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Band of Brothers — The Case of the Jómsvikings

J þenna tíma reð fyrir Vindlande konungr sa er Búrizlafr het ok hugde hann illt til hernadar Palnatoka, þuiat einge uikingr uar þa jafnfrægr sem Palnatoki at hardfæinge ok uitrleik. hafde hann jafnan sigr þar sem hann helt til, ok uonu bradar, er hann kemr við land ok konungr spurde til hans sende hann menn a fund hans ok baud honum til sin ok letzst uilea eiga uid hann frid ok vinattu. konungr let þat ok fylgia þessu heimbode, at hann baud at gefa honum eitt fylki edr ríki af lande sinu þat er a Jome heitir. til þess at hann stadfestizst her i lande ok uæri skylldr til at veria land ok ríki mitt. Ok þetta þiggr Palnatoki at þui er sagt er ok allir menn hans. Ok þa letr Palnatoki gera æina borg mikla¹.

This passage is a part of the *Jómsvíkinga saga* in *Flateyjarbók*, and it tells how a group of Vikings settled down on an area called Jóm. They were called the Jómsvikings (*jómsvíkingar*). This group of warriors has a certain reputation in the Icelandic saga tradition and their deeds are told in several sagas. However, the sagas give us contradictory information on Jómsvikings and their deeds. This has puzzled scholars and it still does.

The *Jómsvíkinga saga* was probably written ca 1200 according to linguistic and text-critical research². The original saga has not survived and the oldest manuscript is dated to the end of the 13th century. If we assume that the *Jómsvíkinga saga* was based on oral tradition, it seems that there have been two different versions of the saga already at a very early stage. It is also possible that these

¹ *Flateyjarbók. En samling af norske konge-sagaer*, c. 132. Christiania 1860, pp. 165—166 (further cit.: *Flateyjarbók*).

² J. Kristjánsson: *Eddas and Sagas. Iceland's medieval literature*. Transl. by P. Foote. Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag. Reykjavík 1988, p. 165.

two versions have developed independently, but still they would originate from the oral tradition. The two versions of the saga are called A- and B-versions³.

Because the *Jómsvikinga saga* is to be found both as a separate saga and it has also been included to other sagas, it has been difficult for the scholars to study it. John Megaard has made a suggestion for a stemma for the *Jómsvikinga saga*, which is probably the best one so far⁴. AM 291 4to is the oldest and best version of the *Jómsvikinga saga*. The manuscript is written on the second half of the 13th century. It lacks two pages but it is still the most complete of all the texts that survive. The other independent saga versions are Sthlm. membran nr. 7 4to (also known as Codex Holmiensis or Stock. Perg. 4to no. 7), and it has been written on the first half of the 14th century; AM 510 4to from the 16th century; Arngrimur Jónsson's Latin translation from ca 1600 which is based on a version now lost (AM 1022 4to, Nks. 1778 4to). *Flateyjarbók* contains an independent version of the *Jómsvikinga saga*⁵. The *Jómsvikinga saga* has been included also to following sagas or collection of sagas: *Fagrskinna*, *Heimskringla*, Oddr monk's separate saga of Óláfr Tryggvason (especially the version in AM 310 4to), *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar hin mesta* and Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*. Besides these saga versions there is also a poem of the Jómsvikings, *Jómsvikingadrápa*⁶.

As already mentioned, the *Jómsvikinga saga* has two versions, and the problem is that the versions in the Kings' sagas, i.e. in *Fagrskinna* and in *Heimskringla*, differ from the independent *Jómsvikinga saga* versions. According J. Megaard it seems that the versions in the Kings' sagas follow closer the original version of the saga than the independent sagas. *Fagrskinna*'s and *Heimskringla*'s version of the *Jómsvikinga saga* derived from a common source, but still *Heimskringla* seems to follow it more faithfully of these two⁷.

The *Jómsvikinga saga* is a problematic source because it is clear that it was written for entertainment but at the same time it cannot be labelled as pure fiction because of some historical characters and historical setting. As has been stated by J. Megaard, for example, the *Jómsvikinga saga* lies between the Kings' sagas and *forntiðasögur*⁸. In fact, the whole question of to which saga genre the *Jómsvikinga saga* belongs or what is its source critical value is created by

³ Ó. Halldórsson: *Jómsvikinga saga*. In: *Medieval Scandinavia. An encyclopedia*. Ed. Ph. Pulsiano. New York 1993, pp. 343—344.

⁴ J. Megaard: *Studier i Jómsvikinga sagas stemma. Jómsvikinga sagas fem redaksjoner sammenlignet med versjone i Fagrskinna. Jómsvikingadrápa, Heimskringla og Saxo*. "Arkiv for Nordisk Filologi" 2000, Vol. 115, pp. 125—182.

⁵ Ó. Halldórsson: *Jómsvikinga saga*..., pp. 343—344; J. Megaard: *Studier*..., p. 128.

⁶ The poem was composed by Bjarni Kolbeinsson, who was the bishop of the Orkney Islands from 1188 to 1223. It was composed probably before Bjarni became bishop. Cf. B. Fidjestøl: *Bjarni Kolbeinsson*. In: *Medieval Scandinavia*... p. 48; J. Megaard: *Studier*..., p. 128.

⁷ J. Megaard: *Studier*..., pp. 179—180.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 125.

modern scholars. We have to remember that the saga audience in the 13th century did not probably have any problems understanding the saga, because their conception of history was different from ours. The only thing a modern scholar can do is to examine different elements in the saga and judge whether for example the characters, place names or battles are historical facts or fiction. The *Jómsvíkinga saga*'s style has been described as not classical saga style and the language imitates archaic language use. Moreover, the saga contains clearly literary device that the author has used in order to produce a more dramatic story. It is even difficult to say whether the *Jómsvíkinga saga* is a tragedy or a farce⁹. Nowadays the opinion among scholars seems to be that even if the *Jómsvíkinga saga* is a fantastic story, whose main purpose was to entertain, it cannot base entirely on imagination; such a story could not have emerged out of nowhere¹⁰. So, the basic assumption is that the *Jómsvíkinga saga* has a historical kernel.

In this short article I am going to deliberate the historical kernel of the *Jómsvíkinga saga* mainly with help of three versions of it, namely the versions in *Fagrskinna*, *Heimskringla* and *Flateyjarbók*. The sources are, of course, rather limited if we consider that there are several other versions of the saga. However, the length of this article restricts the amount of sources. *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla* represent the versions that are probably closest to the original as stated above, and moreover *Flateyjarbók* represents the younger tradition of *Jómsvíkinga saga*. Along with AM 291 4to *Flateyjarbók*'s version is the longest and most complete of the independent tradition of *Jómsvíkinga saga*. Possibly *Flateyjarbók*'s version is also closer to the original tradition than AM 291 4to¹¹.

