

have been found on *Hiidenmäki* [‘Hill of *Hiisi*’] (in 2017, the hill was metal-detected by experienced detectorists working together with an archaeologist), it may not be too daring to interpret it as a *hiisi*-site related to pre-Christian cult (Frog 2017: 122). This possibility is perhaps strengthened by the local folklore related to healing magic practised at a natural hole on a rock surface on the hill. The hill attracts modern-day neo-pagans, adding another layer of meaning, memory and topophilia to this fascinating cultural landscape.

Sami Raninen (samikristianraninen[at]gmail.com), Ylitie 20 B as 1, 20810 Turku, Finland.

Notes

1. The exhibition was open until March 2019.
2. For more detailed information and references, the reader is referred to Finnish-language publications Lesell et al. 2017 and Adel & Lesell 2017. English-language publications will eventually appear as the research project proceeds.
3. The Sámi-speaking population around Lake Näsijärvi must have been assimilated or displaced by the 16th century, as it does not enter into written record and the fishing sites and hunting ground in this area became owned and utilized by farmers from settlements in south.
4. Image available at: <https://finna.fi/Record/musketti.M012:KM40152:1>.

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Jómsvíkinga saga – Recent Research Focus on Genre

Sirpa Aalto, University of Oulu

This report offers an overview of recent research being conducted on Jómsvíkinga saga.

In recent years, *Jómsvíkinga saga* has received scholarly attention in many ways: it has been in the focus of a scholarly journal (*Scripta Islandica* 65, 2014), seminars and symposiums (e.g. ones organized in Wolin, Poland, in spring 2015 and 2017), and one dissertation (Þórðís Edda Jóhannesdóttir 2016). In addition, single articles and books have dealt with various aspects of the saga, such as its historicity, historical characters, outlaw-theme

and onomastics (e.g. Morawiec 2009; Aalto 2009; Petrulovich 2013; 2016; Poilvez 2016). The reason for this attention is genuine interest in this saga which was not thoroughly investigated before the end of the 20th century. The saga itself poses a challenge for the reader and scholar: its style and content make it a combination that draws features from *Íslendingasögur*, kings’ sagas and mythical sagas (Þórðís 2016: 192).

Jómsvíkinga saga's genre has thus raised discussion among scholars, because it has been difficult to categorize into saga genres, which has even led to new genre suggestions: Melissa Berman has suggested that *Jómsvíkinga saga* together with *Færeyinga saga* and *Orkneyinga saga* could be labelled as 'political sagas' (Berman 1985). The combination of different modes and somewhat 'unpolished' style that *Jómsvíkinga saga* displays, has been interpreted as proving something about the saga's early date. Categories of saga literature arise from the scholarly need to classify the sagas in order to evaluate, for example, their provenience and historical reliability as sources. However, it is actually typical that the sagas contain elements from several genres. Therefore, *Jómsvíkinga saga* is not an atypical saga. (Finlay 2014; Hermann 2013: 336.)

Although the earliest surviving manuscript of *Jómsvíkinga saga*, AM 291 4to, is dated to the end of the 13th century, the saga itself is supposed to have been written already around 1200. *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, which was composed by Bishop Bjarni Kolbeinsson of the Orkneys, is dated to the end of the 12th century (maybe around the 1180s) and it shows that there was an earlier, probably oral tradition concerning the Jómsvikings before the saga was written down. The poetical tradition about jarls of Hlaðir and the battle of Hjørungavágr, in which the combined fleet of Danes and the Jómsvikings was defeated, is especially strong. These poems were composed at different points in time and for different audiences, as Judith Jesch (2014) has pointed out.

Synopsis

In order to understand why *Jómsvíkinga saga* has been at the center of manifold research, one needs to look at the synopsis. It reveals how historical characters and events are mixed up with what we would call the supernatural today. In addition, the saga has intertextual connections for instance with *Eyrbyggja saga*, not to mention the kings' sagas. The saga was apparently very well known in the 13th century, since the author of *Fagrskinna* and Snorri Sturluson in his *Heimskringla* draw on *Jómsvíkinga saga* as part of Ólaf Tryggvason's saga in their respective works. Also, the poetic

tradition mentioned above supports the view that *Jómsvíkinga saga* was known as an immanent whole before it was written down (Clover 1986: 34–36; Gísli Sigurðsson 2004: 45).

Jómsvíkinga saga is set in the latter half of the 10th century in Denmark and Norway. At the core of the story is a Danish nobleman Pálna-Tóki who becomes the enemy of his former fosterson, King Svein Forkbeard of Denmark (ruled ca. 986–1014). Pálna-Tóki flees Denmark and goes on Viking raids with his crew. In Wendland (the West Slavic area on the southern coast of the Baltic Sea), he is offered an island, *Jóm*, by the Wendish Prince Búrizláfr. Pálna-Tóki's duty is to defend Búrizláfr's realm from other Vikings, so he builds a fortress on the island. Pálna-Tóki's Jómsvikings become famous for their law code and their fierce fighting.

The saga continues after the death of Pálna-Tóki: the Jómsvikings have a new leader Sigvaldi. He wished to marry one of Prince Búrizláfr's daughters. However, the Prince sets a condition: Sigvaldi must bring King Svein to Wendland, which he does by luring the king onto his ship. King Svein is forced to accept the terms that Prince Búrizláfr sets, and their deal is confirmed by marriage alliances. After this humiliation, King Svein plots to take revenge on the Jómsvikings. He invites them to a feast where the Jómsvikings become heavily intoxicated. King Svein manages to make them promise that they will attack his enemy Earl Hákon of Norway. After the feast, the Jómsvikings realize that they will have to fulfill their promise quickly so that they will not lose their honor and the possibility for a surprise attack.

