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BJARMALAND

UNIVERSITAS OULUENSIS

SERIES EDITOR

Acta Universitatis Oulensis

Number 145

Oulu 2016
Bjarmaland (also Biarmaland, Biarmia, Byarmia, Bjarmia) and its inhabitants (Bjarmar, Beormas, Biarmar) are known to us through c. 30 medieval written sources, most of them written in Norse, a few in Latin and one in Anglo-Saxon. Majority of the texts were written during the 13th century, but the stories they relate may nevertheless be of earlier date. The Kings’ Sagas in particular often refer to 10th century events. Oldest of the sources is the so-called Ohthere’s account, a 9th century Anglo-Saxon text added to the OE Orosius translation. The rest of the sources are of Norse-Icelandic origin including a number of konungasögur, a few chronicles and islendingasögur, some texts of geographical nature, a couple of þáttr, and a number of fornaldrasögur as well as six annals. Additionally Haralds saga gráfeldar contains a few skaldic verses.

Written sources locate Bjarmaland to the White Sea. The words Terfinna land connect the location with the Kola Peninsula and the environs of the Varzuga River whereas the name Gandvik guides our interest towards the Kantalahti Bay of the White Sea. The name ‘Vína’ can be connected with either the Northern Dvina River or Viena Karelia. Written sources portray the Bjarmians as permanently settled group of Baltic Fennic speaking people that lived in the north of Europe since the Viking Age (first mentioned in writing in the 9th century) until the early Middle Ages (mid-13th century). Involvement in the international fur trade is implied and continuous contacts with Norwegians with both looting and trade as integral part of interaction are present in the descriptions. The Bjarmians cannot be connected ethnically with any existing group of people but must be considered as a group of their own. The origin of the specific ethnic identity most likely lies in economical interaction (trade with furs and possibly other items) with neighbouring areas. Since 12th-13th centuries new settlers moved to the northern areas and many political and economical changes occurred in Northern Fennoscandia and Russia, all of which would have contributed to a change that left the Bjarmians out of written sources.

Keywords: Baltic-Finnish peoples, Bjarmaland, Finno-Ugric peoples, Kola Peninsula, sagas, viking expeditions, White Sea
**Tiivistelmä**

Bjarmaland (myös Biarmaland, Biarmia, Byarmia, Bjarmia) ja sen asukkaat (Bjarmar, Beormas, Biarmar) tunnetaan noin kolmestakymmenestä keskiaikaisesta kirjallisesta lähteestä, joista useimmat on kirjoitettu islanniksi, muutamat latinaksi ja yksi anglosaksiksi. Suurin osa teksteistä kirjoitettiin 1200-luvulla, mutta niiden sisältö voi koskea aiempia tapahtumia. Erityisesti kuningassaagat viittaavat usein 900-luvun tapahtumiin. Vanhin lähteistä on niin sanottu Ohtheren kerromus, joka on 800-luvulla kirjoitettu lisäys Orsiuksen maailmanhistorian anglosaksiseen käännöksen. Muut lähteet ovat islantilais-norjalaisia alkuperää ja koostuvat useista kuningassaagoista sekä muutamasta islantilaisaagasta, maantieteellisistä teksteistä, parista þáttrista että joukosta muinaissaagoja ja annaleja. Lisäksi Haralds saga gráfeldarissa on mukana skaldiruunouden säkeitä.


**Tiivistelmä**

Etnisen identiteetin synty on nykyiseen ihmisryhmään vaan heitä täytyy pitää erillisenä ryhmänä. Etnisen identiteetin synty liittyy todennäköisimmin kaupankäynnin (turkikset ja mahdolliset muut kauppatavarat) naapureiden kanssa. Alkaen 1100- ja 1200-luvuilla pohjoiselle alueelle muutti uutta väestöä ja samaan aikaan ohjettiin muinaisissa Sibiriassa ja Venäjällä tapahtui monia poliittisia ja taloudellisia muutoksia ja näiden yhteisvaikutus todennäköisesti johti osaltaan sillä, että bjarmit jäivät pois kirjallisista lähteistä.

**Asiasanat:** Bjarmalanti, Bjarmia, itämerensuomalaiset kansat, Kantalahti, Kuolan niemimaa, saagat, suomalais-ugrilaiset kansat, Vienanmeri, viikinkiretket
Preface

Professor Milton Nuñes brought Bjarmaland to my attention when I was looking for a subject for my master’s thesis back in the mid-‘90s. At that point I rejected the subject as too demanding despite finding it highly interesting. In a few years’ time I was again contemplating a suitable topic in order to start on a PhD and again Bjarmaland emerged, this time instigated by Professor Jouko Vahtola.

I soon found out that Bjarmaland was a subject that had been addressed many times in historical (and archaeological) literature over many centuries, but to my surprise there was no comprehensive study and most of the literature was dated. Lack of basic research meant that my first priority was to collect, present and analyse with traditional research methods of history the written sources that mention Bjarmaland and thus constitute all direct information we have about the area. This simple guideline forms the backbone of the current study. Additionally other disciplines (most notably archaeology) were consulted whenever this was possible.

I defended my thesis in the fall of 2008, but the manuscript was put forward already earlier that year which means literature that has appeared after this time is not included in the study. For various reasons the study was not printed before the dissertation and the plans to have it in print afterwards got delayed. I have since written several articles about Bjarmaland. My views on some issues have refined over the years, I have read new studies and parts of the current study could be modified. However, the study was written over many years and concluded many years ago. Altering it would mean that it is no longer the same study. Thus the thesis is printed as it was, in order to finally have my PhD thesis in print.

I consider myself lucky having had financial support throughout the project. I wish to express my gratitude for receiving funds from University of Oulu, CIMO, Lönnrot-instituutti, Finnish Cultural Foundation (Suomen kulttuurirahasto), Suomen kulttuurirahaston Pohjois-Pohjanmaan rahasto and the Department of History at the University of Oulu (Oulun yliopiston historian laitos).

Without the support, encouragement and help of Professor Emeritus Jouko Vahtola (University of Oulu) my study of Bjarmaland would never have emerged. A big thank you for being my adviser throughout the research process. I wish to express my gratitude to Associate Professor (emerita) Anne Stalsberg (NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet) who became my second adviser and offered among other things invaluable help with Russian matters and interesting discussions about archaeology.
Many people have shared their time and expertise for the benefit of my research and I wish to express my gratitude to them all and especially to those who have taken time to answer my e-mails with various questions and/or requests for literature. I wish to thank NTNU (Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, Norwegian University of Science and Technology) for providing me office space over the years. The University Library at the University of Oulu (Oulun yliopiston kirjasto) did some miracles in order to let me get my hands on some books that at first seemed impossible to obtain. A special thank you goes for editor Santeri Palviainen for the final pushes to make this study appear in print and to the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Oulu (Oulun yliopiston humanistinen tiedekunta) for providing the means for printing. Last, but by no means least, I have to thank my husband and daughter for always backing me up.
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1 Aims, methods and sources

1.1 Subject and aims of the study

The subject of this study is Bjarmaland. This area of the north is known from medieval written sources. The aim of the study is to introduce all the written sources by presenting the relevant texts in both the original language and in English translation in order to give a full account of the source material in easily accessible form. Each excerpt is analysed separately and after this is done, all the extant information is collected in order to provide the fullest possible picture of Bjarmaland, as seen in the light of the written sources. In essence, my approach to Bjarmaland in this study is historical, with source critical analysis of medieval written sources explicitly naming Bjarmaland as the core of the study. On a general level the aim of historical research is to reach such an overall picture of past/parts of the past that all the traces that have been left behind are explained without contradictory or conflicting notions.1 This is also the ultimate goal of my study, to reach an overall picture of Bjarmaland, set in the medieval environment and taking into account all the extant information.

Bjarmaland has been addressed both briefly and more extensively in numerous studies over many centuries, but considering how many have expressed their opinion in the matter, it is somewhat surprising that up to date no comprehensive and critical study surveying all the extant source material and addressing all the aspects of the topic has been produced. It is here that my study of Bjarmaland has its motivation: to produce a comprehensive and critical study surveying all the extant source material and setting Bjarmaland in its historical context by analysing the written sources in a critical manner, taking into account their complex provenience and their limitations as historical sources. A lot of emphasis is put on source criticism and on evaluating the written sources and their historicity in order to understand how they were formed and what they can reveal of the historical past in order to create as much of an historically correct image of Bjarmaland as possible. Evaluating the historicity of the written sources will hopefully contribute in eliminating those aspects that are not historically tenable and in highlighting those aspects that must be seen as part of the historical past. However, the image of Bjarmaland filtered to us remains to an extent coloured by the special nature of

1 Renvall 1965, 51.
the medieval Scandinavian written sources and I have put some emphasis in trying to point out this throughout the study.

The source material contains some thirty odd excerpts that in this study are divided into twenty-eight sub-chapters for practical reasons. Passages of the following texts are included: Ohthere’s Account, Historia Norvegiae, Saxonis Gesta Danorum, Nöregs konunga tal (Fagrskinning), Haralds saga hárfragra (Heimskringla), Egils saga Skallagrímssonar, Landnámabók (Þorgeir höggvinkinna and Hjörleifr Hörðakonúng), Haralds saga gráfeldar (Heimskringla), Kormáks saga, Ólafs saga helga (Heimskringla), Magnús saga berfœts (Heimskringla), Mappa Mundi, Landafæði (AM 194, 8to) and two other geographical accounts catalogued as AM 736 I, 4º and AM 764, 4º, Hákonar saga Hákónarsonar (Hákonar saga hins gamla) (Flateyjarbók), Hálfs saga ok Hálfshrekkja, Qvar-Oddssaga, Njáls saga Porgeirssonar, Saga Heiðreks konungs ens vitra, Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar, Áns saga Bogveigis, Bósa saga ok Herrauðs, Sturlaug saga starfsama, Hálfdáns saga Bróňfóstra, Eymundar saga (Flateyjarbók), Þattr Hauks habrokar (Flateyjarbók) and six Icelandic Annals (Flatøbogens Annaler, Annales Reseniani, Henrik Høyers Annaler, Annales Regii, Skálholts-Annaler, Gottskalks Annaler).

The majority of the sources are in Norske2, three are in Latin, and one is in Anglo-Saxon. Excepting the Anglo-Saxon text, all the other sources are of Scandinavian origin and even the Anglo-Saxon source is based on a narrative of a Scandinavian informant. It is worth noticing that Bjarmaland is not mentioned in

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2 The term ‘Old Norse’ is largely synonymous with the term ‘Norse’ and defines the culture of Norway and Iceland during the Middle Ages. Its temporal and geographical scope is far from clear, but it does not apply to anything post-medieval - after around 1500 things become Nordic or Scandinavian. Linguists use (Old) Norse to describe the common language of Scandinavian peoples until the emergence of the separate languages (Danish, Swedish, Norwegian) in the late Middle Ages. The medieval vernacular literature (i.e. written with the language called Norske) of Scandinavia is described as (Old) Norse literature. Term Norse is often used as a translation of norrmenn (norrir menn) and applies to all the Germanic peoples of Scandinavia and their colonies. In Viking Age context Norse is often used for anyone of Scandinavian origin and the term is somewhat synonymous with ‘Vikings’, ‘Scandinavians’ and ‘Northmen’ whereas after the Viking Age Norse is not used of Danes and Swedes. ‘Norse’ is not regularly used by archaeologists who rather prefer the word ‘Viking’ whose meaning is equally ill-defined as that of the word ‘Norse’. After the Viking Age everything becomes medieval. In general, the word Norse in archaeology tends to refer to the less material aspects of culture. Vésteinsson 2005, 7–8. Old Norse is the common denomination of the medieval language in Norway and its colonies, including Iceland and parts of the British Isles. Differences between the written forms of Old Norwegian and Old Icelandic are small and without any literary significance. From a linguistic perspective it is natural to speak of Old Norse literature as an entity encompassing both Icelandic and Norwegian literature from before about 1400. However, from a literary point of view it is practical to speak of Old Icelandic literature. Meulengracht Sørensen 2000, 8–9.
Old Russian written sources. Consequently Bjarmaland is seen from a Scandinavian point of view.

The sources did not emerge with the main purpose of giving information about Bjarmaland. The texts portray Scandinavians who travelled to Bjarmaland, but Bjarmaland only appears as one of the many elements involved in the main character’s life. What is told about Bjarmaland is a side effect of general narrative and the information that is preserved of Bjarmaland is selected haphazardly. All this leads into duality of the viewpoint in the study. Firstly, the aim must be to collect and analyse all the pieces of information that enlighten the circumstances of Bjarmaland as such. Secondly, we must look at the Scandinavian activity directed towards Bjarmaland. This gives a sort of secondhand view of Bjarmaland, revealing mostly the nature of the contacts between these two areas rather than providing direct information about Bjarmaland. Indirectly, though, certain features do arise, including information about location, economy, and society seen from the Scandinavian point of view.

I will try to set Bjarmaland into its context, in the landscape of medieval north. In doing so, I will consult additional written sources and archaeological material whenever this is possible and relevant. The aim of this further analysis is to try to get the fullest possible understanding of all the aspects of Bjarmaland. This includes localising the area, discussing the ethnicity of the inhabitants and aspects of the society as well as revealing contacts and political allegiance. The following questions will be asked. Where was Bjarmaland located? Who were the inhabitants? How did they live? What kinds of contacts were involved? Did Bjarmaland exist before the time of the earliest references? What happened to Bjarmians after they are no longer mentioned in the written sources? In other words, I will try to provide as complete a picture of Bjarmaland as the sources allow and discuss all the aspects in fullest possible detail. This is done in an historical setting, placing Bjarmaland among its neighbours and tracing the
development over the centuries trying to decipher any changes that may have occurred.

In the course of the analysis I occasionally refer to texts that do not mention Bjarmaland directly, but that in some other way illuminate circumstances in medieval Northern Fennoscandia or Northern Russia. I have not put emphasis in presenting all texts that can be potentially helpful, but have concentrated on those that I have found most relevant in the context.

In this study I primarily approach Bjarmaland through medieval written sources that directly mention Bjarmaland. I have supplemented the sources with archaeological material, but the scope and approach of this study do not allow the full treatment the archaeological material deserves. I have collected a selection of archaeological material from several relevant areas including certain northern parts of Finland, Norway and Russia. In order to make use of the full potential of archaeological material one needs to collect a more extensive material from a larger area to allow more thorough comparisons. Ideally, the material used to illuminate the question of late prehistorical and medieval Bjarmaland should include a comprehensive collection of archaeological material in Russia, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Through comparisons and studies of provenience of the material one could hope to reach relevant results, but for practical reasons this kind of approach has proved to be outside the scope of this study. In Finland and Norway a lot of the material is comparatively easy to obtain through publications, but I find that the specifics of the material remain only partially studied and a lot of basic studies are needed before the material is usable for the purposes of the current study. As for the Russian material, a lot of it seems to remain scattered in different museums and inquiries for publications that would collect archaeological material in relevant areas have proven that comprehensive and detailed publications have not appeared. I feel that a more intensive study of the archaeological material would constitute a separate study of its own, and given the generally historical approach to Bjarmaland within the framework of this study, the archaeological approach had to be very selective. I have ended up using archaeological material in much more cursory way than I had initially hoped, only exploring certain areas that are

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4 I feel that medieval Russian written documents have a potential to be used, but collecting and critically examining the bulk of these has been outside the scope of this study. Also other Scandinavian written documents (up to historical times) may contain potentially interesting, albeit indirect information about Bjarmaland, but the full usage of this material, too, is outside the scope of the present study.

5 E-mail letter to the author from Pirjo Uino 1.12.2006; E-mail letter to the author from Nadezhda Lobanova 19.12.2006. See also Alaräisänen 2004, 86.
indicated by the written sources. I have chosen to use the material to survey different approaches on a fairly hypothetical level, since this is the only tenable option when it is not possible to perform time-consuming collecting of material and minute analysis of it.

Many studies about Bjarmaland explore etymology (very extensively and speculatively by some researchers) in regard to a number of names (especially Beormas, Bjarmaland, bjarmar and the assumably related names Perm’ and Permians as well as Vina and Gandvik) that have been connected with Bjarmaland in either the written sources or in the literature discussing the topic. I have mostly disregarded this approach on the grounds that every single theory presented in course of several centuries has been countered as scientifically untenable.6 Ethnonyms are a specifically difficult topic in view of their etymology and most theories connected to etymology of ethnonyms are highly speculative, with no definite results. Generally, I feel that any linguistic approaches to Bjarmaland should be left for linguists, and although studies of this kind can on occasion be helpful for historical studies, in the case of Bjarmaland this kind of speculations only add to the confusion. This is why I have decided to give etymology a very cursory role.

Structure of the study

In the first, introductory part of the study I will introduce the written sources by providing a short overview of their nature, provenience and usage as sources in general terms. Each of the sources is introduced with greater detail before the analysis of each individual excerpt. I will also shortly discuss the sources that mention Bjarmaland by addressing issues regarding the origin of the information and its reliability as historical source material.

Next, I will give a chronological overview about historiography concerning Bjarmaland. In the last subchapter I wish to discuss the image of settlement in the north. I will do this partially from historiographical point of view and I wish to clarify certain tendencies that seemingly have affected the researchers’ image of Bjarmaland.

In the second part of the study three chapters are dedicated to introducing and analysing the sources. Relevant portions of each text are given in the original

6 To learn more about some of the objections to current theories see e.g. Suomen kielen etymologinen sanakirja III, 524.
language as well as in the English translation. After this, information about the source is given including its dating and other relevant information that sets the source into its context. Then the references to Bjarmaland are discussed. The sources have been divided into three sections chronologically. Exact dating is difficult in many cases and judgement calls have been necessary. This is why the order may appear somewhat imprecise at times. Whenever it has been possible, I have tried to place the oldest source first followed by the next oldest. However, on occasion different sources refer to same events or persons and I have in some cases chosen to place these sources after one another, even if they would not otherwise follow each other in chronological order. This division is at best artificial, but has been necessary for practical reasons. The division has been an aid in deciphering changes of Bjarmaland’s image over time.

The first main chapter concentrates on the early information about Bjarmaland. Only one written source is introduced, though it is an important one. I will try to find out what the image of Bjarmaland was at the time this area appeared in the written sources, but in the archaeology chapter I will also look for possible roots for the earliest Norwegian contacts with the help of archaeological material. The time period that I handle in this chapter is extended to the 13th century. This is because the archaeological material is scarce and difficult to date with precision. It has been proven impossible to divide the material in a way that would give any sensible results. Only considering the archaeological material as a whole over a longer period of time has made it possible to trace any trends regarding contacts or settlement.

The second main chapter is about Bjarmaland’s image approximately during the years 900–1265, based on both the age of the sources, as well as the dating of the described events. All the sources are of Scandinavian origin, a few written in Latin, but the majority in Norse. The last sub-chapter aims to offer a more analytical and collected view of Bjarmaland than an analysis of each single excerpt allows.

The third main chapter includes the rest of the sources written ca. 1265–1400. These sources are mostly not much younger than the sources of the previous chapter, but contentwise they are rather different, including among other things a much larger quantity of fantasy elements. Many of the sources are so-called fornaldarsögur that are known to be imaginative. The last sub-chapter is again dedicated to giving a collected view of the Bjarmaland image of the previously introduced texts.

In the last chapter I will try to collect all the extant information about Bjarmaland. First, I will look at the Norwegian expeditions to Bjarmaland, since
this largely is the viewpoint of the sources. In the very last chapter I will try to offer a more analytic image of Bjarmaland taking in consideration all aspects, also outside the scope of the written sources explicitly mentioning Bjarmaland. The aim is to set Bjarmaland in its historical context.

Additionally, I have included an explanatory list of names (both historical and current) that appear in this study in order to help the reader get orientated among varied orthography and different languages. There are also a number of illustrations (mostly of archaeological finds) and a map that are referred to in the text.

1.2 Introduction to written sources

The source material of this study consists of one source in Anglo-Saxon, three sources in Latin and the rest in Old Norse including a number of saga texts, a þáttr, a few excerpts of geographical nature and excerpts from several annals. Some of these include only a few lines, others several pages. The earliest text was written down in the late 9th century, the youngest ones derive from the 14th century. The group is rather heterogeneous in many other ways as well. It is also important to notice that although the language of some of the medieval Scandinavian texts is Latin\textsuperscript{7} they were still written by Scandinavians. So, despite the language, they should be seen as Scandinavian sources equal in value to those written in Old Norse. The Latin texts are also also from the same time period as the saga texts and researchers classify them under the different saga genres. The texts in Old Norse constitute the main bulk of the sources and demand a rather thorough introduction, because they are rather intricate to use as sources and there is great variation in e.g. date, content and purpose among them. The Anglo-Saxon source does not demand any further introduction - everything of importance is said in the analysis. The source of each of the texts that is used in this study is discussed in more detail in the analysis of the individual texts. The following overview is of more general character designed to introduce the reader with the complexity of the medieval Scandinavian texts as historical sources.

\textsuperscript{7} In comparison to the amount of medieval Latin literature in Europe, the contribution of Norway and Iceland is modest. Most of the Latin texts in Scandinavia are connected with church and religion. One of the few exceptions is Historia Norvegiae that is a work of history with some religious tones intertwined. Salvesen 1990, 9.
Saga genres and their origin

The Icelandic word saga (pl. sögur) is a derivative of the verb segja (to speak, to say) and means ‘a tale’ or ‘a story’. Word saga also refers to prose narrative in general. According to Norse practise the whole narrative prose literature (mainly historical and biographical) can be called saga. The word saga originally referred to an oral story, but later on (approximately since the beginning of the 13th century) it also referred to a written story.8

The introduction of Christianity to Scandinavia brought with it the Latin alphabet. The earliest manuscripts from Iceland date from the very end of the 12th century, but already the preceding century saw a production of texts in vernacular: genealogies, laws, grammar books, works of Christian doctrine. By 1150 first historical works were written in vernacular. Many of these have since disappeared, but in their time they served as sources to other Icelandic texts.9

A large part of the medieval Norse literature is anonymous and without dating and this complicates the study of the material.10 There exist several hundred sagas. Icelandic sagas are a heterogeneous group and in order to make research easier, sagas have been divided into groups. This division is exclusively a modern phenomenon.11 None of the classifications cover all needs, but certain terms are commonly used. For the purposes of this study there is no need to go through in detail all the classifications that have appeared over the years.12 It suffices to take a closer look at the groups that contain the texts of this study. These are the Kings’ Sagas, the Sagas of Icelanders and the fornaldarsögur. Additionally, the skaldic verses deserve a short introduction.

Kings’ Sagas (konungasögur) are historical and biographical works concerning Norwegian and Danish kings of (at the time of writing) relatively recent past c. 850–1280. It is worth paying attention to the textual affiliation of Kings’ Sagas, namely these sagas tell the same story (i.e.biographies of the Norwegian kings) many times. This is the oldest Norse prose genre and most sagas belonging to this group were composed between c. 1180–1280, although the earliest examples were

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10 Helgason 1934, 14.
produced a few decades earlier. What sets the Kings’ Sagas apart from other genres is that these texts were composed in both Norway and Iceland. Interestingly, Kings’ Sagas have a literary parallel in European chronicles about kings. We know many of the saga authors by name. Skaldic poetry was an integral part of the genre, both for aesthetic reasons and to prove the accuracy of the narrative. Oral tradition in general must have been an important source, but after awhile also earlier written works were used as source. Additionally, the writers made use of motifs and descriptions found in both native and foreign literature. Sagas of this group are diverse in length, structure and subject matter and the language varies from vernacular to Latin. The Kings’ Sagas differ from the Sagas of Icelanders by the choice of topic (the main character is a Nordic king or earl) and stage (i.e. outside Iceland) and they are thought to be more historically reliable than the Sagas of Icelanders. The group can be further divided into subgroups on the basis of when the main character lived (pagan kings, historical kings and contemporary kings). These sagas are entertaining and artistic. As for the historical reliability of the Kings’ Sagas, James E. KNIRK puts it in a nutshell: “In spite of reservations as to their reliability, these sagas still provide the basis of any historical speculation about the period.”. Out of the sources of this study Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar, the sagas in Heimskringla, Flateyjarbók, Fagrskinna and Historia Norvegiae belong to this genre. Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar is considered historically relatively reliable.13 Kings’ Sagas can be divided into four main periods: the earliest lost kings’ lives by Sæmundr and Ari from the early 12th century; the so-called Norwegian synoptics, c. 1175–90 (Theodoricus monachus, Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagienstium c. 1180, Historia Norvegiae perhaps before 1178 or as late as 1220, Ágrip af Nöregs konunga sogn c. 1190); the formative period of the Icelandic Kings’ Sagas proper, c. 1150–1200; and the major compendia 1220–1230 (Morkinskinna, Fagrskinna, Heimskringla). During the third stage (1150–1200) the first independent sagas appeared (Oldest Saga of St. Olaf c. 1200, Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar by Odd SNORRASON and Gunnlaugr LEIFSSON, *Hryggjarstykki, Orkneyinga saga, Jómsvíkinga saga, *Hlaðajarla saga, *Skjoldunga saga and some portion of Sverris saga). Some of these early sagas are nearly contemporary, others rely on skaldic or other oral tradition. Some are primarily historical in tone, others are better described as tales of adventure. Some

show hagiographic colouring, but most are entirely secular. The first compendia of Norwegian kings include *Morkinskinna* (1220), *Fagrskinna* (1225) and *Heimskringla* (1225–35). *Heimskringla* used the same sources as the other two, probably also *Fagrskinna* on parts of the work, whereas *Morkinskinna* (in contrast to *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla* that are largely based on literary sources) could be an original work drawing its material directly from skaldic poems and oral prose tradition.14

Sagas of Icelanders (*Íslendingasögur*, in English also called Family Sagas) are non-religious sagas about Icelanders during the Viking Age (after the so-called *Landnáma* [870–930], covering an era that is commonly called the Saga Age, ca. 930–1030). They were written down after 1170 (the majority in the 13th century and the rest in the 14th century, although all the preserved manuscripts are from later), but no original manuscripts are known, only copies and the dating of Sagas of Icelanders remains unclear. Traditionally these sagas have been regarded as anonymous, but there are attempts to recognise their authors and it is currently generally believed that Snorri STURLUSON wrote *Egils saga*. It has been suggested that the authors remain anonymous because these sagas are so closely connected with oral stories about past that circulated in Iceland. It is assumed that verses and oral tradition were used to compose these sagas, but the details of this remain unclear as does the extent of author’s influence (imagination). There are varied ideas about the value of Sagas of Icelanders as a source, but it is considered that the sagas were created as historical rather than fictional works. One may detect certain tendencies and it is assumed the information is modified. Usually the description of material surroundings is limited to what is necessary in order to understand the action. Out of the texts of this study *Njáls saga*, *Landnámabók*, *Kormáks saga* and *Egils saga* belong to this genre.15

*Fornaldarsögur* (‘sagas of antiquity’, singular form *fornaldarsaga*, ‘a tale of the Nordic countries in ancient times’, in English known as Mythical-Heroic Sagas or Legendary Sagas; the name *Märchensaga* - literally ‘folktale saga’ – is also used to some extent) is one of the main groups within Norse literature (known to the contemporary audiences as *fornsögur*, *fornar sögor* or *fornar frasagnir*, i.e. “old tales”) and derives its name from an 1829–30 edition of *Fornaldar sögor Norórlanda* by Danish scholar Carl Christian RAFN. This group includes all the

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sagas (around 30 in all) that are about the ancient times (the heroes may be as old as from the Migration Period) before the settlement of Iceland in the late 9th century. The exact time and milieu are diffuse and appear non-realistic. The events take place outside Iceland, often in Scandinavia and sometimes in remote places like Russia, Bjarmaland and Byzantium. The treatment of geography is reminiscent of folklore attitudes and consequently countries and places remain merely as exotic settings and are not described in detail. In general terms the fornaldrarsögur can be characterised as Icelandic prose narratives based on traditional heroic themes. Some of the fornaldrarsögur display a lengthy continuity within the Nordic cultural context whereas other tales have foreign origins. Contrary to other groups that are to an extent historical, fornaldrarsögur contain a lot of supernatural and fantasy elements. The world of the fornaldrarsögur has affinities with that of folklore and the ballads. Supernatural scenes serve as a story-telling device and are used to underline the significance of certain events. Escapist emphasis on the fanciful and the unreal is the basic feature of the fornaldrarsögur. These sagas were primarily used for entertainment. Historical background is often absent, the events are based on fiction, although in some cases there may be some remote historical core and some characters may even give tentative dating for the events. The genre started as a branch of the Kings’ Sagas, but quickly developed from describing heroic deeds into adventure while preserving some saga writing traditions despite the imaginary quality of the tales. As a written genre the fornaldrarsögur are only slightly younger than the Sagas of Icelanders, the genres appeared almost simultaneously. Fornaldarsögur appeared in written form in the late 13th century and the early 14th century, but the genre had an oral existence prior to this (perhaps since the 12th century). Fornaldarsögur were still written in the 15th century and the genre outlived all the other saga genres. During the Late Middle Ages the authors used earlier works as a model. Fornaldarsögur are anonymous and they are based on an oral tradition that goes a long way back in time. The sources of fornaldrarsögur include verses, anecdotes, fragments of stories and motifs from old heroic poems, Viking stories and fairytales. Certain motifs appear repeatedly in a number of sagas, e.g. happy ending where the hero is married and acquires a kingdom, battles, giants and robbing of mounds, to mention a few. The only red line in the story of fantastical events is the hero. Fornaldarsögur were extremely popular entertainment among the contemporary audiences as is testified by the amount of surviving manuscripts. They were designed for popular consumption and give a glimpse into the mentality of their age. Out of the texts in this study this genre includes Ævar-Oddssaga, Áns saga Bogsveigis, Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka, Bósa
Generally speaking, skaldic poetry is historical (and then typically concerned with contemporary history) and situated within a definite historical context. Often the name of the skald, the poem’s original addressee and audience are known. The earliest skaldic poems have been dated to the 9th century. Only a fraction of skaldic verses (yet sixteen thousand lines, mostly in the form of single stanzas) has survived to us as fragmentary quotations in hundreds of prose texts (sagas) from the 12th to the 14th century. Prior to this skaldic poetry was transmitted orally for several centuries, but we have little information about the early stages. One of the functions of a skald was to observe events and report them and the deeds of his employer, often a prince or a king, and preserve his deeds to posterity. The skald had to be truthful, although he could choose to have a specifically positive tone towards his employer. It can be considered that the panegyical poems composed in honour of kings and earls is the main genre of skaldic verse. The typical content of a praise poem includes enumeration of battles and other feats of prowess with praise of generosity and boldness. In the Kings’ Sagas stanzas are incorporated into the prose to serve as historical verification and they are an integral part of the narrative. The authors of the royal compendia regarded verses as extremely valuable sources of historical information and as it so happens, it is Snorri Sturluson who provided modern skaldic scholarship with most of its terminology and principles of analysis and interpretation. Verses are often thought to be among the historically most reliable elements in the sagas, since they present a local

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16 Helgason 1934, 195–196, 199–201, 204–206; de Vries 1942, 426–427; Pálsson–Edwards 1968, 13–17; Schier 1970, 72–80, 83; Sveinsson 1981a, 499–507; Zitzelsberger 1970, 72–80, 83; Sveinsson 1981a, 499–507; Zitzelsberger 1986, 4–6; Häme 1987a, 10–11; Mitchell 1993, 206–208; Mundal 2004b, 293–294; Driscoll 2005, 190–199; Tulinius 2000, 242–244, 260–261; Tulinius 2005, 447, 450, 456. *Fornaldarsögur* motives are found in SAXO’s writing. See e.g. Helgason 1934, 198–200. Translated *röðasögur* (‘tales of knights’) and indigenous *röðraröður* named *lygisögor* (‘lying sagas’, literally ‘lie-sagas’, the term is medieval) together with *fornaldarsögur* belong within the comprehensive genre of romance. Most of the *lygisögor* are, on surface at least, bridal-quest narratives and end in wedding(s) and enfronement, but search for adventure is the driving force of the story. These narratives nearly always begin by stating that a certain king or jarl (hero’s father generally) ruled a certain country or region. Driscoll 2005, 190, 199; Glauser 2005, 372. The saga tradition was not completely independent of European literature. In romance sagas the conventions of European romance narrative (castles, courtesy, battlefield, boudoir) influenced the Icelandic narrator. European romance, particularly the French one, had an impact on Norse literature. Many Scandinavians studied on the continent. Also the British Isles were an important source of influence. Many romances were translated into Norse in the 13th century, the first one in 1226. The romances were intended as entertainment of a less serious nature. Pálsson–Edwards 1968, 7–9, 14; Häme 1987a, 238; Tulinius 2000, 244.

17 Finnur JÓNSSON’s edition of the corpus (1912–15) is still the standard one. Frank 1985, 162.
contemporary view of the described event written by somebody who knew the described persons and who often had been an eyewitness to the events, but even here there are elements of uncertainty. We do not know how faithful the saga authors were to the original, preserved verses and verifying authentic verses is difficult. The verses have been through changes also in written form. Skaldic poetry is often very difficult to decipher since it was written in a very schematic manner using stylised formulas and generic descriptions and employing a multitude of so-called kennings. Also, the verses may be coloured by the fact that the poet was writing for an employer. The verses have also been subject to change in their oral state, although it is sometimes thought that they remained relatively unchanged due to their bound form that was also relatively easy to memorise. It is possible that from a very early stage in the transmission of the poetry, interpretive or narrative prose became attached to each stanza. Oral transmission of skaldic verse preserved the title and author of each verse, which contributed to the understanding of each stanza, however, these contextualising details were also subject to reinterpretation over the centuries (e.g. stanzas being assigned to different poets). All in all, it is thought that the verses in most cases are based on historical facts and they take us closer to the events of the past than any other sources. Skaldic verses are an invaluable primary source, transmitting a more authentic pagan tradition than anything in the rest of Germanic literature.18

Historical perspective into study of sagas

Although a number of medieval Scandinavian texts remained known in different parts of Scandinavia,19 most of them had fallen into oblivion by the 17th century. It is generally considered that study of sagas began around 1600 (although there was already interest in the 16th century) when medieval Norse literature was rediscovered, collected (from Iceland instead of Norway that had been the first resort) and scrutinized for the first time by an alien generation. The early research


19 Some Kings’ Sagas remained known throughout the Middle Ages. In Norway the knowledge of medieval Scandinavian texts never quite died out whereas in Denmark only SAXO was known. Andersson 1964, 2–3; Mundal 1977, 9. However, medieval literature survived in Iceland and Icelanders were able to read it. O’Donoghue 2004, 107–108.
was inspired by national historiography, which swept northern Europe in the wake of Italian Renaissance humanism.\footnote{Andersson 1964, 1; Mundal 1977, 9; Jørgensen 2004, 50–52; O’Donoghue 2004, 108; Sigurðsson 2005, 285–286.}

The incentive of the early interest in medieval Norse literature was to find more historical material that could be used in historical works. References in the sagas had guided the scholars to Iceland and the organised collecting of manuscripts began shortly before the year 1600. The early researchers had a blind faith in the authenticity of the Icelandic accounts and it was believed that sagas were reliable sources about actual events in the real world of the Viking Age and to begin with, the idea of historical veracity was automatically transferred to apply not only to Kings’ Sagas that happen to be among the most historical among sagas, but also to the Sagas of Icelanders and \textit{fornaldarsögur}. The unquestioned postulate had it that what was written in the sagas was literally historically true. For a long while nobody\footnote{With the exception of Árni MAGNÚSSON (1663–1730) who in his severe and critical scepticism was well ahead of his time. Andersson 1964, 7–9; Mundal 1977, 13, 16.} questioned this assumption. It was only during the era of Enlightenment that the axiom was gradually challenged. \textit{Fornaldasögur} were considered interesting, since they told about ancient times in Scandinavia and in many cases they were the only source available about the ancient past. Especially Swedish historians wrote pompous, speculative works, based mostly on \textit{fornaldasögur} since these were practically the only ones mentioning Sweden. Once sagas had become better known, the scholars started to ask questions because of the discrepancies in different texts (e.g. varied descriptions of the same event, appearance of gods and supernatural creatures). However, to begin with the historians tried to overcome the difficulties with various explanations that allowed one to believe that sagas were historically correct. Scholars were aware that the events were in many cases much older than the existing written version, but they thought that the sagas had kept their historicity over several centuries, because oral tradition had remained unchanged over time.\footnote{Andersson 1964, 11; Mundal 1977, 9–12; Sigurðsson 2005, 285.}

During the Enlightenment in the 18th century strong criticism against the historical reliability of the sagas was raised by German researchers. Criticism brought with it growing scepticism towards the belief that oral tradition could retain correct historical facts. One started to look at the sagas as literature, not as historical
source, and the belief that oral tradition by nature must be unhistorical gained ground.\textsuperscript{23}

Modern Old Norse scholarship was born of the Romantic movement. The material was systematically classified and studied in increasingly more detail.\textsuperscript{24} The significance of oral tradition has been one of the main issues under debate since the 19th century. The question raised was whether the author of the saga simply wrote down the oral stories in the form they had been inherited or was his role more of an author’s who made modifications and used several sources. Two new concepts introduced by Andreas HEUSLER in 1914 brought a new polarisation into the debate. Freeprose (Freiprosa) theory advocated that the sagas had existed in practically full oral form before being written down with certain literary additions, whereas the Bookprose (Buchprosa) theory supported the notion that oral sources were one of equal sources authors used when the written sagas were formed and gives the authors’ personal influence greater significance and consequently sagas are the literary creation of 13th century antiquarians who may have had some recourse to oral tradition in addition to various literary sources and imagination. There is no real antagonism between the theories, rather it is a matter of grades. Both groups see the same potential sources, but give them different value. Theodore M. ANDERSSON sums up some of the more current views regarding the debate about the role of oral tradition. “The discussion of Icelandic oral tradition lies very much in the region of speculation and logic. The records at our disposal tell nothing about how a saga was told or how it was conferred to parchment.”\textsuperscript{25} “The writer undoubtedly could and did use written sources, supplementary oral sources, his own imagination, and above all his own words, but his art and presumably the framework of his story were given him by tradition. The inspiration of the sagas is ultimately oral.”\textsuperscript{26} Icelandic School, an heir of the Bookprose tradition, is that branch of saga scholarship devoted to the use of the traditional tools of textual and source criticism in the service of determining manuscript and text relations. Literary sources, use of skaldic stanzas, manuscript transmission, dating, authorship, and provenience are matters that are discussed whereas oral background, social and political biases are not. Anthropological

\textsuperscript{23} Mundal 1977, 17–18.
\textsuperscript{24} Andersson 1964, 27–29; Frank 1985, 159.
\textsuperscript{25} Andersson 1964, 129.
\textsuperscript{26} Andersson 1964, 119.
approach marks a difference between historicity of an event and between historicity of social structure and setting.²⁷

1.3 Using sagas as historical source

Since sagas can be seen in so many ways, their validity for research has to be evaluated in some way. Source criticism is the test that is used to decide if historical assertions are scientifically usable and source criticism is of utmost importance in using sagas as source material in historical research. Sources are those materials from which historians construct meanings and critical analysis of sources is the basis of good historical scholarship. Sources are artefacts left by the past and primary sources exist either as relics (“remains”), or as the testimonies of witnesses to the past. Relics/remains offer a clue about the past simply by virtue of their existence since they are a direct trace of the past. Testimonies are the oral or written reports that describe an event, and although not an immediate part of the events of the past, they still are an indirect trace of events. Both types of sources were usually created for the specific purposes of the age in which they were made and it is the task of the historian to uncover the original purpose or function of relics and testimonies. Although it is important to be aware of the nature of the source at hand, sources most often can be seen as part of both groups, depending on viewpoint. This also applies to the sagas that are both part of the time they were written in and offer information about events in the past.²⁸

External source criticism fixes the source as precisely as possible to a certain point in the past (where, when, and by whom, for whom etc.) and is always the prerequisite of internal source criticism, that is concerned with the realism of the source (questions about the intended meaning and reliability of a source). The internal source criticism examines what kind of testimony the action gives or can give of reality and the researcher has the right to be sceptical in regard to how well the source conveys the actual action for there are many reasons why the action would be described in a manner that defers from reality.²⁹


There are three important criteria of source criticism that will also be applied to the sources of this study. Firstly, it is considered that the sources should be contemporary. This means that the source is considered increasingly unreliable when the time between the events and the writing of the source increases. When information is passed on as oral tradition, the content tends to change over time. Secondly, the sources may have tendencies. Things that are presented may only include one point of view whereas some things are not mentioned at all. Antipathies or sympathies towards certain characters may be present due to e.g. political differences. Thirdly, the sources should be evaluated for independence. This means that the information given should be corroborated by some other, completely independent source. It happens two sources may e.g. quote each other word-by-word. Similarity may be seen in vocabulary, in describing the same event in similar manner, or the theme may otherwise be similar, or two sources may include same errors. If two independently created sources agree on a matter, the reliability of each is measurably enhanced. Through source criticism one establishes that there does not exist a scientific reason to distrust information in the source, but even sources that have passed the scrutiny cannot be taken as directly historically correct. One must still apply the use of source criticism in order to use them. A single piece of information about an event can only establish the general contours of the event. The details may not be equally reliable unless another source that is totally independent of the first one verifies these. Again it is important to be aware of any tendencies that may be present in the source. Additionally, one can establish veracity of a piece of information in an indirect manner by using circumstantial evidence that matches the information of the source as a ground for reasoning. For instance, existing circumstances and the fact that something is not mentioned (ex silentio) can be helpful to the researcher. Although the indirect method alone cannot be the basis of the theory, it can nevertheless be helpful if it is applied correctly and with great care.³⁰

Medieval Scandinavian literature as a historical source is rather strange in character. Most of the material is written down a long time after the events and the material includes poems among prose. Nobody would seriously consider using similar material to solve issues of a later date and one can imagine how strange results using similar sources (contemporary verses and texts written several hundred years after the events) would be in regard to e.g. the 17th century.³¹

³¹ Weibull 1964, 56–57, 60–64.
However, we have no other medieval written material available about the Northern European matters, so the existing material is accepted as historical source.\textsuperscript{32}

In saga literature history, telling stories and tradition bound storytelling are mixed together and there clearly are a lot of unhistorical elements in the sagas. There are supernatural elements, formulaic events and formulaic characterisations that could be truthful, but are suspicious since they appear so often. Originally the sagas had two objectives, to instruct and to entertain. Recording historical facts was not their main objective, although sagas contain historical elements. Historical accuracy was not allowed to interfere with the entertaining aspect and many of the most entertaining sagas (fornaldarsögur and riddarasögur) are nearly devoid of all historical information, although they have preserved some saga writing traditions, whereas the Sagas of Icelanders and the Kings’ Sagas have a firm historical basis for much of the material. The process of turning tradition and eyewitness tales into larger epic tales requires conscious or unconscious artistic touch, simplification, dramatising. The social, historical and geographical settings of the sagas set a framework that the author could not disregard in order to appear sufficiently reliable and thus acceptable for the audience. Knowledge of history in Iceland effectively hindered extensive tampering with history, geography and customary beliefs by the author. In general, the information about geographical conditions in the sagas is considered relatively reliable, because there did not exist clear reasons to relate erroneous information concerning geography. The author had a licence to add “flesh to the bones” by adding characters and inventing dialogue, but the traditional story could not be changed beyond recognition and incongruous and anachronistic information had to be avoided. The audience was too knowledgeable to accept extensive changes. However, one should take into consideration in evaluating the sagas from a historical point of view that for the Icelanders the limit of reliable history only went to the beginnings of their own society around c. 850 AD and everything before this was regarded as legendary past and infested with myth. Imaginary elements are also found among the most realistic of sagas, especially when the hero journeys overseas. As long as the environment is known, the author is compelled to present a plausible and recognisable environment, but as soon as the hero leaves his native country, he often enters an alien world. In judging the historical value of a saga, one must take into account its age and type. One may expect more historical facts in a saga that repeats traditional knowledge than in a saga that has novelistic traits. All the information within one saga cannot be judged

\textsuperscript{32} See e.g. Helgason 1934, 129.
to be equally reliable, e.g. it is generally considered that names are more reliable
details than for example dialogue, and it is considered that sagas give more reliable
information about milieu and social structures than of actual events.33

A few thoughts concerning the sources of this study

What can the written sources we have available actually reveal about Bjarmaland?
To begin with, it is important to notice that the viewpoint of the sources is
Scandinavian. This is why Bjarmaland and Bjarmians often are not addressed
directly, but rather information concerning them appears in the texts as a side-
product of accounts of Scandinavians and especially their expeditions. This is also
why we must approach Bjarmaland from two angles. Firstly, there are the
expeditions themselves. Most of the information connected to these does not say
anything about Bjarmaland as such. Instead, a picture emerges of Norwegian-
Bjarmian relations seen from a Norwegian point of view. We learn about the
motivation of these trips, about the participants, and about the manner of
conducting the expeditions. Secondly, we learn about Bjarmaland, seen through
Norse eyes and often indirectly communicated. Scattered information about
location, society, religion, language, contacts, and political situation is revealed.

It is worth noticing that in this study a more detailed introduction to the
provenience of each of the sources is given before the analysis of each of the
excerpts and the aim of this is to fix each source in time and place and give all the
available information about its provenience. The historical reliability of the events
is discussed in the course of the analysis of each excerpt.

On a general level, I consider that the comparatively more reliable sources
about Bjarmaland include Ohthere’s account, Mappa Mundi, Historia Norvegiae,
Landafræði and the two other geographical accounts (AM 764, 4° and AM 736 I,
4°), Ættartal Noregs konúnga (Fagrskinna), Haralds saga hárflagra
(Heimskringla), Egils saga Skallagrímssonar, Landnámabok (Þorgeir
höggvinkinne), Haralds saga gráfeldar, Kormáks saga, Óláfs saga helga
(Heimskringla), Magnús saga berfætts (Heimskringla) and Hákonar saga
Hákonarsonar (Flateyjarbók).

The rest of the sources are either imaginative and/or heavily influenced by
other, earlier sources. Gesta Danorum is a relatively early source and the writer

33 Helgason 1934, 121, 129; Pálsson–Edwards 1968, 7–12, 14; Häme 1987a, 236, 238; Pálsson–Edwards
should have been able to access fairly reliable written and oral sources. The author, however, has used these sources in such a liberal manner that the information has lost much of its authenticity. Reading *Gesta* is like trying to solve a riddle or crack a code. *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka* and *Landnámabók* (Hjörleifr Hörðakonungr) talk about the same characters and in principal the accounts should be reasonably reliable. However, the mentioned events took place centuries before the accounts were written down and this is why a critical look is demanded. *Njáls saga Porgeirssonar*, *Saga Heiðdeks konungs ens vitra* and *Áns saga Bogsveigis* all relate long ago events and this calls for a critical attitude. *Ǫrvar-Odds saga* is one of the oldest *fornaldarsögur* (Mythical-Heroic Sagas). However, the story is put together from such a variety of impulses that nearly all originality of information is gone. *Pattir Hauks hábrókar* (Flateyjarbók), *Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar*, *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs*, *Sturlaug s saga starfsama*, *Hálfdanar saga Brönufostra* and *Eymundar saga* (Flateyjarbók) all include imaginative elements and most of the texts borrow heavily from earlier material. *Annálar Íslenzkir* are of a late date and do not include original material since they are in all probability based on sagas.

Only about half of the sources can be regarded as reliable sources even in the widest meaning of the concept. It is worth noticing that not all of these sources, either, can be regarded as equally reliable, and one has to retain a critical attitude even towards those texts that are deemed as comparatively reliable. Also, the scope of the information the texts yield is limited, and even the more realistic sources contain repetitions about the same events. It is likely that the texts are based on same sources and one cannot consider that the sources independently corroborate each other. Within this collection of texts I consider that those texts that belong to more reality oriented genres are more reliable than those that belong to more fantasy style genres. Certain information is repeated in several texts of different genres and the oldest version should be considered as more reliable than later ones. For instance, *fornaldarsögur* copy information from Kings’ Sagas, but elaborate details, probably manufactured by the author. The Kings’ Sagas are older and thus more reliable. Generally speaking, if some features appear in several of the more reliable sources, it is more likely that they are based on reality, whereas if a certain piece of information is only mentioned in less reliable sources, it is rather likely that it is unreliable.

General criteria for reliability concern aspects like the distance in time between the event and the text. In regard to sagas that mention Bjarmaland, the demand for contemporaneity is strictly speaking never met. A few sources were written a short time after the events, but in most cases the gap is centuries long. However,
Ohthere’s account is as good as contemporary and Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar was written down only decades after the events. We may guess that the more geographical texts (Historia Norvegiae, Mappa Mundi, geographical accounts) convey the geographical image at the time of the writing. Additionally, those texts that claim skaldic verses (Fagrskinna, Egils saga Skallagrímssonar, Haralds saga gráfeldar) as source could be seen as reflecting a secondhand, interpreted image of contemporary sources. However, none of the sources are a direct result of the described events and consequently all the sources about Bjarmaland must be considered as giving secondhand information. At best the texts are at least partially based on eyewitness accounts, but these accounts may be up to several centuries older (cf. skaldic verses) than the sagas.

It has been said that when skaldic verses are historical, they take us closer to events than any other source about late prehistorical/early medieval Scandinavia.34 The sources containing skaldic verses or claiming the verses as source (Fagrskinna, Egils saga Skallagrímssonar, Haralds saga gráfeldar) may be thus regarded as relatively reliable. It is generally considered that the skaldic verses contain reliable information despite the fact that the verses are only preserved to us through the saga authors’ presentation. It must be considered that in many cases the verses are authentic and convey a contemporary view of events as opposed to most sagas that were often written several hundreds of years after the events. The information given by the verses is generally considered as slightly more reliable than the rest of the saga information, despite the possible corruption of the verses over the centuries and author’s influence. After all, the verses in many cases represent a view as close to the contemporary views as we can get. Mostly the verses refer to only a few events in each saga, so the whole account may not be equally reliable, only the parts that are touched by the verses.35

As for the possible tendencies in sagas, it is clear that sagas are not devoid of partiality, on the contrary, it is in the very nature of the sagas to be partial.36 In the case of Bjarmaland, one should be aware of not just politically coloured description, but be wary of conventions that may foreshadow the actual circumstances. Due to the nature of both skaldic verses and the tradition of saga writing, one may assume that the role of the Norwegian kings in regard to

34 Weibull 1964, 60–64; Whaley 2000, 167.
36 Authors could have political, national or artistic tendencies. Additionally, contemporary influences were woven into the stories about the past. Weibull 1964, 60–64; Mundal 1977, 217.
Bjarmaland expeditions may be somewhat exaggerated and one may even assume politico-economical motivation in depicting the involvement of the kings.

Since there are very few written sources about the late prehistorical and early medieval period in Scandinavia, it is almost impossible to find other, contemporary independent sources that could verify the information found in the sagas.\textsuperscript{37} It is clear that a lot of the saga literature is interdependent\textsuperscript{38}, but it is a possibly fruitful approach to try to decipher among the sources of this study those that possibly are not based on the same sources as the rest. Ohthere’s account is independent of the rest of the sources. Håkonar saga is as good as contemporary and thus does not rely on the same, up to centuries old sources or earlier works as the rest of the sagas. Historia Norvegiae is among the oldest sources, but this does not exempt this text from being, at least partially, based on same sources than the rest of the saga material. The rest of the Kings’ Sagas probably used same sources, at least partially. The Bjarmaland image in fornaldarsögur most likely largely derives from the accounts in Kings’ Sagas, or in the very least from the same sources. Occasional nearly verbatim quotations and closely related subject matter make this assumption highly likely.

It is worth noticing that although the sagas may not yield much direct information about the actual historical events, it is possible at times to decipher (often indirect) information about a number of conditions regarding Bjarmaland (e.g. general milieu and social structures). However, the excerpts about Bjarmaland are quite short and one should not expect to be able to read too much additional information between the lines. Also behind the more fantasy-filled accounts one could expect to find some contours of historical reality, but separating the facts from fiction is mere guesswork, and not much credence can be given to the assumptions, especially if the information is not verified by more reliable sources.

Considering the often ambiguous nature of the sagas as historical source, I find it of utmost importance to be able to set the written sources in their context, i.e. to define when they were written, where, by whom and in what purpose and what parts (if any) can be considered as historically reliable and why. In the course of the analysis I will try to trace sources of the information, interdependence and other factors like that in order to evaluate the historical value of each of the sources in more detail. Although the main aim is to find out as much as possible of the real historical Bjarmaland, the nature of the sources indicates that certain features may

\textsuperscript{37} Helgason 1934, 125; Andersson 1964, 95, 108, 131; Mundal 1977, 217; O’Donoghue 2004, 36.

\textsuperscript{38} Andersson 1964, 95.
be less historical and can be more understood from the viewpoint of how the written sources emerged.

Why are we told what we are told about Bjarmaland? What topics did the writers take up? Details of Bjarmaland appear as a side product of Norwegian activities (that among other things included expeditions to Bjarmaland). The main purpose of the stories was not to relate details about Bjarmaland, but to describe Norwegian expeditions and thus the information we get is limited in details and scope. Details are mentioned in order to make the activities understandable and at times more lively. In practise everything that is mentioned has the purpose to promote the current storyline. In other words, what is told about Bjarmaland is dictated by the storyline and details all give a meaning to the story. Of course, a bit of local colour may add spice to the story, but in general the saga style was very concise and does not revel in description of minute details in the case of Bjarmaland, either. Some details, however, are required in order to make the story intelligible and more captivating. One may guess that details are dependent on both the available sources and the general knowledge of the author, as well as the style of the writing, i.e. if the author wished to convey a factual image or was prone to more entertaining account with invented details and even elements of pure fantasy.

We hear about the means and route of travelling to Bjarmaland and about the number, and sometimes the identity, of the Norwegian participants. We hear about interaction between the Norwegian travellers and the Bjarmians and in the course of describing this, some details of the language and religious habits of the Bjarmians are mentioned. In a more indirect way we can deduce something about how and where the Bjarmians lived and who they might have been. A few details in some of the accounts hint that either the authors, or rather the sources (especially skaldic verses but possibly also oral accounts) they used, might have had intimate and detailed knowledge of the Bjarmians. Additionally, purely geographical descriptions convey the current geographical understanding the Norwegians had regarding their neighbouring areas. In regard to the Kings’ Sagas, one may guess that the authors included Bjarmaland episodes because “Viking” expeditions in general would enhance the heroic image of the king and including Bjarmaland could also serve to promote the kings’ economical interests in the north.

39 Generally, sagas describe individual people, not political or general history, and they do not contain descriptions that do not have direct connection with the events - landscape or interiors are not described for their own sake. Helgason 1934, 135–136.
40 About the sources generally see e.g. Andersson 1985, 222–223.
Where did the writers obtain the information concerning Bjarmaland? It is largely unknown how the authors obtained their information concerning Bjarmaland. In some cases skaldic verses were used as source and on one occasion (Ohthere’s account) the text is based on firsthand experience, i.e. the informant had himself travelled to Bjarmaland. Some scholars have noted that Ohthere’s account resembles an interview where the questions are not shown. Anton ENGLERT has even suggested that the story about Ohthere’s 15–day journey to the Beormas may have been the very reason why the account was included in OE Orosius.41 We may assume that there existed a number of accounts (both oral and written)42 that contained descriptions of expeditions to Bjarmaland. One may assume that many of the accounts were originally based on information obtained from people who had travelled to Bjarmaland themselves. It is unknown if any of the authors had been to Bjarmaland themselves, although the skalds are known to have followed their employers. We may assume that at least some of the sources behind the preserved accounts of Bjarmaland were based on accounts where either the author, or more likely the informant had been to Bjarmaland. However, nearly all information preserved to us is at best a retelling of firsthand experience. At worst we are faced with totally invented details and uneducated interpretations of earlier accounts.43

In regard to the sources of this study, it is not always possible to tell where the authors obtained their information about Bjarmaland. The sources themselves reveal that skaldic verses were used in some cases and we can presume that there existed additional oral information. A number of early sagas are lost to us, but assumably the authors of later sagas had access at least to parts of earlier written accounts and used the information they encountered. As to where the authors obtained the information of the early accounts, it is impossible to say with any

41 Englert 2007, 117–118.
42 It is generally considered that alongside the written material there existed a rich oral literary culture that included myth, legend, fictionalised history, factual history, folklore, genealogical material, and storytelling of all kinds. By the 13th century this material was being written up, copied down, collected, compiled, analysed, commented on, recycled, reshaped, extended, developed and refined in both prose and verse. Weibull 1964, 60–64; Quinn 2000, 31, 46; O’Donoghue 2004, 62.
43 Authors wished to achieve a continuous story and modified the material by filling in the blanks that were left by the sources. Although the authors were not critical in a manner that corresponds today’s standards, to an extent they used objective and critical thinking in choosing the most reliable tradition. Weibull 1964, 60–64. The information authors worked with was a subject of changes in both oral and written versions. Each narrator remembered things in his way and could involuntarily confuse things like similar sounding names or episodes that in some way resembled each other. In regard to the written versions scribal errors are possible and authors could also misinterpret sources. Andersson 1964, 108, 131.
certainty in any detail, but most likely they drew their material from various oral sources.

For what kind of audience were the texts aimed for? What kind of motives did the authors have? As a rule Bjarmaland is but a minor element of a larger narrative and consequently we must consider that the intended audience of the texts that mention Bjarmaland was the same as the intended audience of any other medieval Scandinavian literature. It is, however, worth noticing that Bjarmaland is mentioned in a variety of genres intended for different audiences. Along with the assumption that the audience of the texts that mention Bjarmaland was the same as the audience of any other medieval Scandinavian literature, goes the notion that the audience of each genre was probably expected to be knowledgeable at least to some extent about the various locations and peoples that were mentioned in the texts. This is why extensive and detailed explanations would have been superfluous, but it is uncertain as to whether the audience was expected to be able to judge the veracity of the details that are mentioned. At least as far as the more realistic type genres go, it is likely that the audience was supposed to have some background knowledge and consequently could be expected to some extent to make judgements regarding the truthfulness of the presented details on many of the elements of the story. The author probably intended to entertain the audience, but also record things that had happened in the past. As for the more fantasy style literature, probably the audience rather expected exotic details than something out of their own world of experience and perhaps the authors were rather more prone to try to impress and entertain the audience than anything else.

Did the content of the accounts evolve or was the same information passed on? It is difficult to see any evolvement of factual information concerning Bjarmaland. The basic line remains the same for as long as the accounts seem realistic, and even beyond this. Trade and plundering are the main motives. The more imaginative accounts differ from this model, but we are no longer dealing with fact and this later evolvement must be connected with change in the tradition of writing and general alienation from firsthand knowledge of Bjarmaland as a result of lessened contact. There is a slight difference between the oldest source and the rest in that the oldest account does not bring up either trade or plundering as such. However, this difference may well be explained by the fact that the oldest account was written down by a foreign scribe. Although the informant had personally been to Bjarmaland, it was not his choice what details the scribe chose to put down and consequently the informant’s original story may well have included a number of other, unrecorded details that the scribe did not deem interesting enough to include.
One can guess that the continuation of motifs is dependent on both the tradition and purpose of the writing (ie. that similar motifs were considered interesting and were described in rather unanimous, conventional style), as well as the used sources (e.g. formulaic skaldic verses). One can also guess that the later accounts do not bring anything new and tangible, because by the time of their writing the personal connection to Bjarmaland was not so common any more and the writing was based directly on older accounts (and possibly also on the same sources as before) and these only included certain details that were repeated also in the younger accounts. It may also have become increasingly difficult to understand the sources and one may guess that understanding e.g skaldic verses may have been difficult centuries after the events.
2 Bjarmaland in historiography

2.1 On the borderline between source and research

In the case of Bjarmaland, it is difficult to decide where to draw the line between sources and research. Since the earliest literary reference in the 9th century the name Bjarmaland appears regularly in writing. There is no problem in classifying the earliest Scandinavian texts as sources but texts written after the 14th century pose to some extent a problem of interpretation. The problem arises with a break in the tradition.

Strictly speaking the sources about the Bjarmians end around the middle of the 13th century. The later Scandinavian saga tradition (after the 13th century) is already far removed from historical fact. However, those texts that mention Bjarmaland are closely related to earlier, more realistic texts and the 14th century Scandinavian texts that follow the saga tradition can still be treated as sources.44

After about 1400 there is over a century of silence about Bjarmaland. Towards the middle of the 16th century Bjarmaland again appears in writing, but the question remains whether after this relatively long silent period this word still had the same meaning as before.

The presentation of Bjarmaland in texts written after the 14th century is to some extent connected with the earlier saga tradition but distance in time is so great that there is hardly any historical connection. The later texts portray the image of Bjarmaland that prevailed at the time of the writing but it is unclear whether this image was more dependent on living tradition or on interpretation of earlier written accounts.

I find that in many respects the early scholars had to start with blank paper, i.e. by the 16th century the Bjarmians had become “extinct” in the meaning that the descendents of the Bjarmar were no longer commonly known with this name and generally there no longer existed any certain knowledge as to who they were or where they once had lived. In principle one must consider that the possibility of living tradition about the ethnicity and location of Bjarmaland should have been greater in the 16th century than later on because the longer time passes, the more is forgotten. However, it appears that the 16th century writers expressed their opinion

44 Also Scandinavian folk-literature (Icelandic rímur, Færoese ballads and the folkeviser) contains possible references to Bjarmaland but the topic is according to ROSS “difficult”. See Ross 1940, 29 footnote 3. In any case, rímur only originated in the early part of the 14th century so their value as historical source is secondary. Hughes 2005, 206.
about Bjarmaland at least partially based on the earlier written sources and thus their texts must be seen as research. It is considered that study of sagas began in the early 17th century. It was at this point that Norse medieval literature was rediscovered. This means that there had been a period when the old Norse manuscripts were not generally known. This would have contributed in forgetting the location of Bjarmaland and could mean that by the 16th century the content of the written sources would have been mostly forgotten with the exception of SAXO that remained known. Actually, the writings of MAGNUS brothers who were among the first to comment Bjarmaland rely on SAXO a great deal.

In the 16th century Bjarmaland first appeared in a number of maps. Olaus MAGNUS’s *Carta marina* of 1539 and a map in *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (1555) placed Bjarmaland on the Kola Peninsula. Following the example of these two maps Bjarmaland was located on the Kola Peninsula in a number of later maps including several of Gerhard MERCATOR’s 16th century maps (1541 and 1595), Sebastian MÜNSTER’s *Cosmographia* of 1548, Abraham ORTELIUS’s *Theatrum orbis terrarum* of 1570 and Johannes SCHEFFERUS’s *Lapponia* of 1673. Other maps mentioning Bjarmaland include J. and B. van DOETICHUM’s map (*Tabula hydrographica, tum maris Baltici…tum Septentrionalis Oceani navigationem continens*) printed in 1589 in Amsterdam where “Biarmia” is found due south of Vardø and Joris CAROLUS’s map of 1614.

Bjarmaland also appears in a few documents from the 16th century. As interesting as these references are, they cannot be regarded as sources. Again, the main reason is discontinuity in time and tradition. These references are much later than the previous known references and the prevailing opinion seems to be that Bjarmaland references of the 16th century are in fact based on information of the sagas. This is also stated at least in some of the documents.
Instruction issued to the Dano-Norwegian emissaries (dated to 14th May 1595) for the meeting suggested by Christian IV to determine the frontier with Russia in Kola mentions Bermelandt. This has been interpreted as merely a vague reference to the Bjarmaland voyages of the sagas (and Scandinavian medieval literature in general) and actually the document refers to the fifth book of SAXO’s *Gesta Danorum* and to Sebastian MÜNSTER’s *Cosmographia*. Bjarmaland is also mentioned in a letter of Ivan IV to Karl V of 1556 (preserved in Danmarks Rigsarkiv in Copenhagen).

Johannes MAGNUS wrote in *Gothorum Sveonumque historia* (originally printed in 1554) that “--Biarmiam suppolarem regionem: que in Vltieriorem & Citeriorem dividitur”. With this he interpreted SAXO’s remark “in ulteriorem Byarmiam navigant” as referring to twofold division of Bjarmaland. Also Johannes MAGNUS’s brother Olaus MAGNUS interpreted SAXO in similar way. In *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (1555) he wrote (in Liber Primus) “Biarmia duplex. Diuiditur autem Biarmia, secundum Saxonem Sialandicum, in ulteriorem & citeriorem.”

Olaus MAGNUS rephrased all the Bjarmaland plots in *Gesta Danorum* except one (in Liber Tertius) and added his own interpretation and many details. The twofold division of Bjarmaland introduced in the middle of the 16th century has had a long lasting effect and the notion is carried on to present day.

Many researchers including Alan S. C. ROSS (1940) consider that Olaus MAGNUS’s *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* is one of the sources about Bjarmaland. I have come to the conclusion that it is an interpretation of Bjarmaland references in *Gesta Danorum*. Consequently, it is not really a source in its own right but rather represents very early research. In his work we can see the 16th century idea about Bjarmaland based on SAXO’s writing as well as Olaus’s own interpretation of events that happened many centuries earlier.

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50 SAXO remained known in Denmark throughout the Middle Ages and in the early 16th century new edition of *Gesta Danorum* was available. Andersson 1964, 3; Mundal 1977, 9.
51 Johnsen 1923, 99–100, 312–314; Ross 1940, 41 footnote 22. ROSS finds it an impossible and unprofitable task to list all the references to Bjarmaland from the 16th century onwards.
52 Magnus 1617, 10, 91, 192.
55 Olaus MAGNUS describes the Saami and the Bjarmians in a similar way and this feature is also found on occasion in SAXO. Perhaps Olaus MAGNUS mixed the Saami and the Bjarmians not only because SAXO did that as well but also partially because the Bjarmians were not really known anymore and it had become unclear who they were and how they lived.
Richard HAKLUYT’s book of 1589 connected Ohthere’s destination on the White Sea with the Northern Dvina River.\textsuperscript{56} This association has been persistent, although it appears that it gained wider popularity only from the 18\textsuperscript{th} century onwards.

2.2 Fantasy and long-living theories (1600–1800)

During the 17\textsuperscript{th} century European historians tried to discover a great past for their nation. According to the prevailing philosophy the researchers built a past that went back to Deluge and the characters of the Bible. The idea of Gothic origin of the Swedes was presented already during the 15\textsuperscript{th} century. The brothers Johannes and Olaus MAGNUS are early representatives of this tradition that dominated Swedish history in the 16\textsuperscript{th}–17\textsuperscript{th} centuries. Olof VERELIUS and his followers had a blind faith in the authenticity of the Icelandic accounts. Scholars like Petrus BÅNG and Olof RUDBECK were trying to construct as great a past for the Swedish people as possible. However, alongside this dominant view a more realistic approach existed (e.g. Sven LAGERBRING, A. L. SCHLÖZER). This more realistic view of science engendered by the Enlightenment was born already in the late 17\textsuperscript{th} century, but it took a long time before it actually took hold in Sweden and Finland for real. “Latter-day Rudbeckianism” survived until the middle of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century (e.g. Erik Julius BJÖRNER), but dissolved gradually. In Finland imaginary history continued a good while and is represented by e.g. Daniel JUSLENIUS (\textit{Aboa vetus et nova} 1700). However, by the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century some of the more fictitious views (e.g. connection between Finnish and Hebrew) had become old-fashioned.\textsuperscript{57}

The 17\textsuperscript{th} century saw the actual beginnings of Bjarmaland research. This has to do with the gradually increasing knowledge of medieval Scandinavian written sources\textsuperscript{58} as well as the general increase in historical study. Some 17\textsuperscript{th} century scholars placed Bjarmaland on the Kola Peninsula in accordance with the tradition from the previous century and in many of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century theories the White Sea area is included, but the location has become extended. Two important and long living theories developed since the late 17\textsuperscript{th} century. The older of these two theories identifies Bjarmalnd with the Perm’ area and the other one situates Bjarmaland at the Northern Dvina River. Often the supporters of the latter theory placed the

\textsuperscript{56} Hakluyt 1965, 399–400, 599.
\textsuperscript{58} Organised collecting of saga manuscripts began in Iceland in the 17\textsuperscript{th} century. Häme 1987a, 11.
central Bjarnian trading place to Cholmogory/Holmogory/Kholmogory\textsuperscript{59}, i.e. the predecessor of the city of Archangel. The 17\textsuperscript{th} century saw a number of clearly imaginative theories about the location of Bjarmaland. The appearance of obviously fanciful and academically constructed theories may indicate that what first-hand knowledge or living tradition there may have been left previously, was now lost or at least essentially faded. Also the first nationalistic theories appeared.

In a map originally published in 1626 Andreas BUREUS placed Bjarmaland in that part of Lapland that stretches between Vardø and the White Sea and that is called Trinnes/Pyheniemi/Terchana voloch. BUREUS found that the name Bjarmaland derives from the Finnish word Vaaramaa that refers to a land with mountains.\textsuperscript{60}

Olof VERELIUS (in Latin Olao Verelio) seemed to think in an edition of Herrauds och Bosa saga (1666) that Bjarmaland and Lapland were the same. As a source of his ideas he referred to SAXO (location next to Scricfinnia), to Olaus and Johannes MAGNUS (e.g. division in two), Andreas BUREUS (e.g. Varama etymology) and the sagas (Óláfs saga helga).\textsuperscript{61}

Johannes SCHEFFERUS (Lapponia originally published in 1673) found that Bjarmaland was located in Lapland. His opinion seems to be that Bjarmaland and Scridfinland were identical (since Norse sources never mention Scridfinland and foreign authors never mention Bjarmaland). According to SCHEFFERUS, Bjarmians were Finnish as indicated by the word “Jomala”. He found that Bjarmians were the oldest immigrants that moved to Lapland from Finland. Later on the Bjarmians assimilated with the Saami. He also found that Gandvik is identical with the Bothnian Bay. He referred to the brothers Johannes and Olaus MAGNUS, Bösasaga and SAXO as his sources.\textsuperscript{62}

Petrus (Petro) BÅNG identified Bjarmaland with the Åland Islands in his book Priscorum Sveo-Gothorum Ecclesia (1675) basing his theory on the similarities between the place name Jomala in Åland and the temple of Jomali in Bjarmaland.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{59} Kholmogory is situated on the delta of the Northern Dvina River around 100 km from the sea. Hansen–Olsen 2004, 155–157. It is considered that Kholmogory grew into administrative and economic center by the 12\textsuperscript{th} century. Its appearance was instigated by permanent Russian settlements on the lower reaches of the Northern Dvina River. Nosov–Ovsyannikov–Potin 1992, 13, 16.

\textsuperscript{60} Bure 1985, 52.

\textsuperscript{61} Verelio 1666, 71–73.

\textsuperscript{62} Schefferus 1956, 44, 46–48, 92–93, 151. In the French version of the Lapponia (Histoire de la Laponie 1678) SCHEFFERUS placed Bjarmaland on the Kola Peninsula in the map drawn by the royal geographer R. P. Aug. LUBIN, but in the text he stated that he is prone to think that Bjarmaland was the same area for the local writers as Scritfinnia was for the foreign writers. Haavio 1965, 21, 28–29.

\textsuperscript{63} Bång 1675, 262–272.
Olof RUDBECK identified Bjarmaland with Perm’ in a book popularly known as *Atlantica* (1675). In the second part of *Atlantica* from 1689 he wrote with a reference to SCHIEFFERUS’s *Lapponia* and SAXO that Bjarmaland was the same as (Russian) Lapland (i.e. Perm’).64

Daniel JUSLENIUS was a Finnish nationalist and wrote in his local-patriotic work *Aboa vetus et nova* (1700) that the Bjarmians were a powerful ancient Finnish tribe. He identified the city of the Bjarmians with Turku by the Aurajoki River in southwestern Finland.65

Philipp Johann von STRAHLENBERG developed further the idea of Bjarmaland-Perm’ theory that was presented by RUDBECK and in his book *Das Nord- und Östliche Theil von Europa und Asia* (1730) he identified Bjarmaland with the Perm’ area in Russia.66 This opinion gained immense popularity.67 Connection between Bjarmaland and Perm’ was accepted by Russian scholars as an axiom. Starting with the *Old Russian History* (1766) by M. V. LOMONOSOV, a great number of Russian historians identified Bjarmaland with Perm’. The early supporters of the theory include among others Valeri N. TATIŠČEV.68

One of the earliest supporters of STRAHLERGENG’s theory was Matthias HALLENIUS who wrote in *De Borea-Fennia* (1732) that amongst the many theories about the location of Bjarmaland the one identifying Bjarmaland with Perm’ seems the most probable.69

According to Erik Julius BJÖRNER (*Nordiska Kämpa Dater I en Sagoflock Samlade Om forna Kongar och Hjältar 1737*) Bjarmaland was once situated in the northern part of Medelpad and southern part of Ångermanland in Sweden. As a source for this claim he refers to *rímur* that he allegedly had found.70

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64 Rudbek 1675, 33; Radbeck 1689, 158, 561.
66 Strahlenberg 1730, 181–182.
67 The Bjarmaland/Perm’ theory remained popular for a long time, until the 1890’s. However, the views of the adherents were not unanimous about the details. First of all, the meaning of Perm’ was not the same for all of them. Some saw it as a territorial name (Perm’ the Great or Perm’ on the Vycegda), others thought it designated ethnicity (Perm’ gave their name to Bjarmians, although they could live anywhere in the north). Location of Bjarmaland was dependent on whether the scholar knew the Scandinavian written sources or not. Those acquainted with Bjarmaland of the sagas on the “Vína” River located their Bjarmaland on either the Northern Dvina River or on the White Sea. Alternatively, Bjarmaland could grow into enormous proportions if it was still connected with the White Sea and the Northern Dvina, but at the same time included also the Perm’ provinces. See Jackson 1992b, 122–123.
69 Hallenius 1732, 15–16.
70 Björner 1737, 4–5, 18. BJÖRNER’s theory from 1737 that Bjarmaland was located in northern Medelpad and southern Ångermanland gained a strong supporter in G. A. SILFVERSTOLPE (1813). Iduna 1818, 81; Calamnius 1864, 64; Haavio 1965, 22.
In 1525 Paulus JOVIUS wrote about Northern Dvina and the account of Othere’s journey was printed in the 1590’s.\textsuperscript{71} In principle both Northern Dvina and Othere’s account could have been known to the 17\textsuperscript{th} century researchers. However, it took a long time before they were employed in connection with Bjarmaland and it was actually only in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century that the researchers included these elements in theories about Bjarmaland.

The earliest reference to Northern Dvina in connection with Bjarmaland seems to be in Thormod TORFÆUS’ (also known as Þormóður Torfason) book from 1711. He located Bjarmaland by the Northern Dvina River and Archangel.\textsuperscript{72}

The Swedish historian Sven LAGERBRING wrote in Swea Rikes Historia (1769) that Bjarmaland was located by the Northern Dvina River and also Othere reached this river. He also found that the Bjarmians had their own kings who were paying taxes to the kings of Jotunheim.\textsuperscript{73}

H. G. PORTHAN (in papers originally published in 1784 and 1790) identified Othere’s destination as the Northern Dvina River and considered that the Bjarmians were of Finnish origin.\textsuperscript{74}

Although ROSS includes Sagan af Huld drottningu hinni ríku in his comprehensive list of sources\textsuperscript{75} I have come to the conclusion that due to its extremely late dating it should rather be seen as prose literature that takes inspiration in earlier accounts of Bjarmaland. According to Konrad MAURER, Sagan af Huld drottningu hinni ríku was probably influenced by many other texts that at the time of the writing were available in printed form.\textsuperscript{76} Two totally different versions of Huldarsaga are known to us.\textsuperscript{77} The younger version that is dated as late as the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century does not mention Bjarmaland. The older version that mentions Bjarmaland is first mentioned in literature in 1775 and it is clear (e.g. on basis of the language and names) that it, too, was written late. A number of references testify that Huldarsaga and more generally Huld as a character were known in the 13\textsuperscript{th} century Scandinavia, but the earlier versions of the saga are lost to us. We can deduce that the early versions cannot have had much in common with

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\textsuperscript{71} Richter 1967, 118, 120.
\textsuperscript{72} Torfæi 1711, 163–165. The same location is found in August Ludv. SCHLÖZER (Allgemeine nordische Geschichte 1771). See Iduna 1818, 99, 101; Julku 1986, 14.
\textsuperscript{73} Lagerbring 1769, 316, 319–320.
\textsuperscript{74} Porthan 1859, 39–42, 53; Porthan 1873, 67.
\textsuperscript{75} Ross 1940, 63.
\textsuperscript{76} Maurer 1894, 27–28.
\textsuperscript{77} ROSS notes that there is no reference to Bjarmaland in the shorter version (Sagan af Huld hinni miklu og fjölkunnugu trölldröttningu) of the highly fantastic Huldarsaga, but in the longer version (Sagan af Huld drottningu hinni ríku) Bjarmaland appears. Ross 1940, 63.
the currently remaining versions, besides the common name. There is no sign of *Huldarsaga* in any sources from the end of the 13th century until the end of the 18th century. Different arguments have been made to support the notion that the older preserved version of *Huldarsaga* could be of fairly early date whereas others have argued that it could not in any case be older than of the late 14th century. However, considering all the evidence there seems to be no doubt that the older version of the saga was written only in the 17th or the 18th century.78 Bjarmaland appears as a mere name in the saga and on the basis of references to a northern location (and association with Gandvik) as well as references to a temple one can assume that the author was familiar with (the printed versions of) at least some earlier sagas that mention Bjarmaland. The story is saturated with fantasy and it is needless to repeat the story here.79

The runic manuscript *Historia Hialmari Regis Biarmlandiae atque Thulemarkiae* (1690 or 1698/1700) that is accepted as a forgery of the late 17th century can be mentioned as an interesting anecdote.80 The existence of such a forgery is an indication that at least some of the medieval Scandinavian written sources mentioning Bjarmaland were accessible to those who were interested and that those sources were at times used in quite a liberal manner.81

78 Maurer 1894, 3, 6, 11, 13–22, 37–38, 40–41, 44–45, 53.
81 The anonymous article (signed only by “R.”) published in *Iduna* in 1818 gives historiographical overview (referring to authors like Johan MESSENIUS (1612) who found Bjarmaland belonged to Sweden and ADLERBETH (1786) who identified Bjarmaland with Perm’) and goes through a number of written sources including some very late and imaginative ones (all with reference to BJÖRNER who...
2.3 Nationalism and foundations of modern research (1800–1900)

In the 1810’s the German romanticism reached Finland. This gave rise to national feeling that is one typical feature of this kind of philosophy. Strong nationalism within history was an international trend at this time. Finnish national feeling (so-called fennofilia) had begun to develop in the 18th century. Fennofilia turned into so-called fennomania, a stronger and more active national feeling in the 1840’s and history was one of the weapons that was used to promote nationalistic feelings. Finland’s new position under Russia made Finland more independent, which made the search for national identity even more important than before. Romantic historiorraphy saw ancient times as strongly positive and ancient history started to interest scholars. Studying the distant past offered an opportunity to decipher the special characteristics of the Finnish people. History was actively used as a means to build a national identity and portrayal of the ancient past offered the possibility to see the past as the great era of the Finnish tribes. The strong national feeling may have promoted at times somewhat lively interpretations of the past, but alongside the prevailing nationalism the early 19th century saw a renewed interest in sources. Documents were collected and organised. First source publications were printed in the 1820’s and the activity level went up in the 1840’s. This shows that the approach to history was turning more fact oriented.

It can be considered that modern Bjarmaland research began in the early 19th century. To begin with the research was coloured by romantic and nationalistic feelings that prevailed at the time. Nevertheless, the most fanciful theories were gradually abandoned and there is continuity in the research from the 19th century until today.

In Finland the Bjarmians provided a great past for the Finns. It was thought that the “wealthy and prosperous” Bjarmians (who were considered “Finnish”) had once ruled over a vast area and the Bjarmaland/Perm’ theory remained popular for

reproduced them: Bodwar Bjartes Saga, Samson Fagres Saga and Rim om Carl och Grymur, Svea Konungar, samt om Hialmar, Konung Hareks son i Biarmaland) that later on have not been counted as proper sources. See Iduna 1818, 78–173.

82 Also in Norway nationalism had an important role within historical study. Tommila 1989, 61, 65–66, 68, 71, 76, 83–84, 89. Historical studies were increasingly written in Finnish. To begin with J. V. SNELLMAN was a leading figure of the “fennomaanit” and his work was continued in the 1860’s by Yrjö KOSKINEN who had national aims in mind while writing about history. Tommila 1989, 83, 89. See also Howell–Prevenier 2001, 9–10.

a long time. During the 19th century popular notions within Bjarmaland research included identifications with Karelians and Zavoločskaja Čud’. Bjarmaland still often stretched from the White Sea to Volga and Kama although there were critical voices that opposed identification between the Bjarmians and the Permians. It was often thought that the economical center of Bjarmaland lay around the Northern Dvina River and Cholmogory.

Julius KLAPROTH wrote in *Asia Polygotta* (originally printed in 1823) that “Biarmia” of the Icelandic sagas was located by the Northern Dvina River and should not be connected with the Perm’ area.

The first monographies about Finnish history appeared in the early 1800’s by German (Friedr. RÜHS 1809) and Russian scholars. RÜHS saw early Finnish society as undeveloped but this was contradicted by e.g. ARVIDSSON who published a revised version of RÜHS’s history in 1827. According to Adolf Ivar ARVIDSSON (1827) Bjarmaland was located by the White Sea and stretched from the southeast coast of the White Sea and the Arctic Ocean to the Northern Dvina River and all the way to rivers Volga and Kama, the Ural Mountains and Pechora. According to him, Bjarmaland was the most remarkable area of the Finnish (speaking) tribes, both powerful and rich, and the Bjarmians the most civilised of the Finnish tribes. The main trading place was located by Holmgård/Cholmogor by the Northern Dvina River. He connected the name “Savolochie” (i.e. Zavolochye) with the words “savolax” and “savolainen” (inhabitant of the Savo area in Finland) and based on this claimed that the Bjarmians could have been of Savo origin. He further found that the Norwegian expeditions came to an end after Bjarmaland was subjugated by Novgorod.

Joh. Andreas SJÖGREN (*Die Syrjänen, ein historisch-statistisch-philologischer Versuch* originally published in 1829) found that Bjarmaland and Perm’ were identical. He further found that Ohthere’s destination was the Northern

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84 It is interesting to notice that many Finnish authors and artists let themselves be inspired by the romantic aspects of Bjarmaland. Eino LEINO wrote about “Perma” on several occasions (*Suur-Suomi in 1896, Perman taru in 1902 and Vienan valta*). Also Juhani AHO (*Panu from 1897*), Joel LEHTONEN (*Pirm from 1904*), Onni OKKONEN (*Raida ja Jagmort from 1919*) and Akseli GALLEN-KALLELA (*Pirm Junala from 1924*) were inspired by Bjarmaland. Haavio 1965, 8–9.
85 E.g. Swedish scholar Jacob ADLERBETH (1813) wrote that the Bjarmians were the same as the Komi (i.e. Zyrians, i.e. Permians) and that Bjarmaland stretched from Kazan to the White Sea and the Arctic Ocean. Haavio 1965, 22–23.
86 Klaproth 1831, 185.
87 Tommila 1989, 62.
Dvina River. He thought that Cholmogory was the center of Bjarmaland and that the name Cholmogory derived from the Scandinavian “Holmgård”.89

Jacob FELLMAN wrote in his notes (published in 1906 but originally written between 1820 and 1831) that Bjarmians lived by the rivers on the coastal zone of the White Sea. On several occasions FELLMAN referred to written sources that mention Bjarmaland and indirectly identified the Bjarmians as Karelians. He further found that the inhabitants in Kajana Province in Finland were mainly descendants of the Bjarmians.90

According to M. A. CASTRÉN (Anmärkningar om Savolotschesskaja Tschud, first published in 1844) Bjarmians were identical with Zavoločskaja Čud’ and lived by the Northern Dvina River and southwestern coast of the White Sea. However, “old” Bjarmaland included also the Permian area until the Kama River and Permian and Karelian area met by the Northern Dvina River. Northern Dvina River (and especially Cholmogory) was the most important part of Bjarmland and destination of Scandinavian expeditions (both Ohthere and later expeditions). CASTRÉN considered that the Bjarmians were rich with gold and treasures, practised agriculture and trade, had burial mounds and temples for worship and lived in towns. He identified the Bjarmians as Karelians.91

Elias LÖNNROT (the compiler of Kalevala) wrote in Mehiläinen (1839) that Bjarmaland stretched from the Kama River in the Perm’ district until the Northern Dvina River. He found that the Finnish folk poems that are collected in Kalevala were composed by the Bjarmians living by the Northern Dvina River. The Bjarmians consisted of at least two Finnish groups, the Karelians and the people of Pohjola (i.e. a place mentioned in the Finnish folk poems). LÖNNROT connected the Cholmogory/Holmgård etymology with Sariola, a name mentioned in the Finnish folk poems. In the new edition of Kalevala (1849) LÖNNROT wrote that the poems were composed during Bjarmian times on the southeastern part of the White Sea and those Karelians who preserved old folk poems through centuries were direct descendants of the Bjarmians.92

Joh. Fredr. KAJAANI (CAJAN) (Suomen historia 1846) placed the main Bjarmian trading place at the Northern Dvina River, close to Kolmogory. He supported Holmgård/Sariola/Saariola etymology for Kolmogory. KAJAANI found that the Bjarmian area stretched up to Kama River and Bjarmaland was inhabited

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90 Fellman 1906a, 268, 494; Fellman 1906c, 34, 175–176, 178.
91 Castrén 1858, 45–47, 52–55.
92 Lönnrot 1839, 16–19; Lönnrot 1849, IV-V.
by Finns and Karelians. He considered that the poems of Kalevala were composed in Bjarmaland.93

LÖNNROT and KAJAANI co-wrote a book of Finnish history.94 This is clearly visible in the works of both since they seem to agree on all the theories concerning Bjarmaland.

J. V. SNELLMAN (originally published in 1847) commented on J. F. KAJAANI’s fresh (1846) Suomen historia. Despite minor criticism he agreed on most counts including the location of the “Finnish Permian” trading place by the Northern Dvina River. He also agreed that the Finnish folk poems were created in “ancient Perma” by the White Sea and the Northern Dvina River.95

J. W. CALAMNIUS (1864) considered that the roots of Finnish history lay in Bjarmaland that was situated furthest north on the coast of the Arctic Ocean. He identified Ohthere’s destination as the Northern Dvina River. He thought that the Bjarmians were “Finnish” and the Karelians lived by the Northern Dvina whereas Tavastians lived in a more southerly area and by the rivers Suchona and Vytchegda. These were called Čud’ by the Russians. He also supported the etymological theory that connects “perämaa” with the name of the Bjarmians. CALAMNIUS considered that the northern expansion of Novgorod and Mongol penetration of Russia was the end of the Bjarmians who assimilated with the Slavic population or migrated to Finland. In fact, the ancient location of the Finns before they came to Finland lay by the Northern Dvina.96

Julius KROHN (1869) placed Bjarmaland by the Northern Dvina River and referred to a trading place near the present-day Archangel that the Scandinavians called Holmgård and the Russians Kolmogory.97 He identified the Bjarmians with the Karelians and the Čud’ and mentioned that the name “Permian” may have been attached to the Bjarmians because the Zyrians once lived close to the Northern Dvina River. KROHN supported the “perämaa” etymology as the origin of the name of the Bjarmians. He thought the Norwegian expeditions to Bjarmaland came to an end due to expansion of Novgorod and blockage of the trade route.98

Yrjö KOSKINEN (1869) thought that the Bjarmians were Karelians by the White Sea with the center around the Northern Dvina River. He further found that

93 Kajaani 1846, 1–16. This is the first book about Finnish history written in Finnish. See e.g. Vilkuna 1964, 81–82.
94 Tommila 1989, 64.
95 Snellman 1929, 319, 327–328.
96 Calamnius 1864, 62–63, 66–68, 73, 76, 80, 96–98.
97 Haavio 1965, 27.
98 Krohn 1869, 3–12.
the Bjarmians and the Permians were identical and that Bjarmaland extended to Perm’ and the rivers Vytchegda and Kama. KOSKINEN also thought the expansion of Novgorod was the end of Norwegian Bjarmaland expeditions.99

P. A. MUNCH took up the question of Bjarmaland on several occasions (a few articles originally published between 1849 and 1851). He found that the central area of Bjarmaland was located by the Northern Dvina River that was also Ohthere’s destination. He further considered that the group known under the name Zavoločskaja Čud’ included Bjarmians among other “Finnish” groups and the area around the Kantalahti Bay was part of Bjarmaland. The border between Bjarmaland and Finnmark was located around either Varzuga or Umba. At a certain point the name Bjarmaland was no longer in use and the former Bjarmian area was inhabited by Karelians.100

August AHLQVIST (1887) located Ohthere’s destination as being the Northern Dvina River. He further found that Bjarmaland stretched from the Northern Dvina to Onega. He identified the Bjarmians as Karelians and Zavoločskaja Čud’. Eastern Bjarmians were the same as the Permians, i.e. Zyrians.101

Gustav STORM (1894) considered that Bjarmians were Eastern Karelians on the western side of the White Sea. He concluded that Ohthere cannot have reached Northern Dvina River but must have arrived in the southwestern part of Lapland, perhaps by the Kantalahti Bay. Later on Norwegian expeditions (that at times were peaceful with fur trade and at other times hostile) were directed to Northern Dvina River (and Cholmogory, close to present-day Archangel).102

Despite many theories, none of the Russian Bjarmaland studies of the 18th and the 19th centuries were comprehensive and no special studies were dedicated solely to this one subject. Some scholars used the Scandinavian written sources while the majority simply borrowed the information concerning Bjarmaland from previous studies thus relying on the correctness of their predecessors’ views. Archaeological material was used to reject the Bjarmaland/Perm’ theory, but otherwise the scholars did not make use of the material.103

99 Koskinen 1869, 6, 9–12.
100 Munch 1874a, 628, 630–631, 636–638, 649; Munch 1874b, 226, 270.
101 Ahlqvist 1887, 11, 13, 18, 25–26, 39.
102 Storm 1894, 95–100.
103 Jackson 1992b, 124.
In Russia certain theories were more popular than others but there existed a variety of different theories. N. DERGAČEV (1887) suggested that Bjarmaland was located on the Kola Peninsula. V. KORDT (1893) was of the opinion that Bjarmaland was located by the Mezen’ River. Both these theories were based on Oththere’s account. Some 19th century scholars identify Bjarmaland with Zavolochye, the area north of lake Beloje, and found that the Bjarmians were identical with the Zavoločskaja Čud’ of the Russian chronicles. That Bjarmaland in some sources consisted of two parts was not missed by researchers. Many 19th century researchers localised one part of Bjarmaland in Karelia. This theory was instigated by G. S. BAYER and spread amongst the Russian scholars via V. N. TATIŠČEV’s Russian History. The first criticism against the Bjarmaland/Perm’ theory was raised in the early decades of the 19th century. The basis for the criticism were archaeological finds made in Čerdyn’ that did not seem to support the theory. These scholars located Bjarmaland by the Northern Dvina River, but they were not quite unanimous about the exact location.104

2.4 Modern research (historiographical overview after 1900)

Historical research was facilitated in the late 1800’s and the early 1900’s. Archives, universities and access to sources improved, it was easier to publish studies and new scientific clubs were founded. The field of history specialised and new disciplines (e.g. archaeology) appeared and an increased scientification followed. Research was already easier in the late 1800’s than in the beginning of the century.105 In Sweden a new, more critical attitude towards source criticism was gaining ground. This had its impact also in Finland, although many scholars (e.g. Jalmari JAAKKOLA and Martti HAAVIO) maintained a more romantic attitude.106

During the 20th century Bjarmaland research saw a certain rationalisation. Despite a number of new elements, many theories and notions from earlier centuries lived on. Considering the long roots of studying Bjarmaland, it is perhaps surprising to notice that no comprehensive study of Bjarmaland has so far been produced, although the subject has been studied from many viewpoints. The

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106 The WEIBULLS introduced a strict source criticism that limited the interpretation to historical facts only. It became important to be aware of interdependency of the sources and it was important not to mix historical facts and the traditional formulations that the sources often use. This new attitude also required that the researcher made a clear distinction to earlier research and acquired an attitude that questioned the prevailing historical image. Tommila 1989, 186–190, 198.
archaeological approach has been used to some extent and there have been attempts to collect and analyse the available written sources. However, none of the studies are comprehensive.

Bjarmians have been identified as Karelians, Permians, Vepsians107, Čuđ or as being of mixtum compositum. Bjarmaland has been located as stretching from Perm’ to the Kola Peninsula, as limited to the Kola Peninsula, as being on both the Kola Peninsula and the Northern Dvina River or only on the Northern Dvina River, in Karelia or as wherever the Bjarmians roamed in the North as ambulant traders. Many scholars of the 20th century including Kemp MALONE (1930), Richard EKBLOM (1960) and A. L. BINNS (1961) have identified the river Olthère reached as Varzuga.108

In Finland, both historians and archaeologists often comment on Bjarmaland while dealing with general events of Finnish history. Generally authors base their view on past research, but many seem to have a slightly modified personal opinion as well. No extensive studies have been made in the recent decades. In the Scandinavian countries Bjarmaland is of interest first and foremost in connection with Northern Norwegian history and especially Olthère’s account is often commented on. Both historians and archaeologists dealing with the time period generally comment Bjarmaland, albeit often in a rather cursory manner. Outside the Scandinavian countries, Finland and Russia, Bjarmaland has interested only few scholars.

In Russia the question of Bjarmaland has generally only been addressed in passing and it is only during the 20th century that scholars have dedicated whole studies to the topic. Many scholars who have expressed their opinion about Bjarmaland have simply copied the views of their predecessors and in doing so passed on the prevailing opinion within research. However, it is important to note that the Russian research has always been a part of European research milieu and the Russian scholars were acquainted with the works of their European colleagues already during the 18th century and these strongly influenced the research in Russia. The beginning of the 20th century saw an ever-increased interest in the problem of Bjarmaland in Russia. Two monographs were published in 1906 by K. TIANDER and S. KUZNETSOV who took the Scandinavian written sources as a starting point. Other Bjarmaland monographs were published by G. GEBEL (1910), A.

107 The Finno-Ugric Vepsians lived southeast of the Lake Ladoga, but they are also connected with the Lake Beloozero area. They had contacts to the south, with the trading center called Aldeigjuborg by Scandinavians and Staraja Ladoga (Old Ladoga) by Russians. Edgren 1993, 266; Uino 1997, 101.
108 Malone 1930, 159; Ekblom 1960, 9; Binns 1961, 44, 49.
SOBOLEVSKIJ (1929) and T. N. JACKSON (1979). JACKSON has since followed with articles on the subject (e.g. in 1992 and 2002). A number of Russian scholars including V. P. KROHIN, V. BERNADSKIJ and S. S. GADZJATSKIJ placed Bjarmaland in Karelia. Bjarmaland is located on the Kola Peninsula by a number of Russian scholars who support their views with a selection of written sources (mainly Othere’s account and some maps, e.g. Olaus MAGNUS’s from 1539 and Gerhard MERCATOR’s from 1569). This theory has been popular from the early years of the 20th century until the 1980’s. Some scholars try to avoid altogether identifying Bjarmaland with any particular area and use Bjarmaland as a general name for the northern or northeastern part of Russia. Yet others see it as fairyland that has no connection with reality. A rather recent (and fairly popular yet quite absurd) theory from the 1970’s and 1980’s locates Bjarmaland in the Eastern Baltic area. Many historians who locate Bjarmaland by the Northern Dvina River also support the view that the names Bjarmaland and Perem’/Perm’ are derived from the Finnish word perämaa meaning “the hind land”, “the land beyond the border”. This interpretation has its roots in the idea that the Bjarmians were the same as the Zavoločskaja Čud’. This identification was first made in the early 19th century (by LERBERG and SJÖGREN) and was developed further by a Soviet linguist D. V. BUBRIKH (1947). The theory that Bjarmaland and Perm’ were identical was popular during the 18th and the 19th centuries, but during the 20th century many scholars have rejected this view, sometimes strongly opposing it. However, e.g. A. SOBOLEVSKIJ (1929) and M. I. STEBLIN-KAMENSKIJ (in a commentary to the Russian translation of Heimskringla in 1980) have still made this identification. K. TIANDER, S. KUZNETSOV and V. PIMENOV all strongly oppose the idea on the basis of the Scandinavian written sources and not just the archaeological finds from Čerdyn’ as the first critics of the theory did.109

Current Russian research still seems to make the connection between Bjarmaland and Perm’ and Bjarmaland is often understood as an extremely large territory. In his study of the toponyms at the White Sea area S. V. POPOV (1991) refers to Bjarmaland as an area stretching from the Kola Peninsula to the Ural mountains.110 V. V. NIZOV (1997) concludes that Perm’/Bjarmaland was a

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109 Jackson 1992b, 122–125. The article gives a more comprehensive list of the Russian scholars who have addressed the problem of Bjarmaland. See also Jackson 2002, 166–170. Håkon STANG takes a look at the influence of politics regarding Bjarmaland theories (e.g. the political use of the Perm’/Bjarmaland identification) in Russia during the 20th century. He also takes a critical look at the theory placing Bjarmaland in the Eastern Baltic area (and making the Bjarmians Celtic), effectively slaughtering the idea. See Stang 1978, 300–310.

110 Попов 1991, 45.
multiethnic and cultural territorial unit composed of the Čud’ of the Northern Dvina River, Vjatka and Kama. He finds that Bjarmaland and Perm’ are the same. NIZOV refers to the Karelian-Vepsian word perämaa as the likely origin of the name Bjarmaland.111 On the other hand, Galina GLAZYRINA (1990) connects Bjarmaland with the coast of the White Sea and the Northern Dvina River. She regards the name Bjarmaland as a place-name of generalising character (due to the seemingly homogeneous population) that was used by the Scandinavians to denote the territory between the White Sea in the north and Lake Ladoga in the south.112

According to Nikolaj A. MAKAROV, currently most scholars agree that the name Bjarmaland was used to indicate vast but poorly studied and insufficiently known territories with vaguely marked boundaries. Along with MELNIKOVA, he agrees that the term was used to refer to the entire outlying area of northeast Europe, populated mainly by Finnish-speaking people. MAKAROV has taken a look at the archaeological material in the north of Russia and observed that so far no archaeological evidence of a very well settled land differing from the cultural landscape occupied by Saami has been discovered on the Kola Peninsula or the White Sea littoral. Practically all the currently known sites date back to the 11th-13th centuries. There is total absence of anything archaeological datable to 9th and early 10th centuries, i.e. Ohthere’s time, from the whole territory including Varangerfjord, Lake Ladoga and Beloozero as well as the Kama and the Vychegda. The littoral area between the Onega and the Northern Dvina lacks finds from human habitation, the bulk of the population was concentrated in the inland territories. No artefacts of clearly Scandinavian provenance are known. The only area with archaeological finds from around Ohthere’s time is Mortensnes by Varangerfjord with finds between the 6th-12th centuries. Although this is the only area of all the thinkable possible areas that according to MAKAROV can be described as “well settled”, contradictions between Ohthere’s description of his destination and the geographical situation around Varangerfjord do not allow for a clear solution.113

Of the current Russian historians T. N. JACKSON has studied the question of Bjarmaland most profoundly. According to her, Bjarmaland was located on the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula, probably west from either the lower Strelna or the lower the Varzuga. On the basis of the written sources she concludes that Bjarmaland was probably divided in two, into northern and southern Bjarmaland.

that were separated by the White Sea and its Kantalahti Bay. Most scholars identify the river “Vína” that is mentioned in connection with Bjarmaland with the Northern Dvina River, but actually only three episodes in the sagas make this connection. JACKSON proposes that the word Vína of skaldic poetry may have been used metaphorically and that the association between the metaphoric Vína and the Northern Dvina River developed over time due to consonance of names when the Scandinavians through their journeys became familiar with the name “Dvina”. However, JACKSON does not totally dismiss the connection between the Bjarmians and the Northern Dvina River because the names in different languages (Scandinavian “Vína”, Finnish Viena and Russian Dvina) are strikingly close.

Kustavi GROTENFELT (1909) placed Bjarmaland on the southern shore of the White Sea, around the Northern Dvina River. He further considered that the Norwegian expeditions to Bjarmaland came to an end because Novgorod expanded in the north and the trade route to Volga was blocked.

J. R. ASPELIN (1910) identified the Bjarmians with Permians and placed them by the Kama River. He further found that the Northern Dvina River was an important Permian trade center. ASPELIN considered that the Bjarmians were Karelians and identical with the Zavoločskaja čud of the Russian sources.

Fridtjof NANSEN (1911) found that Oththere’s destination on the White Sea must have been on the Kola Peninsula. He may have reached Varzuga or even come as far as the Kantalahti Bay. However, the White Sea coast until the Northern Dvina River belonged to Bjarmaland and later on Norwegian expeditions were made to the Northern Dvina River. NANSEN concluded that the Bjarmians may have been Eastern Karelians.

Oscar Albert JOHNSEN (1923) identified the Bjarmians as Karelians. He suggested that Oththere’s destination on the White Sea was either the Umba River or Kantalahti Bay. The Northern Dvina River was also part of Bjarmaland and later Norwegian expeditions to obtain furs were directed there.

A. W. BRØGGER’s view of Bjarmaland (Håløygenes Bjarmalandsferder 1928) is based on the information of the sagas as well as archaeological material including “eastern” artefacts found in Norway, the Permian artefacts in Northern

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115 Grotenfelt 1909, 1070–1071.


118 Johnsen 1923, 9, 15–16, 19.
Russia and the finds around the Northern Dvina River. According to BRØGGER, Bjarmacland was located on the coastal area around the White Sea. He located the most important trading place of the Bjarmians as being Cholmogory on the Northern Dvina River. He thought that the Bjarmians were identical with the Permians and that the name bjarmar originally referred to the Permian traders (people further southeast of the White Sea) who have come to the White Sea area ever since the 9th century. BRØGGER further found that the inhabitants of the White Sea area also included Baltic Fenns, among these some Karelians and people called Čud'. BRØGGER saw the expeditions from Northern Norway to Bjarmacland as a part of a larger phenomenon, namely the “Viking” expeditions. These expeditions included trading and plundering and the activity was regulated by well-established rules. Obtaining furs was the main incentive behind the expeditions to Bjarmacland, but also the possibility for easy profit through plundering was tempting. He concluded that Bjarmacland had become an important trading center by the beginning of the 11th century because of the Hálogalandian expeditions. The Northern Norwegians were better disposed than others to use the opportunities Bjarmacland offered, because of their long experience with long distance sailing and the expeditions to collect taxes from the Saami in Finmark.119

Gutorm GJESSING (Finsk-ugriske vikingetidssmykker i Norge 1928) mentions Bjarmacland only in passing and wonders about the seemingly minor role the Norwegians played in the eastern contacts in comparison to the Saami population of the north (a view he later modified). GJESSING located Bjarmacland loosely around the White Sea. In a later paper (Noen nordnorske handelsproblemer i jernalderen 1939) GJESSING listed the imported objects that are found in Northern Norway and concluded that the activity (trade, “Viking” expeditions) in this part of the country was directed towards north and east, via Finmark to Bjarmacland. He set the fur trade in Northern Norway during the Viking Age and the early Middle Ages in connection with the Norwegians trips to Bjarmacland. He set the “eastern” artefacts found in Northern Norway in a larger perspective by notifying that the Norwegian contacts towards east have roots going back to the Stone Age (with a possible break during the Migration Period). GJESSING was not sure who the Bjarmians were, but he was fairly certain that they cannot be identified with the Permians. This is because there are so few (certain) Permian artefacts in the finds and even those that are from the Permian area for certain, are also common in Finnish and Russian finds. This, and the fact that many Permian objects are found

119 Brøgger 1928, 27–36.
in Saami context, make the connection between the Norwegians and the Permians look much more insignificant than it should be if Perm’ was to be identified with Bjarmaland. GJESSING doubted that the Northern Dvina River should be seen as identical with the “Vína” of the sagas and as the center of trade in Bjarmaland. He noted the many features in the Northern Norwegian finds that strongly point towards Karelia. According to GJESSING, the word Jómali most likely is either Karelian or Vepsian and this seems to indicate that the “Vína” of the sagas referred to a more westerly river than the Northern Dvina, e.g. the river Vyg.\textsuperscript{120}

Halvdan KOHT (1930) located Bjarmaland at the White Sea, in the areas around the Northern Dvina River. According to him, the incentive of Norwegian trips to Bjarmaland was fur trade and Norwegians since the latter part of the 10\textsuperscript{th} century attempted to impose taxes on the Bjarmians in the same manner as they taxed the Saami.\textsuperscript{121}

A. M. TALLGREN (1930 and 1931) took up the problem of Bjarmaland in a few specific, although not very extensive studies. He referred to written sources and supplied the study with relevant archaeological material from the Russian area. He concluded that the question of Perm’ should be kept completely separate from the question of Bjarmaland. TALLGREN saw the Bjarmians as Karelians (and perhaps partially Vepsians) who travelled in the northern wilderness. He found that during the Viking Age their home base was on the southeast shore of the Lake Ladoga. According to TALLGREN, Bjarmaland included a rather large area between Finnmark, the White Sea and the lakes Onego and Ladoga. He located Oththere’s destination somewhere on the Kola Peninsula because Oththere did not cross open water. He considered that the Norwegians also travelled to the Northern Dvina River to meet Bjarmians.\textsuperscript{122}

Valter JANSSON (1936) presented the written sources briefly. He concluded that Oththere may have reached River Umba or River Varzuga or the Kantalahti Bay itself, but later on the Norwegian expeditions were directed toward the Northern Dvina River. He found that the Bjarmians were identical with the Zavoločskaja čud’ and the Karelians.\textsuperscript{123}

The compact monograph (\textit{The Terfinnas and Beormas of Oththere} 1940) by Alan S. C. ROSS lists all available written sources. According to ROSS, Bjarmaland was divided into two parts, \textit{Biarmia ulterior} (located around the

\textsuperscript{120} Gjessing 1928, 33; Gjessing 1939, 40, 44–45.
\textsuperscript{121} Koht 1930, 22, 24–25.
\textsuperscript{123} Jansson 1936, 33–41, 44–47, 49.
Northern Dvina River and constantly mentioned in Scandinavian written sources) and Biarmia citerior (on Kantalahti Bay and mentioned in Ohthere’s account, located with the help of reference to Terfinnas and the geographical distribution of the name “Ter”). Ohthere’s log makes it evident that his destination was on the Kola Peninsula, perhaps by the Varzuga or the Umba or even the head of the Bay itself. Based on linguistic evidence (the word Jómali and Ohthere’s statement of the closeness of the Saami and the Bjarmian languages) ROSS concluded that the Bjarmians must have been Baltic Fenns, most probably Karelians.124

According to J. J. MIKKOLA (1942), Bjarmaland was located by the Northern Dvina River (center being around Holmogory, i.e. Cholmogory, near present-day city of Archangel) and on the western shore of the White Sea. This latter area was called Kolo-Perm’, Perm’ of the Kola Peninsula. He identified the Bjarmians as Finnish-speaking people. MIKKOLA considered that the Bjarmians were trading partners of the Volga Bulgars who had a base in Perm’ by the Kama River but who extended their travels to the White Sea where the Northern Dvina River became the center. The area east of Lapland along the shore of the Arctic Ocean all the way to the Ural area became a trading area known as the Great Perm’. MIKKOLA considered that Voguls, Zyrians and Karelians lived in the area, but that it was the Karelians living on the Kola Peninsula, by the White Sea and by the Northern Dvina River that were called Bjarmians by the Scandinavians.125

Hans EIDNES (1943) located Bjarmaland to the Northern Dvina River and Cholmogory but found that Ohthere had reached the Varzuga River.126

Jorma LEPPÄAHO (originally published in 1949) considered that Bjarmaland was located on the White Sea and the Bjarmians were Finno-Ugrian. He located Ohthere’s destination on the Kola Peninsula and identified “Vína” with the Northern Dvina River. He noted the connection between the ambulant traders called “permi” and the name of the Bjarmians and assumed the name may have been a professional name that was inherited from the Russian Permians. According to LEPPÄAHO, the Bjarmians must be considered as ambulant traders in the White Sea area. He found that the Bjarmians were a mix of Finnish Karelians and Čud’ian Vepsians from the Lake Ladoga area.127

Jalmari JAAKKOLA (1956) located Bjarmaland solely to the Northern Dvina River. He rejected any connection between the Bjarmians and the Karelians.

126 Eidnes 1943, 27, 50, 70.
127 Leppâaho 1964, 80–84.
JAAKKOLA maintained that the Bjarmians undoubtedly were Finno-Ugrian and identified them as Vatvans (who in the north were called Čud’ by the Russians) but does not exclude the possibility of Vepsian involvement.\textsuperscript{128}

Povl SIMONSEN (1957) suggested that Ohthere crossed the mouth of the Kantalahti Bay around the River Vyg but did not define more closely his final destination.\textsuperscript{129}

Heikki KIRKINEN (1963, 1986, 1988) mainly connects the Bjarmians with the Vepsians and the Karelians but also with the Permians (i.e. Zyrians, also known as Komi) and Čud’ who were involved in the fur trade in the north. He places the Bjarmians principally around the Northern Dvina River but widens the perspective by stating that the Bjarmian area stretched from the Pinega River in Perm’ to the Kola Peninsula.\textsuperscript{130}

Ella KIVIKOSKI (1964) located Bjarmaland to the White Sea area and identified the river “Vina” known from the sagas as the Northern Dvina River. KIVIKOSKI found on the basis of archaeological finds (Varzuga River and graves, i.e. permanent settlement, in the areas north and east of the Lake Onego) that during the Viking Age, the White Sea area belonged to the area of interest of the southeastern Ladoga area. KIVIKOSKI assumed that the Bjarmians were of Karelian origin and their name was professional rather than ethnical.\textsuperscript{131}

Kustaa VILKUNA (1964, 1977, 1980) considered that the Bjarmians were not a separate ethnical group but members of a trading organisation consisting of people that spoke several languages including Karelian, Zyrian, Saami, Russian and Vepsian. He found that Ohthere’s destination on the White Sea was one of the rivers on the northern shore of the Kantalahti Bay (i.e. southern shore of the Kola Peninsula), perhaps Varzuga or Umba. Later on expeditions were made to the Northern Dvina River. VILKUNA identified the Bjarmians of the Kola Peninsula that had contact with the Norwegians as Karelians whereas those Bjarmians who lived inland were Zyrians. VILKUNA connects with Bjarmians the rare Finnish (eastern dialects) word “permi” that refers to ambulant traders from Viena Karelia. According to VILKUNA “permi” was a professional name that was used by outsiders when referring to the home of a group of professionals. Consequently, the

\textsuperscript{129} Simonsen 1957, 11.
\textsuperscript{130} Kirkinen 1963, 36–40; Kirkinen 1986, 56; Kirkinen 1988, 64.
\textsuperscript{131} Kivikoski 1964, 289–290.
Bjarmians must be seen as organised traders and not as a “national” (i.e. ethnic) group.\textsuperscript{132}

Martti HAAVIO’s *Bjarmien vallan kukoistus ja tuho* (1965) is the latest larger study in Finnish about the subject. HAAVIO based a large portion of his study on etymology and linguistics and extended his search for Bjarmians to the Arabic sources besides the Scandinavian ones (especially Saxo GRAMMATICUS). HAAVIO concluded that the Bjarmians were identical with the Vepsians (and the Čud’). According to him, Bjarmaland was located in two areas, the Northern Dvina River and the Kola Peninsula. He considered that Ohthere’s destination was the Northern Dvina River.\textsuperscript{133}

Reidar DJUPEDAL (1969) concluded that it is not likely Ohthere sailed across the White Sea but rather stayed on the coast of the Kola Peninsula. He did not conclude which one of the rivers on the Kola Peninsula Ohthere reached but gave alternatives, i.e. Varzuga, Umba and Vyg. He found that the Bjarmians were identical with Karelians.\textsuperscript{134}

Thorleif SJØVOLD (1974) wrote how a mixture of eastern and western artefacts in the finds of Northern Norway (e.g. from Hillesøy) makes one think of Ohthere who sailed to England as well as to Bjarmaland. The sagas mention a route around the Kola Peninsula into the White Sea. SJØVOLD identifies Bjarmaland (with a reference to TALLGREN) as a somewhat vague zone between Finnmark, the White Sea and the great lakes of Onego and Ladoga and the population in the area (i.e. the Bjarmians) as Karelians, possibly also Vepsians.\textsuperscript{135}

Håkon STANG’s (1977) view of the Bjarmians is that they are identical with the ves’ and Wisu of Russian and Arabic sources, i.e. the Vepsians, and are known as the Čud’ by the Russians. According to him, the Vepsians were associated with the Perm’ area in Russia and had contacts with the Norwegians under the name of Bjarmians in the more westerly areas of the White Sea (Kantalahti Bay and Northern Dvina River).\textsuperscript{136}

Jouko VAHTOLA (1980) introduces the possibility that the inhabitants of Bjarmaland, at least to some extent, could have been of Häme origin. This assumption is based on linguistic evidence (Finno-Ugrian language, the

\textsuperscript{134} Djupedal 1969, 7, 9.
\textsuperscript{135} Sjøvold 1974, 361.
\textsuperscript{136} Stang 1977, 109, 120, 130–133.
“Bjarmian” word “Jómali” and distribution of the name “Jumi”), oral tradition in the Northern Dvina River area about immigration from Häme and Russian written sources that mention people of Häme (jem) around the same area.137

According to Knut ODNER (1983) Bjarmaland was located somewhere by the White Sea and bordered Norway. He associates Bjarmians with Zyrians.138

Matti HUURRE (1983, 1987, 1992) writes about Bjarmaland in connection with the Norwegian Viking Age finds in Northern Finland. He thinks that Norwegian activity in the area is due to early Norwegian trips to Bjarmaland by land route (prior to the sea route becoming known in the end of the 9th century). This route went from Northern Norway via the Finnish Lapland and the Kainuu area to the White Sea. There are no more Norwegian finds in Northern Finland after the beginning of the 10th century, soon after the sea route to Bjarmaland was established. According to HUURRE, Bjarmaland was located by the White Sea and divided in two. The more important of these two was the area around the mouth of the Northern Dvina River, close to the modern-day city of Archangel. This is an area that imported metal to Fennoscandia during the Bronze Age and the contacts continued through the Iron Age as well. The other Bjarmaland was located on the Kola Peninsula, perhaps including areas around rivers like Varzuga and Kem’ (in Finnish Vienan Kemi) as well as other rivers on the western shore of the White Sea. HUURRE does not express a conclusive opinion about the ethnical background of the Bjarmians but maintains that they certainly were (Baltic) Fennic. He refers to both the Karelians and the Čud’ from the Lake Ladoga area as possible Bjarmians. HUURRE also refers to the possibility that the word “Bjarmian” may have been a professional name rather than ethnical.139

Grethe Authern BLOM (1984) identifies the Bjarmians as Karelians and considers that Oththere’s destination was probably the Varzuga River at Kantalahti Bay whereas later on the Norwegians travelled to the Northern Dvina River where Cholmogery was the center.140

Mikko HÄME (1987) locates Bjarmaland around the Northern Dvina River but notes that the Bjarmian trading place may have changed location around the

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138 Odner 1983, 24, 40, 81.
140 Blom 1984, 385–386.
White Sea area. He considers that the Bjarmians were identical with the Finno-Ugrian Čud'.

Kerstin EIDLITZ KUOLJOK (1991) places the Bjarmians to the White Sea area and sees them as possibly multiethnic but does not seem to believe that the Bjarmians could be identified more precisely with any known ethnical group.

Przemysław URBAŃCZYK (1992) mentions Bjarmaland in passing. The location is not more closely defined, besides rather vague references to an area “behind the Kola Peninsula” and to the White Sea. In one map, Bjarmaland is located around the Northern Dvina River. According to URBAŃCZYK, Bjarmaland was a source of furs for the Northern Norwegians. The northern sea route to Bjarmaland was established at the latest in the end of the 9th century and local Northern Norwegians gained wealth by means of the furs they obtained from the Bjarmians. Later on, the king aspired to monopolise the Bjarmian fur trade and this contributed to the diminished wealth amongst the local population in the north of Norway.

Christian CARPELAN (1993) concludes that Bjarmaland was divided in two and contained areas both on the southern and the northern shores of the White Sea. He considers that Ohthere’s most likely target on the White Sea was on the western coast (perhaps either Kem’ or Vyg) that served as a contact area with the Bjarmians and traders from different directions. He finds that the Bjarmians were permanently settled agrarian people and in lack of archaeological research refers to the so-called Late Kargopol culture on the eastern side of the Lake Onego (Ääninen) as the closest reference. CARPELAN rejects theories about connection to Dvina and the Karelians and instead finds that the Bjarmians had connections with more easterly areas, especially the Perm’ area. He sees the Bjarmians as (organised) fur traders in the northern wilderness. He finds that the organisation materialised in the Zyrian area and later on the name rather than the activity moved westwards. These people were later called “permi” in the sense of an ambulant trader (from Eastern Karelia). Because the relevant area has since the medieval times become Russian, it remains undecided which Finno-Ugrian group the Bjarmians represented. CARPELAN finds that after major political changes (Mongol invasion of Russia, Russian and especially Novgorodian colonisation in the north) in the 13th century the Bjarmians

141 Häme 1987a, 194, 233.
settled in Eastern Karelia and continued to trade with their neighbours and gradually (after the 16th century) became known as “laukkuryssä”.  

Torsten EDGREN (1993) places Bjarmaland to the coastal area of the White Sea and connects the river Viunu of the sagas with the Northern Dvina River. He remarks that the Norwegians initially travelled to the White Sea through Northern Finland and this can be seen in the archaeological material of Northern Finland from prior to the 10th century.  

According to Claus KRAG (1995) the Bjarmians Ohthere met must have lived on the Northern Dvina River, around the present-day city of Archangel.  

Thomas WALLERSTRÖM (Norrbotten, Sverige och medeltiden 1995) finds (with reference to JACKSON) that Bjarmaland consisted of two parts, Biarmia citerior and Biarmia ulterior. These were located around the White Sea, on an area that stretched from the river Onega to either Strelna or Varzuga. This area is identical with Koloperem of the Russian sources (from 1264 and 1304–1305). WALLERSTRÖM connects the end of the Norwegian expeditions to Bjarmaland in the early 13th century with an increased Karelian/Novgorodian activity in the north (expeditions to Kola Peninsula and the fur markets of the Northern Dvina River as well as attacks against Northern Norway).  

Lars Ivar HANSEN (1996) locates the Bjarmians on the southern shores of the White Sea and the lower basin of the Northern Dvina River. He supports the notion that the Bjarmians were members of trade organisation and that “Bjarmian” is a functional term, rising out of special economical adaptation. These travelling merchants who had special economical functions in relation to Saami, Norse and Russians and served as middlemen in a trade network that became gradually dominated by Novgorod may have been of mixtum compositum, composed of different ethничal groups including Vepsians (ves’, by Russians also called čud’ like several other Finno-Ugrian groups), Karelians and Zyrians in varying proportions at different times. HANSEN suggest that the two Bjarmalands mentioned in written sources could refer to the main settlement of the Vepsians along the lower Northern Dvina basin on the one hand and territories occupied by the Karelians further to the west (present-day Karelia and the western coast of the White Sea) on the other hand.  

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144 Carpelan 1993a, 231–233.  
146 Krag 1995, 78–79.  
Theories in the course of time

After the chronological overview, it is perhaps useful to take a look at general tendencies within research and outline the development of different theories over longer periods of time, as well as try to decipher developments within research milieus nationally and internationally.

The 16th century saw the beginning of Bjarmaland research and both the notion about the location of Bjarmaland (at least partially) on the Kola Peninsula and the division of Bjarmaland into *Biarmia ulterior* and *Biarmia citerior* have persevered until the present day. Also the presently often mentioned notion about connection between the “Vina” of the sagas and the Northern Dvina River was first introduced in the 16th century. The early scholars had a limited source material available and they relied largely on SAXO’s *Gesta Danorum*. The opinions of the Magnus brothers (that rely largely on Saxo) were also often repeated. *Bósa saga* was among the sources of the 17th century scholars and also *Óláfs saga helga* was a known source already during this century.

During the 17th century (BUREUS 1626, VERELIUS 1666, SCHEFFERUS 1673) Bjarmaland was frequently associated with Lapland due to SAXO’s and the Magnus brothers’ close association of the Bjarmians and the Saami (especially Scricfinnia). Interestingly, the earliest advocate of this theory, BUREUS, locates Bjarmaland in Lapland between Vardø and Trinnes and in this way links his interpretation to theories that locate Bjarmaland on the Kola Peninsula.

Bjarmaland research has ever since the 17th century been influenced by nationalistic tones. To begin with the suggestions were more or less fanciful. Scholars advocated locations like the Åland Islands (BÅNG 1675) and Turku (JUSLENIUS 1700) for Bjarmaland. During the 19th century the Finnish Bjarmaland research was influenced by the romantic and nationalistic tendencies that permeated the international research. With a point of departure in the notion that Finland was gradually inhabited during the Iron Age by Finnish tribes migrating from the east, some researchers concluded that the Bjarmians were Finnish and the folk poems published in *Kalevala* were composed by the Bjarmians while they still lived by the Northern Dvina River. The Bjarmians were seen as a highly developed and rich ancient Finnnish tribe that testified to a glorious and independent past of the Finns.

There are also some national tendencies among the Swedish and the Russian scholars. In Sweden E. J. BJÖRNER (1737) tried to argue that Bjarmaland was located in Medelpad and Ångermanland. Locating Bjarmaland at Perm’ was
originally suggested by RUDBECK in 1675, but it was the Russian scholars
(through STRAHLENBERG in 1730) from the late 18th century onwards up until
the present day that made this theory excessively popular, although scholars in
other countries have supported this theory as well. This theory has been connected
with certain nationalistic considerations, as is the case also with the newer and more
imaginative theory that connects the Bjarmians with Celts around the Baltic Sea.149

During the 17th and the 18th centuries the scholars could resort to rather
imaginative theories and some ideas regarding the location of Bjarmaland from this
era seem to have been made of not much more than pure imagination. However,
the scholars became gradually more knowledgeable about the sources and the spirit
of Enlightenment started to temper the most far-fetching constructions. During the
19th century the theories became more detailed and elaborate and this is connected
both with accessibility to sources and more fact oriented research attitude. However,
in Finland in particular the national romantic ideals continued to have a
notable impact on Bjarmaland theories even during the 20th century.

During the 18th century (starting with TORFÆUS in 1711) the notion that
Bjarmaland was located by the Northern Dvina River (and Cholmogory) started to
gain popularity. Although Ohthere’s account was known to researchers already in
the 16th century and mentioned in print as early as 1557150, it was only during the
18th century that the scholars started to use Ohthere’s account as a source more
regularly. The connection between Ohthere’s destination and the Northern Dvina
River was first made in the 16th century, but it was from the 18th century onwards
that this destination became popular.

