iola toco Englar til konongs Haralld son Goðena Ulfnaðrs sonar […]	**In the nineteenth year of King Harald's reign** Edward the Confessor died in England on the fifth day of Yule. And on the sixth day of Yule the Englishmen chose as their king Harald, son of Godwin, son of Wulfnoth[382] […]

As one can see, it is not only the local events, as the building of a ship in the first example, that are situated into the regnal years of the Scandinavian rulers in kings' sagas, but also foreign events, as the death of Edward the Confessor in the second example. The main attention of the narrators always remains focused on the Scandinavian kings and everything that happens home or abroad is incorporated into their regnal periods.

Sometimes, the narrators mention only a certain king's regnal year without adding to which king in particular the number relates. For instance, in the following example from *Fagrskinna* the narrator states that the sons of Eirík Bloodaxe arrived in Norway in the twentieth year without explaining that it was the twentieth year of King Hákon the Good's reign, because it is already obvious from the narration (*Fsk* x):

A tyttugta are kvamo synir Oiriks bloðæxar með hærliðe.	**In the twentieth year** arrived the sons of Eirík Bloodaxe with an army.

However, the *anni regni* dating does not necessarily have to appear in each chapter of a kings' saga. As regards for instance sagas from *Heimskringla*, Snorri occasionally reminds the audience of the kings' regnal years or age, but otherwise arranges the narrated events based on a *relative* chronology, using time indications such as "four years after the fall of King Magnús," but also more vague expressions as "the following summer," "the autumn after" etc.[383] Nevertheless, although Snorri does not mention the exact years of the kings' regnal periods in each chapter, he follows their reigns very carefully year by year. Einarsdóttir considers Snorri's effort to follow the narrated events year by year an influence of Western European historiographical literature: "Når der i store dele af *Heimskringla* (…) er foretaget en

[382] King Harold Godwinson, who fell in the Battle of Hastings.
[383] A special type of relative chronology can be encountered in the first part of *Magnússona saga* (chapters iv to vii), which is achieved by following the number of battles King Sigurð jórsalafari fought in.

findatering af materialet svarende til de enkelte år, må dette først og fremmest opfattes som et resultat af påvirkningen fra den annalistiske historieskrivning i Vesteuropa."[384]

As I mentioned in the previous chapter dealing with medieval charters, *anni regni* was officially accepted as a dating of charters by the Byzantine emperor Justinian (the 6th century).[385] It was later adopted by the Roman Catholic Church and for a certain period of time it was used in the papal charters (6-8th century); soon it was adopted also by the Lombard and Merovingian dynasties, and afterwards by other Western European rulers as well.[386] However, this system of dating was also used by historians, as Bláhová states, "the authors of Merovingian narrative sources dated according to the regnal years of the Frankish kings," as for instance did Gregory of Tours.[387] A similar phenomenon can be observed in the Scandinavian milieu where dating by regnal years of kings appears also in the sagas narrating their lives. Based on Hastrup's division of chronologies that I mentioned in the beginning of the thesis, *anni regni* would belong to the *absolute intrinsic* chronologies, i.e. chronologies based on a timeline connected to a local background. The dating based on regnal years is connected to the kings' lives and events in them, such as their births, coronations or deaths. The narrators of kings' sagas use almost exceptionally this *intrinsic* chronology and not an *extrinsic* one; they refer to the AD era only very rarely and they rather adhere to the "royal time" of the Scandinavian kings. In the forefront of kings' sagas stand the depicted kings and the royal family, and the choice of dating system reflects this fact.

When a kings' saga narrates about events that had happened before a certain king was crowned, which is the case especially in the biographical sagas, the narrator usually builds the chronology of narration based on the age of the particular king. This is easily observed for example in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* whose author, Odd Snorrason, dates the narrated events first by mentioning Óláf's age and later by referring to his regnal years after Óláf becomes king (Odd, *ÓT* viii; Odd, *ÓT* xxxvii):

Þá var Óláfr níu vetra gamall er þessi atburðr gerðisk, at Sigurðr móðurbróðir Óláfs kom í þenna stað er Óláfr var fyrir […]	**Óláf was nine years old** when it happened that his uncle from his mother's side Sigurð arrived to the place where Óláf stayed […]

[384] Einarsdóttir. *Studier i kronologisk metode*, p. 242.
[385] Bláhová. *Historická chronologie*, p. 317.
[386] Ibid.
[387] Ibid, p. 317; 358.

Á ǫðru ári ríkis Óláfs konungs Tryggvasonar stefndi hann fjǫlmennt þing hjá Stað á Dragseiði.	**In the second year of his reign King Óláf Tryggvason** summoned an assembly attended by many people at Stað on Dragseiði.

As regards the second example, I would like to point out the fact that the holding of an assembly is dated here by the regnal year of King Óláf. In family sagas, similar references to assemblies belong to the most frequently used time indications. The narrator often reminds the audience of the fact that a certain assembly is drawing nearer or how long before or after an assembly the narrated events happened. Especially the summer assembly Alþing is an important point of orientation in time because it plays a crucial role in the lives of the saga characters, as regards the conflicts they are involved in. Contrary to this, in the aforementioned example from a kings' saga it is not the assembly that figures as a time indication, but the regnal year of the king: the assembly is situated onto a timeline represented by his regnal period. What one witnesses in kings' sagas is a certain unification of narrative time, because all events depicted in these sagas are situated onto one unifying timeline connected to the kings. This might be seen as a consequence of the feudalization of Scandinavian society during which the gentile society, including the system of assemblies that could originally be attended by all free men, was gradually subjected to the person of the king.

Consequently, the *genealogical* chronology typically used as a dating system in gentile society was substituted by *anni regni* dating which embodies the power of the Scandinavian kings both over time and society. One may ask about the occurrence of genealogies one so often encounters in family or legendary sagas and the role they play in kings' sagas. It does not come as a surprise that in the forefront of kings' sagas stands one genealogy, namely the genealogy of the royal family and the kings' relatives. Sometimes, the genealogical lines of the kings are led back even to the rulers from the legendary past. For example, Snorri's *Heimskringla* begins with the so called *Ynglinga saga* that follows the genealogical chain of legendary Swedish kings, beginning with the pagan gods Óðinn, Njǫrd or Frey, seen as the founders of the Yngling Dynasty. On its other side, the Yngling Dynasty is linked up to the historical Norwegian kings through the ninth and tenth century kings Hálfdan the Black and Harald Fairhair who are presented as son and grandson of King Gudrǫd the Hunter from the House of Ynglings. However, the role of genealogies in kings' sagas changes in comparison with legendary or family sagas. As mentioned before, in these two saga genres genealogies function as a dating system, while in the case of kings' sagas this role is overtaken by an *absolute intrinsic* chronology. The royal genealogies included in these sagas probably do not

have a dating function in the stories. They rather serve as a literary tool for the legitimization of the kings' reign, i.e. they confirm the legitimacy of his right to rule the country by showing his connection to the old local royal dynasties, legendary heroes or gods.[388]

11.2. Other time indications in kings' sagas

Besides mentioning the age or regnal years of the kings, the narrators use various other time indications to further specify the temporal relations between the narrated events. Most prominent among them are the seasons of the year. One can encounter references to all four seasons in kings' sagas, although summer and winter seem to play the most important role, just as they do in family sagas. It is only natural when one realizes that, the same as in the case of the Icelandic aristocracy from family sagas, the activities of kings are dependant on the changing of the summer and winter seasons. Winter is the time of staying on shore, while the summer half of the year brings the possibility of organizing sea expeditions, for instance (*Fsk* xlvi):

Þa var Sveinn konongr ilendr i Danmorcu. Sat um kyrt um vetronom oc la uti um sumrum með leiðangre […]	In that time King Svein settled in Denmark. He was inactive in wintertime and sailing abroad in summertime with the sea forces […]

As mentioned before, the dualistic division of the year has probably remained long alive in Norse society and it appears in various genres of Old Norse literature, kings' sagas being no exception.

What is different from family sagas is the much more distinct penetration of the liturgical calendar into the stories. While the Christian feast days are only rarely mentioned in family sagas, in kings' sagas one can find more frequent references to not only Christmas and Easter, but also to the various days of saints. One can observe how these feast days were incorporated into Scandinavian time reckoning. For instance, in *Hákonar saga góða* from *Heimskringla* one can read of how the king himself took part in the spreading of the Christian feasts into the country, especially as regards Christmas. As the narrator states, in the time the king came to

[388] As Margaret Clunies Ross states, it was not only kings who strived to prove the antiquity of their dynasties by genealogical chains connected to the legendary past, but also some prominent Icelandic families: "The great families of the Oddaverjar, the Sturlungar, and the Hvammverjar believed they were related (albeit tenuously) to royal or noble dynasties of mainland Scandinavia. (…) compilations which record the kinship between members of these Icelandic families and Scandinavian royal houses also include a range of mythic and legendary as well as biographical material relevant to famous members of the lineage" (Ross. "The Development of Old Norse Textual Worlds", p. 380).

Norway (the first third of the 10th century), the country was heathen. The king had to practise his Christianity in private, but he kept Sundays and the Friday fasts, as well as some holidays. He also made a new law through which he intended to replace the Yule festival with Christmas (Snorri, *Hák* xiii):

Hann setti þat í lǫgum, at hefja jólahald þann tíma, sem kristnir menn, ok skyldi þá hverr maðr eiga mælisǫl, en gjalda fé alla, en halda heilagt, meðan ǫl ynnisk, en áðr var jólahald hafit hǫkunótt, þat var miðsvetrarnótt, ok haldin iii.-náttajól.

He made a law that the festival of Yule should begin at the same time as the Christmas of the Church, and that every man, under penalty, should brew a meal of malt into ale, and therewith keep the Yule holy as long as it lasted. Before him, the beginning of Yule, or the slaughter night, was the night of mid-winter, and Yule was kept for three days thereafter.[389]

What one can also encounter concerning the increasing use of the liturgical calendar in the local time reckoning is that certain events were planned based on this calendar. This was a common occurrence also in Western Europe, as Bláhová writes, "the importance of the Christian feasts not only for the religious, but especially for the social and political life of medieval society reflected itself in the fact, among others, that people began to reckon time based on these feasts, both the fixed and movable ones. The clergy, but also the secular dignitaries even planned legal and political acts on the important feast days."[390] Such an example of planning an event on a feast day, although in this case not a legal or political act, can be found at the end of *Saga Magnús konungs berfœtts*. King Magnús stays with his army in Ireland and asks the local king to provide him and his men some cattle for ship-provisions for the way back to Norway. As the day the cattle should be brought to them the king determines a day before a feast day (Snorri, *MBer* xxiv):

[…] ok sendi Magnús konungr sína menn til Mýrkjartans konungs, at hann skyldi senda honum strandhǫgg, ok kvað á dag, at koma skyldi inn næsta fyrir Barthólómeusmessu […] en messudaginn, þá er sól ran upp, gekk Magnús

[…] King Magnús sent a message to King Moriartak, telling him to send some cattle for slaughter; and appointed the day before Bartholomew's day as the day they should arrive […] On the mass-day itself, when the sun

[389] *Hakon the Good*. Transl. S. Laing, p. 93.
[390] Bláhová. *Historická chronologie*, p. 348-349.

konungr á land með mestum hluta liðs síns […]

rose in the sky, King Magnús went on shore himself with the greater part of his men […][391]

Let me add that King Moriartak sends the cattle, but later on when King Magnús with his men return to their ships, the Irish attack them and a battle starts in which the king himself falls.

