ANTHONY FAULKES

DESCENT FROM THE GODS

1. The development of the Old Icelandic langfēdgatal

There are a number of ways in which the idea of descent from the gods is used in medieval writings. In some legends individual heroes are said to be sons of gods or descended from a god, like Hercules and Æneas. Thus in Eddic poems adjectives such as reginkunnigr and góðborinn are used of some heroes to distinguish them from ordinary mortals.1 This divine ancestry of selected individuals was presumably understood literally in heathen times.

Even as far back as the time of Tacitus, however, there existed in Germanic tradition another idea that appears in connection with the universally popular kind of legend that tells of the origins of things. In Germania 2, Tacitus mentions the tradition of a progenitor of the tribes of the Ingævones, Istævones, and Herminiones (and perhaps of other tribes too, he adds) called Mannus, son of the god Tuisto whom the earth brought forth. In such primitive legends there was probably no clear distinction made between the origin of nations and the origin of mankind as a whole, and the tradition reported by Tacitus can be seen as paralleled in the Norse poem Rígsþula, which tells how each of the three classes of men (slaves, freemen, noblemen) are descended (on the male side) from the god Rígr, identified in the prose introduction with Heimdallr. The same conception seems to be implied in the first verse of Völuspá.2 The idea of universal and thus basically undifferentiated descent of all men from a first man who was son of a god found reinforcement in Christian times in the book of Genesis, and Adam is sometimes referred to as son of God.3

For a list of editions of texts referred to, see p. 37.

1 Helgakviða hundingsbana I 32, Hamðismál 16 and 25 (PE 135, 271, 273). It is possible that regin- is simply an intensive (‘of mighty descent’ or ‘having mighty wisdom’?), and that the other word should be góðborinn (‘well-born’); but it would be churlish to deny all the evidence for the belief in divine descent in heathen Scandinavia. Cf. K. von See, Mythus und Theologie im Skandinavischen Hochmittelalter (Heidelberg, 1998), p. 76.

2 PE I and 280 ff.

Probably as a development of these two, a third idea became common, and was used to support the claims to nobility of individual families, both to differentiate them from commoners and in rivalry with other families either within the same national group or outside it. Already in the sixth century Jordanes (De origine actibusque Getarum 13–14) traced the descent of the Gothic royal house of the Amali from ‘semidei’ called Anses (i.e. Æsir) and names the progenitor of the family Gapt. This name is thought to represent Ó›inn, one of whose names in Norse tradition is Gautr. Jordanes did not himself regard these ancestors as divine, but his motive for reporting the tradition was presumably to show that the Amali had as respectable a genealogy as the noble Roman families who counted gods among their ancestors; moreover it is uncertain how much genuine Gothic tradition Jordanes knew. Always when such genealogies are recorded by Christian writers (e.g. Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica I 15), the gods that appear in them will have been interpreted euhemeristically, i.e. as great kings or heroes who came to be worshipped as gods after their deaths. Descent from such great and successful men would have been regarded as a claim to nobility, while heathen gods themselves could hardly have been regarded with anything but abhorrence. Since the gods in genealogies were considered to have been really mortals, there was moreover felt to be no inappropriateness in continuing the genealogical lists back beyond them, sometimes even as far as Noah and Adam. (It is likely that Biblical genealogy, such as is found in Genesis and Matthew 1, played a part in encouraging medieval scholars to compile genealogies stretching back to the remote past.)

The transition from the type of tradition recorded by Tacitus to the royal genealogies of Christian times must have been gradual. Names that

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5 As in the Anglo-Saxon genealogies quoted in note 3 above; cf. also Nennius, Historia Brittonum, pp. 154 and 172.
originally applied to the tribe or nation seem, as political relationships became more complex, to have come to be applied to dynasties, which were perhaps believed to preserve the pure line of descent from the original progenitors best. Thus there seems to be a connection between the Ingavones of Tacitus, the Ingwine of Beowulf, and the Ynglingar in Icelandic historical writings. All three names imply descent from an ancestor called Ing or Yngvi, but in Icelandic sources the Ynglingar are no longer a tribe or nation but a dynasty. Similarly the name Scyldingas in Beowulf seems to refer to the Danes as a nation, but in Norse writings the Skjöldungar are the royal house of the Danish rulers.

Such legends of eponymous ancestors or founders of tribes and dynasties, however, did not always involve divine figures at all. It seems not to have been until the twelfth century that Skjöldr is made son of Öðinn—in Beowulf, though Scyld’s origin is mysterious, the idea of divine ancestry is not introduced—and it is uncertain how early Yngvi came to be regarded as identical with the god Freyr. Other eponymous founders of nations were never given divine status (e.g. Danr, Nórr).

The motive of divine ancestry is often found in association with legends about the origins of nations and dynasties, but not invariably, and it ought to be treated as a separate phenomenon; it cannot be assumed that the earliest figures in extended genealogies were always considered divine. The Icelandic genealogies in fact provide very little evidence for the divine status of any of the figures in them; when there is any interpretation at all, they are always treated as human kings, even in the oldest examples (Íslendingabók and apparently Háleygjatal; the part of Ynglingatal that would have thrown light on this problem is not extant). It is possible

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6 See Beowulf, ed. F. Klaeber (Boston, 1950), p. xxxvii. It may be noted that an Ingui appears in a genealogy of Northumbrian kings (sixth from Woden) in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle s.a. 547; but there is no hint there that he had any special status.

7 Most sources however are rather ambiguous on this point; in Beowulf, for instance, the Danes evidently existed as a nation before the coming of Scyld, and Angrimir Jónsson in his version of Skjöldunga saga writes ‘à Scyldo, quos hodie Danos, olim Skiolldunga fuisse appellatos, ut et Svecos ab Ingone Inlingen’ (Opera, I 333).

8 See Heimskringla, I, xlvi. On the vexed question of the divinity of Yngvi and other figures in Norse tradition see W. Baetke, Yngvi und die Ynglinger (Berlin, 1964; Sitzungsberichte der Sächsichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, Phil.-hist. Kl. 109.3), and the review of recent study by R. McTurk, ‘Sacral kingship in Ancient Scandinavia,’ Saga-Book, XIX, 139–69.

9 See Heimskringla, I, xxxii.
that the introduction of figures from mythology into Icelandic genealogy was the result of the influence of English traditions, for Anglo-Saxon genealogies included names of gods long before Norse ones can be shown to have done so.

There are therefore several kinds of ambiguity in records of ancient genealogy. It is often uncertain whether a given figure was regarded in any sense as a god; it is often unclear whether we are being told of the origin of a dynasty or of a nation (generally the Icelandic sources are concerned with dynasties, but *Upphaf allra frásagna*, believed to be derived from the beginning of the lost *Skjöldunga saga*, *Ynglinga saga*, and the prologue to *Snorra Edda* all have vague references to the Æsir being accompanied by a large following;\(^{10}\) while *Rígsþula*, though it began by accounting for the origin of the human race, ended by celebrating the noble descent of the kings of Denmark); and thirdly, since a list of rulers and a genealogy look very much the same, it is sometimes not quite clear when we have to do with succession and when with descent. But the greatest uncertainty concerns the age of the various traditions. For obvious reasons it is always difficult to trace them back beyond the introduction of literacy which with all Germanic nations came as a consequence of the conversion to Christianity (runic inscriptions offer no information about genealogical traditions of pre-Christian times). If genealogies were taken back to the gods in heathen times, they were presumably closely associated with the kind of legend that survives in the Eddic poems quoted above, and may have implied that those who could claim such descent were different from ordinary mortals. But if the gods were only introduced into genealogies after the coming of Christianity, then the euhemeristic interpretation of the gods must have preceded the construction of the genealogies. This latter view makes it easier to explain certain aspects of the extant genealogies, for instance the fact that many of them conflict with each other, so that there appears to have been no fixed tradition about the relationships of the gods and their human sons, and the even more striking fact that the family relationships of the gods in genealogies are very different from those they have in mythology. In Christian times the constructors of genealogies would have had no reason to pay attention to the authority of myths, but one would have thought that in heathen times they would have been bound to.

\(^{10}\) *Danakonunga sögur*, p. 39; *Heimskringla*, I, 14; *Snorra Edda*, p. 5. The prologue to *Snorra Edda* (p. 7), like *Skjöldunga saga* (*Danakonunga sögur*, p. 39), assumes that the Norse language was brought to the north by the invading Æsir. *Heimslýsing* (see section 3 below) is certainly concerned with the origin of nations.
In Icelandic tradition, as in Anglo-Saxon, most of the genealogies going back to the gods concern the families of national rulers, but some Icelanders had connections with royal families and a number of the extant versions of *lángfeðgatal* trace the lines of individual Icelandic families back to great heroes and gods. Such family pride was common in Iceland, and the genealogies are just one of many ways in which it found expression. Rivalry of various kinds (between Goths and Romans, between different royal families in Anglo-Saxon England, between various Icelandic families and between Icelanders and other Scandinavians) must have been the principal reason for the compilation of most of the genealogies in Germanic tradition that include mythological names.

The oldest Norse genealogy that survives seems to be that in *Ynglingatal*, supposed to have been composed by the Norwegian poet Þjóðólfr of Hvinir about 890. It survives as quotations in Snorri Sturluson’s *Ynglinga saga*, and was clearly his chief source for his account of the Yngling kings, though he probably had other sources as well. In the verses that are extant, the poem traces the genealogy of the kings of Norway back to Fjólnir, who is said to be a contemporary of the Skjöldung king Friðr-Fróði, grandson of Skjöldr (according to other sources Fróði was ruling in the time of the emperor Augustus). Snorri has three more names before Fjólnir: he places Óðinn first, and he is succeeded by Njörðr (who in Snorri’s account is not Óðinn’s son), whose son is Freyr, according to Snorri also known as Yngvi or Yngvi-Freyr, and Fjólnir is his son. It is difficult to believe that Snorri in this part of his account is following lost verses of *Ynglingatal*—the fact that he does not quote any verses for the names before Fjólnir suggests that either he did not know any or that he was following a tradition that differed from *Ynglingatal* here. One would

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13 Snorri’s respect for mythology is probably the reason for this, for Njörðr and Freyr were Vanir, unrelated to Óðinn and the Æsir.