Together with the Bjarmaland-Perm’s association, the notion that Bjarmaland
was located by the Northern Dvina River (with center in Cholmogory) remained
the two leading theories within Bjarmaland research. The notion from the earliest
research about the connection between Bjarmaland and the Kola Peninsula was
pushed to the background. During the 19th century, the Finnish researchers in
particular promoted theories that combined the elements of the most dominant
theories. ARWIDSSON (1827) found that Bjarmaland was located by the White
Sea, from the southeast coast to the Northern Dvina (Cholmogory as the center),
Volga, Kama, the Ural Mountains, and Pechora. He further thought that the
Bjarmians were the most powerful of Finnish (speaking) tribes. Most scholars
continued on the same track. Often the Bjarmians were also connected with the

149 For more details see Stang 1978, 300–310.
150 Bately 2007a, 19.
Zavoločskaja Čud’ and/or the Karelians. Already in the early decades of the 19th century KLAPROTH (1823) criticised the theory that placed Bjarmaland at Perm’ and instead supported the theory that placed Bjarmaland by the Northern Dvina River. Gradually this river became axiomatically connected with Bjarmaland and this notion has remained virtually unchallenged. The only modification that has been made is that the scholars do not anymore unanimously locate Othhere’s destination at the Northern Dvina River. Starting with STORM (1894), a number of scholars have argued that Othhere must have arrived somewhere at the Kantalahti end of the White Sea. However, this modification has not changed the fact that most scholars still locate the Scandinavian expeditions after Othhere to the Northern Dvina River by the force of the fact that a river named “Vína” is mentioned in the Scandinavian medieval sources.

In Russia the 19th century scholars had varied theories. The Kola Peninsula is among the suggested locations and although the Perm’ identification remained popular, it was also heavily criticised and those who abandoned this notion found that Bjarmaland was instead located by the Northern Dvina River. Those who believed in Biarmia ulterior and Biarmia citerior often located the other part of Bjarmaland in Karelia. Researchers also believed in the notion that the Bjarmians should be connected with the Zavoločskaja Čud’.

During the 20th century Finnish scholars have toned down the image of Bjarmians as the most powerful and rich of the (ancient) Finnish tribes and largely replaced them as a trading organization. This theory is a new creation of the 20th century research and the view has been most popular in Finland. In Russia many still follow the Bjarmaland-Perm’ identification, but a number of scholars have also come up with more imaginative suggestions, including locating Bjarmaland in the Eastern Baltic area. In Norway the researchers have not produced very detailed studies, but Othhere’s account and the other expeditions to Bjarmaland have been frequently commented from a Norwegian point of view.

One of the 20th century trends (with strong roots to the theories of the 19th century) was to localise Bjarmaland in a vast area, from Zavolochye to Kola and Karelia and the Northern Dvina or even the Perm’ lands. By this means the scholars could be sure that no information from the sources contradicts the proposed location of Bjarmaland. However, this also meant that the limits of Bjarmaland grew into such proportions that the localisation in practice became meaningless, and far removed from the sources that in my opinion are after all fairly precise and do not indicate vast lands in Bjarmaland.
Currently, most scholars continue to express some variation of the theory that divides Bjarmaland in two (Biarmia ulterior and Biarmia citerior), located on the Northern Dvina River on the one hand and the Kola Peninsula (and most often the Varzuga River) on the other hand. The Bjarmians are often connected with the Karelians, and sometimes with the Vepsian, or the Zavoločskaja Čud'. Some believe them to have been of mixtum compositum or/and a professional group rather than an ethnical one.

Most studies about Bjarmaland are not detailed enough to bring anything new to the current theories and instead of detailed study of the original sources, the current research relies a great deal on the achievements, observations and axioms from studies done in previous centuries. Although archaeologists have occasionally referred to Bjarmaland, the possibilities of archaeological material have not been researched extensively. In general, the sources have not been studied critically and with a different outlook and the researchers do not seem to be much aware of the origin of the axioms they repeat, nor concerned whether these axioms can actually be supported by the source information. It is interesting that the roots of the dominant theory go as far back in time as the 16th century (the division to Biarmia ulterior and Biarmia citerior and the partial connection with the Kola Peninsula as well as the connection with the Northern Dvina River). In general, the theories about Bjarmaland seem to have the tendency to linger and persevere over a very long time. For instance, the theory about the connection between Bjarmaland and Perm’ was first introduced in the 17th century, and although the 19th century scholars quite convincingly showed that the theory was scientifically untenable, the theory is still repeated today as a feasible option by some scholars. Although currently most scholars agree on certain points regarding Bjarmaland, a lot is left for individual tastes to decide and the problem of Bjarmaland is far from resolved, even if at first glance it would appear that so much has been said over the centuries that it is hard to see what new the subject could yield. However, since detailed and critical study of the sources has been largely disregarded, it appears feasible that by paying attention to these neglected aspects, it is possible to reach a yet more comprehensive and conclusive image of Bjarmaland, going beyond the bounds of current research.
3 Early contacts

3.1 Ohthere's account

Ohthere said his hlaforde, Ælfrede cyninge, þæt he ealra Norðmonna norþmest bude. He cwæð þæt he bude on þæm lande norþweardum wiþ þa west sæ. He sæde þeah þæt [þæt] land sie swiðe lang norþ þonan; ac hit is eal weste, buton on feawum stowum stycceælum wiciad Finnas, on huntoðe on wintra 7 on sumera on fiscaþe be þære sæ. He sæde þæt he æt sumum cirre wolde fandian hu llon Þæt land norþryhte læge, oþþe hwæder ænig mon be norðan þæm westenne bude.


In the Lauderdale manuscript the unfamiliar word Beormas is in each case altered by erasure to the familiar beornas which means men. Ross 1940, 18–19.
hwæt þæs sōpes wæs, for þæm he hit self ne gesah. Þa Finnas, him þuhte, 7 þa Beormas spræcon neah an geþeode.

Swiþost hē for ðider, toeacan þæs landes sceawunge, for þæm horshwælum, for dæm hie habbað swiþe æþele ban on hiora toþum - þa teð hie brohton sume þæm cyninge - 7 hiora hyd bið swiðe god to scirrapum. (Ohthere’s Voyages 2007:44–45)

Ohthere said to his lord, King Alfred, that he lived furthest north of all Northmen [Norwegians]. He said that he lived in the northern part of the land, beside the West Sea. He said however that the land extends a very long way north from there, but it is all waste, except that in a few places here and there Finnas camp, engaged in hunting in winter and in summer in fishing by the sea. He said that on a certain occasion he wished to investigate how far the land extended in a northerly direction, or whether anyone lived north of the waste [or wilderness].

Then he went north along the coast; he kept the waste land on his starboard side and the open sea on his port side all the way for three days. Then he was as far north as the furthest the whale hunters go. Then he continued to travel north, as far as he could sail in the next three days.

Then the land there turned east, or the sea into the land, he did not know which of the two, but he knew that he waited there for a wind from the west and slightly north and then sailed east along the coast as far as he could sail in four days.

Then he had to wait there for a wind from the north, since the land there turned in a southerly direction, or the sea into the land, he did not know which of the two. Then he sailed from there in a southerly direction along the coast as far as he could sail in five days.

Then a large river there stretched up into the land. Then they turned up into that river, because they dared not sail on past [or across] the river because of hostility, since the land was all settled on the other side of the river. He had not previously encountered any settled land since he travelled from his own home, but there was waste land all the way on his starboard side, except for fishermen

152 The text can also be found in The Old English Orosius 1980, 13–15 and Sweet’s Anglo-Saxon Reader 1970, 17–18.
and [wild]fowlers and hunters, and they were all Finnas, and open sea was always on his port side.

The Beormas153 had settled their land very well, but they dared not come in there. But the land of the Terfinnas was all waste, except where hunters camped, or fishermen, or fowlers. The Beormas told them [or him] many stories both about their own land and about the lands that were around them, but he did not know what there was of truth in it, because he did not see it himself. The Finnas and the Beormas, it seemed to him, spoke practically one and the same language.

He chiefly went there, in addition to surveying the land, for the walruses, because they have very fine bone in their teeth - they brought some of the teeth to the king - and their hide is very good for ship’s ropes. (Ohthere’s Voyages 2007:44–45154)

Ottar’s (OE155 Ohthere156) account in the Orosius translation of King Alfred of Wessex157 is the only available Anglo-Saxon written source about Bjarmaland. It is also the oldest known written source that mentions this area. King Alfred had the famous and widely used world history by OROSIUS (Historiarum adversum Paganos Libri Septem, “Seven books of History against the Pagans”) translated from Latin to OE in the 890’s158 and some descriptions about Northern Europe were then added to the geographical part of the translation. The original work does not contain information about Europe north of the Alps. This is probably because that the writer of the book, Paulus OROSIUS, an Iberian priest of the early 5th century

153 The older translations use the word Permians for Beormas. See Anglo-Saxon World 1984, 64–65. In general many English translations appear to identify (and consequently translate) Beormas/Bjarmaland with Permia. It is most likely not a conscious research statement. It has simply become a common practice to use this translation without further thought of its justification. In my opinion, it would be more neutral (and historically correct) to use Bjarmaland/Bjarmians or simply the original form of the text. I generally prompt the reader to disregard the unfortunate practise of using Permia and Permian(s) for Bjarmaland and Bjarmians in English text.
154 For an alternative translation see Anglo-Saxon World 1984, 64–65.
156 The Anglo-Saxon Ohthere corresponds precisely to Old Norse Ottar/Ohtharr. Rafn 1852, 459; Whitelock 1970a, 229. Ottar is a more modern Scandinavian form.
157 Alfred, King of Wessex (also known as Alfred the Great) 871–99. He is sometime called “father of English prose”, due to his literary efforts. Greenfield–Calder 1986, 39.
158 The OE Orosius is dated sometime between 889–899. Greenfield–Calder 1986, 55; Valtonen 1992, 644. The dating is approximate. We can only say with certainty that the translation was made in the late 9th century and it seems like it cannot have been done before 871 which is the year of Alfred’s accession. The authorship of the OE Orosius has gone largely unchallenged, but there are some complications that BATELY discusses. See Bately 1980b, lxxxvi-lxxxix.
(c. 385–420), was not familiar with the north. The book gives an overview of world history from the creation of Adam to the year of the book’s composition (417–8). It starts with a geographical survey containing three parts: Europe, Asia and Africa. During the translation process into OE much original material gained firsthand from merchants and travellers was added. The part featuring Europe contains a description of 9th century Northern Europe and Scandinavia after which follow two accounts of geographical nature (travel accounts) by Ohthere and Wulfstan. Norwegian Ohthere travelled to Bjarmaland, Skiringssal (Sciringes heal) and Hedeby; Wulfstan, whose exact nationality has remained uncertain, was probably either Norwegian or English and travelled in the Baltic area. Both of these men had been guests at King Alfred’s court and the accounts we can read in the OE *Orosius* translation are written versions of the oral accounts the two men had delivered at the king’s court, presumably based on notes made at the time by a scribe, a royal clerk or a secretary. The two travel accounts seem to be original OE compositions. They have been seen as later interpolations in the geographical first chapter in the OE *Orosius* by an author who had access to the notes made of Ohthere’s and Wulfstans stories, although presumably only a fraction of what Ohthere had told can be read in the OE *Orosius*. How precisely the two accounts ended up as interpolation is unknown. However, the accounts of both Ohthere and Wulfstan must have been deemed as useful and precise narratives of geographical and other conditions in the north of Europe and thus worth recording and preserving.¹⁵⁹

What makes Ohthere’s account so special is that it is a contemporary source. It is also a relatively reliable, realistic source. We may assume (by mere conjecture as it happens) that Ohthere spoke directly with King Alfred. It would appear that Ohthere was interviewd and at least part of the answers were immediately written down. We cannot be totally confident as to the extent to which what Ohthere is reported as saying is a faithful representation of what he actually said or tried to say. Parts of the account also show a clearly English point of view (e.g. in the form of expressing surprise to the manner of Ohthere’s agricultural activity). We can also occasionally detect imperfect or selective reporting by the original note-taker or clumsy and selective paraphrasing by a subsequent drafter. However, the contemporaneity of the text overshadows the fact that the text itself was most likely

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composed by someone whose cultural background differed from that of Ohthere and Ohthere’s account must be deemed as a more reliable source than the sagas.\textsuperscript{160}

There are two manuscripts that contain Ohthere’s account, but these are fragmentary and consequently the account is put together as a combination of the two. Two other OE \textit{Orosius} manuscripts do not include Ohthere’s account. The older manuscript (London, British Library MS Additional 47967 known as The Lauderdale or The Tollemache MS, generally shortened in literature as MS L) with parts of Ohthere’s account is derived from the first quarter or the first half of the 10\textsuperscript{th} century and is the basis of SWEET’s edition, as well as all the other modern editions. However, it was the later The Cotton MS that was used in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century when the modern interest in Ohthere’s account began (first mentioned in print in 1557). The Cotton MS, the other major manuscript containing Ohthere’s account (London, British Library MS Cotton Tiberius B.i., often referred to as The Cotton MS, in short MS C) is dated to the 11\textsuperscript{th} century and it is this manuscript that was associated with King Alfred in the early 12\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{161}

\textit{Ohthere and his journeys}

Ohthere was a wealthy farmer and merchant from Hálogaland (\textit{Halgoland}) in Norway. He gives us detailed information about his way of life in Hálogaland and describes in detail his journey to the north, as well as his trips to southerly trading places in Norway and Northern Germany. In addition, he describes the geography of Norway as well as that of the rest of Scandinavia, especially the Baltic islands of Denmark and Sweden. Ohthere was a wealthy man measured against the background of his own country. Seen from the English point of view, he kept only few animals and the scale of his cultivation was modest. Instead, other ways of livelihood made up for the missing agricultural efforts: trade, whale hunting, reindeer herding and the taxation of the Saami all contributed to Ohthere’s wealth.\textsuperscript{162}

\textsuperscript{160} Simonsen 1957, 3–4, 12; Djupedal 1969, 9; Häme 1987a, 60, 161; Bately 2007a, 29–31; Storli 2007, 76.
\textsuperscript{161} Simonsen 1957, 4; Djupedal 1969, 9; Whitelock 1970b, 17; Lund 1983, 16; Bately 1980b, xxvi–xxxi; Bately 2007a, 18–21.
\textsuperscript{162} Blom 1984, 385; Crossley-Holland 1984, 62–63; Krag 1995, 80; Krag 2000, 51–52. Cereal production in the north had an important cultural significance since it was used to brew ale and it was cultivated in such a small scale that it had very little importance for food production. Storli 2007, 88.
Ohthere’s journey to Beormas has been dated to c. 875 on the basis that it must have happened some time before his journey to King Alfred and of course before his tale was added to the Orosius translation which was written between 889 and 899. A wider estimation gives years 870–890 for Ohthere’s journey to Beormas. In any case, the journey must have taken place towards the end of the 9th century, but most likely not before c. 870 and most probably before 889. The latest possible date (the absolute terminus ad quem) would be just before 899, since King Alfred died in 899 and Ohthere must have told his story to the king before this. However, it would seem more likely that it happened a number of years before this.\(^\text{163}\)

Ohthere’s account of his journey to Beormas contains detailed information about the sailing times and directions, and is in fact the most detailed description we have available. Ohthere uses the form Beormas for the Bjarmians, but there is really no doubt that Beormas refers to Bjarmians. As ROSS puts it, the identification of Ohthere’s Beormas with Bjarmar (Old West Norse) is so obvious that it has never been questioned. From philological point of view Beormas represents Bjarmar exactly.\(^\text{164}\) Indeed, the words are very similar and the geographical area of Beormas in Ohthere’s account fits very well with that of the Bjarmar in Scandinavian sources.

Ohthere begins by telling that he lived in the northernmost extremity of Norway, by the North Sea. The land extended north of this location, but was according to Ohthere desolate except for the nomadic Saami that dwelled in the area. Hålogaland was the name of the northernmost area with Norwegian settlement (stretching from Bindalen to Malangen). The area north of this was called Finnmark and inhabited by Saami. In the Viking Age and the Middle Ages the Malangen Fjord was considered as a border between Finnmark and Hålogaland, as well as the limit of major Norwegian settlement. However, the border was somewhat mobile in the sense that the Saami also dwelled in areas south of Finnmark and there was some Norwegian settlement north of Malangen. The Norwegian settlement had to some extent spread to the large islands in Troms, perhaps as far north as Vannøy and Karlsøy. North of this began the desolate land Ohthere refers to. Since the Norwegians were farmers, they lived on the coast and at the bottom of the fjords because these were areas where cultivation was possible.

\(^{163}\) See Nansen 1911, 132; Simonsen 1957, 4; Vilkuna 1964, 83; Djupedal 1969, 6, 10; Bately 1980b, lxxxvii-lxxxix; Vilkuna 1980, 647; Carpelan 1993a, 231.

\(^{164}\) Ross 1940, 29; Djupedal 1969, 11 footnote 1.
In addition, fishing could be practised in these locations. The Saami inhabited the inland, since this area was good for hunting.  

There seems to prevail consensus that Ohthere lived at Malangen Fjord or thereabouts, somewhere in the vicinity of Tromsø. It may have been a bit further in the north, since studies of archaeological material show that there was some Norwegian settlement north of Malangen. It is, however, worth remembering that maybe we should not take Ohthere all too literally regarding his statement of being the very northernmost of all Norwegians. It is possible he may have meant that he was the northernmost chieftain or one of the most northerly of all Norwegians. In any case, I find this generalised localisation of his homestead to be sufficient for the purposes of this study. Because of the general nature of the information Ohthere gives about his home, it is hard to suggest a more precise location with any reasonable certainty. We do not need it either, since it is impossible in any case to follow Ohthere’s journey in minute detail. Since Ohthere only gives the rough outline of his journey, all we can hope to do is to determine the journey’s course in equally rough manner.

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165 Simonsen 1957, 7; Gunnes 1976, 69–70; Krag 1995, 81–82; Storli 2007, 82. According to STORM, the old Hålogaland stretched up to 69½ N. Storm 1894, 93.
166 Nansen 1911, 131 footnote 1; Johnsen 1923, 7; Malone 1930, 158; Tallgren 1931, 101; Ross 1940, 2 footnote 16a; Simonsen 1957, 8; Sjøvold 1974, 302; Gunnes 1976, 70; Lund 1983, 7; Suvanto 1987, 11. Also the island of Senja has been pointed out as Ohthere’s home. Nansen 1911, 131 footnote 1; Binns 1961, 44; Whitelock 1970a, 229. Lenvik (south of Malangen) is one of the suggestions. Johnsen 1923, 7. SJØVOLD suggests Hillesøy as Ohthere’s home, but he is open for other possibilities as long as it is somewhere in the borderland of Norwegian agricultural settlement. Sjøvold 1974, 302. Some scholars have tried to identify Ohthere’s home in great detail. STORM finds that Ohthere lived in one of the big farms just south of Malangen. Storm 1894, 93. DJUPEDAL places Ohthere either on the farm Greipstad in Hillesøy or on Senja. He however maintains that these are mere guesses. Djupedal 1969, 6. SIMONSEN refers to several (outdated) older suggestions for Ohthere’s homestead: the farms Gibostad, Lenvik or Finnsnes in Gisundet. Also Vannøy has been suggested, but SIMONSEN finds that Greipstad Hillesøy Lenvik, Andøy and Ytre Senja are more likely suggestions. Simonsen 1957, 7–8. Also Bjarkøy and Kvaløya have been suggested. However, if Ohthere was to be taken literally about being the absolute northernmost Norwegian, then in the light of the current research Loppa is the northernmost point with Norwegian settlement. According to STORLI, any farm in northern parts of Hålogaland with suitable finds could in principle have been Ohthere’s home. Since cereal does not ripen north of the southeren coast of Kvaløya, this area must be seen as the northern limit of where Ohthere could have lived. Thus Ohthere’s farm must have been located somewhere between Bjarkøy and Kvaløya. Storli 2007, 83–85.
Journey to Beormas

Ohthere’s approximate starting place was around 68 ½ N on the Atlantic coast.\textsuperscript{167} He provides us with comparatively detailed information about the manner with which he sailed from his home. He particularly stresses the fact (on several occasions) that during the whole travel he and his crew sailed along the coast with land on starboard and open sea on port. Excepting the nomadic Saami, the land was uninhabited until the end of the journey.

The first three days of sailing took Ohthere and his crew to the place where the whale-hunters travelled at their farthest. This indicates that Ohthere had at least some information about areas north of his home. This seems reasonable since the Norwegians had contacts with people in the east and north. It is thus likely that they were familiar with the lay of the coast and knew what kind of people lived in the neighbouring areas. Also place names in Finnmark indicate that the Norwegians had some knowledge of northern Finnmark before Ohthere’s time.\textsuperscript{168} There are only few suggestions where this northernmost spot of whale-hunters might have been\textsuperscript{169}, but it is actually not very important in this connection. Another three days would still bring Ohthere further north, up to a point where the land (or the estuary on land) turns towards east.

It has been suggested that after six days of sailing, Ohthere had reached North Cape or a slightly more northern location. Nordkyn, forty miles east of the North Cape and around 450 km from northern Hålogaland, has been suggested.\textsuperscript{170} Here Ohthere and his crew changed direction and sailed for four days toward east, still following the coast. After this they reached a point where the land (or estuary within land) again turns, this time toward south. It has been suggested that Ohthere at this point of his journey had reached Cape Sazonova on the east side of the Kola Peninsula. Alternatively, Ohthere’s southern turning point has been placed to

\textsuperscript{167} Tallgren 1931, 101.
\textsuperscript{168} Nansen 1911, 133; Djupedal 1969, 6.
\textsuperscript{169} The northernmost location of the whale-hunters may have been Kvaløya in Hammerfest or Gjesver in Magerøya. Koht 1930, 22. Nansen has calculated that the location should be approximately midway from Malangen to the North Cape since it took three days to sail from Malangen to this spot and from there another three days to the North Cape. The midway point is in Loppen. Nansen 1911, 131 footnotes 3 and 4.
\textsuperscript{170} Malone 1930, 158; Whitelock 1970a, 229; Bately 1980a, 180; Blom 1984, 385.
Korabelnyy, close to Sviatoi Nos’ or directly south from there, perhaps Mys Malyy Gorodetskiy or Mys Orlov.\footnote{171}

Again it was time to change course. This time Ohthere sailed southward for five days, still following the coast. After this Ohthere and his crew reached a great river that turned inland. This river was the final destination of their journey. To reach it, they had been sailing a total of fifteen days.

Some scholars have tried to trace Ohthere’s route in greater detail. C. C. RAFN has attempted to follow Ohthere’s route with the following results. Ohthere would have started from the Island of Hindey by sailing for three days past the big islands (like Senja) to the North Cape (probably Geirsver/Gjesvær close to Magerøya, the same place that is mentioned in the sagas) where he changed direction and began sailing towards the east. An additional four days would have taken Ohthere to Vardø in Varanger Fjord and finally another five days of sailing would bring him to Northern Dvina River (i.e. the “Vína” of the sagas).\footnote{172}

Gustav STORM has traced Ohthere’s journey as well. According to him, Ohthere reached the northernmost point of land in Finnmark, i.e. the northern part of Magerøya, after six days of sailing. He needed six days from Malangen to North Cape. The distance between the two is only half of that from North Cape to the mouth of the White Sea which took Ohthere only four days to sail. This is according to STORM because during the first “slow” stretch he had been sailing between the islands following a route that is still in use. In order to inspect whether the land was inhabited, he had to sail close to it. There are no more islands after Magerøya and sailing must have become easier after this and consequently faster. Sailing between the islands would have made the actual distance longer and provided many opportunities to stop. On the open sea one would be aided by good winds and there would be less opportunities to stop. Ohthere continued towards the east for four days. After this he reached the “entrance” to the White Sea and turned south. This was probably around Sviatoi Nos’. After this Ohthere sailed for five days towards the south. STORM points out that Ohthere cannot have landed on the Northern Dvina River despite the opinion of many scholars. He was seemingly the first one to do this accompanied with arguments that many later scholars have found decisive in trying to determine Ohthere’s destination. First of all, Ohthere had sailed around uninhabited peninsula with open sea on one side the whole time and

\footnote{171} Munch 1874a, 631 footnote 2; Nansen 1911, 131 footnote 5; Malone 1930, 158; Bately 1980a, 184; Korhammer 1985, 261–262. According to BATELY, \textit{Admiralty White Sea Pilot} gives quite a choice of anchorages for small vessels along the Terski coast. See Bately 1980a, 184.

\footnote{172} Rafn 1852, 461.
the side had not changed during the journey. Secondly, the big river that he reached was a border between the Saami and the Beormas.173

Richard EKBLOM finds that the first six days of sailing brought Ohthere to Nordkyn promontory. Ohthere passed the island Magerøya (at North Cape) from the south, like the present-day shipping route. After four more days he reached Cape Orlov where the coast turns south. Ohthere sailed past walrus area. Still today an island at the entrance to the White Sea is called Morzhovets, “Walrus Island”. He ended up at Varzuga, which is a quite short river but very broad at its mouth. It is impossible to think the it was the Northern Dvina, because the land was on his starboard throughout the journey.174

Reidar DJUPEDAL finds that Ohthere followed the coast northwards for six days until he reached Vardøy. He calculates that six days of sailing with 60 nautical miles per day makes a distance of 360 nautical miles from Ohthere’s farm in Hålogaland. After this Ohthere must have followed the coast of the Kola Peninsula for four days adding a distance of 240 nautical miles. After this he turned south into the White Sea, but it is not clear where the journey ended, though the destination must have been on the border between the permanently settled Beormas and the nomadic Saami on the Ter coast of Kola. Both the Varzuga River and the Umba River are possible. Also the River Vyg (close to the present-day city of Belomorsk) on the southern coast of the Kantalahti Bay is a possibility if Ohthere crossed the Kantalahti Bay of the White Sea. However, it seems likely that Ohthere did not reach the southern coast of the White Sea.175

Povl SIMONSEN sketches a route that would take Ohthere and his crew to NE or east for the first six days, then four days to the southeast or south and finally five days to the southwest. The turning points of this route were Vardøya at Varangerfjord and Sviatoi Nos’ at the White Sea. Ohthere’s final destination should be placed on the southern shore of the White Sea.176

Kemp MALONE traces the last five-day journey in finer detail. Ohthere would have sailed from Cape Sazonova (the last turning point) to Ponoi River (60 miles south), from there to Chapoma (75 miles southwest), from Chapoma to Chavanga (40 miles west) and from there to the mouth of Varzuga (30 miles west by northwest).177 This is a journey of just over two hundred miles.

173 Storm 1894, 94–95. See also Nansen 1911, 131 footnote 5.
174 Ekblom 1960, 8–9.
175 Djupedal 1969, 6–7.
176 Simonsen 1957, 10–12.
177 Malone 1930, 159.
A. L. BINNS tracks down Ohthere’s voyage taking in account the sailing conditions and concludes among other things that Ohthere could well have sailed past the North Cape with the winds he describes. In general, the log he gives for the journey is realistic and in accordance with the sailing conditions. According to BINNS, the turning point after the first six days was probably Nordkyn, not North Cape. It is unlikely the turning point could have been North Cape since for an observer on a ship this is not the spot where the coast turns towards the east. Nordkyn is forty miles further east and it is only at Nordkyn (or even at Slettnes, ten miles further on) that one can see how the land turns east. The second turning point was probably the Sviatoi Nos’ Bay, which is a very prominent headland. Until this point nobody sailing along the coast would think of the land turning southward. After this spot there is a marked change in the trend of the coastline down to the entrance of the White Sea. 178

**Ohthere’s destination in historiography**

As the examples above demonstrate, the results are varying. Older literature most often finds that Ohthere had reached the Northern Dvina River, whereas theories of later date have it that he reached Varzuga, Umba or the head or the southern coast of the Kantalahti Bay; even Varangerfjord and the Mezen River have been suggested.179

The Northern Dvina River has long been connected with Bjarmaland. Already H. G. PORTHAN (1790) (and several other 18th century scholars, the first one being Thormod TORFÆUS in 1711) suggested this, as did MUNCH (1874) and the theory still remains popular.180 A list of more recent scholars who are in favour of the Northern Dvina River as Ohthere’s destination include e.g. Heikki KIRKINEN (1963), Martti HAAVIO (1965), Matti HUURRE (1983) and Claus KRAG (1995). There are several arguments that have been used to support this theory. It has been pointed out that since Northern Dvina was the destination of later journeys to Bjarmaland, also the “original” one most likely took Ohthere to Northern Dvina. It has been suggested that both Umba and Varzuga are too small to fit the description of a great river. A third argument has it that the level of living in the Kola Peninsula

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179 Jansson 1936, 41; Bately 1980a, 185–186; Makarov 2007, 141.
180 Torfæus 1711, 163–16; Munch 1874b, 631; Haavio 1965, 15–16.
area does not fit with the information of cultivation among the *Beormas*. Instead, the Northern Dvina region is considered more suited to fit this description.181

STORM (1894), NANSEN (1911), JOHNSEN (1923), TALLGREN (1930 and 1931), ROSS (1940), SIMONSEN (1957), BINNS (1961), VILKUNA (1964 and 1980), DJUPEDAL (1969), JACKSON (1992 and 2002) and CARPELAN (1993) are all in favour of the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula, perhaps at the mouth of either the River Varzuga or the River Umba or even the Kantalahti Bay.182 The Varzuga River is by many accepted as Ohthere’s destination. At least it seems to be the one most often referred to when speaking of the big rivers on the Kola Peninsula.183 In several cases, though, it is only one option among many.

Oscar Albert JOHNSEN is of the opinion that Ohthere’s large river must have been on the Kola Peninsula. He finds that River Umba or the Kantalahti Bay are more likely options than the Varzuga, since permanent settlement hardly reached this far east as early as Ohthere’s time.184 Kustaa VILKUNA is in favour of one of the big rivers on the Kola Peninsula, probably either the Umba or the Varzuga.185 Tatjana JACKSON finds that the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula, west from the Lower Strelna River or the Varzuga River, is the most likely destination of Ohthere’s journey.186 Fridtjof NANSEN finds that Ohthere’s “large river” must have been on the Kola Peninsula where the border between *Terfinna land* and *Beormas* was. The river may well have been Varzuga or another one of the big rivers, even the Kantalahti Bay.187

ROSS has dealt extensively with the location of Ohthere’s *Beormas*. He finds that Ohthere’s destination must have been on the Kantalahti Bay and rejects the possibility that Ohthere reached the Northern Dvina River. This conclusion is based on Ohthere’s log and the vicinity of *Terfinna land*. Also, Ohthere makes it very clear that during the entire journey he had land on his right and open sea on his left, which can only lead to the conclusion that he must have sailed along the west coast

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182 Storm 1894, 94–95; Nansen 1911, 133–134; Johnsen 1923, 9; Tallgren 1930, 60; Tallgren 1931, 101; Ross 1940, 6–7; 24, 43, 49; Vilkuna 1964, 83; Vilkuna 1980, 647; Jackson 1992a, 24; Jackson 1992b, 125; Carpelan 1993a, 231–232; Jackson 2002, 165, 170.
183 Binns 1961, 44; Whitelock 1970a, 229; Bately 1980a, 185–186; Korhammer 1985, 261. Considering the length and speed of the journey Ohthere could have reached Varzuga, but this does not mean that he did so. As BATELY points out, there are other large rivers in the area: Stryél’naya, Pyálka, Chapoma, Pyálitsa. Bately 1980a, 186–187.
184 Johnsen 1923, 9.
185 Vilkuna 1964, 83; Vilkuna 1980, 647.
186 Jackson 1992a, 24; Jackson 1992b, 125.
187 Nansen 1911, 134.
of the White Sea and not the east. ROSS finds that the most probable destination of Ohthere’s journey must have been one of the great rivers flowing south into the Kantalahti Bay, most likely either the Umba or the Varzuga. A conceivable possibility is also the head of the Kantalahti Bay itself. However, Ohthere’s statement that “they turned up into that river, because they dared not sail on past [or across] the river”, seems to imply that he was not referring to the bay itself. For “to sail on past” the bay would have involved a complete reversal of the course and this does not add up with the phrase Ohthere used. Even if he was so far into the Kantalahti Bay that he would have thought it was a river, he must have been able to see across it and realise that he needed to change course. The changing of course is not in accordance with “sailing on past”. In the end ROSS prefers the Varzuga of the two options, because it is connected with “Karelian parishes” in a document of 1419.188

According to CARPELAN, it is less likely that the river Ohthere reached was the Northern Dvina, the Varzuga, the Niva or the Onega. Instead, all information about Ohthere’s journey points towards the western coast of the White Sea, perhaps either the River Kem’ or the River Vyg. The territory of the Saami extended there still during the Middle Ages. The Saami in the area lived next to people that most likely spoke Baltic Fennic language and thus were linguistically close to the Saami. The rivers Kem’ and Vyg were important waterways. The River Kem’ led towards Northern Finland and Lapland and one could continue further on to Northern Sweden and Norway. The River Vyg flows towards the Onega Bay of the White Sea and from there one could travel on to either the Baltic Sea or the River Volga.189

There are enough theories, but where did Ohthere actually end up? Before going to this in more detail there are a few matters that I would like to discuss. First of all, the largely debated matter of orientation needs to be addressed before trying to trace Ohthere’s course. After that I shall shortly discuss sailing and ships to find out about sailing conditions in Ohthere’s time. Another matter of interest is the location of Ohthere’s Terfinna land. I will also take a look at theories that try to reconstruct Ohthere’s journey by estimating the speed of sailing and the distances covered. All of these issues can offer help in locating Ohthere’s destination on the White Sea.

188 Ross 1940, 6–7, 24, 43, 49.
189 Carpelan 1993a, 231–232.
Orientation

The shift theory has long roots and already PORTHAN (1800) brought it up. After him there have been many others who have discussed the shift of the cardinal points in old Scandinavian practise.\(^{190}\) MALONE picks up many examples in King Alfred’s *Orosius* where there seemingly is a shift of about 45 degrees clockwise.\(^{191}\) He comes to the conclusion that Alfred uses “two distinct systems of orientation, which may be named the classical and the shifted”. However, he does not arrive at any distinct conclusions of how these two systems are implemented. In other words, he could not discover any logic in why Alfred in some cases chose the classical and in other cases the shifted orientation. It seems like the two systems were used randomly, there is no consistency in their use.\(^{192}\) MALONE has concluded that Ohthere’s north is actually northeast, since the Norwegian coast does not run straight from south to north but more from southwest to northeast. MALONE tries to correct all the directions Ohthere gives to match the modern usage, i.e. directions that one gets when using both map and compass. A curious thing is that in this case it seems like Ohthere was mixing two different systems as well.\(^{193}\) A slightly different theory of shifted orientation has been instigated by EKBLOM. He suggests a shift of 60 degrees clockwise instead of 45. He finds support for the shift in lie of the Norwegian coast as well as the direction of the big rivers in Sweden and astronomical conditions in the Trondheim area. By complicated calculations he has reached the shift of 60 degrees.\(^{194}\)

KORHAMMER has effectively slaughtered the assumptions of EKBLOM, MALONE and others who have promoted variations of Old Scandinavian shift theory with either 45 or 60 degrees shift clockwise for all the cardinal points. There are also several others who have rejected the theory or shown some degree of criticism\(^ {195}\), but none of these as effectively as KORHAMMER. He finds that the “two main champions” of the shift theory have been EKBLOM and MALONE. MALONE’s method is simple and descriptive: he goes through the literature and picks out all the examples he considers to be in variance with current usage. The

\(^{190}\) Storm 1894, 93; Malone 1930, 139 footnote 2; Whitelock 1970a, 229–230; Korhammer 1985, 251.

\(^{191}\) See Malone 1930, 144, 150, 152–158, 162, 164–165.

\(^{192}\) See Malone 1930, 166–167.

\(^{193}\) Malone 1930, 158.

\(^{194}\) Ekblom 1960, 3–5.

\(^{195}\) E.g. NANSEN has pointed out that although Ohthere seems to make an error in the direction of the Norwegian coast (it bends towards northeast, not due north), he realised that only four cardinal points were used to describe Ohthere’s journey. Nansen 1911, 131, 133.
conclusion is that two systems are used simultaneously without any consistent logic. MALONE’s theory contains a silent assumption that the bearings of the Old English *Orosius* can be treated as if people of that time had had access to modern maps. EKBLOM’s method is more systematic and complicated but his “facts” are poorly founded and unscientific (and even downright erroneous) as a study of how he reached his conclusions clearly shows.

KORHAMMER offers a reasonable explanation to the navigation dilemmas that have bothered many scholars dealing with Ohthere’s account. The information Ohthere gives about wind and coastline refers only to the time of departure from the stopping-place and immediately afterwards. It cannot be assumed that the wind would have stayed constant for several days. After leaving Nordkyn, Ohthere could from Cape Sletnes see no further than Cape Makkaur (NW of Vardø). His course there would have been 122°, 32° south of east and consequently not so much different from the *eastryhte* he claims. There was nothing more to tell for four days, since there was no dramatic change of course during this time. It seems unreasonable to expect more detailed information about his course. The route from the next stopping place close to or south from Sviatoi Nos’ would start by sail towards the south, although if the journey were to end at Varzuga a change would be needed later on. It is worth noticing that wind can be described quite accurately in terms of the eight-point system of orientation. However, the overall course of an unknown coastline stretching for 300 nautical miles and curving for 150 miles is definitely more difficult to describe. Ohthere had no map available. In any case, a very detailed description would not have been of great interest even if it was possible and a four-point system would be sufficient. The destination of the journey was already described sufficiently: the land was on the starboard the whole time, the effective sailing time was 15 days and the journey ended at a great river beyond which the land was cultivated again. A precise eight-point system used in connection with wind and weather and less precise information about land corresponds very well to usage in modern Iceland. For Ohthere to be able to determine the wind directions precisely in unfamiliar surroundings, he must have gained the information directly from the sun. The conclusion is that like Ohthere, all the other Scandinavian seafarers must have used the normal compass system we

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196 Korhammer 1985, 251–257.
197 BINNS has pointed out that it was habitual to use right-angle courses (north, east, south, west) in reckoning. Binns 1961, 50–51.
use today. In any case, the idea of a shifted system based on the normal one is absurd.\textsuperscript{198}

One of the main factors that has contributed to the rise of the theory of shifted orientation is the fact that the word \textit{norþryhte} has been interpreted as meaning “due north”. As Ohthere’s account uses this expression of the course along the Norwegian coast (that in reality bends towards northeast, not due north), many scholars have thought that Ohthere’s directions are not in accordance with reality. KORHAMMER has studied the dilemma with a statistical method and reached the conclusion that there is a difference in the meaning of -\textit{ryhte} depending on whether it is used as an adverb or a suffix. This puts an end to the traditional semantic equation between the two. The former (i.e. adverb) defines an exact cardinal point, the latter (i.e. suffix) gives only the general direction. With these new translations in mind, Ohthere’s account should be translated with “wanted to know how far north, to what northern latitude the land stretched” and “sailed northwards along the land”\textsuperscript{199}. With these more correct translations there is no need for a shift in compass points. KORHAMMER has clearly shown that the shift-theory is “methodically inconsistent, impracticable and historically improbable”. He concludes that the idea of a shifted-orientation system should be “rejected once and for all”.\textsuperscript{200} I agree with him.

Tatjana N. JACKSON and Alexander V. PODOSSINOV have launched an additional theory of orientation that takes its starting point in the so-called mental map, i.e. one would build up a map in one’s mind based on the information one had obtained. Medieval authors had a general idea of the world. They did not have real maps (nor compass data) they could use and consequently they used mental maps as a means to orientate in space. Both the Scandinavians and other Germanic and even Indo-European peoples thought that the world was divided into four segments according to the cardinal points. This kind of division in four segments/cardinal points is actually universal among humans. The center of the Scandinavian or Germanic “wind-rose” must have been located south of Norway, somewhere in the north of continental Europe, perhaps north of Jutland or in the northern part of the

\textsuperscript{198} Korhammer 1985, 261–262.

\textsuperscript{199} In older times “northwards” meant along the coast with land on starboard. This would be applied on the Norwegian coast until Vardo. See Simonsen 1957, 10.

\textsuperscript{200} Old English \textit{Orosius} did use an eight-point system of orientation, i.e. both the cardinal points and the half-cardinal points. A closer study shows that the OE \textit{Orosius} normally uses four points and only when there was more detailed information available the smaller sectors were used. Even today with numerous devices from maps to satellites we still tend to think in terms of north, south, east and west. One can hardly expect more of a man of the 9\textsuperscript{th} century. Korhammer 1985, 262–268.
Danish islands or in the south of Scandinavia. The analysis of Icelandic Kings’ Sagas has shown a division of the world in four segments. The set of lands in each of these is rather permanent. The eastern quarter contains the Baltic lands and the territories far beyond the Baltic Sea such as Russia. The northern quarter contains Norway and Finnmark, sometimes also Bjarmaland.201

**Ships**

Skuldelev finds have proved that there existed different types of ships for war and trade in prehistorical Scandinavia. Different types of ships were used according to where one sailed, e.g. in sheltered or shallow water, wide and stormy seas, by the coast or on the inland waterways. The largest sea vessels were called *hafskip* (e.g. Gokstad) and were over 20 meters long. Warships were called *langskip* (e.g. Skuldelev 2 and 5 are “longship” war vessels) and trading ships were called *knarr*.202

The material that we can use to to identify the type of Ohthere’s ship is sparse. There are a few contemporary ship-finds, we can use Ohthere’s own description and additionally use our general knowledge of the society in Northern Norway.203 Although it is possible that Ohthere’s ship was of different type, I would like to

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201 In Iceland the usage of cardinal points depended on context and could either correspond or not correspond to the compass. HAUGEN has distinguished two types of orientation, the so-called “proximate” and “ultimate”. “Proximate” orientation is based on visual experience at sea with celestial observation as the only possible way of defining position. In this case the cardinal points are “correct”, i.e. they correspond to the compass. Ultimate orientation developed in land travel and coastal sailing between the four quarters of Iceland. In this system the directions are described in terms of a goal and accordingly, the compass points are incorrect. The goal is one of the quarters and the directions always would follow the corner one was travelling toward. The starting point was of no consequence. If one would be e.g. travelling to the western quarter, then one would be always going to the west despite one’s original position. Jackson–Podossinov 1997, 281, 283–286. In many ways Jackson and Podossinov’s theory makes sense. In general, the directions given in written sources correspond to the directions of this theory without clashing with the modern orientation. On the other hand, KORHAMMER’s simple use of common sense shows that the Scandinavians were capable of orientation in a manner that corresponds to what is in use today. This leads to the conclusion that both means of orientation were used, depending on context and need. The mental map with the four quarters was perhaps in everyday use and the more demanding orientation that involved using the sun or the stars to define the cardinal points was used for navigation on sea or otherwise as an aid when travelling, especially in unknown areas. It seems pretty clear that Ohthere was using the cardinal points according to the regular compass points. Actually, the ultimate system with its quarters does not disagree with Ohthere’s directions either, but since Ohthere most likely was sailing on unknown waters, it seems more probable that he would have employed the system which uses the actual cardinal points.

202 Sawyer 1971, 85; Häme 1987a, 219; Binns 1993b, 578; Christensen 1993a, 232.

203 Christensen 2007, 112.
give a short presentation of the three famous Norwegian Viking Age ships, namely the Oseberg, Gokstad and Tune ships. This is in order to give a larger background on ships, their size and usage.

The Oseberg ship is a large, open boat of oak designed and equipped for both sailing and rowing. It is 21.58 metres long and 5.10 metres wide at its broadest part. Fifteen oar-holes on each side reveal the minimum number of crew when all oars were used. This would be 30–33 hands including 30 oarsmen, a helmsman and a look-out. Oseberg, Gokstad and Tune ships are all roughly of the same size. They are somewhat smaller than the regular Viking longship. They are all vessels for sailing along the coast. The Oseberg ship carries the signs of being a pleasure ship for use in good weather on closed waters. Despite the similar basic construction, the Gokstad and Tune ships are more sturdily built and better suited for sailing in rougher conditions. Oseberg ship’s displacement has been calculated to be 11 tons. This number includes the crew of 35 men. The Oseberg ship can be dated to the first decades of the 9th century, in other words to the very beginning of the Viking Age. However, the ship was buried (in the 830’s) nearly two decades after it was built.204

The Gokstad ship is rather similar to the Oseberg ship, only slightly larger. It was built for 16 pairs of oars and measures 23.24 metres, the longest beam being 5.20 metres. It is likely that during long voyages the crew was not much larger than about thirty-five men.205 An exact copy of the ship built in 1893 had a tonnage of 31.78 register tons. The Gokstad ship is more seaworthy than the Oseberg ship, although the type of the construction is similar. The Gokstad ship is a karve, a private travelling vessel of chieftains and it was designed to sail along the coast. It is superior to the Oseberg ship in stability, serviceable construction and building and in general bears the characteristics of a practical utility ship. It has minimal ornamentation, but the craftsmanship is of high quality. The Gokstad ship was probably built after the middle of the 9th century, nearly half a century after the Oseberg ship. Perhaps the difference in seaworthiness is due to progress of building skills during this half century. The first “Viking” expeditions had occurred and the experiences gained at sea may well have resulted in improved shipbuilding methods. The Gokstad burial is generally dated to around 900 AD.206

204 Sjøvold 1985, 22, 28, 34, 36; Christensen 1987, 7, 21; Christensen 1993b, 457.
205 A larger number would be advantageous in hand-to-hand fighting, but for example for crossing the North Sea larger crew would have made the sailing difficult and even hazardous. Sawyer 1971, 71.
206 Sawyer 1971, 68–76; Sjøvold 1985, 56, 60; Christensen 1993a, 232.
The Tune ship is smaller than the two previous ships. However, the construction is roughly the same. Because of the bad state of preservation, it is impossible to estimate the ship’s original full length, but it must have been close to twenty metres. It is 4.35 metres wide at its widest part. The number of oars is also uncertain, but was probably 11–12. The Tune ship can most likely be dated to the latter half of the 9th century, i.e. roughly the same period as the Gokstad ship. Gokstad and Tune ships are also the closest in date to Ohthere’s ship of all the finds that we know.\footnote{Sjøvold 1985, 69–70; Christensen 2007, 112.}

A. L. Binns is of the opinion that it is probable that Ohthere’s ship was of stouter type than a lean war-galley of Gokstad type. Ole Crumlin-Pedersen finds that both Gokstad and Oseberg ships derive approximately from Ohthere’s time, but that Ohthere’s ship was hardly the same type as these, the so-called karvi, since these were primarily used for transporting many men with arms and armour. Instead, Ohthere was most likely sailing a larger merchant ship. Perhaps his ship was something like the Skuldelev I ship which is a so-called knar. This ship is, however, of later date, c. one hundred years after Ohthere’s time. Also Arne Emil Christensen is of the opinion that most likely Ohthere’s vessel was a merchantman, roughly of the same type as Gokstad and Tune ships that were most probably somewhat all-purpose ships. Merchant ships had become a separate type already in the 9th century as is testified by several finds that represent this type. All of these ships are 16–18 metres long. All in all, Skuldelev I is probably a closest parallel to Ohthere’s ship. This ship could carry a cargo of 15–20 tons. With a ship of this size Ohthere would have been able to make just one journey every year and still make good business. He could transport goods of many sorts including furs, walrus tusks and iron, i.e. both heavy and lighter cargo. Since Ohthere most likely traded expensive luxury items (down, furs, walrus tusks, walrus- and seal-hide ropes) he did not necessarily need very large capacity for cargo. Ohthere’s assumed status indicates that he owned both the ship and the cargo himself. The crew may have counted at least 8–10 men, but perhaps as many as 30–40. Ohthere did most likely not wait for favourable wind because he could not have sailed against wind, but because he was sailing in unknown waters, he wanted as favourable a wind as possible to be able to maneuver the ship in unexpected danger situations. In any case, Ohthere must have had a good seaworthy vessel, well suited for traveling long distances.\footnote{Binns 1961, 47; Crumlin-Pedersen 1983, 32–35; Christensen 2007, 112–114, 116; Englert 2007, 118.}
Sailing

The tradition was that one sailed during the day and camped on land or cast the anchor for the night. On occasion though, one sailed also through the night, although this may not have been the preferred manner of travelling at least in regard to sailing along the coast. Sailing along the coast was the most common manner of sailing in the Viking Age and was still predominant in the Baltic Sea during the 13th century. There is a written account from this time that shows that it was preferable to sail a far longer distance along the coast than to dare sail over open sea although this would have been considerably shorter.209

There is no evidence whatsoever that any sort of instrument was used in Viking navigation. The alleged instruments are all imaginary modern creations. However, sun as well as wind and conditions on the sea aided navigation. Most Viking navigation took place along the coast, at a safe distance offshore. There is no evidence of any charts for sea use before the 15th century. Texts show that the navigators had a clear mental picture of the layout of their world. Sailing direction (that were passed on in oral form and in more moderen times also in written form) were the oldest means of navigational help. Traditional sailing without compass and chart with only sailing directions as a guide was practised in the north of Europe up until the 16th-17th centuries. As a matter of fact, the sailing instructions given in Ohthere’s account are very similar to other preserved medieval sailing instructions.210 The magnetic compass (in its rudimentary form) only appeared in the 12th century in Europe (and even then only in the Mediterranean) and before the 14th century Scandinavians had no advanced observational or navigational instruments worthy of the name. Before this, only heavenly bodies could supply one with the cardinal points. The Polar Star and the sun would give north and south. When sailing along the coast it is often impossible to know the exact direction of the coastline since there may be many islands, projections and fjords that obscure the overall direction of the coast. There were no maps or sea charts to orientate after. Ohthere could have been confused of directions only if he sailed in bad

209 Simonsen 1957, 11; Crumlin-Pedersen 1983, 35; Binns 1993a, 429; Binns 1993b, 579.
210 Binns 1993a, 429; Schnall 2000, 379, 384 footnote 11, 385–386; Vilhjalmsson 2000, 366–368. The matter of medieval Scandinavian navigational instruments is a debated issue and some scholars have tried to suggest that there existed advanced navigational aids (e.g. astrolabe). See e.g. Berghórssson 2000, 277. However, the historical evidence does not seem to support this assumption. The astronomical aspect of sailing has been overestimated and suggestions regarding the use of instruments is related to this. In any case, available aids would only have been of limited assistance. Schnall 2000, 384 footnote 11, 385; Vilhjalmsson 2000, 368–371.
visibility when observation of the sun was impossible. If the weather was not clouded, Ohthere needed simply to glance at the midnight sun to see where north was. Since Ohthere was able to determine the direction of the wind precisely, he must have known where north was. Even if the sun had been behind clouds the whole time, Ohthere should have been able to detect changes of course from the wind and waves.\textsuperscript{211}

It is worth noticing that on two occasions Ohthere points out that he does not know if the mainland changes direction or if it is only an estuary that curves into the land. Why he stresses this can perhaps best be understood in the light of how the medieval people understood geography. People commonly thought that all the land in the world was gathered into a rectangular or rounded mass that was surrounded by the ocean. Here and there deeper bays cut into the landmass. There was common interest to find out the shape of the coastal line and this is probably why the scribe of Ohthere’s account so carefully writes down the different turns the coast-line took during Ohthere’s journey. In order to define the outermost edge of the world it was important to know whether it was the land or the sea that curved. If it was the land, one would have found the outermost edge, but if it was the sea, one would just have been entering a sea like the Baltic or the Mediterranean.\textsuperscript{212}

Christine E. FELL has another explanation for Ohthere’s careful way of explaining that he was not sure whether it was the land or the sea which curved. She finds that the English language had no word for fjord as it does not have today. To explain what this was, Ohthere would have described that it was a place where sea curved into land. The text repeats this explanation.\textsuperscript{213} FELL has come up with several interesting interpretations in her article from 1983, but in my opinion most of these theories have serious shortcomings. The theories simply do not fit with what the original text actually says. The fjord theory is rather clever but with a closer look one discovers that FELL’s interpretation is not compatible with the actual wording of the text. If Ohthere had been referring to fjords in a roundabout way, he would hardly have expressed his doubt about the curving of the land. It is thus more likely that the scribe is trying to trace the coastline in as much detail as possible and had to use the roundabout expressions since Ohthere was not sure of the lie of the land. Ohthere’s careful tracing of the coastline illustrates well the manner of sailing, namely that instead of going on the open sea, it was common to follow the coast.

\textsuperscript{211} Korhammer 1985, 258–261; Schnall 2000, 384 footnote 11, 385; Viljalmsdóttir 2000, 368.
\textsuperscript{212} Lund 1983, 15; Krag 1995, 79.
\textsuperscript{213} Fell 1983, 59.
Also Janet BATELY has concluded that most likely what we read in Ohthere’s report is the scribe’s way of trying to follow the lie of the land.\textsuperscript{214}

*Terfinna land*

There is little doubt that the word *Finnas* refers to the Saami people. *Finnas* in different forms of spelling has been long used as a general name for these people.\textsuperscript{215} A point that deserves a more detailed analysis is the *Terfinna land* (i.e. “the land of Tersaami”) that Ohthere mentions. It seems to be a name of a special group of Saami or perhaps rather a denomination of a special area where a certain group of Saami lived. Ohthere does not differentiate in describing the livelihood of the Saami and the “Tersaami”: they all lived by hunting, fishing and fowling in an otherwise desolate country. *Terfinna land* is mentioned as a kind of contrast to the *Beormas*: *Beormas* were permanently settled, the “Tersaami” dwelled in a desolate land. Ohthere’s account gives the impression that “Tersaami” and *Beormas* were living next to each other, perhaps on opposite sides of the big river Ohthere sailed. This may help to localise the *Beormas*.

Scholars place *Terfinna land* seemingly without exception on the southern (or southeastern) shore of the Kola Peninsula (east of the River Varzuga). This identification has a long history beginning already in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Many seem to identify *Terfinna land* with the Finnish name *Turja* that appears in folk-poetry. This name has a counterpart in Russian: the terms *Terskij bereg* (meaning “the shore of Turja/Ter") and *Terskije lopari* (meaning “the Saami of Turja/Ter”) appear in some Russian documents. According to *Admiralty White Sea Pilot*, *Terskij bereg* covers the coastal area between Mys Sviatoi Nos’ (“Holy Cape”, Old Norwegian *Veggestaf?) in the north and Mys Ludoshnyy some 28 miles west of the Varzuga. In modern maps *Litus tericum* refers to the southern part of the Kola Peninsula. In the Kola Saami language the most eastern part of the Kola Peninsula is called *Tarje*. In modern Finnish *Turja* is used specifically of a small peninsula (*Turjanniemi/Ponoi/Turjenjarva*) on the eastern part of the south coast of the Kola Peninsula. The modern Russian name of the same location is *Turij*. According to Jacob FELLMAN, the sea by the peninsula is called *Turjan meri* (alternatively known as *Aluan meri*) and the mountains in the area are called *Turjan tunturit*. FELLMAN is also aware that *Turja* names are by some associated with mythology.

\textsuperscript{214} Bately 2007a, 35–36.

\textsuperscript{215} See e.g. Simonsen 1957, 11; Djupedal 1969, 5; Whitelock 1970a, 229; Pritsak 1981, 693 footnote 39.
and fantasy and can refer to an unknown far northerly location containing all kinds of ailments, creatures and beasts. All in all, the name in question seems to be particularly associated with the Kola Peninsula, although there is a slight variation in its application. It is worth noticing that there is no trace of the name in the areas east of the White Sea. Also, Saami have to our knowledge not lived by the Northern Dvina River. The conclusion is that “Terfinnas” are a group of Saami on the Kola Peninsula, in Ter or Turja Lapland. Some scholars seem to think that the whole of the Kola Peninsula was called Terfinna land. ROSS, however, points out that the “Terfinnas” are a particular group of Saami living on the southeast coast of the Kola Peninsula (the modern Russian Terskij bereg), more accurately the coast stretching from the entrance of the White Sea to the Varzuga River. This is an old theory proposed already by Joh. Andreas SJÖGREN. Reidar DJUPEDAL identifies the Finnas who lived in Ter/Turja as Saami on the Kola Peninsula, i.e. Skolte Saami. According to MAKAROV, “Terfinnas” are to be identified with eastern Saami, Terskaya Lop’ who inhabited the Kola Peninsula whose southern littoral had since the 13th century been known as the Novgorodian administrative area (volost) “Tre”. Kerstin EIDLITZ KUOLJOK writes that one of the seven coasts of the White Sea was called the “Tercoast”. The Saami on this coast were the first to be assimilated with the Russian settlers. Tre (i.e. Ter) was one of Novgorod’s volost, i.e. area of taxation. Tax was collected on the Tercoast between Varzuga and Sviatoi Nos’. The Terskaja zemlja known from a document of the 16th century is the same as the Terskij bereg that was still known in the 1930’s. It is also worth noticing that the medieval Scandinavian Trinnes, Trennes referred first to Ponoi (at the mouth of the river of that name) and to the adjacent promontory Cape Korabel’nyi (the most easterly point of the Kola Peninsula). Later on it referred to the eastern part and even the whole of the peninsula. This word is related to the Old Russian Têr.217

Max VASMEER gives a full etymological account of the different forms in different languages. The Finnish Turja derives either from the Lappish Tarje or *Tirja and must have been borrowed early on. The assumed old Russian form Tûrê must derive from the Finnish/Karelian form. The later Russian forms include trê.

216 In Finnish (in folk poetry in particular) Turja may sometimes also refer to “Lapland” or the northern area in general. Nykysuomen sanakirja osat V ja VI, S-O, 75; Suomen kielen etymologinen sanakirja V, 1421–1422; Rafi 1852, 462; Fellman 1906b, 175; Ross 1940, 25, 26 footnote 10; Haavio 1965, 15–16; Vasmer 1965, 169; Whitelock 1970a, 229; Bately 1980a, 186; Bergsland 1982, 123; Hauot 1997, 161; Bately 2007b, 56.

217 Storm 1894, 95–96; Fellman 1906b, 175; Nansen 1911, 133; Johnsen 1923, 9; Ross 1940, 25–26, 28; Djupedal 1969, 11 footnote 2; Vilkuna 1980, 647; Bergsland 1982, 123; Eidlitz Kuoljok 1991, 33; Makarov 2007, 142.
tîrê, terê, têrî. Old Russian türiskyjî beregû evolved from türe. Trê is often found in the Novgorodian written sources of the 13th-14th centuries in connection with the northern areas including Permî. The Kola Lappish dictionary by A. GENETZ (1891) identifies Turja with the eastern part of Kola Lapland. According to Elias LÖNNROTT the Finnish Turja refers to an area beyond the mountains in the north. This word is only found in folk poetry. VASMER finds that the Anglo-Saxon Ter- can be traced down to the Lappish tarje. The Russian Terski cannot be the origin. He further finds that both “Terfinnai” and “Beormas” are Finno-Ugrian names that were adopted from the Saami language via Norse.²¹⁸

It is often thought that Terfinna land only appears in Othøre’s account. However, it seems that a reference to the same area is also found in medieval Scandinavian texts. The name Tyrfsfînna²¹⁹ appears in one of the stanzas of Órvar-Odds saga. Also here the Tyrfsfînna are in juxtaposition to the Beormas: Bjarmar are mentioned in the stanzas immediately preceding and following the stanza with Tyrfsfînna.²²⁰

**Distance, speed and duration**

In the following I will go through different suggestions regarding the distance Othøre sailed in the given fifteen days. First it is important to find out what is understood with the word “day” (dagum). The Norse equivalent would most likely be dœgr, which could mean both a 12 and a 24-hour period depending on the context. In this context it may refer to a 24-hour period (dœgr-siglingar) considering that Othøre seemingly did not camp on shore on his way to Denmark it appears likely he did not do this on his way to Beormas either. In any case, Othøre had natural light both day and night. It has been estimated when counting full 24-hour days of sailing that one could cover for example 48, 50, 55, 60 or 65 nautical miles (1 nautical mile is 1852 metres). In perfect conditions one could of course sail very fast and in bad conditions much slower than any average estimate.²²¹

²¹⁹ The manuscript actually reads tyrvi finnar but it has been corrected by JÓNSSON to *Tyrfsfînna. This correction is based on a folk-etymology. ROSS suggests another reading: *Tyrvi-finnar. Also he suggests a folk-etymology, but of a different kind, to support this reading. ROSS’s form is also closer to the form in manuscript. See Ross 1940, 28 footnote 15.
²²⁰ Ross 1940, 27–28 footnote 15; Bergsland 1982, 123.
²²¹ Dœgr generally refers to 12-hour period (can be translated as ‘half-day’) and it is a fairly recent development that the word took the meaning of a 24-hour period (e.g. døgn). In context of sailing it
On the basis of Ohthere’s log on his way from Hálogaland to Kaupang (Skiringssal) (c. 1750 km) Ole CRUMLIN-PEDERSEN has calculated a minimum average speed of 2 knots (when sailing for thirty days, 16 hours per day). This is a rather modest speed but one could not count on keeping even this as an average on such a long journey. The average of two knots would mean that one could cover the distance of 48 nautical miles or about 88 kilometres per day. Accordingly, one could cover the distance of just over 1300 kilometres or 720 nautical miles per fifteen days.

Also A. L. BINNS has used the average of 48 nautical miles per 24 hours. He reasons that ordinary degr-sigling seems to have been 12 hours of sailing at the average speed of 2 knots, which corresponds to 24 nautical miles during the 12–hour day. Ohthere must have sailed round the clock to be able reach as far as he did. This means that he could cover the above-mentioned 48 nautical miles per day. This estimate seems realistic judging by experiments made with copies of Viking ships.

Anton ENGLERT has estimated that a distance somewhere between 555–1200 nautical miles in 15 days is a feasible number.

It has been assumed that the distance of about 1500–1800 kilometres is doable in fifteen days with favourable winds. This distance is given for the length of the journey from Ohthere’s homestead to the Northern Dvina River. Even if Ohthere did not sail to Northern Dvina, but ended up on the southern coast of the

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generally refers to a 24–hour period as can be deduced on the basis of the relations of the sailing times and average speed as presented in some texts. Simonsen 1957, 11; Djupedal 1969, 5; Batley 1980a, 182; Binns 1993a, 429; Vilhjalmsson 2000, 368–371.  
222 Crumlin-Pedersen 1983, 32–35.  
223 Estimates of effective sailing speed also include 3–6 knots per 24 hours. Vilhjalmsson 2000, 368–371. It has been estimated that under optimal circumstances the Viking Age trade ships could reach an average speed of 6–8 knots over one day. The maximum speed could most likely come up to 10–12 knots, but this only if the wind was strong (10–20 m/second). During normal conditions the circumstances were not always optimal and this is why one must count extra time for journeys. Crumlin-Pedersen 1983, 32–35; Binns 1993b, 579. The average of six knots over 24 hours would mean that one could cover 144 nautical miles corresponding to just over 266 kilometres a day. Keeping up this speed for fifteen days would mean that one could cover the total of 4000 kilometres or 2160 nautical miles. It is however exceedingly unlikely that one could keep up the average speed on this level during the whole journey.  
225 Englert 2007, 125.  
226 These estimates come close to the estimates based on average speed and average sailing distance per day. E.g. the average of 50 nautical miles (ca. 92 km) per day means the length of 750 nautical miles in fifteen days corresponding to just less than 1400 kilometres.  
227 Haavio 1965, 15–16; Häme 1987a, 162.
Kola Peninsula, the same approximate distance still applies. The conclusion thus remains that a distance of 1500–1800 kilometres is doable in fifteen days as also the previous calculations indicate. To set this estimate in perspective it is worth noticing that the journey by sea from Northern Norway to Oslo is longer than the assumed length of the journey to Bjarmaland.228

Povl SIMONSEN has tried to follow Ohthere’s route day by day taking in account the probable length of a day’s sailing. Six days of sailing sixty nautical miles per day results in 360 nautical miles or just less than 667 kilometres. Ohthere probably started from around Malangen Fjord and in six days he reached a turning point. The distance between Malangen and Vardø is about 335 nautical miles229 or just over 620 kilometres and serves as an estimate of how far north Ohthere may at least have reached in six days. Next Ohthere sailed eastwards for four days. The average of sixty nautical miles makes 240 in four days and corresponds to just under 445 kilometres. SIMONSEN compares this distance to the journey between Vardø and Sviatoi Nos’ which is about 300 nautical miles230 or just over 555 kilometres. It would seem to me that either this distance was faster to sail than the previous or Ohthere did not reach quite as far as Sviatoi Nos’ in four days. In any case, there seems to be a discrepancy of about 110 kilometres, but if we consider that Ohthere could in principal have reached at least fifty kilometres farther than Vardø during the first six days, the difference shrinks to only sixty kilometres. Also, the sailing conditions may have varied and one cannot expect to always reach exactly the same distance. According to SIMONSEN the last five days of sailing towards the south would cover about 300 nautical miles or just over 555 kilometres from the last turning point. If this turning point was at Sviatoi Nos’, this measure would in SIMONSEN’s opinion take one to Belomosrk by the River Vyg, past the mouth of the Kantalahti Bay. The journey could also have ended in Kantalahti Bay, although change of course is not mentioned.231

Also A. L. BINNS has tried to trace Ohthere’s journey. According to him, the first six days of sailing covered 260 nautical miles, the average being 43 miles per day. The journey would go from Senja to east of Nordkyn. The next four days covered 300 nautical miles, the average being 75 miles per day from Nordkyn. It has been a matter of discussion why Ohthere would have sailed much longer in

228 See e.g. Leppäaho 1964, 82–83.
229 The midway point where the whale hunters came at farthest would thus lie half way from Malangen to Vardo, somewhere west of Nordkap towards Ingøy and Rolfsøy. Simonsen 1957, 11.
230 Simonsen 1957, 11.
231 Simonsen 1957, 11.
four days than during the first six days. The discrepancy is according to BINNS not due to sailing among islands as has been suggested. Rather, it is connected to the general sailing conditions. There is a strong eastward current of two knots from North Cape to Vardø and a more weak current thereafter. This would definitely help to cover longer distances. Despite taking this into consideration, the first portion still remains comparatively slow, but not excessively so, which means that it is realistic to rely on the estimated distances. Altogether this makes a journey of something between seven and eight hundred miles corresponding to 1296–1482 kilometres. 232

Thus the total length of the journey according to SIMONSEN’s estimates based on average distance per day sums up in the following manner: 360+240+300=900 nautical miles or about 1667 kilometres. SIMONSEN’s suggestions of turning points make the total length of the journey 935 nautical miles or 1732 kilometres. The difference between the two estimates based on SIMONSEN’s calculations is only around 65 kilometres in total, which corresponds to over half a day’s sailing. This difference may not be significant since we are after all dealing with estimates only and it may also be that SIMONSEN has assumed Ohthere reached farther than he actually did. This may well be, since BINNS is operating with somewhat shorter distances per day. The difference is at its largest well over 300 kilometres in total, thus making it unlikely that Ohthere would have managed to cross the Kantalahti Bay within the time limit of his journey. This assumption is supported if we trust that Ohthere told the truth about his journey and that it was recorded correctly. In this case we must consider that there was no drastic changes of course during the last five days of sailing. Accordingly, Ohthere could not have sailed to the southern shore of the Kantalahti Bay and must have reached his destination on the southern shore of the Kola Peninsula, at one of the rivers. The head of the Kantalahti Bay itself cannot be excluded off-hand either, although Ohthere’s wording that he needed to turn to follow the river seems to indicate that one of the rivers on Kola Peninsula was the destination.

Ohthere’s trip to Beormas took fifteen days of effective sailing plus the time he spent waiting for suitable wind. 233 Since the journey took fifteen days of effective sailing one way, the complete effective sailing time would have come up to thirty days (although the return trip could take a different amount of time depending on sailing conditions like weather and currents). One needs to count

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some additional days that were spent waiting for suitable wind (certainly several days if we consider the whole journey) plus the time Ohthere spent with the Beormas.234 A rough estimation that gives room for all this comes up to perhaps another fifteen days. The minimum may be somewhere around seven days, but the maximum may be more than the suggested fortnight. The total length of the journey thus comes up to 37–45 days (or more). This means that the total length of Ohthere’s journey is about 6–7 weeks. The conclusion is that it would take over one month to sail to Bjarmaland and back. In other words, the Norwegians would use a good part of the summer months to sail to Bjarmaland and trade. Perhaps we are talking about a two-month journey altogether if we include time spent in waiting for suitable wind and time needed for trading.

**Ohthere’s destination in the light of extant information**

Since Ohthere gives relatively good sailing instructions, it is worth going through these and trying to follow the route. He sailed along the coast the whole time, with land on his right (starboard) and open sea on his left (port). First Ohthere sailed six days towards the north. He started from Hálogaland, probably somewhere around Malangen Fjord and ended up on the northernmost point of the land, probably somewhere close to the North Cape, perhaps somewhat east of Nordkyn (which on the map is the spot where the land starts turning). Here he turned to sail toward east for four days until he reached a point (perhaps somewhere close to Sviatoi Nos’ or Mys Orlovskij south of Sviatoi Nos’ where the land starts to turn for real) where he again needed to change course, this time toward south. He sailed in this direction for five days until he reached a big river that extends far inland. Here he turned to sail inland along this river. It is important to notice that all the directions given in Ohthere’s account are approximate directions that give the general direction of sailing. It was of no importance for him to give all the minor changes of course. The overall direction was probably considered as sufficient in order to follow his journey and consequently Ohthere only mentioned dramatic changes of course.

Because Ohthere followed the coast the whole time, he must have sailed around the Kola Peninsula on the White Sea. There is nothing in Ohtere’s account to suggest that he would have crossed the White Sea.235 Because there are several big rivers in the Kola area, it is difficult to deduce with any certainly which one of

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234 It is mentioned in the sagas that the trading could take a fortnight. See Orvar-Odds saga 1888, 27.
235 Englert 2007, 127.
these was Ohthere’s destination. What can be stated with certainty at this point is that according to Ohthere’s account, he sailed effectively for fifteen days before arriving at the estuary of a large river on the White Sea and then followed this river.

In my opinion, Ohthere’s account does not support the notion that Ohthere reached the Northern Dvina River. First of all, the location of Terfinna land places the Beormas quite precisely on the Kola Peninsula since all the place names with Ter are located on the peninsula and according to Ohthere’s account Terfinna land was located close to the Beormas. Secondly, the fact that Ohthere kept the land on his starboard for the entire journey, effectively rules out the possibility that he might have crossed to the southern coast of the White Sea. If he did this, the land would suddenly have been on his port. He himself points out on several occasions that this was not the case. It may be worth noticing that the Scandinavians preferred to sail along the coast and would definitely have avoided crossing open sea, even more so if the sea was unknown to them like the White Sea must have been if Ohthere was among the first to sail there. It has been estimated that around 80–90% of seafaring in northern waters during the Middle Ages was coastal sailing. NANSEN has pointed out that Ohthere cannot have crossed open sea, because if he was unknown in the area he could not have known there was land on the other side of the wide bay. Also A. M. TALLGREN observes that since Ohthere followed the coastline the whole time, he cannot have crossed an open sea. Consequently, the end of his journey must have been somewhere on the Kola Peninsula. Everything we know about the sailing habits of Viking Age Norwegians indicates that Ohthere would not have sailed across the White Sea under normal circumstances, because it was not preferable to sail across open sea. In other words, he could not have reached the Northern Dvina River unless he sailed around the entire western and southern coasts of the White Sea. This is far too long a journey to fit Ohthere’s description of both time and directions. Additionally, it is worth noticing the wording of Ohthere’s account that says quite clearly that having reached the great river Ohthere turned to sail inland along the river: “Then they turned up into that river” is the wording of the English translation and the original wording goes “Þa cirdon hie up in on ða ea”. If one had reached

236 Storm 1894, 94–95; Nansen 1911, 133–134; Johnsen 1923, 9; Tallgren 1930, 60; Tallgren 1931, 101; Ross 1940, 6–7, 24, 43, 49; Vilkuna 1964, 83; Vilkuna 1980, 647; Jackson 1992a, 24; Jackson 1992b, 125; Carpelan 1993a, 231–232.

237 See e.g. Bately 1980a, 185–186.

238 Nansen 1911, 133–134; Schnall 2000, 383.

239 Tallgren 1930, 60; Tallgren 1931, 101.

one of the great rivers of the Kola Peninsula, one needed to turn inland to sail along them. But if one had reached the Northern Dvina River by crossing the White Sea, one did not need to turn to sail along the river. The conclusion is that, actually, the wording of Ohthere’s account best fits to the scenario where Ohthere had reached one of the rivers on the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula.

Although this evidence should be more than enough to convince that Ohthere ended up on the coast of the Kola Peninsula, there are a few arguments that have been used in favour of Northern Dvina. Heikki KIRKINEN does not find it significant that Ohthere claimed to have had land on his starboard the whole time since he thinks this only referred to the northern coast of the Kola Peninsula. He also finds that the Umba and the Varzuga are too small rivers to fit the description of a large river. Also, he finds that the level of living among the people by these rivers does not fit the alleged cultivation. Instead, he finds the Northern Dvina River to be more suited. Also, the information about walruses fits better with the Northern Dvina, because these animals are found in an area that stretches from the Northern Dvina River towards Siberia.241 Also HUURRE finds that cultivation of land would seem to indicate that the Umba, the Varzuga or the Kantalahti Bay could not have been Ohthere’s destination.242 Several scholars have connected Ohthere’s destination with the “Vína” of the sagas and consequently are of the opinion that also Ohthere must have sailed to the Northern Dvina River.243

I have already expressed my opinion concerning the likelihood that Ohthere would suddenly have abandoned his coastal course to sail across an unknown sea. The argument that the rivers Umba and Varzuga are too small to fit Ohthere’s description of a large river is in my opinion quite pointless. We have no standards according to which to judge what Ohthere considered as a large or small river. There seems to be an agreement that agriculture was practised around the Northern Dvina River perhaps already as early as the 9th century. If this was the case with the Kola Peninsula as well is not certain in light of the current research. Many are of the opinion that this was not the case, but in truth, there is no adequate research and we know very little of the subject. It is perhaps worth noticing that archaeological sites from the Viking Age or the early Middle Ages are not known at the Northern Dvina River.244 In my opinion it is of little interest in this connection what later sources say about the name of the river in Bjarmaland. The destinations may have

241 Kirkinen 1963, 37.
243 Haavio 1965, 15–16.
244 Carpelan 1993a, 232.
been different and varied. This means that superficial similarity of the names “Vína” and Dvina is not sufficient to establish connection between Ohthere’s large river and the Northern Dvina River. The most important thing is to follow Ohthere’s account, because this is the most detailed travel account we have. Also the distribution of walruses has been used as an argument to place Ohthere’s destination on the Northern Dvina River. Walruses (*Odobenus rosmarus*) gradually increase in number towards more northerly and easterly regions. Before discovery of Greenland, walrus tusks could only be obtained in the arctic areas north of Norway. Although they are not found on the coast of Finnmark anymore, it is likely that they once lived there as well. At least they would occasionally venture to the coast from more northerly regions. According to Inger STORLI, walrus were formerly hunted along the coast of Northern Norway, but were wiped out during the 19th century. There are also indications that walruses were hunted on the Kola Peninsula. This means that walruses were once found west of the Northern Dvina River, contrary to what KIRKINEN claims and accordingly his argument has no value. Also, the northern peoples went to specific hunting expeditions in the north and east because the walruses live in the extreme north. In other words, the walruses would not in any case be found in areas where people usually lived, and one always had to go after them.

All in all, I find that there are no grounds whatsoever to assume that Ohthere reached the Northern Dvina River. On the contrary, there are many reasons to believe he ended up on the Kola Peninsula. What was Ohthere’s large river? It is hard to give any definite answers, but by all accounts the most likely location is the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula. The southern coast of the Kantalahti Bay is a suggestion that must be considered as an alternative to the Kola Peninsula.

The Varzuga River seems to be the favoured alternative of the big rivers on Kola Peninsula. Karelian settlement, cultivation and wideness of the river’s mouth all speak for the Varzuga, but on the other hand it has been pointed out that settlement and cultivation were probably of later date and that the river itself is quite short. However, the relative shortness of the river is by no means a conclusive argument. We have no way of knowing for what reason Ohthere named the river “large”. It is worth noticing that at this point the Varzuga was a sailable river.

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246 See Tegengren 1962, 23, 33–36. TEGENREN refers to hunting areas instead of suggesting that all who hunted walruses actually dwelled in the same area the walruses came from.
247 Тупи́на 1984, 14.
Another clue that leads to the Varzuga is *Terfinna land* that is bordering to the land of the *Beormas*. It is often thought that the Saami settlement on the Kola Peninsula stretched from the entrance of the White Sea at Sviatoi Nos’ to the Varzuga River thus covering most of the southern and southeastern coast of the Kola Peninsula. It is worth noticing that Ohthere mentions that only one side of the river was inhabited. This would suggest that we are here talking about the limit between the areas inhabited by the Saami and the *Beormas*. This is the first time when he meets other people than Saami after leaving behind his own home. A silver treasure and burial sites of early medieval date have been found at the Varzuga.\(^{248}\) This kind of sign of settlement in this area would seem to speak for the Varzuga alternative.\(^{249}\) This can, however, prove nothing with certainty, only indicate the existence of medieval settlement.

The Umba has also been suggested, seemingly mainly because it is a big river on the Kola Peninsula. On the other hand, it has been pointed out that it is not big enough, although this is a rather feeble argumentation. The Kantalahti Bay is one of the suggestions, partly because of cultivation in this area.\(^{250}\) However, it seems like Ohthere’s remarks that he turned up into the river and dared not sail past the river seem to indicate that the Kantalahti Bay was not the big river in question, because one cannot sail past it without dramatic change of course and one does not need to turn to sail inland along it.\(^{251}\) As for the Varangerfjord suggestion, it is exceedingly unlikely despite some traces of habitation, since the distance from Hálogaland is too short and there is no suitable large river in the area.\(^{252}\)

The rivers Kem’ and Vyg on the western coast of the White Sea have also been suggested as Ohthere’s destination. Ohthere’s last sailing session toward south lasted for five days. Considering the length of the journey the Kem’ and the Vyg are reachable. However, there is an obstacle for this interpretation. To reach the


\(^{249}\) Admiralty *White Sea Pilot* is designed to help mariners identify their position. According to the description Varzuga River marks a noticeable difference in vegetation, many plants are absent particularly east of the Varzuga River, and this distinctive feature is also visible from the sea. According to BINNS, this further enhances the idea that Varzuga is a likely option for Ohthere’s destination. Additionally, it can be argued that if Varzuga was the destination, it is possible that Ohthere does not mention that the course toward south had during the last five days of sailing turned more towards west than south simply because the change was so gradual that it was not easy to detect it. Binns 1961, 49, 51.

\(^{250}\) See Johnsen 1923, 9; Ross 1940, 24, 58.

\(^{251}\) See e.g. Bately 1980a, 185–186.

\(^{252}\) Englert 2007, 128; Makarov 2007, 147.
Kem’ or the Vyg Ohthere needed to sail past Kantalahti Bay and this without crossing open sea. This would be quite hard, because the bay is very wide and to follow it to the end and then continue along the western coast of the White Sea would both result in a huge increase of sailing time and include a rather drastic change of course. If we rely on the text, sailing across open sea is excluded and I find it hard to see how Ohthere could have reached the Kem’ or the Vyg. Additionally, we do not know archaeological sites from the Viking Age or the early Middle Ages around the rivers Kem’ or Vyg.\(^{253}\)

I must conclude that one of the great rivers on the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula is by all accounts the most likely destination of Ohthere’s journey. Which one is more difficult to decide, because Ohthere does not provide sufficient clues. The Varzuga certainly seems a likely option, but it is impossible to exclude the Umba. The Kantalahti Bay on the other hand does not seem quite so likely. The Umba becomes perhaps more likely in the light of the distances that can be calculated on the basis of Ohthere’s account, because the Varzuga may be too close to the last turning point if we consider that Ohthere was able to maintain the assumed average speed throughout his journey. This is not, however, by any means certain and Anton ENGLERT has concluded that from a geographical and nautical point of view it is likely that Ohthere reached as far as the Varzuga River.\(^{254}\)

*The first nautical expedition?*

Ohthere’s account gives the impression that the sea route to the land of the *Beormas* was not known in Norway before Ohthere’s journey in the end of the 9th century. Ohthere does not seem to know anything about the *Beormas* before he meets them. However, it is more than likely that Ohthere was not the first Norwegian to meet *Beormas*. Although Ohthere gives the impression that he was the first one to have sailed to the *Beormas* this does not have to mean that it was he who discovered the *Beormas*. In fact, the Norwegians had long been familiar with the White Sea area. Since the Stone Age this area had a role in the contacts of Northern Fennoscandia. The land route may have become too laborious for transporting heavy items like walrus tusks. HUURRE suggests that Ohthere’s journey may have been a deliberate exploration to find a direct sea route to the *Beormas* and thus avoid the difficulties of transportation. This can be seen indirectly in the archaeological finds of Northern

\(^{253}\) Carpelan 1993a, 232.

\(^{254}\) Englert 2007, 128.
Finland. Norwegian artefacts from the Merovingian Period onwards have been found in Western Lapland and the eastern parts of Northern Finland. For instance some brooches from Posio, Kajaani and Kuhmo may give indications of the route that was used by Norwegians before the sea route was taken in use. There are no more Norwegian artefacts in Northern Finland (on route between Northern Norway and the White Sea) after c. 900. This would seem to indicate that Norwegian activity in the area practically ceased at this time. This date coincides with the introduction of a sea route to the Beormas.\textsuperscript{255} It has been suggested that complications attached to the land route promoted the introduction of a sea route. The usage of the land route became more complicated during the 9th century due to an increasing pressure from the Kvens. The new sea route would have been beneficial in two ways. It would be possible to avoid conflict with the Kvens and it would offer an opportunity to exploit the walruses that were found in the north (Barents Sea).\textsuperscript{256}

\textit{Motivation}

Ohthere claims that his motive for sailing northwards was curiosity: he wanted to find out how far in the north the land extended and whether it was inhabited or not. Later on in his account Ohthere also mentions the walruses as a motivating factor: the tusks and hides of these animals were precious\textsuperscript{257} and would have been a solid economical incentive besides mere curiosity.

It has been considered as suspicious that Ohthere does not mention the furs that later on were the main trade article in Bjarmaland. It has been suggested that this may be because he wanted to protect the Norwegian trade in Bjarmaland. By not mentioning the furs he wanted to keep competitors away.\textsuperscript{258} It is true that Ohthere only mentions curiosity and walruses as motivation for his expedition. Leaving out the furs may have been a deliberate attempt to keep competitors away, but I am rather doubtful about this. Surely the English would have been too far away to pose any threat to Norwegian trade in Bjarmaland. It is actually not certain that Ohthere originally left out the furs. After all, what we hear is what the English scribe thought interesting or important. The walrus tusks were a luxurious item that were in high

\textsuperscript{255} Huurre 1983, 421, 424–425. More details of the archaeological finds in next chapter 1.2.
\textsuperscript{256} Carpelan 1993a, 231.
\textsuperscript{257} Haavio 1965, 188–192.
\textsuperscript{258} Pritsak 1981, 693 footnote 40.
demand in Western Europe.\footnote{259 See Tegengren 1962, 11, 24, 26–32.} Perhaps this economical incentive was more interesting to Ohthere’s audience than the perhaps more everyday furs.

Contrary to what Ohthere says, it has been suggested that he did not go to Beormas by accident and was not the first Norwegian to sail there. It has even been suggested that he had probably been there several times himself.\footnote{260 Pritsak 1981, 693 footnote 40.} I, however, find it rather likely that Ohthere was telling the truth in claiming that the sea route was a new thing since Ohthere’s expedition coincides with the abandoning of an older land route. One may also consider that long sea voyages may not have been very spread before a certain level of ship construction was achieved. This level would certainly have been achieved by Ohthere’s time. Finally, the benefits of sailing must have become marked before one would abandon the traditional and well-known land route. It has been suggested that the land route traversed an area with increased unrest and this may have been incentive enough to start finding alternatives. It is likely, though, that meeting Beormas was not a surprise for Ohthere but rather the intended result. That Ohthere underlines the exploration quality may be due to his attempt to portray his journey as interesting. And if he was one of the pioneers of the sea route, there is some justification in underlining the exploration aspect. Also, we must remember that for the English scribe the existence of the Beormas may well have been a new thing.

**Hostility and contact**

One feature that has puzzled scholars is the claimed hostility of the Beormas. Because of this alleged hostility, Ohthere did not dare to sail past the big river and furthermore did not dare to go on land. This is at least what Ohthere claims. There seems to be a discrepancy here, since Ohthere first claims he did not go on land and yet claims that the Beormas told him many stories, i.e. that he assumedly had gone on land after all and had had communications with the hostile Beormas. Many explanations\footnote{261 FISHER has come up with one of the more imaginative theories. SAXO writes about a bridge which separates the world of men from supernatural regions, a feature found in many mythologies. Ohthere talks about a river which formed the boundary of Bjarmaland against the Saami. He was unwilling to cross the river because of possible hostility. FISHER finds that where Bjarmaland is concerned travellers’ tales were mixed with legends and thus links the alleged hostility to mythology. Fisher 1980, 143. See also The History of the Danes 1979, 263. However, Ohthere is very realistic in his tale and it would seem surprising that he would have mixed legend and reality and I find that there must be another reason for him stressing the hostility of the natives.} have sprouted as a result of these statements.
ROSS explains the discrepancy of Ohthere’s story by suggesting that Ohthere landed at an up-river settlement of “Terfinnas” on their frontier with the Beormas where for reasons of trade the Beormas were in the habit of coming peacefully. It is impossible to find evidence either for or against this theory. In theory it is of course possible, but it is hard to say how likely it is.

Omeljan PRITSAK explains the discrepancy of not going on land and yet talking to the Beormas by suggesting that the text includes two different accounts, the first one describing Ohthere’s experiences while on a scouting expedition, the second relating experiences in conducting peaceful trade with the Beormas. This might of course be the case, but we should consider other explanations as well.

Christine E. FELL introduces a new interesting interpretation of what Ohthere might have meant by stating that he did not dare to go on land to meet the Beormas or did not dare sail past the river “for unfriþe”. This has been interpreted to mean that he did not dare to go on land because of fear of attack. FELL finds (on the basis of language studies) that “to have frið” meant that one had formal rights to trade and lack of frið meant missing permission to travel, not hostility. This is a very clever explanation. However, I do not see how this interpretation could fit the further wording of Ohthere’s account. Namely, a few sentences after claiming that “they dared not sail on past the river because of hostility” (i.e. FELL’s lack of trading rights) he says “they dared not come in there”. This wording (i.e. dared not) seems to refer more to a fear of hostility than to lack of trading rights. Also Janet BATELY has concluded that there exists no reason to disregard the obvious meaning of unfriþ (hostilities).

If the theory about Ohthere wanting to protect the fur trade with the Beormas were true then it is possible to consider the alleged hostility as part of the strategy. Portraying the Beormas as hostile might help keeping competitors from sailing to Beormas after furs. Ohthere mentions that the Beormas gave him a lot of information about their own country and the area around it, but unfortunately he does not give us any details. This seems to be because Ohthere shows “source criticism”: he cannot guarantee that the information he heard was correct because he has not seen it himself and this is why he refrains from repeating it. Perhaps there was no space in the OE Orosius to repeat what Ohthere might have told about the Beormas in King Alfred’s court or perhaps Ohthere refrained repeating the

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262 Ross 1940, 19 footnote 26.
263 Pritsak 1981, 694 footnote 43.
265 Bately 2007b, 56.
information altogether in order to sustain the hostile and slightly mysterious aura of the Beormas so that competitors would not desire to travel there. Maybe his criticism was simply a means not to spread the knowledge of where to obtain furs.

If we take Ohthere for his word, it is possible to think that he stayed in his ship and communicated with Beormas from there because he was genuinely afraid of the hostile Beormas. This may, however, be too simplistic an explanation. Another possible explanation is that Ohthere wanted to stress the exploration quality of his journey by referring to information the newly discovered Beormas gave him. It is worth noticing that he does not repeat this information so one can wonder if he gained it in the first place. He does not reveal that he knew about the existence of the Beormas before meeting them, although in all probability Norwegians had contacts with Beormas way before Ohthere’s expedition. This means that Ohthere did not need to go on land to gain knowledge of the inhabitants. He could have been able to tell King Alfred some details about the Beormas anyway. Perhaps Ohthere knew about the Beormas but was not sure how to reach them by sailing. It is likely that he had little information of what was expecting him after he left behind the area where the whale-hunters came at their northernmost. It is possible that although Ohthere was not the very first to find his way to the Beormas by sailing via north, the trip he describes was perhaps his first one and also among the first Norwegian expeditions by sea route. By referring to the Beormas as hostile he may have attempted to dramatise his qualities as explorer. Ohthere seems to make a certain connection between the hostility and the inhabited country. It almost seems like it was enough for Ohthere to discover that the land was inhabited in order to assume that the inhabitants would be hostile. It is also worth noticing that if Ohthere indeed was already familiar with the Beormas his attitude towards them would have been similar to the general attitude among Norwegians as portrayed in medieval Scandinavian written sources. It is interesting that in the sagas the relations between the Norwegians and the Bjarmians are portrayed as predominantly hostile and according to the sources the Norwegians were often looting even on occasions when trade was included. This certainly leads one’s thought toward the idea that Ohthere was simply stating a fact when he was worried about the hostility. Perhaps he first needed to establish a truce before venturing on land.

It is difficult to say which one of these theories, if any, best explains Ohthere’s statements regarding the Beormas. I have dwelled on the subject in order to

266 See e.g. Heimskringla 1999, 404. A truce was needed for trading.
demonstrate that despite the rather realistic tone of Ohthere’s account there remain difficulties in the interpretation.

Livelihood

Ohthere states that the Beormas had settled²⁶⁷ their land very well. He further accentuates this by telling how he considers that the area where the Saami lived was uninhabited, because they only hunted, fished and fowled. In other words, Ohthere did not consider a country as inhabited before the inhabitants cultivated the land and since Ohthere considered the land of the Beormas as inhabited they must have been cultivating the land.

It is interesting to notice that similar ideas about what is to be considered as inhabited and uninhabited country has survived until the present day. An example of this is how many Finnish and Swedish historians and archaeologists consider Lapland in respectively Finland and Sweden as uninhabited during the late prehistorical times although it is certain that Saami lived in the area. In other words, these historians do not consider a country as inhabited unless the population exploiting the area cultivates the land.²⁶⁸

ROSS writes that the antithesis between the gebun land and the weste land may be either antithesis between inhabited and uninhabited land or between cultivated and uncultivated land. Unfortunately, neither of the words can help to make a distinction since both can have both meanings. OE weste can mean either uninhabited or uncultivated or both at the same time. OE (ge)buan is normally translated with “to occupy” and does not in any passage render the sense “to cultivate” unambiguous. The latter sense is, however, plentifully attested in all the other branches of West Germanic. “Pa Beormas hæfdon swiþe wel gebud hira land” must by all accounts mean that the Beormas “had very greatly cultivated their land”. Any translation where “gebud” would take the meaning of “to occupy” would be forced. A later reference in Ohthere’s account supports the view that “gebud” means “to cultivate”. Ohthere talks about “þæt byne land” i.e. “the cultivated land” when referring to the cultivated areas on the west coast of Norway. “þæt byne land” and “all of it that can be grazed or ploughed” are clearly equated. The conclusion is that “gebud” must refer to cultivation and not merely occupied land. Ohthere makes a clear distinction between the cultivated land of the Beormas

²⁶⁷ There has been some debate how this should be translated, but there seems to be a consensus that gebud must be translated with “to cultivate”, not just simply “to live”. More of this below.
²⁶⁸ Zachrisson 1997b, 14.
and the uncultivated land of the “Terfinnas” who in addition lived an itinerant life.269

Some scholars have doubted that cultivation is feasible so far in the north.270 Even if the geographical and climatic conditions would support cultivation, it has been doubted if cultivation could have been adopted as early as the Viking Age on the Kola Peninsula. Besides these issues it is discussed if cultivation for Ohthere meant cultivation of crops or perhaps keeping cattle and harvesting hay.

To begin with it is interesting to notice what type of agriculture Ohthere himself was used to. According to his own description, he cultivated only small portions of land.271 Instead he kept 20 cows, 20 sheep and 20 pigs and a lot of reindeers. This was not much in the eyes of a contemporary Englishman, but among Northern Norwegians Ohthere must have been among the wealthiest, not least because of all the additional means of livelihood besides agriculture. An important difference between Ohthere and the neighbouring Saami was that the Saami were nomadic but Ohthere and other Norwegians lived permanently in villages. Although Ohthere saw himself as a farmer, cultivation of crops alone was not very important. Hunting and fishing still played a major role in the economy.272 Ohthere considered himself as a farmer. So, for him to consider someone else as one, the livelihood should have been somewhat similar. This would probably mean that the person would live year around in the same spot in a permanent house, keep some cattle and cultivate a piece of land. But it would not exclude additional means of livelihood like hunting or fishing or collecting down. In this light it was not required that agriculture be the main source of livelihood for the Beormas for Ohthere to consider them as permanently settled agriculturalists. All that was required was that they practise cultivation on a modest scale and live in permanent houses.

It is perhaps worth noticing that the Kola coast is more southerly than Ohthere’s home region.273 Yet it is accepted that during the Viking Age agriculture was practised in northern Hålogaland and doubted that this was possible on the Kola Peninsula. At the present day the cultivation of rye, the ripening of fodder-grass and hay-making are possible on the south coast of the Kola Peninsula under natural conditions. Ohthere’s account does not reveal whether the cultivation he

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269 Ross 1940, 44–45. FELL has additionally pointed out that Ohthere used two different verbs in meaning “to live”, buan and wician. The difference between the two is that buan is used for permanent settlement and wician for temporary “visit” in the area. Fell 1983, 59.
270 See e.g. Tallgren 1930, 63; Huurre 1983, 421.
271 He probably cultivated barley or perhaps oats. Bately 2007a, 30.
273 Varzuga is at the Arctic Circle. Binns 1961, 52.
observed was pastoral, arable or both. If the cultivation was arable, rye is the most probable crop, but barley is also conceivable.\textsuperscript{274} The northern or eastern Karelians have lived on the western coast of the White Sea for a long time. They made a living of land cultivation and raising domestic animals, and partly also of fishing and salt making. In historical times they have always been permanently settled.\textsuperscript{275} It is worth noticing that the climate in the north was milder than today from c. 900 until the end of the Middle Ages. A few examples can demonstrate what this milder climate meant. Corn could be grown in some parts of Greenland, oats and barley in Iceland and wheat in the Trondheim district. It is also worth noticing that Karelia has a less continental type of climate than more easterly areas and e.g. Murmansk is an ice free port, but Arkhangelsk is not.\textsuperscript{276}

Putting together all this information, it is possible that people living on the Kola Peninsula or on the western coast of the White Sea could have practised agriculture already during the Viking Age. Both arable and pastoral variant of

\textsuperscript{274} Ross 1940, 45.
\textsuperscript{275} Storm 1894, 96.
\textsuperscript{276} Korhammer 1985, 260–261; Briffa et al. 1992, 119; Jasinski 1993, 5. In the Arctic area the safety margin for agricultural economy is small. Even slight deviations from mean climate conditions can result in very serious consequences. Climate microspheres determined by local topography have influence on the climate conditions. Southern slopes, vicinity of water reservoirs and forest make climate warmer, swamps make it colder. Urbańczyk 1992, 22–24. It is generally considered that the climate was favourable for agriculture until about the end of the 12th century. After this the climate turned gradually more moist and cold. Suvanto 1987, 73, 223; Törnblom 1993, 305. However, a new study gives a more varied picture. According to a tree-ring-based climate reconstruction representing mean summer temperatures over a large region of northern Fennoscandia predominantly warm conditions occurred e.g. in 870–1110 with peaks of warmth around e.g. 930, 990, 1060, 1090 and 1160. Cool conditions prevailed in Fennoscandia in e.g. 790–870, 1110–1150, 1190–1360. The most significant cold troughs occurred e.g. around 800 and 1140. General warmth is apparent throughout the 10th and the 11th centuries and in most of the 14th century. Especially warm summers occurred in 1051 and 1091–92. Especially warm periods (20–year means) took place in 981–1000, 1043–1062 and 1087–1106. Looking at the 50–year means especially warm periods occurred in 886–935, 957–1006 and 1043–1092. Especially cold periods (20–year mean) occurred in 846–865 and 1127–1146 and looking at the 50–year means in 1108–1157. In the 9th century there were cold decades but the next 200 years experienced an increasing trend. 870–900, 920–940 and 970–1000 were warm and 850–870 and 940–960 relatively cold periods. Between 970–1120 it was consistently warm, warmer than the levels reached in the 1930’s and 1940’s. In about 1100 the warmth terminated abruptly followed by oscillation from warm to cold in 1100–1150 and back to warm in 1150–1190. There was a widespread warmth in the early Middle Ages between 900–1300 throughout Europe. The early medieval warmth is restricted to 10th–11th centuries but there was also a shorter warm period in the late 12th century. It does not seem like there was any general climatic deterioration in the 14th century. The remarkable change (the little Ice Age) only took place in the late 16th century and lasted until the middle of the 18th century. The numbers presented here apply only for Northern Fennoscandian summer temperatures and it is worth taking into consideration that local spatial diversity of climate change did exist. Briffa et al. 1992, 111, 116–117, 119.
agriculture is conceivable as well as a combination of the two. The conclusion is that we cannot reject Ohthere’s observation of cultivated land and permanent settlement in the area. Currently there is not much archaeological evidence of this, but the amount of research has been modest. Until the relevant areas have been satisfactorily investigated, cultivation and permanent settlement cannot be ruled out.

Language and ethnicity

Ohthere mentions that the Saami and the Beormas seemed to be speaking “virtually one language”. It is highly feasible that Ohthere could recognise both the Saami and their language(s). He must have had an intimate knowledge of these people based on his close contacts with them. He himself describes these extensive contacts elsewhere in the account.\(^{277}\) The Saami language(s) is a Finno-Ugrian language and consequently the language of the Beormas should be a related language. In other words, the Beormas according to Ohthere were a people who spoke a Finno-Ugrian language. It is worth noticing that the similarity between the Saami language(s) and other Finno-Ugrian languages like Karelian or Finnish must have been more noticeable a thousand years ago than today, although it is hardly likely that Ohthere could have been able to communicate with the Beormas without an interpreter merely on the basis of knowledge of the Saami language.\(^{278}\)

Ohthere makes a clear distinction between the Beormas and the Saami and consequently it is highly unlikely that the Beormas would have been a branch of the Saami.\(^{279}\) Ohthere knew the Saami intimately enough to tell them apart from other peoples. The language was related, true enough, but the economy was different. It is commonly considered that the Saami did not practise agriculture although there are indications that the Saami may have kept animals. The fact remains that during Ohthere’s time, the Saami were still itinerant, although towards the middle of the 12th century there are known to have been some permanently settled sea Saami.\(^ {280}\) In any case, their life was predominantly nomadic unlike that of the Beormas who were permanently settled. The conclusion is that the Beormas

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\(^{277}\) See e.g. Ross 1940, 20–21.

\(^{278}\) Johnsen 1923, 9; Ross 1940, 48–49; Djupedal 1969, 9; Bately 1980a, 187.

\(^{279}\) Despite the logic of this assumption, some scholars still maintain that the Beormas should be identified as Saami and not as some other Finno-Ugrian group like the Karelians or the Finnish. See Simonsen 1957, 12.

\(^{280}\) Johnsen 1923, 22; Ross 1940, 53; Krag 1995, 82.
must have been ethnically different from the Saami although they spoke a Finno-Ugrian language as well. It is impossible to characterise the Beormas more closely in terms of ethnicity in the light of Ohthere’s account alone.

Sailing season

It is of interest to try to determine what time of the year Ohthere’s journey took place. He could not have sailed in winter, during the time of the polar night and ice. In general, the sailing season in the north stretched from April to September. April seems too early since there usually is ice in the Gorlo, the entrance to the White Sea, until May (and it stays ice-free until mid-December). This, however, applies to the modern period, but the medieval climate in the north was milder than today and the ice may have melted a little earlier. Despite the possibly milder climate in the Viking age, May or June would still seem more likely options than April. In May and June the sun would not set in the North Cape and along the coast of Finnmark. At the North Cape the center of the sun is constantly above the horizon between May 12 and July 30. Lapland has full daylight from May 26 to July 18.281 This light, ice-free period would appear to be the most likely time for Ohthere’s journey. This would at least give good possibilities to sail around the clock. Sometime after mid-May is a possible starting point if we rely on our knowledge of daylight and ice conditions.

BINNS has another theory, though, based on modern conditions. He finds that out of all the fortnights of the year the second and third week of April are the most likely time for a trip to the White Sea. There is a concentration of vessels in the north Norwegian harbours ready to sail to the Murmansk coast at this time. Earlier than mid-April, the conditions are wintry and winds unfavourable. Later, the melting snow water from the great rivers produces a strong southern current out of the White Sea, which makes entrance difficult and involves some danger from ice floes carried with it. BINNS has some reservations in placing the return trip into the summer months. According to him, the winds of the Murmansk coast are fitful and light in June and July. This would not have been very helpful considering that one needed to go against hostile current on the way back. Visibility too is bad due to frequent fogs. The coastline is hostile and there are not enough good stopping places to dodge from one to the other. Taking these conditions in consideration it

was perhaps required to row the vessel on the return trip. All this sounds reasonable enough, but one may question whether Ohthere would have known all this, if he was among the pioneers of the northern sailing route? If we however consider that Ohthere would have left from his home during the second week of April, the return trip would then be in early or perhaps mid-May. In any case, he would then meet difficult sailing conditions on the way back, although perhaps better conditions than in June and July. It is perhaps worth considering that according to a late 18th century description boats from Kola, Kem’ and Onega left in May to Grumant. In light of this and the above-described general conditions we should perhaps conclude that BINNS’s conclusions may not be correct and May is after all a more likely month for expedition than April.

Conclusions

To sum up, Ohthere’s account is generally considered to be the most reliable of the written sources that mention Bjarmaland. His account is also the oldest known source about Bjarmaland. The geographical details seem to be correct and in any case, he would not have gained anything by inventing these.

Ohthere is quite clear about several things. First, the Beormas were permanently settled and practised agriculture. Second, they spoke a Finno-Ugrian language, but were not identical with the Saami. Third, Ohthere and his crew sailed along the coast throughout the journey without crossing open sea, and the journey ended on the Kola Peninsula where the Terfinna land was located. The Beormas of Ohthere could not have been itinerant traders, no matter how organised. Their language differed from that of the Saami, although it was close to it, and because also the livelihood of these groups was different, the Beormas cannot be connected with the Saami. Ohthere must have followed the shores of the White Sea, in which case it is doubtful that he reached the Northern Dvina River, as so many scholars have assumed. Instead, he most likely ended up on the Kola Peninsula following one of the big streams there. Varzuga appears to be the most likely suggestion. Ohthere’s motivation for the journey seems to have been curiosity, but probably he also had economical motives. He himself names the walruses, but unlike later sources the furs are not mentioned. However, the furs may have been also Ohthere’s main motivation even though they are not mentioned in the account. It has been

282 Binns 1961, 50, 52.
283 Jasinski 1993, 37.
suggested that Ohthere did not mention the furs on purpose, because he did not want to spread the knowledge and risk competition. It is also possible that the furs are not mentioned simply because the scribe did not consider them important or interesting enough.

Archaeological finds indicate that Norwegians and Beormas had contacts already before Ohthere’s time. Originally the Norwegians used a land route, but a demand for a safer and easier sea route may have risen in the late 9th century. It was easier to carry a larger cargo by ship than by land. In addition, the land route may have become unsafe because of the increased activity of the Kvens.

The most likely time of the year to sail to Bjarmaland was probably during spring and summer, from April/May to July when the sea was ice-free and there was light around the clock. The ship Ohthere was using was probably a trading ship that could take a cargo of 15–20 tons and a minimum crew of 8–10 men. He would have been sailing on the coast, with land on his right and the sea on his left. He would probably sail 24 hours a day. The effective sailing time in one direction was 15 days. This means that the whole trip would take at least 30 days of effective sailing, plus the time spent in waiting for suitable wind and the time it took to deal with the Beormas. The whole trip could thus last a minimum of 5–6 weeks, perhaps longer. With the average of 60 nautical miles a day fifteen days of sailing constitutes the total of 900 nautical miles, about 1667 kilometres. This distance combined with Ohthere’s directions would take the traveller to the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula as is also indicated by the vicinity of the Terfinna land. However, since the distances are only average estimates at best, it is impossible to establish the precise river Ohthere reached.

On the basis of Ohthere’s account it can be concluded that Beormas were a Finno-Ugrian permanently settled agrarian group of people living in the White Sea area, most likely on the Kola Peninsula and around some of its large rivers like the Varzuga or the Umba. Ohthere’s account alone is not detailed enough to decide the ethnicity or the location in more detail.

3.2 Contacts in the light of archaeology

Ohthere’s account from the late 9th century is the oldest written source about Bjarmaland. In order to find out about conditions before this we can only rely on archaeology. However, the research in the relevant areas is not very extensive. Also, the nature of archaeological material is such that it is difficult to attach it to any specific groups of people and there are many methodological problems connected
with distribution maps and defining the areas of origin for artefact types. This makes it difficult to reach any definite conclusions. Nevertheless, we can take a look at finds in specific areas. In some cases it might be possible to draw relevant conclusions. In the following, I intend to take a look at the relevant archaeological material and see if it is possible to reveal some aspects of Bjarmaland and the Norwegians’ relations with the Bjarmians before Ohthere’s expedition as well as in the centuries following it. I will investigate the theory that suggests that Norwegians travelled to Bjarmaland via northern Finland before the introduction of the sea route in the late 9th century. Although the material is scarce, I will take a look at the archaeological material in the White Sea area in order to get an idea of the conditions and contacts of this area. Due to the scarceness of the material, I will take a look at all the Late Iron Age and early medieval material in this one chapter. In any case, it is impossible to date archaeological material with great precision and it is important to see the material as a whole because this is the only way to decipher any trends. It is also important to investigate the archaeological material in Northern Finland and Northern Norway in order to get an idea of the contacts the inhabitants in these areas had. All in all, I hope to be able to get a clearer picture of

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284 All archaeological data has to be interpreted within a certain logical framework before the finds can be used as evidence and the process of interpretation contains difficulties and controversies. See Dark 1995, 36–63. The areas where artefacts were made and used do not necessarily correspond to ethnic and linguistic boundaries. Defining the origin of artefacts requires data on their manufacture, but detailed information on these aspects is limited. Metallurgy and other technical studies are required for reliable results regarding centers of manufacture. In practice, artefact forms are usually regarded as deriving from areas where they are most common. However, distribution of artefacts only provides an indication of the places where objects were used. Artefacts could be exchanged through direct trade or through intermediate means like marriage, gifts and plunder. It is worth noticing that fieldwork and publications influence distribution maps and several other factors may effect the available selection of archaeological material too (burial customs, replicas made outside the original area and itinerant craftsmen who made their product according to demand). The image may be further distorted by lack of organic material (especially trade articles like wood, bark, bone and leather artefacts, textiles, foodstuffs, wax, hides, furs and slaves). In some cases (e.g. Viking Age and Crusade Period male material) the international character of the material makes it difficult to draw any conclusions. Uino 1997, 165–166. Deciding the “origin” of an artefact type is in most cases quite complicated and the conclusions contain elements of uncertainty. For instance, one would assume that the so-called Finno-Ugrian artefacts have a Finno-Ugrian origin. However, studies show that ornaments of Finno-Ugrian type were mass-produced in Novgorod in the 12th century and consequently these artefacts can no longer be seen as clear indicators of ethnic origin. Nosov 1990, 83–85. The so-called “eastern” ornaments are traceable back to Finno-Ugrian plastic art but as early as the 11th century these ornaments became a component of Northern Russian women’s dress in a synthetic combination of East Slavic and Finno-Ugrian elements and the ornaments are thus unsuited as ethnic markers. Makarov 1991, 73. Researchers try to find artefact types that can serve as markers of ethnicity (so-called idioms), but since archaeological material is “silent”, i.e. no name tags are attached to it, drawing conclusions about ethnicity based on archaeology only is risky. See e.g. Reyment 1980, 18, 24–30; Storli 1991, 95.
what kind of inhabitants the White Sea area may have had and make some kind of
deductions about the contacts in the northern area.

Route through Northern Finland?

Guttorm GJESSING has suggested that Norwegian activity in Finnmark in the
early Iron Age served as a predecessor to the Norwegian journeys further north, to
Bjarmaland. There is evidence of Norwegian (Germanic) activity in Finnmark at
least since the Migration Period. Place-names (e.g. Kvænangen, Porsanger and
Varanger) would even seem to suggest Norwegian presence in Finnmark already in
the middle of the 4th century. This date goes as far back in time as the Germanic
settlement in Northern Norway.285 There have been contacts between the White Sea
area and Northern Fennoscandia since the Stone Age. This is why it is likely that
also the area that was inhabited by Bjarmians was known to the Norwegians already
before the introduction of a sea route in the late 9th century.286 It seems clear that
Finnmark by no means was unknown to the Norwegians in the 9th century when
Ohthere sailed to the White Sea along the coast. If we assume that the Norwegians
started to sail to Bjarmaland only in the 9th century, but yet had prior knowledge of
and contact with the area, the question arises of how the Norwegians travelled to
Bjarmaland before the introduction of the sea route. Following the coast of
Finnmark along the land all the way to the White Sea appears a needlessly long
route. It would appear more likely that the Norwegians would have chosen a shorter
and straighter route across land. It has been suggested on basis of certain
archaeological material that a direct overland route from Norway to Bjarmaland
traversed the Finnish Kainuu area.

The present-day area of Kainuu in Finland is located at crossroads of different
routes and since the Stone Age the Kainuu area has received influences from many
directions: west, southwest, southeast and east. Flint from Finnmark and a stone
axe of Norwegian type have been found in Kemijärvi in Northern Finland. Flint
was also imported to Fennoscandia from the southern part of the White Sea area.
This probably took place mostly during the Early Metal Period when also even-
based flint arrowheads were imported from the east. In Kainuu the use of metal was
first introduced through eastern contacts. The finds in Kainuu include Bronze Age
casting forms of eastern type. Also, one casting form of Norwegian type has been

285 Gjessing 1939, 40.
found in Rovaniemi. Daggers and spearheads of eastern types are also known in Northern Norway. It is likely that bronze was imported via the White Sea area to Northern Fennoscandia and came through Kainuu in substantial amounts. Also iron was imported to Northern Fennoscandia through the White Sea area and the Northern Dvina River area during the Early Metal Period. In time, one started to produce iron oneself and this made the contacts with the east less intensive, although they persisted as finds of “eastern” types of bronze ornaments suggest. Before the Viking Age only one such ornament is known in Kainuu, a 4th century type found in Sotkamo and otherwise known in Pechora and Kama areas. There is a relief brooch of Norwegian type from the second half of the 6th century in Rovaniemi in Northern Finland.287 There are also a few artefacts in Northern Norway288 from the Merovingian and the Viking Periods that are considered Finnish.289 None of these finds can directly be connected with Bjarmaland (and Norwegian expeditions there) but they indicate interaction between Fennoscandia and the White Sea area and imply that inhabitants in these areas were familiar with their neighbours. It is only the so-called Norwegian finds in Kainuu290 in Northern Finland from the 9th century onwards that have been connected with Norwegian-Bjarmian contacts.

The most certain Scandinavian artefacts in Northern Finland are a number of brooches. Typical oval Scandinavian brooches have been found in Kajaani, Petäisenniska (possibly a grave from the 10th century), Kuhmo and Posio Suolijärvi (two pieces, possibly a grave find). In addition, one round brooch has been found in Suomussalmi. The brooch from Mikonsärkkä Juntusranta Suomussalmi comes from a cremation burial of a woman dated to c. 900 AD. The brooch is of rather rare Scandinavian type with closest counterparts in Norway and southeastern Lake Ladoga area. The other artefacts of the burial are most likely Finnish. Some other finds in Kainuu also contain combinations of artefacts of mixed origin, e.g. from Scandinavia, West Finland, Ladoga Karelia and more eastern areas, although some types are common for the whole northern area and difficult to identify more closely.

288 Generally speaking, the so-called “eastern imports” in Norway are clearly coast bound. Gjessing 1939, 38–39, 42–43.
290 Many of the artefacts from the Late Iron Age that have been found in Kainuu represent Finnish types. See Huurre 1983, 337–338, 351–353, 370, 373, 375, 377, 381, 390–391.
The Scandinavian round brooch from Kajaani was found together with a West Finnish armring. Two Scandinavian brooches and an Eastern Baltic neckring have been found in Posio. The oval brooches of Posio and Kuhmo are of a type that is mainly dated to the 9th century and is common in Northern Norway. The oval brooch from Kajaani represents a more rare type that is most numerous in Northern Norway and dated there to the 9th century. The most likely dating of the Kajaani brooch is, however, the 10th century.

Matti HUURRE regards the axes of Petersen’s C-type from the Merovingian/Viking Period that have been found in Northern Finland as Norwegian imports. There are altogether seven of them in Northern Finland, from Kittilä, Pyhäjärvi, Rovaniemi Sinettä, Rovaniemi Tapionkylä, Utsjoki, Kuusamo and Sodankylä. One is found in Petsamo in Northern Russia. However, in Norway the finds come mostly from Nordland and Trøndelag. The type is also known in Northern Sweden and Northern Russia. In Norway the axes of Petersen’s C-type are regarded as eastern and the finds in Norway are interpreted as a sign of the close contacts that existed between different regions in the northern area including the northern part of Middle Norway, Northern Sweden, Northern Finland and Rus’. A couple of axes of another Norwegian type (E) from the Viking Age have been found in Muonio. One Norwegian spearhead of an early 8th century type has been found in Ylitornio Tengelio in Northern Finland. In addition a Norwegian 9th-10th century soapstone vessel has been found in Ylitornio.

Early theories attached the Norwegian artefacts found in Northern Finland with the contacts between Scandinavia (Finnmark) and the Lake Ladoga area (and its Scandinavian inhabitants). For instance the Suomussalmi brooch of Scandinavian type has counterparts in southeastern Lake Ladoga area. It is interesting to notice that also a number of artefacts found in the burials by the Varzuga River have

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291 It is difficult to distinguish Norwegian and Swedish artefacts. According to HUURRE, it is likely, however, that the “Scandinavian” finds in Northern Finland derive from Norway rather than Sweden since Norway had an established settlement on the coast up to Tromso. Also the medieval written sources that refer to Norwegian expeditions in the northern area (e.g. encounters with Kvens) would seem to indicate that the Scandinavian finds in Northern Finland originate in Norway. Hurre 1983, 424–425; Hurre 1987a, 70; Hurre 1987b, 26.
294 Personal communication by Anne Stalsberg.
296 Hurre 1987b, 22.
counterparts in the southeastern Lake Ladoga area. However, Scandinavian types have not been found in the area between Kainuu in Finland and the Lake Ladoga. Consequently, it remains as a theory only that there was traffic between Scandinavia and the Lake Ladoga area through Kainuu and we should perhaps also consider alternative explanations. One alternative theory proposes that the Norwegian Late Iron Age artefacts found in Northern Finland were left behind by Norwegians travelling to Bjarmaland before the sea route known from Scandinavian written sources was introduced.

Looking at the map, the Scandinavian finds seem to illustrate a route from Hålogaland to Ounasjoki River and from there via the Kemi River to Kuusamo and Kainuu. Perhaps the earlier trade route between the White Sea and the Atlantic Ocean went through the rivers in Northern Fennoscandia. The sea route was allegedly only introduced in the late 9th century. This was perhaps because it was easier to transport walrus tusks and other (heavy) products by sea than by land and the Norwegians gradually gave up the travels across land. The assumed time of introduction of the sea route finds support in the archaeological material. There are no more Scandinavian finds after the early 10th century in Northern Finland, soon after Oththere’s expedition. The sea route was better suited for transportation and gradually the long hikes across Northern Finland became unprofitable.

It is worth noticing that this only applies to the Norwegians. Contacts between Finland and the White Sea area would still follow old routes.


298 A thought to consider is that perhaps the contact on occasion was between Kainuu and the White Sea area.

299 Tallgren 1930, 80–81; Huurre 1983, 421; Huurre 1987a, 70, 73; Huurre 1987b, 26. TALLGREN is clear in his conclusions; the Scandinavian finds in otherwise "poor" area suggest that Scandinavians travelled in the eastern part of Northern Finland around 900 AD.

300 There is a watershed close to the present-day border of Finland and Russia which separates the waters flowing into the Gulf of Bothnia and the White Sea. The Oulujärvi water system has been important route between east and west. It is easy to traverse in many places and at least in Sarvitaipale there are still signs of portage passages made of logs. Through this area one could reach for instance rivers like Kem’ in Viena relatively effortlessly. There are also several other route possibilities further north. From Kuusamo there is connection with the Kantalahdi Bay, along the Kemijoki River via the Tennö River and the Tuntsa River. There are several options, but the shortest route between the Gulf of Bothnia and the White Sea passes through Kainuu. There are also south-north options (the so-called Nousia Venäläinen route), from the Lake Ladoga to the Gulf of Bothnia, which traverse through Kainuu. Eastern Finland could be traversed by boat from the Lake Ladoga to the Arctic Ocean with only few portages in between. In Kainuu and Kuusamo the north-south routes crossed the most important east-west routes. Huurre 1984, 42.

As tempting as the theory of route through Northern Finland from Norway to Bjarmaland sounds, it appears that archaeological evidence remains slight. However, a few brooches, a couple of weapons and a soapstone vessel do indicate some sort of connection with Northern Norway and given the good natural conditions for travel it does not appear altogether impossible that for a period of time around the Late Merovingian Period and the Early Viking Age Norwegians did indeed travel through Kainuu in Northern Finland.

**How far back do the expeditions to Bjarmaland extend?**

In this connection we are only referring to the specific contacts that took place between the Norwegians and a group of people called Bjarmians in the White Sea area. It is unclear when the Bjarmians obtained this specific identity in the eyes of the Norwegians. Strictly speaking we can only talk about the Bjarmians after the late 9th century when they first appear with this name in the written sources. We may, however, assume that this identity was born already some time before this, perhaps already in the late Merovingian Period the archaeological finds suggest, but probably latest in the early 9th century. In any case, we can only detect specific Norwegian activity in Northern Finland beginning in the late Merovingian Period. It seems possible that the Norwegian artefacts in Northern Finland indicate a route to the White Sea via the easily traversable waterways. There are no finds in the White Sea area that could be directly connected with Norway. Thus we cannot put the Norwegian-Bjarmian contacts further back in time than the late Merovingian Period/the early 9th century despite the fact that there has been interaction between the White Sea area and Fennoscandia throughout history. Due to the nature of archaeological material it is not possible to suggest with any certainty when the *Beormas* gained their separate identity in the eyes of the Norwegians. Archaeological material indicates Norwegian interest towards the White Sea area already in the 8th century. Perhaps continued contacts gradually introduced the peoples of the White Sea to Norwegians and one group was to become known as the *Beormas* latest by the late 9th century.

**Archaeological finds in the White Sea area**

In the following I will take a look at the Late Iron Age and early medieval period finds in the White Sea area in order to get a clearer picture of the peoples and contacts in the area. However, the archaeological finds in general are few in the
White Sea area, most likely because only few excavations have been made there.\footnote{Uino 1992, 609.} This means that there are not many finds to base the conclusions on and this of course makes all assumptions very uncertain, although I believe that even scarce archaeological material is better than no material at all. Perhaps future finds will be able to either verify or reject the current hypotheses.

MAKAROV has listed the Viking Age and early medieval sites in the White Sea area: Severnaja Salma on Kola Peninsula (stray find); Sidorovskaja Buchta on Kola Peninsula (stray find); Inderka on Varzuga (hoard); Kuzomen’ 1–2 close to the Varzuga (burials); Kem’ in Viena Karelia (hoard); Filippovskie Sadki on Solovki Isles (stray find); Anzerskij ostrov on Solovki Isles (burial site); Archangel (hoard); Gorekij Most 6–8 close to the Vyg (dwelling site); Erpin Pudas close to the Vyg (dwelling site); Sumozero on the southwestern shore of the White Sea (stray find). The finds thus include three hoards, two cemeteries, one solitary burial, two dwelling sites and four sites with stray finds.\footnote{Makarov 2007, 143.}

There are no finds dated to the time of Ohthere’s expedition or the time immediately preceding it but there is a cemetery from the Crusade Period/early Middle Ages from the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula\footnote{The prehistorical era on the Kola Peninsula has not been very well examined, but many Stone Age sites and some Early Metal Period sites usually situated in the coastal region around the whole peninsula have been discovered. Gurina 1987, 35–37, 41, 43, 45; Gypnina 1984, 13, 16.}, on the left bank of the Varzuga River near the village of Kuzomen’. The bronze ornaments of mainly 12th century from this destroyed cemetery (Kuzomen’ I) (interestingly, the Shangenichi-selo site in northeastern Lake Ladoga region has counterparts for several artefacts found in Kuzomen’ I) include a West European silver coin (denarius of Count Albert II 1018–1064), a key-shaped amulet and an umbo-shaped plate as well as two belt buckles, two penannular brooches, three horse-shaped pendants, two bird-shaped pendants, a spearhead and a number of other metal artefacts (some of which are so corroded that it’s difficult to define them closer). A number of human bones attest to inhumation burial ground. The key-shaped amulets are typical of the grave mounds (kurgan) of the southeastern Lake Ladoga area and are actually quite rare outside this area. They are considered as women’s ornaments (worn on the breast or the belt, sometimes several in a bunch) and are dated to the second half of the 11th and the early 12th centuries. Also the two metal staves of bronze have counterparts in southeastern Lake Ladoga area and by Cheptsa as well as in kurgans of Volga Kostroma area where they are dated to 12th-
13th centuries. The umbo-shaped plate (conical pendant with spiral decoration that was originally used as boot decoration) has counterparts in an area (inhabited by Finno-Ugrian tribes) stretching from Kama to southeastern Lake Ladoga area. Both the penannular brooches and the belt buckles have a wide distribution in the northern area (Čud’ian and Russian population) in 10th-13th centuries. The specimens in Kuzomen’ I are dated to the end of the 11th or to the 12th century. Horse-shaped pendants have a wide distribution in the northeastern Finno-Ugrian area (from Finland to the basin of the Northern Dvina River) and are as a rule dated to the 12th century. The so-called woman astride a snake variant is known in the Lake Ladoga area, Kama area and in the basin of the Northern Dvina River. The type (R’abinin305 XI:2, all found outside Kama area) found in Kuzomen’ I is a variant of the earlier woman astride a snake pendant that originated in the (Permian) Kama area and is dated to the 11th-12th centuries (up to turn of the 13th century). Pendants of the same type as the Kuzomen’ I specimen are most numerous in the Lake Ladoga area, the Beloozero area and the Vaga basin (each with 3 finds, e.g. Aksenovskaja and Korbala). It is considered that the type originated in the Vaga area and the Beloozero area that had ties with the Kama area. The westernmost specimen has been found in the Swedish Lapland. The flat perforated horse-shaped pendant of R’abinin’s type III:XIII (variant 3) is the northernmost of its kind. Other similar artefacts have been found in Karelia (Sakkola), Ingria, Staraja Ladoga, Volga Kostroma (manufactured in this area in the 12th-13th centuries), Moscow area and Latvia. The type is dated to 11th-13th centuries. Another variant of the pendant has been found in Novgorod in layers dated to 1160–1170. In Finland a specimen belonging to the variant type 2 has been found in Suomussalmi Juntussranta and another specimen (outside R’abinin’s variant types) has been found in Ikaalinen. The two-headed horse-shaped pendant (R’abinin’s type VII) belongs to a series of ornaments connected with the wide Finno-Ugrian settlement zone and the Slavic-Čud’ian border zone of the 12th century (northeastern part of Novgorod, area stretching from Lake Ladoga to Kostroma area by Volga). The type originated in northeastern parts of ancient Russia (areas around the basin of Vaga River and Lake Beloe). A significant amount of the finds come from the basin of the Northern Dvina River and from the Čud’ian area but specimens have been found as far west as in Finland (Teuva) and in the Swedish Lapland. One of the bird-shaped pendants (with loose legs) probably originated in Kostroma area and is dated to the 12th century. The other bird-shaped pendant (duck or goose figure of R’abinin’s type

305 Also spelled as Rjabin or Ryabinin.
I:1) is frequently present in Russian finds (in Finno-Ugrian context, e.g. Aksenovskaja) with main concentrations in the southeastern Lake Ladoga area and the Beloozero area. Its origin is connected with the southeastern Lake Ladoga area with earliest finds there from the second half of the 10th/early 11th century. From the first half of the 11th century until the 12th or the early 13th century the type was also produced in the Beloozero area and this variant has counterparts in a large area including the Perm’ Province (basin of Kama), the basin of the Northern Dvina River and Swedish Lapland (Unna Saiva). Zoomorphic objects were common in an area stretching from lands around Novgorod to Perm’ and are especially common in the Lake Ladoga area. Kuzomen’ I site is considered as Finno-Ugrian. It appears that a local population with likeness to the population in the Lake Ladoga area lived on the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula, by the Varzuga River. The artefacts are a mix of Baltic Finnic, Volga Finnic and Permian forms and the artefacts are typical to two large Čud’ian areas, the Ladoga-Beloozero(-Kama) area and the Volga area. Most finds in Kuzomen’ I site can be dated to the late 11th century or the 12th century, although the earliest specimens are from the 10th century and the latest from the 13th century.306 It is conspicuous how many of the artefacts found on the Kuzomen’ I site have counterparts in the Lake Ladoga area. However, not all the types originate in the Lake Ladoga area and the inhabitants on Kola Peninsula may well have had contacts with other areas as well. However, it would appear that the Lake Ladoga region has been important for the Kola Peninsula.

