

Jan Ragnar Hagland:

“On *Rognvalds þáttir ok Rauðs* in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* and elsewhere.”

I

To be dealt with here is one of the so-called *þættir* included in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* [‘The Great Saga of Olaf Tryggvason’] – in the separate version [*OTm*] as we have it in Ólafur Halldórsson’s edition (Halldórsson 1958, 313–351) and the one included in *Flateyjarbók* [*Flat.*], (Vigfússon & Unger 1860, 288–299). The *þáttir* is usually referred to as *Rognvalds þáttir ok Rauðs*, although no such heading is given in the manuscripts (cf. Würth 1991, 34). A somewhat different version of the *þáttir* is known from AM 557, 4to, now published separately in the third volume of Ólafur Halldórsson’s edition of *OTm* (Halldórsson 2000, 95–102). AM 557, 4to is dated in the 15th C.¹ being in consequence younger than the main manuscripts with the extended saga about Óláfr. In AM 557, 4to the *þáttir* is entered as one of twelve different sagas and *þættir*² thus being completely independent of the wider context of the saga about Óláfr Tryggvason. It may at first sight be seen as a somewhat abridged version of the ones incorporated in the larger compilations. In the context of the present paper it will, however, be relevant to have a closer look at the relationship between the three preserved redactions of *Rognvalds þáttir ok Rauðs* – a problem which has recently been addressed also by Richard Perkins (2001, 27–43).

The *þáttir* contains in short what could appropriately be called the conversion history of a certain Rognvaldr living in Ærvik on the peninsula of Stað in Western Norway and his son Rauðr, alias Gunnar Rognvaldsson, connected to king Óláfr Tryggvason’s missionary activity in Norway (cf. also Strömbäck 1940, 15, Harris 1980, 162–167). When the function of this *þáttir* within the larger context of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* is concerned, there is, in my opinion, every reason to agree with Stefanie Würth’s interpretation of it as an *exemplum*:

Auch der *Rognvalds þáttir ok Rauðs* kann im Kontext der *ÓTT* als religiöses Exempel interpretiert werden. [...] Diese – wohl nicht historische Erzählung – soll auf unterhaltsame Weise die Vorzüge des christlichen Glaubens verdeutlichen. Der Christengott ist mächtiger als die heidnische Götzengestalt und schenkt jedem seine Gnade, der bereit ist, seine Sünden zu bekennen und zu bereuen. Derjenige, der den Norwegern diese neue Religion nahebringt, ist König Ólaf Tryggvason, dessen Missionstätigkeit der *þáttir* unterstreicht. (Würth 1991, 97.)

However, when we compare the two versions of this *Rognvalds þáttir ok Rauðs* in *OTm* and *Flat* with the one in AM 557, 4to, there are, as I see it, some differences worth considering in a wider perspective than this.

II

The versions of the *þáttir* contained in *OTm* and *Flat* are, of course, closely related as they obviously depend on a common source (for an overview of the stemmatic relations between them, cf. Ólafur Halldórsson 2000, CCCIX). The only major difference between the two versions is that the *þáttir* in *Flat* is given in one consecutive piece (chapters no 243–249) – in *OTm* it is interpolated by a *þáttir* about Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld. Thus *Rognvalds þáttir ok*

¹ The manuscript has, in all probability, been written by Ólafur Loftsson in the period 1420–50 (cf. Stefán Karlsson 1970, 137–8).

² The manuscript contains the following sagas and *þættir*: *Valdimars saga*, *Gunnlaugssaga ormtungu Hallfreðar saga vandræðaskálds*, *Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar*, *Eiríks saga rauða*, *Rognvalds þáttir ok Rauðs*, *Damusta saga*, *Hróa þáttir heimiska*, *Eiríks saga víðfjrla*, *Stífs þáttir skálds Þórðarsonar katta*, *Karls þáttir vesæla*, “*Sveinka þáttur*” (cf. Káldund 1894, 708f., and Perkins 2001, 27).

