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## A skald in royal service – the case Þórarinn loftunga. Part 2: Poetics and ideology of *Tøgdrápa*

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Þórarinn loftunga, an Icelandic poet, was famous for his service for Knútr in ríki, the King of England and Denmark. The skald played an important role in events he described in his poetry. It mainly refers to the taking over of Norway by Knútr in 1028 and efforts to establish Knútr's son Sveinn in Norway in the early 1030s as a follower and heir of the king Óláfr Haraldsson whose status as saint was just about to rise<sup>1</sup>.

Knútr, as other rulers of that time, was eager to use skaldic poetry as one of the main channels of royal propaganda. That's why his court in England gathered a substantial number of skalds who were delivering their compositions praising the king and legitimising both his status and achievements<sup>2</sup>. Þórarinn loftunga belonged to this group, being its important member.

The present article is the second part of the threefold study on Þórarinn's poetry with each part devoted to a different skald's composition. As I have already noted in the first part, the main aim of my study is to contextualise Þórarinn's poetry as a whole and determine if it can be treated as a sophisticated insight not only into the politics of Knútr in ríki (and his son Sveinn) but also the skald's own artistic input

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- 1 Timothy Bolton, *Cnut the Great* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 172–195; Jakub Morawiec, *Knut Wielki. Król Anglii, Danii i Norwegii (ok. 995–1035)* (Kraków: Avalon, 2013), 248–301.
  - 2 Matthew Townend, "Contextualising the Knútsdrápur. Skaldic Praise-Poetry at the Court of Cnut", *Anglo-Saxon England* 30 (2001): 145–179; Jakub Morawiec, *Między poezją a polityką. Rozgrywki polityczne w Skandynawii XI wieku w świetle poezji ówczesnych skaldów* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2016), 407–446.

that could have affected his place at the royal court<sup>3</sup>. The present study is focused on *Tøgdrápa* (Journey *drápa*), a poem Þórarinn devoted to Knútr's expedition to Norway in 1028.

Contrary to *Höfuðlausn*, it is possible to be more precise when it comes to the chronology of *Tøgdrápa*. Its content suggests the skald composed sometime between 1028 and 1030, between the taking control of Norway by Knútr and the death of jarl Hákon of Hlaðir, who was predicted to represent the king in Norway<sup>4</sup>.

The poem depicts the route Knútr and his fleet took on his way to Norway in 1028. The skald enlists spots that either marked crucial stages of the campaign (e.g. Limfjord, where the king's troops from Denmark and England met) or made it easier for an audience to estimate developments of the royal fleet (e.g. Stad). The poem features eight stanzas. Þórarinn used a *klofastef* in his *drápa*. Its second part is missing, thus assumptions that the poem is partially preserved are justified. Its beginning (*Knúts und sólar*) leaves no doubt that, similarly to *Höfuðlausn* – Þórarinn composed *Tøgdrápa* being fully aware of ideological expectations of the king and his court. Stanzas of *Tøgdrápa* are to be found in various narratives. Six out of eight preserved strophes are cited by Snorri in both redactions of his *Óláfs saga helga*. A sequence of the first four stanzas is to be found in the redaction A of *Fagrskinna*. Stanzas 7 and 8 are to be found only in the *Knýtlinga saga* and *Snorra Edda* respectively<sup>5</sup>.

Snorri used the poem while describing Knútr's expedition to Norway in 1028<sup>6</sup>. Providing a whole sequence of six stanzas, in fact, he makes Þórarinn a dominant figure of the chapter. It is the skald, not the saga author, who “speaks” through his poetry and provides a proper account of the encounter of two monarchs. In this very case, Snorri did not feel obliged to either develop or explain the content of the stanzas and one can find it as a consequence of a good opinion he had on Þórarinn as a poet. He concludes the chapter in question with an intriguing comment. Snorri states that, for him who composed the stanzas, an observance of these events was far more important than retelling them (*var sjón sögu ríkri*), as Þórarinn was very proud of being in the company of King Knútr when he came to Norway<sup>7</sup>. This unique statement can be interpreted in different ways. On one hand it could refer to Snorri's general acknowledgment of the skalds as eyewitnesses of various events, articulated in the Prologue of *Heimskringla*.

3 Jakub Morawiec, “A skald in royal service – the case Þórarinn loftunga. Part 1: Ideological contexts of *Höfuðlausn*”, *Studia Maritima* 33 (2020): 30.

4 *Scandinavian Poetry of the Middle Ages, Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1. From Mythical Times to c. 1035*, vol. 2, ed. Diana Whaley (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 851 (further cited as SPMA 1).

5 Stanza 8 is cited by all main redactions of *Snorra Edda*. Only redaction A attributes it to Þórarinn. See SPMA 1, 862.

6 *Heimskringla II*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, Íslenzk fornrit 26–28 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornrita-félag, 2002), 307–310 (further cited as Hsk II).

7 Hsk II, 310.

On the other, it could, rather indirectly, refer to Snorri's focus on Knútr's generosity as the key factor in a process of gathering followers, needed to overcome King Ólafr the Saint effectively. No matter which alternative one prefers, it is possible to assume that Snorri knew the remaining preserved stanzas of *Tøgdrápa*. Obviously, it is confirmed by the featuring of strophe 8 in *Snorra Edda* where it is used to provide an example of a kenning of a generous man<sup>8</sup>. However, the above-mentioned statement of Snorri clearly suggests that he had also known stanza 7, the very same used by the author of the *Knýtlinga saga*. Þórarinn underlines the fact of meeting the outstanding man (*mannbaldr*) – Knútr and fifty marks (*fimm tega marka*) he was given for his poem<sup>9</sup>. Snorri refers to the very same amount of silver the poet was said to have been given by the king, although according to *Heimskringla* it was a reward for *Hofuðlausn*<sup>10</sup>. Besides, it seems very probable that Þórarinn's remark on meeting *mannbaldr* was enough for Snorri to comment on the poet's pride.

The author of *Fagrskinna* decided to cite a sequence of four strophes of *Tøgdrápa* (stanzas 2–5). Similarly to Snorri, he used them to corroborate his own account on Knútr's expedition to Norway in 1028<sup>11</sup>. The author of the *Knýtlinga saga*, on the other hand, cited stanza 7 of the poem, just to fulfil his account on Þórarinn and his encounters with King Knútr<sup>12</sup>.

A distinguished feature of *Tøgdrápa* is its metre – *tøglag* (journey metre). It differs from *dróttkvætt* by having four syllables (instead of six) in each line. Presumably, referring to the title of the poem, the metre was to be used in accounts on war expeditions, and optionally other travels of the king. *Tøglag* seems to be especially bound to Knútr's court. Roberta Frank has very recently referred to the meaning of the prefix *-tøg*. She argues convincingly that, on a more general level, it may mean “campaign, journey”, however its literal meaning: “rope, tie, knot” is particularly intriguing. It seems to refer not only to certain elements of the metre, e.g. *klofastefur* (knotted refrains) but is a synonym of ON *knútr*, alluding directly to the name of the royal patron supervising the origins of the metre<sup>13</sup>.

Perhaps it was a result of numerous journeys undertaken by this monarch (Denmark, Norway, Rome, Saxony) that each time were presented as important and prestigious

8 Snorri Sturluson, *Edda, Skáldskaparmál 1–2*, ed. Anthony Faulkes (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1998), 63.

9 SPMA 1, 861.

10 Hsk II, 310.

11 *Fagrskinna*, ed. Bjarni Einarsson, Íslenzk fornrit 29 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1984), 191–193.

12 *Danakonunga sögur*, ed. Bjarni Guðnason, Íslenzk fornrit 35 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1982), 125.

13 Roberta Frank, “A taste for knottiness. Skaldic art at Cnut's court”, *Anglo-Saxon England* 47 (2018): 210.

means of Knútr's reign<sup>14</sup>. The same metre was used by Sigvatr Þórðarson in his *Knútsdrápa*<sup>15</sup>. Matthew Townend argues that the latter poet invented the metre and used it for the first time, but it was Þórarinn's *drápa* that made it well known<sup>16</sup>.