Historical events

The Jómsvíkings would have been active in the end of the 10th century and in the beginning of the 11th century, if we base the timing on historical events and characters (for example on reigns of kings) in the saga. There are certain

⁹ *Jómsvíkingernes saga*. Oversættelse og noter ved H. Degnbøl og H. Jensen. København 1978, pp. 11—12.

¹⁰ See for example: A. Finlay: *History and Fantasy in Jómsvíkinga saga*, and L.P. Słupcecki: *Facts and Fancy in Jómsvíkinga saga*. In: *The Fantastic in Old Norse/Old Icelandic Literature. Sagas and the British Isles*. Preprint Papers of the 13th International Saga Conference, Durham and York, 6th—12th August 2006. Eds. J. McKinnell, D. Ashurst, D. Kick. Durham 2006, pp. 248—257, 906—915.

¹¹ See J. Meegaard: *Studier...*, p. 179.

events in the *Jómsvíkinga saga* that must have historical background, and it is worth studying them more closely in order to find out what is their background. In my opinion three scenes in the saga deserve this kind of closer study: the founding of Jómsborg, the battle of Hjørungavágr and the battle of Svoldr.

The founding of Jómsborg

According to the sagas the names Jómsborg and Jómsvikings derive from the area of Jóm or Jóma, in which the fortress of the Jómsvikings was situated. There have been several attempts to identify Jóm with different places in the present day Northern Germany and Poland (Pomerania). The fortress of Jómsborg has also been connected with the mysterious town of Jumne or Vineta, which sank into the Baltic Sea according to some legends. However, nobody has so far found archaeological evidence of the magnificent fortress of Jómsborg that is been described by the *Jómsvíkinga saga*. For example Klaus Goldman and Günter Wermusch have tried to locate the town of Vineta as well as Jómsborg, but in vain. In my opinion, the problem is that such amateurs as K. Goldman and G. Wermusch rely too literally on medieval written sources without considering the nature of the texts, when they try to locate Vineta or Jómsborg¹². It should be considered that the texts may exaggerate, they rely on earlier sources that may be unreliable, the authors may have never visited the places they describe, the places function as symbols in the story, etc.

The town of Wolin has been one of the candidates for being location of Jómsborg. The area in Wolin was excavated by Władysław Filipowiak in 1952. It seems that the town or emporium was a lively place for trading, and the artefacts found there suggest that there dwelled a “multi-cultural” community of Slavic, German and Baltic peoples¹³. Etymology of the place name Jóm is still unclear and several attempts have been made to reconstruct the origin of the word¹⁴, but it is unlikely that the origin and the meaning of the word can be proven with watertight facts. The word Jóm has been connected to Baltic and even to Fenno-Ugrian languages, but these are just speculations¹⁵. Archaeological excavations testify the presence of Scandinavians in the area of Wolin, but as Leszek P. Słupecki poses the question, it would be interesting to know what kind

¹² K. Goldman, G. Wermusch: *Vineta. Die Wiederentdeckung einer versunkenen Stadt*. Lübbe 1999.

¹³ W. Filipowiak, H. Gundlach: *Wolin Vineta. Die tatsächliche legende vom Untergang und Aufstieg der Stadt*. Rostock 1992, p. 131.

¹⁴ See for example: *ibidem*, p. 125—126; L.P. Słupecki: *Facts and Fancy...*, p. 913.

¹⁵ L.P. Słupecki: *Facts and Fancy...*, p. 913 and references.

of presence it was. In the Viking Age the Baltic Sea was used as well as by the Scandinavians as by Slavs, Germans and Balts as a trading and raiding route. So, it is not unusual to find evidence of Slavic artefacts in the present day Denmark or Sweden, or Scandinavian artefacts on the south shores of the Baltic Sea. In short, the Scandinavian artefacts do not prove that Wolin would have been the place for Jónsborg, but instead it confirms that the connections between Scandinavians and Slavs were lively in the Viking Age, and that some Scandinavians had probably settled down to live among the West-Slavs. They may have been merchants or warriors. It would not have been unusual if Scandinavian warriors would have been hired by Slavic princes in the Viking Age, so in this sense the story of the Jómsvikings may be based on reality¹⁶.

The sagas give different versions how Jónsborg was founded and by whom. According to *Flateyjarbók*, which by the way is the only one of the three sources that describe the fortress in detail, a Danish nobleman Pálnatóki fled from Denmark because he did not get along with the Danish king Harald (Blue-tooth), and he came to Wendland. The king of the Wends, Búrisláfr, was afraid of Pálnatóki and his men, so he decided to hire them. He gave them the area of Jóm so that they would defend Búrisláfr's lands and people. *Flateyjarbók* portrays a magnificent fortress. According to the saga the fortress was so big that it had a capacity for three hundred ships. The main gate could be closed with an iron gate. On top of the gate was a tower (*kastale*)¹⁷. Of course, this description is highly exaggerated and nothing like this has been found in the excavations. It is probable that the description is influenced by the Danish fortifications from the same period¹⁸. One detail that has enticed readers of the *Jómsvikinga saga* is that the Jómsvikings had a law code (*Jómsvíkingalag*) that is mentioned immediately after the description of Jónsborg¹⁹. According to the code the Jómsvikings pooled the goods they won by raiding, they were not allowed to be absent for no more than three days from the fortress, they submitted to their leader to settle disputes etc. All in all, the code can be described as pseudo-monastic, as Alison Finlay does. She points out further: "Although there is no historical evidence of warrior bands adopting such complex ordinances, some of the requirements can be paralleled, for instance, in the Norwegian *Hirðskrá*"²⁰. In-

¹⁶ J. Herrmann: *Wikinger und Slawen — zur Frühgeschichte der Ostseevölker*. Berlin 1982, p. 61.

¹⁷ *Flateyjarbók*, c. 132, p. 166: "[...] þat var sæborg ok hard uid ok ramger su var kollut Jomsborg. þar let hann gera hofinn upp j borgina þa er leggja matti .iij. hundrut langskipa ok voru þar dyrra. en yfir dyrunum var stæinb(o)ge en jarnhurd firir dyrunum ok matti þar draga upp ok ofan. en yfir steinboganum var kastale ok þar j ualslóngur ok matti þar læsa jme oll skip".

¹⁸ H.R.E. Davidson: *The Viking Road to Byzantium*. London 1976, p. 23.

¹⁹ The law code, *Jómsvíkingalag*, is mentioned in *Flateyjarbók* but neither in *Fagrskinna* nor in *Heimskringla*.

²⁰ A. Finlay: *History and Fantasy...*, p. 253.

deed, the law code reminds more of a 13th century code for the Norwegian royal *hirð* than anything else. The law code of the Jómsvikings is probably invented by the saga author(s) in order to enhance the warrior bands reputation as a “band of brothers” and give some extra glory to the story.

