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Alfred Wintle Johnston**

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# **Orkney and Shetland Folk**

## **872-1350**

By  
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# ORKNEY AND SHETLAND FOLK, 872-1350.

NOTE.—Unless where otherwise stated this paper is founded on *Orkneyinga Saga* (Rolls Series, text and translation). Page references are to *Orkney and Shetland Records*, Vol. I. Fb., *Flateyjarbók*. Hkr., *Heimskringla*. J.J., Jacob Jakobsen's works. S.S., *Sturlunga Saga*.

This paper is an attempt to describe the mixed races which inhabited Orkney and Shetland from the foundation of the Norse earldom, in 872, until the end of the rule of the Gaelic earls, *circa* 1350, and it is a first instalment of the evidence on which a paragraph on "person-names" was founded, in the *Introduction to Orkney and Shetland Records*, vol. I.

The earliest inhabitants, of whom we have any record, were the Picts, and the Irish papas and Columban missionaries, who must have brought some Irish settlers with them.

It has already been suggested that the Norse must have settled in Orkney and Shetland, *circa* 664, among the aboriginal race, the Picts, who would have become their thralls, and with whom the settlers would have intermarried.

The first Norsemen who came to Orkney and Shetland would have been adventurers, and not settlers with wives, families and thralls, such as later went to Iceland and Orkney. Consequently such adventurers who settled in the islands would naturally have intermarried with the aborigines. This kind of male settlement may have gone on for some time, before the actual *bona fide* colonisation took place.

It has already been pointed out that Shetland was not so fully colonised as Orkney, at the commencement of the Norse migration, which appears to account for the older Norse dialect forms in Orkney, and for the survival of more Keltic island-names in Shetland.

[4]

A stronger Pictish strain is thus, on that account, to be looked for in Shetland. The Norse would select the easiest landing-places, while the Kelts would occupy the inland and inaccessible places, as they did in the Isle of Man. The two inland districts of Hara and Stennes in Orkney are especially rich in the remains of the pre-Norse inhabitants—stone circles, brochs, etc.; and Ireland, the only sea-board of Stennes, is particularly inhospitable for shipping.

Besides the archæological and topographical proof of the continued residence of the Picts in Orkney and Shetland, there is the much more reliable evidence of anthropology, in the existence of a large strain of the small and dark race in both Orkney and Shetland, representing the aboriginal race, the later prisoners of raids and the later settlers from Scotland. Allowance must also be made for thralls brought from Norway.

Queen Auðr djúpauðga (deeply-wealthy) or djúpúðga (deeply-wise), passed through Orkney, in the ninth century, on her way to Iceland, with twenty freed Irish thralls. After this, Einarr, grandson of earl Torf-Einarr, went to Iceland from Orkney with two Vestmenn (Irishmen). *Írar*, Irish, occurs in place-names in Iceland, Orkney and Shetland, in each of which latter there is an *Ireland*.

It will now be proved that there were only three possible pure-bred Norse earls of Orkney and Shetland, viz., the first three—Sigurðr hinn ríki, his son, Guðormr, and his nephew, Hallaðr.

The first earl of the main line was Torf-Einarr, who was half Norse and half thrall, his mother being probably of the pre-Norse dark race. His son, the next earl, married a Gael, and after this, through repeated Gaelic marriages, the succeeding earls in the Norse male line were never more than a cross between Norse and Gael, sometimes almost approaching pure-bred Gaels, if the rules of a modern breeding society are to be observed. The same holds good of earl St. Rögnvaldr, a Norwegian, who succeeded on the distaff side, his mother being of Gaelic extraction. The Gaelic conversion of the earls was completed on the succession of the Gaelic earls in 1139.

[5]

The next step will be to show that the leading families, some of which were related to the earls, were also mainly of Gaelic descent, and in some cases probably in the male line.

As the Gaels did not give up patronymics and begin to assume permanent surnames (usually those of their chiefs), until after 1350, those who settled in Orkney before that, and became Norse in language and customs, of course adopted the Norse, in place of the Gaelic, patronymic, *i.e.*, *-son* for *mac-*. This was done by the Gaelic earls in Orkney, in precisely the same way as had been done by the Irish settlers in Iceland.

In reply to a query, Sir Herbert Maxwell writes: "You ask me to fix a date 'when patronymics flourished and ceased in the Highlands?' I think it would be impossible to do so. There were few, if any, fixed surnames in England or Lowland Scotland before the middle of the thirteenth century, other than territorial ones, derived from the feudal tenure of land. In the Highlands, the adoption of fixed names appears to have been indefinitely deferred. Such counties as Perth and Dumbarton, being nearest the frontier of civilisation, their people would find it convenient to conform to the habit of their neighbours. In more remote districts the shifting patronymic prevailed much longer, and when it was abandoned individuals frequently assumed the surname of their chief or the name of his clan, which accounts for the old patronymic 'Macdonald' being the third commonest surname in Scotland; Smith and Brown being first and second."

In the following description particular attention will be called to personal appearance, character, habits, superstitions, etc., as indications of descent.

[6]

## THE NORSE EARLS.

Earl Torf-Einarr, 875-910, was the illegitimate son of the Norwegian earl Rögnvaldr, by a thrall mother who was thrall born on all sides, *í allar ættir þrælborinn*. He was therefore half Norse and half thrall. His mother was probably of the pre-Norse small dark race, the Finnar or Lappir, which may account for her son being ugly, *ljótr*, one-eyed, *einsýnn*, but keen-sighted, *skygnstr*, an expression which latterly meant second-sighted, and capable of seeing elves, etc. He saw, what others did not, Hálfðán há-leggr, the self-appointed "king of Orkney," bobbing up and down on another island, and had a *blóð-örn*, blood-eagle, carved on him.

His poetic genius may have been the result of the mixture of Norse and Finn. He died of sickness, *sótt-dauðr*, equivalent to *strá-dauðr*, straw-dead, died in bed, an ignominious death for a víkingr.

Nothing is known of his wife, but, as he had children before he left Norway, she was, probably, a Norwegian.

His children were earls Þorfinnr, Arnkell and Erlendr, and two daughters, Þórdís, born in his youth, in Norway (she was brought up by her grandfather, earl Rögnvaldr, and married Þorgeirr klaufi, whose son Einarr went to Orkney to his kinsmen, and as they would not receive him, he bought a ship and went to Iceland), and Hlíf, who had descendants in Iceland.

Earl Þorfinnr hausakljúfr (skull-cleaver), 910-963, was the son of earl Torf-Einarr and an unknown mother, probably Norwegian, so that he would be three-fourths Norse and one-fourth thrall in descent. He married Grelöð, a daughter of Dungað (Gaelic *Donnchadh*, Duncan), Gaelic earl of Caithness, and Gróa, daughter of Þorsteinn rauðr.<sup>[1]</sup>

He is described as a great chief and warrior, *mikill höfðingi ok herskár*, and died of sickness, *sótt-dauðr*, and was buried in a mound, *heygðr*, in Rögnvaldsey á *Haugs-eiði*, at Hoxa. The Saga reads á *Hauga-heiði*, wrongly; this isthmus would have been called *Haugs-eið*, how's isthmus, because the Norse found on it a large mound, which covered the ruins of a pre-Norse round tower, in which the earl may have been buried.