The aim of this part is to verify to what extent both Þórarinn and Sigvatr were able to meet requirements of *tøglag* in their poems. Consequently, it should throw some new light on the controversy which of both skalds should be treated as the originator of the metre. To achieve it, it will be necessary to confront compositional practice of both skalds with a theoretical framework of the metre, defined particularly by Snorri in his Edda. The following investigation will include respective statistics referring to basic components of the *tøglag*; it is a number of syllables in line, has proper rhyming and alliteration<sup>17</sup>. The other aim of this investigation is to estimate the role Þórarinn played in ideological endeavours that had been developed at the court of Knútr at the time of the takeover of Norway in 1028<sup>18</sup>.

Snorri Sturluson used the metre in stanzas 68–70 of his *Háttatal*. Each of them is accompanied by a prose commentary explaining specifics of *tøglag*. The first of them that I propose to label as the Type 1 features:

- four syllables and full rhymes in even lines,
- four regular syllables and the fifth an enclitic syllable in odd lines<sup>19</sup> and half-rhymes in odd lines,
- alliteration as in *dróttkvætt*<sup>20</sup>.

The stanza 69, the Type 2, is a slight variant of the previous one. It features all components of the Type 1 excerpt for the lack of rhyme in odd lines<sup>21</sup>.

14 See Townend, "Contextualising the Knútsdrápur", 161–163.

15 Morawiec, *Między poezją a polityką*, 234.

16 SPMA 1, 852.

17 A statistical analysis in skaldic studies is not a completely new thing. One can recall investigations on an intensity of mythological references in 11<sup>th</sup> century poetry, very recently summarised by Chris Abram and Mikael Males. See Chris Abram, "Einarr Skúlason, Snorri Sturluson, and the Post-Pagan Mythological Kenning", in: *Eddic, Skaldic and Beyond. Poetic Variety in Medieval Iceland and Norway*, ed. Martin Chase (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 44–61; Mikael Males, *The Poetic Genesis of Old Icelandic Literature* (Berlin-Boston: deGruyter, 2020), 39–43.

18 See Charles Insley, "Why 1016 Matters; or, The Politics of Memory and Identity in Cnut's Kingdom", in: *Conquests in Eleventh-Century England. 1016, 1066*, ed. Laura Ashe, Emily Joan Ward (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2020), 16–17. However, it is difficult to agree with the author's statement that *tøglag* was a simpler metre than *dróttkvætt*. I argue below that its structure, in many aspects similar to the latter, appeared to be challenging enough for both Sigvatr and Þórarinn to find *tøglag* pretty demanding.

19 Snorri Sturluson explains that it refers to very short syllables like "ek" or "eða".

20 Snorri Sturluson, *Edda*, 29.

21 Snorri Sturluson, *Edda*, 30. Margaret Clunies Ross claims that Snorri gives two variants of the metre in *Háttatal*. In my opinion, however, inclusion of the stanza 69 in the poem, accompanied by a separate short commentary on the lack of rhymes in odd lines as its characteristic feature, points at Snorri's

Finally, stanza 70 represents Type 3, that, according to Snorri, should feature:

- four syllables and full rhymes in even lines,
- four syllables and half-rhymes in odd lines,
- alliteration as in *dróttkvætt*<sup>22</sup>.

Additionally, Snorri states, that it is allowed to provide short and quick syllables in any line of *tøglag* stanza. He also refers to *klofastefur*, another feature of the metre, whose number in the poem relies on the invention of a poet. According to Snorri, each *stef* must have its opening and conclusion<sup>23</sup>. The type 3 can be considered as the most perfect incarnation of *tøglag*, especially when being used to embroil in a chain of refrain sections. That's why Snorri called this variant *hagmælt* – skillfully spoken<sup>24</sup>.

*Tøglag* was included among the metres both Hallr Þórarinsson and Rognvaldr Kali Kolsson used in their *Háttalykill*. Two stanzas of the poem (25–26) were composed in this very metre<sup>25</sup>. Similarly to the whole composition, there is no prose commentary on the metre and its usage excerpt for a heading *tødrápu háttr* that precedes both stanzas<sup>26</sup>.

Unfortunately, what is quite characteristic for the preservation of *Háttalykill*, neither of the four half-stanzas (*helmingar*) are complete and some of their lines are reconstructed by modern editors<sup>27</sup>. The first line of the *helmingr* 25/1 cannot be reconstructed. However, the remaining three lines feature four syllables each with full rhymes in even lines and a half-rhyme in the third line. Thus, it is very likely that *helmingr* 25/1 corresponds with Snorri's Type 3. Only two lines (2,3) of the *helmingr* 25/2 could be reconstructed. Considering a full rhyme in the even line and the half rhyme in the odd line as well as five syllables in the latter, the *helmingr* corresponds with Snorri's Type 1<sup>28</sup>. Both *helmingar* of stanza 26 are even more badly preserved. The *helmingr* 26/1 has complete even lines and gaps in both odd lines. Considering the number of syllables and full rhymes in even lines, the *helmingr* can be hypothetically labelled as Snorri's Type 3. The *helmingr* 26/2 has only the first line complete that, intriguingly, features no rhyme. It could point at Snorri's Type 2, however the fragmentary state of the *helmingr* prevents any more precise labelling<sup>29</sup>.

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intention to distinguish it as separate variant of *tøglag*. See Margaret Clunies Ross, *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer 2005), 32.

22 Snorri Sturluson, *Edda*, 30.

23 Ibidem.

24 Ibidem. See also *Scandinavian Poetry of the Middle Ages, Poetry from Treaties on Poetics*, vol. 2, ed. Kari Ellen Gade, Edith Marold (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 1182 (further cited as SPMA III).

25 SPMA III, 1033–1034.

26 See SPMA III, 1005.

27 See Gade's commentary to both stanzas, SPMA III, 1033–1034.

28 Ibidem, 1033.

29 SPMA III, 1034.

Despite some obvious limitations, caused by the preservation of the poem, both stanzas of *Háttalykill* seem to point to the existence of formal variants of *tøglag* concerning both rhymes and number of syllables. Concerning the postulated status of Hallr's and Rognvaldr's composition as a forerunner of Snorri's *Háttatal*<sup>30</sup>, it is reasonable to assume that all three poets referred to the same three types of *tøglag* stanza that were for the first time fully introduced and defined in *Snorra Edda*<sup>31</sup>.

The theoretical framework of the metre, provided by Hallr, jarl Rognvaldr, and especially by Snorri, allows one to assume that the invention of *tøglag*, and *Tøgdrápa* as its natural consequence, was a result of poetic concurrency. The main challenge for poets was to keep the same rules of rhymes and alliteration as in *dróttkvaett* but with a lesser number of syllables (4/5 instead of 6) in one line<sup>32</sup>. That is why an ideal stanza would consist of four lines each including four syllables; the first and third line features half rhymes, the second and fourth lines feature full rhymes. The possibility to add the fifth syllable, as both *Háttalykill* and *Háttatal* indicate, had been cemented with the scope of the metre during the time of skaldic practice. That itself suggests that the challenge was not so easy to match and postulated a shortage of lines in the *helmingr* made it difficult for skalds to match its strict requirements. It resulted with additional Types (1, 2) that made room not only for the additional syllable but also various treatments of rhymes. The composition of both Sigvatr and Þórarinn are traditionally defined as the earliest examples of the usage of *tøglag*. Moreover, scholars assume one of them, in fact, invented the metre. Margaret Clunies Ross and Mikael Males point at Þórarinn, whereas Matthew Townend seems to favour Sigvatr in that role<sup>33</sup>. A close, detailed look at both *Tøgdrápa* and *Knútsdrápa* seems necessary not only to shed some new light on the question of authorship of *tøglag* but, more importantly, Þórarinn's personal input into the development of the metre and its usage for skaldic milieu active at the court of Knútr inn ríki.

30 Ibidem, 1005.

31 There are other 12<sup>th</sup> century instances of *tøglag* compositions: Einarr Skúlason's *Haraldsdrápa II* Þórarinn stuttfeldr's *Stuttfeldardrápa*. Einarr's poem consists of eight Type 3 *helmingar*, sporadically defected by five-syllable lines. Þórarinn's *drápa* features more metrical irregularities. See *Scandinavian Poetry of the Middle Ages, Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1. From c. 1035 to c. 1300*, vol. 1–2, ed. Kari Ellen Gade (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 473–479, 544–548 (further cited as SPMA II).