Rauðs in that version is given in chapters no 146–151 and 156, chapters no 152–155 containing the interpolated *þáttur* about Hallfréðr. These two versions have in common three longer segments which are absent from the version in AM 557, 4to. Thus the entire chapter 148/245 in *OTm* and *Flat* is absent from AM 557, 4to. The chapter is given the heading of "Vidal konungs and bænda" in *Flat*, having the textual signals of an aside – *Nú er þat til at taka sem fyrr var frá horfit*. The content of this chapter may, within the larger context of an *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* be motivated well enough dealing, as it does, with Óláfr's marrying of his sister *Astriðr* to Erlingr Skjalgsson. Within the more restricted framework of the *Rognvalds þáttur ok Rauðs* it may be considered irrelevant.

Similarly chapter 150/247 in *OTm/Flat* is absent from the AM 557, 4to version of the *þáttur* together with the beginning of chapter 151/248. This part of the text describes king Óláfr's itinerary from Western Norway towards the northern parts of Norway – via a *iiij. fylkna þing* at Stað and the destruction of a pagan *hof* at Hlaðir in Þrendalögum to the district of Naumudal. Finally also the last few lines of this chapter 151/248 in *OTm/Flat* are absent from AM 557, 4to – a part of the text primarily concerned with enumerating the main chieftains (*hofðingjar*) among the *háleygir* – the people of Hálogaland in northern Norway, which is again relevant to the king's saga, but less so to the *þáttur* as such. A summarized version of the story in English is given by Harris (1980, 168–169).

III

What is, then, the relation between these two main redactions of the *þáttur*? Is AM 557, 4to an abbreviated extract of the version we have in *OTm* and *Flat*, or should the textual variation between the two be explained differently? A comparison between *OTm/Flat* on the one hand and AM 557, 4to on the other of a smaller section chosen at random from these redactions of the *þáttur* may provide some additional arguments for an answer compared to those offered by Perkins (2001). The section to be considered here equals the latter part of ch. 146/243 in the two compilatory works – the extracts of the text are given in normalized form (text between angled brackets – only in *OTm*):

OTm/Flat:

Þá er Rognvaldr hafði litla hrið heima verit í Ærvík, tók hann sun sinn Gunnar ok fór til sjóvar, fekk sér einn lítinn bát; síðan tók hann annat skip meira ok flutti bátinn á sjó út, langt frá landi. Síðan tók hann sveininn ok batt við innviðu í hinu litla skipinu ok let reka hvert er vildi. En Rognvaldr fór til lands. Sigríðr spurði at um ferð hans eða hvat er hann hefði gert af barninu. Hann svarar kvezt ekki mundu til segja annat en eigi mundi sveininn segja hvær Skjalg hefði inni brent. Sat Rognvaldr síðan í búi sínu ok þótti mikill maðr. En frá sveinum er þat (at) segja at bátinn rak undir honum fyrir vindi ok straumi norðr með landi ok reiddi um síðir at eyju einni. Rognvaldr hafði svá um búit þó at hann hefði bundit hann við innviðu í skipinu, svá at hann mátti eigi leysa sik, en þó váru lausar hendr hans ok mátti hann taka til fœðu þeirrar er faðir hans hafði etlat honum at hann mætti lifa við. Fyrir ey þeirri er bátinn rak at, réð einn blótmaðr. Var þar mikít hof ok eignat þór. Þessi maðr fann rekann ok þótti undarliga um búit, leysti hann sveininn ok leitaði orða við hann, en hann þagði við. Bóndi tók barnit (upp) ok bar heim til konu sinnar. Þeim sýndisk sveinn þessi friðr ok eiguligr, en þau váru barnlaus. Þau leitaðu eptir ef hann kynni nokkut (at) mæla. Fengu þau ekki orð af honum. Bóndi sagði fundinn nágrønnum sínum ok fréttu eptir hvárt nokkurr maðr vissi um barn þetta, hvaðan þat var at komit, ok kunni þat engi at segja. Þá mælti bóndi: "Hvat mun annat þá en ek fœða upp, með því at engi maðr kannask við svein þenna ok kalla ek minn sun, en nafn skal hann taka af lit kyrtilsins ok heita Rauðr." Óx hann upp ok var bæði mikill maðr ok skróuligr. Unni fostri hans honum mikít svá at hann gaf honum alla eign sína eptir sinn dag. Blótmaðr þessi varð ekki gamall. Þá tók Rauðr þar við öllum eignum ok öllum

fjárforráðum. Gerðisk Rauðr þá hinn mesti blótmaðr, ok svá er sagt at hann magnaði með miklum blótskap líkneski Þórs er þar var í hofinu, svá at fjandinn mælti við hann ór skurðgoðinu ok hrærdi þat svá at þat sýndisk ganga með honum úti um dögum, ok leiddi Rauðr Þór optliga úti um eyrna.