His children were earls Arnfinnr, Hávarðr ár-sæli (of prosperous years), Hlöðver, Ljótr or Arnljótr, and Skúli, and two daughters. Three of his five sons married, in turn, the murderess Ragnhildr, daughter of king Eiríkr blóðöx and the notorious Gunnhildr. She killed her first husband herself. The second husband was killed by his nephew Einarr klíningr (butter), at the instigation of his aunt, who promised to marry him, and for which deed he was thought to be a *níðingr*, dastard. Preparatory to marrying the third brother, she got rid of Einarr at the hands of his cousin Einarr harðkjöptr (hard-jawed), who was in turn slain by the third and last husband.

One cannot wonder at the character of Ragnhildr, considering the antecedents of her mother Gunnhildr, the reputed daughter of Özurr toti, a lord in Hálogaland. She, probably a Finn, was found in a Finmark cot, studying wizardry, and was brought to Eiríkr blóðöx, who, struck with her great beauty, obtained her in marriage. She was held guilty of having poisoned king Hálfðán svarti. Her life was spent in plotting and mischief. She is described in *Heimskringla*: the fairest of women, wise and cunning in witchcraft; glad of speech and guileful of heart, and the grimmest of all folk. Fortunately, her daughter left no descendants in Orkney.

Earl Hlöðver (Ludovick or Lewis), 963-980, was the son of earl Þorfinnr hausakljúfr, and Grelöð, who was half a Gael, and so he was five-eighths Norse, one-eighth thrall and two-eighths Gael. He is described as a mighty chief, *mikill höfðingi*, and died of sickness, *sótt-dauðr*. He married Eðna (Eithne), daughter of the Irish king, Kjarvalr (Cearbhall). She was learned in witchcraft, *margkunnig*, and wove a magic banner, *merki*, in raven form, *hrafns-mynd*, for her son; and predicted that those before whom it was borne should be victorious, *sigrsæll*, but it would be deadly, *banvænt*, to the bearer.

Their children were earl Sigurðr hinn digri, and a daughter, Nereiðr or Svanlaug, who married earl Gilli of Kola (Coll).

Earl Sigurðr hinn digri, 980-1014, was the son of earl Hlöðver and an Irish Gael, and was 5/16 Norse, 1/16 thrall, and 10/16 Gael. He was a mighty chief, *höfðingi mikill*, and a great warrior.<sup>[2]</sup> He was killed in the battle of Clontarf, *Brjáns-bardagi*, in Ireland in 1014, with the fatal *hrafns-merki* wound around him, as no one else would bear his *fjándi*, fiend. He was converted to Christianity by the sword-baptism of king Ólafr Tryggvason, although he expressed his preference for the religion and carved gods of his Norse forefathers, notwithstanding any Christian teaching he may have received from his Irish mother beyond witchcraft. He gave up the confiscated óðul to the Orkney böendr (for one generation) in return for military services rendered against the Scots. The name of his first wife is unknown, and his second one was a daughter of Malcolm, the Scot king. His children by his first wife were Hundi or Hvelpr (Gaelic, *Cuilen*, who was baptised with the name of his grandfather, earl Hlöðver), Einarr rang-muðr, stern, grasping, unfriendly, and a great warrior, Brúsi, meek, kept his feelings well in hand, humble and ready-tongued, and Sumarliði.

Earl Þorfinnr hinn ríki, 1014-1064, was the son of earl Sigurðr digri and his second wife, a Gael, and was 5/32 Norse, 1/32 thrall, and 26/32 Gael in descent. He was *bráðgjörri í vexti*, *manna mestr ok sterkastr*, early in reaching full growth, tallest and strongest of men; *svartur á hár*, black hair; *skarpleitr ok skolbrúnn*, sharp features and swarthy complexion; *ljótr*, ugly; *nefmikill*, big nose; *kappsmaðr*, an energetic man; *ágjarn bæði til fjár ok metnaðar*, greedy of wealth and honour; *sigrsæll*, lucky in battle; *kænn í orrostum*, skilful in war; *góðr áræðis*, of good courage. King Ólafr found that Þorfinnr was *miklu skapstærri en Brúsi*, much more proud of spirit than his

[7]

[8]

[9]

brother, Brúsi. Þorfinnr gladly agreed with all the king's proposals, but the king doubted that he meant to go back on them, whereas he thought that Brúsi, who drove a hard bargain, would keep his word, and would be a *trúnaðar-maðr*, faithful liegeman. The earl married Ingibjörg, jarla-móðir, daughter of Finn Arnason. He made a pilgrimage to Rome, got absolution from the Pope, and built the first cathedral in Birsá, Orkney, where he died.

He was liberal, in that he did that *frama-verk*, honourable deed, by which he provided his *hirð*, bodyguard, and many other *ríkis-menn*, mighty men, all winter through, with both *matr ok mun-gát*, food and ale, so that no man required to put up at a *skytningr*, inn; whereas, kings and earls in other lands, merely made a like provision only during Yule. Arnórr jarlaskáld sang to his praise in his *Þorfinns drápa*, and noted his liberal fare.

His children were earls Páll and Erlendr, who were *miklir menn ok fríðir*, mickle men and handsome, and so took after their Norwegian *móðurætt*, mother's kin, and were *vitrir ok hógværir*, wise and modest; taking after their mother, a Norwegian, is in contrast to their father, who was almost a pure-bred, black-haired, swarthy Gael.

Earl Rögnvaldr Brúsason, 1036–1046, was the son of earl Brúsi Sigurðarson and an unknown mother, and the nephew of earl Þorfinnr hinn ríki. The *fríðastr*, most handsome of all men; *hárit mikit ok gult sem silki*, much hair, yellow as silk; *snimma mikill ok sterkr*, manna var hann *gjörfiligastr bæði fyrir vits saker ok svá kurteisi*, tall and strong, the most perfect man was he both in wits and courtesy; *fríðastr sjónum*, most handsome in face; *atgervi-maðr mikill svá at eigi fanst hans jafningi*, an accomplished man without an equal. Arnórr jarlaskáld said that he was the *bezt mennt af Orkneyja-jörlum*, the most accomplished and best bred of the earls of Orkney. From this description one would imagine that his unknown mother and grandmother had both been Norwegians. It is not stated whether he was married or had any children.

Earl Páll Þorfinnsson, 1064–1098, was the son of earl Þorfinnr hinn ríki and Ingibjörg, a Norwegian, after whom he took—handsome and modest. He was thus 19/32 Norse and 13/32 Gael in descent.

He married a daughter of earl Hákon Ívarsson and Ragnhildr, daughter of king Magnús hinn góði. Their children were earl Hákon, and four daughters, Herbjörg (ancestress of bishop Biarni), Ingiriðr, Ragnhildr (ancestress of Hákon kló), and Þóra.

He was banished to Norway, in 1098, where he died.

From 1098 to 1103, Sigurðr (afterwards king Sigurðr Jórslafari), the eighty-year-old son of king Magnús berfoettr, was earl of Orkney.

Earl Erlendr Þorfinnsson, 1064–1098, was the son of earl Þorfinnr hinn ríki and Ingibjörg, a Norwegian, and so was 19/32 Norse and 13/32 Gael in descent. He married Þóra Sumarliðadóttir, whose mother and grandmother are not mentioned, but her father was the son of an Icelander. The earl was banished to Norway, in 1098, where he died.

His children were, earl St. Magnús, Gunnhildr, who married Kolr Kalason, whose son Kali became earl Rögnvaldr, and Cecilia who married Ísak, a Norwegian, whose sons were Kolr and Eindriði. He had a thrall-born illegitimate daughter called Játvör (fem. of Játvarðr, the Norse form of Edward), who had a son called Borgar,—the earliest record of this name, which, however, occurs in Norwegian place-names; they were both, mother and son, rather disliked, *úvinsæl*.

