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On the Chronology of Óláfr Tryggvason
and Volodimer the Great:
The Saga's Relative Chronology as a Historical Source

OMELJAN PRITSAK

*In memory of my dear Scandinavian friends
Agnete Loth and Jón Helgason*

I.1.

Óláfr Tryggvason played an exceptional role in Norwegian history as the ruler who introduced Christianity in his land, yet he has never been the subject of a monograph by modern historians, Norwegian or foreign.¹ Even the date of his birth has remained a controversial question² for which, it seems, scholars have lost hope of finding a definite answer.

The situation, fortunately, is not that bleak. Óláfr Tryggvason was highly respected by Icelanders—for centuries the guardians of the Old Norwegian past—because they regarded him as their baptizer. At least four complete sagas devoted to him have come down to us. Although their information is often repetitious, they do at times complement each other. And some of the

¹ There are only three biographical articles on Óláfr Tryggvason (hereafter OT), two of them brief: Alexander Bugge, "Sandhed og Digt om Olav Tryggvason," *Aarbøger*, 1910, pp. 1–34; Halvdan Koht, "Olav Trygvason, 968–1000," in *Norsk Biografisk Leksikon*, ed. A. W. Brøgger and Einar Jansen, vol. 10 (Oslo, 1947), pp. 413–14; and Gerard Labuda, "Olaf Trygwason," *SSS* 3, pt. 2 (1968):471–72. See also Siegfried Beyschlag, *Konungasögur* (Copenhagen, 1950), pp. 180–202, and Per Sveaas Andersen, *Samlingen av Norge og kristningen av landet 800–1130* (Handbok i Norges Historie, 2) (Bergen, 1977), pp. 102–9. For full citations of abbreviations used in the footnotes, see the List of Abbreviations at the end of the article.

² The dates given in the scholarly literature for OT's birth vary from 950 to 968 (969). Some examples:

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 950–952 | = Arkadij Ljaščenko, "Saha" (1926), pp. 14–15; |
| 963 | = Alexander Bugge (1910; see fn. 1), p. 5; |
| ca. 965 | = Erma Gordon, <i>Olafssaga</i> (1938), pp. 86–87; |
| 968 | = Konrad Maurer, <i>Die Bekehrung des Norwegischen Stammes zum Christenthume</i> , vol. 2 (Munich, 1856), pp. 523–24;
= Halvdan Koht, "Olav Trygvason" (1947; see fn. 1), p. 43; |
| 968 (969) | = Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, introduction to his edition of Snorri Sturluson, <i>Heimskringla I (IF 26)</i> (Reykjavík, 1941), p. CXXXVI; |
| between 963 and 968 | = Gerard Labuda, "Olaf Trygwason" (1968; see fn. 1), p. 471. |

In 1938 Erma Gordon stated, with some desperation, "Wie man sieht, ist es fast unmöglich festzustellen, in welchem Jahre Olaf zur Welt kam"; *Olafssaga*, p. 37.

Icelandic data on Óláfr Tryggvason can be synchronized with other sources, such as skaldic poetry, Adam of Bremen, and, above all, the English and Old Rus' annals.

The four sagas about Óláfr Tryggvason are the following:

1) *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, by Oddr Snorrason (hereafter *OsT*), a work of the Benedictine Þingeyrar monastery in northern Iceland. One can assume, with good reason, that Oddr compiled his saga in Latin, circa 1190. It survives in an early thirteenth-century Old Icelandic translation, but its best manuscript (AM 310, 4to = A) was copied in Norway toward the end of the thirteenth century.³

2) *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* is the longest (28,019 words) single saga in the first volume of the *Heimskringla* (hereafter *Hkr*) of Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241). The *Heimskringla* was written down in Iceland between 1220 and 1230; the basic manuscript is the so-called *Kringla*, which has been preserved in two copies from the early eighteenth century (AM 35, fol., and Sth 18, fol. = K).⁴

3–4) The encyclopedic collection which scholars call *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* (hereafter *OsTm*) was probably compiled around 1300 by the Þingeyrar monk Bergþór Sokkason,⁵ who was later (from 1322) the abbot of the other Icelandic Munka-þverá Monastery. It exists in two redactions: AM 61, fol. (Icelandic, from the fourteenth century; basic text);⁶ and *Flateyjarbók* (hereafter *Flat*; Icelandic MS., ca. 1380–1394).⁷ But this encyclopedic work incorporated to a great degree an older Icelandic translation of the second Þingeyrar *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, originally written in

³ For a general presentation, see Ólafur Halldórsson, "Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar," *KHL*, 12 (1967), cols. 551–53. On Oddr's *OsT*, see Gordon, *Olafssaga*; Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Om de norske kongers sagaer* (Oslo, 1937), pp. 55–85; Jan de Vries, *ALG*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1967), pp. 242–45; Kurt Schier, *Sagaliteratur* (Stuttgart, 1970), p. 24. In quoting Oddr's *OsT* I use the edition by Finnur Jónsson, *Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar af Oddr Snorrason munk* (Copenhagen, 1932).

⁴ On Snorri's *OsT*, see Aðalbjarnarson's introduction to his edition of the *Hkr* I (see fn. 2). I quote this edition of *Hkr*. See also the English translation by Lee M. Hollander, *Heimskringla: History of the Kings of Norway* (Austin, Texas, 1964). See also Schier, *Sagaliteratur*, pp. 26–27.

⁵ See Schier, *Sagaliteratur*, p. 25.

⁶ On *OsTm*, see Lars Lönnroth, "Studier i Olaf Tryggvasons saga," *Samlaren* (Uppsala), 84 (1963): 54–94. When quoting the saga below, I use the edition by Ólafur Halldórsson, *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen, 1958, 1961). The English translation, with my emendations, is based on the edition by John Septon, *The Saga of King Olaf Tryggvason* (London, 1895).

⁷ *Flateyjarbók. En samling af Norske Konge-sagaer*, vol. 1, ed. Carl Richard Unger and Guðbrandur Vigfússon (Christiania, 1860). On the different Óláfr Tryggvason sagas, see Rudolf Simck and Hermann Pálsson, *Lexikon der altnordischen Literatur* (Stuttgart, 1987), pp. 128, 262–63, and 270–71.

Latin circa 1200 by the monk Gunnlaugr Leifsson (d. 1218/1219). Fortunately, the chapter on Óláfr's chronology in *OsTm* has been correctly recognized by Bjarni Aðalbarnarson as going back to Gunnlaugr's original work.⁸

I.2.

Oddr Snorrason, the first Icelandic biographer of Óláfr Tryggvason, stated that he found in the material existing during his time (ca. 1190) two versions of the chronology of Óláfr Tryggvason (hereafter OT): one established by Ari inn fróði (1067–1148), the father of Icelandic historiography in the vernacular; and the other written by some anonymous “learned men.”

In checking the veracity of both versions, Oddr Snorrason sided with that by the anonymous authors. He provided only Ari's summation, without giving the components of his presentation. Here are both Oddr's text and its translation:⁹

25. Þat finnz i frasogn Ara hins

froða oc eru þeir fleire er þat
sanna at Olaftr T. s hafi ij uetr
haft oc XX þa er
hann com i land.
oc tok riki
en hann reð firir v. uetr
En þo eru þeir sumir menn fróðir
er sua vilia segia
oc þui trua at sua se at
hann hafi haft ij uetr oc XXX vetra
er hann tok rikit.
oc þat scal nu sanna huersu þeir
telia.

Þat segia þeir þa er Tryggvi konungr
faþir hans var uegin at Olaftr var
þa i moður quiði oc
var fóðr þat.
oc var einn uetr með moður feþr

It was found in the record of events
(*frásögn*)

of Ari inn fróði—and most [scholars]
affirm it—that Óláfr Tryggvason was
XX and II [= 22] years old when
he came to the country [Norway] and
took the state.

And he ruled for V [= 5] years.

But there are some learned men
(*menn fróðir*) who would stipulate
and believe that he [OT] was
XXX and II [= 32] years old when he
took the state [of Norway].

It will now be shown how they count.

They say that when King Tryggvi,
his father, was killed, Óláfr was
still in [his] mother's womb and was
born in that [year].

Then he was for one year in hiding

⁸ Aðalbarnarson, *Sagaer*, pp. 85–135. See the critical remarks by Anne Holtmark, “Om de norske kongers sagaer: Opposisjonsinnlegg ved Bjarni Aðalbarnarsons doktordisputas 23 September 1936,” *Edda* (Oslo), 38 (1938): 145–64.

⁹ Oddr, *OsT*, ed. Jónsson, pp. 88–90. On Oddr's reckoning, see Svend Ellehøj, *Studier* (Copenhagen, 1965), pp. 71–73.

sinum oc moður með leynd.

Oc síþan for hann austr i
Suiþioð. a fund Hakonar
gamlu firir motgangi
Hakonar j. oc
Gunnhilldar.

oc for þa um eyði
merkr oc scoga. oc var þar
ij uetr með Hakoni gamla.
oc er hann for brot þaðan þa
var hann þrevetr.

Oc er hann for skiferðum oc
hann var hertakin
er hann ætlaði i Garðr
þa tocu heiðnir menn

þau oc hafðu i sinu
valldi oc var hann i þessi
anauð vi uetr.

En i Gorðum austr
oc austrholfunni veri hann xi ar.

En i Vinðlandi
iij uetr.

oc þa for hann til Danmerkr
oc til Irlandz. Oc tok þar
helga skirn af abota
þeim er fullr var af helgum anda.

oc i Uestrlandum
var hann ix ár.

Oc eptir þat for hann af
Englandi

oc hafði þa ij uetr
hins fiórþa tigar.

with his mother at his maternal
grandfather's.

From there he fared east in
Sweden to stay with Hákon
gamli because of enmity on
the part of Hákon jarl and
Gunnhildr.

He fared there over deserted
marshland and forest and stayed
there with Hákon gamli for II [= 2] years.
When he departed from there he
was three years old.

Then he was on a sea voyage and was
taken in captivity [by the Ests]—
he intended [to travel] to Garðr
[= Novgorodian Rus']; the heathens
[Ests]

captured him and held him
in their power; he was in such
bondage for VI [= 6] years.

Then he stayed in Garðr east
[Novgorod] and in the East for XI
[= 11 < *IX = 9; see pp. 13, 23] years.

Then [he stayed] in Wendland
for III [= 3] years.

Then he fared to Denmark
and Ireland; also he was
baptized [at the Isle of Scilly] by an abbot
and filled with the Holy Spirit.

Then he [was] in the Westlands
for IX [= 9] years.

And afterwards he departed from
England [to assume rule in Norway];

he was then thirty
and II [= 32] years old.

