

MÁGUS SAGA - RIDDARASAGA OR FORNALDARSAGA?

Mágus saga jarls exists in two recensions, the first and shorter version being composed around 1300, the second about fifty years later.¹ The saga is preserved in eight vellum manuscripts, as well as numerous paper copies, so it has evidently been quite popular in the past.² It has not, however, enjoyed the same popularity among modern scholars, receiving no mention, for example, in a recent treatment of the riddarasögur.³

It is now a century since the one decade which saw much critical activity on the saga. In 1873, F. A. Wulff discussed the relationship between the sagas of Mágus and Geirarð and the French epics,⁴ and Wulff's work was followed in 1875 and 1876 by two other papers on the sources of Mágus saga.⁵ Meanwhile, Gaston Paris reviewed the edition of the Dutch translation of a related French text, and added by the way valuable observations on Mágus saga.⁶ The only scholarly edition of the saga, Gustaf Cederschiöld's edition of the shorter recension, appeared in 1884.

In view of the paucity of critical material on the saga, it is perhaps not surprising that scholars should be seen to be bewilderingly inconsistent in their views about the saga's origins. Thus, while an early critic writes of the compilation of the saga that 'ist die im Französischen Maugis genannte Chanson ... nicht benutzt worden',⁷ a more recent critic apparently simply assumes that 'the narrative is not a translation, but a very free adaptation, of material found in the French Quatre Fils d'Aimon, Maugis d'Aigremont, and (:) Renaud de Montauban.'⁸

Probably the main deterrent to the criticism of the saga is this 'very free adaptation' which the original compiler of Mágus saga made of his sources, linking together two French epics: Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne and Renaud de Montauban, to provide the basic plot of the saga,⁹ upon which is superimposed a good deal of material, especially concerning the supernatural, of the type found in the fornaldarsögur. The plot of Mágus saga 1 is unusual among the ridðarasögur in being based, however loosely, on two, not one, French sources. Why should this be? A second problem is the fact that the account of Charlemagne's journey to Constantinople is turned into a bride-quest story, with a suitably Carolingian name, Ermingsdóttir, being provided for the hitherto anonymous daughter of King Hugon of Constantinople. Thirdly, in both the Pèlerinage and Renaud de Montauban, the emperor is Charlemagne, but he has been substituted for in Mágus saga 2 by HLöðvir, (Játtmundr in Mágus saga 1) followed by Karl. Fourthly, of course, the scene of the action has suffered a remarkable shift from France to Saxland. The following paper is a first attempt to reconsider the relationship of Mágus saga to its sources. We may start by looking at details of the treatment of Mágus as magician. Some of these details, especially concerning the Viðföru-character, have been discussed elsewhere,¹⁰ but some additional comments may be appended here.

The last of Mágus' three disguises is as hinn Hálfliti Maðr. The outstanding features in the description of this character, for which there apparently exists no single source, are the cat's eye, and

the two-coloured appearance: he is half snow-white, and half dusky red.

Auga hans var annat blátt ok snart ok vel um sik, en annat var morautt, sem i kauptum. Aunnur kinn hans ok sua nef var halft sniohvítt, enn halft moravítt; ok skiott orði yfir at fara, var hans likami allr halflitr, snióhvittr ok moravör, ok allr auðrum megin vel uorðinn, sem hverr myndi sik kíósa; enn ððrum megin var hann allr unndarliggr ok amatliggr.¹¹

A part of this description is clearly based on traditions concerning sorcerers. From Karlamagnús saga, we know that the possession of cats' eyes, and of improved nocturnal vision, are an attribute of the troll-sorcerer:

En Burnament hefir un allan aldr verit i bardögum, hann var mikill vexti ok illr kosti, svartr á hárr ok hörund; hann má engan mát eta nema hrán ok eigi vin drekka nema blóði væri blandat; hann hafði gul augu sem kettir, ok þó enn skygnri um nætr en daga. Þessi maðr var fullr galdra ok gerninga ok flærðar, ok mundi hann tröll kallað vera, ef hann kæ mi norðr hingat i heim.¹²

At this point in the saga, the reader knows that Mágus is supposed already to have died of sickness, so hinn Hálfliti Maðr is presumably a revenant from the world of the dead. His two-coloured appearance might well be connected with death, being probably derived from the well-known description of Hel, into whose care passed those who died of sickness.¹³ Indeed, the text shows some inconsistency concerning the colour of hinn Hálfliti Maðr, who tells Karl,

