

Facts and Fancy in *Jómsvíkinga saga*

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The *Jómsvíkingar* as described in *Jómsvíkinga saga* (and other Old Norse texts) are among the most popular heroes of Old Icelandic literature, renowned for their bravery and life in a male society organized according to the strict rules of the warriors' law (*Jómsvíkingalög*). However, the picturesque vision of the Viking past in *Jómsvíkinga saga* is undoubtedly a literary creation of the late twelfth century, as has been proved convincingly by scholars, primarily by L. Wiebull, whatever Viking enthusiasts might have wished for. Beyond doubt, the *Jómsvíkingar* never existed in reality.

But in my opinion the scepticism of the researchers has gone a bit too far. To believe that the saga was created almost *ex nihilo* is as absurd as to believe in the real existence of *Jómsvíkingar*. The aim of my paper will be to discover how the story about the *Jómsvíkingar* was invented and what sort of reality is reflected in it.

The investigation of questions concerning Scandinavian *Jómsborg* and Slavic *Wolin* has a long history.¹ It has sometimes been influenced by current fashions in philology and historiography, sometimes by political factors.² For many complicated reasons, the Vikings on Southern shores of the Baltic sea never existed, so far as Polish historiography after the Second World war was concerned. In reality they were there, but obviously not in such numbers or with so much influence as the Old Rus, who played such an important role further East. To sum up: some Vikings lived on the southern shores of Baltic, but they were not the *Jómsvíkingar* of the saga.

¹ J. Stenstrup, *Normanerne* 3, København 1882, 449; J. Stenstrup, *Venderne og de Danske for Valdemar den Stores tid*, København 1900, 36-37 and passim; L. Wiebull, *Kritiska undersökningar i nordens historia omkring år 1000*, Lund, 1911; S. Larsen, 'Jomsborg, dens Beliggenhed og historie', in: *Aarbøger for nordisk oldkyndighed og historie* 17, 1927, 1-138; S. H. Cross, 'Scandinavian-Polish relations in the late tenth century', in: *Studies in honour of Hermann Collitz*, Baltimore, 1930, 114-140. Polish literature is collected in: L. P. Słupecki, 'Jómsvíkingalög, Jómsvíkingar, Jomsborg/Wolin and Danish Circular Strongholds', in: *The Neighbours of Poland in the tenth Century*, P. Urbańczyk ed., Warsaw 2000, 58, footnote 58 and in G. Labuda, *Mieszko I*, Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków 2002, 262-263; cf. also: W. Filipowiak, H. Gundlach, *Wolin-Vineta. Die tatsächliche Legende vom Untergang und Aufstieg der Stadt*, Rostock, 1992; W. Filipowiak *Wolin-Jomsborg. En vikingatids handelsby i Polen*, Roskilde, 1991.

² The overcritical positivism in studies of the Old-Icelandic sagas in Scandinavia (and after the Second World War also in Germany) fits well into the period of anti-German phobia in Polish research (for which the Second World War was of course a very good reason!). Unfortunately some Polish scholars seemed to identify modern German imperialism with everything linked to the Old Germanic world, including Norsemen and Vikings, and for some time most of them did not like to see any Vikings on the Southern shores of the Baltic Sea.

*Jómsvíkinga saga*³ is an early and excellent example of the saga genre. The stories concerning the Jómsvíkingar are additionally spread across almost the whole Old-Norse saga literature in a broad sense, beginning from Oddr Snorrason, through *Fagrskinna*, *Heimskringla*, *Knytlinga saga*, *Færeyinga saga*, *Brennu-Njáls saga*⁴ until the Greatest saga of Óláfr Tryggvason⁵. Apart from that another medieval 'saga' develops, starting from Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, namely a legend about the famous and marvellous Slavic town of Vineta⁶. Is this merely a case of *Genius loci*? Or were there some facts that formed the foundation for future legends? But from the time when Jómsvíkingar are supposed to have lived we have no trace of their name and existence. So, it is still true, as Jan de Vries (1957, 260) stated many years ago, that: '*Jómsvíkinga saga* ist ein Beispiel dafür wie Geschichte in Sage umgewandelt werden kann'.⁷ But there must have been some facts at the beginning.