32 Mikael Males has recently underlined that the alteration of the length of the line was the main parameter of conscious metrical innovation before the twelfth century. See Males, *The Poetic Genesis*, 24. See also Richard North, "Behold the Front Page. Cnut and the Scyldings in Beowulf", *in press*, 13, who notes, that Þórarinn was able to meet requirements of the metre partly by using compounds *lije veg-Jóta* (*helmingr* 6/1) that could have been inspired by Old English constructions like *suð-Dene*. On possible Old English influences see also SPMA I, 860.

33 Clunies Ross, *A History*, 32; SPMA I, 852; Males, *The Poetic Genesis*, 24.

### Metrical analysis of *Tøgdrápa*

Even though both older and the newest editions of both poems provide stanzaic division of both compositions, all calculations made below have a half-stanza (*helmingr*) as its base. Such a treatment of both *drápur* was dictated by two observations. First of all, counting by *helmingar* provides more reliable and visible numbers. Secondly, it provides a much clearer picture of an extent to which both poets used particular types of the metre, especially in the context of rules of *tøglag*, described in *Snorra Edda*. Lastly, both poems feature *helmingar* treated by modern editors as separate stanzas. It refers to stanza 8 of *Tøgdrápa* and stanzas 1, 2 and 11 of *Knútsdrápa* respectively.

*Tøgdrápa* consists of 15 *helmingar* in total, whereas *Knútsdrápa* lists 19 half-stanzas<sup>34</sup>. Both poems feature *helmingar* that, due to its metrical irregularities, has been excluded from the counting. It refers to *helmingr* 6/2 of *Tøgdrápa* and *helmingr* 8/2 of *Knútsdrápa*:

*Þá gaf sínum,  
segik þat, megi  
dals dökksali  
Danmörk svana*<sup>35</sup>.

*En, þeirs kómu,  
kilir, vestan til,  
of leið liðu  
Limafjarðar brim*<sup>36</sup>.

The irregularities of *helmingr* 6/2 of *Tøgdrápa* feature five syllables in the second line. It consists of an intercalary clause (*segik þat*) that can hardly be defined as an equivalent of the short syllable Snorri describes in *Háttatal*. Besides, three out of four lines (excerpt from the first line) have full rhymes.

The case of *helmingr* 8/2 of *Knútsdrápa* is different. Its irregularities refer to adjustment of the fifth syllable to both even lines. Its odd lines, however, have four syllables. Distribution of rhymes in the *helmingr* is also slightly irregular. Although both even lines have full rhymes and the third line has a half rhyme, the first line has no rhyme. That is why it is difficult to classify both stanzas as examples of any of the three Types. The basic information is summarised in Table 1:

<sup>34</sup> Obviously, the incomplete *klofastef* of *Tøgdrápa* points to an incomplete state of the poem. One has to consider also that some *helmingar*/full-stanzas of *Knútsdrápa* had been lost. See SPMA I, 851.

<sup>35</sup> SPMA I, 860.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem, 659.

**Table 1.** Type preference in Þórarinn loftunga's *Tøgdrápa* and Sigvatr Þórðarson's *Knútsdrápa*

Author/poem	Þórarinn loftunga, <i>Tøgdrápa</i>	Sigvatr Þórðarson, <i>Knútsdrápa</i>
Nr of <i>helmingar</i>	15	19
Type 1	0	2
Type 2	1	0
Type 3	13	16
Unclassified <i>helmingar</i>	1 (6/2)	1 (8/2)

### Type preference in both poems

Both Þórarinn's and Sigvatr's poems seem to confirm that the three Types of *tøglag* stanza distinguished by Snorri in his *Edda* were used already by the time of the supposed birth of the metre, namely in the 1020s. Both skalds seem to have been eager to stick to strict requirements of the metre, as the vast majority of *helmingar* in their poems belong to Type 3. In the case of Þórarinn loftunga, it is 93% (13 out of 14) of *Tøgdrápa*'s half-stanzas. 89% (16 out of 18) of *helmingar* in Sigvatr Þórðarson's *Knútsdrápa* belongs to the same Type. Both poets used other Types as well, although marginally. *Tøgdrápa* features one Type 2 *helmingr*, whereas *Knútsdrápa* consists of two Type 1 *helmingar*.

Both poets were able to compose the Type 3 *helmingar* that can be described as metrically perfect. Their odd and even lines consist of four syllables each, the odd lines feature half-rhymes and even lines have full-rhymes, alliteration links the lines according to *dróttkvætt* requirements. *Helmingar* 4/2 of *Knútsdrápa* and 6/1 of *Tøgdrápa* are good examples:

*En með annan  
Qnundr Qðnum  
á hendr at há  
her sænskan ferr.*

*Þá gaf sínum  
snjallr gørvallan  
Nóreg nefa  
njótr veg-Jóta<sup>37</sup>.*

It must be noted, however, that such stanzas do not prevail in any of these poems. 7 out of 14 (50%) *helmingar* of *Tøgdrápa* feature metrical anomalies. In the case of

37 SPMA I, 655, 860.



*Knútsdrápa* the ratio is even higher – 61% (11 out of 18). Instances of metrical anomalies in both poems refer mainly to rhymes. The ratios for both *drápur* are: 78% (7 out of 9) for *Tøgdrápa* and 66% (10 out of 15) for *Knútsdrápa*.

These numbers show that both poets found it relatively difficult to keep a systematic provision of rhymes throughout their whole compositions. In the case of *Tøgdrápa* it is interesting to note instances of *helmingar* featuring lines with no rhyme: 1/1, 3/1, 4/2, 5/1, 7/1. Of course, Þórarinn was allowed by the metre rules to provide such lines (Type 2) as he did once in *helmingr* 5/2. However, instances in question suggest the skald did not prefer “the easy track” and wanted to remain as faithful to *tøglag* requirements as possible so *helmingar* in question can be classified as instances of defected Type 3. *Helmingar* 3/1 and 5/1 may serve as examples:

*Ok fyr Lista*  
*liðu framm viðir*  
*Hádýrs of haf*  
*hart kolsvartir.*

*Knottu súðir*  
*svangs mjök langar*  
*byrrömm bera*  
*brimdýr fyr Stim*<sup>38</sup>.

Sigvatr’s problems with rhymes are of a slightly different kind. In most instances, 9 out of 10, it is a case of unmetrical placement of both full and half-rhymes. *Knútsdrápa* consists of two *helmingar*, 8/2 and 10/1, that feature a line without rhyme. The former is the unclassified half-stanza, whereas the latter, similarly to the above listed *helmingar* of *Tøgdrápa*, can be treated as an instance of defected Type 3:

*Kom á fylki*  
*farlyst, þeims bar*  
*hervíg í hug,*  
*hafanda staf*<sup>39</sup>.

Contrary to Þórarinn, who used Type 2 once (*helmingr* 5/2) in his *drápa*, Sigvatr did not avoid anomalies in both Type 1 *helmingar* (8/1, 11/1) of his poem:

*Ok þøru í byr*  
*blø segl við rø,*

38 Ibidem, 855, 858.

39 Ibidem, 661.

*dýr vas dōglings fōr,  
drekar landreka.*

*Svá mun fār feril  
fetum suðr metinn  
hringdrífr hafa.  
Höfuðfremstr jōfur<sup>40</sup>.*

The *helmingr* 8/1 has a half rhyme in the second line, instead of the metrical full rhyme. Besides, the fourth line features five syllables, instead of the metrical four. The *helmingr* 11/1 has also disturbed syllabic order in both even and odd lines. Both even lines have five syllables instead of four<sup>41</sup>, whereas the third line has four syllables instead of the expected five.

Analysis of both poems suggests that occasional problems Þórarinn and Sigvatr had with provision of rhymes were caused by an ultimate will to keep the required number of syllables in line throughout most of their compositions, especially in the Type 3 *helmingar*. All these observations are summarised in the tables below.

**Table 2.** Anomalies in type per *helmingr*

Anomalies in type per <i>helmingr</i>	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3
Þórarinn loftunga, <i>Tøgdrápa</i>	0	0	7
Sigvatr Þórðarson, <i>Knútsdrápa</i>	2	0	9

**Table 3.** Anomalies in type per number

Anomalies in type per number	Þórarinn loftunga, <i>Tøgdrápa</i>			Sigvatr Þórðarson, <i>Knútsdrápa</i>		
	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3
Nr of syllables in line	0	0	1	5	0	0
Rhymes	0	0	7	0	0	10
Alliteration	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	8	5	0	10

Þórarinn seems to have wanted to stick to the ideal of the metre, not allowing himself to add an additional syllable in most of his *helmingar* and being able to have half of the *helmingar* metrically perfect. The urge to stick to four syllables in line resulted with anomalies noted in half of the preserved *helmingar*. It meant problems with keeping the rules of rhymes.