AM 557, 4to:

Síðan tók hann sveininn Gunnar ok flutti hann langt undan landi. Síðan batt hann barnit við innviðu ok lét reka þangat er byrjaði fyrir vindi, en hann reri aprt sínu skipi. Sigríðr spurði at um farir hans eða hvat hann hefði gert af sveininum. Rognvaldr kvezk ekki mundu til segia ok bað hana ekki um þat forvitnask. Hon lét illa yfir meðferð hans, en kvezk þó ekki mega at gera. Hann sat nú at búi sínu í Ærvík ok settisk nú um kyrrt. Brennan spurðisk víða, en enginn vissi hvern gerði. En frá barninu er þat at segia at þat rak at eyju einni ok bjó þar bóndi sá er Káti hét. Hann fann rekan ok undraðisk ok þótti með kynjum um búit. Hann tók sveininn ok beiddi orða, en þat þagði sem þat hefði eigi mál numit. Hann ferr síðan heim með ok sýnir kerlingu sinni. Karl sá at barnit var frítt. Síðan lét hann móts kveðja þviat þar var fjölbyggt í eyjunni. Hann segir síðan hvat hann hefir fundit ok frétti eptir ef nokkurr vissi hvern þenna bát mundi eiga. En engi kvezk þat vita. Karl mælti: "Hvat mun þá nema ek fœða upp ok segja minn son? Mun ek gefa nafn sveininum ok kalla Rauð. Skal hann taka nafn af klæðum sínum, þviat hann var í rauðum kyrtli." Mönnum kvezk þetta þykkja allráðligt. Rauðr óx nú þar upp ok unni karl honum mikit, ok er Rauðr var mjök til aldrs kominn, tekr karl sótt ok bað syni sínum velferðar ok kvezk hann þat ætla at hann yrði mikill maðr fyrir sér. Þar váru blót mikil ok réð Þórr þar fyrir hofi. Karl bað Rauð stunda mjök Þór ok kvað þar heill hans mundu eptir fara. Eptir þat andaðisk karl. En Rauðr tók við fé öllu. Hann lét eigi hofit niðr falla, heldr lét hann auka ór því sem áðr hafði verit. Ok svá gat hann magnat Þór, at hann leiddi hann eptir sér um eyrna, ok gerðisk Rauðr hinn mikilhœfasti maðr.

A more detailed comparison between these two main versions of the *þáttur* brings several major and minor differences to light. If we divide the above section of the text into a series of consecutive segments, the following differences can be observed (text from AM 557, 4to is given in *italics*):

(1) Þá er Rognvaldr hafði litla hríð heima verit í Ærvík <i>Síðan</i>	(7) af barninu <i>af sveininum</i>
(2) fór til sjóvar, fekk sér einn lítinn bát; síðan tók hann annat skip meira ok +	(8) hann <i>Rognvaldr</i>
(3) bátinn á sjó út +	(9) segja annat en eigi mundi sveininn segja hvern Skjalg hefði inni brent. <i>segia ok bað hana ekki um þat forvitnask. Hon lét illa yfir meðferð hans, en kvezk þó ekki mega at gera.</i>
(4) í hinu litlu skipinu +	(10) + <i>í Ærvík</i>
(5) hvert er vildi <i>þangat er byrjaði fyrir vindi</i>	(11) ok þótti mikill maðr +
(6) En Rognvaldr fór til lands <i>en hann reri aprt sínu skipi</i>	(12) frá sveininum <i>frá barninu</i>

(13)

at bátinn
þat

(14)

undir honum fyrir vindri ok straumi norðr með landi ok
reiddi um síðir

+

(15)

Rognvaldr hafði svá um búit þó at hann hefði bundit
hann við innviðu í skipinu, svá at hann mátti eigi leysa
sik, en þó váru lausar hendr hans ok mátti hann taka til
fœðu þeirrar er faðir hans hafði etlat honum at hann
mætti lifa við.