1. There is no doubt that the Scandinavian *Jóm* and the Slavic *Wolin* are two names for the same place, but *Wolin* is first recorded a century earlier, as the name of a Slavic tribe. In 967 Widukind of Corvey mentioned the German adventurer Wichman, who ... *egitque cum Sclavis qui dicuntur Vuloini* and fought against the Polish ruler Mieszko I⁸. In the account of Ibrahim ibn Yaqub, written at almost the same time, the Arab voyager describes a great Weletian town (no name is mentioned) with a large port situated on the shore of the Ocean (i.e. the Baltic Sea), which probably refers to

³ The five Norse versions of the saga are different from each other and from the Latin translation by Arngrímur Jónsson. A useful edition of the short version of the saga is: *Jómsvíkinga saga. The Saga of the Jómsvíkingar*, ed. N.F. Blake, London 1962 (Nelson's Icelandic Texts, 3). G. Storm, 'Om Redaktionerne af *Jómsvíkinga saga*', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 1, 1883, 235-248; J. de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte* 3, Berlin 1967, 259; Ólafur Halldórsson, '*Jómsvíkinga saga*', in: *Medieval Scandinavia. An Encyclopedia*, New York, London 1993, 343-344; R. Simek, Hermann Palsson, *Lexikon der Altnordischen Literatur*, Stuttgart 1987, 198-199; J. Megaard, 'Studier i *Jómsvíkinga saga* stemma', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 115, 2000, 125-182.

⁴ The Jómsvíkingar appear in the tradition of *konungasögur* in: Oddr, *Ólafssaga* 18, 34, 46, 66; Odd Snorrason, *Saga Ólafs Tryggvasonar*, ed. Finnur Jonsson, København 1932, 60-62, 109-112, 143, 198; *Fagrskinna* 19-21; ed. Bjarni Einarsson, IF 29, Reykjavík 1985, 121-130; *Heimskringla, Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* 34-35, 38-42; IF 26, 1941, 272-286; *Knytlinga saga* 1, 5, 8 (IF 35, 1982, 93, 97, 101); *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar hinn mikla* (see Ólafur Halldórsson 2000).

⁵ This problem has recently been analysed by Ólafur Halldórsson, *Danish Kings and the Jómsvíkingar in the Greatest Saga of Ólafur Tryggvason*, London, 2000.

⁶ R. Kiersnowski, 1950; W. Filipowiak, Gundlach, 1992.

⁷ Jan de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, vol.2, Berlin 1942, 187. In a similar way Lee M. Hollander said: 'this saga furnishes an instructive example of how historical fact is transmitted into legend'. L.M. Hollander, *The saga of the Jómsvíkingar*, Austin 1990, 14.

⁸ Widukind, III, 69: *Widukindi rerum gestarum Saxoniarum libri tres*, SRGerm. in. us. schol., G. Waitz ed., Hanoverae 1882, 82. Cf. R. Kiersnowski, 1950, 33-36; H. Łowmiański, *Początki Polski*, vol.5, Warszawa, 1973, 513-517. Widukind also mentions, rather obscurely, some links between Wichman and King Haraldr Gormsson (Widukind, III, 64: 1882, 80). The Slavic Wolinians of Widukind's account are surely not Jómsvíkingar (J. Widajewicz, 'Najdawniejszy piastowski podbój Pomorza', *Slavia Occidentalis* 10 (1931), 57-63).

Wolin. Ibrahim stresses that the Weletians were in permanent conflict with Mieszko I⁹ for domination of the Oder estuary, which was very important for Mieszko I and the Polanians (the future Poles) because of the existence of trading ports there, of which the most important was Wolin.¹⁰ The next reliable information concerning the Slavic town of Wolin appears at Easter 1007, when the German King (and future Emperor and Saint) Henry II met in Regensburg envoys from the pagan Lutitians and from 'the great city of Wolin (Livilni)', and concluded an alliance against the Polish King Boleslaw Chrobry with these two rather separate powers (Thietmar of Merseburg, VI, 33).

If the Jómsvíkingar lived in the Oder estuary, it can only have been during the period between 967 and 1007. Clear traces of the presence of Scandinavians in the second half of the tenth century and first half of the eleventh have been found in that region, but the question is what kind of presence it was. The saga portrays the Jómsvíkingar as a great power playing their own political game between the Polish and Danish kingdoms. It does not seem credible that the band of Jómsvíkingar could have played such a role, involved in conflicts with kings and manipulating such personalities as Haraldr Gormsson, Sveinn Haraldsson and Boleslaw the Great. We know from more reliable sources like Adam of Bremen that during the revolt of his own son Sveinn Forkbeard, King Haraldr Gormsson *vulneratus ex acie fugiens ascensa navi elapsus est ad civitatem Sclavorum, quae Iumne dicitur*, and that he died there from his wounds.¹¹ In a similar way, *Ágrip af sögu Danakonunga* states that in the battle with his own son *varð Haraldr konungr sár ok flýði til Jómsvorgar í Vinðland* (*Agrip af sögu Danakonunga* (IF 35, 1982), 328). Another source, the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, states independently of Adam of Bremen that Haraldr,