Before proceeding on to the next text, we need to correct one mistake made by the copyist of *OsT*—an emendation important to our problem. Oddr supposedly states that Ari allotted twenty-two years to OT before his return to Norway. In 1853, Peter Andreas Munch, in his first edition of Oddr's saga (from the codex Sth 18, mbr. 4to = *S*), had already suggested

that Ari's "XX and ij" should be corrected (following *Ágrip*¹⁰) to "XX and vij," or twenty-seven.¹¹ This correction has also been accepted—quite rightly—by recent scholarship.¹² I might add that one quotation in *OsTm* from Ari's work clearly states that Ari reckoned the year 968 as that of OT's birth,¹³ and therefore the suggested emendation is correct (i.e., 995 - 968 = 27).

I.3.

Gunnlaugr Leifsson decided that his saga would be more effective if he did not follow Oddr, who merely quoted the elements computed by two schools of scholars; rather, he presented this material in the guise of an oratory,¹⁴ namely, as the speech about his odyssey that OT delivered before the assembly known as "Thing." Here is this disguised list:¹⁵

105 . . . En er Eiriks s(y)nir hófðo	But when the sons of Eiríkr succeeded
riki tekít. þa suíku þeir Trygvá	to the kingdom, they dealt treacherously
konung foður minn ok drapu	with my father King Tryggvi, and slew

¹⁰ On *Ágrip* see below, p. 14.

¹¹ *Saga Olafs konungs Tryggvasunar. . . af Odd Snorresøn* (Christiania, 1853), p. 91.

¹² See Aðalbjarnarson, *Sagaer*, p. 43, and Ellehøj, *Studier*, p. 72.

¹³ *OsTm*, ed. Halldórsson, 1: 95–96: "Þa voro liðnir fra falli Hakonar Aþalsteins f(ostra), .xv. uetr at sógn Ara prestz Þorgils sonar. en fra falli Sigurþar Hlaða j(arls) .xiiij. uetr. Þa var Olafur Trygvá s(on) .vij. uetra ok hafði hann þa .iiij. uetr uerit í utlegð aa Eist landi. en tua i Suiþioð með Hakoni gamla" [The Battle (at Linfjord between Haraldr gráfeldr Eiríksson and Gull-Haraldr Knúttsson) was fought fifteen (.xv.) years after the death of Hákon Aðalsteinsfóstri Haraldsson (i.e., in 975 [960 + 15]; see *Ann R*, ed. Storm, p. 104), according to the reckoning of priest Ari Þorgilsson, and thirteen (.xiiij.) years after the fall of Sigurðr jarl of Hlaðir (i.e., 975 [962 + 13]; see *Ann R*, ed. Storm, p. 104). Óláfr Tryggvason was then seven (.vij.) (incorrect—O.P.) years old; he had been in exile for four (.iiij.) (incorrect—O.P.) years in Estland, after his two (= tua) years in Sweden with Hákon gamli].

The editor, Ólafur Halldórsson, adopted two incorrect numbers here: "seven" and "four." For the first figure, both AM 54, fol., and *Flat* have the correct forms: the first has "vij" and the second has the fully spelled-out *atta*, "eight" (see also *Flat*, ed. Unger and Vigfússon, 1: 85). The incorrect number "four" = .iiij. came about as a substitution for *.iv., which was a copyist's error: iv < vi: 4 + 2 cannot result in "7," but 6 + 2 does equal "8." In order to obtain the year 968 for OT's birth, Ari, whose starting point was the year 975, counted back "8" on his fingers from that year: 975, 974, 973, 972, 971, 970, 969, 968 = 8. The later writer introduced his own "correction," realizing that 975 - 968 was not 8 but 7. Ellehøj, *Studier*, p. 72, quotes this passage from *OsTm* but does not comment on it. I dwell here on the passage, since a correct analysis of it allows us insight into Ari's methods of computation. On Ari, see the general presentation in Gabriel Turville-Petre, *Origins of Icelandic Literature* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 88–108. On Ari's work and his chronological method, see Ólafía Einarsdóttir, *Studier* (Stockholm, 1964), pp. 13–314, and Ellehøj, *Studier*, pp. 15–84.

¹⁴ See James E. Knirk, *Oratory in the Kings' Sagas* (Oslo, 1981).

¹⁵ *OsTm*, ed. Halldórsson, 1: 241–42; the English translation is based on Sephton, *Saga*, pp. 149–50, with my own emendations. Cf. fn. 6. See also *Flat*, ed. Unger and Vigfússon, 1: 240–41.

hann ítrygð at raði
 Gvnnhilldar moður sínar
 þa er ek var ímoður kuiði.
 Sv hin sama Gvnnhilldr
 setti margar gilldrvr með sinni
 slægð at veiða mik ok af
 lifi taka þegar ek var fæddr.
 Var Ástríðr moðir mín ok ek
 enn fyrsta uetr leyniliga
 aa Ofro stóðum með Eiriki
 foðvr hennar.
 En fyrir vm sat ok vefræði
 Gunhilldar treystiz hann eigi
 at hallda okkr lengr her
 ilandi.
 for moðir min þa með mik
 hvíðu hófði ok helldr
 faa tækliga avstr i Sviþioð.
 þar duöldumz vit .ij. aar
 jvtlegð með Hakoni gamla.
 Hefði Gvnnhilldr þa fangit mik
 með svik ræðum fyrir sína
 sendi menn ef sa goði maðr
 Hakon gamli hefði eigi
 halldit mik með valldi
 ok hófðing skap fyrir hennar
 eptir sokn fyrir sakir
 vínskapar við Eirik moður foður
 minn.
 Þvi nærst þa er ek var
 þreuetr.
 forvm vit moðir min or Sviþioð
 skipferði ok ætlaðum austr i
 Garða riki aa fvdn Sigurðar
 broður hennar.
 þa maetv ver vikingum ok
 vórum hertekin ok selld mansali.

 en svmt foroneyti ockart drepit.
 skilði þar með okkr moður
 minni sva at ek sa hana
 allðri siþan. Ek var þa selldr
 við verði sem aðrir mans menn.
 var ek .vi. vetr i þeiri aa
 navð aa Eist landi.

him in time of truce, on the advice
 of their mother Gunnhildr;
 I was still in [my] mother's womb.
 The same Gunnhildr
 in her cunning laid many snares
 to take me and deprive me
 of life as soon as I was born.
 My mother Ástríðr and I
 were in hiding, the first year of my life
 in Oprostaðir with her father
 Eiríkr.
 But because of the lying in wait and
 the devices of Gunnhildr, he did not dare
 to keep us any longer
 in the country.
 My mother, disguised and dressed
 poorly
 took me eastwards into Sweden.
 There we dwelt two years
 in exile with Hákon gamli.
 Gunnhildr would have seized me
 treacherously by her emissaries,
 if that good man
 Hákon gamli had not
 saved me from her pursuit
 by his power and authority,
 because
 of his friendship with Eiríkr,
 my mother's father.
 Then when I was
 three years old
 my mother and I sailed from
 Sweden, intending to go east
 to Garðarfi [= Novgorod] and
 visit her brother Sigurðr.
 There [on the voyage] we met with Vikings
 and were taken captive and sold into
 bondage,
 some of our company being slain.
 My mother and I were separated,
 so that I have never since
 beheld her. I was then sold
 for money, like other bondsmen.
 Six years I remained in bondage
 in Estland,

þar til er Sigurðr moður broðir minn leysti mik þaðan. ok flutti mik þaðan með ser austr i Garða ríki. þa var ek .ix. vetra	until Sigurðr, my mother's brother, ransomed me thence, and took me with him eastwards to Garðaríki [Novgorod], I being then nine years old.
Aðra. ix. uetr var ek i Górdum. enn i vtlegð. þo at fyrir mann doms sakir goðra hofþingia væra ek þar vel halldinn.	Nine other years I lived in Garðar, still an exile, though I was maintained in comfort by the humanity of kind rulers.
þar næst var ek aa Vind landi .iij. vetr. en .iiij. fyrir vestan haf i hernaði.	Three years I then passed in Wendland. and [the next] four years in the Western Sea [in the British Islands] as a freebooter.

I.4.

Snorri Sturlson does not give a chronological list in his *OsT*, not even, like Gunnlaugr, one in disguise; however, in the appropriate chapters, he supplies data about the duration of OT's stays in relative chronological order. These are—interestingly enough—in agreement with those of Gunnlaugr:

(chap. 6) . . . þá hafði hon verit tvá vetr með Hákonni gamla Óláfr var þá þrevetr. ¹⁶	By then she [Ástríðr] had been two years with Hákon gamli. Óláfr was then three years old.
(chap. 6) . . . Óláfr var sex vetr á Eistlandi í þessi útlegð. ¹⁷	Óláfr stayed six years in Estland as an exile.
(chap. 8) . . . Óláfr var nfu vetra, er hann kom í Garðaríki, en dvaldisk þar með Valdamar konungi aðra nú vetr. ¹⁸	Óláfr was nine years old when he came to Garðaríki [Novgorod] and lived then with King Volodimer another nine years.
(chap. 29) Óláfr Tryggvason var þrjá vetr á Vinðlandi. ¹⁹	Óláfr Tryggvason had been three years in Wendland.
(chap. 30) . . . Óláfr Tryggvason var fjóra vetr í hernaði síðan er hann fór af Vinðlandi, til þess er hann kom í Syllingar. ²⁰	Óláfr Tryggvason passed four years harrying, after [leaving] Wendland, and before he arrived at the Isles of Scilly.

¹⁶ *Hkr*, ed. Aðalbjarnarson, 1:230; cf. English trans. (with my emendations): Hollander, *Heimskringla*, p. 147.

¹⁷ *Hkr*, ed. Aðalbjarnarson, 1:230; cf. English trans.: Hollander, *Heimskringla*, p. 147.

¹⁸ *Hkr*, ed. Aðalbjarnarson, 1:232; cf. English trans. (with my emendations): Hollander, *Heimskringla*, p. 149.

¹⁹ *Hkr*, ed. Aðalbjarnarson, 1:263; cf. English trans.: Hollander, *Heimskringla*, p. 169.

²⁰ *Hkr*, ed. Aðalbjarnarson, 1:265; cf. English trans. (with my emendations): Hollander, *Heimskringla*, p. 170.

I.5.

The anonymous work *Ágrip af Nóregs konunga sögum* (Summary of the sagas [stories] of the kings of Norway) is the only Norwegian vernacular synoptic history from the twelfth century. It was written—like Oddr’s work—circa 1190, but in Norway.²¹ The only preserved manuscript is in an Icelandic hand and was copied in the first half of the thirteenth century (AM 325 II, 4to).²²

Although *Ágrip*, being a summary, does not contain a special saga on OT, its Norwegian data (in addition to those taken from the Icelandic sources), and especially some chronological information, nevertheless deserve special attention.