14 Compare Snorri’s accounts of *Háleygjatal*: when he says Sæmingr is son of Yngvi-Freyr in the prologue to *Heimskringla* (I, 4; Ingunarfreyr in the prologue to his *Saga Ólafs konungs hins helga*, ed. O. A. Johnsen and Jón Helgason (Oslo, 1941), p. 4), but son of Óðinn in *Ynglinga saga* (*Heimskringla*, I, 21), as in the prologue to *Snorra Edda* (p. 7), it is apparent that on one occasion or the other he was ‘correcting’ his poetical source in its account of mythological figures, and
also have expected *Ynglingatal* to have begun with Yngvi.\textsuperscript{15} Besides *Ynglingatal*, there existed in Snorri's time three other versions of this part of the genealogy. Ari’s genealogy in *Íslendingabók*, which is also based on *Ynglingatal*, begins Yngvi, Njörðr, Freyr, Fjölnir. The genealogical lists in AM 1 e β II fol., which seem to be derived from a compilation of genealogies and regnal lists made in the early thirteenth century and used by Snorri both in *Heimskringla* and the prologue to his *Edda* (see below), have the sequence Óðinn, Njörðr, Yngvi-Freyr, Fjölnir. According to *Skjöldunga saga*, Ingí-Freyr (Ingo), like Skjöldr, was son of Óðinn.\textsuperscript{16} It would seem likely that in *Ynglinga saga* Snorri has departed from *Ynglingatal* for the names before Fjölnir and has preferred to follow the genealogical list from which AM 1 e β II fol. is derived (in the prologue to *Snorra Edda*, on the other hand, *Skjöldunga saga* is followed). The increasing tendency to put Óðinn at the head is probably due to English influence (cf. also Jordanes), for in Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies he is the most prominent progenitor among the gods;\textsuperscript{17} in addition the scaldic and mythological tradition in the centuries before Snorri seems gradually

\textsuperscript{15} As does Ari’s Yngling genealogy in *Íslendingabók*. Cf. the prologue to Snorri’s Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga, p. 3: ‘allt til Ingunnarfreys er heiðinir menn kölluð guð sinn.’
\textsuperscript{16} Upphaf allra frásagna in AM 764 4to (*Danakonunga sǫgur*, p. 39); Arngrím Jonae Opera, I, 333. Arngrímur’s account probably represents the beginning of the saga more reliably than the version in the fragment in AM 764 4to, which may have used other sources as well, even perhaps the prologue to *Snorra Edda*. See Bjarni Guðnason, *Um Skjöldungasögu* (Reykjavík, 1963), pp. 18–22. On the genealogical lists in AM 1 e β II fol, see Anthony Faulkes, ‘The Genealogies and Regnal Lists in a Manuscript in Resen’s Library,’ *Sjötíu ritgerðir helgaðar Jakobi Benediktssyni 20. júlí 1977* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1977), pp. 177–90.
\textsuperscript{17} Cf. Bjarni Guðnason, op. cit. pp. 173, 187, 287; A. Heusler, *Die gelehrte Urgeschichte im Altisländischen Schrifttum* (Berlin, 1908), p. 66 (reprinted in *Kleine Schriften*, II (Berlin, 1969), p. 132). The identification of Yngvi, progenitor of the Ynglingar and perhaps son of Óðinn, with Freyr, and the consequent conflict with the mythological tradition, according to which Freyr was son of Njörðr, presumably led to the various attempts to work all four names into the genealogy. Cf. *Heimskringla*, I, xlvii and xxxv; Baetke, op. cit. (note 8 above), pp. 85 ff. Óðinn might also have been preferred as progenitor after the development of the migration legend (see section 3 below), which, because of the etymological association with Asia, involved Æsir rather than Vanir.
to have made Óðinn the most prominent of the Norse gods at the expense of some of the others.

The rest of the genealogy in Ynglingatal is also of doubtful antiquity. There is no reason to doubt the authenticity of the last six names (from Halfdan hvítbeinn down to the poet’s own time), but at that point the poem makes the genealogy of the Norwegian kings a branch of the Swedish royal family. It is possible that Þjóðólfr did not in fact have any information about his patron’s family further than five generations back, and so joined it on to the better-known Swedish dynasty.18

Whether or not there were gods at the head of the genealogy in Ynglingatal, the poem implies descent from the gods by the use of the terms goðkynningar, Freys afspringr (and áttungr), Týs áttungr.19 The next oldest surviving genealogy is that in Háleygjatal, supposed to have been composed about 985 by Eyvindr skáldaspillir in imitation of Ynglingatal. This poem seems to have begun its account of the ancestry of the jarls of Hlaðir with Óðinn and his son Sæmingr, though the beginning of this poem too is not well preserved, and the genealogy in it can only be reconstructed from later lists.20 But gods certainly appeared in it, and the word Manheimar in verse 3 implies a contrast with Goðheimar, which in turn implies the concept of euhemerised gods.21 The third poem belonging to the genre is Nóregskonungatal (composed about 1190), but the line of kings in this poem is not taken back to the gods or to prehistoric times at all.22 Hyndluljóð includes gods in its genealogy (cf. verse 8), but the age of this poem is altogether uncertain.23

18 See Heimskringla, I, xli–xliv.
19 Verses 11, 17, 21, 27 (Skjaldedigtning, A I, 9, 11, 12, 13). The reading goðkynning is not certain, as some manuscripts have goðkonung.
20 Only sixteen verses or parts of verses have been preserved (see Skjaldedigtning, A I, 68–71) of which five are in Snorra Edda, five in Fagrskinna, and ten in Heimskringla (four of these ten being the same as four of the verses in Fagrskinna). The beginning of the genealogy in the surviving verses (see Heimskringla, I, 21–2) cannot be said to be quite clear, and Snorri’s accounts of it are contradictory (see note 14 above). The later lists (Heimskringla, I, 47, note) seem to be derived from that in AM 1 e β II fol. (see note 27 below), which in the case of the Yngling line does not follow Ynglingatal exactly, and so may not follow Háleygjatal exactly either. It cannot therefore be regarded as certain that the line in Háleygjatal began with Óðinn. See Anthony Faulkes, ‘The genealogies and regnal lists in a manuscript in Resen’s library,’ pp. 189–90, note 36.
21 Cf. til goda in verse 1 (Skjaldedigtning, A I, 68; and Skjoldunga saga, p. 39.
23 PE, 289.
Apart from the oldest genealogical poems, all the other Norse genealogies were not only first written down in Christian times: they were also first compiled in Christian times. If in view of the problems about the beginning of *Ynglingatal* it must be regarded as uncertain how common it was for genealogies in heathen times to go back to the gods, in Christian times it became almost universal. The oldest non-poetic genealogy is that of Ari and is based on *Ynglingatal*; it is preserved as an appendix to his *Íslendingabók* (pp. 27–8), admittedly only in seventeenth-century manuscripts, but they are thought to reproduce accurately the contents of a text first compiled in the early twelfth century. This genealogy begins Yngvi Tyrkja konungr, Ínýr Svía konungr, Freyr, Fjólør. There is no accompanying narrative that survives but evidently Ari had in mind some idea of a migration of euhemerised gods from the Black Sea area to Scandinavia, perhaps in imitation of other European legends of the foundation of nations by survivors of the Trojan war (see section 3 below), though it is impossible to know exactly what Ari meant to imply by the word Tyrkir. A similar genealogy is found at the beginning of *Historia Norvegiae*, written in Norway about 1190, but this has no mention of the Turks.24

It is thought that about the time Ari was tracing his genealogy to the Ynglings, a member of the Oddaverjar family was tracing his to the Skjöldungs, perhaps in rivalry with Ari.25 This genealogy was incorporated in *Skjöldunga saga*, written perhaps about 1200, now only known from a Latin version by Arngrímur Jónsson and from passages incorporated in other works.26 It is uncertain how much if any of this genealogy was derived from poetic sources. *Skjöldunga saga* began with Óðinn and his son Skjóldr, ancestor of the Skjöldungs, who is said to be brother of Ingi (Ingi-Freyr in the fragment believed to be derived from the beginning of the saga in AM 764 4to, Ingo in Arngrímur’s Latin), ancestor of the Ynglings. Thus by the end of the twelfth century there existed genealogies, partly in prose, partly in verse, of each of the three chief ruling houses of Scandinavia, the Ynglings, the Skjöldungs, and the Hlaðjarlar, in each


case tracing the line back to names of Norse gods. These three genealogies were incorporated in a single table, with Óðinn now heading each line, in a compilation probably made in the early thirteenth century, but now surviving only in late copies of which the best is in AM 1 e β II fol.²⁷ The compiler, however, made a significant addition to the genealogies: he added four more lists, all derived from an English source, three giving lines of descent from Óðinn through two more sons (Veggdegg and Beldegg) to Anglo-Saxon kings, and one giving Óðinn’s descent through eleven generations from Seskef (a misunderstanding of Old English Se Sceaf). Thus Óðinn himself now, for the first time in Icelandic genealogies, had ancestors.²⁸

Further developments first appear in the prologue to Snorra Edda, which has an even more elaborate scheme. Here Óðinn is said to have had six sons. Three are the ancestors of the three Scandinavian dynasties (though the author has preferred to make them Skjöldr, Yngvi, and Sæmingr, following Skjöldunga saga and Háleygjatal, which is mentioned by name, rather than Skjöldr, Njörðr, and Sæmingr as in AM 1 e β II fol.).²⁹ The other three sons are said to have been kings in different parts of Germany;

²⁷ The genealogies in this manuscript were copied by Árni Magnússon from a manuscript in P. H. Resen’s library, destroyed in 1728, which had been made about the middle of the thirteenth century, but the compilation it contained was almost certainly known to Snorri Sturluson. See the article referred to in note 16 above. There is another version of most of the lists in AM 1 e β II fol., written in the early seventeenth century in AM 22 fol., fol. 63, though it may be derived from an earlier version of the compilation in Resen’s manuscript rather than from that manuscript itself. The West-Saxon regnal list at the end of Breta sogur is not closely related to that in AM 1 e β II fol., but is most similar to that in Cotton Tiberius A iii, fol. 178. See Bjarni Einarsson, Litterære forudsætninger for Egils saga (Reykjavík, 1975), p. 234.

²⁸ According to the mythological tradition embodied in Gylfaginning (cf. PE, 1 and 293), Óðinn was the son of Borr, the son of Buri, the first man, who was licked from salt stones by the primeval cow Auðhumla. This parentage is occasionally included in later genealogies as an alternative to the names from the Anglo-Saxon source (Flateyjarbók, 1, 26; cf. Edda Snorra Sturlusonar (Hafnæ, 1848–87), II, 636).