⁹ Ibrahim, describing the 'tribe called Watabah', said: 'They lived in dense marshy forests to the west and a little to the north of the country of the Mashaqqah. They have a big city which stands on the coast of the Surrounding Sea. The city has twelve gates and a haven for which the shore with firm ground is used. They make war on the Mashaqqah and are very powerful. They have no king and do not obey anybody but are governed by their old people.' ('Ibrahim ibn Ya'qub at-Tartshi's account of the Slavs', trans. D. Mishin, *Annual of Medieval Studies at the CEU*, Budapest, 1996, 189; cf. G. Labuda, 'Wolinianie – plemię pomorskie czy wieleckie?' in: *Studia nad Etnogenezą Słowian*, vol. 2, G. Labuda, S. Tabaczyński eds, Wrocław, 1988, 70.

¹⁰ The Poles were apparently only partly successful in these wars (G. Labuda 2002, 126) and the first bishopric for Pomerania was established in year 1000 in Kołobrzeg, not in Wolin (Thietmar of Merseburg IV, 46, *Kronika Thietmara*, ed. M.Z. Jedlicki, Poznań, 1953). Soon after the war between Polish King Boleslaw the Great and the German King Henry II began in 1002, the Poles lost control over Pomerania and Reinbern, the first bishop of Kołobrzeg had been sent to Kiev with Boleslaw's daughter as her chaplain (Thietmar of Merseburg VII, 72).

¹¹ Adam of Bremen, II, 27-28: *Adami Bremensis Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, in: *Quellen des 9. und 11. Jahrhunderts zur Geschichte des Hamburgischen Kirche und des Reiches*, ed. W. Trillmich, Darmstadt, 1961, 260-262. There are similar accounts in the *Chronicon Roskildense* and in Annals from Lund. L. Weibull (1911, 187) argued that both these sources follow Adam. In *Chronicon Roskildense* (6) we read: *Haraldus (...) fugiens uenit in Scaluam ibique exul obiit* (*Scriptores Minores Historiae Danicae Medii Aevi*, vol.1, ed. M.C. Gertz, Kjøbenhavn 1917-1918, 19).

defeated by his son and wounded in a battle, was forced to flee to the Slavs.¹² This could mean that he fled to the Obodrits,¹³ who were usually closely allied with the Danes, but in that case why should Adam of Bremen, whose account was written before the development of any picturesque Jómsvíking-stories, have mentioned Wolin? If Haraldr came to Wolin, he clearly went there looking for help, or at least was sure that it would be a safe place for him. Adam of Bremen's words, that he found support there *contra spem quia* [the inhabitants of Wolin] *pagani errant*, fits well, in my opinion, with the efforts of later times to make Haraldr into a quasi-saint. If so, we can assume that Wolin (Jumne) was on good terms with Haraldr. Talking about Haraldr's escape to the Slavs, Sven Aggesen states that he was the founder of the town.¹⁴ But for Adam of Bremen and *Agrip af sogu Danakonunga* (and perhaps the author of the *Encomium Emmae*), it was not the Jómsvíkingar who ruled in Jumne, but the Slavs. For Saxo Grammaticus, too, Haraldr was only a conqueror of the magnificent Slavic town of Iulin (Wolin), which he handed over to Styrbjörn.¹⁵ Even in *Jómsvíkinga saga* the Slavic character of the Oder estuary is clearly expressed when the saga states that the band of Jómsvíkingar dwelt in king Burisleif's land and were in his service.

In my opinion if anybody was playing their own game in the Oder estuary at that time, it was possibly the Slavic tribe and town of Wolin. The question asked in Niels Lund's paper, of how one might explain Haraldr's escape to a town that was 'dangerously close to the Poles', who at that time were on very good terms with Germany, rests on what may be a false assumption.¹⁶ In fact we do not know if Wolin was between 967 and 1007 close to the Poles. Possibly the situation was quite the opposite (G. Labuda 2002, 126-135). Taking a different assumption, Wolin, as an ally of the anti-German Polabians and enemy of Mieszko I (Germany's ally), may have been a very appealing place for Haraldr. This would fit in well with the probable net of alliances round the Baltic Sea at that time. Poland was obviously allied to Sweden, as we can see from the marriage of a Polish princess to the Swedish King - her original

¹² Father and son *congređiuntur in proelio in quo vulneratus pater ad Sclavos fugit, et non multo post ibi obit* (*Cnutonis Gesta sive Encomium Emmae Regine auctore monacho sancti Bertini*, ed. G.H. Pertz, MGH SS, vol. 19, Hannoverae 1866, 512; cf. G. Labuda, 1964, 130.

