

*Johan Ottesen*



# *The Jómsviking Battle*

**Where was the battle site?**

*FOTOARKIVET*



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*Where was the battle site?*  
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# Preface

The discussion about where the Jómsviking battle took place is still alive, even though there has been erected a monument of the battle at Ovra in Hareid municipality. New theories are also being put forward. In 2009 two new theories were launched – one which preferred to place the battle at Ørskogvika and one which placed it west of Raudøya towards Berkneset. The last one, Gurskevågen, was presented in 2011.

The purpose of this book is, among other things, to present the central sources that people have used in their work with the localization of where Jarl Hákon and the Jómsvikings met.

The sources which tell us about the battle are partly contradictory. It is probably impossible to find a place in Sunnmøre where all the details match the old writings. Therefore, over the years there have been many suggestions about the location of the historical Hjørungavágr. We can briefly mention: Haugsfjorden, Gurskevågen, Ulsteinfjorden, Liavågen, Aspevågen, Vegsundet, Ørskogvika, Hjørundfjorden, Norangsfjorden and Ørstafjorden. These alternatives are also presented and assessed. And finally follows an in-depth version of the theory I outlined in 1986 that the battle took place in the Eiksund/Leikong area. The battle of Hjørungavágr, the place name is a literary one, is said to be fought in a vágr near Høð (Hareidlandet). Sagas say that the Norwegians should meet in this vágr before the battle. A vágr named after the island Høð is Haðvágr, today Havåg.

For some, this debate may seem strange. Today we have Hjørungavåg at the east side of Hareidlandet. But one must be aware that this is a newly created name. It came in as a naming suggestion of a post office from local people who believed that the battle took place there. The name is only a little over 100 years old and is a product of the Norwegian nation building movement in the years before the independence in 1905.

In addition to the few holds which we find in the old writings, one must also consider where it was natural for the Norwegians to gather for consulting before the battle. It was most reasonable for them to gather in a place where they used to meet on other occasions, and not at a random and unknown place. In my opinion, the names Måløya and Leikong tell us that here have been old meeting places. Military tactics must also be taken into consideration when trying to locate the battle site. Thus, in this book I have also dealt with several different local history topics which I believe support

the theory that the historical Hjørungavágr must be located in the area near Havåg/Leikong.

Some say that Jómsborg and the Jómsvikings never existed. It is not difficult to conclude that much of what is reported about the Jómsvikings must be pure fiction. But at the same time, others again point to the fact that during archaeological excavations in Wolin in today's Poland, where it has been assumed that the Jómsvikings lived, large structures have been found. It can be confirmed that earlier there has been a large city with fortifications around it. The excavations further indicate that Scandinavians also lived there.

So, the question is whether there is a kernel of truth in the saga of the Jómsvikings – and how big this might be. It is also those, among others Per Fett and Halldór Laxness, who have concluded that the saga is just pure poetry.

In the various versions which report the battle, the gallery of characters varies. Not so unexpected since the writing down would have been done around 200 years after the battle. The spelling of the name of the same participant can also vary between the different representations and even within the same version of the saga. So that the changing spellings shall not confuse the reader, the surnames/nicknames in this book have been given a common form. But the interested reader can find the main form used in the various versions in an appendix at the end of the book.

In order to avoid mixing up the newly created and the historical name, Hjørungavágr is most often used in this book for the battle site. Exceptionally, the name of the battleground has been written in the same form as in the sources. The modern writing form Hjørungavåg is used for today's school district, which was called Liabygda, and earlier Liabygden, before the renaming.

In this book I present central parts of old sources. Then interested readers can make up their own opinion. Two versions of *Jómsvikinga saga* are presented in full length from the promises in the feast and until the battle is over. These have not previously been published in a modern language. This applies to Laurents Hanssøn's translation into Danish around 1550 and Arngrímur Jónsson's translation into Latin somewhat later. The other versions are presented in short form, the same as the presentation in *Heimskringla* and *Fagrskinna*. Readers who want a complete version of the saga in English, can read this in the following

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books: In 1955 Lee M. Hollander translated *The Saga of the Jómsvíkings* from old Icelandic to English. Norman Francis Blake published in 1962 *The Saga of the Jómsvíkings*. This edition presents both an English and a Norse version of Stock. Perg. 4to no7. The latest English edition, *The saga of the the Jómsvíkings* from 2018 is based on the version 291 4to. This translation with full introduction to the saga is presented by Alison Finlay and Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir.

In former translations of *Jómsvíkinga saga* into English, bay and creek have been used as synonyms with *vágr*: I feel that bay stands for a more open sea area than the Norse *vágr*. Creek can also refer to a river,

and in American creek even suggests a small river. To emphasize that one here speaks of an enclosed sea area, I have used *vágr* throughout the book, and in many places in the presentation *vágr* will be a short form of *Hjörungavágr*. See also page 70.

The personal names are written in the Norse form. The place names, when the location is undisputed, are usually presented in today's writing. But you can find a Norse form in brackets in the register.

This edition is an updated version of the book *Slagstaden* published in Norwegian in 2010. It may also be mentioned that quotations from Norwegian, Swedish and Danish have been translated into English.

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# The background of the battle

The Gunnhildarsynir, the sons of Gunnhildr, who ruled Norway after Hákon inn góði fell around 960, killed among others Sigurðr Hlaðjarl, father of Jarl Hákon Sigurðarson. Sigurðr and many of his people died when the house they stayed in was set on fire.

Snorri further tells that his son, Jarl Hákon, was at another place when this happened. Hákon took up the fight against the Gunnhildarsynir. There were several battles without a final victory to either side. The Gunnhildarsynir equipped a large army in eastern Norway before going to Trøndelag. Jarl Hákon escaped by sailing in open waters to Denmark, to the Danish king Haraldr Gormsson. In Denmark, Gull-Haraldr claimed half of the kingdom from his uncle Haraldr Gormsson. In the further power struggle, Haraldr gráfeldr, one of the Gunnhildarsynir, was killed by Gull-Haraldr. Soon after, Jarl Hákon went to battle against Gull-Haraldr. Haraldr was captured and hanged. As a reward for this, Haraldr Gormsson assigned the rule of the westernmost part of Norway – from Agder and northwards – to Jarl Hákon. Haraldr inn grenski was assigned to govern the south-eastern part of the country.

The Saxon emperor Ótta II wanted to subjugate Denmark. Jarl Hákon then came to assist the Danish king. It seemed that Ótta II chose to retreat. Jarl Hákon therefore prepared for his return to Norway. But soon after, the emperor turned and defeated Haraldr Gormsson's army. In the further negotiations, the Danish king accepted to convert to Christianity. Jarl Hákon, who was sent for, was also forced to be baptized. He should also bring priests and other learned men with him so that all the people in Norway would become Christians. But before he left Denmark, Hákon set the Christianizers ashore. Hákon, who had noted that the Danish king now was greatly weakened, ravaged at the homeward journey in the Danish areas all the way to Vík (Oslofjorden).

Not long after, Haraldr Gormsson prepared an army to punish the apostate. The Danish king ravaged and killed in Hákon's realm all the way north to Stad. Here he turned back after knowing that Jarl Hákon was waiting in Møre with a large army. *Jómsvíkinga saga 291* is the only saga version reporting about this expedition. This is also copied in *Heimskringla* and *Fagrskinna*.

Some years later, the Danish king equipped another army in order to once again take over the dominion of western Norway. The king himself did not take part in this campaign, but assigned the mission to the Jómsvíkings. *Gesta Danorum* says that it was Haraldr

Gormsson who sent them. He calls the Jómsvíkings pirates from Julin, a town on the island of Wolin at the outlet of the river Oder.

*Heimskringla*, *Fagrskinna* and *The saga of Jómsvíkings* say that it was Sveinn tjúguskegg, son of Haraldr Gormsson, who fooled the Jómsvíkings, intoxicated after drinking to the memory of his father, to promise that they would fight against and win over Jarl Hákon.

The Jómsvíkings and the army of Jarl Hákon met in Hjörungavágr. The timing depends on who sends the Jómsvíkings off. If it was Haraldr Gormsson, the battle must have taken place before approx. 985. If it was Sveinn tjúguskegg, the battle must have been after this year.

The local commemoration which was to be held in connection with the 1000th anniversary of the battle, was decided to take place in 1986 on the basis that the year 986 was reasonable. In this context, we do not go into more detail about the factors that speak for the various years. The aim of this book is an attempt to place the most likely battleground based on the most central written sources and from military strategic considerations.

The Swedish historian Lauritz Weibull says that the Jómsvíkings have never existed. But there has, nevertheless, been a battle between Jarl Hákon and the Danes, he says. Weibull believes that Jarl Hákon's opponents in Hjörungavágr were Vikings from the Danish islands and not Jómsvíkings. None of the skaldic epics, who are said to be contemporaries of the battle, use the name Jómsvíkings. In the verses, the opponents are called *Danes*, Jarl Sigvaldi travelled home to Denmark, etc.

Einnarr skálaglamm, in *Vellekla*, and the historical work *Ágrip* do not mention any opposition between Jarl Hákon and Haraldr Gormsson. It is only after 200 years of Norwegian nationalist development after the battle that the story of Jarl Hákon's attempt to free himself from the Danes emerges. The oldest saga sources do not connect the battle in Hjörungavágr to the relationship between Haraldr Gormsson and Jarl Hákon.

Weibull's conclusion, after assessing the stories about Jómsborg and the Jómsvíkings, is as follows: The Nordic Jómsborg and the Jómsvíkings as we find it in the Danish and Icelandic traditions have never existed.

Jarl Hákon's opponents were Vikings who came from the Danish islands, e.g., *Háleygjatal*, and not from the legendary city of Jómsborg.

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# The saga of the Jómsvikings

An important source when we are going to locate the battleground will be the different versions of *Jómsvíkinga saga*. Here we find most of the place names and the geographical details which can be of help in this work. But *Heimskringla* and *Fagrskinna* can also be useful for those who want to place the historical Hjørungavágr.

*Jómsvíkinga saga* tells us about the Jómsvikings who live in the fortress Jómsborg and about their deeds. These Vikings were supposed to be a warrior society with very special rules. Through the execution scenes after the battle in Hjørungavágr, we get an insight into the ideals of these feared Vikings.

Jakub Morawiec says that medieval Scandinavian tradition points first of all to King Haraldr Gormsson as the individual responsible for founding Jómsborg and establishing a viking hirð there. The stronghold was located in Vendland, the land of Slavs, which had just been conquered by Haraldr. Consequently, the Jómsvikings were, in theory, dependent on royal authority. Historical works: *Svend Aggesen*, *Gesta Danorum*, *Knýtlinga saga* and *Fagrskinna* place the Danish king as the originator of the stronghold and its hirð, labelling Haraldr as both its founder and overlord.

But the preserved redactions of *Jómsvíkinga saga* provide the reader with a completely different story regarding the foundation of Jómsborg. In *Jómsvíkinga saga* Harald Gormsson is replaced by Pálnatóki, the jarl of Fyn, and Búrizleifr, the king of Vendland. Jómsborg was given to the jarl by Búrizleifr, who prefer to treat Pálnatóki as an ally rather than an enemy.

We can also mention that Jakub Morawiec says that a corresponding replacement is possible regarding to who sent the army of *Jómsvikings* to Norway. Haraldr Gormsson seems to be the originator as in *Gesta Danorum*. *Jómsvíkinga saga*, which wants to deprive his qualities, lets Sveinn be the originator.

Torfi Tulinius says: even though many of the characters and events in the saga are grounded in historical reality, this saga does not seem to be aiming at a precise reconstruction of true history. At every moment, one senses that the author's zest for storytelling outweighs his concern for historical accuracy.

*Jómsvíking saga*, according to Tulinius, is a work of fiction and must be interpreted as such. Moreover, it may be one of the first overtly fictional sagas. The saga is not so much interested in historical material found in the past, but more concerned with the political, social,

and economic problems of their own society, transposing these issues into the past and developing them more freely the further the chronological setting was removed from their own. The main motive of the saga is the rebellion of nobles against the royal authority.

The first time we come across the name Jóm, at Jómi, is in 1043. Then the city name is mentioned in Magnusdrápa. It is around 1180/1190 the first sources use Jómsborg. It is used in *Ágrip* and in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* when talking about the winterstays of the king in Jómsborg. But *Ágrip*, written before the existing versions of *Jómsvíkinga saga*, does not mention the Jómsvikings.

Whether Jómsborg has existed and where it might have been is much discussed. As with Hjørungavágr, there have been several suggestions of the most likely location of the castle. It can be mentioned that in Denmark the remains of at least 5 larger castles have been found, where the archaeological material may indicate that it was rather younger warriors who stayed there. One of these, Trelleborg outside Slagelse, was linked by Poul Nørlund to a warrior society of the same type as the Jómsvikings could have been. But today, Wolin in Poland seems to be the town that has most support as residence of the Jómsvikings. Snorri also writes that Jómsborg was burned down by Magnus inn góði during a trip to Vendland. This would have taken place in 1043.

In Arngrímur Jónsson's version of *Jómsvíkinga saga*, we can read that after the battle, Jómsborg was supposed to have been transformed into an ugly and dirty market place. Still, others would prefer to say that this is probably how the town appears also before, since Jómsborg and the Jómsvikings have never existed in the version we are presented in the sagas. It is also pointed out that in the cited skaldic verses, which are thought to be roughly contemporary with the battle, Danes and not Jómsvikings are used for the opponents of Jarl Hákon. The term Jómsvikings seems to come into use some time later.

The first and largest part of *Jómsvíkinga saga* is mainly about the history of previous Danish kings. In the last part, we learn about the Jómsvikings' mission to Norway, where they were defeated by Jarl Hákon in the battle of Hjørungavágr. The saga exists in several written versions. The oldest is from around 1200. Scholars debate whether there were originally two independent written versions, both of which are based on



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oral traditions that could be around 200 years old when the history was written down. Or it could initially have been one written version, also based on oral narratives, but which in later transcriptions has developed in two different directions.

In our context, we are primarily interested in what the various saga versions tell us about the battle in Hjørungavágr:

*Version AM 291 4to* is the oldest, but is not quite complete. The deficiencies have therefore been filled in by including parts from *Flateyjarbók*, which has a presentation that is very close of AM 291 4to. AM 291 4to is dated to the 13th century.

*The Stockholm book*, Stock. Perg. 4to no 7, is reckoned to be written early in the 14th century.

*Flateyjarbók*, which also contains many other stories in addition to *Jómsvíkinga saga*, is believed to have been written down around 1390.

*Version AM 510 4to* is said to have information from various writings. This is from around 1550.

The battle is also depicted in *Jómsvíkingadrápa* written by Orkneyan Bjarni Kolbeinnsson (d. 1222). Bjarni was appointed bishop in 1188. It is most likely that he wrote the drápa before this.

Around 1550, Laurents Hanssøn translated a part of *Jómsvíkinga saga* into Danish. The manuscript from which he translated has now been lost. It is therefore difficult to determine the time of the original script.

Arngrímur Jónsson was preoccupied with communicating Icelandic history as widely as possible. He therefore translated a version of *Jómsvíkinga saga* into Latin around 1592. Since the two latter versions

are not available in a modern language, they are here translated into English. They will give a representation of the saga from when the Jómsvíkingarsaga give their many generous promises and until the battle is over.

The other versions are presented in abbreviated versions. Here are also quotations in Norse from the original editions with information which can tell us different forms of names and information about the battleground.

It is usually reasonable to consider the oldest sources as the most reliable. But in this case, we know of original sources that have been lost.

And a source which is dated to a certain period of time based on the usage of language can also be based on an original which is older or has been supplemented with significant information from other sources that are older. These circumstances can complicate which version is most reliable.

Many scholars who have assessed the content of truth in *Jómsvíkinga saga* believe that much must be pure poetry. But at the same time, one expects that there may be real events as basis for some of the stories. Thus, it becomes a job for the students of history to assess what is fact and what is fiction. It has been assumed that *Snorri Sturluson*, *Saxo Grammaticus* and the author of *Fagrskinna* may have had access to one or more versions of *Jómsvíkinga saga*.

These early authors may have made their assessments based on these and possibly other available sources in their time.

Thus, we have chosen to present their representation of the Jómsvíking battle as well.

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# Laurents Hanssøn

According to Gustav Storm, Laurents Hanssøn (Hansson) was in Denmark in his youth and served as a clerk. Later he stayed in the Bergen area. In the last years before he died, he was a learned legist in Stavanger. Hanssøn worked a lot on translating Norwegian *Antiquitates* into Danish. Around 1550, Storm says, he translated a part of *Jómsvíkinga saga* into Danish. The version is close to AM 291 4to. The original manuscript has now been lost. It is therefore difficult to determine the time of origin for the writing down of the original. In 1899, Gustav Storm published what he called *Laurents Hanssøns Saga Oversættelse* in book form.

Gustav Storm says that Laurents Hanssøn probably died in 1557–58 because a new lawman arrived in Stavanger in 1558. At this time his first name was also written Laurits. Can it be an equally reasonable conclusion that he moved to Bergen and became castle clerk there in 1560? Could there be one or two Laurents Hanssøn/Laurits Hanssøn working with Norse writings?

In Storm's introduction it seems that some of the manuscripts that Hanssøn used can be linked to Bergen. We can also mention that Storm places Laurents at Skoge on the island Sotra around 1550.

In *Maal og Minne* 1981, James E. Knirk writes about the owners of AM 327 4to at the end of the 16th century. He says that a Laurits Hanssøn, also called Laurits skriver, was castle clerk at Bergenhus from 1560, alderman in Bergen from 1579, and from 1582 until he died in 1596, he was one of the mayors there. He would then have been old, but there was perhaps no retirement age at the time.