+

(16)

Fyrir ey þeirri er bátinn rak at, réð einn blótmaðr. Var
þar mikit hof ok eignat Þór.
þjó þar bóndi sá er Káti hét

(17)

þessi maðr
hann

(18)

ok þótti undarliga umbúit
ok undraðisk ok þótti með kynjum um búit

(19)

leysti hann sveinninn ok leitaði orða við hann, en hann
þagði við
*Hann tók sveininn ok beiddi orða, en þat þagði sem
þat hefði eigi mál numit*

(20)

Bóndi tók barnit (upp) ok bar heim til konu sinnar
Hann ferr síðan heim með ok sýnir kerlingu sinni

(21)

Þeim sýndisk sveinn þessi fríðr ok eiguligr, en þau
váru barnlaus
Karl sá at barnit var frítt

(22)

Þau leitaðu eptir ef hann kynni nokkut (at) mæla.
Fengu þau ekki orð af honum

(23)

+

*Síðan lét hann móts kveðja þvíat þar var fjölbyggt í
eyruni*

(24)

Bóndi sagði fundinn nágrönnum sínum ok fréttu eptir
hvárt nokkurr maðr vissi um barn þetta, hvaðan þat
var at komit

*Hann segir síðan hvat hann hefir fundit ok frétti eptir
ef nokkurr vissi hvern þenna bát mundi eiga*

(25)

ok kunnir þat engi at segja
En engi kvezk þat vita

(26)

Þá mætti bóndi
Karl mælti

(27)

"Hvat mun annat þá en ek fœða upp, með því at engi
maðr kannask við svein þenna ok kalla ek minn sun,
en nafn skal hann taka af lit kyrtilsins ok heita Rauðr."
*"Hvat mun þá nema ek fœða upp ok segja minn son?
Mun ek gefa nafn sveininum ok kalla Rauð. Skal hann
taka nafn af klæðum sínum, þvíat hann var í rauðum
kyrtli."*

(28)

Mörnum kvezk þetta þykkja altráðligt

(29)

Óx hann upp ok var bæði mikilill maðr ok sköfuligr.
Unni fostri hans honum mikit svá at hann gaf honum
alla eign sína eptir sinn dag.
Rauðr óx ní þar upp ok unni karl honum mikit

(30)

Blótmaðr þessi varð ekki gamall. Þá tók Rauðr þar við
öllum eignum ok öllum fjárforráðum
*ok er Rauðr var mjök til aldrs kominn, tekr karl sótt
ok bað syni sínum velferðar ok kvezk hann þat ætla at
hann yrði mikill maðr fyrir sér*

(31)

Gerðisk Rauðr þá hinn mesti blótmaðr
*Karl bað Rauð stunda mjök Þór ok kvað þar heill
hann mundi eptir fara*

(32)

+

Eptir þat andaðisk karl. En Rauðr tók við fé öllu.

(33)

ok svá er sagt at hann magnaði með miklum blótskap
líkneski Þórs er þar var í hofinu, svá at fjandinn mælti
við hann ór skurðgodinu ok hræðði þat svá at þat
sýndisk ganga með honum úti um dögum, ok leiddi
Rauðr Þór optliga úti um eyrna.
*Hann lét eigi hofit niðr falla, heldr lét hann auka ór
því sem áðr hafði verit. Ok svá gat hann magnat Þór,
at hann leiddi hann eptir sér um eyrna, ok gerðisk
Rauðr hinn mikilhæfasti maðr*

There are, as we can see on the basis of this comparison, discrepancies between the versions that apparently point in different directions if we are looking for an explanation. The blanks in AM 557, 4to might on the one hand be interpreted as the results of an abbreviating process whereby this text was shortened or trimmed on the basis of the versions found in the two compilatory works (cf. nos 2,3,4,11,14,15, 22 above). On the other hand there are blanks in the *OTm/Flat* version in relation to AM 557, 4to which do not so easily fall into this kind of explanation (cf. nos 10, 23, 28, 32). Moreover, only in this short section of the *þáttir* there are enough discrepancies in the wording to seriously question AM 557, 4to's dependancy on *OTm/Flat* (cf. in particular nos 30, 31 and 33).

Thus rather than seeing the text in AM 557, 4to as being dependant on either of the versions in the two compilations, it does not seem a stop-gap solution in this case to suggest the existence of a common source for the versions of *Rögnvalds þáttir ok Rauðs* in *OTm/Flat* on the one hand and the version in AM 557, 4to on the other. (For further argumentation along these lines, see Perkins 2001, 35–6 and Strömbäck 1940, 17–8.)