²⁹ Cf. notes 14 and 20 above. The sentence ‘telja þar Nóregskonungar sínar ættir til hans’ (i.e. to Sæmingr; Snorra Edda, p. 7) is presumably only a modification of the facts in the interest of uniformity with the other descendants of Óðinn, for it was well known that Sæmingr’s descendants, the Hlaðjarlar, never became kings and that according to Ynglingatal the kings of Norway traced their ancestry to a branch of the Ynglings of Sweden. The compiler of the prologue salves his conscience by adding ‘ok sva jarlar ok aðrir ríkismenn’. It is indeed
two of them are the Veggdegg and Beldegg that appear in AM 1 e β II fol. and are derived from English sources (though neither they nor AM 1 e β II fol. say anything about Germany), the third is Siggi, father of Rerir and ancestor of the Volsungs, and the information about him is presumably taken from an early version of Volsunga saga, whether written or oral (a forerunner of the extant Volsunga saga was also probably used in parts of Skáldskaparmál, though the Sigurðar saga mentioned in Háttatal does not seem to mean a particular form of the story30). This Volsung genealogy is the only part of the genealogy in the prologue to Snorra Edda (apart from the remoter ancestors of Óðinn) that was neither in Skjöldunga saga nor the compilation from which AM 1 e β II fol. is derived (Ynglinga saga on the other hand does not go beyond the information in that compilation at all as regards Óðinn’s sons, and does not include any of Óðinn’s ancestors31). Moreover the Volsung genealogy is only known from Norse sources; besides Snorra Edda, it appears at the beginning of the extant Volsunga saga, in Volsungs rímur I and II, at the beginning of Flóamanna saga, and as part of the genealogy at the beginning of Sverris saga in Flateyjarbók (it is perhaps unlikely that this genealogy was included in the original version of Sverris saga and taken from there by the author of the prologue to Snorra Edda).32 Four of the six sons of Óðinn in the prologue (i.e. excluding the two Anglo-Saxon names) are

31 In Heimskringla, I, 14, however, there seems to be a desire for symmetry in Óðinn’s descendants, and this is expressed in concrete form in the lists from which Árni made his copy in AM 1 e β II fol., for there the compiler had put three lines of descent from Óðinn according to Anglo-Saxon sources on one page, the three lines according to Icelandic sources on a second, and lists of the rulers of Norway, Denmark and Sweden on a third.
32 Volsunga saga, ed. M. Olsen (København, 1906–08) pp. 1 ff.; Rímfræðin, ed. Finnur Jónsson (København, 1905–22), I, 318, 321 ff.; Flóamanna saga, ed. Finnur Jónsson (København, 1932), p. 1; Flateyjarbók, II, 533. In Volsunga saga, Volsungs rímur and Sverris saga the form Sigi (Siège) is found, in Flóamanna saga the form Sigarr; in Volsungs rímur the form Rerri, in Flóamanna saga and Sverris saga, Reri; and in Sverris saga, Reri is made Óðinn’s son, Sigi his grandson.
included in the *hula* of names of Óðinn’s sons (alongside other names from mythological tradition) appended to Skáldskaparmál, and Semingr, Skiolldr and ‘Reyri’ appear among his sons in the fragment of mythology in AM 162 m fol.\(^3^3\)

The eleven ancestors of Óðinn back to Seskef that are listed in AM 1 e \(\beta\) II fol. (and are derived from Anglo-Saxon tradition) appear also in the prologue to *Snorra Edda*, but the author of the prologue has extended the line back yet further, to Trór/Pórr, son of Munon/Mennon and Troan, daughter of Priam of Troy. Between Seskef and Pórr are put six names that are all variants of names that elsewhere in Norse tradition are associated with Pórr: Lórr(i)íi, Einriíi and Vingfðórr correspond to Hlórriíi, Eindríi and Vingbórr, which all appear in the *hula* of Pórr-names in *Snorra Edda* 196, verse 428; Hlórriíi also in *Hymiskviða* and *Prymskviða*, Vingbórr in *Prymskviða* and *Alvíssmal*.\(^3^4\) Vingnir, Móði and Magi correspond to Vingnir, Móði and Magni, which all appear in *Vafthrúðnismál* 51 (though Vingnir is not in the Codex Regius text of the Eddic poems), quoted in *Snorra Edda* 75; Vingnir is apparently a name for Pórr, Móði (also in *Hymiskviða*) and Magni (also in *Harbardlýð* and *Snorra Edda* 103) are his sons, both of whom are also mentioned in *Snorra Edda* 87.\(^3^5\) The six names may have been chosen to fill the gap between Pórr and Seskef because the compiler thought them appropriate for descendants of Pórr, and the variations from the normal spelling elsewhere may be deliberate attempts at archaism or ‘foreign’ spellings, in which considerable interest is shown elsewhere in the prologue (though the compiler may simply of course have wanted to distinguish the names from the actual names of Pórr and his sons while retaining their associations with Pórr).

But the reason for having Pórr at all in this part of the genealogy is not clear; he is not elsewhere found as a progenitor of royal lines in genealogies, and his introduction at this point, in association with the Trojan figures and so many generations earlier than Óðinn, makes for uncomfortable conflict both with the mythological tradition and historical plausibility.

The beginning of the genealogy in the prologue seems to have been constructed from names chosen arbitrarily from various learned writings. Priamus and Troan are probably derived from *Trójumanna saga*, which also mentions in two places a Men(n)on who may be the source of the prologue’s Munon/Mennon (though his relationship with Priam has no

\(^{33}\) *Snorra Edda*, 196 and *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* (Hafnæ, 1848–87), II, 636.

\(^{34}\) PE, 88, 90, 93, 95, 112, 113, 115; 111, 125.

\(^{35}\) PE 55, 94, 79, 86.
authority). Tror is perhaps an echo of Tros son of Erichthonius, who is mentioned in Dictys Cretensis (but not in Trójumanna saga). The identification of Tror with Óðinn and Sibyl with Sif is presumably based purely on similarity of sound; the sibyls also are not mentioned in Trójumanna saga but appear commonly in medieval Latin writings. As to Pórr’s foster-parents, Lorikus has not been identified, while Lora/Glora is presumably a variant of Hlóra (Snorra Edda 95). No source is known for the stories told about Tror/Pórr in the prologue.

The author of the prologue thus succeeded, by rather arbitrary means, in relating the beginnings of Scandinavian dynasties, through Óðinn and Pórr, to Priam of Troy, thus making their ancestry as noble as those of the Frankish and British kings (though only on the distaff side). In the version of the prologue in Codex Wormianus the line is extended further back still, to Saturn. This part of the genealogy is again based on learned sources, but used in a more scholarly way, and has more authority than the line from Priam to Seskef. Priam’s descent from Saturn was quite well known in the Middle Ages, and appears for example in Honorius Augustodunensis, De imagine mundi III, and in the first mythographer. The inclusion of Priam’s ancestors now meant that the kings of Scandinavia were not only

36 P. 9: Priamus rēð þa fyrir Tyrklandi at detr þeira þær Casandra ok Polixena ok Troan; p. 56: Kasandra er Troan hét þóru nafni (these three passages are only in the Hauksbók text but may have also been in earlier manuscripts that are now lost). Men(n)on appears on pp. 71–2 and 108. Dares Phrygius (see note 127 below) mentions Memnon, and some manuscripts spell the name -nn-. Troan is thought to have been originally a misunderstanding of the Latin adjective in a phrase such as ‘filia Trojana’; cf. Geoffrey of Monmouth, Historia regum Britanniae, I, 3 (p. 225): ‘ex Trojana namque matre natus erat’ (Assaracus); this passage is however correctly translated in Breta sǫggur.

37 Dictys Cretensis, Ephemeridos belli Troiani libri sex, ed. F. Meister (Lipsiae, 1872). Tros appears also in the first three of the sources quoted in note 40 below. The name is found in the form Thror in Stjórn, ed. C. R. Unger (Christiania, 1862), p. 82.

38 E.g. besides Æneid, VI, in S. Augustine, De civitate Dei, X, 27, XVIII, 23 (Patrologia Latina, 41, 306 and 579–81); Honorius Augustodunensis, De imagine mundi, III (Patrologia Latina, 172, 169).

39 Codex Wormianus was written about the middle of the fourteenth century, but it is uncertain when the additions to the prologue that appear in it were compiled.

40 Patrologia Latina, 172, 171 (Honorius however lacks the link Jupiter–Dardanus); Scriptores rerum mythicarum Latinì tres I, ed. G. H. Bode (Cellis, 1834), pp. 34 and 43; cf. IIiad, XX 215 ff. and Servius on the Æneid, I, 139 and VIII, 319. see also note 42 below.
descended from Norse gods but from classical gods too (no attempt was made in the genealogies to identify figures in the two mythologies).

The final stage was reached in versions of langføðgatal, in which the genealogy of Norwegian kings and Icelandic families is traced back to Noah and Adam. Probably the oldest versions of this are the genealogies of the Sturlung family that are preserved in two manuscripts of Snorra Edda, the Uppsala manuscript and AM 748 II 4to.41 These genealogies are not part of the Edda, and in their present form may have been compiled after Snorri’s time, but it is likely, in view of their inclusion in manuscripts of his work and the fact that they concern his family, that parts of them are derived from genealogies constructed by him. The Sturlungs traced their descent back through the Skjöldung line to Óðinn. This part of their genealogy is presumably derived from Skjöldunga saga and differs in some details from that in AM 1 e β II fol. From Óðinn back to Priam in these and other versions of langføðgatal is derived from the prologue to Snorra Edda, as is shown for instance by the fact that they nearly all (excepting only the version in Sverris saga in Flateyjarbók) have the intrusive fragment of narrative ‘Munon eða Mennon hét konungr í Tróju’, and all have the female link through Troan (like Ari’s genealogy in Íslendingabók and those in AM 1 e β II fol., the versions of langføðgatal are in the main simply lists of names, unlike the genealogies in the poems, in Skjöldunga saga, and in the prologue to Snorra Edda, where they are worked into narratives). Whether the line from Priam to Saturn in the versions of langføðgatal is derived from the version of the prologue in Codex Wormianus or vice versa is impossible to say; but Codex Wormianus itself was written later than the oldest manuscript of langføðgatal that contains this part of the genealogy (i.e. the Uppsala manuscript).