First of all, *Ágrip* (like the *Historia Norvegiae*)²³ relates two versions of Tryggvi’s death: one (the Norwegian version) ascribes it to his own yeomen and the other maintains that it was due to the wickedness of Queen Gunnhildr and her sons.²⁴

16. En til ríkis eftir Hókon iarl steig Óláfr Tryggvason	After Hákon jarl[’s death in 995] Óláfr Tryggvason ascended to the throne and
ok tígnaði sik konungs nafni í Nóregi, er ættar rétt átti af Haraldi hárfagra, þvíát Óláfr hét sunr Haralds, er faðir var Tryggva, er of daga Gunhildar suna tók konungs nafn ok	assumed the name of king in Norway, for which he had lawful claim through Haraldr hárfagri, because Haraldr’s son was Óláfr, who was father of Tryggvi, who [Tryggvi] assumed the name of king during the days of Gunnhildr’s
vald á Raumaríki ok var þar	sons and ruled in Raumaríki. And an end was

²¹ On *Ágrip*, see Gustav Indrebø, “Aagrip,” *Edda* (Christiania), 17 (1922): 18–65; Aðalbjarnarson, *Sagaer*, pp. 1–54; Ellehøj, *Studier*, pp. 197–276. Cf. also Torfinn Tobiassen, “Ágrip af Nóregs konunga sögum,” *KHL*, 1 (1956), cols. 60–61.

²² I quote here from the edition by Finnur Jónsson, *Ágrip af nóregs konunga sögum* (Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek, 18) (Halle a.d. Saale, 1929). A new “standardized” edition was published by Bjarni Einarsson in 1984 (see the List of Abbreviations). See also the Norwegian translation by Gustav Indrebø, revised by Arnt Løftingsmo and prefaced by Bjarne Fidjestøl, *Ágrip or Noregs kongesoger* (Norrøne Bokverk) (Oslo, 1973).

²³ The anonymous *Historia Norvegiae* was written in Latin by a Norwegian either between 1152–1163 or between 1195–1198; see Anne Holtmark, “Historia Norvegiae,” *KHL*, 6 (1961), cols. 585–87. See also: Aðalbjarnarson, *Sagaer*, pp. 1–55; Ellehøj, *Studier*, pp. 142–74; and Jens Th. Hansen, *Omkring Historia Norvegiae* (Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo, Avhandlingar, II. Hist-Filos., Klasse 1949, no. 2) (Oslo, 1949).

The text was published by Gustav Storm in *Monumenta Historica Norvegiae*, vol. 1 (Christiania, 1880), pp. 69–124; the passage in question is on pp. 110–11.

²⁴ *Ágrip*, ed. Jónsson, pp. 18–19 = ed. Einarsson, p. 19.

tekinn af lífi á Sótanesi
ok er þar heygþr ok kalla
menn þar Tryggvareyr.

En aftak hans segja eigi
allir einom hætti, sumir kenna
búðndom, at þeim þótti yfirboþ
hans hart ok drópo hann á þingi.

sumir segja, at hann
skyldi gera sætt við föþorbró-
þorsuno sína, ok tóko þeir hann
af með svikom ok illræþom Gun-
hildar konungamóþor, ok trúa því
flestir.

Some details concerning the second version are given in § 9:²⁶

Haraldr gráfeldr gerþi fö
at Tryggva bræþrung sínom
ok drap hann, en Þórólfr lúsa[r]skegg
hlióp undan síþan með Óláf,
son Tryggva konungs.

put to his life in Sótanes.

And he was buried there in a how. People
call it the Cairn of Tryggvi.²⁵

Not all present his [Tryggvi's] slaying
in the same manner; some attribute it
to the yeoman (*bændr*) who were angry
because of his [Tryggvi's] harsh rule
and killed him at a Thing.

The others say that he intended to make an
agreement with the sons of his father-
brother, but they killed him
due to treason and wickedness on the
part of the queen mother Gunhildr, and
that [second version] most people believe.

Haraldr gráfeldr fared to
Tryggvi, his cousin, and
killed him. But Þórólfr lúsa[r]skegg
fled from there with Óláf,
son of King Tryggvi.

Ágrip adhered to the Norwegian tradition, which maintained that OT was
three years old at the time of his father's death and that he was sent away
because of the civil war:²⁷

17. En aftir fráfall hans
þa flýþi Æstríþr, er Tryggvi
hafþi fengit á Upplöndom,
braut til Orkneyia með Óláfí
þrévetrom,
syni sínom ok Tryggva.
at forþask bæþi fláræþi

Gunnhildar ok suna hennar ok
Hókonar iarls, er öll kipþosk þá
enn um Nóreg, þvíat eigi vóro
þa enn synir Gunnhildar af lífi

teknir.

Ok kom hon til Orkneyia

After the death [of Tryggvi], fled
Æstríþr, whom Tryggvi had married
in [Norwegian] Uppland, away with the
three-year-old Óláf, her and Tryggvi's
son,

in order to escape danger from both
the deceit

of Gunnhildr and her sons, and
Hákon jarl, all of whom
struggled with one another for
Norway, since [at that time] the sons
of Gunnhildr

had still not been killed.

She [Ástríþr] arrived in the Orkneys

²⁵ On the Cairn of Tryggvi, see *Hkr*, ed. Aðalbjarnarson, 1: 214, fn. 2.

²⁶ *Ágrip*, ed. Jónsson, p. 13 = ed. Einarsson, p. 13.

²⁷ *Ágrip*, ed. Jónsson, p. 19 = ed. Einarsson, pp. 19–20.

með þrimr skipsögnom. ²⁸	with three ships' crews.
En með því at eigi mátti leynask	Since it was impossible to hide her voyage
ferþ hennar ok mart kunni til svika	and many betrayals could happen,
gerask, þa sendi hon barnit á	she sent her child with her [trusted]
braut með manni þeim, er sumir	man whom some call
kalla Þórólf lúsarskegg	
sumir	Þórólfr lúsarskegg and others
loþskeggi, ok hafði	
hann barnit á launungo á braut	Lopskeggi, and he brought the child
til Nóregis ok flutti með miklom	[with him] with great danger to
ótta til Svíþjópar.	Sweden.

The Norwegian author of *Ágrip* (and of the *Historia Norwegiae*, as will be noted later) uses the proper name Hólmgarðr (= Novgorod) and also relates that the center of the Estonian pirates was the island of *Eysýsla* (Ösel/Saaremaa).²⁹ Ástríðr, of course, did not travel to Novgorod, and there are no traces of a piratic novella of the hellenistic type containing only fantastic personal names:³⁰

17 (cont.) Ok ór Svíþjóþ	And from Sweden he [Þórólfr] intended
vildi hann fara til Hólmgarþs,	to fare to Hólmgarðr [Novgorod], since
þvíat þar var nokkvot ætterni hans.	there [there] was some kindred of his [OT's].
En þá kvómo Eistr at skipi því,	And then the Ests raided the ship,
er hann var á, ok var sumt	he [OT] was on her; some [passengers]
drept af, en sumt hertekit,	were killed and some taken captive.
fóstri hans drepinn, en hann	His foster-father was killed, and he [OT]
hertekinn fyr ey þeiri, er	was taken to the island called
heitir Eysýsla, en sþan seldr	Eysýsla [Ösel] and there he [OT] was
í nauþ.	sold in bondage.

From § 18 we learn that Óláfr was twelve years old when he was released from bondage and taken to Novgorod, where he was able to revenge the death of his foster-father Þórólfr:³¹

18. En guþ, er þetta	But God, who had chosen that child
barn hafði kosit til stórra hluta,	for great deeds,
stilti honom til lausnar með þeim	arranged liberation in this manner

²⁸ See also *Historia Norwegiae*, ed. Storm, p. 111.

²⁹ *Historia Norwegiae*, ed. Storm, p. 113.

³⁰ *Ágrip*, ed. Jónsson, p. 19 = ed. Einarsson, p. 20. On the traces of a piratic novella, see Lars Lönnroth, *European Sources of Icelandic Saga Writing* (Stockholm, 1965), pp. 17–18; see also L. Lönnroth, "Studier i Olaf Tryggvasons Saga," *Samlaren* 84: 54–94. Unfortunately, I cannot deal with those interesting problems here.

³¹ *Ágrip*, ed. Jónsson, p. 20 = ed. Einarsson, p. 20.

hætti, at maþr kom til Estlandz
sendimaþr konungs af Hólmgarþi,
er var sendr at taka skatt af

landino ok var frændi barnsins,
ok leysti frænda sinn ok hafði
til Hólmgarþs, ok var hann þar

umb hríf, svá at ekki var
margra manna vitorþ á hans
ætterni.

En þá er hann var XII. vetra
gamall,³³ þá gerþisk svá til, at
um dag nekkvern á torgi, þá
kendi hann í hendi manni
øxi þá, er Þórólfr hafði haft,
ok leitaði eftir atburðom, hvé
honom hefði sú øx komit,
ok varþ af hins ansvørom sannfróþr,
at þat var bæði øx fóstora hans
ok svá bani, ok tók øxina ór
hendi honom ok drap þann, er
þangat hafði, ok hefndi
svá fóstora síns.

in that a man came to Estland,
a *legatus*³² (*sendimaðr*) from the king of
Hólmgarðr [Novgorod] to gather tribute
(*skatt*)

from the land. He was a relative of the child;
he released his relative [OT] and took him to
Hólmgarðr [Novgorod]. He [OT]
stayed there

for a while, but not many people
knew about his [royal]
descent.

And when he was twelve years
old it happened that one day
at the marketplace (*torg*) he recognized
in the hand of a man the ax which had
belonged to Þórólfr,
and he inquired about the circumstances,
in which manner he had obtained that ax.
From his answers, he [OT] deduced
both that the ax was his foster-father's and
that he was his killer. And he [OT]
took the ax from his hands and slew
him who brought it thither,
and [in this way] he [OT] revenged
his foster-father.

Another anonymous synoptic history of the Norwegian kings—this one written in Latin—the *Historia Norwegiae* (or its Latin predecessor?), whose date of composition is still the subject of scholarly debate,³⁴ draws upon the same type of Norwegian sources as does *Ágrip*. It contains the same information about the age of OT in Novgorod:³⁵

Hic cum esset circiter XII [= 12] annorum, in medio foro Holmgardiae paedagogum suum viriliter vindicavit, et inaudita ultio vix deodennis pueri illico auribus regiis intonuit; unde regi praesentatur, a quo demum filius adoptatur.