Earl Hákon Pálsson, 1103–1122, was the son of earl Páll Þorfinnsson and a Norwegian mother, and was 51/64 Norse and 13/64 Gael in descent.

He was *ofstopamaðr mikill*, a very overbearing man, *mikill ok sterkr*, great and strong; and *vel mennt um alla hluti*, well-bred, accomplished in every way. He would be the *fyrirmaðr*, leader, over his cousins, and thought himself better born, being the great grandson of king Magnús hinn góði. He always wanted the largest share for himself and his friends, and was *öfund*, jealous, of his cousins. When abroad he suffered from *landmunr*, home-sickness, and wanted *at sækja vestr til Eyja*, to seek west to the *Isles* (Orkney). He consulted a wizard as to his future. He murdered his cousin, St. Magnús, in order to get the whole earldom, and then made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. He ended by being a good ruler, and died in the Isles.

It is not known whom he married, if he was wedded at all; but his son, earl Páll, appears to have had a mother other than his father's known *frilla* or concubine. She was a Gael, Helga, daughter of Moddan, a nobleman rolling in wealth, *göfugr maðr ok vell-auðigr*, who lived in Dalir, or Dalr, in Katanes. The Gaelic name *Moddan* may be connected with the Irish *O'Madadhain*. This man's family of daughters was a disgrace even to the morals of the twelfth century. After earl Hákon's death, Helga, aided by her sister Frakök, attempted to murder her step-son, earl Páll, by means of a bewitched garment, white as snow, *línlæði hvitt sem fönn*, which they had sewn and embroidered with gold, but which her own jealous son donned and paid the penalty. Earl Páll, who naturally deemed that this precious article, *gersemi*, had been intended for him, promptly cleared them, and their family and dependents, *skulda-lið*, out of the islands.

It was the opinion of earl Rögnvaldr that Frakök was an old hag who would not do anybody good, *kerling er til einkis er fær*. She was burnt alive in her house by Sveinn Ásleifarson, for having instigated her grandson Ölver rósta to burn Svein's father in his house. Moddan's carlines and their offspring wormed themselves into Orkney society. Frakök (a Gaelic name?) married Ljótr níðingr (the dastard) of Sutherland, and their daughter married Þorljótr of Rekavík (in Orkney). Another daughter married Þorsteinn fjaranz-muðr (dreadful mouth). Þorleif Moddandóttir was the mother of Auðhildr, the frilla of Sigurðr slæmbi-djárn (the slim or tricky deacon), by whom he had an illegitimate daughter, who married Hákon kló. Sigurðr himself, was the illegitimate son of

[10]

[11]

[12]

a priest, Aðalbrigð. When he and Frakök came to Orkney a great faction, *sveitar-drátt mikill*, took place. He took part in the slaughter of Þorkell fóstri, a man much beloved in Orkney, for which the deacon was promptly deported as an undesirable alien. As the pretended son of king Magnús berfœttr, he, however, met a terrible death with remarkable fortitude. Earl Hákon's children were: earls Haraldr slétt-máli (smooth-speaking) and Páll úmálgi (the silent), Margrét, who married Maddadh, the Gaelic earl of Atholl, and Ingibjörg, who married Ólafr bitlingr (the morsel), king of Suðreyjar.

Earl St. Magnús Erlendsson, 1108-1116, was the son of earl Erlendr Þorfinnsson and Þóra Sumarliðadóttir. In descent, 51/64 Norse 13/64 Gael. In personal appearance he was, great of growth, *mikill at vexti*; manly, *drengiligr*; intellectual in appearance, *skýligr at yfirlitum*. The saga is voluminous in a description of his good qualities, etc., e.g., he was a most noble man, *ágætastr*; of good morals in life, *siðgóðr í háttum*; fortunate in battle, *sigrsæll í orrostum*; a sage in wit, *spekingr at viti*; eloquent and high-spirited and generous, *málsnjallr ok ríklundaðr*; liberal of wealth and magnanimous, *örr af fé ok stórlyndr*; wise in counsel and more beloved than any other man, *ráðsvinnr ok hverjum manni vinsælli*; gentle and of good speech, with kind and good men, *blíðr ok góðr viðmælis við spaka menn ok góða*; hard and unforbearing with robbers and víkingar, *harðr, ok úeirinn við ránsmenn ok víkinga*; he let murderers and thieves be taken and punished, high and low, for robbery and theft and all bad deeds, *lét hann taka morðingja ok þjófa, ok refsaði svá ríku sem úríku ráni ok þyfsku ok öll úknytti*; impartial in judgment, *eigi vinhallr í dómum*; he valued godly justice, *guðligan rétt*, more than rank, *mann-virðingar*; munificent, *stórgjöfull*, with *höfðingjar ok ríkis-menn*; but ever showed great solicitude and comfort, *huggan*, for poor men, *fátækir menn*. Along with his cousin, earl Hákon, he burnt a Shetlander, Þorbjörn í Borgarfirði, in his house, and they slew their cousin Dufnjáll, without any reason being assigned in either case.

St. Magnús, as a youth, accompanied king Magnús on his expedition in 1098, but refused to fight, because he said he had no quarrel against any man there, and he took a psalter, *saltari*, and sung during the battle. He married an unknown Scotswoman of noble family, he had no children, and was murdered by his cousin, earl Hákon, on April 16th, 798 years ago.

Earl Rögnvaldr Kali hinn helgi, 1136-1158, was the son of Gunnhildr, earl Erlends dóttir and Kolr Kalason, a Norwegian, and thus 115/128 Norse and 13/128 Gael in descent. He is described as a most promising man, *efniligasti maðr*; of average growth, *meðal-maðr á vöxt*; well set, *kominn vel á sik*; best limbed man, *limaðr manna bezt*; light chestnut hair, *ljósjarpr á hár*; a most accomplished man, *atgervi-maðr*. He numbered nine accomplishments, *íþróttir*, viz., *tafl*, chess, *rúnar*, runes, *bók*, book (reading and writing), *smíð*, smith work, *skriða*, á *skiðum*, sliding on snow-shoes, *róðr*, rowing, *hörpu-slátt*, harp-playing, *brag-pátt*, versification, to which may be added a tenth, *sund*, swimming, as he frequently *lagðist yfir vatnit*, in dangerous places. The king gave him the name of earl Rögnvaldr Brúsason, because his mother said that he had been the most accomplished, *görviligasti*, of all the earls of Orkney, and that was thought to bring good luck, *heilla-vænligr*.

In 1134, he plotted with his disreputable Gaelic relative, Ölver rósta, to oust earl Páll, but was not successful. Like a good vikingr he was slain in 1158, and was briefly described as *íþróttamaðr mikill ok skáld gott*, a very accomplished man and a good skáld.

The name and race of his wife are unknown. He had a daughter, Ingigerð, who married Eiríkr stagbrellr, in Sutherland (a grandson of one of Moddan's carlines, and whose mother had been the frilla of the slim deacon), and their children were, earl Haraldr ungi, who was slain in 1198, Magnús mangi (nobody; *Mangi* is also a contracted form of *Magnús*, which is sometimes spelt *Mangus* in Orkney documents), Rögnvaldr, Ingibiörg, Elin, and Ragnhildr.