11.3. Specific features of narrative time in kings' sagas

As regards the relation of narrative time with narrated time within the category of *order*, one can notice that the narrated events are mostly arranged chronologically, as is common in Old Norse literature in general. In the case that the narrator follows more narrative lines at the same time, for instance the events happening at a Norwegian court and a Swedish court, he uses parallel narrative, the same as the narrators of family sagas. He narrates one of the lines until a certain point were this line is interrupted, for example up to the moment when the characters stay at some place over winter. Then he depicts the other line, again until the moment of its interruption and subsequently returns to the first line.[392]

If the narrator depicts some side episodes that are not a part of the main narrative line following the life of the king, he interrupts this line to narrate these episodes. Thus, the chronology of the narrated events is preserved, although the continuity of the main line is interrupted. As Einarsdóttir writes concerning such an episode inserted into the main narrative line of a kings' saga: "Dette lille kapitel virker indholdsmæssigt som et indskud i den øvrige fortælling i denne del af sagaen, men er indsat netop her, fordi det tidsmæssigt hører hjemme på dette sted i fortællingen."[393] This approach reminds us of chronicles where the narrators enumerate various events that happened in the same year, although there is no connection

[391] *Magnus Barefoot*. Transl. S. Laing, p. 273.

[392] Let me mention an example from *Óláfs saga helga* (Snorri, *ÓH* lxix-lxxiii). King Óláf sends two of his men, Bjǫrn and Hjalti, to the Swedish king to negotiate peace. The narrator follows their journey to the court of Earl Rǫgnvald where they stay "for a very long time" (*mjǫk langa hríð*). Afterwards Hjalti continues his journey to the Swedish court. Hjalti probably arrives to the court in summer, but the negotiations last long and do not end before winter. Before the winter comes, Hjalti manages to send messengers back to Earl Rǫgnvald to inform him about the results of the negotiations. The narrator states that the messengers arrived to the earl shortly before Christmas (*nǫkkuru fyrir jól*) and leaves the narrative line at this point. Then he narrates what King Óláf was doing in the meantime during the autumn and winter. The narrative line following his actions is interrupted at the moment he arrives at his parent's house where he stays over winter. Subsequently, the narrator returns to the narrative line following the actions of Earl Rǫgnvald, Bjǫrn and Hjalti. Earl and Bjǫrn begin to prepare for the journey to Sweden just after Christmas. Finally, the Swedish king accepts the proposal of peace and Bjǫrn sails back to Norway the next year and returns to King Óláf's court. In this moment both narrative lines are united again (Snorri, *ÓH* xxc).

[393] Einarsdóttir. *Studier i kronologisk metode*, p. 238.

between them (other than temporal). The causal relations between the narrated events, a fundamental principal of the *relative* chronology in family sagas, is subordinated to their bare chronological succession in kings' sagas. Steblin-Kamenskij states that: "The internal bond of events characteristic of the family sagas yields to the bond of simultaneity."[394] Sometimes, several events are enumerated that are not related to each other, but that simply happened at the same time. For instance, in the following passage from *Magnússona saga* Snorri enumerates various information about King Magnús' sons Eystein, Sigurð and Óláf, which are related to each other only by their simultaneity (Snorri, *MS* xiii-xiv):

[…] ok var þat mál manna, at eigi hafi verit farin meiri virðingarfǫr ór Nóregi, en þessi var, ok var hann þá xx at aldri; hann hafði iii vetr verit í þessari ferð. Óláfr bróðir hans var þá xii vetra gamall. Eysteinn konungr hafði mart gǫrt í landinu, þat er nytsamligt var, meðan Sigurðr konungr var í ferð. Hann hóf muklífi í Bjǫrgyn í Norðnesi ok lagði hann þar mikit fé til; hann lét gera Mikjálskirkju, it vegligsta steinmusteri […]	It was the common talk among the people, that none had ever made so honourable a journey from Norway as this of King Sigurð. He was twenty years of age, and had been three winters[395] on these travels. His brother Óláf was then twelve winters old. King Eystein had also effected much in the country that was useful while King Sigurð was on his journey. […] He also established a monastery at Nordnes in Bergen, and endowed it with much property. He also built Michael's church, which is a very splendid stone minster.[396]

As mentioned before, for family sagas a plurality of timelines is typical, where each of the narrative lines following the fates of one character or the members of one family is set onto its own timeline. The various lines cross each other at certain points of the narration, based on their causality, for example when an assembly is held and the conflicts between the families are presented there. This is also how the inner chronology of the narration is achieved. On the contrary, in kings' sagas one encounters the tendency to connect all narrated events based on their sequence on one unifying timeline represented by the kings' lives or regnal periods.

Let me now move on to the category of *duration* that compares the pace of narrative time and narrated time or, in other words, how long a certain event lasts in narrated time with how long it takes to narrate it. The prevailing form of narration in kings' sagas is *summary* that

[394] Steblin-Kamenskij. *The Saga Mind*, p. 132.
[395] I change the word "year" for "winter" in the translation, following the expression used in the original.
[396] *The Sons of Magnus*. Transl. S. Laing, p. 287.

includes occasional *ellipsis* used when the kings are inactive, for instance when staying somewhere over the winter (*Fsk* xli; *Fsk* xx):

Magnus konongr var um vætrenn i Norege.	During the winter King Magnús stayed in Norway.
Eirikr sœker austr i Svia riki a funnd Olafs Svia konongs. oc var þar i goðo ivir læte langa rið.	Eiríк travelled to the east of Sweden to visit the Swedish king Óláf and stayed there in good spirits for a long while.

The *ellipses* in kings' sagas are usually not as vast as in family or legendary sagas, where commonly a year or more years of narrated time are omitted. As regards kings' sagas, it is mostly the winter season that is omitted and the narrators only rarely omit a whole year. Generally said, the jumps in time are not as vast and the narrative pace is more regular.

As concerns *scenes* and dialogues, they generally occur in a lesser amount in kings' sagas than in family or legendary sagas. As Hallberg writes: "In a representative body of the *konungasögur* [= kings' sagas][397] we thus find an average of approximately 19 per cent direct speech, the corresponding figure for forty different texts of the *Íslendingasögur* [= family sagas] is about 30 per cent (…)."[398] However, some of the kings' sagas include more scenic narration than others. The narrative structure of *Fagrskinna*, as regards the category of *duration*, reminds us of annals where the narrated events are mostly briefly enumerated in the form of summaries with minimal use of scenes.[399] As Kadečková writes, *Fagrskinna* "represents one of the 'extreme' types of kings' sagas" that can be defined by their "briefness, factuality (…) and resignation from any artistic intentions."[400] As she adds: "This type of saga was intended merely for the explanation of historical facts than for entertainment of the audience."[401] On the contrary, *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* or sagas from *Heimskringla* are richer as regards the scenic description and dialogues, and, rather than of annals, they remind us of a certain type of chronicles that are more narrative than annal. Especially *Heimskringla* is rich in

[397] As Hallberg adds, the kings' sagas he examined are "twelve texts, including *Heimskringla*, counted as one work" (Hallberg. "Some Aspects of the Fornaldarsögur", p. 2).
[398] Ibid.
[399] The narrative time slows down and gets closer to the narrated time only occasionaly, for instance when the narrator describes the Battle of Fitjar where the Norwegian king Hákon the Good died. The depiction of the battle takes two chapters (*Fsk* xi-xii) which can be considered extensive in a saga that otherwise depicts events very briefly.
[400] Kadečková. *Dějiny severských literatur*, p. 109.
[401] Ibid.

dialogues, used as a narrative tool to liven up the story and make it more entertaining and dramatic. However, despite the increased presence of scenes in these sagas when compared to *Fagrskinna*, it can generally be claimed that the narrative pace is more regular than in the case of family or legendary sagas. While these saga genres are composed, with a slight exaggeration, from alternating *scenes* and *ellipses*, narrative time in kings' sagas mostly consists of *summary* including the occasional *ellipsis* and several (more or less) inserted *scenes*. In family or legendary sagas, narrative time slows down or speeds up according to what is happening in the narration; the pace and even the very existence of this "full" time is dependent on the events that fill it with certain content. On the contrary, as Steblin-Kamenskij points out, the fact that kings' sagas situate all narrated events onto one timeline indicates that time becomes abstract and independent of its content: "The reign of a king forms the core, hence their name [i.e. kings' sagas]. But the reign of a king comprises not only events; it is also the flow of time. Therefore in the kings' sagas, in contrast to the family sagas, time is severed from events, is objectivised, and begins to exist by itself."[402] What one can observe in kings' sagas is that time which has become independent of its content flows in a more even pace and gains certain regularity given by the timeline in the background of these sagas.

Let me now move on to the last of Genette's categories I am working with in the thesis, namely that of *frequency* within the scope of which one can examine foreshadowing in kings' sagas. Generally, foreshadowing in this saga genre offers less variety than in family or legendary sagas: its prevalent form is a dream or a prophecy, often itself presented in a dream. While in family sagas almost anybody can have a prophetic dream, dreamt usually before the respective person's death, in kings' sagas it is mostly the dreams that royal family members have that are depicted. They are often dreamt by the king himself; or if the dream anticipates the birth of the king, it is revealed to his mother or father. The restriction of prophetic dreams to solely members of the royal family is probably a result of the aforementioned overall concentration on the personhood of the king and the royal family line. The process of what one might call the "feudalization of time" in kings' sagas affects also the form and content of dreams.

Although usually concentrated on the kings, dreams in kings' sagas can be of a different nature, as to their content, or temporal and geographical extent. I have pointed out this fact earlier in my article dealing with foreshadowing in various saga types. In this article, I divided dreams from kings' sagas into three groups that I called "individual," "dynastic" and

[402] Steblin-Kamenskij. *The Saga Mind*, p. 132.