Nearby, close to confluence of the rivers Kitsa and Varzuga, three other graves (Kuzomen’ II) have been discovered. The first grave contained a burial where the corpse had been swaddled in bast and cloth and placed into a wooden coffin, probably of log frame type (with construction over the grave). Coin-shaped pendants, triangular pendant of bronze wire, remains of a necklace made of eight round pendants and glass beads, a penannular brooch with spiral ends (12th–13th centuries), iron belt ring, small iron knife, bronze spiral belonging to woman’s dress (geometrical ornamentation attached to fabric on the lower part of the dress) and some fabric remains (e.g. parts of a belt) were found. This is obviously a burial of a female. The second burial was made in a wooden cist. Finds include a necklace made of glass beads, two large round pendants, four round coin-shaped pendants and a round slit pendant (all of the previous in a very bad state of preservation), a bronze pendant shaped like a duck’s foot and a bronze belt ring. This is also a burial

of a woman. The third grave contained a body wrapped in bast. The finds include a bronze belt buckle with remains of a leather belt, a round bronze belt ring, two bronze belt ring plates with three links (strap distributors) and an axe. This has been regarded as a burial of a man. All burials are dated to the 12th-13th centuries. The artefacts represent types that are typical to (western) Finno-Ugrian tribes during the medieval times. O. V. OVSYANNIKOV finds that the burials were left behind by the autochthonous Saami population. He finds support for this assumption in both the physical features of the human remains and in the general knowledge that Saami have lived in close by areas. Although the Saami most likely dwelled in this area or at least in areas close by, I find it by no means certain in the light of the artefacts that these burials were made by the Saami.

Bronze spirals belonging to the female dress are typical to the Finnish area, but there are no reports for them being a part of Saami female dress. The penannular (horseshoe) brooch is generally regarded as a Finno-Ugrian and Baltic ornament type, used by both men and women. Penannular brooches are characteristic for peripheral areas in Northern Russia where the brooches were in use mostly in the area where the Slavic population came in contact with Baltic and Finno-Ugrian peoples. The brooches are most numerous in Finland and the Eastern Baltic area (that has produced the earliest finds), but Viking Age variations have also been found in Scandinavia. There are very few of the brooches in the eastern area, east of the Northern Dvina River. In the Baltic area women used the penannular brooches in pairs whereas in the Russian area only one brooch was used. There are many variants, some with large and others with more limited distribution. In Russia the penannular brooches belong in a solely Finno-Ugrian context and they are numerous in finds between the 10th and the 13th centuries and are a part of the typical Finno-Ugrian dress. The Saami are, of course, Finno-Ugrians, and penannular brooches also belong to Saami context. However, the penannular brooches are such a common artefact type that they can tell nothing specific about ethnicity.

Beads are a part of the Viking Age and the Crusade Period female decoration in Scandinavia and Finland and they appear in finds in a large area (e.g. the Finno-


308 Bronze spirals were mostly used as an ornament on the hem or the apron of the female dress. They have been found in Western Finland and Karelia but they were also used by Baltic tribes. Bronze spirals belong to the end of the Viking Age and the Crusade Period. Alsvik 1973, 77. See also Lehtosalo-Hilander 1980, 243–245, 256–257; Lehtosalo-Hilander 1987, 392–401.

Ugrian areas of Russia, basin of the Northern Dvina River, Kama River, Lake Ladoga area [10th-12th century, from 950 to early 1100's] and Sweden; bronze beads in a leather thong are considered typical to Finno-Ugrian culture). Pendants of different kinds are found in a large area, although animal-shaped pendants are considered as “eastern”. Strap distributors have also been found in (eastern) Finland. Bronze belt rings have been found in a large area including southwestern Lake Ladoga area, Kostroma Volga area, middle parts of the Northern Dvina River, Vychegda and Tichman’ga by Lake Lacha. Key-shaped pendants of bronze of similar type as the one from Kuzomen’ I are common in the mounds of the southeastern Lake Ladoga area. They are considered to be women’s ornaments and are dated to the 11th–12th centuries (1050–1100). Umbo-shaped plate and three of the zoomorphic pendants found in Kuzomen’ I have counterparts in Lake Ladoga area and metal staves have counterparts in southwestern Lake Ladoga region. Lyre-shaped belt buckles (10th–12th centuries) are considered as western Finno-Ugrian by Russian archaeologists and have also been found in Korbala by Vaga. Some artefacts also point to Volga Kostroma, Kama, Vaga and Beloozero areas. A triangular wire pendant of Kuzomen’ II has counterparts in Korbala by Vaga (late 11th/first half of the 12th century) and on Vaigach Island and an ornament of same shape (although of silver and with ornamentation and a fastening hook) belongs to the Archangel hoard. The type may be eastern since certain finds e.g. in Ugrian burial grounds in western Siberia and in Kama area resemble the triangular wire pendants. The habit of covering the deceased with bark is found in Baltic Fennic, Saami and Permian cemeteries and cannot be linked to any specific ethnicity. Orientation of the deceased in Kuzomen’ II is typical for contact zones or for microstructures in places where different ethnical groups mixed with one another.310 What is unclear is what ethnical groups could have met in Kuzomen’. It could have been the Saami and another Finno-Ugrian (Baltic Fennic) group, possibly e.g. the Bjarmians or the Karelians.

Judging solely by the artifact types and the burial customs the burials could in my opinion be interpreted as western Finno-Ugrian with some influence from more easterly areas. Actually, if the interpretation is based on archaeology only, there is in my opinion nothing in the finds as such that would specifically point toward Saami origin of the artefacts – rather the contrary. Neither the burial habits with timber constructions nor the female dress with bronze spiral ornamentation appear

to belong to Saami context. O. V. OVSYANNIKOV points to the physical features of the deceased when defining the burials as Saami, but I am rather doubtful in regard to using physical features to define ethnicity.\(^{311}\)

The fact remains that the artefacts are very similar to finds in the Lake Ladoga area as also N. N. GURINA has noted.\(^{312}\) Perhaps we should look for a Finno-Ugrian population other than the Saami. Russian scholars seemingly consider the Kola Peninsula as a single ethnic unit, but a closer look at the sources reveals that the peninsula may well have had at least two ethnically different populations at least since the 9th century.

It is known from written sources that there was a Saami population on the Kola Peninsula and currently it is held that this population has roots going back to the earliest settlers who migrated after the Ice Age from Norway and Finland to the northwestern part of the peninsula that was first uncovered of the ice sheet and from Karelia to the more southerly parts of the peninsula. There is continuity from the Mesolithic Period (the culture on the peninsula was a variant of Komsa culture) through the Neolithic Period (ceramics of this period show affinity with both Sperrings ceramics and Säräisniemi I ceramics) to the Early Metal Period.\(^ {313}\)

The earliest written source available, i.e. Ohthere’s account from the late 9th century refers to ethnic border between (itinerant) Saami and another (agricultural) Finno-Ugrian population most likely on the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula, possibly around the River Varzuga.\(^{314}\) Varzuga is generally considered the westernmost point\(^{315}\) of the Ter coast (Terskij bereg), east of which was the coastal area inhabited by the Saami.\(^ {316}\) Russian sources of the 13th century seemingly place

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\(^{311}\) See e.g. Jutikkala 1984, 365; Kemiläinen 1993, 16.

\(^{312}\) Гурина 1984, 16.

\(^{313}\) Гурина 1984, 16; Gurina 1987, 35, 37, 41, 43, 45, 48.


\(^{315}\) However, in current Russian literature it is seemingly often considered that Ter coast covered all of the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula. See e.g. Post 2005, 19–22. It appears to me, though, that this expanded interpretation cannot be applied in historical context.

\(^{316}\) Nykysuomen sanakirja osat V ja VI, S-Ö, 75; Suomen kielen etymologinen sanakirja V, 1421–1422; Storm 1894, 95–96; Nansen 1911, 133; Johnsen 1923, 9; Ross 1940, 25, 26 footnote 10, 28, Haavio 1965, 15–16; Vasm er 1965, 169; Djupedal 1969, 11 footnote 2; Vilkana 1980, 647; Eidlitz Kuoljok 1991, 33. See also the map in Gurina 1987, 36. The coastal area of the Kola Peninsula has traces of settlement that on occasion seem to stretch in the inland areas along rivers. On the northern (and partially the eastern) shore there are many traces of Stone Age settlement and a few traces of Early Metal Age activity but only two sites of medieval date. The Varzuga River area stands out in that besides having traces of all periods including the Mesolithic, the Neolithic and the Early Metal Periods it also contains several medieval sites, both dwellings and burials. There are large number of dwelling sites from the Stone Age on the western bank of Varzuga, near the village of Kazomen’. Гурина 1984, 13.
two regions on the Kola Peninsula, *Koloperem’/Goloperm’* and *Tre*.\(^{317}\) One may but wonder if this difference between the regions is not made on basis of ethnically different populations in the mentioned areas. In medieval times the Karelian area on the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula stretched until Varzuga.\(^{318}\) A 14th century written document refers to a half-Saami, half-Karelian population on the Kola Peninsula.\(^{319}\) It is possible that the population was ethnically mixed containing both Karelian and Saami elements already before the 14th century. However, it is notable that there are no special Karelian types from Kola Peninsula, although the special Karelian artefact types are dated to the 12th-13th centuries.\(^{320}\) It seems like there was an ethnic boundary on the Varzuga River with Saami living east of it and another Finno-Ugrian population west of it. On the basis of the artefact types found in Kuzomen’ it would appear to me that the population that left behind the burials were not Saami, but rather representatives of the other, more westerly Finno-Ugrian population.

Few other medieval finds are known in the northernmost part of northwestern Russia.\(^{321}\) In Uhtua, just east of the Finnish-Russian border in Kainuu, a bird-shaped pendant has been found. According to KIVIKOSKI the artefact has Karelian ornamentation traits. TALLGREN noted that the ornament has some counterparts in the Kama area, but concluded nevertheless that it was probably made in the Karelian area. He referred to one specimen found in Old Ladoga at Olhava River and to another found in Vologda.\(^{322}\) However, these two specimens are not very similar to the pendant from Uhtua. HUURRE has concluded that the bird-shaped pendant from Uhtua has probably come from the White Sea area.\(^{323}\)

There is one duck-pendant of R’abinin’s type 1 in the Kargopol area. Another one is known of from the burials on the southern part of the Kola Peninsula (Kuzomen’). The Lake Ladoga area is considered to be the area of origin for this type. The earliest examples are dated to the second half of the 10th century.\(^{324}\)

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\(^{319}\) See e.g. Hansen 2003, 17–19.

\(^{320}\) Cf. Uino 1997, 166–172. However, silver penannular brooch of Karelian type (dated to c. 12th-14th century) has been found in Anzer (Hanhisaari), one of the Solovetsk islands. Uino 1997, 358.

\(^{321}\) In general, archaeological record is limited throughout the White Sea region - there has not been intensive fieldwork. Iron Age and early medieval finds indicating settlement in Viena Karelia are rare. Uino 1997, 200–201.

\(^{322}\) Tallgren 1930, 74; Kivikoski 1964, 290.

\(^{323}\) Huurre 1987a, 67, 70.

\(^{324}\) Makarov 1992, 338.
According to KIVIKOSKI, during the Late Iron Age the area between Finmark, the White Sea and the lakes Onego and Ladoga was only inhabited by half-nomadic hunters, either of Saami, Zyrián or Samoyedian descent. It has been suggested that during the Viking Age the White Sea area belonged to the interest sphere of southeastern Lake Ladoga settlement. Towards the end of the Viking Age there are traces of permanent settlement (graves) on the northern and eastern coast of Onego. A couple of Scandinavian women’s brooches from the 10th century have been found in the area. These can perhaps be connected with the Scandinavian settlement in the Lake Ladoga region. Archaeological sites are not known from the Late Iron Age at the southern coast of the White Sea, from around the rivers Kem’ or Vygy, neither are they known around the lower Northern Dvina River325 (with the exception of one large hoard). The closest known finds belong to the Late Kargopol culture and its poorly studied Viking Age continuation that was centered on the eastern side of the Lake Onego (Ääninen). Earliest finds from this area derive from the 12th century.326

It suffices to say here that on the basis of these few finds presented above it seems like the White Sea area has had contacts with the Lake Ladoga area. Several of the artefact types are specifically connected with the southeastern Lake Ladoga region. Many artefacts have a wide distribution in the northern area (between the Kama area and Northern Sweden) and although these types reveal little of specific contacts they indicate that the White Sea area belonged to the cultural sphere of the northern regions. There is little in the material that indicates any direct contact with the eastern area (Permian area by Kama) and there is nothing that points to Scandinavian activity in the White Sea area. There are no direct indications that the White Sea area people had contact with (southern) Finland, although some of the zoomorphic ornaments have also been found in Finland and e.g. the strap dividers and bronze spiral ornamentation of garments are connected with Finland also. There are slight hints of connections with the Finno-Ugrian population in the Vaga and Beloozero areas and perhaps also in the Volga Kostroma area. The currently known archaeological material (burials and single artefacts) connects the White Sea area with other Finno-Ugrian areas of the Russian north and the southeastern

325 Although the archaeological studies are not extensive and the situation is easily changed by increased research, it appears significant that the Northern Dvina River area that is in historical literature often connected with Bjarmaland has so far failed to produce anything that would indicate medieval settlement in the area.

Lake Ladoga region seems to have played a special role. It seems natural that regions located close by would have had most contacts. Olthère’s account indicates that Bjarmaland may be located at the Kola Peninsula and it is interesting to notice that there are indications of permanent medieval settlement by the Varzuga River. Finds also indicate some sort of human presence in Kem’ and Uhtua in Viena Karelia, in Kargopol and in the Lake Onego region.

**Hoards**

A number of hoards in the northern areas of Norway, Finland and Russia contain a very similar selection of artefacts. The common artefact types include neckrings, armrings, penannular brooches, crosses and axe-shaped pendants. Some of the hoards also contain coins that are considered as atypical for northern hoards.327

The Northern Finnish hoards include finds from Lämsä Kuurna, Tavajärvi Ukonlahti (on the Russian side of the border) and Puutteenkylä Pyhälahti in Kuusamo, Aatservainen in Salla (Kuolajärvi) and Lohijärvi in Ylitornio. Another hoard was found in Kemijärvi Termusvaara, but has been lost since.328 Recently, another silver hoard consisting of four neckrings (one with three axe-shaped pendants) has been found in Inari Nanguuniemi.329 The hoard from Puutteenkylä consists of only silver coins and there are over 400 of them, mostly German (397 out of total 409), but also Arabian (2), English (3 original Anglo-Saxon and 2 copies) and Danish (5) and is dated to the end of the 11th century (oldest coins being from the 10th century, youngest from around 1065). There are traces of prehistorical, perhaps Late Iron Age settlement close to the spot where the hoard was found. The hoard was found on top of the ground and this seems to exclude the possibility that the money was hidden. Rather, it would seem like a sacrifice. The hoard from Aatservainen consists both of coins and ornaments, plus a scale with weights. The rest of the hoards consist of ornaments only. Possibly the hoard from Ylitornio, that was found while making a road, originally had more artefacts that have been lost since. Now it only contains a brooch and a necklace, both of silver.330 The hoard of Tavajärvi Ukonlahti is the largest of the late Iron Age hoards

327 Spangen 2005, 15, 38, 77–78.
328 Kivikoski 1964, 287; Edgren 1993, 246.
330 The “hoard” of Ylitornio that only contains a brooch and a neckring of silver is perhaps not an actual hoard at all, it has only been interpreted as such since it was found so far in the north. Also the
of Northern Finland with the total weight of 1.4 kilograms of silver. It consists of eight brooches, seven of which are penannular (horseshoe) brooches and one a shield-boss-shaped brooch. There are six neckrings, four armrings and two axe-shaped pendants. A rough estimation dates the find to around 1050–1150. The shield-boss-shaped brooch has silver counterparts in Varsinais-Suomi and Satakunta and bronze counterparts in Häme. The type is known in Estonia and is numerous in Northern Swedish sacrificial finds/hoards. There is also one in Northern Norwegian hoards. The type is dated to the 12th century. Three of the armrings have counterparts on Gotland and the penannular (horseshoe) brooches are of a type that was used in the Western Finnish female dress, although the type originated in Gotland. Probably the pieces in the hoard were made in Finland. The type is also known in Northern Swedish sacrificial finds and in Northern Norway. The penannular (horseshoe) brooches have been dated to the 11th-12th centuries. The find has been interpreted as sacrifice due to the place-name and the fact that it was placed above ground. The Lämsä hoard includes one axe-shaped pendant with chain, four neckrings, two armrings and three penannular (horseshoe) brooches. The total weight is 810 grams. It is dated to around 1050–1150. There are archaeological sites close to where the hoard was found, connected with settlement and hunting but undated. Axe-shaped pendants are known, besides a few examples in Finland (including some specimens in the southern part of Finland), also in Estonia and Ingria. Three examples have been found in Northern Norway (in Skjervøy, Lennvik Bothhamn and Vardø in Northern Norway), two in Swedish sacrificial finds (Gråträsk in Piteå), one by the River Vaga (Voskresenskoe), one in northwestern Novgorod area and one in Archangel hoard. Suggestions for the origin of this artefact type include Karelia, Novgorod, Ingria or Estonia. It has also been suggested that the type originated in the Eastern Baltic area and simpler copies were later manufactured in Northern Fennoscandia. The type is dated to the 11th-12th centuries. The hoard from Inari weighs just over one kilogram altogether. The heaviest neckring weighs about 380 grams. Dating of the find is the 11th-13th centuries (radiocarbon datings give the average of 1160 AD-1280 AD). The artefacts have counterparts in a large area including Scandinavia and the Baltic area.

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assumption that it must have had more ornaments originally seems like an attempt to make it fit more into the profile of a hoard. Perhaps the artefacts are from a grave?

and the Inari hoard is clearly connected with other hoards in Northern Finland and Northern Norway.332

Hoard (around 30) are also known in Northern Norway and some artefact types in the Norwegian hoards are similar to those found in the Northern Finnish hoards. Most Norwegian hoards are dated from the late 10th and the 11th century, a few to the 12th-13th centuries.333

Northern Norwegian hoards are rather homogeneous regarding both the material (silver) and artefact types and seemingly all the artefacts were deposited at the same time. In contrast, Saami sacrificial sites that contain somewhat similar material are more heterogeneous in nature, the artefacts have accumulated over time and the sites contain artefacts made of different materials (e.g. bronze rather than silver). The most common silver artefacts in Saami sacrificial sites are coins that are nearly absent in the hoards in Northern Norway. Neckrings are the most common artefact type in the hoards in both Northern Norway and in Northern Europe in general. Silver neckrings found in Northern Norwegian hoards are considered as local products.334

The axe-shaped pendants that appear in the hoards are dated to the transition between the Viking Age and the Middle Ages. The specimen from the hoard from Indreidet335 is suspended from a plaited silver chain. Similar suspension is also known in the case of the hoard from Botnhamn Lenvik at the Malangen Fjord where three pendants were attached to a chain. Three bronze specimens derive from a grave in Vardo. The find from Indreidet contained also three necklaces and the find from Botnhamn two necklaces and a cross. Similar pendants are known in Finland: three from Southern Ostrobothnia (all suspended from chains like in the Botnhamn hoard and belonging to hoards), one from a grave find in Satakunta and two from a hoard in Hämeenlinna. In Sweden similar pendants are known from the Saami sacrificial sites. Some have been found in Russia and at least one in Estonia. The distribution of these pendants gives poor clues to decide where the type originated. Many suggestions have been made, including Novgorod, Karelia, the southeastern Lake Ladoga district and Ingermanland. The prevailing view according to Thorleif SJOVOLD seems to be that they were specially manufactured for the Saami that

335 Also forms Indre Eidet and Eidet appear in literature (see e.g. Sjøvold 1974, Spangen 2005, Storli 2006).
were involved in the fur trade. Cross pendants of silver have been found in two hoards from Troms, viz. Botnhann and Flatvollen Lyngen. The Flatvollen treasure also contained two necklaces and a shield-boss-shaped brooch (only one in Northern Norwegian hoards). Sjøvold suspects the round shield-boss-shaped brooches may have been produced in Finland. One specimen has been found in the Aatservainen hoard in Northern Finland. The distribution of crosses coincides fairly well with that of the axe-shaped pendants, although the crosses are less common (none found in Northern Finland). One parallel is known in the Lake Ladoga area and another in the Archangel hoard that also contains an axe-shaped pendant. The closest parallel to the cross of the Botnhann hoard is from Virušmäki in the Aura River valley in Finland. This is a stray find dated to the 11th or early 12th century. Cross-shaped pendants were seemingly produced in Northern Russia but were probably also manufactured in Latvia and perhaps in Finland.

The hoards from Haukøy, Botnhann, Indreidet and Flatvollen are linked together, because of the similarities in the material and they constitute a single chronological horizon that most likely goes back to the late 11th century. This group is also closely related to a group of hoards from the Finnish Lapland (especially Kuusamo Lämsä and Kuusamo Tavajarvi). The Finnish hoards contain e.g. axe-shaped pendants and shield-boss-shaped brooches.

In Northwestern Russia hoards have been found in Kem’, Varzuga (Inderka) and Archangel. All these contain artefacts that are typical in the hoards found in Northern Finland and Northern Norway. The now seemingly lost Kem’ hoard from the 11th century contained neckrings as does the Varzuga (Inderka) hoard. These two hoards are very similar in content. The Varzuga (Inderka) hoard contains a plated flat-ended neckring of the so-called “Permian” type (local manufacture based on a type known in the Kama area, dated from the middle of the 9th century to the 11th century), two flat armrings with twisted ends of Scandinavian type and four pieces of at least two different neckrings with knob-ends. According to A. M. Spiridonov, a find of silver ornaments in the Kem’ district near the White Sea contained two plate bracelets with tied ends and a twisted neck-ring, both dated to the 11th century plus a neck-ring of the so-called Glazov type from the 10th or the

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early 11th century. There is some confusion in the literature regarding these hoards and it appears the Kem’ hoard has disappeared and can today only be examined through pictures. According to A. M. TALLGREN, only the Baltic area (including Lake Ladoga area) has counterparts for all the artefacts of the Varzuga (Inderka) hoard. Ella KIVIKOSKI has suggested that the Viking Age hoard from the Varzuga River (Inderka) derives from the southeastern coast of the Lake Ladoga. Matti HUURRE has noted that the “Permian” neckring from Varzuga (Inderka) is similar to the one found in Oulujoki Koveronkoski and it also has counterparts in Southern Finland. Also, another of the neckrings of the Varzuga (Inderka) hoard has a counterpart in an ornament found in Vaala in Northern Finland. HUURRE finds that the artefact from Vaala has come from the White Sea area to Northern Finland. Marek JASINSKI and O. V. OVSYANNIKOV have observed that the Varzuga (Inderka) hoard contains artefact that have counterparts in a large area stretching from Kama to Scandinavia. The artefacts are dated to the end of the 10th century and the early 13th century. It is considered that the hoard was deposited in the early 13th century. It seems to me like the artefacts from Varzuga (Inderka) are rather similar (at least the two armrings and one neckring are very similar) to some specimens in Tavajärvi hoard in Northern Finland, as also SPIRIDONOV has observed. He finds that the above-mentioned ornaments from the Kem’ district and some 11th century silver neckrings found close to the River Varzuga on the Kola Peninsula are very similar in appearance to the content of the Finnish hoards from Kuusamo and Ylitornio, because they all contain solely ring-ornaments and it is probable that they came from the west. ZACHRISSON has assumed that the finds are connected with the Saami sacrificial finds.

The Archangel hoard from the late first quarter of the 12th century is the largest (total weight over 1.6 kg of which 270 g are non-numismatic) of the Northern Russian hoards and contains an axe-shaped pendant, a cross and plaited chains that are typical to northern (Norwegian and Finnish) hoards. However, it also shows affinity to Russian hoards in that it contains a large number of coins (around

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343 There are a number of coin hoards (including both Arabian and western coins) in the Russian north, e.g. Petrozavodsk (Arabian coins of the 10th century), Kargopol, Sortavala, Kurkijoki, Räisälä, Lotinapelto, the northern side of the Lake Onego (11th century), basins of the Northern Dvina River and Sukhona River, Vychegda River and Kama River. Tallgren 1930, 70–71; Nosov–Ovsyannikov–Potin 1992, 12–13.
(2000) and artefacts that derive from eastern and southern parts of Russia (including Novgorod, Väga and Bulgar). The numismatic material of the Arkhangelsk hoard resembles the numismatic material in Finnish (especially the Salla hoard) and Scandinavian finds. The Archangel hoard has been connected with people involved in fur trade. Since most of the silver objects in the Archangel hoard are Russian it has been assumed that the owner of it came to the lower reaches of the Northern Dvina River from the North Russian territories.344

In Norway the northern hoards have been lately interpreted as a manifestation and consolidation of cultural affinity. This conclusion is based on the information that in the north hoards have been deposited in areas where Norse settlement met the Saami settlement. In other words, the hoards have not been found in purely Norse or purely Saami context but rather on the border of the settlement zones. The “eastern” artefacts345 are seen as manifestations of the will to keep up close contacts with eastern areas whereas taking the habit of depositing hoards served to show affinity with Norse culture. The rather large number of hoards in Northern Norway has been explained from the viewpoint that depositing offerings according to already existing custom was a socially accepted form of disposing of excess wealth that had started to accumulate since the 12th century as a result of fur trade to certain individuals within the principally egalitarian Saami society. A piece of information in Svarfdöla saga describes how ownership to land was claimed by depositing silver and personal belongings on the border of the property. In southern Scandinavia Viking Age silver hoards are connected with farms’ outer or border zones. The northern hoards have been interpreted in the light of these pieces of information and the habit of depositing hoards is seen as confirmation of (ethnic) borders (or meeting zones) in unstable times and as a seal of economical contracts. It is considered likely that both groups, the Saami and the Norse population, participated in the depositing ceremonies that perhaps included various rituals and exchange of gifts.346 Earlier, hoards have been interpreted as accumulations of capital connected with trade and economy. The connection to economy is based on

345 It is worth noticing that the term “eastern” is used quite loosely in the Scandinavian countries for any artefacts that derive east of Scandinavia including for example Finnish, Karelian, Finno-Ugrian, Baltic, Russian and Permian artefacts. Even oriental objects can be included. See e.g. Gjessing 1928, 25–26, 29–30; Zachrisson 1987, 190; Storli 1991, 90, 94; Spangen 2005, 47. From a Finnish point of view the term “eastern” must necessarily be narrower including mainly the Finno-Ugrian area of Northern Russia.
the content of some hoards that contain coins and pieces of hacked silver. It is possible that hoards in different areas should be interpreted differently since content of the hoards varies from area to area. In West Norway and East Sweden hoards seemingly contain somewhat standardised collection of items and this standard composition insinuates that they were deposited ritually or that they were an expression of formalised prestige rather than a part of regular economical activity. In South Scandinavia and Western Slavic area the composition of items in the hoards appears more fortuitous and these hoards are seen as collections of wealth, used in economical transactions. It is notable that the artefact types that are common in the northern hoards are not generally found in the context of graves in the north whereas several types including neckrings and pendants have been found in regular context of graves and dwelling sites in e.g. the Baltic area. This would seem to indicate that the types were specifically selected to be deposited in hoards and were not in everyday use as ornaments. It has been suggested that e.g. the silver pendants were produced in the Lake Ladoga area to be used in fur trade with the Saami.

In Russia the scholars maintain that the hoards are a manifestation of trade and the 11th-12th century hoards are seen as outlining the territory where the population was involved in exchanging furs for silver with Novgorod. This view is based on the observation that the consistency of the northern Russian hoards is typical to Ancient Russian hoards from the Novgorod lands including e.g. both Oriental and Western European coins. The appearance of hoards to the northeast and east of Lake Onego coincides with the arrival of the Russian population from Novgorod and the Lake Ladoga region. Silver hoards are seen as concrete evidence of relations between indigenous populations and Ancient Russia and of the inclusion of the remote northern areas into Novgorod’s sphere of influence. The biggest difference between the Northwestern Russian and other Russian hoards is that the latter mainly consist of coins whereas the northwestern hoards contain also ornaments.

Many of the Northern Finnish hoards have been found in places whose names (e.g. Ukonvaara, Pyhäjärvi, Termusvaara) imply sacrifice, but there is no clear evidence that the finds were connected with cult. On the contrary, the scale in one

547 Storli 2006, 170, 184.
548 Hansen–Olsen 2004, 85–86; Spangen 2005, 43–46, 124–125. However, in Finland one axe-shaped pendant has been found in a grave and in Nord-Trøndelag in Norway one miniature sized axe-shaped pendant has been found in a grave. Spangen 2005, 43–45.
of the finds indicates that the hoard belonged to a tradesman. Additionally, coins that also appear in the hoards have been interpreted as the traders’ bank. KIVIKOSKI finds it unlikely that the hoards were sacrificed by hunters or fur traders or the Saami. She sees them rather as regular hidden hoards that may have belonged to either Saami or tradesmen from the south, although scales seem to suggest that tradesmen are the more likely option. However, both placing of the artefacts above the ground in many cases as well as the place names indicate that some of the hoards may have been sacrifices. It is worth considering that not all of the hoards need to have been deposited for the same purpose. HANSEN and OLSEN have observed that the hoards are associated with border or transit zones connected to the Saami. This is also the case in Finland (Kuusamo area between Gulf of Bothnia and the White Sea was a transit zone already during the Early Metal Period and it is considered that there was Saami population in the area) and this sets the Northern Finnish hoards in a similar context as in Northern Norway where they are interpreted as confirmation of (ethnic) borders (or meeting zones) in unstable times and as a seal of economical contracts.

If the theory that the hoards are connected with border and transit areas of ethnic groups holds, then we can on the basis of the distribution locate such border or transit areas in the coastal area of Northern Norway, in Kainuu area in Finland as well as on the shores of the White Sea. Kainuu should perhaps be interpreted as a transit zone rather than border zone whereas the two Northern Russian hoards (from Kem’ and Varzuga) that show affinity to Northern Fennoscandian hoards could perhaps be connected with borders. The Archangel hoard should perhaps be connected with trade due to the large amount of coins that make it similar to other Russian hoards rather than the Northern Fennoscandian hoards although some of the artefacts also show affinity with the latter.

Both the “eastern” artefacts and hoards are currently connected with the Saami population and it is considered that it was the fur trade (with Novgorod) that brought wealth and resulted in contacts that brought the specific artefacts to the north. Since the hoards are connected with the Saami in Norway, they should probably be connected with the Saami in other areas as well, although the

351 Kivikoski 1964, 289.
352 The connection with transit or border zone also fits for Swedish Norrland and Southwest Finland. Hansen–Olsen 2004, 83–86. Also OKKONEN connects the Northern Finnish hoards with local inhabitants (Saami) rather than with travellers from other areas. Okkonen 2002, 64–66.
353 “Eastern” ornaments in Northern Norway have also been connected with expeditions to Bjarmaland. Makarov 1991, 57–58; Hansen–Olsen 2004, 84–85; Spangen 2005, 77.
distribution area of the hoards is large and there may well have been regional differences. The theory connected with ritual deposits assumes presence of another ethnical groups besides the Saami which in the case of Norway is the agricultural Germanic population. We can assume that also in the case of Finland and Russia the other ethnic group should be a group distinctly different from the Saami, both linguistically and probably also by way of livelihood. Varzuga area has been indicated as a border zone also in other connections and one may but speculate if the other population in this area besides the Saami could have been Bjarmian. Also other Finno-Ugrian groups are possible.

The Northern Finnish hoards and stray finds all reflect the economical interests that were bound with Northern Fennoscandia, the White Sea area and the Kola Peninsula. Most of the finds derive from an area that is close to the watershed in Northern Ostrobothnia and Lapland. The Oulujoki River and the Iijoki River were the most important thoroughfares, since they are situated close to the rivers that run to the White Sea. This east-west connection was already in use during the Bronze Age. In Sotkamo this route meets another that leads from Karelia to the Gulf of Bothnia via the lakes Saimaa and Pielinen. The finds in the north include artefacts from Karelia, Western Finland, Scandinavia and the Russian area. These reflect which cultural areas had economical interests in the north.354

Regardless of the interpretation of the northern hoards it is clear that they represent a considerable value and give an implication of the wealth of the people living in the areas surrounding the locations the hoards have been found in.355 It seems clear that hoards of similar character (Northern Norway, Northern Finland and northwestern Russia) outline a cultural zone or a zone whose inhabitants were engaged in intensive contacts during the 11th-12th centuries356. However, despite the

355 The Northern Finnish hoards are certifiably of good quality although it has been suggested that they are of inferior quality. Leppäaho 1964, 85; Edgren 1993, 245, 247. It seems, however, that there is still some uncertainty regarding the quality of the silver and Scandinavian scholars seem to maintain the notion that the silver artefacts in Saami context occasionally in fact are of inferior quality. See Hansen–Olsen 2004, 85; Spangen 2005, 127.
356 Basically, all the hoards found in Northern Finland can be dated to a period between 1050 and 1150, in other words to the Crusade Period in Finnish terms and early medieval period in Scandinavian terms. Kivikoski 1964, 287–289; Edgren 1993, 246. The Norwegian hoards have been generally dated (on basis of neckrings) to the Viking Age, but SPANGEN has suggested that it is worth considering that the Norwegian hoards that contain eastern types should be dated somewhat later than the Viking Age, like in Finland closer to 1100 than 1000. Spangen 2005, 80–82. Neckrings of silver appeared around 900, or just before, and were in use until 1050/1100 in Scandinavia and up to the 14th century in Finland (e.g. the ring in Inari Ninguniemi is dated to 1120–1280), although they are most often dated to 1050–1150. Older finds (800–900) come from western areas and younger ones from more easterly areas. In
similarity of the material it appears reasonable to assume that not all the hoards were necessarily deposited with the same purpose. Hoards with coins and scales should be perhaps connected with trade whereas hoards consisting of a special collection of artefacts should perhaps be put in connection with sacrifices.

Conclusions

According to the earliest written source about Bjarmaland, the *Beormas* lived during the Viking Age in the White Sea area, probably on the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula at the Kantalahti Bay by one of the rivers. They cultivated land and spoke a Finno-Ugrian language. The Norwegians seemingly had an economical interest in travelling to Bjarmaland. Walrus tusks are mentioned, but not the furs that have a main role in later sources. It is not clear whether Ohthere’s intention was to trade. It is possible, but his intention may also have been to loot, since he mentions threat of hostility.

There is no archaeological material from Ohthere’s time to verify the assumed settlement, but early medieval settlement by the Varzuga River is archaeologically documented. A few finds in the Kargopol area, the Onego Lake area and in the northern part of Karelia indicate human presence in the respective areas. The scarce material is not able to cast any certain light on the livelihood or ethnicity of the peoples in the White Sea area during the Late Iron Age and the early medieval period, although Saami presence on the Kola Peninsula since the Stone Age is taken for granted.

The investigated medieval burials in Kuzomen’ I and II indicate contact primarily with the southeastern Lake Ladoga region. The material also contains slight hints of contacts with the Vaga and Beloozero areas in Russia. One could perhaps say that the material from Kuzomen’ generally indicates contacts with the Finno-Ugrian settlement area in Northern Russia. The few Northern Russian hoards, in Kem’, Varzuga and Archangel, set the White Sea area in connection with a larger cultural area in Northern Fennoscandia. The northern hoards have been connected with borders or transit zones where Saami and other groups of people met. In Northern Norway the other group was the Germanic settlers, but in

Scandinavia neckrings have not been found in graves, although neckrings are mentioned as part of the dress in written sources. Spangen 2005, 41–42. It is considered that in Northern Norwegian hoards neckrings are partially of Scandinavian/Norwegian, partially of eastern (Finnish, Baltic) origin. Hansen–Olsen 2004, 84–85.
Northern Finland and the White Sea area we can only speculate who the others might have been.

The few hoards with their accumulation of silver artefacts indicate that the White Sea area had some economical potential. It is worth considering that some of the hoards should be connected with trade as coins and a scale with weights found in Northern Finland suggest.

The Varzuga and Kem’ hoards are very similar in content to some Northern Finnish hoards and certain artefact types found in the White Sea area hoards have counterparts in a couple of stray finds from Northern Finland (neckrings from Oulujoki Koveronkoski and Vaala). This similarity would seem to emphasize the cultural connections between Northern Finland and the coastal White Sea area. A single find from Uhtua and the Kem’ hoard draws very hazy outlines for a route between the Varzuga area and the Northern Finnish Kainuu area.

Due to the nature of the archaeological material, this chapter includes a lot of speculation. If we assume that Bjarmaland was located by the White Sea, and more closely on the Kola Peninsula as Ohthere’s account seems to suggest, the thoughts that cross the mind include a connection between the Varzuga River and Bjarmaland as well as Norwegian expeditions to Bjarmaland traversing the Kainuu area and the Viena Karelia (Uhtua, the River Kem’).

The Permian area has been historiographically connected with Bjarmaland, but modern research mostly concludes that Bjarmaland is not connected with the Perm’ area in Russia, although the names perhaps have some sort of etymological connection that does not require any sort of ethnical connection.\(^{357}\) The archaeological material does not reveal anything in either the White Sea area, Northern Norway\(^{358}\) or Northern Finland\(^{359}\) that would support the notion of connecting Bjarmaland with Perm’. Actual Permian artefacts are rare in the finds in Northern Fennoscandia and northwestern Russia. “Permian” artefacts that have been found in the north are often local variants of types that originated in Perm’.\(^{360}\)


\(^{358}\) One bronze chain-holder (or pendant) found in Drag Tysfjord is of Permian type (dated to either the Merovingian Period or the Viking Age). The closest parallel comes from Satakunta in Finland and similar ones are also known in the Swedish sacrificial sites. Sjøvold 1974, 81, 222.

\(^{359}\) A couple of finds (an ornament from Sotkamo Tipasoja Kiuluniemi from around 350–500, earring from Inari Ukonsaari from around 11th-12th centuries) in Northern Finland have been connected with the Kama area. See e.g. Huurre 1983, 331, 364.

\(^{360}\) See e.g. Ясинский–Овсянников 1998, 28; Alaräisänen 2004, 39. The so-called Permian artefacts have a special distribution. They are found in the Karelian finds of the Crusade period, in the sub-Arctic areas of Sweden, Norway and Finland and in Western Finland. The earliest finds until around the middle
The material we have available is extremely scarce, but it is interesting to see that although the archaeological material is currently unable to shed any substantial new light\(^\text{361}\), those finds we have are not at odds with the assumptions that can be

of the 11\(^{th}\) century contain artefacts from the Perm’ proper. Later finds until around 1100 (after which the artefacts lose their ethnical characteristics and are harder to place) are from the Finno-Ugrian areas in Beloe ozero, Ladoga, Novgorod and Kama. Wallerström 1995, 202, 204. It is worth noticing that not all artefact types that are deemed “Permian” are “Permian” after all. The oldest examples of double-headed horse-shaped pendants come from Finland and the type can no longer be regarded as “Permian”. Personal communication by Anne Stalsberg. Cf. Huurre 1983, 358–359. Note especially the dating of the Finnish specimens that are considerably older than the eastern ones.

\(^{361}\) Unfortunately the archaeological finds and research are scarce in the north. However, on general level we can speculate what could be seen if there was enough material in the right places. The trade with the Bjarmians must have been barter trade. Whatever was used as payment (if it was not perishable) should be visible in archaeological finds in the Bjarmian area. This would include artefacts from all the possible trade partners including Norwegians, Finns, Russians (Novgorod, Suzdal’, Perm’, Finno-Ugrian peoples) and Karelians. The Bjarmians probably also bought furs from others, e.g. the Saami and perhaps also other Finno-Ugrian peoples and finds in these areas could reveal traces of contact. The Norwegian looting should have resulted in some “Bjarmian artefacts” in the Norwegian area. To add to the speculation, SJÖVOLD suggests that “eastern artefacts” like the ones known in the Saami sacrificial sites were bartered by the Norwegians from the Saami. This barter would explain the eastern ornaments in Northern Norway (in Germanic context) without including long overland journeys to e.g. Finland and Karelia. Instead, the Saami territory would have served as a contact zone. See Sjøvold 1974, 362. In my opinion, SJÖVOLD may just as well have a backwards view of the matter. Perhaps it was the Norwegians that offered the eastern metal artefacts as a payment for the Saami furs. The Norwegians could have obtained these on their travels to Bjarmaland or on their “Viking” expeditions to the Russian area. All these are well documented in the sagas. Many excerpts in the sagas relate how the Norwegians plundered the Bjarmian burial mounds e.g. for ornaments (at least neckrings, probably of silver). See e.g. Oláf saga helga 1945, 227–232. This kind of view would explain the scarcity of “eastern” ornaments in Norwegian sites despite presumably vivid contacts with eastern areas. Perhaps the Bjarmians themselves did not produce any metal ornaments and got what they had from neighbouring areas, e.g. the Lake Ladoga area in connection with fur trade. If the Bjarmians did not produce their ornaments themselves, there does not exist any artefact types that can be labelled directly Bjarmian and the “Bjarmian” material in e.g. Finland and Norway could be camouflaged as e.g. “eastern” artefacts. That the Scandinavians bought furs from the Bjarmians is known from the sagas. Scandinavian material from Northern Russia could perhaps represent the items that were used as a payment for furs by the Norwegians and Finnish material in Northern Russia could perhaps be what the Finnish used as a payment for the trade with the Bjarmians. Perhaps the Norwegians were buying or robbing “eastern” ornaments to give them further to the Saami. This does not exclude the possibility that the Saami could have had their own contacts to obtain “eastern artefacts”, it just means that perhaps the Norwegians also supplied the Saami with eastern ornaments and thus the amount of eastern imports that remained in the Germanic Norwegian area is smaller in regard to the expected intensity. It is agreed on that the Saami had contacts with east since the Stone Age. It is also agreed on that in Norway “eastern artefacts” are connected with the Saami and eastern penannular (horseshoe) brooches (of bronze) are seen as an ethnic marker (idiom). Also in Sweden the Saami are connected with “eastern artefacts”. It is often considered that the Saami obtained the “eastern artefacts” by trade. See Gjessing 1928, 32; Zachrisson 1987, 190, 200; Zachrisson 1988, 121; Storli 1991, 90, 92, 94–95. In all likelihood the Saami had long lasting contacts with the eastern areas but this does not exclude the possibility that also the Norwegians could have occasionally supplied the Saami with artefacts they knew were in demand. After all, the close (economical and social) contacts between the Norwegians and the Saami are undisputed.
made on basis of the few written sources that relate the circumstances of the late prehistorical and the early medieval period in the Fennoscandian and Russian north.
4 Battles, trade and geography

4.1 Historia Norvegiae

1. --versus vero septemtrionem gentes perplures paganismo, proh dolor, inservientes. Trans Norwegiam ab oriente extenduntur scilicet Kyriali et Kweni, cornuti Finni, ac utrique Biarmiones; sed quæ gentes post ipsos habitent, nihil certum habemus; quidam tamen nautæ, quam de glaciali insula ad Norwegiam remeare studuissent, et, a contrariis ventorum turbinibus in brumalem plagam propulsi, inter Viridenses et Biarmones tandem applicuerunt, ubi homines miræ magnitudinis et virginum terram, quæ gustu aquæ concipere dicuntur, se reperisse protestati sunt. (Antiquités Russes 1852:116)

Thanks to be God, the population of these countries are now Christian, but northward and spreading from the east across Norway are many peoples devoted to paganism: Kirjaliens, Kvenir; Horn-Lapps [Horn-Saami] and the people of the two Bjarmalands [more literally: two kinds of Bjarmians]. Of what peoples live beyond these we have no certain knowledge. However, when certain shipmen were trying to return to Norway from Iceland, they were driven by contrary tempests into the wintry region and at last made land between the Greenlanders and the Bjarmians where, so they claimed, they found men of prodigious size and a country of maidens (these are said to conceive children by a drink of water). (A History of Norway 2001:2–3)

2. Quarta (patria) Halogia --cuius incolæ multum Finnis cohabitant, et inter se commercia frequentant; quæ patria in aquilonem terminat Norwegiam juxta locum Wegestaf, qui Biarmoniam ab ea dirimit. Ibi ille profundissimus septentrionalis sinus, qui Charybdim, Scyllam, et inevitabiles voragines in se continet-- (Antiquités Russes 1852:116–117)

The fourth is Hálogaland, whose inhabitants often live together with the Lapps [Saami] and have frequent commerce with them. This province bounds Norway to the north, where the place called Vegistafr marks the divide between it and Bjarmaland. The deepest stretch of northern sea is found there, with a

362 MUNCH (1850) and RAFN (1852) give the form "utique", but the correct form here is "utrique" that can be found for the first time in STORM (1880). More of this in the text below.
História Norvegiae (appears in the only surviving manuscript entitled Ystoria Norwegie and in literature with various spellings) is written in learned Latin and can be characterised as a geographical description of Norway and a chronicle of the Norwegian kings until 1015. It is preserved in one anonymous manuscript (generally known as the Dalhousie manuscript kept at Brechin Castle, Scotland [fols 1r-12r of the 35 leaves contain Historia Norvegiae], but occasionally referred to as the Panmure Codex), which is often dated to about 1450 (between 1443 and 1460), but which according to most recent estimates dates to around 1500–10. There are different opinions as to when the original was written, although it is agreed that it is considerably older than the preserved paper manuscript. During the past few decades a sort of consensus has been reached that the original probably dates to the second half of the 12th century. This dating makes the manuscript older than the previously assumed middle of the 13th century. A commonly used dating seems to be c. 1170, although there are scholars who prefer a slightly later dating, e.g. 1190 and 1211. It may be also worth noticing that there are a few suggestions of a slightly earlier dating as well, from c. 1146 to 1152–63. In any case, Historia Norvegiae is older than any of the great Kings’ Sagas and represents a historical tradition that is independent of the Icelandic sagas. The conclusion seems to be that Historia Norvegiae belongs to the middle, or to the second half of the 12th century, but at the latest to the early 13th century. The manuscript is anonymous and its country of origin is unclear, but it is often assumed it was written in Norway. It is generally considered relatively reliable historically, although not without the characteristic inaccuracies and inventions of medieval historiography.363

The text of the first excerpt is a part of a geographical description that presents Norway and its neighbours. The geographical information is correct and many of the names like “Denmark” or “Jämtland” are still easy to identify today, although the names that are presented in a form that is not in use today may cause debate.364 The Bjarmians are mentioned among those northern peoples that are still pagan.

These are all situated east of Norway and include besides the two kinds of Bjarmians, also the Karelians, the Kvens and the ("horned") Saami.

Of this list of pagan peoples the Karelians and the Saami are easy to identify even today and the Kvens are known from other medieval written sources, as are the Bjarmians. The author does not know people who live in the more easterly areas than these, so the author here describes the extreme corner of the known world. With this statement he seems to give himself the permission to repeat stories that are not necessarily correct. What follows does not need to be as factual as what was told above. This comes in view in the text when the author mentions the country of maidens. This account has a mythical feel to it in comparison to the rest of the geographical account, which has a clear sense of reality about it. The account sounds like the fanciful tales that are found in classical authors’ works when they describe the parts of the world one has no first-hand information about. The author tries to add authenticity to the tale by referring to some shipmen as a source of the tale, although this information is hearsay judging by the choice of words. Another legendary addition is the reference to men of prodigious size. It is a common feature in people’s minds to consider mythical or little known people as tall. This is testified by the numerous accounts of giants. Folklore and literature alike in many parts of the world have references to them. Both people living far away or long ago turn to giants in people’s imagination. It is worth noticing that the same peoples (giants and virgins) are mentioned in ADAM OF BREMEN’s work. This text is

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365 Since the Saami are not the primary subject of this thesis, I will refrain from analysing this epithet more closely. There are others who have discussed it. See for closer reference e.g. Storm 1880, 74; Salvesen 1990, 39 footnote 4; Phelpstead 2001b, 77–78.

366 I find that “cornuti Finni” are more correctly translated as “Horn-Saami”, not as “Horn-Finns” of SALVESEN’s Norwegian translation, nor “Horn-Lapps” of KUNIN’s English translation. This is based on two arguments. Firstly, the Old Norse texts consistently use the word “Finnar” as a denomination of the Saami and up to the present day it has been a common practise in Norway to call the Saami as “finner” and the people of the present-day Finland as “kvæner”. Word Finland in its current meaning was only taken in use relatively late and then more in the eastern part of Scandinavia. Word “Lapp” as a denomination for the Saami also originated in eastern Scandinavia but due to disparaging connotations it should not be regarded as the preferable translation of “Finni”. Secondly, the other excerpt repeats the word Finnar (without the epithet horned) and in this case the only correct translation is the Saami since the Finnish people cannot have lived in Hálogaland. In order to be consistent the same translation should be applied to the whole text. SALVESEN seems to think that the “cornuti Finni” corresponds to "Finnland" in the list of peoples presented in Egil’s saga. I do not find the list in Egil’s saga comparable to the list in Historia Norvegiae despite some similarities, because all the names are not included in both texts. See Salvesen 1990, 39 footnote 4. It seems like SALVESEN’s identification goes back to STORM. See Storm 1880, 74. About the usage of the words “finner” and “kvæner”, “Lapps” and “Finns” see e.g. Johnsen 1923, 8; Vuorela 1960, 23–24; Reyment 1980, 133; Itkonen 1981, 276; Gallén 1984, 253; Carpelan 1993b, 223; Skjöld 1993, 379; Hansen–Olsen 2004, 47.

about a century older than *Historia Norvegiae* and has been used (among several other works) as a source by the writer of *Historia Norvegiae*.368

It seems to have been a common conception among the medieval Scandinavian authors to think that Bjarmaland and Greenland had geographical vicinity or that they were in some way adjacent. Geographical accounts like *Landafræði*369 (see below) are an example of this. The text at hand talks about seamen travelling from Iceland to Norway who ended up somewhere “between the Greenlanders and the Bjarmians” instead of Norway because wind blew them off course. It appears that the Scandinavians had a somewhat vague picture about the geography of the northernmost sea. Svalbard was found in 1194. Otherwise the Scandinavians saw the sea in the north as a large fjord (so-called Nordviken Fjord or *septentrionalis sinus*, sometimes identified as the half-mythical *Hafslotn* of the sagas) and because of this assumed that the land extended from Greenland until Bjarmaland.370

The by far most intriguing information is the reference to two kinds of Bjarmians.371 This seems to be the only372 solid indication that Bjarmaland consisted of more than one area or that the Bjarmians were not ethnically uniform. Before addressing this question in more detail, it is worth mentioning that there are different transliterations of this extremely important detail. The first publication of *Historia Norvegiae* after the retrieval of the manuscript in Scotland in 1849 was by its retriever P.A. MUNCH who published it already in 1850.373 MUNCH writes “ac utique Biarmones”374 and also RAFN375 has “utique”. STORM on the other hand has the correct form “utrique” for the first time and even writes in a footnote that MUNCH had used an erroneous form.376 The difference of one letter is crucial here because “ac utique Biarmones” simply means “and also/especially/in any case the Bjarmians” whereas “ac utrique Biarmone s” has the meaning of “two kinds of Bjarmians” or even “both (kinds of) Bjarmians”.

368 Storm 1880, 75; Koht 1950, 8; Holtsmark 1981a, 586; Salvesen 1990, 39 footnote 5; Santini 1993, 285.
369 See e.g. Antiquités Russes 1852, 404, 405, 445.
370 Munch 1850, 31–32; Koht 1950, 12; Salvesen 1990, 40 footnote 10.
371 I find that the English translation is imprecise since the original mentions the ethnonym rather than the actual “land” and I prefer the translation “two kinds of Bjarmians” to “people of the two Bjarmalands”.
372 It is a common conception that also SAXO refers to two Bjarmalands, but I do not agree with this. I will discuss this in more detail below when analysing SAXO’s text.
373 Holtsmark 1981a, 585; Salvesen 1990, 9.
374 See Symbolæ ad historiam antiquiorem rerum Norvegicarum 1850, 2.
375 Antiquités Russes 1852, 116.
376 Monumenta Historica Norvegiae 1880, 75.
It has been real detective work to establish the correct word. The task was complicated because the crucial word is shortened in the manuscript. For deciphering the correct form I have received invaluable assistance from PhD Timo SIRONEN. After scrutinising the manuscript he has concluded that the correct form is indeed “utrique” and consequently “two kinds of Bjarmians”. He has given three major arguments for this conclusion. Firstly and most importantly, there is a palaeographical parallel “paTRIas complectens” in the manuscript in chapter De tripartito incolatu Norvegiae, line 2 iii. Secondly, there is a lexical parallel “qui UTRIQUE regibus” in the text and a corresponding palaeographical parallel in the manuscript. Thirdly, another lexical parallel “utraque Lapponia” is found in SAXO’s work, as also STORM notices.

After establishing that the text actually does refer to “two kinds of Bjarmians” a question arises what this actually means. We should consider that the text does not establish whether the difference between the two kinds of Bjarmians was a geographic or an ethnic one. Researchers have not discussed extensively the possibility of ethnically heterogeneous Bjarmians although the possibility cannot be dismissed in light of the wording. The geographical aspect, on the other hand, has been dealt with.

The most common theory has it that the two parts of Bjarmaland were located around the Northern Dvina River on the one hand and on the Kola Peninsula and the Kantalahti Bay on the other hand. This idea is rather widespread among the scholars. JACKSON has an alternative theory and finds that the Kantalahti Bay of the White Sea divided Bjarmaland into a northern and southern part. She refers to the practise of parallel subdivision of lands in Scandinavian texts and takes up an example from the Gulf of Bothnia. Olaus MAGNUS wrote about Bothnia occidentalis and Bothnia orientalis and about Lappia occidentalis and Lappia orientalis that were located on the opposite shores of the Gulf of Bothnia.

These theories as such certainly seem possible enough, although there is not enough evidence to support any one of them with reasonable certainty and the field

377 E-mail letter to the author from Timo Sironen 23.12.2001.
378 See Historia Norvegiæ, 3.
379 See Monumenta Historica Norvegiæ 1880, 209, fol. 4a line 7.
380 See Storm 1880, 75.
381 Some authors, though, seem to think that the Bjarmians were a somewhat anonymous conglomeration of the different (Finno-Ugrian) peoples of the Fennoscandian-Russian north. See e.g. Carpelan 1993a, 232–233.
remains open for alternative theories. Actually, if anything, the concise wording of
the excerpt would seem to refer to ethni cal diversity rather than regional. The
wording of the source at hand at least clearly suggests that the Bjarmians consisted
of two distinguishable groups of people. However, nothing more can be said of this
on the basis of this excerpt only and we must leave the issue undecided for now.

The second passage of Historia Norvegiae is about the inhabitants in different
parts of Norway and to some extent it also defines the borders of Norway. The
text is written in realistic style and the information given in it is geographically
correct. I judge the correctness by the general knowledge of Norwegian geography.
Since the details concerning Norway are correct, it seems natural to assume that
the author knew his facts also in connection with the border between Norway and
Bjarmaland. However, this is a detail we have no way of judging in the light of
current circumstances, because Bjarmaland is not known by this name today.

To interpret the text, Hålogaland was the northernmost part of Norway and
Wegestaf was the point that marked the border towards Bjarmaland. The author
mentions the North Fjord and this leads to the conclusion that we are dealing with
the coast of the present-day Finmark or the (Arctic Ocean) coast of the Kola
Peninsula. It appears that the areas of Norway and Bjarmaland met in the north. In
this connection the location of Wegestaf is of utmost importance. This matter has
been widely discussed and there is a certain consensus about the location, although
much of the reasoning is speculation.

There are other sources as well that mention Wegestaf as the northern border
of Norway. Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar af Oddr Snorrason Munk says (Stockholm
18, 4to, known as manuscript S): “Sa konungr ræð fyrstr Norege er NóR het. i svðr
fra Norege er Danmark ok asutr Sviþioð en i vestr Englanz haf. ok norðr Finmork
ok er lengz lanzins yr svðri oc i norðr. fra Gauttelfe svnnan ok norðr til Vegistafs
en breiddin or austri ok ivestr fra Eiða skoge til Englanz siofar.”

385 Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar 1932, 83–84. An alternative version (AM 310, 4to, known as manuscript
A) goes as follows: “Sa var konungr forðum er Nori het er first bygþi Noreg. en suþr fra Noregi er
danmork. en Suiþioð austr fra. En uestr frae r England En norðr fra Noregi er Finmork. Noregr er
vaxinn með iij oddum. er lengð lanzins or utsuðre i norðr ætt fra Gautelfi oc norðr til Ueggestafs. En
breiddin oc uiddin or austri oc iuestr fra Eiðascogi oc til Englandz sioar.” Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar
1932, 83–84. See also Jackson–Podossinov 1997, 290. The text has also been edited by RAFN. See
Antiquités Russes 1852, 116. Another version of the text is also found in Saga Olafs konungs
Tryggevasonar 1853, 21. English translation of the text (A version) goes as follows: “Formerly there was
a king named Nóri who first inhabited Norway. South of Norway is Denmark, and Sweden is to the
east. To the west is England. North of Norway lies Finnmork. Norway is shaped with three
promontories. The length of the land from the southwest northward is from Gautelfr [Götaälv] north to
Another passage (in the so-called Legendary Saga of St. Olaf) goes as follows: “--Óláfr konúngur--hafði nú einn allan Noreg undir sic lagðan næst æftir Haralld hinn hárfragr frá Ægestaf norðan oc allt til Ælvar austr--.”

An Icelandic geographical treatise of the late 12th century (Landafræði AM 194, 8) defines the Norwegian borders as follows: “Noregr er kalladr nordan frá Végistaf, þar er Finnmork, þat er hia Gandvik, ok sudr til Gaut-elfar. Pesa rikis ero endimork; Gandvik fyrir norðan, en Gaut-elfr fyrir sunnan, Eida-skogr fyrir austan, en Aunguls-eyiar-sund fyrir vestan.”

In some cases Gandvik is mentioned instead of Veggestaf, but otherwise the borders are the same. The following can be read in Flateyjarbók (the so-called Separate Saga of St. Olaf): ”Hann [Óláf Haraldsson] var einvaldskonúngur yfir Noregi, svá vitt sem Haraldr hinn hárfragri átt, frændi hans, rð fyrir norðan Gandvik, en fyrir sunnan Gautelfr, en Eiðaskógr fyrir austan, Aungulseyjasund fyrir vestan, þessu ríki stýrdi engi einn milli Haralds hárfragra ok Ólafs ens helga.”

Also Fagrskinna reads: “Óláft konungr enn digri lagði þá undir sik allan Nóreg austan frá Elfi ok norðr til Gandvikr.” Gest Danorum mentions Gandvik as the northern border of Norway as well: “Quem maris terminum gentis nostræ veteres Gandwicum dixere. Igitur inter Gandwicum et meridianum pelagus breve continentis spatium patet--.”

These texts clearly indicate that Veggestaf (in its different forms of spelling) and Gandvik are inseparable, so we should look for Veggestaf on the shores of Gandvik. Gandvik is mostly identified with the White Sea. The quoted texts leave no doubt that Gandvik/White Sea and Veggestaf once were the northernmost extremity of Norway. It seems also that Veggestaf is located at the White Sea.

MUNCH finds that Veggestaf is either at Umba or Varzuga. He suggests the River Varzuga on the basis of the distances between certain locations in Norway and Veggestaf given in a passage of Codex no 3260 (see below). Umba is suggested

Veggistafr. The breadth and width from east to west is from the Eiðaskógr to the English Sea.” The Saga of Olaf Tryggvason 2003, 71.

386 Antiquités Russes 1850, 473. See also Jackson–Podossinov 1997, 290.
387 Alfræði Íslenzk 1908. See also Antiquités Russes 1852, 404–405; Jackson–Podossinov 1997, 290.
388 Antiquités Russes 1852, 496. See also Jackson–Podossinov 1997, 291.
391 See e.g. Rafn 1852, 116; Nansen 1911, 391; Haavio 1965, 17; Richter 1967, 80, 119; Djupeđal 1969, 7; Jackson 1992a, 25. The Arctic Ocean (the coastal area of Finnmark) is also sometimes identified with Gandvik. See Jackson–Podossinov 1997, 282. However, I find this identification quite unlikely if we consider all the written sources.
because a 14th century text (see below) defines the border (of taxation) between Norway and Russia to be at Veleaa/Veleaga. MUNCH identifies Umba with Veleaa/Veleaga because the eastern fork of Umba bears the name Vjala. According to MUNCH, the form Veleaa contains the Norse “aa” for river, the form Veleaga possibly the Finnish “joki” for river (i.e. Finnish Väijoki, Russian Vjala/Vaeia). MUNCH considers that the border of taxation at Veleaa/Veleaga is the same border that in other sources is said to be in Veggestaf (thus disregarding that one source speaks about the border between Norway and Russia and another between Norway and Bjarmaland). This identification has not met approval.

STORM writes that Veggestaf must be sought around the mouth of the White Sea and can be identified as the current Sviatoi Nos’ that still is the ending point of the Murman (i.e. Norwegian) coast that used to belong to Norway. According to STORM, both forms Ægestavr and Vegestafr mean “the border pole at sea”. This translation he gets from BUGGE. The name is thought to derive from the pole-like form of the long peninsula.

JOHNSEN concludes on the basis of the different texts that talk about the borders of medieval Norway that the border in the north was at Veggestaf and Gandvik/White Sea. He finds that this border was an established one in the 11th century, maybe already during the reign of King Olaf. The border should be looked for on the south or east coast of the Kola Peninsula. JOHNSEN agrees with STORM and finds Sviatoi Nos’ a suitable place. Still during the early 18th century this place was referred to as an old border between Norway and Russia. There are a few problems connected with this identification and JOHNSEN duly takes them up. Sources seem to point to two different spots as the old border since the same Isaac OLSEN who first had referred to Sviatoi Nos’ as the old border between Norway and Russia in another connection wrote that Ponoj (a river just south of Mys Orlovskij) belonged to the old Norwegian area of taxation. JOHNSEN points out that the border may have moved over time. Also, a border between two lands may not have needed to be a border for taxation and this is why Veggestaf (at Sviatoi Nos’) may well have been the official border between the countries while taxation could still reach beyond it.

These conclusions get support in the following text (AM 114 a 4°, dated to around 1330) that defines the Norwegian and Russian areas of taxation. “Þessor enda merke ero millim Noregs kononghs rikis ok Ruza kononghs efter þui sem

392 Munch 1850, 31; Munch 1874a, 636, 644, 648–649.
393 Storm 1880, 78.
394 Johnsen 1923, 16–19.
gamler menn hafua sagt ok en sæghia j dagh gamler bumenn oc finnar. Eigha Ruzar at taka skat medh sio till Lynghesþufuu, en aa fialle till Mæleear oc liggr hon beinsta upp af Lyngesþufuu oc austr mote kili. En kononghr af Noreghe tækar skatta austr till Trianaemna ok in efter Ganduik till Veleaga, huar sem Halfkarelar æda Hafinnær ero, þeir sem finzska modor hafua aat. Tækzst ok ei meira j þeim ædsta ændamærkumm en .v. graskin af huorium bogha ok þa eftir fyrnd er þeir vilia eftir fyrnd gera.“395

In order to define the location of Veggestaf, JOHNSEN reads the early 18th century writings and a map by Isaac OLSEN. He writes about two border stones. One was at Swættanæs/Oster-Kind (in the map the names are in form Sveltanaes/Oster Kild, Passe Niarg on Saami) and looked like a horse and was thus called Konni Kamin by Russians and Hæpys Giergie by Saami, i.e. horse stone. The other landmark was a big white stone called Bielloi Kamin by Russians and Vilgis Giergie by Saami, i.e. white stone. On OLSEN’s map the horse stone lies on an island in Lumbovsk Bay and the white stone on the continent opposite the first stone. Øster-Kind is the short peninsula between Sviatoi Nos’ Bay and Lumbovsk Bay and Sviatoi Nos’ is actually a part of Øster-Kind.396

ROSS relies on the information by STORM and JOHNSEN and “safely” identifies Wegestaf with Sviatoi Nos,’397 Also HAAVIO identifies Wegestaf with Veggestaf and Sviatoi Nos’ and sees it as the border between Hálogaland and Bjarmaland.398 BLOM finds that Veggestaf is possibly identical with Sviatoi Nos’.399 As we can see, there prevails a consensus that Wegestaf is the same as the Russian Sviatoi Nos’ that means “the Holy Cape”. Since we have written information from the 18th century about the old borders between Russia and Norway, I must conclude that Sviatoi Nos’ remains a liable suggestion for localising Veggestaf.

A passage of Codex no 3260 (from the late 14th century400) says ”--swa manga tylfter sio æro af Kalfsunde ok til Wargøhws. Primo .ij. tylfter sio til Lidhanznes. Item .ij. tylfter til Bærwen. Item .iii. tylfter til Krakowaadha som ær Þrondeims minne. Item .iii. til Wagha. Item .iiiij. tylfter til Anznes. Item .iiij. tylfter til Vargøhws. Summa .x. viku sio ok .ii. hundradha viku sio. Item af Vargøhws ok til

396 Johnsen 1923, 17 footnote 62.
397 Ross 1940, 41 footnote 21.
398 Haavio 1965, 19.
399 Blom 1981, 282.
400 Johnsen 1923, 18.
Æghestaf som Noreghe lyktas .vj. tylftir."\(^{401}\) One could try to establish the location of Wegestaf more precicely by following the distances given in the text, but it seems like nobody has established the exact length of the given unit. There are, however, some suggestions.

MUNCH finds that the unit of distance in this text does not have a specific, constant value, but is based on experience of how long one could approximately sail in a given span of time on a certain stretch. On the basis of the known locations he comes to the conclusion that the distances are approximately correctly related to one another, although the absolute length is not always the same. According to MUNCH’s calculation the given distance from Vardøhus to Veggestaf takes one somewhere at the Kantalahti Bay, around the River Varzuga.\(^{402}\) RAFN, too, finds that the given distance from Vardøhus to Veggestaf takes one to the White Sea, perhaps a bit further west than Varzuga, but not as far as Veleaga.\(^{403}\)

Also JOHNSEN finds that the “relative distances” are correct. According to him, one must look for Veggestaf at the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula, at Varzuga or even Umba. This does not fit with the identification of Veggestaf with Sviatoi Nos’ and JOHNSEN explains this with a suggestion that because the Norwegians taxed people living on the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula they tried to make the “old border” at Veggestaf to fit the new reality. In other words, the knowledge of the actual location of Veggestaf was lost by the late 14th century, but the name was still known (from various texts?) and the Norwegians tried to use this knowledge in “legalising” the “new border” that was actually the border of tax areas.\(^{404}\)

JOHNSEN’s explanation is logical and it is quite possible that the border has been in a different place at different times. Also, a border can be defined in many ways and for example a border of taxation may have included a common area. It is, however, worth noticing that the suggestions put forward by MUNCH, RAFN and JOHNSEN about the location of Veggestaf at the Varzuga River are by no means based on anything but rough estimates. Also, they operate with a relative unit of length and the correctness of this conclusion is debatable. Unfortunately, the attempts to localise Veggestaf accurately remain non-conclusive.

To discuss the issue further, Sviatoi Nos’ is thought to be the same as the Old Norwegian Veggestaf. Ohthere’s account indicates that the Bjarmians and the “Ter-

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\(^{401}\) Antiquités Russes 1852, 494.
\(^{402}\) Munch 1874a, 635–636.
\(^{403}\) Rafn 1852, 484–485.
\(^{404}\) Johnsen 1923, 18.
“Ter-Saami” were neighbours. In modern maps *Litus tericum* refers to the southern part of the Kola Peninsula and in Kola-Lappish the most eastern part of the Kola Peninsula is called *Tarje*. The general consensus is that *Terskoi bereg* extended to *Sviatoi Nos’* in the north. If the border (i.e. *Veggestaf*) between Norway and Bjarmaland would have been in *Sviatoi Nos’*, then it seems like the area of the “Ter-Saami” was considered by the Norwegians to be a part of Bjarmaland (and later Russia) and not Norway, although the Norwegian area of taxation may have included a common zone with Russia since the sources indicate that the border of taxation between Norway and Russia was at *Veleaga*, which most likely is the River Umba on the southern shore of the Kola Peninsula. Bjarmaland and Russia may be seen as synonymous in the sense that at some point Bjarmaland became a satellite of Russia. So, if the Norwegians ceased to consider Bjarmaland as an independent area after it had became a satellite of Russia, then the neighbour of Norway would be Russia instead of Bjarmaland. It seems like Norwegian interests extended beyond Sviatoi Nos’, all the way to the southern shore of the Kola Peninsula. However, the same source that indicates Umba as the border of taxation for Norway, also indicates that the Russian interests extended to Finnmark. This leads into the conclusion, that the borders in the north were not stable and areas of interest between Norway and Russia/Bjarmaland intertwined leaving a common area of interest on the Kola Peninsula and in eastern Finnmark. The areas of interest may have been defined more on the basis of ethnic background than on geographical criteria. According to the source that has been quoted above, the king of Norway could take taxes in the east until *Trianæma* (*Ter?) and from there along *Gandvik* (the White Sea or the Kantalahti Bay) until *Veleaga* (*Umba?) where there were half-Karelians or half-Saami who had a Saami mother. In other words, the Saami or half-Saami were taxed by Norway. The conclusion is that the most northernly possible location for *Veggestaf* may be somewhere around *Sviatoi Nos’*, i.e. close to where Gandvik/White Sea and Ter-coast began. On the other hand, there are indications that Norwegian influence in form of taxation of Saami and Half-Saami may have extended as far as Veleaga/Umba on the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula. *Veggestaf* is not mentioned in connection with the area of

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405 Rafn 1852, 462; Vasmer 1965, 169; Ross 1940, 25, 26 footnote 10; Haavio 1965, 15–16; Whitelock 1970a, 229.

406 See Antiquités Russes 1852, 404.

407 There may have existed a double set of borders, the actual border between lands and markers for a common area of taxation. See Hansen 2003, 26.

408 See Munch 1874a, 644–646.
taxation and it may be that Veggestaf has nothing to do with this “border”. This leads to the conclusion that Veggestaf must be sought on the more northerly coast of the Kola Peninsula, possibly somewhere close to Sviatoi Nos’. Although the evidence is too scarce to make a definite connection between Sviatoi Nos’ and Veggestaf it seems like there are many reasons to locate Veggestaf around this area.

To move on to one last detail of Historia Norvegiae, Charybdis and Scylla are a part of classical mythology. Over time the original myth faded and Charybdis was used as a denomination of dangerous waters in general. The existence of a maelstrom in the northern sea is a known feature from other medieval Scandinavian texts. Two sagas written in realistic style mention the maelstrom off the coast of Finnmark. Öláfs saga helga mentions a strong current in the sea and a passage in Flateyjarbók relating Andres and Ivar’s journey to Bjarmaland talks about a maelstrom at Straumneskinnum. In her translation SALVESEN identifies “septentrionalis sinus” with North Fjord (Nordviken) that was a part of the Arctic Ocean and which the medieval Scandinavians thought extended from Finnmark to Greenland. This fits since the coast of Finnmark would seem to be the logical place to look for this strong stream.

Beginning with MUNCH, scholars have tried to identify the maelstrom. MUNCH identifies it with Moskøstrommen in Vestfjord in the Lofoten Islands, but this cannot be correct, as already STORM comments. He has another suggestion, the maelstrom around Straumneskinnum in Finnmark that is also mentioned in the sagas in connection with the travels to Bjarmaland. I must agree with this assessment. This localisation is, however, not very important in regard to the location of Bjarmaland. It is simply interesting to notice how the different sources coincide in their notion of a maelstrom on the way to Bjarmaland along the coast of Finnmark. It gives a certain feel of truthfulness to the accounts of Bjarmaland when this kind of detail is mentioned in several separate sources. In any case, the waters off the coast of Finnmark and on the way to the White Sea are generally considered as rather difficult to sail and the existence of a maelstrom can also be linked to this observation.

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409 Salvesen 1990, 40 footnote 10.
411 Munch 1850, 31–32; Koht 1950, 12; Salvesen 1990, 40 footnote 10.
412 Munch 1850, 32.
413 Storm 1880, 79.
414 See e.g. Binns 1961, 50, 52.
To sum up the information *Historia Norvegiae* gives us, the Bjarmians were a pagan people that lived east of Norway. There were two kinds of Bjarmians. The division may have been ethничal, although mostly the existing suggestions are geographical. Norway and Bjarmaland shared a border at *Wegestaf*. This was located on *Gandvik* (the White Sea), somewhere on the eastern or southern shores of the Kola Peninsula. Sviatoi Nos’ on the east coast is currently the most widely accepted locality, although a written document would seem to indicate that *Wegestaf* was instead located on the south coast of the Kola Peninsula, perhaps around the River Umba or the River Varzuga. Both may have been at one time on the border of Norway and Bjarmaland, but the border may have changed over time. In truth, *Wegestaf* could be nearly anywhere on the coast of the Kola Peninsula, between Sviatoi Nos’ and Umba and in lack of one strong deciding argument we can only speculate. However, it may be somewhat more likely that *Wegestaf* is located somewhere close to Sviatoi Nos’ than around Umba, but this conclusion is anything but certain. The discussion remains open.

4.2 Saxonis Gesta Danorum


*Book One (8.16): Meanwhile Uffi, who had an amazingly beautiful daughter, issued a proclamation that he would bestow her on whoever took Hading’s life.*
This bargain greatly excited one Thuning, who rallied together with a band of Bjarmians and applied himself to achieve this felicity. While coasting Norway with his fleet in an effort to intercept him, Hading noticed an old man on the shore waving his mantle to and fro to indicate that he wished him to put in to land. --After he [the old man] had distributed his companies into this wedge formation, he took up his stance behind the warrior’s backs and, drawing out from a small bag hung round his neck a cross-bow, which appeared thin at one end but then projected in an extensive arc, he fitted ten shafts to its cord and, briskly shooting them all at once, gave the enemy many wounds. The Bjarmians then changed their weapons for magic arts and with spells dissolved the sky into rain, destroying the pleasant aspect of the air with miserable showers. The old man on his side met and dispelled the mass of storm that had arisen with a cloud of his own, and by this obstruction curbed its drenching downpour. At his departure following Hading’s victory the old man predicted that he would not be destroyed through foemen’s violence but by a self-chosen kind of death, and at the same time told him he must go in for glorious campaigns, not petty fighting, and seek action in remote parts rather than on his borders. (The History of the Danes 1979:31)

2. Liber Tertius II 8. Ea tempesta Helgo Halögæ re x Gusonis Finnorum Byarmorumque principis filiam nomine Thoram crebræ legationis officio procabatur. --Ille sedula iuvenis supplicatione devictus armata classe Norvagiam petit, quod verbis non posse t, viribus peracturus. Cumque pro Helgone per summam eloquii suavitatem egisset, refert Gu so mentem filiæ consulendam, ne quid contra nolentem paterna videretur severitate presumptum. Accersitamque, an proco allubesceret, percontatus annuentis Helgoni nuptias pollicetur. (Saxonis Gesta Danorum 1931:65)

Book Three (2.8.): Gusi, prince of the Finns [the Saami] and Bjarmians, had a daughter, Thora, who was being wooed at this time by Helgi, king of Halogaland, through a series of emissaries. --The other [Høther] was overcome by the young man’s persistent solicitation and sailed to Norway with a naval force, determined to achieve by power what he failed to affect with words. After he had delivered a most persuasive piece of oratory on Helgi’s behalf, Gusi answered that he must consult his daughter’s inclination, as he

415 The “Finns” of the English translation refer to the Saami throughout the translation. I quote the translation as it is, but the reader should keep this correction in mind.
didn’t want to be seen as the heavy-handed father encroaching on her wishes. He summoned her and enquires whether she found pleasure in her suitor; when she said yes, he promised to marry her to Helgi. (The History of the Danes 1979:71)


XIII 2. --Videntes enim suas inclinari acies, potestati se permisere victoris. Quibus Arngrimus hanc tributi legem instituit, ut, recensito Finnorum numero, reda ferinis pellibus conferta ab unaquae decade loco census exacto triennio penderetur. Deinte Egtherum Biarmiæ ducem duello provocatum devicit indiditque condicionem Biarmis viritim pellem pro capite persolvendi.

XIII 3. Post hæc spoliis trophæisque auctus ad Ericum revertitur. (Saxonis Gesta Danorum 1931:137–138)

Book Five (13.1): Erik [ruler of Sweden] urged him to win Frothi’s favour by doing him some distinguished service; he might wage a campaign against Egther, king of Biarmaland and Thengil, king of Finnmark, because they alone, while the rest were subservient, appeared scornful of Danish power. Arngrim lost no time in taking an army there. Now the Finns [Saami] are the northernmost of all peoples; indeed they occupy and cultivate a tract of the world which is scarcely habitable.

(13.2.) --When they [the Saami] saw their battle-line giving, they surrendered to the power of their conqueror. Arngrim laid down this condition for tribute: the Finns [Saami] should be counted and each three years, instead of tax, they must deliver to him sledges stuffed with animal pelts, one load for every ten of their population. He then challenged Egther, the Bjarmian leader, to a duel, defeated him and imposed to the Bjarmians the duty of paying him one skin per head. (13.3) --Afterwards, laden with spoils and trophies, he returned to Erik. (The History of the Danes 1979:153)

4. Liber Sextus V 10. Mortuo autem Bemono, Starcatherus ab athletis Biarmensibus ob virtutem accitus, cum plurima apud eos memoratu digna
edidisset facinora, Sueonum fines ingreditur. Ubi cum filiis Frø septennio
feriatus ab his tandem ad Haconem Daniae tyrannum se contulit, quod apud
Upsalam sacrificiorum tempore constitutus effeminatos corporum motus
scænicosque mimorum plausus ac mollia nolarum crepitacula fastidiret.
(Saxonis Gesta Danorum 1931:153–154)

Book Six (5.10): After Bemoni’s death Starkather, because of his valour, was
summoned by the Bjarmian champions and there performed many feats worthy
of telling. Then he entered Swedish territory where he spent seven years in a
leisurely stay with the sons of Frø, after which he departed to join Haki, the
lord of Denmark, for, living at Uppsala in the period of sacrifices, he had
become disgusted with the womanish body movements, the clatter of actors on
the stage and the soft tinkling of bells. (The History of the Danes 1979:172)

5. Liber Octavus VIII 8, 9. Ad hæc Starcatherus: “—Quattuor hinc Leri natos
pugilesque subegi Biarmenses”.

--XIV 1. Huic succedit Biorn, itemque post ipsum Haraldus rerum assequitur
summam. Cuius filio Gormoni inter priscos Danorum duces non infima laudis
locum rerum strenue gestarum titulos tribuit. --Cumque esset externa atque
inusitata visendi cupidus, experiendam praeceteris duxit Geruthi cujusdam
sedom acceptam a Tylensibus famam. Incredibilia enim ab is super opum
inibi congraturam magnitudinem iactabantur, sed iter omnino refertum pericolo
ac pæne mortalibus inueniebatur. Ambitorem namque terrarum Oceanum
navigandum, solem postponendum ac sidera, sub Chao peregrinandum ac
demum in loca lucis expertise iugibusque tenebris obnoxias transeundum
expertorum assertione constabat.

--XIV 2. Trecentis idem cum rege votum nuncupantibus, auctorem famæ
Thorkillum itineris ducem assumi placuit, utpote locorum gnarum peritunque
adeundae regionis eius. Is, officio non recusato, adversum inusitatam navigandi
maris sævitiam firmiore structurae genere nodisque crebrioribus ac
consortioribus clavibus praeparanda iubet navigia solidari, eademque magnis
repleri commeatibus ac bovinis superne tergoribus claudi, quæ intrinseca
navium spatia ab incursantium undarum asperrime tuerunt. Inde tribus
dumtaxat liburnis navigatio tenditur, unaquaque centenos capiente delectos.

XIV 3. At ubi in Halogiam ventum, secundis flatibus destituti, varia pelagi
iaactatione dubiiis navigationis casibus agebantur. --Læti omnes regionem, quæ
ab eo significabatur, avidis insequuntur luminibus, attente promissi litoris præsidium expectantes. Cuius tandem aditum nacti, in editiorem soli partem per obstantes clivos præaltis callibus enituntur.

XIV 4. Tunc Thorkillus ex armentis, quæ in maritimis frequentia discurrebant, supra quod semel leniendæ fami sufficeret, negat esse tollendum; futurum enim, si secus agerent, ut a diis loci præsidibus discedenti potentia privarentur.

--XIV 6. Quo facto, optato vento excepti in ulteriorem Byarmiam navigant. Regio est perpetui frigoris capax præaltisque offusa nivibus, ne vim quidem fervoris persentiscit aestivi, inviorum abundans nemorum, frugum haud ferax inusitatisque alibi bestiis frequens. Crebri in ea fluvii ob insitas alveis cautes stridulo spumantique volumine perferuntur. Illic Thorkillus, subductis navibus, tendi in litore iubet, eo loci perven tum astruens, unde brevis ad Geruthum transitus foret. Prohibuit etiam ullum cum supervenientibus miscere sermonem, affirmans monstra nullo magis nocendi vim quam advenarum verbis parum comiter editis sumere, ideoque socios silentio tutiores exsistere; se vero solum tuto profari posse, qui prius gentis eius mores habitumque perviderit.

XIV 7. Crepusculo appetenste, inusitæ magnitudinis vir, nominatim salutatis nauticis, intervenit. Stupentibus cunctis, Thorkillus adventum eius alacriter excipiendum admonuit, Guthmundum hunc esse docens, Geruthi fratrem, cunctorum illic applicantium piissimum inter pericula protectorem. --Procedentibus amnis aureo ponte permeab ilis cernitur. Cuius transeundi cupidos a proposito revocavit, docens eo alveo humana a monstruosis secrevisse naturam nec mortalibus ultra fas esse vestigiis. (Saxonis Gesta Danorum 1931:226, 228, 238–240)

Book Eight (8.8–9): Starkather replied: “--Next I defeated the four sons of Ler and the champions of Biarmaland”.

(14.1) --Snio was succeeded by Biorn and after him Harald came to supreme power. His son Gorm achieved a position of significant honour among the old Danish leaders for the renown of his active life. --As he was bent on viewing things strange and rare, he decided that before all else he must test a report he had heard from the Icelanders of the place where a certain Geruth dwelt. They would throw out unbelievable statements about the immense heap of riches there, but the entire road thither was said to be fraught with peril and for
mortals almost impassable. Those who were knowledgeable claimed that you had to sail across the ocean which girds the earth, putting the sun and stars behind your back, journey beneath the realm of night and pass finally into the region which suffers perennial darkness without a glimmer of daylight.

(14.2) --Three hundred volunteers proclaimed their wish to accompany the king and it was decided to make the originator of the story, Thorkil, the guide to their expedition, inasmuch as he was an expert geographer and well-informed of the route to that land. When he had accepted the duty, he ordered them to build ships strong enough to withstand the unprecedented fury of the seas they must navigate; they must be constructed with more than usual solidity, fitted with many knotted ropes and closely-driven nails, filled up with abundant provisions and covered on top with oxhides to guard the inner quarters from the spray of the encroaching waves. The voyage was undertaken with only three swift galleys, each containing a hundred select men.

(14.3) When they came to Halogaland, they lost the following breezes and were tossed to and from on the waters, encountering some tricky sailing hazards. -- Overjoyed, they all gazed with eager eyes in the direction he had pointed, longing expectantly for the relief of the promised shore. When they had eventually gained it, they struggled along mountainous paths over the intervening slopes to reach the higher ground.

(14.4) There were cattle racing about in droves along the seaboard, but Thorkil forbade the men to take any more than would serve once to stem their appetites; if they herded them away, he said, the guardian deities of the place would stop the mariners departing.

(14.6) --Immediately this was done, they were wafted forward by a favourable wind and sailed on to the further coast of Biarmaland. This is a region of everlasting cold, spread with deep snows, for it does not experience the sun’s vigour even in summer. Abounding in trackless forests, it is incapable of producing crops and is haunted by animals uncommon elsewhere. There are many rivers, whose courses are churned into the foam of roaring rapids by the reefs embedded in their channels. Here, when they had drawn up their boats on the shore, Thorkil instructed them to pitch their tents and added that they had now reached a point from which the passage to Geruth would be short. He forbade conversation with anyone who overtook them, stressing that nothing gave the giants more power to harm newcomers than words uttered
discourteously and he warned his comrades that it would be safer for them to stay silent; only he could speak without harm, since he had observed the habits and customs of this race before.

(14.7) As evening drew on, a man of extraordinary stature came up and greeted the seamen by their names. Since all the others remained dumbfounded, Thorkil advised them to give him a cheerful reception, introducing him as Guthmund, Geruth’s brother, one who conscientiously guarded from danger all who landed there. --While they were travelling along, they discerned a river spanned by a bridge of gold. When they wanted to cross it Guthmund called them back, telling them that the bed of this stream formed a natural boundary between the human and the supernatural worlds. (The History of the Danes 1979:249, 251, 262–263)


IV 25. --Nec Finnorum quam Caroli fuga parcius gratulatus est, plus se virium in nudissima plebe quam in instructissimo milite reperisse confessus; siquidem
gravissimam Romanorum armaturam quam levia pannosae gentis spicula tolerabilius ferre potuit. Ubi Biarmorum rege interfecit, Finnorum vero fugato, Regnerus saxis rerum gestarum apices pra se ferentibus iisdemque superne locatis aeternum victoriae suae monumentum affixit. (Saxonis Gesta Danorum 1931:257–258)

Book Nine (4.22): Other nations were brought to heel after prompt surrender, but, after spending nearly five years in pirating expeditions, Regner discovered that the Bjarmians, reduced not long before, were openly critical of his rule and he could put small reliance on their passivity. When the Bjarmians knew of his arrival, they addressed their magical spells to the heavens and by agitating the clouds brought about huge, raging thunderstorms. Consequently the Danes could not put to sea for some time, with the result that they ran out of food supplies. Suddenly the tempests abated, only to be replaced by a burning, baking heat, a curse no more endurable than intense cold. These two wicked extremes of climate following one upon the other broke the men’s constitutions. Many were finished off by dysentery. So the majority of the Danes, trapped by the fluctuating sky, contracted disease, and death was widespread.

(4.23) Once Regner realised that he had been hampered by severe weather that was not natural but contrived, he pursued his voyage as best he could till he reached the regions of Kurland and Samland; the peoples there deeply reverenced his majesty as if he were the greatest and most glorious of conquerors. Their favour maddened Regner all the more against the Bjarmians’ arrogance and he sought to avenge his slighted dignity in a surprise attack. Their king, whose name is unknown to us, was thrown into consternation by his foes’ sudden invasion and, having no heart for an engagement, took refuge with Matul, prince of Finnmark. Depending on the accomplished skill of Matul’s archers, he harried Regner’s army as it wintered in Biarmaland and remained unscathed himself.

(4.25) --Regner was just as overjoyed at dispelling the Finns [Saami] as he had been when Charles was routed, for he admitted that he had found these poorly-equipped people more powerful than the most highly-organised legions; he could stand the heavy armed might of the Empire better than the light darts of this ragged tribe. After the king of the Bjarmians had been killed and the Finnish [Saami] ruler put to flight, Regner had his achievements
engraved on stone surfaces, which he set up in a high place to establish an everlasting record of his victory. (The History of the Danes 1979:286–287)

The story in SAXO’s *Gesta Danorum* begins with the mythical king Dan and reaches the reign of King Knud VI around c. 1185. *Gesta Danorum* must have been written in the early 13th century, most likely between the years 1208–1219, judging by certain pieces of information mentioned in the book. Four fragments of medieval manuscripts have been preserved. The whole text is only found in Christiern PEDERSEN’s edition of 1514, which is the basis for all modern editions. That the name of the author was SAXO has been verified with help of two documents. The name of the book, *Gesta Danorum*, was probably not given by SAXO, but was still adopted as early as the 13th century.416

SAXO wrote *Gesta Danorum* as a national history and probably followed the examples of BEDA’s *Historia ecclesiastica Anglorum* and Paulus DIACONUS’s *Historia Langobardorum*. SAXO’s intention was to “glorify the fatherland”. His sources were “rich and varied”, to borrow SAXO’s own words. He himself lists his sources, which include Icelandic verses and tales in either written or oral form. Oral tradition was certainly important, but also a number of written sources have been indicated. Traces of Nordic mythology and stories of Starkad are clearly visible among the sources, but the Anglo-Saxon tradition has had an important role as well. ADAM OF BREMEN’s *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiæ pontificum* as well as a collection of chronicles, documents and legends of saints are among the source material that was used.417

The list of kings in *Gesta Danorum* is SAXO’s own construction and there are many arbitrary identifications and pieces of information throughout the book. One reason for this is that SAXO wanted to deliver a continuous story about the history of Denmark and in order to do this he needed to fill in the gaps. The restricted historical value of *Gesta Danorum* has been long known. This also applies to the parts of the book that talk about SAXO’s own time. This unreliability is partly due to the fact that SAXO used sources that we still have available and his work thus becomes a secondhand source, partly because he heavily rewrites his sources. SAXO rewrites until the original becomes almost unrecognisable and arranges events to fit his own ideas and the result does not necessarily resemble the original very closely. In other words, SAXO’s mediation of the sources is imprecise. However, HAAVIO has pointed out that SAXO did not simply create from his own

416 Ellis Davidson 1979, 1; Skovgaard-Petersen 1982, 49–50; Christiansen 1993, 566–567.
417 Ellis Davidson 1979, 1–2; Skovgaard-Petersen 1982, 49–50, 53–55; Christiansen 1993, 567.
imagination, but had almost always some kind of starting point in older material which he used to compose his work. He used his material like a poet, stylising, bending, and adjusting in order to achieve artistic goals. He also integrated events of his own time into past times. Curt WEIBULL has observed that SAXO treats history in the same spirit as the 17th century Swedish historians.418

The different books of Gesta Danorum are about different periods of time in Danish history. Books 1–4 deal with time before the birth of Christ. Book 5 relates the events around the time of the birth of Christ. Book 8 is about the spreading of Christianity up to the borders of Denmark. Books 9–12 deal with the christianisation of Denmark and the establishment of the church.419

In the first book of the Gesta, legendary kings of Denmark are portrayed, among these Hading who defeated the Bjarmians. It is impossible to identify Hading with any particular hero known from the Scandinavian sources, although the name itself is picked from Old Norse poetry. It is worth noticing that the adventures of Hading belong mostly to the supernatural world. Considering the events of his life, the most plausible conclusion is that Hading should be seen primarily as a follower of the god Odin.420 The first excerpt has a plot that puts a certain Thuning after Hading together with a band of Bjarmians. The skirmishing between Hading and the Bjarmians is placed on the coast of Norway. The Bjarmians are more of a side issue of the tale and remain as background material for Hading’s adventure. The Bjarmians are portrayed as having magical skills that they use to raise weather designed to defeat Hading. However, Hading gets supernatural help himself and manages to defeat the Bjarmians. In medieval Scandinavian literature magic is associated primarily with the Saami, but also with the Finnish. In medieval literature weather magic has been specifically connected with the Finns, but also with the Saami.421 Considering that the Bjarmians are introduced as a rather anonymous adversary of the hero, it is likely that the ability to do magic is connected with the Bjarmians only as a necessary attribute for their role in the story. All in all, this excerpt does not contain much tangible information about the Bjarmians who are reduced to being the adversary of the hero Hading.

The second excerpt (Book Three) is rather short but somewhat more informative than the previous one. Gusir is mentioned as king of the Finnar in

419 Skovgaard-Petersen 1982, 51; Christiansen 1993, 567–568.
420 Ellis Davidson 1979, 12; Christiansen 1993, 567.
Ketils Saga hængs 3 as well as in Orvar-Odds saga. Ketils Saga hængs 3 also mentions Thorgerd Holgabrúðr who FISHER thinks is the equivalent of Thora in Gesta Danorum. Hœtherus appears in a version of a legend found in the Snorra Edda and Skjoldunga saga. These observations perhaps indicate at least some of the sources SAXO had in mind when forming his story.

An interesting feature is how Gesta Danorum binds the Bjarmians and the Saami together. In other sources these peoples are neighbours, but generally kept apart, although Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar does talk about joint war effort of the Bjarmians and the Saami. SAXO’s Gusi is a prince of both the Saami and the Bjarmians, but in the other sources about Gusi Bjarmaland in not mentioned. The closely related title king is used in medieval Scandinavian sources of the leaders among both the Saami and the Bjarmians. HÄME concludes that the Saami kings in the sagas are probably imaginary characters. It seems like SAXO’s Gusi has no real connection with the Bjarmians and even as a leader of the Saami this character does not have a historical background.

It is a recurring feature in the written sources that the daughter of the Bjarmian king appears as a character in a tale of Bjarmaland. In some cases (Landnámabók, Bósa Saga and Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar) the king’s daughter ends up married with a Scandinavian. This time she is wooed by the king of Hálogaland. This emphasises the connection between Hálogaland on the one hand and both the Saami and the Bjarmians on the other hand. Oftentimes it was men from Hálogaland that sailed to Bjarmaland and since Hálogaland and Finnmark are situated next to each other, the contacts must have been extensive. The rest of the plot with Hœther as a spokesman for the bridegroom-to-be and the father asking the girl’s opinion is in my opinion of no consequence to Bjarmaland. That Gusi asks Thora’s opinion, does perhaps tell something of SAXO’s ideals in the 12th-13th century Denmark, but certainly nothing of habits or ideals in Bjarmaland. It is

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423 Fornaldar sögur Nordrinda 1830, 539–543.
424 Hâme 1987a, 49–50. Saami society is generally understood as egalitarian, also in historical times. However, lately the researchers have considered the possibility that especially during the Viking Age and the Middle Ages the Saami may have had a hierarchic society with differences in wealth and consequently leading characters, “kings”. Hansen–Olsen 2004, 125, 219, 233. The existence of Saami “kings” does not, however, change the conclusion that the Saami kings mentioned in the sources most likely cannot be taken as historical persons but rather as stereotypical representations of leading figures among Saami.
426 See e.g. Antiquités Russes 1852, 232.
427 See e.g. Hakonar saga 1964, 70–71; Sweet’s Anglo-Saxon Reader 1970, 17–18.
difficult to find any real historical background behind the marriage, although as a hypothesis a marriage between neighbouring ethnical groups is a realistic possibility. Both Gusi and Thora are Scandinavian names and bear no witness to the names in use in Bjarmaland. Also other written sources name Bjarmian characters with Norse names (Landnámabók, Órvar-Odds saga, Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar, Bósa saga and Sturlaug's saga starfsana).428

The third excerpt (Book Five) again connects the Saami and the Bjarmians. This time both groups have their own king, but appear to be close allies. Egther, the name of the Bjarmian king, is also found in Voluspá 42 in the form Eggþér as the name of the herdsman of a giantess. This is all we know of this figure, although Gesta Danorum mentions another man of this name in Book VII. The name Egther is Norse like all the other names attached to Bjarmian characters in medieval Scandinavian sources.429 It may be also worth noticing that the name Thengil (cf. OE Pengel) has the meaning of a king or leader and it seems like SAXO may have used the title as a proper name.430 As mentioned above, the Saami kings in sagas are most likely imaginative characters431 and in all probability this is true also for the Bjarmian kings in the medieval Scandinavian sources and most certainly for Gesta Danorum.

The Saami were not generally seen as warlike people, but both the Bjarmians and a number of other Finno-Ugrian peoples were more belligerent and for instance both the Kvens and the Karelians are known to have had conflicts.432 Perhaps the more warlike character of the Bjarmians was transferred to apply to the Saami as well. In any case, there is no doubt that in SAXO’s mind the Saami and the Bjarmians were closely related. It seems that sometimes these two groups of people even got mixed and borrowed each other’s characteristics. Why this should be remains speculation, but we may assume that perhaps SAXO did not know these peoples very well and because they were neighbours he confused the pieces of information he had. An indication of such confusion can perhaps be seen in SAXO’s account of the Saami where he presents them as agriculturists. Agriculture is a trait that has never really been attached to the Saami. On the contrary, sources make a point of portraying them as nomadic and non-

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431 Häme 1987a, 49–50.
agricultural.\textsuperscript{433} The Bjarmians, on the other hand, are represented as cultivating land in Ohthere’s account\textsuperscript{434} and perhaps SAXO here has confused characteristics of these two peoples whom he so closely connects. SAXO mentions that the Saami were agriculturalists but yet nomadic, used skies, were expert archers and had magical skills. Except for agriculture, all these traits are generally connected with the Saami.\textsuperscript{435} Including both agriculture and nomadism in the characteristics would seem to imply some sort of confusion since these traits are usually seen as opposites.

A character called Arngrim (Arngrímr) also appears in \textit{Saga Heiðreks konungs ens vitra}.\textsuperscript{436} In order to defeat Arngrim’s army, the Saami resort to magic but in the end they find themselves defeated. The use of magic is often connected with the Saami\textsuperscript{437} and in this way the excerpt reflects common medieval stereotypes. Arngrim’s condition for peace was that the Saami should pay regular tribute. This detail seems to have its origin in actual circumstances for the Saami are known to have paid tribute or tax to Scandinavians. It is beyond the point to analyse the amount of tribute and how the amount was calculated, but it is worth noticing that the payment was made in pelts. This appears to reflect reality because it is known that at least part of the tribute the Saami paid to the Norwegians was in pelts.\textsuperscript{438}

Although SAXO largely binds the Saami and the Bjarmians together, Arngrim’s conflict with the two groups is presented as consequent episodes. Instead of fighting with his army, Arngrim solves his conflict with the Bjarmians by challenging the Bjarmian leader to a duel. Arngrim comes out victorious and imposes a tribute of one skin per person. One gets the impression that the tribute on the Saami had a more permanent character whereas the tribute imposed on the Bjarmians was a one-time event. Whether this reflects actual conditions is hard to say. In any case, it is a known fact that the Saami regularly paid tax or tribute to their Scandinavian neighbours.\textsuperscript{439} The relations of the Bjarmians and the Scandinavians as portrayed in the sagas have more the character of sporadic trade and equally sporadic raids. The Norwegian travellers are often told to have come

\textsuperscript{433} See e.g. Sweet’s Anglo-Saxon Reader 1970, 17–18. However, some groups of Saami have practised agriculture. Vuorela 1960, 23–27. Also, both written sources and archaeological material leave open the possibility that the Saami in Nordland had domesticated animals during the Viking Age. Hansen–Olsen 2004, 207.

\textsuperscript{434} Sweet’s Anglo-Saxon Reader 1970, 17–18.

\textsuperscript{435} See e.g. Nesheim 1982, 7; Häme 1987a, 47–48, 95, 125.

\textsuperscript{436} See Haavio 1965, 135.

\textsuperscript{437} See e.g. Nesheim 1982, 7; Häme 1987a, 48, 125, 128–129, 198–199, 205.

\textsuperscript{438} See e.g. Fisher 1980, 90; Häme 1987a, 46.

\textsuperscript{439} See e.g. Häme 1987a, 46.
home from Bjarmaland with a lot of booty and this coincides with SAXO’s statement that Arngrim returned to Sweden “laden with spoils and trophies”. It is interesting to notice that according to ROSS, the Bjarmian tax seems very similar to the Saami tax referred to by Ohthere and to the finnskattr of Egil’s Saga. Perhaps SAXO transferred the tax paid by Saami to the Bjarmians.

All in all, it seems that in this excerpt SAXO somewhat confuses the characteristics of the Saami and the Bjarmians and that there are not so many facts behind the tale, although from time to time one can get a glimpse of the actual circumstances known from other medieval Scandinavian sources even if in somewhat mutated form.

In Book Six SAXO’s hero is Starkather who has a strong character and supports the old order of things and the hard life of a warrior. He is a known character in the sagas, although he is portrayed differently depending on the saga. Speculations concerning Starkather’s character include the observation that many of his exploits seem to have taken place in eastern Europe and this may suggest that perhaps he originally was a warrior who fought in the service of the Russian princes and made expeditions into northern regions like Bjarmaland. It has also been suggested that he may have been a follower of the god Odin. In any case, it seems like SAXO’s Starkather is put together from several sources.

The fourth excerpt only mentions Bjarmaland in fleeting. It introduces the above-mentioned Starkather who appears again in connection with the Bjarmians in the next, equally scarce excerpt. The piece at hand mentions that because of his valour Skarkather was summoned by the Bjarmian champions and evidently visited Bjarmaland. According to Gesta Danorum, he performed “many feats worthy of telling” there, but the text does not specify these. After spending some time in Bjarmaland, Starkather returned to Sweden (Uppsala) and seven years after this continued to Denmark. HAAVIO notes that it seems like we are here dealing with a rudimentary invitation plot. This kind of plot is often used in older literature to legitimise the penetration of a foreign people in the territory of another people. However, HAAVIO’s theory is based on rather shallow evidence. It seems too far-fetched just on the basis of few words to think that any group of people would have

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440 See e.g. Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217; Haralds saga ins hárfagra 1962, 134–135.
441 Ross 1940, 46.
442 Starkad can be placed on basis of Landnámabók (Book of Settlements) to around 750 and is associated with a court of a Swedish king. Pálsson–Edwards 1968, 13–14.
444 Haavio 1965, 110–111.
penetrated Bjarmaland in any permanent manner, especially, since SAXO is very liberal with his sources. Instead, this plot might be seen as emphasising the connection between Sweden and Bjarmaland, suggesting that it was not only the Norwegians who went to Bjarmaland. However, Starkather’s exploits are very ecclesiastical and imaginary, so too much emphasis should not be put on any conclusions suggested by this scanty excerpt.

The next excerpt (Book Eight) has more of Starkather. In one verse Starkather refers to his encounter with the Bjarmian champions whom he here claims to have defeated. This does not tell much and is in fact a rephrasing of the previous plot mentioning Bjarmians and Starkather. In the rest of the plot Starkather is not mentioned in connection with Bjarmaland. Instead, King Gorm with his men is after giants and their riches. On the way to find these, they travel past Bjarmaland.

According to Icelandic tales the way to a certain Geruth was “fraught with peril”. One had to sail across the ocean which girds the earth, beyond sun and stars and pass into a land of perennial darkness. Following the advice of Thorkil, the ships were built extra strong to withstand the fury of the seas. This information seems to further confirm the mythical nature of King Gorms destination. However, the sea in the north is known to be hazardous and one could here possibly see a hint of the known maelstrom (mentioned in Óláfs saga helga, Flateyjarbók and perhaps Historia Norvegiae) off the coast of Finnmark, although I am inclined to think that the hazards of the sea are mentioned only to add to the feeling of adventure. The road to the land of giants should by all means be dangerous.

The journey advances and the explorers sail on the coast of Hálogaland. Here they are met with bad sailing conditions and tossed until they manage to land in Bjarmaland. After having had some food they continue their journey along the coast of Bjarmaland. The wording of the original text here is “Quo facto, optato vento excepti in ulteriorem Byarmiam navigant”. The English translation goes

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445 Geirrōðr is a giant of Icelandic tradition. Fisher 1980, 142.
446 ADAM OF BREMEN writes about the darkness of the northern waters. In classical tradition there is a recurring idea about the need to pass through darkness as a part of supernatural journeys. It is found e.g. in VIRGIL’s Aeneas. SAXO seems to be influenced by VIRGIL in other details of this tale as well. Fisher 1980, 142.
447 See e.g. Binns 1961, 50, 52.
449 FISHER suggests that the route described in Gesta Danorum is similar to the route Ohthere sailed and additionally certain other details (attached to the giants’ land in Gesta Danorum) resemble details in Ohthere’s account. Because of this FISHER finds that SAXO was familiar with Ohthere’s account. Fisher 1980, 142–143. In my opinion FISHER’s reasoning is superficial. It is clear though that SAXO may well have known a number of tales connected to Bjarmaland.
“Immediately this was done, they were wafted forward by a favourable wind and sailed on to the further coast of Biarmaland”.

SAXO’s remark “in ulteriorem Byarmiam navigant” has since Olaus and Johannes MAGNUS’s books from around the middle of the 16th century been interpreted so that SAXO believed in the existence of two Bjarmalands. In other words, many scholars think that there is a reference to “Biarmia ulterior” and this requires the existence of “Biarmia citerior”, although the latter is not mentioned by SAXO. However, it is worth noticing that also the name “Biarmia ulterior” is imaginary since it is never mentioned in the original. Its existence is interpretation only. “Biarmia ulterior” and “in ulteriorem Byarmiam” are not actually synonymous.

When the above-mentioned words are correctly translated in their context the text goes as follows “sailed on to the further coast of Biarmaland”, just like the English translation does. In other words, there is or never was “Biarmia ulterior”. To get this point clarified I have requested assistance of PhD Timo SIRONEN (Senior Lecturer in Classics, University of Oulu). He finds the English translation correct and his statement leaves no doubt that SAXO’s wording has been both misinterpreted and overinterpreted.

There are elaborate interpretations of Biarmia ulterior and Biarmia citerior, but on the basis of the correct translation I suggest we should just disregard all these. They cannot make us any wiser since they are based on a misconception. Because Olaus MAGNUS’s interpretation of SAXO is based on misunderstanding, Historia Norvegiae remains the only source that refers to some sort of division of the Bjarmians.

SAXO further describes Bjarmaland as a region of everlasting cold, covered in deep snow and trackless forests, filled with strange animals and many wild rivers. When the travellers camp they are said to be close to the giant Geruth. The mythical feel of the story is accentuated by the further description of the journey revealing that the river they meet is the “natural boundary between the human and supernatural worlds”. This heightens the feeling that also the description of Bjarmaland is not realistic, but somewhere between human and supernatural.

SAXO points out in his description of Bjarmaland that one could not grow crops there and consequently seems to exclude the possibility of agriculture. This

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450 See Magno 1617, 10, 91, 192; Magnus 1972, 9–10. See also Ross 1940, 41 footnote 22.
451 See e.g. Storm 1880, 75; Ross 1940, 43; Haavio 1965, 19–20; Salvesen 1990, 39 footnote 4.
452 E-mail letter to the author from Timo Sironen 31.10.2001.
trait is contradictory to information in Ohthere’s account. Since Bjarmaland is portrayed as rather supernatural, I do not put much weight in SAXO’s opinion. He obviously tries to portray Bjarmaland as bleak and sinister as possible and the barrenness of the land is just one characteristic that contributes to this objective. In general, SAXO’s account of the area north and east of Scandinavia is full of fantastic tales of the legendary past. In any case, after the giant Geruth begins to guide the travellers, they no longer are in Bjarmaland, but have moved to the supernatural land of the giants.

The sixth and last excerpt (Book Nine) about Bjarmaland follows the story of the Danish King Regner who defeated the Bjarmians and because they were critical to his rule he went against them for a second time. Regner had a hard time winning because the Bjarmians used magical skills to put off the attackers. Only a surprise attack made the Bjarmians retreat. Their king took refuge with Matul, the prince of Finnmark. Regner’s army wintered in Bjarmaland before their final victory. The poorly-equipped Saami were dispelled and the anonymous king of the Bjarmians killed.

Regnerus is identified as Ragnar loðbrók (hairy-breeches), a character known from the sagas. He probably lived in the 9th century and may have belonged to the royal Danish house. The saga plots about him have a highly exaggerated nature and modern history regards Ragnar as a legendary hero. In SAXO’s version he is merely a character who performs a certain role and the story combines elements from several sources that do not necessarily have anything to do with Bjarmaland. For instance, the campaign of Regnerus against the Bjarmians is seemingly a relocated plot associated with Ragnar, namely, an attack on Paris in 845 after which the Viking troops became ill.

Once more SAXO connects the Saami and the Bjarmians who appear to be close allies. Again, the Bjarmians are attributed with magical skill, a feature that in other sources is often explicitly connected with the Saami. SAXO presents the Saami as warlike, although other sources do not corroborate this. The Bjarmians,

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454 Ellis Davidson 1979, 2; Fisher 1980, 143.
455 SAXO is the first one to mention Mattul/Möttull, king of the Saami. This character is also mentioned in Norse sources including Fagrskinna, Landnámabók, Flateyjarbók and perhaps also Flateyjarsögur. The name most probably comes from a word meaning cape (möttull) that is transferred into a proper noun. Haavio 1965, 132; Fisher 1980, 157; Håme 1987a, 100–104, 107–109.
457 See e.g. Nesheim 1982, 7; Håme 1987a, 48, 125, 128–129, 198–199, 205.
on the other hand, are known to have been more belligerent. It seems like SAXO again gives the qualities of the Saami to the Bjarmians. It is also worth noticing that SAXO uses the title king for the Bjarmian ruler who in this case is anonymous. This title is used also in several sagas of the Bjarmian leader (Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar, Landnámabók, Ævar-Odds saga, Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar, Sturlaug saga starfsama and Bósa saga).

It is likely that the Bjarmian leader is associated with the title king simply because the leaders in Scandinavia were called kings. It is worth noticing that the content of this title during the Middle Ages was different than what we perhaps associate the title with today. Namely, king was not a sovereign of a whole country, but more a local leader with limited power. I would like to mention the observation ROSS makes about the engravings on the stone surfaces. According to him these were most likely runic inscriptions. He finds that it is not unlikely that runic inscriptions may be found in the White Sea area. I, however, do not think this is very likely, although the Scandinavians undoubtedly travelled in this area. SAXO’s information is not very reliable and I find it difficult to believe that the engravings he mentions could have been originally associated with Bjarmaland. All in all, I find that this excerpt does not much increase our knowledge of the Bjarmians. It serves to emphasise the features that SAXO has already mentioned on several occasions, namely the close relations between the Saami and the Bjarmians and the association with magic.

To sum up, the accounts of Bjarmaland in Gesta Danorum do not contribute much to our knowledge. In general, SAXO’s writing is unreliable (even if based on Nordic tradition) and this definitely seems to apply to the accounts of Bjarmaland. In many cases SAXO attributes the Bjarmians with magic skills and many of the events convey imaginary characters and events. This does not leave us much concrete information. A general trait is that the Saami and the Bjarmians are portrayed as closely linked with each other, and at times it even seems like SAXO mixes the characteristics of the two groups. Some of the excerpts seem to reflect the more realistic conditions that we know from the sagas. A connection between Hålogaland and Bjarmaland is present in Gesta Danorum, kings of Bjarmaland with Norse names, furs, spoils, trophies and a marriage between a Bjarmian woman

460 See e.g. Haavio 1965, 136–137; Håme 1987a, 122.
461 Ross 1940, 46 footnote 15.
and a Norwegian man are mentioned as well. All this is present in SAXO’s text as a mere echo of that we know from the sagas, and is best taken as modified secondhand information.

4.3 Fagrskinna: Nóregs konunga tal

28. Kapítuli --Svá segir ok Glúmr Geiras on í sínu kvæði, at Eiríkr herjaði áðr en Haraldr konungr andaðisk suðr um Halland ok Skáni ok viða um Danmørk, ok allt för hann um Kúrland ok Eistland, ok morg ònnum lond herjaði hann í Austvegum. Hann herjaði ok viða um Svíjóó ok Gautland. Hann för norðr á Finnmørk ok allt til Bjarmalands með hernaði. --Ok síðan Eiríkr kom til Englands herjaði hann um òll Vestrlønd. Fyrir þessa sOK var hann kallaðr Eiríkr blóðøx.462 (Fagrskinna 1985:79)

Glúmr Geirason also says in his poem that before King Haraldr died Eiríkr plundered south around Halland and Skáney and extensively around Denmark, and he went all the way around Kúrland and Eistland, and plundered in many other countries around the Baltic. He also raided extensively round Sweden and Gautland. He went raiding north in Finnmørk and all the way to Bjarmaland. ---And after Eiríkr went to England he raided all over the British Isles. Because of this he was called Eiríkr blóðøx (Blood-axe). (Fagrskinna 2004:59–60)

This is one of the three excerpts that relate Eiríkr’s expedition to Bjarmaland. It is found in Fagrskinna ("fair parchment"), a collection of biographies of the kings of Norway from Hálfdan svarte (the Black) to Sverre Sigurdsson (i.e. until 1177). It was most likely written (possibly in Trondheim) sometime in the early 13th century (perhaps in the 1220’s although even the late 12th century has been suggested) by either an Icelander or a Norwegian and is considered to be older than Heimskringla. It was compiled using many sources, mostly written, but probably also oral. Skaldic verses were an important source as numerous quotes of stanzas indicate. There is a

462 Finnur JÓNSSON’s edition of Fagrskinna (also based on B version and its copy UB 371 fol.) has alternative spelling: "hann for norðr a Finnmøre ac allt til Biarmañandz með hernaðe.” Fagrskinna 1902, 30. The text is also found in Antiquités Russes 1852, 92. The English translation below follows EINARSSON’s edition of 1985, based on B version and its copy UB 371 fol. Finlay 2004, 37. It is worth keeping in mind that manuscripts are principally different even if they contain the same text. Manual copying will always result in differences, although the differences do not need to be only accidental: making a copy by hand gives room for individual wishes and needs. Each hand written book, each codex, is a unique document. Jørgensen 2004, 27, 31.
close connection between Fagrskinna and Heimskringla, the two most important sources of Norwegian history of the period. Certain striking similarities (at times nearly verbatim) between the two are possibly due to common sources, or else Fagrskinna was among the sources of Heimskringla, although there is no clear evidence that suggests that Fagrskinna was known in Iceland at the time of the composition of Heimskringla. The anonymous author of Fagrskinna was a rationalist and excluded supernatural phenomena. Two vellum manuscripts are the basis of the modern presentations of the text. These are dated to around the middle of the 13th century and to the first half of the 14th century. The two manuscripts were destroyed in a fire in Copenhagen in 1728, but many paper transcripts have survived (A version with copies catalogued as AM 52 fol., AM 301 4to, AM 303 4to and B version with copies catalogued as UB 371 fol., AM 51 fol., AM 302 4to). The original medieval title of the work appears to have been Ættartal Noregs konúnga or alternatively Nóregs konunga tal (“Catalogue of the Kings of Norway”), but because of the special beauty of one of the manuscripts it was renamed in the 17th century as Fagrskinna and the name has persisted in use.463

A skaldic poem by Glúmr GEIRASON is given as a source for this excerpt.464 Also in Egils saga skaldic verses are mentioned as a source, but in that case the skald is left anonymous. This indicates that there existed older material that was used to compose the passage in Fagrskinna. In general, skaldic verses are considered as relatively reliable source material.465 That these verses were used as a source increases the veracity of the information. There is a considerable gap between the events described in the text and the time the text was written. That the text would be based on older material that was composed closer to the time the events took place is a factor that enhances reliability. This does not, however, make the information infallible. After all, we do not know exactly what pieces of information are based on the verses and what is derived from other, perhaps less reliable sources.

According to the excerpt, Eiríkr went to Bjarmaland to plunder. This indicates that the relations between the Norwegians and the Bjarmians were not altogether

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464 Glúmr GEIRASON composed about Eiríkr blóðós and his son Haraldr gráfeldr. Gade 2000, 76–77. It has been assumed that Glúmr GEIRASON composed the verses about Eiríkr blóðós while Eiríkr was still alive, i.e. latest in 954. Helgason 1934, 78, 224; Krag 2000, 269.
peaceful. Eiríkr is portrayed as a victorious warrior. This is a very stereotype image and it may be that in order to enhance this image his exploits were exaggerated to some extent.

The location of Bjarmaland follows the schematic example of most of the texts. Bjarmaland was situated in the north, past Finnmark. It is worth noticing that the location of Bjarmaland as a rule is connected with the location of Finnmark, indicating a regular sea route to Bjarmaland around the northern extremity of Norway. What is interesting is that Bjarmaland is just one location among many where Eiríkr plundered. The list in this connection includes easterly locations like Denmark, Sweden and Estonia as well as westerly locations like England. Bjarmaland seems to be the representative of the northern part of the world. It seems like Bjarmaland was considered as a common destination for “Viking” raids. Fagrskinna is not the only text that includes Bjarmaland among a number of “Viking” expedition destinations. A passage in Heimskringla includes a slightly different list including destinations in east and west as well as Bjarmaland.

All the other places besides Bjarmaland are commonly known and we can still identify them today by the name mentioned in the saga text. Any further information about the location of these places is not given. This is obviously because the location of the places was commonly known and required no further explanations. When the saga was written the location of Bjarmaland must have been equally commonly known and is therefore not explained any further.

The text informs us that Eiríkr’s expeditions took place when King Harald was still alive. Harald hárfagre (fair-hair) reigned until 931 or 932, so the events should have taken place before this. How long before, is not clear merely on the basis of the text. However, it is known that Harald died in 932, and by then Eiríkr had reigned two years. This means that if Eiríkr was already a king when he went to Bjarmaland, the expedition must have taken place either in 930 or 931, perhaps 932. The text at hand does not give any more clues concerning the issue, but I will come back to it below, since one of the two remaining excerpts about Eiríkr elaborates the subject somewhat.

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467 Årstallsliste 1993, 52; Krag 2000, 269.
468 Krag 2000, 52.
4.4 Heimskringla: Haralds saga hárfagra

32. Kapítuli --Þá er Eiríkr var tílf vérta gamall, gaf Haraldr konungr honum fimm langskip, ok fór hann í hernað, fyrst í Austrveg ok þá suðr um Danmörk ok um Fríslend ok Saxland, ok dávalóðsk í þeiri ferð fjóra vetr. Eptir þat fór hann vestr um haf ok herjaði um Skotland ok Bretland, Írland ok Válland ok dávalóðsk þar aðra fjóra vetr. Eptir þat fór hann norðr á Finnmörk ok allt til Bjarmaland, ok átti hann þar orrostu mikla ok hafði sigri. Þá er hann kom áptr á Finnmörk--

Chapter 32. --When Eirik was twelve years old, King Harald gave him five warships, and he went raiding, first in the Baltic, then south around Denmark and about Frisland and Saxland, and he was four years on this expedition. After that he sailed west across the sea, harrying in Scotland, Bretland [Wales], Ireland, and Válland [France], and passed four more years there. Then he sailed north to Finnmörk [Lappland] and all the way to Bjarmaland [Permia], where he fought a great battle and was victorious. When he returned to Finnmörk-- (Heimskringla 1999:86)

Heimskringla ("The Orb of the World") is a 17th century title of a book that was probably originally called Sögur Noregs konunga. It deals with the lives of rulers of Norway from legendary times until 1177. Heimskringla is commonly attributed to an Icelander Snorri STURLUSON (1179–1241), but we cannot be absolutely certain that he really wrote it himself, since no existing medieval manuscript names Snorri as the author. His name is connected with Heimskringla for the first time in the 16th century translations. However, there are many indications that tie Snorri to Heimskringla. There are no certain indications as to when Heimskringla was composed and it should perhaps be seen as an occupation of a lifetime. There are, however, some indications that Heimskringla was started by 1220 and finished by 1230 or 1231 (perhaps 1235), but this still remains highly uncertain. Heimskringla is based on written and oral sources containing a number of sagas and skaldic

469 An alternative version of the same text goes as follows: Saga Ólafs konungs Tryggvasonar af Gunnlaugi máink: 3. --því var hann kallaðr Eiríkr blóðxðr-- Eptir þat fór hann norðr á Finnmörk ok allt til Bjarmaland, ok átti þar orrostu, ok hafði sigri-- Antiquités Russes 1850, 393. According to HALLDÖRSSON, the text in Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta is based on Heimskringla and is an almost word for word copy. Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta has been compiled from numerous sources probably sometime after 1325. Halldórsson 2001, v. Also HALLDÖRSSON gives the text in full. See Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta 2001, 23. Ólafs Saga Tryggvasonar in Flateyjarbók repeats the text as well. See Flateyjarbók 1860, 42–43.