Margrét, daughter of earl Hákon Pálsson and Helga Moddansdóttir, was 51/128 Norse, 77/128 Gael, and is described as *fríð kona ok svarri mikill*, a beautiful woman and very proud. She married Maddadh, the Gaelic earl of Atholl, as his second wife, and was the mother of Haraldr Maddaðarson, who became earl of Orkney. After her husband's death she returned to Orkney and had an illegitimate son by Gunni, Svein's brother, for which he was outlawed. After that she eloped with Erlendr ungi, of whom nothing is known.<sup>[3]</sup>

## THE GAELIC EARLS.

Earl Haraldr Maddaðarson, 1139-1206, was the son of Margrét Hákons-dóttir and Maddadh, Gaelic earl of Athole (Gaelic, *maddadh*, a dog), and was 51/256 Norse, 205/256 Gael. When about twenty years of age, he was *mikill maðr vexti ok sterkr, ljótr maðr ok vel vitr*, a big man in growth and strong, an ugly man and well-witted. He was a *mikill höfðingi*, great chief; *manna mestr ok sterkastr*, the tallest and strongest of men; *ódæll ok skap-harðr*, overbearing and harsh.

He was twice married, viz., (1) Afreka, daughter of Duncan, Gaelic earl of Fife, whom he repudiated, and (2) Hvarflöð (Gaelic, *Gormflaith*), daughter of Malcolm, earl of Morhæfi (Moray). The names of the children of the first were, Heinrekr (Henry), Hákon, Helena, Margrét, and by the second, Þorfinnr, Davið, Jón, Gunnhildr, Herborg, and Langlíf. He allowed a rebellion, against king Sverrir, to be hatched in Orkney, for which he had Shetland taken from him in 1194, when it was placed under the government of Norway,<sup>[4]</sup> and was not restored to the earls till 1379.

Here the *Orkneyinga Saga* ends, and information about the succeeding earls is derived from documents few and far between.



Earl Haraldr Maddaðarson was succeeded by his sons, earls Davið Haraldsson, d.s.p. 1214, and Jón Haraldsson, slain, 1231, the latter having been predeceased by his son, Haraldr Jónsson, who was drowned in 1226.<sup>[5]</sup> Earl Jón Haraldsson was succeeded by Malcolm, the Gaelic earl of Angus, from whom the title was transferred to his kinsman (uncle or cousin), earl Magnús, who was succeeded by his son or brother, earl Gilbert (Gaelic, *Gilleabart*), who was succeeded by his son, earl Magnús Gilbertsson, who was succeeded by his sons, earls Magnús and John and another earl Magnús, after which the earldom passed to Malise, (Gaelic, *Maoliosa*), Gaelic earl of Strathearn, through his great grandmother, a daughter of earl Gilbert. After Malise, the earldom, after an interregnum, passed to his daughter's son, Henry St. Clair, in whom the earldom was vested in 1379. His grandson, earl William, after the wadset of Orkney and Shetland to Scotland in 1468-9, resigned his right to the earldom to the crown of Scotland in 1472, when it was annexed to the crown as a royal title.<sup>[6]</sup>

[16]

### THE GÆÐINGAR: EARL'S MEN.

The suggestion of Vigfússon in the Oxford *Dictionary* that the *gæðingar* of the earls of Orkney were synonymous with the *lendir-menn* of the kings of Norway can be amply proved by the Saga. One explicit instance gives a clue to the whole mystery, viz., that of Kúgi, a *gæðingr* (of earl Páll), whom we find living in Hreppisnes, now Rapnes, in Westrey. The bú of Rapnes, Swartmeill, and Wasbuster, were, in 1503, described as *boardlands* or *borlands* of the old earldom, paying no skattr. *Bordland* or *borland* is a Scottish loanword, meaning, "land kept for the board of the laird's house."<sup>[7]</sup> The Oxford *New English Dictionary* states that the form *bordland* is first found in Bracton, c. 1250, by whom it is wrongly derived from *bord*, a table, whereas it is from M. Lat. *borda*, a hut, cot, and was applied to land held in *bordage* tenure by a *bordar*, a villein of the lowest rank, a cottier. The Gaelic *bòrlum*, royal castle lands, *borlanachd*, compulsory labour for a landlord, must also come from the same source.

[17]

*Boardland* in Orkney is, therefore, a translation of Old Norse *veizlu-jörð*, land granted in fief for military service and for the entertainment of the superior when on circuit. In accordance with the *Hirðskrá* of king Magnús Hákonsson, the earl, while prohibited from disposing of the earldom lands, was permitted to grant earldom lands *at veita* or *at veizlu*, i.e., in return for military service and entertainment. It seems certain that the same privilege was allowed by the older *Hirðskrá*, which is now lost.

To return to Kúgi, he had the *upp-kvöð* or *útboð*, the calling out of the levy, of ships and men, *leiðangr*, in Westrey. As he was the instigator, *upphafsmaðr*, of a secret þing, *laun-þing*, in Westrey, he probably acted as the representative of the earl in the district assembly, *héraðs þing*. The localities of the other *gæðingar* support the above conclusion.

Porkell flatr was also in Westrey; Þorsteinn Hávarðarson Gunnason had the calling out of the levy in Rinansey, and his brother Magnús that of the adjoining island, Sandey, where there were the boardlands of Brugh, Halkisnes, Tofts, Lopnes and Tresnes; Valþjófr Ólafsson was in Stronsey, where there were skatt-fré lands; Sigurðr á Vestnesi in Rousey, where part of Westnes was old earldom land; and this leads to the conclusion that the *gæðingar* also held skatt-land as well as skatt-fré land of the earldom *at veita*; Jón vængr abode in Háey, where there is boardland. The earls also gave gifts, *veita gjafir*, to their friends, the *gæðingar*.

*Gæði* means, among other things, profits, emoluments, etc. It seems certain that the *gæði* in Caithness, which the king of Scotland restored to Sveinn Ásleifarson, in 1152, were the *gæði* of the earldom, which he had formerly held as *gæðingr*.

The *gæðingar* of Orkney (and Shetland?) were thus the feoffees of the earl of Orkney, from whom they received grants of earldom land, *veizlu-jörð*, *at veita* or *at veizlu*, in consideration of military service and the entertainment of the earl, when on circuit. As the feoffees of the earl's *gæði*, or emoluments, they received the name of *gæðingar*, corresponding to the *lendir-menn*, landed men, of Norway, who were so-called because they held land or emoluments from the king for similar duties. A distinction in nomenclature had to be drawn between the king's and the earl's feoffees.

[18]

As was to be expected, some of the *gæðingar* were related to the earls—remunerative government offices were then, as now, conferred on the relatives and favourites of the rulers. Their military service included the *upp-kvöð* or *útboð*, calling out of the *leiðangr*, levy, the superintendence of the *vitar*, beacons, etc.

Their civil functions probably included attendance at the local assembly, *héraðs þing*, the nomination of delegates, *lögréttumenn*, to the jury, *lögrétta*, of the law-thing, and generally the representation of the executive in their respective districts.

As the callers out of the levy of ships and men, the *gæðingar* were necessarily located at strategical points, with easy access to the sea and in close touch with the beacons.

Mr. J. Storer Clouston has suggested with regard to the Orkney place-name, *Clouston*, older forms, *Cloustath* and *Clouchstath*, which probably represent an original *\*kló-staðr*, claw-stead, that *kló* is "the original proprietor's name—possibly Hákon kló of the Saga."<sup>[8]</sup>

Now Hákon kló, who flourished *circa* 1150, was a *gæðingr*, and was presumably connected with the islands of Sandey and Rinansey, over which his brothers were *gæðingar*, and there is no historical or traditional evidence associating him or his family with Clouston, in any way.