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, 659, 663.

<sup>41</sup> It is possible, however, to count the fourth line as metrical due to fact that it is a part of the poem's *klofastef*.

There are certain distinguished elements of the composition. *Helmingr* 2/1 features tmesis (*Lima-firdi*), that perhaps was based on older examples and pointing at possible sources of Þórarinn's inspiration<sup>42</sup>. The way he distributes the word *Limafjörðr* in the first two lines of the *helmingr* results in an intriguing wordplay in the second line: *gramr Lima* (ruler of Limfjorden). Apart from the main goal of the *helmingr* that was an account on Knútr being able to operate quickly with his fleet between Denmark and England, the skald was able to underline the king's rulership over this key area. *Helmingr* 8/1, as Roberta Frank has recently noted, is distinguished not only by an impressive warrior kenning but also its alliteration, based on the same consonant (g)<sup>43</sup>. Additionally, the *helmingr* is concluded by a compound *Tøgdrápa*. Matthew Townend has recently considered its function, either as a title or as a technical term, depending on which of two poems, Þórarinn's or Sigvatr's, was older<sup>44</sup>. I agree that both options are possible. However, if my assumption is right, and neither of the poets was the inventor of the metre, I would treat the coupled as a technical term, used by Þórarinn to prove his ability of meeting challenges of the metre. Consequently, his poem could have been titled *Knútsdrápa*, the very same way other skaldic encomia dedicated to the King of England and Denmark are traditionally titled.

Sigvatr also seems to have wanted to stick to the ideal of the metre as much as possible. The vast majority (16 of 18) of *helmingar* belongs to Type 3. All of them feature four syllables. On the other hand, most of them feature metrical anomalies that in all cases (11) refer to rules of rhyme. 2 of 18 *helmingar* belong to Type 1. Intriguingly, all of them feature metrical anomalies that in all cases (4) refer to the number of syllables. In short, depending which Type is concerned, the skald seemed to have problems either with syllables or rhymes. Another intriguing observation refers to manuscript preservation and transmission of the poem. It looks like certain unmetrical variants were corrected in the younger mss. *Helmingr* 4/1 is a good example of this trend. A group of older mss<sup>45</sup> has a variant *þorðu* in the first line that constitutes unmetrical full rhyme with *norðan*<sup>46</sup>. The other group of mss, that would be labelled as the younger, features a variant *þurðu*, which is metrical as it provides a half rhyme in the first line. One can see a similarly puzzling situation in both *helmingar* of stanza 5. The 18<sup>th</sup> century paper mss of *Fagrskinna*<sup>47</sup> features the *helmingr* 5/1 with a variant *marbeðjum* in the third line, that constitutes unmetrical full rhyme with *með*. However, the very same

42 See SPMA I, 853.

43 Frank, "A taste for knottiness", 209–210.

44 SPMA I, 863.

45 The group features the following manuscripts: DG 8 1225–1250 Holm 2 1250–1300, AM 68 fol 1300–1325, AM 61 fol 1350–1375, AM 325 V 4 to 1375–1400.

46 SPMA I, 655.

47 The following manuscripts: OsloUB 371 folx, AM 51 folx, copies of now lost medieval manuscripts.

*helmingr* in the 13<sup>th</sup> century mss of the *Legendary Saga of Óláfr the Saint*<sup>48</sup> features a variant *marbiðjum* that constitutes metrical full rhyme in that line. That is why it looks like the *helmingr* was badly “corrected” during the transmission. An opposite situation can be noted in the *helmingr* 5/2. The paper copies of *Fagrskinna* feature a variant *grøum* in the second line that constitutes metrical full rhyme. Intriguingly, the mss of the *Legendary Saga* features a variant *gráni* in the same line that constitutes unmetrical half rhyme with *lá*. So *grøum*, that replaced *gráni* in the line, could perhaps be treated as a trace of a later correction of the stanza in order to improve it metrically.

Despite limited syllabic space within the line, *Sigvatr* was able to include an intercalary clause in the second line of *helmingr* 4/1. The phrase *namsk þat* (that has been learned) belongs to a typical feature of *Sigvatr*’s poetry, pointing to the role of the skald as the one able to gather reliable data on a subject of his composition<sup>49</sup>. The *helmingr* in question is almost perfect metrically, except for a lack of half-rhyme in the first line in its variants preserved in group of older mss<sup>50</sup>. One can also distinguish the first line of *helmingr* 5/2. It features five syllables that provide advanced rhyming scheme with both either half rhyme (*þars – fyr*, metrically required) or a full rhyme (*þars ad garðr*, unmetrical).

Summing up this part of the article, it is very likely that neither of the poets were, in fact, the inventor of *tøglag*. Rather both, as talented and already distinguished skalds, did not hesitate to accept another artistic challenge, most likely put up by somebody else. It seems reasonable to assume that such a challenge was born at *Knútr*’s court, probably as a side effect of the king’s success in Norway in 1028. The new political situation meant that *Knútr*’s became not only the sole leader of the whole region but also that his court remained the main centre of skaldic production, attracting ambitious and skilful poets<sup>51</sup>. Such an artistic milieu was driven not only by royal grace but also by internal competition that was decisive for any poetic innovations, including *tøglag*. Both poets had some difficulties with keeping up with demands of the metre. Even though both not only managed to refer to it in most parts of their compositions but also to enrich their poems with pompous *klofastefur*.

### **Ideology and symbolism of *Togdrápa***

The extensive and detailed geographical setting of the poetic narrative is one of the most characteristic features of *Þórarinn*’s poem on *Knútr*’s expedition to Norway.

48 DG 8.

49 See Morawiec, *Między poezją a polityką*, 334.

50 See SPMA I, 655.

51 See Frank, “A taste for knottiness”, 197.

According to Matthew Townend, such a precision over placenames is generally typical for journey-poems<sup>52</sup>. Six *helmingar* of stanzas 3–5 provide a list of places that mark a track of the Anglo-Danish fleet. Despite some confusions concerning the internal order of the following places<sup>53</sup>, the list is arranged geographically, in a south-north line, starting, in fact, in Limforden and reaching Nidelven<sup>54</sup>.

The skald's emphasis of the placenames is hardly accidental. Firstly, it seems likely Þórarinn constructed his poem that way to evoke certain memories among recipients of the poem, presumably those who, as the poet himself, took part in the expedition. Using some of the placenames in alliteration had presumably served to strengthen this effect as they were even more decisive for skaldic delivery and memorisation of the whole poem. Secondly, it could have been useful to define the scope of Knútr's *fǫr* and its success by showing that it was the whole of Norway, *gǫrvallr Nóreg* as he puts it in *helmingr* 6/1, that he conquered and kept under his control. There are similar arrangements in the skaldic corpus. Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnsson, in stanza 12 of his *Hályegjatal*, defining territory under control of jarl Hákon of Hlaðir, described it as *liggr und bægi allt austr til býs Egða* (lies all the way east to the territory of the Egðir)<sup>55</sup>. Einarr skálaglamm Helgason, in stanza 16 of his *Vellekla*, encompassing lands under the reign of the very same jarl, states that *nú liggr allt fyr norðan Vík und jarli* (now everything north of Viken lies under the jarl's rule)<sup>56</sup>. The last example comes from Þórðr Kolbeinsson's *Eiríksdrápa*. In stanza 9, the skald, referring to territories jarl Eiríkr of Hlaðir was to control as an outcome of the battle in Øresund, states: *enn ept víg lagðisk land norðan frá Veigu suðr til Agða eða stundu lengra* (and after the battle the land was subjected from Vega in the north, south as far as Agder or somewhat further)<sup>57</sup>.

The density of verbs describing a movement of the fleet is another characteristic feature of Þórarinn's composition. *Liðu* (*helmingr* 3/1, 4/1), *drifu* (*helmingr* 4/2), *bera* (*helmingr* 5/1), *kom* (*helmingr* 5/2) are clear examples of this practice. The verbs in question not only served to justify an account on a royal *fǫr*. They helped in linking particular areas of Knútr's domain, the king, accompanied by his fleet, was able to conquer and control. It seems that it was especially important to underline the king's ability to reach Limfjorden, a strategic point for his action. Its control meant both a grasp of Denmark and ability to influence conditions in Norway. In other words, as the greatness of the royal fleet (see below) was a significant marker of the king's power,

52 SPMA I, 856.

53 Ibidem, 857.

54 Morawiec, *Między poezją a polityką*, 395.

55 SPMA I, 211.

56 Ibidem, 304.

57 Ibidem, 501. See also Morawiec, *Między poezją a polityką*, 297–306.

the movement of the fleet, in particular the geographical setting, was to highlight the ability to execute this power.