470 The square brackets in this text are the translator’s, not mine.
verses. Snorri had great respect for the skaldic verses, although he also realised their limitations as a source. All in all, the work combines historical tradition and invented details. *Heimskringla* is not always true to details that are found in other sources, and for instance foreign written sources sometimes corroborate, sometimes undermine information presented in the work. Especially the earlier parts of the work contain ample invented details. It should also be taken into consideration that the description of milieu in Snorri’s Kings’ Sagas reflects as much his own time as the earlier centuries. Snorri was familiar with political developments in contemporary Norway since he spent time there, first in 1218–1220 and later on in 1237–1239. The earlier visit is considered to have been important for the composition of *Heimskringla*.471

This very short passage contains two motifs that are often repeated in the accounts of Bjarmaland, first of all, the northerly location and secondly, the victorious battle. It gives a minor glimpse of the location of Bjarmaland: from Norway one goes (i.e. sails) first north to Finnmark and further on to Bjarmaland. The reference to the battle is more schematic, but contains a small fragment of knowledge, i.e. that the relations between the Norwegians and the Bjarmians were not exclusively peaceful. In this connection it is interesting to notice parallels in the rest of the saga. In addition to the Bjarmaland expedition, Eiríkr made expeditions to *Austrveg, Danmork, Frisland, Saxland, Skotland, Valland, Bretland* and *Írland*. All these expeditions follow the same pattern as the story about the expedition to Bjarmaland. In Bjarmaland Eiríkr had a battle, in other places he *herjaði*, raided. There is obviously a tradition of telling about this type of expedition and similar accounts appear regularly in old Scandinavian literature. It is worth noticing that most of the other destinations are well known to us and nobody seriously doubts the veracity of these expeditions. Likewise, it seems reasonable to assume that the expeditions to Bjarmaland were real. Another interesting narrative parallel appears just before the account of Eiríkr’s exploits. It it told that Hálfdan *svarti* and Hálfdan *hvíti* had a great battle in Estonia.472 The similarities of this description and the description of the Bjarmaland expedition serve to accentuate the feeling that the Bjarmaland expeditions were described in an identical manner with other “Viking” expeditions. Consequently, we must


472 “Hálfdan svarti and Hálfdan hvíti lágu í víking ok herjuðu um Austrveg. Þeir áttu orrostu mikla á Eistlandi,” Haralds saga ins hárfagra 1962, 134.
assume that Bjarmaland was at this time considered to be as known and frequently visited area as the other areas the Norwegians verifiably travelled to.

It has been assumed that *Heimskringla* was probably written by circa 1230.473 The events it describes are of earlier date. There are as many as three hundred years between the events and the composition of the saga. Consequently, it is possible that all the information is not fully reliable, but it is worth remembering that even though *Heimskringla* is a product of the 13th century, it was not born out of a vacuum. Earlier texts were most certainly used as source material.474 Another question is, how reliable these earlier sources may have been.

Eiríkr Haraldsson *blóðx* (“blood-axe”) was king in Norway in 930–934.475 The saga itself dates the expedition to Bjarmaland to the year Eiríkr was 20 or 21 years old. Unfortunately, it is not known when he was born. He died though in 954.476 The text at hand does not tell whether Eiríkr was already a king when he went to Bjarmaland. If he was not, the expedition must have taken place before 930, but if he was a king, it must have happened sometime between 930 and 932, but not later than this because Harald hárfagre is said to have been still alive (see the previous analysis of *Fagrskinna*) and he died in 932. In any case, we are dealing with a Bjarmaland expedition that took place during the first half of the 10th century.

### 4.5 Egils saga Skallagrímssonar

> 37. Kapítuli Eiríkr blóðx tók þá við ríki; hann hafði yfirsókn á Hørdalandi ok um Fjorðu; tók hann þá ok haði með sér hirðmenn. Ok eitt hvert vár477 bjó Eiríkr blóðx þó hrð til Bjarmalandi ok vandaði mjók lið til þeirar ferðar. Þórólfr rézk til ferðar með Eiríki ok var í staftni á skipi hans ok bar merki hans; Þórólfr var þá hverjum manni meiri ok sterkari ok ligg ur þat ferð sínum. Í ferð þeir var mart til þiðenda; Eiríkr átti orrostu mikla á Bjarmalandi við Vínu; fækk Eiríkr þar sigir, svá sem segir í kvaðum hans, ok í þeirri ferð fekk hann Gunnhildar, döttur Özurar tóta, ok hafði hana heim með sér-- (Egils saga Skallagrímssonar 1988:93–94)

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474 Häme 1987b, 244–245; Hollander 1999, xvii.
475 Krag 2000, 267. It is worth noticing that the dates prior to circa 1000 AD are especially uncertain and this results in a certain variation of dates. Alternative dating for Eiríkr’s reign is 931–933. See Árstallsliste 1993, 52.
476 Krag 2000, 269.
477 Alternatively “eitt sumar”. See Antiquités Russes 1852, 254.
37. Eirik Blood-axe came to power and ruled Hordaland and Fjordane. He took men into his service and kept them with him.

One spring Eirik Blood-axe made preparations for a journey to Permia [Bjarmaland] and chose his men carefully for the expedition. Thorolf joined Eirik and served as his standard-bearer at the prow of his ship. Just like his father had been, Thorolf was outstandingly large and strong.

Many great events took place on that journey. Eirik fought a great battle by the river Dvina in Permia [Bjarmaland] and emerged the victor, as the poems about him relate; and on the same journey he married Gunnhild, daughter of Ozur Snout, and brought her back home with him. (Egil’s saga 1997:74–75)

Egil’s saga Skálalagrimssonar (“The Saga of Egill Skálalagrimsson”) belongs to Íslendingasögur, a group of sagas that are about Icelanders in a period from c. 900–1050 and that are to some extent based on historical knowledge. Since the 19th century Egil’s saga has been generally attributed to Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241). Although this has become a common assumption, it is not certain that Snorri is the author despite a number of indications (e.g. occasionally verbatim parallels between Egil’s saga and Heimskringla). In any case, the saga was written in Iceland and is dated to the second quarter of the 13th century, perhaps somewhere around 1230 (or 1240). The events in the saga are of prior date, from the 9th and the 10th centuries. The historical veracity of the events is doubtful, but the geographical descriptions are considered to be relatively reliable as is the case with geographical details in medieval Scandinavian literature in general. It is worth noticing that the information about geographical conditions may reflect the circumstances of the 13th century rather than earlier times. Egil’s saga is preserved in a number of manuscripts and fragments. Möðruvallabók (AM 132 fol) from the first half of the 14th century (possibly 1325–1350) is the most important of these.

This is the third excerpt relating Eiríkr blóðax’s expedition to Bjarmaland. In all likelihood it is the very same expedition that is described in all three sagas. This in fact becomes plain since Heimskringla and Egil’s saga both connect Eiríkr’s marriage to Ozur Snout’s daughter Gunnhild with the return trip from

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However, the account in *Egils saga* is the most informative of the three excerpts. The saga repeats the information that Eiríkr had a battle in Bjarmaland, but elaborates that this took place by “Vína”. Here the English translator has taken the common liberty of identifying “Vína” with the Northern Dvina River, but original text simply says “á Bjarmalandi við Vínu”, in Bjarmaland by “Vína”. I prefer to use the original name without making any identifications at this point. I want to analyse all the excerpts that mention “Vína” collectively in a later stage. For now all that can be said with certainty is that according to the sources, Eiríkr had a victorious battle by “Vína” in Bjarmaland. There is nothing in this statement that indicates with certainty that “Vína” is a river, but there is nothing either to say that it is not. The preposition “við” can be used with any location including a river.

I would additionally like to point out that the translators at times translate names in an unsatisfactory manner. In English texts Bjarmaland is most often translated with “Permia” which is a reflection of a popular but currently not so favoured theory. To get the truest picture without presumed attitudes I insist on using original names.

Eiríkr’s expedition is here related in a similar manner to the other sources mentioning this expedition. He had a great battle and was victorious, indicating that hostilities were a part of the Bjarmaland expeditions. That Eiríkr is presented as a victorious hero may be seen as a stereotypical description of a king whose exploits need to be presented in a good light. The text indicates that verses of Eiríkr were used as a source for the saga. It was a common feature in Norse poetry to praise kings for their generosity and martial prowess. Perhaps the portrayal of the king in the saga is owed to the poems that are indicated as the source. Since there is a gap of about three hundred years between Eiríkr’s expedition and the writing of the saga, one may question its reliability. Skaldic verses as source material may increase the reliability of the saga, since verses are often considered as comparatively reliable. This is because the skaldic verses are contemporary with the events. Also, it is believed that the skaldic verses could not be embellished too much since people who had participated in the various events were among the

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479 See Heimskringla 1999, 86; Antiquités Russes 1852, 254. It is, however, doubtful whether this event really took place like it is described in the saga. There are indications that Gunnhild was actually of royal Danish blood. See Häme 1987a, 86–94.
480 E-mail letter to the author from Jan Ragnar Hagland 22.5.2002.
481 Einarsson 1993a, 154.
audience. The skald had his credibility to consider.\textsuperscript{482} It is worth noticing that also \textit{Fagrskinna} refers to verses as source material regarding Eiríkr’s expedition to Bjarmaland. This increases the likelihood that there really existed contemporary verses that referred to the expedition.

\textit{Egils saga} offers a few additional pieces of information. It reveals that Eiríkr started his expedition in the spring, or perhaps summer. That the expeditions would take place in spring or summer is the norm. The actual sailing season covered a short period in the summer, generally speaking from April to September.\textsuperscript{483} The sagas repeatedly mention that the winter was spent on land and summer on expedition.\textsuperscript{484} Natural conditions certainly contributed to this practise. In the north the winters were dark and ice, cold and short days would make it unpleasant and perhaps impossible to go on longer expeditions during the winter.\textsuperscript{485}

Since Eiríkr ruled in Hordaland and Fjordane, these areas are the most likely starting place for his journey. The wording also seems to imply that Eiríkr was already a king when he travelled to Bjarmaland. This would date his expedition to sometime between the years 930 and 932 because \textit{Fagrskinna} informs us that Eiríkr’s expedition took place when King Harald \textit{hårfagr} was still alive and he died in either 931 or 932.\textsuperscript{486} This only leaves the years 930, 931 and 932 as possible datings for the expedition. JANSSON and STORM, however, write that the expedition took place around 920 without elaborating further how they have reached this conclusion.\textsuperscript{487} In any case, in the light of all the three excerpts it seems most likely that the expedition took place in the early 930’s, probably between 930–932.

\subsection*{4.6 Landnámabók: Þorgeir höggvinkinne}

27 (25.) --Þorgeir höggvinkinne var hirdmadur Hakonar k(ongs) Adalsteinsfostra. Enn er hann var buinn til Bjarmalandz, þa kom Haralldur med her mikinn. (Landnámabók 1921:35)

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Binns 1961, 44; Krag 2000, 31–32; Englert 2007, 118.
\item See e.g. Egil’s Saga 1997, 75; Jackson 2003, 55 footnote 111.
\item Korhammer 1985, 260–261.
\item Årstalsliste 1993, 52; Krag 2000, 269.
\item Storm 1894, 97; Jansson 1936, 35.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
27. --Thorgeir Cheek-Wound was a retainer of King Hakon, fosterson of King Athelstan. (The Book of Settlements 1972:27) And when he was prepared to go to Bjarmaland, Haraldr came with a great army.488 (Ross 1940:31–32)

Landnámabók ("The Book of Settlements") describes the discovery and colonisation of Iceland c. 870–930. It deals with roughly 430 settlers and their families. It has been suggested that the original purpose of the work was to ensure the proprietary right of certain chieftains to landownership, but it is probable that some of the traditions concerning the settlement are original. To an extent Landnámabók is based on historical facts, but some of the stories and genealogies suggest the folk imagination at work. Consequently, we cannot trust all the details to be historically correct. Three medieval versions of the work exist, one of them fragmentary. Additionally, there are two 17th century redactions. The original version was probably written in the early 12th century, but the earliest version still extant (Sturlubók) is the one credited to Sturla ÞÓRDARSON and dated to the 13th century (c. 1280). Hauksbók (AM 371, 544, 675 4°) by Haukr ERLENDSSON was written during the years 1306–1308 (or in any case between the years 1302 and 1310). The today fragmentary Melabók from the early 14th century represents the oldest preserved redaction. The now lost oldest redaction from the beginning of the 12th century was probably based on the information from several people acquainted with local conditions. However, the preserved redactions are expanded in relation to the original and Sturlubók and Hauksbók adopted material from sagas, genealogies and so forth. Many of the brief accounts included in Landnámabók probably go back to the 13th century.489

This minor reference mentions an expedition to Bjarmaland. The instigator of this trip seems to have been Thorgeir höggvinkinne who was a retainer of King Hákon. It is not clear whether Thorgeir made the trip on his own initiative or whether he was on king’s service. In many cases it seems that the Norwegians who travelled to Bjarmaland were among the most powerful in the society. This may be due to the fact that it took solid financial resources to arrange an expedition, 489

488 The reference to Bjarmaland is not included in Sturla ÞÓRDARSON’s version of Landnámabók from around 1275–1280. Bjarmaland is mentioned in the Melabók redaction from the early 14th century. This redaction, like Sturla’s Sturlubók, derives its information from an earlier redaction named Styrmisbók that was written around 1220 and was based on the earliest version of Landnámabók (originally composed in the early 12th century). Melabók follows Styrmisbók more faithfully than Sturlubók, because Sturla ÞÓRDARSON added a lot of material from other sources, particularly the sagas. See Pálsson–Edwards 1972, 4–5, 7–8; The Book of Settlements 1972, 27.
because one needed both a ship (or ships) and a large number of men who all had to be paid. It may also be that due to the nature of the written sources we only hear of the expeditions that were made by the leading figures of the society. On many occasions the sagas connect the Bjarmaland expeditions with kings. Sometimes the king himself travels to Bjarmaland, other times he appears as the financier of the expedition.

King Hákon “the Good” Adalsteinfostra was ruler of Norway c. 935–961 and had been brought up by King Athelstan of England. Accordingly Thorgeir’s intended Bjarmaland expedition must be dated to this period. The text does not make it clear whether Thorgeir managed to go to Bjarmaland in the end and what he wished to do there.

4.7 Heimskringla: Haralds saga gráfeldar

14. Kapítuli Haraldr gráfeldr fór á einu sumri með hér sinn norðr til Bjarmalands ok herjaði þar ok átti orrostu mikla við Bjarma á Vinubakka. Þar haði Haraldr konungr sigr ok drap mart fólk, herjaði þá víða um landit ok fekk ófa mik fē. Þess getr Glúmr Geirason:

100. Austr rauð jofra þrýstir/orðrakkr fyr bý norðan/brand, þars bjarmaskar kindir/,brennanda, sák renna/.Gótt hlaut gumna sættir,geirveðr, í fór þeiri,ölingi fekksk ungum,orð, á Vinu borði.493 (Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962:217)

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490 See e.g. Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232; Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar 1988, 93–94.
491 Pálsson–Edwards 1972, 27 footnote 24. Different sources give a different time frame for Hákon’s rule like 934–961 and 933–959. However, the differences are small and in this connection an approximate dating is adequate. See Årstallsliste 1993, 52; Krag 2000, 269.
492 Also “einum bakka”. Antiquités Russes 1850, 394.
493 The text is repeated nearly word by word in Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta. See Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta 2001, 59. The text is copied from Heimskringla. Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta has been compiled from numerous sources probably sometime after 1325. Halldórsson 2001, v. The text is also found in nearly identical form, but without the verses, in Fagrskinna, Nőrega konunga tal: 14. Kapítuli --Haraldr konungr gráfeldr-- Fjórða sumar fór hann með her sinn norðr til Bjarmaland ok áttu þar mikla orrostu á Vinubakka ok drap þar mikit fólk, fókk þar baði gull ok sílfir ok mikit annat fē ok fór apra sama haust. Fagrskinna 1902, 57. Finnur JÓNSSON’s edition of Fagrskinna has alternative spelling: “fjórða sumar fór hann með her sinn norðr til Bjarmalandz. oc atte þar mikla orrostu a Vino bakka oc drap þar mikit folk. feck þar baðe gull oc sílfir. oc mikit annat fe. oc for apra sama haust.” Fagrskinna 1985, 103. In English translation this passage goes as follows: “The fourth summer he went north with his army to Bjarmaland, and there fought a great battle on Vinubakki and killed many people there, and got there both gold and silver as well as many other valuable goods, and returned the same autumn”. Fagrskinna 2004, 79. RAFN gives the following construction of the skaldic poem:
14. One summer Harald Graycloak sailed with his fleet north to Permia [Bjarmaland], harried there, and had a great battle with the Permians [Bjarmians] on the bank of the Dvina River in which Harald was victorious and killed many people, whereupon he plundered the land far and wide and acquired an immense amount of property. Glimr Geirason makes mention of this:

117.Eastward saw I the athelings’ (/awer redden his broadsword/where Permian [Bjarmian] folk, frightened,/fled their burning dwellings./Good fame got him youngish/gold-bestower on Dvína’s/banks, in fiercest battle/braving the storm-of-arrows. (Heimskringla 1999:140)

Haraldr gráfeldr (“grey-cloak”) was king of Norway from 961–965/70 or alternatively from 959–974, the precise dating is somewhat uncertain.494 It is not specified in the saga when Haraldr’s expedition to Bjarmaland took place, but it appears that it may have happened towards the end of his reign.495 This can mean anything between 965 and 974, perhaps even slightly earlier. RAFN dates the expedition to year 974, the last possible year of his reign. HAAVIO dates it to 960, STORM to 965 and Jansson finds that it took place around 970.496

This passage gives several pieces of information. The expedition took place during the summer and Haraldr and his men returned home in the fall. This fits well with the general pattern of expeditions with common sailing season during the summer months.497 The location of Bjarmaland is not specified. The only information about this is the schematic statement that Bjarmaland is situated in the north. The verses, however, also refer to an eastern location. This implies that Bjarmaland was located both east and north of Norway and was seemingly considered to be part of Austrveg. Like other sources relate498, one sailed first north to Finnmark and then (east) to Bjarmaland.

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495 See Heimskringla 1999, 140–141.
496 Rafn 1850, 272; Storm 1894, 97; Jansson 1936, 34; Haavio 1965, 146.
498 See e.g. Fagrskinna 1985, 79.
Haraldr sailed to Bjarmaland with his fleet, in other words he went there with his army. We are informed that Haraldr and his men ravaged Bjarmaland and had a great battle in which they emerged victorious. Additional information has it that Haraldr’s men killed many Bjarmians and plundered the country far and wide and thus obtained a great amount of property. *Fargskinna* names gold, silver and a lot of other booty. Not one word about peaceful trading is mentioned and in light of the text it seems that Haraldr Graycloak’s expedition to Bjarmaland was from beginning to end designed and carried out as a “Viking” expedition where looting and killing played a major role. However, the verses that are used as a source may be the reason why such hostile behaviour is in focus. The verses often aim to glorify the kings and make them look heroic and victorious battle with killing and looting is a good way of giving this kind of impression. This does not mean, of course, that killing and looting did not take place. However, it may be that if any peaceful trading was involved it is left out from the verses, although it is fairly likely that trade really was not a part of this type of expedition at all.

Both the northerly location and a victorious battle are rather schematic motifs that appear in the early Scandinavian texts about Bjarmaland. The reference to an immense amount of property is also a recurring theme and need not be referring to actual booty. Instead, it may be seen as a common feature of the sagas to exaggerate the success of the hero to make him look even more heroic. This does not exclude the possibility that the Norwegians obtained considerable profit from their expeditions. They would have hardly bothered to go to Bjarmaland if this was not profitable. However, we cannot be certain of what type of booty the Norwegians obtained. It may have included both silver and gold but may equally well have contained other items as well, and even in greater quantities than the assumed gold and silver. Some sources mention furs in connection with Bjarmaland and these are certainly a possibility.

This particular passage contains a stanza from *Gráfeldardrápa* that was composed by Glúmr GEIRASON in c. 970 (i.e. the approximate dating of 499 Hallberg 1965, 113.

500 It is perhaps interesting to notice in this context that the Bjarmaland passage in *Fagskinna* is immediately preceded by an account of Haraldr’s “Viking” expeditions to many other areas. Over the years he is said to have gone to Denmark, Skåne, Scotland, Ireland and Götaland besides Bjarmaland. During these expeditions Haraldr and his army had great battles and victories and ravished the different areas. See Fagskinna 1985, 103.

501 See e.g. Magnúss saga berfœtts 1951, 212; Haralds saga ins hárfagra 1962, 134–135.

502 See e.g. Hakonar saga 1964, 70–71.

503 See Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232.

Haraldr’s expedition to Bjarmaland). He was a skald to the Norwegian King Haraldr Eiríksson gráfeldr. Gráfeldadrápa glorifies the king’s military campaign in Bjarmaland. Bjarmians (bjarmskar kindir) are mentioned for the first time in preserved Scandinavian literature in these verses. The name “Vina” also makes its appearance for the first time in connection with Bjarmaland.505

Some sagas quote passages from skaldic verses and others have these verses as source, although their influence is not always equally direct or obvious. Because the skaldic verses are a contemporary source, written for the people they are talking about, they are often taken as comparatively reliable sources. In comparison to the skaldic verses, the sagas were written much later than the events described in them and because of this it is possible that the writers of the sagas took more liberties in their writing.506 However, we do not know if the verses that the medieval authors used were preserved in their original form. It is likely some changes had occurred during the time the verses were in oral form.

The verses mention a few interesting things. First of all, there is the reference to burning dwellings. This has to mean houses where people lived and accordingly permanent settlement. It would also seem like the Bjarmians used bows and arrows in their fight against the Norwegians whereas the Norwegians would seem to have used swords. This could be a realistic feature, at least in the sense that swords were common weapons among the wealthy and certainly a king would have used a sword, although axes were probably more common among regular men. Bows and arrows were also used for warfare, although this was perhaps not very common.507 Another interesting feature is that the denomination “bjarmskar/Bjarma kindir” is used. This refers more to people than to an area, although also Bjarmaland as a name of an area is mentioned in the saga texts. It is worth noticing that the text uses plural, i.e. Bjarmian peoples or even peoples of Bjarmaland. The word kind bears the meaning of family or relatives.508 This seems to indicate that the people of Bjarmaland consisted of two or more groups of people. Although this assumption is based on linguistics only, it is perhaps worth remembering that also Historia Norvegiae refers to two kinds of Bjarmians.509 It would seem like in the eyes of the Norwegians the Bjarmians were not ethnically uniform.

505 Helgason 1934, 78, 224; Haavio 1965, 16; Pritsak 1981, 260.
508 E-mail letter to the author from Jan Ragnar Hagland 22.4.2003.
509 See Antiquités Russes 1852, 116.
The author of the saga interprets *bjarmskar kindir* and *á Vinu borði* of the verses as *við Bjarma á Vinubakka*, but does not mention the word Bjarmaland that appears in many other written sources (e.g. *Kormáks saga* and *Landnámabók*)\(^{510}\).

“Vína” is mentioned as the location where a battle took place. It is translated with “Dvina” and this translation has in effect become an axiom. There are many things that seem to support this, not least the similarity between the words “Vína”, *Dvina* (Russian) and *Viena* (Finnish for the Russian Dvina). JACKSON, however, has raised a doubt whether this identification is justified. She points out that Glúmr GEIRASON may have used the word “Vína” (*á Vinubakka*) in the poetic sense, just referring to a river in general, not to any particular river.\(^{511}\)

Looking at the phrase *á Vinubakka*, it is possible that it refers to a bank of a river, but *borð* can be used in other connections as well, e.g. with *dalr*. The words *á Vinubakka* can be translated to “on the bank of Vína”. *Bakki* translates to either ”slop” or ”bank”, although ”bank” is more likely.\(^{512}\) There is nothing direct here that forces us to conclude that “Vina” is a river, although this is rather likely. The author of the saga has come to the conclusion that “Vina” is a river, although the verses do not say this directly.

### 4.8 Kormáks saga

Bjarmalandsferð/Haraldr konungs fæ til Bjarmalands

25. Kapituli Eptir um várit byrjar Haraldr konungr féð sína til Bjarmalands með míklu líði. Kormákr var skipstjórnarmaðr í þeiri féð, ok á óðru skipi var Þorvaldr; eigi eru fleiri nefndir skipstjórnarmenn. Ok er þeir sigldusk nær í sundi eíní, laust Kormákr hjálmvelinum við eyra Þorvaldi, ok fell hann frá stýrinu í rot; skip Kormáks renndi við, er þat missti hjálmvalar. Steingerðr sat áðr hjá Þorvaldi ok tók til stýris ok stýrði á flott skip Kormáks. Þat sá Kormákr ok kvað vísu--

Skipinu hvelfir undir Kormáki ok hans mónum; varð skjót borgit, er mart var manna við. Þorvaldr rétti við, ok snúa álæðis ferðinni; býðr konungr sína góð í málinu, ok því játu þeir báðir. Konungr lét jafnað hogn Þorvalds ok hrakning Kormáks.

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510 See *Landnámabók* 1921, 35; *Kormáks saga* 1939, 294–296.
512 E-mail letter to the author from Jan Ragnar Hagland 22.5.2002.
The following spring, King Harald went off on a journey to Permia [Bjarmaland] with a great following. Kormak commanded a ship on that expedition, and Thorvald another one; no other names of ship commanders are recorded.

And when they sailed near each other in a certain sound, Kormak struck at Thorvald's ear with his ship's helm's tiller, and Thorvald fell from the helm of his ship, stunned. Kormak's ship veered aside when it lost its tiller. Steingerd, who had been sitting next to Thorvald, took hold of the helm and steered at the broadside of Kormak's ship.

Kormak saw this and spoke a verse--The ship capsized under Kormak and his men, but they were quickly rescued as there were many people there. Thorvald recovered, and they proceeded on their voyage. The king offered his services as arbitrator in the matter, and they consented to that. The king judged as equal the blow to Thorvald and the insult to Kormak.

They made land in the evening. The king and his men were sitting at a meal. Kormak was sitting relatively near to the door in the tent and drinking with Steingerd out of the same vessel, and while he was doing so, a man stole a cloak pin from Kormak as a joke, after he had taken his cloak off; and when he was about to put it on, the pin was missing.

Kormak leapt up and ran after the man with the spear that he called Vig, cast it after him, missed, and spoke a verse--

After this they journeyed to Permia [Bjarmaland] and back from there home to Norway. (Kormak's Saga 1997:220–221)

Kormáks saga was written in the early 13th century, but the events of the saga take place c. 930–980. The whole text is preserved in the codex Möðruvallabók (AM
132 fol) from the middle of the 14th century. Kormáks saga belongs to so-called Poets’ Sagas (skáldasögur) and is among the oldest of the Sagas of Icelanders, but the authenticity of its verses is not agreed on. Because the verses are of varying quality, it may be that some parts are later inventions. The main character of the saga is the 10th century Icelandic poet Kormákr Ögmundarson. King Haraldr gráfeldr was one of his patrons.513

This excerpt seems to give us additional information about Haraldr gráfeldr’s expedition to Bjarmaland. If King Harald did not go to Bjarmaland more than once it is likely that Kormáks saga and Haralds saga gráfeldar in Heimskringla describe the same expedition. Scholars seem to agree that it is the same expedition that is described in both sagas.514 The passage at hand does not describe the events in Bjarmaland but relates more of what happened before the Norwegians arrived there.

The expedition took place in the spring. King Harald was the leader of the trip and he had a great following with him. This following included at least two ships and even the commanders of these ships are named (i.e. Kormak and Thorvald). It is not clear if there were more ships but this seems to have been the case because the saga text mentions that only the names of the two commanders were recorded. In any case, the expedition was quite large. For instance, ships like the Oseberg or Gokstad ship could take up to thirty-five men onboard.515 Two ships of this kind would mean a crew of seventy men and each new ship would increase the number by around thirty men. It is worth noticing that merchant ships could manage with small crew whereas war vessels could take a larger crew that would of course vary according to the size of the vessel. Anything between twenty-five and fifty men could constitute a minimum crew, but the number of men could easily come up to anything between fifty and hundred men.516 Since Harald’s ships most likely were war vessels, it is possible that his crew consisted of at least a hundred men, but could easily have been even larger. The text also gives an insight into sailing manners: in the evening land was sought and tents were put up for the night.

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514 See e.g. Rafn 1852, 275–276; Jansson 1936, 34–35.
515 Sjøvold 1985, 22, 28, 56.
516 Binns 1993b, 578.
4.9 Heimskringla: Óláfs saga helga

133. Kapituli Vetr þann sat Óláfr konungr í Sarpsborg ok hafði fjólmenni mikit. Þá sendi hann Karla inn hálleyska norðr í land með ørendum sínum. Fór Karli fyrst til Upplanda, síðan norðr um fjall, kom fram í Niðarósi, þök þar fó konungs, svá mikit sem hann hafði orð þótil send, ok skip gott, þat er honum þótti vel til fálfir ferðar þeirar, er konungr hafði fyrir ætlat, en þat var at fara til Bjarmalands norðr. Var svá ætlat, at Karli skyldi hafa félag konungs ok eiga hálft fó hvárr við annan. Karli helt skipinu norðr á Hálogaland snimma um várít. Rézk þá til ferðar með honum Gunnsteinn, broðir hans, ok hafði hann sér kaupeyri. Þeir várú næra hálftum þrójþa tig manna á skipi því, föru þegar um várítt snimmendis norðr á Morkína. Þórir hundr spurði þetta. Þá gerði hann menn ok orðsending til þeira bróðora ok þat með, at hann ætlar at fara um sumarit til Bjarmalands, vill hann, at þeir hafi samflokt ok hafi at jafnaði þat, er til fjengjar verðr. Þeir Karli senda þau orð at móti, at þórir skyli hafa hálftan þrójþa tig manna, svá sem þeir hörðu. Vilja þeir þá, at af því, er fæsk, sé skipt at jafnaði milli skipanna, fyrir útan kaupeyri þann, er menn hörðu. En er sendimenn þóris kómu aprtr, þá hafði hann fram látítt setja langskipsbúzu mikla, er hann áttu, ok láttí búa. Hann hafði til skips þess húskarla sína, ok várú á skipinu næra áttí tigum manna. Hafði þórir einn forráð lóðs þess ok svá aflan þá alla, er fengisk í fæðuminni. En er þórir var búinn, helt hann skipi sínu norðr með landi ok hitti þá þó Karl norðr í Sandveri. Síðan föru þeir allir saman, ok byrjóði vel. Gunnsteinn reðd í við Karla, bróður sinn, þeirar er þeir þórir hittusk, at honum þótti þórir vera hóltt fjólmeðr – ”ok æftla ek,” segir hann, ”at þat væri ráðligr, at vör snerim aprtr ok færir ekki svá, at þórir ætli alla kosti við oss, þvi at ek trúi honum illa.” Karli segir: ”Eigi vil ek aprtr hverfa, en þó er þat satt, ef ek hefða vitat, þá er vör várum heima í Laynge, at þórir hundr myndi koma í ferða várar með lóð svá mikit sem hann hefir, at vör myndim hafa haft fleiri manna með oss.” Þeir bróður reðdu þetta við þórir, spurðu, hverju þat gegndi, er hann hafði menn miklu fleiri með sér en svá sem orð hörðu um farit. Hann svarar svá: ”Vér hörðum skip mikit ok lóðskylíft. Þykkki mér í háskafþrum slikum eigi gðöum dregu aukit.” Fóru þeir um sumarit optast þannug sem skipin gengu til. Þá er byrllétt var, gekk meira skipit þeira Karla, sigldu þeir þá undan, en þá hvassara var, sóttu þeir þórir þá eptir. Várú þeir sjaldan allir saman, en vissusk þó til jafnað. En er þeir kómu til Bjarmalands, þá lögðu þeir til kaupstaðar. Tóks þar kaupstæðna. Fengu þeir menn allir fullræði fjár, er fó hörðu til at verja. Þórir fekk of grávoru ok bjór ok safala. Karli hafði ok allmikit fó, þat er

517 Ok er þer komu til Bjarmalands, þá lögdú þeir í kaupstaðar, ok tókst þar þegar kaupstefna med þeim Bjúrnnum/Björnum, fengu þar þar fullræði fjár, er fél hóðu til at verja; þórir fikk ok grávuru marga, það björ ok safala; Karli hafði ok allmikit fél, hann keyppti ok skinnavöru micla. Antiquités Russes 1850, 448–455.
síns. Þeir Karli hóðu þá dregit segl sitt ok várú langt komnir, áðr þeir Þórir
hefði upp komit sínu segli. Fóru þeir þá svá, at þeir Karli sigldu ávalt fremri,
ok hóðu við hváirtveggu allt slikt, er máttu. Þeir förú svá, til þess, er þeir
kömu í Geirsver. Þar er bryggjulegð fyrrst, er norðan ferr. Þar kömu þeir fyrrst
hváirtveggu aptan dags ok logðu þar til hafnar í bryggjulegði. Lágú þeir Þórir
inn í hofinni, en þeir Karli váru í útanverðri hofinni. (Óláfs saga helga
1945:227–232)

--Síðan fóru þeir Þórir heim til Bjarkeyjar. --Fór Gunnsteinn fyrrst heim í
Langey ok dvalðisk þar skamma hrið. Fór hann þá þegar suðr á leid. Létti hann
eigi, fyrr en hann kom suðr í Þrándheim ok hitti þar Óláf konung, ok segir
honum tíðendi slikt sem orðin várú í Bjarmalandsferðinni. (Óláfs saga helga
1945:234)

139. --Finnr sendi menn í Bjarkey til Þóris hunds, þet þar krefja leiðangrs sem
annars staðar. En er Þóri kömu bðð konungs, þá bjósk hann til ferðar ok skipaði
af húskorlum sinum skip þat, er hann hafði haft áðr um sumarit til Bjarmalands,
bjó þat með sinum eins kostnaði. (Óláfs saga helga 1945:250) --Þórir--sigldi í
Englandshaf, ok kom fram á Englandi, fyrir sidað á fund Knúts konungs, ok tók
hann vel við honum. Kom þá þat upp, at Þórir hafði þar of lausaðár, hafði þar
þat fæ allt, er þeir hóðu teikt á Bjarmalandi hváirtveggu ok Karli. En í tunnum
þeim inum miklum þá var botn skammt frá hinum botni, ok var þar í millum
drykk, en tunnum sjálf hvártveggi var full af grám skinnum ok bjór ok
safala.518 (Óláfs saga helga 1945:253)

Chapter 133. Thórir the Hound Joins Karli and Gunnstein.

During that winter King Óláf resided in Sarpsborg and had many troops about
him. He sent Karli of Hálogaland to the northern part of the land on his
missions. Karli first journeyed to the Uppland District, then north over the
mountains. He arrived at Nitharós and there took as much of the king's
revenues as he was empowered to, and selected a ship which seemed to him
fitting for the errand which the king had assigned to him; which was, to sail
north to Bjarmaland. The intention was that the king and he should be in

518 Kom þat þá upp, at þórir hafði of lausafjár, hafði hann þar þá allt lausað þat, er hann hafði haft af
Bjarmalandi/í Bjarmalands fornir hit fyrir sumarit, ok svá þat er hann tók af þeim Karla; en í tunnum
þeim hinum miklu, þá vor botn fyrir innan þann botninn, ok allskamti í milli, ok vor þar drykkirin í milli,
en hvártveggi tunnum sjálf vor reynadar full af gulli ok grám skinnum, björ ok safala-- Antiquités Russes
1850, 459.
partnership, each to have half of the revenue. Early in spring Karli steered his ship north to Hålogaland. Then Gunnstein, his brother, joined him. He had his own merchandise along. There were nearly thirty men on board, and straightway they sailed that same spring north to the Mork [Finnmark].

Thórir the Hound learned about that, so he sent word by messengers to the brothers informing them that he too intended to journey to Bjarmaland in the summer and that he wished to sail together with them and to have an equal share of their gain. The brothers in reply sent a word that Thórir should take along twenty-five men, which was the number of their crew. They demanded that of the goods they acquired, an equal portion should be assigned to each ship, not reckoning the merchandise each of them had along.

Now when the messengers Thórir had sent returned, he had launched a large vessel, half warship, half merchantman, which he owned, and had it equipped. As crew for this ship he used his men-servants, nearly eighty in number. Thórir alone had command of this force and was also owner of all the earnings that might be got on the expedition. When ready to sail he steered north along the land and met Karli north at Sandvær. Then they sailed together and had a favourable breeze.

When Thórir had joined them, Gunnstein said to his brother Karli that he thought Thórir rather strong in numbers; “and I consider,” he said, “that it is more advisable that we turn back and do not travel in such fashion that Thórir has power over us, because I do not trust him.”

Karli said, “I do not want to turn back; yet it is true that if I had known when at home in Langey that Thórir the Hound would join us with such a large crew, we would have taken more men along.”

The brothers talked about this with Thórir, asking him how it was that he had far more men with him than was stipulated. He made this answer: “I have a large ship, requiring a large crew. It would seem to me that on a hazardous enterprise such as this there never can be too many good men.”

During the summer they sailed, most of the time, as fast as the ships would travel. When there was a light breeze, Karli’s ship sailed faster, but when it freshened, Thórir caught up. Hence they rarely were together, yet never lost sight of one another. When they arrived in Bjarmaland they put into a market town, and dealings [with natives] began. All those who had merchandise along
sold it at full value. Thórir acquired an abundance of grey furs as well as beaver and sable pelts. Karli also had a very great amount of wares along, with which he bought many furs.

When the market closed they left by way of the Vína [Dvina] River, and then the truce with the people of the land was declared to be at an end. Now when they were on the high seas, they called a meeting of the crew. Thórir asked them if they perhaps cared to go on inland and make booty. The men answered that they were eager to, providing there was a definite chance to acquire booty. Thórir said that booty could be got if everything went well, “but it is not unlikely that there is danger of life on such an enterprise.” They all said they would risk it if there was hope of making booty. Thórir said it was the custom of Bjarmaland that when a wealthy man died, all his movable property was divided between the dead man and his heirs, in such fashion that he would get half or a third of it, and sometimes less. And this property was to be carried into the woods, sometimes put into grave mounds, and covered with earth. Sometimes, houses were built for that purpose. Thórir told them to make ready for the venture in the evening. It was agreed that no one was to leave the other in the lurch, and no one was to stay behind when the steersmen gave the signal to leave.

They left men behind to guard the ships, and the others went up on land. There they first found a level plain, then a big forest. Thórir headed them, followed by Karli and Gunnstein. Thórir bade the men proceed silently, “and rip some bark from trees so that one can see one tree [so marked] from the other.” They came to a large clearing, and in it was a tall wooden palisade with a gate in it which was locked. Six of the natives were set to guard the palisade every night, two of them every third part of it.

When Thórir and his men arrived at the palisade, the watchmen had gone home, and those who were to have the next shift had not yet come to keep guard. Thórir went up to the palisade and hooked his axe [over the top], then hoisted himself up and so got over the fence. By then Karli had got over it on the other side of the gate. Both came to the gate at the same time, removed the bars, and opened the gate. Then the men entered the enclosure.

Thórir told them, “In this enclosure is a mound, and in it is gold and silver all mixed up with earth. Let us go at it. But inside the yard there stands the god of
the Permians [Bjarmians] who is called Jómali. Let no one be so bold as to plunder him.” Thereupon they went at the mound and took out of it as much gold and silver as they could and carried it away in their garments. Much earth stuck to it, as might be expected. Then Thórir told them to leave the place. He said, “Now you brothers, Karli and Gunnstein, lead the way, and I shall bring up the rear.” Then all left by the gate. Thórir turned back to Jómali and snatched the silver bowl from his lap. It was filled with silver coins. He poured the silver into his kirtle and inserted his arm in the handle of the bowl, then left by the gate. Meanwhile all the company had passed out of the enclosure when they became aware that Thórir had stayed behind. Karli turned back to look for him, and they met inside the gate. Karli saw that Thórir had the silver bowl with him. Then Karli ran up to Jómali. He saw that he had a thick necklace around his neck. Karli swung his axe and cut in two the thong with which the necklace was fastened in the back of Jómali’s neck. That blow was so violent that Jómali’s head came off. The crash was so loud as to seem a marvel to all. Karli snatched the necklace, and then they made off. But no sooner was the crash heard than the watchmen appeared in the clearing and blew their horns. Right soon then they heard trumpets in all directions. They rushed toward the forest and into it, and heard in the clearing behind them the shouts and the hue and cry of the Permians [Bjarmians] who had come up.

Thórir the Hound went last of all the company. Two men ahead of him carried a sack for him. In it was something resembling ashes. Thórir put his hand in it and sometimes sowed the contents on their tracks behind them, at others he threw them forward over the company; and so they emerged from the forest onto the plain. They heard the army of the Permians [Bjarmians] pursuing them with shouts and evil-sounding howls. They rushed out of the forest after them on two sides, but at no time did the Permians [Bjarmians] or their missiles come so close as to do them any harm. From that they gathered that the Permians [Bjarmians] did not see them.

Now when they arrived at the ships, Karli and his men boarded his first, because they were first all along, but Thórir was farthest behind on land.

As soon as Karli and his company were aboard their ship they took down the tents and unmoored it, then hoisted sail, so their ship quickly gained the high

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519 It is worth noticing that in this text I have only added square brackets after the word “Permian”, all the others are added by the translator.
sea; whereas Thórir and his men took a longer time, for their ship was less manageable. And when they got their sail up, Karlí’s ship was far from land. Then both sailed across the White Sea. The nights were still light, so they sailed both day and night until Karlí one day in the evening put to shore by some islands, where they lowered the sail, cast anchor, and waited for the falling of the tide, because there was a strong current in the sea ahead of them. Then Thórir caught up with them. He also anchored. Thereupon they lowered a boat. Thórir stepped into it with some men and rowed over to Karlí’s ship. Thórir came on board of it. The brothers greeted him cordially. Thórir requested Karlí to hand over to him the necklace. “I consider myself most entitled to have the valuables taken there, because it was owing to me that we escaped without danger to our lives. Whereas you, Karlí, put us into the worst peril.”

Karlí replied, “King Óláf is entitled to half of all that I gain on this journey. I intend him to have the necklace. Go to see him, if you care to, and then maybe he will let you have the necklace, in case he does not wish to have it because I took it from Jómali.” Then Thórir said he wanted both parties to go up on the island to divide their booty. Gunnstein said that the tide was turning and that it was time to sail on. Then they pulled in their cables. When Thórir saw that, he stepped down into his boat and rowed to his ship.

By the time Thórir was able to hoist his sail, Karlí and his men had theirs up and had sailed quite a ways. Then they sailed on in such fashion that Karlí always was ahead, and both sailed with the utmost speed. So they proceeded till they came to Geirsver, where there is the first landing stage for ships from the north. There they both arrived early in the evening and moored their ships by the landing stage. Thórir’s ship lay inside the harbor, Karlí’s more on the outside. (Heimskringla1999:403–407)

--Thereupon Thórir proceeded home to Bjarkey. --Then Gunnstein first returned home to Langey Island, where he tarried only a short while before straightway journeying south. He did not stop till he arrived south in Trondheim. There he met King Óláf and told him what had happened on his expedition to Bjarmaland. (Heimskringla 1999:408)

Now when Finn proceeded to the northern part of Hálogaland he called [the farmers] to assemblies and despatched some of his men to request the levy where he thought it was required, and also to Bjarkey, to Thórir the Hound. There as elsewhere he had his men demand a levy. And when the messengers
of the king came to Thórir he made himself ready for the journey and manned with his housecarls the ship he had had the summer before on his expedition to Bjarmaland, which he had equipped entirely out of his own means. (Heimskringla 1999:420)

Thórir--sailed south till he reached the North Sea and England. He proceeded to the court of King Knút who received him well. It was then seen that Thórir had with him an abundance of valuables and all the money he and Karli had taken in Bjarmaland. In the large barrels there was a false bottom, and the drink in between, and both the barrels were mainly filled with squirrel skins and beaver and sable furs. (Heimskringla 1999:422)

Óláfs saga helga (“The Saga of King Olaf the Saint”) developed from the confluence of two lines of historical writing in medieval Norway and Iceland, the religious-historical tradition of saints’ lives and the secular-historical tradition of royal biography. The saga found many realisations during the period 1180–1230. The first full-scale saga rendition of the history of Óláfr is the so-called Oldest Saga of St. Óláfr from the end of the 12th century. Only fragments of this saga have been preserved. A Norwegian revision of the Oldest Saga is called the Legendary Saga of St. Óláfr, which contains a lot of clerical or legendary matter. In addition, other sagas about St. Óláfr’s life must have existed. For instance, the presentation of his life in Fagrskinna is dependent on one of these lost sagas. The versions of Óláfs saga helga culminate in Snorri STURLUSON’s Separate Saga of St. Óláfr (from c. 1230), which was later incorporated in a slightly revised version in Heimskringla. Extended versions are found in e.g. Flateyjarbók. SNORRI drew material from a number of sources, among them Orkneyinga saga, Færeyinga saga and Styrmir KÁRASON’s Óláfr biography. The final stage of development is the 14th century interpolated version of Separate Saga. In the later redactions, SNORRI’s version was used as the basic text, but it was expanded through the introduction of much of the (fanciful) material that SNORRI had discarded from his sources.520

Two older versions mention Karli and Thórir’s expedition to Bjarmaland in passing, without details of the journey, namely the so-called Oldest (eldsta) Saga of St. Óláfr and the Legendary Saga of St. Óláfr.521 The wording of the two is identical, although in the usual manner spelling varies slightly. ”Þórer hundr var oc

521 See Häme 1987a, 180 footnote 4.
ríkr maðr, hann hafðe faret til Biarmalanz oc drepit þar góðam mann þann er Karle hét; konongr sændi menn til ok fecc bórer nauðulega sætt firir illvirki sitt.”

*Heimskringla* contains one of the longest and most informative passages about the Norwegian expeditions to Bjarmaland. The narrative has an overall realistic tone. However, a few features of the narrative need to be explored with critical eye because of the nature of the source. The kings of Norway tried to gain control over the northern parts of the country, but despite some success, they were met with strong opposition. Thórir *hund* was the main opponent of King Óláfr in the north. He was driven into exile by the king in 1027, but he nevertheless ended up killing the king. In the light of this, it seems understandable as to why Óláfs saga helga would try to portray Karli and Gunnstein as heroes and Thórir as a villain. In the story of the Bjarmaland expedition, Thórir appears hostile to the brothers apparently without proper reason. Also, Thórir is using magic and this might be an attempt to make his character appear even worse, since magic is often portrayed in less than favourable light in the sagas of the Christian era. Considering the background, it appears that the killing of Karli may not have been as unprovoked as the saga portrays it. Thórir as a man of influence and wealth had his reason for opposing the king and trying to stop him sharing the economical profit in the north of Norway.

The reign of King Óláfr gives an idea of the dating of the events. Óláfr Haraldsson “the Saint” was king of Norway from 1015–1028. The expedition to Bjarmaland is commonly dated to 1026. The expedition consisted of two ships. One of these was under the command of the brothers Karli and Gunnstein from Hålogaland, the other belonged to Thórir, also from Hålogaland. Karli undertook the expedition on the assignment of King Óláfr. These two were to be partners and half the revenue was to go to each of them. Karli’s brother Gunnstein wanted to

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522 Antiquités Russes 1850, 459. The following is found in Fagrskinna, Ættartal Noregs konúnga: “99. -- bórir hundr var ok ríkr maðr, hann hafði farit til Bjarmalands ok drepit þar góðs mans son, er Karli hét, er farit hafði með honum; Ólafr konúngr sændi menn at taka bóri, ok fikk hann af því nauðulíga sætt, ok fór or landi.” Antiquités Russes 1852, 100. For another variation of the text see Fagrskinna 1902, 160. In English translation this goes as follows: “Bórir hundr (Hound) was also a powerful man; he had travelled to Bjarmaland and killed there a powerful man’s son who was called Karli, who had been travelling with him. King Óláfr sent men to arrest Bórir, and he was barely able to get quarter for the crime and left the country.” Fagrskinna 2004, 146.

523 Blom 1981, 283; Urbańczyk 1992, 44.


525 Årstallsliste 1993, 52; Krag 2000, 269.

526 Storm 1894, 97; Tallgren 1930, 60; Jansson 1936, 36; Mikkola 1942, 28; Haavio 1965, 16; Djupedal 1969, 9; Vilkuna 1980, 647; Pálsson–Edwards 1990b, 31; Urbańczyk 1992, 195; Carpelan 1993a, 231.
join the expedition with his own merchandise. Also Thórir wanted to join the expedition and sail along with the brothers in his own ship with his own crew and merchandise, although he demanded an equal share of the gain. This gives some kind of idea as to how the profit on the expeditions might be shared.\(^{527}\) However, considering the antagonism between the rich chieftains of Hálogaland and the Norwegian crown striving to gain control over the financial resources in the north, one should not perhaps trust the account in all details.

In any case, the description gives us an insight as to who went to Bjarmaland and how the expeditions could be organised. Men from Hálogaland were involved like some other sources also indicate.\(^{528}\) As in many other cases that the written sources mention, the king was involved as well.\(^{529}\) However, in this case the king himself did not join the expedition. He simply provided the means (funds in form of the king’s revenues and a ship chosen in Trondheim by Karli) to equip a ship for the journey and as a reward wanted to split the profit in half while his partner and the crew did the actual work. Others were able to join the trip and trade their own private merchandise. Thórir equipped a ship of his own. Karli’s brother travelled in the king’s ship, but was still allowed to bring his own merchandise. Thórir wanted to sail together with the brothers in his own ship, but despite separate ships and own merchandise, he still demanded to have an equal share of their gain. In response, the brothers demanded that of the goods they acquired in Bjarmaland, an equal portion should be assigned to each ship and this did not include the merchandise each of them brought privately. This is probably referring to the booty only. The text emphasises that Thórir owned the ship he sailed and had it equipped privately and was alone in charge of its command. He was consequently in principle also owner of all the earnings that might be gained by trade.

To sum up, it was agreed on that all who had their own merchandise with them were allowed to keep the profit made out of this merchandise. However, the king and Karli were partners and would split all profit in half between them. Thórir challenged the rules and wanted to have profit of all the gain. The brothers would not agree with this but wanted to keep separate the private merchandise and the booty they obtained together. According to Karli, the king was entitled to half of everything Karli gained on the journey, including booty. We can in this dispute over

\(^{527}\) There existed so-called félag tradition where resources (money and property, ships as well as sellable goods) were put together either for a certain length of time or for a specific enterprise, and the proceeds pooled. Müller-Boysen 2007, 182–183.

\(^{528}\) See e.g. Hakonar saga 1964, 70–71.

\(^{529}\) See e.g. Magnúss saga berfœtts 1951, 212; Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217.
the profit see traces of the antagonism between the interests of the Norwegian king and the interests of the influential Hålogalandians. The antagonism becomes even clearer after the expedition which ends up in Thórir looting the booty from the brothers’ ship. Since the antagonism is brought up, it might be that the details of how the booty was to be divided are correct overall.

Like nearly all the Scandinavian expeditions530, also this one took place during the spring and summer months. Ice-free waters, warmer weather and perhaps also the light nights that are mentioned all contributed to summer being the season of choice for sea journeys. The light nights allowed the Norwegians to sail both day and night. This might have been a welcome possibility on the way to Bjarmaland where the places to land were scarce in the north.531 The story also mentions a known feature of the Scandiavian ships, namely the tents that were aboard.532 It would seem like the overall frame of the account is realistic.

We are informed that there were nearly thirty men onboard the brothers’ ship. Later on it is said that if they had known how many men Thórir would take, they would have taken more men themselves. This might suggest that there was place for more men on their ship. It is perhaps unlikely that they would have taken a second ship because of the costs this would bring with it. The brothers asked Thórir to take with him twenty-five men since this was the number of their own crew (assumably not including the brothers themselves). However, Thórir preferred to sail with a large vessel that was half warship, half merchantman, and took nearly eighty men with him, presumably because such a large ship needed a large crew. There were many different types of ships made for different purposes. Finds of prehistorical ships give some indications of the different types and the amount of men they could carry. Karvi is a ship designed mainly for transporting many men with arms. Three famous finds in Oseberg, Gokstad and Tune in Norway represent this type. Based on the number of oarholes, ships of this size would take a crew of about 30–35 hands including oarsmen, captain, helmsman and look-out. Trade ships like Skuldelev I are called knar and would take a crew of at least 8–10 men.533 Thirty sounds realistic as a number of crew on a ship of fairly regular size. Eighty as a number of crew sounds fairly large, but the text indicates that the ship Thórir was sailing was large, larger than a regular trading ship. As a rule, warships were

531 Binns 1961, 50, 52.
532 Tents that were used on shore were seemingly a standard equipment of a ship. See e.g. Christensen 1987, 23.
533 Crumlin-Pedersen 1983, 32–35; Sjøvold 1985, 22; Christensen 1987, 7.
designed to carry more men. In this light, a crew amounting to nearly eighty men
is feasible.

According to the saga, crew on Thórir’s ship consisted of his menservants. This
would seem to be the regular source of crew for Thórir, since the saga mentions
menservants (housecarls) as a crew of his ship on another occasion as well. We are
not specifically told the background of the crew on the brothers’ ship, but at least
some of them probably came from Hålogaland, from the brothers’ home in Langey.
At least this was a possible place to get crew members since Karli indicates that if
he had known how many men Thórir was going to take with him, he would have
taken more men himself when he was at home in Langey.

The expedition started with Karli sailing to Trondheim. Here a suitable ship
was selected for the expedition. Early in the spring Karli sailed to Hålogaland and
continued to Finnmark. Karli and Gunnstein started the journey by sailing north
along the land. They had established a meeting point with Thórir in Sandvær.
Again, the location of Bjarmaland is described as northerly. On the way back the
Norwegians started their journey by sailing across Gandvik and then sailed both
day and night until Geirsver, the first possible landing stage for ships from the
north. At the end of the journey Gunnstein met King Óláfr, his brother’s business
partner, in Trondheim. The description of the route corresponds well with the
details mentioned in other written sources. Although some localities are mentioned
they unfortunately do not help us localise Bjarmaland with better precision since
these localities are all found on the coast of Norway or Finnmark.

Gandvik makes its first appearance in connection with Bjarmaland in Óláfs
saga helga. It is told that the Norwegians sailed across Gandvik on their way from
Bjarmaland. Gandvik is most often identified with either the whole of the White
Sea or with just its westernmost bay, today known as Kantalahti/Kandalaks/Kandalax/Kandalaksja. Some scholars also indicate that it
may have referred to the Arctic Ocean, although it seems like this identification is
not currently supported. It seems that “Hafsbotn” is the old Norwegian name for

534 Binns 1993b, 578.
535 His home was in Lango in Vesterålen in Hålogaland. See Storm 1894, 97–98; Urbańczyk 1992, 195.
536 He came from his home in Bjarkø in northern Hålogaland. See Storm 1894, 97; Urbańczyk 1992, 196.
537 This has been identified as Sandvær outside Ringvatsøy (latitude 70) in Finnmark. See Storm 1894, 98; Heimskringla 1999, 403 footnote 2.
538 Geirsver is identified as Gjesvær, situated northeast on the island of Mageroya, not far from the North Cape. See Rafn 1850, 340; Häme 1987a, 87; Heimskringla 1999, 407 footnote 4.
539 Kandalaksjskaja Guba in Russian for Kantalahti Bay. See Ross 1951, 429.
the Arctic Ocean and this means that Gandvik cannot be the same as the Arctic Ocean. Consequently, Gandvik must be either the White Sea or a specific part of it. 540

When the Norwegians arrived in Bjarmaland they started to trade in a market. We are told that all the Norwegians who had merchandise sold it at full value. To sell, though, is perhaps a wrong choice of wording in this case, since it obviously was barter trade that took place. Actual money was not needed; instead the Norwegians had a variety of goods with them. It is not specified what kind of merchandise the Norwegians had brought. We can only guess that it may have been metal in form of tools, ornaments or even weapons as well as fabrics, food or other such common merchandise. 541 We are given no indications as to what might have been the merchandise that was in special demand in Bjarmaland. In any case, the Norwegians apparently had something to offer that the Bjarmians were willing to accept. We are told that Thórir acquired an abundance of furs including grey furs (i.e. squirrel542), sable and beaver. Karli is said to have had a very great amount of wares with him and with these he bought furs as well. This is actually the first time furs are mentioned in connection with Bjarmaland.

There is no doubt that both squirrel and beaver existed in Fennoscandia during the Late Iron Age and medieval times. 543 What has caused more debate is the reference to sables. It has sometimes been assumed that these animals were only ever found in the far eastern parts of Europe. For instance WALLERSTRÖM finds that living sables have never existed west of River Pechora in the eastern part of European Russia or west of the Northern Dvina River and the Mezen River. 544 However, others have come to different conclusions. It is in fact rather likely that also sable once lived as far west as the eastern part of Fennoscandia, including areas like Northern Finland and Sweden, Karelia and parts of the Kola Peninsula. 545 Consequently, it would seem like the distribution of sable cannot be used as an argument to place Bjarmaland as far east as the Northern Dvina River. In any case, the distribution of sable cannot be used as a decisive argument for location of

541 According to BRØGGER, furs, butter and cereal were the main trade products of the Iron Age. Other wares like wool, train oil and iron were also important, but not as fundamental as the first three. Brogger 1936, 76.
542 See e.g. Storm 1894, 98; Brogger 1936, 75.
543 Martin 1986, 8, 10, 64.
544 Wallerström 1995, 315.
Bjarmaland. Although according to the saga the Norwegians purchased sable furs in Bjarmaland, the text does not mention where the Bjarmians had obtained the furs. It is quite as possible to hunt in the areas close to home as it is to embark on long distance hunting expeditions. Finally, it is also possible to purchase furs from people far away and sell this merchandise further. The conclusion is that even in the light of the distribution of the fur animals, it is quite feasible that the Bjarmians could have lived west of the Northern Dvina River even if they hunted the sables in their home district or close by.

After the dealings had come to an end, the market closed and the Norwegians left along “Vina”. This being done the truce ended. Again the name “Vina” comes up in connection with Bjarmaland. In this case, it is clearly defined as a river (ánni Vínu).

It is interesting that a truce was needed in order to trade. This indicates that the relations between the Norwegians and Bjarmians were not peaceful as a rule. One may only assume that the looting of the mound described later on was not an exception and that the Norwegians generally took the opportunity to loot in Bjarmaland. This would perhaps be cause enough for hostility and explains why a truce was required when the Norwegians wished to trade.

There are parallels to this in general habits of the era. To be “i viking” was a widespread practise in Norway. This included a combination of trade, plunder and robbery after certain rules. All foreign coasts were target for plundering except for during a short truce established for trading. Expeditions required both capital and men and were most often a communal activity where the participants shared the profit. Sometimes this kind of expedition was financed by a rich person who would not physically join in.546 According to HANSEN, the Norwegian expeditions to Bjarmaland had a sporadic character including pillaging and ravaging and were parallel to the “Viking” expeditions in other parts of Europe. Like in other regions, in Bjarmaland peaceful conditions for trade were restricted to specific market or bartering times. The periods in between appear to have been of a belligerent nature.547 It may be worth noticing that the expedition to Bjarmaland in Óláfs saga helga is not specifically called a “Viking” expedition, although many other expeditions (but not all that fit the characteristics) mentioned in the written sources are so named. In any case, as far as looting and trading go, they correspond very well with the general practise of “Viking” expeditions.

546 Brøgger 1928, 30.
It seems like the marketplace by the river was not very far from the sea, since on two occasions it is mentioned that it did not take very long before the expeditioners reached the high sea after leaving the river. Unfortunately, this does not help us localise the marketplace more closely. TALLGREN is of the opinion that large trading places could not appear, instead seasonal gathering and marketplaces are more feasible.548

The saga describes the landscape of Bjarmaland in general terms. There was a level plain close to the river and beyond this a big forest. The big forest is a feature that appears in several texts549, but it is a rather generic description fitting to most of the areas in the north of Europe. ROSS interprets the level plains as tundra.550 However, as far as I know, tundra covers large areas and does not simply turn into forest in a matter of few kilometres. It does not seem realistic to suggest that the banks of the river were covered with tundra landscape, but as soon as one left the river, the landscape turned into forest.

Although the trade had been profitable, the Norwegians wanted to have a chance for even greater profit. Following Thórir’s suggestion the men went inland in search for booty. Thórir was the expert on this enterprise and seemingly knew a great deal about the habits of the Bjarmians. It has been suggested that he was familiar with the area, in other words, he must have been in Bjarmaland before.551 Thórir gives an account of Bjarmian burial habits. The custom was that when a wealthy man died, all his movable property was divided between the man and his heirs. The dead man would get half or one third or sometimes even less. This amount was taken to the woods or to the grave mound and covered with earth. Sometimes a house was built for the purpose. The burial ground that the Norwegians are set to loot is said to be on a clearing in the woods and surrounded by a high palisade that can be entered by a gate. It is also mentioned that watchmen kept nightwatch in three shifts. This was probably to prevent looting of the valuables.

It is very difficult to decide how much of this description is authentic and how much is made up for the purposes of the story. Certainly the watchmen increase the suspense and offer the chance of things going wrong. The watchmen need not be a realistic feature, rather an invented element to improve the plot. It is, however, possible to think that perhaps the Bjarmians were prepared for the Norwegian

548 Tallgren 1930, 63–64.
549 See e.g. Órvar-Odd 1888, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32.
550 Ross 1940, 44.
551 Haavio 1965, 230.
looting and to prevent this, they had set up guards. It is known that among some Finno-Ugrian peoples the holy places were guarded on occasion. This has been recorded with certainty at least among the Voguls.552

What is most likely a realistic feature is that Bjarmians like so many peoples of the time buried their (wealthy) deceased in mounds made of earth and perhaps stones. This habit of burial would also include burying each person with an amount of personal belongings like weapons, ornaments and tools occasionally including valuable metals like silver and gold. These might in some cases have presented a considerable value and certainly grave robbing is known to have happened. For instance, in the case of the famous Gokstad ship burial, the grave robbers took the jewellery and the weapons and perhaps some other valuables, but were not interested in simple wooden objects.553 The existence of burial mounds seems a realistic feature and most likely some form of this type of burial was practised in Bjarmaland as well. VILKUNA has described the mound inside the palisade as a cemetery.554 Others have referred to the site as a sanctuary, temple or a place of worship555, a kind of sacrificial site. The existence of an image of a god would seem to support this claim. However, it would seem like the site was a combination of a burial and sacrificial site. The realistic description of a burial mound clearly seems to indicate that it was not a question of a sacrificial site only. However, it is known that among many Finno-Ugrian peoples sacrifices took place in special sites. This kind of practise is recorded among the Voguls, in Perm’ and among people living in the White Sea area. Silver and other metals (gold, copper, iron, tin) as well as furs are known to have been included among the sacrificed objects.556

It is more difficult to judge whether the division of property is based on fact or fiction. It is within limits of reason that there was some authentic knowledge of Bjarmian habits beyond the description. After all, the author does mention a word of Finno-Ugrian origin (Jómali) in the text and this would indicate some closer knowledge of Bjarmaland, perhaps based on narratives of Bjarmaland visitors. However, the account of the division of property may just as well be based on the

552 Krohn 1894, 48.
555 Tallgren 1931, 101; Hansen 1996, 60.
556 Krohn 1894, 48, 50–52, 57, 63. Information has been preserved that a family who had moved from the Kantalahiti area and was living in Muhos by the Oulujoki River had preserved the habit of sacrificing money. It has also been recorded in 1496 that a captain on a ship that stopped at Sviatoi Nos’ because of unfavourable wind made sacrifices by a special rock. Krohn 1894, 57, 63.
situation in areas other than Bjarmaland or be made up for the purposes of the story. We have little chance of verifying the source of the account either way. Medieval written sources do contain some accounts of division of property, although none that I know of contains an identical description. As an example there can be mentioned an account of Estonian habits of sharing the property of the deceased included in the account of Wulfstan in King Alfred’s Orosius translation. According to the description, all of the dead person’s possessions (excluding though what was spent for drinking and games before the burial took place and his clothes and weapons that followed him on the pyre) would be distributed in a riding game.\textsuperscript{557} Additionally, Egils saga contains an account of how the Norwegians and Kvens shared a loot. In this case, though, it is not a question of sharing the property of a deceased person and consequently one can hardly draw parallels, although the description also mentions one third as a share that in this case was what the king of the Kvens as a rule would get of all the plunder put together.\textsuperscript{558}

It would seem to me that the fact that there was a burial mound not very far from the river indicates that the Bjarmians lived close to the marketplace. Generally, people were buried close to their home.\textsuperscript{559} The existence of a burial mound indicates normal settlement with men, women and children. Thórir’s account of the customs in Bjarmaland refers to childbirth and this also indicates permanent settlement. We have, however, no way of knowing whether Thórir’s description of the custom is correct in its details, whether the deceased got one third, one half or some other amount of his possessions with him or indeed if there was any established amount at all. However, it is likely that some possessions were included since this was the common practise of the time.

The mentioned palisade with a gate and the possible houses built on top of the grave are all features that might perhaps be truthful, but may just as well be inventions. The description that houses were sometimes built on top of the grave brings in mind the timber-frame graves (the so-called houses of the dead) that are found in several areas in the Russian north. This type of grave has been excavated e.g. on the left bank of the Vaga River near the village of Korbola where there were eighteen north-south oriented timber-frame graves including both male and female graves with either inhumation or cremation burials. These burials that were dated

\textsuperscript{557} See Anglo-Saxon World 1984, 67–68.
\textsuperscript{558} See Egil’s Saga 1997, 47. It has been pointed out that the rules of division presented in Egils saga have parallels with practices in the 10th century Byzantium and with the 12th century Kiev. See Wallerström 1995, 315.
\textsuperscript{559} See e.g. Ovsyannikov 1980, 234–235; Koivunen 1985, 56.
to the 11th-12th centuries are similar to the timber-framed burials that are common in Karelia. However, the other finds on this site are of a different character than what is common in Karelia. This is why sites with timber-framed burials on the White Sea area cannot be regarded as Karelian, despite clear similarities in the burial form. Timber-framed burials dated to the 11th century have also been discovered in the Pinega River area. Two of the burials at the early medieval (12th-13th centuries) cemetery on the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula by the Varzuga River contain wooden constructions. One of the graves contained a burial in a wooden coffin, probably of log frame type. Another burial was made in a wooden cist. Low mounds with timber-framed burials are known in the Aunus (Olonets) area. The mounds contain inhumation burials made on the ground level inside thick wooden frames. These burials are dated to the 11th-13th centuries. All these features might be reminiscent of “houses” built on top of the grave. Perhaps the Scandinavians had seen this type of grave during their travels.

Also the palisade with a gate could be a realistic feature. It is known that many Finno-Ugrian peoples had special holy places (most often in the woods) that were on many occasions fenced and had up to three gates. The Finno-Ugrian peoples at Perm’ and Volga had wooden fences around their holy places. Fences with gates have been recorded at least among the Votyaks, the Mari and the Mordvians. It seems like the gates were only opened for special ceremonies. The Saami holy places were natural locations with images of gods of wood and stone. The Saami had fences of stone, sometimes with a layer of wood on top. In Estonia wooden fences were common. Also the Finns had pagan holy places but no certain information has been preserved as to whether these had fences.

560 Ovsyannikov 1980, 230, 232; Huurre 1983, 422; Ovsyannikov 1984, 98–105; Uino 1992, 609; Wallerström 1995, 343, 120–123; Saksa 1998, 178. According to WALLERSTRÖM, the spreading of the “houses of death” seems to have the Karelians, the Vepsians and the international fur trade market as a common nominator. Wallerström 1995, 343. WALLERSTRÖM also interprets certain timber-framed constructions at Tornio Hietaniemi as burials. He considers the constructions as graves of the Karelian type despite late dating to the 14th-17th centuries. Wallerström 1995, 109, 114–115, 119–127. UINO has doubted that the burials should be regarded as Karelian. Uino 1992, 609. However, there may be reason to doubt whether the timber-framed constructions should be regarded as graves at all. Both their location close to the river and the late dating give grounds to suggest that they had a different function, probably that of market stalls built for the famous Tornio market. Personal communication by Lennart Klang. The habit of building houses for the dead was practised until recent times. Harva 1948, 488, 490.

561 Krohn 1894, 16–17, 19, 23–29, 31–35, 44, 48, 50. It is perhaps interesting to notice that it is known that one of the Mari sites had a tree that was dedicated to the god Juma. Krohn 1894, 19.
The saga tells us about a Bjarmian god called Jómali. It is generally agreed on that the word Jómali is an adopted form of the Finnish word “jumala” meaning god. Variations of the word are found in Baltic Fennic languages (Finnish and Karelian jumala, in Aunus jumal, jumallu, Estonian jumal, jummal, Livonian jumāl, Vepsian jumā, jumal, gumaļ, Vatyan jumala, Lydian d’jumal, dumal, dumaļu) as well as the Saami language (Ter and Kil’din jimmel, Inari immel, ibmel, Norwegian Finnmark (j)ibmel, Frostvik, Offerdal, Undersåker and Härjedalen jippmēl, Akkala jimmel, Lule juppmeel, Arjeplog uppmēl, Malå jubmel, Stensele jupmēle, Vilhelmina juppmele). An identical form is not found elsewhere, but certain words are related in both Mari and Mordvin, and perhaps also in Komi and Udmurt, Ostyak and Vogul. ROSS gives a fuller account of these. It is difficult to say if OWN. Jómali could represent the protoform of the Saami forms like juppmeel, but on philological grounds this is somewhat unlikely. It is worth noticing that the word is not found in Komi. All evidence is in favour of Bjarmians being Baltic Fenns. Most scholars have been of the opinion that “jumala” was a generic name for all gods that the Scandinavians took for a proper name. HAAVIO, though, maintains that “jumala” was a proper name. His ideas, however, are of no consequence in this connection.

TALLGREN finds that Jómali cannot be a Permian, Saami or Kolt-Saami word. Since the word for god differs from “jumala” in all these languages, the possibility that Jómali could have been a Saami word that was attached to the Bjarmians must be excluded. Instead, it must come directly from the Bjarmians. The word in his opinion may be only either Karelian or Vepsian. Several other scholars are of the opinion that Jómali is a Karelian word. HANSEN finds on the basis of the word Jómali that the indigenous population in Bjarmaland belonged to a Baltic-Finnic speaking people and thus the Karelians cannot be excluded. KIRKINEN finds that the name Jómali is related to the Finnish jumala, but probably does not derive from this word. Instead, the Finno-Ugrian languages of

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563 Interestingly, the oldest text written in Baltic Fennic language, a birchbark letter nr 292 from Novgorod probably contains the pagan god’s name jumala(a). Alaräisänen 2004, 11. This shows that the word was in use in medieval times.
564 Suomen kielen etymologinen sanakirja I, 122; Suomen sanojen alkuperä. Etymologinen sanakirja. 1 A-K, 247; Storm 1894, 98; Tallgren 1930, 79; Ross 1940, 50; Haavio 1965, 198–199.
565 Haavio 1965, 198–199.
566 Tallgren 1930, 79.
567 Storm 1894, 98; Vilkuna 1980, 648.
568 Hansen 1996, 60.
Eastern Russia are a more likely source. This is because a statue was involved in the cult of the god.  

The general conclusion is that jumala, found in Finnish and Karelian, in closest to the Jómali of the sagas, and in my opinion one of these languages must be the source of Jómali. Estonian, Livonian, Vepsian and Vatyans all have the form jumal which is fairly close to Jómali as well, but in my opinion it is unlikely that the source of Jómali would be any of these. This is simply because the form jumal does not correspond to Jómali as well as jumala does, the last letter being omitted in jumal. Also, if we consider geography, it seems unlikely that any of the other four could be connected with Bjarmaland. The Scandinavians may have come in contact with Estonians, Livonians, Vepsians and Vatyans on their travels in the Baltic area, but I find it unlikely that any word the Scandinavians may have heard in these areas would have become connected with Bjarmaland. According to ROSS, the one native Finno-Ugric word is sufficient to prove that the Bjarmians were Finno-Ugrian. A more refined definition makes them Baltic Fenns, speaking either Finnish or Karelian. It is perhaps impossible to define the language more closely. We are after all dealing with circumstances from nearly a thousand years ago. At this time the differences between the languages were not necessarily as defined as today. Considering how close Finnish and Karelian still are, I find that it is pointless and indeed needless to speculate more with the language.

It is unclear how the saga author got to know the word “jumala”. It would seem like there existed a background of local knowledge of Bjarmaland and its language. Perhaps there were oral accounts of Bjarmaland that used this word, told by people who had been in Bjarmaland. However, we can only speculate about the source of the word.

This is the first time the word Jómali appears in connection with Bjarmaland, but several of the fornaldarsögur mention it as well, most likely due to influence of Óláfs saga helga. The story indicates that there was a statue of this deity inside the palisade. It is referred to an anthropomorphic statue with head, neck and feet. It was probably rather large since when the head fell, there was a huge noise. The statue was ornated with metal artefacts including a thick necklace and a silver bowl filled with silver coins placed on the statue’s lap. It is not quite clear if this statue was in standing or sitting position. The fact that the statue had a silver bowl on his lap would seem to indicate a sitting position; otherwise it is hard to imagine how

569 Kirkinen 1963, 38.
570 Russ 1940, 48–49.
571 Vuorela 1960, 64. Karelian and Finnish are the closest of the Baltic Fennic languages.
the bowl could be placed on the lap. TALLGREN suggests that the statue may have been made of wood.572

The text in Óláfs saga helga describes a religious site, out in the open, without any kind of “temple” building but with certain wooden constructions (fence and the grave) as well as a statue of a deity adorned with valuables.

ADAM OF BREMEN mentions the statues of Odin, Thor and Freyr in the temple in Uppsala in Sweden. The written sources mention also statues of gods among the Russians and the Scandinavians.573 HAAVIO’s suggestion that the statue of Jómali in fact was an actual statue of the Indian god Yuma, has not much credence. He finds some similarities between these statues (these are sometimes depicted with a bowl or a necklace) and the description of the statue of Jómali, but not all the features are similar.574 Certainly, if one keeps looking, it is possible to find similarities among a group of objects that are used for a similar purpose. Similarities are not always a sign of contact or connection, but simply arise from the similar background.

Both the statue of Jómali and the mound (interpreted as a sacrificial mound) are Saami features according to TALLGREN. He finds that all the information does not have to be completely reliable and should not be taken literally. The account may have incorporated Saami habits that were more familiar to the Norwegians. TALLGREN also refers to a Permian idol and says that at least the description of the statue in the saga may have been based on a fact.575 I do not see any specific reason to think that the description would be based on Saami features although the Norwegians undoubtedly were familiar with these. Although the objects TALLGREN refers to in my opinion are too easterly to be directly connected with the Bjarmians, they nevertheless offer an archaeological parallel indicating that it is not completely inconceivable that similar artefacts could have existed also in the neighbouring areas.

HAAVIO opens up for the possibility that there existed cult places for the god Jumi/Jume/Juma which he identifies with Jómali.576 Although I do not agree with the identification as the evidence is rather feeble, HAAVIO’s observations indicate

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572 Tallgren 1930, 61; Tallgren 1931, 102.
575 Tallgren 1930, 61–62, 82; Tallgren 1931, 110 footnote 5. TALLGREN finds that the existence of a temple of Jómali (referred to in fornaldarsögur like Sturlaug saga starfsama and Bósa saga) is not likely. There are no indications that either the Karelians or the Vepsians would have had anything of the kind.
576 Haavio 1965, 218.
the possibility of cult places. However, the description of a cult place could also be modelled according to Scandinavian tradition. Apparently there existed both open air locations and buildings for sacrifice, with cult images. There were also Finno-Ugrian cult places that often had statues of gods and these offer an even closer parallel indicating that actually the description in the saga may be based on genuine knowledge of Finno-Ugrian religious habits. Many of the statues were made of wood and had an anthropomorphic form. Anthropomorphic statues of gods are known to have existed at least among the Voguls, the Ostyaks, the Votyaks, the Saami in Finland, the Ingrians, the Livonians, the Estonians and probably also the Finns. We know with certainty that in Northern Finland there existed trees with carved images in human shape.

All in all, the features of the story seem to fit to what is known about the pre-Christian religion of many Finno-Ugrian peoples. The religion may well have been very similar in Bjarmaland. It is, however, impossible to localise the Bjarmians more closely on basis of religious habits, since the habits among all the Finno-Ugrian peoples seem to have been rather similar, both among the peoples of Volga and Perm as well as the Estonians, the Finns and Karelians.

Necklaces and neckrings of different kinds are a common find in late prehistorical and early medieval finds in Northern Fennoscandia. Also coins, especially silver ones, are among the finds, sometimes in great numbers. There are a great number of silver coins from the Late Iron Age in Scandinavia, Finland, the Baltic area and Russia. These include both eastern (e.g. Arabian, Byzantine) and western coins (e.g. Anglo-Saxon, Frisian, German). Some coins are found in the area between the Lake Ladoga and Finnmark. There are finds from Kuolajärvi, Kuusamo, Sortavala, Kurkijoki, Rääsilä and Rautu. In Aunus, Arabic coins of the 10th century are found in Petroskoi at the River Neglinka. Two treasures from the 11th century are known in Lotinapelto and one lost treasure in Kargopol. Coins are nearly nonexistent in Northern Dvina, Perm’, Petsora and Kama.

The silver bowl that is mentioned seems like a more rare artefact. The bowl is supposed to have a handle and must have been cauldron-like. Some silver bowls of eastern origin have been found in Perm’, but none by the Northern Dvina River.

577 Lidén 1993, 639.
580 Tallgren 1930, 71.
These bowls, however, lack handles and do not thus fit the description found in the saga. The bowls of Perm’ were used for religious purposes.⁵⁸¹

Horns that are mentioned do not need to be an especially Bjarmian feature. Signal horns made of metal (brass), carved wood or animal horn were used in medieval times to signal arrivals, while hunting and in times of war to signal an advance or retreat.⁵⁸² It is not certain that Bjarmians had horns at all, since the feature may well be added for the purposes of the plot only. On the other hand, the horns may well have existed among Bjarmians since they were in common use.

In the otherwise realistic sounding story⁵⁸³, Thórir’s usage of magic in concealing the Norwegian intruders from the Bjarmian pursuers with the help of spreading an ashlike substance from a sack is the only feature that with certainty indicates that imagination was used in telling the story. This kind of magic to hide people is mentioned also elsewhere in Heimskringla. Thórir is associated with magic also later in the story.⁵⁸⁴ This may be propaganda since Thórir was the enemy of King Óláf and killed him at Stiklestad. He is presented in a bad light since he was from Hálogaland and a rival to the kings in the south.

According to the saga, the Bjarmians chased the looting Norwegians. They could not reach the Norwegians but shot arrows towards them. No actual battle is mentioned, but Orvar-Odds saga that has been influenced by the sequence here has turned the chase into a battle.⁵⁸⁵ In the light of other earlier texts, the battle between the Norwegians and the Bjarmians is known to have happened.⁵⁸⁶ It may be that the Bjarmians are said to have used arrows simply because they were too far away to use other weapons like swords or axes, but it may also be that bows and arrows were the weapon of choice for them in any case. At least one of the verses in Heimskringla, Haralds saga gráfeldar refers to bows and arrows as the weapon of the Bjarmians.⁵⁸⁷
The text mentions a strong current in the sea by some islands. The existence of tide is also mentioned. The waters on the coast of Finnmark are known as difficult\textsuperscript{588} and this piece of information seemingly indicates the knowledge of the circumstances. Although this is a rather vague reference it is possible that this is a reference to the maelstrom\textsuperscript{589} that is also mentioned on a couple of other occasions including in a passage in \textit{Flateyjarbók} (\textit{Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar}) and \textit{Historia Norvegiae}.\textsuperscript{590}

It is interesting to notice that the expeditions to Bjarmaland were considered as a rather dangerous enterprise. Also, it is worth noticing that several people could go together each with their own merchandise and ships. There needed to be no real partnership between the participants but some form of co-operation could occur anyway. It was probably rather demanding economically to go to Bjarmaland, because one needed a ship, crew and merchandise. Capital was needed in order to accomplish all this and consequently it required a wealthy person to instigate an expedition of this kind. Kings and local men of power were resourceful enough to design and undertake such a journey. Because it was so demanding to set out on such a journey the profit must have been worth the effort, otherwise the Norwegians would hardly have bothered. As this excerpt indicates, looting after the trading was perhaps not exceptional. This may indicate that a considerable part of the profit did not come from trade but from looting and it was the looting that widened the margins of profit enough to make such a “hazardous enterprise” worth one’s while. Regarding all these characteristics it does not seem like Bjarmaland expeditions deferred from other expeditions of the era.\textsuperscript{591} JOHNSEN suggests that the expeditions to Bjarmaland may often have been an excuse to plunder the Saami on the way (cf. \textit{Ǫrvar-Odds saga}) and trade a little. According to him, the taxation of the Saami became gradually a monopoly of the king and was probably not enforced fully before the 11th century. People who were not allowed to take tax used the expeditions as an excuse. Also, all trade with the Saami was forbidden. The king’s men went hard against those who broke the monopoly. A law from c. 1105/1115 forbade all trade with furs (except by the king) north of southern Helgeland (i.e. Hålogaland).\textsuperscript{592} This again shows the tendency from the side of the Norwegian

\textsuperscript{588} Binns 1961, 50, 52.

\textsuperscript{589} In a text from c. 1700 a place with maelstrom is called Østkinn. Russian sources show that this was close to Sviatoi Nos’. The maelstrom itself is said to be in “Motka”. See Storm 1894, 98, 101.

\textsuperscript{590} See Antiquités Russes 1852, 116–117; The Saga of Hacon 1964, 73–74.

\textsuperscript{591} See e.g. Brugger 1928, 30; Hansen 1996, 59–60.

\textsuperscript{592} Norges Gamle Love 1846, 257; Johnsen 1923, 16; Hagland–Sandnes 1994, xxxiii, 227.
kings to expand their influence towards the north and gain control over the profitable trade and taxation in the area.

Thórir went to England and took with him an abundance of valuables and all the money he had acquired in Bjarmaland. This gives us an indication of what might happen to the merchandise, mostly furs of different kinds, that the Norwegians obtained in Bjarmaland. In this case it seems like Thórir sold the furs plus the booty from the mound in England. In other words, England was one possible market for furs and other merchandise obtained in Bjarmaland. This assumption based on the saga text seems to be verified by medieval English customs registers that on many occasions mention among other things furs of different kinds (grey and red squirrel, beaver, bear, otter, elk and lynx) that were imported from Norway.\footnote{Urbanićzyk 1992, 231.} According to the saga, Thórir robbed Gunnstein’s ship after killing Karli\footnote{See Heimskringla 1999, 408.} and consequently all the merchandise obtained in Bjarmaland was sold in England. It is unclear what the king and Karli would have done to their share had they been able to keep it. It is by no means improbable that also this share would have been sold abroad, since it is unlikely that Norway alone would have provided a large and profitable enough market for them.

The journey to Bjarmaland had an aftermath. On the way home Thórir killed Karli and was required to pay a fine for this deed. The story goes as follows: “He set forth these terms for compensation: that Thórir was to pay the king ten marks in gold, and to Gunnstein and his kinsmen another ten marks, and for the robbery and destruction of property still another ten marks. ‘And it is to be paid at once,’ he said. Thórir said, ‘This is a huge fine.’”\footnote{Heimskringla 1999, 421 footnote 1.} The fine makes thirty marks in gold altogether. One mark is equal in weight to eight ounces.\footnote{Heimskringla 1999, 421.} This makes altogether 240 ounces of gold. In grams this means 240 x 28.349523 = 6803.8855g, i.e. 6.8038855 kilograms of gold, in other words, a fairly massive amount.

Attempts have been made to count out the values. According to Bøgger, the fine amounted to 240 marks silver. He has counted the value of Thórir’s fine to be 25 000 Norwegian crowns (in 1928). He finds it is a large sum, but not necessarily exaggerated, although exaggeration often is connected with money in the sagas.\footnote{Brøgger 1928, 34.} Tallgren, however, is of the opinion that Thórir’s fine cannot have been as large as the saga claims since the booty obtained in Bjarmaland cannot have
been so large. He has converted BROGGER’s calculation in Finnish currency of the time concluding that the fine amounted to about 250 000 Finnish marks.\textsuperscript{598} Also HAAVIO has calculated the fine. According to him, Thórir probably paid with the money he had robbed from Bjarmaland. He payed ten gold coins to the king and another ten to Gunnstein and as a recompensation for Karli’s property another ten. Another version has it that he paid 240 silver coins. The amounts are identical if the ratio of gold and silver in the 11\textsuperscript{th} century in the north was 1:8\textsuperscript{599}. In the middle of the 10\textsuperscript{th} century the ratio was 1:12 in southerly Europe. One silver mark included about 200 silver coins which means that Thórir needed to pay \(200 \times 240 = 48000\) silver coins. Snorri tells that Thórir took most of his booty with him to England. He had all he and Karli had taken in Bjarmaland. The amounts are staggering and some researchers have commented that when it comes to money, the popular stories of all peoples include exaggeration. HAAVIO finds that the amounts here seem unreliable. On the other hand, he seems to think that if Bjarmaland had not been as rich as told, it would hardly have been the regular target for plundering. In addition, Vikings were used to enormous booty, e.g. \textit{Danegeld} in England. As a comparison it may be interesting to know that a hoard with 100 000 coins has been found in the southern shore of the Lake Ladoga.\textsuperscript{600} More “regular” silver treasures can contain nearly ten marks worth of metal. Hoards with up to ten kilograms of precious metal are not uncommon. In comparision, the largest known “Viking” hoard from around 905 in northwestern England weighs around forty kilograms. In Denmark the largest medieval hoard contained over thirty-three kilograms of precious metals and consisted of 81,422 coins.\textsuperscript{601} This means that large conglomerations of money were not totally uncommon.

The amount of the fine is staggering, but the text seems to indicate that it was meant to be. Thórir himself comments the amount. Although texts tend to exaggerate the amounts of money, it seems to me that the mentioned fine is just barely within the limits of possibility if we consider that it was intended to be staggering. The thing is, Thórir never paid the whole fine. According to the saga, he actually paid less than one third of the intended sum. What Thórir paid was paid in silver, borrowed from the crew of the ships. Thórir also had to give up the

\textsuperscript{598} Tallgren 1930, 82–83.
\textsuperscript{599} It may be interesting to know that according to medieval Norwegian weight system, one mark corresponds to eight \textit{ører} which corresponds to twenty-four \textit{ertoger} which corresponds to 240 penninger. Brøgger 1936, 78
\textsuperscript{600} Haavio 1965, 185–186, 196. He counted the value of the fine to be 100 000 Finnish marks in 1965.
\textsuperscript{601} Brøgger 1936, 82; Graham-Campbell 1993, 287–288.
Bjarmian necklace he had taken from Karli. The description in the saga is realistic at least when it comes to paying the fine in silver. Silver was namely the basis of the monetary system during the Viking Age. In a sense, the fine could indicate how profitable the expeditions to Bjarmaland could be. After all, Thórir paid what he managed to pay from the profit of this trip and he still had a great amount to take with him to England. However, the text does not say if it was actually expected that Thórir would be able to pay the fine in full. It would rather seem that the fine was meant to be unpayable and served as a means for the king to get rid of his main opponent in the Arctic.

To sum up, according to Óláfs saga helga Karli from Hálogaland in Northern Norway went to Bjarmaland with his brother Gunnstein and another Hálogalandian, Thórir hundr on the assignment from King Óláfr. The expedition is traditionally dated to spring/summer 1026. The king and Karli were to split all the profit, but anybody who had their own merchandise with them could sell it for their own benefit. The journey started from Trondheim and went past Hálogaland and Finnmark and across Gandvik. Upon the arrival to Bjarmaland by the River “Vina” a two-week truce was established. All who had anything to sell bought furs of squirrel, sable and beaver from the Bjarmians. After the truce was over, the Norwegians did not leave, but went on to loot a burial mound/sacrificial site. This site was located in the woods a distance away from the river. At the site there stood an anthropomorphic statue of a god called “Jómali”. From this the Norwegians extracted a number of gold and silver artefacts including a bowl, a necklace and coins. Being chased by the Bjarmians, the looters escaped to their ships and sailed away. Later on, Thórir sold the furs in England. There were two ships on the expedition, one containing a crew of twenty-five men and another of nearly eighty. The word “Jómali” is very close to the Finnish and Karelian word for god, “jumala” and on the basis of this, it has been concluded that the Bjarmians must have spoken a Baltic Fennic language, most likely a form of Finnish or Karelian. Several pieces of information seem to indicate that the Bjarmians were a permanently settled people living close to the marketplace by the river. The grave mound that is described might be reminiscent of a type that is found in several areas in the Russian north. Also many other features described in connection with the religious site seem to fit to what is known about the religious habits among the Finno-Ugrian

602 Heimskringla 1999, 421–422.
603 Brøgger 1936, 82.
604 Urbańczyk 1992, 196.
peoples. The habits, however, are so similar among most of the peoples that they offer no help in localising the Bjarmians more closely.

The expedition for the most part is described in a realistic manner. The account of the route, the half-hostile relationship between the Bjarmians and the Norwegians that resulted in both trade and looting in a “Viking” manner, the number and origin of the crew, the manner of sailing and the existence of burial mounds with grave goods are all realistic features. Although the account has some political tendencies, for the most part this should not have an effect on the description of the Bjarmaland expedition and the conditions in Bjarmaland. Since even the earliest versions of the saga mention Bjarmaland, albeit in passing, it would seem like the journey really took place. However, what is more difficult to evaluate is the source of all the details about Bjarmaland that are given in later, more detailed versions. Partially it would seem like these must be based on genuine knowledge of Bjarmaland (e.g. the Finno-Ugrian Jómali), but some of the details may be general features that are attached to Bjarmaland only due to the demands of the plot. In any case, the features attached to Bjarmaland in Óláfs saga helga came to be associated with Bjarmaland in the following decades and many of the later, more imaginative sagas use these characteristics in either direct or enhanced form as we shall see in the next chapter.

4.10 Heimskringla: Magnús saga berfœtts

II. Kapituli --Hann [Hákon konúngr] hafði farit norðr til Bjarmalands ok átti þar orrostu ok fekk sigr.605 (Magnúss saga berfœtts 1951:212)

King Hákon--had been north to Bjarmaland; he had a battle there and was victorious. (Ross 1940:30)

Hákon Magnússon Toresfostre shared the kingdom with Magnús, son of King Olaf Kyrre, for a short period of time from 1093 to 1094.606 He was only about 25 when he died607 so he cannot have travelled to Bjarmaland very many years before this.

605 Also found in Antiquités Russes 1852, 114. The text is the same with the exception of the words “mikla orrostu” instead of just “orrostu”. The expedition is also mentioned in Fagrskinna: “Hákon hafði farit til Bjarmalands ok barizk þar ok fekk sigr.” Fagrskinna 1985, 302. The same passage with minor variations of spelling and choice of words is also found in Fagrskinna 1902, 309. English translation goes as follows: “Hákon had travelled to Bjarmaland and fought there victoriously.” Fagrskinna 2004, 241.

606 Krag 2000, 270.

607 See Heimskringla 1999, 668.
Most likely he was there earliest in 1084, probably somewhat later. STORM dates the expedition to 1090.608

This very short reference to Bjarmaland - one out of the total four in Heimskringla - contains the elements of a northerly location and a victorious battle. These schematic themes are a recurring motif in narratives of Bjarmaland.609 The excerpt at hand does not add anything new, only accentuates the notion of not-so-peaceful relations between the Norwegians and the Bjarmians. An almost identical passage is to be found elsewhere in Heimskringla, with Eiríkr blóðpx as a hero instead of King Hákon. Hákon’s expedition to Bjarmaland is presented in a manner that makes one think that it was designed to emphasise Hákon’s virtue as a beloved king and a hero.610 It is almost as if it was obligatory for a valid king to have travelled to Bjarmaland in the 10th and the 11th centuries, because the motif of a victorious battle in Bjarmaland is presented in connection with many kings. Ólafs saga helga speaks of a Bjarmaland expedition as a hazardous enterprise611 and perhaps the danger connected to this undertaking was the reason why a journey to Bjarmaland was considered to emphasise heroism. There may have been political motives as well to mention the expedition to Bjarmaland, namely the Norwegian kings’ aspirations to gain control over the economical resources of Hálogaland, including the trade with Bjarmaland.612 To justify the kings’ claim to the profit, the sagas may have regularly included Bjarmaland among the destinations of “Viking” expeditions.

4.11 Mappa Mundi


608 Storm 1894, 99. Also HAAVIO mentions this year. Haavio 1965, 147.
609 See e.g. Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217; Haralds saga ins hárfagra 1962, 134–135.
610 According to JACKSON, the journey to Bjarmaland at times serves as an element of a hero’s positive characteristics. Jackson 2002, 174.
611 See Ólafs saga helga 1945, 227–232.
612 Urbańczyk 1992, 44, 55.
613 According to CHEKIN, “habitaut” should be corrected into “habitant”, a form that is found in Antiquités Russes 1852, 394; Alfræði Íslenzk 1918, 72; Pritsak 1981, 515. See Чекин 1999, 65 footnote 4; Chekin 2006, 70 footnote 4. See also Мельникова 1986, 112.
614 Essentially the same text, with slightly different orthography, is found in Antiquités Russes 1852, 394 and Мельникова 1986, 105. See also Чекин 1999, 65.

This map of the world (Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, GKS 1812, 4°, fols 5v-6r) is the only known Icelandic one. RAFN dated it to around 1150, KÅLUND to the first half of the 13th century, but currently it is dated from the mid-thirteenth century to 1300. The piece in question is a round T-O type map (text only) that is not constructed according to a system of mathematical-geographical co-ordinates. Instead, it is a schematic map based on the directions of the world. These directions (oriens, meridies, occidens, septentrio) are marked in four corners with both Latin and Norse. The names on the map are grouped in four quarters and no distinctions are made between the names of rivers, lands, mountains and seas. Three parts of the world, Asia, Africa and Europe, are named at the edge of the map. The names on each part are arranged into columns and rows.615

The European section is divided in two plans. In the upper plan the northernmost column begins with the inscription “Biarmar habitauit hic” after which there is a blank space. This entry appears between two columns of names. On the left-hand side (northwestern Europe) the names are Tile, Island, Norvegie, Gautland, Suiþiod and Rusia. Between the names Island and Norvegie there is an empty space. In northeastern Europe (well below the Bjarmaland entry) the names are in two columns. The first contains two names: Misia and Sparta, the second (easternmost) the names Scithia, Frigida, Eroneni and Kio.616

According to PRITSAK, this Icelandic map of the world presents what was for the time a precise picture of Northern and Eastern Europe. Alongside classical and biblical geographical names it introduces some names that follow Nordic tradition: Tanakvisl, Biarmar, Rusia, Kio, Gautland, Suiþiod, Norvegie, Island, Danmorci and Saxonia.617 The Bjarmians are mentioned in the section of the map that almost entirely consists of Nordic names that were foreign to classical and biblical geography. This means that the author of the map used the practical knowledge that the Scandinavians had about the geography in the north of Europe. However, the northern section of Europe has few names in comparison to the rest of the map where the space is completely filled with names.

615 Alfræði Íslenzk 1918, 71 footnote 2; Pritsak 1981, 514–515; Мельникова 1986, 104; Чекин 1999, 64; Chekin 2006, 69. The preserved manuscript itself may be from around 1400. Jansson 1936, 39.
617 Pritsak 1981, 516. See also Chekin 2006, 70. The map is as a rule written in Latin, but some place names in Northern Europe are in Norse. It makes sense that a Scandinavian author would write down the northern names in the form used in his native tongue.
There is a large gap between the Bjarmaland entry and the columns containing the names Island and Norvegie and next to Bjarmaland there are no other names listed from the north of Europe. The two columns (Misia and Sparta; Scithia, Frigida, Eronei and Kio) below Bjarmaland are not geographically closely connected. This is obvious not only because of the large space between the entries, but also because the orientation of the names is different: the Bjarmaland entry and the columns below are written upside-down to one another. However, Bjarmaland is parallel to Scandinavia and Russia, just more northerly than the other two. In other words, in the mind of the medieval Icelandic cartographer, Bjarmaland was located northeast of Scandinavia (Thule, Iceland, Norway, Götaland, Sweden) and Russia.

The cartographer does not mention the lands or peoples between Scandinavia and Bjarmaland (i.e. the area of present-day Finland and Northern Russia), but the space left between them on the map suggests that the author knew that they were not situated directly next to each other. Considering that the Norwegians commonly sailed to Bjarmaland via the north, it is possible that the Icelandic cartographer had his knowledge of Bjarmaland from the Norwegians. In general, Icelanders were intimate with the Norwegian circumstances and the sagas testify that the existence of Bjarmaland was well known in medieval Scandinavia. The reason why the areas between Scandinavia and Bjarmaland are not marked on the map may be that the cartographer had no closer knowledge of them. Although the author would have been familiar with the northern sea route, he may not have had detailed information about the lands between Norway and Bjarmaland. Since the map has only a few names in the north, it may be that only the most significant ones were chosen and perhaps the contacts between Norway and Bjarmaland were more significant (economically) than the contacts between the Norwegians and the inhabitants of present-day Finland and Northern Russia.

It may be worth noticing that the author of the map uses the term “Biarmar” (ethnical name, name of “nationality”) instead of the word “Bjarmaland” that refers to a land. This may be just a coincidence or it may have a deeper meaning since the practise here defers from that in the rest of the map. Perhaps it has to do something with the way the Bjarmian society was constructed in comparison to the Norwegian society. In other words, perhaps the Bjarmians had a looser social organisation and the Norwegians considered them more as “a people” than as “a country”. A parallel

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618 Cf. the space between Island and Norvegie on the same map.
619 See e.g. Häme 1987a, 27.
practise may be seen in the consistent use of the ethnical term “Finnar” of the Saami instead of using a name that would refer to a land/area. The oldest Norse reference preserved to us, a line in a skaldic poem, is “Bjarmskar kindir” that refers to ethnicity rather than area. Also the other early source, Ohthere’s account, uses the “ethnic” form “Beormas”. We can here see a tradition of using “Bjarmar” instead of “Bjarmaland”. It is worth noticing that it seems to be the earliest sources that refer to ethnicity rather than to area and we may wonder whether the name of the area was used at all to begin with.

All in all, this excerpt seems to confirm that the Bjarmians were significant to the Norwegians and their existence well known. They lived somewhere east of Norway and north of Finland and Russia. The map does not list any fictional names (although some names based on classical tradition may be hard to locate), so we should assume the reference to “Biarmar” is no exception.

4.12 Landafræði, AM 736 I, 4º and AM 764, 4º

1. Næst Danmerk er Svíðjóð en minne; þar er Eyland; þá er Gotland; þá Helsíngaland; þá Vermaland; þá Kvenlónd ið, ok eru þau norðr frá Bjarmalandi. Af Bjarmalandi gánda lónd óbygð of norðr ætt, unz við tekr Grænland.

(Antiquités Russes 1852:405)

Next to Denmark there is Sweden the less; then there is Öland; then there is Gotland; then Hälsingland; then Värmland; then the 2 Cwen-lands – and these

620 Naturally, the name Finnmark is used, but when the text is about the people living in this area, the “national” name Finnar seems to be the preferred form. Finnmark is the northernmost part of Norway that is inhabited by Saami (who are sometimes called the Lapps). The word Finnmark can be translated as “Saami forest”. See Bergsland 1971, 18; Reyment 1980, 72–73, 133; Hansen–Olsen 2004, 80. The name “Finnland” (or “Finnmark”) as a name of the area where the Saami lived is rare, although it is sometimes used. However, the use is dual and some early texts use Finnland for the present-day Finland (and especially the Varsinais-Suomi area), other texts use it for the area of the Saami. By the 13th century “Finnland” refers solely to present-day Finland. See Zachrisson 1997c, 159. Finland as a denomination of the whole area that is today known as Finland became common only after the 1440’s. Suvanto 1987, 217. Egil’s Saga mentions both “Finnland” and “Finnmørk” in the same passage and it is clear from the context that the former refers to parts of present-day Finland and the latter to the area of the Saami, the current Finnmark. See Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar 1988, 36.


622 See also Alfraði Íslenzk 1908, 12 and Haavio 1965, 19.
are north of Bjarmaland. From Bjarmaland uninhabited territories run north until Greenland starts.623 (Ross 1940:39)

2. Fyrir norðan Noreg er Finnmörk, þaðan vikr landi til lannorðrís ok svá til austrís, aðr komi til Bjarmalands; þat er skattgilt undir Garða konúng. Frá Bjarmalandi gånda lönd til óbygða ab norðr ætt, allt til þess er Græn land tekr við. Frá Grænlandi i suðr liggr Helluland.624 (Antiquités Russes 1852:404)

Finmark is north of Norway. Thence the land trends north-east and then again east before one reaches Bjarmaland which is tributary to the King of Russia. (Ross 1940:39)


East of Norway lies Rúzaland (Rus’), and to the north from there [is] Tartararíki (the realm of the Golden Horde). North of Norway is Finnmork. From there the land extends to the northeast before it comes to Bjarmaland. From Bjarmaland the land extends to the desert in the north until it comes to Greenland.625 (Pritsak 1981:543)

Landafræði, an Icelandic manuscript (AM 194, 8vo) of geographical content from 1387 contains the first of these three geographical descriptions. It is often considered that this manuscript is based on a 12th century Icelandic text written by Abbot NIKOLÁS (died between 1155–1159), but E. A. MELNIKOVA has shown that it was written by an anonymous author sometime around 1170–1190. It is

623 An alternative translation of the last sentence (based on KÅLUND’s edition of the original, published in 1908 in Álfarði Íslenzk) goes “From Bjarmaland uninhabited land continues through the north until it joins Greenland”. See Phelpstead 2001b, 78.

624 There is also another almost identical version of this text, Gripla no 115 in 8vo: “Svíþjóð liggr fyrir austan Danmörk, Noregr fyrir norðan, Finnmörk norðr af Noregi; þá vikr til landnorðrís ok austrís, aðr er kemri til Bjarmalands; þat er skattgilt undir Garðaríki. Frá Bjarmalandi liggr óbygðir norðr allt til þess er Grænland kallast.” Antiquités Russes 1852, 404. See also Jackson–Podossinov 1997, 290.

625 The text PRITSAK translates is a bit longer and varies a little from the text RAEN copies, but the meaning is the same. I have adapted PRITSAK’s translation to fit the text presented here. PRITSAK’s text goes as follows: ”en austr af Noregi er Ruzaland ok norða þatan er Tartararíki. Fyrir[r] norðan Noreg er Finnmörk, þaðan vikr landi til lan[d]norðrís oc svá til austr, aðr komi til Bjarmalands; þat er skattgilt undir Garða konúngs. Frá Bjarmalandi gånda lavnd til óbygða ab norðr [a] ett, allt til þess er Gr[a]enland tekr við.”
considered that *Landafræði* was influenced by writings of ISIODORUS, but supplemented with information about the Nordic countries.626 This text relates the circumstances of the second half of the 12th century. It gives a list of areas in the Nordic countries starting with Denmark and moving on to Sweden627 and further eastward. The different areas are given in loose south-north order, at times moving from east to west or vice versa. Except for Kvenland and Bjarmaland, all the areas are still easy to recognise and locate today, because the areas are still known with the same name.

The passage seems to indicate that Bjarmaland was a more southerly land than the two Kvenlands. Looking at the map it is hard to conceive how this could be without very liberal placing of both Bjarmaland and Kvenland. Other written sources indicate that Kvenland was situated around the northern extremity of the Gulf of Bothnia.628 With this in mind, it is hard to see how Bjarmaland could be placed at the White Sea at all. It would be much easier to place Bjarmaland north of Kvenland than the other way around. The most correct and precise location would be on an east-west axis, i.e. Bjarmaland is east of the two Kvenlands or the two Kvenlands are west of Bjarmaland. The question is, whether we should consider that there has occurred some kind of mix-up in the placing of the two, or whether we are just lacking the right understanding of the passage. To assume that the text is correct would, however, mean that many other sources do not match with the information given in *Landafræði*. This is why the conclusion for now has to be that there has been a mix-up with the directions. Mikko HÄME’s suggestion that the second Kvenland refers to southern Finland makes Kvenland into even more southerly area and this makes it even harder to reconcile the location of Bjarmaland in the passage with general knowledge of geography and other contemporary sources.629 If HÄME’s suggestion that the author was not very well aware of the location of Kvenland is true, then one could assume that his geographical knowledge was not perfect in other respects either. His vague knowledge of certain facts may have resulted in errors thus placing Bjarmaland and the two Kvenlands on the map incorrectly.

627 According to HAAVIO, "Sweden the less" is today’s Sweden. The "bigger Sweden" would be *Sviþjód it Mikla*, i.e. *Garðaríki*, i.e. Russia. Haavio 1965, 19.
628 See e.g. Carpelan 1993b, 223.
629 HÄME has suggested that the author did not know the exact location of Kvenland. He suggests that perhaps the abbot knew the story about Fornjótr who ruled Finland and Kvenland and in his own work transformed Finland into another Kvenland. Häme 1987a, 146.
Landafreði’s statement that the land extends towards the north between Bjarmaland and Greenland is a common idea in medieval Icelandic literature. It appears in other geographical accounts as well as in Historia Norvegiae.630

The second excerpt is found in an Icelandic geographical treatise of the late 12th century, catalogued as AM 736 I, 4º. Another almost identical text is the so-called Gripla, which is very similar to both Landafreði and Rimbegla. Gripla is only preserved as one 17th century copy by Björn JÓNSSON (1574–1655), but the original text was much older.631

The second excerpt seems generally speaking geographically correct. Finnmark is placed north of Norway and a route from there to Bjarmaland goes first northeast along the coast and then east (víkr landi til lannorþrs ok svâ til austrs). In all its simplicity this is similar to the descriptions that are often found in the sagas.632 In other words, the “road” from Norway to Bjarmaland went past Finnmark and then east all the way to Bjarmaland. However, the description is not detailed and does not give any precise location for Bjarmaland. The information that the uninhabited land extends from Bjarmaland to Greenland is a recurring feature in Norse literature.633

The most original and interesting information is that Bjarmaland is tributary to the king of Russia (Garða konúng or alternatively Garðaríki, i.e. Russia/Rus’634). The wording skattgilt suggests that the Bjarmians paid taxes to the Russian “king”. This refers to some sort of dependency, but how close this was is not made clear with the economical wording. It is interesting to notice that this dependency is not mentioned in Landafreði from the first half of the 12th century. One may speculate whether this means that Bjarmaland was not tributary to Russia before the end of the 12th century or if the information was simply omitted in Landafreði for other reasons. In any case, it seems like by the end of the 12th century Bjarmaland had to pay taxes to Russia. The text does not elaborate on which part of Russia this was. Garðaríki is a rather general term. HÄME has on one occasion interpreted Garðaríki in this connection as Novgorod.635 This may well be the correct interpretation. It is interesting to notice that the younger version of Bósa saga

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630 For more detailed information see the analysis of Historia Norvegiae and Munch 1850, 31–32; Koht 1950, 12; Salvesen 1990, 40 footnote 10.
632 See e.g. Fagrskinna 1985, 79.
633 See Munch 1850, 31–32; Koht 1950, 12; Salvesen 1990, 40 footnote 10.
634 It is perhaps worth noticing that I use the word “Russia” as a synonym of Rus’ throughout this study.
635 See Häme 1987a, 222 footnote 3.
knows the form Hólmgarðaríki. This word seems to combine both Garðaríki, i.e. Russia and Hólmgarðr, i.e. Novgorod into one word. Considering this, it seems possible that the word Garðaríki may have been used for Novgorod. Also, other texts use Garðaríki and Hólmgarðr almost synonymously. For example Hákonar saga talks about an ambassador of the king of Novgorod (Hólmgarðr) who came from Garðaríki. According to JACKSON, Hólmgarðr (i.e. Novgorod) appears (somewhat stereotypically) in the Old Norse sources as the capital of Garðaríki (i.e. Russia/Rus’) with the main seat of the king of Garðar situated in the town.

Some other written sources may perhaps help to enlighten the dependency issue. A treaty between Prince Jaroslav and Novgorod from 1264 places Vologda, Savolotshje, Kola, Perm, Petshora and Ugrien among the holdings of Novgorod. This means that the Novgorodian influence reached (among other areas of the north and east) the Kola Peninsula on the White Sea. It has also been assumed that already around 1200 the Karelians were loosely bound to Novgorod. All this indicates that Novgorod was interested in expanding towards the north and the activity must have started already in the 12th century.

There were conflicts between Novgorod and Norway about the taxation of the northern areas in the 13th century. An episode (in 1251) between King Hákon of Norway and an ambassador sent by “King” Aleksandr Nevskiy of Novgorod (Holmgård) that is mentioned in Hákon’s saga calls for attention. According to the text, the Russians complained to the king of Norway about the trouble between the emissaries of the Norwegian king in Finnmark and the austan Kirjalar/austr-Kirialar (i.e. East-Karelians) who were paying tribute to the king of Holmgårđ, “austan Kirjalar/austr-Kirialar, þeir sem skatt-gildir vörð undir Hólmgarða-konung”. There was looting and manslaughter between the parties according to the usual habit.

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636 See Bósa saga 1893, 105.
637 See Hakon saga 1964, 266.
638 Jackson 2003, 42–43, 45.
639 See e.g Munch 1874b, 265. According to RAFN, the “Perm” of the list is “Permia”, i.e Bjarmaland, but I find this interpretation incorrect. See Rafn 1852, 396. Rather, “Perm” should be seen as the current Perm in Russia, a rather more easterly area than what the Bjarmaland of the medieval sources seems to be. This interpretation is rather clear since the two areas that follow “Perm” are “Petshora” and “Ugrien”, neighbouring areas of Perm in the east.
640 Johnsen 1923, 19.
641 Häme 1987a, 217.
642 Munch 1874a, 636; Hakonar saga 1964, 266.
643 Hakonar saga 1964, 266.
It is somewhat far-fetched to set these East-Karelians in connection with the Bjarmians, but several interesting issues arise. The wording of the text resembles what is said about the taxation of the Bjarmians in *Gripla* and the other manuscripts. The Bjarmians at this time were also tributary to Russia. It is interesting that the text refers specifically to East-Karelians. In principle, Bjarmaland could be described as East Karelia if we consider its location at the White Sea. An ethnical identification is of course more doubtful, but many scholars have identified the Bjarmians with Karelians.644 Certainly Bjarmians and Karelians lived relatively close to each other and must surely have had contacts. Anything else is inconceivable, especially regarding the mobile lifestyle of the Karelians with expeditions across the north.645 Scandinavian medieval sources indicate that meetings between the Norwegians and the Bjarmians often ended up in looting and manslaughter.646 In this sense the description fits perfectly with the Bjarmians, but of course the Bjarmians were not necessarily the only group of people in this kind of conflict with the Norwegians, so the identification is by no means conclusive. I do not wish to identify the East-Karelians with Bjarmians with any probability, only to point to these interesting issues as a food for further thought. However, it is worth noticing that *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* mentions that a group of Bjarmians sought refuge in Northern Norway around the middle of the 13th century.647 This information would seem to indicate that there was no animosity between the Bjarmians and Norwegians at this time despite numerous earlier accounts of hostility.

The third passage is another Icelandic geographical treatise catalogued as AM 764, 4º. It is slightly younger than the other two here and derives from the mid-thirteenth century.648 It resembles the previous passage except that it does not mention the taxation. It places Finnmark north of Norway and indicates the location of Bjarmaland by explaining that the land turns to the northeast along the coast before it comes to Bjarmaland. Like several other documents (e.g. the two other passages of this chapter) this treatise repeats that the uninhabited land extends northwards from Bjarmaland to Greenland. The text does not give any details about the location of Bjarmaland, just that one has to sail past Finnmark to get there. One

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644 See e.g. Ross 1940, 57–58; Vilkuna 1980, 648.
645 See e.g. Saksa 1998, 202, 204, 206.
646 See e.g. Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217.
647 Hákonar saga 1964, 358.
gets, however, the impression that Bjarmaland and Finnmark were adjacent; there was no other country between the two.

The original information in this passage is the statement that Tartarariki was located north of Russia/Rúzaland. At the first glance, this statement does not seem to be correct. In principal, the correctness of this information has not much bearing for Bjarmaland except as a general evaluation of the reliability of the text. Since this passage places Tartarariki north of Russia, one should try to explain the statement somehow. The obvious explanation is that the statement is erroneous. Another possibility, which is not supported by sources, is that Tartarariki extended to northerly areas. Another speculative explanation is that the author meant something else than the realm of the Mongols with his term Tartarariki. However, the sources do not support this, although other passages mentioning the Mongols have also been difficult to interpret in a satisfying manner that is in accordance with the sources. Perhaps one should instead question what is meant by Rúzaland. It may not have included areas like Novgorod, but simply some more southerly parts of modern Russia. Although it cannot be decided which one, if any, of these explanations is correct, it is worth noticing that the information given in the passage does not necessarily contain erroneous information. This makes the passage as a source slightly more reliable.

Geographical details are often considered to be the most reliable part of the medieval Scandinavian literature, even when the story is saturated with fantasy. It is thought that the writers had no motivation to tamper with geographical information and rather attempted to describe the prevailing conditions as correctly as their knowledge allowed. It is also thought that the Scandinavians were pretty well acquainted with geography due to their extensive travels, foreign books and keenness to learn about geography. In principal, we should consider the geographical information here to be reliable, but the fact is that even purely geographical accounts present a number of difficulties. Often the accounts are not very detailed and at times the information seems to be conflicting with what we know from other sources. It is difficult to say whether this is simply because the information is incorrect or because we have lost the understanding of it by not being able to put ourselves into the mindset of a 12th-13th century author. One can assume

649 A probably unconnected issue is that Tattara/Tartara are also mentioned in Hákon’s Saga in connection with Bjarmians. This statement, too, has been difficult to interpret, because it is not known that the Mongols were active so far in the north that this could have caused problems for the Bjarmians. See Hakonar saga 1964, 358.

that the aim of the authors was to give as correct a picture as possible. Although the picture may not match to our knowledge of geography, it does offer a view to the geographical ideas of medieval people. The conclusion is that in principle we should trust the information, but be aware that everything may not be fully trustworthy or in accordance with current understanding of geography.

The three passages are unanimous that Bjarmaland was located north and east of Norway, past Finnmark. Bjarmaland and Finnmark/Norway seem to have been adjacent. One of the passages also mentions that Bjarmaland was tributary to Novgorod/Russia latest by the late 12th century.

4.13 Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar (Hákonar saga hins gamla)

81. Sumar þetta fóru þeir herferð til Bjarmalands, Andrés skjaldar-band ok Ívarr útvík. Þeir hóðu fjögur skip. En sú sök var til ferðar þeirrar, at [þeir] höðu farit kaupferð til Bjarmalands nökkurum vetrum aðr, Andrés af Sjaumelingum, ok Sveinn Sigurðarson, Ögmundr af Spánheimi, ok margir aðrir. Þeir hóðu tvau skip. Ok fóru apra um haustið, Andrés ok Sveinn; en þeir sút eptir með annat skipit, Helgi Bograns son ok skipverjar hans. Ögmundr af Spánheimi var ok eptir; ok fór um haustið eptir565 i Suðrdalaríki með sveinum sínum ok varnaði. En Háleygar vóru missáttir við Bjarma-konung. En um vetrinn fara Bjarnar at þeim ok dráp allö skips-höfnina. En er Ögmundr spurði þat, för hann austr í Hólmsgarða, ok þaðan it eystra út til hafis; ok létði eigi fyrr enn hann kom til Jórsala. Fór hann þaðan apra til Noregs, ok varð hann ferð all-fræg. Þeir Andrés ok Ívarr fóru til Bjarmalands, ok gördu þar it mesta hvervirki í manndrápum ok ránunum, ok féngu stór-fé í grávöru ok brennudu sílfrí. Ok er þeir fóru norðan, siglðu þeir í röst norðr fyrir Straumnes-kinnum; ok bar þrjú skipin; en á því skipi er Ívarr var á, bar sjóinn í seglit, ok hálloði því skipinu, at inn féll sjórinn, ok því næst vellti. Jógrimr hét maðr frá Ívari kom á kjóli, ok inn þrjú maðr komst á kjólinn. Þeir skutu til bátí af skipi Þorbergs; ok gökk ör stafinn ör bátínum, ok kom Jógrimr þeim í bátínum. Ok þa létt Jógrimr eigi sjá Þorstein, félagsmann sinn; ok hljóþ þá enn á sund í róztína. Ok þar létt hann, ok þeir allir er á vóru skipinu, nema þeir Ívarr tveir einir. Þar týndisk stór fé. Andrés för um haustið til Hálologalands. Ok hefir ekki verit síðan [farit] af Noregi til Bjarmalands. (Hakonar saga 1964:70–71)

565 Also “austr”. See Antiquités Russes 1852, 81. The rest of this text is also found in Antiquités Russes 1852, 81–82.
102. --En Ívarr útvík hafði til farit með þeim, ok hét upp svörum af hendi híðarinnar. Páll bóndi hafði komit út um nóttina, [ok] líkaði stór-illa. Um morguninn er þingit var, bauð Ívarr boð fyrir vigit. En Páll bóndi svarar; kvað Ívari meiri nauðsyn at hafa betr gætt siglingar sínnar, er hann fór af Bjarmalandi, ok hafa eigi þar týnt inum beztum bóndasonum, en görask fyrir-maðr at þessu, at drepa híð konungs ok jarls, en lög-nauta sína; ok kvað eigi boð mundu þegin af hónum. Ok sleit svá þessu þingi. (Hakonar saga 1964:87)

81. That summer they, Andrew shieldband and Ivar outwick, set off on warfare to Bjarmaland. They had four ships. But that was the cause of their going that these men had fared some winters before on a trading voyage to Bjarmaland, Andrew of Seven-times, and Sweyn Sigurd’s son, and Ögmund of Spanheim, and many others. They had two ships. And Andrew and Sweyn came back in the autumn; but the rest sat behind with the other ship, and Helgi Bogran’s son and his shipmates. Ögmund of Spanheim also stayed behind, and fared in the autumn back into Sudrdalerick with his men and traded. But the men of Helgeland were at variance with the king of the Bjarmir. But in the winter the Bjarmir fell on them and slew all the ship’s company. But when Ögmund heard that he fared east to Holmgard (Novgorod) and thence by the east out to the sea; and did not stay till he came to Jerusalem. Thence he fared back to Norway, and became very famous for his travels. Then Andrew and Ivar fared to Bjarmaland, and made there the greatest warfare in manslayings and plundering, and got much goods in greyskins and burnt silver. And when they fared from the north they sailed into a race off Straumness Cheek and three ships got out of it; but a sea broke on the sail of that ship which Ivar was aboard, and the ship heeled over so that the sea dashed in, and next to that she capsized. Jogrim was the name of the man who got Ivar on to the keel, and a third man got on the keel. They put off a boat from Thorberg’s ship; and the sea washed the stern out of the boat, and Jogrim got them into the boat. But then Jogrim said he could not see his partner Thorstein, and jumped then again swimming into the race. And then he lost his life, and all those who were on board the ship but those two, Ivar and the other. There great goods were lost. Andrew fared in the autumn to Helgeland. And since then there has been no sailing from Norway to Bjarmaland. (The Saga of Hacon 1964:73–74)
offered atonement for the manslaughter. But good man Paul murmurs, and said
that Ivar had much better have looked closer after his sailing when he fared
from Bjarmaland, and not have lost there the sons of the best yeomen, than
have taken the lad in this, to slay the boduguard of the king and earl and his
own messmate, and said that no atonement would be taken from him. And so
that meeting was broken up. (The Saga of Hacon 1964:90)

Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar (also Hákonar saga hins gamla, Hákonar saga gamla
Hákonarsonar, "The Saga of Hákon Hákonarson the Old") is a biography of King
Hákon of Norway (r. 1217–1263). Sturla ÞÓRDARSON compiled the original
version of “The Saga of Hacon” by commission of Hákon’s son and successor,
King Magnús lagabœtir. It was probably begun directly after Hákon’s death and
finished most likely around 1264–1265, only about 40 years after the expedition to
Bjarmaland, which increases the reliability of the account. Besides Ohthere’s
account, this text should be considered as the most reliable source we have, since
it was (like Ohthere’s account) written down very soon after the events. However,
since Hákon’s son ordered the saga, it may not be completely impartial, although it
has been considered that the dependency on the king has not reduced the
objectivity. In any case, Hákonar saga is an important historical document and is
considered as more reliable historically than other sagas. This is first and foremost
because the author could base his presentation of events on a great number of
written sources. Hákonar saga has been preserved in three redactions, in
Eirspennill (AM 47 fol.), Codex Frisianus (AM 45 fol.) and Flateyjarbók (GkS
1005 fol.). The Flateyjarbók manuscript of the saga dates to c. 1370–1380.
Flateyjarbók (“The Book of Flatey”, after the placename Flatey where the
manuscript was kept for a long time) is a modern title for a parchment codex written
in the north of Iceland by two priests, Jón ÞÓRDARSON and Magnús
ÞÓRHALLSSON, in 1387–1390/94. It attempts to present a continuous history of
Norway by combining the biographies of individual Norwegian kings and other
writings (þættir and other sagas) that in some way concern the lives of the kings. It
contains among other things several poems (e.g. Noregs konünga tal) and many
sagas (e.g. Oláfs saga helga, Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar, Eymundar saga). Most
of the sagas are also found in other, older manuscripts, but some texts have only
been preserved in the Flateyjarbók manuscript. The story of Bjarmaland expedition
in Flateyjarbók is copied from STURLA’s text.652

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652 Rafn 1852, 80; Jansson 1936, 36; Dasent 1964, x-xi, xxvi; Haavio 1965, 147, 239; Holtsmark 1981b,
This excerpt gives an account of two separate expeditions, the latter caused by the first one. Six Icelandic annals mention that the latter trip, which is also the last datable expedition to Bjarmaland, took place in 1222.\textsuperscript{653} According to the text, the initial expedition took place some winters before the second one. The year 1217 has been suggested\textsuperscript{654}, but there is no way to be certain and in any case it is enough to know that the first expedition took place just a few years before 1222.

According to the text, the motivation for the first voyage was trade. The expedition comprised of many men (some named) who travelled with two ships\textsuperscript{655}. A number of these returned home in autumn\textsuperscript{656} with one ship. The rest stayed behind with the other ship. This group divided in two. Helgi and his men stayed in Bjarmaland, Ögmund and his men continued their journey in autumn from Bjarmaland (east) to Suðrdalarík. Those who stayed in Bjarmaland came to be at variance with the king of the Bjarmians and during the winter all the Norwegians were slain.

This is the first time a king of the Bjarmians is mentioned in the sources. It seems to me like the Norwegian written sources are using “king” as a general title for a leader. Choosing this title appears logical since the Norwegian leaders bore the same title. The Norwegian kings were not originally the rulers of the realm. Before the unification of the country there existed local kings. Their power was very limited; they were hardly more than wealthy farmers. Also in medieval Norway a king’s power was more limited than in other European countries. The title “King of Bjarmaland” cannot be compared to European feudal kings, but more to local Norwegian kings, the wealthy farmers and leaders of the local community. By the 13\textsuperscript{th} century kings had established a rule that spanned throughout Norway. The process that had begun for real in the 10\textsuperscript{th} century had taken a long time to get established. Local chieftains had maintained a strong position and several kings’

\textsuperscript{653} Munch 1874а, 637; Jansson 1936, 36; Ross 1940, 33 footnote 9; Vilkuna 1964, 83; Djupedal 1969, 9; Vilkuna 1980, 648.
\textsuperscript{654} Storm 1894, 99; Urbańczyk 1992, 232. This is the first year of King Hákon’s rule (1217–1263). See Årstallsliste 1993, 52; Krag 2000, 271.
\textsuperscript{655} Depending on the type of the ship, the crew per ship may have varied between ten and thirty. It is unlikely that the ships would have been large warships with a larger crew, since the motivation of the journey was trade. Binns 1961, 47; Sawyer 1971, 71; Crumlin-Pedersen 1983, 32–35; Sjøvold 1985, 22, 28, 34, 36; Christensen 1987, 7, 21; Christensen 1993b, 457.
\textsuperscript{656} It is interesting to notice that the White Sea is ice-free from the end of May until the beginning of September, c. three months altogether. See Foote 1998, 1024.