IV

Having this likely possibility in mind there are two minor textual differences between the preserved versions of the *þáttir* which deserve particular attention within a larger context of medieval historiography on the Christianization of Norway.³ In ch. 147/244 of *OTm/Flat* we are told that Sigríðr, the wife of Rögnvaldr in Ærvík, decides to leave her husband in order to find a compatriote, who, she had heard, travelled wide and far to preach a new faith – a faith in Christ the White; his name is Óláfr, the son of Tryggvi, son of Óláfr, she tells her husband. She wants to find out about this, she goes on to tell, "and if it is true, then I shall take the faith that he preaches". The text of *OTm/Flat* then adds the following passage: *Því næst fór Sigríðr úr landi með kaupmönnum ok sigldu til Englands. Fann Sigríðr Ólaf konung fyrir vestan haf.* The corresponding passage in AM 557, 4to is told as follows: *Síðan redzt hon vr landi með godum fauruneyti, ok fór hon þar til er hon kom i Garda Ríki ok hitti þar Olaf konong.*

Sigríðr was baptized and asked Óláfr to come to Norway and bring with him the right creed – *þú munt koma til Noregs ok boða þar rétta trú.* She tells Óláfr about her husband and instructs him how to conduct his missionary activity towards Rögnvaldr. So, as the king arrives in Norway he is on one occasion attending a party – a *veizla* – near Ærvík; then he remembers what Sigríðr had told him on the western side of the ocean – *hvat Sigríðr hafði sagt honum fyrir vestan haf* (*OTm/Flat* ch. 149/246). This phrase *fyrir vestan haf* does not occur in AM 557, 4to: *hvat Sigríðr hafði sagt honum.*

The relevant point here, of course, is that the variant given in the two compilatory works – *OTm* and *Flat* – about Óláfr Tryggvason so vigorously underscores that Sigríðr goes to England and meets Óláfr *fyrir vestan haf*, whereas the manuscript version containing the *þáttir* of its own in AM 557, 4to tells us that she goes East – to Garðaríki to find the king. However trivial this difference may seem at first sight, it pinpoints an apparently highly controversial issue in historiography from medieval times onwards: From what part of the Christian world was Norway christened?

There is an ongoing discussion on the question of possible influences from the Eastern Churches on the Christianization of the Scandinavian countries (cf. Janson (ed.), forthcoming) in which the scarcity of written sources for that kind of influence has repeatedly been brought forward as a problem (cf. Hagland 1996, 4). There is, however, reason to believe that the scarcity of written evidence is to a large extent due to historiography itself – from the Scandinavian High Middle Ages onwards. Historical and literary tradition has, as it seems, to

³ Perkins (2001, 29) and Strömbäck (1940, 16–17) also call attention to the existence of these differences. Neither of the two, however, elaborate on this particular variation.

a large extent undercommunicated contacts and possible influences from the East during the process of Christianization – of Norway at least. The textual differences with which we are dealing here may well be explained as an instance of a tendency to attribute the Christianization of Norway first and foremost to the Church of Rome.

V

A side glance at one particular point of discrepancy between Oddr Snorrason's saga of Óláfr Tryggvasonr and Snorri Sturluson's version in *Heimskringla* seems relevant at this point. Oddr, as the only one, transmits a tradition about Óláfr Tryggvasonr's conversion history which has traditionally been dismissed as historic evidence. According to Oddr, ch 13 in the A manuscript and ch 9 in S⁴ Óláfr, when staying with the king and queen of Garðaríki, had a dream in which he was told to go to Greece (*tíll Girclanz*) where he would be taught the name of Our Lord the Saviour, the obedience of whose commandments might earn him eternal life and eternal grace (*Oc ef þu varðueitir hans boðorð. þa manni þu hava æliff líf oc sælu*). In his dream he also became shockingly aware of the horrors which were in store for those who worshipped heathen gods (*þa er truat hófpu ascurþguð*). He realized that this was the case for many of his friends, the king and queen included. Óláfr Tryggvasonr woke up in tears much frightened and decided to go to Greece immediately:

--- oc vil ec nu sigla til Girclanz. oc sua gerir hann oc byriar honum vel. oc com hann til Girclanz. Oc hiti þar dýrlega kenni menn oc uel trúaða er honum kendu nafn drottins Iesu Cristz. varð hann nu lærþr með þeire tru sem fyrr var honum boðat ísuefni. Síþan hiti hannagetan byscup einn oc bað hann ueita ser helga skirn þa sem hann hafði lengi til girnz oc mætti hann vera ísamlagi cristinna manna. oc síþan var hann primsignaðr. [Finnur Jónsson 1932, 41.]