This time interval (twelve years), the traditional age of maturation, deserves to be taken seriously. Thus, Óláfr Tryggvason's favorite skald, Hallfrøðr Óttarsson vandræðaskáld (b. ca. 917; d. 1007), bears witness that his hero began his harrying expeditions out from Novgorod when he was twelve years old. The testimony in question is expressed in the poet's *Óláfs*

³² This is the Latin translation of the term in the *Historia Norwegiae*, ed. Storm, p. 113.

³³ The designation "twelve" refers to OT's age when he arrived in Novgorod.

³⁴ See fn. 23 above.

³⁵ *Historia Norwegiae*, ed. Storm, p. 113.

drápa, which was recited in 996:³⁶

1. Tolf vas elds at aldri
 ýsetrs hati vetra
 hraustr þás herskip glæsti
 Hǫrða vinr ór Gǫrðum.

Twelve years was
 the arm who shuns
 when he—the friend of the Hǫrðar—
 launched his warship out of Garðar
 [Novgorod].

Whereas the Icelandic authors are unsure whether the queen in Novgorod was Volodimer's mother or wife and give the queen the imaginary proper name of *Allógiá*, *Ágrip* gives her only the general designation of queen (*dróttning*):³⁷

18 (cont.) En þar var
 mannhelgr mikil ok miklar
 viðlogor við manz aftak,
 ok fekk hann þat til ráps,
 at hann hlióp á hald
 dróttningarinnar, ok með bæn
 hennar ok af því, at
 hvatligt þótti vera verkit manni
 XII. vetra gömlom at vinna,
 ok af því at sannlig þótti
 hefndin vera, þá þá hann
 miskunn af konunginóm, ok
 tók síþan at vaxa vitorþ
 of hann ok svá metorþ
 ok alt yfirlæti.

There was there [in Novgorod] a great
 inviolability of person and a great fine for
 slaying a man.
 And he [OT] found an escape in running
 for the queen's protection.
 And because of her request,
 and because of the boldness of the action
 of a man of 12 years of age,
 and because of the justness
 of the revenge, he [OT] then
 received mercy from
 the king. And from that time
 his renown started growing, and
 also his esteem
 and all honor.

En síþan er á leiþ á
 stundina, þá var honom
 fengit liþ ok skipastóll,
 ok fór hann bæþi á eitt
 land ok önnor lönd ok
 heriaþi, ok auköþo flokk hans
 brátt Norþmenn ok Gautar
 ok Danir, ok vann nú
 stórvirki ok aflaþi sér
 með því frægþar ok
 góþs orþlags.

And after some time passed, he
 was given a retinue (*liþ*) and
 a fleet,
 and he [OT] fared now to one
 land, now to another land, and
 harried [there]. And soon his [OT's]
 host was increased with the
 Norsemen, Gautar, and Danes. And now
 he was performing great deeds
 and in this way he [OT] procured for
 himself glory and good reports.

³⁶ See O. Pritsak, *The Origin of Rus'*, vol. 1, *Old Scandinavian Sources other than the Sagas* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), p. 272.

³⁷ *Ágrip*, ed. Jónsson, p. 20 = ed. Einarsson, pp. 20–21. See also fn. 66 below.

Finally, the author of *Ágrip* gives Óláfr's age when he returned to Norway as twenty-seven; it is possible that the figure was not the result of his own reckoning but was taken directly from Ari's authoritative work (see above, pp. 10–11):³⁸

19 . . . Hann hafði vii. vetr ok XX., er hann kom í Nóreg, ok á þeim v. vetrom, er hann bar konungs nafn í Nóregi.	He [OT] was 20 and 7 [27] years old when he came to Norway, and for 5 years he bore a king's title in Norway.
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I.6.

Although the “Icelandic Annals” were composed late—according to their editor, Gustav Storm, in about 1280, in the Skálholt bishopric—and their information up to 1160 was based extensively on the sagas, their dates concerning Óláfr Tryggvason are of interest to us in our study, especially since the learned monks, following Ari's example, transformed the dates given in the relative chronology of their sources into those of the Christian Era. I limit myself here to a few quotations from the *Annales Regii* (ca. 1300; hereafter *Ann R*), the most important collection for the period in question:³⁹

968. Dráp Godrøðar konvngs Biarnar sonar ok Trygg[v]ja konvngs Óláfs sonar. Fóðdr Óláfr Trygg[v]ja sonr.	Killing of King Guðrøðr Bjarnarson and King Tryggvi Ólafsson. Birth of Óláfr Tryggvason.
971. Óláfr Trygg[v]ja sonr hertekinn til Estlanndz.	Óláfr Tryggvason taken captive in Estland.
977. Óláfr Trygg[v]ja sonr kom í Garðaríki.	Óláfr Tryggvason came to Garðaríki [Novgorod].
986. Óláfr Trygg[v]ja sonr fór ór Garðaríki.	Óláfr Tryggvason departed from Garðaríki [Novgorod].
993. Óláfr Trygg[v]ja sonr skírðr í Syllingvm.	Óláfr Tryggvason baptized in the Isles of Scilly.
995. Vpphaf ríkis Óláfs Trygg[v]ja sonar í Nóregi.	The beginning of the kingship of Óláfr Tryggvason in Norway.
1000. Fall Óláfs konvngs Trygg[v]ja sonar.	The fall of King Óláfr Tryggvason.

³⁸ *Ágrip*, ed. Jónsson, p. 22 = ed. Einarsson, p. 22.

³⁹ *Islandske Annaler indtil 1578*, ed. Gustav Storm (Christiania, 1888), pp. 104–5. Concerning the dependence of the Icelandic annals on the sagas, see Einarssdóttir, *Studier*, pp. 293–326.

I do not deal with the chronology of OT's rule in Norway here since a special study on that subject exists: Bjørn Magnússon Ólsen, “Kronologiske bemærkninger om Olaf Tryggvasons regeringshistorie,” *Aarbøger*, 1878, pp. 1–58.

II.1.

Before analyzing the texts set forth in the previous section, it is necessary to elaborate on the methodology applied in a chronological study.

Time is man's basic concept for marking the duration of conscious experience. It comprises the occurrences of events and the intervals between them. The events and the intervals together relate to both personal happenings and to "public"—i.e., "historical"—ones.⁴⁰

There are two systems for reckoning events. The first is relative chronology, or what Ólafía Einarsdóttir calls "popular chronology";⁴¹ this has been universally used, since it is rooted in the cyclical thinking of the non-abstracting mind. The second is absolute chronology, or what Ólafía Einarsdóttir calls "learned chronology";⁴² it is artificially created after the human mind discovers the abstract linear concept of time.

Whereas in relative chronology dating is reckoned by *time intervals* ("x years *after/before/since* the event y"), in absolute chronology an abstract *time scale* is developed: i.e., individual years from a definite starting point are numbered consecutively and called an era.

I prefer the term "relative chronology" to its synonym "popular chronology," since the notion of "popular" in this context is usually associated with "the way in which the primitive peoples calculated time."⁴³ The use of "relative chronology" has never been restricted to "primitive" peoples; on the contrary, it has been (and still is) the universally natural way for all men to reckon the passage of time. Even today, we (including specialists in absolute chronology) usually say "x years elapsed after/before/since the death/birth/ascendence of y (kings, parents, children, pets, etc.)," "during the war of x," "x years after we moved to place y," etc. Only when it is necessary to present a "public," i.e., "official," version of private occurrences do those of us who live in societies using the linear concept of time in public life synchronize our personal relative chronology with absolute chronology and use a time scale of our society, such as the Christian Common Era.

⁴⁰ On chronology, see N. H. Nicolas, *The Chronology of History* (London, 1838); F. K. Ginzel, *Handbuch der mathematischen und technischen chronologie*, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1906–1914); M. P. Nilsson, *Primitive Time-Reckoning. A Study in the Origins and First Development of the Art of Counting Time among the Primitive and Early Culture Peoples* (Skrifter utgivna av Humanistiska Vetenskapssamfundet i Lund, 1) (Lund, 1920); J. F. Schroeter, *Haandbog i kronologi*, 2 vols. (Oslo, 1926).

⁴¹ Einarsdóttir, *Studier*, p. 143; *folklig kronologi*, p. 349.

⁴² Einarsdóttir, *Studier*, p. 143; *lærd kronologi*, p. 349.

⁴³ Einarsdóttir, *Studier*, pp. 144, 349.

The feature typical of relative chronology is its durability, based on the fact that each single segment (time interval) is perceived as a finished, independent unit. Its simple structure (e.g., “we lived x years in the city of y”) makes it easy for human beings to retain and recall data at will.

Every mentally healthy human being remembers to the end of his or her days the time intervals between important personal events as they are dated in relative chronology. By contrast, even educated members of the most progressive societies who constantly use absolute dating in their public life often make mistakes when they present events from their personal life in terms of absolute chronology.

II.2.

The transition from pre-Christian *oral* literature to Christian *written* literature throughout Europe—including Norway and Iceland—made it necessary to synchronize the simple time intervals given in relative chronology with the Christian Era. In this effort the great Icelandic scholars of the twelfth century, especially the founding fathers of Old Icelandic historical science, Sæmundr Sigfússon inn fróði (1056–1133) and Ari Þorgilsson inn fróði (1067–1148), found support in the absolutely dated events in the history of the old Christian centers (Rome, Constantinople), as well as in the history of neighboring Christian countries, in particular, England.