[19]

Dr. Jakob Jakobsen has pointed out that *kló*, f., a claw, denotes, in Norse place-names, something projecting, curved or pointed. It occurs in a large number of place-names in Shetland, including an identical name to that in Orkney, viz., Klusta, \**Kló-staðr*, -*staðir*, a district situated on a headland between two bights. Now the *bú*, or principal farm, of Clouston, from which the whole township takes its name, is also situated on a ness; and directly opposite to the house is a claw-formed or curved tongue of land which projects into the Loch of Stennes, which leaves no possibility of a doubt as to the true origin of the name.

With regard to nicknames, those which are person forenames in themselves, such as *brúsi*, buck, and personifications such as *hlaupandi*, landlouper, etc., are used in place-name formation; while nicknames which merely point to an eccentricity in personal detail and are attached to forenames, such as *kló*, finger-nail, *flat-nefr*, flat nose, *rang-beinn*, -*eygr*, -*muðr*, wry-legged, squint-eyed, wry-mouth, etc., do not lend themselves for place-names, *quasi*, "flat-nose's farm." But even if such nicknames were detached from their forenames and applied to places, they would be in the genitive case, e.g., if Hákon kló had been known as kló (of which there is no evidence) then his farm would have been called \**Klóar-staðr*, Claw's farm, not \**kló-staðr*, claw-farm, which could only point to a claw-formation in the place, such as we actually find in Clouston itself, and hence the name.

Circumstantial evidence is against Hákon kló, a *gœðingr*, with the *uppkvöð* of the *leiðangr*, levy of ships and men, being landlocked in one of the very few inland townships in Orkney, situated from two to three miles from the nearest easy landing place. Earl Haraldr Maddaðarson in going from Grímsey to Fjörðr (Firth) by way of (Clouston and) Orkahaugr (Maes-howe), chose Hafnarvágr (Stromness harbour) as his landing place, and the same choice would be made now.

[20]

The nearest coast to Clouston is that of Ireland, which is quite unsuited for shipping, owing to its exposed position, shallow water, extensive beach at low water—a place to be avoided by sea-going craft. Moreover, it has been shown that the *gœðingar* were in the occupation of earldom lands, of which there were absolutely not a penn'orth in Stennes, and next to none in the adjoining inland parish of Hara. This lack of earldom land in these inland districts, corroborates the supposition (p. xx), viz., that the earldom estate was formed of the confiscated estates of the leading *víkingar* of 872, which would naturally be situated on the seaboard with easy landing places, which is a characteristic of the earldom estate; while the two inland and inaccessible districts of Stennes and Hara are remarkable for their wealth of Pictish remains and dearth of earldom lands.

The last notice we have of the *gœðingar* is in 1232, when a shipload of them, *gœðinga-skip*, were drowned. Possibly the eighteen men of Haraldr Jónsson, son of earl Jón Haraldsson, who were drowned, along with him, on June 15th, 1226, were also *gœðingar*.<sup>[9]</sup>

## INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES.

In 1106, Dufnjáll (Gaelic, *Domhnall*, Donald), son of earl Dungaðr (Gaelic, *Donnchadh*, Duncan) was a first cousin once removed on the father's side, *firnari en bræðrungr*, of earls Hákon and Magnús, by whom he was slain. Dufnjáll's grandfather must have been an illegitimate son of earl Þorfinnr hinn ríki, who lived mostly in Caithness, and was almost a pure Gael.

In 1159, Jómarr, a kinsman of earl Rögnvaldr, is mentioned in Caithness, and his name may be the Norse form of some Gaelic name.

[21]

In 1116, Gilli (Gaelic, *gille*, servant) was a *dugandi-maðr*, a doughty or good man, with St. Magnús, and probably a relative of the earl's Gaelic wife.

Kúgi (G., Cogadh), 1128–1137, was a wealthy *bóndi* and a *gœðingr* of earl Páll, and lived in Hreppisnes, now Rapnes, in Westrey, which he would have held as *veizlu-jörð*. Nothing is told of his family or relations. He is described as a *vittr*, wise man, and had the *uppkvöð*, calling out of the levy, in Westrey. As a schemer himself, he smelt a rat when the invading earl Rögnvaldr played a clever trick in getting the Fair Isle beacon lit; and his pawky *eyrendi*, speech, thwarted the internecine complications which that deed was designed to arouse. Earl Rögnvaldr, however, unexpectedly, landed in Westrey, whereupon the *eyjarskeggjar*, the "island beards," *hljópu saman*, louped together, to get Kúgi's *ráð*, advice, which was that they should at once get *gríð*, peace, from the earl; and he and the Vestreyingar submitted to the earl and swore oaths to him. One night, however, the earl's men caught Kúgi napping at a secret meeting for *svíkræði*, treachery, against the earl. He was promptly put *i fjöttra*, in fetters. When the earl arrived on the scene, Kúgi fell at his feet and *bauð*, offered or left, all his case in God's hands and the earl's. He then tried to shift the blame on to others, and asserted that he had been brought to the *þing*, *naudígr*, unwilling, and that all the *boendr* had wanted him to be the *upphafsmaðr*, instigator, of the *ráð*, plot. The Saga states that Kúgi pleaded his own cause *orðfærliga*, with great elocution or glibly. Fortunately for Kúgi's life, the humour of the situation tickled the earl's poetic fancy to such a degree that he could not resist the temptation of letting off steam in one of his habitual improvisations, stuffed with scathing ridicule; a lasting punishment, more severe than the decapitation, or sound drubbing, which the object of his poetic flight so richly deserved.

[22]

The earl referred to the fettered man before him as a *kveld-förlestr karl*, a night-journey-hampered carl or old duffer, and advised him, in future, never to hold *nátt-þing*, night meetings—which Vigfússon says were not considered proper. The earl, further, admonished him that it was needful to keep one's oath and covenant. *Gríð*, peace, was given to all, and they bound their fellowship anew. Exit Kúgi, of whom nothing further is related, beyond the one line which is



preserved of *Kúga drápa*, in praise of Kúgi, and which runs:

*Megin-hræddir ro menn við Kúga, meiri ertu hverjom þeira.*<sup>[10]</sup>  
All are afraid of Kúgi, thou outdoest them all.

This can only have been intended as biting sarcasm. His name and character indicate that he was a typical bad Gael of his class.

### SVEINN GROUP.

The next persons to be described are the family, relatives and companions of Sveinn Ásleifarson.

Ólafr Hrólfsson was a gæðingr of earl Páll, and owned Gareksey (Gairsey) in Orkney, and another bú in Dungalsbær á Katanesi. He was a most masterful man, *mesta afarmenni*, and his wife, Ásleif, was wise and of great family, *vittr ok ættstór*, and most imperious, *ok hin mesta fyrir sér*. In 1135, Ólafr had a great suite, *sveit mikla*, á Katanesi, which included his sons Sveinn and Gunni, and Ásbjörn and Murgaðr, sons of his friend Grímr of Svíney. His wife also lived in Caithness at this time. Their children were Valbjófr (an English name), Sveinn, Gunni, all well-bred men, *vel-menntir*, and a daughter, Ingigerðr. Ólafr had a brother Helgi, who lived Þingvöllr in Hrossey, now Tingwall in Mainland of Orkney, where the þing was held.