¹³ Niels Lund, 'Harald Bluetooth - a Saint very nearly made by Adam of Bremen', in: J. Jesch, *The Scandinavians from the Vendel Period to the Tenth Century*, Woodbridge, 2002, 303-315.

¹⁴ Haraldr fled from Denmark and *ad Sclaviam usque profugus commeavit, ibique pace impetrata primus urbem fundasse dicitur, quae nunc Hymnisburgh nuncupatur* (*Suenonis Aggonis Gesta regum Danorum*, MGH Scriptores, vol. 29, 32; cf. L. Weibull 1911, 180; G. Labuda 1964, 185. *Fagrskinna* (ch. 19: *Fagrskinna - Noregs Konunga Tal*, ed. Bjarni Einarsson, IF 29, Reykjavík 1985, 121) and *Knytinga saga* (ch. 1: *Knytinga saga. The History of the Kings of Denmark*, trans. Hermann Pálsson, P. Edwards, Odense, 1986, 23) also ascribe the foundation of Jómshorg to Haraldr.

¹⁵ Saxo Grammaticus, X, 2, 1: *Saxonis Gesta Danorum*, ed. J. Olrik, H. Raeder, Hauniae, 1931, 271. On Styrbjörn as a legendary leader of the Jómsvíkingar see G. Labuda, 'Saga o Styrbjörn, jarlu Jomsborga', *Slavia Antiqua* 4 (1954), 283-332; cf. G. Labuda, 1964, 191-221.

¹⁶ N. Lund, 'Harald Bluetooth...', p. 310.

name was probably Swietoslawa (G. Labuda 2002, 133-134). But the same lady later married a Danish King Sveinn (Thietmar of Merseburg VII, 39)! So because of the lack of sources we should be very careful in interpreting the puzzle of dynamic and sometimes changing trans-Baltic alliances! If we agree that Wolin may have been an independent factor in the Baltic Sea politics of that time, it seems possible that the town could have employed some Scandinavians as mercenary warriors. In fact it seems that Wichman, a German adventurer and mercenary warrior-champion of very high pedigree (the emperor's exiled cousin), had already played the role of foreign military advisor among the Wolinians, probably with his own (rather small) retinue. Wichman died in battle in 967 during the war against Mieszko I. Later on some Vikings may have followed him in the service of Wolin. To support this supposition about the presence of foreign warriors in Wolin with archaeological evidence is not easy, as the whole body of Scandinavian weaponry found there is big enough to arm only two or three Vikings. The town of Wolin may after 967 have acknowledged Polish supremacy to some extent, and it eventually paid tribute until the year 1007. But the first bishopric for Pomerania was founded in the year 1000 in Kolobrzeg, not in Wolin, and it may indicate that at the turn of the tenth century the town had never been under direct Polish rule.¹⁷

2. Turning to the Skaldic poetry, one can see that none of the skalds¹⁸ who according to sagas were present at the battle of Hjörungavágr¹⁹ (or at least, those who praise Hákon jarl for his victory) make any mention of the Jómsvíkingar or of Jóm! Some skalds contribute almost nothing to the problem.²⁰ However, Vigfús Víga-Glúmsson does mention the fight against Danish warriors and their ships: *þar gingum vér ... í bœð ... til knarrar ... danskra drengja* (*Skj* B1, 115). In Tindr Hallkelsson's Hákonardrápa (st. 4) the Vikings whom later sagas interpret as Jómsvíkingar are described as Slavs, and the Norwegian warriors fought against Wends, wounding them with swords: *Verðbjóðr hugins ferðar ... vann ... sverðs eggja spor á Vinða sinni*. In st. 6 of the same poem the Danes are also finally mentioned (*Skj* B1, 136-138). It seems from these references that the expedition against Hákon Jarl was a joint Danish-Slavic raid.

Þórleifr Rauðfeldarson, although giving no names, praises Hákon jarl for sending nine mighty chieftains to Óðinn (*þú hefr øðlinga Óðni... niu senda*) (*Skj* B1, 132), and this could be the original nucleus of the picturesque scene of the execution of captured Jómsvíkingar in *Jómsvíkinga saga*. Þórleifr's words could mean that the nine chieftains (Óðinn's number!) died in the battle and in that way went to Óðinn, but he might equally well mean that the same nine were executed or rather offered to Óðinn after the battle. Whichever was the case, the verb *senda* stresses the ritual context of the event.