Fagrskinna and *Heimskringla* are more short-spoken about the founding of Jómsborg than *Flateyjarbók*. According *Fagrskinna* it was the Danish King Harald (Bluetooth) who founded the fortress of Jómsborg²¹. If Jómsborg was ever founded, it seems very unlikely that King Harald would have founded it. He may have raided in Wendland and collected tribute, but founding a permanent fortification to ensure his status and power in foreign and maybe hostile seems highly unlikely. This kind of effort would have demanded a lot of resources (both men and money). Maybe Harald’s connections to the Slavic neighbours have lead to these conclusions that he founded the fortress of Jómsborg. After all, Harald was married to the Obodritian Prince Mstivoj’s daughter, and after he was unseated in 987 he probably fled to his Slavic relatives or allies. This information does not base just on saga evidence, but also Helmold von Bosau mentions Harald’s escape to a town called Vineta in his *Chronica Slavorum* (*Slawenchronik*)²². However, if King Harald really escaped after he was unseated, the obvious place to escape would have been the court of his father-in-law Mstivoj²³.

Heimskringla does not reveal the origin of Jómsborg, but it mentions that Jarl Sigvaldi commanded in Jómsborg²⁴. It seems that Snorri did not find it necessary to tell about the origin of the Jómsvikings or their fortress. One gets the impression that Snorri takes it for granted that his audience was familiar with the Jómsvikings so he does not bother telling the story again. Instead, he concentrates on the battles of Hjörungavágr and Svoldr.

²¹ *Fagrskinna*, c. 19. Ed. B. Einarsson. *Íslensk Fömrít*. T. 29. Reykjavík 1985, p. 121 (further cit.: *Fagrskinna*): “Haraldr konungr Gormssonr herjaði á Vindland ok lét þar göra borg mikla, er heitir at Jömi, ok er sú borg kölluð síðan Jómsborg. Þar setti hann yfir höfðingja, ok fór sjálf heim til Danmarkar [...]”. Also Davidson agrees with this hypothesis, cf. H.R.E. Davidson: *The Viking Road*..., p. 23.

²² Helmold presbyteri Bozoviensis/Helmold von Bosau: *Chronicon slavorum/Slawenchronik*. Darmstadt 1973, p. 83 (further cit.: Helmold).

²³ N. Lund: *Scandinavia, c. 700—1066*. In: *The New Cambridge Medieval History*. T. 2. Cambridge 1995, p. 219.

²⁴ S. Sturlusson: *Heimskringla. Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, c. 34. Ed. B. Aðalbjarnarson. *Íslensk Fömrít*. T. 26. Reykjavík 1979, p. 272 (further cit.: *Heimskringla*).

The battle of Hjørungavágr

In the battle of Hjørungavágr the Jómsvikings fought with the Norwegians led by Jarl Hákon. Both *Fagrskinna*, *Heimskringla* and *Flateyjarbók* give the same story how the Jómsvikings were trapped into attacking Norwegians by the Danish King Sveinn (Forkbeard). The leader of the Jómsvikings Jarl Sigvaldi was invited to a funeral feast by King Sveinn to honour Sigvaldi's dead father Strút-Harald. In the feast the Jómsvikings became intoxicated and it was rather easy for King Sveinn to make them promise that they would attack Jarl Hákon and his troops in Norway²⁵. According to the sagas this was King Sveinn's revenge to Jómsvikings who had kidnapped him and forced him to marry King Búrisláfr's daughter. Because we have no evidence of this kind of background episode, we can only speculate with other possible reasons. King Sveinn's father King Harald had subdued Norwegians and it is very likely that he collected tribute from the southern part of Norway. At least the rune stone that was erected in Jelling describes that Harald "won the whole of Denmark and all Norway". However, the Norwegians had freed themselves from the Danes already during Harald's reign and Jarl Hákon had been the leader of the Norwegians. So, King Sveinn may have had all the reasons for trying to attack and win Norway for himself again. Whatever the reasons for the attack, the plausible date for the battle could have been around 987, when Sveinn took the power in Denmark²⁶.

Before the actual battle in Hjørungavágr the Jómsvikings burned and plundered in Norway. Finally, the Jómsvikings and the troops of Jarl Hákon met in Hjørungavágr²⁷. This is one of the great battles of the saga literature. Especially *Heimskringla* gives a detailed picture of it. We get to know who fought with whom and what kind of heroic deeds were done. The battle scenes are depicted also by skalds whose poems are cited in the text. *Flateyjarbók*-version adds more dramatic elements to the story by describing how Jarl Hákon was helped by two goddesses Þorgerðr Hörðabruð and her sister Irpa. They created a hailstorm, which helped the Norwegians to win²⁸. The hailstorm was too much for the Jómsvikings and they began to flee Jarl Sigvaldi being one of the first to do so. Some of the Jómsvikings were captured by the Norwegians after the battle:

²⁵ *Fagrskinna*, c. 20, p. 125; *Heimskringla*, c. 35, p. 274; *Flateyjarbók*, c. 145, p. 180.

²⁶ H. Ehrhardt: *Jómsvikinga saga*. In: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*. T. 5. München—Zürich 1991, p. 621.

²⁷ John Megaard has written an article about the battle place. According to him, the battle must have taken place in somewhere around Ålesund. Cf. J. Megaard: *Hvor sto "Slaget i Hjørungavágr"?* *Jómsvikingeberetningens stedsnavn og Saemundur fróði*. "alvissmál" 1999, Vol. 9, pp. 29—54.

²⁸ *Flateyjarbók*, c. 154, pp. 191—192.

some of them were executed and some of them were freed. One of the freed Jómsvikings, Vagn Ákason, married the daughter of Þorkell leira, whom Vagn had killed when he was captured²⁹.

The battle of the Hjørungavágr is the climax of the *Jómsvikinga saga*. This is not so clear in *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla* in which the battle is just one part of the story. It is a bit unclear what happens to the Jómsvikings after the battle. *Flateyjarbók* gives the impression that the Jómsvikings were disbanded. The saga tells what the surviving Jómsvikings did afterwards. And still, the Jómsvikings pop up again in the eve of the battle of Svoldr few years later. *Heimskringla*'s version does not hint that the Jómsvikings would have disbanded and they play a small role again in the battle of Svoldr. *Fagrskinna* differs from the other sagas because it does not mention the Jómsvikings as part of the battle of Svoldr. It says that "Jarl Sigvaldi was there with the king of the Danes because he was the jarl of the king of the Danes"³⁰.