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rivalry had led to elongated internal struggle. In Norway king was the title of the leader, but this does not have to mean that the Bjarmians would have called their own leaders with the same title. In fact, we have no way of knowing the level of organisation in Bjarmaland or what titles were used. Perhaps the use of the title king here indicates that the Bjarmians had an organised social structure with chieftains. Taking their own country as a model, the Norwegians called the leaders of the Bjarmians that they met with the same title that was used in their own country.

Another interesting feature is that the Norwegians in some cases could stay in Bjarmaland over a longer period of time after the trading had ended. Also, the Norwegians and the Bjarmians were not necessarily on friendly terms, although they could do business together. For one reason or another, the Bjarmians turned against the Norwegians and killed them. The text does not give any specific reasons for this and I find it fruitless to speculate. Judging by other sources, hostility between the two despite trade seems to be a recurring feature.

The text refers to the slain Norwegians as “Háleygir”, men of Hálogaland. This area then is mostly likely the place where the men of this expedition came from.

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657 See e.g. Haavio 1965, 136–137; Urbańczyk 1992, 197–199, 216–217; Helle 1993, 27–28, 33–34; Krag 2000, 67–72, 103–104; Sawyer 2007, 136. Germanic tribes normally lived under the rule of kings. By the end of the pagan period in Scandinavia, kings were numerous, but the many petty kingdoms were united into three kingdoms (Norway, Denmark and Sweden) around the same time that Christianity gained ground. Karlsson 2005, 503. Before Harald hárfagre’s time, the kings in Norway ruled small areas and had little power to decide over political issues. The king was dependent on the will of the people and he was very much a symbolic figure with religious power. During the times of war, the kings could become quite powerful warrior kings with their hird (the king’s following). In Østlandet local kings emerged already in the 7th century. Gunnes 1976, 63, 65–66, 68; Krag 2000, 34–35. The concepts “king of Norwegians” and “Norway” appear for the first time in late 9th century sources. During the Viking Age, Norway was only a geographic name and regional identity was dominant. It is traditionally thought that Harald hárfagre united Norway into one kingdom in the end of the 9th century. However, we know very little of the actual circumstances and of how large his realm was. It seems like there existed minor local kings in Østlandet who were independent, but may have recognised the power of either Harald hárfagre or the Danish king. Most likely the southern part of Vestlandet (southwards from Hordaland) formed the central part of Harald’s kingdom. Harald may have had direct control only over Hordaland and Rogaland, perhaps parts of Agder. Denmark’s dominance stretched to parts of Southern Norway (especially in Viken) and probably also to parts of the west coast of the present-day Sweden (Götaland). It may be that Harald’s unification of the kingdom became possible because the Danish king was weakened exactly at this time. Another important center of power was Trøndelag where the so-called ladejarler dominated the area since the late 9th century. It seems like Harald hárfagre’s influence did not properly reach the north and Hákon Grjotgardsson had an independent position and real power over Trøndelag and Hálogaland. Krag 1995, 73–76, 81, 84–85, 89; Krag 2000, 28, 49–50, 54.

658 VAHTOLA has speculated that in Finland the leader of the “tribe” could have been called “kuningas”, a king. Vahtola 1980, 468.

659 See e.g. Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232.
That the instigator of the expedition and most of the crew came from Hálogaland, does not exclude the possibility that some men could have come from other parts of the country. It seems like Hálogaland was very active in trade with Bjarmaland and already Othere, the first known Norwegian to sail there, came from Hálogaland.\footnote{Crossley-Holland 1984, 62–63; Krag 1995, 80; Krag 2000, 51–52.} Also the men of the second expedition most likely for the most part came from Hálogaland since the reason for the expedition was to avenge the death of the participants of the previous expedition.

The general assumption seems to be that the second expedition to Bjarmaland was not arranged by Andrés\footnote{Storm 1894, 99. URBAŃCZYK is of the opinion that both of the expeditions were organised by royal representatives. Urbanchyk 1992, 232. However, the text does not give direct indications of this in regard to the first expedition.} and Ívarr útvík as private persons but in capacity of royal provincial representatives (sysselmann, i.e sheriff/bailiff).\footnote{Andrés\footnote{Andrés\footnote{Andrés\footnote{Andrés skjaldar-band was appointed by Earl Skúli as sysselmann in Hálogaland in 1219. However, King Hákon took the office from him soon after, but he was nevertheless reappointed by Skúli. Eidnes 1943, 27, 94.} skjaldar-band and Ívarr útvík as private persons but in capacity of royal provincial representatives (sysselmann, i.e sheriff/bailiff).} skjaldar-band was appointed by Earl Skúli as sysselmann in Hálogaland in 1219. However, King Hákon took the office from him soon after, but he was nevertheless reappointed by Skúli. Eidnes 1943, 27, 94.} Andrés was sysselmann for a period of time\footnote{Andrés skjaldar-band was appointed by Earl Skúli as sysselmann in Hálogaland in 1219. However, King Hákon took the office from him soon after, but he was nevertheless reappointed by Skúli. Eidnes 1943, 27, 94.}, but the source does not mention anything about this capacity in connection with the second Bjarmaland expedition. He may well have had economical motives in mind in attending the expedition, but it is impossible to say whether the motives would have been in the capacity of a royal representative or as a private person with a certain standing in the society. Perhaps it was also seen as a duty of a sysselmann to take part in an act of revenge. It may have been in the king’s interest to involve his representatives in matters that had to do with trade and definitely the Norwegian king had great interest in the economical resources of the north.\footnote{Urbańczyk 1992, 44, 55. It is worth noticing that a Norwegian law from around 1105/1115 says that the Norwegian king was to have a monopoly to buy furs north of Vennesund (in southern Hálogaland/Helgeland). Norges Gamle Love 1846, 257; Blom 1981, 283–284; Wallerström 1995, 187; Hagland–Sandnes 1994, xxxiii, 227. This would seem to imply that the king was involved in the trading expeditions to Bjarmaland at least through his representatives. However, it is unclear how well the rather independent Hálogalandians abided by the law.}

Ögmund and his men left Bjarmaland for Suðrdalaríki in autumn. This name has with good reason been interpreted as Suzdal’.\footnote{Probably the text refers to the principality of Suzdal’ in general and not to the town of Suzdal’ in particular. Джаксон 2000а, 205.} Other Norse sources mention Suzdal’ in forms like Suðralr, Surtsdalir, Súrdalar, Súrsdalr, Syrgisdalar, af Súrdolum. The form til Surtzdala is found in Flateyjarbók (Patt Hauks hábrókar) in juxtaposition to Bjarmaland.\footnote{Rafn 1852, 81; Munch 1874b, 269; Ross 1940, 33 footnote 7; Jackson 2003, 43.}
A version of the text mentions that the Norwegians travelled from Bjarmaland east to Suðralarík. ROSS has corrected this, saying that the direction is more south than east.666 In doing this he must have been thinking that Bjarmaland was located at the Northern Dvina River. He is also taking the compass points literally. If Bjarmaland was placed closer to the Kantalahti Bay and not at all at the Northern Dvina River, east is actually fairly correct and even more so if we think that the compass points were used more in the sense of the quarters of the world than actual directions.

This excerpt gives the first account of a land route to Bjarmaland. Although the Norwegians in this case are travelling from Bjarmaland, they must have known which way to go in order to reach their destination, Suzdal’.667 In principal, the journey could be made the other way as well and actually the text gives indications that this may in fact have been Ógmund’s original intention. This plan was, however, changed when by some unknown means Ógmund heard of the slaughter in Bjarmaland and instead of returning there, continued to Hólmgarð, i.e. Novgorod. This indicates communications between Suzdal’ and Bjarmaland on a regular basis since the news reached Ógmund before he managed to return.

Ógmund intended to trade in Suzdal’. One can assume that he had already been trading in Bjarmaland with the goods he had taken with him from Norway. It is logical to assume that he intended to trade in Suzdal’ with the goods he had obtained in Bjarmaland. It seems like the goods Norwegians obtained in Bjarmaland were not meant for the Norwegians themselves. Instead, they were obtained in order to trade them further with another party, in this case Suzdal’.

The second expedition was sent to Bjarmaland to punish the Bjarmians for killing the Norwegians. This expedition that comprised four ships is dated to summer 1222. The text clearly states that the purpose of the expedition was warfare and the purpose was fulfilled since the journey resulted in manslaughter and plundering. It is further elaborated that the Norwegians obtained a lot of goods, both greyskins and burnt silver. However, on the return journey part of these goods was lost when one of the ships capsized in Straumneskinnum668. It is interesting to note that the waters off the coast of Finnmark were known to be treacherous669 and

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666 Ross 1940, 33 footnote 6.
667 It is, however, worth noticing that JACKSON does not believe it possible that the Scandinavians would have been familiar with Suzdal’. She suggests that the author got his information about Suzdal’ from a Novgorodian or someone who had been in Novgorod. Джааксон 2000а, 205.
668 Straumneskinnum has been identified as Sviatoi Nos’ or Strømø, Flagstadø. See Rafn 1852, 81; Haavio 1965, 239.
669 Binns 1961, 50, 52.
other sources (Óláfs saga helga and Historia Norvegiae)\textsuperscript{670}, refer to a maelstrom on the way to Bjarmaland.

All men but two onboard the capsized ship drowned. These are later referred to as \textit{bóndasonum}, sons of yeomen. This gives an insight into the people that made up the crew of the ships. This probably applies to other expeditions as well.

The greyskins seem to refer to squirrel skins and burnt silver probably means silver that has been refined or purified.\textsuperscript{671} It seems like furs were still the main trade article in Bjarmaland, but also silver has been mentioned before in connection with Bjarmaland.\textsuperscript{572}

This expedition came back home to Hálogaland in the autumn. At the end of the account it is bluntly stated that since then there has been no sailing from Norway and Bjarmaland. Why this should be, is not elaborated. Increased hostility between the two may be a reason. It may also be that the expeditions no longer were economically profitable. There had been changes in the European fur trade and the trade routes to the east had become increasingly blocked and gradually ceased to function.\textsuperscript{673} Also, dried fish trade was becoming increasingly important\textsuperscript{674} and may have offered an easier and more profitable alternative for fur trade that at least in some cases required long and costly expeditions. Additionally, the Norwegian king had become more and more involved in the fur trade in the north and aimed to make it his privilege\textsuperscript{675}, a matter which may have made the involvement of the local Hálogalandians in the fur trade less attractive than before. Both the Bjarmians and the Norwegians may have needed to search for other trade articles and partners.

Also, the first Mongol attacks on Russia took place around the same time as the last Norwegian expedition to Bjarmaland took place. Mongols appeared in northern Russia in 1238. They conquered Suzdal’ and continued towards Novgorod. They also went to the south and conquered Bolgar in 1236 and Baghdad in 1258. The trade on the Volga came to an end and the people in the north had to search for another market for their products. It seems like the Mongol attack to Russia had a profound impact on the northern trade and circumstances in general. The Mongol reign in Russia lasted for so long that the old trading route from the

\textsuperscript{670} See Antiquités Russes 1852, 116–117; Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232.
\textsuperscript{671} Ross 1940, 33; Haavio 1965, 240; Pálsson–Edwards 1985a, 286.
\textsuperscript{672} See Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232.
\textsuperscript{673} Hansen 1996, 53.
\textsuperscript{674} Eidnes 1943, 28; Urbańczyk 1992, 228; Wallerström 1995, 202; Storli 2007, 89.
\textsuperscript{675} Urbańczyk 1992, 55.
north to Volga was abandoned forever. Another factor that added to the profound change was the expansion of Novgorod in the north.676

Hákon Hákonson (ruled 1217–1263) was the last Norwegian king under whose rule datable expeditions to Bjarmaland were made. STORM finds that although the last known Norwegian expedition took place in 1222677, the contact continued throughout the Middle Ages, on a smaller scale. These contacts were occasionally peaceful, at times not.678 HANSEN refers to later expeditions known from other sources. These were undertaken before 1326 and in 1419 and 1445. The Novgorod chronicle speaks about a Norwegian (murmane) expedition to Arzuga. A great number of warlike contacts between the Norwegians and people from the Russian area took place throughout the 13th-15th centuries. References to these are found in both Scandinavian and Russian sources.679 In my opinion, however, one cannot directly connect these with the Bjarmians and Bjarmaland. This, on the other hand, does not exclude the possibility that the people who were known as the Bjarmians in the sagas were involved in the conflicts of later times. This is in fact even likely, considering that the first “anonymous” raids happened already in the middle of the 13th century, right after the Bjarmians cease to appear in the medieval Scandinavian sources. It is, however, almost impossible for us to judge with any reasonable certainty when the Bjarmians might have been involved in the later raids since the sources do not use the names Bjarmaland and Bjarmians.

4.14 Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar (Hákonar saga hins gamla)

333. Hákon konungr lagði meira hug á, at styrkja Guðs kristni í Noregi, en engi konungr fyrir hónum, síðan er var inn helgi Óláfr konungr. Hann lét göra kirkju norðr í Trums, ok kristnaði alla þá kirkju-sókn. Til hans kvómu margir Bjarmar, er flýit höfðu austan fyrir ófriði Tartara680; ok kristnaði hann þá, ok gaf þeim einn fjörð er Malangr heitir. (Hákonar saga 1964:358)

333. King Hacon set his heart more on strengthening God’s Christianity in Norway than any other king before him since the king Saint Olaf was alive. He

676 Vilkuna 1964, 84; Haavio 1965, 244, 246; Vilkuna 1977, 84; Vilkuna 1980, 650–651; Urbańczyk 1992, 232.
677 It would be only from 1222 until the saga was written around 1265 that the statement of ceased expeditions can apply. See Pálsson–Edwards 1985a, 286.
678 Storm 1894, 99–100.
680 “Tattara” in Antiquités Russes 1852, 84.
let a church be built north in Tromsoe, and christened all these parishes. To him came many Bjarmir who had fled from the east for the strife of the Tatars; and he christened them, and gave them a firth which is called Malangr. (The Saga of Hacon 1964:371)

Hákon Hákonsson was a king of Norway 1217–1263. The events of the text are often dated to the 1230’s, usually to 1238 and in any case around 1240. Also the year 1251 is mentioned. This dating has probably to do with the Mongol campaigns in Russia in 1237–1240. Only a few decades separate the events described here and the writing of the saga (1264/65). This gives a reason to believe that we are dealing with a relatively reliable document.

We are told that many Bjarmians fled from their homes in the east and came to Northern Norway where they were given permission to settle at the Malangen Fjord. The Bjarmians who came were pagan, but they became christian after they came to Norway. Also Historia Norvegiae from the end of the 12th century mentions that the Bjarmians were pagan. It seems like they remained pagan for a relatively long time and probably gradually became christian, beginning in the 13th century.

Another interesting information is that King Hákon gave the Bjarmians the area around the Malangen Fjord to live in. The allegedly last Norwegian expedition to Bjarmaland also took place during King Hákon’s reign, in 1222. This was a bit more than a decade before the Bjarmians fled to Norway. It is interesting to notice that although the relations between the Bjarmians and the Norwegians were not altogether peaceful, they in any case were so trustful and familiar that the king of Norway was prepared to receive Bjarmian refugees. This makes one suspect that perhaps the relations as a rule were rather more peaceful and commercial that the sources let us know. It may be that there was no reason to write about regular peaceful trade whereas conflicts would have made a more interesting reading, worth mentioning in written accounts.

Still during the 13th century the Malangen Fjord was considered to be the border between Finnmark and Hålogaland, as well as the limit of the permanently settled Scandinavians and the nomadic Saami. Pope Clément V wrote in 1308 that the church in Tromso was situated next to the pagans (sancte Marie de Trums iuxta

Munch 1874a, 646; Johnsen 1923, 21; Ross 1940, 46; Vilkuna 1964, 84; Haavio 1965, 246–247; Vilkuna 1977, 84; Vilkuna 1980, 649; Carpelan 1993a, 231.
Halperin 1987, 46, 65.
Antiquités Russes 1852, 116.
paganos)\(^685\), in other words next to the frontier of Finnmark. Also Rímbegla from the late 12\(^{th}\) century or the early 13\(^{th}\) century states that Måläng separates Finnmark from the area of the Búmenn, the permanently settled Norwegians: “Þá er fjórðr, er Malangr heitir, hann skilr Finnmörk við búmenn”.\(^686\) In the peace treaty of 1326 Malangen remained as the border of the Norwegian settlement.\(^687\)

We are not told how many Bjarmians came to Norway and we do not know what eventually happened to those “many” that settled at Malangen. One can only guess that if they stayed at their new homestead, they must have gradually become integrated with the local people. JOHNSEN has suggested that by giving the Bjarmians the permission to live in Malangen, close to the Norwegian settlement and administration, the king wanted to promote the assimilation of the Bjarmians with the Norwegian and especially the Saami inhabitants.\(^688\) VILKUNA sees the “invasion” of the Bjarmians to Malangen as a parallel phenomenon to how the Karelian traders became settled in many places including different parts of Finland and the coast of the Arctic Ocean. The northern shore of the Malangen Fjord is according to VILKUNA still today the area where the Finnish-Karelian settlement in Finnmark begins. A parish called Karlo is situated in the vicinity. It has been suggested that this name means “the island of Karelians”.\(^689\) I am not, however, so certain that this interpretation is correct. Other, more obvious alternatives based on Norse come to mind as more likely explanations. I also find it a too rash a conclusion to identify the Bjarmians as Karelians. The sagas make a clear distinction between the Bjarmians and the Karelians and sometimes the two are mentioned separately in the same source.\(^690\)

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\(^685\) 113. 5 Februar 1308, Diplomatarium Norvegicum 1849, 100–101. See also Munch 1874a, 646.
\(^686\) Alfræði Íslenzk 1918, 6. This can be translated as “The fjord called Malangen separates Finnmark from the settled people” Urbańczyk 1992, 48. See also Munch 1874a, 646; Blom 1981, 281. It is perhaps interesting to know that the border of the settlement coincides with the climatic limit of cereal cultivation. It has been suggested that this limit in fact did not indicate the actual settlement but rather the administrative range of the state. The settlement probably reached beyond Malangen. Urbańczyk 1992, 46, 48. The church at Lenvik, straight south of Malangen, was considered as the northernmost point of the territory that was fully integrated to the Norwegian state. Hansen 2003, 11.
\(^687\) It is worth noticing that the treaty does not specifically name any location, just refers to old borders. 80. 3 Juni 1326, Diplomatarium Norvegicum 1874, 101–102. It is, however, generally considered that the treaty maintained the border at Malangen. Rafn 1852, 449, 481; Vilkuna 1980, 649.
\(^688\) Johnsen 1923, 22.
\(^689\) Vilkuna 1977, 84; Vilkuna 1980, 649.
\(^690\) E.g. Historia Norvegiae. See Antiquités Russes 1852, 116.
The reference to the *Tattarar* appears to most scholars as rather enigmatic and its interpretations are controversial. In fact, no one has managed to explain this statement in a satisfactory manner. It says in the text that the Bjarmians fled from the east because of the strife of the Tatars. This seems to refer to Tatars or the Mongols that at this time had entered Russia. The problem is that according to the current knowledge, the Tatars never came so far north that they could have been a threat to the Bjarmians. There is no knowledge of direct contact between the two.\(^{691}\)

A closer look, however, reveals that the Mongols may have come further north than previously assumed if not to the Bjarmian area directly. It is possible that the Mongols reached as far north as Novgorod. *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* writes about this: “*gengu Tattarar á ríki Hólmgarða-konungs*.”\(^{692}\)

There are some indications that the Mongols may have extended their presence to the Northern Dvina River area as well. There is actually a mid 13\(^{\text{th}}\) century text that refers to a Mongol campaign against the Samoyeds. The Franciscan monk Johannes de Plano Carpini was sent by the pope Innocentius IV to the great khan of the Mongols in 1245. The monk’s travel description includes a mention that the Mongols had fought against the Samoyeds. The Samoyeds live in the north and although they perhaps lived in a more southerly region in the 13\(^{\text{th}}\) century than today, the reference to them in connection with the Mongols is a clear indication that the Mongols occasionally came to the very north, not far from the Bjarmian area. Another written text refers to Mongol activity in the north as well. Marco POLO writes that the Mongol lords obtained their peregrine falcons from the northern ocean. Also this points to Mongol suzerainty in the extreme north. Many references in Russian folk-literature to *Bugai*, a Mongol *bogatyrs* (i.e. hero), attest the presence of Mongols in this area.\(^{693}\)

Despite the possible or even likely Mongol activity in the north, it is not clear why this should have been so disturbing to the Bjarmians that they needed to flee. The Mongol impact may have directly reached near the Northern Dvina River, but there is no clear evidence that this was so. As for the more westerly areas, there is no evidence at all. It is for example unlikely that the Onego area would have felt the direct impact of the Mongols. In the light of this, CARPELAN has suggested that it is likely that the Bjarmians that fled to Norway came from a more easterly area.\(^{694}\)

\(^{691}\) Ross 1940, 46–48.

\(^{692}\) Hakonar saga 1964, 266. See also Häme 1987a, 185.


\(^{694}\) Carpelan 1993a, 232.
The opinion of some Russian scholars that the Mongols did not penetrate Northern Russia has lead to the theory that *Tattarar* in the saga cannot refer to Mongols. Instead, this word would have to refer to the Russians from Novgorod. This would be because the Russians were under Mongol rule and from the Norwegian point of view they were now *Tattarar*. This interpretation is, however, not very likely, as HAAVIO points out. It does not seem at all likely that Mongols and Russians could have become synonymous terms to the Bjarmians or the Norwegians by the middle of the 13th century just because the Russians had very recently become subject to the Golden Horde.695

I have no satisfactory explanation to offer to the mystery of the *Tattarar* in the north. It is too simplistic to suggest that the information is erroneous, made up by the writer of the saga. This may be the case, but to disregard the information just because it is inconvenient is like hiding the dust under a carpet. It is not convincing either that the Scandinavians would suddenly have started to regard the Russians as Tatars just because they invaded Russia. Some have suggested that a number of Mongols may also have come to more northerly areas than previously suggested. This would certainly give more credibility to the information given in the saga, but as long as we lack strong evidence of the precise areas, this idea can remain only as a hypothesis. Also, it does not directly explain the need to flee even in the case the Mongols would directly attack the Bjarmians. However, if this would have been the case, the need to flee would become understandable. It is known from various parts of Russia that the Mongols did make people leave their homes and depopulation of a region could happen also through killing.696 However, there is no evidence of any kind of direct hostile contact between the Bjarmians and the Mongols. This is why it is reasonable to suggest that the need was caused by other, more indirect reasons.

JACKSON suggests that conflict with Mongols in Suzdal’ may have caused inhabitants to flee to the White Sea area and this could have pushed the Bjarmians out of their former territory.697

I tend to think the Bjarmians had no direct contact with the Mongols. Perhaps it was that the devastation the Mongols spread in Russia698 disturbed the life of the Bjarmians and their routines concerning livelihood and the way of life were

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698 The immediate impact of the Mongol invasions was catastrophic and the Mongol campaigns of 1237–1240 shattered the Russian economy. Halperin 1987, 75–76.
shattered. It may be that the regular trade routes could not be used anymore and this may have caused economical problems. It may have become more difficult to sell furs and other merchandise and obtain essential commodities in exchange. Perhaps the Bjarmians were to some extent dependant on contacts with southern parts of Russia and after these came under the influence of the Tatars, the life became hard for the Bjarmians. The routines in connection with trade were disturbed by the strife of the Mongols.

There is evidence of changes occurring during this period. Economical crisis coincided with a political change. Kiev was the center of the Russian fur trade to the west. In the 12th and the 13th centuries the trade stagnated. Fur animals were hunted to near extinction close to Kiev and this coincided with the diminished import from the north. The River Dniepr lost its status as a trade route. At the same time new routes had been opened from Western Europe to the orient as a result of crusades. At this point the Mongols entered Russia and this severed the trade between Kiev and Baghdad. The Mongols conquered the trade center Bulgar in 1236. They also destroyed all opposition in the Vladimir-Suzdal’ian Rus’. All this could mean problems to maintain old trade routes and stagnation of the fur trade in the east.

It would seem that in this new situation Novgorod gained a key position. The Mongols did not engage directly in trade, but taxed the foreign merchants. The Mongols cut off Novgorod from the western trading partners in the Hanseatic League, but gave tax exemptions to Hanseatic merchants entering Russia through Novgorod and passing through Suzdal’. Nearly all the Baltic trade entering and leaving Russia went through Novgorod and the Mongol policy probably increased trade and hence income for the Horde.

There prevailed continuing hostility between Norway and Novgorod despite the peace treaty in 1251. Perhaps problems between Norway and Novgorod were a contributing factor in some Bjarmians deciding to flee to Norway. Considering a

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699 Chingis Khan and his Mongols (also called Tatars) first appeared in southern Russia in 1223 and ravaged large areas. After the first appearance the Mongols vanished only to reappear in the late 1230’s. The war chief Batu campaigned between 1237 and 1240. The Mongols attacked a more northerly area destroying the Volga Bolgar state and the towns of Vladimir-Suzdal’ and threatened Novgorod. Prince Alexander of Novgorod promised to pay yearly tribute to the Mongols and the town was spared. The Mongols turned south ravaging Kiev. The Mongol rule over Russia is traditionally considered to have lasted from 1240 to 1480. Kirkinen 1986, 60; Halperin 1987, 20–21, 46, 65.


701 Halperin 1987, 28, 80–81.

702 Johnsen 1923, 20–21.
hypothetical situation where the Bjarmians would have come into conflict with the Novgorodians, Norway would appear to be the logical place to seek support.

It is interesting to remember that Novgorod had started to expand towards the north in the 13th century. Novgorod that had during the 12th-13th centuries become an important center for fur trade expanded northwards and built a network of strongholds along the Northern Russian rivers. Novgorodians had probably reached the White Sea in the 12th century and settled first by the estuaries of the rivers Dvina and Onega. From these locations they went on trading and trapping expeditions to the Kola Peninsula and gradually established certain rights on the southwestern coast of the peninsula. The first taxation of the Saami on the Kola Peninsula by the Novgorodians may have taken place in 1216. The interests of Norway and Novgorod met on the northern coast. Hostility intensified between the rivaling parties in the north after the middle of the 13th century. This may have a connection with the expanding Norwegian settlement in Northern Troms and eastwards in Finnmark that began at this time. The Norwegian settlement crossed the established ethnical-cultural border at Lyngen that had been stable probably for as long as for three hundred years. Scandinavian written sources (mainly Icelandic annals) report on Russian-Karelian hostility in Hålogaland in 1250, 1271, 1279, 1302, 1316 and 1323. More hostilities took place in 1326, 1338, 1349 and 1385 as well as in 1411, 1419 and 1444. We have also grounds to believe that the Norwegians, too, made raids in the White Sea area, although this is only first documented in Russian sources of the 15th century. Behind the plundering expeditions to Norway were motives of political and economical character. The places that were attacked and burned were primarily instiututions that represented the Norwegian crown and the Norwegian church in the north. One probable reason for the mutual hostility is the sharpened rivalry of taxation and trade with the Saami. The expansion into the Saami area from Norway, Sweden and Novgorod had become more organised than before. The primary goal was to establish taxation of the Saami, the secondary goal was to built secular and ecclesiastical administration.

Although the strife of the Mongols is given as a reason for the Bjarmians coming to Norway, it is interesting to speculate whether this might also have had something to do with the fact that the Novgorodians by this time with all probability had invaded the Bjarmian area and perhaps tried to impose economical sanctions on the Bjarmians or interfere with their trading activity. A possible conflict between

the Novgorodians and Bjarmians might have driven some Bjarmians to seek refuge in Norway that also at this time was engaged in increased hostility with Novgorod.

4.15 Active contacts

Like the name of the chapter indicates, these sources relate a Bjarmaland image with battles and trade as well as portray a geographical approach. The image is that of active contacts. The excerpts that are analysed here have been written approximately between 1150 and 1265. In some cases the events described in the text are of considerably earlier date than the date of the writing (Gesta Danorum, Nóregs konunga tal, Haralds saga hárfigra, Egils saga Skallagrímssonar, Landnámabók, Haralds saga gráfeldar, Kormáks saga, Óláfs saga helga, Magnus saga berfœtts) whereas some of the texts describe the events or conditions at the time of the writing (Mappa Mundi, Historia Norvegiae, Landafraði, AM 736 I, 4º, AM 764, 4º, Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar). Although all the texts in this chapter were written within about one century, the span of events covers a fairly long period of time, from the early part of the 10th century (c. 930) to almost the middle of the 13th century (c. 1240), in other words, a period of about three hundred years.

Despite the variation in regard to the date of writing and the events described, all the excerpts must be regarded as relatively reliable and all except Gesta Danorum are written in a realistic tone. In general, geographical descriptions are considered as comparatively reliable since it in most cases can be assumed that the author had no ulterior motive to alter geographical facts. However, there remains the question as to whether the author in each case was well acquainted with geography also in remote areas far from his home and outside the sphere of his personal experience. In many cases it may be assumed that although the author was not trying to give directly erroneous information, he may have been bound by stereotypical images of geography in foreign countries. Also, the understanding of geography and usage of foreign geographical names went through a historical development during which the content and usage of a certain name could alter in written accounts.704

All the above-mentioned reservations apply to the geographical excerpts analysed here (Mappa Mundi, Historia Norvegiae, Landafraði AM 194, 8to, the manuscript catalogued as AM 736 I, 4º and the manuscript catalogued as AM 764, 4º). All of these give some information about the location Bjarmaland, but few

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clues of other aspects. The accounts with mainly geographical content were written between about 1150 and 1250 and consequently reflect geographical understanding of this era. Two of these, *Historia Norvegiae* and AM 736 I, 4º, give also information about other aspects than the location of Bjarmaland. These pieces of information must be seen as a valuable addition to our knowledge since the geographical descriptions give information about the circumstances at the time of their writing and thus do not contain the same gap between the writing and the events as most of the sagas do. Especially *Historia Norvegiae* is interesting since it represents a tradition independent of the sagas and is probably even slightly older than these, perhaps also drawing its information from somewhat more reliable sources than the sagas.

In the geographical accounts the location of Bjarmaland is northerly and somewhat easterly in comparison to Norway. However, the information is fairly vague and the only reference points given are the neighbouring areas like Norway, Kvenland, Finnmark and Russia and locations like Gandvik (the White Sea or parts of it) and Veggestaf (uncertain placing by the White Sea). Additionally we learn that the Bjarmians were pagan and paid taxes to Russia. We also learn that the Bjarmians most likely were ethnically diverse or in some other way divided in two.

SAXO’s *Gesta Danorum* (written c. 1208/1219) was composed around the same time as the sagas, but it offers a completely different approach that must be regarded as ecclesiastical and unreliable in a historical sense, although the writer must have had access to many of the same sources as the saga authors had. In consequence, the information in *Gesta Danorum* must be treated with utmost care. The conclusion is that it offers very little information of Bjarmaland and reduces the Bjarmians to mythical people with magical skills, very similar to the Saami.

The sagas (*Nøregs konunga tal, Haralds saga hårfgastra, Egils saga Skallagrímssonar, Landnámabók, Haralds saga gráfeldar, Kormáks saga, Óláfs saga helga, Magnús saga berfœtts*) are mostly written a fairly long time after the events. The authors had earlier sources (both written and oral) at their disposition. These sources were used in a somewhat historical manner producing fairly realistic accounts of the events. However, several factors may have distorted the historical reality. First of all, by the time the sagas that are preserved to us were written, up to several centuries had passed since the described events and both the written and oral tradition may have changed form during this time. The author also always interprets his sources and even if the sources are reliable, the author interprets them based on his understanding. The author may also wish to present certain events according to his own agenda and consequently change the information on
Despite all these factors, the sagas present as reliable an image of the past as is available for us. In many cases the author probably also presented an image as true to his sources as possible. It is hardly likely that all the details would have needed remodelling to fit the author’s possible agenda. Despite this, the sagas at hand cannot be seen as contemporary sources and one has to take into account their limitations. Tendencies of all kinds, distortion of information either by design or accident and change in circumstances over the centuries have caused difficulties in interpreting the sources. The difficulties of interpretation certainly are present throughout in the sagas that tell about events many centuries ago since circumstances probably in many respects had changed by the time of the writing of the sagas. The verses probably contain mostly original information, especially when quoted (as in the case of Haralds saga gráfeldar). However, the verses probably had changed somewhat over the centuries and when used as a source material for prose the authors’ interpretations may have interfered with the facts.

The Bjarmaland image of the non-contemporary sagas gives the impression that it was a habit among the 10th-11th century kings of Norway to travel to Bjarmaland to loot and fight in the spirit of “Viking” expeditions. Often Bjarmaland is mentioned as one of many destinations in Northern Europe (the Baltic area and the British Isles). Three of the excerpts (Nöregs konunga tal, Haralds saga hárfaðra, Egils saga Skallagrímssonar) relate the Bjarmaland expedition of King Eiríkr blódøx. They give an image of a regular “Viking” expedition where plundering and fighting were an essential part. Some of these texts also refer to other similar expeditions to other locations in Northern Europe. It seems like old skaldic verses were among the source material for Eiríkr’s Bjarmaland expedition, although no direct quote has been preserved to us. Nevertheless, it seems like the different accounts are based on contemporary sources which somewhat enhances the credibility of the accounts. The three excerpts contain enough similar information to confirm usage of similar source material. The excerpts also fulfil one another, each of them adding something new and this suggests that perhaps the sources that were used, originally contained more information than is revealed to us. The Bjarmaland expedition in Egils saga Skallagrímssonar is the earliest expedition that is connected with “Vina”.

As URBAŃCZYK puts it: “Written sources, despite being very attractive as narrative discourses, pose many questions relating to the reliability of their 13th century versions and we should treat them with reservations due to their character as “rewritten” oral repositories of information legitimising social power structures.” Urbańczyk 1992, 192.
Haralds saga gráfeldar and Kormáks saga relate King Haraldr’s expedition to Bjarmaland sometime between 960–974. Also this expedition is presented as a “Viking” expedition. The king travelled with at least two ships during the summer and returned home in the fall. He had a battle in Bjarmaland, was victorious and obtained a large booty. Again “Vína” is mentioned. Bjarmaland is located in the east. Dwellings in Bjarmaland indicate permanent settlement. The words Bjarmskar kindir indicate that the Bjarmians may have consisted of more than one group of people. The verses that are quoted in Haralds saga gráfeldar give some credence to the information despite the fact that the verses originally were meant to glorify the king’s exploits. Consequently, the amount of looting and killing may be exaggerated. Nevertheless, both undoubtedly were a part of this (type of) expedition, albeit not necessarily to such an extent as the verses indicate.

Magnús saga berfœtts gives an account of King Magnús berfœtt’s Bjarmaland expedition around 1084–1090 where a battle with the Bjarmians played a major role. This account fits well into the pattern of describing the expeditions of various Norwegian kings with a victorious battle (and consequent looting) as the main ingredient.

All the above-mentioned excerpts present the Bjarmaland expeditions as regular “Viking” expeditions where the king of Norway was among the participants. However, the sagas of the same period present also another approach to the Bjarmaland expeditions. Óláfss saga helga gives an account of a journey commonly dated to 1026. The king of Norway was indirectly involved in this expedition, although he did not travel himself. Instead, he helped finance the expedition and in reward acquired parts of the profit that was gained by combination of trade and looting. Trade is not mentioned in connection with any of the earlier expeditions. This may well be due to the nature of the saga tradition that may not have been much concerned with descriptions of peaceful and commonplace trade. Perhaps it is also that none of the sources that were used to produce the saga accounts that are preserved until today really were concerned with peaceful trade either. The verses that in many cases seem to have been among the sources are known to concentrate on glorifying the exploits of kings and other great men and references to trade would be out of place. It is possible that for some reason the sources that produced the account of the Bjarmaland expedition in Óláfss saga helga had preserved a more varying account of the expedition. The story is rather entertaining with a looting sequence and details of a group of foreign people. Perhaps this adventurous quality was enough to produce more detailed account where also a more commonplace trade had its share.
The expeditioners came from Hálogaland (although the expedition parted from Trondheim) with two ships and over a hundred men mostly consisting of menservants. They established a truce to buy furs (squirrel, sable and beaver) that were later sold further in England. After the dealing had ended, the Norwegians decided to loot a local cemetery/sacrificial site where they obtained coins and silver artefacts. The indigenous word *Jómali* indicates that the Bjarmians were Baltic Fennic, probably speaking some form of Finnish or Karelian. Many details about the cemetery/sacrificial site are in accordance with what we know of general Finno-Ugrian pre-Christian religion. This seems to confirm further that the Bjarmians indeed were a Finno-Ugrian people. The location of Bjarmaland is bound with *Gandvik*, but no further details are given. “Vína” appears as the destination river in Bjarmaland.

Despite the clearly realistic tone of this account, we should still be observant for tendencies the author may have had. This applies to the presentation of the king of Norway and his motives in connection with the Bjarmaland expedition as well as the presentation of those who were his allies or opponents. The king’s opponent Thórir hundr is presented in a bad light in the saga, probably due to his opposition of the king who after all was the main concern of the author. We may also question the presentation of the king’s role in the Bjarmaland expeditions. There are grounds to assume that the Hálogalandians had long been involved in Bjarmaland expeditions and perhaps the attempts from the side of the Norwegian crown to extend commercial activity to the north was not well received by leading Hálogalandians like Thórir hundr. The almost forced involvement of Thórir hundr in the king’s Bjarmaland expedition becomes intelligable if we consider that he was simply aiming to protect his commercial activities in imposing his presence on the expedition. However, it was convenient for the author to use even this as a negative characteristic of a person, who later killed the Norwegian king Óláfr.

The duality of motives, looting and trade, was probably present as long as the expeditions took place. The account of the two Bjarmaland expeditions in *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* would seem to illustrate this. We are first given an account of a purely commercial enterprise to be followed by a purely hostile expedition in order to revenge the hostile outcome of the first commercial expedition.

*Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* is an especially important source since it must be regarded as a contemporary source, written only a few decades after the events. In this sense it offers one of the rare insights into a contemporary view of Bjarmaland. Besides the often fairly uninformative geographical texts, only Ohthere’s account is comparable in this respect. One can only assume that the
author had good, reliable sources at his disposition. Nevertheless, we should be aware that the saga was ordered by the son of Hákon Hákonson and this may have caused the author to adjust certain details or events. However, there is no reason to believe that this possible adjusting was needed in describing the details of the Bjarmaland expedition.

As it happens, Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar is also among one of the most informative accounts. Among the sagas of this chapter only Óláfs saga helga contains more details about Bjarmaland. However, of these two, Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar must be seen as the more reliable account, although much of the information given in Óláfs saga helga does fit to what we otherwise know about e.g. Finno-Ugrian peoples.

Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar relates that a group of Norwegians (from Hålogaland) sailed to Bjarmaland some years before 1222 with two ships. They traded with the Bjarmians and after this was done, they split into three groups, one returning to Norway, another continuing to Suzdal’ to trade and the third staying in Bjarmaland for the winter. The excerpt gives an insight into what the Norwegians on occasion might do with merchandice they had obtained in Bjarmaland, namely instead of travelling home to Norway, they could continue to Suzdal’ and trade the wares further. The group of Norwegians who stayed in Bjarmaland were slain by the Bjarmians after hostilities broke out. For the first time the king of Bjarmians is mentioned indicating a hierarchic society.

Another Norwegian expedition to Bjarmaland took place in the summer of 1222 with four ships as a response to the ill-ending previous expedition. The intention of this trip was to revenge the killing of a number of Norwegians. According to the saga, killing and looting took place. The booty included greyskins and burnt silver. Earlier, furs have been mentioned once as merchandice the Bjarmians sold to the Norwegians. Objects of silver have been mentioned on several occasions as loot obtained in Bjarmaland. This excerpt clearly illustrates how both looting and trade could be an integral part of the Norwegian Bjarmaland expeditions, all according to the circumstances.

According to the excerpt, the expedition of 1222 was the last one to go from Norway to Bjarmaland. Why the expeditions would cease is not elaborated on. It is very likely that the change in general political circumstances (expansion of Novgorod, Mongol invasion of Russia, possibly also increased hostility between Norway and Bjarmaland) as well as changes within trade (blocked trade routes, new trade articles) were contributing factors. The agglomeration of all these factors
probably meant that it was no longer profitable enough for the Norwegians to venture to Bjarmaland.

Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar also informs us that around 1240 a number of pagan Bjarmians settled at Malangen Fjord in Northern Norway and were christened. That the Bjarmians were allowed to settle in Norway would seem to speak for the conclusion that although the sources often portray the relationship between the Norwegians and the Bjarmians as hostile, the relationship was not exclusively so. On the contrary, the relationship between the two may well have been much more friendly than the sources let us know. This could mean that peaceful trade played a much bigger role throughout the centuries than the sources relate. However, it cannot be denied that aggression, too, must have been part of the relations for as long as the two groups had contact.

Mongol aggression is given as the reason for the Bjarmians moving to Norway. This may indeed be the indirect reason because Mongol invasion of Russia caused many political and economical changes. Perhaps the Bjarmians lost their economical foothold in the aftermath of these changes. Another more close-lying reason may also have contributed, namely the northward expansion of Novgorod and conflicts between Novgorod and Norway. In the hypothetical situation where the Novgorodians and the Bjarmians would be in conflict, it might be logical for the Bjarmians to seek support in Norway.

Although some of the geographical accounts were written in the 12th century, it is the Bjarmaland image of the first half of the 13th century that is preserved to us in form of a number of sagas. The events that are related date from the 10th century onwards. Although a lot of the information must be valid for the early dates as well, it is clear that the 13th century viewpoint of the authors certainly has formed the accounts. This is clearly visible in Heimskringla whose characters are portrayed to fit the political agenda of the author. Also the tradition of writing has to some extent formed the accounts. An example of this is the probable exaggeration of hostile attitude between the Bjarmians and the Norwegians. In reality, it is likely that peaceful trade was more prominent than the sources let us know.

It is worth noticing that already by the early 13th century the mythologisation of Bjarmaland had begun with SAXO’s portrayal. This is specifically interesting since the geographical accounts (some of which were written only slightly earlier) convey a very factual image of Bjarmaland despite the general shortcomings of this type of literature. Also sagas, despite their shortcomings, do give a realistic image of Bjarmaland and seemingly contain information that must sprout from intimate knowledge of the Bjarmians (e.g. the word Jómalí and information about pre-
Christian Finno-Ugrian religion). It can, of course, be contested whether the seemingly correct (uncontradictory at least) information can be attached precisely to the Bjarmians with any certainty since we can mostly compare the saga information only with much later historical accounts that seem to apply to a large portion of Finno-Ugrian peoples. In this respect we can only rely on information given in the sagas and be content in assuming that the information sprouts from the intimate knowledge of precisely the Bjarmians and no other group of people. However, we cannot trust every little detail and must allow that whatever knowledge was missing, the author added from another source or his imagination.

It seems that the Bjarmians were ethnically diverse, consisting of at least two groups of people. This is indicated by the verses in Haralds saga gráfeldar where “Bjarmskar kindir” is a plural form, i.e. Bjarmian peoples or even peoples of Bjarmaland. This may, of course, be a figure of speech only, but it is worth remembering that also Historia Norvegiae refers to two kinds of Bjarmians (utrique Biarmones). In this case, there is no doubt that the text is referring to two groups.

The location of Bjarmaland in the sagas at hand is rather schematic as a rule. It is mentioned that Bjarmaland was located in the north, past Finnmark. Sometimes also an easterly location is mentioned. On occasion Bjarmaland is associated with “Vina” that appears to be a river. Óláf’s saga helga mentions Gandvik for the first time. Gandvik is also indirectly connected with Bjarmaland in Historia Norvegiae. Namely, Wegestaf that is mentioned in Historia Norvegiae in other texts is connected with Gandvik. The location of Bjarmaland is also indicated by its neighbours that include Norway, Kvenland, Finnmark and Russia.

During Hákon Hákonarson’s rule (1217–1263) Lübeck began trading with Norway and in 1250 a treaty was signed with the city.706 This gives some indications that the trade from Norway was perhaps directed differently than before. According to the sources, the trade with Bjarmaland had lost its meaning by this time and we can perhaps see the new orientation of trade in the treaty with the Hanseatic city. The sources let us assume that the Mongol invasion contributed in cutting Russia from its old trading partners. General restlessness in this direction and hostilities between Norway and Novgorod may have made the east unattractive for Norwegian trade. Also introduction of new trade articles (stockfish) may have made the traditional trade with furs less attractive. All this could have contributed in cutting the trade between Bjarmaland and Norway and consequently in deterioration of contacts between the two.

706 Sigurðsson 1993, 258.
All in all, the collection of sources written between circa 1150–1265 convey a fairly realistic picture of Bjarmaland with the emphasis on the Norwegian expeditions. As a side effect of these accounts we learn about Bjarmaland. The relationship between the Bjarmians and the Norwegians seems to have been both commercial and hostile. Probably the contacts between the two were fairly frequent since the Norwegians seem to have been fairly intimate e.g. with the Bjarmian religion. There seems to have been no great change in the nature of the contacts from the 10th century until the mid 13th century after which the Norwegians seemingly stopped travelling to Bjarmaland where they had been going at least for over three hundred years.
 Tradition and fantasy

5.1 Landnámabók: Hjörleifr Hörðakonungr

King Hjorleif of Hordaland married Æsa the Fair, and their son was Otrygg, father of Oblaud, father of Hogni the White, father of Ulf the Squint-Eyed. Another son of Hjorleif was Half, the leader of Half’s Band; his mother was Hild the Slender, daughter of Hogni of Njarðey. Hjor was the father of King Hjor who avenged his father along with Solvi Hognason. Hjor plundered in Permia [Bjarmaland], and there he took captive Ljufvina, daughter of the king of Permia [Bjarmaland]. She stayed behind in Rogaland when King Hjor set out on a viking expedition, and later gave birth to twins, one called Geirmund and the other Hamund. Both of them were very swarthy.

(The Book of Settlements 1972:56–57)

This fairly short account traces the ancestors of Geirmund Hell-Skin who allegedly migrated to Iceland after King Harald had conquered Geirmund’s kingdom in Rogaland. According to the text, it was Geirmund’s father Hjörr, who had travelled to Bjarmaland to plunder. The only detail we get is that Hjörr captured the daughter of the king of Bjarmaland. She was called Ljúfvinu and became Hjörr’s...

707 An alternative version goes: 112 (86) --Hiör kongur heriadi a Biarmaland. hann tok þar ad herfange Ljúfvinu d(ottur) Biarma kongs. hun var eptir a Rogalande þá er Hiör k(ongur) for i hernad. Landnámabók 1921, 66. The reference to Bjarmaland is found in both the Melabók (written c. 1300–1310) redaction of Landnámabók and in Sturla ÞÓRÐARSON’s version Sturlubók (c. 1275–1280) Both are based on the earlier redaction Styrmisbók (c. 1220) that derives its information from the earliest version of Landnámabók from the early 12th century. Melabók seems to be more faithful to Styrmisbók. See Pálsson–Edwards 1972, 5, 7–8. The text at hand is closely connected with Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka.

708 See The Book of Settlements 1972, 57.
queen. She gave birth to two sons, one of whom was the previously named Geirmund.

HAAVIO mentions that according to *Landnámabók*, Geirmund, son of a local king Hjörr Hálffsson, arrived in Iceland in 895 as an old man. On the basis of this, he has assumed that his father Hjörr was an adult man in the 830’s, perhaps already a bit earlier. This leads to the conclusion that Hjörr’s expedition to Bjarmaland is most likely dated to the 830’s and makes this expedition into one of the earliest known expeditions to Bjarmaland.709 To an extent *Landnámabók* is based on historical facts, but some of the stories and genealogies suggest the folk imagination at work. Consequently, we cannot trust that everything is historically correct.710 All this makes it hard to judge whether we should rely on this information or not. There may be some truth behind the story, but parts of it may have been composed in order to create a suitable genealogy. The Bjarmaland expedition is of an extremely early date in comparison to other sources. The earliest written source about Bjarmaland is from the late 9th century describing an expedition from the same era. The expedition that is described in the text at hand would be even earlier than the one in the earliest source. The earliest written version of *Landnámabók* dates to the beginning of the 12th century and this leaves nearly two hundred years between the described Bjarmaland expedition and the writing of the earliest version. We have no way of verifying that Bjarmaland was mentioned in the earliest version, but it is likely it was included in the *Styrmisbók* from around 1220 since two later versions based on this redaction include the episode. The gap between the alleged dating of the Bjarmaland expedition and the written versions is consequently between two and three hundred years. This gap is by no means longer than in the case of some sagas and their description of expeditions. However, the longer back in time one goes, the more unreliable the information is. It is often considered that the events taking place in the 9th century that are described in the sagas are unreliable.711 This may well be the case with the episode in *Landnámabók* as well. It is, though, interesting to notice that in many ways the information given about Bjarmaland contains features that are familiar from other written sources mentioning Bjarmaland. In this sense, *Landnámabók* could be seen as holding some genuine tradition. It is at least likely that Bjarmaland was a well-known area in Norway already in the early 9th century and there may be versed accounts placed to this early era.

709 Haavio 1965, 130.
710 Kellogg 1997, xxxiv.
711 See e.g. Häme 1987a, 3–4, 8.
In any case, *Landnámabók* refers to the less peaceful relations between the Norwegians and the Bjarmians. Plundering is a feature that appears early on in the accounts of Bjarmaland and in this sense the episode in *Landnámabók* is comparable to accounts in many sagas. The more realistic ones relate that a number of 10th century kings (Eiríkr Haraldsson *blóðox*, Haraldr *gráfeldr*) went to Bjarmaland to plunder. Also the fact that it was a king who undertook the expedition is a common thing in accounts of Bjarmaland and also in this sense the tale in *Landnámabók* fits into the pattern found in many sagas.\(^\text{712}\)

The fact that Hjörr comes from Rogaland is somewhat uncharacteristic. Often the sagas refer to Hálogaland as the starting point or home of the participants of the Bjarmaland expeditions. However, the 10th-11th century Norwegian kings who according to the sagas travelled to Bjarmaland had their power base in the more southerly parts of the country.\(^\text{713}\)

The excerpt at hand mentions a marriage between the daughter of the king of Bjarmaland and Hjörr. This is the only early reference to intermarriage between the Norwegians and the Bjarmians. The marriage motif does, however, appear in a different form in a couple of the earlier sagas (in connection with Eiríkr *blóðox*’s expedition to Bjarmaland) and in *Gesta Danorum*. According to the texts, Eiríkr *blóðox* found himself a Norwegian wife on the way from Bjarmaland.\(^\text{714}\) In *Gesta Danorum* a Hálogalandian is wooing the daughter of the king of Bjarmaland.\(^\text{715}\) Some of the so-called *fornaldarsögur* (*Hálfs saga ok Hálfskrekkja, Bósa Saga* and *Hálfdanar saga Eysteinnsonar*)\(^\text{716}\) also contain a marriage motif in connection with Bjarmaland.

Ljúfvina is described as a daughter of a king. It is perhaps better not to take this information literally. First of all, Ljúfvina’s royal origin may be an addition designed to make her a suitable spouse for the Norwegian king. Also, as I have expressed earlier, I do not take the title king in connection with the Bjarmians literally. The concept of king in medieval Norway was something quite different than what we understand with it today.\(^\text{717}\) Hjörr himself was only a local king ruling a rather limited area. We have no idea of the organisation of the Bjarmian society.

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\(^{712}\) See e.g. Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217; Fagrskinna 1985, 79.

\(^{713}\) See Krag 2000, 53–54. Eiríkr *blóðox* is said to have ruled in Hordaland and Fjordane. See Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar 1988, 93–94.

\(^{714}\) See e.g. Antiquités Russes 1852, 254; Heimskringla 1999, 86.

\(^{715}\) Saxonis Gesta Danorum 1931, 65.

\(^{716}\) See Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 539–558; Antiquités Russes 1850, 86; Bósasaga 1893, 61–63.

Most probably they had some sort of social division and persons with certain authority over others. It would have been natural for the Norwegians who had local kings to call these authority persons with this same title. It is quite another matter which title “the king of the Bjarmians” would have used for himself (if any title was used at all). It seems to be a common thing in medieval Scandinavian sources to refer to the leaders of different ethnical groups as “kings”. For example, to our knowledge the Saami did not have kings in the same tradition as the Norwegians. Nevertheless, sagas talk about “king of the Saami”.  

All in all, it is feasible that there could have been occasional marriages between the Norwegians and the Bjarmians since these had active contacts. However, the royal descent of the spouses that is almost invariably present in the written sources need not be a realistic feature.

The allegedly Bjarmian name Ljufvina is spelt differently in different manuscripts. The form Ljufvina appears in the English translation, the manuscripts have the forms Ljúfvinu, Ljúfinu, Ljūvinu, Ljúfinnu, Ljúfínnu and Liufinnu. Scholars have dealt very little with this name. It does not appear very Finno-Ugrian, but rather to be a Scandinavian name. This is in keeping with the general practise since all the “Bjarmian” names (in *Gesta Danorum*, *Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar*, *Ǫrvar-Odds saga*, *Sturlaugs saga starfsama* and *Bósa saga*) are actually Scandinavian.

As we have seen, basically all the information about Bjarmaland in this excerpt is comparable to information in other written sources. It is perhaps worth remembering that many of the sagas were written around the same time (the early 13th century) as *Styrmisbók*, the probable source for both *Melabók* and *Sturlubók*. Perhaps there prevailed a similar tradition of writing. The earliest version of *Landnámabók* was written in the early 12th century and to some extent the later versions must be based on this. Also, the sagas derive their information from earlier sources (both written and oral). It would seem like there is no great difference in the tradition of writing between *Landnámabók* and the early 13th century sagas and one should perhaps consider them equally reliable as sources. However, *Landnámabók* relates events that happened one century earlier than the earliest descriptions of Bjarmaland expeditions in the sagas and this early dating adds a

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718 See Häme 1987a, 48–50 for a comprehensive list of references in the different sagas.
720 The 9th century events are not generally taken as historically very reliable. Pálsson–Edwards 1968, 7–12, 14; Häme 1987a, 237; Pálsson–Edwards 1990b, 1, 23.

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factor of unreliability to the account in *Landnámabók*, despite the very similar appearance of the details.

*Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka* from the 13th century mentions the same people. *Landnámabók* is about Hjör’s expedition to Bjarmaland whereas *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka* takes up his grandfather Hjörleifr’s journey there.

### 5.2 Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka

1. 5. Hjör (Kjör) konúngr Jösursson var ríkr konúngr, ok vard sóttduadr, ok var heygdr á Rogalandi; hans son var Hjörleifr Hórdalands konúngr, hann rød ok fyrí Rogalandi, ok var allríkr konúngr, hann var kalladr Hjörleifr enn kvennsami, hann átti Æsu ena ljósu, döttur Eysteins jarls af Valdresi. Hjörleifi brustu lausaðe fyrí örleika; hann lét gjöra skip af virktum, ok för til Bjarmalands. Högni enn audgi bjó í Njardey fyrí Naumudalsmynni; hann tók vel vid Hjörleifi konúngi, ok var hann thar thrjár nætr, ok gekk at eiga Hildi hina mjófu, döttur Höguna, ádr hann för burt, ok för hon med honum til Bjarmalands, ok Sölvi, bródir hennar. En er Hjörleifr könungr kom í Vinumynni (Vinunmynni), skipi hann lidi sinu í iij thrjúngu; á skipi hans voru xc manna; thrjúngur lids hèlt upp bardaga med honum vid landsmenn, annarr thrjúngur lids vardveitti skip med stýrimanni, en iij thrjúngur braut haug med staðbúa, ok fengu their mikit fē. Á sunnanverdri Finnmörk í Gjardeyjarlæita/Gjardeyjarhlóma lá Hjörleifr konúngr um nótt.\(^{721}\) (Antiquités Russes 1850:86)

2. VI, 1. Hjörleifr konungr för með skipi sinu til Konungahellu, þvi sem hann helt til Bjarmalands. Þeir Hreiðarr, Sjólands konungr, settu buðir sinar et næsta þar. (Hálfissaga ok Hálfsrekka 1909:80)

1. 5. King Hjor Josursson was a mighty king who died in sick-bed and was buried in a mound in Rogaland. Hjorleif, King of Hordaland, was his son and also reigned over Rogaland and was a very powerful king. He was called Hjorleif the Womanizer and was married to Æsa the Fair, the daughter of Eystein, earl of Valdres. Hjorleif lacked movables since he was so generous. He let build a ship with great care and went to Bjarmaland. Hogni the Rich lived on Nærøy on the coast of Namdalen. He received well King Hjorleif who

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\(^{721}\) This excerpt is also published in essentially the same form in Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka 1909, 76–78 and in Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka 1981, 171–172.
stayed there for three nights and took to his bed Hild the Slender, daughter of Hogni, before he left. She and her brother Solvi went with him to Bjarmaland.

And when Hjorleif came to the mouth of Vina, he divided his troops in three. On his ship were ninety men. A third of the fold joined him in the battle against the men on land. The other third took care of the ship and the captain. The last third broke into a mound with the help of a local and they got many goods. Hjorleif lay one night in Gjardeyjar-geima/Gjardeyjarhólm south of Finnmark.

2. VI, 1. King Hjorleif went with his ship to Konghelle. It was the same one he went to Bjarmaland with. Hreiðarr, King of Sjælland and his people set up booths next to him there.722

Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka (“The Saga of Hálfr and His Champions”) is an Icelandic fornaldarsaga, preserved in one vellum manuscript (GkS 2845 4to) written around 1450 and in a great number of paper copies. An older version of the saga, Hróks saga svarta (“The Saga of Hrokr the Black”) that is mentioned in Sturlunga saga, seems to have been written between 1220 and 1280. A major rewriting has taken place since then. It is worth noticing that Landnámabók precedes this early form of the saga. The extant text probably dates from the 14th century. The events of this saga are supposed to have happened long before Harald hárfragr’s time. Fornaldarsögur (Mythical-Heroic Sagas) can be described as old fantasy literature with imaginary persons capable of supernatural deeds. Historical background is often absent. They are named after the collection of sagas published by C.C. RAFN (Fornaldarsögur Nordrlanda I-III 1829–1839). The events of these sagas are supposed to have happened before the settlement of Iceland (starting in the ninth century) and consequently the events are placed outside Iceland. The story is often set in Scandinavia, but also outside it in faraway places like Russia, Bjarmaland and Byzantium. They relate events of ancient times, the heroes may be as old as from the Migration Period.723 Also the saga at hand has supernatural elements, but the Bjarmaland expedition is described in realistic style, although right after the expedition supernatural elements appear. Fornaldarsögur were meant as entertainment and Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka is a good example of this type of literature.724

722 My translation based on unpublished Norwegian translation by Jan Ragnar HAGLAND.
723 Rafin 1850, 86; Andrews 1909a, 47; Jansson 1936, 37; Seelow 1981, 105, 165; Häme 1987a, 10–11; Seelow 1993, 262; Sigtrygsson 2000, 5. ANDREWS claims that Saga af Hálfi ok Hálfsrekkum preceded Landnámabók. See Andrews 1909a, 45–46. This does not, however, seem very probable.
We are here dealing with people familiar from *Landnámabók*. It is, however, a different person who travels to Bjarmaland. In *Landnámabók* it was King Hjörr, but in *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka* it is Hjörr’s grandfather Hjörleifr.

Hjörleifr’s first great voyage, the expedition to Bjarmaland, is a typical “Viking” expedition and a motif many of the *fornaldalsögur* depict. The motivation for Hjörleifr’s expedition is his lack of goods. He builds a ship and starts his journey to Bjarmaland. On the way he stops in Nærøy (off the coast of Namdal726 in Nord-Trøndelag) where he finds himself a new wife (although he already has one) and takes her and her brother with him. It is a known motif that saga heroes acquire a wife on an expedition to Bjarmaland. In some sagas the wife herself is a Bjarmian, but in others the wife is a Norwegian found on the way to or from Bjarmaland. For example, sagas relate that Eiríkr blóð ox found his wife Gunnhild on the way from Bjarmaland.727 Also in *Landnámabók* the hero acquires a wife, this time a Bjarmian woman.728 It comes to mind that perhaps the plot here is influenced by the story in *Landnámabók* or even by other saga texts with the wife motif. However, it is typical of Hjörleifr to acquire a new wife on each of his major expeditions729, so the wife motif may not have a direct connection with the plot in *Landnámabók* or the sagas.

According to the text, there were ninety men on the boat. This amount is reasonable for a larger war vessel.730 Once in Bjarmaland, Hjörleifr set to obtain the goods he lacked. He divided his troops in three. One third was left to take care of the boat, another third (including the king himself) fought the Bjarmians on shore. The last third set out to rob a mound. With the help of local guidance, they managed to loot the mound and get many goods. These are not specified further.

The local guide brings in mind an episode in *Ǫrvar-Odds saga*. In this saga the expeditioners encounter a Norwegian man who has lived among the Bjarmians for a number of years and make him help them to rob a mound. In *Ǫrvar-Odds saga* the mound contains silver.731 It is possible that the Bjarmaland expedition in *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka* is influenced by *Ǫrvar-Odds saga* which is the older of the two.

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726 Namdal is also mentioned in *Áns saga Bogsveigis* in connection with a Bjarmaland expedition. See Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1829, 360.
727 See Antiquités Russes 1852, 254; Heimskringla 1999, 86.
728 Antiquités Russes 1852, 232.
730 Binns 1993b, 578.
731 *Ǫrvar-Odd* 1888, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36.
It is perhaps also worth noticing that Órvar-Odds saga shows clear influence of Óláfs saga helga.\textsuperscript{732}

A. Le Roy ANDREWS points out that for a saga hero who is short of cash, there are two particular ways to improve the situation fast and efficiently: trade (and plundering) expeditions to Bjarmaland or the looting of burial mounds and these motifs are both combined in the text at hand. The fornaldarsögur are especially rich in these motifs.\textsuperscript{733} Also other sagas mention looting in Bjarmaland. In Óláfs saga helga a mound is looted.\textsuperscript{734} A number of sagas also refer to looting in general.\textsuperscript{735} Looting was seemingly one of the things that made the Bjarmaland expeditions especially profitable for the Norwegians. Also a battle between the Bjarmians and the Norwegians is a recurring motif and many of the sagas refer to this.\textsuperscript{736}

Both Órvar-Odds saga (á þá er Vína heitir, i.e. river that is called Vína)\textsuperscript{737} and Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka (Vinumynni or Vinuminni, i.e. the mouth of the River Vína) mention the River “Vína” and this might be a further indication that the former influenced the latter. “Vína” is also mentioned in a couple of the sagas in Heimskringla and in Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar\textsuperscript{738} and it is possible that these, too, may have been an inspiration for Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka.

Finnmark is mentioned on the return journey, so the route to Bjarmaland here followed the coast of Norway past Finnmark like in most of the sagas and other sources.\textsuperscript{739}

Again it is a king of Norway who goes to Bjarmaland. In this case he comes from the southern part of Norway, Rogaland and Hordaland. This is the case also in some of the 13th century sagas.\textsuperscript{740}

The events are supposed to have happened very early. If we take HAAVIO’s estimations about the dating of the events in Landnámabók as a starting point, the events of the text at hand must be dated to the late 8th century. According to HAAVIO, Hjörr’s expedition to Bjarmaland that is described in Landnámabók

\textsuperscript{733} Andrews 1909b, 78.
\textsuperscript{734} Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232.
\textsuperscript{735} See e.g. Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217; Fagrskinna 1985, 79.
\textsuperscript{736} See e.g. Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217; Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar 1988, 93–94.
\textsuperscript{737} Órvar-Odd 1888, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36.
\textsuperscript{738} See Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232; Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217; Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar 1988, 93–94.
\textsuperscript{739} See e.g. Haralds saga ins hárfagra 1962, 134–135; Fagrskinna 1985, 79.
\textsuperscript{740} See e.g. Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar 1988, 93–94.
most likely took place in the 830’s.\textsuperscript{741} In this text, it is his grandfather Hjörleifr who goes to Bjarmaland. This means that Hjörleifr’s expedition must have happened about 40–60 years earlier, i.e. circa 770–790.\textsuperscript{742} However, one should not rely on the veracity of this too much. According to the current knowledge, the Norwegians started to sail to Bjarmaland in the end of the 9th century, about one century later than Hjörleifr’s assumed expedition.\textsuperscript{743} \textit{Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka} is a relatively late saga, one of the so-called \textit{fornaldarsögur}, which are known to include imaginary persons and events and magical elements. \textit{Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka} in its current form gives us a picture of how saga material was used in late medieval Iceland. The kernel of the action is based on old material and most of the main characters are known from other sources. To a modern reader a lot of the motifs seem stereotyped, but during the Middle Ages there was no demand for originality.\textsuperscript{744} It seems likely that \textit{Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka} was inspired by the account of a Bjarmaland expedition in \textit{Landnámabók}. In other words, the author of the saga was inspired by the genealogy and composed an account of a Bjarmaland expedition in similar style, borrowing elements from other texts like \textit{Ǫrvar-Odds saga} and perhaps also some of the 13th century sagas referring to Bjarmaland expeditions (i.e. a number of sagas in \textit{Heimskringla} and \textit{Égils saga Skalafígl}). All in all, the historical veracity of the Bjarmaland expedition in \textit{Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka} is doubtful even if motifs from earlier sources are included.

5.3 \textit{Ǫrvar-Odds saga}\textsuperscript{745}

4. --Grímr gengr þá út ok allir þeir, er inni váru, ok fagna vel Oddi ok Ásmundi. Grímr býðr þeim á skála, ok þiggja þeir þat, en þegar þeir höfðu niðr sez, þá spyrr Oddr at þeim frændum sinum Guðmundi ok Sigurði. Þar var svá frændsemi farit, at Guðmundr var bróðir Odds, sonr Gríms ok Lopthœnu, en Sigurðr var systurson Gríms. Þeir váru báðir vænir at yfirliti. Grímr svarar:

\textsuperscript{741} Haavio 1965, 130.
\textsuperscript{742} Also HELGASON states that according to Icelandic genealogies Hálf lived in the end of the 8th century. Helgason 1934, 203.
\textsuperscript{743} ANDREWS sees Hjörleifr’s expedition as an anachronism exactly because Óththere is supposed to be the first Norwegian to have sailed to Bjarmaland in the end of the 9th century during the rule of King Harald hárfagr. Andrews 1909b, 77. However, it is likely that the Norwegian travelled to Bjarmaland prior to this, but by land instead of sailing. See e.g. Huurre 1983, 421, 424–425.
\textsuperscript{744} See Seelow 1981, 166.
\textsuperscript{745} There are many versions of this saga. None of these follow the English translation word by word. In order to give the best possible overview, I have decided to include three slightly different versions in Old Norse. Together these three versions cover the English translation.

6. Oddr gengr á skip; þeir réðir Oddr um, er hann var á skip kominn, at þeir skyljúf flytjaz undan eyjum, ok taka þeir til segls, ok svá gera þeir Guðmundr ok Sigurðr, ok þegar gaf þeim byr, ok sigldu þeir í einni norðr til Finnmarkr. Þá fell af byrrinn, ok leggja þeir á lægi; þar liggja þeir um nóttina. Þar var fjöloði gamma á land upp, en un morgininn eptir gengu þeir á land af skipi þeira Guðmundar ok renna á hvern gamma ok renna Finnurnar, en þar þola þat illa ok efa mjók. Þeir réða um skipi Odds, at þeir vilja á land ganga, en hann leyfir þeim eigi þat. Til skips koma þeir Guðmundr um kveldit. “Vartu á land genginn, Guðmundr?” sagði Oddr. “Þat var satt”, sagði Guðmundr “ok hefi ek þat svá gört, at þér þykkir mest gaman at greta Finnurnar, ok muntu vilja fara á morgin á land með okkr?” “Frarri ferr þat” kvað Oddr. þar liggja þeir þrjár nét; þá gefr þeim byr, ok er ekki sagt fyr fyr frá ferð þeira, en þeir koma til Bjarmalands; þar halda þeir skipum sínum í á þá er Vína heitir; eyjar liggja margar á ánini. þar kasta þeir akkerum, svá sem þeir koma undir nes þat, er ofan gekk af meginlandi ok fram í ána. Þat sjá þeir til tjónda, at menn koma ór morkinni fram, en þeir hverfa í einn stað allir; þá tók Oddr til orða: “hvat ætlar þú, Guðmundr, at lið þetta ætlaz fyrr?” “Aldri veit ek þat”, segir Guðmundr “eða hvat ætlar þú, Oddr frændi?” segir Guðmundr. “Þat munda ek ætla”, segir Oddr “at hér mundi boð nokkut vera, eða erfi drukkit eptir gøfðan mann; nú skaltu, Guðmundr, gæta skipa, en vit Æsmundr skulum ganga á land. Þeir gora svá, en er þeir koma til merkrinnar, þá sjá þeir ár skála einn mikinn, þá var næsta myrkt orðit. Þá ganga þeir at dyrum ok nema þar staðar: sjá mörg þiðindi í gegnum hurðina; mönnum var þar skipat á báða bekki. Þat sá þeir, at
skaptker var við dyrr utar; svá var þar ljóst, at hvergi bar skugga á, nema þar er skaptkerit stöð; glaumr var þar mikill inn at heyra. “Skilr þú hér nokkut mál manna?” segir Oddr. “Eigi heldr en fugla klíð”, segir Ásmundr “eða þykkiz þú nokkut af skilja?” segir Ásmundr. “Eigi er þat siðr” segir Oddr. “Þat muntu sjá”, segir hann “at einn maðr skenkir hér á báða bekkja, en þat gefr mér grun um, at hann muni kunna ta tala á norrœna/norska tungu. Nú mun ek ganga héra inn” segir Oddr “ok nema þar staðar, sem mér þykkir vænligast, en þu skalt bíða mín hér á meðan úti”. Nú gengr Oddr inn ok nemr hann staðar nær dyrum ok þor þar til, en göngu byrlarans berr þar at. Þá finnr byrlarann eigi fyrir, en hann er þrifinn hónum, en Oddr bregðr byrlarannum upp yfir hofuð sér, en byrlarinn kveðr við hátt ok kallar ok segir Bjarmum, at troll hafi tekit hann. Þá skjótliga spretta þeir/Bjarmar upp ok taka til þðrunegi til byrlarans, en Oddr berr þá með byrlarannum ok kem þum hann svá út með hann; þá skilr með þeim, ok fá modified out for readability. Oddr ok þeir Ásmundr með byrlarann, en Bjarmar treysta eigi út at ráða eptir honum. Þá kom þeir Oddr til skipa með byrlarann ok setr Oddr hann í rúm hjá sér. Þá tekr Oddr til orða ok spyrri byrlarann tóðöinda, en hann þago við. “Eigi þarfut at þegjja, þvíat ek veit, at þu kant at mæla á norrœna tungu”.


746 Also, “nú fára þeir ok finna þar úgrynni fjár af gulli ok silfrí ok báru til skipa ok lágu þar nokkurar nætr, því ekki gaf á brott. En af þessum þeirra verkum varð þat, at Oddr ok allir þeir þrostredr áttu hinn mestu bardaga við Bjarma, en þo skilði svá, at þeir könum á brott með alt féir ok mistu þó margu menn ok byrlarann”.

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á millum sín – “ok vakið yfir honum trúliga” kvað Oddr “fyrir því at svá standa augu hans á land upp, sem honum þykki eigi jafnilt hér, sem hann lætr yfir, með Björnumunum/þeim Björnum. Þá fara þeir Oddr til haugsins, en þeir varðveita skip, Guðmundr ok Sigurðr; þeir sitja við ok sælta sílfi, en byrlarinnir sitr í milli þeira, ne eft finna þeir fyrir, en byrlarinnir hleypr á land upp, ok hafa þeir hans allz ekki.

8. Svá gengr Oddr fram í bardaga, at ekki heldz við. Ásmundr fylgir honum; svá ryðz Oddr um með kylfu sinni, at hann gengr í gegnum fylkingar; þar kemr, at svá fellr lið af þeim Björnum sem storð. Bardagi þeira var baði harðr ok langr, en sá varð endir á sökn þeira, at Bjarmar flyja undan, en Oddr rekr flóttan, ok síðan snýr hann aprtr ok kannar lið sitt ok er fátt manna fallit af honum, en múgi nær er drepinn af Björnum/landsmonnum. “Nú skulu vérr gora fjárskipti” segir oddr “ok skulu vérr gora byrðar af vápnum/silfrvápnum í staðinn”. Svá gora þeir, sem Oddr mælti fyrir; síðan fara þeir til skipa, en þá er þeir koma þar, þá eru skipin öll á brottu; þá þykkiz Oddr sakna vinar á stað. “Hvat skal þá til ræða taka?” segir Ásmundr. “Tvennu mun þar at skipta um tiltekjur þeira”, segir Oddr “þeir munu hafa lagt skipin hér í leyni í ána, jitt ella, at þeir hafa brugðiz oss meirr en vér ætlum”. “Þat mun ei vera” segir Ásmundr. “Ek mun gora raun til” segir Oddr “nú mun ek ganga til skógar ok kveykja eld”. Ok þá er hann kemr þar, ferr hann upp í tré ok tendrar eld í limum uppi ok síðan gengr hann aprtr til sjávar, en tréit kviknar, svá at logi stendr í lofti uppi. þá sjá þeir, at skip fara at landi, ok verðr fagnarfundr með þeim frændum; stíga þeir Oddr þegar á skip sín.

9. Þeir Oddr ok hand forunautar halda nú í braut af Bjarmalandi með herfang sitt; er nú eigi um ferð þeira getit, fyrr en þeir koma til Finnmerkr ok í þat lægi it sama, er þeir hofðu fyr í verit. (Ǫrvar-Odd 1888:20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36)

12. --Svá varð Ǫrvar-Oddr frægr af þessi fór, at engi þykkir slik farin hafa verit ór Noregi [vegna þess mikla fjár er hann fekk á Bjarmalandi ok annarra afrekswerka]. [Má nú kalla, at úti sé fyrst þáttur þessarar sognu.] (Ǫrvar-Odd 1888:50)


“Ertu ei sá Oddr”, segir Skolli “er fór til Bjarmalands fyrir lóngu?” “Sá er maðr inn sami” segir Oddr. (Ǫrvar-Odd 1888:84)

“Viltu, at ek segi þér”, kvað Rauðgæni “hversu Ögmundr er til kominn? Ok get ek, at þér þykki þá engi ván, at hann verði unninn af mennzkum monnum, ef veizt allan hans uppruna; en þat er þar fyrst af at segja, at Hárekur hét konungr, er rëð fyrir Bjarmalandi, þá er þú fórt þangat herferði, eptr því sem þú viest, hvern skaða er þú gerðir þá Björnum. En er þú vart í burtu farinn, þóttuð Bjarmar hafa raunítt af fengit ok vildu gjarna hefna, ef þeir gæti. Var þat þá tiltekja þeirra, at þeir fengu eina gygi undan fossi stórum, galdra fulla ok gørninga, ok logðu í sæng hjá Hárek konungi, ok við henni átti hann son: sá var vatni ausinn ok naði gefit ok kallaðr Ögmundr. Flestum mennzkum monnum var hann ulíkur þegar á unga aldri, sem ván var sakir moderneis hans, en faðir hans var þó inn mesti blótmaðr. Þegar er Ögmundr var þrévetr, var hann sendr á Finnmörk ok nam hann þar allzkyns galdrak ok gørninga, ok þá er hann var í því fullnuma, för hann heim til Bjarmalands: var hann þá sjau vetra ok svá stórr sem fullrosknir menn, rammr at aflk ok illr viðskiptis. Ekki hafi hann batnat yfirlits hjá Finnumum, þvíat hann var þá bæði svart ok blár, en hárit sitt ok svart, ok hekk flóki ofan fyrir augun, þat er topprinn skylti heita, var hann þá kallaðr Ögmundr flóki, ælðstu Bjarmar þá at senda hann til móz þik ok at drepa þik; þó þóttuð þeir vita, at mikils mundi við þurfu, aðr en þér yrdi í hel komit; var þat þá enn tiltekji þeirra, at þeir létu seíða at Ögmundi, svá at hann skylti engi jarn þita atkvæðalaus. Þvinæst blótuðu þeir hann ok tryldu hann svá, at hann var engum mennzkum manni líkr. Eyþjófr hét vikingr einn, hann var inn mesti berserkr ok hofuðhetja, svá at eigi þótti nokkur garpr meiri en hann, ok hafði hann aldri fæði skip í hernði en átján; hann sat hvergi at landi ok lá úti á sætrjæam vetr ok varmt sumar, alt var við hann hraett, hvir sem hann feor. Hann vann Bjarmaland ok skattgildi; þá hafði Ögmundr fengit sér átta fylgðarmenn, þeir váru allir í flókastökum, ok beit á engan jarn. Þeir hétu svá: Hákr ok Haki, Tindr ok Tóki, Finnr ok Fjösin, Tjósin ok Torfi. Síðan leggr Ögmundr félag sitt við Eyþjófr, ok heldu þeir báðir samt í hernð. Þá var Ögmundr tíu vetra. Hann var með Eyþjófi fimn vetr, lagði Eyþjófr við hann ástföstr svá mikit, at hann mátti ekki í móti honum láta, ok fyrir hans skuld gefi hann upp Hárek konungi alla skatta af Bjarmalandi. Eigi launadí Ögmundr Eyþjófi betr en svá, at hann drap hann sofanda í sæng sinni ok myrði hann síðan.” (Ǫrvar-Odd 1888:126–127)
--Rauðgrani mælti: “her er kominn maðr sá, er þit föstbroðr hafið heyrt getit, er Oddr heitir, ok er kallaðr Órvar-Oddr, ok við, at hann verði föstbroðr várr; skal hann ok einn mestu ráða af oss, þvát hann er vanastr hernaði”. Símir svarar: “er þetta Oddr sá, sem för til Bjarmalands?” “Satt er þat” sagði Rauðgrani. (Órvar-Odd 1888:128)

--Hann kvez Vignir heita, “eða ertu Oddr sá, er för til Bjarmalands?” “Satt er þat” sagði Oddr. (Órvar-Odd 1888:130)


Eptir þetta skiljaz þeir. Snýr Grímr heim, en Oddr gengr á skipit út. Hann heitr þegar á menn sínna, biðr þá hafa uppi akkerin ok drañaz undan eynni með báti. Svá góra þeir, ok þvínaest báð hann þá vinda seglin. Þeir góra ok svá, Guðmunr ok Sigurðr; þeim gaf þegar byr, ok sigldu þeir í einni norðr til Finnmerkr; þeir lóðuz þar um nóttina við akkeri. Þar var fjöldi gamma á land

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Guðmundr frendi”, segir hann “fara til lands ok eptir visan hans til haugsins í nóttr með yóra skipara; en ek mun gëta skipa ok byrlans með mina menn.” Svá gora þeir nú. Þeir fara nú ok koma til haugsins ok binda sér þar byrðar, þviat eigi skorti fë; ok þegar þeir váru búnir, fara þeir til skipa. Oddr lét vel yfir þeira ferð; taka þeir nú við byrلانum. Oddr mælti: “vaki þit trúliga yfir honum, þviat svá standa augu hans á land, sem homun þykki hér eigi jafnilt, sem hann lætr yfir”. Oddr ok hans menn fara nú til lands ok súðan til haugsins. Nú varðveita þeir Guðmundr ok Sigurðr skipin; þeir setja byrlann í milli sin, en þeir tek anú ok sælda silfrítt. En er minst ván er, bregðr byrllinn við ok fleygir sér útbyrðis ok legg þegar til lands. Guðmundr hleypr upp ok þrífr eitt sneríspjót ok skýtr eptir honum. Þat kemr í kálfa byrланum, ok skír þar með þeim; er byrllinn þvinæst á landi ok í skógi.

Frá ráðagöðum Odds.


Bardagí við Bjarma.
Þvinæst veita Bjarmar harða atsókn; í þat bil hleypr Oddr fram með kylfuna ok berr til beggja handa svá hart, at alt stökkr frá, en fjölóði fell. Ásmundr fylgði honum einkar vel. Sjá þar dagi var bæði harðr ok langr, en sá varð endir á, at Bjarmar fýðu, en úgrunnir fállit. Oddr rak flóttað ok drap alt þat er hann náði; snorri síðan aprt til sinna manna ok bað þá gora byrðaskipti: “látum eptir moldina, en klyfjum oss með gripum godum ok vápnum”. Svá gørdu þeir, förð nú síðan til skipa, ok er þeir kómu þar, váru skipin í brottu. Oddr mælti: “hvæt er nú til ráðs?” Ásmundr bað hann fyrir sjá. Oddr mælti: “tvennu mun skipta um tiltejkjur þeirra Guðmundar, þeir munuhafla lagt í leyni, ella munu þeirr hafa brugðið oss meirir en véð ætlum”. “Þat mun eigi vera” segir Ásmundr. “Ek mun góra raun til” segir Oddr, hann snorri þá til skógar ok fór upp í tré eitt ok tendraði eld í linum uppi, en síðan gekk hann til manna sinna, en tréit kviknaði svá skjött, at þvinæst stóð logi í lopti uppi. Þá sá þeir, at bátar tveir røru til lands; kendu þeir þar sina menn, ok varð þar þar fagnafundr með þeim frændum.

Brautfór þeira Odds af Bjarmalandi.

Nú stíga þeir á skip sitt ok heldu þegar á brot með herfang sitt. Er nú ekki sagt um ferð þeira, fyr en þeir kómu við Finnmork ok á þat sama lægi, sem þeir höfðu haft fyrir. (Ǫrvar-Odd 1888:23, 25, 27, 29, 31, 33, 35, 37)


--ok þegar nemr kall, spyrr Hjálmar, hvert fyrir liði því réði. Oddr sagði til sín. Hjálmar mælti: “ertu sá er fór til Bjarmalands fyrir nókkurum vetrum, eða hvert er órendi þitt hingat?” (Ǫrvar-Odd 1888:63)


Eyþjófr hét víkingr einn, hann var inn mesti berserkr ok höfuðhetja, svá at eigi þótti nökcurr garpr meiri en hann, ok hafði hann aldri færri skip í hernapi en átján; hann sat hvergi at landi ok lá úti á sætrjám vetr ok varmt sumar, alt var við hann hrætt, hvar sem hann för. Hann vann Bjarmaland ok skattgildi; þá hafði Ögmundr féngt sér átta fylgðarmenn, þeir váru allir í flokastökkum, ok beitt á engan járn. Þeir hétu svá: Hákkr ok Haki, Tindr ok Tóki, Finnr ok Fjösni, Tjösni ok Torfí. Síðan leggr Ögmundr félag sitt við Eyþjóf, ok heldu þeir báðir samt í hernað. Þá var Ögmundr tíu vetr. Hann var með Eyþjófí fimn vetr, lagði Eyþjófr við hann ástföstr svá mikit, at hann mätti ekki í móti honum láta, ok fyrir hans skuld gaf hann upp Háreki konungi alla skatta af Bjarmalandi. Eigi launaði Ögmundr Eyþjófí betr en svá, at hann drap hann sofanda í sæng sinni ok myrdi hann síðan. (Ǫrvar-Odd 1888:127)

18. Þú látt, Sigurðr, á sal meyja,/meþan viþ Bjarma bọþomsk tysvar;/họþom hilde heldr snarlega,/en þú, seggr,/í sal svæt und blæjo. (Ǫrvar-Odd 1888:161)

8. Varðk at vari viss, at gørðuz/brynþ ings boðar Bjarma at søkja;/síðan kvaddak Sigurð ok Guðmund,/vildak með freknum til farar ráðaz.


10. Vér kaupskipi kómum heilu/at, þar er Bjarmar bygðir áttu/at, þar er Bjarmar bygðir áttu/eydum eldi ættr þeirra,/únnum lóskvan láðmann tekinn.

11. Hann léz seggjum segja kunna,/hvar til hodda var hægt at ráða;/hann bað oss ganga á gótu lengra,ef [vér] víldum fæ fleira eiga.

12. Røðu Bjarmar/borgarmenn brátt at verja/hauð hermønnum ok hamalt fylkja;/létum þegna, aðr þaðan færir,ofmarga mjök ondu týna.

13. Røðum skunda til skipa ofan,/þá er flótti var fen rekinn;/mistum bæði báz ok knarrar,/auðs ok ýta ofan kómum.

14. Skjótt nam kynda á skóg þykkum/eld brennanda upp á landi,/svá við lopti létum leika/hávan ok rauðan hrötgarm viðar.


--Síðan fór Grímr út ok allir þeir sem inni voru, ok fagna vel Oddi ok Ásmundi; býdr Grímr þeim inn með sér í skála, ok þat þiggja þeir; en þegar þeir höðu

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niðr sezt, þá spyrr Oddr at þeim frændum sínnum, Guðmundi ok Sigurði, en þar
var svá fréndsemi farit, at Guðmundr var bróðir Odds, en sonr Gríms ok
Lopthænu, en Sigurðr var systurson Gríms; þeir voru vænir menn; þeir liggja
hér norðan undir eyjunni, ok ætla til Bjarmanlands, sagði Grímr; at þú sérth hér í
vetr; fara verðr nú fyrst, sagði Oddr, ok hitta þá; ok þá fyr Grímr med honum,
it þess er þeir koma á norðanverða eyna; þeir liggja þar á í skipum; þá létt
Oddr kalla þa á land, frændr sínna; þeir fagna honum vel, ok þegar sem þeir hafa
spurt tóenda, mælti Oddr: hvert hafi þit fyr r ykkar ætlat? til Bjarmanlands, sagði
Guðmundr. Vit Æsmundr viljum fara með ykkr, sagði Oddr, en Guðmundr hafði
orð fyrí þeim ok mælti: eigi stendr þanveg af, Oddr frændi! at þú farir með
okkr sumarðánt; vit hófum nú út ára býna ferð okkra, ok far þú með okkr at
sumri, þangat sem þú villt! Vél er þat mælt, sagði Oddr, en vera þiki mér mega,
et ek fái mér skip at sumri, ok þurfi ekki at vera ykkar farþegi. Eigi muntu með
okkr fara at sinni, sagði Guðmundr, ok skildu at því.

4. Nú þiggr Oddr heimboðit at fóður sínunum, ok skipar Grímr honum hit næsta
sér í öndvegi, en Æsmundi hjá Oddi, ok var þar uppi öll olværð af Gríms hendi;
en þeir Guðmundr ok Sigurðr lágu þar undir eyjunni hálfan mánuð, svá at þeim
gaf aldri á burt. Þat var á einni nótt, at Guðmundr lét illa í svefini, ok ræddu
menn um, at hann skylldi vejka, Sigurdr sagði at hann skylldi njóta draums sínna.
(Antiquités Russes 1850:96–98)
Nú gaf þeim þegar byr, ok sigldu í einu norðr fyri Finnmörk, ok fellr þá af
byrinn, ok liggja þar til hafnar, ok voru þar um nóttina, ok var þar fjöldi gamma
á landi uppi. Um morguninn gánga þeir á land af skipi Guðmundr, ok renna í
hvern gamma, ok renna Finnurnar; þær þola þetta illa, ok æpa mjök. Þær ræða
um á skipi við Odd, at þeir vili á land gánga, en hann vill eigi leyf þat. Þeir
Guðmundr koma nú til skips um kveldit. Oddr mælti: varðu á land upp? sagði
Oddr. Þat varna, sagði hann, ok hefi ek þat svá gjört, at mér hefð mest gaman
at þót, at græta Finnurnar, ok muntu vilja fara með mér á morgun? Þat farr
farri, sagði Oddr. Þar liggja þeir íj næthr, ok gefr þeim þá byr, ok er ekki fyrí
þeim sagt, en þeir koma til Bjarmanlands. Þeir hélðu skipum sínum upp í á
þá, er Vína heitir. [Eyjar liggja margar í ánni; þeir kasta akkerum undir nesi
eINU, þat gekk af megínlandi. Þat sjá þeir tóenda á land upp, at menn koma af
skogi fram, ok safnast allir í einn stað. Þa mælti Oddr: hvat ætlar þú,
Guðmundr! at ligg þetta berist fyrír á landi? Eigi veit ek þat, sagði hann, eða
hvat ætlat þú, Oddr frændi? Þat munda ek ætla, sagði hann, at hér mundi vera
blót mikit eða drukkt erfi; nú muntu, Guðmundr! gæta skipa, en Ásmundr ok

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ek munum gánga á land. [En er þeir voru þar komnir, fengu landsmenn skjót
njós af, voru þá menn sendir til mots við þá, var þá sett fríðr hálfr manuð
til kaupstefnu, komu þá landsmenn of an með allskyns grávöru, fengu menn þar
fullensi fjár, allir þeir er nákkvat hóðu at verja. En er sjá stund var liðin, þá
var uppsagt fríði; lógðu þeir Oddr þá út í ána um strengi. En er náttu tók, mælti
Oddr til sinna manna: hvat vili þer ráðs taka? þeir báðu hann ráða; þá skolu við
Ásmundr róa til lands ok forvitnast til landsmanna. Svá gördu þeir, ok er þeir
koma á land, gengu þeir til merkrinnar]. En er þeir koma at mörkinni, sáu þeir
skála mikinn; þá var næsta myrkt orðit; þeir gánda at dyrnum, ok nema þar
staðar, ok sjá mórg tíóendi; mönnum var þar skipat á báða bekk; þat þá skolu þeir,
at skapting stóð við dyr út; þá var þar bjart, at hvergi bar skugga á, nema þar
se, skapting stóð. Glaumr var þar mikill inn at heyrta. Skilr þú hér nokkut mál
manna? sagði Oddr; eigi heldr en fuglagliði, sagði Ásmundr; eða þikist þú
nokkut af skilja? eigi er þat síðr, sagði Oddr; þat máttu sjá, at einn með
skeinkir hér á báða bekk; en þat gewfr mér grun um, at hann muni kunna at
tala á norræna tungs; nú mun ek gánda inn, sagði Oddr, ok nema staðar þar,
sem mér þikir venligast, en þú bíd min hér á meðan! Hann gengr nú inn, ok
[nemr staðar nær dyrnum, til þess at [stendr við trapizu, hon stóði utar við dyrrin,
þat bar ok helzt skugganir] gaungu byrlarans berr þar at; þá finnr byrlarinnir
eigi fyrir, en hann er þrifin höndum, ok bregð Oddr honum yfir hófuð sér, en
hann kváð við hátt, oko sagði Björnum at tröll hafi tekki sík; þeir spretta né
upp, ok taka til hans öðrumegin, en Oddr ber þá með byrlarum; en svá lauk
með þeim, at þeir Oddr ok Ásmundr hóðu með sér byrlarann, en Bjarnar
þeystust eigi at ráðu út eptir þeim; þeir koma nú til skipa með byrlarann, ok
setr Oddr hann í rúm bjá sé, ok spyr hann tíóenda, en hann þagði við; [eigi
þarfut a þegja, sagði Oddr, þviat ek veit at þú kannt at meðe á norræna tungs
[Oddr mælti þá: hér eru tveir kostir fyrir höndum, at þú vorð þótt, þviat ek
veit at þú kannt norræna tungs, eða ella skal þik í járn setja]. Þá mælti
byrlarinnir: hvers villtu spyrja mik? Oddr mælti: hve lengi hefur þú hér verit?
[nokkura vetr, sagði hann. Hvern veg hefur þer þótt? sagði Oddr; hér hefur ek
svá verit, sagði byrlarinnir, at mér hefur verst þótt. Hvat segir þú til, sagði Oddr,
hvat vèr munum þess gjöra, at Björnum þikí verst? [Byrlinn segir: ek hefur hér
nú verit sjó vetr, en ek em norrænn at ætt. Oddr mælti: hvert visar þú oss til
félanga?] þess er vel spurt, sagði hann; haugr stendr upp með ánni [Vínu, hann
er gjörr af íj hlutum, silfri ok moldu [Rhen (prave), borinn saman af moldu ok
skirum penningum], þangat skal bera gaupnir silfrs eptir hvern man þann, sem
ferr af heiminum, ok svá er hann kemri í heimin, ok jafnmikla mold; þat munu

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þær svá göðra, at Björnum mun versst þikja, ef þær farit til haugsins, ok berit féit í burt þaðan. Oddr kallar nú á þá Guðmund ok Sigurðr, ok mælti: þit skulut fara ok skipverjar ykkir til haugsins eptir tilvisan byrlarans; þeir búast nú til ferðar, ok gänga á land upp, en Oddr er eptir ok gættir skipa, ok byrjarinn hjá honum.

5. Þær fara nú þartil er þeir koma at hauginum, ok binda sér byrðar, fyri því at þar skorti ekki fé; en er þeir voru búnir, fara þeir til skipa. Oddr spuruði, hversu farit hefði, en þeir létu vel yfir, ok sögðu þar eigi skorta fæng. Nú skulu þit, sagði Oddr, taka við byrlaranum ok geyma hann trúliga, fyri því at svá standa augu hans á land upp, sem honum þiki eigi svá illt með þeim Björnum, sem hann læt yfir; Oddr fór nú til haugsins, en þeir varðveita skipin, Guðmundr ok Sigurðr; þeir sitja við ok sælda silfrit, en byrjarlinn sitir í millum þeirra, [ok eigi finna þeir fyr en hann hleypr á land upp, ok hafa þeir hans ekki meira [en er minnst von er, bregðr byrlinn við, ok fleygir sér útbyrðis, ok leggst þegar til lands; Guðmundr hleypr upp ok þrifir eitt snærisspjót, ok skýr eptir honum, þat kemr í kálfa byrlanum, ok skilr þar með þeim; er byrlinn þvínaest á landi ok í skógi]. Þat er at segja frá þeim Oddi, at þeir koma til haugsins, þá mælti Oddr: nú skuluður búu oss byrðir, hverr aptir sínu afli, svá at vör megum fulla ferð fara. [Þá lýsti, er þeir fóru frá hauginum; þeir fara þartil at birti, þá þingri Oddr við fótum. Því fær þu eigi? sagði Ásmundr; ek sér [tiðendi, segir Oddr, þau oss mun þóð vera; hvat sér þu, segir Ásmundr; ek sér] mannfjöldá mikinn koma fram úr mörkinni/skógi, sagði Oddr. Hvat skal nú ráða taka? sagði Ásmundr; þeir sjá nú allir mannfjöldann: Eigi er þetta allvel á komit, sagði Oddr, fyri því at örvamæli mit er at skipum niðri, en nú mun ek snúa aptr at mörkinni, ok höggva mér kylfu eina með bastóxi/óxi/batóxi þessi, er ek hefi í hendi, en þer skulut fara fram í neshat, sem gengr fram í ána; ok svá göðra þeir, en er hann kemr aptr, hefir hann stóra kylfu/klumbu í hendi. Hvat ætlar þú, sagði Ásmundr, at gegni um fjölmenni þetta? get ek, sagði Oddr, at þeim Guðmundi muni lauss hafa orðit byrjarlinn, ok hafi hann borit erendi vort til Bjarma/bæjar, fyri því at mér þótti sem honum þætti hér ekki svá illt, sem hann læt yfir, skulu vör nú fylka liði voru yfir þvert nesi; drifr nú at þeim liði, ok kennir Oddr þar byrlaraninn í ferðar broddi. Oddr kastar orðum á hann ok mælti: því stýrir þú nú svá hverft? byrjarlinn mælti: ek vilda at því hyggja, hvat yðr líkaði bezt. Hvort vartu nú farinn? sagði Oddr; á land upp, sagði hann, at segja Björnum tiltekjur yðar. Hversu liðar þeim nú þá? sagði Oddr; svá hefi ek nú túlkat fyrir yðr, sagði hann, at þeir vilja nú eiga kaupstefnu við yðr. Pat vilju vör gjarna, sagði Oddr, þá vör komum til skipa vorra; eigi þikir Björnum oflaunat, þoat þeir rói at
því, at í stað sè keyp/kaupstefnu. Hverju skulu vèr kaupa? sagði Oddr; þeir vilja kaupa við yðr vopnum, ok gefa silfrvopn ímót jarnvopnum. Eigi vilju vèr þat kaup, sagði Oddr; þá munu vèr eigast við bardaga, sagði byrlarinn. Þeir verðir því at ráða, sagði Oddr; þá segir Oddr líði sinu, at [þeir skyldu fleygja hverjum útá ána [þer skulu þeim fylgja til árinnar, ok kasta á út], sem fêlli af lídi þeirra, því þeir munu þegar göra fjölkýngi í líði voru, ef þeir (ná) nokkrum þeim, sem dauðir eru. Siðan tekst með þeim bardagi, ok gengr Oddr ígegnum fylkingar, livar sem hann kemr at, ok fellir líð af Björmum sem strávið, ok var bardagi þeirra bæði harðr ok þigur; en sá varð endir á sókn þeirra, at Bjarmar flýðu, en Oddr rekr flóttann, ok snýr siðan aprt, ok kannar líð sitt, ok haði fátt fallit, en mugi var dreppinn af landsmönnum. Nú skulu vèr göra fjárskipti, sagði Oddr, gjörum oss nú byrðar af silfrvopnum/vopnum í stað silfrs/byrðaskipti: látum éptir moldina, en klyðum oss með gripum göðum ok þigurnu!; ok svá göra þeir, ok fara siðan til skipa sinna; en er þeir kvomu þar, voru þau óll iburtu, þikist Oddr nú sakna vinar í stað. Hvat skal nú til ráða taka? sagði Æsmundr; tvennu mun þar at skipta, sagði Oddr; þeir munu hafa lagit skipin í leyni hér undir eyjunum, ellígar hafa þeir brugðið öss meir, en vèr ætlum; þat mun eigi vera, sagði Æsmundr; ek mun göra tilraun, sagði Oddr; hann gekk til skógar, ok tendrar ëld upp í einu stóru tré; þat logar snart, svá at login stendr í loft upp. Þessu næst sáu þeir, at skipin fara at landi, varð þá fagnafundr með þeim fræendum, ok halda þeir nú burt þaðan með herfâng sitt, ok er nú eki sagt af þeirra ferðum, þýr en þeir koma við Finnmörk, ok í þat sama lægi, sem þeir höldu fyrð í verit. (Antiquités Russes 1850:96–103)

19. --Viltu at ek segi þér, kvað Rauðgrani, hversu Ögmundr, er til kominn, ok get ek at þér þiki þa engi von at hann verði unninn af menskum mönimnum, ef þu veizt allan hans uppruna; en þat ar þar fryst af at segja, at Hárekr hét konüng, er röð fyrí Bjarmalandi, þá er þu fórt þangat herferð, éptir því sem þu veizt, hvørn skáða er þu gjöðir þá Björmum; en er þu vart iburtu farinn, þótust Bjarmar hafa raunílaft af fengit, ok vildu gjarnan hefna, af þeir gæti; var þat þá tiltekja þeirra, at þeir fengu eina gygi undan fossi stórum, galdra fulla ok görnýnga, ok lóðgu í sæng hjá Hárek konúngi, ok við henni átti hann son, sá var vatni ausinn, ok nafni gefit ok kallaðr Ögmundr; flestum menskum mönimnum var hann ólíkr þegar á ungra oldri, sem von var sakir móðernis hans, en fáðir hans var þó hinn mesti blótmaðr. Þegar er Ögmundr var þrævet, var hann sendr á Finnmörk, ok nam hann þar allskyns galdra ok görnýnga, ok þá er hann var í því fullnuma, för hann heim til Bjarmalandis, var hann þá við vetra, ok svá stór
sem fullrosknir/fullvaxnir menn, rammr at aflí ok illr viðrskiptis; ekki haði hann batnat yfirlíts hjá Finnum, þvíat hann var þá bæði svartr ok blár, en hárit sitt ok svart, ok hékk flóki ofan fyrir augun, þat er topprim skylldi heita, var hann þá kallaðr Ögmundr flóki; ættuðu Bjarmar þá at senda hann til móts við þik ok at drepa þik; þó þóttust þeir vita, at mikils mundi viðþurfa, àðr en þær yrði í hel komit; var þat þá enn tilteki þeirra, at þeir létu seíða at Ögmundi, svá at hann skyldi engi járn bíta atkvæðalaus; þvínaest blótuðu þeir hann, ok tryldu hann svá, at hann var aungum menskum manni líkr. (Antiquités Russes 1850:104)

32. Nú tekr hann til kvæðisins, en hinir til sýslu sinnar, at höggva steinþróna, ok færa at viðinn; en þeir nema kvæðit, er til þess voru ættlaðir Nú kvað Oddr þetta: (Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1829:301)

8. Varð ek at vori/vís, at gjörðust/brynþ íngs boðar, Bjarma at sækja/síðan kvaddek/Sigurð ok Guðmund,/Víðla ek með fræknum/Til farar ráðast.


11. Hann lézt seggjum/segja kunna,/hvar til hodda var/hægt at ráða;/hann bað oss gána/götu lengra,/ef vér vildum fé/

fleira eiga.

12. Rèðu Bjarmar/borgarmenn/brátt at verja/haug hermönnum/ok hamalt fylkja/létum þegna,/áðr þaðan færum,/ofurs marga/óndu týna.

13. Rèðum skunda/tíl skipa ofan,/þá er flótt vori/á fen rekinn;/mistum bæði/báts ok knarrar,auðós ok ýta,/er ofan kvomum.

14. Skjött namk kind/a skóg þykkvum/eld brennanda/uppí á landi,/svá við lopti/létum leika/haman ok rauðan/hrottarm viðar.

15. Sáum skjótliga,/at skyndi at landi/skeiðr vegligar/ok skrautmenni;/fegnir urðu/þeir er fyrir voru/frændr mínir,/þa finnst gjörðum. (Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1829:303–305)

--Ok er lokit var kvæðinu, þá dregt at Oddi fast, ok leiða þeir hann nú þángat, sem steinþróin var búín. Þá mælt Oddr: nú skal þat allt sannast, er hon sagöi
mér, völvan; nú mun ek leggjast niðr í steinþróna, ok deyja þar; síðan skuluð þær slá at utan eldi ok brenna upp allt saman. (Antiquités Russes 1850:107–109)

3. --Then Grim went outside with all the people of the house to welcome Odd and Asmund. Grim asked them into the hall, and they accepted his invitation. After they had settled down, Odd asked about his kinsmen, Gudmund and Sigurd. This Gudmund was the son of Grim and Lofthæna and Odd’s brother, but Sigurd was Grim’s nephew. They were both handsome men.

‘They’re sheltering on the north side of the island on their way to Permia [Bjarmaland],’ said Grim.

‘I want to see them,’ said Odd.

‘But I want you to spend the winter here,’ said Grim.

‘I’m going to see them first,’ said Odd.

Grim came along with him, and when they reached the north side of the island, they saw two ships. Odd called on his kinsmen to come ashore. They gave him a good welcome and asked him the news.

‘Where are you thinking of going?’ inquired Odd.

‘To Permia [Bjarmaland],’ said Gudmund.

‘We’d like to go with you,’ said Odd.

Gudmund spoke for the others, and said, ‘It can’t be done, kinsman Odd, your coming along with us this summer. We’ve already made all the arrangements. Next summer you can come with us anywhere you like.’

‘That’s very kind of you,’ said Odd, ‘but maybe by next summer I’ll have my own ships, and won’t need to be your passenger.’

‘Well, you’re not joining us on this expedition,’ said Gudmund, and with that they parted. (Arrow-Odd 1985:32–33)

4. (To Permia [Bjarmaland]) ---They sailed north with a favourable wind, but when they were north of Lappland [Finnmark] the wind dropped, so they made for a harbour there where they spent the night. There were plenty of Lappish [Saami] huts farther up. In the morning the crew on Gudmund’s ship went ashore, raided every hut, and robbed the Lapp [Saami] women. The women
took this in very bad part and started screaming noisily. The crew on Odd's ship wanted to go ashore too, but he wouldn't hear of it. In the evening Gudmund and his men came back to the ship.

Odd said, 'You went ashore then?'

'I did that,' said Gudmund, 'and I've had the time of my life, making the Lapp [Saami] women squeal. Would you like to come along with me tomorrow?'

'Not in the least,' said Odd.

They were there for three days, then got a fair wind, and there's nothing more to tell till they reached Permia [Bjarmaland]. They brought their ships up the river Dvina [Vína]. This river has a great many islands, but the place they cast anchor was off a headland jutting out from then mainland. Then they noticed crowds of people leaving the forest and assembling.

Odd said, 'What do you think those people are doing up there, Gudmund?'

'I don't know,' he said. 'What's your opinion, Odd?'

'I'd think this must be either a big sacrificial rite or a funeral feast,' said Odd. 'This time, Gudmund, it's your turn to guard the ships while Asmund and I go ashore.' (Arrow-Odd 1985:33–35)

[And when they had come there the natives immediately heard news of it; men were sent to meet them and a fortnight's truce was appointed for a market; the natives came down with all kinds of furs; of these all those who had anything to exchange got a quantity. This time elapsed and there was an end to the truce; Oddr and his men then rode at anchor out in the river.] (Ross 1940:37–38)

When they reached the forest, they saw a large building. Darkness was coming on. They went up to the door and took a good look round to see what was happening. Inside, people had been settled on benches along both sides of the hall, and by the door there was a vat. The house was so well lit there wasn’t a shadow to be seen except behind the vat. It sounded as if the people in the house were enjoying themselves.

'Do you know anything about the language of these people?' asked Odd.

'No more than the twittering of birds,' said Asmund. 'Can you make anything of it?'
‘About as much as you,’ said Odd, ‘but you see that man there serving the drinks to both benches. I’ve an idea he knows how to speak Norse, so I’m going into the house to look for some likely place to take up position, and in the mean time you’re to wait for me here.’

Odd went inside, took up his position near the door and waited there until the serving man happened to pass by. The first thing the serving man knew, Odd had grabbed him and lifted him above his head. He started yelling and shouting to the Permians [Bjarmians] that he’d been caught by a troll. Up they jumped, and made for Odd on one side but he warded them off with the serving man. In the end, Odd and Asmund managed to get him outside, and the Permians [Bjarmians] didn’t feel confident enough to chase after them.

They brought the serving man down to the ships. Odd settled the man on the seat beside him and started questioning him, but he didn’t say a word.

‘There’s no point in keeping your mouth shut,’ said Odd, ‘I know you can speak Norse.’

‘What do you want to know?’ asked the man. Odd said, ‘How long have you been here?’

‘Some years,’ he said.

‘What do you think of it?’ asked Odd.

‘I’ve never been anywhere I’ve liked less,’ said the serving man.

‘What would you say was the worst trick we could play on the Permians [Bjarmians]?’ asked Odd.

‘That’s a good question,’ he said. ‘There’s a mound further up on the banks of the river Dvina [Vína], made up of two parts, silver and earth. A handful of silver has to be left there for every man who leaves this world, and the same amount of earth for every one who comes into it. You couldn’t play the Permians [Bjarmians] a nastier trick than go to the mound and carry off all the silver.’

Odd called to Gudmund and Sigurd and said, ‘You and your crew follow the serving man’s directions and go to the mound.’

They got ready to go ashore, but Odd stayed behind to guard the ships and kept the serving man there with him. (Arrow-Odd 1985:35–36)
5. (Encounters with Permians [Bjarmians] and Lapps [Saami]) Off they went to the mound and there they began gathering loads for themselves, for there was plenty of silver. When they were ready, they went back to the ships. Odd asked them how things had gone. They were very pleased with themselves and said there was no shortage of plunder.

‘Now,’ said Odd, ‘take the serving man and watch him carefully. He keeps looking ashore as if he doesn’t dislike the Permians [Bjarmians] as much as he’d have us believe.’

Odd went up to the mound while Gudmund and Sigurd guarded the ships. They kept the serving man between them and at the same time they tried to sift the silver from the earth, but before they knew what was happening he was off and ashore, and that was the last they saw of him.

Meanwhile, Odd and his men had reached the mound. ‘Now,’ said Odd, ‘we’ll gather loads, each according to his own strength, so that our journey won’t be wasted.’

Dawn was breaking when they left the mound, and they travelled on till the sun was up. Suddenly Odd came to a halt. ‘What are you stopping for?’ asked Asmund.

‘There’s a crowd swarming down from the forest,’ said Odd.

‘What can we do now?’ asked Asmund.

Then they all saw the crowd. ‘This doesn’t look too promising,’ said Odd. ‘My arrow-bag’s back at the ship. I’d better turn off into the wood and cut myself a club with this axe I have, but you carry on to that headland jutting out into the river.’ And that was what they did. When he got back to them he had a great club in his hand.

‘What’s the cause of this crowd, do you think?’ asked Asmund.

‘It’s my guess the serving man must have got away from Gudmund and Sigurd and then carried tales about us to the Permians [Bjarmians],’ said Odd. ‘I’ve a feeling that he wasn’t as unhappy here as he pretended to be. Now we’d better spread out in a line across the headland.’

Then the mob swarmed towards them, and Odd recognized the serving man well to the fore. Odd called out to him and asked, ‘What’s your hurry?’
‘I wanted to find out what would please you best,’ he answered.

‘Where did you go?’ asked Odd.

‘Further inland to tell the Permians [Bjarmians] what you were up to,’ he said.

‘How did they like this affair?’ asked Odd.

‘I’ve put your case so well for you,’ said the serving man, ‘that they want to do business with you.’

‘We’d like that,’ said Odd, ‘as soon as we get back to our ships.’

‘The Permians [Bjarmians] think the least they could ask for is to finish the business here and now.’

‘What’s our business to be then?’ asked Odd.

‘They want to exchange weapons with you, silver for steel.’

‘We’re not interested in that sort of bargain,’ said Odd. ‘Then we’ll just have to fight it out,’ said the serving man.

‘That’s for you to decide,’ said Odd.

Then Odd told his men to throw all their dead enemies into the river. ‘Otherwise, if they can get back any of their dead, in no time they’ll start using their magic against our people.’

So the fight began. Odd hacked his way through the enemy wherever he could get at them, and cut down the Permians [Bjarmians] as if they were saplings. It was a long hard fight, but the outcome of the battle was that the Permians [Bjarmians] fled, with Odd at their heels. Then they turned back to find out what had happened to his own men and saw that only few of them had been killed, though natives had fallen in large numbers.

‘Now we can do business,’ said Odd. ‘We’ll collect silver weapons in loads.’

That was what they did, and then went down to their ships. But when they arrived, the ships had vanished. Odd seemed rather put out by this.

‘What can we do now?’ asked Asmund.

‘There are two ways of looking at it,’ said Odd. ‘Either they must have brought the ships round to the lee of the island, or else they’ve let us down worse than we could ever have expected.’
‘That couldn’t be,’ said Asmund.

‘I’ll try to find out, said Odd.

He went up to the edge of the wood and set fire to a large tree. It was soon ablaze, and flames reached high in the air. Next thing, they saw the ships coming back to land. The kinsmen were delighted to meet again. After that they set off with their loot and there’s nothing to tell of their journey till they reached Lappland [Finnmark], putting in at the same harbour as before. (Arrow-Odd 1985:36–38)

7. --The Vikings lifted the awnings. ‘The leader of this fleet is called Halfdan,’ they said, ‘but who’s asking?’

‘Odd’s the name.’

‘Are you the Odd who went to Permia [Bjarmaland]?’

‘I’ve been there,’ said Odd. (Arrow-Odd 1985:44)

9. --‘What’s your name?’ said Hjalmar.’

‘My name’s Odd, the son of Grim Hairy-Cheek of Hrafnista.’

‘Are you the Odd who went to Permia [Bjarmaland]? What do you want here?’ (Arrow-Odd 1985:47–48)

12. --‘Are you the Odd who went to Permia [Bjarmaland] a long time ago?’

said Skolli.

‘The same,’ said Odd. (Arrow-Odd 1985:56)

13. --Then Ogmund said, ‘Who’s the man finding fault with me?’

‘Odd’s the name,’ he said.

‘Are you that same Odd,’ said Ogmund, ‘who went to Permia [Bjarmaland] a long time ago?’

‘Some such fellow,’ said Odd, ‘has arrived.’ (Arrow-Odd 1985:58)

19. --Do you want me to tell you how Ogmund came to be born?’ said Red-Beard. ‘Once you know his background, I think you’ll realize he’s beyond human power.’ First I should explain that there was a king called Harek who ruled over Permia [Bjarmaland] about the time you went there on your Viking expedition. You’ll remember all the damage you did the Permians
Bjarmians? Well, after you left, the Permians [Bjarmians] thought they’d had the worst of it and wanted, if they could, to get revenge, and this is how they went about it. They took an ogress living under this great waterfall, loaded her with magic and sorcery and put her in bed beside King Harek, so he had a son by her. The boy was sprinkled with water and called Ogmund. Even as a young child he wasn’t like ordinary mortals, as you’d expect from the kind of mother he had, and anyway his father was a great sorcerer too. When Ogmund was three he was sent over to Lappland [Finnmark] where he learned all sorts of magic and sorcery, and as soon as he’d mastered the arts, he went back home to Permia [Bjarmaland]. By that time he was seven and already as big as a full grown man, immensely strong and very hard to cope with. His looks hadn’t improved during his stay with the Lapps [Saami]. He was dappled black and blue, with long black hair, and had a rough tussock hanging down over the eyes where his forelock ought to be. That’s why he was called Ogmund Tussock.

The Permians [Bjarmians] meant to send him to kill you, though they realized that the ground had to be carefully prepaped before they could put you under it. The next step they took was to have him strengthened with witchcraft, so that ordinary weapons couldn’t bite him, then they carried out the rituals over him and turned him into a proper troll, like nothing on earth.

‘There was a Viking called Eythjof, a fine berserk and a fighting man with no equal. Eythjof never had fewer than eighteen ships on his Viking expeditions, and never set up a base on land, but stayed on sea, winter or warm summer. Everyone was terrified of him, wherever he went. He conquered Permia [Bjarmaland] and forced it to pay tribute. At that time Ogmund had eight companions. They all used to wear thick woollen cloaks, and iron couldn’t touch them. Here are their names: Hak and Haki, Tind and Toki, Finn and Fjosni, Tjosni and Torfi. Then Ogmund joined forces with Eythjof and they went on campaigns together. Ogmund was ten at the time, and he was with Eythjof for five years. Eythjof grew so fond of him, he could refuse him nothing, and because of Ogmund, Eythjof exempted Harek from paying any tributes from Permia [Bjarmaland]. The best Ogmund could do to repay Eythjof was to kill him asleep in his bed and then conceal the murder. (Arrow-Odd 1985:80–82) —Red-Beard said, ‘Here’s a man you fellows must often have heard mentioned. Odd’s his name, Arrow-Odd. I want him to be our blood-brother, and to have the most say, since he’s the one who’s done the most fighting.’
Sirnir answered, ‘Is this the Odd who went to Permia [Bjarmaland]?’

‘Yes, it’s him,’ said Red-Beard. (Arrow-Odd 1985:82–83)

21. --The stranger said he was called Vignir. ‘Are you the Odd who went to Permia [Bjarmaland]?’

‘Yes, that’s true,’ said Odd. (Arrow-Odd 1985:85)

27. --You, Sigurd, were lying

enchambered with the ladies,

while twice we clashed

in combat with the Permians [Bjarmians].

Hawk-minded, we won

Our war like heroes,

While you lay dozing

Under the linen. (Arrow-Odd 1985, 103)

--‘That could be so,’ said the king. ‘But who is this man who’s been hiding his identity from us?’

‘I still call myself Odd, as I told you a while ago, and I’m the son of Grim Hairy-Cheek of Hrafnista in north Norway.’

‘Are you that Odd who went to Permia [Bjarmaland] a long time ago?’

‘I’m the man who went there.’ (Arrow-Odd 1985:108)

32. Then he started composing the poem, and the one group set about making the stone coffin and collecting firewood, while those who had been chosen memorized the poem. So Odd recited:

(8.) In the spring/I learned that Sigurd/And Gudmund were going/Against the Permians [Bjarmians]:/So I told them,/These two trusted/Warriors, that I wished/To wander with them.

(9.) These, my kinsmen,/had command/over a fleet/of fighting ships,/and their crew/were keen to conquer/and take the treasure/of the Tervi-Lapps.
(10.) We approached the Permian [Bjarmian]/people’s settlements,/sailing our trading/ships in safety;/we flayed the Permians [Bjarmians]/with flame and fire,/we took captive/the Tervi-Lapps’ servant.

(11.) The servant said/that he could show us/where to look/ for a load of loot;/told us further/to follow the road/if we wanted/to win more wealth.

(12.) Soon the Permian [Bjarmian]/people appeared/to defend their mound — /formed up their men —/but well before we/went on our way,/lots of them lost/their lives, with our help.

(13.) We sprang with speed/down to our ships,/flying on foot/across the fen:/ we reached the shore/but saw no sails,/no sign of spoils,/ not a single man.

(14.) Quickly then/I kindled wood,/fire flared/in the dense forest:/We tended the fire/Until it touched/The sky above us,/A bark-burning flame.

(15.) Soon we saw/splendid ships,/with richly clad/crews racing shoreward:/my kinsmen/showed very clearly/how glad they were/to greet us again.

--When it was finished, Odd was getting very weak, and they led him over to where the stone coffin was ready for him.

Then Odd said, ‘Now it’s all coming true, what the sorceress said would happen. I’m going to lie down in the stone coffin and die there. Then you’re to set fire to it, and burn everything.’ (Arrow-Odd 1985:122–137)

Ǫrvar-Odds saga (“The Saga of Arrow-Oddr”) is known in three main redactions, a short redaction S (Stock. Perg. 4to no. 7) from the second half of the 13th century or the beginning of the 14th century, an intermediate redaction M (AM 344a 4to) perhaps from the second half of the 14th century and a later, long redaction that appears in two, closely related manuscripts (AM 343 4to known as A and AM 471 4to known as B), probably from the 15th century. The saga at hand belongs to a group of fornlachsögur known as Hrafnistumanna sögur. There are different estimates as to when Ǫrvar-Odds saga was originally written down. Some are of the opinion that is was written c. 1265–1275, but others find that it was written already in the early 13th century thus being one of the oldest fornlachsögur. There
are a great number of vellum manuscripts and paper copies, dating from the end of the 14th century and onwards that testify to the popularity of the saga.747

Ǫrvar-Odds saga is a fictitious tale about a great adventurer who travels far and wide and lives to be three hundred years old. Ævar-Odd, who is from Hálogaland in Norway, is a known heroic character, but the genealogy the sagas give does not seem to be correct (or real), because Ævar-Odd is not found in Landnámabók like his alleged father and grandfather. It seems that the saga has adopted a great deal from general heroic stories, chivalric romance and mythology and the story includes stereotypical “Viking” adventures. The chapter describing Odd’s death as well as some other features in the saga are parallel to the story of the Russian Oleg and the saga has also elements from classical fables. Many sagas, as well as SAXO’s Gesta Danorum have similarities with Odd’s story or even direct references to him. Ævar-Odds saga lies somewhere between naturalistic story and pure fantasy, tending towards the romance end of the spectrum. The story has novelistic traits and is designed to entertain. It is clear that in Ævar-Odd’s person more than one hero and his exploits have been combined. The early events are dated to the 9th century.748

It has been suggested that the saga has certain similarities with Ohthere’s expedition to Bjarmaland and that Ohthere and Oddr are essentially the same person.749 As far as I can see, there is only one striking similarity between the two texts, that is the appearance of “Terfinnar”/”Tervi-Lapps”. The names Ohthere (Óttarr) and Oddr are not philologically connected. It has also been argued that since Ævar-Odd became extremely famous for having gone to Bjarmaland, there must have been something very special about this expedition. This would imply that Ævar-Odd was the very first Norwegian to sail there.750 The story, however, does not imply at all that the journey was anything special. The Norwegians seem to be very well aware of Bjarmians and Bjarmaland and certainly there had been prior contact since a Norwegian had been living among the Bjarmians for several years. Considering all the evidence, I am not convinced that Ohthere’s account and

749 Jansson 1936, 37 footnote 1; Chadwick 1966, 171; Häme 1987a, 188–189. However, e.g. BATELY denies any such connection as unfounded. See Bately 1980b, lxxi.
750 Chadwick 1966, 145, 171.
Ǫrvar-Odds saga are connected. It is of course an acknowledged fact that Norse literature was not created in a vacuum but was influenced by both contemporary and classical European literature. Yet it does not seem exceedingly likely that a 13th century Scandinavian author could have had access to a 9th century Anglo-Saxon text (and been able to use it). It can be questioned how well known Ohthere’s journey to Beormas could otherwise have been in Scandinavia. Ohthere proclaimed himself as the first to sail to Bjarmaland and if this were true, it might of course have earned him some fame. It is possible that he and his journey to Bjarmaland were famous in his own country, but I find that this is not enough to connect Oddr and Ohthere. In any case, Ǫrvar-Odds saga is put together with strong influence from several earlier texts and probably also oral accounts. If by some chance Ohthere’s journey would have been famous, it is possible to think that it was one among the many that influenced the author of the saga. However, I do not see any special grounds to point out the similarities between the two, perhaps with the exception of the reference to “Tervi-Lapps” in both.

In the end of the saga, Oddr recites a poem describing the events of his life. In this connection “Tervi-Lapps” (there are several versions: tyrfi/tyfni/tyfvi/gamlir/þannig Finnar) are mentioned. It seems possible that the tyrfl/tyfni/tyfvi Finnar in the stanzas in the end of Ǫrvar-Odds saga should be identified with “Terfinnar” since these names are fairly similar. Besides Ohthere’s account, the earliest source of Bjarmaland, there is no mention of “Terfinnar” in the written sources. In the English translation of Ǫrvar-Odds saga the “Tervi-Lapps” appear two times, but as far as I can tell the original only names them once. There also seems to be some confusion concerning the Bjarmians and the tyrfl/tyfni/tyfvi Finnar between the verses and the description of events in the prose text. In the verses Oddr and his companion are said to have been keen to “conquer and take the treasure of the Tervi-Lapps”. When this adventure is described in the saga earlier, the expeditioners are robbing a Bjarmian mound, although they had been looting the Saami prior to arriving in Bjarmaland. The next stanza speaks only of “Bjarmar”, but the translator translates that the expeditioners took captive “the

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751 Pálsson–Edwards 1968, 7–9, 14; Häme 1987a, 238.
752 According to CHADWICK, the growing interest in Russia in the 9th century made Oddr’s journey to Bjarmaland “universally” famous. Chadwick 1966, 172. However, her arguments are implausible and even directly erroneous.
753 It is, however, worth noticing that a certain area on the coast of the Kola Peninsula is in a number of medieval Russian (13th century) and Norwegian (early 14th century and the 16th century) documents called e.g. Tre, Terskij bereg, Trianæma and Trenes. See Bergsland 1982, 123. See also Norges Gamle Love 1849, 152–153.
Tervi-Lapp’s servant”. It seems like the translator has mixed up the Bjarmians and the “Tervi-Lapps” here. In any case, there seems to be an initial mix-up already between the verses and the prose of the original manuscript.