¹⁷ See footnote 10.

¹⁸ Vigfús Víga-Glúmsson (*Skj* B1, 115); Eilífr Guðrúnarson (*Skj* B1, 139); Þórleifr jarlaskáld Rauðfeldarson (*Skj* B1, 132); Hallfróðr Óttarsson vandræðaskáld (*Skj* B1, 147-148); Tindr Hallkelsson (*Skj* B1, 136-138).

¹⁹ According to the *Jómsvíkinga saga* (30), four Icelandic skalds fought at Hjörungavágr.

²⁰ From Eilífr Guðrúnarson's poem for Hákon only some praise of the Jarl survives. Hallfróðr vandræðaskáld includes the description of fighting that is proper for every battle, and a mention of sea-warriors.

Another battle with legendary connections to the *Jómsvíkingar* is described in *Styrbjarnar þátttr.*²¹ A stanza by Þorvaldr Hjaltason speaks of the battle at Fyrísvellir, (*Skj* B1, 111, cf. G. Labuda, 'Saga o Styrbjörnme...', 300-301 and passim), and some runic inscriptions also mention a battle fought near Uppsala.²² But in the sources that are actually older than *Styrbjarnar þátttr* there is no mention of Jóm, Jómsborg, Jómsvíkingar or Wolin (G. Labuda, 'Saga o Styrbjörnme...' 285). The battle at Fyrísvellir, if does not belong to heroic mythology, was also fought between Danes and Swedes.

3. One possible method of solving the puzzle of the origin of the *Jómsvíkingar* might lie in the names of the main actors and the places mentioned in the story. The skalds quoted here do not know *Jómsvíkingar* as a collective name or Jóm as a place-name, but Tindr Hallkelson does mention the names of some men who were later interpreted as leaders of the *Jómsvíkingar*: Búi (*Hákonardrápa* 2 and 10) and Sigvaldi (*Hákonardrápa* 2). Sigvaldi is perhaps the same person as the Sewald mentioned by Thietmar (VII, 38 and 42; cf. Labuda 2002, 133). In the twelfth century Búi became the hero of Þorkell Gíslason's *Búadrápa* (*Skj* B1, 536-538), which is preserved only in the *Greatest Saga of Olaf Tryggvason* (Ólafur Halldórsson 2000, 23, 76; Hermann Pálsson, R. Simek 1987, 49). On the other hand Vagn is mentioned by Vigfús Viga-Glúmsson (*Skj* B1, 115).

The early skalds do not know Pálna-Tóki, a very important character in the saga-story. Lauritz Weibull (1911, 183) even argued that in *Jómsvíkinga saga* King Haraldr has been replaced by Pálna-Tóki. Pálna-Tóki may originally have been the same person as Danish chieftain Toke. In one version of *Jómsvíkinga saga* (AM 510) he appears at the very beginning of the saga as *maðr er nefndr Tóki* (ed. C. af Petersens, Lund 1879, 3; cf. S. Larsen 1927, 34). A certain *Tóki dux Winlandensis* is mentioned by Adam of Bremen (II, 49, schol.35/37/: 1961, 288). As long ago as 1931, Józef Widajewicz argued (see his p.85) that *terra Winlandensis* here is not Wolin nor any land of the Wends (and absolutely not America!) but a part of Jutland, namely Vendsyssel. A person bearing the name Toke was supposedly linked to the Danish royal dynasty.²³ On the Gunderup rune stone (North Jutland), which was originally located on or beside a burial mound, this Tóki appears as a person who erected the stone and burial mound for his mother Tova and step-father Abe.²⁴ In the etymology of

²¹ *Styrbjarnar þátttr*, see *Flateyjarbók. En samling af norske kongesagaer*, Kristiania, 1862, 70-73; cf. G. Labuda, 'Saga o Styrbjörnme, jarlu Jomsborga', *Slavia Antiqua* 4 (1953), 283-332.

²² L. Jacobsen, E. Moltke (eds.), *Danmarks Runeindskrifter*, København, 1942, 332-334, 347-350; cf. G. Labuda 'Saga o Styrbjörnme...', 302.

²³ W. Duczko, 'Kungar, thegnar, Tegnebyar, juveler och silverskatter. Om danske inflytande i Sverige under senvikingatid', *Tor* 27/2 (1995), 630.