A quotation from Ari's *Íslendingabók* illustrates this:⁴⁴

. . . en Gizurr byskup andaðisk þremr tegum	Thus Bishop Gizurr died thirty days later
nátta síðarr í Skálaholti á enum þriðja	[after Þorlacr Rúnólfsson was made his successor]
degi í viku <V> Kalend. Junii.	in Skálaholt
	on the third day of the week, on the fifth day before the Calends of June (= May 28).
Á því ári enu sama obiit Paschalis secundus páfi fyrr en	In that same year, Pope Paschal II died [January 21] before the bishop Gizurr [i.e., before May 28];
Gizurr byskup ok Baldvini Jór-salakonungr ok Arnaldus patriarcha í Hferúsalem ok Philippus Svíakonungr, en síðarr et sama	Baldwin king of Jerusalem [April 2]; Arnulf, patriarch of Jerusalem [April 15]; Philip, king of the Swedes and, later [i.e., after May 28] the

⁴⁴ *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. (with notes) by Jakob Benediktsson (*IF*, 1, pt. 1) (Reykjavík, 1968), pp. 25–26.

sumar Alexíus Grikkjakonungr;	same summer, Alexius [Comnenus;
þá hafði hann	August 15],
átta vetr ens fjórða tegar	emperor of the Greeks; at that time he
setit at stóli	had occupied the throne at Constantinople
í Miklagarði.	for thirty-eight years [1081–1118].
En tveim vetrum síðarr	But two years thereafter, there was a
varð aldamót.	turn in the lunar cycle.
Þá höfðu þeir Eysteinn	Then Eysteinn and Sigurðr had been
ok Sigurðr verit sjautján	seventeen years kings of Norway
vetr konungar í Norvegi	[since 1103]
eptir Magnús föður sinn Óláfsson	after their father Magnús Óláfsson,
Haraldssonar. Þat vas tuttugu	son of Haraldr. It was 120 years
vetrum	
ens annars hundraðs eptir fall	after the fall of
Óláfs Tryggvasonar, en fimm	Óláfr Tryggvason, 250 years
tegum ens þriðja hundraðs	after the slaying of
eptir dráp Eadmundar	Edmund, king of England,
Englakonungs, en sextán vetrum	and 516 years after the death
ens sétta hundraðs eptir	of Pope Gregory [I; 590–604]
andlát Gregóríus páfa, þess	who, as is said, introduced Christendom
es Kristni kom á England,	in England.
at því es talit es.	
En hann andaðisk á 980	But he [Gregory I] died in the second year
ári konungadóms Fóku	of the reign of the [Byzantine] emperor
keisara, fjórum vetrum ens	Phocas [602–610], 604 years
sjaunda hundraðs eptir burð	after the birth of Christ according
Krist at almannatali.	to the common era.
Þat verðr allt saman tuttugu	That makes altogether
ár ens tolfra hundraðs.	1120 years. ⁴⁵

II.3.

In analyzing the placement and structure of the time intervals in the relative chronology occurring in the above-quoted passages, it becomes clear that some are repeated in several texts, whereas others are omitted. From this we

⁴⁵ “The three years 870, 1000, and 1120 in the ‘Book of the Icelanders’ [*Íslendingabók*] thus appear to have been chosen for arithmetical reasons as the nearest round years after the dates of the three principal events of the Book [of the Icelanders]: the first settlement of Iceland, the introduction of Christianity, and Bishop Gissur [= Gizurr] Ísleifsson’s death. None of the three events which Ari has attached directly to these years—the murder of King Edmund in 870, Olaf Tryggvason’s fall in 1000, and the end of a lunar cycle in 1120—belong to the history of Iceland; but Ari has endeavored to attach to the three years events known to his readers.” Einarsdóttir, *Studier*, p. 345.

can deduce that time intervals can be extracted from the texts and studied separately.

In addition to the time intervals, there are also *summations*, which can be either partial (e.g., OT was nine years old [= 3 + 6] when he arrived in Novgorod), or general (e.g., OT was twenty-seven years old when he became king of Norway). The partial summation may or may not be a product of the original source, whereas the general summation is made by the compilers.

Keeping this in mind, one arrives at two starting points and at the following inventory of nine time intervals and six summations—three partial and three general:

Starting Points

- A. OT was three years old when his father was killed (*Ágrip*);
- B. OT was born posthumously (*Ari⁴⁶ > Oddr, *Hkr, OsTm*).

Inventory of Time Intervals

1. OT *born after his father's death,⁴⁷ spent one year with his maternal grandfather (*Ari > Oddr, *Hkr, OsTm*);
2. OT stayed two years with Hákon gamli in Sweden (*Ari > *OsTm, Oddr, Hkr, OsTm*);
3. OT spent six years in Estnish captivity (*Ari [> *OsTm*], Oddr, *Hkr, OsTm*);
4. OT resided in Garðr/Garðaríki for nine years (*Hkr, OsTm*);
5. OT spent three years in Wendland (Oddr, *Hkr, OsTm*);
6. OT harried in the North Sea for nine years (Oddr);
7. OT was active in the British Isles for four years, until his baptism on the Isles of Scilly (*Hkr, OsTm*; cf. *Orkn*⁴⁸);
8. *OT was active in the British Isles for two years after his baptism (*Ann R*);⁴⁹

⁴⁶ The asterisk before Ari's name indicates that this is quoted from Oddr's *OsT* rather than from the original work by Ari, which has not come down to us.

⁴⁷ The notion that OT was born after his father's death was subsequently added by clerics to the simple time interval.

⁴⁸ *Orkneyinga saga*, ed. Finnboði Guðmundsson (*IF* 34) (Reykjavík, 1965), p. 25: "Oluff Tryggeson vaar fire Aar udi Kriig i Vesterlandene, effterat hand kam fra Vindland. . . ." [Óláfr Tryggvason spent four years looting in the British Isles, after his return from Wendland. . . .].

⁴⁹ The *Ann R* (and other annals) had already synchronized the data of the intervals, so that there one finds A.D. 993 as the date of OT's baptism and 995 as that of his return to Norway. Cf. p. 19.

9. OT was king of Norway for five years (Theodoricus,⁵⁰ *Ágrip*, Oddr, *Ann R*; cf. *Kristnisaga*⁵¹).

Inventory of Summations

a) Partial

- I. OT was three years old (1 + 2) when he left Hákon gamli and was captured by the Ests (*Hkr*, *OsTm*, *Ann R*);
- II. OT was twelve years old (10 + 2) when he arrived in Garðr/Novgorod (*Ágrip*; cf. *Historia Norwegiae* and the skald Hallfrøðr Óttarsson);⁵²
- IIa. OT was eight years old in 975 when he left Estland; he stayed for two years with Hákon gamli and for six years in Estland (*Ari > *OsTm*);
- IIb. OT was seven years old in 975 (*OsTm*);
- IIc. OT was nine years old when he arrived in Garðr/Novgorod (*Hkr*, *OsTm*, *Ann R*);
- III. OT was eighteen (9 + 9) years old when he left Garðr (*Ann R*).

b) General

- IV. OT was twenty-five years old when he was baptized (*Hkr*, *OsTm*, *Ann R*);
- V. OT was twenty-seven years old when he became king of Norway (*Ari > Oddr; *Ágrip*, *Ann R*);
- Va. OT was thirty-two years old when he became king of Norway (Oddr);
- VI. OT was killed in the year 1000, after five years of rule in Norway (Ari, *Íslendingabók*; *Ann R*; cf. Theodoricus and Adam of Bremen).⁵³

III.1.

The first question to be solved is: was OT born after his father's death or was he three years old when his father was slain?

⁵⁰ Theodoricus was a Norwegian monk who, ca. 1180, wrote in Latin the synoptic *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium*. On this work, see Anne Holtmark, "Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagensium," *KHL*, 6 (1961), cols. 583–85.

Theodoricus's work was published by G. Storm in his *Monumenta historica Norvegiae*, vol. 1 (Christiania, 1880), pp. 3–68; the passage in question is on p. 23: "De morte Olavi filii Tryggva. Quinto ergo anno regni Olavi filii Tryggva, qui et ultimus fuit. . . ."

⁵¹ On *Kristnisaga* by Sturla Þorðarson (1214–1284), see Magnús Már Lárusson, *KHL*, 9 (1964), col. 356. I am quoting from the edition by Guðni Jónsson, *Íslendinga sögur*, vol. 1 (Reykjavík, 1953), p. 273: "Þá hafði hann [OT] verit konungr at Nóregi fimm vetr" [then he was king over Norway for five years].

⁵² See above, p. 17.

⁵³ Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae Pontificum* (ca. 1073–1076), ed. Werner Trillmich and Rudolf Buchner, in *Quellen des 9. und 11. Jahrhunderts zur Geschichte der Hamburgischen Kirche und des Reiches* (Berlin [1961]), p. 276.

All Icelandic works relate the first variant; only the Norwegian *Ágrip* relates the second. This is not the only instance when the summation, despite its brevity, either has more information than the Icelandic sagas or presents two versions—one Icelandic and one Norwegian—of one event.

A feature typical of the Icelandic presentation is its hagiographic character. One can but agree with James E. Knirk that

the historical distortion was strengthened by literary efforts in Iceland where clerical circles may have wanted this “Apostle of the North” [OT] to be their patron saint. Although Oddr [the first Icelandic biographer of OT—O.P.] concedes in his prologue that his protagonist was never canonized, the work has hagiographic trappings, blending biblical and legendary material with fairy-tale motifs, romance, and heroic legend. The tale of Ástríðr’s flight with the infant Óláfr parallels the flight of Mary and Joseph with the baby Jesus, while the queen mother Gunnhildr’s pursuit is a realization of the “evil stepmothers” of folklore.⁵⁴

One can also accept Arkadij Ljaščenko’s suggestion that Oddr’s saga was inspired by the sagas of St. Óláfr, that is, like Óláfr Haraldsson (St. Óláfr),⁵⁵ the hero was made to be a posthumous child. There is no legitimate reason to doubt that the Old Norwegian tradition of OT persevered in the twelfth century. The Old Norwegian historical work *Ágrip* is superior to the later (12th–13th cen.) Icelandic tradition and its hagiographic recastings.

OT was apparently born at the home of his maternal grandfather Eiríkr at Oprostaðir in Jaðarr.⁵⁶ The surname *bjóðaskalli* would indicate that Eiríkr was originally from **Bjóðar* in Southern Hǫrðaland. This hypothesis, expressed by Erik Henrik Lind,⁵⁷ is corroborated in a skaldic strophe (quoted above) in which the special relationship of OT to Hǫrðaland is expressed: there he is called *Hǫrðavinr* ‘friend of the Hǫrðar’.⁵⁸

Three years later, Tryggvi Ólafsson, OT’s father, was killed near Sótanes in Ranríki; he had ruled over both Ranríki and Vingulmörk.⁵⁹ Here, again, there is no reason to doubt that the slayers of Tryggvi were his own yeomen, as *Ágrip* noted.

⁵⁴ Knirk, *Oratory in the Kings’ Sagas*, p. 172.

⁵⁵ Ljaščenko, “Saha,” p. 15.

⁵⁶ The compilers of the *OsT* had the information that OT was sent to the Norwegian Uppland to live with his grandfather, who was named Eiríkr a Oprostoðum. From this they—being Icelanders—deduced (incorrectly!) that Oprostaðir was located in Uppland.

⁵⁷ See Aðalbjarnarson’s commentary, *Hkr* 1 (*IF* 26): 225.

⁵⁸ See Hallfróðr Óttarsson’s *Óláfs drápa*, on p. 17 above.

⁵⁹ See *Hkr*, ed. Aðalbjarnarson, 1 (*IF* 26), p. 151: “Tryggva gaf hann Ranríki ok Vingulmörk” [He (Hákon Aðalsteinfostri) gave to Tryggvi Ranríki and Vingulmörk].