Sveinn Ólafsson, after his father's burning, was called Ásleifarson, after his mother. He married Ingirið Þorkeldsdóttir, a kinswoman of earl Haraldr Maddaðarson, and the widow of Andrés of Suðreyjar or Man. Their children were, Ólafr, and Andrés, who married bishop Biarni's sister, Fríða, and was the father of Gunni, whose son, Andreas, was in Iceland in 1235 (SS). Sveinn was a wise man and prophetic, *forspár*, about many things, unfair and reckless, *újafnaðarmaðr ok úfyrrleitinn*. When drinking with his karlar he took to speaking, *hann tók til orða*, and rubbed his nose, *ok gneri nefit*, and remarked, "it is my thought" about so and so, and then mentioned his foreboding, *hugboð*.

As an illustration of Svein's masterful unfairness may be mentioned his expedition against Holdboði. He asked the earl for *lið*, assistance, and got five ships, of which the captains were Þorbjörn klerkr (a grandson of Frakök and a brother-in-law of Sveinn), Hafliði son Þorkels flettis, Dufnjáll son Hávarðs Gunnasonar, Ríkgarðr (Richard) Þorleifsson and Sveinn himself. However, Holdboði judiciously fled, but they slew many men in Suðreyjar and plundered wide and burnt and got much booty, *fé*. On their return, when they were to share their *herfang*, war spoil, Sveinn said that they should all share equally except himself, who should have a chief's share, *höfðingjahlutr*, because, he said, he alone had led them, and the earl had given them to him for help, *til liðs*, and he alone had a quarrel with the Suðreyingar, and they none. Þorbjörn thought that he had worked as much and had been as much a leader, *fyrirmaðr*, as Sveinn. They also wished all the ship-captains, *skipstjórnar-menn*, to have equal shares, *jafnir hlutir*. But Sveinn would have his own way, *vildi þó ráða*, and he had more men in the Nes than they had. Þorbjörn complained to earl Rögnvaldr about Sveinn robbing them of their shares, *göra hlut ræningja*. The earl said it was not the only time that Sveinn was an unfair man, *engi jafnaðarmaðr*, and the day of retribution would come for his wrong-doing, *ranglæti*. Although the earl made good what Sveinn had cheated him of, Þorbjörn declared himself divorced from Svein's sister. The declaration made by him, *segir skilit við*, corresponds with old Gulathinglaw, "ef maðr vill skiliast við kono sína þa skal hann sva skilit segia at hvartveggja þeirra mege heyra mal annars oc have við þat vatta." The consequence of this was hostility, *fjándskapr*, between them, which had its advantage, as it was now a case of "Foruðin sjást bezt við"—the wrongdoer can best detect his fellow. In contrast with the above is Svein's sportsmanlike treatment of earl Rögnvaldr. When earl Erlendr and Sveinn were at feud with earl Rögnvaldr, on the latter's return from his crusade, they captured his ships and treasures. Sveinn claimed earl Rögnvaldr's treasures as his share of the spoil, which he promptly sent back to the earl. Being a keen-sighted man, he probably anticipated that his drunken ally, earl Erlendr, would ultimately be defeated by earl Rögnvaldr, whose treasures from the Holy Land may have been curios and relics of no great market value in the eyes of a víkingr.

Sveinn is further described as of all men the sharpest-sighted, *skygnastr*, and saw things which others could not see. It was the opinion of Jón vængr, junior, that Sveinn was a truce breaker, *grið-níðingr*, and was true to no man. When earl Haraldr advised him to give up roving and twitted him with being an unfair man, *újafnaðarmaðr*, Svein's answer was *tu quoque*, and there the discussion ended. The Saga sums him up as "mestr maðr fyrir sér í Vestrlöndum," the most masterful man in the West, both of old and now, of those men who had no higher *tignar-nafn*, rank, than he.

Of Svein's relatives may be mentioned Eyvind Melbrigðason (Gael., *Maelbrighde*, servant of St. Bride or Bridgit). He was one of the *göfugir-menn*, great men, with earl Páll, and superintended the earl's famous *Jóla-boð mikit*, great Yule feast, at which Sveinn killed Sveinn.

Eyvind schemed to make his kinsman Sveinn Ásleifarson quarrel with his namesake, Sveinn brjóstreip, and having succeeded in this, he then plotted with Sveinn to kill Sveinn, and arranged an artful manœuvre, by which the second Sveinn, before he died, killed his own relative, Jón, the only other witness of the murder. Magnús Eyvindsson, by Eyvind's arrangement, took Sveinn by horse and boat to Damsey, where Blánn sheltered him, and took him afterwards secretly to the bishop. Blánn (Gael., *flann*, red), took charge of the castle in Damsey. His father, Þorsteinn of Flyðrunes, his brother Ásbjörn krók-auga (squint-eye), and himself were all *údælir*, overbearing, men.

Jón vængr, senior, a relative of Sveinn, abode in Háey á upplandi. He was a gœðingr. His brother Ríkarðr (Richard), abode in Brekka í Strjonsey; they were notable men, *gildir-menn*. They burned Þorkell flatr, a gœðingr, in the house which their kinsman, Valþjófr, had owned. The earl had given Þorkell the house for finding out where Sveinn (the brother of Valþjófr) had fled to, after the murder for which he had been outlawed.

Jón vængr, junior, was a systur-son of Jón vængr, senior, and became earl Harald's *ármaðr*, or steward. He had two brothers, Blánn (Gaelic, *Flann*) and Bunu-, or Hvínu-Pétr; (*buna*, a purling stream, and *hvína*, to whistle or whine). These two were ignominiously disgraced by Sveinn in a mock execution, to shame their brother Jón, who had given Sveinn a bad character.

Of Svein's companions may be mentioned Grímr, in Svíney, a *félitill*, poor, man, and his Sons Asbjörn and Murgaðr (Gael., *Murchadh*, Murdock). Sveinn, who was *sýslumaðr* for the earl in Caithness, on one occasion, in his absence, deputed his office to Murgaðr, who turned out *sakgæfinn*, quarrelsome, and *áleitinn*, provocative, and was *úvinsæll*, unpopular, for his *újafnaðr*, tyranny. Along with Sveinn, he did much *úspektir*, uproars, *í ránum*, in plunder, in Katanes.

As has already been mentioned, Ólafr Svein's father was burnt in his house in Caithness at the instigation of the hag, Frakök, whom Sveinn, in turn, burnt in her house.

Svein's father had estates both in Orkney and Caithness, and as he resided in Caithness, where he had the *yfirsókn*, the stewardship, of the earldom, and where Sveinn was afterwards *sýslumaðr*, the family appears to have been a Caithness one, and the Caithness Clan Gunn claim to be descended from Gunni Sveinsson. This, taken in conjunction with the personal characteristics and the numerous Gaelic names of members of the family, relations and friends, makes it probable that these families were all of Gaelic descent in the male line.

Sveinn brjóstreip, *circa* 1136, had a kinsman Jón, of whose family nothing more is known. He was a *hirðmaðr* of earl Páll, by whom he was well esteemed, *metinn vel af honum*. He spent the summer in víking and the winter with the earl. He was a *mikill* man and *sterkr*, strong, *svartr*, of dark complexion, and rather evil-looking, *úhamingju-samligr*, he was a great wizard, *forn mjök*, and had always sat out at night (as a wizard), *úti setið*, in order to raise *troll*, ghosts, which, in accordance with Old Gulathinglaw, was *úbótaverk*, an unfinable crime punished by outlawry. He was one of the earl's forecastle men, *stafnbúi*, and was the foremost of all the earl's men in battle, and fought bravely, *barðist all-hraustliga*. Sveinn preferred "sitting out" to attending midnight mass on Yule. The bishop hailed his slaughter as a cleansing of the land of miscreants, *land-hreinsan*. It was the opinion of Ragna of Rinansey, that the earl had little scathe in Sveinn, even though he were a great warrior or bravo, *garpr mikill*, and that the earl had suffered much unpopularity, *úvinsældir miklar*, through him.