²⁴ (Side A:) tuki:raisti:stini:thajsi:auk:kathi:kub(l):thausi:aftaba:mak:sin:thai:kin:kuthan: auk:/ (Side B:) :tufu:muthur:sina:thau:luka:bafhi:i:thau:m:hauki:/abi:uni:tuka:fiar:sins:aft:sik: ('Toke rejste disse stene (?) og gjorde disse kumler efter sin 'mag' (stedfader) Abe (Ebbe), en velbyrdig thegn, og (efter) sin moder Tove. De ligger begge i denne høj. – Abe (Ebbe) 'undte' Toke sid gods efter sig (indsatte ham som arving). *Danmarks Runeskrifter* 143, Gunderup-St.1: *Danmarks Runeindskrifter*, ed. L. Jacobsen, E. Moltke, Text, København, 1942, 179-180.

the name Pálna-Tóki, Tóki is possibly the same as Þorkell.²⁵ The word *Pálna* could be compared with Old Norse *pallr* - German *hacke*, or *pallr* - German *bank*,²⁶ but it could be eventually derived from *Polna*, if it could mean Polish or rather Polanian.²⁷ If so, the name Pálna-Tóki might mean 'Þorkell who is connected in some way to Poland', and his by-name in the saga could perhaps be interpreted as a trace of his connections to Poland, in the legend or in reality.

The characters from *Jómsvíkinga saga* could have also their prototypes in real history. Looking to the Slavic side we should mention especially Burisleifr Vinðakonungr, who is obviously in a way the same person as Polish King Boleslaw the Great. The problem is that Boleslaw began to rule Poland in 992, when the 'legendary activity' of the Jómsvíkingar was already coming to an end. But Burisleifr as a saga-hero may have been substituted in the story for his father Mieszko - it was a common mistake of central-European Latin sources to confuse Mieszko I and his son Boleslaw the Great. Burisleifr the saga hero might also reflect another Polish ruler, Boleslaw Krzywousty (died 1138), who in historical reality gained control over Wolin in the 1120's, precisely in the period when the world of the Jómsvíkingar was being re-created into the story told in the saga.²⁸ The only problem with this theory is that the form of the name which sounded to Norse speakers like *Burisleifr* is different from Boleslaw and fits much better with *Borzyslaw*, a name which was also very well known and attested in Pomeranian written sources from the thirteenth century onwards.²⁹

When we turn to the Scandinavian side, another important person involved in the affairs of the Jómsvíkingar appears, namely Óláfr Tryggvason. The *Historia Norwegie* provides a very interesting detail, stating that Óláfr Tryggvason had his winter quarters in Iomne, where his army grew, 'his fleet was swelled by an influx of Norwegians, Danes, Gotar and Wends, who flocked to join him at his winter quarters in Jónsborg, the strongest of Wendish towns'.³⁰ This idea of how a Viking expedition was usually composed and the nations from which it was derived seems to be genuine.

4. The name *Jóm* is first used by Arnórr Jarlaskáld in his two poems praising King Magnús and mentioning his victory over Slavs (including their town *Jóm*) in 1043.³¹ It is necessary to stress that in *Hrynhenda* and *Magnúsdrápa* Arnórr describes Magnús's campaign against the Wends,³² not only against *Jóm*-Wolin. Magnús (*Hrynhenda* 11)

²⁵ J. de Vries, *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Leiden 1962, 594, after E. Brate, E. Wessen, *Södermanlands Runinskrifter*, vol.1, Stockholm, 1924-1936, 220 (*Sveriges Runinskrifter* 3) explaining the name Toke on the Saby stone (Sö. 252).

²⁶ The explanation 'Tóki the Archer' (with quotation mark!) in R. Cleasby, Gudbrand Vigfusson, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*; Oxford, 1975, 475, is not convincing.

²⁷ I owe this interpretation to the friendly suggestion of Władysław Duczko.

²⁸ This was already noticed by S.H. Cross in 1930, 139-140.

²⁹ *Słownik Staropolskich Nazw Osobowych*, ed. W. Taszycki, vol. 1, Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków, 1965, 231-232.

³⁰ *augmentabat enim eius classem Norwegens ac Dani, Gautones et Sclauī, qui cum illo ciuitate Iomne, que est firmissima inter Sclauie urbes, hyemales frequentabat sedes* (*Historia Norwegie* XVII, 12, ed. I. Ekrem, L.B. Mortensen, trans. P. Fischer, Copenhagen, 2003, 92).

³¹ See the old standard edition in *Skj* B1, 306-315.

