PASTORAL FUNCTION AT THE NORWEGIAN COURT

Diego Poli
University of Macerata

It has long been argued whether we can suppose a sacral kingship for ancient Scandinavian culture (McTurk:139-169). Without entering into discussion,I only add that much of the incompatibility arises from referring sacral kingship to protohistorical Eastern-Mediterranean models we are acquainted with. It would seem more likely to consider kingship virtually coexistent with a wide range of sacral features requested by the specific ideology and enacted by social and political situations.

Therefore,if we assume as a myth of exemplary sacral kingship the motif of king Dómaldi's death, we recognize in it a threefold interpretation depending upon the origin and purpose of the source we look at (Lönnroth:73-93). And the linkage between lack of peace (friðr) and fertility (ár) on the Swedish soil, and loss of happiness (gipta) on the king's side might finally come - in the third stage attained in the frame of Heimskringla - from a well-constructed Christian fiction, where the royal power on the nature is shown to be deceitful when it is based on bloody sacrifice, but graceful when it is subordinated to the Christian order.

This last reading,though, is built up with segments drawn from ethnic tradition, where Odin appears to have founded seasonal sacrifices (Ynglinga saga), where the kings Dómaldi and Hálfdan the Black are cut into pieces and sown, reminding of a co-

[illegible] (Traditional [illegible] [illegible]), [illegible] [illegible] (Celtic) [illegible] [illegible] (The [illegible]).

[illegible] much [illegible] rather [illegible] ship. That I [illegible] is that the functional load such inherited narrative material acquires can only be detected within the structural network of ideology of a specific text.

Sacral kingship we know of during the Middle Ages is paralleled by the political theology - cp. the contributions by Marc Bloch, Jacques Le Goff, Ernst Kantorowicz - that totally changed the perspectives Germanic Scandinavians had developed in their prehistory. The comparative sources do not allow to sketch sharply the ideological context but still confirm the ethnicity of the segments we find remoulded because of the idea of sacral kingship.

Having slaughtered their ruler, Danubian Herules send for a king in Thule (Procopius, De bello gothico); we know that the Goths believed that their king possessed a particular virtue which made him divine (Jordanes, Getica XIII :"iam proceres suos, quorum quasi fortuna vincebant, non puros homines sed semideos, id est Anzis, vocaverunt"). The fortuna attributed to the Anzis is to be compared with the cipta od Dómaldi who in this way would be equated to an áes.

Outside Scandinavian culture, Odyssey and Irish Audacht Morainn (Early) witness of social welfare warranted by the justice of [illegible] the queen of Ithaca, Dían Dómaldi's, was to [illegible] [illegible] ruler.

If we now turn to Konungs Skuggsjá, we find a section of the text devoted to the same ethnic theme of kingly failure inserted into a integrated pattern of the medieval episteme of speculum principis that was developing in XIII cent. - when K.S. was composed - and knew an earlier example in John of Salisbury's Policraticus.

In K.S. The royal figure presents no contrasts between pagan and christian assumptions. The stress is here rather on absolute monarchy overtly exalted following the track of king Sverre's manifesto (Storm). Therefore the ethnic segments enter the narrative plot near the most original chapters offering insights of peculiarities drawn from the vast area under Norwegian control.

Knowledge of socio-economic values, of habits at the court, and of environment outline the setting of the kingdom under Hákon IV. Within this frame the paedagogical target of K.S., to show the young Norseman the "right paths" (ch.I), yields to a paradigm to the behaviour of kings as well as of other people.

For K.S. is a fact to rank famine and distress occured to the country as faults of the ruler (ch. XXXV), identified in the unwise splitting up of power and wealth (ch. XXXVI). The answer reflects the pragmatic discussion of K.S. concerned with the make-up of XII cent. joint kingship. But inthis field Sverre's manifesto - issued about the end of the XII cent. - and Hákon's S.K. acknowledge a kind of kingship through which to restore its original sacral nature; if the historical context is again that of the medieval struggles between Church and Empire the narrative segments are basically the inherited ones.

The procedure of reshaping ethnic material in a new web invo-

lves the [illegible] of K.S. introducing the royal court. If we disentangle from the target represented by good manners teaching towards a civilising process (Elias), we face in K.S. the king's retinue displayed in the banqueting hall according to a pattern we find in medieval archaic traditions - like the Irish one (Lincoln:75-84), where geometric arrangements imply social hierarchy - focussed by the verbal dueling and the ritualized stages in Locasenna and Orvar-Odds saga, or by the cosmogonic purport of Beowulf's medo-ærn micel "the great mead-court" (Poli:597-608).