The battle of Svoldr

According to the sagas King Sveinn (Forkbeard) was offended at King Óláfr Tryggvason who had married his sister Þyra without his consent. Moreover, Sveinn was accusing King Óláfr for having taken the land (Norway) that should pay tribute to him³¹. King Óláfr had also other enemies than King Sveinn. King Óláfr of the Swedes wanted to avenge his mother. Namely, King Óláfr Tryggvason had proposed Óláfr's mother Sigríðr, but he had deserted her because she refused to convert to Christianity³². The Norwegian Jarl Eiríkr had an obvious reason to hate King Óláfr, who had taken the power in Norway after Eiríkr's father Jarl Hákon had been killed by a slave. According to *Heimskringla* Jarl Eiríkr and his brother Sveinn had fled after this from Norway³³. So, King Óláfr Tryggvason had enemies from every direction in Scandinavia.

In 999 or in 1000 King Óláfr Tryggvason met his allied enemies somewhere in the southern part of the Baltic Sea. According to the sagas he had been visiting Jarl Sigvaldi, the leader of the Jómsvikings, and Sigvaldi's wife Ástriðr, who was sister to his former wife princess Geira. King Óláfr was also negotiat-

²⁹ *Fagrskinna*, c. 22, pp. 135—137; *Heimskringla*, c. 41, p. 285; *Flateyjarbók*, c. 162, pp. 200—202.

³⁰ *Fagrskinna, a Catalogue of the Kings of Norway*. Ed. A. Finlay. Leiden—Boston 2004, p. 117.

³¹ *Fagrskinna*, c. 24, p. 147.

³² Ibidem; *Heimskringla*, c. 60—61, pp. 309—310.

³³ *Heimskringla*, c. 51, p. 299.

ing with King Búrizláfr about the possessions of his wife Þyra in Wendland. Namely, she had been married to Búrizláfr, but she had taken flight and ended up marrying King Óláfr. However, on his way back to Norway King Óláfr Tryggvason was surprised by the enemy fleet and so began the battle of Svoldr³⁴.

This is the last episode in the sagas in which the Jómsvikings have a role. According to *Heimskringla* Jarl Sigvaldi had promised to follow King Óláfr with ten ships in order to protect him. Sigvaldi's wife Ástriðr was following them with her own ship. *Fagrskinna* and *Flateyjarbók* give slightly different versions: according to *Fagrskinna* Ástriðr was not following them but she had given eleven ships to protect Óláfr's fleet, and according to *Flateyjarbók* she just warned King Óláfr about his enemies and asked him not to travel³⁵. Jarl Sigvaldi betrays King Óláfr and informs his enemies about his moves. *Heimskringla* even enhances that Jarl Sigvaldi led King Óláfr to a trap³⁶. Sigvaldi's role in the battle is unclear. According to *Fagrskinna* "little is said of Sigvaldi in connection with the battle"³⁷ and this is confirmed also by *Heimskringla* and *Flateyjarbók*. This could refer to that Sigvaldi did not engage the actual battle. In the end Jarl Sigvaldi is left with the role of the dishonoured man who betrayed the heroic King Óláfr Tryggvason. The battle ends with the death of King Óláfr — even though *Flateyjarbók* claims that King Óláfr did not die but he was saved after he had jumped into the sea. After that he would have dedicated his life to Christianity and he would have travelled to Jerusalem³⁸. This fits with the later tradition that tried to emphasize King Óláfr's saintly side. He was seen as the predecessor of the real Saint Óláfr, and these two kings have been seen as a metaphor for John the Baptist and Jesus.

Considering the fact that the sagas mention the Jómsvikings in the battle of Svoldr with just few lines (*Heimskringla*³⁹, *Flateyjarbók*⁴⁰) or just Jarl Sigvaldi (*Fagrskinna*⁴¹), makes one wonder if they really existed as a group or was it just a convenient way to create a dramatic plot to get them involved with the story. But whereas *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla* tell or imply that Jarl Sigvaldi (and

³⁴ The actual place of the battle remains unsolved even though several attempts have been made to show where it took place. See for example N. Lund: *Scandinavia, c. 700—1066...*, p. 220.

³⁵ *Heimskringla*, c. 112, p. 367; *Fagrskinna*, c. 24, p. 147; *Flateyjarbók*, c. 374, pp. 473—476.

³⁶ *Heimskringla*, c. 100, pp. 351—352.

³⁷ *Fagrskinna*, c. 24, pp. 154: "[...] ok er Sigvalda lítt við orrostuna getit [...]".

³⁸ *Flateyjarbók*, c. 393, p. 501.

³⁹ *Heimskringla*, c. 100, p. 351.

⁴⁰ *Flateyjarbók*, c. 377 and c. 381, p. 482. Also c. 374, p. 474 in which Sigvaldi offers to follow King Óláfr Tryggvason with his fleet: "[...] en ef yðr er nokkurr grunr á því at yðr mune vfridr gerr þa skal ek fylgia yðr með lide minu ok þotti þat enn nokkurr styrkr fyrr hvar sem Jomsuikingar fylgdu hofdingium".

⁴¹ *Fagrskinna*, c. 24, p. 154.

supposedly his men) stayed away from the battle, *Flateyjarbók* gives a more confusing description. Namely, it tells how some of the Jómsvikings (or former Jómsvikings) fought with Jarl Eiríkr against King Óláfr Tryggvason. One of them was Vagn Akason, whom Jarl Eiríkr had pardoned after the battle of Hjørungavágr, and they had become friends.

þui var þat skip kallat Jarnbardi [Jarl Eiríkr's Ship]. hann uar allra skipa ramgeruazstr. var hann ok skipadr af agætum monnum at afle ok allri atgerui [...] Uagnn Akason. Suæinn Buason ok margir adrir Jomsvikingar⁴².

Then we are told that one of the ships of the *vinder* (*Vindasnekkian*) came to King Óláfr and his men, and the crew said that they wanted to fight on Óláfr's side. King Óláfr replies that they could be of help if they stayed nearby⁴³. This passage must have been created to fit the end of the battle. King Óláfr jumps over board and swims to this ship and is thus saved. Because *Flateyjarbók*'s version of the *Jómsvikinga saga* is later and not so close to the original, we can assume that all these details with the *vinder* helping King Óláfr seem to be fabricated. However, it is a puzzling question, to whom does the word *vinder* refer? Were they part of Sigvaldi's fleet and if so, were they also Jómsvikings? Or if they were men that Ástriðr had sent to protect King Óláfr's journey, were they Wends or Jómsvikings? Of course, it is impossible to give a watertight answer to these questions, but it is worth deliberating why the Jómsvikings are also called *vinder*, especially in poems⁴⁴.

Jómsvikings — wendish warriors?

Vinder, or Wends, was a common name for some West-Slavic tribes living in the area that is today Northern Germany and Poland. Helmold von Bosau tells that following tribes were called Wends: “Wagiri, Obotriti, Kycini, Circipani”⁴⁵. It is plausible that the Scandinavians used the word *vinder* to signify all the West Slavs. At least in German the word *Wenden* referred to Slavic peoples who lived in the area between the River Elbe and the Baltic Sea⁴⁶.

⁴² *Flateyjarbók*, c. 377, p. 482.