³² All quotations from Arnórr jarlaskáld are from D. Whaley, *The Poetry of Arnórr jarlaskáld. An edition and study*, London, 1998. Magnús's raid is also mentioned by

'carried the war-shield (...) to the land of Wends' (*til Venda grundar*), causing 'grief for the Wends' (*valdið Venda sorg*). Because as Arnórr said in *Hrynhenda* 12:

King, you fared through the evil tribe with flame;
 Fated then was death to men;
 Crusher of thieves, you kindled a towering
 Blaze of fire south at Jóm [*sunr at Jómi*].
 No wise dared they halls defend,
 The heathen host in the broad stronghold;
 [*heiðit folk i virki breiðu*]
 royal one, you wrought in the townsmen,
 by bright flame, terror-struck hearts.

In *Magnúsdrapa* (8) the same victory is described as follows:

Then worked the king a weapon-
 Blizzard, which Wends remember,
 The ruler singed not a few
 Wrong-doers' corpses at Jóm (*at Jómi*).
 A body swift-roasted the bloody
 Wolf dragged from the embers;
 Darted on unbaptised brows
 The most ravenous death of the hall.

It is absolutely clear here that Magnús's enemies in Jóm were Wends, not Vikings. So S.H. Cross's supposition (Cross 1930, 118) that Magnús's raid destroyed the Scandinavian colony in Jóm is based on a misunderstanding of the evidence of the source. Arnórr mentions a Slavic Jóm, not Scandinavian Jómsvíkingar.

The name *Jóm*, *Jumne*, *Jóms-borg* is possibly not of either Scandinavian or Slavic origin. The best etymology for it is the one proposed by Gerard Labuda, who compared *Jumne* with Finish *juoma*, Estonian *Jóm* and Latvian *juma*.³³ According to Elias Lönnrot's Dictionary Finnish *juoma* means 'djupaste stället i vikar'³⁴, so a place of some importance for sailors. Although a noun *jama* ('a hole') exists in the Polish language and appears in the name of the Pomeranian lake Jamno, the pronunciation of the name *Jóm* seems to point to Finnish origin.

5. The other way of explaining the literary creation of the Jómsvíkingar involves archaeology. The sagas show the Jómsvíkingar as an active factor during the reign of Haraldr Gormsson and the first years to that of Sveinn Haraldsson. The battles of Fyrisvellir (ca. 985) and Hjörungavágr (ca. 995) bring the legendary activity of the Jómsvíkingar to an end. In *Jómsvíkinga saga* Jómsborg is described just like a late 'idealborg' and the Jómsvíkingar like a mediaeval 'krigareideal', as has already been noticed by Lauritz Weibull (1911, 192-193). What eventually has to be recognized as reliable (in a way) in the saga-tradition about the Jómsvíkingar is their law – the

Theodoricus Monachus, *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium* 24 (ed. and trans. D. and I. McDougall, London, 1998, 37, 96-97).

³³ G. Labuda 1964, 188-189; For the relation between many forms of the place-name Jóm-Jumne-Vineta, see G. Labuda 1964, 184-190 and R. Kiersnowski 1950, 5-27, where the older literature is covered.

³⁴ E. Lönnrot, *Suomalais-Ruotsilainen Sanakiria (Finskt-Svenskt Lexikon)*, vol.1, Helsingfors, 1874, 388-389.

Jómsvíkingalög. According to the saga they lived in a fortress which was at the same time a purely military camp, not a city, castle or burgh with many social functions. The description of the fortress includes a lot of fantasy but it is possible to imagine it as something like the Danish circular forts.

The law that regulated the life of the Jómsvíkingar in the camp and during expeditions (see *Jómsvíkinga saga*, ed. N.F.Blake, London 1962, 17-18) does not look totally invented, even if the rules for acceptance of new members, age limits, the duty to stay in the place and the rules for discipline were formulated late and include legendary motifs. As far as I know there are only two other sources concerning similar laws. One, mentioned in *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka* ch. 5 (ed. H.Seelow, Reykjavík 1981, 177-178), looks like the Jómsvíkingalög, and Jan de Vries (*Altnordische Literaturgeschichte* 2, Berlin 1942, 452) suggested that *Hálfs saga* borrowed it from *Jómsvíkinga saga*. Saxo Grammaticus' code of laws for warriors at war³⁵ is a rather different case and may reflect another, original tradition. It was, however, a Danish tradition, like the law ascribed to the Jómsvíkingar. Maybe all these laws reflect (though they do not record) the rules that were laid down for the military group which helped the Danish king Haraldr Gormsson to unify the country and keep control over the land from circular forts. As regards the problem of the royal guard which is typical of Slavic and (possibly) Danish rulers of the tenth and eleventh centuries, I shall here refer only to my previously published paper.³⁶ The statement in *Knytlínga saga* ch. 1 that the Jómsvíkingar were paid by the king is worth attention here. An echo of the existence of such groups of warriors may have influenced the later legendary tradition.