Enn blamaðr var faðir minn, enn móðir mín var ęttuð
norðan yfir haf; ok þui em ek blár ððrum megin, at mer
bregðr þui til feðr mins.¹⁴

The blár side seems to go back directly to the description of Hel, particularly in view of the fact that the goddess figures in other accounts of trolls or troll-like creatures which have blár-coloured flesh.¹⁵ But while blár flesh is connected with death in a general way, it may be that the mó-rauðr colour is more specifically intended to denote return from the dead: Steingrímur Þórsteinsson quotes an Icelandic tradition whereby male revenants are referred to by their dusky colour, as Móri.¹⁶

Not surprisingly, Karl is somewhat taken aback at the appearance before him of such a creature, but hinn Háfliti Maðr good-naturedly assures him that there are a good many more like him elsewhere:

ok marga megi þer þar seá a Elalanndi sva vorðna, sem
ek em, ok micklu endimligri, ok sva a Sithia hinni Micklu.¹⁷

Mention here of Scythia, as the country of origin of such and even more extraordinary beings, calls to mind Pliny's Natural History:

Esse Scytharum genera, et quidem plura, quae corporibus
humanis vescerentur, indicavimus. Idipsum incredibile
fortasse, ni cogitemus in medio orbe terrarum, ac
Sicilia et Italia fuisse gentes hujus monstri, Cyclopas
et Læstrygonas etc.¹⁸

Among these monstrous races described by Pliny is one which can see better by night than by day:

Idem in Albania gigni quosdam glauca oculorum acie, a pueritia statim canos, qui noctu plus quam interdiu cernant.¹⁹

These monsters are also referred to by Isidore:

Albania a colore populi nuncupata, eo quod albo crine nascantur.²⁰

Perhaps Isidore's first phrase here has contributed to the Icelandic accounts:

Par i hia er Albania land. þar ero menn borner sua huitir sem snior. en þeir sortna sua sem þeir eldast.²¹

It is clear that the cat's eye, and the snow-white side of hinn Háfliti Maðr represent a tradition which combined the nocturnal vision ascribed to the Albanians by Pliny, with the white skin ascribed to them perhaps from Isidore. This mingled tradition is also seen in the manuscript AM 194 8vo, where can be found:

A Sithio ero Albani, þeir hafa gul augu sem alla kvodu forðum hafa ok sea betr um netr en um daga.²²

A little further on we are told

A Svipiod enni miclo (compare Mágus saga a Sithia hinni Micklu) ero Albani, þeir ero hvitir sem snær bædi aa hars lit ok hörund, þegar þeir ero alnir, þeir hafa augu gul ok séa betr um netr en daga.²³

The troll-like nature of the magician-hero was recognised by the compiler of Mágus saga 2, who rationalises the character of Mágus by creating a genealogy for him. Whereas none of the characters of Mágus saga 1 are provided with genealogies, the compiler of the later version has given two, those of Mágus and Hlökkvir. Because of their similarities

(they are both bookish), and contrasts (one involves mythological, the other historical characters), they provide a useful focus for the study of the way in which the (pseudo-)historical and the supernatural are united in this saga.

One is inclined to wonder who the fræðimenn might have been, who claimed that Mágus jarl 'vari kominn at langfeðgatölu af syni Óðins, þeim er Narfi eða Nari hét,'²⁴ and who were given as the saga-man's authorities. The passage reads like the parody of a genealogy, which allows the saga-compiler to continue

ok því er mikil líkendi, ef hann hefir verit þessarrar
ættar, at hann hafi mikit kunnat i nígrómantía, því
at Esir plöguðu þa íþrótt framast, er kukl ok sjónhverfingar
er kallat,²⁵

The particular magical power associated with Mágus is nígrómantía, which, being a loan-word, suggests that the compiler of Mágus saga 2 was aware that the original inspiration for the magician was French. Moreover, Old French nigromance, had, in addition to its more generalised meanings, the specific meaning of magic employed in changing appearances, the type of magic (sjónhverfingar, in fact) most strikingly used by Mágus in the saga.²⁶ It is probable that the later saga-compiler had a good knowledge of French, therefore, and that he was looking to French literature in his search for the definition of Mágus' skills. It comes as no surprise, then, to find in this passage an exact verbal correspondence to a French formula:

hann hafi mikit kunnat i nígrómantía²⁷

parallels

Il (viz. Maugis d'Aigremont) sot moult d'ingromance.²⁸

However, this is not to claim that the later saga-compiler necessarily used Maugis d'Aigremont here, but rather that he recreated the character of Mágus in terms of French literary conventions.