That slaying occurred during an uneasy time. Hákon Aðalsteinsfóstri, king of Norway, died;⁶⁰ his place was taken by the sons of his brother Eiríkr and their mother Gunnhilldr, the daughter of the Danish king Gormr. She was able to enlist the military support of her brother, the Danish king Haraldr blátǫnn Gormsson. There can be no doubt that some groups opposed the new rulers. This kind of dislike is manifest in the tradition preserved by the Icelandic hagiographic school in Þingeyrar, which spiced it up a bit. As a result, Gunnhilldr received “special treatment” in the Icelandic sagas. As stated by Halvdan Koht:

The Icelandic family sagas give us from this period of her [Gunnhilldr’s] life a picture of an amorous old woman, preferring, of course, Icelanders as her lovers, and using her witchcraft to prevent them from deceiving her. The Kings’ Sagas continue to represent her as a most wicked-minded woman who incites her sons to kill off all local chieftains, their rivals.⁶¹

It seems, then, that Eiríkr bjóðaskalli had good reason to leave the western coast and to find a quieter atmosphere in the Norwegian Uppland at Skaun (modern Stange),⁶² east of the lake Mjørs. There, the child OT spent his first year.

Next, Eiríkr sent his grandson to his friend Hákon gamli in Sweden, where OT stayed for two years;⁶³ the latter time period was already known to Ari inn fróði.⁶⁴ By then, OT was already six years old, and it was decided to take him to his relative in Hólmgarðr (Novgorod).

This analysis shows that one must follow time intervals 1 and 2, as well as summation I, though with the dating of OT’s birth to follow the death of his father excluded as a possibility.

The next time interval (no. 3), the six years of OT’s captivity, confirms the above computation, since several sources (among them a skaldic strophe) independently confirm that OT was twelve years old when he came to Novgorod. And, since he stayed there for nine years (time interval 4), he must have left Novgorod at the age of twenty-one years.

⁶⁰ To accommodate the dating of OT’s birth to follow the death of his father, the Icelandic clerics separated two events which happened in the same year: the fall of King Hákon (for which *Ann R* has the date 960; see *Íslandske Annaler indtil 1578*, ed. Storm, p. 104) and the fall of Tryggvi Ólafsson (for which *Ann R* has the date 968; *ibid.*). But *Ágrip* puts the fall of King Hákon and that of Tryggvi in the same chapter (chap. 9; ed. Jónsson, pp. 12–13).

⁶¹ Halvdan Koht, *The Old Norse Sagas* (New York, 1931), p. 125.

⁶² See Aðalbjarnarsson’s explanations in his index to *IF 26 (Hkr 1)*, p. 398a, s.v. “Skaun, austan fjalls í Noregi.”

⁶³ It was an Old Norse custom to send young boys to stay with grandparents and with friends of grandparents; see Peter Godfrey Foote and David M. Wilson, *The Viking Achievement* (London, 1970), p. 116.

⁶⁴ See fn. 13.

III.2.

We now reach the point at which it is possible to synchronize the data of the Old Norse relative chronology with those of the Old Rus' sources and, through them, with the common era.

OT must have come to Novgorod *before* A.M. 6485 (A.D. 977). In that year Volodimer (Valdimarr) of Novgorod was forced to flee "beyond the sea," since his older brother, Jaropolk, had assumed all sovereignty and become the sole ruler of Rus'.⁶⁵

But the *terminus ante quem* for OT's arrival in Rus' must have been the year 969, since Volodimer's "mother" (actually, grandmother) Ol'ga,⁶⁶ who took OT under her protection, died on 11 July 969.⁶⁷ The arithmetical equation is 977 - 9 = 968. Although the *Pověst' vremennyx lét* notes that Svjatoslav divided his realm among his sons officially only in 6478/970,⁶⁸ the de facto division must have taken place in 6475/967, when Svjatoslav

⁶⁵ See the Old Rus' Primary Chronicle, *Pověst' vremennyx lét* (hereafter *PVL*), ed. D. S. Lixačev, vol. 1, pp. 53–54.

⁶⁶ As stated above (p. 18), *Ágrip* mentions only one older female ruler in Novgorod. He does not give her name, since it remained unknown in the Old Norwegian tradition. Thus, *Ágrip* simply calls her *dróttning* 'queen' (*Ágrip*, ed. Jónsson, p. 20 = Einarsson, p. 20). Oddr, on the other hand, needed a clairvoyant person who would foretell the birth of the future "Baptizer" of Norway and Iceland. Hence, from the *dróttning* of the tradition, he created two personages: one became the nameless clairvoyant mother of Valdamarr (*OsT*, ed. Jónsson, p. 20); the other was styled as Allógíá, Valdamarr's *dróttning* (*OsT*, ed. Jónsson, p. 23). The "rationally minded" Snorri rejected the story of the clairvoyant mother; he refers to only one *dróttning*, but he calls her Allógíá, the name created by Oddr (*Hkr*, ed. Aðalbjarnarson, 1: 231). Gunnlaugr Leifsson or the editor of the *OsTm* or both, while retaining Oddr's dichotomization, represented Allógíá as Valdamarr's wife (*kona*; *OsTm*, ed. Halldórsson, 1: 80).

The Old Norse tradition regarded the *dróttning* of Novgorod as "the wisest of all women" (*allra kunnna vitrost*; see Oddr, *OsT*, ed. Jónsson, p. 27). This characterization is very similar to the description of Ol'ga in the *PVL*: *bě mudrějši vsěx čelověk* [she was the wisest of all human beings] (*PVL*, ed. Lixačev, 1: 75, s.a. 987). I concur with scholars who identify the *dróttning* of Novgorod of the Old Norse tradition with Ol'ga: e.g., Friedrich (Fëdor A.) Braun, "Das historische Russland im nordischen Schrifttum des X–XIV. Jahrhunderts," *Festschrift Eugen Mogk* (Halle a.d. Saale, 1924), pp. 176–78; Ljaščenko, "Saha," pp. 16–21; Elena A. Rydzevskaja, "Legenda o knjaze Vladimire v sage ob Olafe Trjuggvasone," *Trudy Otdela drevneruskoi literatury AN SSSR* (hereafter *TODRL*), 2 (1935): 13; Gordon, *Olafssaga*, p. 70. But any attempts to compare etymologically the name Ol'ga (< Old Norse, Helga) with Allógíá (see, e.g., Braun, "Das historische Russland") must be rejected, since Allógíá was artificially created—along with other exotic names like *Klerkon*, *Klerkr*, *Reas*, *Recon*—by Oddr to fit the tenor of his piratic novella.

⁶⁷ See D. S. Lixačev's commentary to his edition of the *PVL*, 2: 315. I must disagree with Gordon's statement: "Ich halte diese ganze Geschichte von dem Aufenthalt Olafs in Russland für eine Verwechslung mit der Geschichte von dem Aufenthalt Magnus des Guten in Russland. . . ." (*Olafssaga*, pp. 72–73).

⁶⁸ *PVL*, ed. Lixačev, 1: 49–50; Eng. trans.: Samuel H. Cross, *The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), p. 87.

embarked on his complicated and lengthy Bulgarian campaign.⁶⁹ There is no serious reason to doubt that Volodimer was already residing in Novgorod in 968.

This means that OT's stay in Rus' must be dated between 968 and 977. That result leads us to the determination of OT's year of birth. Since—as we have seen—he was twelve years old when he arrived in Novgorod, he must have been born in 956 (968 - 12 = 956).

Three years later, in 959, the sons of Eiríkr and Gunnhilldr, led by Haraldr gráfeldr, came to power in Norway. OT's father, Tryggvi Ólafsson, was killed in that crucial year, when—according to *Ágrip*—OT was three years old (starting point A).

The next time interval (no. 5) is the three-year period that OT spent “in Wendland.” The duration of three years (977–980) is significant because it corresponds to the number of years (three) that Volodimer of Novgorod, foster-father of OT, was forced to spend in exile.⁷⁰ One can assume that OT and Volodimer went abroad together to find refuge.

III.3.

Where would they go? At that time, the Old Norse term *Vinðland* referred to the territories ruled by the West Slavonic princes. Our knowledge of the political situation in the territories east of the river Elbe is limited. Nevertheless, it is possible to present a general overview.

In the last decades of the tenth century, there were essentially five Wendish political centers.

The most western maritime territory (later eastern Holstein) was ruled by the princes of Wagria, who separated from the Obotriti in about the middle of the tenth century. Their capital was Stargard/Aldinburg (modern Oldenburg in Holstein), which in 968 became the first bishop's see in Wendland.⁷¹

The territory east of Wagria, between the middle Elbe and the eastern part of the Lübecker Bucht, was ruled by the Obotriti. Their capital was the twin city of Michelenburg-Zuarina (modern Mecklenburg-Schwerin).⁷²

⁶⁹ *PVL*, ed. Lixačev, 1: 47–48 (s.a. 6475 and 6476); Eng. trans.: Cross, pp. 84–85.

⁷⁰ Symptomatically, the years 6486/978 and 6487/979 are marked in the *PVL* as “empty years”: *V lěto 6486. v lěto 6487* (ed. Lixačev, 1: 54). Only under s.a. 6488/980 does there occur the story of Volodimer's return to Rus'.

⁷¹ See Jerzy Strzelczyk, “Wagria, Wagrowie,” *SSS* 6 (1977): 293–96; idem, “Stargard wagrzyjski,” *SSS* 5 (1975): 395–99.

⁷² See Gerard Labuda, “Obodrzyce,” *SSS* 1 (1968): 440–41; idem, “Zwjazek obodrzycki,” *SSS* 7, pt. 1 (1982): 180–91; Jerzy Nalepa, “Mechlin (Mecklenburg),” *SSS* 3, pt. 1 (1967): 188–89; Lech Leciejewica, “Swarzyn (niem. Schwerin),” *SSS* 5 (1975): 495–96.

Between the territory of the Obotriti and the Oder River lived the Weletabi/Wilzi, who were then ruled by princes of the tribe of Stodorani. Their center was the town of Brenna (later Brandenburg).⁷³

Situated on an island at the mouth of the Oder was the city-republic of Volin/Jumne (Old Norse, Jóm), then the greatest city in the western Baltic,⁷⁴ with approximately 10,000 inhabitants.⁷⁵ Volin symbolized the “Varangians,” as Constantinople did the “Greeks,” in the designation “the route from the Varangians to the Greeks.”⁷⁶ Both Novgorod and Kiev became important because they were located along the route from Volin to Constantinople.