The sudden appearance of “Tervi-Lapps” in the stanza has caused speculations about the connection between Ohthere’s account and Ørvar-Odds saga. As I have already stated, I am not convinced that there is a connection between the two, despite this one similarity. Since Ohthere speaks about “Terfinnar” (actually Terfinna land), it is likely that people of this name were generally known in Norway, despite the fact that they are not often mentioned in the written sources. If they were generally known, it is likely that would appear more than once. A connection between two sources is not required, even if “Tervi-Lapps” appear in both. General knowledge or access to some other, now extinct, source would be enough for the same name to appear. Since “Terfinnar” are connected with Bjarmaland, it is possible that the author of Ørvar-Odds saga had access to sources that contained somewhat detailed information about Bjarmaland.

Despite the clearly fictitious parts and the entertaining tone, Ørvar-Odd’s journey to Bjarmaland has a realistic tone overall. This has most likely to do with the fact that the story is strongly influenced by earlier, rather realistic accounts of Bjarmaland. The plot follows rather faithfully the account of the Bjarmaland expedition in Óláfs saga helga. The Bjarmians are called both Bjarmar and Björmum in Ørvar-Odds saga. A similar appellative (i.e. Björmum) only appears in one version of Óláfs saga helga. This indicates a connection between the two texts.

It is interesting to notice that the stanzas (especially number 10 and perhaps also 12) at the end of the saga bear some resemblance to stanzas of Glúmr GEIRASON in Haralds saga gráfeldar (in Heimskringla). The actual story in Ørvar-Odds saga does not mention burning, but the stanza 10 in the end of the saga does. Burning of dwellings is also mentioned in Glúmr’s verses in connection with a Norwegian raid in Bjarmaland.

The journey to Bjarmaland is Ørvar-Odd’s very first expedition. In the usual “Viking” habit the journey takes place in the summer. The men travel with two

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754 Jansson 1936, 37 footnote 1; Chadwick 1966, 171; Hâme 1987a, 188–189.
755 See Antiquités Russes 1850, 448–455. FERRARI notes that the author of Ørvar-Odds saga seems to have been familiar with Heimskringla since the Bjarmaland episode is not the only similarity. Ferrari 2006, 241.
756 See Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217.
ships, a number that sounds realistic. However, Órvar-Odd is equipped with magic arrows made by King Gusir of the Saami and already this introduces a non-realistic trait that goes alongside the credible narrative throughout the story. The route to Bjarmaland is described in the regular manner of earlier sagas: One sailed northwards, past Finnmark until one finally reached Bjarmaland. Oddr and his companions cast an anchor on the River “Vína”, off a headland jutting out from the mainland\textsuperscript{758}. The river is described as having many islands\textsuperscript{759}, a feature that proves useful later on. The many islands are not described in any other source and because of this and the function the islands serve in the plot, I assume that they were invented for this purpose and are not describing an actual feature of the River “Vína”. “Vína” is mentioned in a number of accounts of Bjarmaland. It appears first in earlier, more realistic texts (\textit{Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar}, \textit{Haralds saga gráfeldar}, \textit{Óláfs saga helga})\textsuperscript{760} and is also found in several of the later sagas (\textit{Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka}, \textit{Bósa saga ok Herrauðs} [actually \textit{Vínuskógr}], \textit{Sturlaugs saga starfsama})\textsuperscript{761}. In this case, it is most likely that its appearance is due to influence of \textit{Óláfs saga helga}.

The expeditioners observed a large number of the locals leaving the forest and assembling and concluded that this was because of a sacrificial rite or a funeral feast. It is after this observation that the interpolation in the oldest manuscript appears. It explains that the natives heard of the coming of the expeditioners and came to meet them. A fortnight’s truce was established for a market and the natives exchanged furs with all those who had anything to give in exchange. After the truce was over, the expeditioners went out in the river. According to HÄME, the interpolated passage in the oldest manuscript is copied almost verbatim from \textit{Óláfs saga helga}. Besides the description of truce, also the description of burial habits and the mound resemble Snorri’s description.\textsuperscript{762}

\textsuperscript{758} ROSS identifies the River “Vína” with the Northern Dvina River and finds that the projection on the “Dvina” River is one of the alluvial projections that are still found in the river. Ross 1940, 44. I am doubtful of this identification and find that the description in the saga is included only for the purposes of the plot and has no bearing to reality. Consequently I do not find that we have here a description of a real feature in a river in Bjarmaland.

\textsuperscript{759} A more detailed description with the islands and the headland is found in the M-version only. The S-version simply states that Oddr and his men came to Bjarmaland and put their ships up into the River “Vína”. Ross 1940, 37 footnote 15. The S-version is more reminiscent of the description in \textit{Óláfs saga helga} than the more elaborate M-version.

\textsuperscript{760} See Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232; Haralds saga ins hárfagra 1962, 134–135; Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar 1988, 93–94.

\textsuperscript{761} See Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 626–630; Antiquités Russes 1850, 86; Bósa saga 1893, 21.

Both versions continue with a reconnaissance to a large building in the forest. What is interesting to notice is that according to the text, this trip takes place in the dark. I am liable to think that darkness is only mentioned because it has to do with the plot, in other words, it enables the expeditioners to reach the building in cover of darkness. We are informed earlier that the expedition took place in the summer, consequently some time between June and August, when the nights are light in the north. It seems like the author was not interested in or aware of this fact. This is contrary to the text in Óláfs saga helga, where it is specially mentioned that the nights were still light during the time of the expedition.\textsuperscript{763}

The huge forest in the landscape of Bjarmaland appears in several descriptions including Qrvar-Odds saga, Bósa saga and Karli and Thórir’s expedition in Heimskringla.\textsuperscript{764} It is also a rather vague and stereotyped description, but could of course include a hint of reality, i.e. that there were large forests in Bjarmaland. Actually, existence of forest is more than likely since we are, after all, dealing with a northerly area where forests are a typical feature of the landscape. ROSS points out that the descriptions of the landscape in Bjarmaland appear incidental, but maintains that huge forests are a feature that appears in many texts and may thus be a real feature that has impressed the travellers.\textsuperscript{765}

The hall scene that follows is according to ROSS too similar to the typical Germanic description to be taken as specifically Bjarmian\textsuperscript{766} and consequently does not offer an insight into the Bjarmian manner of living, although it might suggest that settlement with houses was not unthinkable in connection with Bjarmaland. In the hall where the Bjarmians are feasting, the expeditioners encounter a man of Norwegian origin whom they hijack and bring to their ship to be interrogated. The man has lived in Bjarmaland for several years and is acquainted with the local habits and language that the Norwegians do not understand more than they understand “twittering of birds”. Two interesting features appear here. First of all, the language of the Bjarmians is totally unintelligible to the Norwegians. Other sources indicate that the Bjarmians most likely spoke a Finno-Ugrian language\textsuperscript{767} and languages of this group indeed totally differ from Norse. Secondly, it is worth noticing that a man of Norwegian origin lived among the Bjarmians. It is possible

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{763}{See Óláfs saga helga 1945, 232.}
\footnotetext{764}{Ross 1940, 44.}
\footnotetext{765}{Ross 1940, 44. In Bósa saga the forest has turned into Vínuskógr. Bósa saga 1893, 21.}
\footnotetext{766}{Ross 1940, 48 footnote 22.}
\footnotetext{767}{Ohthere’s account and Óláfs saga helga contain information about the language and based on this information it has been concluded that the Bjarmians with all probability spoke a Baltic Fennic language. See e.g. Ross 1940, 48–49; Vuorela 1960, 64.}
\end{footnotes}

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this information was included in the story simply in order to carry on the plot. An informant was needed and a Norse speaking person who was intimate with the Bjarmians fulfils this role perfectly. However, there is at least one other indication that the Norwegians in some cases extended their visits in Bjarmaland beyond the summer season. In Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar it is mentioned that a number of Norwegians stayed in Bjarmaland for the winter after the trading for the summer was over.768 Accordingly, one might see a reflection of reality in the description of a Norwegian living in Bjarmaland.

The Norwegian informs the travellers about mounds containing silver further up on the banks of the River “Vína”. The expeditioners set to rob these in two shifts. The first shift returns without incidents, but the second group including Oddr is confronted by the Bjarmians that have been warned by the captured Norwegian who has managed to escape.

The description of the mound and the robbing of it resemble a great deal a corresponding description in Óláf’s saga helga.769 Also the following confrontation between the Bjarmians and the mound robbers exists in both texts. Órvar-Odds saga, however, invents new details. Robbing of mounds as a motif appears also in Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka770 and also this description is most likely inspired by the account in Heimskringla, either directly or perhaps through Órvar-Odds saga. Although the mound robbing is a borrowed motif its inclusion nevertheless suggests that the idea of permanent settlement with a regular burial place in connection with Bjarmaland was not unthinkable for the author.

The Bjarmians are willing to let the expeditioners keep the silver they have robbed in exchange for steel weapons. Oddr rejects the proposal and a fierce battle breaks out. Eventually Oddr and his men win and obtain the silver weapons from the Bjarmians as booty. They go back to the ships that are hiding behind some islands and sail away from Bjarmaland.

The Bjarmian request to exchange silver for iron weapons has prompted Ross to conclude that the Bjarmians lacked iron and were ill-armed.771 I, however, find this a bit far-fetched conclusion. This incident does not appear in Óláf’s saga helga and we are left wondering about the origin. As far as I am concerned, it may simply be an invention of the author to increase the suspense of the confrontation. That the Bjarmians are said to have had silver weapons does not seem realistic. Rather, it

768 See Hákonar saga 1964, 70–71.
769 See Óláf’s saga helga 1945, 232.
770 Antiquités Russes 1850, 86.
771 Ross 1940, 46 footnote 14.
accentuates the impression some texts give that Bjarmaland was rich in precious metals.\textsuperscript{772} We know very little about the level of armament in Bjarmaland. Although some texts refer to Bjarmians as warlike, no details are given about the military conditions. In some of the earlier texts the impression is given that the Norwegians looted the country and destroyed the Bjarmian dwellings and killed the people. The Norwegians are without exception described as victorious.\textsuperscript{773} This kind of description is, however, typical in describing so-called “Viking” expeditions.\textsuperscript{774} If the Bjarmians were always on the receiving end and never themselves ventured to looting expeditions, it may well be that they were not all too well-equipped militarily, but since they apparently were the target for plundering “Vikings”, they probably needed to sustain a certain level of military equipment. Probably the Bjarmians offered a certain resistance to the attacking Norwegians since some saga texts refer to a battle between the two.\textsuperscript{775} One could hardly call it a battle if the Bjarmians were not capable of offering some degree of resistance.

The plot mentions only one battle between the Norwegians and the Bjarmians, but a stanza later on in the saga refers to two battles with the Bjarmians. Perhaps this incongruity indicates that the author based his story on source/sources that described two battles and this was transferred to the stanza, although the author only included one battle in his plot.

Besides Oddr’s expedition, Bjarmaland is mentioned also later in Órvar-Odds saga. This is in connection with a fanciful description of how Hárek, King of Bjarmaland, designed to revenge Oddr’s looting of the country. Hárek appears as the name of the king in Bjarmaland in two other texts, \textit{Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar} and \textit{Bósa saga}.\textsuperscript{776} The name is Norse and I find that is has little to do with either Bjarmaland or reality and more with imagination and demands of a plot. We are also told about Eythjod, a “Viking” berserker, who allegedly conquered Bjarmaland and forced the Bjarmians to pay tribute. This is a highly imaginative account as well. It does, however, appear to have a certain connection with other accounts in \textit{fornaldarsögur} (\textit{Sturlaugs saga starfsama}, \textit{Bósa saga ok Herrauðs}, \textit{Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar}) in which a Norse hero conquers Bjarmaland\textsuperscript{777}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{772} E.g. \textit{Bósa saga ok Herrauðs} and \textit{Sturlaugs saga starfsama} exaggerate the amount of riches. See \textit{Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda} 1830, 626–630; \textit{Bósa saga} 1893, 25–33.
\item \textsuperscript{773} See e.g. Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217; Haralds saga ins hárfagra 1962, 134–135; Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar 1988, 93–94.
\item \textsuperscript{774} See e.g. Haralds saga ins hárfagra 1962, 134.
\item \textsuperscript{775} See e.g. Magnúss saga berfœtts 1951, 212; Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217.
\item \textsuperscript{776} \textit{Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda} 1830, 539–543; \textit{Bósa saga} 1893, 21.
\item \textsuperscript{777} See e.g. \textit{Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda} 1830, 552–558, 631–633.
\end{itemize}
None of these accounts is presented realistically. A tribute is mentioned also in an Icelandic geographical treatise of the late 12th century (catalogued as AM 736 I, 4º) and in Gesta Danorum in connection with Bjarmaland. The geographical treatise is the only one that presents the tribute in a more realistic tone.

It seems like Orvar-Odds saga has been strongly influenced by earlier written texts, especially Óláfs saga helga, but it contains a number of elaborate details that are partially due to imagination and the demands of the plot, but in some cases perhaps contain a kernel of information about Bjarmaland. Orvar-Odds saga is, after all, one of those fornaldarsögur that was written down early on and due to this has perhaps preserved more genuine knowledge of Bjarmaland than some other fornaldarsögur.

5.4 Njáls saga Þorgeirssonar


28. --Gunnar asked him whether he had sailed to many other lands. Hallvard replied that he had sailed to every land between Norway and Russia – ‘and even as far as Permia [Bjarmaland]’. (Njál’s saga 1975: 86)

Njáls saga (“The Saga of Njáll”, also known as Brennu-Njáls saga) is the longest and most widely acclaimed of the Íslendingasögur (“Sagas of Icelanders”, written during the 12th-14th centuries), a group of sagas that are about Icelanders in the period of c. 900–1050. These are to some extent based on historical events. Certain references in the saga show influence from laws introduced in Iceland in 1271. The oldest manuscript is dated to around 1300. These, as well as other arguments have been used to date the writing of the saga approximately to the years 1275–1290. The popularity of the saga is testified by nearly twenty medieval manuscripts and a large number of post-Reformation era paper manuscripts. The saga clearly has a certain historical background and it derives its material from oral traditions and occasional written records. Over the years evaluations of the saga’s truthfulness have varied between pure fiction and verbatim truth. Certain events can be verified on the basis of other written records. However, the anonymous author in Iceland

778 See Antiquités Russes 1852, 404; Saxonis Gesta Danorum 1931, 137–138.
779 Also found in Antiquités Russes 1852, 238.
took an artistic approach to his sources using his material with considerable freedom and thus moving away from historical writing.780

Exact dating of all the events in Njáls saga is impossible and there are all sorts of inconsistencies, both within the saga itself and in relation to known historical framework. The chronology of the saga was dictated by aesthetic demands, not by history, and the author made no real attempt to achieve consistency of historical dating. With rough estimation, the events of the saga start in the second quarter of the 10th century and stretch until the early years of the 11th century. In the chronology, the passage quoted here is placed roughly to the years around 970.781

This is one of the minor references and does not add much to our knowledge of Bjarmaland. It merely confirms further that Bjarmaland was one of the locations visited by the Scandinavians. The lands between Norway and Russia that are referred to in the text are probably lands around the Baltic Sea. Bjarmaland is mentioned as a loose addition. Perhaps Bjarmaland was added as a representative of a northern dimension when talking about lands that one could sail to. The reference gives the impression that Bjarmaland in a way is located beyond Russia. Although the text does not explicitly connect Bjarmaland and Russia they still seem to belong to same sphere.

5.5 Saga Heiðreks konúngs ens vitra

Hér hefr upp sögu Heiðreks konúngs ens vitra.

2. --Arngrimr var þá í viking í Austrveg um Bjarmaland; hann herjaði í ríki Svafrlama/Sigrlami konúngs, ok átti orrostu við hann. (Antiquités Russes 1850:115–116)

Arngrím was at that time on a Viking expedition in the East, round Bjarmaland. (Ross 1940:38) He harried the kingdom of King Svafrlami/Sigrlami and fought with him.783

781 See Magnusson–Pálsson 1975, 375; Njal’s Saga 1975, 86.
782 King(s) of Gardaríki. See Saga Heiðreks konungs ins vitra 1960, 2–3, 67–68.
783 My translation based on the translation by Christopher TOLKIEN of a parallel excerpt that does not name Bjarmaland and that is found in the U-redaction (“Hann herjaði á ríki Svafrlama ok átti við hann orrostu...”). Saga Heiðreks konungs ins vitra 1960, 68. TOLKIEN’s translation of Saga Heiðreks konungs ins vitra is a compilation of R and U redactions. Tolkien 1960, xxxi.
Saga Heiðreks konungs ens vitra ("The Saga of King Heidrek the Wise") is also known by the name Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks konungs ("The Saga of Hervor and King Heidrek"). This saga is one of the fornaldarsögur and was composed around 1250, but the storyline about Bjarmaland appears for the first time in Hauksbók (H-version, AM 544 4to) that was written by Haukr ERLENDSSON who died in 1334.

The author of the saga has attempted to combine a number of stories and poems into a single coherent narrative. Fictional genealogy is one motif that combines the various components. There are many versions of the saga. Two of these are very distinct, an older R-version (from the late 14th century or the early 15th century) and a later version found in two manuscripts, called the U-version (17th century) and H-version (14th century). Both H and U descend from an early 14th century version.784

The hero of this passage is Arngrímr785 berserkr who is on a "Viking" expedition in Russia/the Baltic area. The saga in question contains a lot of imaginary components.786 However, one can still expect the setting of the events to be correct. In other words, the imaginary features may well be placed in a correct geographical environment. This short passage indicates closeness of Bjarmaland and Russia/the Baltic area. It lets us understand that it was possible to reach Russia/the Baltic area via Bjarmaland. In other words, we are told that Arngrímr had gone to a "Viking" expedition in the east by first travelling to Bjarmaland and from there to Russia/the Baltic area. Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar mentions this kind of possibility as well. A group of Norwegians came first to Bjarmaland to trade and after this was done, some of them continued to Suzdal'.787 Also Njáls saga sets Bjarmaland in a loose connection with the Baltic Sea area. Additionally, a couple of the fornaldarsögur (Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar, Bósa saga ok Herrauðs)788, talk about Bjarmaland in connection with the Baltic Sea, i.e. Austrvegr789.

784 Jansson 1936, 38; Tolkien 1960, vii, ix, xxix-xxx; Pritsak 1993, 283.
785 Arngrímr as a character turns up in the fifth book of Gesta Danorum showing that the character was already current in the 12th century. Tolkien 1960, xii. HAAVIO’s suggestion that SAXO’s character Arngrimus may be based on Arngrímr of this saga is anachronistic. See Haavio 1965, 135. One would rather assume the opposite, that SAXO’s character was model to Arngrímr in Saga Heiðreks konungs ens vitra. Most likely, though, there is no direct relation between the two and one may rather assume that there circulated many stories of Arngrim that were used by different authors as source material for stories of their own.
786 See Antiquités Russes 1850, 115–116, 138–144.
789 See Jackson 2003, 29–36 for the use of the term Austrvegr and the development of the term over time.
5.6 Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar

1. --Úlfr hét hinn ýngsti son Svips; hann var kallaðr Úlfr hinn illi; hann herjaði um Eystrasalt ok um Bjarmaland; hann haf’ði mikla reningjasveit, ok var allövinselli. Eitt sumar herjaði Eysteinn konungr í Austreuggin; Úlfkell snilllingar var þá með honum, ok Hálfdán, son konúngs; þeir höfuðu 30 skipa vel skipuð, en Úlfr, bróðir Úlfkels, hafði vald yfir ríki Eysteins konúngs, meðan hann var í hernaðinum. (Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830:520)

12. Ok sem Úlfkell hefri at sér tekít rikit, safnar hann at sér löi ok skipum, ok hél hann þeim í Austreuggin. Hann hafði 30 lángskipa, ok dreka eim sjötugan at rúmatali; --þeir voru nú komnir austr fyrir Hlynskóga, þar sem heitir Klyfandanes; þaðan er ekki lángt til Bjarmalands. Þar sigldu a móti þeim 10 skip, þau voru óll skipuð hraustum drengjum; ok var þar kominn Hálfdán, son Eystes konúngs, ok hafði hann frétt allt um ferðir þeirra Úlfkels. (Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830:534–535)

15. Tökum vèr nú þar til, sem Úlfkell snilllingar flyði úr bardaganum, hann komst til lands við fimtánda mann, en misti allt sitt lið annat; hann hél nú spurnir til, hvar Úlfr, bróðir hans, mundi vera, ok spyrst honum svá at, at hann sè a Bjarmalandi, fór hann nú a hans fund; Hárekr hét sá konungr, er þar réð fyrir; döttir hans hét Eðný. Úlfr hafði beðit hennar, en konungr vildi eigi gipta hana; það herjaði Úlfr á land hans; sem at þeir braðr fundust, bera þeir ráð sín saman, at þeir skuli fara á fund Háreks konúngs; þeir höfuðu 60 skipa; en þar vor ek þeir kvoðu í haftir þær, er lágu fyrir konúngs hallinni, þa fór Úlfkell snilllingar á fund konúngs, ok kveðr hann sæmiliga. Konungr spyr, hvat manna hann væri. Hann sagði til hitt sanna. Konungr spyr, hvern styrði þeim hinum mikla her, sem þar var kominn; en Úlfkell sagði, at honum styrði Úlfr hinn illi: en við erum braðr, fór ek því á yðvar fund, at við viljum bjóðast til at vera yðr menn; ef þú vilt gipta Úlfí döttur þína, þá vil ek leggja til með Álaborg ok Áldeigjuborg, ok óll þau riki sem þar fylgja, því þat er mín eign; væntir mik at yðr verði mikill styrk at okkr braðrum, en mörgum mun þikja þraungt fyrir dyrum, ef vèr skulum íllt þreyta. Konungur bað hann fresta til umráða við menn sina. Úlfkell veitti þat. Konungr spyr döttur sina, hvat hún leggr til, en hún sagði at henni þætti mikill vandi um hernað þeirra braðra: en ef vist væri rikit, þá þætti mér ásjá vert, en kveðst einskis ils synja fyrir þá, ef þeim væri synjat; ok urðu þar endalyktir til Úlfr fékk Eðnýjar, ok tóku þeir braðr landvörn fyrir Bjarmalandi. Úlfkell hét spurningum til, hvver sá mundi vera, at barizt hefði
við hann, þá þeir Hálfdan áttust við, en Hárekr konúngr sagði honum, at sá hét Grím, ok ræðr fyrir austr í Kirjálabetnum, ok hefír brotizt þar til ríkis, ok vita menn eigi, hvaðan hann er ættaðr. Honum fylgir föstrdóttir hans, svá fögur mey, at menn hafa eigi spuprn af annarri jafnvænni. --Þeir sögðu báðir, at þeir vildu honum þar til standa, ok sögðu at þeim þótti þat vel stofnat, ok söðfesta með sér, at þeir skulu þángat fára, þegar sumar kemr, ok eigi fyrri í burtu, enn Grím voru í helju, en konúngr hefði fengit júngfrúna; sátu þeir nú um kyrt. En er voraði, bjuggu þeir skip sín. Þeir höfðu ógrynni hers; með þeim voru 2 konúngar finskir, hét annar Fiðr, en annar Flóki; þeir voru galdramenn. Fara þeir nú þángat til, at þeir koma austr í Kirjálabetna, ok fundu Grim.

16. --Grímur heitir maðr, er ræðr fyri r austr í Kirjálabotnum; hann er kappi mikill, hann sendi þik híngat til mín, mættir þú nú launa honum lífgjöfina, því honum er nú þörf góðra drengja; þar er nú kominn Hárekr konúngr af Bjarmalandi, Úlf hinn illi ok Úlfkell snillingr, ok vill hefnra þeirrar svivirðingar, er hann fékk í yðrum viðskiptum; eru þeir nú á veg kommir með hér sinn, ok er mér sagt, at Hárekr konúngr vili fá föstrdóttur Gríms, er Íngigerðr heitir, ok er allra meyja fríðust. --Kæntu nokkut at segja mér veg þann skimstr er, sagði Hálfdán, því þángat vildik koma sem skjótað. Torsóttir eru hér flestir vegir, sagði Hriflíngr, en á skipum má ekki fá skemr enn 5 vikur, ok er þat hin mesta mannhætta fyrir sakir vikinga ok hermanns. Annar vegr liggr hitt eystra, ok er þar þó at fá fjarð ok eyðimerkr, ok er þat lángr vegr, ok torsóttir, ok övist at framkomist. Hin þríðja leið er skemst, ef hún tækist vel, því hana má fára á 3 vikum, en margt er þar til tálmanar; fyrst er skógr 20 rasta lángr, er heitir Kolskógr; þar liggr spillvirki sá, er Kolr heitir, ok doðtir hans er Gullkúla heitir; aungum er þeim lífs at vænta, er þau finnr. Annar skógr er þaðan skamt, er heitir Klifskógr fjögr rasta ok 20; þar er spillvirki sá, er Hallgeir heitir; með honum er einn villigólur, verri viðreignar enn 12 karlar. Þar er þús kemr af skógnum, fellir lögr auster af kjölnum; engi veit hvor hann spretr upp, þat er þeirra einna manna sund, sem bezt eru syndir, at leggjast yfir löginn, en þaðan er eigi lángr til kastala þess, sem Skúli ræðr fyrir; bæri þeir ekki til döla, þá varð þat nár hæfi, at þú kemir þar, þá bardaginn ætti at vera. (Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830:539–543)
At morni dags sá Hálfðán kastalann, þann sem honum var tilvisat. Þenna morgun var Skúli jarl farinn til bardaga á móti Háreks konúngi ok þeim bræðrum, ok var þat lángt í burt frá kastalannum. Hann hafði lið miklu minna. Kastalinn var eydr af úngum mónnum, en konur stóðu í vigskóðum, þá Hálfðán kom þar.

Hálfðán för nú til bardagans, ok var þá mikit mannfall. Sviði bar merki Skúla jarls, ok gekk fram svá hraustliga, at hann drap merkismann Háreks konúngs, er Krabbi hét. Hálfðán var eigi ístöðlaus; hann rèð þar fyrst at, sem fyrr var Flóki Finnkonúngur. Konúngrinn skaut af boga þrim örum senn, ok var maðr fyrrir hverri. --Þetta sá Fívir Finnkonúngur, ok varð hann at hrosshval -- ok lauk svá með þeim, at Úlfkell snillingr fækka bana. Skúli jarl haði þá drepit Úlf hinn ill. Þa kom at Hárekr Bjarmkonúngur, ok sötti at honum, ok áttust þeir við ðeir vopnaskipti. Hárekr hjó til Skúla, ok af honum allan skjóldinn, ok fækk hann sár á fingranna, ok ekki mikit. --Þá varð Hárekr at flugdreka, ok sló Skúla með sporðum, svá hann lág í óviti. --Þá kom at Hálfðán, ok hjó til drekans á hálsinn, ok var þat hans bani. (Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830: 547–550)


--Hálfðán mælti þá: nú er svá komit, at lönd þessi öll lúta undir mik, því vil ek nú birta því; ek vil ef nú birta því, ef þeir hafði geði í Garðaríki. Ek hefði nú í minu valdi Bjarmaland ok Hildigunni, döttur Háreks konúngs; þat ríki vil ek geði Sigmundi ok megna þar með, ef það er þeim báðum viljugt. Sigmundr lét sér þetta vel líka, ef meyjan

790 The text is not consistent with the name of the daughter of the king in Bjarmaland. In the beginning of the tale she is named Æðný, later on Hildigunn. In the end of the saga, it is mentioned that the sister of the king of Bjarmaland is called Æðný, so there obviously has been some kind of mix-up between the two names.
vill því samþykjast, en Hildigunn lætt eigi framar bóndar sér vænta: ok mun mér þetta vel lika. Hálfdán sagðist mundu vitja þess ríkis, sem (hann) átti í Norigi: ok mun þat hverjum hepnast, sem hann tilborinn er. --Sviða hinn sóknjarfræða sendu þeir austr í Kirjálabotna, ok skylldi hann vera þar hófðingi yfir, ok hafa þat ríki af Skúla jarli. En um vorit, þegar ísa leysti, safnar Hálfdán at sér það skipum ok mǫnnum, ok bjuggust þeir Sigmundr til Bjarmalands ok Skúli jarl, ok tókst þeim sú ferð vel, ok lá landit laust í þeirra valdi, ok gjörðist Sigmundr þar hófðingi yfir, en var þó með Hálfdáni. Skúli jarl fór heim í Álaborg, ok unnust þau Ísgerðr drottning mikit. Þeirra son var Hreggvíðr, faðir Íngigerðar, er Gaungu-Hróifr átti.

25. Þat er nú at segja af Hálfdáni, at hann býst til Noregs, ok fór Sigmundr með honum ok Oddr skrauti, broðir hans. Þeir hóðu fritt lið, ok er Hálfdán kom í Norig, fógnuðu fændr hans honum vel, ok var hann til konungs tekinn yfir þrándheim, ok öll þau ríki er Eysteinn konúngr, faðir hans hafði átti, ok var hann mikill vinsældamaðr af sinum undirmönnum. --Þessu næst kvomu austan af Bjarmalandi menn Sigmundar, ok sögðu at vikíngar herjaðu á Bjarmaland ok Nógarða; þeir hóðu drepit Sviða hinn sóknjarfræða, ok lagt undir sík Kirjálabotna ok mikit af Rússalandi; en er þeir fréttu þetta, Hálfdán ok Skúli, sönuðu þeir liði, ok fór austri til Bjarmalands.

26. Í þenna tíma reð sá konungr fyrir Gestrekalandi ok öllum ríkjum fyrir austan Kjöl, er Agnar högt. Hann átti Eðnýju, systur Háreks heitins Bjarmakonúngrs. Þau áttu tvö sonu, hét annar Raknar, en annar Valr; þeir voru vikíngar, ok lágu úti í Dumbshafi, ok herjuðu á jötuna. Raknar áttu skip þat, sem Raknarsslóði var kallaðr, þat var tiraðat að rúma tali; þat hefðir verit mest lágskip gjört í Norigi annat enn Ormr hinn langi; þat var skipat allra handa íllmönnum; þar voru 15 skaekjusynir í hverju hálfrómi. Raknar lágði undir sík Hellulands öbygðir, ok eyddi þar öllum jötunum. Valr, bróðir hans, lá í Dumbshafi, ok er mikil saga af honum. Þeir bræðr þóttust rétt komnir til Bjarmalands eftir Hárek, af sínn. Valr átti 2 sonu, hét annar Kötr, en annar Kisi; þeir voru stórir menn ok sterkr. Valr hafði drepet Sviða, ok lagt undir sík Kirjálabotna. Hann hafði fengit svá mikit gull, at þess kunni engi markatal, ok tók hann þat af Svaða jötini, er bjó í fjalli því, sem Blesanegr heitir; þat er fyrir nordan Dumbshaf. Svaði var son Ása-bórs. Valr átti sverð þat, sem Hornhjalti hét, þat var mjök gulli búit, ok nam aldrí í höggi stað. Þeir Hálfdán ok Sigmundr koma nú austr til Bjarmalands, ok halda fréttum til, hvor Valr er, ok fundu hann fyrir nordan Gandvik, ok sló þar þegar í bardaga. --en með því at Valr var uppgefinn,
Svip's youngest son, Ulf the Evil, used to go plundering in the Baltic with a band of robbers, all the way up to Permia [Bjarmaland]. Nobody was very fond of him.

One summer King Eystein went raiding in the Baltic along with his son Halfdan and Ulfkel the Wizard. They had thirty ships, all well manned, and Ulfkel's brother Ulfar had charge of the kingdom for as long as the expedition might last. (Halfdan Eysteinsson 1985:172)

Once Ulfkel had the kingdom [Norway], he started gathering ships and forces, then sailed his fleet east to the Baltic. He had thirty longships and a dragon head with seventy oars on each side. --On they sailed till they reached a place called Klyfandness, east of the Hlyn Forest and not far from Permia [Bjarmaland], where they ran into ten ships, all bravely manned, commanded by King Eystein's son Halfdan, who had heard all about what Ulfkel and his men had done on their expedition. (Halfdan Eysteinsson 1985:182)

Now we take up the story at the point when Ulfkel the Wizard fled from the battle. He managed to get ashore with fourteen men, but the remainder of his army was lost. He made inquiries about where his brother Ulf might be and, learning that he was in Permia [Bjarmaland], set off to find him. The king there was Harek, who had a daughter called Edny. Ulf proposed marriage, but the king refused, so Ulf started raiding his kingdom. When the brothers met, they talked things over and agreed to go together for a word with King Harek. They sailed with sixty ships, put in at the harbour close to the royal palace, and the Ulfkel the Wizard set off to see the king and present his compliments. The king asked his name, and Ulfkel told him exactly who he was.
The king asked who commanded the great fighting force that had just arrived, and Ulfkel replied that Ulf the Evil was in charge.

‘He and I are brothers,’ said Ulfkel, ‘and here’s why I’ve come to see you: we’d like to offer to be your men. If you let Ulf marry your daughter, I’ll give him Alaborg, Ladoga Town and all the territories under them, since they all belong to me. I daresay my brother and I would be a great source of strength to you and people would find us hard men to deal with when it comes to foul play.’

King Harek told Ulfkel that he needed time to consult his people, and Ulfkel made no objection. Then the king asked his daughter how she felt about it, and she said that in her opinion the brothers’ war-record made the decision a difficult one – ‘but if we can be sure about the territories, I think it’s a very tempting offer.’ She added that if the brothers were turned down, nothing would be too wicked for them, so the outcome was that Edny married Ulf, and he and his brother took over the Permian [Bjarmian] defences.

Ulfkel made inquiries about the man who had helped Halfdan against him in the battle, and Harek told him the man’s name was Grim.

‘He rules over Karelia, to the east of here,’ said the king. ‘He forced his way to power, but no one knows anything about his background. He has his foster-daughter with him, the best-looking girl anyone’s ever heard tell of.’

--Both brothers swore to stand by him and said they thought it was a good idea, so they sealed an agreement to go to Karelia once summer came, and not to leave till Grim was dead and the king had won the girl. And now for a while they took things easy.

In the spring they prepared their ships and gathered a great army. With them went two Lappish kings called Finn and Floki, both of them magicians. They travelled all the way to the Bay of Karelia, where they came face to face with Grim.

16. ‘There’s a man called Grim, a great warrior, ruling to the east in Karelia. He’s the one who sent you to me, and now he’s in bad need of strong men, so it’s time to repay him for saving your life. King Harek of Permia [Bjarmaland], Ulf the Evil and Ulfkel the Wizard have arrived in Karelia to take revenge for the humiliation Ulfkel suffered in your hands. Now they’re in the field with their whole army, and I’m told that King Harek wants to marry Grim’s foster-daughter Ingigerd, the best-looking girl alive.’
'What’s the shortest route?’ asked Halfdan. ‘I’d like to get there as soon as I can.’

‘Most of the routes from here are heavy going,’ said Hrifling. ‘What with the Vikings and pirates, it takes at least five weeks by sea. Then there’s an easterly route through wild forest country and over mountains, but it’s long, hard road and I don’t know if you’d make it. All being well, the third route would be the quickest and could get you there in about three weeks, but there are many obstacles. First there’s a forest twenty leagues across called Kol’s Wood, where a ruffian called Kol lives with his daughter, Gold-Ball. No one who meets them has much hope of survival. Just beyond is another forest called Klif’s Wood, twenty-four leagues across, where another ruffian lives, Hallgeir; along with a wild boar that’s worse enemy than a dozen men. After that you come to a forest called Kalfar Wood, thirty-six leagues across, where there’s nothing in the way of food apart from berries and sap, and there you’ll meet yet another ruffian, who’s called Sel and has a dog with him the size of a bull, that fights better than a dozen men and has a human brain. When you get out of that forest, you come to a river flowing east from the direction of Kjolen. Nobody knows its source, and only the best of swimmers can make it across, but once on the other side you’re not far from Skuli’s stronghold. With nothing to slow you down, you should get there near enough in time for the battle.’ (Halfdan Eysteinsson 1985:185–187)

19. Next morning, Halfdan sighted the castle to which he had been directed. That very day, Earl Skuli had set out to face King Harek and the brothers, for the battle was to be fought some distance from the castle. Earl Skuli had much smaller army, and not a single able-bodied man had been left behind, so when Halfdan arrived only women stood on the ramparts.

20. Then Halfdan marched into battle, where there was terrible carnage. Svidi, carrying Earl Skuli’s banner, pushed forward bravely and killed King Harek’s standard-bearer, Krabbi. Halfdan needed no urging on. First he assaulted the flank commanded by the Lappish [Saami] king, Floki, where the king was shooting three arrows at a time and hitting a man with each one. --Seeing this, the other Lappish [Saami] king, Finn, turned himself into a whale. --That was how Ulfkel the Wizard met his death. By now, Earl Skuli had killed Ulf the Evil too, but King Harek of Permia [Bjarmaland] came up to face Skuli and there was hard fighting between them. At a stroke Harek shattered Skuli’s shield,
wounding him in the fingers, though not too badly. --Then Harek turned into a winged dragon and swung his tail at Skuli, laying him out completely. --By then, Halfdan was back in action, and he struck at the dragon’s neck, and so the creature died. (Halfdan Eysteinsson 1985:190–192)

22. Next, Halfdan held a public meeting to announce a military expedition to Permia [Bjarmaland] leaving within a month. People liked the idea, and after speedy preparations they all set out for Permia [Bjarmaland], where Earl Skuli joined them. There was little resistance and they took over the whole country.

Edny, King Harek’s daughter, was taken captive by Halfdan, but Harek’s son Grundi, who was only three years old at the time, was being fostered by Earl Bjartmar, the son of the same King Raknar who had built the ship Raknarslodi. Earl Bjartmar pledged his allegiance to Halfdan.

After all this was done, Halfdan got himself ready and sailed back to Ladoga Town. He had been away for five years and everyone was pleased to see him. The queen welcomed her daughter and thanked Halfdan and Earl Skuli for all their kindness towards her. (Halfdan Eysteinsson 1985:194)

24. --‘Since all these lands have come into my power,’ said Halfdan, ‘I’ll make clear how I’m going to arrange things. I’ll give Queen Isgerd in marriage to Earl Skuli, along with her kingdom here in Russia. Both Permia [Bjarmaland] and King Harek’s daughter Edny are now under my authority, and provided both parties agree I want Sigmund to have the kingdom and the princess.’

Sigmund said that as long as the girl was in favour, it was all very much to his liking, and Edny said that she wasn’t expecting a better offer – ‘so it suits me very well’.

Halfdan announced that he was returning to his own kingdom in Norway – ‘People’, he said, ‘are happiest with what they’re born to.’

--They sent Svidi the Bold across to Karelia to run that country, under the overlordship of Earl Skuli.

In the spring, when the ice broke, Halfdan started gathering ships and men, then set out for Permia [Bjarmaland] with Sigmund and Earl Skuli. Their expedition was a great success, for the people there offered no resistance: Sigmund became their ruler though he remained with Halfdan, while Earl Skuli
went back to Alaborg. He and Isgerd loved each other deeply: they had a son called Hreggvid, father of Ingigerd who married Göngu-Hrolf.

25. Now the time has come to tell how Halfdan sailed to Norway, along with Sigmund and his brother Odd the Showy, and a fine retinue of men. Halfdan received a friendly welcome from his kinsmen in Norway. He was made King of Trondheim and all the other provinces once ruled by his father Eystein, and was very popular with his subjects. --Some of Sigmund's men arrived in Norway east from Permia [Bjarmaland] with the report that Vikings had been raiding in Permia [Bjarmaland] and Novgorod, killing Svidi the Bold and laying Karelia and a large part of Russia under them. When Halfdan and Sigmund heard the news they started gathering forces and then set out east for Permia [Bjarmaland].

26. At that time, the king ruling over Gestrekaland and all the provinces east of the Kjolen Mountains was a man called Agnar, married to Hildigunn, sister of the late King Harek of Permia [Bjarmaland]. They had two sons, one Raknar, the other Val, both Vikings, who spent their time in the Arctic Ocean attacking giants.

Raknar had a ship called the raknarslodi. It had a hundred rowing spaces, and after the Long Serpent it was the biggest ever built in Norway, manned by every kind of blackguard, with fifteen sons of whores at either hand upon each bench. Raknar conquered the wild regions of Slabland and cleared them completely of giants.

His brother Val lived upon the Arctic Sea, and there is a great story about him. He and his brother believed they had inherited the right to rule Permia [Bjarmaland] from their uncle, Harek. Val had two sons, Kott and Kisi, both big, powerful men. Val it was who killed Svidi the Bold and conquered Karelia. He had captured more gold than anyone could count in marks from the giant Svadi, a son of the god Thor, who lived on the mountain called Blesanerg, north of the Arctic Sea. Val had a sword called the 'Horn-Hilt', heavily inlaid with gold, and its stroke never failed.

Halfdan and Sigmund arrived east in Permia [Bjarmaland], and after inquiring where Val might be found they located him north of the White Sea. They went strait into battle. --Now that Val was out of the fight, Kott and Kisi made off in the one ship, but Odd went after them, forcing them ashore at a
place where a great river pours over a cliff into the sea. --Behind the waterfall was a great cavern. Val and his sons swam into it under water, lay down upon the gold-hoard, and were changed into winged dragons. --Odd was the only one to come back alive, and by then Halfdan and Sigmund had killed all the Vikings except for Agnar, who escaped in a single ship. He went to Halogaland and became a notorious troublemaker.

27. Halfdan and Sigmund went back to Permia [Bjarmaland]. Sigmund settled down there in his kingdom and Halfdan journeyed back to Norway. (Halfdan Eysteinsson 1985:195–198)

Hálfdanar saga Eysteinnssonar (“The Saga of Hálfdan Eysteinsson”) is one of the so-called fornaldarsögur, a heterogeneous group with fictitious stories set in Scandinavia and beyond and designed to entertain. The historical value of this group is slight. The saga at hand lies somewhere between naturalistic story and pure fantasy, tending towards the romance end of the spectrum. The anonymous saga is transmitted in three recensions (AM 343 a 4°, AM 109 a 8°x, AM 340 4°x plus a fragmentary manuscript AM 586 4°) and belongs to the later period of Icelandic narrative art, meaning that it was probably not written before the middle of the 14th century, although it has also been suggested that it was written as early as in the end of the 13th or in the beginning of the 14th century. The saga survives in manuscripts from the 15th century onwards.791

The saga at hand features a complicated story describing the fortunes of Hálfdan, his friends and adversaries. We are dealing with a romantic tale with kings, kings’ daughters, marriages, battles, good and evil persons, heroes, magic, adventures, giants, dragons, kingdoms, castles and challenges, in a word, entertainment. I do not see any need to comment the story line as such since the saga and the characters are imaginary.792 Instead, I will deal with features that may have importance in connection with Bjarmaland. Most of all this applies to geographical details.

The story refers to geographical circumstances mostly from a Baltic perspective. In general, geographical details are considered the most reliable material in sagas and even in cases when the tale is purely fictitious, it is considered

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792 Håme 1987a, 222.
that the geographical details reflect reality. The text at hand gives a divided view of the location of Bjarmaland. On the one hand, a view centered around the Baltic Sea is presented. On the other hand, a northerly view is given with both Gandvík and Dumbshaf as reference points. The northerly approach is dominant in Norse texts in general. In very few occasions a different view is shown, most prominently so in connection with the penultimate Norwegian Bjarmaland expedition just prior to 1222. In that case, a group of Norwegians took on a journey from Bjarmaland at the White Sea to Suzdal’ and even further south.

The following geographical locations are mentioned in connection with Bjarmaland: Kirjálabotnar (Karelia), Russaland (Russia), Nógarða (Novgorod), Álaborg, Aldeigjuborg, Norway (Trondheim specifically), Gestrekaland (in Sweden), Gandvík (the White Sea) and Dumbshaf (the Arctic Ocean). Most of these places are rather easy to recognize and we can immediately give them an approximate location on the map. Identification of Álaborg is inconclusive. Different suggestions include Russia in general, northern Rus’, the Lake Ladoga region, banks of the Onego Lake, the White Lake and the Sjas’ River. Aldeigjuborg is the same as Staraja Ladoga, i.e. Ladoga Town. Ladoga Town and Novgorod were the two Russian centers closest to Scandinavia. Generally Novgorod is known with the name Hólmgardr in the Scandinavian texts, but in this case the word Nógarða is used. Nógarða/Nógarðar as a name for Novgorod appears in some of the later Scandinavian texts. This is obviously a name borrowed from the Russians. Likewise, the text uses the word Russland of Russia instead of the more “Scandinavian” Garðaríki. This kind of usage of the toponyms would seem to agree with the relatively late dating of the saga.

When the Norwegian campaigns against the Baltic area are described, Bjarmaland is also mentioned. The text gives the impression that one could sail from the Baltic Sea all the way to Bjarmaland and that Bjarmaland was not far from the Baltic. It is also mentioned that one could sail from Bjarmaland to Ladoga Town. The idea that one could reach Bjarmaland by sea from the south is simply

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793 See e.g. Häme 1987a, 236.
794 See e.g. Haralds saga ins hárfagra 1962, 134–135.
796 More about the identification and references to Karelia in the written sources in Häme 1987a, 219.
797 Глазырина 1996, 100; Jackson 2003, 40–41, 53 footnote 77.
798 Ross 1940, 35; Jackson 2003, 40–44.
800 Jackson 2003, 42–43, 45.
801 Jackson 2003, 45, 55 footnote 100.
geographically impossible unless the sailing would have taken place along rivers and lakes. This is not, however, evident in the text where no details of the sailing are given. It may be that the text here is influenced by accounts in Scandinavian literature where one sails from Norway to Bjarmaland, past Finnmark and to the White Sea. On the other hand, there has been traffic along waterways between the White Sea and the Baltic Sea. HÄME suggests that the author of the saga had heard about direct contacts between Ladoga/Karelia and the White Sea (Bjarmaland).

The saga at hand mentions a place called *Kirjálabotnar*, which could be reached from Bjarmaland. Besides *Kirjálaland*, the form *Kirjálabotnar* is used of Karelia in the Scandinavian sources. The translation, “Karelian Bays” testifies of a connection with waterways. This area was situated somewhere in the eastern end of the Baltic Sea, between the River Neva and the Bay of Viborg. It seems as if by the 13th century Karelia was drawn under the influence of Novgorod, but retained partial independence. In *Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar* Russia and Karelia appear almost identical and the text gives the impression that Karelia, in fact, was part of Russia. This can be said to reflect actual circumstances for Karelia had been part of Russia at least for some time by the time the saga was written.

The text also mentions Swedish “Vikings” who were “attacking giants” at the Arctic Ocean (Dumbshaf). The part telling about the Swedish “Vikings” is perhaps the most unrealistic part of the saga. One of the “Vikings” had also been raiding Bjarmaland and Novgorod (Nôgarða) laying Karelia and a large part of Russia under him. There has certainly been Scandinavian aggression against Bjarmaland as well as Karelia and Novgorod and although the text may well reflect actual circumstances, it does not offer much historical data since the whole plot is embellished with incredible details. In general, the Scandinavian written

803 Huurre 1987a, 67, 70, 73.
804 Häme 1987a, 222.
806 Dumbshaf is here interpreted as the Arctic Ocean in line with the English translation, although it does seem to appear in connection with less realistic geographical areas like Jötunheim and the identification is far from certain. See Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 557–558; Sagan af Huld drottningu hinni riku 1909, 49; Halfðan Eysteinsson 1985,196.
807 A number of written sources relate aggression between Norway and Bjarmaland. See e.g. Haralds saga græfeldar 1962, 217; Hakonar saga 1964, 70–71. The 13th century saw an acceleration of aggression between Norway and Novgorod/Karelia. This resulted in e.g. Novgorodian/Karelian raids in Hålogaland. Also Sweden extended its interest towards Karelia and there were ongoing hostilities between Sweden and Novgorod. See Hansen 2003, 9, 14, 16.
sources do not mention Swedish activity in Bjarmaland. This is probably due to the sources that portray a Norwegian point of view. However, from a geographical point of view it is quite likely that the Swedish may have extended their interest to Bjarmaland. At least they were active in the Russian area.\footnote{Hansen 2003, 16–17.}

Also in this text the convention that one sailed to Bjarmaland in the spring or summer appears. This is understandable since this is a convention applying to all the “Viking” expeditions.\footnote{Binns 1961, 44; Krag 2000, 31–32; Jackson 2003, 55 footnote 111.}

The text names four Bjarmians. The king is called Hárekr, which is a Norse name. Hárekr appears as the name of the king in Bjarmaland also in two other texts, Orvar-Odds saga and Bósa saga.\footnote{See Orvar-Odd 1888, 127; Bósa saga 1893, 21.} The women’s names Eðný and Hildigunn are Norse as well and the king’s son’s name Grundi sounds likewise profoundly Norse. That the names are Norse is to be expected since the text is designed to entertain. The writer certainly did not try to obtain authenticity in his descriptions. Certain details are exaggerated, like the number of ships and men that take part in the battles. All this speaks against relying on the details of the story.

Several other fornaldarsögur (Sturlaug saga starfsama, Bósa saga ok Herrauðs, Orvar-Odds saga)\footnote{See Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 631–633; Orvar-Odd 1888, 127; Bósa saga 1893, 61–63.} also mention a Norwegian hero conquering Bjarmaland. The oldest of these accounts is Orvar-Odds saga. In this sense it could be the source of the motif, although it is also possible that the motif originally derives from an even older source that is now lost to us. Some of the more realistic accounts of Bjarmaland include a description of a battle in Bjarmaland as well as portray looting\footnote{See e.g. Ólafs saga helga 1945, 227–232; Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217; Haralds saga ins hárfagra 1962, 134–135; Hakonar saga 1964, 70–71.} and it seems feasible that these motifs could have been enhanced into the conquering of Bjarmaland in the more liberal fornaldarsögur.

The marriage motif that is also present in Hálfðanar saga Eysteinsssonar appears in different forms in the Norse texts about Bjarmaland expeditions including Gesta Danorum, texts about Eiríkr blóðox, Landnámabók, Hálf’s saga ok Hálfrækka and Bósa saga ok Herrauðs.\footnote{See Antiquités Russes 1850, 86; Antiquités Russes 1852, 232, 254; Bósa saga 1893, 61–63; Saxonis Gesta Danorum 1931, 65; Heimskringla 1999, 86.} In Hálfðanar saga Eysteinsssonar the marriage motif actually appears two times, first in marriage between a Norwegian man and a Bjarmian woman and a second time between a Bjarmian woman and a
Swedish man. A marriage between a Bjarmian woman and a Swedish man is also found in *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs*.

Besides the approximate location, the text does not give any tangible information about Bjarmaland that appears more as a suitable background for action. The function of the characters is to support the storyline. The persons are not representatives of Bjarmaland, but rather fulfill the demands of the plot. The few details we hear, like the existence of a king and his hall and a beautiful princess, are not genuine details, but rather part of stereotyped paraphernalia attached to a certain type of character, in this case a king in a suitably remote, yet attainable country.

The Bjarmians and some Norwegians (who had holdings in Karelia) are represented as allies. These received help from two Saami kings in an attack against Karelia. This indicates some kind of antagonism between Karelia and Bjarmaland. On the other hand, Bjarmaland and Karelia are connected since one of the Norwegians in alliance with the Bjarmians had *Álaborg* and *Aldeigjuborg* under his rule. There is also an antagonistic situation between Bjarmaland and Norway and the hero of the saga, Hálfdan, conquers Bjarmaland. It is, however, rather doubtful whether any of these alliances and antagonisms could somehow reflect real circumstances. I am liable to think that these kinds of details rise simply out of the need to present a story, but may sometimes, more accidentally than out of design, also reflect real circumstances. It is known from other sources that the relations between Norway and Bjarmaland often were hostile, although not so much as to hinder trade.814

HÄME is of the opinion that the attack against *Kirjálabotnar* could be principally true. The Norwegian brothers together with the Bjarmians and the Saami attacked Karelians and other Norwegians. They travelled with ships from Bjarmaland and arrived in *Kirjálabotnir*. Gripla mentions that Bjarmaland belonged to Novgorod’s area of taxation (*skattgilt undir Garða konúng*815). Also the Karelians paid taxes to Novgorod.816 HÄME is of the opinion that it is possible that the Karelians and the Bjarmians who both were under Novgorod at some point could have put together their forces and attacked their oppressor.817 This is certainly possible. However, the text does not talk about alliance between the Karelians and

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815 Antiquités Russes 1852, 404.

816 Hansen 2003, 14.

817 Häme 1987a, 222–223.
the Bjarmians but rather of aggression between the two. In any case, the aggression is not directed towards the Novgorodians/Russians, but against rivaling Norwegians and Karelians. If anything, the sequence would seem to reflect the dual relationship between the Norwegians and the Bjarmians that at times was peaceful and at other times hostile. The alliance between the Norwegians and the Bjarmians is interesting since Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar mentions that a number of Bjarmians escaped to/settled in Norway in the 13th century. Since the image of the relations between the Bjarmians and the Norwegian given in the written sources is predominantly hostile, it is interesting occasionally to detect a hint of another kind of relationship between the two, albeit in very diluted form.

All in all, this saga does not offer much tangible evidence concerning Bjarmaland, but the geographical details at least are mainly correct. The saga would seem to reflect the knowledge that Bjarmaland could also be reached from the south via the Baltic, not just from the north, via Norway, Finnmark and Gaudvik.

5.7 Áns saga bogsveigis

Þórir--he had four ships. He harried Bjarmaland after this, and got a great booty, and in the fall he came back to Namdalen.819

Áns saga bogsveigis (“The Saga of Án Bow-bender”) is one of the so-called ungra fornaldarsögur (later fornaldarsögur also known as “adventure sagas” or Märchensagas or lygisögur). These do not have any historical background. Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda (“Tales from the Remote Scandinavian Past”) is a modern and somewhat misleading blanket title for a group of fictitious stories set in Scandinavia and beyond, but never in Iceland since the events are supposed to have happened before the settlement of Iceland. Some are based on ancient heroic poetry, others have a less respectable background. The historical value of these sagas is slight and it is hard to draw a line between them and the riddarasögur. The saga at hand belongs to a group of fornaldarsögur known as Hrafnistumannasögur or “sagas of the men of Hrafnista”. The oldest extant recension is from the early

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818 Hakonar saga 1964, 358.
fifteenth century. This is seemingly based on two earlier manuscripts. Additionally, there are as many as forty-six paper manuscripts of a later date. There also exist early 15th century *rímur*, based on an earlier manuscript. The narrative is reminiscent of the style of many *Íslendingasögur*, but the content of the saga is typical to *fornaldarsögur*.\footnote{Pálsson–Edwards 1990a, 96; Campbell 1993, 16; Sigtryggsson 2000, 5.} This short passage about the Bjarmaland expedition that RAFN repeats in a footnote is only found in the B manuscript or the *Björners útgáfa* of the saga.\footnote{Rafn 1829, 360.} The text is about Tore’s (Án’s brother’s) expedition to Bjarmaland. We are told that Tore had altogether four ships with him. This number of ships seems realistic, because *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, one of the more reliable sources, mentions the same number of ships in connection with a Bjarmaland expedition.\footnote{See *Óláfs saga helga* 1945, 227–230.} We do not know the size of the ships, but other saga texts can tell us about crews on a single ship number anything between thirty and eighty men.\footnote{Crumlin-Pedersen 1983, 32–35; Sjøvold 1985, 22; Christensen 1987, 7; Binns 1993b, 578.} These numbers seem to correspond rather well with reality and a crew of about thirty men per ship on a regular vessel and as many as eighty men or more on larger war vessels is realistic.\footnote{See e.g. *Magnúss saga berfœtts* 1951, 212; *Haralds saga gráfeldar*, *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, *Kormáks saga*, *Óláfs saga helga*.} This means that we can count at least over one hundred men on the expedition.

One could call the expedition a “Viking” expedition, because the Norwegians ravaged Bjarmaland and obtained a great booty as result. The way we are told about the expedition with pillaging and booty resembles a great deal the other narratives about Bjarmaland. Often the leader of the expedition is a king and a great battle is included in the ingredients of the expedition\footnote{See e.g. *Magnúss saga berfœtts* 1951, 212; *Haralds saga gráfeldar*, *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, *Kormáks saga*, *Óláfs saga helga*.}, but otherwise the text at hand follows closely the pattern of the other narratives both in regard to collecting booty after ravaging the country and coming back in the fall with a number of ships.

Several texts mention that the Norwegians sailed to Bjarmaland in the spring and summer and come back in the fall (*Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, *Haralds saga gráfeldar*, *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, *Kormáks saga*, *Óláfs saga helga*).\footnote{Kormáks saga 1939, 294–296; *Óláfs saga helga* 1945, 227–232; *Haralds saga gráfeldar* 1962, 217; *Hakonar saga* 1964, 70–71; Fagrskinna 1985, 79.} This is consistent with general custom.\footnote{Binns 1961, 44; Krag 2000, 31–32; Jackson 2003, 55 footnote 111.} The regular practice is seemingly applied to this tale as well since we are told that the Norwegians came back to Namdalen in
the autumn. The text indicates that men from Namdalen travelled to Bjarmaland. Namdalen is situated in Nord-Trøndelag, south of the ancient Hálogaland, that was a common starting point of Bjarmaland expeditions (Óláfs saga helga, Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar and Oththere’s account)\textsuperscript{828}.

It seems as if despite the lack of historical background for the described expedition, many of the features mentioned in Áns saga bogsveigis are consistent with what we know about the Norwegian Bjarmaland expeditions. Consequently, we can assume that the tale is based on earlier, more realistic accounts, relying on conventions relating Bjarmaland expeditions and expeditions of “Viking” character in general. Certain features of the text (the amount of ships, looting and returning in the fall) resemble the story found in Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar\textsuperscript{829} and this text could perhaps be one of the accounts that have inspired the Bjarmaland episode in Áns saga bogsveigis.

5.8 Bósa saga ok Herrauðs

1. Hringr hefir konungr heitit, er réð fyrir Eystra-Gautlandi; hann var son Gauta konungs, sonar Óðins, er konungr var i Svífjöð ok kominn var utan af Ásíam ok frengaztar konungaeittir eru frá komnar hér a Nordrlandum. --Hringr konungr átti Sylgju, dóttur Sæfara jarls af Smálöndum; --Þau áttu einn son, er Herrauðr hét. (Bósa saga 1893:3–4)\textsuperscript{830}

2. Maðr er nefndr Þvari ok var kallaðr Brynþvari, hann bjó skamt frá konungs atsetum; hann háði verit vikingr mikill hinn fyrra æfi sinnar, ok þá er hann var í vikingu, mætti hann skjaldmey einni, er Brynhildr hét; hun var döttir Agnars konungs úr Nóatúnum; --Þvari gerði brúðlaup til hennar. --Lagði Þvari þá af hernad ok settið í bú, ok áttu II sonu. --var Bósi jaðnan í konungsgarði ok lögðu þeir herrauðr lag sitt saman.

3. --Litlu síðar beiddi Herrauðr fóður sinn at fá sér herskip ok rökua menn til fylgðar, þvi hann lézt vilja úr landi ok afla sér meiri frægðar, ef þess verðr auðít. --hafði hann V skip úr landi ok vóru þau flest öll forn. --Þaðan sigldu þeir til Saxlandz ok herjaðu hvar sem þeir föru. Þeim varð gott til fjár ok föru þeir svó V vetr. (Bósa saga 1893:5–9)

\textsuperscript{828} See e.g. Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–230; Hakonar saga 1964, 70–71; Sweet’s Anglo-Saxon Reader 1970, 17.

\textsuperscript{829} See Hakonar saga 1964, 70–71.

\textsuperscript{830} The text is also published in Antiquités Russes 1850.
5. Sentu þá forsending, segir kelling. (Bósa saga 1893:20)

6. At morni dags er konungr snemma uppi ok lét blása til þings, ok vörð þeir þangat leidir Herrauðr ok Bósi. Konungr spyrð þá ráðgjafa sína, hvat við þá skyldi gjöra, en flestir bánu hann vægja við Herrauð. Þá meðli konungr til hans:

--Bósi skal hafa lifs grið ok lima, ok skal hann fara úr landi ok koma eigi aftar, fyrir en hann þérit mér þat gammsægg, at skrifat er alt með gullstöfum utan, ok eru því þá sáttir. --en Herrauðr geri hvort er hann vill. --Vörð þeir þá leystir báðir, ok fóru þeir þá til Ívars kallz ok vörð þá honum um vetrinn. En er vóraði, bjuggu þeir ferð sína úr landi ok höðu eitt skip ok á fjóra menn ok XX.

--heldu þeir í Austrveg ok kvennu undir Bjarmaland ok lögðu undir einteyfiskóg. (Bósa saga 1893:20–21)

7. Hárekr hét sá konungr er þá réð fyrir Bjarmalandi; hann var kvóngaðr ok átti tvó sonu, hét annarr Hrærekr, en annarr Siggeir; þeir vörð kappar miklir ok hirdmenn Godmundar konungs á Glaesisvöllum ok landvarnarmenn hans. Dóttir konungs hét Edda; hún var frið sýnum ok um flesta hluti vel kunnandi. Nú er at segja frá þeim fóstbraðrum, at þeir vörð komnir undir Bjarmaland ok þann skóg, er Vinuskógr heitir. Þeir reistu tjald á landi mjökk útrætt um mannavegum. Um morguninn sagði Bósi mónum sinum, at þeir Herrauðr mundu ganga á land ok kannu skóginn ok vita, hvers þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þér mánuð, en ef því komum þá eigi aftar, þá skulí þeir þú sýgla, hvert sem þeir yrði visir; en þeir skulíð bída okkar þer...
góða nætrskemtan, en segja honum þat, sem hann vill vita; en hverr var þer svó reiðr, at þik vill feigan ok senda þik forsending? Eigi gengr ílt til allz ok verðr enginn þrag af öngu, segir hann, eru þeir ok margir hlutir, at opt snuæzt til gæfu, þoat háskasamliga sê stofnaðir. (Bósa saga 1893:21–25)

8. - Hér í skógi þessum stendr hof mikit, þat á Hárekr konungr, er hér ræðr fyrir Bjarmanlandi; þar er göfgat goð, þat er Jómali/Jómanni heitir; þar er gull mikít ok gersemar. Fyrir því hofi ræðr móðir konungs, er Kolfrosta heitir; hún er mjögnað af blótskapt, svó at hann kemr engi hlutir á óvart. Hún veit þat fyrir með konstrum sínnum, at hún á eigi at lifa út allan þenna mánuð, ok því fyrir hún hafði austr á Gígisvöllum ok því fyrir hún hafði austr á móti dyrum ok þekkir hvat er í hofinu, at hann hafði frétt, at þat hafði frétt, ok dvölduzt þeir þar þrjár nætr, ok sagði bóndadóttir þeim, hvat þeir skyldu stefna til hofsins, ok bað hún vel fyrir þeim at skilnaði; fara þeir nú leið sína. Þeir þóttuzt í mál. Þeir þóttuzt þat þeir ﬂógu af henni belg ok stöppuðu upp með mosa ok lyng. Herruðr fór í kufl þraðins ok leiddi eptir sær kvígubelginn, en Bósi steypdi kápu sinni yfir þraðins ok bar hann á baki sér, þangat til at þeir sá hoft. Þá tók Bósi sjóti sitt ok rak í rass þraðnum ok neðan eptir honum endilöngum, svó at oddrinn kom út við herðarnar. Ganga þeir nú at hofinu. Herruðr gekk inn í hoft í bünning þraðins; hoftþraðjan var þá í svefni; hann leiddi kvíguna á básinn, en leysir gríðunginn; hann hljóp upp
á kvíguna, mosabelgrinn varð léttir fyrir, ok rak griddi hófuðit út á múrinn ok braut af sér bæði hornin. Herrauðr greip þá í bæði eyrun á honum ok i granirnar ok snaraði hann svó úr hálsliðinum. Þá vaknaði hofgyðjan/gygrin ok hljóp á fætr. Í þessu kom Bósi inn í hofit ok bar þrelinn uppi yfir höfði sér á spjótinn; gammrinn brá nú við skjót ok steypti sér ofan úr hreiðrinnu ok vildi gleypa þann, sem inn var kominn. Svalg hann nú þrelinn ofan at miði; Bósi þrysti þá spjótinu, svó at þat gekk upp í háls gamminum, þar til at stóð í hjartanu. Gammrinn setti klærnar í þjóiná þræl sskrokkinum ok setti vænghnúfana við eyrat á Bósa, svó at hann fell í övit; fell gammrinn þá at ofan á hann, ok vóru hans fjörbrot óglerliga mikil. Herrauðr réðzt á móti hofgyðjunni ok var þeira atgangr hinn høðazi, ok hafði kelling illa skornar negl ok reif þurði hans níðr at beini. Þau báruzt þángat at, sem Bósi var fallinn, ok var þar blóðugt mjök; kellingu varð hálta í gammsblöðinn, ok fell hún á bak aprtr ok vóru þá sviptingar miklar með þeim, svó at ýmsi voru undir. Bósi raknaði þá við, ok greip hófuð gríðungsins ok rak á nasir gygrinni; Herrauðr sleit þá af henni høndina í axlarliðinum; tók henni þá at dafna leikrinn, en í fjörbrottum hennar varð landskjalfi mikil. Þeir gengu nú um hofit ok rannsökkuðu þat; í hreiðrinn gammsins fundu þeir eggit, ok var þat almútt göll og súflumum ritat; þar fundu þeir gull svó mikit, at þeir höfuðu nóg at bera. Þeir kvómu at stalla þeim, sem Jómal/Jómanus sat á; af honum tóku þeir gullkórónu setta með XII göllumum ok men, þat sem kostaði CCC marka gullz, ok úr knjám honum tóku þeir silfrbolla svó stórarn, at öngir fjörir menn mundu af drekkka; hann var fullr af rauðagulli; en þeir sjálft at, sem Jómal/Jómalann, var meira vert en þrífarmar af drómundi þeim, er rikaztr skriðr um Grikklandzag; þetta tóku þeir alt til sín. Þeir fundu afstúku eina í hofinu, ok var hún kominn mjök leyndlega, þar var fyrir steinhúð starkliga læst, ok vóru þeir at allan daginn, at brjóta hana upp, áðr en þeir kvómuzt inn. Þeir sá þar konu sitja á stóli; eigi höfuðu þeir aðra vænni sét; hár hennar var bundit við stólfurðið; þat var fagrt sem hálmar barninn eðr gull teint; járnfestr var um hana miðja vannliga læst at henni; hún var grátinn mjök; en er hún sá mennina, spurði hún, hvítt olí òkynrlíska þeim, er verit hefir i morgin, eðr því þikkir ykkk lif ykkart svó ílt, at þít fyssitz hingat í þrolla hendr, þviat þeir, sem hér ráða fyrir, munu þegar drepa ykkk, er þit sjáizt hér. En þeir söggu, at morgu svaraði frestí; þeir spurðu at, hvat hún hét ok þvi hún væri þar svó harðliga haldini. Hún sagðit Hleiðr heita ok vera systir Goðmundar konungs austr á Glæsisvöllum; en tröllkona sú, sem hér ræðr fyrir, sötti mik þángat með fjölykngi ok ætlar, at ek skuli ganga fyrir blóturn í hofinu, ok vera hér abbadis, þá hún er dauð; en ek vilda fýrr vera
brend. Göð mundir þú vera þeim manni, segir Herrauðr, er þik frelsaði heðan. Hún segizt vita þat mundi engi gert geta. Herrauðr mælti: viðu eiga mik, ef ek kem þér heðan? Öngvan veit ek svø leiðan mennzkan mann, segir hún, at ek mundi eigi heldr vilja eiga, en at vera blótuð hér i hofinu: eðr hvert er naðin þitt? Herrauðr heiti ek, segir hann, sonr Hrings konungs af Eystra-Gautlandi; en eigi þarf at öttazt hofgyðjuna, þvíat vit Bósi höfum sungit yfir hausamótum hennar, en til þess máttu ætla, at ek þikkjumzt sæmda af þér verðr, ef ek leysi þik heðan. Ekki hefi ek meira i veð at setja en sjálfa mik, segir hún, ef þat er vili frænda minna. Eigi mun ek til þeirra giptingar leita, segir Herrauðr, ok vil ek hér örgan undandrätt í hafa, því ek þikkjumzt í öngu þér varboðinn, ok skal leysa þik sem áðr. Eigi veit ek þann mann, segir hún, at ek vil heldr eiga en þik, af þeim, sem ek hefi sét. Þeir leysa hana nú. Herrauðr spyr, hvórt hún vil heldr fara heim með þeim og giði hann bróðlaup til hennar, eðr senda hana austr til bróður síns ok sjáí hún hann aldri súðan; en hún kjöri at fara með honum, ok lofaði hvort óðru trú sinni. Eðr þat báru þeir útgull ok gersemar úr hofinu, en súðan lögðu þeir eld í hofin ok brendu upp at ösku, svó at öngva örmul så nema óskuna, ok fóru súðan burt með þat, sem þeir hofðu fengit, ok létu eigi fyrir, en þeir kvömu til Hóketils kallz ok dvöldust þar eigi lengi ok gáfu honum fé mikit báru á morgum hestum gull ok geremar til skips ok urðu menn þeirra þeim fegnir. (Bósa saga 1893:25–33)

9. Þessu næst sigldu þeir burt af Bjarmalandi, sem byr gaf, ok er þar eigi getit um ferð þeirra, fyr ir þeir svó örmu heim í Gautland, ok hofðu þeir þá tvó vetr í burt verit. Þeir gengu nú fyrir konung, ok færði Bósi honum eigi, ok var þá brotin rauf á skurninu ok vóru þar í X merkr gullz, ok hafði konungr skurnit fyrir borðker. Bósi gaf konungi kerit, er hann tóku af Jómalanum/Jómala/Jómanu. (Bósa saga 1893:33)

10. --ok er þar nú til at taka fyst, at Hleiðr, systir Goðmundur konungs, hvarf í burt af Glæsisvöllum. --Þeir braeðr vóru þá með konungi Hrærekr ok Siggeirr. Konungr bað Siggeir bindazt fyrir um eptirleit Hleiðrar ok vinna þat til eiginorð við hana. Siggeirr kvaðzt ætla, at þat mundi eigi auðvelt at finna hana, ef hofgyðjan á Bjarmalandi vissi ekki til hennar. Þeir bjugguzt nú úr landi ok hofðu V skip ok fóru til Bjarmalands ok fundu Hárek konung ok söðu honum nú erendin, en hann bað þá fara til hofsin ok kvað eigi mundu laust fyrir liggja, ef Jómalí/Jómanni eðr gyðjan vissu ekki til hennar. Þeir fóru nú til hofsin ok fundu þar óskudungjuna ok sått engin örmul neins þess, er þar atta at vera. Fóru þeir nú um skógin ok kvömu til bygða Hóketils kallz ok fréttu
eptir, hvörð þau vissu ekki til, hverr hofinu hefði grándat; en kall kvaðzt þat eigi vita, en hann sagði þó, at tveir gauzkir menn hefði legit undir Vinuskógi mjök lengi, og hét annarr Herrauðr, en annarr Bögu-Bósi, ok kvað þá sér þikkja likæta til at hafi gert slíkt stórræði. En bóndadóttir sagðizt hafa fundit þá á veginum, þá þeir föru til skips, ok þeir höfðu með sér Hleiðr, systur Goðmundar konungs af Glæsisvöllum, ok sögðu hennar til sín leita mega, ef nökkrur vildi hana finna. Ok sem þeir urðu þessa visir, sögðu þeir þetta konungi, ok söfnuðu þeir nú lói um alt Bjarmaland ok fengu þar þrjú skip ok XX ok sigldu síðan til gautlandz. --Tóku þeir nú meyna, en ræntu fé öllu, ok föru i burt síðan ok léttu eigi, fyrr en þeir kvómu heim á Glæsisvöllu. --Siggeir biðr nú Hleiðar, en hún var treg til þess ok kvað þat makligt, at sá nyti sín, er hana frelsaði úr trölla höndum. (Bósa saga 1893:34–37)

11. --en hann sagði, at þeir mundu verðda of seinir, ef þeir söfnuðu lói miklu, ok því sagði hann, at þeir mundu heldr ná konungsdóttur með djúptum råðum ok snörum atburðum, ok var nú þetta ráðit, at þeir bjuggu eitt skip ok á XXX manna; --kvómu þeir nú vónum bráðara austr á Glæsisvöllu, ok lögðu skipi sinu undir einn eyðiskóg. (Bósa saga 1893:37–38)

13. --þeir sigla þangat til at vegir skiljast, ok annarr lá til Bjarmalandz; þá bað Bósi Herrauð sigla heim til Gautlandz, en hann kvaðzt eiga erendi til Bjarmalandz. Herrauðr segizt eigi við hann skilja; eðr hvat er i erendum þínun þangat? Hann segir þat man þeir síðar sýnast. Smiðr bauð at bifa þeirra V nátr. Bósi sagði, at þeim mundi þat vel duga, ok föru þeir nú á bátinum til landz II saman ok földu bátinn í leyni nökkruru, en þeir gengu til bygða, þar sem kall bjó ok kelling; þau áttu döttur vana. (Bósa saga 1893:49–50)

Hann sagði til hit sanna ok spyrr, hvórt hún væri nökkt í kærleikum við Eddu konungsdóttur; hún sagðizt opt koma i skemmu konungsdóttur ok vera þar vel tekin. Ek mun hafa þik at trúnaðarmanni, sagði hann, ok vil ek gefa þer til þrjár merkr silfirs, at þú komir konungsdóttur í skóginn til min. --Um morguninn snemma fór hún at finna konungsdóttur ok sýnir henni gullhnetrnar ok sagðizt vita, hvar slikar metti nógar finna. Fórum þangat sem fyst, segir konungsdóttir, ok þrellinn með okkr; ok svó gera þau. Þeir kompánar vóru nú komnír í skóginn ok snúa til motz við þau. Bósi heilsar jungfrúnni ok spyrr, því hún fenn svó einmana. Hún kvað eigi hættligt um þat. Þat er nú sem takazt vill, segir Bósi, ok gjör nú hvórt er þú vilt, at fara með mér viljug, eða geri ek skyndibrúðlaup til þín hér í skóginum. --Síðan setti Bósi konungsdóttur á
handlegg sér ok bar hana til skips, ok létu frá landi ok föru þar til er þeir fundu Smið. --ok sigludu heim í Gautland. (Bósa saga 1893:52–54)

14. Þat byrjazt nú, sem þeir braðr höðu fullbúit sitt lið, ok höðu ógrynni liðz, en svó hafði Godmundi konungi orði þungr þústrinn Herraður, at hann var eigi ferðugr at fara þessa ferð, ok skyldu þeir braðr hafa af veg ok vanda. Þeir höðu XL skipa af Glæsisvöllum, en juku þó mórgum við í ferðinni. Þeir kvómu til Bjarmalandz ok fundu Hárek konung feðr sinn, ok vôru þeir Herraður ok Bósi nýfarnir þaðan; hafði Hárek konungr þá fulla vissu þat því, at þeir höðu tekit í burtu dóttur hans, hafði hann þá þúit lið sitt ok hafði XV stór skip; slæzt hann nú í ferð með þeim braðrum ok höðu þeir allz LX skipa ok sigla nú til Gautланд. (Bósa saga 1893:55)

--Þeir frétta nú, at þeir eru við land komni hárek konungr ok synir hans, ok var nú eigi þusulaust. --ok tekzt með þeim bardagi mjök harðr, ok vóru hvóirtveggi hínir ákófuztu. --Smiðr snýr nú á móti honum ok hjó til hans með saxi því, sem Busla kelling hafði gefit honum, því at hann bitu eigi atkvæðalaus våpn. (Bósa saga 1893:56–58)

16. --Síðan bjugguzt þeir við brúðlaupum sinum Herraður ok Bósi. --Tók Herraður þá konungsnaðin yfir öllum þeim ríkjun, sem faðir hans hafði stýrt. Litlu síðar söfnuðu þeir liði ok föru til Bjarmalandz, ok beiddi Bósi sér þar viðökök ok taldi þat til, at Edda ætti land allt eptir fóður sinn, er nú var orðin eiginkona hans, ok seigizt hann svó helzt mega bæta landzmönum þann mannskaða, sem þeir höðu af honum fengit, at vera konungr yfir þeim ok styrka þá með lögum ok réttarbótum, ok með því at þeir vóru höfðingjalausir, þá sá þeir öngvan sinn kost váenna, en taka hann sér til konungs, var Edda þeim kunnig dór at öllum göðum síðum; gjördizt Bósi nú konung yfir Bjarmalandi.

--Svó hefir sagt verit, at í gammsæggingu því, sem þeir sötti til Bjarmalandz, hafði fundizt yrmlingar sá, er gullzítr var á. --Heistrengdi Herraður konungr þess, at gipta þeim einum manni Þóru dóttur sina, sem þyrði at ganga í skemmun til máls við hana ok af réði orminu; en þat þorði enginn fyrr at gera, en til kom Ragnar, sem Sigurðar hrings. --ok lúkum vér hér nú sögu Bógu-Bósa. (Bósa saga 1893:61–63)

1. There was a king called Hring who ruled over East Gotaland. His father was King Gauti, the son of King Odin of Sweden. Odin had travelled all the way from Asia, and all the noblest royal families in Scandinavia are descended
from him. --Hring was married to -- Sylgja, the daughter of Earl Seafarer of the Smalands. --Hring and his queen had a son called Herraud.

2. --There was a man called Thvari or Bryn-Thvari, who lived not far from the king’s residence. He had been a great Viking in his younger years and during his fighting career he had come up against an amazon, Brynhild, the daughter of King Agnar of Noatown. --Thvari made her his wife. --After that Thvari retired from Viking life and settled down on a farm. He and Brynhild had two sons. --Bosi spent a lot of time at the royal court, where he and Herraud were always together. (Bósa saga 1968:59–60)

3. --A little later Herraud asked his father to give him some warships and sturdy men as he wanted to sail away and earn himself a reputation, if that was possible. --Herraud set off with five ships, most of them old. --From there they sailed to Saxony, plundering wherever they went, and getting plenty of money. This went on for five years. (Bósa saga 1968:61)

5. --’You’re to send Bosi and Herraud on a dangerous mission,’ said Busla.

6. --the king -- had the alarm sounded to call people to a meeting, and then Herraud and Bosi were led before the gathering. The king asked his councilors what should be done with the two men, and most of them pleaded with him to spare Herraud. Then the king spoke to his son. --’I’m going to spare Bosi’s life. He’s to leave this country and not come back until he brings me a vulture’s egg, inscribed all over with gold letters, and then we’ll be reconciled. --Herraud is free to go wherever he wants to. --After that the two men were set free. They went to Thvari and stopped with him over the winter. In the spring they got ready for a voyage with one ship and a crew of twenty-four. --And so they set off and sailed east across the Baltic, and when they came to Permia [Bjarmaland] they brought their ships in under cover of a certain thickly-forested wilderness.

7. At that time the ruler of Permia [Bjarmaland] was King Harek, a married man with two sons, Hrærek and Siggeir. They were great fighters, serving at the court of King Godmund of Glasir Plains, and they were also in charge of the country’s defences. King Harek has a daughter called Edda, a beautiful woman and in most matters unusually talented.

831 There exists a revised version of this translation by the same authors in Seven Viking Romances from 1985. See Bosi and Herraud 1985, 199–227. The translations are in practise identical.
Now we must return to the foster-brothers, who were lying off Vina Forest in Permia [Bjarmaland] where they’d set up a tent ashore in a remote and desolate spot. One morning Bosi told his men he was going ashore with Herraud to explore the forest and see what they could find. ‘You’re to wait a month for us here, and if we’re not back by then, you can sail wherever you like.’ Their men weren’t too happy about this, but there was nothing they could do about it.

The foster-brothers made their way into the wood. They had nothing to eat except what they could catch by shooting deer and birds; sometimes their only food was berries and the sap of the trees, and their clothes were badly torn by the branches. (Bósa saga 1968:68–69)

One day they came upon a cottage. An old man was standing outside it splitting firewood, and he greeted them and asked them their names. They told him who they were and asked him his name, and he said he was called Hoketil. Then he told them they were welcome to stay the night if they wanted to, so they accepted his offer. The old man showed them to the living-room, and very few people were to be seen there. The woman of the house was getting on in years, but there was an attractive young daughter. The girl pulled off their wet clothes and gave them dry things instead, then brought a basin so they could wash their hands. The table was laid, and the young woman served them with excellent ale. Bosi kept eyeing her suggestively and touching her foot with his toe, and she did the same to him.

In the evening they were shown to a comfortable bed. --When the people were asleep, Bosi got up, went over to the young woman’s bed and lifted the bedclothes off her. --Bosi asked her, ‘Have you any idea where I can find a vulture’s egg inscribed with gold letters? My foster-brother and I have been sent to find out.’

She said the very least she could do in payment for the gold ring and a good night’s entertainment was to tell him all he wanted to know.

‘But who’s so angry with you that he wants you dead, sending you on such a dangerous mission?’

‘Evil motives aren’t the only motives, and no one can get much of a reputation without some effort,’ said Bosi. ‘There are plenty of affairs full of danger to start with, that bring you good luck in the end.’

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8. —‘In the forest,’ said the girl, ‘there’s a large temple belonging to King Harek, the ruler of Permia [Bjarmaland]. The god worshipped there is called Jomali, and a great quantity of gold and jewels is to be found there, too. The king’s mother, Kolfrosta, is in charge of the temple. She’s so powerful with her witchcraft, nothing could ever take her by surprise. By her sorcery she’s been able to predict that she won’t live out the month, so she’s travelled by magic east to Glasir Plains and carried off King Godmund’s sister, Hleid, whom she means to take her place as the priestess of the temple. But that would be a loss indeed - Hleid’s one of the most beautiful and well-bred of the women - so it would be all for the best if it could be prevented.’

‘What’s the main snag about the temple?’ Bosi asked.

She said, ‘There’s an enormous vulture there, so savage it exterminates everything that comes anywhere near it. The vulture stares at the door and sees everything that comes inside. There’s not a man alive has a chance of survival if the vulture’s claws and venom come anywhere near him. Underneath this vulture lies the egg you’ve been sent after.’ (Bósa saga 1968:70–71)

‘There’s also a slave in the temple, who looks after the priestess’s food – she eats a two-year-old heifer at every meal. And there’s a bewitched and enchanted bull in the temple, shackled with iron chains. The bull’s supposed to mount the heifer, poisoning her flesh, and then all those who taste it go crazy. The heifer’s to be cooked for Hleid, and then she’ll turn into a monster like the priestess.

‘As things are, I don’t think it’s very likely you’ll be able to beat these devils, considering all the sorcery you’re up against.’

Bosi thanked her for telling him all this and repaid her handsomely with yet another round of good entertainment. They were both very pleased with themselves, and slept till dawn. In the morning, he went over to Herraud and repeated what he’d been told. They stayed on for another three nights, and then the farmer’s daughter told them the way they should go to the temple.

Early one morning they saw a tall man in a grey cloak leading a cow. They realized this must be the slave, so they went for him. Bosi struck him a heavy blow with a club, and that was the end of him. Then they killed the heifer and skinned her, and stuffed the hide with moss and heather. Herraud put on the slave’s cloak and dragged the heifer’s skin behind him. Bosi threw his cloak
over the slave’s body and carried him on his back. When they came in sight of the temple, Bosi took his spear and drove it into the slave’s backside and up through the body so it jutted out of the shoulder. They walked up to the temple and, wearing the slave’s clothes, Herraud went inside.

The priestess was asleep. Herraud led the heifer into the stall and then untied the bull, and the bull mounted the heifer at once. But the moss-filled hide collapsed on impact, so that the bull fell forward against the stone wall, breaking both its horns. Herraud grabbed the bull by the ears and the jaw, and gave the neck such a violent twist that it broke.

At that moment the priestess woke up and jumped to her feet, as Bosi walked into the temple carrying the slave over his head by the spear. The vulture wasted no time and dived down from the nest, intending to make a meal of this intruder. But it only swallowed the upper part of the corpse, and Bosi gave the spear a hard push so that it went straight through the vulture’s throat and into the heart. The vulture set its claws hard against the slave’s buttocks and struck its wing tips against Bosi’s ears, knocking him unconscious. Then the vulture crashed down on top of him, ferocious in its death-throes.

Herraud made for the priestess, and there was a hard struggle between them, as she wore her nails cut jagged and tore his flesh down to the bone. The tussle took them to the spot where Bosi was lying, the floor around him covered with blood. The priestess slipped in the vulture’s blood and fell flat on her back, and so the struggle continued as fierce as ever, with Herraud sometimes on top of her and sometimes underneath.

Then Bosi came to, got hold of the bull’s head and hit the old hag hard on the nose with it. Herraud tore one of her arms off at the shoulder, and after that her spirit began to weaken. Even so, her final death throes caused an earthquake.

After that they went through the temple and searched it thoroughly. In the vulture’s nest they found the egg, all covered with letters in gold. They found so much gold there they had more than enough to carry. Then they came to the altar where Jomali was sitting, and from him they took a gold crown set with twelve precious stones; also a necklace worth three hundred gold marks; and off his knees they took a silver cup filled with red gold and so big that four men couldn’t drink it up. The fine canopy that was hung over the god was more
valuable than three cargoes of the richest merchantman that sails the Mediterranean; and all this they took for themselves.

In the temple they found a secret side room with a stone door, securely locked. It took them the whole day to break it open and get inside. There they saw a woman sitting on a chair - never had they seen such a beautiful woman! Her hair was tied to the chair posts, and was as fair as polished straw or threads of gold. An iron chain, firmly locked, lay round her waist, and she was in tears.

When she saw the men, she asked them what had been causing all the uproar that morning. ‘Do you care so little for your lives that you’re willing to put yourselves into the power of demons? The masters of this place will kill you the moment they see you here.’

They said there’d be plenty of time to talk about that later. Then they asked her what her name was, and why she was being treated so badly. (Bósa saga 1968:71–73)

She said her name was Hleid and that she was the sister of King Godmund of the Glasir Plains in the east.

‘The ogress in charge here got hold of me by magic and wants me to become priestess here when she’s dead and take over the sacrifice in the temple. But I’d rather be burnt alive.’

‘You’d be good to the man who helped you escape from here?’ said Herraud. She said she didn’t think anyone could possibly manage that.

‘Will you marry me if I take you away?’ asked Herraud.

‘I don’t know a man on earth so loathsome I’d not prefer being married to him rather than worshipped in this temple. What’s your name?’

‘I’m called Herraud,’ he said, ‘and my father is King Hring of East Gotaland. You needn’t worry any more about the priestess. Bosi and I have already given her a good send-off. But you’ll realize that I feel entitled to some reward from you if I get you out of this place.’

‘I’ve nothing to offer but myself,’ she said, ‘that is, if my family will let me.’

‘I don’t intend to ask them,’ said Herraud, ‘and I won’t have any more evasion, since it seems to me that I’m every bit as good as you. So whatever you decide, I’ll set you free.’
‘Of all the men I’ve ever set eyes on, there’s no one I’d rather have than you,’ she said.

Then they set her free. Herraud asked what she would prefer, to travel home with them and become his wife; or else to be sent east to her brother, never to see Herraud again. She chose to go with him, and so they pledged themselves to each other.

They carried the gold and the treasures out of the temple and then set fire to the building and burned it to ashes so that there was nothing else to be seen there. After that they set off with all that they’d taken and didn’t break their journey till they reached Hoketil’s house. Nor did they stay there very long, but gave him a great deal of money, and then carried the gold and treasures on a number of horses down to the ship. Their men were delighted to see them. (Bósa saga 1968:74)

9. They sailed away from Permia [Bjarmaland] as soon as the wind was in their favour, and there’s nothing to tell of their voyage until they arrived back home in Gotaland, after being away two years. They went before the king, and Bosi delivered the egg. The shell was cracked, and even the broken piece was worth ten gold marks. The king used the shell as a loving-cup. Bosi also gave him the silver cup that he’d taken from Jomali and now they were completely reconciled.

10. --We begin at the point where King Godmund’s sister, Hleid, had vanished from Glasir Plains. --The two brothers, Hrærek and Siggeir, were staying with the king at the time. The king asked Siggeir to take charge of the search for Hleid, and as a reward he was to win her as his wife. Siggeir said that in his opinion Hleid would be very hard to trace, unless the priestess in Permia [Bjarmaland] knew where she was. The brothers got ready to sail away with five ships. When they reached Permia [Bjarmaland], they found King Harek and told him about their mission. He advised them to go to the temple, and said that if neither the god Jomali nor the priestess knew Hleid’s whereabouts, there wasn’t much hope of finding her. The brothers went to the temple and saw nothing but a vast heap of ashes, with no sign of anything that should have been there.

The brothers scoured the forest until they came upon Hoketil’s house. They asked if he or his household had any idea who could have destroyed the temple.
The old man said he didn’t know, but he mentioned that two men from Gotaland had been lying at anchor for a long time off Vina Forest, one called Herraud and the other, Bosi. In his opinion they were the most likely men to have done such an extraordinary thing. The farmer’s daughter said she had seen these men on their way to the ship, bringing King Godmund’s sister with them, Hleid of the Glasir Plains. They had told the girl that anyone who wanted to see Hleid should come to them.

When the brothers realized what had happened, they told the king about it. Then they gathered forces all over Permia [Bjarmaland] and with twenty-three ships they sailed to Gotaland. --Then the brothers took the girl, stole all the money they could and sailed back without stopping to Glasir Plains. --Siggeir made a proposal of marriage to Hleid, but she was far from willing and said it would be more fitting if she were to marry a man who had saved her from the monsters. (Bósa saga 1968:75–76)

11. --Thvari said there was no time to gather a whole army and the only way of rescuing Hleid was by means of carefully-laid plans and swift action. So the outcome was that they got ready a single ship with thirty men aboard. --Soon the brothers had reached Glasir Plains in the east. They cast anchor off a certain thickly-wooded coast. (Bósa saga 1968:77) [Bosi and Herraud set out to save Hleid. They manage to take her with them from the king’s hall.]

13. --They sailed on their way till they came to the point where one route lies to Gotaland and the other to Permia [Bjarmaland]. Then Bosi told Herraud to sail on to Gotaland and said he himself had some business in Permia [Bjarmaland].

Herraud said he was not going to leave him. ‘What’s your business there anyway?’ he asked.

Bosi said this would become clear later. Smid offered to wait for them five days, and Bosi said that would be long enough. Then the two men rowed ashore in a small boat and hid it in a secret cove. They walked for a while until they came to a house belonging to an old man and his wife, who had a good-looking daughter.

--He asked her whether she was by any chance on friendly terms with the king’s daughter, Edda. She answered that she often visited Edda’s boudoir and was always given a good welcome there.
‘I’ll take you into my confidence,’ he said. ‘I’m going to give you three marks of silver, and in return you’re to get the princess to join me in the wood.’

Early next morning the girl went to see the princess, showed her the golden walnuts and told her she knew a place where they were plentiful.

‘Let’s go there right away and take Skalk with us,’ said the princess, and that’s what they did.

Bosi and Herraud were already in the grove and met them there. Bosi greeted the great lady and asked her why she was travelling with so small a retinue. She said there was no risk involved.

‘That’s what you think,’ said Bosi. ‘You’ve a choice of two things: either come with me willingly, or else I’ll make you my wife right now, here in the wood.’

--Then Bosi took the princess and carried her in his arms down to the shore, where they rowed out to the ship and found Smid. --And so they sailed back home to Gotaland. (Bósa saga 1968:82–84)

14. --While all this was going on, Siggeir and Hrærek had gathered and fitted out a huge army. But King Godmund was not fit to travel because of the punch Herraud had given him, so the brothers were in sole charge. They set off from Glasir Plains with forty ships, but added a good many more as they went along. They went to Permia [Bjarmaland] to see their father, King Harek, just after Bosi and Herraud had left. By now King Harek knew for certain that the foster-brothers had gone off with his daughter. He had his own forces ready and fifteen large ships. He joined his sons on their expedition, and between them they had sixty ships in all, and with this fleet they sailed to Gotaland.

--Then they heard that King Harek and his sons were approaching the coast, and things didn’t look so good. --A fierce battle broke out, with both sides eager to fight. --Then Smid turned to meet him and lunged at him with a special short-sword that Busla had given him, because Harek couldn’t be hurt by ordinary weapons. (Bósa saga 1968:84–85) [King Harek turns first into a dragon, then a boar and is finally killed by Busla in animal form832. In the end, the foster-brothers win the battle.]

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832 JULKU has noted the interesting similarity of certain motifs (e.g. a woman in bird form) that appear in both Kalevala and some of the more imaginative sagas. Julku 1986, 89.
16. After that Herraud and Bosi made arrangements for their weddings. --
Herraud became king of all the territories that his father had ruled over.
A little later they gathered their forces and went to Permia [Bjarmaland]. Bosi
demanded to be accepted as king there, because his wife Edda was the legal
heir after her father. Bosi told the people that this would be the best way of
compensating the country for the men he had killed. Then he could make them
strong, with better laws and more justice. And since they had no leader now,
the best solution they could find would be to make him their king. Edda was
well-known to them and they knew all about her excellent qualities, so Bosi
became the king of Permia [Bjarmaland]. (Bósa saga 1968:87)

--According to legend, a small snake was found in the vulture's egg which
Herraud and Bosi had fetched from Permia [Bjarmaland]. This snake grew
into a savage creature. --King Herraud made a solemn vow that he would only
marry Thora to the man brave enough to go into the bower and destroy the
snake, but no one had enough courage for this until Ragnar, son of Sigurd
Hring, appeared on the scene. --And so we end the Saga of Stunt-Bosi. (Bósa
saga 1968:88)

Bósa saga, also known as Bósa saga ok Herrauðs or Herrauðs saga ok Bósa ("The
Saga of Bósi" or "The Saga of Herrauðr and Bósi"), is an anonymous
fornaldarsaga that was composed sometime before 1350. It is extant in two
independent recensions, an older form ("the earlier Bósa saga") that is preserved
in a 15th century vellum manuscript (AM 586 4to, AM 343a 4to, AM 510 4to, AM
577 4to) and a later form ("the later Bósa saga") preserved in 17th-18th century
paper manuscripts, the earliest of which dates to 1663. The later Bósa saga is based
on the prototype of the earlier version as well as on the Bósarímur, but is
embellished. Probably this version of the saga was originally written earliest
around 1600. An additional version of the same material, the anonymous Bósa
rimur, was composed around 1500 and is based on the older recension, but is
embellished. The saga at hand is the prototype of the fairytale-like bridal-quest
narrative and lies somewhere between naturalistic story and pure fantasy, tending
towards the romance end of the spectrum. Bósa saga ok Herrauðs can be described
as an entertaining fictitious tale about heroic adventure, magic and love. Fantasy
runs free in the description of Bjarmaland as well as in the rest of the saga. The
story in general is infested with Märchen motifs. In fornaldarsögur ("Mythical-
Heroic Sagas") fantasy is often rooted in folk tradition. There is a continuous shift
between the fantastic and the credible. *Bósa saga* has a wholly pagan setting. It is likely that the authors of *fornaldarsögur* did not particularly want the audiences to identify the tales with any particular period. Like the history, the geography of these sagas is deliberately hazy.\textsuperscript{833} Half legendary characters like Ragnar *loðbrók* would seem to place the events of the saga at hand at the first half of the 9th century.\textsuperscript{834} However, considering the nature of the *fornaldarsögur* as unhistorical entertainment, the “dating” must be regarded as nothing more than a stylistic effect created by the author.

The plots in the earlier and later versions of *Bósa saga* are similar, but certain changes have been made in the later version. Certain names and relations have been changed: *Hóketill* has turned into *Grímr*, *Vínaskógr* into *Myrkviskóg*, *Hleiðr* into *Geirríðr* (daughter of Goðmundr, not sister), *Hárér* and *Hrærekr* are brothers, not father and son. I have chosen not to repeat the text of the later version, since the later *Bósa saga* is of very late date and saturated with fantasy. I simply refer to a few relevant sentences for comparison. For full reference JIRICZEK’s edition from 1893 can be consulted.

The story begins by presenting the two heroes, Bósi and Herraud. Herraud is a son of king in East Gotaland (*Eystra Gautland*), Sweden. The genealogy presented is mythological and one should not look for historical truth in the story.\textsuperscript{835} Herrauds father, the king of East Gotaland gives Bósi a mission: he is not to return before he can bring with him a vulture’s egg inscribed with gold letters. In spring, the regular time for starting a “Viking” expedition\textsuperscript{836}, the foster-brothers set out on a journey with one ship and a crew of twenty-four. This description sounds fairly realistic, the number of men or ships is not exaggerated\textsuperscript{837} and the expedition takes place during the regular sailing season.\textsuperscript{838} The expeditioners set off and sail east across the Baltic (*Austrveg*) and eventually reach Bjarmaland. The route to Bjarmaland is seen from an easterly perspective. According to the written sources, the Norwegians sailed to Bjarmaland via the north, past Finnmark\textsuperscript{839}, but in the


\textsuperscript{834} About Ragnar *loðbrók* see Haavio 1965, 123–124, 140.

\textsuperscript{835} Jiriczek 1893, III–IIIL.

\textsuperscript{836} Binns 1961, 44; Krag 2000, 31–32.

\textsuperscript{837} For the number of crew in ships see Crumlin-Pedersen 1983, 32–35; Sjøvold 1985, 22; Christensen 1987, 7; Binns 1993b, 578.

\textsuperscript{838} Binns 1961, 44; Krag 2000, 31–32.

\textsuperscript{839} See e.g. Haraldr saga ins hárfagra 1962, 134–135; Sweet’s Anglo-Saxon Reader 1970, 17; Fagrskinna 1985, 79.
fornaldarsögur (e.g. Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar) Bjarmaland can be reached via the Baltic as well.\textsuperscript{840} Also Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar gives an indication that the Norwegians knew the route to Bjarmaland also via Russia and the Baltic\textsuperscript{841}, but with this one exception the more realistic sagas do not mention this possibility.

Besides Bósa saga Sweden appears also in some other fornalddarsögur including Pátrt Hauks hábrókar, Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar and Sturlaug saga starfsana as well as in Gesta Danorum.\textsuperscript{842} When Sweden is the starting point for a trip to Bjarmaland a route via the Baltic would appear natural (i.e. shorter) geographically speaking if we assume that Bjarmaland was located by the White Sea. However, considering the geography of the Baltic area, Bjarmaland could not be reached directly by ship unless one was using a small ship that could be sailed along rivers and lakes and perhaps carried over portages. Bósa saga indicates that the expeditioners sailed directly to Bjarmaland, but also describes how Bósi and Herraud needed to continue on foot in order to reach the temple in Bjarmaland. The description of Bjarmaland in this saga is so fictitious that one should not read too much even in the geographical details. Probably the author did not have any clear idea of historical Bjarmaland and relying on the entertaining aspects of the genre simply described events according to the demands of the plot, regardless of actual circumstances. In other words, the name Bjarmaland is used as a remote and exotic location where adventures could take place.

To follow the plot further, the foster-brothers lowered the anchor under cover of thickly forested wilderness (eyðiskóg\textsuperscript{843}). Eyðiskógr is also mentioned in connection with Glasisvellir\textsuperscript{844} so it is by no means uniquely associated with Bjarmaland. Instead, it appears to be an expression describing the lay of the land. When Bjarmaland is described, a large forest is a recurring feature that also appears in the more realistic texts (Óláfs saga helga)\textsuperscript{845}. It is, however, a rather stereotypical feature. What is new in the text at hand is the name of the forest, Vínuskógr, i.e. “Vína” Forest. In other sagas the name “Vína” is attached to a river in

\begin{footnotes}
\item See Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 534–535.
\item Hakonar saga 1964, 70.
\item See Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 552–558, 626–630; Antiquités Russes 1852, 122–125; Saxonis Gesta Danorum 1931, 137–138.
\item ROSS translates this as "virgin forest". See Ross 1940, 34 footnote 12.
\item See Bósa saga 1893, 38.
\item Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232.
\end{footnotes}
Bjarmaland.\textsuperscript{846} Obviously the author here is influenced by these texts but uses artistic liberty in applying the name.

In the later \textit{Bósa saga} certain interesting points that differ from the earlier version appear. First of all, on the way to Bjarmaland the heroes find a dwelling in the forest called Myrkviskógur\textsuperscript{847}, i.e. “wood of darkness” (cf. myrkviðr of the same meaning that is applied to various forests both real and mythical\textsuperscript{848}). The foster-brothers ask their whereabouts and are told that the country is Bjarmaland austara\textsuperscript{849}, i.e. Eastern Bjarmaland.\textsuperscript{850} What is worth noticing is that there is no mention of Bjarmaland austara in the older version of \textit{Bósa saga}, only in the younger one. Also the name of the forest differs in the younger version. I find that the later version of the saga has not much bearing since the text is very late. It is unlikely that any new, authentic historical data would appear in a text this young. I consider both the names Myrkviskógur and Bjarmaland austara as late inventions with no connection to historical reality. They were simply invented for the purposes of the story. In any case, the Bjarmaland austara does not appear to me as a geographical area, but more like a simple direction, a means of orientation and not as an indicator of division of lands as has often been suggested\textsuperscript{851}.

The foster-brothers discover that there is a large temple\textsuperscript{852} in the forest and this is where the vulture’s egg is to be found. The god that is worshipped in the temple is called Jómali (also Jómanni, Jómanus). This name for a Bjarmian god is first mentioned in Ólafs saga helga\textsuperscript{853} and it seems likely that this saga is the source of the name of the Bjarmian god in \textit{Bósa saga}. The temple is described as very rich and there are enormous amounts of both gold and jewels. The god Jómali is sitting by an altar wearing a gold crown set with precious stones and a necklace worth three hundred gold marks. On his knees there is a silver cup filled with red gold. A fine canopy is hanging above the god. In this connection the riches of the temple are being compared with the riches on a merchant ship on the Mediterranean

\textsuperscript{846} See e.g. Ólafs saga helga 1945, 227–232; Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217; Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar 1988, 93–94.

\textsuperscript{847} “Herjuðu nú víða um sumarið og fengu ærið mikið fje, en sem áleið sumarið, hjelt Herrauður undir Bjarmaland við eyðiskóg þann, er Myrkviskógur heitir.” Bósa saga 1893, 105.

\textsuperscript{848} Ross 1940, 35 footnote 13.

\textsuperscript{849} “Hvört er land þetta eþur hvað heitir byggð eður þær þessi? Þessi maður kvað það vera Bjarmaland austara, en kot þetta heitir Bólstaður, en bónið Grimur.” Bósa saga 1893, 105.

\textsuperscript{850} Ross 1940, 35 footnote 13.

\textsuperscript{851} See e.g. Ross 1940, 43; Haavio 1965, 20.

\textsuperscript{852} It would appear that this temple was a building made of wood, since it burned down and only ashes were left.

\textsuperscript{853} See Ólafs saga helga 1945, 227–232.
This sudden reference to the Mediterranean world is one of the points that has caused HÄME to think that it is possible that the description of the riches in Bjarmaland reflects the knowledge of riches in Byzantium. There is no foundation to believe that such enormous riches could ever have existed in Bjarmaland. It is more likely that the author, in fact, was describing the magnificent riches that the Scandinavians had seen in Constantinople. Several points speak for a change of motifs. In the more imaginary descriptions of Bjarmaland (Bósa saga and Sturlaug's saga strafsama) a very powerful (witch) woman is a central character. A reflection of Byzantium where the female empress Zoë once ruled can be detected here. Her rule is described in Heimskringla, so the Scandinavians were well aware of the existence of such a character. The Scandinavians who had served in Constantinople brought artefacts of great value with them and in this way Byzantium became associated with riches. The temple in Bjarmaland is comparable to the palaces in Miklagarð. It is told in several sagas (Bósa saga, Sturlaug's saga starfsama, Orvar-Odds saga and Óláfs saga helga) that the Bjarmaland expeditions ended in looting which resulted in a great amount of booty. In this way Bjarmaland was associated with looting just like Byzantium where it was a habit that the emperor’s guard was allowed to loot the palaces after the death of an emperor. Additionally, both Bjarmaland and Byzantium were reached by sea. Considering all this, it seems like the stories of treasure and temple in Bjarmaland and the women guarding them are based on motifs that originally described the real circumstances in Miklagarð.854

To follow the plot of the saga further, the foster-brothers managed to obtain the desired vulture’s egg alongside other riches and discovered a fair maiden who would marry Herraud. They then went back to their ship and returned to Gotaland. The raid on the temple caused a Bjarmian attack on Gotaland with twenty-three ships. In the attack Herraud lost his bride and needed to go to Glasir Plains (Glæsisvöllum or Glasisvellir, i.e. Glittering or Glassy Plains855) to recover her. After this was done, the foster-brothers sailed back to the point where one route goes to Gotaland and the other to Bjarmaland. This could appear like a description of geography, but considering that Glasir Plains is mythological, this has hardly any bearing on real geographical conditions. King Godmund of Glasir Plains is a clearly mythical figure who appears in three romance sagas. In Bósa saga he is something of a figure of fun, an incompetent villain.856

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855 See e.g. Fisher 1980, 143.
In the end of the saga Bósi goes to Bjarmaland to get the king’s daughter Edda in order to marry her. This caused the king’s sons to attack Gotaland again, this time with sixty ships, seemingly a rather exaggerated number, even in comparison to the number of ships otherwise seen in Bósa saga. A battle broke out and the men of Gotaland emerged as winners after dealing with a magic transformation of King Hárek. Both the king and his sister have magical skills and their characters appear imaginary.

As a happy ending both of the foster-brothers marry their royal brides. The marriage motif appears in several fornaldrasögur including Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar and Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka as well as in other texts including Gesta Danorum, texts about Eiríkr blóðox and Landnámabók.

Bósi who does not have a kingdom home in Sweden becomes the king in Bjarmaland, because his wife Edda is the lawful heir to the throne. This plot is clearly pure romance with no connection with reality. Also in Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar, the hero who is without a kingdom in his home country becomes the king of Bjarmaland after conquering it and marrying the daughter of the former king.

Conquering Bjarmaland is a motif that also appears in other texts including fornaldrasögur like Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar, Sturluks saga starfsama and Ævar-Odds saga. Some of the more realistic accounts of Bjarmaland include a description of a battle in Bjarmaland as well as portray looting and it seems feasible that these motifs turned into the conquering of Bjarmaland in fornaldrasögur.

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857 The foster-brothers originally travel to Bjarmaland with one ship and the first counterattack against Gotaland is made with twenty-three ships. In other sagas the number of ships on expedition varies between one and four. See e.g. Oláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232; Hakonar saga 1964, 70–71; Sweet’s Anglo-Saxon Reader 1970, 17. Although I am liable to consider the fleet of sixty ships as a means to enhance the suspense in the story, there are indications that the Scandinavians on occasion could sail with a massive amount of ships (even if the sources tend to exaggerate the number), despite the fact that the attacking forces were often restricted to more modest numbers and the potentially more numerable leidang fleet was reserved for defence purposes. Krag 1995, 16; Krag 2000, 53, 78. If the Scandinavians had a potential for a great fleet, perhaps similar capacity was possible for others as well. However, the Bjarmian fleet of Bósa saga must be considered purely imaginary.

858 See Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 552–558; Antiquités Russes 1850, 86; Antiquités Russes 1852, 232, 254; Saxonis Gesta Danorum 1931, 65; Heimskringla 1999, 86.

859 See Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 552–558.


Several features in Bósa saga imply that the author was familiar with the description of Bjarmaland in Ólafs saga helga. The names “Vína” and Jómali appear in both sagas. Also the description of Jómali with a necklace and a silver bowl are very alike in both of the texts, although the riches are embellished in Bósa saga. It is interesting to notice that a Bjarmian temple appears also in Sturlaugr saga starfsama and is described in similar terms although it is not ascribed to Jómali.

Again a number of Bjarmians are mentioned by name. The names, however, are Norse as in all the other sagas (Gesta Danorum, Landnámabók, Órvar-Odds saga, Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar and Sturlaugr saga starfsama) where “Bjarmian” names are mentioned. The person gallery as usual includes a king of Bjarmaland called Hárekr, his sons Hrærekr and Síggjeir and a daughter Edda. The king’s mother, a witch, is called Kolfrosta. An old man living in a cottage in Bjarmaland is called Hóketill. Hárekr appears as the name of the king in Bjarmaland also in two other texts, Órvar-Odds saga and Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar. It is unlikely that Edda of Bósa saga has anything to do with Eðný in Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar, despite the similarity of the names.

Bjarmaland is presented as rather mythical and imaginary in Bósa saga. This fictitious nature is also made clear by the close association between Bjarmaland and the fully mythological Glasir Plains with its equally mythological king Godmund. The saga does not aim to give a realistic picture of Bjarmaland. Instead, Bjarmaland is used as a stage for events, some of which are influenced by earlier written sources (Óláfs saga helga). The author, however, has used his sources freely and let his imagination run freely as generally is the case with the fornaldarsögur that should be seen as escapist literature designed to entertain. It is interesting to notice that some of the heroes in these sagas may resemble modern day fictional heroes. Bósa saga has a tongue-in-cheek effect and a feel of parody suggesting that it was not intended as serious reading but rather as entertainment.

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863 See Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 626–630.
864 Jiriczek 1893, III–II.
866 See Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 539; Órvar-Odd 1888, 127.
867 Jiriczek 1893, L.
5.9 Sturlaug's saga starfsama

1. Allir menn, þeir sem sannfróðir eru at um tíðindi, vita, at Tyrkir/Grikkir/Grikklands ok Asiamenn bygðu Norðrlönd; hófst þá túngu sú, er söfn dreifðir um öll lönd. Formaðr þess fólks hét Óðinn --Í þann tíma réði sá konúnr fyrir Þrándheimi í Noregi, er Haraldr gullmuðr hét. --Íngölf hét ríkr maðr, er rëð fyrir Naumudalafylki; hann átti þann son, er Sturlaugi hét. (Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830:592)

Konúnr svarar: --nema þú færir mér Úrarhorn þat -- skuldu heita Sturlaugr hinn starfsami. (Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830:616)

17. --Áki mælti: --þá þikkir oss betr at vita it sanna, hvat þú kant at segja oss frá horninu. Hún [frendkona] seigir: þat er til móts at taka, at hof eitt stendr á Bjarmalandi, þat er helgat bòr ok Óðni, Frigg ok Freyju, gert með hagleik af dýrstum viði; dyr eru aðrar á hofinu or útnóri, en aðrar or útsuíri, þat inni er bór einn, þar er Úrarhorn á bordi fýrri honum fagurt at sjá sem gull; en Sturlaug einn skal í hofit gánga, þvíat honum einum mun gæfa tilendast, ok skal hann þó eigi berum höndum á horninu taka. (Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830:624)

18. --þá rennr þegar á blásandi byr, ok sigla þeir þar til er þeir koma við Bjarmalond, ok framan at anní Vinu. Þeir sjá á landit upp fýrýr vestan ánà, at þar voru sléttir vellir, ok þar var hof allgæilsigt, svá at ljóma þótti um alla völuna, þvíat þat var með gulli búit ok steinum. Sturlaugr mælti: nú skulum vör smía skipinu, ok skal skutstað fyrða á landi, ok eimrestr á landi, ef ver þurfum skjót til at taka, ok hafa forka úti, ok verum búnir at öllu; en verum skulum gángra á land upp. Framar ok ek. Nú gänga þeir á land upp, ok Hrölf hréfja, ok forú til hofins; ok er þeir komu at hofinu, var þar svá háttat dýrum, sem þeim var sagt; gángra þeir at dýrum þeim, sem or útnóri á hofinu voru, þvi þar einar voru opnar ; þá sáu þeir, at fýrýr innan þróskulðinn var gróf full af eiti, ok þarnaest ein slá stór, ok helð ofan fýrýr inngánginn, en í dýrumun var mýrat umhverfis grófnina, svá eigi skuldi spillast umbúnaðr af afgángi eitrsins; ok svá sem þeir voru komni at dýrum hofins, þá kemr Hrölf nefja þar. Sturlaugr spúði, þvi hann varri þar kominn; (hann sagði): ek vilda eigi fýrýr muna mér frægð, at gángra í hofit með þeir. Þess er eigi von, seigir Sturlaugr, einn skal ek i hofit gángra. Fýrýr muna viltu mér frægðina, seigir Hrölf. Eigi gengr mér þat til,
segir Sturlaugr. Hann litr nú inn í hofit, ok sér, hvar Þórir sitr allvöxtuligr í öndvegi; frammir fyrir honum var eitt frábaert borð með silfri laugat, þar sér hann at stendur Úrarhornit frammir fyrir Þórir á bordinu, þat var svá fagurt, sem á gull sæi, ok fullt at eitri. Taflförð ok tafl sá hann þar standa hvorttveggja af lýsi gulli gert, skinandi klaði ok gullhringar voru festir uppá steingr. 60/30 kvenna voru inn í hofinu, ok var sú ein, er aftar öllum, hún var svá stór sem risi, ok blá sem Hel, en digr sem meri, svarteggð ok sviptuilla, þú var sú kona vel búin; hún þjónaði fyrir borði. Þá kvödu þær kvölding þenna, er þær sáu Sturlaug: -- Eptir þetta býr Sturlaugr síc til inngöngu, fyrir bjóðandi sinum fóstbraðrum sér at fylgja; en í hofinu stóðu hellur þrjár, svá háfar at tóku undir bringspálir, ok djúpar grafir fyrir innan í milli, fullar af eitri, ok þar var at hlaupa inn yfir, áðr enn hann komst þangat, sem Úrarhorn stóð. Nu hefr Sturlaugr síc upp, ok stökkr innyfir allar hellurnar vel ok frækiliga, gripandi hornit af bordinn með skyndi, án nokkurs tálma, hafði síc í burt aprí í veginn; hofgyðjan stendr hjá bólin, ok heldr á saxi tveggjuðu, honum þikkir eldr brenna úr eggjum þess; hún grenjar illa á hann, ok nystir tennum á hann allgrimmliga, en verðr þó bilt til hans at ráða; ok er Sturlaugi kemr at hellunum, sér hann at Hrólf fréfa hleypr inn yfir hellurnar, snýr hann þá þangat at, er þeir Þórir ok Óinn voru fyrir, greip tafítt at steypir í kjóltu sér, ok hleypr fram eptir hofinum. --Hún -- sækir eptir honum -- ok þarnæst sér Sturlaugr, hvor maðr ferr fró skóginum, annar ok hinn þríðri, ok þvínæst koma menn fró öllum áttum. Sturlaugr hopar undan, en hún sækir at með því með því meira illsku, sem hún sér mennina fleiri atdrífða. Hann hleypir nú at henni með Hornnefju, ok rekði á hana miðja, svá fast, at hann lætr lausan atgeirinn, ok dvelst hann þar eptir, er hún fær þegar strengin, en Bjarmar heldu eptir á meðan þeir mætti, svá at suma rak undan fyrir ofveðri, en sumir létust fyrir vopnum, þottust þeir gøðu baettir, er aprí komust.

19. En þeir Sturlaugr sigla nú í haf. Ekkir er nú getit um ferðir þeirra, fyrr enn þeir koma við Vermalând, lögðu at landi, ok spuruðu tíöinda. Þeim var sagt at Hringr jarl var farinn or landi til Svíþjóðar. Síðan fara þeir á fund Haralds konungs, komu í höll, ok gengu fyrir konung. --Sturlaugr stóð fyrir konungi, ok helt á Úrarhorni. (Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830:626–630)

20. Á einu sinni lýsir Sturlaugr því yfir, at hann vill til Bjarmalands, ok safnar hannah at sér liði miklu, ok komu þá til hans fóstbraðr hans. Ok frá þeirra ferð er eigi sagt, fyrr enn þeir koma til Bjarmalands, ok brenna þar allt ok brała/bala sem þeir mega; þeir gerðu hvert illvíkri at òðru. Röndólfr/Roðólfr konunga Bjarmalands, varð varr við þetta, ok safnar þegar liði, ok verðr heldr
liðfár; ok þegar þeir fundust, slær þar þegar í harðasta bardaga; þar mátti sjá marga þykkva skildi klofnna, en brynjur högggnar, höggspjót af sköptum brotin, ok sundr sverðin, en margan höfuðlausan til jarðar hníga; en svá laud þessari orrostu, at þar fél Röndólfr konúŋgr, ok mart lið með honum. En eptir þetta verk it mikla leggr Sturlaugr undir sík allt Bjarmaland, fèkk hann ok náð apr þatgeirnum Hornnefjóuna ok morgum ðöðum gripum, ok er þessum hinum miklu storvirkjum var lokit, þá ælðaði hann at hafa her sinn til Hundingjalands á hendr Hundingja/Hundólfi konúng. Eptir þetta býr Sturlaugr ferð sínna at nýju með her sinn, ok er eigi afsagt, fyrir enn hann kom á Hundingjaland. Þeir drepa menn, en taka fé, (brenna) bæi ok bygð alla, þar sem þeir koma. --Sturlaugr gengr opt í gegnum fylkingar þeirra -- ok fèkk Sturlaugr konúŋgr fagran sigr -- ork for Snælaug þá með þeim, er nú eigi sagt frá ferð þeirra, fyrir enn þeir komu heim í Sviðjóð. (Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830:631–633)

22. --hvurr er sá? segir hún; þat er með því móti, segir hann, at heístrenging er á hendi mér, at ek skylda vita, af hverjum rökum Úrarhorn er komit. Þat kann ek at segja þér, segir hún [Mjöll]; er þar þá fyrst frá at segja, at Haraldr konúŋgr herjaði víða um lönd, ok fèkk jafnan sigr, þar sem hann kom, en jafnan kom hálæri mikit víða um lönd, ok mest á Bjarmaland, svá at bæði eyðdi fé ok mǫnnum. Pá tóku þeir dýr eitt, ok blót uðu, ok kölluðu þat Úr, þat gapti á þá kjaptinum, ok köstuðu þeir ofan í þat gulli ok sildri, ok svá mögnuðu þeir þat, at þat varð hverju dýri meinna ok verra, þat tók þá bæði at eta menn ok fēnað, ok allt braut þat undir sik, ok eyddi allt fyrir vestan ána Vinu, svá at ekkert kvikindi komst undan. Engi var sá kappi, at þyrdi at ganga á móti þessu dýri, þar til at Haraldr konúŋgr frétiti þessi tóindi, ok þat at þar var févon mikil, ok heldr þángat með 3 hundruð skipa, ok kom at Bjarmalandi. Þar bar svá til, at Haraldr konúŋgr sofnaði, kom at honum kona, ok lét heldr ríkuliga; hún mælti við konúŋginn: hér liggr þu, ok ætlar at sigra dýr vort, at Úr heittir. Konúŋgr mælti: hvort er heiti þitt?

Goðríðr, segir hún, ok er ek skamt á land upp, en ef þú vilt min ráð hafa, þá skaltu fara á land upp á morgin með helming liðs þins, þá munu sjá dýrit; þat mun óttast mannafjöldam, ok taka undan til sjófar, þá skultu athleypa öllum hinum heimnum. --það kom þar þessi kona, ok tók horn þetta, þat hitt sarna söttir þú, Sturlaugr minni til Bjarmalands í hofit. Nú hef ek sagt þér, at hverjum rökum Úrarhorn er upprunnt. (Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830:637–640)
All people who are truly informed with regard to history know that the Greeks and the men of Asia settled the Northlands. It was at that time that language originated which later spread out through all countries. The chief of this people was called Odin, from whom people trace their lineage. At that time there ruled over Trondheim in Norway that king who was called Haraldr Goldmouth. He had a queen as wife. --Ingolf was the name of a powerful and distinguished chief who ruled the district of Naumudalr; he had a son who was called Styrlaugr. At an early age he was very tall of stature and powerful in strength, light of hair and skin, courteous in every way, and his whole body was well-formed; he was friendly in speech toward his fellows, easy in temper and open-handed with regard to money. (Sturlaugs saga starfsama 1986:640)870

The king replied: “I do not care about your slanderous talk, but this I must tell you, Styrlaugr, that you will never be unafraid in this country unless you bring me the aurochs horn which I once lost. But along with this errand I shall give you a name. You shall henceforth be called Styrlaugr the Hard Working. This name will be fastened to you, since you and your sworn-brothers are destined for labor.” --Styrlaugr asked: “Where am I to look for this?” The king said: “Look to that for yourself.” (Sturlaugs saga starfsama 1986:663–664)

Then they sailed northward by Halogaland and Finnmark and Vatnsnes and into the Vastuvik inlet. --They sailed until they sighted land that was much overgrown by forest. They came to a hidden fjord and, sailing in along it, landed in a hidden creek where they dripped anchor. --Styrlaugr asked: “What land do you suppose this is, to which we have come?” Franmar said: “It is the land of the Hundings according to the report of my brother Kolr.” (Sturlaugs saga starfsama 1986:665, 670)

Aki said: “I have come here to meet you, kinswoman. I want you to tell me what you can about the aurochs horn - where it can be sought.” --She said: “To begin the story, a large temple stands in Bjarmaland which is consecrated to Thor and Odin, Frigg and Freyr. It is constructed with great skill from precious wood. It has one set of doors facing the northwest and the other facing the southwest. Inside are Thor and Odin, and the aurochs horn, as beautiful as gold to behold, lies before them on a table. However, Styrlaugr alone shall enter the temple, for to him alone will good luck hold out so long. Nevertheless,
he is not to grasp the horn with his bare hands because it is full of poison and sorcery.” (Sturlaug's saga starfsama 1986:671–672)

They readied themselves for departure and moved out along the fjord. Ake said: “I think I shall never have more need for fair wind than now.” Then at once a fresh breeze arose and they sailed until they came to Bjarmaland and further on to the Vina River. They saw that on shore, on the western bank of the river, there were level fields. A gleaming temple was also there, so that it seemed that all the fields were a-glitter, for it was ornamented with gold and precious stones. Styrlaugr said: “Let us now change our course, turning the stern to land. Only one line shall lie ashore, should we need to use it quickly and have poles out and be ready for anything. Franmar and I shall go ashore.”