Not fræðimenn but annals were used by the later saga-man in his reconstruction of the genealogy of HLöðvir and Karl. The last chapter of his version begins:

En svo visar á i annál, at Karl tók ríki i Saxland þá Haraldr hinn hárfagri skipti ríki með sonum sínum, en þá var Stephanus páfi hinn 7. með því nafni. Stýrði Karl 7 ár ok 20, áðr hann var svikinn ok kastaðr inn af Herbertó, ok þrim vetrum eptir fráfall hans kæmi Ulfljótr með lög til Íslands, ok þá var Eiríkr blóðöx orðinn yfirkonungr bræðra sinna. Þrim vetrum síðar andaðist Haraldr hárfagri. Einum vetri áðr tók Hrafn Hængsson lögsgu á Íslandi.²⁹

It is clear from this account that the Karl here referred to was that son of Lodovicus balbus, who ruled in France, was deceived and incarcerated by Heribertus in 924, and died in 929.³⁰

The account given at the end of Mágus saga 2 does not square with that at the beginning of the saga:

Svo hefir byrjat eitt æfintýr at einum frögum ok fjölmennum Frakklands konungi: Þat segja sumar bækur, at hann hafi heitit Játmundr, sumar nefna hann Júlíanó er hann tók keisaratígn; en mér þíkkir svo helst til

vísa sá titull, er af æfi keisaranna er skrifaðr, at hann muni verit hafa sonarson Karlamagnúss keisara, ok svo segja flestar bœkr, at hann hafi Lúdvíkus heitit, sem hann hafði við ríkisstjórn tekit, ok hann hafi átt þrjá bræðr, er svo hétu: Pippín, ok þeirra faðir hafi heitit HLððvir, son Karlamagnúss, konungs í Franz; ok ef hann hefir svo heitit, þá hefir hann verit konungr í landinu. Svo segia bœkr, at hann réð fyrir Saxlandi.³¹

In the latter case, it is quite clear that we are dealing with that Lodovicus who first bore the title rex Germaniæ. Presumably, this confusion is the result of the simple coincidence within a short space in the annals of two father-son pairs with the names HLððvir and Karl.

It seems quite likely that the later saga-man compared the names for the emperor that occurred in those texts of the saga that were available to him, with the annals that he had access to, and realised that neither of these names, Játmundr or Júlíanus could have belonged to the father of Karl of Saxonia, and so substituted Lúdvíkus (HLððvir). It says much for his editorial methodology that the character he chose to be the father of Karl agrees in name with the tyrannical ruler in the related Dutch text.³²

The change of scene from France to Saxland was probably dependent upon the change of the ruler's identity, from Charlemagne to Louis, and represented an attempt on the part of an earlier saga-man to provide Mágus saga with an apparently historical base. The efforts of the later saga-compiler to discover the original identity of the ruler should be seen as attempts to recover, rather than create, this pseudo-

historical base. But a question which arises at this point is whether these developments originated in Scandinavia or elsewhere.

The fact that Worms, not St.-Denis or Paris, is the emperor's capital city, led Wulff to speculate that Mágus saga had developed out of the French through a German intermediary. The difficulty with this hypothesis, however, as Wulff himself admits, is that the extant German versions of Renaud de Montauban do not show the change in scene from France to Saxonia. Wulff is forced to conclude that 'il y a eu en Allemagne une version de l'histoire des Quatre Fils Aymon et de leurs luttes contre l'empereur Charles qui est antérieure aux versions connues, et qui accuse un mouvement de création plus libre et plus germanique qu'on ne le trouve dans celles-là.'³³

This theory, as Suchier comments, is certainly possible. But he also pointed out that the names at least of Verminzuborg and Saxland occur very frequently in Piðreks saga, and since it is clear on other grounds that the compiler of Mágus saga knew Piðreks saga, there is no necessity to look any further for the origin of these two names.³⁴

Nor is it necessary to postulate a lost German source to account for the other place-names in Mágus saga, those that are not found in Piðreks saga, for all these names would be familiar to Scandinavians, since they are the names of major towns set on the Rhine, the traditional route to the central alpine passes. These towns were among the important stopping-places on journeys of trade or pilgrimage. Here, for example, is part of the description of a pilgrim-route to Rome from Ålborg in Denmark, a route followed by Norwegians as well as Danes:

Or Kolni ero III dagleidir upp med Rin til Meginzo-

borgar, þar er erkibyskups stoll ath kirkiu Petri et Pauli.
Þa er dag-for til Spiro, þar er byskups stoll ath Mario
kirkiu. Þa er dag-for til Sels-borgar. Þa er dagfor til
Strans-borgar, þar er byskups stoll ath Mario kirkiu,
þa III dag-leidir til Boslara-borgar.³⁵

The names that occur in Mágus saga, it will be noted, are those of episcopal seats, so a further possible native source for the setting of the saga could have been some such list as is found in Hauksbók:

Erckistólar næster i Saxlandi I Brimum og i Spiru,
j Strasborg og Meginzu.³⁶

At this point, however, any attempt to take seriously a supposed historical base of Mágus saga runs up against a series of inaccuracies. In the first place, these towns were situated in Alamannia, which was not included in the original territories of Louis the German, although Louis formally took control of them when he became rex Germaniæ, by the terms of the Treaty of Verdun (August 843).³⁷ Secondly, Louis' wife was called Hemma, not Erminga(ð)³⁸. And thirdly, of course, Louis the German was never given the title 'Emperor'; he reigned, rather, as king of Germania from 843-876.³⁹ That title belonged to his eldest brother, Lothair I, who was also the original ruler of these territories.⁴⁰

The original saga-compiler may have confused Louis with Lothair I. If he did so, he would have been demonstrating a confusion that was found even in the Icelandic annals, as comparison of different annals shows. Correct historical information is presented in the entry for the year 840 in the Skálholt Annal (whose text agrees with that of the Oddveria Annal):

Lotharius tok keisara dom eptir Loðvé keisara foður
sinn at vvilia bræðra sinna ... Loðver broðir hans var
konungr yfir Germania .xxxij. ar.⁴¹

But the Lögmanns Annal entry for the same year reads:

Loduir keisare rikte .xxx.vj aar.⁴²

The annalist here has confused the brothers, giving Louis the imperial title, and assuming that he succeeded to the title in 840, on the death of Louis the Pious, and that he ruled for thirty-six years, until his death in 876. There must be real confusion here: the name Loduir cannot simply be a scribal error for Lotharius, since the elder brother retired into a monastery in 855, and died shortly after.⁴³ The annalist has conflated the dates of the two brothers, and the title of Lothair, under Louis' name.

There seems to have been an Icelandic tendency to think of Louis, in fact the third son, as the eldest son of Louis the Pious, and therefore to consider him Louis' imperial successor. This trait is exemplified in Veraldar saga:

Pa var son hans (viz. Louis the Pious') Lodovicvs ok
brædr hans með honvm Lotharivs Karolvs ok Pippinvs.⁴⁴

If the later compiler of Mágus saga followed Icelandic sources and confused or conflated the two brothers when he assumed that the saga-tyrant was Hlöðvir, and not Játmundr, we can explain the giving to Hlöðvir of the title keisari, and account for his tyrannical character. Hlöðvir's gift for making honest men serve him through fear (allir þjónuðu honum með ótta ok aga, meirr en með ástúð eðr elsku⁴⁵) was apparently shared by Lothair I: 'Ergo cupiditate terroreque

illecti undique ad illum conflunt,⁴⁶ is how Nithard describes the results of Lothair's recruiting technique. Nithard, admittedly prejudiced against Lothair, but writing close to the events he describes, and more or less accurate as a source, draws attention to Lothair's deceitfulness, to his habit of breaking oaths:

Quibus peractis benigne et pacifice Lodharium in Italian
ditatum remissionis gratia ac regni muneribus remittens,
sacramenta quæ sæpe juraverat, quotiens in illum deliquerat,
quotiens delicta eidem donaverat, in memoriam reducens ac
piis visceribus monens contestabatur, ne saltem id quod
tunc novissime peregerant coramque cunctis ita se velle
confirmaverat frustrari quolibet modo permittat.⁴⁷

And again:

Quibus cum undique vires crevisse viderentur, reminiscentes
insidiarum quas Lodharius temporibus patris sui patri
et Karolo inferre studuerat, quas etiam post obitum patris
fratribus suis absque remedio struebat - occurrebant insuper
sacramenta, quæ tunc nuper fefellerat - aiebant se omnem
justiciam ab eo libenter consequi velle, sed his inditiis
nil boni sperare posse;⁴⁸