"Christian" dreams.[403] The first group comprises dreams similar to the ones found in family or legendary sagas, i.e. negative dreams that foretell events during the lifetime of a man, most often his death, and commonly used symbols are rooted in domestic pre-Christian tradition, e.g. animal symbolism. A typical example of "individual dreams" in kings' sagas would be the dreams predicting a king's death or a defeat in a battle (that also usually leads to his death).[404] Several dreams of this kind foretell, for instance, the battles of King Harald Sigurðarson (Snorri, *HHarð* lxxx-lxxxii).[405] Similar dreams reflect the original Old Norse image of fate that I have described in the chapters dealing with *Poetic Edda*, legendary and family sagas. However, as Alexander Argüelles claims, in the whole corpus of kings' sagas there is only a small number of this type of dream, i.e. dreams similar to those found in family sagas: "There are some dreams in the *Konunga sǫgur* [= kings' sagas] that betray an affinity to the indigenous Norse tradition of dreaming, but these are a small minority."[406]

While individual dreams do not surpass the limits of a man's life (i.e. one generation's life), the second type of dreams in kings' sagas that I have called "dynastic dreams" are not connected to individual destinies, but foretell the fate of more generations of the royal family. These dreams announce great events to come not only with regards to the king and his kin, but more often to the whole land.[407] At the level of a king's life, what is at play is the birth of the king as well as the birth of his descendants. At the level of the land, it can be the future unification of the country, incorporation of new territories in civil wars or the spreading of Christianity throughout the kingdom.

A very popular motif to be found in dynastic dreams is the motif of a tree symbolizing the family line and offspring of the dreaming king.[408] It appears, for example, in the following

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[403] Králová. "What did the Future hold for them?", p. 34.

[404] This type of a dream to be found in kings' sagas that anticipates the death of the dreamer is called *Abberufungstraum* ("dream of recall") by Gerhard Loescher in his aforementioned work *Gestalt und Funktion der Vorausdeutung in der isländischen Sagaliteratur*.

[405] Two soldiers of Harald's who are, as the narrator points out, sailing on board the king's ship (or on a ship which does not lie far from the king's) have terrifying dreams that anticipate a battle, for instance a dream where they see a huge witch riding before the army of the enemy upon a wolf that eats the bodies of the soldiers (Snorri, *HHarð* lxxxi).

[406] Argüelles. *Viking Dreams*, p. 403.

[407] Loescher has introduced the German term *Verkündigungstraum* for this type of dreams that could be translated as "dream of annunciation."

[408] What has been discussed by many scholars is whether or not the tree motif was taken from foreign literary sources. On the one hand, the tree dreams seem to have a Biblical parallel, namely the tree that in a vision appears to King Nebuchadnezzar. Moreover, as Schach claims, the tree motif is also to be found in Christian legends as well as in the works of Latin classical writers (Schach. "Symbolic Dreams", p. 71). On the other hand, the same motif appears in family sagas, e.g. in the first chapter of *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* or in the sixth and seventh chapters of *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja*, and it can also be found in a skaldic poem from the 10th century, namely in the poem *Sonatorrek* (strophe 21). Its author, Egil Skallagrímsson, mourns the loss of his son, who he calls "the ash that grew from my stock, the tree bearing my wife's kin" (*áttar ask, þanns óx af mér, ok kynvið kvánar*

dream of Queen Ragnhild, wherein the birth of the first king of all of Norway, Harald Fairhair, is foreseen (Snorri, *HSv* vi):

Ragnhildr drótning dreymði drauma stóra; hon var spǫk at viti; sá var einn draumr hennar, at hon þóttisk vera stǫdd í grasgarði sínum ok taka þorn einn ór serk sér, ok er hon helt á, þá óx hann svá, at þat varð teinn einn mikill, svá at annarr endir tók jǫrð niðr ok varð brátt rótfastr, ok því næst var brátt annarr endir trésins hátt í loptit upp; því næst sýndisk henni tréit svá mikit, at hon fekk varla sét yfir upp; þat var furðu digrt; inn nezti hlutr trésins var rauðr sem blóð, en þá leggrinn upp fagrgrœnn, en upp til limanna snjóhvítt; þar váru kvistir af trénu margir stórir, sumir ofarr, en sumir neðarr; limar trésins váru svá miklar, at henni þóttu dreifask um allan Nóreg ok enn víðara.

Ragnhild, who was wise and intelligent, dreamt great dreams. She dreamt, for one, that she was standing out in her herb-garden, and she took a thorn out of her shift; but while she was holding the thorn in her hand it grew so that it became a great tree, one end of which struck itself down into the earth, and it became firmly rooted; and the other end of the tree raised itself so high in the air that she could scarcely see over it, and it became also wonderfully thick. The under part of the tree was red as blood, but the stem upwards was beautifully green, and the branches white as snow. There were many and great limbs to the tree, some high up, others low down; and so vast was the tree's foliage that it seemed to her to cover all Norway, and even much more.[409]

The growth of the tree represents the future of the king and his relation to the land. As he gains control over the land – that is, as "he becomes firmly rooted in it" – and as his kingdom broadens, he becomes "wonderfully thick" and one can "scarcely see over" his kingdom. The colours of the tree tell us about the different periods of the king's life and reign. It is in *Haralds saga ins hárfagra* that the explanation of the dream is given (Snorri, *HHár* xlii): "He was a great warrior in his youth; and people think that this was foretold by his mother's dream before his birth, as the lowest part of the tree she dreamt of was red as blood. The stem again was green and beautiful, which betokened his flourishing kingdom; and that the tree was white at the top showed that he should reach a grey-haired old age."[410] Finally, the many branches of the tree symbolize the king's many descendants who will, according to the dream, cover all of

minnar) (*Egil's saga*. Transl. B. Scudder, p. 157). Furthermore, the motif appears in the fifth stanza of the eddic poem *Hamðismál*, where Guðrún compares herself to a lonely aspen tree without twigs and leaves while she mourns her children's death. Thus, one comes into contact with the symbol of a tree with branches which represents a person with their offspring whilst reading a poem considered to be one of the oldest in *Poetic Edda*.

[409] *Halfdan the Black*. Transl. S. Laing, p. 47-48.

[410] *Harald the Fairhaired*. Transl. S. Laing, p. 82-83.

Norway. The geographical extent of dynastic dreams is usually more extensive than in the case of individual dreams, because they concern the future of the whole country. These dreams show not only the fate of the king and royal family, but, in a way, also of the whole land, since the kings are understood to be the personification of the country. [411]

A similar image of the royal dynasty can be found also in another dream from *Hálfdanar saga svarta* (Snorri, *HSv* vii), this time not symbolized by a tree, but the king's long hair and beard. In this dream King Hálfdan sees himself with long hair full of ringlets of various sizes and colours that symbolize his offspring. In particular, "one ringlet surpasses all the others in beauty, luster and size (…) and it was the opinion of people that this ringlet betokened King Óláf the Saint."[412] As Paul Schach notes in connection to this dream: "The use of hair as a symbol of present or future renown is not surprising, for both long hair and a full beard signified power."[413] At this point one may recall the aforementioned dream from a family saga, namely *Laxdæla saga*, where Guðrún's husband Þorkel sees his beard grown so long that it covers the whole of Broadfirth, a motif that foretells Þorkel's drowning in the firth (*Laxd* lxxiv). With regards to this dream, *Laxdæla saga* favours the standard domestic interpretation (i.e. the death of Þorkel) over the foreign way of interpreting the dream (as the future power and fame of Þorkel). Thus, two dreams of a similar content – a man sees his hair or beard to be extraordinarily long – are read differently when in a family saga as opposed to when in a kings' saga, the kings' saga being susceptible to foreign influences.

While in family sagas foreshadowing does not usually exceed the lifespan of one man (i.e. the lifetime of one generation), dynastic dreams in kings' sagas often exceed these boundaries. They can reach out to a more distant future of the royal family and the kingdom itself when foretelling for example the future power of the kings over the country. Thus, the foreshadowed events lie beyond the scope of the narrative and these dreams could be removed from the saga without having a significant influence on the story as a whole. This is very different from family sagas, where foreshadowing is inextricably linked to the story and the people and places contained in the story. This fact could be explained by the following: While in family sagas it is the story and the *telling of the story* that is most important, in kings' sagas it is *recording the*

[411] Another dynastic dream from *Heimskringla* that uses the tree symbol is the dream of the Norwegian king Sigurð Jórsalafari, who sees a dark tree far away on the sea moving towards him (Snorri, *MS* xxv). The dream predicts the arrival of Harald Gille, the future king of Norway, who is symbolized by the tree. In the dream, the pieces of the tree are driven everywhere along the coast of Norway and symbolize Harald's offspring spreading throughout the land with greater or lesser influence depending on the size of the various pieces of the tree.
[412] *Halfdan the Black*. Transl. S. Laing, p. 48. King Óláf Haraldsson, known as St. Óláf, spread Christianity in Norway and was canonised one year after his death, the act of which was later confimed by the pope.
[413] Schach. "Symbolic Dreams", p. 67. Such an interpretation of the beard symbol can be found in *Somniale Danielis*, a medieval Latin dream book.

history of the land that is the narrators' main goal. Thus, in family sagas (or legendary sagas) foreshadowing is centred on the heroes of the story, whilst in kings' sagas it is connected to the land and exceeds the destiny of the individuals. The deeds of the kings and especially their dreams become an important tool used to reaffirm the concept of monarchy and state formation being imposed on society.

The last type of dream to be found in kings' sagas is what I have called "Christian dream," i.e. a dream using Christian symbols taken from hagiographies and the Bible.[414] Similar dreams can only be found in the kings' sagas that depict the history of Scandinavia after Christianization, not in sagas (or parts of sagas) dealing with the pagan or legendary kings. As an example, one can mention the dream from *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (Odd, *ÓT* xiii) where the king dreams about climbing up to the sky (this motif seems to have a parallel in the Bible with Jacob's ladder) and visualizing Paradise:

Honum sýndisk einn mikill steinn ok þóttisk hann ganga langt upp eptir honum, allt til þess er hann kom at ofanverðum. […] Ok er hann hóf upp augu sín, þá sá hann ágætliga staði fagra ok bjarta menn er byggðu í þeim stǫðum. Þar kenndi hann ok sœtan hilm ok alls skógar fagra blóma, ok meiri dýrð þótti honum þar vera en hann mætti hug sínum til koma frá at segja.	He saw a great rock and seemed to be climbing high up on it until he reached the top. […] And when he lifted his eyes, he saw fair and splendid places and bright men who dwelled in them. He perceived a sweet fragrance and all sorts of beautiful flowers, and it seemed to him that there was more splendour there than his mind sufficed to relate.[415]

Similar descriptions of Paradise show the influence of hagiographic literature, where it is commonly described as an astonishingly light, dazzling place; likewise, Jesus and the saints are portrayed as being surrounded by great light and radiance. In the king's dream, one can also encounter the presence of what Schach calls the "radiance motif"[416] and what the scholar of folklore C. Grant Loomis refers to as "white magic."[417] Just as it is for the saints, it can also be the king himself whose appearance is accompanied by glaring light. For instance, in the first chapter of *Sverris saga* one reads that, a short time before the king's birth, his mother had a

[414] For the various symbols see Loescher. *Gestalt und Funktion der Vorausdeutung in der isländischen Sagaliteratur.*
[415] Odd Snorason. *The Saga of Olaf Tryggvason*. Transl. T. M. Andersson, p. 54.
[416] Schach. "Symbolic Dreams", p. 53. As Schach points out, this motif which often appears in kings' sagas, "occurs only infrequently in the Sagas of Icelanders [= family sagas], probably because this symbolism is so closely associated with Christianity" (Schach. "Symbolic Dreams", p. 71).
[417] Loomis uses the term in the title of his book *White Magic: An Introduction to the Folklore of Christian Legend*. Cambridge: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1948.

dream in which she saw herself giving birth to a shining snow-white stone. In *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* the arrival of young Óláf into Russia is accompanied by many visions of him shining brightly (Odd, *ÓT* viii). The images of the kings surrounded by light make the audience aware of the fact that they have been appointed to rule the country by divine intention. As Knut Helle states: "Et annet hovedtrekk i kongemaktens ideologiske opphøyelse er dens stadig nærere teoretiske tilknytning til guddommen, med tilsvarende økt ansvarsfrihet i forhold til jordiske instanser."[418]

The same as with the dynastic dreams, Christian dreams have a certain ideological subtext. While the dynastic dreams demonstrate the continuity of the royal dynasty and its power over the land, the Christian dreams might emphasize the fact that the king has been chosen by God to govern his earthly possessions. Christian dreams in kings' sagas are not understood to be forewarnings of fate but rather messages revealed by God to those (and concerning those) who have been chosen to rule and guard the land, i.e. to the kings and the royal family. The aforementioned "feudalization" of time that is in kings' sagas closely connected to the lives and reigns of the kings influences also the concept of fate and future that reflects itself in foreshadowing focused on the royal dynasty and its bond with the country.