⁴³ *Flateyjarbók*, c. 382, p. 490.

⁴⁴ *Heimskringla*, c. 33, 42, 112; *Fagrskinna*, c. 23; *Flateyjarbók*, c. 378, 385.

⁴⁵ Helmold, c. 6, pp. 52–55: “Inde extendur termini ad Winithos, eos scilicet qui dicuntur Wagiri, Obotriti, Kycini, Circipani [...]”.

⁴⁶ F. Graus: *Die Nationenbildung der Westslawen im Mittelalter*. Sigmaringen 1980, p. 74.

Jakub Morawiec has dealt with the problem of the word *vinder* in skaldic poetry⁴⁷. He has studied two epithets *Vinða myrðir* ('murderer of Wends') and *Vinðum háttir* ('danger to the Wends'), which are used by skalds and which refer to several Scandinavian rulers. From the viewpoint of author of this article, it is interesting that the epithet *Vinða myrðir* is used for King Harald Bluetooth, Jarl Hákon of Norway, his son Jarl Eiríkr and King Óláfr Tryggvason in the skaldic poetry. Jakub Morawiec has tried to explain this by studying what we know about these rulers and their relationship to the Wends. In many cases, we have no clear evidence. Some poems or sagas may refer to that these rulers may have made raids to the southern shores of the Baltic Sea.

It is a generally accepted assumption that King Harald Bluetooth had good relations with his Slavic neighbours: he had family ties with the Obodritian dynasty and they had a common enemy, the Ottonian Empire. If we are to believe that Harald fled to Wolin (or to the Slavic territory in general) after he was unseated, everything seems to point to only positive contacts with the Wends. However, during the end of the 10th century the situation in the Wendish territory was not stable and alliances changed frequently. Considering this it would not be surprising if the Danes and the Wends — depending on the tribe — could have had hostilities during those unstable times. Without the centralised power rulers were also incapable of preventing their subjects from making, for example, independent raids to the neighbouring territory. As Jakub Morawiec puts it, "presumably, the expression *Vinða myrðir* symbolized Danish raids on the Slavic shores of the Baltic, though it is impossible to say more about the chronology and targets of this activity"⁴⁸.

Einarr Helgason commemorates Jarl Hákon in his poem *Vellekla* and calls Jarl Hákon *Vinða myrðir*:

Varð fyr Vinða myrði,
viðfrægt, en gramr, síðan
gerðisk mest at morði
mannfall, við styr annan;
hlym-Narfi bað hverfa
hlífar flagðs, ok lagði
Jalks við Qndurt fylki
Qndur vQrp, at landi.⁴⁹

The epithet in this context is at least strange, because the stanza in question tells about the battle in which Hákon defeats his enemy Ragnfrød. Hákon may

⁴⁷ J. Morawiec: *Vinða myrðir, Vinða háttir: Viking raid on the territory of Slavs in the light of skaldic poetry*. In: *The Fantastic in Old Norse/Old Icelandic Literature...*, pp. 707—717.

⁴⁸ J. Morawiec: *Vinða myrðir, Vinða háttir...*, p. 708.

⁴⁹ F. Jónsson: *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigting*. B1. København og Kristiania 1912, p. 121 (further cit.: *Skjald*. B1).

have been fighting with Slavs earlier when he was supporting the Danish King Harald against Emperor Otto II in 974, because Otto's army consisted of Saxonian, Frisian and Slavic (i.e. also Wendish) troops according to skald Einarr Helgason. The Scandinavians lost this battle and their alliance split up. Because Jarl Hákon did not have long-term hostilities with the Wends and in fact he was not even victorious against them in the battle of 974, there seems to be no sense of using the epithet *Vinða myrðir* for him. However, poetic epithets do not base on sense or rational thinking. Jakub Morawiec suggests that Hákon may have made raids on Slavic territory in the 960's, and that the epithet *Vinða myrðir* was used because the poet wanted to underline Hákon's military skills, and the purpose was not to refer to any particular battle⁵⁰. This seems a very plausible explanation.

King Óláfr Tryggvason was called *Vinða myrðir* once in Hallfreðr Vandræðaskáld's *Erfdrápa Óláfs Tryggvasonar*:

Varð of Vinða myrði
vígskýs (en þat lýsik)
ramr und randar himni
rymr (knóttu spjör glymjá);
hirdir stózk með harðan
hnitvegg við fjöld seggja
viðis veltireiðar
vargholllr þrimu marga.⁵¹

Because King Óláfr fought with Wends in the battle of Svoldr, this epithet seems plausible. Skald Halldór ókristni, who had been fighting in the troops of Jarl Eiríkr in the battle of Svoldr composed the poem *Eiríksflokkur*, in which he refers to Jarl Eiríkr's participation:

Hét á heiptar nýta
hugreifr (með Álcifi
aptr stókk þjóð of þoptur)
þengill sína drengi,
þás hafvita hqfðu
hallendr of gram snjallan
(varð fyr Vinða myrði
vápnreið) lokit skeiðum.⁵²

If we consider that King Óláfr may have had Wends fighting on his side, the epithet *Vinða myrðir* used for Jarl Eiríkr is not unjust. But, as Jakub Morawiec also points out, it is more plausible that the epithets are again to be understood

⁵⁰ J. Morawiec: *Vinða myrðir; Vinða háttr...*, p. 710.

⁵¹ *Skjald.* B1, pp. 151—152.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 194.

on more general level as praise for military skills⁵³. This assumption is further confirmed, when we look at *Vikingavisur* by Sigvatr Þórðarson, which refers to King Óláfr Haraldsson's victorious military campaign in England.

Veitk, at víga mœtir
 Vinðum háttir enn átta
 (styrkr gekk vǫrðr) at virki
 (verðungar) styr gerði;
 sinn mœttut bæ banna
 borg Kantara (sorgar
 mart feksk) prúðum (Portum)
 portgreifar Áleifi.⁵⁴

King Óláfr Haraldsson is called *Vinðum háttir* and in this case he has nothing to do with Wends as he is in England. King Óláfr Haraldsson may have raided on the Baltic Sea before he came to England⁵⁵. Still, the conclusion is that the epithet is not meant to refer to a certain battle but to serve as a synonym for “a warlike and victorious ruler and chieftain”⁵⁶. Even if this explanation is to be taken as good as accepted, I would like to suggest that the epithet may also have referred to the Jómsvikings in another case: namely in Tindr Hallkelsson's *Hákonardrápa* 4, in which we are told that the Danes were supported by Wends.