It is uncertain where the Icelandic compiler found the links between Saturn and the Biblical names. Cælus or Celius father of Saturn of Crete is part of classical tradition (e.g. Servius on the Æneid V 801). ‘Zechim’ (i.e. Cethim) back to Adam is from Genesis. The two links between Cælius and Zechim, Cretus and Ciprus (or Ciprius) also appear in some thirteenth-century Welsh genealogies, where the whole line from Saturn back to Adam appears in similar form to the Icelandic langføðgatal.42 Presumably

41 Diplomatarium Islandicum (Kaupmannahöfn, 1857 ff.), I, 504–6, and III, 10–13; Edda Snorra Sturlusonar (Hafniæ, 1848–87), III, lxxiii f. The Uppsala manuscript was written in the first quarter of the fourteenth century, AM 748 II 4to about 1400
42 See Heusler, op. cit. (note 17 above), pp. 76–7 (140–41), who quotes Godfrey of Viterbo, Pantheon (Patrologia Latina, 198, 1028; Monumenta Germaniae
there was a common medieval Latin source for this genealogy, but it has not yet been discovered.

The other versions of langfedgatal were probably mostly compiled in the fourteenth century. Haukr Erlendsson wrote his own and his wife’s genealogy back to Adam, like the Sturlung genealogy through the Skjöldung line. The version of Sverris saga in Flateyjarbók traces Sverrir’s descent both through the Yngling line to Njörðr and also through Haraldr hárfagr and the Völsungs back to Öðinn, Priam and Adam. It is likely that this genealogy was not in the earliest version of the saga. At the beginning of Flateyjarbók there is a collection of genealogies, including the Yngling line back to Öðinn with his descent from Burs and Burri (these are evidently ultimately derived from the Bor and Buri in Gylfaginning), who is said to have been king in Tyrkland; and the Skjöldung genealogy in a form similar to that in AM 1 e β II fol., as well as Haraldr hárfagr’s descent from Adam through a version of the Skjöldung saga (though the later part of this genealogy too corresponds to AM 1 e β II fol.), with the line back from Öðinn as in other versions of langfedgatal.

In AM 415 4to there is a collection of genealogies which as a whole is

Historica, Scriptores in folio 22 (Hannoverae, 1872), pp. 300–01; there Saturn’s father Céilus is said to be son of Cres, son of Nembrot (= Nimrood?—according to Godfrey descended from Sem son of Noah), and this provides part of the link. The Biblical Cethim (Kittim) is associated with Cittium, the city in Cyprus, by Gervase of Tilbury (c. 1210), Otia Imperialis. Recreation for an Emperor, ed. S. E. Banks and J. W. Binns, Oxford 2002, II 26 (p. 531). Cf. von See, Mythos und Theologie 75–6, who quotes from Godfrey of Viterbo, Speculum regum, 5–8, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores in folio 22 (Hannoverae, 1872), pp. 35–9.


43 Hauksbók, 504–05; Diplomatarium Islandicum, III, 5–8 (AM 281 4to, foll. 103–04 and AM 738 4to, foll. 29–30; both written in the late seventeenth century).

44 Flateyjarbók, II, 533–4.

45 Flateyjarbók, I, 26–7 (Ættartala Harallds frá Öðini; Ættartala; Ætt Harallds frá Adam).
similar to that in AM 1 e β II fol., though the order is different: here there is a langefögatal tracing the Yngling line through Óðinn back to Noah (including an explanatory note about Óðinn that corresponds closely to that in AM 1 e β II fol.), the Skjöldung line back to Óðinn in a similar form to that in AM 1 e β II fol., and lists of rulers of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark that again correspond to lists in AM 1 e β II fol.46 In Uppsala University Library DG 9 the genealogy of Bishop Jón Arason is traced through the Skjöldung line and Ragnarr liðbrók back to Adam.47

All these versions of langefögatal have virtually the same names in the sequence from Óðinn back to Adam (with scribal variants and occasional omissions), and in the part from Óðinn to Priam are probably all derived (ultimately) from the prologue to Snorra Edda. From Óðinn down to the time of the settlement of Iceland there was a choice of four lines, the Skjöldungs, Ynglings, and Háleygjajarlars (these three were all available in the compilation from which AM 1 e β II fol. is derived), and the Völungs; and in this part of the genealogy different versions of langefögatal follow different lines. For the links with Icelandic families various sources must have been used, some of them probably dating from the twelfth century. In many cases compilers of individual versions of langefögatal were clearly using various conflicting sources, and it is not possible to construct a straightforward stemma of relationships.48

There is also a genealogy going back to Baldr son of Óðinn in AM 1 f fol., fol. 13, copied by Ketill Jörundsson in the early seventeenth century from the continuation of the fragment AM 162 m fol., originally part of the same manuscript as AM 764 4to. This is a separate concoction not directly related to the versions of langefögatal described above.49

46 Alfræði, III, 55–9.
47 Biskupa sögur, II (Kaupmannahöfn, 1878), 417–20 (DG 9 was written c.1580–90).
48 Heusler, op. cit. (note 17 above), pp. 19–20 (93–4) discusses the relationships of the various versions of the genealogy from Óðinn backwards, and points out the close relationship between the two versions in Flateyjarbók and that in DG 9, and between the versions in the two manuscripts of Snorra Edda. But the picture is complicated by the fact that the compiler of the lists in AM 415 4to certainly used, besides a version of langefögatal, a compilation similar to that in AM 1 e β II fol. (which was unknown to Heusler); and the compiler of the lists at the beginning of Flateyjarbók used similar sources and also a version of Snorra Edda. Moreover the genealogies in the prologue to Snorra Edda were probably used in the compilation of langefögatal rather than vice-versa as Heusler assumes.
The Old Icelandic *langføgtatal*, therefore, developed in several clearly defined stages. In preliterary times there were poems tracing genealogies of ruling families back to the ancestors and founders of dynasties Yngvi and Sæmingr, and possibly also traditional genealogies in other forms tracing other lines back to eponymous ancestors like Skjólfr. By at any rate the twelfth century it had become customary to have the names of Norse gods at the head of these genealogies, and it became increasingly common for Óðinn to appear either as a replacement for other figures or in front of them. By the early thirteenth century Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies became known in Iceland, and names were introduced from them extending the lines back several generations beyond Óðinn, as in AM 1 e β II fol. These names were incorporated in the prologue to *Snorra Edda*, the compiler of which extended the line back even further and introduced figures at its head associated with Troy, using names that were partly derived from Norse mythology and partly from Latin writings. A reviser of the prologue added the ancestors of Priam of Troy from classical tradition back to Saturn, thus introducing the names of classical gods as well. Finally, by the end of the thirteenth century an unknown genealogist added some more apocryphal pseudo-classical names from an unknown source that was also known to Welsh writers, linking Saturn’s father Celus/Celius to the descendants of Japhet in Genesis, thus taking the line right back to Adam. In some versions of *langføgtatal* the descent of thirteenth-century Icelandic families is traced back to the Scandinavian royal lines and thus linked on to the same line of descent through Óðinn.

The final versions thus included names from the Bible and classical mythology and legend, as well as the names from Germanic (Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse) historical and mythological traditions. A similar mixture of elements from three traditions is found for instance in the Anglo-Saxon poem *Widsith*, which includes classical names like Alexander and Cæsar, and names of Biblical nations like Israelites and Hebrews, among lists containing predominantly Germanic names (lines 15, 20, 76, 82–4). Anglo-Saxon genealogies themselves sometimes go back to Noah and Adam, but do not introduce classical (Trojan or mythological) names; they are therefore considerably shorter than the Icelandic *langføgtatal*. Genealogies of British kings in versions of *Historia Brittonum* (some of them Irish ones) and later Welsh lists provide the closest parallels to the Icelandic ones, in that they too include names associated with Troy and the names of classical gods as well as being linked to Genesis (see note 42 above), though it is difficult to believe that there is any direct link between these and Icelandic tradition.
2. Euhemerism in Icelandic sources

All genealogies written in Christian times, whether in Iceland or England, that contain names of heathen gods also contain an assumption of euhemerism. In some cases the doctrine is made explicit, as in Ari’s genealogy in Íslendingabók, where Yngvi is described as king of the Turks and his son Ýmir king of the Swedes; and it is even more so in the corresponding passage in Historia Norvegiæ:

Rex itaque Ingui, quem primum Swethia monarchiam rexisse plurimi astraunt, genuit Neorth, qui vero genuit Froy; hos ambos totum illorum posteritas per longa sæcula ut deos venerati sunt. Froy vero genuit Fióthi . . .

The genealogy of Óðinn in AM 1 e β II fol. has the following comment:

Voden, þann kunum vêr Óðin. Frá honum eru komnar flestar konunga ættir í norðr hálfu heimsins. Hann var Tyrkja konungr ok fylbi fyri Rúmverjum norðr higat.

Even Ynglingatal and Háleygjatal may have contained a more or less explicit euhemeristic interpretation of the heathen gods mentioned in them. Already Jordanes had applied the interpretation to Germanic gods when he gave the supposed descent of the Amali from the Anses:

Proceres suos, quorum quasi fortuna vincebant, non pueros homines, sed semi-deos id est Ansis vocaverunt . . . Horum ergo heroum . . . primus fuit Gapt.

There are similar comments in some Anglo-Saxon genealogies, such as Asser’s Life of Alfred, ch. I and Textus Roffensis, fol. 101r. But the most detailed exposition of the theory of euhemerism in Anglo-Saxon is in Ælfric’s homily De falsis diis, of which there is a translation in Hauksbók that may well have been made already in the twelfth century, and thus known to early Icelandic historians:

Enda fengu fleir enn meiri villudóm ok blótaþu menn þa er ríkir ok rammir váru í pessum heimi, síðan er þeir váru dauðir, ok hugðu þat at þeir myndu orka jammiðu dauðir sem þa er þeir váru kvíkir.

50 Monumenta Historica Norvegiæ, ed. G. Storm (Kristiania, 1880), p. 97.
51 Cf. Alfredi, III, 58.
52 See Heimskringla, I, xxxii.
54 See note 4 above.
55 Hauksbók, ‘Um þat hvaðan otru hofsk’, 158; Homilies of Ælfric, A Supplementary Collection, ed. J. C. Pope, II (Oxford, 1968; Early English Text
Although Ælfric’s examples were mainly taken from classical mythology, he identified the Roman gods with their Norse counterparts, so that the application of the theory to Norse mythology was already explicit in his homily. (Norse equivalents to classical gods appear also in Clemens saga, probably introduced by the translator of the Latin source.)