If the law of the Jómsvíkingar reflects to some extent the existence of warriors inhabiting Danish circular forts, this could explain why the Danes who fought against Hákon Jarl at Hjörungavágr were identified with the Jómsvíkingar. We know two circular forts from Jutland. One is Aggersborg, the largest of the whole group and situated on the northern periphery of the Jutland peninsula, at the nearest point to Norway. This fort could have served as a camp for warriors ready to assert the Danish control over Norway which is claimed by Haraldr Gormsson's inscription on the Jelling stone. The activity of the Jómsvíkingar in Norway looks strange when we think about Wolin as the starting point of the expedition. But if in the place of the Jómsvíkingar we put Danish warriors living in every circular fort (including Aggersborg) this starting point will be shifted much closer to Norway. The Danish army had been sometimes supported by Slav allies, as the skalds who describe the battle at Hjörungavágr already record. Later analogies include the Slavic Lutitians who supported Scandinavians in England in 1069 according to Ordericus Vitalis.³⁷ So the legend about the brave Jómsvíkingar may include a memory of a special group within the Danish army and their allied Slavic troops. The memory of the circular forts may be reflected there and exaggerated in the picture of Jónsborg.

³⁵ Saxo Grammaticus V, 5, 1-2; *Saxonis Gesta Danorum*, ed. J. Olrik, H. Raeder, Hauniae 1931, 127-128.

³⁶ I have already argued this in another paper (L.P. Slupecki, 'Jómsvíkingalög...' 49-59).

³⁷ Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV, year 1069: excerpts in: MGH Scriptores, ed. G.H. Pertz, vol.20, Hannoverae, 1868.

Finally it should be noticed that the time of the legendary activity of the Jómsvíkingar (the second half of the tenth century) fits well with the period to which most of the archaeological finds of Scandinavian provenance from Wolin belong. This period covers the years from ca. 950, to ca. 1050, and for that time strong Scandinavian presence (but not domination!) in Wolin is attested.³⁸ This question is investigated in detail in Blażej Stanisławski's paper.

Conclusion

For Jan de Vries, the battle at Hjörungavágr was a historical fact.³⁹ But it seems to follow from the evidence of the skaldic poetry that it was a victory over a Danish-Slavic fleet. So why did the literature make the invented Jómsvíkingar the main actors in the event?

Maybe this was because of a memory that Slavic troops from Jóm-Wolin had participated in the battle, and had become involved in the raid because of the connections between the Wends and the Danish kings. Maybe it was remembered that in this town of Wolin, which was a very important port of trade from the beginning of tenth century up to King Magnús's raid in 1043, the Scandinavians were living among other nations. The foreigners there included warriors, as is proved by the case of German champion warrior Wichman. The presence of some Vikings, although not attested by contemporary written sources, also seems possible. Additionally in the twelfth century, when the saga was probably created, Poland, under the energetic rule of Boleslaw Krzywousty, was again involved in Baltic Sea politics and for some time enjoyed authority over the whole of Pomerania, including Wolin (and formally even the isle of Rügen).

The conclusion of this investigation is thus that although it is obviously invented, the story of the Jómsvíkingar was partly built on some true basic facts. These include the strong presence of Scandinavians in Wolin (still remembered at the time when the saga was written); some Wendish connections to the Danish Kings; the presence of Wends in Danish overseas expeditions; and the interests of Polish rulers in influencing the Oder estuary. The motif of the Jómsvíkingalög and Jómshorg may also reflect a memory of the existence of Danish elite troops at the time of the building of Danish state under Haraldr Gormsson's rule. The flavour of authenticity was reinforced by the use of authentic names, and the facts were mixed with plenty of imagination and set in a beautiful literary framework.

³⁸ This question will be reconsidered in detail in Blażej Stanisławski's paper; cf. also W. Duczko, 'Obecność skandynawska na Pomorzu i słowiańska w Skandynawii we wczesnym średniowieczu', in: *Salsa Cholbergensis. Kołobrzeg w średniowieczu*, ed. L. Leciejewicz and M. Rębkowski, Kołobrzeg, 2000, 23-44.

³⁹ Jan de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, vol.2, Berlin 1942, 186; cf. L. Weibull (1911), 186.