Vann á Vinða sinni
 verðbjóðr hugins ferðar
 (beit sólgagarr seilar)
 sverðr eggja spor (leggi),
 áðr hjörmeiðir hrjóða
 (hættings vas þat) mætti
 leiðar langra skeiða
 (liðs) halfan tög þriðja.⁵⁷

The poem refers to the battle of Hjørungavágr. The Wends in question have to be Jómsvikings. The question is why the Jómsvikings are called Wends. On the one hand the obvious reason would be that for a poetic composition *vinder* sounds better than *jómsvikingar*. If we speculate that the Jómsvikings were hired soldiers — both Scandinavians and Slavs — it would be only practical to refer to them as *vinder* if they were hired by a Wendish ruler. On the other hand the intention may have been to refer to the origin of the Jómsvikings or the location

⁵³ J. Morawiec: *Vinða myrðir; Vinða háttir...*, p. 711.

⁵⁴ *Skjald.* B1, p. 215.

⁵⁵ At least Óttarr svarti's *Höfuðlausn* says that the king had activity on the Baltic. See *ibidem*, p. 268–269.

⁵⁶ J. Morawiec: *Vinða myrðir; Vinða háttir...*, p. 713.

⁵⁷ *Skjald.* B1, pp. 136–137.

where Jómsborg was situated, i.e. in Wendland. However, these are just speculations and it would need a more thorough study to find out the connection between *vinder* and Jómsvikings.

The Characters

The description of the characters in the *Jómsvikinga saga* follows the typical saga style. Lars Lönnroth has categorized in his book *Njáls saga — A Critical Introduction* ten different characters that appear in the sagas. Of these five can be applied also in the *Jómsvikinga saga*: 1) the hero⁵⁸, 2) the wise adviser, 3) the brother-in-arms, 4) the bad guy/scoundrel and 5) the judge or mediator⁵⁹. These characters play different roles in the sagas and their role may even change during the saga. The more often the character appears in the saga, the more often he or his role changes⁶⁰. If there are two opposing sides in the saga, they both have heroes and bad guys. The one and same character may be a hero and then a scoundrel in different parts of the saga. This may create an illusion that the sagas are realistic when depicting characters but in reality the characters follow a stereotypical role model. The characters are depicted with attributes that are same from saga to saga. As L. Lönnroth points out, this narrows the psychological perspective of the sagas; people are acting according to certain stereotypical models. When the sagas use only the customary attributes about the characters, we do not get any deeper information of their personalities — for instance whether the character is philosophical or whether he or she is a bad cook⁶¹.

The *Jómsvikinga saga* emphasizes certain characters such as their leaders Pálnatóki and Sigvaldi as well as the foremost competent warriors such as Vagn Ákason and Bui digri. But instead of categorizing all the characters in the *Jómsvikinga saga* according to L. Lönnroth's category, I am going to concentrate on the historical and fictional sides of the characters by using two of them as examples. Basically, the characters can be divided into historical (such as King Sveinn Forkbeard) and unhistorical/fictional (such as Pálnatóki). However,

⁵⁸ There are two types of heroes: Siegfried and Grettir. Siegfried-type is handsome, blond, fortunate, popular etc. Grettir-type resembles more an ordinary man: he may be ugly, he has dark or red hair, he is a difficult person and he is impatient.

⁵⁹ L. Lönnroth: *Njáls saga — A Critical Introduction*. Berkeley—Los Angeles—London 1976, p. 61.

⁶⁰ Ibidem, pp. 66—67.

⁶¹ Ibidem, p. 61.

some of the characters seem to be “semi-historical”, which means that they appear also in other sources but the *Jómsvíkinga saga* connects them with events with which they may have had nothing to do. Maybe the best example of this is Torkell the Tall (Þorkell hinn hávi). I would like to take him and King Þúrizláfr as examples of how fact and fiction is intertwined in the *Jómsvíkinga saga*.

Torkell the Tall

In the *Jómsvíkinga saga* Torkell is portrayed as brother of Sigvaldi and one of the foremost warriors among the Jómsvíkings. However, other sources that mention his name do not connect him with the Jómsvíkings but tell a different story. Torkell was born into a leading Danish family that was probably from Zealand or Scania. The sources that concern Torkell’s early life are not reliable. His father is said to be Jarl Strút-Harald and his brothers were Sigvaldi (the leader of the Jómsvíkings) and Hemming⁶². The other sources than the sagas which tell about Torkell are *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (ASC). According to ASC Torkell was raiding in England with a Viking army in the year 1009. In the year 1011 King Æthelred sued for peace with the Vikings, and as a result the Viking army disbanded and Torkell the Tall entered Æthelred’s service⁶³. He stayed in England and possibly married one of King Æthelred’s daughters. Torkell enjoyed a certain status in Æthelred’s court. He possibly signed his name with the words “Þurkytil miles” in one of King Æthelred’s charters in 1012⁶⁴.

However, when the Danish King Cnut few years later invaded England, Torkell was ready to change his side. When Cnut got the total control of England he divided the country into four parts, and Torkell was given East Anglia, which he had as an earldom already before Cnut’s regime. This is taken as a sign that Torkell was one of Cnut’s trusted men⁶⁵. We have only scattered evidence on Torkell after this. He seems to have been exiled by King Cnut in 1021, because Torkell’s second wife was accused of murdering Torkell’s son by his first marriage. Torkell rejected the charges on behalf of himself and his wife, and he ignored the summonses for a meeting with the bishop. The truth was revealed, however, and Torkell’s wife was convicted of murder and Torkell himself of perjury. We cannot be sure how reliable this story is, because it is only known

⁶² A. Kruhøffer: *Thorkell the Tall — a key figure in the story of King Cnut*. In: *The Fantastic in Old Norse/Old Icelandic Literature...*, p. 514.

⁶³ Ibidem, p. 515.

⁶⁴ Ibidem, p. 517.

⁶⁵ Ibidem, p. 519.

from the *Ramsey Chronicle*. The ASC remarks in the year 1021 that King Cnut outlawed Torkell, and another chronicler Florence of Worcester adds “and his wife Edith”. Few years later in 1023 the ASC (C-version) reveals that King Cnut came back to England and he and Torkell were reconciled. Apparently King Cnut trusted Torkell very much, because they gave their sons to each other as foster-sons, which was a common manner in the Middle Ages. The exchange of sons strengthened the ties between the families, created networks and served as a way to educate children — not to mention that children could actually be hostages. As a foster-father of Cnut’s son Torkell was also acting as the King’s representative or regent in Denmark⁶⁶.

We have no reliable information about Torkell’s death, as Annette Kruhoffer points out. According to William of Malmesbury Torkell was killed after he returned to Denmark, but actually we do not know when and how Torkell died⁶⁷. We know nothing about Torkell’s early years so it is possible that he may have been with a group of Vikings — possibly the Jómsvikings? — and made raids. Torkell’s story just shows that such characters as Torkell the Tall must have been very well known in Scandinavia. Because of his connections with the Danish royal house it is no wonder if he is connected with the Jómsvikings, whether or not it is true. If Torkell the Tall is the same character that is mentioned in the *Jómsvíkinga saga* and in other medieval sources he is one of the best known Jómsvikings.