Saxo Grammaticus most of the time treats the Norse gods euhemeristically; see particularly the account of Óðinn and Pórr in Gesta Danorum I 7 and VI 5. Saxo’s treatment (like, it seems, Jordanes’s) is especially similar to Snorri’s and that in Trójumanna saga (see below) in that he unequivocally makes his kings achieve the status of being the object of worship while they are alive, not just after death as in most other medieval Latin versions of the doctrine.

One of the fullest narrative developments of the theme in Old Icelandic is in the fragment Upphaf allra frásagna, which is thought to be derived from the beginning of Skjöldunga saga. Here the doctrine is expounded clearly:

Óðinn ok hans synir váru stórum vitrir ok fjólkunnigir, fagrir at álítum ok sterkir at aflí. Margir aðrir í þeira ætt váru miklir afburðarmenn með ymisilium algerleik ok nokkura af þeim tóku menn til at blóta ok trúa á ok kölluðu goð sín.57

As well as telling the story of the migration of the Æsir from the south-east, Skjöldunga saga reported that King Fróði, great-grandson of Óðinn, lived at the time of Christ, thus placing the Norse gods in a specific historical context.58
Skjöldunga saga was known to Snorri, and it is probably from it that he developed his own account of euhemerism. In the prologue to Snorra Edda, the process of deification is described in some detail:

En hvar sem þeir [the Æsir] fóru yfir lónd, þá var ágæti mikit frá þeim sagt, svá at þeir þótti líkari goðum en móðunum . . . Sá tími fylgði féð þeirra, at hvar sem þeir dvoðust í lóndum þá var þar ár ok friðr göðr, ok trúðu allir at þeir verði þess ráðandi.59

But euhemerism is even more explicit in Ynglinga saga:

Óðinn . . . var svá sigraðell at í hverri orrostu fekk hann gagn ok svá kom at hans menn trúðu því at hann ætti heimilán sigr í hverri orrostu . . . En Óðin ok þá höfðingja tölfl blótuðu menn ok kölluðu god sín ok trúðu á lengi síðan.60

Euhemerism appears elsewhere in Icelandic literature too, in places where the foreign source is more obvious. The introductory chapter to Trójumanna saga in Hauksbók gives an account of classical mythology (in which classical gods are identified with their Norse counterparts) interpreted from a historical and euhemeristic viewpoint. It is possible that this account was known to the author of the prologue to Snorra Edda (it was certainly known to the person who added the interpolations in Codex Wormianus). The traditional story of the origin of idolatry in the worship of Bel (cf. Peter Comestor, Historia Scholastica, Genesis XL: ‘De morte Beli et ortu idolarum’)61 is reproduced in Veraldar saga and AM 194 8vo, as well as in the translation of Elucidarius, where, as a result again of the identification of Jupiter of Crete with Þórr, the doctrine of euhemerism is also applied to Norse mythological figures (as in Trójumanna saga and the prologue to Snorra Edda in Codex Wormianus):

Hann (Ninus) lét gera likneskju eftir feðr sínum dauðum, en hann hét Belus, ok bað hann allri þjóðr ríkis sín at gýgga likneskit. En þar námu aðrið eftir ok gerðu likneski eftir ástvinum sínum, eða eftir hinum ríkastu konungum dauðum, ok baðu lýðnum at blóta þá svá sem Rúmaborgar menn Romulum, Krítar menn Pór eða Óðín.62

60 Heimskringla, I, 11 and 20. Euhemerism is further developed in the extended version of the prologue to Snorra Edda in Codex Wormianus, and in AM 162 m fol. (see notes 33 and 49 above).
61 Patrologia Latina, 198, 1090.
All these accounts are of course part of a long tradition going back to classical times, and euhemerism had become one of the usual ways of interpreting heathen gods. Most Christian writers would think of Wisdom 14, especially verses 15–21:

\[\ldots\text{multitudo autem hominum, abducta per speciem operis, eum qui ante tempus tanquam homo honoratus fuerat nunc deum æstimaverunt}\ldots\]

The idea is common in the early Middle Ages; Lactantius has several passages that develop it, e.g.:

Illi ergo, qui dii putantur, quoniam et genitos esse tanquam homines, et procreasse constat, mortales utique fuerunt; sed dii crediti sunt, quod, cum essent reges magni ac potentes, ob ea beneficia, qua in homines contenderant, divinos post obitum honores consequi meruerunt.\(^6^3\)

Augustine mentions the doctrine in various places in *De civitate Dei*, e.g.:

De quibus credibilior redditur ratio, cum perhibentur homines fuisse, et unicuique eorum ab his qui eos adulando deos esse voluerunt, ex ejus ingenuo, moribus, actibus, casibus, sacra et solemnia constituta.\(^6^4\)

Isidore was universally used, and he has a thorough account of heathen religions from a euhemeristic standpoint in *Etymologiae* VIII 11, beginning:

Quos pagani deos asserunt, homines olim fuisse produntur, et pro uniu-s-cujusque vita vel meritis, coli apud suos post mortem ceperunt.\(^6^5\)

The material of this chapter is reproduced by Rabanus Maurus, *De universo* XV 6 (‘De diis gentium’).\(^6^6\)

Although euhemerism is thus extremely common, particularly in the early Middle Ages, it was not the only way of interpreting the heathen gods, and was not necessarily the commonest one. More didactic writers particularly often preferred another interpretation, that heathen gods were

\[^6^3\] *Epitome* 6; see also *Divinae Institutiones*, I, 8–15 (Patrologia Latina, 6, 153–201 and 1023).
\[^6^4\] VII, 18; cf. VI, 7 and VIII, 26 (Patrologia Latina, 41, 208, 184, 253–4).
\[^6^6\] *Patrologia Latina*, III, 426 ff.
manifestations of the devil. But euhemerism remained popular among writers whose main purpose was historical, like Gregory of Tours and Rudolf of Fulda, and among the mythographers.67

In Iceland too, both interpretations were known, and the idea that heathen gods were really devils is commonly found in hagiographic writings. But euhemerism is all-pervasive among more secular historical writers from the earliest times, and must be considered to have been the underlying concept when names of gods were included in genealogies from the earliest literary period onwards. Like many of the names themselves in the genealogies, this idea was an importation from Christian Europe, and underlines the fact that Icelandic genealogy owes rather little to native tradition going back to pre-Christian times. But by the time of Snorri Sturluson, who was the Icelandic writer who made the most extensive use of euhemerism in his works, the doctrine was well established in Icelandic tradition, and he would not have needed to go beyond native sources to find it expressed.

3. The origin in Troy

The prologue to *Snorra Edda* is a puzzling mixture of wit and ignorance. The first section tells of the origin of heathen religions, and the theory proposed and its working out is as intelligent a piece of writing as can be found on this subject from the Middle Ages. Then, rather abruptly, the author turns to an account of the geography of the world as an introduction to his story of the origin of the Æsir in Troy, which provides the beginning of his genealogy of the kings of Scandinavia—a story that proposes a different theory of the origin of the gods, euhemerism, that is virtually unrelated to the first part of the prologue, and displays a very hazy knowledge of the story of Troy itself. In his geographical introduction the author gives the usual three-fold division of the world that is found frequently in medieval treatises and derives ultimately from classical sources.68 Several medieval chronicles have such a geographical intro-


68 *Snorra Edda*, 3/8–19. See Pliny, *Naturalis historia* III, 1 (3 ff.); Isidore of
duction. Other Icelandic and Norwegian writings reproduce similar standard information, though it is difficult to point to any one as the source of the author of the prologue’s knowledge. It is probable that he had direct access to some medieval Latin sources. Paradise was traditionally in the east, but for the description of the east as a place of wealth and luxury and wisdom, compare Otto von Freising’s Chronica (written c.1145), Prologus libri primi. The description in the prologue to Snorra Edda is reproduced in the third Grammatical Treatise: ‘i sjálfu Asia landi þar sem mest var fegrð (v.l. frægð) ok ríkdómr ok fróðleik veraldiranar.’

Although the author thus reproduces information derived from learned Latin sources, he appears in some respects oddly ignorant. He describes three zones of the world, the (northern) temperate zone, the arctic, and the equatorial; but seems to be ignorant of the southern hemisphere, though this is clearly described for instance in Isidore, De natura rerum 10 and in Konungs skagssjá. In Gylfaginning (Snorra Edda 15/20 ff.) a flat earth is described (kringlöttr, ‘disc-shaped’). This might simply be because there Snorri is describing the world-picture of the ignorant heathen (the words are Hár’s), but the beginning of Ynglinga saga too, though the geography there is slightly more sophisticated than in the prologue to Snorra Edda, seems with the words kringla heimsins to refer to a flat earth. (The phrase is used in Old Norse as an equivalent of orbis terrarum, though like English orb, kringla may have come to mean

Seville, Etymologie, XIV, 2 (Patrologia Latina, 82, 495–6) and De natura rerum, XLVIII. 2 (Patrologia Latina, 83, 1016–17); Guillaume de Conches, De philosophia mundi, IV, 1–4 (Patrologia Latina, 172, 85–7); Honorius Augustodunensis, De imagine mundi, I, 1–9 (Patrologia Latina, 172, 121–3).


Ed. cit., p. 8/22 f. Cf. Genesis 2. 8; Elucidarius, ed. cit. p. 63; Alfræði, I, 6; Veraldar saga, p. 5.

Den tredje og fjerde grammatiske afhandling i Snorres Edda, ed. B. M. Ølsen (København, 1884), p. 60.

Patrologia Latina, 83, 978; Konungs skuggsjá, loc. cit.

Heimskringla, I, 9.
‘sphere’ as ideas about astronomy changed.) But it was well enough known in medieval Iceland that the earth is spherical; see *Elucidarius*, ‘hans [i.e. manns] var bollött í gliking heimballar’; the second astronomical treatise, ‘jarðar yfirbragð er bollött’; AM 685 d 4to, ‘svá segir Imago mundi at heimrinn sé vaxinn sem egg.’; *Konungs skuggsjá*, ‘bollótr er jarðar hringr’. Whether the prologue to *Snorra Edda*, *Gylfaginning*, and *Inglinga saga* can all be describing a flat earth so as to indicate the limited horizons of pre-Christian Scandinavia is perhaps doubtful.

Enea as a name for Europe is unexplained, and is perhaps derived from some misunderstanding. It may relate to the various traditions that different parts of Europe were settled by survivors of Troy (see below), of whom the best-known was Æneas.