In K.S. the banqueting hall is still the space of the royal household as a whole to which only by permission from the doorkeeper people are admitted (ch.XXX), in which drinking acquires a legal status among banqueters (ch.XXXVII and Hirðskrá ch. XXVIII), who are seated at the established and right place (ch. XXXVII). The king's life and his realm are thus protected by the drinking and dining assembly of the housecarles who undertake the title of hirðmænn - in Olafs saga Helga they are 60 - because, as it is explained by native etymologists, the name means "keeper, guardian" (ch.XXIX:"hirzlo maðr oc gezlo maðr"). The connection with the verb hirða "to protect" - cp. also Hirðskrá ch.I and XXVII - has been rejected in more recent times for the hypothesis of borrowing from A.S. hīrēd (Maurer:169).I will be back to this later. I now underline the point the organized structure the classes of hirðmænn fit in (Munch:595-616) had got its person in the model of a real and metaphoric picture of a society ranked in the banqueting hall where doorkeeper and servant belong to the role of mediators between the participants who are representatives of the social functions.

Among these the skutilsveinar "table-servants" have their own position in the hierarchy described by Hirðskrá. (ch.XXIV:"þeir heita með rettu hirðstiorar með lendum mønnum oc stallarom oc merkismønnum"). And the mention of a king's guard named stallari="comes stabuli" - already known by Western Goths (Bugge:77) - introduces the pastoral function at the royal court; to put it with Saxo's words (499,38) the stallari Nicolaus " clientelae eius[Absalon's] et stabuli curam habebat" (Skyum-Nielsen:175-186). The same function was also understood by skutilsveinar if we remember in relation to svein(n) that A.S. swān "man-warrior" and O.H.Germ. swēn gloss subulcus "swineherd", and A.S. swān-gerēfa is an officer involved with the herding of swine.

The terminology seems to line up along the two pivots of the communion of food and of social dynamics. And since verðung , one of the words for the Gefolgschaft, is clearly linked with verðr "lunch", I feel to explore the possibility that the main term for its members,i.e. hirðmaðr, be connected to hirðir "shepherd",recalling an archaic status in which a shepherd was in charge of the official cares of the society assembled around its monarch; Odissaic Eumaeus gives the most noted example. Functionally a nomen agentis,hir-ðir is related to the verb hirð-a "to protect-to herd" - as it was assumed by native etymologists - following a pattern that spread areallogically (Falk :5,20-32). Suffix -ir ← *-ja- become,particularly in the poetic subcode, the morphological device for extending the noun class endowed with the semantic features [+animate], [+active].

Word formation rule in hirð-ir is paralleled by Greek and Lithuanian poi-mén-pie-muõ/-meñs "shepherd" -but also "protector"

affix *-mōn- is attached to the root *þō(ǵ)- "Hirt, Hirte, Hüter" (Pokorny:239). The [illegible] applies to [illegible] also, therefore, if the link between "herding" and "watching over" can be accepted as a well established fact, we have to investigate in the O.N. prosaic subcode that, following the drift of the language toward analytical categories, developed a class of compounded nomina agentis. In this case the two above mentioned features are contained by the affix-like Wurzelnomen -maðr (Falk:52). Therefore to the series of tatpuruṣa-compounds blót(a)-maðr (in sagas), bóndr-maðr (in Hist.Eccles.Isl.), mann-drápa-maðr (in sagas, Heims., Stjórn), or to the legal terms like bauga-maðr, uppnáma-maðr, ár-maðr, hirðar-konungs-maðr, I propose to add hirð-maðr as the prosaic correspondent of hirð-ir.

The Germanic suffixed form *herd-ija-, Gothic haird-eis, O.N. hirð-ir, A.S. hird-e, O.Sax. hird-i, O.H.Ger. hirt-i "shepherd" pair with O.N. hirð-maðr and A.S. hir(e)d-man(n) "king's man, member of the royal guard", each of them pointing out to the interchangeable meanings of "caring of" and "herding" a human or animal flock; cp. O.N. hirð-ligr "belonging to the king's men" but also "pastoral", fé-hirðir "shepherd" but also "treasurer" -- fé-hus is "stall" and "treasury" -, A.S. folces (or rices) hirde "the guardian-shepherd of the people (kingdom)", huses hirde "keeper of the house", cilda hirde "paedagogus".

I explain the usually alleged A.S. reading hīr(ē)d as the co-aceptual overlapping of documented hir(e)d "a household, retainers of a king" or hīw-rǣden "domus, familia", and I consider O.N. hirðir not to be a loan from A.S., as it has originally been stated by Alexander Bugge and uncritically repeated by many

authors (Bosworth-Toller:537-539,Falk-Torp:406,Hellquist :354, Holthausen:115).