If the later saga-compiler was correct in his belief as to the proper identity of the tyrant, then it is possible that the bride-search motif, which had involved for the original saga-man linking the plots of Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne and Renaud de Montauban, represents more of this literary re-working of historical fact. In Mágus saga, the ruler marries Erminga(ð), the daughter of Húgon,

King of Miklagarð; Lothair I was married in 821 to (H)ermengarda, the daughter of Hugo, Count of Tours.⁴⁹ The hitherto nameless daughter of the fabulous and universally known Húgon of Miklagarð would be a convenient literary peg on which to hang the name of Hlökkvir's queen, for with this pedigree, being in no way her husband's inferior, she could fulfil all the social demands he might make of her.⁵⁰

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NOTES

1. The earlier recension was edited by G. Cederschiöld as Mágus saga jarls, in Fornsiðgur Suðurlanda, Lund 1884, pp.1-42. I am grateful to the Viking Society for Northern Research, London, for lending me their copy of this work. The later version has been edited twice, by Gunnlaugur Þórðarson: Bragða-Mágus saga, Copenhagen 1858; and by Páll Eggert Ólason: Mágus saga jarls, Reykjavík 1916. References here are to Cederschiöld's and Páll's editions, abbreviated as Mágus saga 1 and Mágus saga 2.
2. See Cederschiöld, op.cit., p.CIV.
3. G. Barnes: 'The Riddarasögur: A Medieval Exercise in Translation', Saga-Book of the Viking Society XIX, 1977, pp.403-442.
4. F. A. Wulff: 'Recherches sur les Sagas de Mágus et de Geirarð et leurs rapports aux épopées françaises', Lunds Univ. Årsskr. Tom. X., 1873, pp.1-44.
5. H. Suchier: 'Die Quellen der Mágussaga' Germania XX, 1875 pp.273-291; R. Köhler: 'Zur Mágus-saga', Germania XXI, 1876, pp.18-27.
6. G. Paris: Review of J. C. Matthes (ed.) Renout van Montalbaen (1875) Romania IV (1875) pp.471-474.
7. Suchier, op.cit., p.284. See also Paris' review of Wulff op.cit. in Romania IV (1875) pp.474-478.

8. M. Schlauch: Romance in Iceland (1935), p.183. In an earlier publication, Miss Schlauch had written that Mágus saga is 'an adaptation, with many striking changes, of the chanson de geste Maugis d'Aigremont.' See M. Schlauch: 'Widsíp, Wiðföruull, and Some Other Analogues", PMLA 46, 1931, pp.969-987.
9. See, for example, Wulff, op.cit., p.7 ff.; Suchier, op.cit., pp.283-4.
10. Cederschiöld, op.cit., pp.XC-XCVI; Schlauch, 'Widsíp, Wiðföruull, and Some Other Analogues,' passim; Schlauch, Romance in Iceland, pp.137-8.
11. Mágus saga 1, p.34b.
12. ed. C. R. Unger, Karlamagnus saga ok kappu hans (Chria., 1860) pp.108-9.
13. The description of Hel is found in Gylfaginning chapter 34:

Hon er blá hálf, en hálf með hörundar lit, því er
hon auðkend, ok heldr gnúpleit ok grimmlig.

It is said here that Hel has power over 'sött dauðir menn ok ellidauðir.'
14. Mágus saga 1, p.35a.
15. Examples are Glámr (Grettis saga, chapter 32), Agði jarl (Þórsteins þáttr bæjarmagns, chapter 7).
16. Steingrímur J. Þórsteinsson, 'Icelandic Folk Tales', Scandinavica 12 (1973, pp.83-89) p.90. See too J. Simpson, Icelandic Folk Tales and Legends (1972) pp.143-148.