The Icelandic accounts of the origin of the Æsir (and other gods) in the south-east, on the boundaries of Europe and Asia, may have been inspired partly by the traditional idea, originating in classical times, that the Germanic nations (especially the Goths) were originally located in Scythia (usually taken to be an undefined area north of the Black Sea) or Thrace. In Icelandic writings, ‘Svífljóðhin mikla’ is usually used as the equivalent

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76 Ed. cit., p. 61.
77 *Alfræði*, II, 104 ff.
78 *Alfræði*, III, 75. The manuscript was written in the fifteenth century, but the material in it was probably known earlier. See Honorius Augustodunensis, *De imagine mundi*, I, 1 (*Patrologia Latina*, 172, 121).
79 Ed. cit., p. 11.
81 See, for example, Isidore, *Historia de regibus Gothorum*, 66 (*Patrologia Latina*, 83, 1075); cf. Pliny, *Naturalis historia*, IV, 11 and 12 (40–41 and 80–81); Jordanes, *De origine actibusque Getarum* 4–5 (ed. cit, note 4 above, pp. 60–66). See the excellent account in J. A. Leake, *The Geats of Beowulf* (Madison, Milwaukee, and London, 1967), chs. 1 and 2, where it is shown to be likely that this localisation of the Goths results primarily from the application of the name Getar to them, and the consequent confusion of the Goths with the Thracian tribe of that name. Jordanes, who seems to have known traditions of the origin of the Goths in Scandinavia, has them migrating in the opposite direction from the Icelandic sources, i.e. from Scandinavia to Asia. On the Icelandic migration
of Scythia. Thus in Rómverja sögur ‘per Scythia populos’ (Lucan, De bello civili I 367) is translated um Svífljó› hina miklu.82 AM 764 4to has the equivalents Scitia, þat er nú Svífljó› hin mikla, and Cithia, þat köllum vér Svífljó› hina miklu.83 Hauksbók and AM 194 8vo mention two parts of Svífljó› hin mikla, one in Europe and one in Asia, both distinct from Svífljó› in Scandinavia.84 Isidore already mentions these two parts of Scythia, the main part in Asia, and Scythia inferior in Europe, north of the Black Sea.85 In Icelandic usage the definition in mikla is obviously used primarily to distinguish that Svífljó› from the one in Scandinavia (in AM 194 8vo called Svífljó› in minni).86 and it is easy to see how it might be assumed that the one was settled from the other. This seems to have been explicitly stated in Skjoldunga saga, where the original home of the Æsir had a more elaborate name: ‘Svífljó› hin stóra eða hin kalda.’87

The Icelandic use of Svífljó› to mean Scythia is probably merely a reflection of the tendency of medieval Latin writers to use the word Scythia to mean, or at any rate include, Sweden. Richard of S. Victor writes that the Normans under Rollo, though originally Danish, attacked Germany and Gallia across the sea from Scythia inferior, which here perhaps means (some part of?) Scandinavia.88 Theodoricus, quoting this, is uncertain what is meant by Scythia inferior, but says that ‘illam procul dubio volens intelligi superiorem, quam nos Suethiam appellamus’.89
Grammaticus appears on one occasion conversely to use Svetia to mean Scythia and Adam of Bremen seems to use Scythia to include the whole of Scandinavia as well as other parts of northern Europe. Other etymological associations that reinforced the connection of Scandinavia with south-east Europe were those of the Dani with the Daci (and Danai) and of the Gautar with the Getæ.

The similarity of the words Æsir (Ás-) and Asia undoubtedly encouraged Icelandic speculations on the migration from the south-east, and perhaps led to the particular Icelandic version where the leaders of the migration were (euhemerised) gods. In *Skjoldunga saga* there also seems to have been some association of the gods with the Goths: ‘En þa váru þessi Índ er Asiæn bygðu kölluð Goðlǫnd, en fólkið Goðḥjǫð.’ The name Manheimar in * Háleygjatal* implies a Goðheimar, and Snorri in *Ynglinga saga* introduces both names: ‘Pessa Svíþjóð kölluð þeir Mannheimina, en ina miklu Svíþjóð köllaðu þeir Goðheima.’ This seems to be an attempt to combine the Goðlǫnd of *Skjoldunga saga* with the account in * Háleygjatal*. Snorri adds the further identification of Tanakkvísl (the Don) with a presumably invented Vanakkvísl, and an associated Vanaland or Vanaheimr where the Vanir lived.

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91 See Leake, op. cit., pp. 71 ff. and 98 ff. Paul the Deacon, in his story about Óðinn and Frigg (*Historia Langobardorum*, I, 9, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum [Hannoverae, 1878], p. 53), makes the following remark, which might have suggested to a casual reader that the Æsir originated in Greece: ‘Wotan . . . ipse est qui apud Romanos Mercurius dicitur . . . qui non circa haec tempora, sed longe anterius, nec in Germania, sed in Graecia fuisset perhibetur.’ (The qui probably relates in fact to Mercurius rather than Wotan.)

92 *Upphaf allra frásagna, Danakonununga sögur*, p. 39.

93 *Heimskringla*, I, 21–2.

94 *Heimskringla*, I, 10. The name Tanakkvísl otherwise seems only to be mentioned in GKS 1812 4to (*Alfæði*, III, 72), though Tanais (the Don) is often mentioned (*Alfæði*, I, 44, 49, *Hauksbók*, p. 150; see Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XIV, 4, *Patrologia Latina*, 82, 504).
It is in fact the Vanir who first appear in Icelandic sources in connection with the idea of migration from south-east Europe. The first hint of the idea is found in Ari’s genealogy in *Íslendingabók*, which begins ‘Yngvi Tyrkjákonungr, Njörðr Svíakonungr’. Ari may be assuming a Thracian origin for the Germanic nations, in accordance with the classical writings quoted above, and perhaps described the inhabitants as Tyrkir because of the similarity in sound between ‘Tyrkir’ and ‘Trakia; but of course there were Turks near Thrace in his time. But he may also have chosen the Turks because in pseudo-Fredégar both Franks and Turks are said to have been descended from survivors of Troy, and the Turks to have settled near the Danube in the Thracian area; the Turks may also have been associated with the Teucri.  

The account of the geography of the world in *Hauksbók* known as *Heimsþýsing*, which may have been compiled in the twelfth century, in a passage which otherwise contains standard information similar to that in Isidore’s *Etymologiae*, specifically locates the Turks in Thrace, and claims that from there Sweden was settled. In the compilation of genealogies from which AM 1 e β II fol. is derived, Óðinn was said to be a king of the Turks. In *Skjöldunga saga* the Æsir were said to have come from Scythia, perhaps because of the similarity of the name Æsir with Asia, though in the fragment *Upphaf allra frásagna* there is a compromise by which the settlers of the north are described as ‘Tyrkir ok Asiamenn’. In *Ynglinga saga* the Æsir are said to have come from Asia ‘fyrir austan Tanakvísl’, but they still have connections with Tyrkland.

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96 *Hauksbók*, p. 155; *Etymologiae*, XIV, 4, 6 (*Patrologia Latina*, 82, 505).  

97 Cf. Alfreðr, III, 58.  

98 *Arrgrímis Jóns Opera*, I, 333; *Dánakonunga sögur*, p. 39. The clearest statement of the etymological connection of the Æsir with Asia is in AM 162 m fol. (*Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* (Hafniae, 1848–87), II, 636). If this fragment is connected with Sæmundr fróði and is derived from the same source as some of the material in *Skjöldunga saga*, it may be an indication that the theory of the origin of the Æsir in Asia originated with Sæmundr, who in his stay in France could have learned of the Frankish origin legend. Cf. Stefán Karlsson, op. cit. (note 49 above).  

99 *Heimskringla*, I, 11, 14, 27. There are echoes of the migration legend in
Since the Turks and Trojans are often connected in medieval writings, the connection with Troy may have been implicit already in Ari. But it is only in Snorra Edda (and the genealogies that use material derived from the prologue to Snorra Edda) that Troy and the Trojans are actually mentioned (and although in the prologue the Æsir come from Troy, i.e. Asia minor, Thrace is still kept in the picture as the realm of Þór, pp. 3–4). The descent of the Æsir from Priam of Troy in the prologue may simply be the result of the author connecting the statements in Ari and the genealogy from which the lists in AM 1 e β II fol. are derived that the Norse gods were descended from Turks, with the use in Trójumanna saga of Tyrkir as a name for the Trojans. But it is likely that in introducing Troy as the place of origin of the ancestors of the Scandinavian dynasties he was also influenced by one or more of the many European traditions of the origin of various nations from survivors of the Trojan war.

The model for all such legends of national origins was probably Vergil’s account (and those derived from Vergil) of the Trojan settlements in Italy under Æneas and Antenor. But other classical writers suggest that survivors of the fall of Troy were later found dispersed in various areas; Solinus, Collectanea rerum memorabilium II 51 and Dio Cassius LI 27 speak of Dardani in Illyria/Dalmatia and Moesia, i.e. the Thracian area (from which in the Middle Ages the Getæ/Goths were supposed to have originated, see above). Such statements gave an opportunity and an excuse for historians of all nations to claim descent from the Trojans. In later times there was a persistent tradition that Britain was founded by Britus or Brutus, grandson of Æneas. (This Britus however seems to have been a rather disreputable lone fugitive, not accompanied by a large following of Trojans.) According to the Book of Hyde, Alfred the Great


Besides pseudo-Fredegar, Aimoin, Historia Francorum, I, 2 (see note 112 below); Richard of S. Victor, Excerptio, 1, X 1, Patrologia Latina, 177, 275 f.; Vincent of Beauvais, Speculum Historiale, II, 66.

101 Occasionally in Trójumanna saga 1963, never in Trójumanna saga: The Dares Phrygius version, 1981 (in both the usual term is Trójumenn). On the date of Trójumanna saga see below.

102 Nennius, Historia Brittonum, pp. 154–5; Geoffrey of Monmouth, Historia regum Britanniae, I, 3–16 (pp. 224–49).
was of Trojan descent, for there the genealogy of the West-Saxon kings is linked to British genealogy. Dudo of S. Quentin, writing about 1020, has the Danes originating from the Trojans, and connects the Dani with both Danai and Daci (again the Thracian area), but makes them descendants of Antenor. He is followed in part by William of Jumièges (c.1070). Widukind, also writing in the eleventh century, reports a tradition that the Saxons originated from the scattered remnants of Alexander the Great’s army, while Otfrid had mentioned one that the Franks were related to Alexander himself.