Knirk says that Hanssøn in 1588 gave AM 327 to Povel Helgeson. His name is also among others written Poul Helgesøn and Povel Helliessen. He further says that some words and expressions in this work have been translated into Danish, but that it is not Helgesøn's handwriting. Has anyone checked whether the manuscript could have belonged to Hanssøn and have the same handwriting as in the other translations and works of Laurents Hanssøn?

## Here begins the story of the powerful Jómsvíkings (: the widely-known Danes or Gothi.)

King Sveinn prepared a large feast. He invited many chieftains and great men. At that time, he was to inherit his father, who had recently died. This banquet

they called inheritance feast. A short time before, Strút-Haraldr, the king of Skåne (Skáni), had died, and also Véseti, on Bornholm (Borgundarhólmr), father of Búi inn digri. The king therefore sent invitation to the Jómsvíkings: That Sigvaldi, Búi and their brothers should come and inherit their fathers and to hold a banquet. Sigvaldi came with all his leading Jómsvíkings. They had 11 ships from Vendland and 20 from Skåne. All were fully equipped.

On the first day during the banquet, before King Sveinn sat down in his father's seat of honour, he drank to his father's memory and gave his word of honour that before three winters had passed, he would sail to England with his whole army to kill King Aðalráðr or chase him out of the country. To mark this, everyone who was at the banquet should drink what was presented. They gave the Jómsvíking chieftains the strongest drink in the biggest horns – and everyone drank. Later, the strongest drink was again poured into the biggest horns and they drank in memory of Christ. The third offering was in memory of St. Michael. And the horns were emptied again. The king now took his seat. The others seated on their places around the table. Here the drinking continued. There was a lot of joy and witticism, and people became very drunk.

Sveinn noticed this. He says to Sigvaldi and the other Jómsvíkings: “Here is a beautiful gathering with lots of talk and glam. I would like to suggest that we deal with a little more useful talk and jests that can be of benefit to us. Therefore, I have always wanted to do so, and I have as a habit of doing it in that way.”

Sigvaldi replies: “King, to me it seems what you mentioned first is the best introduction to joy. Perhaps we should all, as is advisable, listen to it and consent to it. But what would you have done or pretended to do which we can rejoice over?”

The king replied: “I have always experienced and heard that where many great men are gathered, they give solemn promises that merit praise and words of encouragement. I'm happy for such a prank. And what great deeds can one expect from Jómsvíkings who have their honour spread to people in all countries for being the most skilled men in the entire northern world? And perhaps all other men ought to know, who in honour are more men than others, what they swear by and stick to is more firm than what other men swear or take their oath by. Your work will then also spread further in the world than other men's deeds. I began this joke by giving my word of honour that before three years have passed, I would have chased



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King Aðalráðr out of England or beaten him to death and taken over his kingdom.

Now Sigvaldi, you shouldn't promise less than me.” Sigvaldi replies: “That's how it should be, king. I will give this word of honour. I shall go on an expedition to Norway before three winters have passed and chase Jarl Hákon from the country or beat him to death – or be left lying down myself.” The king replied: “This will go well. It is a brave promise if you complete that. And if you have half as much luck as you have said, you can accomplish and end it like a skilful man.”

“Now it's your turn to speak,” says the king to Þorkell inn hávi: “What do you want to promise? I know it will be great.”

Þorkell replies: “My king, I have thought about my promise. I will follow my brother, Sigvaldi, to Norway as long as I can see the stern of his ship on the open sea. If he lands, I shall not flee from him as long as I can see his banner in front of me.”

“Well spoken,” says the king, “if you complete this without doubt, you are a good man.”

“Búi inn digri,” says the king, “now it's your turn to add something. I know it will be a great man's promise.”

Búi replies: “I will go to Norway with Sigvaldi and fight alongside him as far as my manhood goes. I will not flee as long as Sigvaldi holds his ground and there are more fighters than those fallen.”

“May it be as you said, Búi,” says the king, “and may the great man's deed follow your words.”

“Now it's your turn, Sigurðr kápa,” says the king, “I know you will follow your brother Búi and promise no less than him.”

“My promise is,” replies Sigurðr, “that I will follow my brother Búi and not flee until he is dead – if that happens.”

“I think you will,” says the king, “follow your brother as a brother should do.”

“Now it's your turn, Vagn,” says the king, “and it's great for us to hear what you want to promise. You who have ancestors who are known to be among the bravest and most capable giants.”

Vagn, who was no more than 18 winters old, promised: “I will follow Sigvaldi on this journey, and my relative Búi, with whom I will keep company as long as he fights and lives. It shall also follow this promise that if I come to Norway, I shall come to bed with Ingibjörg, daughter of Þorkell leira in Vík. It will happen without his or his relatives' will, and I will beat Þorkell to death myself.”

Among the Jómsvikings was one called Björn inn brezki. He was born in Britain in the place where Pálnatóki had stayed. He was in Vagn's entourage. The

king asks what he wants to promise? Björn said that he would follow his foster brother Vagn as far as he had wisdom and courage. Many other Jómsvikings also came with several promises. These Jómsvikings were chieftains, counts and capable warriors.

They continued to drink until people went to their places to sleep. Sigvaldi went to bed together with his wife, Ástriðr. He fell asleep quickly and slept deeply. But Ástriðr was awake all night. She woke Sigvaldi up early in the morning. She talked to him and asked if he remembered what kind of promises he had made in the evening. He answered and said that he could not remember anything. She says that this is such things you shall not remember. What is now needed is both wisdom and good advice.

“What kind of advice,” says Sigvaldi, “you who are wise enough to give such advice?”

“I know no more about your promises,” she said, “than a few words I heard afterwards. But when you again come to drink with the king, be happy and merry. If the king remembers the promises and mentions them, then you must answer that beer changes people. In such a situation one will often say things that one would not otherwise have expressed in a sober state. You shall then ask the king what he remembers. Should he remember, then you can ask what he will contribute to fulfil the promises, since it was the king who led the conversation in that direction. Then ask him how many ships he wants to give for this campaign. If the king then comes in high spirits, then you demand many and say that you need them since Jarl Hákon is powerful. Ask for ships and other help if you promise to leave at once. If he doubts whether anything will come out of it, then he will perhaps promise more help against Jarl Hákon.”

Sigvaldi did as Ástriðr, his wife, advised. When the king came to the throne the next day and the Jómsvikings went to sit at table with him, they began to drink and found much to talk about and enjoy themselves. Now the king remembers the promises from the night before. He thinks it's the best joke and it will be fun to talk to Sigvaldi about these promises. At first Sigvaldi feigns that he didn't remember anything. Later, Sigvaldi answered as Ástriðr had taught him. Then the king replied that when Sigvaldi and the other Jómsvikings were ready, he would give them 20 ships.

Sigvaldi answers: “This subsidy would have been large from a rich man, but is not much from a king.”

King Sveinn replies with a red face: “How many ships do you want me to provide?”

“I can give you that answer right away,” says Sigvaldi, “I want 60 ships, all of them should be large and well-equipped. I will not add fewer ships since they

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are smaller. It is not easy to know if all your ships will return. It is rather unlikely that this will happen.”

The king replies: “All my ships will be ready when you are prepared. And you get ready at once.” Sigvaldi replies: “King, this was a royal answer if it ends as we think. And should we leave as soon as this banquet is over, you must keep what is promised, and that the ships and the other things which we need are ready.”

“Sigvaldi, this is how it should be,” says the king, “and this advice has probably come from someone else than I thought. I did not expect that this would be carried out so quickly.”

Ástríðr, Sigvaldi's wife, replies: “It is not likely, sir, that they can win over Jarl Hákon if they spend a long time preparing this journey. Jarl Hákon can then get information about the campaign and have time to prepare for resistance. The best advice is therefore to start the journey as soon as possible so they can come upon him unexpectedly.”

It is said that Tófa, daughter of Strút-Haraldr and Sigurðr's wife, said to Sigurðr: “You shall go, as you promised. I ask you to fulfil what you have said and follow your brother, Búi, if you want a good reputation. I will promise you that no man will come into my bed as long as you are alive. I will send two men with you Búi for the friendly association you have had with me in good and virtuous deeds. My will and awe would have been the same if my father had wanted me to marry you rather than Sigurðr. In order to complete what is in progress, I will let Hávarðr höggvandi and Áslákr hólmskalli follow you.”

Búi accepted this and thanked her. Búi now let his kinsman, Vagn, get Áslákr hólmskalli to be his companion. He kept Hávarðr to himself. Now the feast ended. The Jómsvikings were ready to go to Norway. From before, they had a hundred longships that they brought from Jómsborg to the banquet. Now they had a total of 190 small and large ships.

They sailed with favourable wind from Limfjorden (Limafjörður) to Vík in Norway. Here they came ashore unexpectedly at night. No one had so far heard about their journey. Immediately afterwards, the same night, they came to Tønsberg with their whole army. Here lived a young man called Qgmundr hvíti. He was Jarl Hákon's vassal and was held in high esteem both by the jarl and others.

The Jómsvikings immediately attacked the city. They killed many men, robbed everything they could find and did not proceed kindly where they came. Those who slept woke up as if from bad dreams, to receive many blows and attacks with weapons. Qgmundr hvíti also woke up together with his men. He escaped to a fortification where they thought they could defend

themselves longest since they could not escape into the terrain. The Jómsvikings discovered them and sought under the building and cut it down until it fell. Qgmundr realized that he could not resist there any longer. He jumped down and landed on his feet on the street. Vagn Ákason was standing there. He immediately cut off Qgmundr's hand above the elbow. Vagn took the hand with the gold rings. Qgmundr got away into the forest, while Vagn only had the gold rings to look at.

When Qgmundr entered the forest, he remained standing. He wanted to hear what the strangers were talking about and what kind of army this was. Then he could tell others who and what kind of people they were, who had caused him and others such harm. When he heard that they were Jómsvikings, he went through forest and fields for six days before he came to people. He received good help from people who knew where Jarl Hákon was. He found the jarl on a farm called Skuggen, where he stayed at a man called Erlingr. The jarl was here with 100 men of his own.

Qgmundr hvíti arrived here late in the evening. He entered the hall in front of the jarl and greeted him.

The jarl replies: “Do you have news to tell?”

Qgmundr answers: “There is not much news to tell so far, but there could be much more if things develop further.”

“What do you mean?” says the jarl.

“I can give you reliable information that a large army has arrived south in Vík. They behave in a bad manner, and I think they intended to continue in the same way,” replies Qgmundr.

The jarl answers back: “What do I know? I don't think people will stop telling lies in this country until someone is hanged for it.”

Jarl Eiríkr, Hákon's son, replies: “This is not how one should face what is being told. This man is not a liar.”

“Eiríkr, are you sure you know who he is. It seems that you remember his speech?” says Hákon.

“I think I know who he is. He is Qgmundr hvíti, your vassal man. He has often welcomed us far better than we do now,” answers Eiríkr.

Then Hákon replies: “I didn't recognize him. Bring him to me so I can talk to him.”

Qgmundr went forward and talked with the jarl until he remembered Qgmundr and realized who he was.

The jarl asks: “Do you have reliable news about the army, Qgmundr? Who is the commander of this great army?”

“His name is Sigvaldi,” Qgmundr answers, “and from other chieftains who were in this group, I heard the names Búi and Vagn. Here I have the proof that it is

true army news that I am presenting.” He showed the jarl the stumped hand.

“Oh, oh,” says the jarl, “hard and bad you have come out of the game. Do you know who caused you this injury?”

“Jarl, I know for sure,” answers Ogmundr: “When Vagn removed the gold ring from the hand, the others said to him: Now you are richer, Vagn. Based on this, I know that it was Vagn who gave me this injury.”

The jarl says: “Then your information that these people are the Jómsvikings is trustworthy. Truth be told, the Jómsvikings are the last ones I want to fight against in this world. Now it needs both wit and courage to get the victory I want.”

Jarl Hákon now sent messengers north to Lade near Trondheim to his son, Jarl Sveinn, and asked him to gather the leading men there. Next, he should get others to prepare ships and weapons and come south as soon as they were ready. Guðbrandr hvíti was a powerful man. He was the jarl's relative and a distinguished fellow and friend. He was at this time with the jarl. Guðbrandr and Hákon travelled immediately after upwards and downwards Romsdalen, and they gathered people in Nordmøre and Sunnmøre.

Hákon sent his son, Jarl Erlingr, south to Rogaland and Hordaland to gather ships and people. He also sent word to all his good men and friends that they should come to him with as many people as they could. Jarl Eiríkr Hákonarson went north to his brother Sveinn and to Namdalen and gathered people there.

When Eiríkr arrived at Hamrasund, there came towards him a warship at which the commander was Þorkell miðlangr, who had recently returned from abroad. He was at odds with Jarl Hákon and for that reason he had travelled abroad on robberies. Eiríkr speaks to him and says that if he wants to come and help his father, he will promise to make peace between them. Þorkell replied that if that promise was kept then he would fight. Eiríkr promised surely that so it would be. They then travelled to the place which had been agreed upon before Jarls Hákon and Eiríkr had parted in Skuggen. Jarls Hákon, Eiríkr, Sveinn and Erlingr gathered in Sunnmøre by an island called Hawud (Hǫð). Here also came the whole army they had called in. There were 360 ships, both large and small. They joined forces in Hjarundavågen (Hjarunda wogh) where they were preparing for the battle and laid their plans.

*De fuldes tilsamen till thenn stedh som forsaugd war ffør æn hak: och Erick Jarller skilldiz att paa Skugge och fanz der samem alle de Hakon Erick Swen og Erling Jarller paa Sundmør hoess en øe som hawud heder och der kom till dennem all den herr som de haf-*

*fde vdsteffndth. war deth iijc skiff smaa och stoor och laugde de sidenn tilhobs ind vdj Hiarunda wogh (5) gøre ther sin anslagh. (5) Slagting vti Hiarunda wogh.* The Jómsvikings came from the south along the coast. They did not proceed peacefully. They robbed, burned and destroyed houses on their way. Everyone who could escape tried to get away. Now they had come north to Ulvesundet (Úlfasund) near Stad (Staðr). (Stad is a peninsula without any harbour and protrude far out into the sea.... And has green cliffs on the other side, etc.)

The armies did not know about each other so far. Jarl Hákon lay on the north side of Stad. The Jómsvikings got a favourable wind and sailed with their entire fleet north of Stad to a port called Herøy (Hereyjar). When they arrived here, they wanted to get more food. Vagn Ákason took his ship to the aforementioned island of Hawud where Jarl Hákon and his sons had gathered in Hjarundavågen (Hjörungavágr), which was in the neighbourhood.

*Wagnn Akesen ffor mett sitt skiff bortt till thenn fforschreffne øe hawud heder der som hak: J: och hans søner samnedis først hart hoess hiarunda wogin.*

There on the island, Vagn wanted to take cattle and sheep for provisions. But he knew nothing about Jarl Hákon and his army. Vagn landed on the island with his people. There he meets a man who drives some cows and 12 goats.

Vagn asks him about the name.

“My name is Ulfr,” answers the farmer.

Vagn told his men to take the cows and goats and slaughter them on the ship. “We will also see if we can find more to slaughter here on the island,” says Vagn further.

Ulfr asks: “Who is the leader of this ship, and what is his name?”

Vagn answers: “My name is Vagn Ákason.”

Ulfr replies: “Not far from here, I think that there must be something better to slaughter for the Jómsvikings than my cows and goats.”

Vagn asks: “Can you give me reliable news about Jarl Hákon? About his journey or where we can find him?”

Ulfr answers: “Last night Jarl Hákon lay inside this island with only one ship. Now he is in Hjarundavågen (Hjarunda wogen) and asks for help. There you can probably kill him if you want, before the army, which he is waiting for, arrives.”

*Her laagh Hak: iarll (sauigde vlff) i afftes innen ffor denne øe mett ett skiff oc er han nu inne vdi hiarunda*

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*wogen bider hielpp, och kunne i nu well kome vidh att drebe hanom om i dett wille fför enn hans herr komer som han wentter.*

Vagn says: “You will be allowed to have your cows and goats in peace if you board my ship and show me where Jarl Hákon is.”

Ulfr says: “It is improper for me that I should be on your ship and fight against my own master. I'll show you the course to the place where you can find him, if you want. But you must set me ashore when I show you the sound you can use into the vágr.”

*Och attj sette megh paa landh naar ieg viser etter i sundett som i scholu ffare i woghenn.*

It was early in the day. Vagn, Ulfr and the others went to the ship and gave the message to the other Jómsvikings. Preparations were now made for the battle against the enemy, and they set off hastily for Hjarundavågen.

*oc legge affstedt met hast till Hjarundowoghin.*

When they came to the mouth, Ulfr thought that the Jómsvikings would see more ships than only the one he had previously told them about. He jumps overboard and tries to swim ashore. Vagn discovers this and sends a spear after him, and there Ulfr dies. Hjarundavågen ends towards east and have its mouth towards west. There are three rocks called Hjarundar (Hjarunder) in the middle of the inlet, and ships can sail between each rock. These rocks have given the name to the vágr.

*Hjarundowogin gaar ind øster i landet æn mynnet i wester der ligge iij sker mitt ffor mynnet som hede hjarunder och kand skiff ffare emellem huert sker. der haffuer wogin naffnn aff.*

Now Sigvaldi and the other Jómsvikings enter the vágr, which they see is full of ships. Jarl Hákon is there with his sons Eiríkr, Sveinn etc. who, when they see the Jómsvikings coming, untie the shore ropes and anchors and get ready to fight.