Then they went up onto land and proceeded to the temple. When they came there they saw that the doors were so constructed as had been told them. They went to the doors which were on the northwest side of the temple because these alone were open. Then they saw that there was a ditch full of poison inside the threshold and right next to it a huge crossbeam and a sword's edge fitted into it. In the doors a wall was provided around the ditch so that the furnishings would not be destroyed by the excess of poison. When they had come to the doors of the temple, Hrolfr Beaknose came along. Styrlaugr asked why he had come. He said: “I did not want to deprive myself of the glory of entering the temple with you.” “There is no hope for that,” said Sturlaugr: “I shall enter the temple alone. Do you want to deprive others of glory?” asked Styrlaugr. He now looked inside the temple and saw where Thor was sitting very nobly in the high seat. In front of him was a table inlaid with silver. He saw the aurochs horn standing there on the table before Thor. It was as beautiful as if it were of gleaming gold. It was filled with poison. He saw a set of chessmen and a chessboard hanging there, both made of bright gold. Resplendent garments and gold rings were fastened on poles. Thirty women were inside the temple, but there was one who surpassed all. She was as big as giants, livid as (the ogress) Hel, but stout as a dangerous ox, wide-mouthed, black-eyed, and evil-looking. Nevertheless, she was well-dressed. She waited on Thor's table. When they saw Styrlaugr, the old women spoke the following verse: -- (Sturlaug's saga starfsama 1986:673–674)

Thereupon Styrlaugr got himself ready for entering, forbidding his sworn-brothers to follow him. Three stone slabs stood in the temple so high that they
reached under the lower part of the chest, and there were deep pits below in between. One had to jump over them before one could get to that place where the aurochs horn stood. Then Styrlaugr lifted himself up and leaped adroitly and valiantly over all the stone slabs, seizing the horn hastily from the table without anyone hindering him. He lifted himself away and back to the side. The temple priestess, livid and swollen with anger, stood by and held a double-edged sword. It seemed to him that fire was burning from the edges of the sword. She howled fiercely at him, gnashing her teeth wickedly. Yet she became so bewildered that she did not rush at him. When Styrlaugr came to the stone slabs he saw Hrolfr Beaknose leaping in over them. He immediately turned in that direction, in front of Thor and Odin, seized the game board and cast it into his tunic front. Then he leaped farther out along the temple. --the temple priestess -- was bounding after him.

Thereupon the temple priestess leaped out, screaming with such frenzies and threats that echoes resounded in every crag and in woods and in districts in the vicinity. She -- pursued and attacked him [Styrlaugr] with vehemence. He defended himself chivalrously and skilfully. Immediately then Styrlaugr saw a man come out of the forest, and a second and a third man, and subsequently men came from all sides. Styrlaugr withdrew, but she pursued with added fury when she saw the men rushing up. He then leaped toward her with the Hornnefjunaotr -- she immediately came to her death. Styrlaugr then rushed out to the ship and immediately cut the rope and the others punted out (to sea), but the Bjarmar attacked Styrlaugr's ship with force. Then Franmar said: “Would that now the fair wind would come which Hrimilldr promised me.” At once a fair breeze began to blow so that each rope grew taut. They sailed away, but the Bjarmar kept after them as long as they could, with the result that some were driven off by a violent gale while others died in battle. Those who survived considered themselves well compensated.

Styrlaugr and his companions then put out to high sea. Nothing is told of their voyages until they came to Vermaland. They went ashore and asked for news. They were told that Earl Hringr had gone to Sweden. Then they went to King Haraldr. They came into the hall into the presence of the king and greeted him. Styrlaugr stood before him wielding the aurochs horn. --Styrlaugr thrust the horn at the king's nose.--Styrlaugr proceeded eastward to Sweden. --They went harrying far and wide. --This continued for twelve years. Then King Ingifreyr
gave Styrlaugr the title of king and with it a large kingdom. (Sturlaug's saga starfsama 1986:675–678)

One summer Styrlaugr indicated that he wanted to go to Bjarmaland. He collected a large force for himself, and his sworn-brothers joined him. Nothing is told of their journey until they came to Bjarmaland where they set ablaze everything that they could and committed one evil deed after the other. King Rondolf of Bjarmaland learned of this and immediately gathered a force, but he was short of men. As soon as the armies met, the most severe battle and terrible combat broke out. There could be seen mighty blows, many shields and coats of mail torn to pieces, spearheads broken from shafts, and many a headless one thrown down to the ground. This battle ended with King Rondolf perishing together with a great force. After this great victory Styrlaugr conquered all Bjarmaland. He also succeeded in regaining the halberd Hornnefjunaotr as well as many other valuables.

When these very great feats were finished, he planned to make his army ready to go to the land of the Hundings against King Hundolf. They slew men, took property, and burned all the settlements wherever they came. King Hundolf learned of this and, collecting a force, he at once proceeded against Styrlaugr. A battle erupted between them with fierce attack and heavy blows. (Sturlaug's saga starfsama 1986:678–679)

“I have made a solemn vow that I would find out from what sources the aurochs horn has come.” “That I can tell you,” she said. “First to be related is that King Haraldr harried many countries and was always victorious wherever he came. But constantly there was a great famine in these lands, especially in Bjarmaland, which destroyed both livestock and men. Then they took an animal, sacrificed it, and called it Urr. It gaped at them with its jaws. They cast gold and silver down its throat, thereby strengthening it so that it became larger and worse than any animal. It then began to devour both men and cattle, destroying everything which lay to the west of the Vina River so that no living creature could escape. No hero was to be found who dared to attack this beast until King Haraldr heard the news that there was great expectancy of money there. He steered a course thither with three hundred ships, and they came to Bjarmaland. It happened that while King Haraldr was sleeping a woman came to him and acted rather majestically. She said to the king: ‘Here you lie and imagine that you will vanquish our animal that is called Urr.’” “Then you will
capture the animal, but I want to have a precious thing from the animal, namely, the horn which projects from its head. 'So shall it be,' the king said. The night passed, and everything went exactly as she had said, so that they succeeded in overcoming the animal. Then this woman came there and took the horn, the very one which you, Styrlaugr, sought in the temple in Bjarmaland. Now I have told you from what sources the aurochs horn has come. (Sturlaug saga starfsama 1986:683–685)

Version B871: Styrlaugr had the wounds of Hrolfr and Framarr dressed and sailed the straightest course to Bjarmaland. They found no house or home and thought that nobody inhabited the country. But after they had sailed along the headland for a short while they saw a house standing, very high to look at and very large. Styrlaugr sailed up to shore at this point, ordered his ship to be kept ready, and told his men to behave exactly as the queen had instructed him earlier. He went ashore with Framarr and Hrolfr, heading straight for the temple. This was at the eleventh hour of the day. They saw that the temple was quite large, built with silver and gold and precious stones. They saw that the temple was open. Never had they seen such a building in the Northern countries. It seemed to them that everything indoors shone and gleamed so that a shadow was nowhere to be seen. Inside they saw rubies, emeralds, and other very precious stones. There they saw a splendid table, fit for a king, ornamented with the most costly velvet cloths with all kinds of precious cups of gold and gems. There Styrlaugr beheld the horn for which he had been sent. At the table were thirty giantesses and the high priestess sat in the middle seat. It did not seem to them to make any difference that she was in the form of a woman rather than of some carrion beast. They all thought she looked more vile that was describable in words. (Sturlaug saga starfsama 1986:776–777)

Sturlaugsrímr:


10. Inside there are Freyja and Thór, Freyr and Týr with Ullr, Odin himself, very big, all inlaid with gold.”

871 The text of the B version is based on manuscript Nks 1228 fol. Zitzelsberger 1993, 615.
11. The valiant man listened to the lady's word: "The ox-horn may be seen on Thor's table."

32. While the strong wind abated, the men saw from the sea how the Vína River came nearer up to the bow of the vessel.

33. They thought it too much difficulty to move so far. They saw a temple of the Bjarmar ashore.

34. It was covered with gold, as each could behold. Strong stones supported it, covered by white silver.

42. (The statue of) Thór was inside, inlaid with gold similar to burning fire, and a red stone shone.

43. In front of Thór stood a broad table inlaid with precious stones. I say it was (also) inlaid with gold and costly ivory.

44. The old ox-horn stood there upon the table. No one had ever seen anything inlaid with gold that was more beautiful.

26. Armored Bjarmar came there. It was better for him to withdraw. He escaped from them. They pursued.

27. There was much shouting and egging on, as the men came out of the wood. They shot at him, but he reached the ship.

30. The wind began to strain the rope; so did the giantess save the men. They sailed with glad hearts over the sea, the Bjarmar following them with their eyes.

31. They had now gained victory. They came back to Thrándheimr and went before Haraldr in his hall, where his men were sitting.

43. He then collected a great host, taking his brothers with him; Sturlaugr had plenty of men and went to Bjarmaland.

44. They went ashore waging battle. The people were afraid. He began to harry and many men lay dead.

45. They cut down both men and cattle. There was no shelter. I am told that soon the Bjarmar fled by day and night.

46. Röndólfr was the name of the king. He gave gold to the warriors. The host of the country came to him. The mighty king (Sturlaugr?) pursued them.
48. The Bjarmar directed their attack against Sturlaugr. The sharp spear had to jump. The columns encountered in battle.

50. Swords cut many an armour; shield began to be cut. Bloody Bjarmar fell down. No one could withstand the brothers.

58. The outcome of the battle was that Röndólfr fell dead. The king (Sturlaugr) there acquired land and wealth. He gave shelter to all shoulders. Peace was established between the warriors. (Sturlaugsrimur 1986:885–892)

Sturlaugs saga starfsama (“The Saga of Sturlaugr the Industrious”) is one of the so-called fornaldarsögur. The oldest known manuscript is from c. 1400, but the saga was probably originally written in the early fourteenth century. There are altogether forty-four manuscripts of varying worth and the saga is preserved in two distinct versions, an older A version (AM 335 4to from ca. 1400, AM 589f 4to from the late 15th century and a fragmentary AM 567 XXI 4to from the late 16th century) and a younger B version preserved in paper manuscripts (the earliest of these is AM 171a fol. from the latter part of the 17th century). The saga at hand is a fictitious adventure story involving witchcraft and heroic deeds and one of those fornaldarsögur where both the characters and events seem imaginary. The author takes liberties in the description of Bjarmaland and the saga has little or no importance as a source.872 The highly imaginative fornaldarsögur were extremely popular among the contemporary audiences. Escapist emphasis on the fanciful and the unreal are the basic features of fornaldarsaga. The hero and his companions engage in adventures in one new remote land after another. Heroes are impersonal and the emphasis is on external events, not on the complexity of inner self like in the classical saga. It appears that Sturlaugs saga starfsama purposefully maintains a humorous burlesque and even macabre tone.873

Of the two main versions of the text, called A and B874, I follow the version A, which is older and more comprehensive, but I also want to present the relevant parts of version B, which includes an even more detailed description of the riches in the temple in Bjarmaland. Otherwise version B omits the details that the version A includes, like the name of the river in Bjarmaland. Rimur repeats the plot in a poetic version and I will include the relevant parts for comparison. It may be also

873 Zitzelsberger 1986, 4–6; Sanders 2006, 876–884.
874 Version B is seemingly a late construction, dating to the 17th or earliest the late 16th century. Zitzelsberger 1986, 14.
worth noticing that Sturlaugskvæði places the hunt of the Urarhorn to Ireland instead of Bjarmaland. This indicates that the horn was not necessarily always connected with Bjarmaland only.

Sturlaugs saga starfsama is about the heroic exploits of Sturlaugr and his comrades. The action is fast-moving. The essential theme is that good will triumph over evil, regardless of sorcery, greedy kings, malevolent challengers or grotesque ogresses. The hero, Sturlaugr, is a son of a chieftain in Namdalen (Naumudelafylki) in Norway in the present-day area of Nord-Trøndelag. Namdalen is also mentioned in connection with Bjarmaland expeditions in Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka and Áns saga Bogsveigis. In Áns saga Bogsveigis the men from Namdalen make an expedition to Bjarmaland whereas in Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka Namdalen was a stopping place on the way to Bjarmaland.

The starting point of the adventures is the task given to Sturlaugr by King Haraldr of Trondheim. He was to bring an aurochs horn (Úrarhorn) to the king. It is known that oxen horns were used in Caesar’s Gallia (Gaul), during the early Anglo-Saxon period (e.g. Sutton Hoo) and in pre-historical Scandinavia as drinking horns. Several sagas mention drinking horns. Drinking horns (with metal fittings) were a part of pagan cult and the church was against them to begin with but later on they were accepted and many churches had them. The drinking horn is a typical representative of temple treasures.

A kind of a prequel that explains the origin of the aurochs horn is presented in the end of the story. There was a great famine in Bjarmaland and to counter the situation the Birmians took an animal, sacrificed it and called it Urr (Úr). The animal turned into a monster and began devouring both men and cattle destroying everything west of the “Vína” River. Finally King Harald came and managed to overcome the animal with help of magic. The aurochs horn was then taken from the head of this monstrous animal. According to HAAVIO, this story describes the cult of an aurochs. The story seems to belong to killing myths like the killing of the big oxen in Kalevala. He further suggests that Sturlaugs saga starfsama and Bósa saga contain traces of the cult of Mithras. Certainly there is something mythological about the description of this animal and it seems likely that the author here was influenced by ancient myths including sacrifice. However, HAAVIO’s
suggestion that the two items, *bubali cornu* (horn of an oxen) and *belue dens* (walrus tusk), described by Saxo were a part of the Bjarmian treasures\textsuperscript{880} is in my opinion incorrect. According to the text it does not seem like these items were in Bjarmaland, but in the land of the giants or even in the Other World\textsuperscript{881}, although Bjarmaland is mentioned as one of the places on route to the giant Geruth. However, SAXO's tale confirms that such horns were described as part of a treasure. Perhaps the author of *Sturlaug's saga starfsama* was influenced for example by SAXO's description of riches\textsuperscript{882} and decided to make the horn a main feature in his own tale.

To follow the plot, the search of the horn began by sailing northwards along the coast of Hálogaland and Finnmark until Vatnsnes and the Vastuvik inlet. The land was overgrown by forest and the expeditioners continued until they reached a hidden fjord and finally went ashore by a hidden creek. They had now reached the land of the Hundings, the description of which may have been influenced by Adam of BREMEN's work and classical tradition.\textsuperscript{883} The names Vatnsnes and the Vastuvik sound Norse but are not found on the coast of Northern Norway. The name Vatnsnes is found in Iceland\textsuperscript{884} and it may be that both names are existing names that were randomly used in the story to give it an enhanced feel of detail. The route along the coast of Hálogaland and Finnmark, on the other hand, is the same one described in several more reliable sources\textsuperscript{885} and represents a geographically correct even if non-detailed description of a route from Trøndelag to the White Sea.

Eventually, the travellers find out that the desired aurochs horn is in Bjarmaland in a temple consecrated to Thorir, Odin, Frigg and Freyr. In some other texts, most prominently in *Óláfs saga helga*\textsuperscript{886}, a Bjarmian god called Jómali is mentioned. In *Bósa saga*\textsuperscript{887} which contains a later adaptation of the story in *Óláfs saga helga*, a statue of Jómali is placed in a temple, although in *Óláfs saga helga* a statue alone was described. In *Sturlaug's saga starfsama* a temple with statues of gods is mentioned, but this time the statues are not of Jómali, but of Scandinavian gods Odin, Thor, Frigg and Freyr. Adam of BREMEN (*Gesta Hammaburgensis c.*

\textsuperscript{880} Haavio 1965, 182–183.
\textsuperscript{881} See Saxonis Gesta Danorum 1931, 240–242; Ellis Davidson 1979, 236.
\textsuperscript{882} See Fisher 1980, 145.
\textsuperscript{883} Zitzelsberger 1986, 583–584.
\textsuperscript{884} See e.g. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vatnsnes.
\textsuperscript{885} See e.g. Oláf’s saga helga 1945, 227–232; Haralds saga ins hárfagra 1962, 134–135; Sweet’s Anglo-Saxon Reader 1970, 17.
\textsuperscript{886} Oláf’s saga helga 1945, 227–232.
\textsuperscript{887} Bósa saga 1893, 33.
1081) describes the statues of Odin, Thor and Freyr in the golden temple in Uppsala and other written sources mention statues of gods elsewhere in Scandinavia. Otto J. ZITZELSBERGER is of the opinion that it seems rather likely that the author of the saga (possibly a cleric) knew Adam’s work and used it as a source material in order to write an entertaining story.\(^{888}\) It seems likely that the passage about the temple has adopted and modified different elements including Scandinavian deities mentioned in Adam of BREMEN’s work and the accounts describing a statue of god in Bjarmaland.

To follow the plot further, the travellers sailed from the land of the Hundings until they reached Bjarmaland and finally the “Vína” River (koma við Bjarmaland ok framan at ánni Vínu). A river of this name is associated with Bjarmaland in other earlier and more reliable sources (Haralds saga gráfeldar, Óláfs saga helga, Egils saga Skallagrímssonar)\(^{889}\) as well as in some fornaldrarsögur (Ǫrvar-Odds saga, Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka and Bósa saga).\(^{890}\) The appearance of “Vína” in this imaginary tale seems to indicate that the author was familiar with other texts about Bjarmaland that mention “Vína”. Also the statue of a god in connection with Bjarmaland would seem to indicate that the author was familiar with earlier texts about Bjarmaland. The statue, River “Vína” and the description of the landscape (level fields by the river) seem to point to Óláfs saga helga (either directly or indirectly) as a main source since this text includes all these features.\(^{891}\) It is also worth noticing that both the temple of Jómali and “Vína” River appear in Bósa saga ok Herrauðs that was seemingly also influenced by Óláfs saga helga.

According to Sturlaugs saga starfsama there were level fields and a temple ornamented with gold and precious stones in Bjarmaland on the western bank of the river. The description of the landscape is rather anonymous, but it is perhaps worth noticing that a somewhat similar description of landscape in Bjarmaland is found in Óláfs saga helga\(^{892}\) that mentions level plains close to the river.

Like in some other fornaldrarsögur, the riches of Bjarmaland are described as resplendent. HäME has suggested that in describing the riches of Bjarmaland the authors in fact were describing the magnificent riches the Scandinavians had seen in Constantinople. In these resplendent descriptions of Bjarmaland a very powerful

\(^{889}\) See Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232; Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217; Egils saga Skallagrímssonar 1988, 93–94.
\(^{890}\) Antiquités Russes 1850, 86; Ǫrvar-Odd 1888, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36; Bósa saga 1893, 21.
\(^{891}\) See Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232.
\(^{892}\) See Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232.
(witch) woman is often a central character. Also in this respect HÅME sees reflections of the Byzantium, where the female empress Zoë once ruled. Her rule is described in Heimskringla, so the Scandinavians were well aware of the existence of such a character. The Scandinavians who served in Constantinople brought artefacts of great value with them and in this way Byzantium was associated with riches. Additionally, one travelled to both Byzantium and Bjarmaland along waterways. It is possible that tales originally associated with Byzantium were later modified and changed and the more familiar Bjarmaland became the place for riches and powerful women in stories that were designed to entertain audiences. Especially the description of the temple in the version B of the saga seems to describe a magnificent building that resembles something one could find for example in Byzantium. The text itself points out that nobody had ever seen anything like this in the Northern countries. This statement contains a hidden assumption that something like this building had been seen outside the north.

To follow the plot further, Sturlaugr managed to catch the aurochs horn and escape both the witch woman and the attacking Bjarmians. He returned to King Harald after stopping for news in Vermaland. Afterwards he went to Sweden and spent many years there eventually becoming a king himself. Namdalen, the home of Sturlaugr, and Trondheim, the residence of King Harald, are situated close to each other on the coast of Norway and in this sense the saga gives a realistic view of the geographical details. Vermaland seems to indicate Värmland in Sweden. To reach Värmland by sailing from the White Sea (where Bjarmaland assumably was situated) would mean a long tour along the coast of Norway passing both Namdalen and Trondheim on the way. If we assume that Vermaland is Värmland and Bjarmaland is on the White Sea the order of events in the saga is not very logical. We can only assume that the author either did not care about geographical accuracy or had another idea about the location of the places he names. In any case, the author was probably only interested in carrying on the plot of his imaginative story and what with all the imaginary elements the author was probably not interested in giving the story a perfectly realistic geographical setting.

In the early and more realistic written sources only Norway is mentioned but Sturlaug's saga starfsama as well as a few other fornaldarsögur (Bósa saga, Þáttr Hauks hábrókar and Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar) also mention Sweden in

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893 Häme 1987a, 190–192.
connection with Bjarmaland. The eastern point of view is also seen otherwise in the text and Garðaríki and Aldeigjuborg are mentioned, as in Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar. Although this has no direct bearing for Bjarmaland, it is interesting to notice this kind of eastern perspective in the fornaldarsögur.

One summer many years after the original expedition, Sturlaugr (now a king in Sweden) wanted to go to Bjarmaland again. He went there with a large force and ravaged the country setting ablaze and destroying everything he could. The text mentions a king of Bjarmaland called Rondolfr (Röndólfr, Rödólfr). Sturlaugr and Rondolfr went to battle against each other and Rondolfr perished with a large force. Sturlaugr conquered all Bjarmaland and went against the Hundings afterwards.

There are several familiar motifs here. Expeditions to Bjarmaland in the summer with a large force and ravaging the country are familiar features (that also fulfil characteristics of a “Viking” expedition) from many other texts. Aggression between the Norwegians and the Bjarmians is a recurring feature also in the more reliable sources. A few other fornaldarsögur (Ǫrvar-Odds saga, Bósa saga ok Herrauðs and Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar) mention a hero who conquered Bjarmaland. King of the Bjarmians is mentioned in several texts as well. This is the case in only one of the more reliable texts (Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar), but some of the more imaginative texts (Gesta Danorum, Landnámabók, Ǫrvar-Odds saga, Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar and Bósa saga) also mention a king. In Sturlaugs saga starfsama the king is called Rondolfr, a name that is Scandinavian as the names of the Bjarmian kings (and other Bjarmians) in the written sources invariably are.

All in all, Sturlaugs saga starfsama presents an imaginary story that includes Bjarmaland as a setting for heroic and magical adventures following many conventions that are attached to the texts describing Bjarmaland. The sequences describing Bjarmaland show to some extent influence of earlier (more realistic) texts like Ölafs saga helga, the rest is imagination.

894 See Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 552–558; Antiquités Russes 1852, 122–125; Bósa saga 1893, 3–4.
895 See Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 520, 539–543, 552–558; Sturlaugu saga starfsama 1986, 685–693.
897 See Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 552–558; Ǫrvar-Odd 1888, 126–127; Bósa saga 1893, 49–63.
898 Hakonar saga 1964, 70–71.
3. --Jarl kvað nú börnin mundu verða at skilja við Grímu, ok kvaddi hana; gekk hann nú burt með börnin, þar til er hann kom til sjófarstrandar, þar sá Hálfdán skipaflopta, jarl átti þar eitt skip, ok kvað Hálfdán skylda þat eiga ok fjárhlut: ok skultu fara til Bjarmalands, til Óttars jarls, bróður mins, ok segja, at ham taki við þér fyrir mín orð, en ef ham er tregr til, þá fa honum gull þetter til jarteigna, ok mun hann þá við þér taka. Hálfdán mælti: þat vil ek nú, fóstri minn! at þú faerir með mér. Jarl neitti því. Mynntist hann þá við þau syskun, ok gekk heim sýðan, en Hálfdán fór á skip með Íngibjörgu, ok hét í haf, ok byrjaði þeim vel, tók Bjarmaland, hann gekk frá skipi með öllum mönnum sínum ok til hallar jarls. Hálfdán gekk fyrir jarl, ok kveðir hann. Jarl tók honum (vel), ok spurði tíðinda. Hálfdán segir þá, sem var, at Hríngr konúnr var andaðr, ok þat með at Þorfiðr jarl hafði sent hann þángat til halls ok trausts.--

4. Einn dag gekk Hálfdán fyrir jarl, ok kveðir hann; jarl tók því vel, ok spyrr, hvat undir kveðju sè. Hálfdán segist vilja halda fyrir land fram. Jarl fékk honum þrjú skip ok dreka mikinn hinn fjórða; skip þessi voru vel skipuð at mönnum ok vopnum/fé. Hálfdán þakkaði jarli þessa (vel)gjörð, ok tók orlof af honum; fór hann síðan til skipa, ok Íngibjörg, systir hans, með honum. Þá var Hálfdán tólf vetra, er hann lét frá landi, ok i haf; hét hann viða um sumarit; en er haustaði, víldi hann hálta aptir til Bjarmalands, kvomu þá á fyrir honum þokur ok hafvillur, ok rakst hann um haf innan/viða, þá gjörði at þeim stórvöld svá mikit, at skipum öll týndust, nema dreki Hálfdánar, ok lét hann reka at honum marga snarvölu; ok er þetta gjört, rekr drekkan at björgum stórum, ok upp á sand slétta. Hálfdán segir, at þeir munu þar umbúast, en þeir báðu hann fyrir sjá; þeir setja þá upp drekkan. Viðr var þar rekinn mikill á sandinn, ok taka þeir þar til skálasmiðrar, ok var skjott algjör. --Menn Hálfdánar spurðu, hvat land þetta væri. Hálfdán kvað þá mundu vera komna at Hellulands óbygðum.

(Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830:566–568)

3. --The earl now declared that the children would have to part from Grima and he bade her farewell. He now left with the children and walked until he came to the seashore. There Halfdan saw a fleet of ships.

The earl owned a ship there, and he said that Halfdan should take it and a sum of money as well, “and sail to my brother Earl Ottar in Bjarmaland, and tell him that he should take you in on my word. If he is reluctant to do this, give him this gold as a token and then he will take you in.”
Halfdan said, “I want you to sail with me, my foster-father.”

The earl declined. He then kissed the children and returned home, but Halfdan boarded the ship with Ingibjorg and put to sea. They sailed with a fair wind and reached Bjarmaland. Halfdan disembarked with all his men and they proceeded to the hall of the earl. Halfdan went before the earl and greeted him. The earl received him affably and asked for the news. Halfdan told him what there was: that King Hring was dead, and, in addition, that Earl Thorfid had sent him there for help and support. --

4. One day Halfdan went before the earl and greeted him. The earl received the greeting affably and asked what might be behind it. Halfdan said he wanted to put to sea. The earl provided him with three cargo ships and a fourth vessel, a large warship. These ships were well-equipped with both men and weapons. Halfdan thanked the earl for this equipment and took leave of him. After that he went down to the ships, and Ingibjorg, his sister, went with him. Halfdan was twelve years old when he set out on this voyage. During the summer he sailed far and wide.

As autumn was drawing near, Halfdan wanted to turn back to Bjarmaland. Then fogs came over him and he lost his bearings, and he was tossed about in the sea. Then they were assailed by a storm so huge that all the ships perished except for Halfdan’s warship, and he had the sails reefed. When this was done the ship drifted past large rocks and up onto a smooth beach. Halfdan said that they would make camp there, and the men asked him to decide that. They drew the ship up on the beach. There was a lot of driftwood on the sand. They began building a cabin, and it was quickly finished. Halfdan often went out on the glaciers with some of the men and some stayed behind at the cabin with Ingibjorg. Halfdan’s men asked what country that could be. Halfdan said that they may have come to unsettled Helluland. (The Saga of Halfdan 1982:26–28)

Hálfdanar saga Brónafóstra (“The Saga of Hálfdan, Foster-son of Brana”) is one of the so-called ungra fornaldarsögur (later fornaldarsögur). These sagas that were designed to entertain do not have any historical background and have been called lygisögur, ævintýrafornaldarsögur and Märchensagas. The saga at hand is one of those that have been influenced most by foreign romantic motifs and descriptions are strongly exaggerated. The saga was probably originally composed in Iceland around the year 1300 or shortly thereafter. The oldest manuscripts are dated to the
This fairly short account features Bjarmaland as one location where the events in the saga hero’s life take place. The young Prince Hálfdan of Denmark is sent to his foster-father’s brother Earl Ottar in Bjarmaland. He spends a summer on “Viking” expeditions with three cargo ships and a large warship well-equipped with both men and weapons. In the autumn he wishes to return to Bjarmaland, but gets lost at sea in thick fog, and storms drive him and the only surviving ship to Helluland (Labrador). This is the only time besides Gesta Danorum that Denmark is associated with Bjarmaland. However, Bjarmaland appears only as an anonymous and suitably distant refuge for Hálfdan before he embarks on real adventures. Even the location of Bjarmaland is very vague and no real directions are given disregarding the extremely indirect hint of a somewhat northerly location indicated by the fact that Hálfdan ends up in the northerly Helluland on his way back to Bjarmaland. All in all, Bjarmaland of this saga must be seen as a name only, designed to give a hiding place for the persecuted prince. It could be exchanged with any name with a suitably remote location.

5.11 Eymundar Þáttur Hringssonar (Eymundar saga)

Ráð Eymundar


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901 It is perhaps worth pointing out that this description of summerly “Viking” expedition with ships, men and weapons follows a formula that is known in the Norse written sources in connection with many of the Norwegian expeditions to Bjarmaland as well as in connection with expeditions to e.g. the Baltic area. See e.g. Haraldr saga ins hárflaga 1962, 134–135; Fagrskinna 1985, 79.
902 Ross 1940, 35; Hannah 1982a, 56.
903 See e.g. Saxonis Gesta Danorum 1931, 30–31.
því sem má komast til borgarinnar; ok er líðit kemr, þau er oss þikja vænt at dugi.

Bardagi þeirra bræðra.

7. Þessu næst lætr Jarizlafr konúngr senda herboð um allt sitt ríki, ok kemr nú til hans mikill bónadærr; eptir þetta sendir Eymundr konúngr menn sína á mórkina, ok lætr fella viðu ok færa heim at borginni, ok seðje upp á borgararmana; hann lætr snúu liminu hvers þrís út af borginni, at eigi mætti skjóta upp í borgina; mikit diki lét hann ok grafa fyrir utan borgina, ok færa brott moldina, ok veita vatni í eptir; síðan lét hann leggja ofan yfir viðu, ok búa svá um, at ekki maðti á sjá, ok sem heil væri jörðin. En er þessi sýslu var lokit, þá spurðu þeir til Burizlafs konúngs, at hann var kominn í Garðaríki, ok stefnìð jángat til borgararmana, sem þeir voru fyrir konúngarnir. Þeir Eymundr konúngr höfðu ok búa látit sterkliga um íj borgarhljóð, ok ætluðu þar at verja, ok svá til brottgöngu, ef þyrfti. Ok um kveldit, þá er hersins var von um morgininn eptir, bað Eymundr konúngr konur gánga út á borgararmana með alla dýrgripa sína, ok búast um, sem bezt kynni þær, ok festa digra gullhringa upp á stangin, at þeim maðti sem mest um fínast: væntir ek, segir hann, at þeir Bjarmar muni gearnir til gersimanna; munu þeir riða hvatt ok úvarliga at borginni, er s’lin skin á guðvefina hina gullofnu; nú var svá gert, sem hann sagði fyrir. Burizlafr kemr nú at borginni með her sinn or mörkinni fram; ok sjá þeir nú fegurð til borgararmana, ok hyggja nú gott til, at engi njósni muni fyrir þeim hafa farit; riða nú at hart ok hermannliga, ok færa heim at borginni, er s’lin skín á gullit ok á guðvefina hina gullofnu; nú var svá gert, sem hann sagði fyrir.

Burizlafr kemr nú at borginni með her sinn or mörkinni fram; ok sjá þeir nú fegurð til borgararmana, ok hyggja nú gott til, at engi njósni muni fyrir þeim hafa farit; riða nú at hart ok hermannliga, ok færa heim at borginni, er s’lin skín á gullit ok á guðvefina hina gullofnu; nú var svá gert, sem hann sagði fyrir. Burizlafr kemr nú at borginni með her sinn or mörkinni fram; ok sjá þeir nú fegurð til borgararmana, ok hyggja nú gott til, at engi njósni muni fyrir þeim hafa farit; riða nú at hart ok hermannliga, ok færa heim at borginni, er s’lin skín á gullit ok á guðvefina hina gullofnu; nú var svá gert, sem hann sagði fyrir.
ok veit honum lið; Ragnarr svarar: hér mun ek við hafast, en þú far til konúngr, þvíat þar mun ráða við þurfa. Fór Eymundr nú þángat með mikit lið, ok só at Bjarmar voru nú komnir inn i borgina; hann veitti þeim þegar mikit slag ok illt; drápu þeir þegar mikit lið af Buríslafi konúngi; sækir Eymundr konúngr at fast með miklu kappi, ok eggjar mjök sina menn; ok eigi hefir verit hardari sókn jafnlöng en þessi; ok nú fýja Bjarmar or borginni, allir þeir er upp stóðu; ok nú fýr Buríslafir konúngir með miklu manntjóni; en Eymundr konúngir ok hans menn reka flóttann til skógar, ok drápu merkismann konúngs; ok er nú enn þat sagt, at konúngrinn muni fallinn vera; ok er nú miklum sigri at hrósa; hefir Eymundr konúngur nú framat sík mjök í þessi orrostu. Ok er nú kyrat at sinni; sitja þeir nú í miklum söma með konúngi, ok virðast þeir hverjum menni vel innan lands; en málagjöldin verða enn sein af konúngi ok tarsótt, svá at þau greiddust ekki eptir skilðögum. (Antiquités Russes 1852:188–191)

6. Eymund gives advice
-- ‘I’ve been told King Burislaf is alive,’ said Eymund, ‘staying over the winter in Permia [Bjarmaland], and we’ve heard from a trustworthy source that he’s gathering a large army to lead against you. That’s nearer the truth.’

‘When will he reach our kingdom?’ asked the king.

‘I’ve heard that he’ll be here in three weeks,’ replied Eymund.

And now King Jarisleif had no wish to lose their support, so the contract was extended for twelve months.

‘What’s to be done now?’ the king asked next. ‘Should we gather troops and go into battle?’

‘Yes, that would be my advice,’ replied Eymund, ‘if you want to defend Russia against King Burislaf.’

‘Should we keep the troops here or lead them out against the enemy?’ asked the king.

904 The same text with slightly varying ortography is found in Flateyjarbók published in 1862. Instead of Bjarmaland “Biarmaland” is used and instead of Bjarmar it is written “Biarmar”. This makes no difference for the interpretation. See Flateyjarbók 1862, 124–126.
'We must summon them all here to the town,' replied Eymund, 'and once the army's assembled, we'll devise some likely scheme which will suit our purposes.'

7. The battle between the brothers

Next, King Jarisleif sent a war summons to every part of the kingdom, and a large army of farmers gathered. After that, King Eymund sent his men into the woods to fell trees, bring them to the town, and set them up on the ramparts of the fortress, with the branches of all the trees facing outwards so that people could not shoot missiles into the fort. He also had a great ditch dug all round the fort and filled with water after the earth had been carried away. Next he placed branches over it and covered it in such a way that the earth appeared undisturbed. When this had been completed, they learned that King Burislaf had reached Russia and was in his way to the town where King Jarisleif and King Eymund were waiting.

King Eymund and his men had made two of the town gates particularly secure, where they intended to make their stand and, if need be, their escape. During the evening before enemy troops were expected, King Eymund told the women to go up onto the ramparts of the fort with all their jewels and after settling themselves comfortably there, to hang all their heavy gold bracelets on poles and so create an impression.

'I'm sure the Permians [Bjarmians] will be eager to lay hands on the jewellery,' he said, 'and when the sun shines on the gold and the precious gold-woven cloth, they'll be wild to charge the stronghold.'

Things were arranged as he had asked. Burislaf led his troops out of the forest towards the town, and they saw how splendid it was. And now, assuming there had been no news of their coming, they rode headlong towards it hard and warrior-like. A great many of them fell into the moat and died there, but King Burislaf was in the rear, and realised there had been a disaster.

'Maybe this place isn't to be won as easily as we expected, and these Norwegians have a few tricks up their sleeves,' he said.

Now that all the splendour on display had vanished, he considered what would be the best place to attack. He saw that all the town gates were shut except for two, and they were not going to be easy to get through, being well prepared against attack and heavily defended. The war-cry rang out, but the
townspeople were ready for battle, with each of the kings, Jarisleif and Eymund, ready at his gate.

A fierce battle followed, with heavy losses on both sides, and the pressure was so intense on the gate defended by King Jarisleif that the enemy managed to force a way through. The king received a bad leg-wound and there were many casualties, before the gate was taken by the enemy.

'Things are looking bad,' said King Eymund. 'Our king has been wounded, a lot of our men have been killed, and now they're breaking through into the town. Ragnar,' he said, 'decide what you're going to do, defend the gate here or go and help our king.'

'I'll stay here,' answered Ragnar. 'You join the king, your advice is needed over there.'

Eymund went with a large body of men and saw that the Permians [Bjarmians] had now made their way into the town, so he attacked them fiercely and killed a number of King Burislaf's troops, pushing forward hard and keenly, urging on his men: and considering the time it lasted, never was there such ferocious onslaught. Now all the Permians [Bjarmians] still on their feet ran from the town, and King Burislaf took to his heels too, his troops suffering heavy casualties. King Eymund and his men drove them into the forest, killing the king's standard-bearer, and yet again King Burislaf was reported killed, so this was a famous victory. In the battle, King Eymund greatly enhanced his reputation, but now things quietened down. The Norwegians stayed on with King Jarisleif in great honour, and everyone there thought very highly of them, but still the soldiers' pay was slow to arrive and hard to come by, and on the appointed day it was still overdue. (Eymund's Saga 1990:76–79)

Flateyjarbók (GkS 1005 fol) is a modern title for a codex written c. 1382–7 in the north of Iceland. Eymundar saga is also known as Pátrr Eymundar ok Óláfs konungs, alternatively Eymundar þáttir Hringssonar. It is found in Flateyjarbók only (in context of Óláfs saga helga) and is of late origin. It is generally considered that it was written in the 14th century, although there is no direct reason to exclude the possibility that it was written already in the latter part of the 13th century. In any
case, it must have come about some time before Flateyjarbók was written in the 1380’s.905

It seems like the Bjarmians are undeservedly involved in the story of Eymundar saga. Namely, the Russian Primary Chronicle gives an account of strife between brothers in Russia during the period 1015–1034. There are great similarities between this account and Eymundar saga, but also major differences, namely some names and family relations are different, as well as dating and certain events. The most prominent difference that concerns us is that in Eymundar saga King Burislaf took refuge in Bjarmaland, but according to the Russian annals he went to Poland and in another version to the country of the Pechenegs. It is difficult to connect the events of Eymundar saga to Russian history with any certainty since it is too full of topoi and recurrent popular motifs for any certain identification. In addition, Eymund, the title hero of the saga, appears to be an invention of the author and this would seem to additionally attest to the imaginative nature of Eymundar saga. However, motifs present in Primary Chronicle must have influenced the writing of Eymundar saga.906 It would seem as if the Russian sources give a more original account of the events907 and since Bjarmians are not mentioned in these sources it would seem as if the appearance of them in Eymundar saga is a construction of the Scandinavian author. Perhaps the author of Eymundar saga had knowledge of the Russian events and used them as a source of his account and in order to adjust his story for the Scandinavian audiences, switched the less known Polish and Pechenegs with the more familiar Bjarmians.908

Although this text does not really seem to be about Bjarmaland, the fact is that it is of Scandinavian origin and in principle could give some clues about Bjarmaland. However, the Bjarmians are mentioned only in passing as allies of one Russian king against another. No details, geographical or otherwise, are given, although Bjarmaland is set in connection with the Russian area. Even if one would take the text as a historical reference to the Bjarmians, there really is not much left to analyse. If one wants to really analyse everything possible, it could be said that according to Eymundar saga the Bjarmians appear to be capable of warfare since they are found in alliance with one Russian king against an alliance formed by a

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905 Rafn 1852, 170; Jansson 1936, 38; Pålsson–Edwards 1990a, 95–96; Pålsson–Edwards 1990b, 8; Würth 1991, 36. See also Джаксон 1994, 90 for a list of Russian and other literature addressing Eymundar saga.
907 Jansson 1936, 38; Häme 19987a, 223–224.
908 See Джаксон 1994, 166.
rivaling Russian king and some Norwegians. These details actually follow conventions found in other Scandinavian written sources where Bjarmaland on occasion appears as a tributary to Russia and where antagonism between the Norwegians and the Bjarmians is described on many occasions. Perhaps we can here see traces of a Scandinavian literary tradition that the author used in forming his story.

5.12 Þáttr Hauks hábrókar

Haraldr sendi Hauk ok Vígharð

3. Eitt sumar segir Haraldr konúngr, at hann vill senda Hauk norðr til Bjarmalands, at heimta hárvöru, ok er Vígharðr veit þat, segir hann, at hann vill fara; konúngr svarar, at eigi vill hann fyrrirmuna honum þeirrar sæmandar, lætr nú búa sitt skip hvorum þeirra, ok er þeir eru búnir, gerir konúngr þeim snaðiðing, og segir at hann sendir nú þá menn frá sér, at honum þikir meira at missa en margra annarra: en liðligt þiki mér, at Eirekr konúngr frétti um ferð ykkra, ok mun nú vilja minnast við ykkr, er þú tökt, Haukr, skikkjuna úti Hólmgarði; veit ek blóth Eireks konúngs, at hann mun frammi hafa þeim til lóðsinnis, en ek sendi ykkr til fostru minnar, er Heiðr heitir, ok byr norðr við Gandvík; haft råð hennar; ek sendi henni gullhríng, er vegr xij aura, ok ij villigaltarflíkki gömul ok ij tunnur smjör. Nú fára þeir brott með góðu liði ok vopnum; Eirekr konúngr sér för þeirra, ok segir Birni ok Salgarði, at hann vill at þeir fari norðr til Surtzdala ok Bjarmalands, ok at sumri lætr Eirekr konúngr veizlu búa at Uppsólum; síðan lætr hann aka ij vögnum til staðarins, þar sem hann blótaði þat goð er Lytir hét, var sá síðr at vagninn skyldi standa um nótt, ok kom hann til um morginnin; en nú kom Lytir eigi at vanda sínum, ok er þetta sagt konúngi, at Lytir er nú ófús at fari; stóð vagn svá at þeir at hann kom eigi; þá tók konúngr at fremja miklu meiri blót en fyr, ok hinn þriðja morginnin verða þeir varir við, at Lytir er kominn; er þá svá höfugr vagninn at eykirir springa, aðr þeir koma með hann til hallarinnar; var síðan vagninn settir á mitt hallar golf, ok gekt konúngr þá at með horni, ok fagnaði Lyti, ok segir at hann vill drekka fulli til hans, ok þikir nú miklu máli skipta, at hann ráðist i féðina, ok kveðst honum sem fyr veita mundu miklar gjafr. Lytir svarar, kveðst ófús gerast þessarar ferðar, segir at hann kom eitt sinn norðr þangat; ok hitta ek þar

909 See e.g. Antiquités Russes 1852, 404; Haralds saga ins hárfagra 1962, 134–135; Hakonar saga 1964, 70–71; Fagrskinna 1985, 79.
fyrir svá mikit tröll, at sílku hefir ek eigi fyrir mætt, en gamalt var þá, ok eigi mundu ek þar koma, ef ek vissa at þat liði, ok væntir mik at nú muni dauðt vera; konúngr segir at svá mun vera; Lytir kveðr konúng göðs verðan frá sér, ok kveðst fara mundu; eru þeim nú búin tvö skip Birni ok Salgarði; ok er þeir látar or Leginum, ferr þar fyrir dreki, ok svört tjöld yfir, öngan mann séa þeir á reipum halda; hann siglír hvaðan sem á er; söðan sigla þeir norðr fyrir landit.

Bardaki þeirra Hauks við Beörn ok Salgarð

4. Ñu er at segja frá Hauki ok Víghaði at þeir koma norðr til Gandvíkr, ok ganga til bæjar Hëidàr, fôstru Haralds konúngs, vj menn af hvoru skipi; hún sat við eld, ok geispaði mjökk, hún var í skinntkylti, ok tóku ermar at olboga; Haur bar heinni kveðú Haralds konúngs; hún segir: göð þiki mér kveðja Haralds konúngs, ok segir at hún (vill) fara til skips mið þeim; hún biðr þá aprtr hverfa, ok segir illa munu verða ferðina; Haukr tók eigi meir en undir þó hú þenn henni, ok var hann manna mestr; hann seldi henni fyrir þeim; þá mælti hún: gefi heil Haralds konúngr! ok dró þá hú henni, ok þeir láta or Leginum, ferr þar fyrir dreki, ok svört tjöld yfir, öngan mann séa þeir á reipum halda; hann siglír hvaðan sem á er; söðan sigla þeir norðr fyrir landit.
báðir, Haukr ok Vikharðr, þviat hroðit var Vígharðs skip; hann gengr þá í framstaðn, ok hleypr á skip þeirra Bearnar ok Salgarðs, ok þeir Haukr báðir, ok komast framan at siglu, ok koma þeir Beörn þar í móti ok Salgarðr, ok slær þar með þeim í bardaga, léttr eigi fyrr en allir eru sárir, þeir er uppi standa; gengr Beörn or lyptingunni at Hauki; nú berjast þeir fjórir, lýkr svá at Beörn fellr; Vígharðr sakir þá at Salgarði, ok er minnst var von, kemr ör af drekanum ok í brjóst á Vikharði, ok fellr hann dauðr niðr; Hauki koma þá í hug mýlarnar, ok kastar þeim fyrir borð með reiði, ok kemr niðr heá drekanum ok lystr þar upp loga stafna á millum; Haukr drepr þá Salgarðr, en hann misti auga sitt; ekki var þá ok fært til liðs hans manna; berr hann þá vopn sin á bát einn ok klaði sin, ok léttr eigi fyrr en hann kemr aprtr til Heiðar kellingar, ok segir henni tööenden; hún lætr vel yfir at hann er aprtr kominn; græðir hún hann, ok fylgr hún honum þar til en kaupmenn eru, kemr honum þar í skip með þeim mönnum er fára ætuðu suðr með landi; hverfr hún þar aprtr, en hann lættir eigi sinn ferð fyrr en hann finnr Harald konúng, ok segir honum alla sögu; konúngr lætt vel yfir at hann var aprtr kominn. En frá Lyti er þat at segja at hann kom aprtr ok fann Eirik konúng, ok sagðist honum aldri meira af liði verða þaðan af, sakir örkumbla þeirra ar hann kvezt fengit hafa af hinu mikla trölli í Noregi. (Antiquités Russes 1852:122–125)

Harald sends Hauk and Vikhard

3. One summer King Harald said that he wanted to send Hauk north to Bjarmaland to get greyskins. And when Vikhard found out this, he said that he wanted to go too. King answered that he did not want to deny him to do so and then let a ship to be equipped for them both. And when they were ready to leave, the king served them a meal and said that he was now sending away men he thought would be harder to lose than many others. “And it seems likely to me that King Eirik will hear of your journey and he will remember that you took off your coat in Holmgard. I know about King Eirik’s sacrifice and he will most likely use it to support him. But I send you to my foster-mother who is called Heid and lives north at Gandvik. Seek advice with her. I am sending her a gold ring that weighs twelve aura and two old pieces of wild-boar and two tunnur of butter.” Now they started on their journey with a good number of men and good weapons. King Eirik saw them leaving and said to Bjørn and Salgard that

910 The same text with slightly varying orthography is found in Flateyjarbók. See Flateyjarbók 1860, 579–581.
he wanted them to go north to Surtzdal and Bjarmaland and in the summer
King Eirik went to visit Uppsala. Then he let two wagons drive to the place
where he sacrificed to the god who is called Lytir. The habit was that the wagon
should stay there over night and he came there in the morning. But now Lytir
did not come as he used to and it was told to the king that Lytir now was
unwilling to come. The wagon stood like that for two nights without him
coming. Then the king set for a much larger sacrifice than before and on the
third morning they discovered that Lytir had come. The wagon was so heavy
that the horses reared before they came with him to the hall. The wagon was
then set in the middle of the floor in the hall and the king went there with horn
and worshipped Lytir and said that he wanted to drink a full drinking vessel
for him and he thought that there now was a lot to do before he started on his
journey and told him like before that he would give great gifts. Lytir answered
and said he was unwilling to do this journey; he said he once arrived there in
the north. "And I run into a big troll there that I had not met before. But it was
old then and I would not have gone there if I knew that it was alive, but I expect
that it is dead now." The king said that it probably was so. Lytir said that the
king was very worthy and said that he would go. Now two ships were prepared
for Bjørn and Salgard and when they set off from Logen (Mälaren) a dragon-
ship with black tent sailed in front of them. They did not see anybody holding
the ropes. He sailed to every existing direction and then they sailed north along
the coast.

Battle of Hauk and those with Bjørn and Salgard

4. Now it must be told about Hauk and Vikhard that they arrived north at
Gandvik and six men from each ship went to Heid's, King Harald's foster-
mother's, farm. She sat by the fire and yawned widely; she was wearing a skin
cloak and the sleeves reached the elbows. Hauk delivered the greeting from King
Harald to her. She said: "I am pleased with King Harald's greeting", and said
that she would come to the ships with them. She asked them now to turn back
and said that the journey may end badly. Hauk took nothing but her services,
he was a big man and gave her the ring first. She then said: "Be praised King
Harald!" and then put the ring on her hand. "And here are additionally two
pieces of meat he sent you." "This is all good", she said. Then he gave her the
butter barrels. Then she said: "King Harald is different from other men. These
are good and valuable things that I never before have received. And if he is not
rewarded for this, then nothing will be rewarded." She took one barrel under
each arm and threw the pieces of meat on the back and said that she thought that this present was worth more than the two others. ”And my foster-son knew what I like best. Take now my advice and come with me!” And that they did. She now put up a fire and sat on the other side. They thought she was ugly on the mouth because one lip hung over the chest and the other folded over the nose. She undressed Hauk and groped him around and said: ”You are strong and have luck with you.” She asked him to kiss her and he did that. Then she asked Vikhard to take his clothes off. He took his time about it. Hauk asked him to do it and so he did. She said: ”Big man, well-equipped and terribly strong.” She asked him to kiss her and he asked all the trolls to kiss her. She answered: ”A lot of good looks is given to you.” And she said that he would probably have more bad luck than she would. She gave Hauk two clumps of stone. ”And if Bjørn and Salgard come against your ship, so throw them overboard of your ship.” They now sailed north to Bjarmaland and one night they saw that there was a ship coming towards them by an island and the men prepared to meet them so that they could ask news from each other. Hauk recognised them now, that they are Bjørn and Salgard. There was not much time for greetings and they put the ships together and fought. Now they saw that there was a dragon-ship by an island, and arrows flew from it and one man fell for each of them. And Hauk did not remember the clumps of rock the old woman had given him. Now men fell overboard on each of the ships: both Hauk and Vikhard now went to their other ship because Vikhard’s ship was cleared of men. He then went to the front and jumped over to the ship of Bjørn and Vikhard and Hauk did the same. They came behind the sail and there Bjørn and Salgard came to meet them. They plunged into a fight and it did not stop before all those that stood up were wounded. Bjørn went to the front of the ship towards Hauk and now those four fought together. It ended in Bjørn falling. Vikhard went against Salgard and when it was least expected, an arrow came from the dragon-ship and to Vikhard’s chest and he fell to the ground dead. Hauk then remembered the clumps of stone and threw them with wrath overboard so that they landed by the dragon-ship and fire sparked in the middle of its masts. Then Hauk killed Salgard but he lost his eye and none of his men were then capable of battle. He then carried his weapons and clothes onboard a boat and did not stop before he came back to the old woman Heid. He told her what had happened. She was pleased that he had returned, healed his wounds and they travelled with her as her following to the place where there were some merchants. She helped him onboard a ship with men that were
preparing to leave south along the coast. She returned from there and he did not stop his journey before he found King Harald and told him the whole story. The king was pleased that he had returned. But of Lytir it is to say that he returned and found King Eirik and said that he did not want to help him after this because of those injuries he claimed to have got from the big troll in Norway.911

Þáttr Hauks hábrókar is only found in Flateyjarbók (GKS 1005 fol, a codex written c. 1382–7) where it is placed between Óláfs saga helga and Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar (which appears in a greatly extended version).912

Þáttr Hauks hábrókar is saturated with elements of fantasy.913 The events of the saga are placed in the end of the 9th century, to the reign of King Haraldr hárfagre (c. 872–931).914 Although the saga has a sort of a historical setting, the events are by no means historical. However, despite the less credible ornamentation of the story, there may be traces of historical reality left.915 According to HAAVIO, Þáttr Hauks hábrókar reveals the ultimate reason for the Bjarmaland expeditions, namely furs.916 The furs, indeed, are mentioned in other, more reliable sources and in this respect the text at hand reflects reality. The text especially mentions greyskins that are also specifically named in Óláfs saga helga and Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar as an item of trade in Bjarmaland.917 Other features associated with Bjarmaland expeditions also appear in Þáttr Hauks hábrókar. The expedition took place in the summer (in common “Viking” manner), the men were sent by a king (as e.g. in Óláfs saga helga), a good number of men and weapons in two ships came along and Bjarmaland was situated in the north and one travelled there by sailing along the coast. These are all features that a number of other, more realistic texts also take up.918

911 My translation based on an unpublished Norwegian translation by Jan Ragnar HAGLAND.
913 See Jansson 1936, 38–39.
915 Rafn 1852, 118.
916 Haavio 1965, 148. HAAVIO’s further assumptions about permanent Norwegian representation in Bjarmaland and the dispute of the division of areas in Bjarmaland between King Harald and King Eirik are too far-fetched to be taken seriously, especially considering the highly fictitious character of the text at hand.
918 See e.g. Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232; Haralds saga ins hárfragar 1962, 134–135; Hakonar saga 1964, 70–71; Fagrskinna 1985, 79; Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar 1988, 93–94.
It is perhaps worth noticing that the commanded journey to Bjarmaland appears to be presented in formulaic manner typical to Þáttr Hauks hábrókar. In this text Haukr is sent by the Norwegian king first to Hólmgarðr in the east and later to England before the commanded expedition to Bjarmaland.\textsuperscript{919} The expedition to England is also mentioned in Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta where the character Hauk hábrök is sent to England by King Harald.\textsuperscript{920} Perhaps the author of the more imaginative Þáttr Hauks hábrókar added two other expeditions according to the model of the England expedition in Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta.

I do not see a reason to comment the plot more closely with the exception of a few special features. The opponent of the Norwegian king is King Eirik of Sweden\textsuperscript{921}. It is interesting that Sweden appears in connection with Bjarmaland in a few of the younger texts including Bósa saga ok Herrauðs, Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar and Sturlaug's saga starfsama as well as in Gesta Danorum (that also names King Erik).\textsuperscript{922} In Þáttr Hauks hábrókar the Mälaren area is mentioned.

Þáttr Hauks hábrókar has something in common with Hákonar saga Hákunarsonar as well. Namely, King Eirik of Sweden asks Björn and Salgard to go to Surtzdal and Bjarmaland. This combination of Suzdal' and Bjarmaland is only otherwise mentioned in Hákonar saga Hákunarsonar in connection with the penultimate Norwegian expedition to Bjarmaland around 1220.\textsuperscript{923}

Heid took Hauk "to the place where there are some merchants" in order to send him back home to King Harald by sailing south along the coast. Whether this place still is in Bjarmaland and whether it has anything to do with trade with the Bjarmians is not clear. It would rather seem that it has no bearing to Bjarmaland, which appears only as a background of events. Neither the land nor the Bjarmians are really presented in the text.

Finally, it is worth noticing that Gandvík is mentioned. In connection with Bjarmaland it is first mentioned in Óláfs saga helga and appears also in Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar.\textsuperscript{924} The text in Þáttr Hauks hábrókar says that one sailed north

\textsuperscript{919} Flateyjarbók 1860, 577–579.
\textsuperscript{920} Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta 2001, 28.
\textsuperscript{921} Seemingly an unhistorical character. However, one of the early kings of Sweden was called Erik, although his reign is dated later (around 990) than that of Harald hárfagre’s (c. 872–931). See Årstallsliste 1993, 52, 54.
\textsuperscript{922} See Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 552–558, 626–630; Bósa saga 1893, 3–4; Saxonis Gesta Danorum 1931, 137–138.
\textsuperscript{923} See Hakonar saga 1964, 70–71.
\textsuperscript{924} See Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 552–558; Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232.
to Gandvik and then north to Bjarmaland. This is a very imprecise description. However, it gives the impression that one had not reached Bjarmaland just by reaching Gandvik, but needed to travel a bit further. Gandvik became associated with sorcery and magic\textsuperscript{925} and in this sense it is a suitable location for an old woman with magic skills. Also Bjarmaland became associated with magic and fantasy in the younger sagas, after the Norwegian expeditions there had ceased and in this sense Bjarmaland is a perfect setting for events including magic.\textsuperscript{926}

All in all, the text at hand is a combination of fantasy and a few facts associated with Bjarmaland. It would seem like the author was familiar with a number of earlier written accounts of Bjarmaland since many details mentioned in these are in some way present in \textit{þátt Hauks hábrókar}. Bjarmaland or the Bjarmians are not presented in any detail, the area simply remains as a setting for some of the events, as a sort of reference without much substance. The story does not require any substance either, just a suitably faraway place where the imaginative events can take place.

5.13 Icelandic annals

1. Flateyborgens Annaler

1222. Andres skialldarband ok Juarr af Vtvikum heriudu til Biarmalandz. (Flateyjarbok 1868:526)

\textit{Andrew shieldband and Ivar outwick harried in Bjarmaland.}\textsuperscript{927}

2. Annales Reseniani

1222. b. Herfor til Biarmalandz Andres oc Ivars. (Islandske Annaler 1888:24)

\textit{Andrew and Ivar went to warfare in Bjarmaland.}

3. Henrik Høyers Annaler


\textit{Andrew and Ivar went to warfare in Bjarmaland.}

4. Annales Regii

\textsuperscript{925} See Storm 1894, 97.

\textsuperscript{926} See Haavio 1965, 196.

\textsuperscript{927} My translation is based on Jan Ragnar HAGLAND’s Norwegian translation. See E-mail letter to the author from Jan Ragnar Hagland 24.9.2002. This applies to all the six excerpts.

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b o. Andres skialldarbannd ok Jvarr af Útvikvm heriaðv til Biarmalanndz. (Islandske Annaler 1888:126)

Andrew shieldband and Ivar outwick harried in Bjarmaland.

5. Skálholts-Annaler

b o. Andres skialldar bannd ok Jvarr af Útvikvm herivðu til Biarma landz. (Islandske Annaler 1888:185)

Andrew shieldband and Ivar outwick harried in Bjarmaland.

6. Gottskalks Annaler

b o. Andres skialldar band og Iuar heriuðu til Biarma lands. (Islandske Annaler 1888:326)

Andrew shieldband and Ivar outwick harried in Bjarmaland.

It used to be thought that the Icelandic annals were a product of the 13th century, but research has shown that they are mostly of considerably later date. The different versions of the Icelandic annals are probably based on one original version that was written most likely around 1280. *Annales Reseniani* (*Resensannáll*), *Høyers annáll* and *Annales regii* (*Konungsannáll*) belong to the so-called oldest annals that were written down in the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th century. All are derived from a common tradition beginning around 1280. *Skálholtsannáll* and *Flateyjarannáll* were written in the end of the 14th century. *Gottskálsannáll* was written in the 16th century and is based on lost medieval annals. It is much younger than the rest of the annals but it is included here because the text is essentially identical to the rest and shows how tradition was passed on. Sagas (e.g. *Heimskringla* and *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*) were undoubtedly used as a source for the annals, but it is possible that not all the information in the annals is secondary to the information in the sagas as has often been categorically assumed. To begin with it was considered that no annals were written prior to the first known annals, but later on it has been demonstrated that certain entries must derive from the 12th century and are based on contemporary records. A large number of entries from the 12th-13th centuries cannot be derived from known historical works or
sagas. Icelandic annals are an important historical source but the analysis of their interrelationship and their relation to the various sources is far from complete. The Icelandic annals do not add anything new to our knowledge of Bjarmaland, except perhaps a confirmed dating of Andres and Ivar’s expedition to Bjarmaland in 1222, mentioned in Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar. The information about Bjarmaland in the annals is identical to the saga text, which is not surprising since the saga with all probability is the origin of the information. Since annals in general are of late origin, they should not be used as a primary source unless the original has disappeared and this is not the case here. Although there seems to prevail a consensus that the annals are to be treated as a secondhand source, this need not always be the case. However, close studies of what pieces of information may precede the sagas and what were added on the basis of the sagas have not been made. Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar was written quite soon after the events described in it and this makes it perhaps unlikely or at least irrelevant to explore further which of the texts, the saga or the annals, is the older. In any case, there are no serious studies available to judge this.

As mentioned above, Andres and Ivar’s expedition to Bjarmaland is more lavishly described in Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar. Perhaps it can be said that since the knowledge of this expedition was included in the annals, it was considered as important and the matter of Norwegian expeditions to Bjarmaland was of considerable interest to the Scandinavian authors.

5.14 Into the realm of imagination

The thirteen excerpts of this chapter are of varying character. What they have in common is that they were all written fairly late, from after the middle of the 13th century until around 1400, and are to some extent drawing their information from earlier sources. They are as a rule unhistorical and despite a number of fairly realistic accounts, the majority of the texts are directly fictitious. Fantasy elements offer entertainment value to forrnaldarsögur where fictitious motifs are much more common than in realistic saga literature. The realism in the texts is mostly based

928 Storm 1888, LXVIII-LXIX; Häme 1987a, 157; Pálsson–Edwards 1990a, 94; Benediktsson 1993a, 15; Eldbjørg Haug, “De islandske annaler som historisk kilde”. Seminar 30.4.2003, Senter for middelalderstudier, NTNU.
930 Pritsak 1981, 574.
931 Dusent 1964, x-xi, xxvi; Schach 1993, 259–260.
on the earlier, realistic texts that were used as inspiration, whereas the fantastical element serves to demonstrate how the earlier realistic Bjarmaland image of the Scandinavians turned into unrealistic Bjarmaland of “wild-goose-chase” without holding points in reality.

Some of the excerpts might contain traces of historical tradition, but the veracity of the details is difficult to judge. The younger the text the more unlikely it is that real historical information is included. It is likely that many realistically sounding pieces of information have been borrowed from earlier texts and if the later source presents a more detailed account one must suspect that the more elaborate details are invented.

Óláfs saga helga seems to have been the most important source that either directly or indirectly has influenced many texts. Ævar-Odds saga, Bósa saga and Sturlaug's saga storfsama as well as Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka show clear similarities with Óláfs saga helga. However, since Ævar-Odds saga is older than most of the other texts in this chapter, it is possible that many of the later texts (e.g. Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka) that show influence of Óláfs saga helga actually plagiarise Ævar-Odds saga that is partially quite heavily influenced by Óláfs saga helga. The Icelandic annals (late 13th century-16th century) seem to repeat information that is found in Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar. This saga may have been used as a source for other texts as well, including the fairly imaginative Þáttr Hauks hábrókar that may additionally be influenced by Óláfs saga helga. Saga Heiðreks konungs ens vitra and Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar mention the possibility to reach Suzdal’ in Russia via Bjarmaland. Perhaps Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar inspired Saga Heiðreks konungs ens vitra. Hálfdanar saga Eysteinnsonar may have gotten inspiration from either Óláfs saga helga or Ævar-Odds saga since all these texts mention Gandvik.

Many of the fornaldarsögur (especially Sturlaug's saga storfsama, Bósa saga ok Herrauðs, Ævar-Odds saga and Hálfdanar saga Eysteinnsonar) contain many similar motifs. This may be partially due to the tradition of writing that was concerned with certain motifs but one may also assume that the sagas were influenced by each another or have at least received inspiration from similar sources. Several similar names in the fornaldarsögur would suggest that the similarities are not only due to the tradition of writing that was interested in certain

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933 Unrecorded by dictionaries, Modern Icelandic to some extent uses the word bjarmalandsför in the sense “wild-goose-chase”. Ross 1940, 39 footnote 17a.
934 HÄME notes that Bósa saga and Ævar-Odds saga are based on Óláfs saga helga. Häme 1987a, 237–238.
motifs but that the authors used the same written (or oral) sources in forming their own story.

Some texts give next to no factual information about Bjarmaland. However, it is significant as such that Bjarmaland is mentioned since it does tell us that at the time of the writing Bjarmaland was a known location even if it was not necessarily a well-known one. It may be, however, that Bjarmaland was only known through literature. If this were the case, it would have allowed Bjarmaland to be an area where imaginative adventures took place.

Eymundar saga (1300 onwards) seemingly has replaced the Polish or the Pechenegs of the original Russian sources with the Bjarmians who were more familiar to the Scandinavian audiences and accordingly this source cannot be regarded as giving any insight into the Bjarmians. Few other texts must be included in the category of sources that do not reveal anything of value about the historical Bjarmaland since Pátr Hauks hábrókar (by 1380) and Hálfdánar saga Brönufostra (c. 1300) also come close to reducing Bjarmaland into a mere name without substance. Although Pátr Hauks hábrókar is quite imaginative in some respects, certain elements in the Bjarmaland description indicate that the author had access to and knowledge of earlier texts about Bjarmaland. In any case, the information about Bjarmaland in Pátr Hauks hábrókar is secondhand knowledge that has been far removed even from its source by imaginative additions. Hálfdanar saga Æysteinnssonar (1300–1350 and onwards) is full of elaborate details but Bjarmaland is presented in imaginative light and appears as a suitable background for action. However, the text offers us a general impression of where Bjarmaland was located in the author’s understanding, i.e. in the vicinity of Karelia and Russia. One step more realistic are Sturlaugs saga starfsama (early 14th century) and Bósa saga (before 1350), but this is only due to the sources that seem to be responsible for the presentation of Bjarmaland. However, despite the sources, these texts too present Bjarmaland in highly fictitious light, already far removed from the more realistic sources.

The rest of the texts of this chapter (Landnámabók: Hjörleifr Hörðakonungr, Hálfs saga ok Hálfreks, Órvar-Oddssaga, Njáls saga Borgirssonar, Saga Heiðreks konungs ens vita, Áns saga Bogsveigis and the Icelandic annals) are perhaps slightly less imaginative, but not necessarily more informative. Again, the more realistic accounts of Bjarmaland are seemingly based on earlier sources and do not actually add anything original to our knowledge of Bjarmaland. They simply serve to accentuate the image of the Bjarmians that prevailed in Scandinavia during the late 13th and the 14th centuries. This image does not seem to be too far removed
from the earlier factual image in some respects whereas in other respects fantasy elements are already in place. The texts still portray Bjarmaland as a destination of “Viking” expeditions with both looting and trade as important elements. On the other hand, the texts at times include more elaborate details that are not found in the earlier texts. These details do not always seem to be directly fantasy as such but they certainly appear more imaginary than realistic and are likely to spring mostly from the authors’ imagination.

Landnámabók (13th-14th century), Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka (14th century), Órvar-Oddssaga (13th century), Saga Heiðreks konings ens vitra (early 14th century) and Áns saga Bogsveigis (early 15th century) (as well as Þáttr Hauks hábrókar) all follow to some extent a formula (sailing through north, looting, trading) that is familiar from a number of earlier sagas. One may assume that the authors were familiar with both the manner of writing as well as many details associated with Bjarmaland expeditions and used this knowledge freely to create their own work. It is difficult to judge if the authors had any knowledge of Bjarmaland beyond the written sources. This need not have been the case but it cannot be excluded either. In any case, Bjarmaland at the time of the writing of these texts would have been different from Bjarmaland of earlier centuries. Also, since the connections between Bjarmaland and Norway at the time were of different character and probably less frequent than during earlier centuries one cannot expect the 14th century authors to have been familiar with the circumstances in Bjarmaland. Even if contemporary knowledge of the authors would have been a contributing factor it could not have covered the events from earlier centuries that are related in the texts.

Njáls saga (c. 1300) and Saga Heiðreks konings ens vitra offer very few details about Bjarmaland and their contribution is thus limited to affirming further the location of Bjarmaland as northerly and close to Russia. Áns saga bogsveigis seems to lack historical background for the described expedition, but many of the features are consistent with what we know about the Norwegian Bjarmaland expeditions and we can assume that the tale is based on earlier, more realistic accounts or at least is striving to reach the tone and manner of that type of writing. The Icelandic annals also seemingly draw their information from the sagas but the annals offer us nothing new since Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar gives us many more details than the annals. As for Órvar-Oddssaga, its description of the first Bjarmaland expedition is so heavily relying on the description in Óláfs saga helga that one must treat it as a copy. The other references to Bjarmaland in Órvar-Oddssaga are either imaginary or very meagre, but the recurrence of the name Bjarmaland would seem
tos indicate that the author was also familiar with other texts than Óláfs saga helga that mention Bjarmaland and knew that many expeditions had been made to this destination.

In principal, the reference in Landnámabók could be expected to be relatively reliable since it was written comparatively early. However, the events described in it are very early and thus the gap between the events and the writing is long and one may with fair reason doubt the accuracy of the details.\(^{935}\) Actually, the account follows largely the tradition of telling of such expeditions and the story as such is realistic, although one may wonder at the early dating. On the other hand, it may be simply a question of invented details and persons that were used in a formulaic story line that includes plundering.

The Bjarmaland episode in Landnámabók should be seen together with the related account in Hálfs saga ok Hálfrekka for although the reference in Landnámabók was written down fairly early, it contains an element of unreliability that is always bound with events from early times. Perhaps Hálfs saga ok Hálfrekka was written after the model of Landnámabók and it pushed the events even further back in time and used the liberty of this early dating to invent the required details after the example of Landnámabók and other texts that the author might have been familiar with. In any case, these two accounts follow the example of the earlier saga texts in relating Bjarmaland expeditions. The texts are not lavish like the other late texts but follow the older formula that includes battles and kings of Norway related in realistic tone and few words.

Earlier texts all talk of the northern route whenever route is mentioned. Later ones have dual view: some still only mention north, others set the journey to Bjarmaland in connection with the Baltic Sea area. The references to the northern route can in many instances be set in connection with the earlier texts that were used as sources for many of the later accounts. In other words, many of the later fantasy sagas follow the traditions of earlier writing where the northern route is a standard. The following texts treated in this chapter mention the northern route: Páttar Hauks hábrókar, Hálfðánar saga Brónufóstra, Sturlaugr saga starfsama, Landnámabók, Hálfs saga ok Hálfrekka, Áns saga Bogsvéigis (not explicit) and Orvar-Oddssaga.

The Baltic approach to Bjarmaland is mentioned in Bósa saga and Hálfdánar saga Eysteinssonar. Both of these are fairly fictitious and the Baltic perspective can

\(^{935}\) In the case of events from the 9th century, it is clear that the conditions and events of the time of writing have influenced the accounts. Häme 1987a, 237. In general 9th century events are considered historically unreliable. See e.g. Pálsson–Edwards 1968, 7–12, 14; Pálsson–Edwards 1990b, 1, 23.
be seen as one of the symptoms that disregarding conventions connected with Bjarmaland produced. Although the later accounts of Bjarmaland follow conventions of earlier writing, the stories also become increasingly fictitious.

JACKSON has observed how the Mythical-Heroic Sagas often develop further the plots of the Kings’ Sagas.936 It seems as if the late texts about Bjarmaland often are interdependent and the authors used the same sources to mould their own story. It is typical to medieval Scandinavian writing that the authors exploited earlier texts and even directly plagiarised longer or shorter excerpts without directly mentioning the sources. This in many ways increases the reliability of these texts.937 However, copying does not give us any new information, either.

In a way the later sagas retain the manner of telling about the Bjarmaland expeditions and battles and looting still have a central position. At times the late texts strive to reach the appearance and feel of the earlier sagas. In other cases imagination has taken over and the familiar motif of looting has turned into magnanimous plots of conquer and tribute.

All in all, the sources of this chapter give a dual image of Bjarmaland as seen in the late 13th and the 14th century Scandinavia. On the one hand, the tradition of the earlier sources was carried on in the presentations that consequently contain somewhat historically correct pieces of information about Bjarmaland. On the other hand, this more realistic view was paralleled by increasingly more fictitious presentations of Bjarmaland. According to Galina GLAZYRINA, the early image of Bjarmaland in the Scandinavian written sources was based on real information about the area, but the image of Bjarmaland went through a significant transformation in the later sources. The significance of concrete geographical information diminished and the artistic elements increased. Real geographical material and historical and literary traditions were combined. The saga authors’ interest in Bjarmaland is connected with the requirements of the genre that demanded the stage of the events to be such that it was possible for the hero to display his heroic characteristics.938

It is interesting to notice that the more fictitious the plot, the more lavish the details of the story are. This is probably because it was easy to invent details when one was not bound with any historical ties and one could include all the details the inner logic of the text required. It was still possible to use earlier texts as background and inspiration, but one was not bound by the often sparse details. The

936 Jackson 1993, 44.
inventiveness became even easier when one also abandoned the attempts to make the new story similar to the old ones in terms of the tradition of writing.

All the texts written after the mid-13th century seem removed from reality. At this time the regular connections from Norway to Bjarmaland had waned or were at least different than before and consequently personal knowledge of the area must have become more sparse. The later tradition of writing is different and much more prone to fantasy and pure adventure. At this point the texts did not attempt to convey history and the stories had become entertainment. However, older sources were still used as inspiration. Sometimes details and events were copied fairly literally but the plot was enhanced with adventures, action and pure fantasy. Only the stories about the wealth of Bjarmaland and the adventures of the Norwegians in there survived. Bjarmaland had become remote enough as a setting for fantasy adventures. It is interesting to notice that the change in character of the texts took place fairly quickly. There are not more than a few decades between the last “historical” texts and the earliest imaginative texts. The change applies to the whole tradition of writing that changed from “historical” writing to entertainment. The image of Bjarmaland changed from a reality bound one into fanciful in the wake of this general change.

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939 *Fornaldarsögur* (Mythical-Heroic Sagas) originated as a genre in the twelfth century. The actual *fornaldarsaga* period extended from ca. 1300 to 1400. In general, historical fact and creative storywriting are present in the sagas. Historical accuracy was not allowed to interfere with the entertaining aspect and many of the most entertaining sagas are nearly devoid of all historical information. The Sagas of Icelanders and the Kings’ Sagas have a firm historical basis for much of the material, but the historical content of the *fornaldarsögur* is comparatively slight and they were written primarily as entertainment. However, despite the legendary traits these sagas have preserved qualities of the saga tradition. The highly fictitious *fornaldarsögur* were extremely popular among the contemporary audiences. Pálsson–Edwards 1968, 7, 10–14; Zitzelsberger 1986, 4–6; Häme 1987a, 10–11, 236; Pálsson–Edwards 1990b, 1, 23; Krag 1995, 88.

940 It is possible that the supernatural motifs may have had a narratological role much in the same way as non-Christian marvels in medieval French stories were either used to decorate the stories or they serve a practical role determined by the plot. Guðmundsdóttir 2006, 38.
6 Bjarmaland in early medieval landscape

6.1 Norwegian expeditions to Bjarmaland

Most of the sources give information about Bjarmaland in connection with Norwegian expeditions. In the following I will try to decipher the nature of these expeditions. This includes all extant information about the participants (their number, station and homestead), number of ships, the duration of the journey, dating of the expedition, and last but not least, the motivation.

In many cases it is possible to tell where the expeditioners came from. In all the cases, the leaders of the expedition were (at least originally) Norwegian. The northern part of the country is dominant. In many cases Hálogaland is mentioned, usually without specifying the area further. In Óláfs saga helga the leader of the original expedition, Karli, came from Hálogaland, as did Thórir who joined the expedition. In this case we even know that Karli’s home was in Langø in Vesterålen and Thórir’s in Bjarkø in northern Hálogaland. In Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar the text refers to the slain Norwegians as “Háleygir”, men of Hálogaland and this is probably the place where the men of this expedition came from. The same source also mentions that the expeditions returned “back home to Hálogaland” and also this clearly indicates that all the participants were from this part of the country. In principal, this need not have been the case since part of the crew could have been hired from other parts of the country. There are, however, no indications of such a practise and in all probability all the participants as a rule came from the same area and in many cases are likely to have been in service of the leader of the expedition already before the journey. Ohthere was said to live in northern Hálogaland, most likely at Malangen Fjord or thereabouts, somewhere in vicinity of Tromsø.Ǫrvar-Odd of Ǫrvar-Oddssaga who travelled to Bjarmaland was also from Hálogaland in Norway. Gesta Danorum mentions a king of Hálogaland who had contact with the Bjarmians and Hálogaland is also mentioned otherwise in connection with Bjarmian/Norwegian relations.

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941 Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232.
942 Hakonar saga 1964, 70–71.
943 See e.g. Nansen 1911, 131 footnote 1; Johnsen 1923, 7; Malone 1930, 158; Tallgren 1931, 101; Ross 1940, 2 footnote 16a; Simonsen 1957, 8; Sjøvold 1974, 302; Gunnes 1976, 70; Lund 1983, 7; Suvanto 1987, 11.
944 Haavio 1965, 148.
945 Saxonis Gesta Danorum 1931, 65, 226, 228, 238–240.
On a few occasions Namdalen in Nord-Trøndelag, south of Hålogaland, is mentioned. In Æs saga Bogsidegin the expeditioners come from Namdalen. In Sturlaug Saga starfsgama the hero who travels to Bjarmaland is a son of a chieftain in Namdalen (Naumudælafylki). It seems though, that this expedition started from Trondheim, south of Namdalen. In Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka the expeditioners stop in Namdalen on their way to Bjarmaland from Hordaland or Rogaland. The sources that mention Namdalen are, however, not among the most reliable (if not among the most imaginative either).

A couple of times a more southerly part of the country is mentioned. Hordaland and Fjordane are mentioned as the kingdom of Eirikr who travelled to Bjarmaland (in Egils saga Skallagrímssonar). Rogaland is mentioned in Landnámabók in connection with Hjör’s expedition to Bjarmaland. In Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka both Rogaland and Hordaland are mentioned as kingdoms of Hjorleif Hörðakonúngr who journeyed to Bjarmaland. The authenticity of these two narratives is, however, questionable. The sources open for the possibility that kings ruling kingdoms in the south of Norway also travelled to Bjarmaland. These journeys would most likely commence from Rogaland, Hordaland or Fjordane.

The conclusion is that Hålogaland is the dominant area of origin (and appears in the most reliable sources) of the Norwegian Bjarmaland expeditions. There are some indications that the Trøndelag area was also active in this respect, and the more southerly part of the coastal Norway could in some cases be active as well. It is not a big surprise that Hålogaland would have produced the most active Bjarmaland travellers since it is geographically closest to the White Sea. The journey from Hålogaland to Bjarmaland took a minimum sailing time of a fortnight in one direction. It would seem natural that journey towards the north would be most tempting for those who lived in the north themselves. Actually, the journey from Hålogaland to Bjarmaland is shorter than the journey from Hålogaland to e.g. Oslo. Probably the Northern Norwegians were quite familiar with the Bjarmian area since there had been interaction between Northern Fennoscandia and the

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946 Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1829, 360.
947 Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 592.
948 Antiquités Russes 1850, 86.
949 Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar 1988, 93–94.
950 Antiquités Russes 1852, 232.
951 Antiquités Russes 1850, 86.
953 Leppäaho 1964, 82–83.
White Sea area ever since the Stone Age. Norwegians did not shun long sea travels, but for the people from the south of the country there would have been other alternatives closer by in other directions, and these were probably chosen more often either out of tradition or lucrativeness.

Curt WEIBULL finds that "Viking" expeditions were private affairs, lead mostly by chieftains on their own account and seldom by kings. There existed independently-acting merchants, but the rulers also took an active interest in trade. In many cases the sources indicate that the king was involved in the Bjarmaland expeditions. King Eiríkr travelled to Bjarmaland according to Egils saga Skallagrímssonar, Fagrskinna and Haralds saga hárfragr (in Heimskringla). According to Heimskringla King Haraldr gráfeldr sailed to Bjarmaland with his fleet. The same information is repeated in Kormáks saga. In Magnús saga berfætts (in Heimskringla) King Hákon Magnússon Toresfóstre travelled to Bjarmaland. Landnámabók mentions king Hjórr’s expedition to Bjarmaland and in Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka Hjórr’s grandfather King Hjörleifr Hörðakonúr travels to Bjarmaland. In Óláfs saga helga Karli undertook the expedition on the assignment of King Olaf and the two were partners, although the king himself did not join the expedition. He simply helped to finance and equip it and expected part of the profits as payment. The instigator of one trip was seemingly Thorgeir höggvinkinne who was a retainer of King Hákon. It is not clear whether Thorgeir was the instigator of the expedition alone, or whether the king was in some way involved. If Thorgeir had solid enough financial resources, he might have been able to set out on an expedition on his own, otherwise he probably was doing so on the king’s behalf. It is in fact even likely that the king was involved, considering the information given in other sources. More imaginative sources mention the king’s involvement as well. Patr Hauks hábrókar mentions an expedition initiated by a king. He sent some of his men to fetch furs from Bjarmaland, but did not join the expedition himself. Also in

955 Weibull 1964, 35.
959 Magnúss saga berfætts 1951, 212.
960 Antiquités Russes 1850, 86; Antiquités Russes 1852, 232.
961 Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232.
962 Landnámabók 1921, 35.
963 Antiquités Russes 1852, 122–125.
Sturlaug's saga starsama as well as in Bósa saga ok Herrauðs the king sends the hero on a mission to Bjarmaland. In Hálfdanar saga Eysteinnsonar kings of Norway are going to Bjarmaland. Seemingly Ohthere who was from Hálogaland was the instigator of his own expedition to Bjarmaland. In Qvar-Odds saga the expedition to Bjarmaland is also a private affair of Qvar-Odd and his two brothers who are sons of a rich family. According to Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar a number of men from Hálogaland (including “Andrew of Seven-times, and Sweyn Sigurd’s son, and Ógmund of Spanheim, and many others”) travelled to Bjarmaland. Later on another expedition was set up to revenge the killing of participants of the previous expedition. Also this trip was seemingly started on the initiative of the local men from Hálogaland. STORM, however, notes that Andres and Ivar who led the second expedition were king’s men. Although there are indications in other texts that kings were partners in Bjarmaland expeditions, in this case the text does not give any specific information about a direct involvement of the king. It is possible that despite the connection between the king and the two men from Hálogaland, the Bjarmaland expedition was a private affair even if it was at odds with the law that monopolised the northern fur trade. It might have been difficult to stop the Hálogalandians from going to Bjarmaland since they by all accounts had long traditions in travelling there on private expeditions.

There can be many reasons why royalty is mentioned in connection with Bjarmaland. First of all, it may be that royalty was involved in such expeditions. On the other hand, royalty may well be an addition to make a tale worth telling, since it may have been mostly regular people who travelled. The fact that sagas concentrate on royalty may come from a tradition of storytelling. Sagas are definitely concerned with people of high social standing and a number of sagas concentrate in relating the life of the Norwegian kings. It is possible that

964 Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 616, 624; Bósa saga 1893, 20–21.
965 Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 534–535.
966 However, STORLI has noted that it is unclear whether Ohthere’s expedition was a one-man enterprise or wheather it was carried out on behalf of, or in partnership with, others. Storli 2007, 98. I personally do not see any indications in the account to suggest that Ohthere would have travelled to Bjarmaland on behalf of someone else. On the contrary, the account leaves the reader with a distinct feeling that he was in charge of all the aspects of the expedition.
967 Qvar-Odd 1888, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36.
968 Hakonar saga 1964, 70–71.
969 Storm 1894, 99.
970 See Ólafs saga helga 1945, 227–232.
expeditions that involve a king are overrepresented in the sources because these were deemed most interesting.

Kings are often associated with Bjarmaland expeditions in the imaginative Mythical-Heroic Sagas, but kings are also mentioned in the more historical sources. Expeditions of the kings were probably preferred in the written sources because local wealthy farmers or chieftains were not deemed heroic and interesting enough and consequently the expeditions related in the written sources most likely have a slightly too aristocratic aura. Kings and chieftains most likely were involved, but common people should not be excluded either. It seems like the sources only record occasions when the wealthiest or the most powerful members of the society were involved. The perspective of the sagas can have several reasons. First of all there is the fact that the rich and the powerful were deemed more interesting on general basis. Kings of Norway are possibly attached to Bjarmaland expeditions also because Bjarmaland was considered as one of the “Viking” destinations and an expedition to Bjarmaland would underline the king’s role as a heroic “Viking”. In the case of the Bjarmaland expeditions particularly it may be that mentioning these expeditions offered a chance to enhance the financial interests of the Norwegian crown. A Norwegian law from around 1105/1115\(^{971}\) says that the Norwegian king had a monopoly to buy furs north of Vennesund (in southern Hålogaland/Helgeland).\(^{972}\) The northerly destination was perhaps chosen specifically because of the crown’s attempts to bring Hålogaland more firmly under its rule.\(^{973}\) Kings’ involvement in Bjarmaland expeditions would accentuate the kings’ involvement in the northern financial affairs and if the kings’ role in the financial affairs of the north became more accepted the kings hold of the north

\(^{971}\) This law is found in the 1260 edition of Frostatingslov that goes partially back to just before the middle of the 11\(^{th}\) century. However, it is considered that the section XVI, 2 (rettarböter) of Frostatingslov that contains the remark about fur trade was added around 1105 or 1115. Norges Gamle Love 1846, 257; Johnsen 1923, 16; Hagland–Sandnes 1994, x-xi, xxxiii.


\(^{973}\) During the 10–11\(^{th}\) centuries the sovereignty of the ruler of Norway over the Arctic area continued to be declarative rather than real. Some attempts of Christianisation left only superficial traces, old pagan customs lived on and local chieftains kept their independence. The Norwegian kings had allies in the north, but there existed also opposition. It is perhaps only in the very late 11\(^{th}\) century that one may speak of more stable linkage between the northern part of Hålogaland and the stately structure. The linkage became even tighter after the early 12\(^{th}\) century and the church had a central role in the consolidation. The reign of Sverre Sigurdsson (1177–1202) put an end to the internal fighting in Norway (civil wars) and this contributed to reforms of economic and administratve systems and resulted in ending the independence of the Arctic families. Also the fact that the ladejarler were not a factor after 1029 contributed to the king’s benefit. The Norwegian crown set bailiffs for collecting taxes in Hålogaland and Trondelag after 995. Urbańczyk 1992, 44–46; Krag 2000, 67–69; Storli 2007, 87, 96.
could become firmer. Perhaps the 13th century writers were trying to give the impression that the kings had been involved already early on in the financial affairs of the north (and probably they really had had interest in the financial resources of the north even before they in reality had political power in Hálogaland and the possibility to take full profit). The authors may have had it in their interest to enhance the kings’ political interests since they at least in some cases worked on the commission of the king.974

We know that the king or other wealthy people975 could go to an expedition to Bjarmaland. They could not, however, sail there alone. Some of the sources give indications as to who the crew on the ships were. Óláfís saga helga976 mentions that the crew on Thórir’s ship consisted of his manservants. The text indicates also more indirectly who the crew on the brothers’ ship on the same expedition might have been. Karli mentions that he would have taken more men with him from home if he knew how many men Thórir was bringing. This indicates that it is possible and even likely that at least some of the brothers’ crew came from Hálogaland, from Karli’s home in Langey. Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar977 mentions that the crew on the described expedition consisted of bóndasonum, sons of yeomen. Besides this we have no indications of the background of the crew. In any case, on the basis of the information we have available, it is fairly safe to conclude that in most cases the crew consisted of local men, either hired for the occasion or already in allegiance to the leader of the expedition.

In many cases the number of the ships is mentioned and sometimes also the number of the crew. King Haraldr’s following, as presented in Kormák’s saga, included at least two ships, possibly more since the saga text mentions that only the names of two commanders were recorded.978 Two ships of this kind would mean a crew of about 50–60 men and each new ship would increase the number by around thirty men.979 The expedition mentioned in Óláfís saga helga consisted of two ships. We are informed that there were nearly 30 men onboard the brothers’ ship.980 It is possible there was room for even more men on the ship since the text indicates that the brothers would have taken more men with them if they knew how many men

975 Long-distance voyages required extraordinary resources. Storli 2007, 84–85.
976 Óláfís saga helga 1945, 227–232.
977 Hakonar saga 1964, 70–71.
978 Kormák’s saga 1939, 294–296.
979 About the number of the crew see e.g. Crumlin-Pedersen 1983, 32–35; Sjøvold 1985, 22; Christensen 1987, 7; Binns 1993b, 578.
980 Óláfís saga helga 1945, 227–232.
Thórir was going to bring. Thórir’s ship was larger, half warship, half merchantman, and took nearly 80 men. Consequently, the total number of Norwegians on this journey was over a hundred. The first expedition mentioned in Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar comprised of “many men” and two ships. The second expedition comprised of four ships.981 We are not told the number of the crew on these ships, but around 25–30 men per ship should be a fairly realistic estimate. Two ships would consequently mean around 50–60 men in total and accordingly four ships around 100–120 men. It is hard to consider any larger crew, although we hear of a crew of 80 men in one ship in Óláfs saga helga. If we think of this number as maximum, the total number of men could reach 160–320, but this number seems very large. A minimum number of crew on a very small vessel can be counted as 10 men per ship. Consequently the minimum number of crew on these two expeditions would range from 20–40, but this number feels small, although perhaps more likely than the maximum number. Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka mentions that there were 90 men onboard the ship.982 This is a rather large number in light of what is generally mentioned, but considering that Óláfs saga helga mentions a crew of almost 80, it is feasible that the crew amounted to 90 men. However, the saga is not very reliable, and it is quite possible the number is exaggerated. Áns saga Bogsveigis relates that four ships joined the expedition.983 Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar mentions the same amount and it seems like this number was generally accepted by the audience and thus within the limits of what was considered normal. Pátr Hauks hárókar and Órvar-Oddssaga mention the realistic sounding two ships.984 In Bósa saga ok Herrauds only one ship set on the expedition with a realistic sounding crew of twenty-four.985

Beyond this the sources do not mention how many ships or men joined the expeditions. In many cases it seems like at least two ships would go together, but for example in Ohthere’s account it is implicit that only one ship set out on the journey. None of the sources tell of more than four ships. The average number of men per ship not exceeding 30 sounds most realistic and likely. This kind of expedition would include maximum around 100–120 men although if all the ships were large nearly 300 men could join in principle. It seems, thought, that this

981 Hákonar saga 1964, 70–71.
982 Antiquités Russes 1850, 86.
983 Formáldar sögur Nordrlanda 1829, 360.
984 Antiquités Russes 1852, 122–125; Órvar-Odd 1888, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36.
985 Bósa saga 1893, 20–21. However, the Bjarmians sailed to Gotaland with twenty-three ships. See Bósa saga 1968, 75–76.
number is so large that it would have been difficult to assemble this many men on one single expedition and still expect some profit. Even if the nature of the expedition would have required considerable manpower it is likely that a lesser number not exceeding some hundred men would have been sufficient even for more belligerent purposes. All in all, a normal expedition could include anything between one and four ships with a minimum crew of around 25–30 men if one ship was involved, 50–60 men if two ships were involved and 100–120 men if four ships were involved.

Mostly we are not told the type of vessel that was used. In Óláfs saga helga it is mentioned that Thórir preferred to sail with a large vessel that was half warship, half merchantman. It seems, though, that this was not the regular choice since the brothers who joined Thórir were surprised and dismayed by Thórir’s choice of vessel, because it carried more men than the brothers had with them. So it seems like a somewhat smaller vessel was more commonly used. The choice of vessel would obviously depend on the motivation of the journey. For a peaceful trading expedition one would not need a large crew but if one had intentions of looting a larger number of men would be desirable and consequently a larger ship that would carry many men with arms was required.

We are told about relatively few expeditions ranging over a number of centuries. In some cases the dating that is implicit in the text may be fairly reliable, e.g. when one of the kings travelled to Bjarmaland it is possible to date the expedition within a comparatively limited range of time. In some of the younger, more fictitious texts events from the remote past are mentioned. In these cases the dating cannot be relied on, in fact it is likely that no such expedition ever took place. It may be simply that an account of an expedition is modelled on the basis of some known event and dated randomly to an early period.

Ohthere’s journey to Bjarmaland is the earliest reliable expedition mentioned in the written sources. It has been dated to c. 875, in any case between 870–890. After this expedition in the end of the 9th century there is a gap in the sources before the next expedition placed in the early decades of the 10th century. King Eiríkr’s expedition to Bjarmaland is mentioned in three sources, in Haralds saga hárfragra (in Heimskringla), Egils saga Skallagrímssonar and Fagrskinna. This expedition took place during the first half of the 10th century, most likely in the early 930’s.
probably between 930–932. King Hákon “the Good” Adalsteinfostra’s expedition to Bjarmaland probably took place during his rule (935–961). Haralds saga gráfeldar (in Heimskringla) and Kormáks saga indicate that Haraldr gráfeldr’s expedition took place in the 960’s or early 970’s. Suggestions range from 960 to 965, 970 and 974. These three expeditions took place during the 10th century, during successive reigns of kings. It seems like it was a tradition to verify that the 10th century kings had been in Bjarmaland. After these expeditions there is a gap in the sources and no expeditions are mentioned before Óláfs saga helga. This expedition dated to 1026 was made on the initiative from the king although he did not join it himself. The next expedition we are told about is Hákon Magnússon Toresfóstre’s journey to Bjarmaland mentioned in Magnús saga berfætts (in Heimskringla) and dated probably to the 1080’s or latest the early years of 1090’s. Until this point we can trace a continuous tradition beginning in the late 9th century, continuing quite frequently during the 10th century and extending to the 11th century. The sources are few but placed fairly evenly over two centuries. After this, however, there is a gap of over one full century before the next two expeditions dated to 1222 and a few years before this are mentioned in Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar. No expeditions are known from the 12th century, but some of the geographical accounts (Mappa Mundi, Historia Norvegiae, Landafraði, AM 736 I, 4º) were written during the 12th century. This means Bjarmaland remained a known area also during this century.

The expedition of 1222 mentioned in Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar is known as the last expedition to Bjarmaland and this information is also repeated in the Icelandic annals. It seems as if at least until the 1260’s there was no sailing from

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988 Landnámabók 1921, 35; Árstallslist 1993, 52; Krag 2000, 269.
990 Storm 1894, 97; Tallgren 1930, 60; Jansson 1936, 36; Mikkola 1942, 28; Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232; Haavio 1965, 16; Djupedal 1969, 9; Vilkuna 1980, 647; Pálsson–Edwards 1990b, 31; Urbańczyk 1992, 195; Carpelan 1993a, 231.
991 Storm 1894, 99; Magnús saga berfætts 1951, 212; Haavio 1965, 147; Krag 2000, 270.
992 Munch 1874a, 637; Storm 1894, 99; Jansson 1936, 36; Ross 1940, 33 footnote 9; Hakonar saga 1964, 70–71; Vilkuna 1964, 83; Djupedal 1969, 9; Vilkuna 1980, 648; Urbańczyk 1992, 232.
994 See e.g. Flateyjarbók 1868, 526; Islandske Annaler 1888, 24, 63.
Norway to Bjarmaland.\textsuperscript{995} This does by no means have to be the end of contacts between the Norwegians and the Bjarmians. The same saga mentions that a number of Bjarmians fled and settled to Norway in the end of the 1230’s.\textsuperscript{996} After this there are no direct indications of contacts in the written sources, although the sources do indicate that Norwegians continued to have contacts with northwest Russia, the very same area where Bjarmaland was located, also during the following centuries.\textsuperscript{997} The name Bjarmaland is not mentioned, though.

A number of younger, more imaginative sources mention datable, very early expeditions. However, it seems like these often are imaginative retellings of earlier sources. \textit{Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka} mentions an expedition dated to approximately 770–780.\textsuperscript{998} \textit{Landnámabók} mentions an expedition to Bjarmaland that is dated to 830’s.\textsuperscript{999} The events in \textit{Pattr Hauks hábrókar} are placed in the end of the 9\textsuperscript{th} century, during the reign of King Haraldr Hárfagre (c. 872–931), but the Bjarmaland image of the saga reflects circumstances of later times than the 9\textsuperscript{th}-10\textsuperscript{th} century of King Harald’s rule.\textsuperscript{1000} All these sources seem to enlighten the “prehistory” of the expeditions, prior to or around the time of the alleged first expedition by Ohthere in the late 9\textsuperscript{th} century. However, these texts are full of imaginary elements and hardly give a realistic view of the subject. They are most likely imaginary tales based on earlier written accounts and thus ultimately enlightening the much later circumstances depicted in the sources, not the alleged circumstances of the early centuries.

\textit{Óláfs saga helga}, \textit{Egils saga Skallagrimssonar}, \textit{Haralds saga gráfeldar}, \textit{Kormáks saga}, \textit{Pattr Hauks hábrókar}, \textit{Ǫrvar-Oddssaga}, \textit{Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar} and \textit{Bósa saga ok Herrauðs} all mention spring or summer as a starting point of an expedition.\textsuperscript{1001} \textit{Haralds saga gráfeldar}, \textit{Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar} and \textit{Áns saga Bogsveigis} mention fall as the time of return from an

\textsuperscript{995} Pálsson–Edwards 1985a, 286.
\textsuperscript{996} Munch 1874a, 646; Joensen 1923, 21; Ross 1940, 46; Hakonar saga 1964, 358; Vilkuna 1964, 84; Haavio 1965, 246–247; Vilkuna 1977, 84; Vilkuna 1980, 649; Carpelan 1993a, 231.
\textsuperscript{998} Haavio 1965, 130.
\textsuperscript{999} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{1000} Häme 1987a, 182; Würth 1991, 110.
\textsuperscript{1001} Forrnaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 520; Antiquités Russes 1852, 122–125; Ærvar-Odd 1888, 20, 22; Bósa saga 1893, 20–21; Kormáks saga 1939, 294–296; Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232; Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217; Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar 1988, 93–94.
expedition. Many texts mention either spring or summer as the starting point of an expedition and fall as a time of return, but the actual month is never mentioned in particular, only the season. It is interesting to notice that the season may vary from spring to summer even in the different manuscripts of the same text. Obviously the exact month did not matter so much. Without exception the expeditions seemingly took place during the summer half of the year. This follows the regular pattern of “Viking” expeditions. During the spring and summer months the sea was ice-free (from May to July, perhaps a bit longer in the Middle Ages) in the north and the light nights allowed the Norwegians to sail both day and night, if desirable. This might have been a welcome possibility on the way to Bjarmaland where the places to land were scarce in the north.

Obviously the amount of time that was needed for a long expedition would vary depending on weather and consequent sailing conditions and on the amount of time used for trade, plundering and possibly other activities. Also, if one sailed also at night the journey took less time. It is possible to estimate the approximate length of time needed to cover a certain distance based on information given in the written sources as well as on calculations of average speed and distance. The sailing time as such gives a minimum length required for an expedition and the time spent on other activities has to be counted additionally in order to find out the total amount of time needed for a Bjarmaland expedition. Ohthere’s account states that it took fifteen days of effective sailing from Northern Norway to Bjarmaland and general calculations are not at odds with this estimate. If we consider that it took close to another fifteen days to return from Bjarmaland it appears as if a journey to Bjarmaland took at least around thirty days of effective sailing. The travelling took some additional days that were spent waiting for suitable winds. On top of this one has to allow the time used for trade and/or plundering. Örvar-Oddssaga mentions that a two-week truce was established for trading after which the Norwegians used one day for plundering. Accordingly, the whole trip would last at least 6–7 weeks, possibly even more. Although any estimates are very average at best, it is fairly clear that an expedition from Norway to Bjarmaland by ship along the coast would have required a large part of the best sailing season.

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1003 It was also a habit to camp on shore at night. Simonsen 1957, 11; Binns 1961, 44, 50, 52; Korhammer 1985, 260–261; Egil’s Saga 1997, 75; Krag 2000, 31–32; Jackson 2003, 55 footnote 111.
Why did the Norwegians travel to Bjarmaland year after year? Two major motives mentioned in the written sources are trade and plundering. In many cases plundering is seemingly the only motivation. This is the case most prominently with the 10th-11th century expeditions by Norwegians kings. According to Ættartal Noregs konúnga King Eiríkr went to Bjarmaland to plunder and obtained gold, silver and a lot of other booty. Haralds saga hárfgara and Egils saga Skallagrímssonar also refer to Eiríkr’s expedition and a battle in Bjarmaland. A prospect of booty would explain why the Norwegians needed to fight with the Bjarmians. Haralds saga gráfeldar mentions that Haraldr and his men ravaged Bjarmaland and had a great victorious battle and Haraldr’s men killed many Bjarmians and plundered the country obtaining a great amount of property. According to Landnámabók Hjórr travelled to Bjarmaland to plunder. In Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka the motivation for Hjörleifr’s expedition is his lack of goods. To improve the situation he set to rob a mound and obtained many goods, which are not specified further. Also in Áns saga Bogsveigis the Norwegians ravaged Bjarmaland and obtained a great booty. In Sturlaugr saga starfsama Sturlaugr harried Bjarmaland setting ablaze and destroying everything he could and finally conquered all Bjarmaland. Also in Saxonis Gesta Danorum the relations between the Scandinavians and Bjarmians are portrayed as hostile. The skirmishing between Hading and the Bjarmians is placed on the coast of Norway and in another episode the Danish King Regner goes against the Bjarmians twice. Also trade was obviously an important motivation for Bjarmaland expeditions, often closely combined with looting if the opportunity would arise, and it often would. The account of the first known expedition gives an image of rather peaceful relations, although possible hostility is implied. Ohthere’s motivation for the journey was according to him simply curiosity, but probably he also had economical motives. He himself named the walruses, but unlike later sources the furs are not mentioned. However, the furs may have been also Ohthere’s main

1007 Magnúss saga berfaetts 1951, 212.
1008 Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217.
1009 Antiquités Russes 1850, 86; Antiquités Russes 1852, 232.
1010 Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1829, 360.
1011 Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 631–633.
motivation. It has been suggested for example that he did not mention them because he did not want to spread the knowledge and risk competition.\textsuperscript{1014} It may also be that the furs are not named simply because the scribe did not deem them interesting enough. Trade is mentioned explicitly for the first time in \textit{Óláf\textquotesingle s saga helga}.\textsuperscript{1015} A truce was established upon the arrival of the Norwegians and allegedly all the Norwegians who had merchandise sold it at full value. It is not specified what kind of merchandise the Norwegians had brought, but apparently the Norwegians had merchandise (possibly metal in the form of tools, ornaments or even weapons or fabric, food or other common merchandise) that was accepted by the Bjarmians. The Norwegians acquired furs including squirrel, sable and beaver. That a truce was needed indicates that the relations between the Norwegians and the Bjarmians were not peaceful as a rule. Most likely the looting of the mound described later on was not an exception and the Norwegians generally took the opportunity to loot in Bjarmaland. Although there was organised trading between the two parties, it is possible a considerable part of the profit was still acquired by looting and it was the looting that widened the margins of profit enough to make the enterprise worth one’s while. It seems like England was one possible market for furs and other merchandise obtained in Bjarmaland\textsuperscript{1016} and it is likely that the real market for furs as a rule was outside Norway since \textit{Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar} the furs were sold in Suzdal’. According to \textit{Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar} the motivation for the first of the two voyages was trade. The second expedition, however, was sent to Bjarmaland to punish the Bjarmians for killing the Norwegians and the text clearly states that the purpose of the expedition was warfare and the purpose was fulfilled since the journey resulted in manslaughter and plundering. It is further elaborated that the Norwegians obtained much goods, both greyskins and burnt silver, so the second expedition was not entirely without economical motivation.\textsuperscript{1017} It seems like furs were the main trade article in Bjarmaland, although silver seems to have been among the booty. The furs are also mentioned in the highly fictitious \textit{Þattr Hauks hábrókar} where greyskins are specially named.\textsuperscript{1018} \textit{Ǫrvar-Oddssaga} seems highly influenced by the account of Bjarmaland in \textit{Óláf\textquotesingle s saga helga}. It mentions a

\textsuperscript{1014} Pritsak 1981, 693 footnote 40.
\textsuperscript{1015} Óláf\textquotesingle s saga helga 1945, 227–232.
\textsuperscript{1016} Torolv Kveldulvson, Hårek of Tjøtta and Thórir hundra all sold furs in England. Eidnes 1943, 28. Also medieval (from the early 13\textsuperscript{th} and the early 14\textsuperscript{th} century) English customs registers name Norwegian hides (grey and red squirrel, bear, beaver, otter, elk and lynx). Urbańczyk 1992, 231. See also Óláf\textquotesingle s saga helga 1945, 253.
\textsuperscript{1017} Hakonar saga 1964, 70–71.
\textsuperscript{1018} Antiquités Russes 1852, 122–125.
fortnight’s truce for a market where furs were exchanged. After the truce was over, the expeditioners set out to rob a mound.\textsuperscript{1019}

It would seem as if the relations between the Norwegians and the Bjarmians were not peaceful. The trade is mentioned for the first time in the 11\textsuperscript{th} century but not without hostilities after a truce. In the 10\textsuperscript{th}-11 centuries the relations were seemingly often hostile and already the first written source from the late 9\textsuperscript{th} century indicates hostility. Despite occasional peaceful trading, hostility could be instigated by either party as the 13\textsuperscript{th} century account in \textit{Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar} indicates. A history of hostility between the Bjarmians and the Norwegians would explain why a truce was needed before trading could begin.

There must have been something worth looting, otherwise it is not likely that the Norwegians would have continued to travel to Bjarmaland one century after another. It was perhaps considered easiest or/and most profitable to take the booty by force, not by trade where one needed to give something in exchange. However, due to the nature of the written sources it is possible that the hostile nature of the contacts is exaggerated and that in reality peaceful trade had a stronger position than the sources indicate.

In Bjarmaland the Norwegians acquired perishable organic material (furs) that cannot be seen in the archaeological material. This can partially explain why the Norwegian archaeological finds do not contain much eastern material that could be connected with Bjarmaland.\textsuperscript{1020} By the testimony of the sagas the Norwegians also looted in Bjarmaland and potentially some of the “eastern” artefacts in (Northern) Norway could have reached Norway through the Bjarmaland expeditions. To speculate further, it is possible to think that the Norwegians did not necessarily keep all the artefacts themselves but may have instead bartered them for example to the Saami who traditionally are connected with the so-called eastern artefacts. Of course, I do not mean to suggest that all the eastern material reached Northern Fennoscandia in this manner. If we want to find archaeological proof about the Norwegian-Bjarmian contacts, we must turn to the archaeological material in

\textsuperscript{1019} Órvar-Odd 1888, 23, 25, 27, 29, 31, 33, 35, 37.
northeastern Russia1021 because the Norwegians needed to pay for the furs with something. It is possible that the payment was made in organic material, but perhaps ornaments, weapons or other valuable artefacts served as a more suitable currency. Scandinavian finds in the White Sea area could be potentially connected with the Norwegian-Bjarmian relations.

One gets the impression that the Bjarmians were not strong enough to defend themselves. However, the sources make it clear that towards the middle of the 11th century the Norwegians were trading, although they still could loot after the trading was done. One may question why bother trading at all. One possibility is that the Bjarmians were now strong enough to defend themselves and the Norwegians could no longer extract the booty easily and considered it easier and perhaps less hazardous to trade. Another and perhaps more likely explanation is that trade had been going on all the time alongside looting, it is just not mentioned in the written sources because the tradition of writing had little space for descriptions of peaceful interaction and commonplace trade. It is thus quite possible that the relationship between the Bjarmians and the Norwegians may have been much more friendly than the sources let us know. In other words, perhaps peaceful trade played a much bigger role throughout the centuries than what the sources relate. However, it cannot be denied that aggression, too, must have been part of the relations for as long as the two groups had contact.1022

As described in many of the sagas, the Bjarmaland expeditions fulfil the general characteristics of the so-called “Viking” expeditions and Bjarmaland expeditions must be seen as the northerly variant of “Viking” activity.1023 At times a number of other destinations are mentioned alongside Bjarmaland.1024 Most of these are well known to us and nobody seriously doubts the veracity of these expeditions. Likewise, it seems reasonable to assume that the expeditions to Bjarmaland were real.

According to Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar the Norwegian expeditions to Bjarmaland came to an end in 1222.1025 The text gives no direct reason for this. One possible explanation is increased hostility between the two as the account of

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1021 There are very few finds in the White Sea area and only few of these can in some way be connected with Scandinavia. Tallgren 1930, 74; Kivikoski 1964, 289; Leppäaho 1964, 86; Huurre 1983, 362–363; Huurre 1987a, 67; Huurre 1987b, 23; Spiridonov 1992, 562.
1022 During the late prehistorical era piracy and trade were by no means contradicting actions, depending on the situation the same person could participate in both. Müller-Boysen 2007, 182.
1024 Haralds saga ins hárfagra 1962, 134–135; Fagrskinna 1985, 79.
1025 Hakonar saga 1964, 70–71.
Norwegians being killed in Bjarmaland testifies. This alone does not, however, seem sufficient and most likely there were economical reasons behind the lapse of contacts since the relations were primarily of economical nature in the first place. European fur trade had undergone changes over a longer period of time and the changes had resulted in blockage of old trade routes. Overall change would most likely affect both the Bjarmians and Norwegians. It is feasible that the trade with the Bjarmians was no longer as profitable as it had been since the demand for furs as well as the trade routes had changed. It seems like the changes that took place in regard to the Russian market were both profound and long lasting. The first Mongol attacks in Russia took place around the same time as the last Norwegian expedition to Bjarmaland and Mongols appeared in northern Russia in 1238 conquering Suzdal’ and heading towards Novgorod. The Volga trade route was blocked and the people in the north had to look for another market for their products. The Mongol reign in Russia lasted so long that the old trading routes were abandoned forever. The Mongol invasion of Russia affected both the political and economical situation in a large area and this may have had dire consequences for the Bjarmians as well, since they most likely relied on fur trade to a great extent. The expansion of Novgorod in the north added to the profound change. There was growing rivalry between Norway and Novgorod due to Novgorod’s expansion towards the north. That the specific Norwegian expeditions to Bjarmaland seemingly lost their established position in the early decades of the 13th century does not mean that Norway totally abandoned its interest in the north. In fact, both the Scandinavian and the Russian written sources testify of continued contacts throughout the Middle Ages. These contacts were occasionally peaceful, but often of a belligerent nature. These contacts are not specifically limited to the Bjarmians, but most likely also the people who were earlier known with this name were one of the parties involved in the conflicts of later times. The first “anonymous” raids happened already in the middle of the 13th century, right after the Bjarmians cease to appear in the Scandinavian sources. Although the sources ceased to address the Bjarmians it is likely that they still continued to exist as a group. It is possible that the sources do not mention them anymore with this name because there was a break in the tradition of the Norwegian expeditions and the contacts between the two took a new form. There was also a change in the tradition of writing in the late 13th

1027 Vilkuna 1964, 84; Haavio 1965, 244, 246; Vilkuna 1977, 84; Vilkuna 1980, 650–651; Urbani czycy 1992, 232.  
The so-called disappearance is more due to the nature of the sources, just like the appearance of Bjarmians is dependent on the sources. In fact, the Bjarmians “appear” in the written sources in the 9th century, as soon as there are any mentions of the areas of Northern Europe.

Conclusions

The written sources only mention Norwegian expeditions to Bjarmaland. Hålogaland is mentioned most often in the most reliable sources as the starting point of an expedition. Men from around Malangen Fjord, from Langø in Vesterålen and from Bjarkø are known to have travelled to Bjarmaland. Also Namdalen in Nord-Trøndelag, south of Hålogaland, appears in the sources a few times, but these are not the most reliable ones. Trondheim as a central area seems to have been the starting point for some expeditions even in the cases where the leaders of the journey were from Hålogaland, as Óláfs saga helga suggests. It seems that the journeys could also start in the more southerly part of the country. A comparatively reliable source mentions the Hordaland and Fjordane area. Rogaland (on one occasion in connection with Hordaland) is mentioned a couple of times, although the sources talking about this area are not among the most reliable.

In the written sources the kings of Norway are closely connected with the expeditions. A number of kings travelled to Bjarmaland in person but the king could also only be a financier of an expedition. Some of the more reliable sources mention that Eiríkr blodöx, Haraldr gráfeldar and Hákon Magnússon Toresfóstre travelled to Bjarmaland whereas more dubious sources mention kings Hjörr and Hjörleifr. King Ólafr and possibly also King Hákon are mentioned as financiers of an expedition. In addition a number of fictitious sagas mention that kings sent men on mission to Bjarmaland. It seems like these fictitious sagas have preserved the connection between a king and an expedition to Bjarmaland, but in modified form. The kings were not the only ones involved in the expeditions. Wealthy men could start on an expedition on their own initiative and it seems like the men from Hålogaland had a tradition of private expeditions. Crew was also needed and those few sources that comment this issue in some way indicate that the crew consisted of menservants and “sons of yeomen”.

Sometimes the Norwegians sailed to Bjarmaland with only one ship, but sources mention also two (in most of the cases) and even four ships. Sometimes the number of crew is mentioned and this ranges from twenty-four to ninety men per ship. It seems like some thirty men per ship is a realistic estimation for a normal expedition. Keeping this number in mind the total number of men could vary from thirty to sixty and could even reach a hundred and twenty depending on the number of ships. If looting was intended one needed a reasonably big crew in order to carry this out safely. On the other hand, if the crew grew too large, it might have been hard to make a profit, so it is likely that the number of men would stay in relatively modest numbers.

The first known expedition is dated to c. 875 or in any case between 870 and 890. The next known expedition took place in the first half of the tenth century, probably in the early 930’s. The next known expeditions are dated to sometime between 935 and 961, in the 960’s or 970’s, to 1026, to 1080’s or 1090’s and finally to 1222. After the first reference in the late ninth century, a fairly regular although not very large record is preserved throughout the following two decades. The sources are quiet about the expeditions throughout the twelfth century but since the expeditions still took place in the early thirteenth century it seems likely that the tradition lived on throughout the period extending over a total of three centuries. The few references to earlier journeys (770–80, 830’s and the late 9th century) all appear in unreliable sources and are most likely imaginative fabrications modelled according to later accounts.

After the early decades of the thirteenth century there seems to have been a break in the tradition of Norwegian Bjarmaland expeditions. It is unlikely, though, that the contacts between the Bjarmaland region and Norway would have ceased altogether since written sources indicate interaction in the area, even if the Bjarmians are not mentioned with this name after the mid-thirteenth century. The end of the contacts is partly due to lack of written material, but it seems that there was a real breaking point as well. This probably has its roots in the profound economical changes the whole eastern area went through in the aftermath of the Mongol invasion of Russia. The impact was great in trade routes and since the basis of Norwegian-Bjarmian contacts was economical, it is natural that there would have been changes of permanent character. It is also likely that the roots of the contact reach beyond the late ninth century of the written sources. Archaeological material shows Norwegian activity in northeastern Finland en route to the White Sea area since the late Merovingian Period. In all likelihood the roots of the contacts go back centuries (there have been contacts since the Stone Age) but it is
impossible to say when the Bjarmians obtained this particular identity in the eyes of the Norwegians. It seems as if the Norwegian expeditions to Bjarmaland remained very similar in character over the whole period the written sources cover. This is partly due to the conventions of writing that have influenced the written sources, but probably the sources do correspond fairly well with historical reality. Changes in the outside world extended to the established contacts and this combined with changed tradition of writing contributed to the disappearance of the Bjarmians.

The expeditions took place during the summer months and the men usually returned home in the autumn. Considering the length of the journey the best part of a season would be needed. Besides Ohthere’s account no other source gives an indication about the total length of the journey. The account mentions that the total sailing time one way was fifteen days. Consequently both ways would mean thirty days of sailing. On top of this comes the time that was spent waiting for suitable wind and of course the time that was spent at the destination. One source mentions a fortnight’s truce that was spent trading and on top of this one day was spent looting. The actual sailing, trading and looting would thus take around 45 days and on top of this would come the time spent waiting for the winds to change. The minimum length of the journey comes close to seven weeks. One source mentions that the expeditioners camped on shore at night, but another states that they sailed day and night. Probably both of these manners were employed depending on the circumstances.

The motivation for the expeditions was economical and the search of profit manifested itself though both trade and plundering. Plundering seems to have been the dominant form in the 10–11th centuries. The booty of these expeditions was mostly unspecified goods but occasionally silver and gold are mentioned. Although the relations between the Norwegians and the Bjarmians were not peaceful also trading occurred. The earliest explicit reference to trade is dated to the early 11th century. A truce was needed and the Norwegians exchanged an amount of goods for furs including squirrel, sable and beaver pelts. However, after the truce the Norwegians took the opportunity to loot which indicates that looting was an integral part of the expeditions.

It seemingly took some financial resources to set up an expedition of a calibre that is described in the sagas and seemingly the instigators were among the wealthiest of the society. Probably the Bjarmaland expeditions also brought a considerable profit. The written sources suggest that the expeditions must have
been profitable for 1–4 ships and 25–120 men. Otherwise it is unlikely that the expeditions would have continued over such a long period of time.

The written sources cover a time span of nearly four hundred years starting in the late ninth century and extending almost to the mid-thirteenth century. There seems to have been no major change in the character of the relations during this time since both looting and trade continued during the whole period. Due to the nature of the written sources it may well be that the image of Bjarmaland expeditions conveyed to us is both too aristocratic and too belligerent in comparison to the historical reality.

The manner in which the expeditions are related in regard e.g. to the manner of sailing, activities, motivation and such applies to the descriptions of the general “Viking” expeditions in Western Europe as well. We can conclude that in this sense at least the sources treat the Bjarmaland expeditions in a realistic manner. Bjarmaland is just one of the numerous destinations of Scandinavian expeditions of the era and what we hear about the Bjarmaland expeditions is related in a similar manner to any other “Viking” expedition. Consequently, we can regard the scanty information about Bjarmaland as trustworthy if we keep in mind the general restrictions of Scandinavian medieval texts as historical sources.

It seems that there existed a constant economical incentive for the Norwegians to travel to Bjarmaland. This is true especially in the case of the Northern Norwegians that due to their geographical position were naturally most interested in contact with Bjarmaland. The distance from Northern Norway to Bjarmaland was after all shorter than to e.g. Oslo. In the more historically oriented sagas Bjarmaland is a natural part of the geographical environment where the Northern Norwegians lived. Sagas as well as Scandinavian geographical accounts include Bjarmaland as a regular part in the descriptions of the closest neighbours and this would seem to imply that Norway and Bjarmaland were areas close by each other. Sagas portray an intimate knowledge of the Bjarmians. For example the name of the Bjarmian deity (“Jómali”) is reproduced in the sagas in its native form. One cannot assume this is a singular random piece of information that somehow made its way to the sagas. One must rather assume that the Bjarmians and the Norwegians had such a close contact over such a long time that intimate details even made their way into the sagas that often are quite vague and even directly imaginative. Perhaps we may assume that a lot of people in Northern Norway had quite detailed knowledge of Bjarmaland. It is possible that the saga information about Bjarmaland is based on knowledge the inhabitants in Northern Norway had. SNORRI repeats many details and one may wonder if he spoke personally to someone who had
travelled to Bjarmaland and knew the place intimately. And perhaps the Bjarmians travelled to Norway as well?

### 6.2 Bjarmaland in early medieval landscape

What kind of image of Bjarmaland emerges after going through all the material and discussing different topics? Where was Bjarmaland located? Who were the Bjarmians and how did they live? Can we distinguish development over time? Can we say anything about Bjarmaland before the period of the written sources? What happened to the Bjarmians after they disappear from the written sources? In the following I will address all the important topics about Bjarmaland including location, ethnicity and economical situation, and anything else that is somehow addressed in the written sources. I will try to place Bjarmaland in its context in the early medieval north by comparing the information about Bjarmaland to the historical reality known to us through other means (written documents and archaeology).

The main incentive for most of the texts is to relate Norwegian expeditions to Bjarmaland. What is told of Bjarmaland has some relevance to the events of the journey and consequently the information is not designed to enlighten the circumstances in Bjarmaland and details simply appear as a side effect of the accounts. Some geographical texts mention Bjarmaland explicitly, but only as one area among many and the information is scarce. All this results in a variety of information ranging from language to religion and political situation. The information is scanty and hard to verify, but certain facts are mentioned repeatedly and putting all the sources together certain features emerge as reasonably reliable and outlines of the medieval Norwegian image of Bjarmaland take form.

**Journey to Bjarmaland**

We know that the Norwegians sailed to Bjarmaland, but where exactly did they go? In the following I will try to trace the journey from Norway to Bjarmaland. Besides the descriptions of the route to Bjarmaland, some sources give other information about the location of Bjarmaland. I will try to look at all this information and establish as precise a location for Bjarmaland as possible.
Óláfs saga helga gives an account of the route to Bjarmaland.\footnote{Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232.} The early part of the trip is described in some detail. The journey started by sailing north along the coast. The expedition started from Trondheim and continued early in the spring to Hålogaland, to Lango in Vesterålen. From there the expeditioners sailed to Finmark. There they had established a meeting point with Thórir (who came from Bjarkó in northern Hålogaland) in Sandvær, outside Ringvatsøy at latitude 70. The first possible landing stage for ships from the north is said to be in Geirsver/Gjesvær on the island of Magerøya, not far from the North Cape. Unfortunately no more details are mentioned, just that Bjarmaland was located in the north. We know, however, that the journey went across Gandvik (most likely the White Sea Sea or a part of it, the Kantalahti Bay). A late 12th century Icelandic geographical treatise, catalogued as AM 736 I, 4º, places Finmark north of Norway and a route from there to Bjarmaland goes first northeast along the coast and then east. An almost identical description is found in a mid-thirteenth century Icelandic geographical treatise catalogued as AM 764, 4. This places Finmark north of Norway and indicates the location of Bjarmaland by explaining that the coast turns to northeast before Bjarmaland.\footnote{See Antiquités Russes 1850, 86; Antiquités Russes 1852, 122–125; Ǫrvar-Odd 1888, 23, 25, 27, 29, 31, 33, 35, 37; Magnús saga berfætts 1951, 212; Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217; Haralds saga ins hárfragra 1962, 134–135; Fagrskinna 1985, 79; Sturlaugs saga starsama 1986, 665, 670.} One gets the impression that Bjarmaland and Finmark were adjacent - there was no other country between the two. These simple descriptions coincide with the descriptions found in many sagas.

Ættartal Noregs konúnga, Haralds saga hárfragra, Magnús saga berfætts and Pattr Hauks hábrókar place Bjarmaland in the north, past Finmark and Haralds saga gráfeldar implies that Bjarmaland was located both east and north of Norway. The northern location is also mentioned in Hálfs saga ok Hálsrekka and Ǫrvar-Odds saga. Also Sturlaugs saga starsama gives an account of a northerly route.\footnote{See Antiquités Russes 1850, 86; Antiquités Russes 1852, 122–125; Ǫrvar-Odd 1888, 23, 25, 27, 29, 31, 33, 35, 37; Magnús saga berfætts 1951, 212; Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217; Haralds saga ins hárfragra 1962, 134–135; Fagrskinna 1985, 79; Sturlaugs saga starsama 1986, 665, 670.} In Sturlaugs saga starsama the journey began by sail northwards along the coast of Hålogaland and Finmark, past the rather fictitious land of the Hundings until one reached Bjarmaland and finally the “Vîna” River. A river of this name is associated with Bjarmaland in other sources as well including Haralds saga gráfeldar, Óláfs saga helga, Egils saga Skallagrímssonar, Ǫrvar-Odds saga, Hálfs saga ok Hálsrekka, Sturlaugs saga starsama and Bósa saga.\footnote{Fornaldar sögur Nordfjánda 1830, 626; Antiquités Russes 1850, 86; Ǫrvar-Odd 1888, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34; Bósa saga 1893, 21–25; Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232; Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217; Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar 1988, 93–94.} Óláfs saga
Helga has most likely been the source of the name for Órvar-Odds saga, Sturlaug's saga starfsama and Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka, either directly or indirectly. The name “Vina” appears in Bósa saga as well, as a name of a forest, and this is probably ultimately due to the influence of Óláfs saga helga. I will take this toponym under more detailed scrutiny below.