One of the most widely reported of such legends is that of the Trojan origin of the Franks. The starting point for this may have been Ammianus Marcellinus, who speaks of traditions that Gaul was settled by scattered Trojans. The earliest accounts of the tradition in the Middle Ages are those in the pseudo-Fredegard chronicle of the seventh century, II 4–6 and III 2. There are a number of striking parallels between these accounts and Icelandic sources. They mention a Memnon or Menon as a supporter of Priam, and tell of the hostile encounters of the infant Frankish nation with the Romans under Pompey, and of a sister-nation also originating from Troy called Torci or Torqui who settled in the Thracian area. According to the second account, the Franks on their arrival in

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104 De gestis Normanniae ducum, I, Patrologia Latina, 141, 621.
107 Res Gestæ, XV, 9.5: ‘Aiunt quidam paucos post excidium Troiae fugitantes Graecos ubique dispersos loca haec (Gaul) occupasse tunc vacua.’
108 Ed. B. Krusch, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum, II (Hannoverae, 1888), pp. 45–6 and 93. There are good general accounts of Frankish tradition in K. L. Roth, ‘Die Trojasage der Franken,’ Germania, I, ed. F. Pfeiffer (Stuttgart, 1856), pp. 34–52; and M. Klippel, Die Darstellung der Fränkischen Trojanersage in Geschichtsschreibung und Dichtung vom Mittelalter bis zur Renaissance in Frankreich (Marburg, 1936).
109 Cf. Snorra Edda 4 (Munon/Mennon); Heimskringla, I, 14 (Romans drive Æsir north); Snorra Edda, Codex Wormianus, p. 6 (Pompey as leader of the Romans); AM 1 e β II fol., 85v, 86v (= Alfræði, III, 58; Óðinn king of the Turks, flees from Romans); Ari’s genealogy in Íslendingabók (Yngvi king of the Turks); Heimslýsing, Haukshók, p. 155 (Turks in Thrace). Cf. the passages from Solinus and Dio Cassius referred to above.
Europe built a new Troy near the Rhine. According to Liber Historiae Francorum fugitives from Troy under Priam and Antenor settled in the Scythian area north of the Black Sea before migrating further into Europe. Many of these details reappear in later writers, such as Aimoin (d. 1008), Historia Francorum I 1 and 2.

A rather different story appears in Aethicus Hister and the ‘Origo Francorum’ that is found as a preface to the Lex Salica and is briefly referred to in some manuscripts of pseudo-Fredegar in an interpolation that is attributed to ‘Dares Phrygius’. Here Francus and Vassus, descended from the royal line of Troy, fight Romulus, are overcome, and flee to Germany to found the nation of the Franks.

References to the Trojan origin of the Franks are found widely throughout the Middle Ages (and later), e.g. in Paul the deacon, Historia Langobardorum VI 23 and Liber de episcopis Mettensibus; Otto von Freising, Chronica I 25–6, IV 32, VI 28; Honorius Augustodunensis, De imagine mundi 29; Godfrey of Viterbo, Pantheon; Vincent of Beauvais, Speculum Historiale II 66 (where their sister-nation the Turks also appear again).

It is not at all certain that the tradition of the Trojan origin of the Franks was known in medieval Iceland, at least in the detailed form in which it appears in pseudo-Fredegar. In spite of the parallels noted above in Icelandic sources, the story of the origin of the Æsir in Troy in the prologue to Snorra Edda is not really very similar to any of the Frankish accounts; some of the details in the prologue that seem similar are better explained as the result of the influence of Trójumanna saga and Breta sögur (see below; this applies to the name Munon/Mennon and the building of the new Troy). Others are perhaps the result of coincidence and do not really

110 Cf. Snorra Edda, 6–7; but the prologue’s account of the new Troy is likely to be influenced more by Breta sögur and Trójumanna saga, see below.
112 Patrologia Latina, 139, 637–9.
114 Historia Langobardorum, ed. cit. (note 91 above), p. 172; Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores in folio, II (Hannoverae, 1829), 264.
115 Ed. cit. (note 69 above), pp. 56–9, 224, 291.
116 Patrologia Latina, 172, 130.
117 Patrologia Latina, 198, 919–20 and 1028; Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores in folio, XXII (Hannoverae, 1872), 201 and 301.
point to pseudo-Fredegar as a specific source. Moreover, when the author of the prologue wished to include the Franks in his account, the genealogy by which he links them to the other Germanic and Scandinavian nations is not a Frankish one and is totally unrelated to Frankish sources: it is the Voluson genealogy, which is only found in Icelandic sources.

In fact only two of the European legends about Trojan ancestry seem to be mentioned in vernacular Norse writings, the Roman and the British. The former appears in _Veraldar saga_, in one version of _Rómverja sögur_, and in the version of the prologue to _Snorra Edda_ in Codex Wormianus. Both are found in _Breta sögur_ (which is a translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s _Historia_), and both are mentioned in _Trójumanna saga_ and in AM 764 4to (the story of Britus/Brutus is referred to at the end of the same fragment that also contains _Upphaf allra frásagna_, thought to derive from the beginning of _Skjöldunga saga_).

_Breta sögur_ and _Trójumanna saga_ appear side by side in manuscripts and there seem to be verbal echoes of both in the prologue to _Snorra Edda_. Óðinn’s establishment of the Æsir in Sweden is described as follows:

> Skipaði hann þar hǫfðingjum ok í þá líking sem verit hafði í Tróju, setti xii hǫfðumenn í staðinum at dørna landslög ok svá skipaði hann réttum õllum sem fyr hǫfðu verit í Tróju ok Tyrkir varu vanir.

At the end of _Trójumanna saga_ we find:

> Þau Helenus ok Antromaca tóku ríkit ok efldu flar mikla borg í eptirlíking Trojanam.

In _Breta sögur_ the foundation of London is described thus:

> Brito lét borg gera í líking eptir Tróju . . . hann lét þá borg kalla Tróju ena nýju.

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120 _Snorra Edda_, 6–7 (cf. also 20/4 ff.).

121 _Hauksbók_, p. 244 (Geoffrey of Monmouth, _Historia regum Britanniae_, I, 17, p. 252, where however there is nothing corresponding to the words í líking eptir Tróju). Cf. the pseudo-Fredegar chronicle, III, 2 (ed. cit., note 108 above, p. 93).

122 Ed. cit., p. 140; _Hauksbók_, p. 244 (Geoffrey of Monmouth, _Historia regum Britanniae_, I, 17, p. 252, where however there is nothing corresponding to the words í líking eptir Tróju).
The idea of a new Troy/Ásgarðr is implied also in Snorri’s phrases í Ásgarði inum forna, Ásgarð hinn forna ok þau ríki er þar liggja til, inn forna Ásgarðr.\(^{123}\) In the prologue Pórr/Tror is described thus:

\[\text{Svá var hann fagt álitum er hann kom með qðrum mönum sem þá er fílsbein er grafí f eik.}\]

In one version of \textit{Breta sögur} Askanius is described thus:

\[\text{Svá var til jafnað hans fegrð ok bjartleið hjá qðrum mönum sem hit hvítaða fílsbein væri skórit í surtar brand.}\]

It is rather surprising to find Pórr of all the gods described in such terms, but it is worth noting that the description in \textit{Breta sögur} also refers to a man; such hyperbolic descriptions usually relate to women, as in the account of Estrildis in the same saga:

\[\text{Svá var hon hrunljóð at því var til jafnað sem nýfallinn snær ðóða fílsbein eða gras þat er lilium heitir.}\]

\textit{Trójumanna saga} is based principally on Dares Phrygius, \textit{De Excidio Troje} and the Latin version of the \textit{Iliad} by the author known as Pindarus Thebanus, sometimes called Homerus Latinus.\(^{127}\) It is uncertain when the saga was compiled, but in manuscripts it is associated with \textit{Breta sögur}, and both may have been written about 1200 (Gunnlaugr Leifsson, d. c.1220, is said to be the author of \textit{Merlínússpá}, a verse translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s \textit{Prophecies of Merlin}, and it is likely that \textit{Breta sögur} was either already in existence or was written soon after). \textit{Veraldar saga} and \textit{Trójumanna saga} share some divergences from Dares Phrygius


\(^{124}\) \textit{Snorra Edda}, 4.


\(^{126}\) p. 142, cf. notes 8 and 9 (Geoffrey of Monmouth, \textit{Historia regum Britanniae}, II, 2, p. 254). Both these quotations are of the text of the saga as it appears in AM 573 4to. Cf. \textit{Fornsögur Suðrlanda}, ed. G. Cederschiöld (Lund, 1884), p. xxiii, where other comparable descriptions of both men and women in romances are quoted.

that could mean that Trójumanna saga was known to the author of Veraldar saga (fragments of which survive in manuscripts written about 1200). \textsuperscript{128} Trójumanna saga is also thought to have been known to the authors of Gunnaugs saga and Vápnfirðinga saga, and perhaps also to the author of Skjólunga saga, though in the case of the last it may have been the Latin original that was used. \textsuperscript{129} So there is no reason to think it impossible for chronological reasons, on the evidence at present available, that the prologue to Snorra Edda was both influenced by Trójumanna saga and written by Snorri Sturluson (d. 1241).

What is rather surprising about the account of the origin in Troy in the prologue, especially if the author used Trójumanna saga, is that it gives such a curious picture of the Trojan background, which lacks all details about the Trojan war and mentions none of the well-known Trojan or Greek heroes except Priam. Those names that do appear have no authority in any of the traditional accounts of the Trojan war. It is perhaps possible that the author thought Trójumanna saga was well enough known for him not to need to mention any of the standard details of the story, so that he could just introduce the figures he needed for his genealogy. But the result looks rather more like the consequence of ignorance or confusion than selection. There is not even any mention of the fall of Troy itself, or of the Greek invaders, and the migration to Scandinavia, which takes place many generations after the time of Priam, has very weak motivation (in the version of the prologue in Codex Wormianus, as in Ynglinga saga

\textsuperscript{128} See Veraldar saga, p. xlvii. It is thought that Veraldar saga was compiled soon after the middle of the twelfth century, and certainly before 1190. There are reasons, however, to doubt whether there is a literary connection between Trójumanna saga and Veraldar saga (Trójumanna saga 1981, p. LII).