The suffixed or affixed derivations hirð-ir~hirð-e vs. hirð-maðr~hir(e)d-man(n) seem to be a device in order to keep quite distinct the 'pastoral' from the 'political' function when historical development urged to that move. Consequently, O.N. affixed form hirð-maðr lost its usage constraints and became semantically autonomous in the registers of prosaic as poetic subcodes (Jónsson:252f.). This expansion pushed aside other terms still preserved,like drótt or verðung, and in the compound hirð-maðr the first term could sever the transparent junction with the second generating the indipendent lexical unit hirð.

The evidence from Runic Da. land-hirðir reflects very clearly the expanded semantics of "herding". In Ravnkilde's stone 1 , dated 980-990, we have (Wimmer :138): "Ąsur lathirþiR Kukis sun raist runar þasi at Ąsbuþ trunik", which is interpreted:"Asser landbestyrer,Køges (el.Kugges) søn,rejstede disse runer efter dronning Asbod (Jacobsen-Moltke:172f.). Again in Egå stone,dated around 1000, we have (Wimmer:220): "Alfkil uk hus suniR risþu stin þansi ift Mana sin frinta þaR uas landirþi Kitils þis nuruna",which is interpreted: "Alvkil og hans sønner rejste denne sten efter deres frænde Manne,som var landbestyrer hos Kald den norske (Jacobsen-Moltke:144f.).

Adjusting to the needs of the socio-economic context, archaic movable wealth,to put it with Émile Benveniste's terms, yields place metaphorically to other referents of the semantic field, i.e. "cattle"~"people"~"(monetary) value",setting up a successful alternation pattern. Interpretation based on a single Scandinavian language leads to explain its data through the ins-

right [illegible] at a synchronic level - therefore it is right to consider O.Swed. hirð-e "shepherd" a denominative linked to *herð-ē meaning "den till hjorden hörande" (Olson:6f.) - but it is not correct to reflect the specific O.Swed. moulding or remoulding upon the longer O.N. corpus of diatopic and/or register variables. In O.N. nothing suggests that hirð-ir "watcher" must be attached as a derivative to hirð-a and detached from hjorð, as it has been assumed (Jacobsen-Moltke;679f.) ,but the target to keep unrelated the semantic alternation pattern I have just proposed.

References

Bosworth-Toller,An Anglo-Saxon dictionary.

Bugge Alexander,Vesterlandenes Indflydelse paa Nordboernes i Vikingetiden, "Skrifter udg. af Videnskabs-Selskabet i Christiania" 1904,II Hist.-Fil.Kl. (1905).

Elias Norbert,Über den Prozess der Zivilisation,I,Frankfurt/Main,1969^2.

Falk Hjalmar,Die nomina agentis der altnordischen Sprache,"PBB" 14 (1889):1-52.

Falk-Torp,Norwegisch-dänisches etymologisches Wörterbuch.

Hellquist,Svensk etymologisk ordbok.

Holthausen,Wörterbuch des Altwestnordischen.

Jacobsen Lis-Moltke Erik,Danmarks runeindskrifter,I,København 1942.

Jónsson,Lexicon poeticum.

Kelly Fergus,ed.,Audacht Morainn,Dublin 1976.

Lincoln Bruce,Discourse and the construction of society,New York-Oxford 1989.

Lönnroth Lars,Dómaldi's death and the myth of sacral kingship,

in Structure and Meaning in Old Norse literature, J.Lindow-L. Lönnroth-G.W.Weber,eds.,Odense 1986:73-93.

Maurer Konrad,Vorlesungen über altnordische Rechtsgeschichte,I, (=Altnorwegisches Staatsrecht und Gerichtswesen),Leipzig 1907 repr.Osnabrück 1966.

McTurk Roderick W., Sacral kingship in ancient Scandinavia:a review of some recent writings,in "Saga-Book of the Viking Society" 19 (1974-1977):139-169.

Munch Peter A.,Det norske folks historie,IV/1,Christiania 1858.

Olson Emil, De appellativa substantivens bildning i fornsvenskan,Lund 1916.

Pokorny,Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch.

Poli Diego,Concord and discord in the Icelandic banqueting hall ,in Poetry in the Scandinavian middle ages (The seventh international Saga Conference,Spoleto 4-10 settembre 1988),Spoleto 1990:597-608.

Skyum-Nielsen Niels,Saxo som kilde til et par centrale institutioner i samtiden, in Saxostudier,I.Boserup,ed.,København 1975:175-186.

Storm Gustav,En tale mod biskoperne,Christiania 1885.

Wimmer ludvig F.A.,De danske runemindesmærker,II,København 1899 -1901.