Þórarinn, consequently, provides us with a picture of a great fleet, owned and commanded by Knútr. The skald states it directly in both *helmingar* of stanza 1: the king was accompanied by *mjök mikit lið, ólittinn floti*<sup>58</sup>. The last word is particularly interesting as it can hardly be found as frequent in the skaldic corpus. For the first time, it is noted in poetry of the grand poets connected with the court of jarls of Hlaðir: Eyvin-dr skáldaspillir Finnson (stanza 11 of *Háleygjatal* and one of *lausavísur*) and Einarr skálaglamm Helgason (stanzas 6 and 29 *Vellekla*)<sup>59</sup>. One cannot exclude a possibility that Þórarinn followed his great predecessors whose compositions, especially *Vellekla*, had presumably accompanied new poets in their artistic upbringing. Most importantly, however, the same word (*floti*) was used by Hallvarðr háreksblei in stanza 3 of his *Knútsdrápa*<sup>60</sup> and it is very probable that one poet directly inspired another in that case.

Þórarinn underlines a greatness of the royal fleet also in *helmingr* 5/1. This time the skald employs elaborate ship kennings that refer to their outstanding construction, being both scary and effective: *byrrömm brimdýr* (the wind-strong surf-animals) and *mjök langar súðir svangs* (very long planks of the hull)<sup>61</sup>. A role of such phrases was similar to those used in *helmingar* 1/1 and 1/2, however they additionally served to show poetic skills of the skald and provide a more picturesque and vivid depiction of Knútr's fleet, making it even more impressive.

The set of placenames present in *Tögdrápa*, mentioned above, also gave Þórarinn an opportunity to underline the vastness of the royal fleet. In *helmingr* 3/2, providing an account on progress of Knútr's ships moving north, the skald states: *allt Eikundasund suðr vas byggt sæskíðum* (the entire Eigersund to the south was inhabited by sea-skis)<sup>62</sup>. It is a visible sign of addressing the poem not only to the king but also to his retainers who were said to be well acquainted with geography of this very place as it could give them a proper impression of the size of the royal fleet, the fleet they, together with Þórarinn, were part of<sup>63</sup>.

It was not only its number but also its splendour that made the royal fleet so impressive in Þórarinn's vision. Skald puts it directly in *helmingr* 2/2:

*Allt vas gollu  
grams skip framit,*

58 SPMA I, 852.

59 Ibidem, 210, 216, 290, 319.

60 SPMA III, 233.

61 SPMA I, 858.

62 Ibidem, 855.

63 See Morawiec, *Między poezją a polityką*, 396–397.

*vorum sjón sögu  
slíks ríkari*<sup>64</sup>.

The king's ship was all decorated with gold; the sight of such was to me more powerful than [any] telling.

Although the *helmingr* focuses on the king's ship, one can assume that Þórarinn had his whole fleet in mind. Matthew Townend is absolutely right arguing that the reference to gold adornments of the royal ship echoes accounts of *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and Adam of Bremen's *Gesta* on the fleet Knútr led to England in 1015<sup>65</sup>. The richness of the fleet was meant both to amaze the king's followers and frighten his enemies. Þórarinn's account confirms longevity of the motif of Knútr's richness as the key to gaining and developing his power that, with special reference to the conquest of Norway in 1028, was later developed much more extensively by saga authors<sup>66</sup>.

The *helmingr* 2/2 features also a personal note of Þórarinn. The skald's rapture over splendour of the royal fleet is persuasive and most likely was meant to evoke similar feelings among recipients of the poem. In this context, *Tøgdrápa* can be seen as a forerunner of very similar poetry, produced by Þjóðolfr Árnorsson for Haraldr harðráði, featuring analogous rapture over the royal fleet, leaving Nidelven to confront the forces of Sveinn Ulfsson<sup>67</sup>.

Consequently, Þórarinn depicts Knútr as the courageous warlord and steerer of the magnificent fleet. In two *helmingar*, 2/1 and 4/2, the skald calls the king *orbeiðir* (eager/arrow demander)<sup>68</sup>. Interestingly, the noun *beiðir* (demander) had been previously used only by Glúmr Geirason as heiti of a monarch in his *Gráfeldardrápa*<sup>69</sup>. Þórarinn added the prefix *orI* that enabled him to invent a new phrase defining the king's attitude. The significance of the new construct seems to be underlined by the fact that both phrases are used to provide alliteration of a coupled in both respective *helmingar*.

One can assume that making up such a phrase, the poet's intention was to underline the king's willingness to achieve military victory. Considering the fact that the expedition to Norway lacked serious battles, Knútr's (and his *hird*) readiness to fight

64 SPMA I, 854. A variant *lið* present in some of the mss (troop adorned with gold) must be considered. However, the variant *lið búit* is unmetrical, contrary to variant *lið ramit* in the manuscript DG8. No matter which variant, *skip* or *lið*, was original, the sense of the *helmingr* remains the same. The royal ship represents the whole fleet.

65 SPMA I, 855. See also Morawiec, *Knut Wielki*, 108.

66 See Sverre Bagge, "Olav den Hellige som norsk konge (1015–28)", *Historisk tidsskrift* 94 (2015): 581–582; Bolton, *Cnut the Great*, 158.

67 See Morawiec, *Między poezją a polityką*, 546.

68 SPMA I, 854, 857. In the first instance the compound is a part of a sophisticated warrior kenning: *orbeiðir svans sigrlana* (eager demander of the swan of victory-heaps).

69 SPMA I, 248.

the enemy was to save the military aspect of the poem. Þórarinn's intentions, if my argument sounds convincing, seem to echo a notion of *Liðsmannaflokkur*, whose anonymous poet also did his best to underline the military skills of the young ruler<sup>70</sup>.

The *helmingr* 5/2 seems to have the same notion. Þórarinn calls the king *herflýtir* (army speeder)<sup>71</sup>. Again, the compound as the monarch/war leader kenning looks like the skald's own invention. Similarly to *orbeiðir*, *herflýtir* seems to underline the king's ability to steer his fleet, his ultimate will to lead the army to an encounter and gain a victory. Both compounds, stressing Knútr's readiness to strike and being poetically innovative, had to convince the audience that the king, despite opportunities to face the enemy, was in fact an effective warrior and army leader, serving as an exclusive example of the expected attitude.

The culmination of this process is to be found in both *helmingar* of stanza 7. Each of them features highly sophisticated warrior kennings describing the ruler: *hlyn malm-dyns* (the maple of the battle-din) and *víghagr morðstærir* (the slaying-skilled battle-increaser)<sup>72</sup>. Þórarinn constructs both kennings using rare vocabulary. The noun *hlynr* (the maple) was used earlier only by Þórðr Kolbeinsson in stanza 2 of his *Eiríksdrápa* as a base word for a warrior kenning (*skjald hlynr*)<sup>73</sup>. A compound *víghagr* (slaying-skilled) appears to be Þórarinn's invention, not to be found elsewhere in the corpus. The same goes with another compound in the kenning, *morðstærir* (battle-increaser). The latter, although built of words frequently used by skalds, were tied for the very first time by Þórarinn.

On one hand warrior kennings in stanza 7 were constructed on the basis of typical features: the warrior as the tree, the one who is skilled in warfare and is willing to provide new encounters. On the other hand, Þórarinn refers to these elements using either original vocabulary or matching known words elsewhere into new, sophisticated compounds.

The *for*, undertaken by Knútr and his army, resulted not only with the conquest of Norway but, equally importantly, a political equilibrium in his domain. In a poetic message provided by Þórarinn, the former proved the king was a skilful, brave warrior and army leader; the latter proved he was an effective political executioner and true monarch. One can assume it influenced the arrangement of both *helmingar* of stanza 6

*Þá gaf sínum  
snjallr gorrvallan*

70 Russell Poole, *Viking Poems on War and Peace* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 86–115; Jakub Morawiec, "Anonimowy poemat Liðsmannaflokkur i problem jego odbiorcy. Ślad pobytu córki Mieszka I, matki Knuta Wielkiego, w Anglii?", *Studia Źródłoznawcze* 47 (2010): 17–34.