[418] Helle. *Norge blir en stat*, p. 162.

12. Time in bishops' sagas

Bishops' sagas (*biskupasǫgur*) belong, together with sagas of saints and apostles, to the extensive body of Christian biographies written in medieval Iceland. These genres of Old Norse literature began with translations from Latin sources in the form of sagas narrating the lives of Catholic saints (*heilagra manna sǫgur*) and apostles (*postola sǫgur*). These translation sagas were followed by domestic narratives about Icelandic bishops from the 12th to the 14th centuries. Margaret Cormack writes that: "The earliest evidence for the existence of vernacular saints' lives is from the second half of the twelfth century."[419] As she adds, the production of original domestic sagas of native bishops began in the first half of the thirteenth century.[420] Although most of these texts are anonymous, some of their authors, all educated as clerics, are known – many bishops' sagas were composed by contemporaries of the bishops whose lives they narrate.[421]

As Cormack points out, the narrative style, form and content of this saga genre was gradually changing towards the end of the 13th century and in the 14th century when many older bishops' sagas were rewritten.[422] These changes affected also the temporal structure of the narratives, because they comprised, among others, rearranging the narrated actions into a more accurate chronological order and a deeper concern with dating and historicity.[423] Based on this fact, I have decided to examine three bishops' sagas that were written down in various time periods in order to achieve a broader view of this genre and its transformation, namely *Jóns saga helga*, *Guðmundar saga Arasonar* and *Lárentíus saga biskups.* The first tells of the life and deeds of Jón Ǫgmundarson, bishop of Hólar in the north of Iceland, and was written not long after Bishop Jón had been declared a saint at Alþing in 1200.[424] The second one follows the life of Guðmundur Arason, who died in 1237, but most of the versions of the saga about him were written in the first half of the 14th century.[425] The last mentioned saga tells of the

[419] Cormack. "Christian Biography", p. 29.
[420] Ibid, p. 30.
[421] Egilsdóttir. "Biskupa sögur", p. 45.
[422] Cormack. "Christian Biography", p. 33.
[423] Ibid, p. 33-34.
[424] https://nors.ku.dk/publikationer/trykte_serier/editiones/jons_saga/. 19. 11. 2018. The saga was originally written in Latin by an Icelandic monk, but it is only preserved in Old Norse (Egilsdóttir. "Biskupa sögur", p. 45).
[425] The oldest saga about Bishop Guðmund was written shortly after his death and the four other sagas, known as *Guðmundar sǫgur* A, B, C and D, were written later in the period 1315-1360 (Egilsdóttir. "Biskupa sögur", p. 45; Sigurdson. *The Church in Fourteenth-Century Iceland*, p. 40). I worked with *Guðmundar saga A* from the first half of the 14th century.

Bishop Lárentíus Kálfsson and was written in the second half of the 14th century which makes it the youngest among the bishops' sagas.[426]

12.1. Systems of dating in bishops' sagas

One can encounter several dating systems in bishops' sagas, but the most frequently used one is by the bishop's age or episcopate period. Events that happened before a bishop was introduced into his office are usually dated by giving his age, while later the narrator refers to the years of the bishop's episcopate. Nevertheless, there are certain differences in the three examined sagas concerning in how much detail the narrators follow the passage of years within the bishops' episcopate. The narrator of *Jón's saga* does not mention the years of episcopate in every chapter and he does not always follow the flow of time precisely. On the contrary, the author of *Guðmundar saga* carefully follows the bishops' episcopate year by year. In this saga, the references to the years of Guðmund's episcopate (or his age) are often situated at the very end of the chapters, which might remind us of the placement of dating formulas in the medieval charters. The narrator of *Lárentíus' saga* follows the passage of years very carefully as well. In the first chapters of the saga he refers to Laurentius' age, afterwards he mentions that Laurentius became a priest (*LBp* vii) and follows the years of his priesthood based on a *relative* chronology, for instance by using the phrase *á því eftirfaranda ári/á því ári næsta eftirfaranda* ("in the following year") and similar expressions. Finally, after Laurentius is consecrated bishop (*LBp* xliii), the narrator follows the years of his episcopate.

The bishops' age or episcopate is used as a timeline in bishops' sagas onto which the narrators situate various local and foreign events, for example (*LBp* iv):

Á fimmta ári aldrs Laurentii kórónaðr Philippus Frakkakonungr. Kómu norræn lǫg í land.

Á sétta ári aldrs Laurentii var páfalaust um fjǫgur ár fyrirfarandi. […]
Á sjöunda ári aldrs Laurentii varð Gregorius páfi hinn tíundi með því nafni. Magnús konungr ok Valdimar Svíakonungr funduz. […] Andaðiz Heinrekr Englakonungr.

In the fifth year of Laurentius' age Philip, the King of the Franks was crowned. The Norwegian laws were accepted in the country.
In the sixth year of Laurentius' age there had passed four years without a pope. […]
In the seventh year of Laurentius' age was consecrated Pope Gregory, the tenth pope of this name. King Magnús and Valdemar, King of the Swedes fought in a battle.[427] […] Henry, King of the English died.

[426] I worked with the version AM 180 b fol.
[427] This is probably a reference to the Battle of Hova (1275) where the Swedish king Valdemar and Duke Magnús fought against each other.

The same as in the case of kings' sagas, one can observe that time in bishops' sagas becomes unified in one timeline, with the difference that this timeline is represented by the lives or episcopal periods of the bishops. From the viewpoint of the narrator, this timeline is superior to all other events that are included into its course.

However, apart from this *absolute intrinsic* chronology, one encounters the *absolute extrinsic* AD era in bishops' sagas as well, which is otherwise only rarely used in other saga genres, including kings' sagas.[428] In the following example from *Guðmundar saga* the year of Guðmund's birth is fixed in time not only by its being situated in the episcopacy of the two Icelandic bishops from Hólar and Skálholt, or the episcopacy of the Archbishop Eystein of Nidaros, but also on the AD time scale (*GBp* viii):

Nu tokum uier þar til mals er Gudmundr uar fæddr at Griot á sem fyr uar sagt. Þat uar allt a einum misserum og fall Jnga konungs og þat er brendur uar bæren Sturlu j Hvamme. Þa uar Biorn byskup at Holum enn Klængur byskup at Skalahollte uigdur Eysteinn erchibyskup einum uetri adur. Þa uar lidit fra hingat burd Krists þusund uetra og c og l og 4 uetur at tale Beda prests.

Now we shall take up the story again where Guðmund was born at Grjóta, as we related before, and this was in the same year as the fall of King Ingi[429] and the burning of Sturla's farm at Hvamm. At this time Bjǫrn was Bishop of Hólar and Klœng Bishop of Skálaholt. Archbishop Eystein had been consecrated in the preceding year. This was the year 1154 after the birth of Christ according to the reckoning of Bede the priest.[430]

The sequence of the dating systems is similar to the one used by Ari in *Íslendingabók*, namely from the local background, which in this case is not the lawspeaker's office, but the burning of Sturla's farm (*relative* chronology) and the episcopacy of the two Icelandic bishops, to the Scandinavian background, namely the episcopacy of the Norwegian archbishop, and finally to the AD era. Furthermore, the fall of the Norwegian king is mentioned (*relative* chronology). The sequence of the chronologies in this case is from the *relative* through *absolute intrinsic* to *absolute extrinsic*.

[428] Some of the bishops' sagas use also the so-called *computatio Gerlandi*, a chronology of Gerlandus, that begins seven years earlier than Anno Domini (See Cormack. "Christian Biography", p. 32; Egilsdóttir. "Biskupa sögur", p. 45; Steingrímsson, Halldórsson, Foote. "Tímatal og saga", p. ccxcv).
[429] The Norwegian king Inge Haraldsson.
[430] *The Life of Gudmund*. Transl. G. Turville-Petre, E. S. Olszewska, p. 7.

Besides the episcopates of the Scandinavian bishops and archbishops, bishops' sagas include also numerous references to the popes and the years of their pontificate. For instance, when the narrator of *Jón's saga* mentions that Ísleif Gissurarson was consecrated bishop (*JBp* i),[431] he claims that it happened "in the days of Leo, the ninth Pope of this name" (*á dǫgum Leonis ins níunda páfa með því nafni*). Similar references to the popes, as well as to the AD era, might be motivated by the narrators' effort to integrate the stories about Icelandic bishops and Icelandic (Catholic religious) history into the salvation history. Moreover, I have found several examples in the examined bishops' sagas where the narrator connects certain events that take place in Iceland with events that happen in Rome, for instance (*LBp* ix; *LBp* xix):

Þat gjǫrdiz til tíðinda á þeim misserum at landskjálfti mikill varð á Íslandi fyrir sunnan fyrir Gregoriusmessu, svá at hús fellu niðr í nokkorom stǫðum. Ófriðr í Róma ok drepnir menn í Pétrskirkju.	In that semester (*misseri*) before the Mass of St. Gregory it happened that in the south of Iceland there was a big earthquake and houses fell down in some places. In Rome broke out riots and people were killed in St. Peter's church.
Kómeta var ok sén í Bjǫrgvin móti langafǫstu en í Róma fyrir páska.	A comet was also seen in Bergen towards Lenten fasting and in Rome before Easter.

These might only be examples of a chronicle-like enumerating of events, or in the second case astronomical phenomena, that occurred at the same time. However, the aforecited examples might also reflect the tendency of the narrator to create a bond between the events happening in Iceland or continental Scandinavia and in Rome in order to affirm the incorporation of Scandinavian history into the salvation history.