Sigvaldi places his ship in the middle of the army. Þorkell inn hávi, his brother, sets his ship alongside. Búi in company with his brother Sigurðr place their ships at the northern flank. Vagn Ákason and Björn inn brezki, his foster brother, are located south of Sigvaldi, at the southern flank.

Jarl Hákon now decides who of his people shall fight against whom. He arranges it so that in some places they should be three against one of the enemies.

Sveinn Hákonarson was sent against Sigvaldi. Three headmen were to fight against Þorkell inn hávi, Sigvaldi's brother. They were Yrja-Skeggi, Sigurðr steiklingr from Helleland and Þórir hjörtr.

Two chieftains, who have not been mentioned before, were given the task to accompany Sveinn Hákonarson against Sigvaldi. They were Guðbrandr hvíti and Styrkárr from Gimsar. Þorkell miðlangr, Kolbjörn kerlingabani from Floan and Þorkell leira were to fight against Búi. Against Sigurðr, brother of Búi, stood Ármóðr from Qnundarfjörðr and his son, Árni.

Against Vagn Ákason stood Eiríkr Hákonarson, Erlingr of Skuggi and Qgmundr hvíti, who would like to retaliate for the damage that Vagn had inflicted on him. These were to fight against Björn inn brezki: vassal Árni, Hallvarðr uppsjá and Hávarðr from Flyðrunes. Jarl Hákon was to be free to assist where it was most needed.

Among Jarl Hákon's men there were four Icelanders. Einarr skálaglamm was of one of these. At that time, he happened to mention that he and his fellows had perhaps been with Jarl Hákon long enough, and that they had not received the wages they deserved. He therefore wanted to go over to Sigvaldi and sings a ballad about this, as was customary at the time. Einarr then ran away from Hákon's ship to see what the jarl would do. Hákon calls at him and asks him to come back. Einarr did so. The jarl now gave him two gilt silver bowls and two necklaces or chains, one of gold and the other of silver. They resembled humans and had from time immemorial been in the possession of many distinguished men.

These chains had a special feature. When the jarl wanted an explanation of strange things, he put the chains into these bowls and then guessed whether something would happen. Should something happen or happen as he wished, then the chains moved in the bowls so that there was a big glam. If what he predicted did not happen, then they lay still. He gave these items to the Icelandic Einarr. He was therefore later called Einarr skálaglamm. Another Icelandic was called Vigfúss, a third Þorðr qrvahqnd and the fourth Þorleifr skúma. These Icelanders had been in the forest the night before and made clubs out of fallen roots or long roots. The clubs were then burned in the fire to make them tougher, and they were taken on board Jarl Eiríkr's ship. Eiríkr then wanted to know what they were going to do with these clubs. Þorleifr replied that the clubs would benefit just as much as other weapons if they had to defend themselves against Danes.

Now they arranged themselves on both sides according to the array described before. Jarl Hákon was at first together with Sveinn, his son, to strengthen him



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against Sigvaldi. Now the fierce battle began with attacks from both sides. They shot with bows, used string spears and kesjers (large and strong iron, twisted bear spears). They continued like this for a long time and fought sharply against each other. Likewise, the leidang people used swords and battle axes, halberds and broad axes. For a long time the ships stay together, and mostly Sigvaldi against Jarl Hákon and his son Sveinn. Neither of them would withdraw their ship for the others.

Many people fell on both sides. But most on Hákon's side as the Jómsvikings cut harder and shot harder so it went through the shield of Hákon's men. Hákon's breastplate was so destroyed that he had to throw it away and get another. Then Jarl Hákon discovered that Búi had achieved a large bow into the northern flank. Those who fought against him had withdrawn their ships. This gave advantages to Búi, and he killed many. At another place, Hákon saw that it was equal between Jarl Eiríkr and Vagn on the southern flank. Now Jarls Eiríkr and Sveinn go with their ships towards Búi. They attack Búi with three ships against his one. One ship on each side and one in front until they forced Búi to retreat, and fought against him so long that the line remained as before.

When Eiríkr returned to his people, Vagn had gained several openings or bows through Eiríkr's bow line. Then Eiríkr got angry and placed *Járnbarðinn*, as his ship was called, against Vagn's *Skeiðin*, which was the name of his ship, close to each other and stem against stem. They fought again as hard as possible. No fight or clash was fiercer than between these two. Vagn and Áslákr hólmskalli jumped from their ship, *Skeiðin*, and onto Eiríkr's *Járnbarðinn*. They walk on each side along the ship and strike with both hands as they go forward. People they encountered fell or fled. Eiríkr sees that these men are so stubborn and strong that one cannot resist for long. What should they do?

Áslákr was bald and had no helmet on his head. The Norwegians chopped at his head with swords and axes, which just slid off as if it were on ice and did not bite on him. On this day the weather was hot, and many had thrown away their clothes and wore only breastplates or bonnets. Eiríkr shouted at his men that they should immediately go towards Vagn and Áslákr with weapons that could bite on their heads as they did not pay attention to swords or axes, but cut down men like grass. Vigfúss, who was standing some distance away, found a solution. He picked up a large beak, which was lying at his feet, and threw it at Áslákr hólmskalli.

It struck his head, and Áslákr fell over dead. Vagn goes by the other bord and mows men out of the way. He reached the Icelander Þorleifr skúma. Þorleifr went

against Vagn with the oak club. The blow hit Vagn on top of the head so that the helmet split all the way down to his forehead. At the same time, he stabbed Þorleifr with the sword. Vagn then jumped up the gangway and over to his ship, *Skeiðin*. Here Vagn and his men began to fight as hard as possible again. Vagn and Áslákr had swept *Járnbarðinn*. Eiríkr now let men go from other ships on board *Járnbarðinn* until it was filled up again. The hard fight between Eiríkr and Vagn now lasted until everyone was tired. Now they see that Jarl Hákon and the others had landed, and both sides rested. Eiríkr also landed and found the other jarls there.

Jarl Hákon says to his sons: "I don't think this battle is going our way. These men do not resemble men I know or have heard of. Nevertheless, I have previously wanted to find out if they really were as the rumour says.

They now make me lose the desire I previously expressed, that I would have chosen to fight against them at the very end. It seems to be far more difficult than I could have imagined. This could be a long battle. It will be uncertain who will win if we don't find a solution. You shall be here with the army because we cannot in any way avoid fearing that they will strike again. But I will leave the field with some men and see if I can find some measures."

He then left the others to worship his sorceress. Jarl Hákon went to a nearby island called Primsigð. He brought some men with him to this island, where there was a large forest.

*Hakon J: foor vdi en øe ther hartt hoss som heder. primsigd. och nogle men met hanom, der var meghin skogh i thenn øe,*

Here he goes into the forest. Hákon turns to the north and begins to urge and pray to his idols, Þorgerðr and Irpa. But they are deaf and will not answer his prayers. He has a feeling that they are angry with him. He asks them to demand something that he can sacrifice. They don't answer. Then he bids them to sacrifice men, but they still don't want to answer. The jarl thinks to himself: "Perhaps they want him or one of his sons?" He asks about this. Then the answer came that they wanted him or his sons. The jarl thinks it's good that it comes to a settlement and instead of sacrificing himself he takes his son, Erlingr, 7 years old and a fine young male. The executioner Skofti karkr catches the boy and kills him at once, since the jarl had heard the witches reply that they demanded Erlingr, his son. He was sacrificed in the same way as Hákon used to do with others he sacrificed. He now thought that they were his best and most faithful friends, as they had also promised him

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to be. Hákon now goes back to his ship and mobilizes his army to attack the Jómsvikings. “Now I know for sure,” he said, “that we will win since I have sacrificed to Þorgerðr and Irpa. And they won't let me down like before.”

There had been a break in the battle while the jarl was away. But both sides had used the time to prepare in the best possible way for new attacks.

Jarl Hákon now goes on board his ship and places himself against Sigvaldi's ship. The others are also ar-aying as before. All over, the hardest fight begins.

After a while the blackest storm cloud moved up in the north. It comes right over the Jómsvikings. From the cloud came the coldest weather and the biggest hail anyone had ever experienced. It thundered and thundered so that the Jómsvikings, who had to defend themselves against this terrible storm, could hardly stay on their feet. Earlier in the day, the weather had been so hot that many had taken off their clothes and were wearing nothing but their military clothing. Now they were freezing and could not move.

It was Hávarðr hoggvandi, Búi's companion, who first saw the sorceress Þorgerðr Hqrðabrúðr. She was on board Jarl Hákon's ship. Later, other clairvoyant men also saw this, and finally those who were not clairvoyant also saw her. She held out her hands. From every finger there flew arrows that killed people. They tell this to Sigvaldi and the other Jómsvikings.

Now Sigvaldi said: “When the storm ended, we still fought against Hákon. But now I think we are fighting against monsters and not against people. It can be difficult to fight against skilled men, but it is worse to fight against monsters. But one thing is for sure, each must fight as best one can.”

The jarl notices that the Jómsvikings will not flee for this shower of hail. The storm subsides and seems to end. Then Hákon calls out to the sorceresses again and tells them how much he has sacrificed to them over the years.

Now it drew up to a new storm from the north. This one is harder and worse than the first. About the time the next storm came, Hávarðr hoggvandi saw that another old woman had entered Jarl Hákon's ship. She did the same as the previous one. Now they were two sorceresses.

Then Sigvaldi said: “Now I escape, and so do all my men. Now it's worse than the first time I noticed that we were fighting against monsters. There are now two of them, whereas previously there was no more than one. I don't want to be here anymore, but I'm running away from monsters and not from people. And I didn't by my oath in Denmark promise that I would fight against monsters in Norway.”

Sigvaldi turns his ship around and sails away. He shouts to the others that they too should leave as soon as possible.

Vagn Ákason answered and presented the following verse:

*Sigvaldi himself has placed us under the club  
Now the coward is going home to Denmark  
To enjoy himself in his wife's lap  
instead of going over wide boards*

Búi and Vagn continued to fight as hard as they could. Just as Sigvaldi called out to Vagn and Búi, Þorkell miðlangr jumped from his ship onto Búi's ship and struck him so that both his lips and his entire chin fell on the deck. Búi chopped back. Þorkell had to defend himself against the strike, but there was a lot of blood on the ship and it was slippery. His feet slipped away, and he was lying on the strake. Búi then struck him in the middle of his waist and split Þorkell in two.

Then Búi said as much as they could understand: “It would be painful for Danish women on Bornholm to kiss me if I should come there again.”

He takes his chests in his hands and asks all his men to do the same. He then walks backwards outboard into the sea and to the bottom with the chests so that they later saw neither him nor the chests.

Sigvaldi had dragged himself out of the fleet and shouts loudly at Vagn and Búi. He did not know that Búi had gone overboard, and he asks them to leave the place like him. Sigvaldi had become cold during the shower of hail. He therefore sat down to row and let someone else take over the helm. When Vagn had finished the verse, he threw a spear at Sigvaldi. All he knew was that he had been at the helm, and thus the spear went through the man standing there. Vagn scolded Sigvaldi and told him to go where all cowards should go. Sigvaldi sailed away. Þorkell inn hávi, Sigvaldi's brother, immediately followed with 6 ships, and Sigurðr kápa escaped since his brother, Búi, had gone overboard. Þorkell and Sigurðr thought that they had fulfilled their promises.

These three chieftains stayed together until they returned to Denmark with 24 ships. After Sigvaldi had fled, the hail, lightning and thunder stopped. The Jómsvikings who were on the remaining ships escaped to Vagn's ship and fought on as hard as they could until the darkness separated the armies. Some of Hákon's men took over the ships which the Jómsvikings had left. They removed the sails and rudder, but left the dead and wounded on the ships overnight. Otherwise, they kept a strong guard around all the ships so that no one could get away.

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Later Jarl Hákon went ashore, set up a tent and cared for the wounded. It seemed to him that he could boast himself of the victory. He had a hailstone that had arrived earlier in the day weighed. This weighed as much as two shillings. It is called øre in Norwegian. He did this to praise and pay tribute to Þorgerðr and Irpa. Jarl Hákon and Guðbrandr hvíti kept watch this night and worked with bandaging people.

Now it must be told what assessment Vagn and Björn inn brezki made between themselves. If they stayed on the ship they would be captured there. If they got ashore, they could through attacks and obstacles in one way or another get away afterwards. They took down the masts and rigging and tied them together so that 80 men could float in that way. They set course towards land in the dark and then came upon a flooded rock or cliff, where they disembarked and thought it was the mainland. Then the current drew away the masts. They have to remain on the rock until the morning. 10 of the wounded died during the night. 70 stood when it dawned. Jarl Hákon had cared for his people all night. There were very few men who had not been wounded, and now it was near daylight. They then heard a string whine. An arrow came flying from Búi's ship. It strikes Guðbrandr hvíti, Hákon's relative. The arrow killed him immediately.

The jarl and everyone else thought that this was a great harm.

At this time a man stood by the tent door and looked in. Jarl Eiríkr asked why he was standing there. "I am Þorleifr skúma, Icelander," he said.

"What kind of injury have you received," said Eiríkr.

Þorleifr replied: "Vagn made me lose blood with his iron yesterday when I hit him with the club. Nobody can stop that." Soon after he fell down dead.

Immediately after they went out to search the ships and first to Búi's ship. They wished to find out who had shot from there during the night. Here they found a man who was barely alive. It was Hávarðr hoggvandi, Búi's companion. Both of his feet were cut off below the knees.

Jarl Sveinn and Þorkell leira ask who he was. He answered: "Hávarðr hoggvandi." He then asks who they are and if they had received something where they stayed last night.

They said: "Certainly. Was it you who sent it?"

"I don't want to hide that," he replies, "was there anyone who got hurt?"

"The person meets his death," they said.

"Who," he asked.

"Guðbrandr hvíti", they said.

"It was a pity that it didn't happen the way I wanted. It was Jarl Hákon I had intended to target. Still,

it makes me feel good to hear that someone who deserved it was injured and died," replied Hávarðr.

Þorkell leira said: "There is no hope for him, so let's kill him."

So, they did and killed him right away. And all the Jómsvikings would have done it in the same way if they had gained the upper hand or none of them would have come to Jómsborg again.

Later they went to the rock where Vagn and his people stood, took them on board a ship and brought them to the beach where Jarl Hákon was. They were tied up and went ashore one after the other in ropes. First the jarl gave food to all his people. Afterwards he wanted to interrogate the Jómsvikings and let them kill. Ships and other booty that had belonged to the Jómsvikings, who had partly escaped, partly taken prisoners and mostly beaten, were divided by Jarl Hákon and his men before they went to the table. Afterwards, they set off to execute the captured. Þorkell leira was the one who preferred to do this since Vagn Ákason had sworn that he would kill him and later have his daughter. Otherwise, Þorkell also wanted to test whether the reputation of the Jómsvikings was correct: that they were fierce warriors who did not fear death.

Now those who were most seriously injured were first untied from the rope.

The others were freed from the rope in which they were tied and led forward to be put to death. They twisted willow twigs in their hair. First, three of the wounded were brought forward, and Þorkell cut off their heads.

Then he did the same with three others. Þorkell wanted to know if they feared death.

One said: "Why should I be afraid of the same thing that happened to my father?" He was then executed. They lead forward 5 men. Þorkell asks them what they thought about their death.

One replied: "We must have forgotten the Jómsviking law if we should fear this one word – death." Þorkell also executed them etc. Then Jarl Eiríkr asked him to inquire each individual and execute him before he did the same to the next. One came forward. Þorkell asked him what he thought about his death.

He replied: "I think well about my death. Worse for you is the shame you inflict on yourself until your dying day."

Þorkell immediately chopped off his head. A handsome young man with long white hair was brought forward.

He brushed his hair back and asked Þorkell to cut it so that no blood got on his white hair. A man stepped forward and held his hair firmly forward. Þorkell strikes, but the other quickly pulled his head towards

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him. Both hands of the man who held the hair were cut off, and the axe stood stuck in the ground.

Jarl Eiríkr runs forward and asked: "Who is this handsome man?"

"They call me Sigurðr and I'm Búi's apprentice," he replied, "and yet, not all the Jómsvikings are dead."

Jarl Eiríkr said: "Truly you are Búi's son. Will you ask for quarter, Sigurðr?"

"The question is – who bids," said Sigurðr.

"Whoever bids has the power to do so, and I want it," said Eiríkr.

Sigurðr was released from the rope. Then Þorkell said: "Will you give quarter to all these men? But Vagn Ákason shall never leave this place alive."

He turned to Vagn: "You swore in Denmark that you would kill me and lie with my daughter. Now it is more likely that I will kill you."

Þorkell lifted the axe. Vagn moved away as soon as

possible from under the feet of Þorkell, who therefore tripped. Þorkell falls over Vagn. Vagn grabbed the axe and gave Þorkell a mortal wound.

Eiríkr said: "Do you want to ask for quarter, Vagn?"

"I want to ask for it if all of us who are here can get it," replied Vagn. Then Eiríkr gave quarter to Vagn and 11 others and released them from the rope. They then separated. Jarl Hákon headed north to Trondheim and was very angry with Jarl Eiríkr who had released Vagn Ákason. Jarl Eiríkr travelled south to his earldom. Vagn himself followed him as number twelve. Eiríkr married Vagn to Ingibjörg, Þorkell leira's daughter, and gave him a fully equipped longship.

They parted as best of friends, and Vagn travelled south to Denmark again. Then he had fulfilled his promises. He became a powerful man in Denmark, and many powerful and distinguished men later descended from him.