71 SPMA I, 858.

72 Ibidem, 861.

73 Ibidem, 491.



*Nóreg nefa  
njótr veg-Jóta.*

*Þá gaf sínum  
— segik þat — megi  
dals dökksali  
Danmørk svana<sup>74</sup>.*

Obviously, it would be hard to find repetition of the first line in both *helmingar* as accidental. It seems likely that the skald did so to underline not only the scope of the king's decision but also that it was his own political arrangement. The skald states in the first *helmingr*: *þá gaf sínum nefa gørvallan Nóreg* (gave his nephew the whole of Norway). The second *helmingr* carries a similar message: *þá gaf sínum megi Danmørk* (gave his son Denmark).

Both statements are evenly distributed in both *helmingar*, presumably because both were equally important and deserved to be underlined in this very way. Both stress not only how Knútr's arranged his dominion after the conquest of Norway, but also that this very arrangement was based on family ties. The king's *nefr* was Hákon Eiríksson, jarl of Hlaðir, who followed his father jarl Eiríkr as a faithful supporter of Knútr and who married the latter's sister, Gyða<sup>75</sup>. The king's *megi* was Hørdaknútr, his only son by Emma of Normandy<sup>76</sup>. The Jelling dynasty was cementing their influences in Norway through an alliance with jarls of Hlaðir, at least since Haraldr Gormsson. Both his son and grandson followed him strictly in this respect. The Danish kings were aware that such an alliance, temporarily abruptly by jarl Hákon Sigurðarsson after 974, was a key to both control of Norway and dominate in the whole region. The conquest of Norway let Knútr not only eliminate the serious opponent, Óláfr Haraldsson, but also reward jarl Hákon for his loyalty. Moreover, it let the king secure not only Danish influences in Norway again but also the position of his own family in Denmark, recently questioned first by jarl Þorkell the Tall, then by Ulfr Þorgilsson, another of Knútr's brothers-in-law<sup>77</sup>. The arrangement of Þórarinn's stanza fully confirms the importance of the new arrangement, and shows that the skald was fully aware how important it presumably was to reflect it properly in his poem. Distribution of both decisions in separate *helmingar* and repetition of the phrase *þá gaf sínum* served not only to properly underline the

<sup>74</sup> Ibidem, 860.

<sup>75</sup> Hákon's position at the court of Knútr is confirmed by his attestation of several of royal charters. See Timothy Bolton, *The Empire of Cnut the Great. Conquest and Consolidation of Power in Northern Europe in the Early Eleventh Century* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2009), 69–70; Morawiec, *Knut Wielki*, 138–139.

<sup>76</sup> Morawiec, *Knut Wielki*, 131.

<sup>77</sup> Ibidem, 206–212, 321–233; Bolton, *The Empire of Cnut*, 235.

scope of the king's decisions, but also to make sure it would be effectively received by recipients of the poem<sup>78</sup>.

According to Þórarinn, Knútr gave the whole of Norway to jarl Hákon as *snjallr njótr veg-Jóta* (the bold enjoyer of the glory-Jótar). There is rather no doubt whom the skald had in mind constructing this kenning. The *helmingr* 6/2, apart from information of Knútr giving Denmark his son, features another kenning that is slightly more problematic in reading. Matthew Townend, the very recent editor of *Tøgdrápa*, proposes to match *dalr* and *svana* and interpret it as the sea kenning (dale of swans). Its *dokksalar* (dark halls), he argues, symbolise Denmark<sup>79</sup>. Alternative reading of the kenning has been recently proposed by Richard North, who noted that although the words in this kenning are simple, their meanings are not, either individually or together. First, he prefers translating *dalr* as *bow* and transferring *dökk* to *svana*. Consequently, he proposes a shield kenning hall of a bow's dark-swans in which dark-swans are ravens and the bow's ravens are arrows, whose hall is a shield. North goes on further seeing the kenning in question as part of a concept of the Danish king as *skjöldungr*, borrowed directly from *Beowulf*, and claiming that constructing the shield kenning in question Þórarinn had Knútr in mind<sup>80</sup>.

Richard North's proposal seems intriguing and convincing for two reasons. First, it accords with a general arrangement of both *helmingar*. The king as the hall of a bow's dark swans, who gives Denmark his son, is an equivalent to the bold enjoyer of the glory Jótar who gives Norway to his nephew. Secondly, it also accords with other instances of the prospect of Knútr as *skjöldr* (shield)<sup>81</sup> that I would argue point at the king as provider of peace in his dominion and protector of his subjects.

There are other intriguing instances of this prospect in *Tøgdrápa*. In *helmingr* 4/1, Þórarinn depicts Knútr's *hirdmenn* as *gríðfastir friðmenn* (protection-secure men of peace)<sup>82</sup>. That is quite a peculiar way of defining royal warriors, especially in the poem on the war expedition. Matthew Townend offered two possible meanings of this phrase. One of them, putting emphasis on Knútr's followers who enjoy the protection, friendship and peace that is conferred on his household and supporters, sounds very reasonable<sup>83</sup>. I would develop it a little bit stressing even more that the skald's intention was to convince the recipients of the poem that it was the king himself who, by

78 Morawiec, *Między poezją a polityką*, 398–399.

79 SPMA I, 860. Townend follows here a previous attempt to read the kenning provided by E.A. Kock, according to whom, dark halls reflect Denmark's forest-covered islands.

80 North, "Behold the Front Page", 13–14; Frank, "A taste of knottiness", 207. See also Katherine Cross, *Heirs of the Vikings. History and Identity in Normandy and England, c.950–c.1015* (York: York Medieval Press, 2018), 34.

81 North, "Behold the Front Page", 12–13.

82 SPMA I, 857.

83 *Ibidem*, 858.

conquest of Norway, provided and secured peace in his dominion, peace that all his subjects could enjoy.

The *helmingr* 1/1, apart from featuring a part of the poem's *klofastef*, depicts Knútr as Þórarinn's friend (*vinr minn*)<sup>84</sup>. It seems quite intriguing as such references to exclusive relations between given poet and his patron are mainly to be found in *erfidrápur*<sup>85</sup>. Limited space of *töglag* stanza makes this phrase metrically important as the adjective *minn* concludes alliteration of two lines being a main alliterating stave. Besides, the phrase *vinr minn* provides a full rhyme in the line.

It seems reasonable, however, not to limit discussion on this phrase to metrical considerations only and ask why Þórarinn decided to address Knútr this way. Studies, mainly by Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, leave no doubt that friendship was a very important tool in the political games in the Viking Age and medieval Scandinavia. Jón Viðar stresses the importance of friendship for the Norwegian kings to secure support for themselves from local chieftains and householders<sup>86</sup>. Those who established friendship with the king had to accept him as their overlord, although Jón Viðar underlines the instability of this relation, giving the action of the taking control of Norway by Knútr as a clear example of it<sup>87</sup>. Nevertheless, the more loyal the king's friends were, the more secure his position was<sup>88</sup>. Similarly, the more powerful the king's friends were, the more crucial for his rulership ties of friendship were, on condition he was willing to nurture his friendships, mainly through his generosity.

Despite the fact that a king could have been willing to establish friendship not only with powerful chieftains but also with local householders, one can ask if it would be equally advantageous to establish a similar friendship with a skald. Before answering such a question, I would point at instances of the king as a friend in pre- Þórarinn skaldic poetry.

There are four instances of this kind in the corpus. The first one is to be found in stanza 3 of Glúmr Geirason's *Gráfeldardrápa*. The skald recalls the king Haraldr as *vinr gumna* (friend of men)<sup>89</sup>. As the noun *gumi* (man) is quite imprecise, Glúmr could have meant either all the king's subjects or, which seems more likely, his retainers. The second instance is relatively less problematic. Eyvindr Finnsson skáldaspillir calls Odinn, who plays a role of ruler and protagonist of the kin of jarls, in stanza 2 of his

84 Ibidem, 852.

85 Morawiec, *Między poezją a polityką*, 194–205.

86 Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Viking friendship. The social bond in Iceland and Norway, c. 900–1300* (Ithaca–London, Cornell University Press, 2017), 73.