As in *Íslendingabók* and the first part of *Landnámabók*, one encounters the lists of personalities that died (or reigned) in the same year in bishops' sagas.[432] The important events of Icelandic Catholic history, for example a bishop's introduction to office or the death of a bishop, are often accompanied by similar enumerations of various foreign personalities. For instance, the author of *Jón's saga* dates the death of Bishop Gissur Ísleifsson, the second Icelandic bishop, in the following way (*JBp* xvii):

[431] Ísleif Gissurarson was the first Icelandic bishop.
[432] As regards for instance the dating of the settlement of Iceland, Ari in *Íslendingabók* uses the AD dating system, refers to the reign of the Norwegian king and to the death of the English king. The author of *Landnámabók* refers to the popes, the emperors of East Francia, the rulers of Byzantine Empire, the Scandinavian kings and the rulers of England, Ireland and Orkney.

Þá var liðit frá burð Krists þúsund tíu tigir ok átján ár. Á því ári inu sama andaðisk Paskalis páfi, Baldvini Jórsalakonungr, Arnaldus patriarcha í Hierusalem, Alexíus Girkjakonungr, Philippus Svíakonungr. Þá var liðit frá falli Óláfs konungs Tryggvasonar tíu tigir ok átján vetr.

At that time had passed one thousand one hundred and eighteen years from the birth of Christ. In the same year died Pope Paschal, Baldwin King of Jerusalem, Arnulf patriarch in Jerusalem, Alexius King of the Greeks, Philip King of the Swedes. It had passed one hundred and eighteen winters from the fall of King Óláf Tryggvason.

It is probable that the author of the saga took the dating of this event over from *Íslendingabók* (Ari, *Íslb* x).[433] However, while in the case of *Íslendingabók* Ari begins with the enumeration of personalities who died in the same year as Bishop Gissur and then continues to the universal AD era, the sequence used in *Jón's saga* is reversed. The AD era is mentioned at the very beginning and afterwards comes the list of personalities. Besides the pope, the narrator refers to the ruler and patriarch of Jerusalem, one of the Christian holy places, the emperor of the Byzantine Empire, the Swedish king and the Norwegian king Óláf Tryggvasonar who played a great role in the conversion of the Norse people to Christianity. In Ari's case the AD era is the result of the list, because from the *absolute intrinsic* chronologies he proceeds to the *absolute extrinsic*; in *Jón's saga* it is the initial point, a date on an abstract time scale that connects the various personalities. As I mentioned earlier, similar enumerations of personalities may remind us of the Old Norse *langfeðgatal*, because both are "chains" of names with the difference that names in *langfeðgatal* are stretched in time, while the lists of personalities are stretched in space. *Langfeðgatal* reflect the importance of family continuity within the flow of time, the enumerations of personalities put emphasis on the both spatial and temporal synchronicity within the history of salvation.

12.2. Other time indications in bishops' sagas

Besides the aforementioned *absolute intrinsic* and *extrinsic* dating systems, bishops' sagas contain various other time indications that are used to further specify the inner chronology of narration. It is predominantly time indications based on the liturgical year, especially the

[433] There are also other examples in *Jóns saga helga* based on the dating taken over from *Íslendingabók* (See Steingrímsson, Halldórsson, Foote. "Tímatal og saga", p. ccxcii-ccxciv).

Christmas and Easter cycles. However, one encounters also frequent references to other feast days or to masses, for instance (*JBp* vii; *LBp* xxvii):

Ok at ǫllum hlutum til búnum þá vígir hann inn helga Jón til byskups á dróttinsdegi, **tveim nóttum fyrir tveggja postola messu Philippi ok Jacobi**.	And when everything was ready then he consecrated St. Jón to bishop on the Lord's day [=Sunday], **two nights before the mass of two apostles, Philip and Jacob**.
Þat varð til tíðenda á Íslandi sem mikil hǫrmung var í at brann kirkja í Skálaholti **næstu nótt fyrir Pálsmessu** […]	There occurred an incident in Iceland which brought much grief, namely that the church in Skálaholt burned down **one night before the mass of St. Paul** […]

Bishops' sagas, just as kings' sagas, reflect the increasing use of the Christian liturgical calendar within Scandinavian time reckoning.

One can also notice references to the Roman calendar in bishops' sagas, namely to the kalends, nones and ides, for instance (*JBp* xvii):

Þat var á þriðja dag viku **fimta kalendas Junii**.	That happened on the third day of a week **on the fifth kalends of June**.

This type of dating, also used in the dating formulas from the charters written by the Scandinavian bishops or archbishops, found its way into bishops' sagas as well, but generally the liturgical calendar prevails here. What I have noticed is the tendency of the narrators to situate the significant events mentioned in the sagas onto the important days of the liturgical calendar. For example, in the second chapter of *Jón's saga* the narrator states that Bishop Jón decided to travel to Norway and Denmark. He mentions neither when the bishop left Iceland nor when he arrived to the aforementioned countries, but claims that he met the Danish king Svein exactly on *pálmsunnudag*, "the Palm Sunday." In the previous chapter, I mentioned that important events within the political or religious sphere could be intentionally planned for the feast days. The feast days were perceived as the days of a special quality, more important than the other days. In the heathen past, time with a special quality too existed, as for instance the feast *jól*, but this quality was usually connected to certain natural phenomena, in this case winter solstice. The whole winter season had a special quality, as it could represent the whole

year. Many pagan names of months were based on the natural phenomena or agricultural activities that constituted the quality of these particular periods of the year. With the arrival of the liturgical year the special quality of time is no longer defined by the natural or social spheres, but it is connected to the life of Jesus and various saints.

Bishops' activities as depicted in sagas are not as much dependent on the changing of the seasons, as those of Icelandic aristocracy from family sagas and Scandinavian kings from kings' sagas, who are travelling, solving conflicts, organizing sea incursions or battles in summer and resting in winter. Bishops' activities are rather subordinated to the liturgical year, the peaks of which are Easter and Christmas. References to the seasons are sometimes connected with the references to these feasts; for instance, the narrator of *Guðmundar saga* (*GBp* xxiv; *GBp* xl) states that something happened "in the spring, after Easter" (*en um uarit eptir pascha*) or "in the winter, after Christmas" (*þat uar um uetrin eptir iol*). Let me add that the reckoning of years in winters is still commonly used in bishops' sagas, but it partially blends with reckoning in years.

While examining time indications in bishops' sagas, I have also noticed that time is generally divided into smaller units than for instance in family sagas that mostly follow the passage of the seasons. The narrators of bishops' sagas often mention that a certain event happened on a particular day, either a feast day or only a common day of the week. The days of the week mentioned in these sagas are not called by their original pagan names, like *óðinsdagr* etc., but the narrators use the names established by the Church, for instance *dróttinsdagr*, "the Lord's day," for Sunday.[434] *Guðmundar saga* even contains a reference to the approximate hour when a certain Icelandic woman died (*GBp* xciii), when the narrator states that the woman died close to *the nones*, the fixed time of afternoon prayers that were held around 3 pm. What one can observe in bishops' sagas is what could be called a "shrinking" of time, originally contained in the passing of the seasons or human activities, into certain abstract units.

12.3. Specific features of narrative time in bishops' sagas

As regards the category of *order*, one can claim that the sequence of the narrated events in bishops' sagas is, as in other saga genres, chronological. *Guðmundar saga* and *Lárentíus' saga* follow the flow of time carefully and in each chapter clarify temporal relations among the narrated events; *Jón's saga* is not as precise in this respect, because the narrator uses more

[434] For the lists of both the original Old Norse names of days and the names introduced by the Church see Björnsson. "Tímatal", p. 72.

indefinite time indications, such as *eitthvert haust* ("one autumn") or *eitthvert sinn* ("once"), but he also depicts the events in chronological order, avoiding *analepsis*. The higher occurrence of exact time indications in *Guðmundar* and *Lárentíus' saga* than in *Jón's saga* probably corresponds with the aforementioned fact that the later bishops' sagas were written (or rewritten) in such a way that their authors included more exact time indications into the narratives and followed the chronology of the narrated events more precisely than in the earlier texts. The bishops' sagas thus received a more annalistic touch. As Einarsdóttir notices, this tendency is especially apparent in *Guðmundar saga*, whose author "has literally constructed an annal and woven it into his narrative about Guðmund's adolescence and ministration."[435] As she adds: "For some of the years covered by the saga the author has nothing to report about Guðmund, and he is then content – having usually stated Guðmund's winter sojourn – with continuing his annal and finally stating Guðmund's age."[436] As with kings' sagas, the inner chronology of the narration in bishops' sagas is often achieved rather based on the principal of simultaneity than causality. As I have shown earlier in this chapter, various local and foreign events that have no relation to each other are situated into the chronological order based on time scales in the form of the bishops' lives or episcopates. Time is no longer contained in events that would influence its character or pace, but on the contrary, it embraces all events into its constant flow.

This brings me to the category of *duration* and narrative pace in bishops' sagas. The relation between narrative time and narrated time within this category is generally more even in bishops' sagas than in family or legendary sagas. As mentioned before, the narrative style in these two saga genres often consists of the blending of *ellipses* and *scenes*. While some parts of narrated time are completely omitted from the narration, other parts are depicted in detailed scenes. On the contrary, in bishops' sagas, as in kings' sagas, one encounters mostly *summary* with the occasional *ellipsis* and *scenes*. The *ellipses* are mostly shorter than in family or legendary sagas; they only rarely cover more than a year of narrated time. If there are no important events happening in the bishops' lives, like when they are inactive while resting or being abroad, the narrators sometimes mention how long this period of time lasted, for example (*LBp* xliii; *LBp* xxviii; *LBp* xvi):

[435] Einarsdóttir. *Studier i kronologisk metode*, p. 362.
[436] Ibid.

Þann sama vetr sem Laurentius byskup kom út um haustit **var kyrrt á Íslandi** ok engin merkilig tíðindi gerðuz.	**The winter after** Bishop Laurentius left the country in the autumn **it was calm in Iceland** and no noteworthy events happened.
Var byskup hinn kátasti ok bað síra Lafranz at hvíla sik þar **þrjár nætur** ok svá gjǫrdi hann.	The bishop was in very good spirits and he asked Sir Lafranz to rest himself there for **three nights** and he did so.
Var hann þá í burtu **eitt ár**; kom hann þá aftr til Niðaróss.	He was abroad for **one year**, then he came back to Nidaros.

In *Jón's saga*, which is earlier than the two other examined sagas, one finds more indefinite time indications when referring to the length of certain periods of time, for instance (*JBp* ii):

Ok er lokit var tíðunum, þá sendir konungr eptir honum ok býðr honum til sín ok bað hann með sér **lengi** vera […] ok dvalðisk hann með honum **um stundar sakir**.	And when it was finished, the king sent for him and invited him to the court and asked him to stay there **for a long time** […] and he stayed with the king **for a while**.