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# Arngrímur Jónsson

Arngrímur Jónsson (b. 1568 – d. 1648), rector at the episcopal seat of Hólar in Iceland, wrote a version of *Jómsvikinga saga* in Latin around 1592. He was preoccupied with Icelandic history, which he also wanted to convey abroad and therefore used Latin in his many publications. In his work, Arngrímur had access to old writings which now have been lost. And when it comes to the Latin edition of *Jómsvikinga saga*, it is assumed that this too is based on a later lost manuscript. The Latin version of *Jómsvikinga saga* was published in book form with comments by Gustav Antonio Gjessing in 1877.

## *IX. The Vows of the Jómsvikings.*

Not much time had passed, when it was brought to everyone's knowledge that Jarl Strút-Haraldr, the father of Sigvaldi and Þorkell, had gone the way of all flesh and thus liberated himself from this mortal coil. King Sveinn promised to organise the burial with all the honours and splendour the late jarl so justly deserved, and then he sent messengers to Sigvaldi and Þorkell in order to invite them to a funeral banquet. They in turn asked the King not to be sparing with any goods or expenses in preparing the feast and promised to arrive in great haste. There were those, however, who, mistrusting Sveinn's noble intentions, tried to discourage Sigvaldi from setting off on this trip, claiming that the king, not oblivious of how he had once been wronged by Sigvaldi, was now plotting his revenge. Bearing in mind their warnings, Sigvaldi agreed to take with him a fleet of at least 130 ships and having chosen the most exquisite representatives of the Jómsvikings, and he set sail to Denmark accompanied by them.

The King ordered welcoming Sigvaldi at the palace with all the royal splendour and sumptuousness and placed a special seat for him right next to the throne. The feast began and everyone started drinking vigorously with much joy and elation, especially the Jómsvikings. Once they had drunk so much wine that they could neither make use of their feet or their minds, King Sveinn observed that – seeing how they were amusing themselves with a pleasant and congenial conversation – he was hoping that the greedy time together with the envious old age would not put an end to such delight. To this Sigvaldi replied: “You first ought to suggest a vow worthy of posterity's attention and memory, which we in turn shall fulfil in our allegiance to you.” Then the King spoke such words: “I vow that before three years have passed, I shall have

driven King Aðalráðr of England from his kingdom or I shall have slain him, thus obtaining his reign.” To which Sigvaldi swore that he would in like manner handle Hákon, the Jarl of Norway. Having heard this, the Jómsvikings unanimously promised to offer their help.

## *X. Ástriðr, Sigvaldi's wife and her advice.*

The guests continued their talks until the small hours, when they finally retired. And indeed, Sigvaldi fell asleep with great ease that night because of his heavy intoxication. When Ástriðr, his spouse, woke him up the following morning, she enquired of him if he could recall the last night's vows. When he steadfastly denied remembering anything, she told him what follows: “I realize it is not my place to advise a man, but I do think that you should never fulfil the promises you made yesterday under the influence of liquor.” And then she related everything to him in detail.

Having heard her words, Sigvaldi said: “Your advice is indeed very prudent and now help me devise a plan of action that will ensure that I shall not expose myself to public scorn and become the laughing stock of others.” To that Ástriðr replied: “When you return to the palace, I would like you to approach the King with your head held up high and your face as courteous and serene as possible, so that he cannot sense that you're unusually preoccupied with something, and infer from it that your mind is vexed with the memory of last night's vows. And should he bring up the subject of the talks, you shall reply that, as they say, not at all erroneously, under the influence of liquor, when the feet exchange their function with the hands, an intoxicated man becomes transformed beyond recognition and bears no resemblance to his sober self. You will then ask him if he definitely wishes you to fulfil the vows and whether he would be willing to assist you in the matter. Should he then promise you his aid, you shall in turn enquire of him how many ships he is prepared to equip you with, and, furthermore, stating that you shall need a great fleet of vessels in order to complete the mission successfully. And then, unless my intuition fails me, he shall assure you, without any reluctance, that he is willing to promise you his help, relying strongly on the hope that you will fulfil your vows. For failing to do so would tarnish your name with the greatest shame and dishonour from which you would never be able to free yourself for as long as you live.” The next day when the King recalled the vows during

the feast last evening, Sigvaldi followed Ástriðr's advice. And so, when he enquired of the King how many vessels, he would be willing provide for him, the monarch replied he would assist him to the tune of twenty ships. Having heard this, Sigvaldi said that with such a small fleet he would not be able to accomplish a mission this arduous. He further asserted: "Seeing that if the campaign proves successful – should the luck be on our side – you are bound to profit from it more than anyone else, it is your duty to provide me with a great fleet of vessels." To which the King, somewhat angered with his words, replied: "So, in your opinion, how many ships should I provide you with?" "Sixty, Sire," came Sigvaldi's answer. "If this is how many you would like to have, you shall get them soon, on the condition that you promise to remain here with me until they have been prepared," said the King. Sigvaldi then spoke these words: "Make sure they are made ready by the time the feast is over, so that we may at once set sail across the seas to Norway to encounter Hákon." The King lowered his head, somewhat saddened, and replied: "I can see that you do not wish to delay the mission and that you are taking matters in your hands much more quickly than I expected." And then the feast which had lasted for many days and which had been filled with joy and witty jests of all kinds came to an end.

### ***XI. The Jómsvikings set off to Norway.***

Hereafter, once the feast was over, Sigvaldi set sail for Norway with a fleet of seventy vessels in order to accomplish his goal, lest Hákon should have the time to learn about his plans and assemble the troops, thus sabotaging the positive outcome of the endeavour. And so, taking on his course, he put his fleet ashore at the province of Jæren on the eve of our Lord's Nativity. Once he had set up his army on the land, he pillaged and plundered the pitiable inhabitants, and brought death to the whole Geirmundr family, among other nobles. But when the Jómsvikings learned that Hákon was staying in the same province where they had anchored, they retreated to Vík and laid siege to the city of Tønsberg in the dead of night, taking its dwellers by complete surprise. So much so, that no one was given a chance to escape and a great amount of gold and silver was looted.

At this time a nobleman by the name of Qgmundr hvíti, a man of great authority and power, held in high esteem by Hákon, was the king's wassal in Tønsberg.

Eager to save his own life, he ascended onto the roof of his house, hoping to be able to hide from the foe's spears more easily up there. But once he heard the Jómvikings entering his attic and, bit by bit, shatter-

ing everything on their way, Qgmundr jumped down to the yard, not far from where Vagn, the son of Áki, was standing, who saw him and cut off his arm with a sword. Injured this way, he reached a nearby forest, from where he could easily overhear the enemy's conversation and learn who the author of such a savage carnage was. He was forced to spend five consecutive lonely nights and days, sleeping in the wild under the naked sky, until he reached a place inhabited by people. So honoured was his name among the people, and so great was his fame that everyone, wherever he went, received him with generosity and due courtesy.

### ***XII. Hákon is informed about the Jómsvikings' army together with its plans and objectives.***

Having fled from the enemy's spear, Qgmundr, without any hesitation whatsoever, made his way to Hákon, who, having gathered, together with his son, Jarl Eiríkr, a hundred of his devotees with their servants for a banquet, was overwhelmed by grievous sadness and sorrow when he learned the gloomy rumours. So, when Qgmundr arrived at his house, he summoned him to his side and enquired of him, if he had any news to share with him. To which Qgmundr replied: "Venerable Hákon, I am bringing news, which may be unexpected: namely, the news of war. A mighty army and an incredible number of enemy troops have invaded Vík. They have pillaged and plundered every village, every farm, every cottage they found on their way, with a hitherto unseen ferocity and cruelty. So, I think you should not desist from action any longer, but send out the defence forces to face the enemy and put an end to this havoc wreaked by the dishonourable foe." Hákon, who these words angered mightily, said unto him: "It does not surprise me that you do not desist from spreading lies, unless of course anyone of your people was afflicted by the torture of impaling, for example." To which Eiríkr, Hákon's son, said: "Father, refrain from speaking in such a rash manner. He is a good man and worthy of trust and a man who does not lie wilfully." Hákon replied: "You ought to come to know a man very well before you begin to defend him so tenaciously." Forth came Eiríkr's answer: "Well, that is certain, but if my mind does not deceive me and if my eyes are not failing me, Qgmundr here, known by the name of hvíti, is your kinsman and a familiar acquaintance of yours, and we have been received by him with luxury and splendour greater than we have ever received anyone with." In consequence, Hákon ordered to summon Qgmundr again and enquired of him if he knew who the army's leader was and what his name was. Qgmundr replied that it was no one else but Sigvaldi, the son of Strút-Haraldr, who was leading the

army with Búi and Vagn as his great commanders. And in order to prove his words truthful, he showed his mutilated arm to everyone around. Then Hákon beholding his friend's misfortune let out a grievous moan: "Alas! He has suffered a great injury! I beseech, do you know who inflicted such a severe and dreadful wound upon you?" To which Qgmundr replied: "Based on what I managed to overhear as they were talking to each other, it was Vagn, the son of Áki, who hurt me. Vagn, the son of Áki, you have indeed gained a rare trophy of a ring, which you took off a hand of a man you attacked while he was jumping down a roof!" Having heard this, Hákon responded: "Of all the soldiers which the surface of the earth carries, it is the army of the Jómsvikings that I fear the most. For I see that now it is the time to gather men and make haste to plan our defence. There is no time for vacillation: messengers are to be sent to Sveinn, my son, to ask him to raise an army as great in number as he possibly can, conscripting as soldiers everyone throughout Trondheim who shall be deemed apt for fighting, and, furthermore, to equip all the ships with weapons and siege engines." And so he ordered his son Eiríkr to prepare himself for the departure, saying that everyone present at his side is to take up the arms with great courage and eagerness. Once the battle standards had been erected everywhere, all the soldiers who cared to defend their lives, properties and livelihood gathered together with Hákon himself. Hákon with the help of his sons, Sveinn and Eiríkr, and other princes and nobles of Norway had already assembled a mighty fleet of three hundred vessels anchored in Sunnmøre by the shores of the isle of Høð, namely in the bay called Hjørungavágr. This navy was sat on its anchors, awaiting the Jómsvikings' arrival.

*Jamqve in Sunnmairia ad insulam Hod Haqvinus cum filiis Svenone et Erico aliisque Norvagiæ proceribus navibus trecentis stipatus convenerat. Hæc classis in sinu Hiorungavog Jomsburgensium adventum opperiens in anchoris stabat.*

In the meantime, the Jómsvikings themselves, having left Vík, set sail to the north of Norway, feasting on the many examples of tortures and great anguish they had left behind. They sailed by the so-called Ulvesundet and Stad (which is either a district or a province) landing on the isles known as the Military ones. When Vagn set off inland to the neighbouring places in search of food supplies, by pure chance he came across a peasant by the name of Ulfr, well stooped with old age, who was leading twelve goats and three cows. When Vagn ordered him to head towards the ships together with his herd, Ulfr replied: "Is it the Jómsvikings from

the mainland – one of whom I expect you must be – who are drilling an army? Are they hoping to make a distinguished name for themselves by stealing from the poor farmers, filching their cows, nanny goats and young goats alike? I have always believed that acquiring great glory – which is the reason, as I expect, why you have set forth on such a difficult expedition – lies not in human hands, but requires Fortune's favours." When Vagn explained the reason for the expedition to the enquirer, Ulfr replied in these words: "Hákon is preparing a double sail fleet, triple sail at most, to dock in this island's vágr and he can take care of any disturbance, be it a trifle one or a slightly greater one."

*Vagno autem, qvam materiam prædicaret, interrogante, respondit Ulvo, Haqvinum in sinu isti insulæ propinqvo duabus aut ad summum tribus stipatum navibus classem suam expectare, eumqve nunc levi negotio e medio tolli posse asserebat.*

Then Vagn urged him: "Forth you go! You shall accompany us on our way and show us the best route to the vágr." And so, when he came back to his comrades, dragging the reluctant peasant with him, Vagn informed Sigvaldi and other Jómsviking about what he had just learned. After they had heard his words, they lifted up the anchors immediately and took on a course towards the vágr following Ulfr's directions. When they had almost entered the mouth of the vágr, Ulfr jumped into the sea and started swimming towards the land in order to aid Hákon by warning him about the enemy. Vagn pierced Ulfr with a javelin, thus bringing his plan to an abrupt end. (...) And so, as soon as the Jómsvikings entered the vágr and saw that the inlet was covered with ships which were spread all over, they immediately put their fleet into battle array. Sigvaldi decided to post himself together with his brother Þorkell in the middle of the fleet, with Búi and Sigurðr kápa covering the right wing while Vagn alongside Björn inn brezki were stationed on the left wing. Having thus prepared for the battle, they sailed forth.

### ***XIII. On Hákon's troops. On Hákon and Einarr, the poet.***

Once Jarl Hákon and his son Eiríkr noticed the Jómsvikings' navy, they ordered to sound the battle trumpet with no hesitation whatsoever. Having prepared his troops and having ordered the battle standards to be erected, Hákon was most eager to confront the enemy and commanded others to follow him. The troops were arranged so that Sveinn, Hákon's son, with the help of Sigurðr steiklingr from Hálogaland, Þórir hjórtr and Guðbrandr of Dalir were to engage Sigval-



di. Yrja-Skeggi, a chieftain, and Styrkárr from Gim-sar were to face Sigvaldi's brother, Þorkell. Búi was to be confronted by Þorkell miðlangr, Rognvaldr of Ærvík, Hallsteinn kerlingabani from Floan (the killer of the elderly), while Þorkell leira and Ármóðr of the Qgmundr lineage, together with his son Árni, were arrayed against Sigurðr kápa. Further on, it was Eiríkr, the son of Jarl Hákon, Erlingr of Skuggi and Gissur hvíti (which means white) who were to face Vagn. Lastly, Björn inn brezki was to be engaged by Einarr litli and two chieftains by the names of Hallvarðr and Hávarðr. Hákon himself incited his men into a belligerent spirit and holding himself in reserve, ready to lend support wherever it would be necessary.

There were four Icelanders who followed Hákon into this battle, one of whom, by the name of Einarr, was a famous poet and much cherished by Hákon himself. And so Einarr began to slowly develop hostile feelings against Hákon, for he had been falsely accusing him of planning to betray the cause and join Sigvaldi, the leader of the Jómsvíkings. For this very reason, Einarr, growing more and more spiteful as days went by, began to make preparations for his departure, willing to finally leave Hákon, who would much too easily lend an ear to gossips spread by his informers. When Hákon learned of his plans, he summoned Einarr for a talk. With Einarr by his side, he took out a set of scales which were made of burnt silver and were all gilded. One of the weights was silver and it depicted Jove, while the other one, made of gold, showed Pluto or Óðinn (gods which Hákon worshipped greatly). Hákon insisted that Einarr should accept the scales as a gift. To which Einarr, mightily angered, cried out loud for everyone to hear that Hákon was an idolator. [...] These delightful images had one additional feature, for when weights were laid on the pans, the depicted gods seemed to be dancing, while they appeared motionless when the scales were empty. Thereafter Einarr was called skálaglamm (Tinkle-Scales). Having accepted this gift, Einarr came back to his senses. Another Ice-lander was called Þorleifr skúma and he accompanied Eiríkr and the jarl as a prominent bard, well versed in the art of wartime poetry. The third Ice-lander's name was Vigfúss and the fourth went by the name of Þorðr.

#### ***XIV. Hákon's first encounter with the Jómsvíkings. The wondrous and hitherto unheard-of stories about Áslákr.***

Once the standards was raised, the fierce battle commenced. For a certain time, the fight was unfolding with equal luck on both sides, but then the part of Hákon's troops which were battling against Búi, began to sway and lose strength. Having noticed that, Eiríkr, the jarl's

son, left Vagn and took matter in his own hands. With Búi driven back, Eiríkr managed to restore the original battle line. Meanwhile, Vagn, driven by a great fury, rushed upon him, raging carnage among his comrades. Having turned back to face him in battle, Eiríkr suffered grave injury on the part of Vagn. And when he leapt up on the prow of Eiríkr's ship together with Áslákr, known as the Bald, and they both ploughed forward, one on the left and the other one on the right side of the ship, thus clearing their way forward, everybody was forced to retreat. Having seen how his men had been weakened and driven off by solely two enemy soldiers, Eiríkr began to urge them on with fiery words to the attack. For those of them who joined Áslákr in battle tried in vain to inflict a serious wound on him, but although he always marched into a battleground without a helmet, they could not harm him, whether they struck his skull with a hatchet or a sword. And indeed, regardless of how vicious and how plentiful the blows were, Áslákr emerged out of every clash unharmed.

When Vigfúss the Ice-lander beheld how he roamed in search of new victims with utter impunity, he seized a large anvil and sank it so deeply in Áslákr's skull that his brains spread across the gangway of the ship. At the same time Vagn got attacked by Þorleifr with an oaken club and thus made to thrust back to his own men. However, not that much later, he raided Eiríkr's other galley, bringing grievous damage to the Norwegians and slaying many a man on his way.

#### ***XV. Hákon slays his son in an act of a heinous sacrifice.***

Jarl Hákon fearing that his men might get defeated and forced to surrender, and since he could not bethink himself of any wise course to follow, made his way to a nearby forest accompanied only by the selected few. Here he was lying prostrate on the grass, facing the Northern star and calling upon his patron goddess, Þorgerðr Hǫrðabrúðr, summoning her in a loud voice with these passionate words:

“Oh Þorgerðr, may you lend an ear to him who has many a time offered sacrifices and libations in your name and who has never wearied you with vain requests, always worshipping you before all other gods; lend your ear to him who you have many a time willingly rescued from imminent dangers and oppressions. Behold him, I beseech you, with a favourable eye and accept his offerings. Aid him, securing his victory against all odds and the great misfortune. You, who yield eternal power over what dwells above and below the surface of the earth, you, who rouse the winds and settle them alike, who invoke tempests, wild hail-

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storms and heavy rains, use your powers, so that everyone may acknowledge and fear your supreme authority and no one else's.