17. Mágus saga 1, p.35a.
 18. C. Plinius Secundus, Naturalis Historiae lib. VII, cap 2,
(London, 1826, p.1283).
 19. ib., p.1285.
 20. Etymologiarum lib. XIV cap. III §34. In Migne's Patrologia Latina, tom. LXXXII, p.501.
 21. Hauksbók, udg. af det Kongelige Nordiske Oldskrift-Selskab
(Copenhagen 1892-6) p.154.
 22. ed. Kr. Kálund, Alfræði Íslenszk (Copenhagen, 1908) p.34.
 23. ib., p.36.
 24. Mágus saga 2, p.271.
 25. ib., pp.271-2.
 26. nigromance < Lat. necromantia. (See W. v. Wartburg, Französisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch, vol. VII, p.79b). The usual meanings of nigromance include 'Geisterbeschwörung, Schwarzkunst, Zauberei'. See Tobler-Lommatzsch, Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch, vol. VI pp.66Cb ff. v. Wartburg, op.cit. glosses as 'Totenbeschwörung'.
- For the use of nigromance to mean 'shape-changing', see Le Roman de Troie lines 29, 978 ff., where Circe changes mer.'s appearance 'Par estrange art de nigromance'.
27. Mágus saga 2, p.272.
 28. ed. F. Castets, Maugis d'Aigremont, in Révue des Langues

- Romanes XXIX (1886), p.58, line 1064.
- d'ingromance = de nigromance. Tobler-Lommatzsch IV 139Ob, VI 660b, cite several instances of sot (savait) moult de nigromance, including Cligés 3006; Le Roman du Renart 14, 849; De Luque la maudite 51 (plural); Le Roman de Troie 14, 670 (plural).
29. Mágus saga 2, pp.269-270.
30. It is probable from the references in Mágus saga 2 to Úlflijótr and Hrafn Hengsson, that the compiler was using native annals. Comparable with his account, for example, are the entries for 897, 924, 927, 928, 930, 931, in Annales regii. See Islandske Annaler, ed. G. Storm (Chria., 1888) pp.100-102.
31. Mágus saga 2, p.3.
32. In the Dutch text he is called Lodewyk. See Suchier, op.cit., p.284.
33. Wulff, op.cit., p.12.
34. Suchier, op.cit., p.285.
35. Kålund, op.cit., p.14.
36. Hauksbók, p.502.
37. See, for example, A. Kleinclausz, L'Empire Carolingien (1902), pp.336-337.
38. See Diplomata Regum Germaniae ex Stirpe Karolinorum I (M.G.H.) p.159 lines 1 and 7: coniunx nostra Hemma; coningis nostrae Hemmae .

39. He was succeeded in 876 by his son Carloman. See B. W. Scholz Carolingian Chronicles (1970), p.33 for a convenient list of dates, with a genealogical table.
40. Lothair received the title by the Ordinatio Imperii, made at Aachen in July 817. While his powers were to be reduced by the divisio regni of Worms, 839, he retained the title of emperor. See Kleinclausz op.cit. pp.320 ff. See too F. L. Ganshof, The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy (translated by J. Sondheimer, 1971) chapter XV.
41. Storm op.cit., pp.173 and 457.
42. ib., p.246.
43. Kleinclausz, op.cit., p.372. Lothair I died on September 29th 855, aged sixty. His entry into the monastery is mentioned in the Skálholt Annal, where he is no longer keisari but konungr. (Storm, op.cit., p.173).
44. ed. J. Benediktsson, Veraldar saga (STUAGNL 1944) p.71.
45. Mágus saga 2 p.4.
46. Nithard, Histoire des Fils de Louis le Pieux, éditée et traduite par Ph. Lauer (Paris 1964) p.38. Most medieval accounts are hostile to Lothair. For a modern re-appraisal of him, see Kleinclausz, op.cit., pp.363-4.
47. Lauer, op.cit., p.32.
48. ib., pp.52 and 54.

49. Scholz, op.cit., p.200 note 8. See too the account of the marriage in the Royal Frankish Annals for 821 (Scholz pp. 109-110). The marriage was memorable because it was the occasion for a general amnesty. See for example H. Martin Histoire de France Tome II (1861) p.377.
50. The point of the bride-search motif is that it arises out of the tyrant's conviction that he has no social equal: 'Hvar veitv annann keisara jafnagstann eda jafnrikann, eda þann er hird eige iafnagsta?' (Mágus saga 1 p.1b. Compare Mágus saga 2 p.5).

It would appear that the emperors of Germany and Constantinople respected each other as equals:

Síþan kallaz hvarr þeirra odrum meiri stolkonvngur i Miklagardi ok keisari a Saxlandi. (Veraldar saga p.70)

The stólkonungr was also known, of course, as keisari in Iceland:

heiter sv borg Constantinopolis. þar er keisara stoll. (ib., p.59).