Written sources indicate that Bjarmaland belongs to the same geographical sphere as Norway, Sweden, Kvenland, Karelia, Russia and the Saami area. All these appear in connection with Bjarmaland in different combinations in the sources, but unfortunately the association with each of these areas is given in general terms without any details that could pinpoint the location of Bjarmaland more precisely.

Only one source gives us enough information to locate Bjarmaland with a somewhat better precision. It is mentioned in Ohthere’s account (that happens to be one of the more reliable sources) that there was a great river in Bjarmaland. This alone does not tell us much, but in association with the information that Terfinna land was located close to the river it is possible to locate the Bjarmians with somewhat better precision, even if detailed locating is still not possible. It is considered as reasonably certain that the mentioned Terfinna land is located on the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula, close to the River Varzuga. Consequently, Ohthere’s Beormas must be located on the coast of the Kola Peninsula as well, since the source lets us understand that the Bjarmians and the “Ter Saami” were neighbours. Sviatoi Nos’ at the mouth of the White Sea is most often associated with Wegestaf that is said to be located at the border between Norway and Bjarmaland. Also, in the written sources Wegestaf and Gandvik are inseparable and since Gandvik most likely refers to at least some part of the White Sea it becomes clear that Wegestaf and consequently also Bjarmaland have to be connected with the Kola Peninsula.

Ohthere’s account gives as detailed description of the journey to Bjarmaland as we have available in terms of duration and general directions. The account emphasizes that on the way to Bjarmaland Ohthere and his crew sailed along the coast the whole time, with land on the right (starboard) and open sea on the left.

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1036 Storm 1894, 95–96; Fellman 1906b, 175; Nansen 1911, 133; Johnsen 1923, 9; Ross 1940, 25–26, 28; Djupedal 1969, 11 footnote 2; Vilkuna 1980, 647; Eidlitz Kuoljok 1991, 33.
1037 See e.g. Antiquités Russes 1852, 116–117, 496; Ross 1940, 41 footnote 21.
(port). The total sailing time one way was fifteen days. The journey lasted somewhat longer, though, since the expeditioners spent an unnamed amount of days waiting for suitable wind. They started from Hálogaland, probably somewhere around Malangen Fjord and after six days of sailing towards the north they ended up on the northernmost point of the land, probably somewhere close to the North Cape. From here they sailed towards the east for four days reaching somewhere close to Sviatoi Nos’ after which they sailed south for five days before following a great river inland. Since the expeditioners followed the coastline the whole time, they must have sailed around the Kola Peninsula to the White Sea. There are several big rivers in the area and it is difficult to deduce on the basis of the fairly scanty information which one was Ohthere’s destination. It seems like Varzuga is the favoured alternative.\textsuperscript{1038} In any case, everything seems to point to the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula.

\textit{Gandvik}

\textit{Gandvik} as a name that appears in skaldic poems (\textit{Pórsdrápa} by Eilífr Góðrunarson and Eyjólfur Valgardarson’s poem of Harald Gormsson) of the 10\textsuperscript{th} century. These references are geographically imprecise. \textit{Landafreóit\textsuperscript{1} from the middle of the 12\textsuperscript{th} century places \textit{Gandvik} beyond Finnmark and the border of Norway is said to be at \textit{Gandvik}. \textit{Orkneyingasaga} from the 13\textsuperscript{th} century places \textit{Gandvik} east of \textit{Helsingjabotn}, i.e. the Gulf of Bothnia. \textit{Gandvik} is mentioned in SNORRI’s \textit{Edda} and in \textit{Ólafs saga helga} in \textit{Heimskringla}. Also \textit{Fagrskinna} mentions \textit{Gandvik} as a border of Norway. Additionally \textit{Gandvik} appears in \textit{Flateyjarbók} and in \textit{Gesta Danorum}.\textsuperscript{1039}

\textit{Gandvik} is mentioned for the first time in association with Bjarmaland in \textit{Óláfs saga helga}. Some scholars indicate that it may have referred to the Arctic Ocean, although currently this theory is not very widely supported. It seems rather that Hafsbotn is the old Norwegian name for the Arctic Ocean and this means that \textit{Gandvik} must refer to something else, in all likelihood to either the White Sea or a specific part of it.\textsuperscript{1040} It is often considered that \textit{Gandvik} referred to the White Sea as a whole, but there are also strong arguments that it may have only referred to the

\textsuperscript{1038} See e.g. Binns 1961, 44; Whitelock 1970a, 229; Korhammer 1985, 261.

\textsuperscript{1039} Storm 1894, 97; Johnsen 1923, 16; Haavio 1965, 17; The History of the Danes 1979, 8–9; Fisher 1980, 23; Häme 1987a, 166–167; Джаксон 2000b, 94.

\textsuperscript{1040} Rafn 1852, 116; Nansen 1911, 391; Haavio 1965, 17; Richter 1967, 80, 119; Djupedal 1969, 7; Jackson 1992a, 25.
sea’s westernmost bay, known (with various spellings in different languages including Finnish, Karelian, Russian and Swedish) as Kantalahti, Kantalaksi, Kanvaslahti, Kannanlahti, Kannanlaksi, Kandalaks, Kandalaksa (Swedish), Kandalaks/Kandalaksha (Russian, actually the bay is called Kandalakshskaya Guba and the town is called Kandalaksha).  

*Gandvik* is quite regularly translated as “the bay of magic or enchantment”. This derives from the etymologically unclear term *gand-r, gandur* that was often used to describe the magical abilities of the Saami. According to STORM, *Gandvik* is the original name that has resulted in e.g. the Finnish translation *Kantalahti/Kannanlahti*. The Russian name *Kandalax (Kandalaksha)* is adopted from the Finnish translation. In this scenario “lax” is Russian reproduction of the Finnish/Karelian “lahti” (i.e. bay) and “kanda” is modified of “gand” to follow Finnish pronunciation. This kind of interpretation makes Kantalahti a half Norwegian, half Finnish word. However, this kind of mixed forms are not common. 

There are a number of scholars who think that “Kantalahti” is the original (Finnish/Karelian) form and *Gandvik* is an adaptation of it. This scenario becomes intelligible if we assume that a Norwegian folk-etymology connected the words “kanta” and “gand(-r)” due to their similarity and the original “Kantalahti” was transformed into Norse *Gandvik*. In other words, *Gandvik* is a reflection of the local name “Kantalahti”. Likeness of the words “kanta” and “gand(-r)” may have

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1041 Ross 1951, 429. *Kantalaksi, Kantalahti* and *Kanvaslahti* are Karelian forms. A town called Kannanlahti (modern Finnish Kantalahti) is situated at the bottom of the Kantalahti Bay by the River Niva coming from Lake Imandra. See Haavio 1965, 18.  
1042 Munch 1850, 32; Storm 1894, 97; Nansen 1911, 391; Djupedal 1969, 7; Fisher 1980, 23; Nesheim 1982, 8–9; Häme 1987a, 166–171. Probably the association with magic derives from FRIIS (1632). See Haavio 1965, 18. HÄME has looked more closely into the somewhat unclear etymology of the word *gand-r, gandur*. Häme 1987a, 166–171.  
1043 Storm 1894, 97.  
1044 Personal communication by Jouko Vahtola. It is, however, worth noticing that JACKSON has used a model that assumes that bilingual place-names often arise in the process of inter-ethnic contacts. According to this model the local element is always the initial, semantic one, while the second, word-building element is of foreign origin, e.g. Aldeigjú-borg. Jackson 2003, 46. However, this model is only applicable to a local name that exists locally in one form where one part is foreign and the other part in the local language. The model is not really usable in the case of the names “Gandvik” and “Kantalahti” because the local name “Kantalahti” does not really contain a foreign element.  
1045 Folk etymological changes are common in foreign loaned names. All over Europe loaned names are mostly direct loans that have been accommodated to the language that adopted the loan. This is because translated names do not work well in communication between different languages. See Kiviniemi 1984, 330, 334.
promoted the popular etymology that formed “kanta” into “gand” and made people think of magic.\footnote{1046} 

Usually Gandvik is identified with the White Sea (Finnish Vienanmeri).\footnote{1047} However, the name comes very close to the Finnish Kantalahti, which only refers to the westernmost bay of the White Sea. The meaning and origin of the name Gandvik is somewhat unclear. My opinion is that the Finnish Kantalahti or the Karelian Kantalaksi must logically be the original form.\footnote{1048} The area was inhabited by Finno-Ugrian peoples. We can assume that when the Scandinavians travelled in the area they heard this name and adopted it in a form that was adaptable to their own language. The last part “lahti” was translated into Norse “vík”.\footnote{1049} The first part “kanta” resembled the Scandinavian “gand-r” that refers to magic or sorcery and perhaps this is why “kanta” turned into “gand” in the Norse toponym. The Saami have been strongly associated with sorcery and shamanism and they also lived in the White Sea area. Perhaps the popular etymology between “kanta” and “gand-r” was enhanced because of the region’s association with the Saami. In linguistic contact place names are adopted from one language to another since it is considerably easier for people to communicate over language barriers if the communicating groups do not create two independent systems of placenames.\footnote{1050} It seems quite likely that the Norwegians would not give the White Sea an indigenous name but instead borrow (and adopt to suit their language) an already existing name that they were bound to hear while interacting with the locals. “Lahti” (i.e. bay) would have been easy to explain and translate but the word “kanta” has multiple meanings and it was perhaps difficult to explain and translate these to someone who did not speak Finnish (or Karelian) at all or knew only the basics. Since “kanta” has complex meaning, a folk etymological translation based

\footnotetext[1046]{\small Nansen 1911, 391–392; Haavio 1965, 18. The Finnish word kanta and the closely related word kannas have several meanings. One of the meanings for kannas is a narrow strip of land between waters. Kanta may refer to heel, base, head (of a nail), origin of something or a standpoint/attitude/point of view. See Suomen sanojen alkuperä. Etymologinen sanakirja. 1 A-K, 300, 302; Suomen kielen etymologinen sanakirja I, 157. See also Ross 1951, 429–430.}

\footnotetext[1047]{\small Nansen 1911, 391; Ross 1951, 430; Haavio 1965, 17; Richter 1967, 80, 119; Djupedal 1969, 7: Jackson 1992a, 25.}

\footnotetext[1048]{\small ROSS finds that it is reasonable to consider the Karelian name as original. He also assumes the genitival Karelian form “Kannanlaksi” is the original one (sh of the Russian form and s of the Swedish Kandalax represent this directly). However, the word existed in an earlier form where the medial nn was nd. Ross 1951, 429–430.}

\footnotetext[1049]{\small See Ross 1951, 430.}

\footnotetext[1050]{\small Alaräisänen 2004, 69.}
on association would seem possible and even likely.\textsuperscript{1051} The fact that the Scandinavians adopted a name that refers to the westernmost bay of the White Sea must mean that they had contact with the local inhabitants in this area.

“Vína”

It is interesting to pay attention to the fact that the Finnish name of the White Sea is “Vienanmeri”, the Sea of Viena. The name “Vína” appears today in two other connections in the area. The Northern (Severnaya) Dvina River is called “Vienajoki” (i.e. River Viena) and the northernmost part of Karelia (south of the Kantalahti Bay) is called “Vínan Karjala” or just “Vína” (i.e. Viena Karelia).\textsuperscript{1052}

The toponym “Vína” appears several times in the sagas in connection with Bjarmaland. It is mentioned for the first time in skaldic verses (from c. 970) preserved to us in \textit{Haralds saga gráfeldar} in Heimskringla (á Vinu borði and við Bjarma á Vinubakka).\textsuperscript{1053} “Vína” makes its second appearance in Heimskringla in Óláfs saga helga (ánni Vinu).\textsuperscript{1054} It is also mentioned in Egils saga Skallagrímssonar (á Bjarmalandi við Vínu).\textsuperscript{1055} Several of the later sagas including Orvar-Odds saga (e. g. á þá er Vína heitir/ánni Vinu), Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka (Vinumynni), Sturlaug's saga starfsama (ánni Vínu) and Bósa saga (Vínuskógr) mention “Vína” as well.\textsuperscript{1056}

“Vína” is often associated with Bjarmaland in medieval Scandinavian literature, but the name appears in other connections as well. \textit{Grímnismál} from the 9th century mentions Hvergelmir, the source of all rivers including Viná. The name Wendum in England is mentioned in a skaldic poem written soon after 937. When referring to Wendum, Egil’s saga says “á Vinheiði vid Vínuskóga”, i.e. Wendum is replaced by “Vína”.\textsuperscript{1057}

Although the quote of the skaldic verses in \textit{Haralds saga gráfeldar} does not specifically mention that “Vína” is a river the likeliest meaning of á Vinu borði is “on the bank of the Vína River”, even if the literal translation simply states “on the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1051} ROSS finds (after complicated etymologies and passage through the Saami language) that folk-etymology connected with OWN \textit{gandr} sufficiently explains how “Kannanlaksi” turned into \textit{Gandvik}. Ross 1951, 431–432.
\item \textsuperscript{1052} See Vuorela 1960, 64 for more details about Viena.
\item \textsuperscript{1053} Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217.
\item \textsuperscript{1054} Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232.
\item \textsuperscript{1055} Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar 1988, 93–94.
\item \textsuperscript{1056} Fornaldar sögur Nordfjorda 1830, 626; Antiquités Russes 1850, 86; Ævar-Odd 1888, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34; Bósa saga 1893, 21–25.
\item \textsuperscript{1057} Haavio 1965, 16–17.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
bank of Vína”. We can assume that Snorri STURLUSON quoted the verses in the exact form they had been preserved from the 970’s to the early 13th century. SNORRI obviously identified “Vína” with a river as can be seen in his elaboration of Haraldr’s journey to Bjarmaland and in SNORRI’s other references to “Vína” (in Óláf’s saga helga and Egils saga Skallagrímssonar). SNORRI’s deduction may have been based on either the wording of the account or geographical knowledge. If the name “Vína” was a well-known name of a river in SNORRI’s time, it would have been logical for SNORRI to think that the skaldic verses were referring to this river. If he was not familiar with a toponym “Vína” he might nevertheless have come to the conclusion that it was referring to a river on the basis of the wording in the verses, although the word “river” is not mentioned explicitly. SNORRI’s wording is slightly ambiguous in both Harald’s saga gráfeldar and Egils saga Skallagrímssonar, but in Ólaf’s saga helga there is no doubt that SNORRI identified the toponym “Vína” with a river since the word “river” (ánni Vinu) is attached to the toponym.

The later sources mentioning “Vína” probably derive both the name and the identification in most part from SNORRI’s writing and possibly also from the skaldic verses. In Órvar-Oddssaga “Vína” is decidedly a river as it is in Sturlaugs saga starfsama. In Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka the toponym appears in the form Vinumynni or Vinuminni, i.e. the mouth of the River “Vína”. The toponym “Vína” also appears in Bósa saga, but this time it is connected with forest instead of a river. Obviously the later sagas both carried on the earlier tradition of writing as such and occasionally also invented new forms.

Glúmr GEIRASON, who first mentioned the name “Vína”, may not have used “Vína” as a proper noun, since “Vína” in skaldic poetry is used as a metaphoric, general denomination of a river. JACKSON suggests that in the course of time the general denomination may have turned into a specific name associated with the real river (Dvina/Viena) that the Norwegians came to know through their travels.1058 Actually, several Finno-Ugrian toponyms in the White Sea area contain the name “Viena” and knowledge of these might have been enough to consolidate “Vína” as a proper noun. Since SNORRI’s influence is tangible in forming the concept of “Vína” in the written sources, it is perhaps feasible that if he interpreted as a proper noun a word that originally referred to a river in general, this interpretation could have influenced the whole written tradition concerning “Vína”. It is clear that 13th century saga authors did not always fully understand the verses from which they

derived their information and Roberta FRANK has shown several examples of how SNORRI interpreted skaldic stanzas. Most frequent misinterpretations of stanzas include instances when a kenning or a kenning element is misread as a proper name.\footnote{Frank 1985, 167–170.} It is conceivable that this also happened with the stanzas that mention “Vína”.

The currently prevailing theory (although opposed by some scholars\footnote{See e.g. Jackson 2002, 172.}) is the association between the “Vína” of the sagas and the Northern Dvina River\footnote{There are two rivers of the name Dvina (Двина) in Russia, the Western (German Düna, Finnish Väinäjoki) and the Northern (Severnaja Dvina, Karelian Viena). VASMER finds that because of the letter combination dv- the name cannot be Finno-Ugrian. Vasmer 1953, 331. On the other hand, HAAVIO has suggested that the Russians named River Viena as “Dvina” when they came to north because “Viena” resembled an already existing Russian river name, the River Dvina (German Düna, Finnish Väinä). Thus the original Finno-Ugrian “Viena” became for Russians the Northern Dvina. Haavio 1965, 17.} (Finnish Vienajoki\footnote{According to AHLQVIST “Viena” was an almost unknown name in Finland (except for the northeastern part close to Russian border) before the printing of Kalevala. Ahlqvist 1887, 109. It would appear that the name “Viena” became introduced in Finnish through the poems of Kalevala (“Vienan pääliitä/väljiltä vesiltä”) and LÖNNROT (mentions province of Viena/Archangel in a preface to Kalevala). Suomen kielen etymologinen sanakirja VI, 1724.}). It seems to me that the association between “Vína” and Dvina may be a result of “modern” research. The strongest argument the researchers have offered for associating “Vína” with the Northern Dvina River is the likeness of the names “Vína”, Viena and Dvina.\footnote{See Jackson 2002, 172.} Since the association is mainly based on the likeness of the names and little else and since there are other similar toponyms, I find that all Viena toponyms should be considered in localising the Norse “Vína”.

The likely origin of the name Gandvik refers to contacts between the Norwegians and the people living by the Kantalahti Bay. We know that the written sources seem to connect the Bjarmians with the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula that forms the northern shore of the Kantalahti Bay. It is interesting to notice that the name Viena is connected with the southern coast of the Kantalahti Bay. I find that on the basis of this only we have at least equal reasons to connect “Vína” and Viena Karelia as to connect “Vína” with the Northern Dvina. The assumption that “Vína” and “Dvina” are identical is after all only based on the likeness of the names and the fact that Northern Dvina is a river.

Simon von SALINGEN’s description of Lapland from 1591 (Simon von Salingen, Bericht von der Landschaft Lappia 1591) relates that eight men from
Kem’ in Karelia told to von SALINGEN that “dass gantze lande von Nougorodt nordwestwerts bisz an die Wina, und west-nordwestwerts vf bisz an die Wiga, all correlisch wohr gewesen vnd von den Mosschowiters erobert, vnd die lande von der Wiga, nordwestwerts vf bis Candelax, nordtwerds auf, all vnter Norwegen gehoret haben”. The description traces areas towards the northwest in sequential geographical order, from Novgorod to “Wina” and further to “Wiga” (the River Vyg) and to “Candelax” (the Kantalahti Bay). It seems like in this late 16th century description the name “Wina” is used of Viena Karelia. I cannot see how JOHNSEN’s interpretation that “Wina” is the same as the Northern Dvina River could hold, since we are talking about a list naming areas in sequential order from south to north.

In Óláfs saga helga Bjarmaland could be reached by sailing across Gandvik. This information is not specified. In other words, it is not clarified which part of the White Sea was crossed. Those who identify “Vína” with the Northern Dvina River find that one reached this river when sailing across Gandvik, i.e. the White Sea. However, the Scandinavian style of sailing did not favour sailing on open sea like this alternative would suggest. If crossing Gandvik meant crossing the Kantalahti Bay then the travellers would have ended up somewhere on the southern coast of the Kantalahti Bay. This destination corresponds to an area known today as Viena Karelia. The conclusion is that one may cross Gandvik in several places and still end up in Viena.

Although neither Vienanmeri nor Viena Karelia are associated with a river, in a scenario where the Norwegians travelled north around Finnmark and to the White Sea following the coast of the Kola Peninsula until the end of the Kantalahti Bay, they would have arrived in Viena. Perhaps it was in this connection that the general denomination of a river was mixed up with a toponym Viena. It is possible that those travelling to this area would have known that “Vína”/Viena was not a river, but writers who had not been in the area themselves would not necessarily have known this. Relying on the skaldic verses and SNORRI’s interpretation of them the later writers could easily have started using “Vína” as a proper noun of a river. It is worth noticing that the Norwegians had contact with the White Sea area long before the earliest literary reference to “Vína”. This name can be considered as a later attachment and the name does not appear in Oththere’s account from the 9th century. It seems like Oththere’s destination was on the Kola Peninsula and it may be

1064 Johnsen 1923, 99.
1065 Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232.
significant that the name “Vina” is not mentioned, since even if Ohthere sailed on \textit{Vienanmeri}, he did not arrive in Viena. Maybe the later travellers extended their trips to Viena Karelia and thus the name became properly attached to Bjarmaland. The existence of the name \textit{Gandvik} indicates Scandinavian activity in the Kantalahti Bay area. Since there is a name \textit{Viena} connected with this area as well, it would seem just as possible that this \textit{Viena} is the origin of the Scandinavian “Vina” as that the Northern Dvina River is the origin.

\textbf{Landscape and natural conditions}

In some cases the landscape of Bjarmaland is described in general, rather stereotypical terms. The ruling convention is that there was a large forest in Bjarmaland. The big forest is a rather generic description fitting to most of the areas in the north of Europe. The forest is mentioned in \textit{Ǫrvar-Odds saga}, \textit{Bósa saga} and \textit{Óláfs saga helga in Heimskringla}.\textsuperscript{1066} \textit{Óláfs saga helga} supplements the picture by describing a level plain close to the river. Also the description in \textit{Sturlaug's saga starfsama} mentions level fields on the western bank of the river.\textsuperscript{1067} Description of the landscape in \textit{Bósa saga ok Herrauðs} is most likely purely fictitious. The foster brothers lower the anchor under cover of thickly forested wilderness (\textit{eyðiskóg}, also called \textit{Myrkviskógur}, i.e. Wood of Darkness, that appears as a general description referring to the lay of the land and is also mentioned in connection with \textit{Glasisvellir}). The big forest is named \textit{Vínuskógr} i.e. “Vína” Forest. In other sagas the name “Vína” was attached to a river in Bjarmaland. Obviously the author here is influenced by these texts but used artistic liberty in applying the name.

I am inclined to think that many of the apparent details of the landscape in Bjarmaland are products of the authors’ imagination. The details were simply meant to be helpful in telling the story. What remains is the big forest and a big river, perhaps with level plains on its banks (or perhaps only the western bank). The forest is typical to the landscape in the north of Europe. Forests and big rivers can be found all over the north of Fennoscandia and Russia and accordingly these features offer no help in localising Bjarmaland.

\textit{Gesta Danorum} speaks about sailing along the coast of Bjarmaland.\textsuperscript{1068} If any credence can be given to this, it seems to indicate that Bjarmaland had a coastline, that it was indeed a larger area, not just a single spot by a river.

\textsuperscript{1066} Antiquités Russes 1850, 96–103; \textit{Bósa saga} 1893, 21–33; \textit{Óláfs saga helga} 1945, 227–232.
\textsuperscript{1067} Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 626–630.
\textsuperscript{1068} Saxonis \textit{Gesta Danorum} 1931, 238.
We cannot conclude anything about the location of Bjarmaland based on the distribution of walrus, squirrel, sable or beaver that are known to have been connected with trade in Bjarmaland. Although the Bjarmians traded with products of these animals, they did not need to obtain them from their own area. They could have gone on expeditions quite far away or they could have traded with people coming from areas where these animals existed.

**Location**

Why would we connect Bjarmaland with the Kola Peninsula and the Viena Karelia? First of all, there is Othere’s log that gives so clear geographical indications of the location of Bjarmaland that we can place the area on a map in approximate terms. Although the Russian sources do not contribute in any major way there is one word appearing in the medieval written sources that is particularly interesting and would seem to offer further indications that Bjarmaland indeed had some connection with the Kola Peninsula. An area called *Koloperem’/Goloperm’* (between Zavoloc’e and Tre) is mentioned in the treaties of Novgorod with the Grand Dukes in 1264 and in 1304–1305.

It is interesting to notice that a number of 16th century maps (starting with Olaus MAGNUS’s *Carta marina* from 1539) locate Bjarmaland on the Kola Peninsula. *Carta marina* influenced cartography until the 17th century and consequently Bjarmaland was located on the Kola Peninsula in these maps. Also some documents (concerning the borders of Russia and Norway) from the 16th century seem to place Bjarmaland in vicinity of the Kola Peninsula, the Kantalahti area and Viena Karelia. The information in these documents is largely relying on medieval sagas and later maps (the 16th century sources notify us of this) and the documents represent a 16th century interpretation of earlier written sources rather than historical knowledge. The 16th century sources also refer to information gathered from the local inhabitants and could in principle contain traces of genuine

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1069 See e.g. Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232; Sweet’s Anglo-Saxon Reader 1970, 17–18.
1070 Munch 1874b, 265; Johnsen 1923, 20 footnote 69; Itkonen 1943, 42; Jackson 2000, 117; Jackson 2002, 171.
1071 Also a map in Olaus MAGNUS’s *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (1555) places Bjarmaland on the Kola Peninsula.
1072 Jansson 1936, 40; Ross 1940, 41 footnote 22; Haavio 1965, 21; Richter 1967, 76, 79–80, 122; Jackson 2002, 166, 169; See Ahlenius 1895, 427–433 for comprehensive list of maps deriving from *Carta marina*. 

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However, the main incentive of these documents was to gather information about the border between Russia and Norway. This means the information about the location of Bjarmaland has to be collected between the lines and this makes very precise conclusions impossible.

Although the archaeological finds are few, it seems like there was settlement on the Kola Peninsula, by Varzuga River, at least in the Crusade Period/early Middle Ages. Although the finds are few they tell us that people dwelled in the area. The finds by Varzuga show similarity especially with the southeastern Lake Ladoga area but also more generally with the whole large northern area that was inhabited by different groups of Finno-Ugrian peoples.

It is also worth paying attention to the distribution of the so-called hoards. The similarity of hoards in the northern area (Northern Norway, Northern Finland and Northern Russia including Kem’ area in Viena Karelia and Varzuga on the Kola Peninsula) indicates a cultural zone. Generally the northern hoards are connected with interaction between the Saami and other peoples in border or transit zones. The concentration of hoards in Kainuu area (located close to waterways that connect east-west and north-south routes) may indicate that this area was a transit zone. One may assume that the traffic in the area was connected with economical activity and one of the directions of this activity could have been the White Sea area and consequently also the Bjarmaland area. Even if the hoards are connected with ritual sacrifices they still represent accumulation of wealth and lucrative trade (including fur trade with Bjarmians and other trade partners) is a probable origin of the excess wealth.

The southern coast of the Kola Peninsula is called the Ter coast. It is geographically located between the Karelian settlement area in the west and Vegestav/Svatoi Nos’ in the east. It seems like the area north of Vegestav (Svatoi Nos’) was considered as Norwegian whereas the coastal area west of the River Varzuga was inhabited by Karelians in medieval times. Varzuga is generally considered the westernmost point of the Ter coast (Terskij bereg), east of which the Saami inhabited the coastal area. In Othhere's account from the late 9th century a river (possibly Varzuga) is considered as the border of the Ter Saami (Terfinna land) and the Bjarmians. In the 15th century the border between the Saami and the inhabitants of Northern Dvina River on the Kola Peninsula was by River Pyalica.

1073 Johnsen 1923, 97–100, 312–314; Ross 1940, 41 footnote 22.
1075 See e.g. Kivikoski 1964, 287; Sjøvold 1974, 331; Spiridonov 1992, 562; Edgren 1993, 246.
It is considered that the Ter coast was inhabited by the Saami in medieval times and Russian influence remained minor. Medieval Russian sources point to the close traditional connections between the lower reaches of the Northern Dvina River and the Ter coast. Several sources from the 1260’s talk about “Ter”/”Tre”/”Tri” as Novgorodian (tax) land. In 1294–1304 Prince Andrei Alexandrovich gave the Russian inhabitants by Northern Dvina River the right to go on trading and hunting expeditions to the Ter coast. Russian sources of the 13th century seemingly place two regions on the Kola Peninsula, Koloperem’/Goloperm’ and Tre. It would seem like the connection between the Kola Peninsula and the lower Northern Dvina River area was restricted to the areas east of Varzuga and thus to the area inhabited by Saami population. Written sources refer to Kola Perm’ and Ter as separate areas under Novgorod and it would seem that these areas were considered as separate from the Russian point of view. This division may perhaps be based on different ethnicity, like already Ohthere’s account suggests.

The Northern Dvina River area is by most scholars connected with Bjarmaland. The strongest argument for this connection is the similarity of the names Dvina and “Vína”. Additionally the scholars argue that Northern Dvina River is a suitable location for Bjarmaland, because the area had contacts with the coastal area of the Kola Peninsula. It seems on basis of the written sources that the contacts were limited to the so-called Ter coast. This area was located on the southeastern part of the southern shore of the Kola Peninsula.

It is worth noticing that in the medieval Scandinavian written sources Bjarmaland as seen through the Norwegian eyes is connected with the coastal zone. However, excluding the large Archangel hoard there are no signs of medieval settlement on the lower parts of the Northern Dvina River. There are finds in the basin of the Northern Dvina, but this area cannot correspond to the Scandinavian Bjarmaland that was coastbound. Since the Northern Dvina area is considered by most scholars as the original Bjarmaland, the signs of settlement in this area should be older than in the later, secondary Bjarmaland that is considered to have been located on the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula. However, as stated above, archaeological remains on lower parts of the Northern Dvina River are missing.


1077 See e.g. Jackson 2000, 117.
whereas there are traces of medieval settlement by the Varzuga River on the Kola Peninsula. In general, it would appear that the lower Northern Dvina area developed relatively late in regard to settlement and Kholmogory that is often considered as the trade center in Bjarmaland became an administrative and economical center only in the 12th century, i.e. centuries after the first accounts of Norwegian expeditions to Bjarmaland. Already the earliest finds from the Northern Dvina area show traces of Ancient Russian influence. The area belonged to the interest sphere of Novgorod. The middle part of the Northern Dvina River remained uninvestigated for a long while and only stray finds and hoards were known. The finds are still few but those that are known point e.g. towards Novgorod and the kurgans of the Lake Ladoga area. The majority of the locations are situated on the western bank of the Northern Dvina River and dated to late 10th century-early 13th century.1078

In fact, during the 11th-13th centuries the Vaga basin area was much more densely populated than the Northern Dvina area. It was probably the Vaga area that served as the largest northeastern center in trade relations with northern Fennoscandia. Due to its location far inland it cannot be connected with Bjarmaland. Also the finds in the Beloozero area and the southeastern Lake Ladoga area indicate contacts with Northern Fennoscandia. It is rather typical to the general understanding of northern European medieval history, that seemingly based on the expectations created by current theories, N. A. MAKAROV has also suggested that Northern Dvina River area (i.e. Bjarmaland) “whose archaeological sites have remained as yet undiscovered” could have been another center that had contacts with Northern Fennoscandia.1079

In my opinion, neither the written accounts nor the archaeological remains speak for the option that the lower parts of the Northern Dvina River should be connected with Bjarmaland. Also linguistics indicates that Bjarmaland cannot have been located by the Northern Dvina River. The indigenous population by the coast of the White Sea and along the Northern Dvina River was Finno-Ugrian. The language spoken by the indigenous population in the Northern Dvina area belonged to the northern Finno-Ugrian language group. Their language was closer to the Baltic Fennic than the Volga Fennic group.1080 This means that the inhabitants in

1080 It is interesting to notice that the Čud’ language (now vanished) was probably somewhere between the Baltic Fennic and the Volga Fennic languages and this means that the Bjarmians cannot have been the same as the Čud’ either. Alaräisänen 2004, 69–70, 94–95.
the Northern Dvina River region cannot have been Bjarmians since Bjarmians spoke a Baltic Fennic language, very close to Finnish and Karelian.

**Borders**

The sources do not give us much information as to how large an area Bjarmaland covered. In the sources we hear about a market place by the river and about a border on the coast, but based solely on this scanty information it is difficult to say anything about how far inland the Bjarmian settlement extended, or if it was in fact coastbound entirely. The watershed between the White Sea and the Gulf of Bothnia would offer a natural border, but since the settlement may well have been coastbound this idea remains pure speculation. We hear that Bjarmaland and Norway were neighbours and the border at some point was placed somewhere on the coast of the Kola Peninsula, possibly close to the entrance to the White Sea (Sviatoi Nos’). Around 1330 it was stated that the king of Norway had the right to tax in the east until Trianæma/Trjanema and along the shore of the Kantalahti Bay until Veleaga (Välijoki by Umba). It is difficult to say if there had been changes over the years regarding the location of the border. It is also hard to say how precise the border was. It seems like the coast of the Kola Peninsula was an area where both the Russians and the Norwegians collected taxes.

Peace treaties and other territorial documents between Russia and Norway since the 13th century give some information about the borders in the northern area. However, it is difficult to interpret these and the information seems to be at least partially contradictory, and some researchers find that some documents were written out of political motivation and did not necessarily reflect existing reality but rather had political goals. Also, these documents do not mention Bjarmaland by name. Regarding all this, I find that these documents simply lead to so much speculation that it is best not to use them in this connection.

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1082 A Russian letter from the 15th century mentions right to fish in forest lakes up to the frontier of Kainuu (do Kajanskogo rybez). The letter contains a number of names from Viena and one may conclude that Kainuu reached the watershed. Julku 1986, 96. The 15th century is of course not comparable with earlier centuries, but the above-mentioned letter gives an indication that the watershed was considered as (a natural) border of interest spheres.
1083 See e.g. Ross 1940, 41 footnote 21.
1084 Munch 1874a, 644; Bergsland 1971, 21.
1085 Hansen 2003, 18.
All in all, it would seem like the location of Bjarmaland is tightly connected with the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula (west of the “Ter coast”) where there are also archaeological remains by the River Varzuga that indicate that people have dwelled in the area in medieval times. Also written sources (especially Ohthere’s account and Historia Norvegiae)\textsuperscript{1087} indicate that Kola Peninsula was connected with Bjarmaland. The name “Vína” additionally connects the Viena Karelia with Bjarmaland.\textsuperscript{1088} Details of the borders of Bjarmaland are beyond us besides these general outlines.

**Language and ethnicity**

There are several references in the written sources to the language of the Bjarmians. The language they spoke differed so considerably from the Norse that it sounded as intelligible as “twittering of birds” to the Norwegians, to borrow the phrase used in Órvar-Oddssaga.\textsuperscript{1089} Ohthere observed that the Bjarmians spoke a language that resembled the language of the Saami.\textsuperscript{1090} The Saami language (or rather languages) is a Finno-Ugrian language and totally different from the Germanic Norse.\textsuperscript{1091} We get a rare insight into the language of the Bjarmians in connection with the description of their religious habits. A statue of god called “Jómali” is mentioned in Óláfs saga helga.\textsuperscript{1092} The word “Jómali” has been unanimously identified as a Baltic Fennic word for god. The Finnish and Karelian form of this word is “jumala”, and this is the closest form found in the Baltic Fennic languages.\textsuperscript{1093} All this seems to point to the conclusion that the Bjarmians were a group of people speaking a Baltic Fennic language, either Finnish or Karelian or a form/dialect very close to these. It is worth noticing that Finnish and Karelian are the closest of the Baltic Fennic languages. It is actually only because of division into countries that

\textsuperscript{1087} See Antiquités Russes 1852, 116–117; Sweet’s Anglo-Saxon Reader 1970, 17–18.
\textsuperscript{1088} It is known that settlement in the inland area of Viena came up to at least around 2500 households around 1550 and the number of inhabitants was perhaps larger than during the 19th century. Ahlqvist 1887, 32–33. This shows that the settlement extended also inland and was comparatively large already fairly early, but unfortunately it is difficult to follow this settlement back in time and consequently it cannot be connected with the Bjarmians.
\textsuperscript{1089} Arrow-Odd 1985, 35–36.
\textsuperscript{1090} Sweet’s Anglo-Saxon Reader 1970, 17–18.
\textsuperscript{1091} Vuorela 1960, 23, 27.
\textsuperscript{1092} Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232.
\textsuperscript{1093} Suomen kielen etymologinen sanakirja I, 122; Suomen sanojen alkuperä. Etymologinen sanakirja. I A–K, 247; Storm 1894, 98; Tallgren 1930, 79; Ross 1940, 48–50; Haavio 1965, 198–199.
Finnish and Karelian are seen as separate languages\textsuperscript{1094} and consequently one word is not enough to decide which of the two was (closer to) the language of the Bjarmians.

It is reasonably certain that the Bjarmians spoke a Baltic Fennic language, but this is not enough to decide anything certain about their ethnicity. It is possible that they cannot be directly identified with any existing ethnical group, but must be seen as a group of their own that once existed with a separate identity. It is not certain what characteristics this group shared so that the Norwegians would call them Bjarmians. It may have been language, but also area, or some other feature like livelihood. According to \textit{Historia Norvegiae} there were two types of Bjarmians (\textit{utrique Biarmones}).\textsuperscript{1095} The words \textit{Bjarmskar kindir} in \textit{Haralds saga gráfeldar} also seem to indicate that the Bjarmians may have consisted of more than one group of people.\textsuperscript{1096} These are the only indications that the Bjarmians were not a totally uniform group in terms of for example location, language or some other characteristic feature.

We should consider that the text does not establish whether the difference between the two kinds of Bjarmians was a geographical or ethnical one. The possibility of ethnically heterogeneous Bjarmians has not been studied in detail. A few researchers refer to this possibility, but without proper discussion.\textsuperscript{1097} The geographical aspect, on the other hand, has been dealt with. A widespread theory has it that the two parts of Bjarmaland were located around the Northern Dvina River on one side and on the Kola Peninsula and the Kantalahti Bay on the other side of the White Sea.\textsuperscript{1098} This is in many ways a logical option as long as it is agreed that the sources really refer to both the Northern Dvina River and the Kola Peninsula. JACKSON offers an alternative theory that takes into account the fact that there is no real evidence that the Northern Dvina River is named in the sources. According to the alternative theory it is the Kantalahti Bay of the White Sea that divided Bjarmaland into a northern and southern part. She refers to parallel practice of subdivision of lands in Scandinavian texts. JACKSON locates the “original” Bjarmaland in the western part of the White Sea shore, from Onega to Strelna or Varzuga, an area that in the Russian written sources is connected with the name \textit{Koloperem’}. In these texts \textit{Koloperem’} (\textit{Goloperm’}) is listed between “Zavoloeje”

\textsuperscript{1094} Ross 1951, 429; Vuorela 1960, 64.
\textsuperscript{1095} \textit{Antiquités Russes} 1852, 116.
\textsuperscript{1096} \textit{Haralds saga gráfeldar} 1962, 217.
\textsuperscript{1097} See e.g. Carpelan 1993a, 232–233.
\textsuperscript{1098} Ross 1940, 43; Koht 1950, 11; Haavio 1965, 20.
(territories including the low Northern Dvina River) and “Tre” (Terskij Coast to the east of the Varzuga River on the Kola Peninsula).\textsuperscript{1099} It is interesting to notice that all the early texts use an ethnonym rather than toponym. \textit{Mappa Mundi}’s “Bjarmar”, \textit{Haralds saga gráfeldar}’s “Bjarmskar kindir” (quote of verses from around 970) and Ohthere’s accounts’s “Beormas”\textsuperscript{1100} all refer to ethnicity, not to a specific area like the seemingly somewhat later “Bjarmaland” that first appears in writing in the 12\textsuperscript{th} century. Whether this is significant and reveals something profound is difficult to decide. It may simply be that the practise reflects a general habit of writing. This is seen also in connection with other groups of people who are named in the Scandinavian sources. Also these are often referred to with an “ethnic” name, e.g. “Kyriali” and “Kweni” in \textit{Historia Norvegiae}.\textsuperscript{1101} However, it may also be that in the eyes of the Norwegians the Bjarmians were originally a group of people who were not bound to a clearly defined area and it was only gradually that the Norwegians began to know the area where the Bjarmians lived more closely and started to use the term Bjarmaland. In any case, despite ethnical diversity, something very characteristic (location? language?) must have unified and identified the Bjarmians from a Norwegian point of view.

\textit{Religion and religious customs}

It is clear in the light of the written sources that the Bjarmians remained pagan even after the Norwegians had adopted Christianity. \textit{Historia Norvegiae} from the end of the 12\textsuperscript{th} century mentions the Bjarmians among those northern peoples that were still pagan. Also \textit{Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar} indicates that the Bjarmians who escaped to Norway in the 1230’s were pagans. These, however, were christened after they came to Norway.\textsuperscript{1102} It seems like the Bjarmians remained pagan at least until the early decades of the 13\textsuperscript{th} century, a couple of centuries later than their Scandinavian neighbours. Slow adaptation of Christianity finds a parallel in Finland where people were slow to adopt Christianity and the process was still ongoing in the 13\textsuperscript{th} century despite the fact that some areas in the southern parts of the country may have become at least partially Christian quite early on.\textsuperscript{1103}

\textsuperscript{1100} Antiquités Russes 1852, 394; Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217; Sweet’s Anglo-Saxon Reader 1970, 17–18.
\textsuperscript{1101} Antiquités Russes 1852, 116.
\textsuperscript{1102} Antiquités Russes 1852, 116; Hakonar saga 1964, 358.
\textsuperscript{1103} Törnblom 1993, 293–296.
Several sagas refer to looting of burial mounds in Bjarmaland. A common pre-Christian habit of burial in a mound with grave goods¹¹⁰⁴ seems to have been practiced in Bjarmaland. Óláfs saga helga even gives an account of the custom of dividing property after the death of a wealthy man. According to the saga text, the custom was that when a wealthy man died all his movable property was divided between the man and his heirs. The dead man would get half or one third or sometimes even less. This amount was taken to the woods or to the grave mound and covered with earth. Sometimes a house was built for the purpose. The saga is very elaborate in its description of the burial/religious ground that was also being guarded during the night. The site was located in a clearing in the woods and surrounded by a high palisade with gate. Inside the palisade there was a statue of a deity, laden with valuables.¹¹⁰⁵

Surprisingly, many of the described features are not at odds with what we know of general pre-Christian religious habits of Finno-Ugrian peoples.¹¹⁰⁶ However, the habits seem to have been fairly similar within large group of people over a large area and give little help in identifying the Bjarmians further. However, the description seems to additionally confirm that the Bjarmians indeed were a Finno-Ugrian people. Since the descriptions do not seem to be completely fictitious, we may assume that the saga descriptions really were based on rather reliable knowledge of the described foreign people.¹¹⁰⁷

Ethnical identification

To begin with I find that the observation HANSEN has made that peoples of earlier times need not necessarily be identified with any group of later date¹¹⁰⁸ is very apt. In fact, in regard to the Bjarmians, this statement holds more than true since today no group is known with this name. On a general basis I find it very unlikely that

¹¹⁰⁵ Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232.
¹¹⁰⁷ Perhaps the reference to idolatry (and magical skills?) in Olaus MAGNUS’s Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus (1555) in some way also reflects the longevity of pagan religion among the Bjarmians and one could also see in Olaus MAGNUS’s description a distant reflection of descriptions of religious habits in the sagas (e.g. statue of Jómali and even the burial mounds). See Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus 1972, 9. It is, however, worth noticing that Olaus MAGNUS often gives the Bjarmians characteristics that are generally connected with the Saami and also in the case of idolatry and magical skills the description fits to the Saami as well.
¹¹⁰⁸ Hansen 1996, 2.
one group would suddenly become totally extinct. It is much more likely that a
group becomes assimilated\(^\text{1109}\) with another group and becomes known with the
name of the other group. Consequently, it is only the name that becomes extinct.

Considering Northwestern Russia, certain gradual changes took place in the
area since the 12\(^{th}\)-13\(^{th}\) centuries. It is somewhat unclear what peoples might have
lived there, although it is known that Saami lived at least on the Kola Peninsula.\(^\text{1110}\)
However, we know that new people moved to the area. The newcomers included
both Karelians and Russians.\(^\text{1111}\) In time the area became totally dominated by these
two groups and disregarding the previously mentioned Saami all others that might
have lived in the area were assimilated with the Karelians and the Russians. If we
assume that unidentified Finno-Ugrian peoples had been living in the area we may
also assume that due to similarities in language these groups might have become
quite easily assimilated with the Karelians.\(^\text{1112}\) It is in any case clear that different
Finno-Ugrian groups, some of which do not exist today (having assimilated with

\(^{1109}\) Ethnic status can be ascribed both by others and by oneself (self-ascription) and assimilation is
related to changes on the level of individual identity rather than acculturation that may lead to
replacement and appropriation of cultural features, regardless of whether or not this process leads to
changes in individual identity. Quote from Charlotte SEYMOUR-SMITH (The Macmillan Dictionary
of Anthropology, 1986) defines assimilation as follows: “Assimilation. One of the outcomes of
acculturation process, in which the subordinate or smaller group is absorbed into the larger or dominant
one and becomes indistinguishable from it in cultural terms”. Hansen–Meyer 1991, 17, 52 footnote 2.
Ethnical identity is not static and unchangeable but can be seen as a process with constant change over
time and space. Contact with others is prerequisit of ethnicity. Sometimes ethnical identity can be
enforced in difficult times and people tend to keep their ethnical identity even after great changes.
However, the content of the identity may be redefined. Fossum 2006, 35–37.

\(^{1110}\) Vuorela 1960, 23–27; Törnblom 1993, 283.

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\(^{1112}\) It is worth noticing that late prehistorical/medieval populations were not very large and immigration
might have had a strong impact within small populations. To give perspective as to how small a
population could live in a large area, it has been estimated that the number of Stone Age population in
Finland ranged between 2500 and 25 000. See Jutikkala 1984, 366. It has also been estimated that in the
beginning of the first millennium AD the population in Finland reached 10 000 whereas the population
according to estimates had grown to around 300 000 by the 16\(^{th}\) century. See
Russians) used to live in northwestern Russia (west of the Northern Dvina River and in Zavolochye\textsuperscript{1114}). Bjarmians may well have been one such group.

Because of lack of written sources all we can do in regard to identifying the ethnicity of the Bjarmians is to say that they spoke a Finno-Ugrian/Baltic Fennic language. We can in other words only talk about language, but cannot identify the Bjarmians with any existing group. However, it is worth noticing that the idea of putting the Bjarmians under any existing label may be quite absurd since they most likely were a group of their own and do not need to be identified with any other group. However, this does not explain why we do not know any group as the Bjarmians today. In the course of time the area the Bjarmians used to live in probably became Karelian (and by association Russian) due to immigration from this area. This does not mean that we can consider the Karelians’ and the Bjarmians’ ethnical origin as the same. On the contrary, the two groups should be kept totally separate. The Karelians and their culture formed in a more southerly area than that of the Bjarmians.\textsuperscript{1115} The Bjarmians must be seen as local northern inhabitants with roots perhaps as far back as the Stone Age. Despite related language the differences must be considered as so large that we cannot by any means call the Bjarmians Karelians. It would seem, however, that at some point the Bjarmians lost their identity, i.e. their neighbours ceased to call them with a separate name and started to include them with the Karelians. The Scandinavian sources talk about Bjarmians

\textsuperscript{1113} The name Zavolochye (Заволочье) that is used in Russian literature even today appeared for the first time in Russian chronicles in 1078. There are different opinions concerning the geographical interpretation of the term Zavolochye. According to OVSYANNIKOV, there are good grounds to assume that the name has not always referred to same area. One definition has it that the original Zavolochye of the 11\textsuperscript{th}-13\textsuperscript{th} centuries comprised the basin of the Vaga River (western tributary of the Northern Dvina River). Later on, the content of the word Zavolochye changed and the written sources of the 13\textsuperscript{th}-17\textsuperscript{th} centuries apply the name to a vast region between the basin of the Omega River and the Northern Dvina River and its tributary Vaga. It is worth noticing that in the 11\textsuperscript{th}-12\textsuperscript{th} centuries Zavolochye was a purely geographical name, not an administrative entity. Artefacts of Russian (Novgorod in northwestern Russia, the Baltic region and the Rostov-Suzdal', i.e. the ponizovskie territory) origin are numerous in the finds from the Zavolochye in the 11\textsuperscript{th}-13\textsuperscript{th} centuries. The name Zavoločskaja čud' (Чудь Заво́лочьская) occurs only once in the written sources. A chronicle contains the following list of tribes in the north: Rus’, Čud’, Merya, Muroma, Ves’, Mordva, Zavoločye Čud’ (Zavolochye Čud’), Perm’, Petchora, Yam, Ugra. It has been assumed that the Zavoločskaja čud’ of the chronicle refers to the tribes inhabiting the territory of Zavolochye in the 11\textsuperscript{th}-12\textsuperscript{th} centuries. Ovsyannikov 1980, 228; Ovsyannikov 1984, 98; Makarov 1990, 167; Makarov 1991, 75–77; Saveljeva 1992, 502; Makarov 1997, 210; Alaräisänen 2004, 3, 5, 19–20.

\textsuperscript{1114} There have existed indigenous Baltic, Fennic and Ugric groups as well as Slavs and Scandinavians in Russia. Density of population varied in different parts over time and often natural borders (e.g. forests, swamps and marshes) separated the groups. Glazyrina 2000, 517–518, 521; Alaräisänen 2004, 67, 86–87.

\textsuperscript{1115} Kivikoski 1964, 262–264; Edgren 1993, 265.
still towards the middle of the 13th century. No exact date for the change of identity can be given but one may assume this perhaps took place during the 13th century since this is approximately when the Bjarmians cease to appear in the written sources with separate identity. There is no singular reason why the assimilation took place but one may assume that a sufficient volume of Karelian settlement in the area inhabited by the Bjarmians may have contributed. The likeness of the languages may have been a helping factor that made it easy for the Bjarmians to accept a new identity and that aided the Karelians in gaining ground in a new area.

*Karelian and Russian settlement in the north*

A view supported by the latest research points to a model according to which the Karelian Late Iron Age (Crusade Period) culture on the western part of the Lake Ladoga region was a result of a merge of local autochthonous population (with roots as far back as the Stone Age) and settlers from Western Finland (Häme) during the Merovingian Period and the Viking Age. The role of the inhabitants from the eastern shore of Lake Ladoga (the Vepsians) in forming the Karelian culture has also been debated. It is generally agreed that the areas to the south and southeast of the Lake Ladoga were exclusively inhabited by Finnic peoples at least until the end of the 8th century after which both Slavic and Scandinavian settlers entered the area. Adopting agriculture during the Crusade Period lead into stationary settlement and population growth that resulted in more centralised settlement. Agriculture and animal husbandry were the main elements of economy. Hunting of fur animals and fishing were also an important part of the economy. We may speak of independent Karelian culture after 1000 AD. The specific features of the Karelian culture are visible in the area west of Lake Ladoga already during the eleventh century, but its heyday belongs to the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries.\(^{1116}\) The Iron Age culture in Karelia had its economical foundation in trade between Gotland and Novgorod. The assumption is that the Karelian prosperity was based on fur hunting voyages to the north. The diminished Vepsian activity in the Lake Onego region offered an opening for the Karelians.\(^{1117}\) Karelia appears in the Novgorod Chronicle


\(^{1117}\) Vuorela 1960, 66; Spiridonov 1992, 564–565; Uino 1997, 192. Vepsian culture existed on the southeastern shore of the Lake Ladoga. This culture’s economy was solely based on fur trade. Saksa 1998, 196.
in 1143 and in the Icelandic sagas in the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries. In Viena the Karelians are still mentioned in the 15th century.\textsuperscript{1118}

Karelians and Novgorodians became allies in the 12th century. During the 12th-13th centuries Karelia was still a “national” unit despite connections to Novgorod. According to a chronicle Karelia belonged to Novgorod only from the 1270’s onwards. Eastern Karelians had been brought under the influence of Novgorod during the 13th century but they maintained a certain degree of independence even though they paid taxes to Novgorod. In time Karelians collected taxes and traded in the north for the Novgorodians.\textsuperscript{1119}

Karelians were active with hunting and trade in the north and the driving force behind the northward expansion that was going on since the 12th century was need for fresh hunting and fishing grounds and metal. There are no traces of Karelians in the north from the Viking Age (we do not know the Viking Age culture of the Karelians archaeologically), but they are mentioned in Scandinavian written sources (earliest reference from around 1170 in \textit{Historia Norvegiae} although in some sources the events are set on an earlier date; additionally, the earliest Russian reference is a chronicle from 1143). It has been suggested that the Karelians established themselves at the Northern Dvina River in the early 12th century and spread along the coast and to the Kola Peninsula during the same century. A chronicle of 1419 calls settlement by Varzuga “the Karelian pogost”. The Karelian establishment at the White Sea was connected to the so-called Karelian shore (\textit{Korelskij bereg}), the Pomor shore and the lower parts of the Northern Dvina River. Written sources of the 13th-14th centuries relate Karelian activity in Finnmark. In the early 14th century Karelians exploited the northern area until the Kola Peninsula. By the 14th century the Karelians had established themselves in Viena and Finnish Ostrobothnia.\textsuperscript{1120}

Since the 10th century the Russians had directed their military, economy and settlement interests towards the north: Zaonezje (behind Onega), Belomorje (on the coast of Kola on the White Sea) and Zavolochye (by Northern Dvina). Novgorod\textsuperscript{1121} established a network of outposts that served as administrative

\textsuperscript{1118} Suvanto 1987, 14; Uino 1997, 192.
\textsuperscript{1121} The central area of the ancient Novgorod (\textit{Holmgarðr} of the sagas) was comprised of the lands around the Lake Ilmen. Already in the end of the 8th and in the early 9th century this area received an influx of Slavic population that settled among the existing Fennic population. Both the early Russian
centers (collecting tribute from local inhabitants) and centers of trade. Colonisation
(settlers included both Slavic and Finno-Ugrian peoples) and taxation of the
Russian north began for real during the 11th century and continued in full strength
during the 12th century. This expansion was fuelled (besides the need of new arable
land) by hunting of fur animals (that were in growing demand in Western Europe)
and resulted in Novgorodian consolidation in an area stretching north of the Lake
Ladoga by the rivers Onega, Vaga and Northern Dvina during the 12th century or
perhaps somewhat earlier. Novgorod met with growing competition within Russia
(e.g. Suzdal’) and expanded in order to tackle the competition. On the White Sea
the mouths of the rivers Onega and Northern Dvina were settled first during the
12th century. After these areas were populated it was possible for the Russian
population to go on trading and hunting expeditions in the Saami areas of the
southeastern coast of the Kola Peninsula (Ter coast). The Northern Dvina area from
the delta to Kholmogory had a central role in the development of Russian
population in the Northern Dvina area, in the far northeastern areas and in the Polar
regions of Western Siberia. It was the terminus of military and trade routes from
Novgorod and Suzdal’ lands and the starting point of new routes to the Pechora
tundra and across the Northern Urals. The administrative and military center of the
Lower Dvina area in the 12th-15th centuries was situated in Kholmogory. A source
from 1137 shows that Novgorod had permanent stations by Onega, Sukhona, Vaga
and Dvina. Novgorod’s influence reached also Pechora (taxation reached Pechora
latest by 1187) and Perm’. In the late 12th and the early 13th centuries Novgorod’s
influence reached also Jugra and Kola. During the 1260’s the Kola Peninsula is
mentioned in several sources as one of the areas belonging to Novgorod and one
may assume that at the latest from this time on the area was more permanently
intergrated to Novgorod.1122 It was only after the late 11th century (latest beginning

chronicles and Arabic sources testify that towards the second half of the 9th and the beginning of the
10th century an early state union existed in the area with the Novgorod Slovenes in a leading position.
From the very beginning, international trade routes had an important part in the socio-political and
economic development of the state. Due to its geographical position at the crossroads of a number of
waterways the surrounding areas of the Lake Ilmen became the central area of the Northern Slav
settlement and later the State of Novgorod. Naturally, the area was involved in the international trade
since the beginning of the settlement. One of the Novgorod chronicles ascribes the founding of
Novgorod to the year 859, but so far the excavations have not revealed any considerable layers that are
this old. However, Novgorodskoye (“Rurikovo”) Gorodishche has layers from the late 8th century,
perhaps even older ones. “Rurikovo” Gorodishche can be thus considered as a predecessor of Novgorod.
The oldest finds in Novgorod derive from 920’s or 930’s. Nosov 1980, 49, 59–60; Edgren 1993, 217.
of the 12th century) when Staraja Ladoga had become a part of Novgorod that northeastward towards Northern Fennoscandia became possible. The northern area was not part of the first Russian state and was not inhabited by solid Slavic-Russian population before the 15th-16th centuries. Archaeological finds prior to 900 are rare and finds dated to 900–1200 are concentrated by Lake Onego, Beloe ozero, Scheksna and Suchona. During the 15th century most of the White Sea’s western coast belonged to “the five families of the Karelian children”. The area stretched until Varzuga on the southern coast of the Kola Peninsula.

NANSEN identifies the Beormas with east Karelians. However, NANSEN identifies the Beormas and Karelians completely. In my opinion the Karelian culture was born in the Ladoga sphere and Karelian influence in the White Sea area is of much later date than the first references to Bjarmians in the 9th century. Consequently, the Karelians and the Bjarmians must be seen as originally different people, despite similarities in the language.

There is no doubt that Karelian influence has extended to the Kola Peninsula. Both historical documents and toponyms testify of this. Karelians are known to have lived in an area south and west of the White Sea as far north as the Kantalahti Bay, perhaps even the Varzuga River. Russian influence grew gradually in Northwestern Russia. HANSEN notes that the area of Kola/Ter was under Gårđaríki by 1150–1216 and the Russians imposed taxes on the inhabitants.

Looking at the situation in the north after the 13th century it is known that there was Karelian settlement on the Kola Peninsula. Around the year 1330 it is

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1123 One of the ancient centers in Northern Russia is Staraja Ladoga (Aldeigjuborg) that, like Novgorod, was an administrative center with flourishing trade (with an international marketplace), handicraft and culture in the 8th-10th centuries in the northern periphery of the Slavic world. It grew into a location that enabled the control of one end of an important trade route. Staraja Ladoga (Old Ladoga/Aldeigjuborg) was established already in the end of the 8th century close to the mouth of the River Volchov. The multiethnic population in this town included traders, artisans and servants of Scandinavian, Baltic Fennic, Baltic, Slavic and probably also Frisian origin. The Scandinavian influence was most prominent during the 9th century; later on the Slavic influence became more dominant. In the end of the 11th century Staraja Ladoga became part of Novgorod. During the 10th century, northern Russia in general grew stronger and the State of Novgorod emerged. The leading role in the area was passed on from Staraja Ladoga to Novgorod, although in the beginning these two centers maintained special relations. Nosov 1980, 51, 59–61; Edgren 1993, 217; Uino 1997, 179; Alaräisänen 2004, 8.

1124 Wallerström 1995, 257.


1126 Nansen 1911, 134.

1127 Greenfield–Calder 1986, 55. It is worth noticing that Ohthere’s account from the 9th century does not mention the Karelians at all. See Sweet’s Anglo-Saxon Reader 1970, 17–18.

1128 Nansen 1911, 134; Uino 1992, 609.

mentioned that half-Karelians or half-Saami lived in the area east of Veleaga (Välijoki by the River Umba). In the 15th century Novgorod separated five Karelian branches that lived spread on the coast until Varzuga. Kantalahti was mostly inhabited by Karelians by the early 17th century. Karelians went spring fishing to Murman in the 17th century and continued the activity at least until 1918. The journey was made either across land from Kantalahti to Kola or by sea around the peninsula with self-made sewn boats that were made in Usmana village by the River Kem’. Karelian possessions on the Kola Peninsula were preserved longest between Umba and Varzuga and especially around Välijärvi/Vjalozero. Still in the 1870’s the last remains of Karelian-Saami population lived there. It is also worth noticing that Saami lived in eastern Karelia all through the 14th-17th centuries alongside the Karelians.1130

Today the eastern Karelians live in an area between the Kantalahti Bay in the north and the Syväri River in the south with the exception of the coast of the White Sea that is populated by Russians. Historically the southern part of eastern Karelia is called Aunus and the northern part Viena Karelia (or simply Viena).1131 Even if we locate Bjarmaland in Viena Karelia this does not make the Bjarmians into Viena Karelians, at least originally. Rather, we have to say that the descendants of those people who to the Norwegians were once known as the Bjarmians live among the people of Viena Karelia.

In the light of the sources we must place the Bjarmians on Kola Peninsula and in Viena Karelia. As we have seen, Karelian and Russian/Novgorodian influence gradually took over in this area. It would seem that the Bjarmians became gradually assimilated with the Karelians sometime during the 13th century. It seems that at least by the early 14th century the inhabitants on the Kola Peninsula were considered as Karelians, although it was acknowledged that Saami lived alongside them. It seems to have been during the period of one century from the 1230’s to the 1330’s that the identity of the inhabitants on the Kola Peninsula shifted from Bjarmians into Karelians in the eyes of Scandinavians. Due to similarities in language, and probably also the way of life it, was relatively easy for the Bjarmians to lose/change their identity relatively fast and become known as Karelians. This is why we do not know any people as Bjarmians today. Perhaps the only reminder that people called Bjarmians once existed is the rare Finnish word “permī” that is used of inhabitants in Viena Karelia.1132

1130 Munch 1874a, 644; Itkonen 1943, 40–44; Bergsland 1971, 21; Hansen 2003, 17–19.
1131 Vuorela 1960, 64.
Bjarmian society

The sources reveal precious little about the society of Bjarmaland. We can surmise some things, but many important aspects are not mentioned and a lot is left for speculation. However, some scattered information can be gathered.

The king of Bjarmaland is mentioned in several texts, most often, though, in the more fictitious ones (Gesta Danorum, Landnámabók, Ævar-Odds saga, Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar, Sturlaugs saga starfsama and Bósa saga)\textsuperscript{1133}, although at least one text referring to a king, namely Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar\textsuperscript{1134}, must be considered as one of the more reliable ones. It is also the first text mentioning a king of the Bjarmians. The title king was most likely used by Norwegians of the leader figures of the society, regardless of the indigenous title (or lack of it). The Norwegians would rather use the familiar title konungr than try to comprehend foreign titles most likely completely unfamiliar to them both in application and language. In Norway the title king originally referred to local leaders and the country became only gradually dominated by one king and even when the country was nominally under one king there was rivalry over the crown and the king’s power remained limited.\textsuperscript{1135} We have no way of being certain of the level of organisation in Bjarmian society, but the usage of the title king by the Norwegians may indicate that in the eyes of a Scandinavian spectator the Bjarmian society appeared organised and there existed social differences.

Many of the texts (Gesta Danorum, Landnámabók, Ævar-Odds saga, Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar, Bósa saga and Sturlaugs saga starfsama)\textsuperscript{1136} mention Bjarmians by name (Gusi, Thora, Egther, Hárekr, Röndólfur/Roðólfr, Grundi, Hrærekt, Siggeir, Eðný, Hildigunn, Edda, Ljúfvinu/Ljúfinu/Ljúfinnu/Ljúfinnu/Ljúfinnu/Ljúfinnu, Kolfrósta, Hóketill). Most often the king is named, but in some cases it is the king’s son, daughter or mother and in one case a common man. However, these names are Norse and in all probability do not have any connection with actual indigenous Bjarmian names, but are simply applied by the author to the most important characters of the tale. It would have been natural for the author to use familiar Scandinavian names since it

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\textsuperscript{1134} Hakonar saga 1964, 70–71.


\textsuperscript{1136} Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 539–543, 552–558, 631–633; Antiquités Russes 1852, 104; Antiquités Russes 1850, 232; Bósa saga 1893, 21–25; Saxonis Gesta Danorum 1931, 31, 137–138.
is likely that the Scandinavians were not familiar with Bjarmian names that belonged to a different, unfamiliar and unintelligible tradition. Especially the later, fictitious sagas often seem to name the characters in remote lands after Scandinavian tradition.1137

Economy

Certain theories have it that the Bjarmians were not permanently settled, but were instead ambulant traders who gathered at seasonal trading places.1138 However, the sources do not seem to corroborate this kind of notion. The account in Óláfs saga helga1139 implies that the burial/religious site that the Norwegians looted was not very far from the river. It is very common that the burial sites were placed close to where people lived.1140 We can only assume that this applies to the Bjarmians as well. Accordingly, it would seem that if the burial site was close to the marketplace by the river, then the Bjarmians cannot have lived very far from these two sites. This kind of location for the market place and the religious site would seem to indicate a regular pattern of settlement with men, women and children living together in a permanent type of settlement. The saga text not only refers to burials, but also to childbirth, and this indicates permanent settlement as well with both women and children present, not only men trading in some seasonal market place. Mostly we hear either of looting, battle or trade, but very little of the environment where all this took place. Haralds saga gráfeldar, however, mentions burning dwellings in connection with a battle in Bjarmaland.1141 This seems to be a clear reference to houses, a clear sign of permanent settlement. The conclusion on basis of these texts is that the Bjarmians lived and traded at the same location. Actually none of the texts give rise to the idea that the Bjarmians would have needed to travel to meet the Norwegians. It was the Norwegians who travelled to meet the Bjarmians in the location where they lived on regular basis.

1137 Randomly picked examples are found e.g. in Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 520–521; The Saga of Halfdan 1982, 38; Arrow-Odd 1985, 89. Names are chiefly Nordic even when events take place in exotic surroundings. Some characters may have more exotic names but heroes generally have Nordic or at least Germanic names. Female characters tend to have Latinate names more often. Driscoll 2005, 199.
1139 Óláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232.
1140 See e.g. Ovsyannikov 1980, 234–235; Koivunen 1985, 56.
1141 Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217.
According to Ohthere’s account the Bjarmians cultivated land.\textsuperscript{1142} The source is very clear about this and explicitly and purposefully brings forth the contrasts between the itinerant Saami and the permanently settled Bjarmians. No details are given as to what type of agriculture was in question. It seems quite clear, though, that growing of crops cannot have had a very prominent role. We are after all talking about a very northerly region. Also, although Ohthere considered himself as an agriculturalist, he cultivated only small portions of land. Additionally he kept cows, sheep, pigs and reindeers. The number of animals and the area of cultivation appeared modest in the eyes of contemporary Englishmen, but among Northern Norwegians Ohthere must have been among the wealthiest, not least because of supplementary means of income that doubtless constituted the most tangible part of his wealth.\textsuperscript{1143} The main criterion that separated Ohthere and other Norwegian Germanic settlers from the Saami was that the Saami were nomadic but Norwegians lived permanently in villages. It would have been sufficient for Ohthere to consider another person as a farmer if that person shared some of the main characteristics of Ohthere’s economy. This would probably mean that the person would live year-round in one spot, keep some cattle and/or cultivate a piece of land even if the main source of income would still be hunting and/or fishing or other activities. So, all that was required for Ohthere to consider the Beormas as agriculturalists is that they practiced cultivation and/or animal husbandry at least to some extent besides all the other economical activities and lived permanently in one location.

Ohthere’s account does not reveal whether the cultivation he observed was pastoral, arable or both. If the cultivation was arable, rye is the most probable crop, but barley is also conceivable. Nowadays the cultivation of rye, the ripening of fodder-grass and hay-making are possible on the south coast of the Kola Peninsula under natural conditions. The northern or eastern Karelians have lived on the western coast of the White Sea for a long time. They lived of cultivation and domesticated animals, partly also fishing and salt making. In historical times they have always been permanently settled. It is worth noticing that the climate in the

\textsuperscript{1142} See Sweet’s Anglo-Saxon Reader 1970, 17–18.

\textsuperscript{1143} Considering the situation in Northern Norway, barley seems to have been the dominant cereal type. There are signs of stable pasturage. In areas where cultivation could not serve as a reliable subsistence base animal husbandry was of great importance. The role of sea resources is indicated by the localisation of the settlements along the coast. Urbaničzyk 1992, 174–175. According to Gjessing, sea products were the basis of the Northern Norwegian economy, not furs or agriculture. Gjessing 1939, 49–50.
north was milder than today from c. 900 to at least 1200.\textsuperscript{1144} Putting together all this information, it is possible that people living on the Kola Peninsula or on the western coast of the White Sea could have practiced agriculture already during the Viking Age. Both arable and pastoral variants of agriculture are conceivable as well as a combination of the two. The conclusion is that we cannot reject Ohthere’s observation of cultivated land and permanent settlement in the area.

In contrast to Ohthere’s observations Gesta Danorum points out that one could not grow crops in Bjarmaland.\textsuperscript{1145} SAXO presented Bjarmaland as supernatural, on the border between “earthly” lands and the supernatural land of the giants. To obtain the effect it seems as if SAXO tried to portray Bjarmaland as bleak and sinister as possible and the barrenness of the land is just one characteristic that contributes to this objective.

It is worth noticing that the peoples in the northern parts of Fennoscandia practiced mixed livelihood still during the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{1146} This kind of livelihood would comprise of a certain amount of agriculture and animal husbandry that were being supplemented by hunting, fishing and other related activities like collecting down.\textsuperscript{1147} In fact, agriculture was not the main source of livelihood in the north for many centuries. Keeping this in mind the image conveyed of the livelihood of the Bjarmians feels actually rather truthful even if the sources do not reveal any details that would make the picture more complete.

Can there be any truth in the claims that the Bjarmians cultivated land if they lived on the Kola Peninsula and in Vienakarelia? Jacob FELLMAN noted in the early part of the 1800’s that only ”Finnish” people practised agriculture on the Kola Peninsula. He further notified that additional means of livelihood included collecting birds’ eggs and hunting beavers.\textsuperscript{1148} He was travelling in the area so we may assume his information was based on his own observations. The observations

\textsuperscript{1144} It is generally considered that the climate was favourable for agriculture until about the end of the 12th century after which the climate turned gradually more moist and cold. Suvanto 1987, 73, 223; Törnblom 1993, 305. However, the warm period may have extended until the 16th century. Briffa et al. 1992, 111, 116–117, 119.
\textsuperscript{1145} Saxonis Gesta Danorum 1931, 226, 228, 238–240.
\textsuperscript{1146} Animal husbandry was important in Northern Sweden, Finland and Norway during the Middle Ages. Cow was the most important domestic animal since dairy farming was dominant. Goats were also used for milk production. Myrdal 1993, 3.
\textsuperscript{1147} In Finland so-called “erä” was an integral part of the lifestyle and had a great economical significance for households in medieval times. Even in the most established areas the farmers used remote areas for hunting and fishing. People going to “erä” expeditions were not in any way nomadic, this kind of activity was just a supplementary way of livelihood alongside cultivation and animal husbandry and most of the participants were farmers. Luukko 1981, 40–43, 45.
\textsuperscript{1148} Fellman 1906a, 538–539.
show that at least during the 19th century agriculture was combined with other means of livelihood by people who lived in fixed locations.

Considering the economical foundation for settlement in the late prehistorical and early medieval Kola Peninsula and Viena Karelia there are indications of other sources of wealth besides the furs mentioned in the medieval Scandinavian sources. To look at the furs first, it can seemingly be established beyond any doubt that the furs played a major role in the economy, not only in the current area, but in the north of Europe in general in the late prehistorical era and the early medieval period.\footnote{The assumption of the important role of the fur trade in exports from the Northern regions to Central and Southern Europe is largely based on medieval and early modern historical sources pertaining to the lands around the Baltic. Tax records of 1500 (\textit{Vodskaja pjatina}) indicate that hunting was a prominent livelihood in Karelia. Numerous place-names point indirectly to the importance of hunting and archaeological record gives indirect evidence of hunting in form of e.g. arrowheads. Uino 1997, 166.} It was only in the 17th century that the furs lost their significance and the Scandinavian kings ended fur trade in 1620.\footnote{Kivikoski 1964, 290; Bergsland 1971, 27; Wallerström 1995, 187; Zachrisson 1997a, 228.} The medieval Scandinavian written sources emphasise the importance of furs in connection with the Norwegian Bjarmaland expeditions. In Norway and especially Northern Norway furs played an important role and merchandise obtained in the northern area was sold further e.g. in England.\footnote{Gjessing 1939, 44; Eidnes 1943, 28; Urbańczyk 1992, 231; Zachrisson 1997a, 228, 230–232.} Also in connection with Finnish prehistory the significance of furs for the economy is constantly emphasised.\footnote{Kivikoski 1964, 290.} This is also the case regarding Northern Russia and especially Novgorod. During the Viking Age and the medieval period areas around the Gulf of Finland, the Lake Ladoga area and Vaga area were central areas of the fur trade. Novrogod’s export reached Bulgar by Volga, Byzantium, Scandinavia and Western Europe. Competition over the market made Novgorod expand towards the north and try to collect tribute (in furs) from Finno-Ugrian tribes living around Onega and Dvina valley.\footnote{Martin 1986, 19, 41, 51, 53, 151–152, 166–169; Zachrisson 1997a, 233; Hansen 2003, 12, 14; Alarkissänen 2004, 60; Hansen–Olsen 2004, 138.}

As for Bjarmaland, geographical vicinity would suggest Novgorod, Norway, Sweden and Finland as a possible market for furs from Bjarmaland. Written sources attest this kind of contact between Norwegians and Bjarmians. The written sources give also rise to the possibility that also Suzdal’ may have been a market for Bjarmian furs, either through direct trade between the Bjarmians and the Suzdal’ians or through intermediaries like the Norwegians that are suggested in the written sources (\textit{Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar})\footnote{See Hakonar saga 1964, 70–71.}. 
Having buyers not too far away would have made living far in the north worthwhile. If we assume that fur trade played a major role in the economy for the Bjarmians we must also assume that they at least to some extent hunted the animals themselves. It is, of course, possible that they obtained parts of the merchandise from more remote areas (in the east). One can assume that it might have been profitable to replace long hunting expeditions (at least partially) and try to buy furs from people who lived in more easterly areas. In this manner the Bjarmians would be able to secure access to furs of animals that lived only in the more easterly areas. These were sought-after in the European market. The quality of furs is highest in the northernmost furs and winter furs are the best. The Bjarmians most likely obtained furs in the very north and perhaps the assumed high quality of the Bjarmian furs served as an extra incentive for the Norwegians to obtain furs from Bjarmaland instead of some other area.

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1155 For example, sable that is mentioned in connection with Bjarmaland in the medieval Scandinavian sources has an easterly distribution. See e.g. Wallerström 1995, 226.
1156 Martin 1986, 1; Zachrisson 1997a, 228.
1157 We can assume that fur trade could have left some traces in the archaeological material. However, the material known to us today is so scarce that it is difficult to conclude anything certain on basis of it. It is often difficult to establish an area of origin for the late prehistorical and early medieval archaeological material and in my opinion the interpretations of finds in Northern Fennoscandia and Northern Russia are quite incomplete.

We can nevertheless raise a few general ideas that can perhaps be checked against archaeological material in the future. On the basis of assumed contacts the Bjarmians could have obtained artefacts from many directions including the eastern (Finno-Ugrian) peoples, Norway, Finland and Russia as well as Karelia. Artefacts from all these areas could have spread through Bjarmaland to any of the other areas (cf. Norwegians looted in Bjarmaland and took the loot with them to Norway). We do not know directly what the Norwegians used as payment for the furs they bought in Bjarmaland. If it was something imperishable, like metals, any finds typical to Norway in the White Sea area could in principle be connected with Bjarmaland. It is also known that Norwegians looted in Bjarmaland and obtained metal artefacts that they must have taken with them to Norway. We do not know the material culture of the Bjarmians but can assume that they had access to Finno-Ugrian artefacts and so-called eastern types and probably also Russian types as well as Finnish and Karelian artefacts. This means among other things that in principal it could be that parts of the “eastern artefacts” in Northern Norway could have reached Norway via Bjarmaland. There is no way of verifying any of this as long as the Bjarmian material culture is unknown, so this remains speculation only. UINO has discussed the difficulties of defining the origin of artefact types (from a Karelian perspective). She notifies that defining material as Karelian requires comparisons with the archaeological record of Finland, the Baltic regions, the Ladoga region and Northwest Russia. Source material must include among other things distribution of “Karelian” artefacts, “foreign” objects and artefacts in Karelia, “foreign” objects distributed by Karelians to other parts and “foreign” objects distributed by others in Karelia. UINO defines Karelian artefacts of Crusade Period as artefacts made according to local models with patterns of distribution centering on Karelia, imported objects popular in Karelia and Karelian-made replicas of imported objects. Uino 1997, 165–166, 202.
Ohthere's account also suggests that walrus ivory may have had some economical role at least in the late prehistorical era but it is unclear if trade with walrus ivory was practised in any larger scale by the Bjarmians. Häme has suggested that after walruses became more scarce, the furs of other animals became the major trade article. In any case, there are general indications that walrus products (tusks and ropes) were sold in the European market (Russia and Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, Central Europe and England). Although there is some dispute concerning the distribution of walruses, they are known to have lived by the Arctic Ocean, both on the continental shores as well as the islands along the coast. At some point they may have even lived on the shores of Finnmark in Northern Norway and along the coast of the Kola Peninsula.

We know that in historical times the Saami and the Karelians in Viena and on the Kola Peninsula looked for pearls (Margaritana margaritifera) and these may have had some economical importance already early on. Searching for pearls has a long tradition in Viena Karelia and the tradition goes certifiably back at least to the sixteenth century. This activity took place in the rivers and brooks of the White Sea and the local lakes.

Olaus Magnus writes about collecting of down in the White Sea area and this activity is also documented by e.g. archaeological means in the north of Norway. This may have been an additional part of the economy. Also collecting birds’ eggs may have been practised. It is also known that Karelians living on the Kola Peninsula hunted beavers.

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1158 It is known that walrus was a trade article already in the 10th century but it is unknown how early exactly the trade begun in Europe. Walruses from the Arctic Ocean were sold to the Arabic world, India and China. Tegengren 1962, 13, 23–24, 33, 36.
1159 Häme 1987a, 185.
1160 Tegengren 1962, 24. Walrus ropes had a market in Europe and in Köln they were commonly sold in the 13th century. In Western Europe walrus dominated the market for bone in 800–1000. Walrus was also in demand in the Arabic countries (up to the 16th century). In the late 11th century the walrus tusks from Greenland offered competition and especially in the 13th century there was a great flux of walrus in Europe. Since ivory was becoming more common there was overflow of products in the market and the prices of walrus went down. Tegengren 1962, 26; Haavio 1965, 188–192.
1161 Haavio 1965, 188–192.
1162 Itkonen 1943, 45; Vuorela 1960, 100, Kivikoski 1964, 290.
1163 Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus 1972, 146, 689.
1164 One collected eggs and hunted puffin and picked eider-duck down. Annually 12–13 nests of eider-duck provided about 1 kg of unsorted down. Urbana 1992, 28–29. In the 12th century, northern exports included down. Urbana 1992, 231. Footnote elaborates that down from eider and puffin were most sought after, but down from e.g. swans and geese were also used. Footnote 1998, 1024.
1165 At least in the 19th century eggs were collected on the Kola Peninsula. See Fellman 1906a, 538–539.
During the Bronze Age metal was imported to Northern Fennoscandia from Northern Russia.\textsuperscript{1167} Some of the import may have gone through the Bjarmian area. Later on the Karelians on the Kola Peninsula manufactured bog iron.\textsuperscript{1168} Metal may have had some economical role in connection with the Norwegian Bjarmaland expeditions as well. Written sources relate that the Norwegians looted e.g. Bjarmian cemeteries\textsuperscript{1169} and we may assume that at least part of the loot was in form of ornaments, probably made out of either bronze or silver.

There is information about salt being manufactured as early as in 1137 and there is information about beeswax being merchandise in the White Sea area.\textsuperscript{1170} Since we are dealing with the White Sea area with many rivers, lakes and the sea itself, one should not forget fishing as an additional means of livelihood. Olaus Magnus tells us about the abundance of fish and importance of fishing in the summer season in the White Sea area. It is also mentioned that although summer was the high season for fishing, fish was on the menu all year round.\textsuperscript{1171} This leads thoughts to conservation of fish and to possible salting and drying. Most likely fish was used as a supplementary part of the diet, but there is a small chance that stockfish could have been a trade article as well. In Norway dried fish had gained importance as a trade article by the early 12\textsuperscript{th} century and had developed into an international business of considerable value by the end of the 12\textsuperscript{th} century, for a great part due to Catholic Lent that created a market for stockfish.\textsuperscript{1172}

It seems like there is a long tradition in stressing the role of trade in connection with Bjarmaland. This seems to have its roots in associating Bjarmaland and Perm’. From this assumption arises the idea that the Permians extended their trading expeditions to the White Sea and even the Kola Peninsula. The Permians are seen as carriers of organised fur trade.\textsuperscript{1173} If the Permians are associated with the Bjarmians living on the White Sea, only a theory about ambulant fur trade in a vast area in the northern wilderness can explain the association. Vilkuna took this line of thought into completion by connecting the rare Finnish word “permi”, i.e.

\begin{enumerate}
\item Wallerström 1995, 232.
\item See e.g. Oláf's saga helga 1945, 253.
\item Kivikoski 1964, 290; Wallerström 1995, 232.
\item Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus 1972, 689.
\item Eidnes 1943, 28; Urbâńczyk 1992, 231; Wallerström 1995, 210; Storli 2007, 89–90.
\end{enumerate}
ambulant trader from Vierva Karelia, to the Bjarmians and keeping up the assumption that the originators of the Bjarmian fur trade were the Permans from further east. Looking at the historical roots of the ambulant trade in Vierva I cannot see how it could be directly connected with the Bjarmians. Its most extensive and organised period was seemingly in the late 19th century and it is hard to see the activity as the last remains of an extensive organised late prehistorical/medieval ambulant trade.

The word “permi” in Finnish has the meaning of trader from Vierva Karelia. The origin and etymology of the word is unclear. Russian Пёрмь (Perm’) and Old Russian Perem (Perem’) are connected with an area stretching from the White Sea to the Ural Mountains and the word “permi” is also often connected with bjarmar, Bjarmaland and Beormas. It is worth noticing, however, that references to Zyrians as “Permans” are late. The often mentioned etymology including the word “perämaa” has to be rejected as linguistically impossible and the same goes for the words “parma”, “berm” and “brim”. It also appears likely that the word “permi” is separate from the word “permi”?/”perme” that refers to a (string) trap used to catch animals including birds, squirrels, hares, elk and bear. The word “permi” was attached to a hunting device mostly in the Savo and Häme areas of Finland.

1174 Pedlary at the Finnish side of the border was a seasonal (winter) occupation of men from Vierva Karelia (Kemsky uezd). The beginning of this type of trade has been dated back to the time of the Swedish King Gustav Vasa’s reign. The trade was financed by merchants in Shunga by Onego Lake region. To begin with the traders mostly sold products of domestic handicrafts. This type of trade was banned in the 1820’s but this had little effect and actually the commercial contacts expanded. Before the traders mostly dealt with the Kajaani region, now locations like Oulu and Tornio were included and the number of traders nearly doubled in few decades. The activity also became more professional and some merchants opened shops in Finland. In the end of the 19th century clothing became nearly the only merchandise. Traders from different villages had divided Finland in sections. It has been estimated that the number of ambulant traders from Vierva in the end of the nineteenth century was over one thousand. The traders left for their trading expeditions in the fall and came back home the next spring. The main articles of trade were textiles. The official policy wanted to restrict this type of trade but the local rural inhabitants were faithful to the tradition. This type of trade was specifically economically important for the inhabitants of the northernmost villages of Vierva. Vuorela 1960, 98–99; Dubrovskaia 2000, 222–225. VUORELA notes that this kind of trade activity did not promote development of agriculture. It is interesting to notice that agriculture in Vierva is taken for granted.


1176 Nykysuomen sanakirja, osat III ja IV, L-R, 271; Suomen kielen etymologinen sanakirja III, 524–525; Vasmer 1955, 342–343; Virtanen 1981, 542. One cannot help but be intrigued by the association
Despite many possible supplementary ways of livelihood it would seem like trade played a central role in the Bjarmian economy. Perhaps it was the pastoral and arable agriculture, fishing and fowling that brought the food on the table on a regular basis.\textsuperscript{1177} In all likelihood the Bjarmians hunted fur animals themselves in both their local area and areas further away. It is also probable that they bought furs from more easterly peoples in order to sell the furs further (to Russians and Norwegians who in turn would sell the furs to more southerly peoples). Fur trade as well as some supplementary means of livelihood like e.g. trade with walrus products, down, pearls, metals, beeswax, dried fish and salt were probably what made it tempting to live in the extreme north.

It would appear that there was a breaking-point in the general way of life during the 13\textsuperscript{th} century. The fur trade underwent major changes and was never to return to what it once had been.\textsuperscript{1178} The changes were so profound that Bjarmians ceased to appear in the sources with a separate identity. We can, however, assume that the Bjarmians tried to keep up their way of life in their traditional area.

\textit{Contacts}

The sources mostly relate contacts between the Norwegians and the Bjarmians. The relations between the two were principally of economical nature and extended over many centuries. The written sources first mention contacts in the end of the 9\textsuperscript{th} century and for the last time just before the middle of the 13\textsuperscript{th} century, in other words, the contacts extended over a period of nearly four hundred years. This is of course only the time span the written sources cover and one may assume the contacts lasted longer on both ends of the time span.

One part of the relations was peaceful trade, but alongside this a more violent aspect in form of looting and warfare took place. Most often the animosity was seemingly instigated by the Norwegians, but there is evidence that the animosities could be provoked by either party, as the story of \textit{Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar}

\textsuperscript{1177} It is considered that Finno-Ugrian peoples in Russia had a complex economy at the end of the first millennium AD with a combination of hunting, fishing and simple (slash-and-burn) agriculture as the basis supplied by other means of livelihood including metal (wood, horn etc.) crafts. Each group practised their own, specific combination of economical activities. Glazyrina 2000, 518–519.

\textsuperscript{1178} See e.g. Hansen 1996, 53.
indicates. A group of Norwegians had stayed in Bjarmaland and aroused the anger of the Bjarmians and as a result the Norwegians were all slain. The source does not, however, tell anything about the reasons for the hostility, i.e. if there was provocation on the Norwegian side or if the animosity was started by way of a Bjarmian initiative.

The relations seem to have been somewhat extensive since there is evidence the Norwegians could spend in Bjarmaland a longer period of time than was needed for a season’s trade. Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar mentions that a group of Norwegians were to spend the winter in Bjarmaland after they had finished trading. Another, less reliable reference in Órvar-Oddssaga indicates that on occasion individual Norwegians could also settle down among the Bjarmians and learn their language and habits.

We hear mostly of Norwegian aggression against the Bjarmians, but there are some indications that the Bjarmians were capable of aggression themselves, at least in defence of their own territory. Probably the Bjarmians offered certain resistance to the attacking Norwegians since some saga texts refer to a battle between the two. One could hardly call it a battle if the Bjarmians were not capable of offering some degree of resistance. Öláfs saga helga relates that the Bjarmians pursued the looting Norwegians. Since they could not quite reach the escaping Norwegians they shot arrows after them. It is also mentioned in Haralds saga gráfeldar that Bjarmians shot arrows. This would seem to indicate that bow and arrow was the weapon of choice for Bjarmians. As hunters who most likely used bow and arrow this choice would seem natural. Nothing certain can be said on a basis of Öláfs saga helga since it may be that the arrows are simply mentioned because other weapons like swords or axes would not have reached the escaping Norwegians. Órvar-Oddssaga borrows much from Öláfs saga helga but elaborates on the conflict between the Bjarmians and the Norwegians. Probably much of the new material is from the imagination of the author and certainly some features like the silver weapons seem improbable. Also Eymundar saga would seem to indicate that the Bjarmians were capable of warfare, but this source is unreliable.

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1180 See Órvar-Odd 1888, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32.
1181 Öláfs saga helga 1945, 227–232.
1182 Haralds saga gráfeldar 1962, 217.
1183 See Órvar-Odd 1888, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36.
1184 See Antiquités Russes 1852, 188–191.
There are also some indications of mixed marriages between the Norwegians and the Bjarmians. None of the sources referring to this are, however, very reliable. In *Landnámabók* it is told that a Norwegian king called Hjörr captured Ljúfvinu, the daughter of the king of Bjarmaland and made her his queen. She was to give birth to two sons.\textsuperscript{1185} *Gesta Danorum* knows of a marriage between the king of Hálógaland and the daughter of a Bjarmian king.\textsuperscript{1186} *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs* and *Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar* also mention marriage between royal daughters of Bjarmaland and a foreign man.\textsuperscript{1187} In these cases the man is either Norwegian or Swedish and does not have a kingdom in the home country but acquires the throne of Bjarmaland through marriage. The marriage motifs are part of the fictitious adventure motifs of these sagas.

Besides the Norwegians, the sources indicate that the Swedish may have been active in Bjarmaland. However, all sources talking about this (*Gesta Danorum*, *Þattr Hauks hábrókar*, *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs*, *Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar* and *Sturlaug saga starfsama*)\textsuperscript{1188} are rather fictitious. Nevertheless, it is not inconceivable that there would have been interest in the Bjarmian fur trade also in Sweden. According to *Gesta Danorum* a certain Arngrim challenged the Bjarmian leader to a duel and after defeating the Bjarmian king requires a tribute of one skin per person.\textsuperscript{1189} One gets the impression that the tribute imposed on the Bjarmians was a one-time event. In sagas the relations of the Bjarmians and the Scandinavians are portrayed as having the character of sporadic trade and equally sporadic raids. The Norwegian travellers are often told to have come home from Bjarmaland with a lot of booty and this is in accordance with the statement in *Gesta Danorum* that Arngrim returned to Sweden “laden with spoils and trophies”.

We hear about the Norwegian expeditions to Bjarmaland, but very little is revealed of the connections the other way around. We know that at least in the middle of the 13\textsuperscript{th} century some Bjarmians settled in Malangen in Norway. *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* relates that many Bjarmians fled from their homes in the east and came to Northern Norway where they were given permission to settle at the Malangen Fjord.\textsuperscript{1190} Still during the 13\textsuperscript{th} century the Malangen Fjord was considered as the border between Finnmark and Hálógaland, as well as a limit of

\textsuperscript{1185} Antiquités Russes 1852, 232.
\textsuperscript{1186} Saxonis Gesta Danorum 1931, 65.
\textsuperscript{1187} Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 552–558; Bósa saga 1893, 61–63.
\textsuperscript{1188} See Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda 1830, 552–558, 626–630; Antiquités Russes 1852, 122–125; Bósa saga 1893, 3–4; Saxonis Gesta Danorum 1931, 137–138.
\textsuperscript{1189} Saxonis Gesta Danorum 1931, 137–138.
\textsuperscript{1190} Hakonar saga 1964, 358.
the permanently settled Scandinavians and the nomadic Saami.\textsuperscript{1191} We are not told how many Bjarmians came to Norway and we do not know what eventually happened to those “many” that settled at Malangen. One can only guess that if they stayed in their new homestead, they must have gradually become integrated with the local people. It is interesting to notice that although the relations between the Bjarmians and the Norwegians were not altogether peaceful, they in any case were so trustful and familiar that the king of Norway was prepared to receive Bjarmian refugees. A lot of the described hostility can probably be attributed to the nature of the sources since the tradition of telling often was to relate the more “heroic” (exaggerated) exploits of rich people with some standing in society.\textsuperscript{1192} Most likely the relations were considerably more casual and peaceful than the sources allow us to know. The literary tradition was not so concerned with regular people and peaceful contact and consequently there must have been (trading) expeditions that we never hear about that were carried on in peaceful manner.

Besides the immigrants that came to Norway the written sources do not mention Bjarmian activity outside their home. We can of course make assumptions. Since the fur trade most likely played an important part in the Bjarmian economy, it is likely that they moved throughout the northern region hunting and selling their products. An account in Håkonar saga Håkonarsonar indicates contacts between Suzdal’ (Suðrdalarík) and Bjarmaland on a regular basis.\textsuperscript{1193} Since Suzdal’ in this saga is mentioned as the market for the furs some of the Norwegians had bought in Bjarmaland, it is likely that sometimes the Bjarmians sold their products directly in Suzdal’.

Quite independently of Bjarmaland, it is mentioned in the Scandinavian written sources (Landnámabók) that a Norwegian went to Novgorod (Holmgård) to sell furs.\textsuperscript{1194} This piece of information together with the knowledge that Norwegians could sell furs in Suzdal’ as well shows that Norwegians were involved in the fur trade in Russia even if they obtained furs outside their own area. Although the sources are silent on this we may assume that the Bjarmians also had contact with the Novgorodian market. They were after all closer to Novgorod than the Norwegians who seemingly still found trading with Novgorod profitable. Trade with Novgorod must have been profitable for the Bjarmians as well. It is quite

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1191} Munch 1874a, 646; Blom 1981, 281; Urbańczyk 1992, 48; Hansen 2003, 11.
  \item \textsuperscript{1192} Fighting was considered a virtue and sagas had more the purpose to impress than to be historically correct. Hansen–Olsen 2004, 61–62.
  \item \textsuperscript{1193} Hakonar saga 1964, 70–71.
  \item \textsuperscript{1194} Munch 1874a, 628 footnote 2.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
likely the trade went both ways, i.e. Novgorodians travelled to north and Bjarmians travelled to south. After all, Novgorod was a great trading center. One may also speculate the role of the Karelians in this trade. Probably after the Karelian settlement had expanded northwards, Karelians travelled actively between the north and Novgorod. If they made direct trade between Bjarmaland and Novgorod obsolete is impossible to say on the basis of the sources, but this could be one possible outcome.

A couple of artefacts that have been found in the medieval burials by Varzuga are considered as eastern, but it is difficult to say whether these indicate direct contact between the Kola Peninsula and the eastern area or if the artefacts reached Varzuga through intermediaries. It is possible that the Bjarmians had direct contacts with eastern areas in connection with fur trade, but it is worth noticing that the eastern types known in Varzuga are most often also known in the intermediary areas and one cannot assume very intensive contacts on basis of a few finds. The archaeological material indicates much more intensive contact with the southeastern Lake Ladoga region than any other area.¹¹⁹⁵ We should perhaps assume that the most intensive (fur) trade took place between the Bjarmians and the (Vepsian) inhabitants of the southeastern Lake Ladoga region.

**Development in the course of time**

What can we say about Bjarmaland in its historical context? Who were the Bjarmians? Where did they live? What were the prerequisites for their existence? Why did they vanish from the sources?

There have been contacts between the population on the Kola Peninsula and its neighbours throughout prehistory. Contacts with the western regions of Northern Norway and Northern Finland have been most extensive, especially during the Mesolithic and the Early Metal Period. It is interesting that there are no eastern elements in the culture on the Kola Peninsula in the period from the Mesolithic to Early Metal Period, whereas the contacts to the west, with Northern Norway and Northern Finland as well as Karelia have been extensive.¹¹⁹⁶ However, we cannot properly connect the people of the White Sea area with the Bjarmians before the first written source mentions this ethnonym in the late 9th century. A number of


Norwegian artefacts in Northern Finland indicate that the Norwegians possibly had contact with the Bjarmians already before the late 9th century. The earliest finds in this context are dated to the Merovingian period.\textsuperscript{1197} It is difficult to date them with any greater precision, but it would seem like we cannot in any archaeological way prove continuity of the contacts beyond the early 9th century and in any case there is not tangible material evidence before the 8th century.

Bjarmians enter the stage in the late 9th century. Was there something specific about this era? We know that fur trade was gaining importance during the Viking Age. We also know that the eastern areas of Northern Europe were rich in fur animals. The contacts between Northern Fennoscandia and the White Sea area reach far back in time and there were probably some kind of established trade connections. Also, Karelians and Vepsians\textsuperscript{1198} lived reasonably close to the White Sea and would offer an alternative market. Based on accessibility to furs and market for them it is quite feasible that there would have been reasonably good conditions for people to settle in the White Sea area and make a decent living. A thought to consider is that perhaps the Bjarmian ethnical identity in fact was born when the trade with furs became a major source of livelihood. In other words, fur trade provided the sufficient incentive for the Bjarmians to settle permanently in a specific location on the White Sea. It is worth noting that the archaeological material in the Kola Peninsula shows close contacts with the (probably Vepsian) southeastern Lake Ladoga area.\textsuperscript{1199} One possibility to consider is that people from the southeastern Lake Ladoga region migrated to the Kola Peninsula in the late Merovigian Period or early Viking Age and became known as Bjarmians by the Norwegians who started to trade with them. It is worth noticing that the beginning of close relations between Scandinavia and Russia is dated to around the year 800 AD (late 8th-early 9th centuries).\textsuperscript{1200} Perhaps it was in the wake of this general interest towards the east that the (Northern) Norwegians (Germanic population) became specifically interested in the economical possibilities the White Sea area offered and established direct relations with the inhabitants.


\textsuperscript{1198} The Viking Age developments made trade among the Finnish peoples in the eastern part of the Baltic Sea area profitable. The Karelians and the Vepsians were in the best position for fur trade. This trade was lucrative and Arab silver is found especially in the southwestern shores of Ladoga. Saksa 1998, 201.


\textsuperscript{1200} Jackson 1993, 38.
As for the ethnical identification, it is reasonably clear that the Bjarmians were a group of their own and almost beyond any doubt a Baltic Fennic speaking one. From the 14th century onwards the inhabitants in the Bjarmian area seem to have been known as Karelians. However, it is quite impossible that the Bjarmians of the 9th century could have been identical with Karelians. The Karelian culture at this time was only becoming distinct\textsuperscript{1201} and the Karelians lived in a much more southerly area than the Bjarmians. In fact, I find it is sufficient to abolish any notion of direct identification between the Bjarmians and the Karelians solely by considering the fact that in the 9th century description by Ohthere only the Saami, the Swedish, the Kvens, the (Ter) Finnas and the Beormas are named whereas the Karelians are not.\textsuperscript{1202} It could of course only mean that Karelia was not in Ohthere’s sphere of interest, but probably it does mean that the Karelian ethnonym had not yet formed. It is only around 1200 that Karelians are mentioned in the written sources.\textsuperscript{1203}

Although the finds on Kola Peninsula show contact with the Vepsian southeastern Lake Ladoga region one cannot call the Bjarmians directly Vepsian either. It is mentioned in \textit{Óláfs saga helga} that the Bjarmian word for god was “Jómali”.\textsuperscript{1204} The Finnish and Karelian word “jumala” is closer to the Scandinavian form than the Vepsian \textit{jumā, jumā, gumaλ}\textsuperscript{1205} and this would seem to suggest that the language the Bjarmians spoke was not Vepsian, but rather a language or dialect very close to Finnish and Karelian. Considering the ethnical identity of the Bjarmians it should be remembered that there existed many small Finno-Ugrian groups in northern Russia\textsuperscript{1206} and not all of these have been recorded in medieval sources. We must perhaps assume that the Bjarmians were a (small) group of Finno-Ugrian people who were closely related to other Finno-Ugrian groups living in the north, yet not necessarily identical with any existing group, or any group known from medieval written sources, but rather a group of their own, with their own identity.

\begin{thebibliography}{1}
\bibitem{1201} It is worth noticing that distinctly Karelian artefact forms from the Viking Age are lacking. Uino 1997, 203.
\bibitem{1202} This has been observed by e.g. JAAKKOLA. See Jaakkola 1956, 242.
\bibitem{1203} Carpelan 1993b, 223.
\bibitem{1204} See \textit{Olaf's saga helga} 1945, 227–232.
\bibitem{1205} \textit{Suomen kielen etymologinen sanakirja I, 122; Suomen sanojen alkuperä. Etymologinen sanakirja. 1 A-K, 247; Storm 1894, 98; Tallgren 1930, 79; Ross 1940, 50; See \textit{Olaf's saga helga} 1945, 227–232.; Haavio 1965, 198–199.}
\end{thebibliography}
The written sources tell us that contacts between the Norwegians and the Bjarmians that had been going on in the 9th century continued during the 10th century. There is not much to say about the Viking Age contacts beyond the notion that the Bjarmians seemingly had their place in the Northern European economical system. During the Viking Age furs had become increasingly important in the economy in Northern Europe. Furs were sold as far as the Arab countries and a trade route between the Baltic area and Volga had major importance. However, the active trade of the Viking Age came to an end when nomadic peoples invaded southern Russia and blocked the trade routes towards the east.1207

There may have been an increased demand for furs in the 11th century1208 and one may speculate that also Bjarmaland may have experienced a favourable time in regard to (fur) trade during this period. Fur trade was redirected from the Arab world to Western Europe. As a result the hunting territories moved markedly to the west in the late 10th and early 11th century. Lake Onego region is considered as an important hunting ground. There are also remains of dwellings in the area. However, around the year 1100 the Vepsian colony by the Lake Onego was seemingly abandoned.1209 The new more westerly orientation of the trade could have meant more westerly hunting grounds, e.g. the Onego region. Bjarmaland was situated reasonably close to Onego region and the Bjarmians may perhaps have sold furs they had obtained from their own hunting grounds through the inhabitants in the Onego area.

It is perhaps significant that the Norse sources do not mention contacts between Norway and Bjarmaland in the 12th century. Change occurred at this time in the Onego region. However, furs were still in demand and most likely the trade went on even if some changes occurred. There were general changes in the 12th century and trade between Novgorod and Gotland became important. At the same time the Karelians of the nortwestern Lake Ladoga region gained importance in the north.1210

Despite changes of the 12th century the sources testify that in the early 13th century Bjarmaland was still involved in fur trade. However, it is during the 13th century that the Bjarmians fall out of the written sources. There are a large number of factors that offer explanations as to why the Bjarmians who had been involved in fur trade at least since the 9th century ceased to be a factor in this activity (at least

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1208 Uino 1997, 199.
1210 Spiridonov 1992, 564.

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with a separate identity). Due to more numerable sources we can say much more about why the Bjarmians vanished than why they appeared.

The sources relate very little about Bjarmaland as an area. Its borders are not defined and very little is said about its relations to neighbouring countries or political allegiance besides letting us know that Bjarmaland was a tributary to the king of Russia (Garða konúngr, alternatively Garðaríki) probably by the end of the 12th century. A treaty between Prince Jaroslav and Novgorod from 1264 places among other areas “Kola” among the holdings of Novgorod. This seems to indicate that the Kola Peninsula that most likely was inhabited to some extent by the Bjarmians was definitely in dependency to Novgorod by the late 13th century.

The Bjarmians are not mentioned in the written sources after the middle of the 13th century. In the 16th century they reappear, but it seems like the appearance is due to the earlier written sources. Olaus MAGNUS’s Carta marina from 1539 and a number of maps until the next century place Bjarmaland on the Kola Peninsula. Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus claims that there were Bjarmians among the visitors to the northern Finnish town Tornio in the middle of the 16th century. These had possibly arrived by boat along the northern waterways. We have to assume that it was Olaus MAGNUS’s own interpretation based on the Old Norse sources. Also a few documents of the 16th century name Bjarmaland, but these are based on interpretation of medieval Scandinavian sources.

Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar indicates that the way of life of the Bjarmians was disturbed by the Mongols entering Russia in late 1237. The Mongols took many towns in Suzdal’ in the winter of 1238. They were a hundred kilometres from Novgorod, but turned away.

The political situation was changing also in other regards. Novgorod began military-economic expansion towards the north and became gradually an important center for fur trade that was an important motivation in Novgorod’s colonisation of the northern areas. The Karelians who were bound to Novgorod became a major factor in the north. The expansion of these two to the north caused long lasting hostility and rivalry between Novgorod/Karelians on one side and Norway on the other. This kind of hostile situation must have affected the Bjarmians who lived in the north. Also, it would seem as if Novgorod had already gained some influence

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1211 Antiquités Russes 1852, 404.
1212 Munch 1874b, 265.
1214 Suvanto 1987, 42–44.
in Bjarmaland by the end of the 12th century. The Karelian expansion towards the north must have added pressure to the Bjarmians. Allegiance to Novgorod, involvement in fur trade and closely related language should be seen as the main factors why the Bjarmians seemingly adopted identity from the Karelians who were settling in the northern areas in increasing numbers. There are a number of mainly economical factors that may have contributed in the development by adding reasons why the Bjarmians could not remain a separate group of their own after the 13th century.

The hostilities between Novgorod and Norway started possibly already before the middle of the 13th century (cf. hostility between Bjarmians and Norwegians mentioned in Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar) and continued throughout the 14th century, despite a few peace treaties and went on well into the 15th century (1411, 1419, 1444, 1445). The peace treaty of 1250–1251 between Aleksandr Nevskiy and the Norwegians was made after the Novgorodians and Karelians had raided Norway in 1223 and 1226. This treaty was renewed in 1326. However, despite the treaties there were ongoing hostilities. Icelandic sources mention Karelian raids in Northern Norway (mostly Hålogaland) between the 1270’s and the early 14th century (1271, 1279, 1302, 1316, 1323). Besides purely Karelian expeditions Russians from Novgorod and the Northern Dvina River area participated in raids against Norway. Russians targeted their expeditions against areas that represented the Norwegian crown and the church organisation and the Norwegians raided areas where Novgorod was strongest, namely on the coast between rivers Northern Dvina and Onega. In this situation the Bjarmians must have felt a pressure since they had trade contacts with Norway and were at least to some extent connected with Novgorod. Keeping good relations to both may have been difficult, although the Bjarmians may have tried this as Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar might suggest in its information that a number of Bjarmians came to live in Northern Norway. Perhaps this search of support from Norway was an attempt to remain separate from the Karelians but it might have turned out that there was no foundation for economical independence in the new general situation. Persistent hostility between Norway and Novgorod could have contributed in severing the traditional contacts between the Bjarmians and the Norwegians. It would seem like the Bjarmians were pressed

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1216 Nansen 1911, 395–396; Itkonen 1943, 42; Bergsland 1971, 20; Blom 1981, 283–284; Aikio 1987, 83; Suvanto 1987, 80; Nosov–Ovsyannikov–Potin 1992, 16; Törnblom 1993, 302; Wallerström 1995, 215, 231, 342–343; Saksa 1998, 204–205; Hansen 2003, 9; Hansen–Olsen 2004, 166. It is interesting to notice that there was ongoing strife also between Sweden and Novgorod. In 1292 the Novgorodians ravaged in Tavastland. This attack was countered the same year. Törnblom 1993, 298.
from all sides and the Karelians eventually took over their role in fur trade. Probably, though, the Bjarmians to some extent kept up the old trade, although they too were known as Karelians after a while.

It would seem like the trade was directed differently than before. Trade between Norway and Hanseatic cities increased and in 1250 King Hákon concluded a treaty of commerce with Lübeck.\textsuperscript{1217} This could have contributed in making the trade with the north less interesting from the Norwegian point of view.

In Norway kings wanted to gain more control over the profitable fur trade and the kings’ privilege within fur trade (monopoly for furs north of Vennesund/Vinjarsund\textsuperscript{1218}) was explicitly defined in a law (\textit{Frostatingslov}) from about 1105/1115. Since the 11\textsuperscript{th} century king’s men collected tributes from the Saami (\textit{finnskatt}) in Hålogaland thus taking over this activity from Håalogalandian chieftains. By the late 12\textsuperscript{th} century the king had his man (\textit{sysselmann}) taking care of the so-called \textit{finnkaup}.\textsuperscript{1219}

The written sources insinuate that the Norwegian kings were also interested in the fur trade with Bjarmaland. We also know that people of Hålogaland had travelled independently to Bjarmaland for many centuries and perhaps the kings’ involvement made it less interesting for Northern Norwegians to sail to Bjarmaland, especially since there were other changes going on that might have made this kind of expeditions less tempting.

A new important trade article entered the market in the 12\textsuperscript{th} century (mentioned in written sources around 1115). Dried fish (and its side product cod liver oil) as merchandise was becoming increasingly important and the Hanseatic cities were interested in it. Norwegian settlement in Finnmark increased (in around 1200 the border was in Malangen) and in time it reached Varanger. Both state and church administration were gradually built in the northern areas. Norse expansion in Finnmark meant that the old border between Saami and Norse settlement at Lyngen was broken. This lead to increased conflicts between Norwegians and Novgorodians/Karelians (see above). The Norwegian expansion in the north (after

\textsuperscript{1217} Schach 1993, 259–260; Sigurðsson 1993, 258.

\textsuperscript{1218} The late 13\textsuperscript{th} century written version that has been preserved names the location as “Umeyiarusund”. Norges Gamle Love 1846, 257. The researchers have interpreted this as the ON Vinjarsund that corresponds to the current Vennesund, located on the border between Hålogaland/Helgeland and Naumdølafylke. See Johnsen 1923, 16; Hagland–Sandnes 1994, 227.

1250) is probably connected with fish trade.\textsuperscript{1220} In general, it seems like Norwegian interest in furs declined during the 13\textsuperscript{th} century, although furs were still exported in the early 14\textsuperscript{th} century to e.g. England. Perhaps accessibility to new merchandise in form of fish close to home made long expeditions to obtain furs less tempting.\textsuperscript{1221} Competition from Karelians\textsuperscript{1222} may have made it more difficult to obtain equal profit from the furs with the same effort than before. All in all, competing trade articles, political and economical changes and instability may have made it unprofitable to keep up the traditional fur trade with the Bjarmians.

By 1220’s the Catholic Church in Finland had its organisational foundation consolidated. In 1221 the Pope allowed the bishop of Finland to use a trade blockade in order to make the rest of the pagans adopt Christianity. This was done by issuing the right to refuse trade with pagans.\textsuperscript{1223} It is known from the written sources that the Bjarmians were pagan in the early 13\textsuperscript{th} century and this kind of hinder on trade with pagans could in principle have affected trade between the pagan Bjarmians and the already Christian people in Southern Finland.

Also the political situation in the whole of the Northern Europe was changing. The Swedish expansion to Finland took place between the end of the 12\textsuperscript{th} century and the early 14\textsuperscript{th} century. In the 13\textsuperscript{th} century Sweden consolidated its dominance over the southwestern part and the Häme area in Finland and the country became formally integrated into the Swedish realm. In Sweden the 13\textsuperscript{th} century was a period of consolidating the kingdom and the king’s position.\textsuperscript{1224} In Northern Norway new administrative structure was being built, with firmer central administration.\textsuperscript{1225}

Novgorod competed constantly with its neighbours and this had a decisive impact on the geopolitical situation in the eastern part of the Baltic Sea and around the Lake Ladoga area. The first conflict with Suzdal’ occurred already in 1169 when the Prince Andrei Bogoljubski of Suzdal’ attacked Novgorod. He failed to conquer it, but the competition went on. There was rivalry over Finland between Novgorod and Sweden. The Karelians of the Ladoga area were Novgorod’s allies and together they attacked the Häme area in Finland. The people of Häme in their turn made counterattacks to the Ladoga area. In the early 13\textsuperscript{th} century the competition that had

\textsuperscript{1221} Hansen–Olsen 2004, 219.
\textsuperscript{1223} Törnblom 1993, 293. By the early decades of the 13\textsuperscript{th} century southwestern Finland and Åland were already Christian, mission was still going on in the Häme area. Törnblom 1993, 294–296.
\textsuperscript{1224} Kirkinen 1986, 37–38; Törnblom 1993, 297–298; 310, 314.
\textsuperscript{1225} Wallerström 1995, 213.
started during the 12th century escalated further when the Teutonic Knights conquered Estonia and aspired to spread their influence further east. The Novgorodian mission in Karelia was intensified during the 1220’s and at the same time the Swedish mission in Häme escalated. Sweden attacked the Neva River in 1240, but failed to seize any areas. In 1240 Novgorod won a decisive battle against the Teutonic Knights at the Peipsijärvi (Peipus) Lake. In the end of the 13th century long lasting alliance between Karelia and Novgorod changed character and Karelia joined under the rule of Novgorod. Sweden continued its attempts to extend its influence further east and in the process the Karelian area became a battlefield. As a result of the war with the Mongols and the accompanying killing and looting, large areas in Russia became deserted. This escalated the settlement activity in the northern wilderness of Novgorod. Novgorod never surrendered to the Mongols, but was the only Russian principality to remain independent against the price of a yearly tribute.  

There is reason to believe that the general changes regarding the conditions in the north may have affected also other groups than the Bjarmians. As it happens, the Icelandic Annals mention the Kvens for the last time in 1271. After this only the Karelians or Russians alone are mentioned. It would thus appear that at least two Finno-Ugrian groups are not mentioned in the sources anymore after the 13th century. Instead, the sources mention Karelians who by that time had moved towards the north and were allied with Novgorod. 

We have seen that changes of both economical and political character (more organised states with control over the economy, new direction of trade, new trade articles, immigration from Karelia, Mongol invasion, hostilities in the north) - that started in the 12th century and escalated in the 13th century - were among the factors that wiped out the Bjarmian identity. Bjarmians were a people speaking a Baltic Fennic language (very close to Finnish and Karelian) who later became assimilated with Karelians, lived on the Kola Peninsula and Viena Karelia and practised agriculture besides trade on furs, perhaps also walrus ivory, down, pearls, salt and metals and supplemented their living with fishing and collecting birds’ eggs.

There are not enough sources to define the Bjarmians more closely. They are perhaps best set in place by their neighbours. Interaction between different groups in the north must have been important for all. The Norwegians, the Kvens, Finnish people from the south of Finland, the Saami, the Karelians, the Russians and the

1227 Carpelan 1993b, 223.
Vepsians all lived close to the Bjarmians and most likely had contacts of some sort. The reference to two kinds of Bjarmians may refer to ethnic diversity and out of the previously mentioned groups it is feasible that there might have been Kven, Vepsian or Saami among the people living by the White Sea. It is also feasible that the words referred to Bjarmians living on the Kola Peninsula on the one hand and to Bjarmians living in Viena Karelia on the other hand. Perhaps it was some characteristics of livelihood or feature in dress or something alike that made it possible to talk about two groups of the Bjarmians.

It seems like the Bjarmians as a group of this identity were established by the 9th century. There had been people living in the White Sea area since the Stone Age and probably also in the Bjarmian area, but the actual identity does not have to be very ancient. Everything indicates that there existed a suitable economical basis for settlement in the Bjarmian area. This need not have changed even after the Bjarmian identity was lost. However, it was probably trade and interaction in general that gave rise to a specific Bjarmian identity and when the prerequisites for this changed, the identity was wiped out. Bjarmaland that appears in the written sources is bound to the coastal zone of the White Sea. It remains speculation, but we can assume that the settlement at least in certain areas (possibly in Viena Karelia) reached some inland areas, but giving any - even vague - borders is difficult. Only further archaeological investigations may shed light on this issue. In general, our only hope to learn more about Bjarmians lies in the possibility of getting to know them through their material culture.

My conclusions about location and livelihood are somewhat at odds with the general image of prehistorical settlement in the north, as well as the traditional image of Bjarmaland. I hope I have managed to show that a lot remains to be examined before we can be certain that the image we have of the late prehistorical and early medieval Northern Fennoscandia is the correct one.  

Looking at historiography, it is clear that old theories about Bjarmaland bear traces of general ideas about the development of settlement in Finland (that is of course closely connected with the general ideas about human habitation and its

1228 Although I have not touched the subject here, it appears probable that also the image of early medieval Northern Russia requires a critical look with emphasis on interpretation of archaeological finds and written sources, as well as evaluation of how different theories have evolved over centuries of historical research. E.g. archaeological remains of Finno-Ugrian origin west of the Northern Dvina River have been discussed only in a few studies and often the argumentation lacks depth and is fairly poorly founded. In other words, the current analyses are not adequate. See Glazyrina 2000, 522; Alaräisänen 2004, 86.
historical development\textsuperscript{1229}). The idea was that people had migrated from south and east and gradually reached more northerly areas. Until the Iron Age the Finns had lived south and east of Finland. Bjarmaland was considered as more easterly than Finland and it was thought that the Bjarmians were one of the earliest Finnish tribes. In fact, the understanding was that the Bjarmians were the same as the later Finns, they had just not yet reached the more westerly area of Finland.\textsuperscript{1230} Probably the Northern Dvina River has partially been so closely connected with Bjarmaland because the prevailing image of history required that the Northern Dvina area was inhabited before e.g. Vien a Karelia and Finland. Because the theory connecting Bjarmaland and the Northern Dvina River goes so far back, it has become well established and has lived on even after the image of the settlement in Finland has changed (i.e. the settlement in the southern part was continuous from Bronze Age to Iron Age and great east-west migration did not occur).

My conclusion based on the information the sources give is that the Bjarmians were Baltic Fennic (language close to Finnish and Karelian) speaking people who buried their dead into mounds close to their dwellings, cultivated land and hunted fur animals. They seem to have lived by the Kantalahti Bay at the White Sea, more closely on the Kola Peninsula (especially the Varzuga River) and in Viena Karelia at least from the 9\textsuperscript{th} to the mid-13\textsuperscript{th} century. Possibly this population has partial roots going even as far back as the Stone Age, although the Bjarmian identity in the indicated areas was not born before towards the end of the Iron Age. The origin of the specific ethnical identity most likely lies in economical interaction (trade with furs and possibly other items) with neighbouring areas. The events of the 13\textsuperscript{th} century caused the Bjarmians to be known with another ethnonym due to new settlers and political and economical changes, but in all likelihood the population

\textsuperscript{1229} Theories that take migration to “empty” land as a starting point for the development of the settlement have their roots in the notion that all humans derive from the Bible character Noah’s family, the only people who survived the Deluge. This theory required that humans had gradually migrated further towards north and since the 18\textsuperscript{th} century it was considered that the Finns migrated to Finland in the course of the Iron Age. The earliest theories assumed that the Finns migrated from the east. Tohmila 1989, 111–112. This kind of notion still guided the 19\textsuperscript{th} century historians. See e.g. Koskinen 1869, 1–2.

\textsuperscript{1230} See e.g. Calamnius 1864, 62–63, 73; Koskinen 1869, 1–6; Krohn 1869, 1–2, 8–9, 12–15; Snellman 1929, 326–328. It was thought that the poems of Kalevala were created in Bjarmaland because the poems were composed before the Finns moved to Finland. See e.g. Ahlqvist 1887, 3; Snellman 1929, 328. It was also acknowledged that before the Finns moved to Finland there lived small groups of ancient peoples like the Saami (“Lapp”, “Finn”), the “jatuli” and the “hiisi” in the area. See e.g. Koskinen 1869, 1–2, 5.
did not abandon its previous dwellings, although it appears probable that they
needed to adjust their way of life to some extent.
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Note about names

Names - both place names, personal names and ethnical names - that appear in this study derive from different languages and even from different epochs. Some names appear with varied forms of spelling in the medieval sources and many names are totally different in different languages. All this makes it difficult to find one unified form of spelling and occasionally it may be difficult to choose in which language a certain name should appear in the study. My attempt throughout the study has been to be as consistent with the spelling as the confused situation allows. I have also aimed to give alternative forms of the names so that the reader can associate the possible different forms that appear later in the study, or in literature and sources. As for the personal names, I have tried to follow the form(s) given in the original sources. I also try to repeat other names in the form(s) used in the sources. This is at times confusing, since orthography may vary from source to source.

I have chosen to use the original form Beormas and I use the name Bjarmaland instead of the latinised Biarmia throughout this study, because these are the forms that appear in the sources. However, I have chosen to use a modified form of the ethnonym, that is, I use Bjarmians instead of Bjarmar that is the form appearing in the sources. This choice is in essence stylistic. I felt that since English is the language of this study, it would simply appear too alien to use the name Bjarmar. I have chosen to totally discard the common English translation where Permian corresponds to Bjarmar since I find this translation scientifically misleading and even directly erroneous.

It has proved nearly impossible to be fully consistent with spelling, because the literature contains so many alternatives. Russian (place) names are problematic, because there does not necessarily exist one established form of spelling with the Latin alphabet since transliteration varies from language to language. I have tried to follow the transliteration practise of the English language as consistently as possible, but at times a form deviating from the established practise may have been used, especially if the context demands this.

As for the use of Icelandic names, I find that in order to fulfill the formal requirements, it has been most practical to treat the names as if the patronyms were proper surnames. This goes against the general Icelandic practise, but I hope the unorthodox usage is excused in the name of practicality.

To help the reader, I have decided to provide a list of names (excluding personal names) that appear most frequently in the course of this study. The list includes both current and historical names. The list is arranged more or less alphabetically.
(no cross-references of the same name in different languages are included) and contains varied forms of spelling and/or gives the name in different languages. I have also included explicatory notes.

Cholmogory – Holmogory – Kolmogory – Kholmogory
appears with numerous spellings; “market town” close to present-day city of Archangel [Arkhangelsk/Архангельск] by the Northern Dvina River

Čuď’ – Zavoločskaja Čuď’ – Čuď Zavoločje
medieval Russian name for probably Finno-Ugrian peoples, varied orthography

Finmark
northernmost part of Norway, traditionally inhabited by Saami

Hálogaland – Hâlogaland – Haalogaland
medieval name of an area in northern Norway, currently known as Helgeland

Häme – Tavastland
an area and its inhabitants in Finland, cf. hämäläinen – Tavastian

westernmost bay of the White Sea

Komi – Zyrian (Finnish “Syrrjääni”) – Permian
Permian is used synonymously of Komi/Zyrian in older literature

Karelia – Karjala
sometimes spelled Carelia

Kem’ – Vienan Kemi – Viena Kem’
a river in Viena Karelia; another river in northern Finland also bears the name Kemi, hence the differentiation “Vienan Kemi”, Kemi in Viena

Kola Peninsula – Kuolan niemimaa
peninsula by the White Sea and the Arctic Ocean

Kvenland – Kainuu – Kajano
medieval denomination of an area and its inhabitants; currently Finnish Kainuu refers to a specific area in northern/eastern Finland, cf. Kvens – kvener – kainulaiset – kaivany; Kajno more with different forms of spelling

Ladoga – Laatokka
lake in Karelia

Lapland
area in the north of Finland and Sweden, traditionally inhabited by Saami

Onego – Äänen
a lake in northern Russia, sometimes spelled Onega; a river in northern Russia is called Onega and one of the bays of the White Sea is the Onega Bay, sometimes spelled Onego

Pechora – Petšora – Petjora
river in Northern Russia

Rus’ – Russia – Gardāariki
Rus’ is the same as Ancient Russia, I use all these quite synonymously in the study; Gardāariki is the somewhat vague medieval Scandinavian denomination of Rus’/Russia/parts of Russia

Saami – saamelaiset – samer – sápmelaš
indigenous name for people who are called the Lapps in older literature and Finnar [OE Finnas] in medieval Scandinavian sources

Savo – Savolax
an area and its inhabitant in Finland, cf. savolainen

Suzdal’ – Suzdalia
area in northern Russia, appears also in medieval Scandinavian written sources with slightly varied orthography

Sviatoi Nos’
location on the coast of Kola Peninsula, varied orthography in literature
Vienajoki – Northern Dvina River – Severnaja (Severnaya) Dvina [Северная Двина]

river by the southern shore of the White Sea

Vienan Karjala – Viena

northern part of Russian Karelia by the Kantalahti Bay of the White Sea

Vienanmeri – White Sea – Hvite Havet

Vyg – Wyg

river in Viena Karelia, in Finnish called Uikujoki

Wegestaf – Veggistaf

location by the White Sea known from medieval sources, varied spelling

Åland – the Åland Islands – Ahvenanmaa

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