["-- I now want to travel to Greece". So he did and he had a fair wind sailing to Greece. There he met good priests much devoted to the faith by whom he was taught the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was now educated in the faith as had been foretold him in his dream. Later on he met a famous bishop and asked to receive from him holy baptism for which he had long been yearning, this allowing him to share the communion of Christian men. After that he was prime signed."]

Óláfr Tryggvasonr asks the bishop to go with him to *Rusiam* to teach the name of the Lord to the heathens there. The bishop asks him to go by himself as he considered that a tactically better move because the king and other major chieftains (*adrir storhoffpingiar*) would then probably be less reluctant to adopt the new faith. Óláfr Tryggvasonr, in consequence, returned to Garðaríki alone. As a result of his mediating of the Christian belief, helped also by the queen's support, the king accepted to take on the new faith. This, according to Oddr, won Óláfr Tryggvasonr much fame not only in Garðaríki but all over the northern hemisphere (*eigi at eins í Garðueldi hellár oc allt inórðralfu heimsins*). The reputation of Óláfr's deeds also reached Norway (*oc þa com frægh Olafs allt norðr í Noregs uelldi. oc agæilegt verk hans er hann vann ahueriom degi*). [Finnur Jónsson 1932, 43.]

This is one of several points in Oddr's saga which has been used to evidence its unhistorical and legendary character. Snorri Sturluson omits the Greek episode completely – a fact which causes Theodore Andersson to make a particular case of contrasting Oddr's text with Snorri's account of Óláfr Tryggvasonr's conversion:

The elimination of Olaf's early missionary activity prior to his arrival in Norway stems no doubt from Snorri's reasonable suspicion that the *prima signatio* in Greece was apocryphal and that his participation in the conversion of Russia and Denmark was premature. Snorri chose rather to believe that Olaf's later meeting with a mysterious and clairvoyant hermit on the Scilly Isles was his first and decisive experience of Christianity. If Olaf

⁴ See Finnur Jónsson (ed.) *Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar af Oddr Snorrason munk*. København 1932, p. 39ff. for philosophical details.

was already so firm in the faith as to carry the Christian standard in Russia and Denmark, Snorri may have reasoned, what need did he have of further persuasion on the Scilly Isles? Snorri's changes are therefore not dictated by any lukewarm interest in the fortunes of the Church, but a logical rejection of the duplication in his source and an adherence to common verisimilitude.[Andersson 1977, 84.]

It could be argued against Andersson on this point that Snorri's use of Oddr's legendary accounts need not necessarily be looked upon as the more logically consistent of the two. The argument that Oddr's story about Óláfr Tryggvasonr's conversion on the Scilly Isles would make no sense if Óláfr Tryggvasonr was already christened in Greece does not per se make Oddr's narrative illogical. Oddr lets Óláfr Tryggvasonr be exposed to the Christian faith in Greece, but he does not say that Óláfr was baptized there – he only goes on to tell that he was primesigned on that occasion. The primesigning is an act which may be seen as a step on the road towards the final goal – baptism which is carried out by the anonymous abbot on the island of *Syllingar* (Scilly Isles), an act which associates Óláfr Tryggvasonr with the Roman Catholic Church. Snorri's leaving out the Russian-Greek episode may in consequence be seen as part of a historiographical tradition that wanted to strengthen this impression of the Christianization of Norway as being the undisputed work of the Church of Rome.