Nevertheless, narrative pace in bishops' sagas is generally relatively regular, as one can feel the constant flow of time in the background of the narration that becomes independent of events and continues forward year after year, the same as in kings' sagas.

Let me finish the analysis of time in bishops' sagas with the category of *frequency* and a short study of the foreshadowing that appears in this saga genre. As mentioned before, both the form and content of foreshadowing in various saga genres varies to a great extent. Foreshadowing in bishops' sagas is of a fundamentally different nature than that of which is found in family or legendary sagas. First of all, the original diversity of the forms foreshadowing can take, as for instance premonition, prophecy, omen, warning or curse, disappears. Foreshadowing in bishops' sagas mostly takes the form of a dream, just as in kings' sagas, or, alternatively, of a trance or vision. Dreams and visions contained in bishops' sagas are very similar to the "Christian dreams" from kings' sagas. Contrary to the dreams from family or legendary sagas, ones that seem to be rooted in the traditional Old Norse belief in fate, these Christian dreams are strongly influenced by medieval hagiographies in various aspects, as are bishops' sagas in general. As Egilsdóttir claims, these "sagas of the holy men were written first and foremost as hagiography," and even such bishops' sagas that are rather

considered historical works than hagiographies are "influenced in style, structure and ideology by saints' lives."[437] Both the form and content of foreshadowing in bishops' sagas corresponds with this fact.

The variety of dream persons (such as an animal or a female *fylgja*) typical for family or legendary sagas is replaced by a more repetitive choice in the Christian dreams. Instead of the supernatural beings connected to the native pagan tradition, it is mostly saints or the bishops themselves that are revealed to the dreaming person. According to observations made by Kelchner, the situation in bishops' sagas (or in kings' sagas that also include Christian dreams) is similar to what takes place in the late layers of Old Norse folklore as a part of the general progression from the heathen to the Christian mode of thinking. As Kelchner claims: "One of the most striking developments of the dream representation is the way in which in folklore all the supernatural or extra-human beings of heathendom tend either to become confused with each other and with various members of Christian hierarchy, or to be completely ousted by the latter."[438] As Le Goff notices, the process of replacement of the local dream persons by saints in the oneiromantic practices derived from the pagan traditions is a common phenomenon: "Only a new elite of the dream measured up to the task of interpretation: the saints. Whether their dreams came from God or from Satan (…), saints replaced the ancient elites of the dream: kings (Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar) and chieftains or heroes (Scipion, Aeneas)."[439] In the Old Norse context one encounters, among others, the Norwegian king Óláf II Haraldsson, known as St. Óláf of Norway, but also, especially as regards bishops' sagas, Icelandic bishops.

The Christian dreams often include images of Paradise, Purgatory or Hell that are shown to the dreamer. Let me mention an example from *Guðmundar saga* where the narrator describes a trance of an Icelandic woman called Rannveig in which she sees Purgatory and Paradise (*GBp* lviii-lix). Purgatory, as revealed in her trance, is covered by *hraun ok klungr*, lava fields and plants with thorns, briars or brambles (*GBp* lviii):

[…] at hon sagðe koma at ser fiandr með ogn mikille ok gripo ihendr henne ok leiddo hana hart ok oþyrmilega þar er voro hraun ok klungr. En þar er þau foro sa hon kualar margar ok menn i quolunum enn þeir foro með hana unnz þeir komu	She said that terrifying demons had assailed her, and had gripped her by the hands and taken her cruelly and mercilessly across lava-fields overgrown with briars. On their way she saw many torments and people undergoing them,

[437] Egilsdóttir. "Biskupa sögur", p. 45.
[438] Kelchner. *Dreams in Old Norse Literature*, p. 73.
[439] Le Goff. *Time, Work & Culture in the Middle Ages*, p. 203.

at þar er hon sa firi ser þui likast sem uére ketill mikill eða þyttr diupr ok uiðr ok ibik uellanda en um huerfis elldr brennande. Þar sa hon marga menn béðe lifendr ok dauða ok hon kende suma þar. Hon sa þar nér alla høfðingia ólérða þa er illa foro með þui uallde er þer høfðo.

but they led her on until they came to a place where she saw in front of her something in the nature of a huge caldron or a deep, wide pit; it was filled with boiling pitch and round it were blazing fires. Inside she saw many men, both those who were living at that time and those who were deceased, and she recognized some of them. There she saw nearly all the lay chieftains who had misused their authority.[440]

Purgatory would await Rannveig, the mistress of a priest who had lived with another priest before that, in case she did not change her sinful behaviour. In contrast to the fearful vision of Purgatory, her subsequent vision of Paradise possesses a typical magnificent atmosphere and feeling of amazement achieved through sensory, in this case visual and olfactory, perceptions experienced by her in the trance (*GBp* lix):

Þar voro firi þeim uellir slettir ok fagrir með allz konar blome ok unaðe ok ilm. Þar sa hon hallir fagrar ok margar ok hus béðe há ok mørg ok føgr sua at hon þottiz eigi skilea mega dyrð alla ok voro þo eigi øll iafn dyrðleg.

Before them lay beautiful smooth valleys of delight, with flowers of all kinds and sweet scents. There she saw many fair palaces and many dwellings, so lofty and fair that she felt unable to comprehend such magnificence, yet they were not all equally magnificent.[441]

This kind of description that enumerates adjectives with positive meaning awakens and encourages the imagination of the saga audience as it visualizes the splendour of Paradise found in bishops' and kings' sagas (e.g. the aforementioned dream from *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*) described as a place full of light, radiance and/or beautiful fragrance.

Besides dreams or visions that are dreamt or seen by the common people and urge them to live virtuously in order to get to Paradise, one encounters dreams connected to the bishops that the sagas focus on, predicting their births, consecrations or future glories. For example, in *Lárentíus' saga* the narrator depicts one of the dreams had by the bishop's mother when she is pregnant that predicts the fact that her son will become a bishop (*LBp* ii):

[440] *The Life of Gudmund*. Transl. G. Turville-Petre, E. S. Olszewska, p. 33.
[441] Ibid, p. 34.

Hana dreymði at hún þóttiz vera komin til Hólarstaðar einhvern hátíðisdag er mikil sókn var til staðarins; þóttiz hún varla inn komaz í kirkjudyrnar fyrir manna þrǫng. Þá þótti henni einn merkiligr maðr ganga ór kirkjunni ok taka í hǫnd henni ok leiddi hana innar fyrir háaltarit, ok þessi maðr seldi henni í hǫnd hina hægri nokkot hart í einum línklút svá mælandi til hennar: "Þetta skaltu eiga, Þorgríma, ok geyma vandliga." Þá hvarf þessi maðr frá henni. En hún þóttiz þenna grip sýna síra Þórarni á Vǫllum, frænda sínum, ok leysti klútinn og var þar í stórt byskups innsigli með þeim inngreftri sem byskups líkneskja er á, ok þóttiz hún geyma síðan ok þótti vænt um.

She dreamt that she came to Hólar one feast day, when there was a great assemblage of people in the town; she could hardly enter the church, so crowded it was. Then she saw a remarkable man go out of the church and he took her hand and led her inside and in front of the high altar. And then the man gently put into her hand something hard wrapped in a linen kerchief, while saying to her: "This you should keep, Þorgríma, and guard it carefully." Then the man left. And she thought that the man was Sir Þórarin from Vǫllur, her kindred, and she uncovered the kerchief and there was a big bishop seal in it with such engraving that bishops' seals are supposed to have, and she has kept the seal since that time and thought it was very beautiful.

It is obvious that this dream serves as proof of Laurentius' suitability for the bishop's office, as he is depicted here as already pre-chosen by God to become a bishop before he is born.

One can see that foreshadowing becomes a powerful tool in the hands of both the Church (bishops' sagas) and monarchy (kings' sagas). It is, among others, through foreshadowing that kings and bishops can be presented as the ones who have been chosen by God to rule and guard the land and faith. As mentioned before, many dreams from kings' sagas have an ideological subtext, namely to justify the right of the kings to rule the country. The ideological aspects are very strong in the foreshadowing of bishops' sagas as well, especially as concerns the glorifying of the Icelandic bishops. For instance, at the end of the aforementioned trance of the Icelandic woman mentioned in *Guðmundar saga* the future glory of Bishop Guðmund is predicted. The narrator states that "he will become the greatest upholder of this land [=Iceland] and take a place no lower than that of Archbishop Thomas in England."[442]

Earlier in the thesis I stated that foreshadowing in family and legendary sagas mirrors the original Old Norse (and probably Old Germanic in general) view of fate: it typically shows

[442] *The Life of Gudmund*. Trans. G. Turville-Petre, E. S. Olszewska, p. 35.

negative images of the future, usually somebody's death, often revealed on the background of darkness, night or the gloom of winter, and the feelings linked to foreshadowing are primarily fear and tension. Fate in family sagas is presented, to use Hallberg's words, as a "cold and inexorable necessity."[443] Fate is predestined and the future is already given, existing in the distant present and neither people nor gods can change it. On the contrary, the positive and at the same time heroic attitude to life lays in accepting it.

The Christian God is seen as the creator of both time and fate. He created time in order to realize the salvation history and he controls the fates of all people and the whole world. In this regard, as Winterbourne notices, the Christian God is superior to the heathen gods.[444] On the other hand, the people must be given the certain possibility to change their lives in order to live virtuously and thus also change their fate and get to Paradise. Here one encounters the so-called paradox of free will that many philosophers have tried to solve.[445] However, regardless of its solution, what remains important is that under the influence of Christianity, using the words of Winterbourne, "fate has been pulled down from pagan inexorability and linked with death *as a new beginning*."[446] As Winterbourne claims, this promise of escape from an all-encompassing fate that the new religion offered the people might have been "the most powerful attraction of Christianity to a pagan German."[447]

The threatening visions of the future typical for Old Norse perception of fate are replaced by positive images of afterlife awaiting those who have lived without sins. Foreshadowing is no more understood to be the forewarning of fate, i.e. a consequence of the fact that the future is predetermined and can reveal itself in the present. The Christian dreams or visions in kings' sagas and bishops' sagas are rather presented as messages from God, the only one who knows the future, revealed to the dreamers by his mediators, saints or bishops. The foreshadowing does not reveal a future that cannot be changed; on the contrary, the mediators often appeal to the dreamer to change his/her future in order to live virtuously and without sin.

[443] Hallberg. *The Icelandic Saga*, p. 91.
[444] Winterbourne. *When the Norns Have Spoken*, p. 124.
[445] Among others St. Augustine who suggested the possibility that God has already predestined some people for damnation and some for salvation and only those chosen for salvation can change their behavior in order to live virtuously.
[446] Winterbourne. *When the Norns Have Spoken*, p. 145.
[447] Ibid, p. 129.