They shall be joyful and thrice, indeed, four times blessed, those who reflect upon it righteously and who you deem worthy of your remarkable and lofty gifts and whom you embrace into your favours. And finally, thrice wretched shall be those to whose good wish you are averse. You shall inflict grave and agonizing punishment onto those who rouse your wrath. And indeed, I vow to you in my utter misery that should you refuse to grant me my wish, I shall surrender myself to you and consign to your ire. You who surpass my ignorance with your virtue and your wisdom, let him into your graces who has always worshipped you in great modesty of soul and who has always paid zealous heed to all your laws, I once more implore you, bless him with a victory."

The words of this prayer came onto him in his sleep. He inferred from the utter silence encompassing him that Þorgerðr was wrathful and would not hear his prayers, nor would she accept the bestowed offerings. So, he offered her a human sacrifice, but she spurned it alike. And so, when in the end, he offered himself to be slain at the altar, willing to save his sons Sveinn and Eiríkr from a sacrificial death, she demanded the blood of his talented and promising seven-year-old son, Erlingr.

Obedient to her instructions, he handed over his son into the lictor's custody who was to have him slain. Once this was done and the altar was splattered with blood, Hákon cheerfully made his way to the galleys summoning everyone eagerly to engage in battle, the victory of which has been secured.

### ***XVI. The Jómsvikings are conquered by means of unheard-of miracles.***

And thus, the furious battle ensued, with much strain and effort on both sides. Soon after a small cloud appeared in the northern sky, and it has to be noted that beforehand the skies were strangely serene and peaceful. As the small cloud began to swell, it suddenly brought with it a great thunder-storm with violent winds, intense cold and unusual hail and flashes of lightning, which had never before been recorded in living history.

The Jómsvikings who had cast off their clothes earlier in the day because of the heat and the arduous battle struggle, as did most of the Norsemen, and who were now clothed only in their armours, had to fight facing the storm. The squall was so heavy that many Jómsvikings could barely stand up against it, and so they limped into their gloomy end. And then it so happened

that Hávarðr, Búi's companion, alongside many others, who were by nature blessed with keen eyesight, saw a woman standing high on the rostrum. Her hands were reaching out in the Jómsvikings' direction and from every finger an arrow was being hurled at them, felling one man after another. Sigvaldi saw her as well and all his associates confirmed this rare sight. Thus, assured that his eyes were not failing him, he stated that now they were raging battle against monsters, not merely humans. And when the storm abated a little, Jarl Hákon began to invoke Þorgerðr again, but this time together with her sister Irpa, reminding them that the victory, as it happened, had been obtained at a great price. And so, another storm came onto them, this time even more severe than before which bruised the Jómsvikings with unusually big hail balls, so much so, that they could not make use of their eyes. Now Hávarðr beheld two women standing on Hákon's ship, both engaged in the same thing that Þorgerðr had done before. A truly great damage and injury was inflicted upon the Jómsvikings who perhaps had to fight not only humans, but indeed monsters as well. All things considered, they put up a valiant resistance defending themselves as resolutely as possible.

Meanwhile, Þorkell midlangr leapt onto Búi's ship and attacked him with a sword, cutting off a part of his nose, together with the chin all the way down to his front teeth. To which Búi said: "Surely now it will be less pleasant for the Danish maidens to kiss me." And then he attacked Þorkell, splitting him in half, and rushed overboard together with the gold laden chests which he had previously snatched away from Strút-Haraldr. And so, as the story goes, attested by all, that after his death they saw him transform into a giant sea serpent, which henceforth inhabited the vágr and kept a jealous eye over any gold that entered its inlet. Sightings of this snake have been recorded many a time afterwards.

(...) With such things taking place, Sigvaldi, the greatest chieftain of the Jómsvikings, began to flee, ordering others to do likewise. Having noticed that, Vagn snatched a spear and hurled it at Sigvaldi wishing to inflict a fatal wound upon him. However, much to Vagn's surprise, the spear missed its target and pierced a man sitting at the helm of the ship. To which Vagn, now mightily irate, roared: "You wretched man! You effeminate coward! Why are you the first one to take flight, thus abandoning your soldiers to fight alone under unfavourable circumstances? Is this how you wish to bring fame to your name and that of the illustrious Jómsvikings? By expecting them to follow you wherever your unbridled folly takes you? Were Pálnatóki still amongst the living, he would be commanding us

in a very different manner. Alas! Disastrous was the day which saw us appoint you to our leader!” Sigvaldi, however, not in the least vexed by such words, paid no heed to them and did his best to facilitate the escape. He was followed straight away by Þorkell and Sigurðr kápa with a fleet of twenty vessels. And then the dusk began to fall.

Meanwhile, Hákon with Eirik and other Norse noblemen descended onto the ground, having first stationed the guards lest any of the Jómsvikings who had been left behind could stand a chance of an escape.

Once the tents had been pitched, Hákon, willing to investigate the true power of goddess Þorgerðr Hǫrðabrúðr, weighed one of the hailstones on a set of scales. Its weight equalled an ounce. The rest of the night was spent on taking care of the wounds and applying bandages.

In the meantime, Vagn together with Björn inn brezki, who were the only ones to remain among eighty other Jómsvikings, began to discuss what course of action they should take: whether to surrender to Hákon's fleet, or try their luck and reach the land in some way, thus shunning harm. Since the second option was much more to everyone's approval, they laid the mast down into the sea, and walked over it, as if over a bridge, to a rock which they thought was part of the mainland, whereas in fact, it was separated from it by some distance. Twenty of them died there during the night because of the severity of their wounds. Those who stayed alive tied themselves together with a rope for safety and, haunted by the ghosts of the dead, suffered a real torture.

That same night Hákon took the trouble to kindle the fireplace, in which he was helped by Guðbrandr hvíti, among others, who also happened to be his kinsman and also a close friend. As they were going about their business, an arrow pierced Guðbrandr's breast wounding him fatally. And so Þorkell leira and Sveinn rowed to the ships abandoned by the Jómsvikings to investigate who the author of this crime was. On Búi's ship they encountered a man by the name of Hávarðr whose both legs had been severed. When they requested him to confess who was guilty of such a heinous crime, he replied it was Þorkell's sword that had done him harm.

## ***XVII. The Courage of the Jómsvikings Proven Right***

Hereafter, a decision was taken regarding the Jómsvikings, namely that they clearly deserved to face capital punishment.

And since everyone in these whereabouts was proclaiming the Jómsvikings' eternal courage and ascertaining that they were never grasped by any fear, Þor-

kell leira was eager to put this mythical fearlessness to a test and inflict carnage amongst them.

1.2.3. And so, at first, they brought forth three of those whose heads had been adorned with wreaths. They were held firmly by executioners, lest they should escape the fatal blow. Then Þorkell leira decapitated them, one by one. Afterwards he spoke thus unto Hákon: “I have heard many times that the man who would behead three men in a row, will lose all courage and doom his soul. Have you noticed a certain change in me then?” To which Hákon replied: “We observed no such thing. However, we fear that a change of colour in the face is not the omen you should be fearful of.”

4. Þorkell led up the fourth prisoner to the place of slaughter and enquired of him how he felt just a moment before his spirit was about to leave his body. The prisoner replied that he was going to face his end fearlessly, as he was destined to die just like his father before him. Then Þorkell dealt him the deathblow.

5. Once the fifth man was brought up and questioned in the same manner, he replied similarly: “Poorly would I remember the laws of Pálnatóki, if I shrank from death with a fearsome spirit, death comes to every man.” Having thus spoken he was slain.

6. The sixth one said he wished for nothing more than to encounter his own demise with glory and merit, as it was just about to happen, by exposing willingly his intrepid neck to a sword. Þorkell then beheaded him like the others.

7. When the seventh man was led there, he spoke such words:

“To me, death is far more precious than life. And so, I beseech you, do remove me from the living as quickly as can be. Behold, I am holding a small dagger in my hand. For it has been long disputed among the Jómsvikings whether a man knows anything of what is befalling him when he is being beheaded. So let this be the proof of the matter: I shall hold up this dagger if I know of anything; if not it will drop out of my hand.” When he met his punishment and his head flew off, the knife, as of its own accord, dropped to the ground.

8. When the eighth man was brought forth, he replied just like his comrades that death was of no importance to him. And he added: “I only have one favour to ask of you, Þorkell. And that is for you to attack me from the front. May you observe me attentively, to see if I show any sign of fear or utter any groan of pain.” As Þorkell carried out his execution, he noticed not a shade of dread in the man's face, not a flinch.

9. The ninth prisoner had an air of rare elegance to him, like that of the royal kind, and he spoke eloquently of how he was going to endure his fate courageously

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up to its very end. “May you humour me in one respect only,” he asked, “namely in that I shall be brought forth to the slaughter place not by executioners, but by one of Hákon's men – one who is eminent for his outstanding courage. Moreover, let him, whoever shall have this duty laid on him, hold my hair with his hands during the execution. For I have up till now kept it clean of any dirt or slovenliness, and so I wouldn't wish for it to get bloodstained at the final moment of my life”. Hákon fulfilled his request by appointing one of his leading men to this task, specifically ordering him to hold the prisoner's hair with both of his hands. And so, when Þorkell slammed down with his sword, the Jómsviking jerked his head away, thus directing the fatal blow at Hákon's soldier which both forearms got cut off as a result. The name of this very Jómsviking, who claimed to be Búi's son of eighteen years of age, was Sveinn. Eiríkr managed to convince Hákon, however with great difficulty, that Sveinn should be kept alive.

10. The tenth prisoner said that he would face his demise quite willingly, if he could fulfil his vow first. When Eiríkr asked him to divulge his name, he replied: “I am Vagn and my vow was to bring dishonour to the daughter of Þorkell leira.” To which Þorkell said: “I shall make sure that this vow is not fulfilled”, and rushed towards him with his sword. Seeing that Björn inn brezki, who had one leg tied up with a rope and the other one free, pushed Vagn forwards with a great force, with the effect that Þorkell who had slain many a man with his sword, accidentally cut the rope with it and thus set Vagn free unwittingly. Freed from the rope, Vagn sprang to his feet and having seized the sword, he dealt Þorkell the death blow. When afterwards Eiríkr offered him a truce, Vagn said that he would spurn it, unless all of the living Jómsvikings were to be held in high esteem and hence offered a quarter. Eiríkr promised to make it happen and so he did, although he found it greatly difficult to convince

Hákon that this was a correct course of action. Once the settlements were completed, Vagn took Ingibjörg, Þorkell's daughter, for his lawful wedded wife. But first, having been given many a lavish gift by Eiríkr, he made his way to Fyn, the land which had been for long renowned for many distinguished traits both in war and peacetime. The brothers Sigvaldi and Þorkell ruled the land of Sjælland with great glory and many a distinction. Among the others Sigvaldi was considered a man of eminent wisdom and shrewdness and great mental dexterity, whose plans were very difficult to decipher at first glance or at first meeting. Until this day many sagas remain in which he plays an important part, but since they are filled with many singular stories, we shall refrain from relating them.

After the Jómsvikings war, Hákon ruled Norway but not for a very long period of time. It is said that he was greatly unjust towards his subordinates; so much so, that he is said to have been lured into a remote place in the countryside by his own servant only to be slain there.

Einarr, the Icelandic poet, while sailing back to his fatherland, met his destiny in the Breiðafjörðr. The scales, gifted to him once by Hákon himself, landed up on a shore of an island which was then named Skáleyjar. Further on, Þorðr the Icelander, who had lost his right arm in the war, was called “Lefty” from then on. He was the one to record the history of Iceland in a most scrupulous manner, which was then preserved by posterity.

Unfortunately, Jómsborg never regained its former glory after the war.

For whereas beforehand, while King Búrizláfr was still among the living, it used to be the receptacle of the most eminent nobles and almost all of the finest men in the land, after the war it turned into a filthy and mucky market place.

The end of the Jómsvikings history.



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## Jómsvíkinga saga AM 291 4to

*The saga of the Jómsvikings*, version of AM 291, has also been published in English by Alison Finlay and Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir in 2018.

This saga version is the only one informing us about two retaliating expeditions from Danish kings against Jarl Hákon.

The first expedition was sent by Haraldr Gormsson. It was as a revenge to the ravages of Jarl Hákon in the realm of the Danish king on his journey home from Denmark. Haraldr Gormsson had been weakened after being defeated by the emperor Ótta. Hákon also stopped paying taxes to the Danish king.

King Haraldr now summons out a levy from the whole of Denmark and sails to Norway with an overwhelming army against Jarl Hákon. King Haraldr havoc along the coast from Lindesnes (Liðandisnes) to Stad (Staðr). Here he heard about the mobilization which Jarl Hákon had carried out along the coast up to Hålogaland. The army of Hákon was now so large that the foreigners would not be able to fight it down.

Haraldr then decides to return to Denmark, and he no longer demands taxes from Hákon.

Further out in the saga we learn about the promises which the intoxicated Jómsvikings gave to King Sveinn tjuguskegg. And immediately after the inheritance ceremony, the Jómsvikings sail to Vík (Oslofjorden) in Norway. They go ashore in Tønsberg, where they ravage and kill. Qgmundr hvíti, who is jarl Hákon's royal vassal here, gets away with a stumped hand. He made his way overland to Skuggen, where Jarl Hákon and his son Eiríkr were visiting Erlingr.

Hákon doubts the story which Qgmundr reports, but understands, when he sees the stumped hand, that the Jómsvikings are in the country. Jarl Hákon now starts gathering people from Rogaland to Namdalen.

Later, father and sons Hákon, Eiríkr and Sveinn, met at the place they had agreed to assemble with the fleet. It was in Sunnmøre by the island called Hqð. There were also many vassals. Altogether they had 360 ships in the fleet, but many of the ships were not particularly large. They now stayed with the whole fleet in the vágr called Hjørungavágr, and consulted.

*Og síðan hittast þeir þar allir feðgar, Hákon og Eiríkur og Sveinn, í þeim stað sem þeir höfðu mælt mót með sér og allur herinn skyldi hittast og saman koma. En það var á Sunnmæri við ey þá er heitir Hqð, og kemur þar mart lendra manna. Þeir höfðu feðgar alls*

*þrjú hundruð skipa, og voru mörq ekki allstór. Þeir liggja þar á vogi þeim er Hjørungavogur heitir og bera nú saman ráð sín, og liggja þar á voginum öllum flo-tanum.*

Now let's talk about the Jómsvikings. They came from the south and behaved not in a peaceful way: they were plundering and robbing wherever they came. They made several large shore raids and killed many people. They burned many farms completely down and sailed belligerently up the coast. People who get news of the Jómsvikings, try to escape. They come to Ulvesundet and to Stad. It should be said that neither Jarl Hákon nor the Jómsvikings knew much about each other.

The Jómsvikings now sail six miles from south of Stad and arrive at Herøy. They docked in the harbour here with the whole fleet. They needed more food. Vagn Ákason then goes with his ship to the island of Hqð. He does not know that the jarl is lying in a vágr not far from the island. Vagn goes ashore to rob some cattle.

*Og er þeir eru þar komnir, þá þykjast þeir þurfa að nýju að fá sér vista, og er það sagt að Vagn Ákason fer á skeið sinni til eyjar þeirrar er Hqð heitir, og veit Vagn eigi að jarl liggur þar í voginum skammt frá eyjunni. Vagn liggur við eyna, og ganga þeir upp og ætla að fá sér strandhogg, ef það ber að hendi.*

Here the Jómsvikings get involved in a conversation with a man who drives three cows and some goats. Vagn asks him about the name. He replies that his name is Ulfr. Then Vagn says to his men: "Slaughter the cows and goats and take them on board our ship. Do the same with any other animals you may find."

"What kind of man commands the men on this ship?" asks Ulfr.

"His name is Vagn and he is the son of Áke."

"I believe," says Ulfr, "that there are more important objects to slaughter not far off for the Jómsvikings than my cows and goats."

"Tell us what you know about Jarl Hákon's journey," says Vagn: "If you can tell us for sure where he is, then you can get back both your cows and goats. What news can you tell us?"

What do you know about Jarl Hákon?"

Ulfr answers: "He was last night with one ship inside the island of Hqð, in Hjørungavágr. Here you can man-



*með ser hacon oc ærikr apr en þeir scilþiz oc sifan*  
 122 *hyttaz þeir þar allir feþgar. hacon oc ærikr oc*  
*Sp[eiv] | j þeim ftap sem þeir hafþp mællt mót með*  
*ser oc allr herriñ scyllde hyttaz oc faman coma | 10*  
*En þat þar á spñmæri piþ æy þa er heitir haþ oc*  
*kemr þar mart lendra mana. þeir hafþp fe[þgar] |*  
*allz .iii.c. scipa oc varo mo:g ecki all ftó:. þeir ligia*  
*þar a Vági þeim er hiorvya pagr [heitir] | oc bera*  
*nþ faman rap fin oc ligia þar á paginom avllvm flot- 15*  
*anpm.*

*vifta oc er þat sagt [at pagu] aka son ferr a sceip [fi]ne*  
*til æyiar þeirrar er haþ heitir oc peit Vagn egi*  
*at jarl ligr þar j paginom scamt fra æyio[ne] | Vagn 123*  
*ligr piþ æyna oc ganga þeir pp oc ætla at fá ser*  
 10 *strandhaeg<sup>1</sup> [ef þat berr] at hendi. Oc nþ berr [sva]*

*Facsimile from Carl af Petersen's diplomatic edition of Jómsvikinga saga AM 291.*

age to kill him at once, since he is lying there waiting for his army.”