King Búrizláfr

The character of King Búrizláfr of Wendland could be labelled as semi-historical, because his character seems to have been adapted from several historical figures. All the saga sources call him the king of Wendland⁶⁸. According to the *Jómsvíkinga saga* he is an important character because he gives the area of Jóm to the Jómsvikings, and he marries King Sveinn Forkbeard’s sister and Sveinn marries his daughter.

Which historical figures could then be behind King Búrizláfr’s character? First of all we know that Prince Mstivoj (ca 967—990/995?), who was the prince of Obodritians, a West-Slavic tribe, was married to King Harald’s daughter Tofa⁶⁹.

⁶⁶ Ibidem, p. 521.

⁶⁷ Ibidem, p. 523.

⁶⁸ *Fagrskinn*, c. 19; *Heimskringla*, c. 22; *Flateyjarbók*, c. 132.

⁶⁹ Ch. Lübke: *Mstivoj*. In: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*. B. 6. München—Zürich 1993, p. 884. Tofa seems to be identical with Byra that is mentioned in the sagas as the sister of King Sveinn.

It is not impossible that the names Mstivoj and Búrizláfr may have changed in the sagas. For instance Julius Forssmann has suggested a similar change of names in another saga (*Eymundar þáttir Hringssonar* in *Flateyjarbók*). In this saga three brothers Jarisleifr, Burisleifr and Vartilafr struggle for power in Russia. J. Forssmann suggests that the real figure behind Burisleifr should be Svjatopolk⁷⁰, but the saga uses the name Burisleifr because Svjatopolk's figure is shadowed by his father-in-law Boleslaus and his name was difficult for the Scandinavians to remember. Instead, the name Burisleifr/Búrizláfr was easier for the Scandinavians to remember as so many West-Slavic Princes had the same name⁷¹. Considering the time perspective in the *Jómsvíkinga saga* Prince Mstivoj would be a suitable candidate for King Búrizláfr.

There are also other candidates for Búrizláfr's character: namely the Polish Princes (Dukes) Mieszko I (ca 960—992) and Boleslaus I Chrobry (992—1025). Mieszko I was the first ruler of the Piast dynasty. Prince Mieszko pledged allegiance to the German emperors Otto I, Otto II and Otto III. It is disputed, however, whether his allegiance represented the whole of Poland, or only part of it. This alliance with the Holy Roman Empire is an interesting detail, because *Heimskringla* mentions that Emperor Otto gathered a big army against the Danes and their King Harald, and that King Búrizláfr of Wendland "followed him [the Emperor — S.A.] with a large army"⁷². It is not clear to which war *Heimskringla* is referring. One possibility is that it is referring to Harald's defeat to the Emperor in 974. According to the saga the Danes were converted to Christianity after the defeat but this may be confusion, because it is generally believed that the Danes accepted Christianity already in the 960's — the acceptance of Christianity by all the Danes is, of course, a relative concept⁷³. Another possibility would be that the saga is describing the so called Slavic revolt in 983. The West-Slavic tribes were then revolting against the German Emperor and King Harald wanted to cash in on the situation and gain back the areas that he had lost after his defeat in 974. Because Prince Mstivoj of the Obodritians took part in the revolt, he could not have been King Búrizláfr who was on the Emperor's side. Instead he could have been Prince Mieszko, who was the Emperor's vassal⁷⁴.

Prince Boleslaus I Chrobry is the third option for King Búrizláfr of Wendland. He was probably the most famous of the three princes. For a Scandina-

⁷⁰ J. Forssmann: *Die Beziehungen altrussischer Fürstengeschlechter zu Westeuropa*. Bern 1970. This scholar has made mistake: Burisleifr should be either Boleslaus Chrobry or Boris Vladimirovič.

⁷¹ Ibidem, pp. 84—85.

⁷² *Heimskringla*, c. 26, p. 255.

⁷³ I. Skovgaard-Petersen: *Harald Blauzahn*. In: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*. B. 4. München—Zürich 1989, p. 1029.

⁷⁴ Ch. Lübke: *Slavenaufstand*. In: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*. B. 7. München—Zürich 1995, pp. 2003—2004.

vian saga writer or audience the name Búrizláfr was best known as a name for a Slavic ruler considering the fact that there were several other rulers with the same name also after Boleslaus I. Scandinavians could probably not make difference between different West-Slavic tribes, which must be one of the reasons why the tribes are called with the name Wends (*vinder*). Pomerania, where the supposedly fortress of Jómsborg was situated, was conquered by Prince Mieszko I in the second half of the 10th century. This means that it could have strengthened the impression of the Scandinavians that the legendary fortress of Jómsborg was based on a Wendish area and their ruler was “some King Búrizláfr”. In my opinion, there is no way we can find one historical figure behind the character of King Búrizláfr, but he is more likely to be a mixture of several persons. The actual historicity of this character was not relevant for the saga writer or audience, but his role in the saga as a king of a foreign and distant country.

End note

The history of the Jómsvikings enchants still people. As an example of this can be mentioned a re-enactment groups that is called the Jómsvikings, books that try to solve the mystery of Wolin/Vineta/Jómsborg or novels that just use the story of the Jómsvikings as a frame story. But as the examples given in this article show, the mystery of the Jómsvikings remains unsolved. The *Jómsvikinga saga* contains grains of truth and some of the details can be traced with the help of other sources or archaeology, but still most of the saga seems to be a fantastic fabricated story. This is understandable if we consider that the saga was probably composed for entertainment.

Sirpa Aalto

Grupa braci — sprawa Jomswikingów

Streszczenie

Artykuł dotyczy kwestii mieszania się elementów historycznych i fikcyjnych w przekazie *Sagi o Jomswikingach*. Opowieść o legendarnych wikingach z Jomsborga zachowana została w różnych średniowiecznych przekazach skandynawskich. Prawdopodobnie od samego początku funkcjonowały jej dwie różne wersje, z których czerpali autorzy zarówno sag królew-