87 Ibidem, 78–79. It seems important to note Jón Viðar's czy nie powinno być jednak nazwisko? accurate remark on the political shift in Norway in 1028–1030, who states that Knutr was able to win the country because he managed to establish friendships with the most influential chieftains in Norway.

88 Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Viking friendship*, 80.

89 SPMA I, 251.

Háleygjatal *vinr skatna* (friend of chieftains/warriors)<sup>90</sup>. Again, the skald presumably referred to chieftains who, as friends of the ruler, fought alongside him. The third instance comes from Hallfreðr Óttarsson's *Erfidrápa Óláfs Tryggvasonar*. The poet, in stanza 9, calls the fallen king *vinr jarla* (friend of jarls)<sup>91</sup>. Leaving aside intriguing connotations of this phrase<sup>92</sup>, there is no doubt that royal friendship targets the highest social and political strata. The fourth example comes from stanza 9 of Þórðr Kolbeinson's *Eiríksdrápa*, where the poet recalls certain *hersar* (chieftains) who were *vinir jarla* (friends of the jarls – Eiríkr and his brother Sveinn)<sup>93</sup>. Treated together, those instances point at friendship between a ruler and either chieftains, who were supposed to support the former with military service or jarls whose friendship could provide a ruler with something even more precious and crucial – political authority.

It is even more intriguing to observe that it was Sigvatr Þórðarson who frequently referred to this concept in his poetry. The poet concludes his *Austrfararvísur* (stanza 21) stating that jarl Rognvaldr Úlfsson from Västergötland was Óláfr Haraldsson's *miklu baztan vin á austrvega* (the best friend in the east)<sup>94</sup>. Leaving aside the political context of both the very stanza and the whole poem<sup>95</sup>, it seems no doubt that Sigvatr's intention was to point at the decisiveness of proper political alliances, here defined as friendships, for effective and stable reign. Only friendship offered by the most powerful chieftains could guarantee a ruler undisturbed control of the country. Moreover, an offer of friendship, expressed by a powerful chieftain, was a clear sign that a ruler was seen as worth such noble support and able to provide political success not only for himself but also for his distinguished supporters. Sigvatr quite forcefully, one may think<sup>96</sup>, sees jarl Rognvaldr in this role when it comes to Óláfr Haraldsson's position in Norway.

The jarl is called the king's best friend which suggests that Óláfr, as any other monarch, could have looked for friends elsewhere, although not as prestigious and influential as *jarlar*<sup>97</sup>. Similarly to the 10<sup>th</sup> century skalds, Sigvatr did not hesitate to label either one's subjects or, more precisely, his military supporters (*hirðmenn*) as friends. It refers to jarl Erlingr Skjálgrsson in stanza 3 of *Erlingsflokkur*, whose defeat in the fight

90 Ibidem, 199.

91 Ibidem, 414.

92 See Morawiec, *Między poezją a polityką*, 276, 302.

93 SPMA I, 501.

94 Ibidem, 613.

95 I elaborate more on this elsewhere, see Morawiec, *Między poezją a polityką*, 367–370.

96 His personal engagement in these political endeavours is another matter, too vast to be considered in this study.

97 In one of his *lausavísur*, Sigvatr puts *þegnar* into the category of the king's (it is Óláfr's) friends (*vina þengils*). See SPMA I, 720.

against king Óláfr is completed by the jarl's separation from his friends (*fjarri vinum*)<sup>98</sup>. It refers also to king Magnús inn góði, who, according to Sigvatr in stanza 3 of his Poem about Queen Ástríðr, was given Norway to rule as *vin virða* (the friend of men)<sup>99</sup>.

Finally, in stanza 10 of his *Bersöglisvísur*, Sigvatr refers to himself as a friend of king Magnús inn góði, whom he warns against angry subjects<sup>100</sup>. The skald's words (*vinrs, sás býðr vörnuð* – he is a friend who offers a warning) suggest Sigvatr found his poetical warning that in fact is a role of his *Bersöglisvísur*<sup>101</sup> as both an excuse and reason to rank himself among royal friends. Consequently, one can assume, the poet treated his poetry in general and this very poem in particular as a sign of friendship, loyalty and support.

It seems likely that Þórarinn was very similarly motivated when calling himself the king's friend. The poet wanted perhaps to underline the importance of his poetry (and himself) for the king, pointing at his ability to fulfil the expectation the king had toward his other friends. As establishing friendship was confirmed by the exchange of gifts<sup>102</sup>, Þórarinn could have treated his poetry for Knútr and rewards he obtained as an instance of such trade that allowed him to treat himself as one of the king's friends. The same way the king was dependent of friendship with chieftains and was expected to uphold his obligations, the same way he was dependent on skaldic delivery and loyal service of poets.

It seems fully appropriate to compare the ideology of Þórarinn's *Tögdrápa* with its counterpart, Sigvatr Þórdarson's *Knútsdrápa*. Sigvatr's poem also focuses on the royal fleets, that, remaining in a constant movement, allow the kings to act. This time it refers not only to Knútr but also to his Scandinavian opponents, Óláfr Haraldsson and Qnundr (Anundr Jacob)<sup>103</sup>. Similarly to his peer, Sigvatr provides a relevant poetic picture by using a series of verbs underling the movement of royal ships: *fara* (*helmingr* 3/2), *þurðu* (*helmingr* 4/1), *ferr* (*helmingr* 4/2), *herjaða* (*helmingr* 6/2), *bar* (*helmingr* 7/2), *böru* (*helmingr* 8/1), *kómu*, *liðu* (*helmingr* 8/2). The density of these verbs creates a vivid and lively image of the encounters in question and presumably helped the poet to keep his audience's attention first on the danger caused by both Óláfr and Qnundr (*herjaða Skáney skarpla*) and then on Knútr's reaction who managed to protect his land and his power there.

Sigvatr encompasses the encounter between three Scandinavian monarchs in his poem. Despite the fact that his account depicts the conflict from the Anglo-Danish

98 Ibidem, 633.

99 Ibidem, 649.

100 SPMA II, 21–22.

101 Morawiec, *Między poezją a polityką*, 219, 225, 457, 461.

102 Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Viking friendship*, 82.

103 SPMA I, 653, 655.

point of view, the poet is able to underline the status of Knútr's opponents. Picturing enemy fleets rushing towards Denmark from the north in stanza 4, he evenly shares both *helmingar* between Óláfr and Qnundr depicting them both as leaders of their own fleets<sup>104</sup>. The same situation is to be observed in stanza 5, which confronts both Knútr and Óláfr Haraldsson<sup>105</sup>. The first *helmingr* presents the former whereas the second the latter. Moreover, the skald stresses the military prowess of both kings as they are depicted as owners of their own fleets. Such even distribution of direct references to opposite sides in *helmingar* suggests a certain level of Sigvatr's political awareness similar to the one Þórarinn showed in stanza 6 of his *Tøgdrápa*.

Finally, Sigvatr, similarly to Þórarinn, focuses on Knútr as the brave warlord (*gramr liðs*) who, having a magnificent fleet (*varrglæstr viðr*), is able to answer effectively to a threat caused by both Óláfr and Qnundr. Addressing Knútr as the enemy of Æthelred (*andskoti Aðalráðs*) presumably served this very purpose. Similarly to *Tøgdrápa*, Sigvatr's poem underlines Knútr's energy in acting. Sigvatr calls it *farlyst* (desire for a journey), which, as such, seems a source of royal praise. It is especially seen in stanzas 7 and 8 that describe crucial moments of the confrontation between monarchs. Knútr first *frá austan* and then his ship carried him *vestan*. Sigvatr continues this picture in stanza 8: royal *drekar þoru blö segl við ro í byr*. Knútr's quick reaction results with the success as his enemies are forced to retreat. The skald can conclude then: *för döglinga vas dýr* and present the king as the protector of Danes (*hlífskjöldr Dana*)<sup>106</sup>.

Sigvatr's *Knútsdrápa* goes close to Þórarinn's *Tøgdrápa* not only on a general, conceptual level. There are several direct verbal correspondences that suggest either mutual influence or close collaboration. Calling Knútr *hlífskjöldr Dana* seems to correspond with and Þórarinn's depiction of Knútr's army as *friðmenn* and strengthens Richard North's argument concerning the concept of Knútr as a shield that protects all parts of his dominion.