It may be worth noticing also that one of the manuscripts which transmits the translated version of Oddr's original text (written in Latin) the S ms (Sth. perg. 18, 4to, ca. 1300) presents the two stories of Óláfr Tryggvasonr's conversion as parallel or co-existing traditions. After having related the Greek episode in wording similar to A (main ms. AM 310, 4to, second half of 13th C⁵) the S ms, on continuing to relate the Scilly Isles episode, starts with the following transitional phrase: *Pess er ok getið at* --- where A simply goes on to say that *Pess er getit at* ---. We have no means to decide whether this difference is due to a textual interpretation by the later scribe or if it is the better rendering of Oddr's original text. The later version seems, nevertheless, to reveal the presence of a medieval awareness of two conflicting traditions in Oddr's text. If Dietrich Hofmann's argument for attributing the *Yngvars saga víðförla* to Oddr holds true, this particular attention to legendary tradition from the East may be traced back to Oddr himself and the intellectual milieu in which he lived and worked at the monastery of Þingeyrar in North Iceland.⁶

The internal logic of Oddr's story which can thus be evidenced by the main manuscript does not, of course, make it historically more true. As a matter of fact the legend about the conversion on the Scilly Isles does not represent any higher degree of historicity than does its Greek parallel, even if it has been adopted and given preference by historians writing later in the High Middle Ages. Most of the details in the latter, such as the claim that Óláfr Tryggvasonr did convert the Russians obviously belong to the genre of hagiography and should be treated accordingly. But rather than dismissing the story of the conversion in Greece as mere legendary fiction we may equally well interpret it as representing the existence of a tradition about an eastern Orthodox element in Óláfr Tryggvasonr's conversion history still alive in Iceland in the second half of the 12th century – a tradition which may well have more than a grain of historic truth in it.

VI

The divergence, as we have seen it, between the two main versions of *Rognvalds þáttur ok Rauðs* on the issue of the whereabouts of Óláfr Tryggvason when Sigriðr went to solicit his

⁵ It should be added here that S in this context briefly mentions a bishop Paul who came from Greece and baptized the Russian royal couple. This is not included in A and is thought to be an interpolation in S (cf. Finnur Jónsson *op. cit.*, p. XIII). Even if this piece of information did not belong to Oddr's original, as Finnur Jónsson maintains, it may be part of a more extensive tradition about these events which did live on in Iceland till the late Middle Ages.

⁶ See Hofmann, Dietrich 1981, 188-220. See also Vukchanov 1996, 20-29.

aid is interesting in itself, irrespectible of the historicity of the related episode. As we have seen, a tradition that connected Óláfr Tryggvason's conversion history the the East – to Garðaríki and Greece and thus indirectly to the Eastern Churches – is clearly present in Oddr Snorrason's saga about Óláfr. It seems quite likely, then, that an exemplum like *Rognvalds þátr ok Rauðs* could be composed at a later stage, at least in part, on the basis of the literary tradition created by Oddr Snorrason. It seems natural to assume that the text preserved in AM 557, 4to is quite close to an original version of this exemplary þátr⁷. The existence of such an original version has been suggested already, by Perkins (2001). Its age, however, is difficult to assess. Perkins concludes his thorough discussion by stating that "in the present state of research the writing of RR can, unfortunately, not be dated to within narrower limits than to between about 1180 (when, as far as we know, works of this type began to be written in Iceland) and about 1330 (i. e. before the compilation of OT)" (Perkins 2001, 36). There is a possibility, then, that *Rognvalds þátr ok Rauðs* should be dated quite early in this relatively long period suggested by Perkins, a possibility which has also been put forward – without further argumentation – by Strömbäck (1940, 16–18). Be this as it may. The important thing to be observed here is the fact that the compiler(s) of the extended saga about Óláfr Tryggvason as we have it in *OTm* and *Flat* do(es) not seem to have favoured an explicit reference to areas dominated by the Eastern Churches when using *Rognvalds þátr ok Rauðs* to celebrate Óláfr Tryggvason's "Missionstätigkeit". In consequence the mention of Garðaríki was not just dropped in this context – the relevant pieces of information were deliberately changed so as to connect Óláfr's missionary work to England and the areas *fyrir vestan haf*, that is to say to areas which safely enough could be associated with the Roman Catholic Church.

The variants of the *Rognvalds þátr ok Rauðs* discussed above could then be seen as a small piece of evidence for a more general trend in medieval historiography not only to undercommunicate but also to rewrite existing literary traditions which might indicate possible influences from the Eastern Churches during the early period of the Conversion process in Norway.

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⁷ It might be added here that this version was in the 18th Century considered interesting enough for Gerhard Schønning to have it copied for his collection of saga manuscripts (cf. Hagland 2001, 74).

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