*Úlfr svarar: “Hér lá hann í gærkveld síð einskipa fyrir innan eya Høð á Hjörungavogi, og munú þér þegar fá drepið hann er þér vilið, þvíáð hann biður þar manna sinna.”*

Vagn then replies: “You have bought your cattle free. Now come with us on board and show the way to the jarl.”

“I can't,” says Ulfr, “I don't want to fight against the jarl. It doesn't suit me. But if you want, I can show you the seaway so you can find the vágr. But if I follow you on the ship, I will be free as soon as you can find the way by your own.”

Now Ulfr goes on board along with them. It is early in the day, and Vagn hurries to Herøy to tell Sigvaldi and the other Jómsvikings what Ulfr had revealed. Now the Jómsvikings begin to prepare as if they were going to the hardest battle, although according to Ulfr it should be an easy fight. And when they are ready,

they start rowing towards the vágr. It is said that Ulfr wondered if there could be more ships in the vágr than he had told the Jómsvikings. And when the Norwegian ships come into sight, Ulfr jumps overboard. He wants to get ashore and not wait for the reward he was supposed to get for his help. When Vagn sees this, he wants to give Ulfr what he deserved. He grabs a spear and sends it after him. Ulfr was hit in the waist and died there. Sigvaldi and all the Jómsvikings now row into the vágr, which is full of ships all the way from the Jómsvikings and further in.

They array the ships for battle. On the other side, the jarls, Hákon and his sons, separate the ships from each other and decide who shall fight against whom. Sveinn Hákonarson, in a team with Guðbrandr hvíti and Styrkár from Gimsar, were to fight against Sigvaldi. Yrja-Skeggi, Sigurðr steiklingr and Þórir hjórt were to fight against Þorkell inn hávi. Towards Búi, Þorkell miðlangr, Hallsteinn kerlingabani and Þorkell leira were sent. Ármóðr from Qnundarfjórðr and his son, Árni, were placed against Sigurðr kápa. Eiríkr Jarl Hákonarson, Erlingr of Skuggi and Qgmundr hvíti

were to fight against Vagn Ákason. Against Björn inn brezki, the wasall Einarr litli, Hávarðr from Flyðrunes and Hallvarðr uppsjá were to fight. Jarl Hákon himself should to be free for assisting his men where it was most needed.

It is said that the bottom of Hjørungavágr faces east and the mouth faces west. There stand three stones called Hjørungar out on the vágr. One of these is larger than the others, and the vágr can be recognized by these stones. A rock lies in the middle of the vágr. It is the same distance from this rock to the shore as to the bottom of the vágr and to both sides. An island that lies north of the vágr is called Primsigð. Harund lies south of the vágr, and Harundarfjord enters from here.

*En svo er hér frá sagt að í austur horfi botninn á Hjørungavogi en mynnið í vestur. Þar standa og út á voginum steinar þrír þeir er heita Hjørungar, og er einn þeirra nokkuru mestur, og er við þá steina vogurinn kenndur. En sker liggur inn á voginum miðjum, og er jafnlangt til lands á alla vega frá skerinu, bæði inn á vogsbotninn og út tveim megin gagnvert. En ey liggur sú fyrir norðan voginn, er heitir Primsigð, en Harund liggur fyrir sunnan voginn, og þar inn frá er Harundarfjörður.*

The battle developed not in favour of the Norwegians. During a pause in the battle, Jarl Hákon realized that he needed more help.

He now went ashore with some men and travelled northwards on the island of Primsigð, where there was a large forest. In a glade in the forest, he knelt down and begged. He turned towards the north and prayed to the one who wanted to be kindest to him.

*Og nú fer jarl á land upp með nokkura menn og fer norður í eyna Primsigð, en þar var mörk mikil í eyjunni. Síðan gengur hann í rjóður eitt er í mörkinni var, og*

*leggst jarl þar niður á knébeð og biðst fyrir, og horfir þó í norður, og mæltist nú fyrir sem honum þótti vænlegast.*

But his guardian goddess, Þorgerðr Hjørðabruðr, first turns the deaf ear to him, but in the end, she accepts as a offer that a son of Hákon, Erlingr, should be sacrificed. Then Jarl Hákon returns to his army. A threatening storm starts building up in the north. Clouds bring a thunderstorm and hails right in the face of the Jómsvikings.

Now Þorgerðr Hjørðabruðr also takes part in the battle. She sends her deadly arrows from her fingers. When the weather seems to calm down, Hákon calls out again for help from Þorgerðr. A new shower is coming, and now Irpa is participating along with her sister Þorgerðr.

Sigvaldi, who had not come to Norway to fight against monsters, flees. He asks Vagn and Búi to do the same. In this situation, Þorkell miðlangr jumped on board Búi's ship and cut off Búi's chin.

Immediately after, Búi takes his gold chests, one in each hand, and jumps overboard. Þorkell inn hávi and Sigurðr kápa also escape together with Sigvaldi. Thus, 24 ships set their bows towards Denmark.

The remaining Jómsvikings gather on Vagn's ship. They fight on until it gets dark. Then there was a new break in the battle.

The following night, Vagn Ákason and Björn inn brezki and many of their men, a total of 80 men, escape from the ship with the help of the mast which they cut down. But they did not get any further than to a rock, where 10 men died of wounds and cold. The remaining 70 were taken into custody the next day. The Jómsvikings who had been captured were to be beheaded. Þorkell leira was given this task. After 9 were beheaded, the rest, among them Vagn Ákason and Björn inn brezki, were granted quarter.

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## Jómsvíkinga saga Stock. Perg. 4to

This version of *Jómsvíkinga saga* is sometimes also called the Stockholm Book. The Norse entries here are taken from Gustaf Cederschiöld, *Jómsvíkinga saga*, Lund 1875.

There are two English editions of this version. The Saga of the Jómsvíkings was published by Lee M. Hollander in 1955 and by Norman Francis Blake in 1962.

When the feast was over, the Jómsvíkings sailed with 120 ships to Vík.

They looted Tønsberg where Geirmundr hvíti was the king's vassal. He got away with a stumped hand and made his way overland to Skuggen, where Jarl Hákon was at a banquet. Hákon sent orders to his son Sveinn in Trondheim to gather people there. Jarl Eiríkr travelled to Namdalen and also gathered people south along the fairway.

The fleet was supposed to come together by the island called Hǫð. Erlingr, son of Jarl Hákon, went to Rogaland, and Jarl Hákon himself to Sunnmøre and Romsdal. They then assembled the whole fleet under the island of Hǫð in the vágr called Hjørungavágr. The total fleet was over 360 ships. Here they consulted.

*skyldi liðit saman koma i ey þeirri er Hauð heitir. Erlingr son Iarls for um Rogalannd. Hakon Iarl sialfr um Sunnmeri ok Raumsdal. þeir koma nu saman herinum aullum unndir eýna Hauð ok a vag þann er Hiaurungauagr heitir. ok hafa þeir aukin.ccc. skipa Nu raða þeir raðum sinum.*

The Jómsvíkings now sailed north of Stad and stayed at Herøy. They didn't know anything about the jarl so far. Here they lay with the whole fleet and planned shore raids.

Vagn then took his ship to the island called Hǫð.

*Vagn ferr þa með skeið sina til eyiar er Hǫð heitir.*

Here they found a man driving three cows and twelve goats in front of him. Vagn asked for his name. He replied that his name was Ulfr.

Vagn said: "Drive your animals to the beach!"

"Who is this man?" asked Ulfr. Vagn answered.

Ulfr then said: "If you are the Jómsvíkings, then you have probably come to find a bigger slaughter, which is not so far from here."

Vagn replied: "Can you tell us what you know about the jarl? Then you can have both your cows and goats."

Ulfr replied: "He was lying last night with only one ship inside the island – in Hjørungavágr."

*Ulfr mælti. her lá hann i gærquelld eínskipa fyrir innan eýna a Hjørunga uági.*

Vagn answers: "Then you must come with us and show the fairway."

Ulfr now goes on board Vagn's ship. They return to Herøy. The Jómsvíkings now prepare for a battle, even though Ulfr had told how easy it would be. On the way to the vágr, Ulfr wonders what the Jómsvíkings will do if there are more ships than he had told them. He therefore jumps overboard and swims away. Vagn then grabs a string spear and drives it into his waist. Ulfr lost his life there.

The Jómsvíkings now observed that the whole vágr was filled with ships. They array their fleet. Sigvaldi places himself in the middle with his brother Þorkell. Brothers Búi and Sigurðr lie on the northern arm and Vagn Ákason and Björn inn brezki on the southern.

Hjørungavágr is made so that a rock lies in the middle of the vágr. An island north of the vágr is called Primsignd and Hjørund is south of it.

*Hjørunga uágr er sua háttadr at sker liggr imiðium uaginum enn ey fyrir norðan er Primsignd heitir. enn Haurund liggr fyrir sunnan.*

The Norwegians place Jarl Sveinn and Guðbrandr hvíti against Sigvaldi. Styrkár from Gimsar was to fight against Þorkell inn hávi. Yrja-Skeggi, Sigurðr steiklingr and Þórir hjotr were placed against Búi. Þorkell miðlangr, Hallsteinn kerlingabani and Þorkell leira were to go against Sigurðr kápa. The relatives Ármóðr, Árni and Finn should fight against Vagn. Jarl Eiríkr, Erlingr of Skuggi and Geirmundr hvíti were to go against Björn inn brezki. Jarl Hákon, Einarr litli and Hávarðr from Flyðrunes should be free to assist where needed. In the wild battle that followed, the Jómsvíkings proved to be the strongest. In a remission during the battle, Hákon said that they had to come up with some measures to avoid the risk of losing.

The jarl then goes to the island of Primsignd and enters the forest. He kneels down, faces north and prays.

*Nu ferr Iarl upp i eyna Primsignd ok geingr i skóg a brutt ok legz niðr a kne ok biðz fyrir ok horfir i norð.*



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Þorgerðr Hqrðabruðr, will not listen to him at first. But finally, she accepts that he sacrifices his son Erlingr.

The weather is now thickening in the north with lightning and thunderstorms. The Jómsvikings receive a heavy hail storm against them. In the middle of this, they could also see that Þorgerðr takes part in the fight. She sends deadly arrows at the Jómsvikings from her fingers.

When the storm seems to calm down, Hákon calls Þorgerðr again. He thinks he has more to merit. In the subsequent storm, one sees two witches fighting alongside the Norwegians.

Sigvaldi, who had not promised to fight against monsters, starts running away and asks the other Jómsvikings to do the same. In this situation, Búi gets his chin and both hands chopped off before he jumps overboard with his chests of gold. Sigurðr kápa and Þorkell inn hávi follow Sigvaldi. They left with a total

of 24 ships. Vagn and Björn inn brezki fight on until it was dark. At night, the 80 men who were still on the ship try to get ashore by using the mast and the oars. They reached a rock, but not longer.

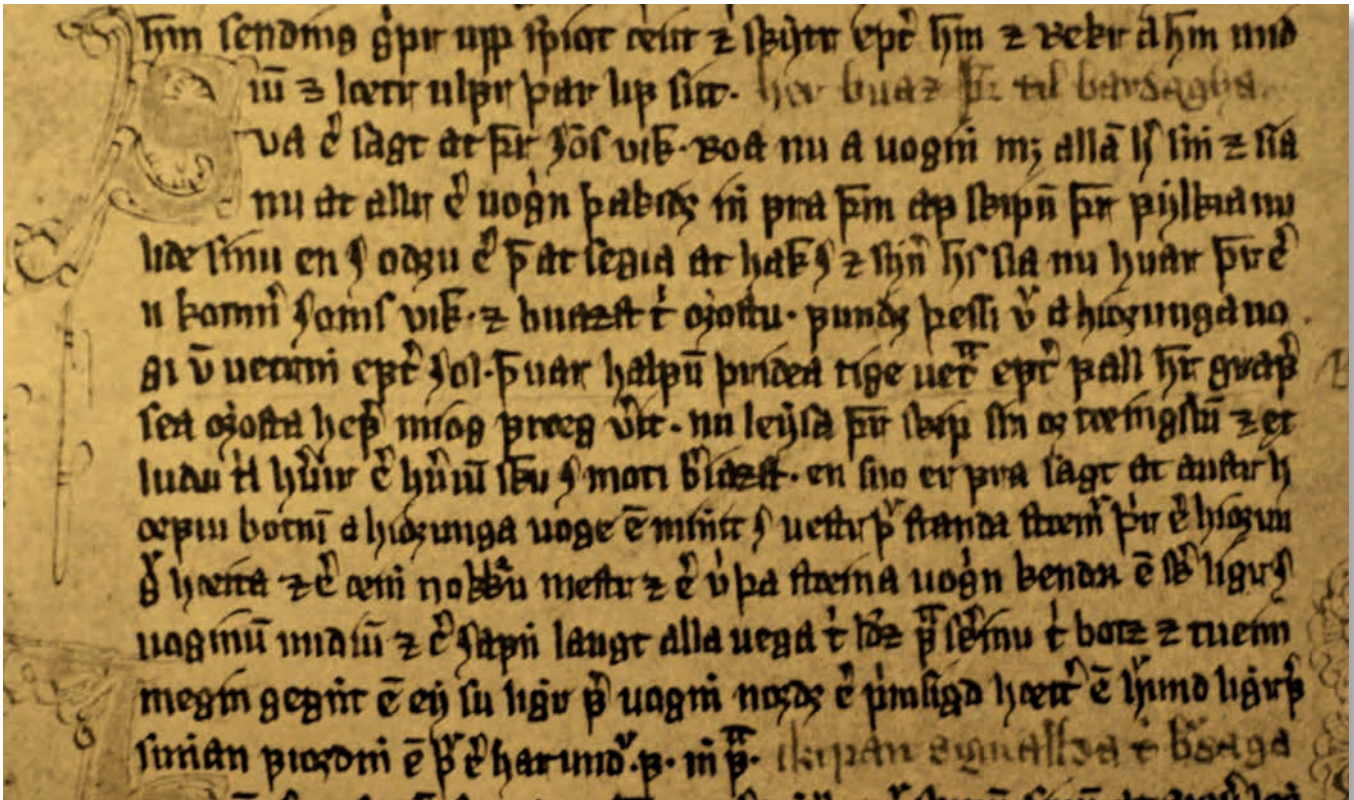
The remaining Jómsvikings who were captured the next morning were to be executed by Þorkell leira. After ten executions, the rest was granted quarter. Between them was Vagn Ákason.

Many say that Búi has turned into a sea serpent lying on his gold.

That is why people have seen sea serpents in Hjørungavágr. But it could also be an evil demon who lies there and which has appeared later.

*Enn þat er margra manna saugn at Bui hafi orðit at ormi ok lagz a gull sitt. er þat til þess haft at menn hafa seð orm a Hiaurunga uági kann þat ok uera at nockur uánnd uétrr hafi lagz a þat fe ok syniz þar síðan.*

# Flateyjarbók



Facsimile from the part of *Flateyjarbók* which depicts the *vágur*:

In this short version of the battle, the Norse text is taken from Guðbrand Vigfússon and C.R Unger's edition of *Flateyjarbók* in 1860.

Near winter's night, the Jómsvikings began to prepare for the campaign to Norway. They sailed with 120 longships and had also 65 small ships. They first landed in Tønsberg, where Jarl Hákon's vassal, Qgmundur hvíti, escaped with a stumped hand. He made his way overland to Sola, where jarls Hákon and Eiríkr were having a feast with Erlingr.

When Jarl Hákon finally realizes that Qgmundur does not lie about the Jómsvikings having come to the country, he mobilizes people to resist. Hákon sends a message to his son, Sveinn, who is at Lade. He should gather people in Trøndelag. Hákon himself goes to Romsdal and gathers people. Eiríkr does the same further south in Western Norway and in Namdalen.

After they come together with their brother Sveinn, they all travelled to the place where jarls Hákon and Eiríkr had agreed to meet. All the relatives – jarls Hákon, Sveinn and Eiríkr – assembled their armies here.

It was in Sunnmøre by an island called Høð. Many vassals came there too. They had many ships. People say that father and sons had 360 ships, but many of these were not large. They are now in Hjørungavágr with the whole fleet and are consulting.

*en þat er vijd ey su er Hødd hæitir a Sunnmæri. þar kemr mart lendra manna. þeir hófdu mart skipa sua at menn segia at þeir hafui nær haft þremr hundrudum fedgarnir ok voru þa morg ekki stor. þeir liggia a Hjørungauoge ok bera nu rad sin saman ok liggia þar nu med allan flotann.*

About the Jómsvikings, it can be said that they come from the south with cruelty, ravaging and robbing. They perform large shore raids, kill many men, burn and destroy. People flee from all the places they come to. The Jómsvikings reach Ulvesundet, which is north by Stad. Now neither side knew anything special about the other. The Jómsvikings then sailed six miles past these difficult waters and outside some islands. They

later reached the harbour at Herøy, where they stayed with the entire fleet.

Here, they needed more meat and other sorts of food. Vagn Ákason then takes his longship to the island called Høð. Vagn does not then know that Jarl Hákon is lying in a vágr not far from him. Vagn docks at the island. He wants to do a raid and therefore goes ashore.

*ok er sagt at Uagnn Akason ferr med skæid sina til eyiar þeirrar er Hødd hæitir ok uæit Uagnn æigi at Hakon jall liggi a vöginum (!) skamt fra honum. hann leggrr uit eyna. ok ætla at fa ser strandhogg ok ganga upp a eyna.*

On the island he meets a man driving three cows and twelve goats in front of him. Vagn asks the man of his name. He calls himself Ulfr. Vagn ordered his men to take the cows and goats and slaughter them on board the ship: “And do the same if here are more cattle to be found.”