Summary III: The blending of times: Transformations of time reckoning and perception in kings' and bishops' sagas

If one compares the temporal structure of kings' and bishops' sagas with the structure of family or legendary sagas, one can find several fundamental differences. The perhaps most distinct of them concerns the systems of dating used in these saga genres. The dating in legendary and family sagas is based on *relative* chronology which puts the narrated events into mutual temporal relations, and *genealogical* chronology, a special type of relative chronology. Every character that appears in these sagas is situated into an extensive genealogical net that spreads throughout time both to the past and to the future. In kings' and bishops' sagas one can encounter *relative* chronology as well, but the role of the *genealogical* chronology is overtaken by various *absolute intrinsic* chronologies based on the kings' ages and regnal periods (kings' sagas) or bishops' ages and episcopates (bishops' sagas). Time that had earlier been contained in the plurality of timelines in the gentile society following the genealogies and fates of the various families becomes concentrated into a certain unifying chronology connected either to the Scandinavian kings or the local bishops.

As a supplement to the *absolute intrinsic* chronology that stands in the background of the stories, various other time indications are used to further clarify the inner chronology of the narrations. What remains true to Old Norse tradition is the frequent references to the changing of the seasons, especially the summer and winter seasons. However, this kind of time indication is blended with references to the Christian liturgical year, first of all to Christmas and Easter, but also to various days of saints or masses. The liturgical calendar becomes an important element of Scandinavian time reckoning used within both the religious and political spheres.

As regards the transformations of narrative time, an interesting change can be noticed within the category of *duration*. In family or legendary sagas, time flows only when something is happening, for instance when the characters take some action, an assembly is approaching, the seasons are changing, etc. When nothing is happening, long periods of narrated time are omitted from the narration through *ellipsis*, often without referring to the flow of time at all. In kings' and bishops' sagas, time becomes independent of its content and flows in a more regular pace, year by year, together with the chronological time scale in the background of these sagas that is attached to the narrated events.

One observes significant changes within the category of *frequency* as well, namely as regards foreshadowing in kings' and bishops' sagas. In kings' sagas foreshadowing mostly

takes the form of what I have called "dynastic dreams" that reveal the future of the royal family and the kingdom, or "Christian dreams" that use motifs and symbols from hagiographies. The latter mentioned type of dream prevails in bishops' sagas too, where it is sometimes transformed into the form of a trance or vision. While foreshadowing in family and legendary sagas is mostly dramatic and reveals the tragic fates of the saga characters in the human world that cannot be changed, the Christian visions of afterlife do not necessarily have to be scary, depending on if the dreamer is living virtuously or not. Foreshadowing in kings' and bishops' sagas is no longer based on a belief in fate, namely the belief that the future is predestined and can reveal itself in the present.[448] The dreams and visions are rather perceived as messages of God revealed to the people and concerning their present lives and deeds. Foreshadowing gains an ideological subtext, first of all, in that it helps spread Christian ideals among the people. Furthermore, in the case of dreams from kings' sagas (both the dynastic and Christian) it helps to legitimize and strengthen the position of the king, and, in the case of Christian dreams from bishops' sagas, to strengthen the position of the bishop, not only in the country, but also within the Catholic Church.

It is interesting to observe these transformations of the temporal structure of kings' and bishops' sagas in connection to certain changes within the social structures taking place in medieval Scandinavia, namely the processes of feudalization and the Christianization of the Norse society. The reflections of these processes appear in family sagas as well, but they are depicted only as a part of the multiplicity of the various layers present in society. If the kings or Church enter the stories, their time, i.e. the references to the Scandinavian kings' reigns often placed in the beginning of family sagas, or the occasional references to the liturgical calendar (Christmas or Easter), stand *side by side* with the genealogies of Icelanders, the references to assemblies visited by all free men or the pagan feast *jól*. On the contrary, in kings' sagas the royal ideology stands in the centre of the stories together with an *absolute intrinsic* chronology based on the kings' lives and reigns. The same claim can be made about bishops' sagas, the Christian beliefs and the chronology based on the bishops' lives and episcopates. All other layers of society are subordinated to these unifying social and temporal structures in these saga genres.

[448] Except for "individual dreams" in kings' sagas that are of a similar nature as dreams in family sagas.

13. Conclusion: Literary images of Old Norse time reckoning and perception and their transformations

The aim of this thesis was to study different images of time reflected in various types of primary sources and their causes. When analysing the temporal structure of Old Norse works and genres, I was concerned with the dating systems and time indications used in the narration and with characteristic features of narrative time examined based on the categories of *order*, *duration* and *frequency* defined by Gérard Genette.

As I explained in the beginning of the thesis, some of the Old Norse works contain traces of pre-Christian domestic time reckoning and perception, while others show strong foreign influences as regards their temporal structures. Therefore, I decided to divide the primary sources into three groups, the first one including works and genres rooted in the original local time perception (*Poetic Edda*, *Snorri's Edda*, legendary sagas and family sagas), the second one comprising works that introduce the new systems of time reckoning into learned Norse society (*Rímbegla*, *Íslendingabók*, *Landnámabók* and the charters from *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* and *Islandicum*), and the third one including two saga genres the temporal structure of which is noticeably influenced by foreign time reckoning and perception (kings' sagas and bishops' sagas), while at the same time containing certain reminders of the native concepts of time.

By dividing the primary sources into the aforementioned groups, I was able to follow certain major transformations of Old Norse time reckoning and perception.[449] In the conclusion of the thesis, I would like to sum up the most significant features of the original Old Norse time understanding that I have encountered when analyzing the primary sources and their transformations connected not only to the arrival of foreign time reckoning and perception in the North, but also to certain important religious and political changes within Norse society.[450]

[449] On the other hand, I also noticed that some aspects of the local time understanding do not change and remain the same in all examined genres, probably because they were deeply rooted in people's minds. This is the case with the dualistic division of the year into the summer and winter half (*misseri*) or reckoning time in winters, which is the perception of winter as the season that can represent the whole year.

[450] By religious changes I mean the consolidating of Christianity in the North, and by the political changes the gradual centralization of the power and replacement of gentile society by feudalism.

13.1. The birth of an abstract concept of time

The first major change, as regards both time reckoning and perception lies in time's separation from its content. Originally, time as perceived by Old Norse people was closely connected to various events or activities within the human sphere, as well as to changes within the natural sphere (e.g. the changing of the seasons). This "full" time seems to exist only when filled with these activities, events or changes. The close connection of time with its content is apparent, among others, from the narrative structure of family or legendary sagas. When something is happening in the story, narrative time slows down and follows the flow of narrated time very closely, in the form of scenic narrative. On the contrary, when the saga characters are inactive, narrative time speeds up, which results in the omitting of often very extensive parts of narrated time in the stories. Usually, the narrators pass these periods of time without paying any attention to them, as if time suddenly ceased to exist.

There was probably a mutual relation between time and its content: certain time was filled with certain content and, vice versa, certain events could only take place at a certain time. For instance, certain natural phenomena occurred only in specific periods of the year and certain agricultural or social activities were only performed by people at specific times of the year. This manifests itself in, as one example among others, the Old Norse names for months enumerated by Snorri in his *Edda*, or in the fact that the summer and winter halves of the year (*misseri*) were filled with specific content: summer was a time of travelling and taking action in lawsuits and violent conflicts and winter a time of resting, visiting relatives and feasting. Winter, as a period of long nights and darkness was also a time of the increased activities of the supernatural, when revenants came to the living, as well as prophetic dreams revealing future events.

The new perception of time that comes to the North with continental European historiographical literature and Christianity is very different in this respect. Time gains the form of an abstract timeline, independent of its content, that flows forward at a regular pace, regardless if something is happening or not. While originally time existed within events, or, in other words, events constituted time, later it becomes separated from them. It is not anymore *time that exists in events*, but rather *events that exist in time*, because time in the form of an abstract time scale constitutes the place for events that are situated into its course.

Old Norse people did not originally use any abstract timeline or era, despite the fact they could count into high numbers, as one can say based on the eddic poem *Grímnismál*. In the 23rd strophe of this poem one can read that there are five hundred and forty doors in Valhalla

and that eight hundred heroes (*einheriar*) are able to pass through a single door all at once. As several scholars believe, the Old Norse expression for a hundred stands here for 120.[451] Thus, the number of the warriors passing through one door is 8 x 120 (960) and the number of doors 5 x 120 + 40 (640). The total number of the warriors in Valhalla would thus be 960 x 640, that is 614, 400. The absence of an abstract era in Old Norse time reckoning was apparently not connected to the inability of the people to create it. There was probably no social need to create such era, perhaps because of the use of genealogies instead of a chronological era, but perhaps also because the perception of time as defined by its content was so strong that it excluded the creation of an abstract era.

However, under foreign influences several local *absolute intrinsic* chronologies appear in Old Norse literature and also the *absolute extrinsic* AD dating system gradually finds its way to the North. As a consequence of this development, time is separated from events and "shrinks" into the form of abstract dates and dating formulas that define the position of a certain event within an *absolute intrinsic* or *extrinsic* time scale. This is clearly visible especially in the medieval charters and the early historiographical literature, but also in kings' and bishops' sagas.

13.2. The replacement of genealogies with chronologies

The original absence of a major chronological scale that would predominate Old Norse time reckoning was compensated for by using *relative* chronology, including *genealogical* chronology. The family lineages of the members of Norse gentile society form a "net" spread in time, both vertically, from the past to the present of the saga characters and even to the present of the saga audience, and horizontally, following both the close and distant relatives within one generation. The vertical extent of these genealogical chains is sometimes enormous, as they can also reach far back into the legendary past.

The narrators of family or legendary sagas use these genealogical nets to fix the depicted events in time. Also, the author of *Landnámabók* uses these genealogical chains when describing events from early Icelandic history concerning the first settlers and their families. Later on, when various *absolute intrinsic* or *extrinsic* chronologies prevail as the main dating systems in Old Norse literature, the role of the genealogical chronology as regards fixing events in time is suppressed.

[451] For example: Larrington. *The Poetic Edda*, p. 289; *De gamle Eddadigte*. Ed. F. Jónsson, p. 67. As Cleasby and Vigfússon explain, "the Scandinavians of the heathen time (and perhaps also all Teutonic people) seem to have known only *a duo-decimal* hundred" (Cleasby-Vigfússon. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, p. 292).

However, the genealogies still keep their function as a link of the present with the past. They are understood as proof of the significance or qualities of persons that belong to the family lines with a long tradition and famous ancestors. The royal lineages of the Scandinavian kings are often traced back to the legendary kings or heroes as a part of the kings' glorification or legitimization of their right to reign in the country. The family lines of characters from family sagas can be led back to the legendary heroes as well, in order to emphasize their greatness and the greatness of their entire kin. However, it is not only kings and saga heroes whose genealogies one uncovers in the primary sources. Ari Þorgilsson, the author of *Íslendingabók*, places at the end of his work the family lineages of Icelandic bishops going back to the first settlers of the country, but also his own family line that goes back even to the legendary Swedish king Yngvi.