The saga climaxes in the battle of Hjørungvágr in Norway, which probably took place in the end of 980s. The Norwegians are about to lose when Earl Hákon calls his protective goddess Þorgerðr Hjørðabrúðr, who raises a hail storm with her sister Irpa. This changes the tide of the battle, and the combined fleet of the Danes and Jómsvikings lose. Sigvaldi flees but many surviving Jómsvikings are captured, among others Vagn Ákason, grandson of Pálna-Tóki. The last part of the saga depicts how part of the Jómsvikings are executed and how the rest of them survive because of their brave attitude.

Historical Background of the Saga

In spite of the fact that *Jómsvíkinga saga* is flavoured with incredible and fantastic elements such as the goddess Þorgerðr Hqrðabruðr and her magic, the saga plot itself seems to be based partly on historical characters and events. Such characters as King Harald Bluetooth, Svein Forkbeard and Earl Hákon of Norway are historical people, whereas some, such as the leader of the Jómsvíkings, Pálna-Tóki, are virtually impossible to verify. The description of the fortress of Jómsborg may be exaggerated in the saga, but a Scandinavian presence on the southern coast of the Baltic Sea in the Viking Age is attested by archaeological finds and cannot be dismissed. The island of Wolin in present day Poland is the most probable place for the base of the Jómsvíkings. (Aalto 2016.)

Thus, the saga combines elements that are familiar from the kings' sagas: the action concentrates on Danish kings and their attempts to rule not only in Wendland but also in Norway. On the other hand, the saga depicts local chieftains and their families in a way that is close to the *Íslendingasögur*. The community of Jómsvíkings itself has been in the focus of research. Marion Poilvez has compared the saga with others that have an outlaw theme, such as *Harðar saga*. She suggests that *Jómsvíkinga saga* may in fact have been "a kind of tutelary motif which influenced the outlaw narratives in Iceland" (Poilvez 2016: 105). Björn Bandlien, on the other hand, has pointed out that the law code of the Jómsvíkings may have had models in real life, such as the codes of knightly orders that were active in the crusades against the West Slavs in the 1150s (Bandlien 2005; Gelting 2007: 99; Bysted et al. 2012).

The place names in the different manuscripts of the saga show that there must have been a common core of the saga, but otherwise the compilers may have added place names in order to bring accuracy to the geographical sphere of the saga. The Norwegian place names are quite correct but distant places, such as Wendland, are very sketchy – they must have been outside the immediate knowledge of the compilers. (Aalto 2016; 2019.) In fact, some names such as Jómsborg, show that they were borrowed from Slavic language either directly or via Low German (Petrukevich 2016:

173). Taking into account this background and the archaeological finds which show a strong Scandinavian presence on the southern coast of the Baltic Sea in the Viking Age, the saga continues to be part of an ongoing discussion of how the Scandinavians (or Vikings generally) were active on the southern coast of the Baltic Sea and how they participated, for instance, in Polish state formation in Pomerania (Morawiec 2009).

Jómsvíkinga saga as Part of Old Norse Historiography

In the context of the Icelandic saga tradition, drawing the line between historiography and 'fiction' has been difficult. For instance, *Íslendingasögur* deal with the Icelandic past and some of the characters are historical persons, and yet these sagas are considered to be more literature than historiography. Mythical-heroic sagas, which were long considered to be pure fiction have now been re-evaluated with the conclusion that they may have been viewed as presenting the past for the saga audience (Lassen 2012). In the light of this knowledge, *Jómsvíkinga saga* seems to fall into the category of historiography. This is backed up by the fact that compendia such as *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla* used it as a source. (Aalto 2014.)

Yet it seems most plausible that the function of this saga changed during the centuries. For instance, it is placed among entertaining indigenous romances in the manuscript Stock. Perg. 7 4to (first half of the 14th century), which could indicate that it was chosen there because of its entertaining elements. The last version of *Jómsvíkinga saga* was written in the 16th century, and a Latin translation was made at the end of the same century. Still in the 18th century, the plot of the saga was repeated in two *rímur*, which would indicate that the saga was appreciated by Icelanders in later centuries more as entertainment than as history. This continuity of *Jómsvíkinga saga* from medieval poetry to post-medieval *rímur* definitely warrants further study.

Forthcoming Events and Research

As Þórðís Jóhannsdóttir states in the end of her dissertation, the investigation of *Jómsvíkinga saga* is not over. A whole session concentrating on *Jómsvíkinga saga* ("*Jómsvíkinga saga* –

Origins and Development of the Legend”) took place at the 17th International Saga Conference in Reykjavík and Reykholt 12th–17th August 2018. The session explored, among other things, the development of the saga in different manuscripts, its historiographical aspect, historical content, language and style.

In addition to research, *Jómsvíkinga saga* is being translated into several languages, the oldest manuscript AM 291 4to being the basis for translations. A loose network of scholars from England, Poland, Czech Republic, Finland, Iceland, Russia and France has been committed to providing translations in various languages. For instance, Dr. Alison Finlay has provided the new English translation of the saga with a full introduction by Þórðís Edda Jóhannesdóttir that came out in 2018. The earlier English translation by Lee M. Hollander was based on the 14th-century manuscript Stock. Perg. Nr 7, so there is a genuine need for the up-to-date translation of the oldest manuscript of *Jómsvíkinga saga*.

Sirpa Aalto (sirpa.aalto[at]oulu.fi) Department of History, University of Oulu, PL 1000, 90014 Oulun yliopisto, Finland.

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