“Who is in charge of this ship?” asks Ulfr.

“His name is Vagn and he is the son of Áke,” is the answer.

“To me, it seems that there must be a bigger slaughter to get hold of,” says Ulfr, “and it's not far from you, Jómsvikings. I had expected that you would have rather that than my cows and goats.”

“Tell us what you know about Jarl Hákon,” says Vagn, “then you and the goats can go free. What reliable news can you tell me?”

Ulfr answers: “Jarl Hákon stayed last evening inside Høð. There you can kill him if he lies there waiting for his army.”

*Ulfr suarar. her la Hakon jall j gærkuellid fyrir jnnan eyna Hødd. ok munu þer þegar fa drepit hann er þer vilit þuiat hann bidr þar lids sins.*

“You have bought free all your cattle. Now come on board our ship and show us the fairway,” was the answer Ulfr got.

“That's not right,” says Ulfr, “I don't want to fight against the jarl. But I can show you the way, so you can find the vágr if you want.”

Vagn replies: “You shall follow us whether you want to or not.”

Ulfr replies: “If I follow the ship, then you shall place me ashore when you see where the vágr is.”

Now he follows Vagn on board the ship. It is early in the day, and they return to Herøy to tell Jarl Sigvaldi and the others what they have found out. Now the Jómsvikings use their time for preparations as if

they were going to the fiercest battle. They would be well prepared even if Ulfr had said that it would be easy. When they are ready, they start rowing towards the vágr.

It is said that Ulfr believed the Jómsvikings to expect more ships in the vágr than he had predicted. As soon as they see Jarl Hákon's fleet, Ulfr jumps overboard. He wants to swim towards shore and not wait for the reward he was promised. Vagn sees this and will certainly reward him as he deserves. He grabs a spear and sends it after him. It hit his waist, and Ulfr dies there.

The Jómsvikings now row into the vágr with their entire fleet. They see that the entire vágr inside them is filled with ships. They prepare for battle. On the other hand, it can be said that Jarl Hákon and his sons see the Jómsvikings coming, and they behave in the same manner.

This was in Hjørungavágr in the post-Christmas winter. It was two and a half years after Haraldr gráfelldr was killed that this battle would have taken place. Now the Norwegians untie their ships from their moorings and decide who shall fight against whom. It is said that the head of Hjørungavágr faces east and the mouth faces west. There are three stones called Hjørungar. One of them is bigger than the others and you can recognize the vágr on those stones. A rock lies in the middle of the vágr, and it is the same length all the way to land, from the rock to the bottom and to both sides. An island that lies north of the vágr is called Primsigð. Harund is south of the fjord and Harundarfjord enters from there.

*Fundr þessi var a Hiorungauogi vm uetrinn eftir jol. þat uar halfum þridea tige uetra eftir fall Haralldz grafelldz. sea orrosta hefir miog fræg verit. Nu leysa þeir skip sin or tæingslum ok ætludu til huerir er huerium skulu j moti beriazst. En suo er frasagt at austr horfui botninn a Heorungauoge en minnit j uestr. þar standa stæinar þrir er Hiorungar hæita ok er æinn nokkura mestr ok er vid þa stæina uogrinn kendr. en sker liggr j uoginum midium ok er jafnlangt alla uega til landz fra skerinu til botz ok tueim megin gegnnt. en ey su liggr fyrir uoginn norðr er Primsigð hæitir. en Harund liggr fyrir sunnan fiordinn en þar er Harundarfjordr inn fra.*

The Jómsvikings array their army. The Norwegians do the same. Sveinn Hákonarson, Guðbrandr hvíti and Stykárri from Gimsar shall fight against Sigvaldi.

Sigurðr steiklingr and Þórir hjórtr were placed against Þorkell inn hávi. Þorkell miðlangr, Hallsteinn kerlingabani and Þorkell leira were to fight against Búi.

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Ármóðr from Qnundarfjörðr and Árni, his son, were set against Sigurðr kápa. Eiríkr Hákonarson, Erlingr of Skuggi and Qgmundr hvíti were to fight against Vagn Ákason. Einarr litli, Hallvarðr uppsjá and Hávarðr from Flyðrunes were to fight against Björn inn brezki. Jarl Hákon should be free to assist where needed.

The battle did not develop as the Norwegians wanted. Jarl Hákon thought during a remission that he must go ashore and find a measure that could turn the battle.

Jarl Hákon now goes up to the island of Primsigð. There was a large forest on the island, and there he knelt down in a glade. He turns to the north and prays to whoever might be kindest to him.

*Nu gengr Hakon jall upp a eyrna Primsigd. en þar var mörk mikil j eyiunne ok þar gæingr hann j riodr æitt. ok þar leggzst hann nidr ok horfir j norðr ok mælizst nu firir sem honum þotti uænligazst.*

Þorgerðr Hqrðabruðr, to whom he prayed, would not listen to his prayers at first. But she finally agreed to take Erlingr, Hákon's seven-year-old son.

Hákon now returns to the ship and foments for a new battle. He goes hard against Sigvaldi, convinced that he will get help from Þorgerðr and his sister Irpa. Storms from the north are building up. There is thunder and lightning, and the Jómsvikings get a powerful hailstorm in the middle of the face. Þorgerðr helps and kills one Jómsviking after another with the arrows

she sends out from her fingers. When Hákon gets his wish fulfilled for another storm, which is harder than the first, yes, then the Jómsvikings see that the Norwegians are helped by two witches. Sigvaldi, who no longer wants to fight against monsters, withdraws. He also asks Vagn and Búi to escape. In the further struggle, Búi inn digri loses his hands before going overboard with a gold chest in each hand stump.

Sigurðr kápa and Þorkell inn hávi joined Sigvaldi. They left with 24 ships. The remaining Jómsvikings gather on Vagn's ship. They continued to fight until it was dark. At night, Vagn and Björn inn brezki wanted to get ashore with the help of the ship's mast and rudder. They were close to 80 men.

At last, they came to the rock which was in the vágr and thought then that they were at the mainland.

*ok um sidir komazst þeir j skerit þat er a uoginum var ok þottuzst þa komnir a meginland.*

Here on the rock 20 men died. The rest were captured. 10 were executed by Þorkell leira. The others were granted quarter. Skjaldmeyjar-Einarr (Einarr skálaglamm) travelled back to Iceland and later drowned in Breiðafjörðr. The body was washed ashore on Skáleyjar, which is named after the bowls that glammed. Þorðr qrvahqnd went home to Dýrafjörðr. He was said to be the brother of Þorleifr skúma who died in Hjqrungavágr.



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# Jómsvíkinga saga AM 510 4to

Norse text inserts in this presentation are taken from *Jómsvíkinga saga*, Lund 1879.

The Jómsvíkings left Denmark with 190 ships. They first came to Tønsberg where they ravaged and burned down the town. Later they sailed to Jæren, where they arrived on Christmas night. Jarl Hákon's vassal there, Geirmundr, was awakened by the ravages of the Jómsvíkings. He sought refuge in an attic, but Vagn Ákason cut off one of his hands when Geirmundr, as the only man, managed to escape. He then made his way overland until he was able to alert jarls Hákon and Eiríkr, who were at a feast in Skuggen with Erlingr.

Hákon at first thought that Geirmundr was lying, but understood when he saw the stub of his hand that mobilization had to be done if one was to succeed in standing up against the Jómsvíkings. He then gathered people from Rogaland to Namdalen.

Afterwards they went to the place where Jarl Hákon had said they should come together. Both the father and his sons, jarls Hákon, Eiríkr and Sveinn, meet there. It was in Sunnmøre by the island called Høð. Here the army assembled, and there were also many vassals who had joined them. Jarl Hákon and his sons had 360 ships, but many of them were not particularly large. They now laid their ships in a vágr called Hjørungavágr, and were counselling. Here they prepared their ships for battle.

*og fara þeir nu, þar til er þeir koma þar, er Hacon iarll hefer á kuedit, at þeir skylldu finast; og fara þeir nu aller samann fedgar, Hacon iarll og Eiríkur og Sveinn; enn þat uar á Sund-mære uit ey, þa er Haud heiter; og kemur þar allur herinn samann, og uoru marger lender menn i lide Haconar iarls. Hacon iarll og syner hans hofdu þa.ccc. skipa, og uoru morg ecki miog stor; þeir leggja nu ollum skipunum sinum á uog, þann er heiter Hiorungauogur, og bera samann rad sin; liggja þeir nu þar ollum skipunum á Hiorunga-uogi uit suo buit.*

Now it is to be told that the Jómsvíkings had reached Ulvesundet. They were then near Stad. It is said that neither the Jómsvíkings or Jarl Hákon knew anything special of each other. The Jómsvíkings now sailed six miles northwards past Stad, which is difficult to get past since there are no harbours on land or on the islands nearby. They reached a port called Herøyr

(Hereyjar) and stayed here with all their ships. They had heard of Jarl Hákon, but knew nothing else than that he was in the fjords, sometimes far north, other times further south. But they did not have any reliable information.

Now, they needed more provisions. It is said that Vagn Ákason took a longship to the island of Høð. Vagn then does not know that Jarl Hákon is lying with his army in a vágr not far away. Vagn laid his ship by the outside of the island and went ashore with his men and wanted to get... six cows and twelve goats. Vagn said to his men: "Take these cows and goats and slaughter them on our ship."

*Ok er þeir eru þar komner, uilia þeir Ioms-uikingar aflu sier nockurs uista, og er þat sagt, at Uagn Akason for á skeid einne til eyiar þeirrar, er Haud heiter, og ueit Uagn eigi, at þar liggja Hacon iarll med lidi sinu á uoginum skamt i fra. Uagn leggur uit eyna utann skipi sinu, og ganga þeir Uagn og hans menn upp á eyna og ætla at fa sier - - .uí. kyr og.xii. geitur. Uagn mælti til manna sinna: "Taki þier kyrnar og geiturnar, og hog-guit þetta fe á skip uortt".*

A farmer asks: "Who is the man who rules over this army?" – "His name is Vagn Ákason," they answered. "To me, it seems," says the farmer, "that there must be bigger objects to hunt than my cows and goats for you who have travelled so far. As noblemen, you do not act in the manner of man of war here in an unknown country if you want to increase your reputation, by taking cows and calves, goats and oxen, pigs and sheep. It must be better to leave these cattle and instead take the bear which is now so close to the bear trap that you can take him there."

Vagn then asks the man for his name. He says his name is Ulfr.

Then Vagn said: "What bear are you talking about, which it might be a pleasure for us to hunt?" Ulfr replies: "The same bear that if you don't take him now, will have all of you in his jaws not before long." Then Vagn said: "Can you tell us good and reliable news which we can benefit from, then we will reward you well. And if you know anything about where Jarl Hákon travels and tell us what he intends to do, then you will get your cows and goats back."

Ulfr replied: "Whether you want to pay me well for what I tell, or if you want to pay me little, I can tell



you that yesterday he was with a ship inside the island of Hqð, in Hjørungavágr. You can kill him there if you want, since he is still lying there,” says Ulfr, “and it seems strange to us that he goes with so few men and is so careless. It looks like his days are numbered. It's clear that he doesn't know anything about you, otherwise he wouldn't behave like that.”

*Ulfur suarar: “Ef þier uilit uel launa mier saugu mina, og suo þier launit mier aungu, þa ma eg seigia ydur til Haconar iarls, huar hann la i giær med einu skipi hier firer innann eyrna Haud á Hiorunga-uogi, og munu þier þegar fa drepit hann, ef þier uilit, þuiat hann bidur þar,” segr Ulfur, “og undarligt þicker oss, er hann fer so fa-mennur og ouarliga i slika ferd, og er likazt, at hann mune feigur uera; og uist hefur hann eigi til yduar spurt, og eigi lægi hann so ella.”*

Then Vagn said: “You have bought yourself and your cattle free, if what you have told is true. Now come on board our ship and show us the fairway to the vágr.”

“It so happens,” says Ulfr, “that I want to fight against Jarl Hákon. It suits me well. I can also show you the way so you can find the vágr.”

“You probably have to follow us, whether you like it or not,” says Vagn. Now Ulfr goes on board Vagn's ship. It is early in the day, and they immediately go back to Herøy to tell the news to Sigvaldi and the other Jómsvikings.

The Jómsvikings at once began to prepare for a really hard fight. This is because they were not sure that it would go as easily as Ulfr had told. As soon as they were ready, the whole fleet was called for departure.

They now sailed with the whole fleet inside the island of Hqð. There was a slight easterly wind. A belt of moss came towards them, then another belt and a third one which was the largest. Then Sigvaldi said: “These moss belts tell us that an army is not far away. It may also indicate that Jarl Hákon has more men than we have been told.”

Búi inn digri was at the front with his ships, then Vagn came with his army and Sigvaldi was at the back with his men. They sailed in along the island, until they came inside Hqð and to the vágr at the northern end of the island, where it is called Hjørungavágr.

*fara þeir nu med ollum hernum inn firer eyrna Haud; þa uar litill austann-uindur, og rak i mot þeim mosa-gard og þui næst annann og hinn.íí., og uar sa ei minztur. Þa mællti Sigualldi: “Þessir mosa-gardar munu uita her-lids uon nær oss, og ma uera, at Hacon iarll se eigi iafn-fa-mennur, sem oss uar sagt.” Bui digri for fyst med sinu lidi; þa for Uagn med sinu lidi; Sigualldi*

*for sidazt med sinum monnum. Þeir fara sidann inn med eyne, þar til er þeir koma firer innann Haud og i uikina firer eyiar-endann nordur, þar sem heiter Hiorunga-uogur.*

It is said that Ulfr wondered whether the Jómsvikings would think that there would be more ships than what he had told them. And as soon as those in the front saw more than one ship, Ulfr jumped overboard and swam away. He wanted to reach the shore and not wait until he got his rewards. When Vagn sees this, he wants to give him what he deserved. He throws a spear at him. The spear hit Ulfr in the waist, and he died immediately. This is how Ulfr and Vagn parted their ways.

Now the Jómsvikings rowed into the vágr and saw that the whole vágr in front of them was crowded with ships. Here they found the man they had been looking for, Jarl Hákon. He was not there with only one ship, not with two, but with over three hundred. There were longships, merchant ships and all kinds of ships which the jarl had got hold of, as long as they were high on board. And all the ships were filled with people, weapons and stones.

It is said that the bottom of Hjørungavágr faces east and the mouth faces west. There are three stones out on the vágr. These are called Hjørungar. One is bigger than the others, and the vágr can be identified by (these) (1) stones. A rock lies in the middle of the vágr. And all the ways from the rock to the shore have the same distance, both to the bottom of the vágr and to both sides. An island which lies north of the vágr is called Primsignd. And the island of Hjørund lies south of Hjørungavágr, and Hjørundarfjord enters from it.

*Nu er sagt, at botnninn at Hiorunga-uogi horfer i austur; enn munnurenn i uestur; þar standa steinar.íj. ut á uoginum, og heita þeir Hiorungar, og er einn nockuru mestur, og er uogurinn uit (þa) (1) steina kendur. Enn sker liggur i midium uognum og iafnlangt á alla uega til landz fra skerinu bædi inn i uogsbotninn og tueim meginn gegnt; enn ey su liggur firer nordann Hiorunga-uog, er Primsignd heiter; enn eyinn Hiorund liggur firer sunnann Hiorunga-uog, og þar inn i fra Haurundar-fiordur.*

The Jómsvikings now array with Sigvaldi and Þorkell inn hávi in the middle. On the northern flank lay Búi inn digri and Sigurðr, his brother. On the south flank were Vagn Ákason and Björn inn brezki. The Norwegians chose to set Sveinn Hákonarson, Guðbrandr hvítí and Sigrek from Gimsar against Sigvaldi. Against Þorkell they set Yrja-Skeggi from Mannhaug, Sigurðr steiklingr and Þórir hjórtr. To fight against Búi inn di-

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gri were Þorkell miðlangr, Hallsteinn kerlingabani and Þorkell leira selected.

Sigurðr Jarlsson, Ármóðr from Qnundarfjörðr and his son, Árni, were to go against Sigurðr kápa. To go against Vagn Ákason was the task of Jarl Eiríkr Hákonarson, Erlingr of Skuggi and Jarl Erlendr Hákonarson. Einarr litli, Hallvarðr uppsjá and Hávarðr, his brother, were set against Björn inn brezki. Jarl Hákon should be free to assist where needed.

In the hard battle, few Jómsvikings fell. The loss of men was great among the Norwegians. It was difficult to resist, and the jarls therefore retreated towards land. There was now a pause in the battle. The jarls consulted and thought it would not be advisable to continue the battle without wise measures. Hákon now left the site with a few men. He asked the other chieftains to stay, in case the Jómsvikings should attack again.

Jarl Hákon now goes ashore at the north of the island of Primsignd. There is a large forest on this island.

*Nu fer Hacon iarll upp á land norður i eyra Prim-signd; þar uar skogur mikill i eyiunni;*

Here he turns to Þorgerðr Hqrðabrúðr, who finally agreed to help him after being given his young son, Erlingr. And when Jarl Hákon returned to his army, he chose to go against Sigvaldi. Now the weather is changing. The Jómsvikings receive hailstorms in addition to Þorgerðr sending her deadly arrows. Hákon's prayers were also heard when he again asked for more help as the storm seemed to subside. Now Þorgerðr's sister, Irpa, also took part. When this stormy weather came at the same time as the Norwegians fought hard,

Sigvaldi chose to flee accompanied by Þorkell and Sigurðr. They left with 30 ships. As Sigvaldi was about to return, Þorkell miðlangr jumped on board Búi's ship and gave him a devastating blow in the face. Búi then threw two chests full of gold and jumped overboard. He shouted at the same time: "Overboard, all Búi's men."