Around 960, Mesico/Dagone⁷⁷ (= Dag-r) *iudex* (963–992), the prince of Gniezno (located at the basin of the river Warthe, the eastern tributary of the Oder), began organizing his realm, which would later be known as Poland.⁷⁸

Two Wendish rulers of that period had close dynastic ties with the Scandinavian kings: Mistavoj, the ruler of the Obotriti (ca. 967–990), was the father of Tófa, who was married to the Danish king Haraldr blátönn (ca. 945–984; d. 986). We know this from her runic stone inscription.⁷⁹

On the other hand, the famous Sigríðr in stórráða was the daughter of Mesico.⁸⁰ During the period under discussion, she was wed to the king of

⁷³ Gerard Labuda, “Wieleci,” *SSS* 6 (1977): 430–36; Jerzy Strzelczyk, “Stodorianie (Hawolanie),” *SSS* 5 (1975): 420–23.

⁷⁴ See Adam of Bremen (ca. 1073–1076): “. . . nobilissima civitas Iumne celeberrimam prestat stationem Barbaris et Grecis, qui sunt in circuitu. . . Est sane maxima omnium, quas Europa claudit, civitatum, quam incolunt Sclavi cum aliis gentibus, Grecis et Barbaris. . . Urbs illa mercibus omnium septentrionalium nationum locuples nihil not habet iocundi aut rari”; *Gesta*, ed. W. Trillmich and R. Buchner (Berlin, 1961), p. 252.

⁷⁵ See Lech Leciejewicz, “Wolin, gród i wyspa,” *SSS* 6 (1977): 561–64, esp. p. 562b.

⁷⁶ There was communication by boat between Volin (Jumne) and Novgorod; the passage took fourteen days. The information is provided by Adam of Bremen: “. . . Ab ipsa urbe [Jumne] vela tendes XIII cimo die ascendes ad Ostrogard Ruzziae [= Novgorod],” *Gesta*, ed. Trillmich and Buchner, p. 254. Cf. Pritsak, *The Origin of Rus'*, vol. 1, p. 220.

⁷⁷ *Dagome* is a scribal error from **Dago-ne*. Scholarly literature on the subject was given by Brygida Kürbisówna, “Dagome iudex,” *SSS* 1 (1962): 311–12. See, especially, R. Holtzmann, “Böhmen und Polen im 10. Jahrhundert,” *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Geschichte und Altertum Schlesiens* (Breslau), 52 (1918): 18–36.

⁷⁸ The origin of Mesico/Dagr (963–992) is still a mystery. His “Slavic” (Piaśt) genealogy, which occurs first in the chronicle of the so-called Gallus (ca. 1112–1116), is certainly an artificial construct.

⁷⁹ Sønner Vissing I, Tyrsting hd., Århus amt. *Danmarks Runeindskrifter*, ed. Lis Jacobsen and Erik Moltke (Copenhagen, 1942), no. 55.

⁸⁰ The princess who married first Eiríkr inn sigrsæli and later Sveinn tjúguskegg was undoubtedly the daughter of Mesico/Dagr; she was also the unnamed sister of the Polish Bolesław I (992–1025), since the contemporary writer Thietmar of Merseburg clearly testified (ca. 1013–1014) to that: “Hos [Haraldr, 1014–1018, and Canute the Great, 1014–1035] peperit ei Misesonis filia ducis, soror Bolizlavi successoris eius et nati” (*Chronicon*, ed. R.

Uppsala, Eiríkr inn sigrsæli (ca. 957–995); her second husband was the Danish king Sveinn tjúguskegg (984–1014).

The sagas on OT name another Wendish king, Búrizláfr, who had three daughters; one of these (Geira) was taken as a wife by OT himself.⁸¹

Who was this Búrizláfr? Some scholars have tried to identify him as Mesico's son Bolesław,⁸² but this attempt should be rejected. Bolesław was born in 967;⁸³ only ten years of age by 977, he could hardly have had a daughter who was then of marriageable age.

The *Landnamabók* contains a strange genealogical entry dated to the reign of the king of Uppsala, Eiríkr inn sigrsæli. It is so odd that artificial construction is most unlikely; some verity must lie behind it. The text runs as follows:⁸⁴

Gormr hét hersir ágætr í Svíþjóð; hann átti Þóru, dóttur Eiríks konungs at Uppsölum. Þorgils hét	There was a famous man in Sweden called Gormr. He married Þóra, daughter of Eiríkr, king of Uppsala. They had
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Holtzmann and W. Trillmich [Berlin, 1957]), p. 396.

The Old Norse tradition, however, calls her Sigríðr in stórráða and claims that she was the daughter of the famous Swedish Viking Skoqlar-Tósti (see, e.g., *Hkr*, ed. Aðalbjarnarson, 1: 215).

Since the publication of J. Steenstrup's *Venderne og de Danske* (Copenhagen, 1900), p. 65, scholars have rejected the Old Norse tradition; see Gerard Labuda, "Świętosława, Sygryda Storráða, Syritha," *SSS* 5 (1975): 588–89.

It seems to me that it is possible to find a compromise solution. Sigríðr was Mesico's daughter, born before 966, by a previous marriage (in 966 he married—for political reasons—the Czech princess Dobrava). Mesico's first wife was Skoqlar-Tósti's daughter; since after 966 Sigríðr lived with her grandfather, the Old Norse tradition, which did not remember Mesico, made the grandfather the father. The Swedish roots and Danish career of Skoqlar-Tósti, who took Danegeld in England in 991 (see Pritsak, *The Origin of Rus'*, vol. 1, pp. 343, 392), would explain Sigríðr's choice of husbands (a Swede and a Dane), which, for a Polish princess without Scandinavian connections, cannot be explained.

Sigríðr was a contemporary of OT and was probably also born in 956, i.e., ten years before her father's second marriage. Mesico, whose career as a ruler was first noted in 963, must have been born ca. 935. If he married Sigríðr's mother in 955, when she was probably about fifteen years old, she would, therefore, have been born ca. 940. We can then assume that Skoqlar-Tósti was born between 920 and 925; since he died about 991, that would mean he had lived approximately seventy years, not an unusual age for the time.

⁸¹ I see no reason to reject this tradition.

⁸² See, e.g., Aðalbjarnarson in his note 1 to *Hkr*, 1: 253. The name *Búrizláfr*, however, reflects the Slavonic **Borislav*; note, e.g., the name of the Galician Ukrainian town *Boryslav* (<personal name).

⁸³ See Oswald Balzer, *Genealogia Piastów* (Cracow, 1895), pp. 37–43.

⁸⁴ *Landnamabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, pt. 2 (*IF* 1: 2) (Reykjavík, 1968), p. 236. This genealogy was also included in the *OsTm*; see ed. Halldórsson, vol. 2 (Copenhagen, 1961), p. 180. As part of *Þattr Suada ok Arnors Kellingarnefs*, it is to be found in *Flat*, ed. Unger and Vigfússon, 1: 436, and in *Íslendinga sögur*, ed. Guðni Jónsson, vol. 8 (Reykjavík, 1953), p. 340.

son Þeira,	a son called Þorgils,
hann átti Elín, dóttur Burisláfs	who married Elín, daughter of Burisláfr,
konungs ór Gørðum austan ok	king of Garðar in the east, and
Ingigerðar, systur Dagstyggis	Ingigerðr, sister of Dagstyggr,
risa konungs.	the king of the giants.

Burisláfr (= Búrizláfr) is styled here as “konungr ór Gørðum,” or “king of Garðar.” Usually, *Garðar* is used in the Old Norse sagas to designate Kievan Rus’, but it is a “movable term,” and was originally used for Frisian Dorestad, the first great city encountered by the Norse Vikings.⁸⁵ I submit that in the text above *Garðar* stands for the maritime center Stargard (modern Oldenburg in Holstein), the capital of Wagria. It seems that *Garðar* = Stargard occurs in the extant *Hrómundar saga*, which mentions King Óláfr who ruled over *Garðar* in Denmark (*sá konungr réð fyrir Gørðum i Danmörk, er Óláfr hét*).⁸⁶ Stargard, as the center of Christian Holstein, came under Danish sovereignty during the last decades of the twelfth century.⁸⁷ Burisláfr of Stargard in Wagria must have been a Christian since in 968, as mentioned above, the first Wendish bishopric was established in his city.⁸⁸

The name of his daughter Elín is certainly a version of the Christian Helen.

Dagstyggr as a personal name is rare in Old Norse, yet two persons with that name appear in the *Sturlunga saga*.⁸⁹ The name is composed of two elements, the well-known personal name *Dagr* and the appellative *styggr*. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary* explains the compound as “day-shy, shunning light.”⁹⁰

Mesico appears (as mentioned above) as *Dagone* (= *Dagome*) *iudex* in his famous donation charter to St. Peter, circa 990. Although this designation has been interpreted differently, it would seem—and our passage from the *Landnamabók* confirms the notion—that *Dagone* is a Latinized form of the Old Norse *Dag-r*.⁹¹ Mesico/Dagone, *rex* of the “Sclavie qui dicuntur

⁸⁵ See Pritsak, *The Origin of Rus'*, vol. 1, pp. 177, 231.

⁸⁶ See Pritsak, *The Origin of Rus'*, vol. 1, p. 140.

⁸⁷ See Strzelczyk, “Stargard węgryjski,” *SSS* 5 (1975): 395–99.

⁸⁸ See Adam of Bremen, *Gesta*, ed. Trillmich and Buchner, pp. 244, 246; Helmold of Bosau, *Chronica Slavorum* (ca. 1163–1172), ed. Heinz Stoob (Darmstadt, 1963), pp. 66, 68.

⁸⁹ See the index in Guðni Jónsson's edition of *Sturlunga saga: Annálar og nafnskrá* (Reykjavík, 1953), p. 224a: Dagstyggr Jónsson and Dagstyggr Þórðarson.

⁹⁰ *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, by R. Cleasby, G. Vigfússon, and W. A. Craigie, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1957; reprinted 1969), p. 601a.

⁹¹ See Holtzmann, “Böhmen und Polen” (fn. 77); Albert Brachmann, “Die Anfänge des polnischen Staates,” in *Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Weimar, 1941), pp. 159–61; Ulrich Noack, *Nordische Frühgeschichte und Wikingerzeit* (Munich, 1941), p. 283.

Licicaviki," appears suddenly in 963⁹² as a very sophisticated politician, uniting large territories under his sway. This extraordinary talent would merit the surname "the king of the giants."

It is reasonable, therefore, to hypothesize that Ingigerðr, the wife of Burisláfr of Wagria, was the sister of Mesico/Dagr of Poland. The clan of Mesico held marital ties with other Slavic dynasties; Mesico himself was married in 965 to Dobrava, the daughter of the Czech prince Boleslav I (935–971); their son Bolesław took for a wife, in 987, the Wendish (Obotriti?) princess Emenilde.⁹³ The two clans also had in common their "Swedish connection" (see above, p. 24).