The process of replacing genealogies with chronologies did not lead to the use of one major unifying chronology in Old Norse literature. On the contrary, the Icelandic authors combined various chronologies. Besides the chronology based on the offices of the Icelandic lawspeakers used in *Íslendingabók*, one encounters other *absolute intrinsic* chronologies based on the regnal periods of Scandinavian kings or episcopal periods of bishops, used among others in the medieval charters or in kings' and bishops' sagas. It is most likely that these *absolute intrinsic* chronologies rooted in the Scandinavian context were much closer to the common people (and the audiences of sagas) than the unfamiliar *absolute extrinsic* chronologies such as the AD dating system used by the learned layers of the society. I have for instance found dating by the regnal year of a Norwegian king in one runic inscription on an ironwork from the 14th century:

Haki Bjarnarsonr á mik. Sveinn Ás[m]u[n]darsonr sló mik. Ásulfr reist mik ok læsti óðinsdaginn næsta eptir Ólafsvôku **á sétta ári ríkis várs virðulegs herra Magnúsar, Noregs konungs**.[452]	Haki Bjarnarson owns me. Svein Ásmundarson hammered me. Ásulf raised me and read me on Óðinsday [=Wednesday] after St. Óláf's Day **in the sixth year of reign of our gracious lord Magnús, the king of Norway**.

The original use of genealogies as a dating system involved a certain "plurality" of timelines contained in the form of numerous family lines. The plurality of times continued also after their replacement with chronologies that could be, as mentioned, of various kinds. However, while the plurality of genealogies was dependent on the original character of Norse

[452] N 179 (ironwork), Rauland, Telemark, Norway, 14th century.

society, i.e. its gentile character, the plurality of chronologies was contingent on the formation of various new social power structures, such as the clergy or royal dynasty. The struggles of these social layers for power reflected themselves among others in their efforts to seize control over time. These efforts aimed at the unification of time under one person, as is the case for example in kings' or bishops' sagas where all narrated events are situated onto one timeline constituted by the life of a king or a bishop that runs in the background of the narration. The unification of time in these sagas may be seen as a consequence of the ideologies that stand behind them, namely the recognition of the power of the Scandinavian secular rulers or the bishops.

13.3. The relations between the past, present and future

Another significant transformation of Old Norse perception of time concerns the way how the relations between the past, present and future were understood. Steblin-Kamenskij even considers this transformation the major difference between the time perception typical for the Old Norse people and contemporary man: "Ikke på noe område atskiller psykologien i islendingesagaene seg så sterkt fre det moderne menneskes psychologi som i oppfatningen av fortid og fremtid i forhold til nåtiden."[453] Steblin-Kamenskij writes here only about the sagas, but traces of the different perception of the past, present and future can be found in Old Norse myths as well, namely in the myth about the Norns and the world tree Yggdrasil.

The Christian image of time, based on the concept laid out by St. Augustine, which in many aspects corresponds with the way we nowadays understand the relations between the past, present and future, defines the present as the only really existing time, or more precisely a bare moment in time separated from the past and the future. The past is enclosed from the present and can only be revealed in memories, and the future is undefined, not yet existing, and has only the vague form of expectations. As regards Old Norse time understanding, it seems that the present was originally perceived as much broader than we now consider it to be.

Although the past was divided from the present by its content (the mythical past was different from the legendary past, the legendary past from the Viking Age and the Viking Age from the time of the saga audience), they were to some extent connected. This connection is reflected especially in the emphasis on the uninterrupted continuation of generations. There was a firm bond between the people of the past and their ancestors achieved through genealogical chains. The personalities of the forefathers might have been inherited by their

[453] Steblin-Kamenskij. "Tidsforestillingene", p. 357.

progeny, as for instance the qualities of the legendary heroes could pass on within their kin. Moreover, the events of the past and the actions of the forefathers often influence the fates and actions of the saga characters. The penetration of the past into the present is embodied also in the aforementioned landmarks (the term is used by Diana Whaley), the social and physical reminders of the past. The narrators of family sagas for instance remind the audience of the fact that the farms or their names mentioned in sagas still exist, the same as with certain objects and inherited weapons. The past is not perceived as something lost, which is the way we usually tend to understand it, but rather as the firm basis of the present, as the foundation in which the present is rooted and from which it grows.

The relation between the present and the future was very different too. The future was perceived as predestined; it lied in fact in the distant present and might reveal itself in the near present in the form of foreshadowing. This belief in fate reflects itself in the frequent occurrence of foreshadowing, rooted in the heathen tradition, in Old Norse literature, namely in the myths, legendary and family sagas and partially also in kings' sagas (the "individual dreams"). The predestined future that foreshadowing reveals, mostly somebody's death, cannot be changed. On the contrary, it must be accepted, which is considered the act that shows the heroism of the saga characters. This concept of the future undergoes a fundamental change under the influence of Christianity. Instead of showing one's predefined future in the human world that must be heroically accepted, the Christian dreams (or visions) from bishops' and kings' sagas often reveal one's afterlife and urge the respective persons to change their lives in order to live in accordance with Christian ideals and get to Paradise. Foreshadowing is no longer a glimpse of a given future, but rather a message from God who warns people through his mediators of the possible consequences of their present deeds.

13.4. The final discussion: Fast goes the fleeting time

Studying the time perception of a certain culture is always a complicated and complex issue, especially in the case of a culture that has never directly described its images of time. However, one can attempt to do so through an analysis of the temporal structure of the many works that Old Norse culture produced. This was the main task of my thesis in which I have examined miscellaneous concepts of time in different Old Norse works or genres and tried to find their causes. In order to achieve this aim, I based my research partially on a synchronic analysis, i.e. I approached the Old Norse narratives as separate entities and performed the narrative analysis of their temporal structures, and partially on the diachronic analysis, i.e. I tried to interpret the

characteristic features of the temporal structures based on the political and religious changes occurring in medieval Scandinavia.

One might perhaps assume that time as depicted in the primary sources is only a literary construct and the differences in the temporal structure of the examined works are connected to the overall genre differences between them. However, I believe that the concepts of time present in these works are rooted in their social background and the differences to be found in the temporal structures of the various Old Norse works or genres can be explained by certain transformations of this social background. Contemporary man understands narratives as entities independent of reality with specific inner rules that do not necessarily have to correspond with the physical laws or social conventions as regards, for instance, images of time. However, this was probably not the case with a medieval audience that mostly perceived the stories as based in social reality as concerns their temporal and spatial structures. As Gurevich points out, the social and artistic concepts of time were not as distant from each other as they nowadays can be: "We can assume that in the Middle Ages artistic time and space did not possess the same degree of autonomy with regard to the social perception of time and space as is the case in modern painting and literature."[454]

One can therefore claim that Old Norse myths reveal the original domestic concept of cosmogonic time since the beginning of time reckoning to its end and subsequent renewal. Legendary sagas contain the images of the legendary-heroic past, seen as a transitional period between the mythical past and historical time. Family sagas reflect the time reckoning and perception typical for the Icelandic aristocracy of the Viking Age. On the contrary, the computistical and historiographical sources like *Rímbegla*, *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók* show the approach of the learned layers of the Icelandic medieval society to time and the attempts to compare or connect the local and foreign time reckoning that had arrived in the North. The dating formulas in the medieval charters mirror the struggles of the kings and bishops/archbishops for power over time. The same could be claimed about the temporal structure of kings' and bishops' sagas that reflect their efforts in enforcing the Christianization and feudalization of time. Let me add that the changes in medieval Norse society concerning the transformation from paganism to Christianity and from gentile society to feudalism are not only reflected in the transformations of time reckoning and perception, but also as regards the changing concept of fate and foreshadowing. This might be another proof that the

[454] Gurevich. *Categories of Medieval Culture*, p. 36.

transformations of time as depicted in Old Norse works are not only a literary construct, because they relate also to the concept of fate.

Contemporary man might perhaps consider the temporal structure of Old Norse narratives not as interesting as the often very elaborate structure of modern novels because the Old Norse narrators do not play with narrative time like modern authors. On the other hand, as I intended to show in my thesis, one can find many valuable passages concerning both the native pre-Christian and the later Christian time reckoning and perception in their works. Some of the original Old Norse temporal concepts, such as the genealogical chronology, the connection of time with its content, the plurality of times or the broader present that could partially embrace the past and future, must certainly be interesting for contemporary man, whose life and activities are strictly governed by the ticking of his watch and Google Calendar. Time that is now closed into these symbols of its reckoning is no longer dependent on the content that fills it, and all human activities, including non-activity like resting or sleeping, are measured by the same universal abstract time units. This is very unlike the following example from *Fagrskinna* that includes a reference to the different pace of time dependent on its content. The below cited passage precedes the description of the Battle of Fitjar where the Norwegian king Hákon the Good died. When his enemies, Gunnhild's sons, arrive to Norway with an army, King Hákon had just begun feasting at Fitjar and neither he nor his men know about the approaching ships until they come close to the land. When the king's men notice the ships, they discuss together who will tell the king about them. Finally, this task is accepted by the king's skald Eyvind skáldaspillir (*Fsk* xi):

En ængi var til nema Oyvindr Finnz sunr er kallaðr var scalldaspillir. Hann gieck inn firir konong oc mæler sva. Litil er liðanda stund hærra en langt matmal.	But there was no one who would do so but Eyvind Finnsson, who was called skáldaspillir. He went in before the king and said: "Fast goes the fleeting time, lord; but your feasting lasts long."[455]

Contemporary man might assume that this is an example of the subjective perception of time, namely that the feast seems to last too long to those who know about the approaching enemy. However, it is very arguable if one can find the subjective perception of time in Old

[455] *Fagrskinna*. Transl. A. Finlay, p. 65.

Norse sagas.[456] The aforecited example might rather witness the close connection of time with its content; time flows fast when filled with the actions of the enemy, but during the feast, which can be considered a non-action, it seems to stop flowing. Eyvind skáldaspillir would thus remind the king of the fact that the time of the feast is only one of the parallel times (i.e. the time of the feast and the time of the approaching enemy) that flow at different paces. This is perhaps something contemporary man should be reminded of too, in order to lift himself up from the concept of time he lives in and realize that it might not be the only way how to perceive time.

[456] See for example Steblin-Kamenskij: "En subjektiv opfattelse av tiden kommer aldri til syne i islendingesagaene (...)" (Steblin-Kamenskij. "Tidsforestillingene", p. 355).

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Note

As regards the English translations of the primary sources, I used either the below enumerated translations, or I used my own translations, namely as regards citations from *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Njál's saga*, *Rímbegla* (with exceptions), *Diplomataria*, *Landnámabók*, *Fagrskinna* (with exceptions), *Jón's saga helga* and *Lárentíus' saga*.

When transcribing the Old Norse names into English, I removed the ending "r" used in the nominative of singular, but I kept the original Old Norse signs ð, þ, æ, œ, and ǫ in the names (e.g. Sigurð, Þorstein, Bjǫrn) and the long vowels in the names (e.g. Óláf, Magnús and Hálfdan). Also, in the citations taken from the below enumerated translations I transcribed the Old Norse names in this way in order to achieve homogeneity.

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