There can be little doubt as to the race of the swarthy wizard Sveinn, notwithstanding his Norse name. With him compare the Icelandic-named Gaelic witch, Þórgunna, in *Eyrbyggja Saga*.

Hávarðr Gunnason, *circa* 1090, was a gœðingr, who married Bergljót, daughter of Ragnhildr, daughter of earl Páll. Their children were Magnús, Hákon kló, Dufnjáll (Gael., *Domhnall*, Donald) and Þorsteinn. Hávarðr was on board earl Hákon's ship, on the way to the last meeting with earl St. Magnús; and when he was informed that Magnús was to be killed, he jumped overboard and swam to a desert isle, rather than be party to the martyrdom.

Dufnjáll Hávarðsson and one Ríkarðr (Richard), were worst in their counsel against Sveinn, when he was in trouble with the earl about Murgaðr's goings on. His brother, Hákon kló, married the illegitimate daughter of Sigurðr slembidjárn, by a daughter of one of Moddan's carlines. The names Gunni and Dufnjáll appear to point to the Caithness origin of this family, as well as does the Caithness marriage of Hákon kló.

Þorljótr í Rekavík, 1116-26, married Steinvör digra, (the stout), daughter of Frakök Moddandsdóttir and Ljótr níðingr (the dastard), in Suðrland. Their son was Ölvir rósta (the unruly); a great and powerful man, *manna mestr ok ramr at afli*, turbulent, *uppivöðslumaðr mikill*, and a great manslayer, *vígamaðr mikill*. He, at the instigation of his grandmother, Frakök, burnt Ólafr, Svein's father, in his house. Their other children were Magnús, Ormr, Moddan (Gaelic), Eindriði, and a daughter, Auðhildr. The whole of this nest left Orkney with Frakök, in her repatriation, under whose evil influence they were reared.

Notices of Shetland, in the Saga, are to all intents and purposes nil. We find among the Shetlanders who were taken to be healed at St. Magnús' shrine two *bœndr*, viz., Þorbjörn, son of Gyrð (O.E. Gurth), and Sigurðr Tandarson, who abode in Dalr, in north Shetland, and who was *djöful-óðr* or *ærr*, possessed or mad. Tandr, or Taðkr, is E.Ir. *Tadg*, and the Shetland Tandarson = Gaelic *M'Caog*, Ir., *Mac Taidhg*, MacCaig, son of Teague.

The Irish Gaels, who settled in Iceland in the ninth century, proved to be desirable and enterprising colonists, the admixture of whose blood helped to form the Icelandic genius in saga and song. They readily adopted Icelandic patronymics and names, and gave up their Christianity for the Norse religion. Their presence is commemorated there to this day in Irish place-names and in the continued use of Irish person-names.

The Scottish Gaels who settled in Orkney were, in accordance with the Saga, in some cases undesirable adventurers, of evil reputation, loose habits, glib, mischief-makers, oath-breakers, witches and wizards. They do not appear to have endowed their offspring with traits other than their own, combined with a personal appearance which is usually described as unattractive.

Gaelic names of residents in Orkney first make their appearance in the late eleventh century in the family of Hávarðr Gunnason, who was probably a Caithness Gael.

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The differentiation between the Norwegians and the mixed Gaelic-Norse race in Orkney, is unmistakably brought into prominence in the middle of the twelfth century, when the Norwegian contingent of the famous crusade, which wintered in Orkney, got on so ill with the islanders that it resulted in murder and bloodshed about love and mercantile affairs.

The earls who were of Gaelic descent in the female line, while exhibiting Gaelic features, were also good rulers and great warriors, whose exploits provided good copy for the *Orkneyinga-Saga*, which was probably written down by Icelanders. The Gaelic admixture of blood in Orkney does not appear to have produced any literary or poetic talent such as it did in Iceland. [29]

As mentioned in a previous paper,<sup>[11]</sup> the *Orkneyinga saga* consists of only two complete sagas, viz. (1) *Jarlasögur*, earls' sagas, the history of earl Þorfinnr hinn ríki and his joint earls—his brothers, and his nephew, Rögnvaldr Brúsason, 1014–1064, and (2) *Rögnvalds saga hins helga*, the story of earl St. Rögnvaldr, 1136–1158, brought down to the death of Sveinn Ásleifarson, 1171. The first of these sagas is prefaced with a summary of the sagas of the preceding earls, 872–1014, of which none have been preserved, while the second is prefaced with a summary of the sagas of the earls, 1064–1136, the period between the first and the second sagas, of which we have preserved St. Magnús's saga, 1108–1116. The saga of earl Haraldr Maddaðarson, 1139–1206, is partly preserved in the second saga, and in *Flateyjarbók*.

As regards Orkney poets, earl Torf-Einarr, the skáld, was a Norwegian by birth and family, with a thrall mother, probably Finnish, from which admixture of Norse and dark races he probably derived his ugly appearance and poetic genius.

Earl St. Rögnvaldr, the skáld, was also a Norwegian by birth, and the son of a Norwegian father, while his mother was an Orkney woman of Gaelic extraction. Bishop Biarni, the skáld, was the only Orkney born poet, but his father was also a Norwegian, and his mother an Orkney woman of Gaelic extraction. It is just possible that these two last-named skálds derived their poetic inspiration from just the right dash of Gaelic descent.

All the other poets, whose compositions are recorded in the saga, were Icelanders: Arnórr Jarlaskáld, Hallr, etc. It goes without saying that Orcadians and Shetlanders must have been, like their fellow Norsemen of the period, improvisers, whose verses, although referred to, have not been preserved. [30]

There were only two Orkney saints, viz., earls Magnús and Rögnvaldr, the one was martyred and the other assassinated, and both of them had very little Gaelic blood.

It is a question whether Orkney and Shetland, with their Christian Picts and heathen Norse, in the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries, were the birth-place of some of the Edda lays; and whether any of these lays were current there, as oral tradition, and taken down in writing in the twelfth century by earl St. Rögnvaldr and his Icelandic skálds. The solitary preservation and use of many Edda poetic words in Shetland is significant. The first notices we have of writing in the saga are in 1116, when Kali Kolsson, afterwards (1136), earl Rögnvaldr Kali, in a verse, numbered among his accomplishments, *bók*, reading and writing, and, in 1152, when earl Erlendr produced king Eysteinn's *bréf*, letter, at the þing in Kirkjubágr.

With regard to person-names, it will have been noted that the Norse earls in the male line, although half Gaels, always gave their children Norse names, while the Gaelic earls, who were only of slight Norse descent, gave their children Norse, Gaelic and English names. So that the *gœðingar* and other leading families of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, who also gave their children Norse, Gaelic and English names, were therefore probably, like the Gaelic earls, also of Gaelic descent in the male line. This is also in accordance with the known practice of other Gaelic settlers in Iceland, etc.