\textsuperscript{129} See Íslenzk fornrit, III (Reykjavík, 1938), liii, and XI (Reykjavík, 1950), xvii and xxvi f.; Bjarni Guðnason, op. cit. (note 16 above), p. 261. Maureen Thomas, in unpublished work on Breta sögur, has found indications that Breta sögur was known to the translator of Tristrams saga (supposed to have been compiled in 1226). It seems also to have been known to the author of Egils saga, see Bjarni Einarsson, op. cit. (note 27 above), pp. 234–5. On the connection of Trójumanna saga with Vápnfirðinga saga, see Jon Helgason, ‘Paris i Troja, Þorstein på Borg och Brodd-Helgi på Hof,’ Nordiska Studier i Filologi och Lingvistik, Festskrift tillägnad Gösta Holm (Lund, 1976), pp. 192–4. The correspondences between Snorra Edda and Trójumanna saga seem generally to relate to what seems to be the later version of the saga. But even though the archetype of the two versions of the saga is likely to have been written not much before 1250 (Trójumanna saga 1981, p. LVI), many scholars still believe that the translation was originally made about 1200.
and the compilation of genealogies from which AM I e β II fol. is derived, it is the hostility of the Romans that causes the Æsir to travel north—a detail in which these sources seem to show affinity with the pseudo-Fredegar account of the origin of the Franks). The name Tyrkir is frequently used in Trójumanna saga for the Trojans and Tyrkland is occasionally used for their country (cf. note 101 above), but the only Trojan name that has any classical basis in the whole of the account in the prologue is that of Priam. The other names seem to have been picked more or less at random and the accounts given of the persons they are attached to have no connection with genuine tradition at all. There is no known source for any part of the Munon/Mennon story.

The one really specific piece of information about Troy given in the prologue, that there were twelve kingdoms and twelve languages, also has no authority. The number recurs in the account of the new Troy later in the prologue, and in Gylfaginning there are said to be twelve Æsir, though to make the following list tally it is necessary to count Óðinn as separate and leave out Loki (or include these two and leave out Njörðr and Freyr, who were not Æsir but Vanir; though Njörðr is counted among the Æsir when he is introduced). In Skáldskaparmál the list of twelve Æsir similarly excludes Óðinn (and Baldr and Þór, though since Nanna is among the Ásynjur this cannot be because the episode takes place after Baldr’s death), but has in addition Hœnir and includes Loki. Öðinn is given twelve names in Gylfaginning. In Ynglinga saga there are said to be twelve hofgo∂ar (v.l. hœf∂jar) among the Æsir, in Snorri’s Óláfs saga helga twelve advisers to the king at Uppsala, and there are twelve spekingar in Hei∂reks saga. The number twelve in these places was presumably used to recall the New Testament.

130 Snorra Edda, 4/2–4. All manuscripts read hœfu∂ungur at 4/4, and it is not at all certain that this is an error for hœf∂ingjar. Pessir hœf∂ingjar in the next sentence could well refer back to the twelve kings implied by 4/2, and the author of the prologue elsewhere shows great interest in questions of language and language differences (3/4, 7/15–19; note also all the alternative names in the prologue, where the author gives supposedly native and foreign forms side by side). The author may well wish us to believe that the twelve kings who ruled over many nations (mœrg fi∂∂∂ond) all spoke different languages.


133 Snorra Edda, 10/13 ff.

Trójumanna saga was also used by the compiler of the interpolations in the version of the prologue to Snorra Edda in Codex Wormianus. Some of the information about classical mythology there uses an account similar to that in the mythological preface to the saga now only preserved in Hauksbók; details about Cerberus and the impregnability of Troy by ordinary means (i.e. except by treachery) correspond to later parts of the saga.135

Troy appears in four other places in Snorra Edda. In two places in Gylfaginning there is reference to old Ásgard, expressly identified in the second case in three of the four manuscripts with Troy.136 Even without this identification however, the borg í midjum heimi and Ásgard hinn forna ok þau ríki er þar liggja til clearly refer to the prologue.137 Then at the end of Gylfaginning, the myths that have been related are said to be allegories of events at Troy, and Pórr is now identified with Hector and Loki with Ulixes. These two names could have been taken from Veraldar saga or Trójumanna saga, and as in the prologue there is no great knowledge of the Troy story shown, except for the information that Ulixes was especially hated by the Trojans. This passage is not in the Uppsala manuscript. Finally, in the so-called epilogue in Skáldskaparmál there is a longer passage (also lacking in the Uppsala manuscript), again stating that Norse myths are allegories of events in the Troy story.138 Here more knowledge of the story is shown: the killing of Hector by Achilles, of Achilles by Alexander, and of Priam by Pyrrhus, and the burning of Troy are all mentioned. This information could all have come from Trójumanna saga.139 There are also some remarkable misunderstandings and lack of correspondence: no source is known for Roddrus, and the words ráku í braut Elenum conflict both with Trójumanna saga and Veraldar saga, where Helenus is the supporter of Hector’s sons in their recovery of Troy.140 Nevertheless, Trójumanna saga was certainly known to the author


136 Snorra Edda, 10 and 16–17. Cf. inn forna Ásgard in Ynglinga saga (Heimskringla, I, 22).

137 Snorra Edda, 3/20–4/3.

138 Snorra Edda, 86/20–88/3.

139 pp. 231, 183, 209, 229, 201. Codex Wormianus has correctly that Alexander killed Achilles; Codex Regius and the Utrecht manuscript make Elenus also responsible.

140 Snorra Edda, 87/17 and 88/3; Trójumanna saga, 236–7; Veraldar saga, p. 46.
of this passage, as is shown by the name Volucretym, found otherwise only in the Hauksbók text of the saga, where it is an error for Polypoetes. This part of Hauksbók is in Haukr’s own hand and was probably written between 1302 and 1310. The oldest manuscript of Snorra Edda that contains the account of Volucrentym is the Codex Regius, written in the first half of the fourteenth century. Many scholars hold that the ‘epilogue’ is an addition to Snorri’s text of Skáldskaparmál, but it could have been written by him, and the spelling Volucretym could have been known to him from an earlier manuscript of Trójumanna saga that no longer survives. The mention of fyrir stalla Pórs as the place where Priam was killed is also obviously derived from the saga.

All the references to the Troy story in Snorra Edda are thus a strange mixture of genuine tradition and fantasy or ignorance. The author had no excuse for ignorance of the Troy story. Even if he did not know Latin, and even if Trójumanna saga was not available, there was a perfectly good summary of the story in Veraldar saga.

There are some unusual features about the Icelandic migration legend. Unlike the comparable European stories, it uses euhemerised gods as leaders of the migration, and this is reminiscent of Irish tradition. They travel, according to the prologue to Snorra Edda, because with their gift of prophecy they foresee that their future lies in the North. They are said to have brought a new language with them. This makes the legend seem rather like a dim memory of some real migration in pre-historic times, but the obvious influence of written learned continental traditions, though undigested, makes it unlikely that it is any more than a rather unusual imitation of them.

The first and last parts of the prologue to Snorra Edda, which discuss the origin of heathen religion and tell of the settlement of northern Europe, are, in the context of medieval philosophy and historiography, admirable pieces of writing. But the middle part, with its muddled Troy story and obviously artificial genealogy, is, like the ‘epilogue’ in Skáldskaparmál, such a confusion of fact and fantasy that scholars have been reluctant to believe it is actually Snorri’s work. It has been thought unlikely that so sophisticated a writer would be guilty of such naive nonsense, especially when he had

141 Snorra Edda, 87/8, Trójumanna saga, 179. The other manuscripts of the saga have here Volocroethen and Voluentem. At Trójumanna saga, 61 the forms Poliberius and Polidares appear for the same person.
142 Snorra Edda, 87/32, Trójumanna saga, 209 and 229.
access to reliable sources of information. In fact the inept introduction of Troy into an account of Norse mythology has probably been the chief reason why the prologue has so often been assumed to be mainly the work of a later redactor of Snorri’s work, while the more restrained Ynglinga saga, which virtually excludes all non-Norse matter, has been thought much more typical of the ‘real’ Snorri. It might, however, be maintained that the middle part of the prologue to Snorra Edda is no more naive and muddled than the pseudo-Fredgar chronicle or Nennius’s Historia Brittonum or Dudo of S. Quentin. Even the strangely unheroic action of Tror/Pórr in killing his foster-father is in fact reminiscent of the career of Britus/Brutus, founder of Britain, who killed his own father and had to flee.  

Nor does it seem possible to assume that the story is intended to be a joke, or a deliberate falsification of tradition (there seems no good motive), though the introduction of the plausible-sounding alternatives Munon/Mennon (along with Tror/Pórr, Óðinn/Voden) looks suspiciously ingenious; or that the author is deliberately trying to portray heathen tradition as childish and unworthy of respect. Whether or not the prologue is Snorri’s work, it is a less mature piece of writing than Ynglinga saga.

It is not necessary to assume a close relationship between the various versions in Old Icelandic of the tradition of the origin in the south-east and either the Frankish or any other particular continental version of the idea. The first suggestions for the idea of a migration to Scandinavia from the Black sea area could have come from the scattered references in classical and later authors to the origins of the Germanic nations, particularly the Goths, there; the localisation in Troy could have been a rather naive imitation of any of the continental accounts of Trojan origin, aided by the association of Turks, who happen to have been chosen by Ari as the nation from which the Scandinavian gods originated, with Trojans in Trójumanna saga and elsewhere. It is thus that Icelandic genealogies go back not only to Norse gods but also to the Trojans, as well as tracing the line of the Trojan kings back through Greek gods to Noah and Adam. They have as noble an ancestry as anyone in Europe.

145 Snorra Edda, 4. See Nennius, Historia Brittonum, p. 155 and Geoffrey of Monmouth, Historia regum Britanniae, I, 3 (p. 224); Breta sögur, ed. cit. (note 119 above), p. 124. The prophecy by which Óðinn is directed to his new realms in the north (Snorra Edda, 5) might also be compared with the prophetic dream that directs Britus/Brutus to Britain (Historia regum Britanniae, I, 11, p. 239; Breta sögur, 132). The name Loricus (Snorra Edda, 4) is rather similar to Locrinus, the name of Brutus’s son in Geoffrey of Monmouth and Breta sögur; in one place the Hauksbók text actually has the form Loricus (Breta sögur, 144).
EDITIONS OF TEXTS REFERRED TO

(Quotations in Icelandic, whether from manuscripts or printed books, are given with normalised spelling)


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Gylfaginning: see Snorra Edda.

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Ynglinga saga: see Heimskringla, I.