skich, jak i zachowanych redakcji *Jómsvíkinga ságu*. Wśród badaczy panuje dziś opinia, że historia ta jest literacką fikcją, ale oparta została na historycznych wydarzeniach i postaciach biorących w nich udział. W tym kontekście znaczenia nabierają opisane w sadze wydarzenia: założenie Jomsborga, bitwa w Hjörungavag oraz bitwa pod Svoldr. Jeśli Jomsborg kiedykolwiek istniał w rzeczywistości, trudno odpowiedzialnym za jego powstanie uznać Haralda Sinozębego, który musiałby dysponować znacznie większym potencjałem militarnym i ekonomicznym. Król duński utrzymywał bliskie stosunki z Obodrytami i mogły one wpłynąć na późniejszą tradycję, która przedstawiała go jako założyciela Jomsborga. *Saga o Jomswikingach* wiąże bitwę w Hjörungavag z osobą Swena Widłobrodego, który wyprawił do Norwegii legendarnych wojów, aby się na nich zemścić. W istocie Swen mógł mieć powody, aby zaatakować Norwegów. Rządzący nimi jarl Hakon podlegał swego czasu jego ojcu Haraldowi i być może Swen także pragnął go sobie podporządkować. Bez względu na rzeczywiste powody do bitwy doszło około 987 roku, już w czasie, gdy władzę w Danii objął Swen Widłobrody. Choć analizując przekaz sag, można mieć wrażenie, iż po bitwie w Hjörungavag Jomswikingowie przestali istnieć jako grupa, poszczególni autorzy przywołują ich ponownie przy okazji opisów bitwy pod Svoldr. Wiąże się to przede wszystkim z osobą jarla Sigvaldiego, który brał udział w spisku przeciwko Olafowi Tryggvasonowi. Kolejnym przejawem mieszania się elementów historycznych z fikcyjnymi jest, widoczne głównie w poematach skaldów, określanie Jomswikingów mianem Słowian. Mogło to być wynikiem zarówno kojarzenia ich z Jomsborgiem, lokowanym w Vindlandzie — kraju Słowian, jak i najmowania tej grupy przez słowiańskich władców. W końcu nie jest wykluczone, iż wśród Jomswikingów znajdowali się także Słowianie. Fakt, że *Saga o Jomswikingach* miesza w swym przekazie historyczną rzeczywistość z fikcją, widać również na przykładzie dwóch jej bohaterów: Thorkella Wysockiego oraz króla Burysława. Thorkell znany jest z innych, o wiele bardziej wiarygodnych źródeł, głównie anglosaskich. Z pewnością wywodził się on z najwyższych duńskich elit, stał się w swoim czasie jednym z najbliższych współpracowników Knuta Wielkiego, wcześniej wspierając jego ojca Swena w podboju Anglii. Pozycja oraz sława, którą niewątpliwie się cieszył, czyniła z Thorkella idealnego kandydata na jednego z Jomswikingów. Na postrzeganie postaci Burysława wpłynęła z kolei pamięć o różnych historycznych osobach. Niewykluczone, iż wśród nich wymienić powinno się obodryckiego księcia Mściwoja, głównie z powodu jego kontaktów z Haraldem Sinozębem. Brać pod uwagę należy także Mieszka I oraz Bolesława Chrobrego. Pierwszy z nich pozostawał w ścisłych kontaktach z Cesarstwem, tymczasem w przekazach sag Burysław pojawia się jako sprzymierzeniec cesarza Ottona walczącego z Haraldem Sinozębem. Chrobry był z kolei najślawniejszy z całej trójki, a jego imię stało się niemal synonimem słowiańskiego władcy w skandynawskich przekazach.

Sirpa Aalto

Die Brudergruppe — die Sache mit den Jomswikingern

Zusammenfassung

Der Artikel betrifft die sowohl aus historischen, wie auch fiktiven Elementen bestehende *Sage über Jomswikingen*. Die Erzählung über legendäre Wikinger aus Jomsborg ist in verschiedenen mittelalterlichen skandinavischen Überlieferungen erhalten geblieben. Vermutlich gab es zwei verschiedene Versionen des Werkes, aus denen die Autoren der königlichen Sagen und der bewahrten *Jómsvíkinga saga* geschöpft haben. Heutige Forscher vertreten die Meinung, die Geschichte sei eine auf historische Ereignisse und historische Figuren fußende literarische

Fiktion. In dem Kontext gewinnen die in der Sage geschilderten Ereignisse: die Gründung von Jomsborg, die Schlachten in Hjörungavag und bei Svoldr an Bedeutung. Sollte es Jomsborg überhaupt existieren, konnte seine Gründung nichts mit dem König Harald Blauzahn zu tun haben, denn der müsste viel größere militärische und ökonomische Leistungsfähigkeit zur Verfügung haben. Der dänische König hatte gute Verhältnisse mit Obodriten und das konnte die spätere Überlieferung vom Harald als einem Gründer von Jomsborg beeinflussen. In der *Sage über Jomswikinger* wird die Schlacht in Hjörungavag mit Sven Gabelbart assoziiert, der die legendären Ritter aus Rache nach Norwegen geschickt hatte. In der Tat konnte Sven den Grund haben, um Norweger anzugreifen. Vielleicht wollte er sich den an der Spitze von Wikingern stehenden Jarl, Hakon, den ehemaligen Untertan seines Vaters, Harald unterordnen. Abgesehen von dem wirklichen Grund kam es zur Schlacht etwa 987, als Sven Gabelbart die Macht in Dänemark übernommen hatte. Obwohl es in den Sagen steht, dass die Jomswikinger nach der Schlacht in Hjörungavag als eine Gruppe nicht mehr existierten, werden sie wieder von den einzelnen Autoren in deren Darstellungen der Schlacht bei Svoldr zurückgerufen. Das betrifft vor allem den Jarl, Sigvaldi, der an der Verschwörung gegen Olaf Tryggvason beteiligt war. Von der Vermischung der historischen und fiktiven Elementen zeugen auch die von den Skalden geschaffenen Dichtungen, in denen Jomswikinger Slawen genannt werden. Die Ursache dafür war, dass diese Wikinger mit dem in slawischen Vindland liegenden Jomsborg assoziiert waren und dass Normannen von den slawischen Machthabern angestellt waren. Es kommt auch in Frage, dass es unter den Jomswikingern auch Slawen gab. Ein weiteres Beispiel für Vermischung der historischen Wirklichkeit mit Fiktion in der *Sage über Jomswikinger* sind deren zwei Helden: Thorkell der Hohe und der König, Burislaus. Thorkell wird auch in anderen verlässlichen, vor allem angelsächsischen Quellen erwähnt. Er stammte von den höchsten dänischen Eliten ab und wurde dann einer der nächsten Mitarbeiter von Knut dem Großen, dessen Vater Sven er in seiner Eroberung Englands unterstützt hatte. Thorkell mit seiner Position und seinem guten Ruf war ein idealer Kandidat für einen Jomswiking. Burislaw dagegen taucht in den Darstellungen von verschiedenen historischen Figuren auf, zu denen bestimmt der mit dem Harald Blauzahn in Kontakt stehende Fürst von Obodriten, Raghier gehörte. Hier wären auch Mieszko I. und Boleslaus der Tapfere zu erwähnen. Mieszko I. hatte gute Beziehungen zum Kaiserreich, indessen erscheint Burislaus in den Sagen als Verbündeter des gegen den Harald Blauzahn kämpfenden Kaisers Otto. Boleslaus der Tapfere dagegen war der berühmteste von den Drei und sein Namen ist in den skandinavischen Sagen beinahe zum Synonym eines slawischen Herrschers geworden.