The non-Norse characteristics of persons of Gaelic descent are most pronounced—black hair, swarthy complexion, quarrelsome, given to witchcraft, pawky and glib, oath-breakers, etc., which perhaps point to the Iberian element rather than to the true Gael; and that in comparison with the Norse—fair-haired, accomplished and well-bred, generous, makers of hard bargains, which they, however, kept, true to their word, etc. [31]

It must be remembered that these comparative characteristics are the observations of the Norsemen themselves, who wrote the saga, probably Icelanders, and therefore, presumably, exaggerated in their own favour. They are valuable, however, in placing beyond doubt the large strain of non-Norse people who lived in Orkney.

It has been shown that the Gaelic earls, 1139–1350, adopted Norse patronymics, and that all persons in Orkney and Shetland before 1350 used Norse patronymics, including the numerous Gaelic families, which must have settled in the islands. There was no other alternative, just as it was, conversely, the case in the Hebrides, where the Gaels predominated, and where their language prevailed, and was adopted by the Norsemen. Here the Norse *Goðormsson* became Gaelic *M'Codrum*, *Þorketilsson*: *M'Corcodail*, *Ivarsson*: *M'Iamhair*, etc., etc. Compare also the case in Ireland.

Gaelic names in Orkney and Shetland in their Norse form have already been dealt with.

The blending of Norse and Gael in the Hebrides does not appear to have been more successful than in Orkney, since we find, in 1139, that earl Rögnvaldr said that most *Suðreyingar* were untrue, and even Sveinn Ásleifarson put little faith in them.

The use of Norse names and patronymics by the leading Gaels in Caithness, who are alone mentioned in the Saga, is accounted for by the fashion set by their Norse earls, as well as [32]

through the influence of Norse marriages. While the leading people must have been bilingual, speaking Norse (the court language), and Gaelic, the *almúgi*, or common people, appear to have maintained their native Gaelic. This is indicated in two striking instances in the Saga. In 1158, earls Haraldr and Rögnvaldr went from Þórs-á up Þórs-dalr and took *gisting*, night quarters, at some *erg*, which "we call *setr*." The local Gaelic name of such a shieling was *àiridh*, E. Ir. *airge*, *àirge*. In 1152, earl Haraldr, who was living at Víkr, dispersed his men *á veizlur*, i.e., quartered them on various houses, in accordance with the obligations of the householders, during Páskar, Easter; then the Katnesingar said that the earl was on *kunn-mið*. Vigfússon suggested that this word was some corrupt form of a local name; Dasent translated it "visitations," and Goudie "guest-quarters," which is correct, as *kunn-mið* must be Gaelic, *comaidh*, a messing, eating together, E. Ir. *commaid*; cf. Gaelic *coinne*, *coinneamh*, a supper, a party, to which everyone brings his own provisions, E. Ir. *coindem*, *cionmed*, quartering. In both these cases the E. Ir. spelling comes nearer to the Norse than the Scottish Gaelic does, and corresponds to the Scottish Gaelic of the twelfth century.

The fact that the earl had the right to quarter his men in Orkney and Shetland, is preserved in the tax, *wattle* < *veizla*, which was paid in lieu of actual entertainment. This tax continues to be paid to this day.

"The Inhabitants of Orkney and Shetland after 1350," will be the subject of a future paper; meanwhile it may be emphasised that the Gaelic earls of Orkney failed in the male line before the Scots began to assume permanent surnames. The Gaelic earls were succeeded, in the female line, by the Lowland-Norman family of St. Clair, bearing a hereditary surname, about the time of whose arrival began the Lowland-Scottish settlement of Orkney, to the influence of which must be attributed the assumption of the Lowland Scottish language and the adoption of place-surnames, and not fixed patronymics, in Orkney, by the Norse-Gaelic inhabitants. Shetland, being far removed from the seat of government and fashion, continued the use of patronymics until the nineteenth century, when they became fixed.

[33]

The great number of persons in Orkney and Shetland bearing the names of Tulloch and Sinclair appears to indicate that the ancestors of some of them may have been tenants of the bishopric and earldom who, in accordance with Gaelic custom, assumed the names of their lords of that ilk. The Tulloch bishops ruled, 1418-1477, and the Sinclair earls and lessees, 1379-1542, the period during which patronymics were giving place to hereditary surnames in Orkney. Tulloch and Sinclair may also have been Christian names which became stereotyped as patronymics and the "son" termination afterwards dropped, as in the case of Omondson, > Omond.

Shetlanders pride themselves in their geographic detachment from Orkney with its Scottish people and customs, and claim to be regarded as purer Norsemen as compared with the Scots of Orkney. Perhaps it is owing to this qualified humdrum purity that the Shetlanders did not achieve any deeds of sufficient interest to be recorded in the Saga. However, from an anthropological point of view, the Pictish and small dark strain is as much in evidence in Shetland as in Orkney, and perhaps more so.

In the twelfth century even an ordinary Shetland *bóndi*, farmer, had his thrall, and *manfrelsi*, giving a thrall his freedom, is mentioned as an ordinary transaction. The thrall element must therefore have formed a large proportion of the population, and intermarriage must have taken place between the Norse and the thralls. We find the earls had children by thralls, and intermarriage between the *bœndr* and thralls, especially the freed thralls, must also have taken place.

[34]

Persons of mixed racial descent are usually very loud in an exaggerated appreciation of the heroic line of their ancestry, especially when it is on the distaff side, usually coupled with an inverse depreciation of the other ascent which is represented by an inappropriate and inconvenient surname.

There would be no necessity for a genuine Norse islander to crow himself hoarse on his native rock; and, to do so, would indicate that there were grave doubts as to the purity of his strain.

Hitherto the Norse traditions of Orkney and Shetland have been solely espoused by outlanders and by natives bearing surnames which leave no doubt as to their foreign origin.

The most voluminous history of Shetland was written by an English tourist, Dr. Hibbert, afterwards Dr. Hibbert Ware. But then, the English are noted for their greater interest in the history and antiquities of countries other than their own, which may be accounted for by the exceptional variety of races which they represent.

But after all the land makes the man. If it had not been for these northern islands there would have been no *Orkneyinga Saga* with its verses and narratives of stirring events.

Dr. John Rae, first honorary president of this Society, was a Scottish Gael born in Orkney (where his father had settled), an Orkneyman of Orkney; and to his youthful training, experience in boating, and his environment in these islands, he attributed his success in Arctic exploration.

And, moreover, it is well known that Orkney and Shetland supply the British Navy and mercantile marine with a deal more than their due share of personnel, and have given the British colonies a good supply of useful pioneers and settlers.

## FOOTNOTES

- [1] Hkr.
  - [2] Hkr.
  - [3] He has been unaccountably confused with earl Erlendr, who would thus have run off with his own aunt.
  - [4] Fb.
  - [5] Isl. Annals.
  - [6] *Scots Peerage*.
  - [7] *Scottish Land-Names*, by sir Herbert Maxwell, bt., 123, Macbain's *G. Dict.*, s.v. *börlum*.
  - [8] *Sandey Church History*, by Rev. Alex. Goodfellow, Kirkwall, 1912, p. 78.
  - [9] Isl. Annals.
  - [10] *Skálda*.
  - [11] *Saga-Book*, 1914.
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## Transcriber's Note

The following apparent errors have been corrected:

- p. 3 "*circa*," changed to "*circa*"
- p. 12 "slaughter" changed to "slaughter"

The following are inconsistently used in the text:

- Atholl and Athole
- Ingibiörg and Ingibjörg
- seaboard and sea-board
- sir and Sir
- slembidjárn and slembi-djárn
- Svein and Sveinn
- uppkvöð and upp-kvöð

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