It is also hardly a coincidence that the rulers of both the Wagri and the Poles first appear on the historical scene at approximately the same time (between 950 and 960). Most likely, they initiated their actions jointly.

Two other circumstances corroborate that OT's Wendland was one of the Baltic Slavic lands. The first is OT's and Búrizláfr's involvement in the affairs of Jómshorg,⁹⁴ which suggests the nearness of their operational base to that city. The second is Volodimer/Valdemarr's genealogy. The *Pověst' vremennyx lét* clearly states that his maternal grandfather was a certain Mal''k'' Ljubečanin, i.e., Mal''k'' from Ljubeka,⁹⁵ the Obotriti port town, later called Lübeck in German.

⁹² The contemporary witness was Widukind of Corvey, who wrote his *Rerum gestarum Saxonicarum* in 967/968; see the edition by Albert Bauer and Reinhold Rau, *Quellen zur Geschichte der sächsischen Kaiserzeit* (Darmstadt, 1971), pp. 170, 172, 174. The name *Licicaviki* has remained a puzzle; see Gerard Labuda and Stanisław Urbańczyk, "Licicaviki," *SSS* 3, pt. 1 (1967): 56.

⁹³ Balzer, *Genealogia Piastów*, pp. 38–43; Halina Modrzewska, "Dąbrówka," *SSS* 1 (1962): 44; idem, "Emnilda," *SSS* 1 (1962): 454.

⁹⁴ I cannot dwell on the problem of Jómshvkingar here.

⁹⁵ *PVL*, vol. 1, ed. Lixačev, p. 49 (s.a. 970): "Volodimer'' bo bě ot'' Maluši ključnicě Ol'ziny; sestra že bě Dobryn'', otec' že bě ima Mal''k'' Ljubečanin'', i bě Dobryna uj Volodimeru" [For Volodimer was the son of Maluša, the housekeeper of Ol'ga; she also was the sister of Dobrynja: their father was Mal''k'' Ljubečani (= of Ljubeka), and Dobrynja was thus the uncle of Volodimer]. As proven by Aleksej A. Šaxmatov, *Maluša* was the derived form of the Old Norse personal name *Málmfríðr*; according to the *PVL*, Mal''frěð' (< Malmfríðr) died in 1000 (ed. Lixačev, vol. 1, p. 88). See Šaxmatov, *Razyskanija o drevnejšix russkix letopisnyx svodax* (St. Petersburg, 1908), pp. 375–77. Interestingly enough, Volodimer's great-great-grandson Haraldr-Mstislav, who married Kristín, the daughter of the Swedish king Ingi I, named one of his daughters Málmfríðr; she was married to the Norwegian king Sigurðr Jórslafari Magnússon; see Snorri, *Hkr* 3 (*IF* 28), ed. Aðalbjarnarson (Reykjavík, 1951), p. 258.

The conclusion to be drawn from this investigation is that both OT and Volodimer found refuge in the lands of the Wagri-Obotriti.

III.4.

Having hired a sufficient number of Varangian mercenaries, Volodimer returned to Rus' in 980 and wrested power from Jaropolk.⁹⁶ But, for some unknown reason, Óláfr did not accompany his former foster-father.⁹⁷ Indeed, he quit the Baltic Sea altogether and began his harrying career on the southern shores of the North Sea.⁹⁸ His skald Hallfrøðr Óttarsson names at this juncture the lands of Saxony, Frisia, and Flanders.⁹⁹ Time interval 6 gives the figure of nine years for the duration of that activity—i.e., OT harried in the North Sea between 981 and 989.

He then transferred his activity to the British Isles, in particular to England, where he was active for four years prior to his baptism on the Isles of Scilly (time interval 7; i.e., 989–993) and two years thereafter (time interval 8; 993–995). OT's activity in England, well-documented in the English sources, has been sufficiently researched, so I shall not dwell on it here.¹⁰⁰

In 995 OT returned to Norway to rule as king;¹⁰¹ five years later (time interval 9; the year 1000) he was killed in a battle against the united fleets of the kings of Denmark and Sweden.

Born in the year 956, OT was forty-four when he died. This computation can be corroborated if one totals summation I and all nine time intervals: $3 + (1 + 2 + 6 + 9 + 3 + 9 + 4 + 2 + 5) = 44$.

IV.

In addition to establishing a chronology for the pre-royal period of OT's life, and, in particular, to determining the year of his birth, this study has yielded some results which, it is hoped, can be applied generally to saga studies. These results are the following:

⁹⁶ PVL, ed. Lixačev, vol. 1, pp. 54–56; Eng. trans.: Cross, pp. 178–80.

⁹⁷ I have made some suggestions regarding this in *The Origin of Rus'*, vol. 2 (in preparation).

⁹⁸ According to the Þingeyrar hagiographers (Oddr et al.), OT did return to Rus' to play the decisive role in that land's conversion to Christianity. But that supposed activity of OT, like his encounters after his physical death in the Svöld battle (A.D. 1000), are not the subject of historical inquiry. On this see Ljaščenko, *Saha*, esp. pp. 9–10, and Elena A. Rydzevskaia, "Legenda o knjaze Vladimere v sage ob Olafe Trjuggvasone," *TODRL* 2 (1935), esp. pp. 13–18.

⁹⁹ "Óláfsdrapa (996)," strophes 6–7, ed. Finnur Jónsson, *Den Norsk-Islandske Skjaldedigtning*, vol. 1, pt. A, *Tekst efter Håndskrifterne* (Copenhagen, 1908), pp. 157–58 = Ernst A. Kock, *Den norsk-isländska skaldediktningen*, vol. 1 (Lund, 1946), p. 81.

¹⁰⁰ See Sir Frank Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1971), pp. 375–80.

¹⁰¹ The literature is given in fn. 1.

1) The saga can have more than one starting point in presenting the life of its hero; in the *OsT* there are two starting points, the one secular (*Ágrip*) and the other hagiographic (Oddr, *Hkr*, *OsTm*).

2) The time intervals given in the sagas are reliable. If differences occur, they can usually be explained as normal copyist's errors, e.g., XI instead of IX in Oddr's text; *iiij* = *iv* instead of *vi* in *OsTm*; and *atta* = *vij* confused with *vij* in *OsTm* and *Flat*.

3) The summations by the compilers are usually unreliable since they depend on two arbitrary choices made by the compiler: the starting point and the time intervals selected for his purpose.

4) None of the compilers of the *OsT* introduced *all* of the time intervals relevant to the life of OT. Oddr used seven time intervals (nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9), whereas Snorri (*Hkr*) and *OsTm* both used the same six time intervals (nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7). Oddr omitted intervals 7 and 8, whereas Snorri and *OsTm* made use of intervals 7 and 4.

5) None of the authors of the sagas devoted to OT made use of time interval 8; this was utilized solely by the compiler of the *Ann R*.

6) All the Icelandic authors have the same starting point (the "hagiographic"), apparently initiated by Ari, who also established the exact date of OT's death (summation VI).

In his summation, however, Ari (and, strangely enough, Oddr) used the secular criterion (summation V)—"OT's age when he became king of Norway"—while the other authors of *OsT* were guided by the religious standard (summation IV)—"OT's age when he was baptized."

7) OT, as a fully developed "hagiographic" hero, was certainly the creation of the Þingeyrar school. Only the Norwegian author of *Ágrip*, though a cleric himself, retained valuable information from the pre-hagiographic period: the circumstances of OT's birth, his first three years of life, and why and by whom Tryggvi, OT's father, was killed. But in the latter case, he was already quoting, side by side, the second version—that elaborated in the Þingeyrar monastery.

8) Snorri, apparently for literary reasons, disregarded the historically reliable data of *Ágrip*. The "romantic" circumstances of OT's birth and death of his father were too precious to be replaced by the "rationalistic" stories of *Ágrip*. He, therefore, developed starting point B. For the same artistic considerations, Snorri replaced time intervals 6 and 8 with time interval 7. So as not to destroy completely his readers' illusion that OT might have lived past his fall in the year 1000, Snorri omits summation VI and an exact date for OT's death.

9) To deal with the chronological problems of the sagas, scholars must first establish a full catalogue of starting points, time intervals, and summations relating to a given hero. The requisite next step is to establish a relative chronology for the time intervals (if this is not fully given in the sagas themselves) and to check the data with other sources. Finally, these relative dates must be synchronized with absolute chronology according to the Christian Era.¹⁰²

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¹⁰² I wish to express my thanks to Dr. Margaret Cormack for her reading of this article and for her useful suggestions regarding my translations from Old Icelandic.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- Aarbøger* = *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie*. Copenhagen, 1866–.
- Aðalbjarnarson, *Sagaer* = Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Om de norske Kongers sagaer* (Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo, Skrifter, II. Historisk-filosofisk klasse, 1936, no. 4). Oslo, 1937.
- Ágrip, ed. Jónsson = *Ágrip af nóregskonungu sögum*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (*Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek*, 18). Halle a.d. Saale, 1929.
- Ágrip, ed. Einarsson = *Ágrip af nóregskonunga sögum. Fagrskinna-nóregskonunga tal*. Bjarni Einarsson gaf út. (*IF*, 29). Reykjavík, 1984.
- Ann R* = *Annales Regii*, ed. Gustav Storm in *Islandske Annaler indtil 1578*. Christiania, 1888.
- Einarsdóttir, *Studier* = Ólafía Einarsdóttir, *Studier i kronologisk Metode i tidlig Islandsk Historieskrivning* (Bibliotheca Historica Lundensis, 13). Stockholm, 1964.
- Ellehøj, *Studier* = Svend Ellehøj, *Studier over den ældste norrøne Historieskrivning* (Bibliotheca Arnamagnaeane, 26). Copenhagen, 1965.
- Flat* = *Flateryjarbók*.
- Gordon, *Olafssaga* = Erma Gordon, *Die Olafssaga Tryggvasonar des Odd Snorrason*. Berlin, 1938.
- Hkr* = Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*.
- IF* = *Íslenzk fornrit*. Reykjavík.
- KHL* = *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for nordisk Middelalder fra Vikingetid til Reformationstid*, 22 vols. Copenhagen, 1956–1978.
- Ljaščenko, “Saha” = Arkadij Ljaščenko, “Saha pro Olafa Trihvasona j litopysne opovidannja pro Ol’hu,” *Ukrajina* 18, no. 4 (1926): 3–22.
- OsT* = *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*.
- OsTm* = *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*.
- OT* = Óláfr Tryggvason.
- PVL* = *Pověst’ vremennyx lét*.
- SSS* = *Słownik starożytności słowiańskich*. Breslau, 1961–; in progress.
- de Vries, *ALG* = Jan de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, 2 vols. Berlin, 1964–1967.