Other intriguing similarities between both poems can be seen in stanza 8. Sigvatr's conclusion in the first *helmingr*: *för döglinga vas dýr* seems to correspond with *för orbeiðis svans sigrlana* Þórarinn which is referred to in stanza 2 of his *Tøgdrápa*. The second *helmingr* of stanza 8 depicts Knútr's fleet approaching Limfjord: *liðu brim Limafjarðar of leið*. Again, this very phrase seems to correspond with Þórarinn's account, in *helmingr* 1/2 of his *Tøgdrápa*, on Knútr bringing his fleet *út ór Limafirði*.

The second *helmingr* of stanza 10 of Sigvatr's *Knútsdrápa* belongs undoubtedly to the most significant features of the composition:

104 Ibidem, 655.

105 Ibidem, 656.

106 Ibidem, 658–659.

*Rauf ræsir af  
Rúms veg suman  
kærr keisara  
klúss Pétrúsi*<sup>107</sup>.

Roberta Frank has pointed out the skald's effective usage of loanwords from Latin, Old English, German and French<sup>108</sup>. Its content makes one speculate that perhaps an idea to create *toglag* was dictated by a will to celebrate and praise all recent journeys of Knútr: to Denmark in 1026, to Rome in 1027 and to Norway in 1028. The proper praise of latter *för*, to paraphrase both poets, was designated to Þórarinn.

Very recently, Charles Insley has argued that an image of Knútr one can find in skaldic encomia is different from the one presented in both of the king's letters to his English subjects issued in 1020 and 1027. The former, Insley argues, are focused on Knútr's and his ancestors' victories over the English whereas the latter present the ruler as Edgard's heir<sup>109</sup>. Both my previous and present analysis of Þórarinn's compositions as well as Richard North's considerations of the *Skjöldungr* concept make Insley's claims hardly acceptable. The idea of *himinríki* (the heavenly kingdom), employed by Þórarinn in the refrain of his *Hofuðlausn*, was very likely influenced by the very similar rhetoric found both in Knútr's charters and his letters<sup>110</sup>.

The ideology of *Skjöldr*, expressed, among others, by calling the king the protector of Danes (*hlífskjöldr Dana*) by Sigvatr, as Richard North convincingly argues, bound Knútr as the king of England with his dominion in Denmark<sup>111</sup>. It corresponds with Þórarinn's depiction of the ruler's *hirdmenn* as *friðmenn* (men of peace) and points at an idea of peace in the king's dominion. This very idea could have been derived directly from the 1027 Letter, as its particular fragments seem to indicate. Knútr, reporting his negotiations with both the pope and the emperor, points at: *the needs of all the people of my entire realm, both English and Danes, that they concede fairer law and securer peace to them on the road to Rome...might go to and return...in firm peace and secure in a just law*.

This very rhetoric is kept in both his declarations: *I am going to Denmark to establish peace and I humbly vowed to Almighty God to lead my life justly in all things from now on, and to rule justly and piously the kingdoms and peoples subject to me*.

107 Ibidem, 661.

108 Frank, "A taste for knottiness", 209–210.

109 Insley, *Why 1016 Matters*, 18.

110 See Morawiec, "A skald in royal service", 43–45.

111 North, "Behold the Front Page", 20–21. See also Cross, *Heirs of the Vikings*, 34.

Finally, Knútr states, that: *when peace has been established with those nations who live around us and my whole kingdom here in the east... I intend to come to England*<sup>112</sup>.

These fragments, in my opinion, provide an additional ground to argue that both *Tøgdrápa* and *Knútsdrápa* were composed in full accordance with the ideological message of the 1027 Letter<sup>113</sup>. Moreover, contrary to Insley's view, it seems likely that both the skaldic poems and the king's letters were intended to provide quite a similar picture of Knútr and make his subjects believe he is fully able to widen his dominion and fully control it. Securing peace was meant to be the most crucial criterium of these abilities.

Taking control over Norway in 1028 concluded perhaps the most significant part of Knútr's reign in both England and Denmark. The king had just defended his position in Denmark, made a very prestigious visit to Rome where he assisted imperial coronation of Conrad II and, finally, was able to add a new territory to his vast dominion. Without doubt, recognition at imperial court and in papal curia as well as the ability to eliminate his main rivals, truly made *Knútr ríkr konungr*.

It is not surprising at all that such grand endeavours, marking royal dominancy, demanded proper praise and record. There had already been a circle of poets functioning at the royal court that did his job as the series of *Knútsdrápur* indicate. The preserved poems prove that skalds used their artistic potency to the maximum to match the significance and impact of Knútr's political and military achievements. Þórarinn's *Tøgdrápa*, with its new metre and original vocabulary, alongside Sigvatr Þórðarson's *Knútsdrápa*, is a very good example of this phenomenon. It shows Þórarinn as a poet ready to challenge his poetical skills and talents to impress both the king and his, equally excellent, peers. Both poems prove that Knútr's skalds were not only distinguished poets, competing against and inspiring each other, but also mature retainers, aware of the complexity of policy of their patron.

112 "[...] *de necessitatibus totius populi uniuersi regni mei, tam Anglorum quam Danorum, ut eis concederetur lex equior et pax securior in uia Romam adeundi, et ne tot clausuris per uiam artentur et propter thelon iniustum fatigentur*". "[...] *Nunc itaque notum sit omnibus uobis, quia ipsi Deo omnipotenti supplex deuoui uitam meam amodo in omnibus iustificare et regna mihi subdita populosque iuste et pie regere equumque indicium per omnia obseruare*". "[...] *Danemarciam eo, pacem et firmum pactum [...]*". „*Composita denique pace cum gentibus que in circuitu nostro sunt, dispositoque et pacato omni regno nostro hic in oriente [...] Angliam uenire dispone [...]*". *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, ed. Felix Liebermann vol. 1 (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1903), 276–277; Elaine Treharne, *Living Through Conquest. The Politics of Early English 1020–1220* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 32–33.

113 See also Bolton, *Cnut the Great*, 156.



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#### SUMMARY

The present study is focused on *Tøgdrápa* (Journey drápa), a poem Þórarinn devoted to Knútr's expedition to Norway in 1028. A distinguished feature of *Tøgdrápa* is its metre – *tøglag* (journey metre). It differs from *dróttkvætt* by having four syllables (instead of six) in each line. Presumably, referring to the title of the poem, the metre was to be used in accounts on war expeditions, optionally other travels of the king. *Tøglag* seems to be especially bound to Knútr's court. Close metrical analysis of the poem as well as comparison with Sigvatr Þórðarson's *Knútsdrápa* suggests that, contrary to previous assumptions, it is very likely that neither of the poets was an inventor of *tøglag*. Rather both, as talented and already distinguished skalds, did not hesitate to take another artistic challenge, most likely put up by somebody else. It seems reasonable to assume that such a challenge was born at Knútr's court, probably as a side effect of the king's success in Norway in 1028.

## Skald w służbie królewskiej – przypadek Þórarina loftunga. Część 2: Ideowe i kompozycyjne aspekty *Tøgdrápy*

**Słowa kluczowe:** poezja skaldów, metrum *tøglag*, ideologia władzy królewskiej

### STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł poświęcony jest *Tøgdrápie* (Wiersz o wyprawie), utworowi skomponowanemu przez Þórarina, w którym opisuje wyprawę Knuta Wielkiego do Norwegii w 1028 roku. Wiersz wyróżnia zastosowane przez skalda metrum – *tøglag* (metrum podrózne). Od *dróttkvætt* różni go występowanie czterech (zamiast sześciu) sylab w każdej linii zwrotki. Prawdopodobnie, odnosząc się do tytułu wiersza, metrum to było stosowane w kompozycjach poświęconych wyprawom wojennym, ewentualnie innym podróżom podejmowanym przez władzę. Użytkowanie *tøglag* wydaje się być szczególnie związane z dworem Knuta Wielkiego w Anglii. Dokładna analiza metryczna poematu Þórarina, jak również porównanie go z *Knútsdrápa* Sigvata Þórðarsona, wskazują na to, że, wbrew wcześniejszym sądom, żaden z dwójki poetów nie powinien być uważany za twórcę tego metrum. Raczej, obaj skaldowie, już jako wzięci i utalentowani twórcy, bez obaw podjęli poetyckie wyzwanie, które najpewniej podsunął im ktoś inny. Wydaje się słusznym założenie, że pomysł ten zrodził się na dworze Knuta Wielkiego, najpewniej jako skutek sukcesu jaki król Anglii i Danii odniósł w Norwegii w 1028 roku.

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