Vagn and his men continued to fight. They managed to keep the Norwegians away, despite the fact that they were far more numerous until it was dark at night. Then there was a pause in the battle.

Vagn and Björn inn brezki consulted. They decided that instead of waiting for the Norwegians to launch a new attack the next day, it was better to launch an unexpected attack on Jarl Hákon and his men. They then took down sails and oars from the ship and used these as a vessel to get ashore. 80 men reached a place, which they first thought was the mainland. Here at a rock, 10 of them died, mostly because of the cold.

The next day the Norwegians discovered the exhausted Jómsvikings on the rock. The Jómsvikings were then bound and taken ashore to be executed. It was Þorkell leira who was given that task. After many Jómsvikings had lost their heads, it was Vagn's turn. When Þorkell leira, in a fit of rage, wanted to kill Vagn because he had previously promised to go to bed with his daughter, he stumbled. Vagn grasped the sword and gave Þorkell a mortal wound. After this, Vagn and the remaining Jómsvikings were granted quarter.

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*"uit (þa) steina kendur."* (þa) is not in the original, but is inserted by Carl af Petersens in the printed version from 1879.

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# Jómsvíkingadrápa

*Jómsvíkingadrápa* tells the story of the battle in verse form. But we find few details here which can be used for localization. It was written by the Orkneyan Bjarni Kolbeinsson (d. 1222). Based on the fact that the use of language does not correspond to what one expects from a clergyman, it has been assumed that the drápa was written in his younger days and before he was appointed bishop in 1188. A drápa is a skaldic poem in honour of a king or chieftain.

In the introduction, we are told about the promises which the Jómsvíkings give in the inheritance feast to dethrone Jarl Hákon. The Jómsvíkings set out at a time of the year when the waves are icy. They do shore raid on Jæren on Christmas night and continue to ravage along the coast.

Later, the Norwegians and the Jómsvíkings met on the wide Hjørungavágr.

*hialma skoðs a víþvum  
fyndr þotti sa fyrþvum  
frægr hiorvnga vagi.*

Jarl Hákon's army was far larger than that of the Jóms-

víkings. But the Jómsvíkings advanced furiously and had the upper hand until Jarl Hákon sacrificed a son. The battle turned when Þorgerðr Hqrðabrúðr send a powerful hailstorm from the north towards the Jómsvíkings. Sigvaldi then chose to escape and asked his people to do the same.

There was a great loss of life, and the current dragged dead people in the sounds between the islands.

*andat folk at svndi  
stravmr dro vt vm eyiar*

In the further battle, Búi inn digri chose to jump overboard with his gold chests. Later, a long sea serpent is said to have coiled itself on the gold.

Vagn, who defended himself heroically against the jarl's men, finally had to surrender. At that time, only 30 Jómsvíkings were alive. 18 men were immediately executed. But when Þorkell leira wanted to kill Vagn Ákason, Þorkell met his misfortune.

Vagn, in a team with 11 other Jómsvíkings, was then given quarter by Jarl Eiríkr. Vagn was later married to Ingibjörg, daughter of Þorkell leira.

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# Saxo Grammaticus

The Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus (born ca. 1150 – died ca. 1220) wrote a major work of *Denmark's history* in Latin. It has been given the title *Gesta Danorum*. Saxo also writes about a battle between Jarl Hákon and an army which the Danish king sends against him. He says that the battle would have taken place while Haraldr Gormsson was king of Denmark. Also, the role of certain central characters differs greatly from the other versions about the battle.

When a war broke out between the Saxons and the Danes, Jarl Hákon reckoned that the conflict would last long and that the Saxon emperor Ótta II would win at last. He then stopped paying taxes to the Danish king. After the Danes and the Saxons entered a peace agreement, Haraldr Gormsson wanted to punish the apostate Norwegian king.

After the conquest in Vendland, Haraldr Gormsson had placed an army under the command of Styrbjörn in the city of Julin, which Saxo calls Jom. This army of pirates was notorious for its raids along the coasts. Saxo does not use the name Jómsvikings when referring to this army. Haraldr, therefore, sent pirates from Julin (*Iulinae piraticae*) on the punitive campaign to Norway. But Saxo does not tell us more about where the armies met.

When Hákon faced the superior power, he no longer relied on his own strength, but sought help from heavenly powers. Hákon then took two of his sons and slaughtered them shamefully at the altar as sacrifices for the victory. He wants to buy the kingdom with the lives of his children. He preferred being called a king rather than a father.

After sacrificing these sons, Hákon was helped by a sorcerer who whipped hail into the Danes' faces. They were blinded as if they had been hit by an arrow. The Danes, who noticed that they had the gods against them more than the Norwegians' own weapons, were driven to flight. But Karlsevne and Jarl Sigvaldi did not get away and were captured. After the victory, Jarl Hákon wanted to test whether the Danish pirates were as brave as the rumours indicate. Sigvaldi did not blink when he was beaten with a heavy club, and he was just as brave in the further tests.

Karlsevne, in chains, showed no less fortitude when he knocked down the man who was going to behead him. He then wielded the axe and killed the man who was to execute him. At the end, Karlsevne and Sigvaldi after also refusing to buy their lives with the help of what they regarded to be a shameful agreement, were granted quarter by Jarl Hákon.

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# Heimskringla

This is a short version of the battle as depicted by Snorri Sturluson (born ca. 1179, died 1241). The Norse text is taken from Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson's edition of *Heimskringla* from 1979.

The rumour that the Jómsvikings had decided to go to Norway was spread before they left Denmark. Jarl Eiríkr Hákonarson heard the rumour when he was in Romerike. He gathered people and then went north to Trondheim where his father, Jarl Hákon, was. People were now summoned from Hålogaland in the north and to Sunnmøre in the south. Jarl Hákon himself immediately travelled to Møre to scout for the enemy and to gather people there. Jarl Eiríkr should come afterwards with the rest of the army.

The Jómsvikings with their 60 ships first landed in Agder. They started to plunder as soon as they arrived in Rogaland. There a man called Geirmundr got away with a stumped hand. He sailed north and met Jarl Hákon in Møre.

After the Jómsvikings led by Jarl Sigvaldi had passed Stad, they first stopped at Herøy. They later docked at the outside of Hqð, went ashore here and ravaged.

*Þeir lögðu útan at Hqð, runnu þar upp ok herjuðu,*

They led both people and livestock to the ship. People who were armed, they killed. On the way down to the ship, an old farmer approached Búi's men. The farmer said: "You don't behave like a man of war. You drive cows and calves to the beach instead of taking the bear which now has come close to the bear trap"

"Man, what do you mean?", they say.

The farmer says: "He rowed yesterday into Hqrundarfjörð."

*Bóndi segir: "Hann røri í gær inn í Hqrundarfjörð.(1)*

He only had one or two ships, in any case there were no more than three, and he didn't know anything about you."

Búi and his people now released all booty and ran to the ship. Búi said: "Let us use what we have learned, so the victory will be ours at once." When they returned to the ship, they immediately rowed off. Jarl Sigvaldi called out to them and asked if there was anything new. They replied that Jarl Hákon was in the fjord. (2) Then the jarl disbands the fleet.

They row north of the island of Hqð and then inside the island.

*ok róa fyrir norðan eyrna Hqð ok svá inn um eyrna.*

Jarl Hákon and Jarl Eiríkr, his son, stayed in Hallkjellsvík (Hallkelsvík) with the whole fleet. They had one and half hundred ships and had learned that the Jómsvikings had docked at the outside of Hqð.

The jarls now rowed from the south and looked for them. When they reached the place called Hjörungavágr, they met.

*Hákon jarl ok Eiríkr jarl, sonr hans, lágu í Hallkelsvík. (3) Var þar saman kominn herr þeira allr. Hqfðu þeir hálf annat hundrað skipa ok hqfðu þá spurt, at Jómsvíkingar hqfðu lagt útan at Hqð. Røru þá jarlar sunnan at leita þeira, en er þeir koma þar, sem heitir Hjörungavágr, þá finnask þeir.*

Jarl Hákon, together with Þórir hjotr and Styrkarr from Gimsar, set their 60 ships towards Sigvaldi's 20. Búi inn digri and Sigurðr, his brother, also had 20 ships. They too got 60 Norwegian ships against them. These ships belonged to Jarl Eiríkr, Guðbrandr hvíti and Þorkell leira. Vagn Ákason, with his 20 ships, was to fight against the 60 ships of Jarl Sveinn, Yrja-Skeggi and Rognvaldr from Ærvík.

It was an impetuous battle, but when there came a storm and hails, Sigvaldi chose to flee with 35 ships so that 25 were left. This turning point in the battle is said to come after Jarl Hákon sacrificed his son, Erlingr. In the further fight, Búi inn digri received a devastating blow in the face.

He chose to jump overboard with two chests of gold and asked his people to follow him. Later, Jarl Eiríkr attacked Vagn Ákason's ship, which was eventually captured with 30 men. After 18 of the Jómsvikings were killed, the remaining 12 were released, and one of them was Vagn Ákason.

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(1) Some manuscripts have also "Hjörungarfjörður". (2) Some manuscripts have "í fjörður" (in the fjords) instead of "í fjörðinn" (in the fjord) (3) Jqfraskinna has "Áskelsvík" instead of "Hallkelsvík". Can this be seen as a half-language, as they say in Norway, by adding or removing letter h at the beginning of words?



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# Fagrskinna

*Fagrskinna* is available in two versions. The B-version is dated to around 1230. It is assumed that this was written in Trøndelag, but it is not known whether the author is Norwegian or Icelandic. The A-version is considered to have been written in the first half of the 14th century. The Norse entries in the text here are taken from Finnur Jónsson's edition from 1902–1903.

His main text is based on the B-version. At some key points, we have in addition deviating text from the A-version as presented by Finnur Jónsson.

In the inheritance feast after King Haraldr, the Jómsvikings Jarl Sigvaldi, Þorkell (Sigvaldi's brother), Búi inn digri, Sigurðr kápa, Vagn Ákason and Björn inn brezki promised that they would either kill or chase Jarl Hákon out of Norway before three winters had passed. So that Jarl Hákon should not find out about this promise, they equipped 60 ships at once and set course for Norway.

They came to Jæren on Christmas night. Here they ravaged and killed. A powerful farmer, Geirmundr, got away with a stumped hand. By boat he got to Skuggen (A-version: Haskinga) where Jarl Hákon and Jarl Eiríkr attended a banquet.

Jarl Hákon did not at first believe what Geirmundr told, but changed his mind when he saw the stumped hand. Now Jarl Hákon and his advisers were alarmed. The first measure was to light the beacons, cut war-arrows and send out ships. He invited to him all men who wanted to defend themselves and their property. Jarl Hákon travelled with one ship in and out of all fjords. No one knew where he stayed at night and where he intended to go. The army was assembled in large groups. First the people who were farthest away from the Jómsvikings. Those who were closest fled away to join the army of Jarl Hákon and Eiríkr, his son.

The Jómsvikings sailed northwards along the coast and did not meet much resistance. They came with their entire army north of Stad and first sailed to Herøy. Here they got the information that Jarl Hákon went in and out of fjords, sometimes to the north and sometimes to the south.

They sailed with the army inside the usual fairway and enter Høð, where they perform a shore raid. Búi inn digri and his people went ashore and drove a lot of cattle down to their ships.

*þeir læggja hærrenom inn af þjóðlæið oc utan at øy þeirri er Hoð æitir. toco þar strandhogg a skip sin.*

*Bui digri með svæit sinni hafðe upp giængit oc rako þæir til skipa bu mart fyrir ser.*

Then an old farmer came and spoke to the Vikings: “You who have travelled this far, do not behave like soldiers should do in a foreign country. You who are big men and who intend to increase your reputation, take yealings, calves, goats and cows. It would have increased your reputation more if you let the cattle go and rather took the bear, which is now close to the bear trap, if you can manage that.”

Then Búi answered: “You man, what bear are you talking about, which might be a fortune to hunt?”

The farmer replied: “The same bear that, if you don't kill him now, will have you all in his jaws before long.”

Then Búi replied: “Farmer, if you can tell us good and reliable news, we will pay you well.”

The farmer replied: “It doesn't matter to me if you pay me well or not. But I can tell you that Jarl Hákon is at *Eltrane* (the A-version: *Almehamrane*). I don't know if he has one ship or two. In any case, he has no more than three. Today he has not rowed north to his army. He can't live long when he goes so careless. He can't know about you either, otherwise he wouldn't have behaved like that.”

*þa svaraðe bonde. vilið þer mer væl launa eða ængu þa ma ec yðr sægia til Haconar iarls hvar hann liggir inn a Ælftrum (A-version: Almunnd hamrum) oc væit ec æigi hvart hann hæfir æit skip eða.ii. en æigi ero flæiri en.iii. oc i dag var hann æigi norðr roenn til liðs sins. oc ætлом ver at vera man fæigr er hann færri sva uvarlega. oc vist hæfir hann ækki til yðar freget. æigi føre hann sva ella.*

Then Búi said to his men: “We must hurry down to the ship and get hold of the victory, we who have the advantage of knowing about it first.”

The fastest ran first, and the farmer was free to drive his cattle back inwards the island. Búi told his men to untie the moorings and get the ship off shore. He was under the impression that the army had to hurry. Jarl Sigvaldi now wanted to know where Búi intended to row and what he had heard about Jarl Hákon. Búi told him and asked everyone to row on: “Today we will get hold of the fox's tail. He is now dragging his tail here along the shores.” Jarl Sigvaldi then replied: “You haven't caught the tail yet. I rather think you have been

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deceived.” Búi replied: “You will not dare to go to battle against Jarl Hákon when you find him with his whole army, if you do not dare to go against him with 60 ships now when he has at most 3.”

Búi urged his men to row. Vagn was also ready for battle. Then Sigvaldi also asked for the boat moorings to be loosened. They now went with their whole fleet in north of the island of Høð. The weather was not very good.

*oc foro allu liðinu inn firir norðan øyna Hoð. oc var litit veðr a.*

Then Sigvaldi said: “Could it be Búi inn digri himself who ends up in the bear trap where he intends to catch Jarl Hákon? He acts as if his days are numbered.”

Búi went first with his ships, then Vagn and then Sigvaldi. They went inwards all the way until they came to Hjörungavágr.

(The A-version: They went inwards along the island until they came to Hjörungavágr.) Here they found Jarl Hákon. He was there not just with one ship, but with 180 ships. It was snekker, warships, knarrar and merchant ships which Jarl Hákon had gathered. The ships had high boards and all were well equipped with people.

*Ðæir foro inn til þess er þæir como i Hiorunga vag. (A-version: Ðæir foro inn með øyiunne alt til þess er þæir como i Hiorunga vag.) þar hittu þæir firir Hacon iarl æigi æinskipa hælldr með halft annat.c. skipa. þat varo snækkiur oc skæiðar: knerror oc kaupskip er Hacon iarl hafðe fengit er ha varo borðe. oc oll væl skipað af mannum.*

The Norwegians now arrayed their army so that the

chieftains Skopti and Rognvaldr from Ærvík were to fight alongside Jarl Hákon against Sigvaldi. Sigurðr Hákonarson, Eyvindr Finnsson and Erlendr Steik should fight against Sigurðr kápa. Jarl Eiríkr, Þorsteinn miðlangr and Þórir hjortr went against Búi inn digri. Those who took up the fight against Vagn Ákason were Sveinn Hákonarson, Gissur hvíti and Þorkell leira. Erlingr Hákonarson, Yrja-Skeggi from Uthaug and Stykkárr from Gimsar fought against Þorkell (brother of Sigvaldi).

We may here mention that *Fagrskinna* lacks the story of the sacrifice on Primsigð/Primsignd. In the versions of *Hanssøn*, *Stockholm Book* and *Fagrskinna*, Erling, son of Hákon, goes to Rogaland to gather people. It is only in *Fagrskinna* that he is a central participant in the array. In the other versions, he is just a boy being sacrificed.

The Jómsvikings had the upper hand immediately, but they had fewer people. When they received a powerful hailstorm straight at them, Sigvaldi, Þorkell and Sigurðr kápa chose to flee. The Norwegians now improved their position. A wounded Búi and his entire crew took their chests and jumped overboard. Now the takeover was complete. Vagn and many of his men were captured.

They were taken ashore and placed on a tree trunk to be executed.

They sat there with their feet tied, but their hands were free.

When some of the Jómsvikings were beheaded by Þorkell leira, Jarl Eiríkr granted quarter to several. When Þorkell in a rage wanted to kill Vagn, he fell and lost the axe.

Vagn grasped the axe and gave Þorkell a mortal wound. After this, Vagn got quarter together with the remaining Jómsvikings.



## The sea serpent in Hjørungavágr

*Buadrápa* and some versions of *Jómsvíkinga saga* tell that at the end of the battle, Búi inn digri jumps overboard with two chests of gold. In some versions, Búi transforms himself into a sea serpent which later guards his gold chests, such as in the Stockholm version: “Many say that Búi has turned into a sea serpent lying on his gold. That is why people have seen sea serpents in Hjørungavágr. But it could also be an evil demon lying there and then appeared later.”

Bishop Guðmundr Arason (1161–1237) came into conflict with secular chieftains in Iceland. He therefore had to escape from the bishopric. These struggles led him to have a couple of longer stays in Norway. After his death, many legends arose about his great and wonderful deeds.

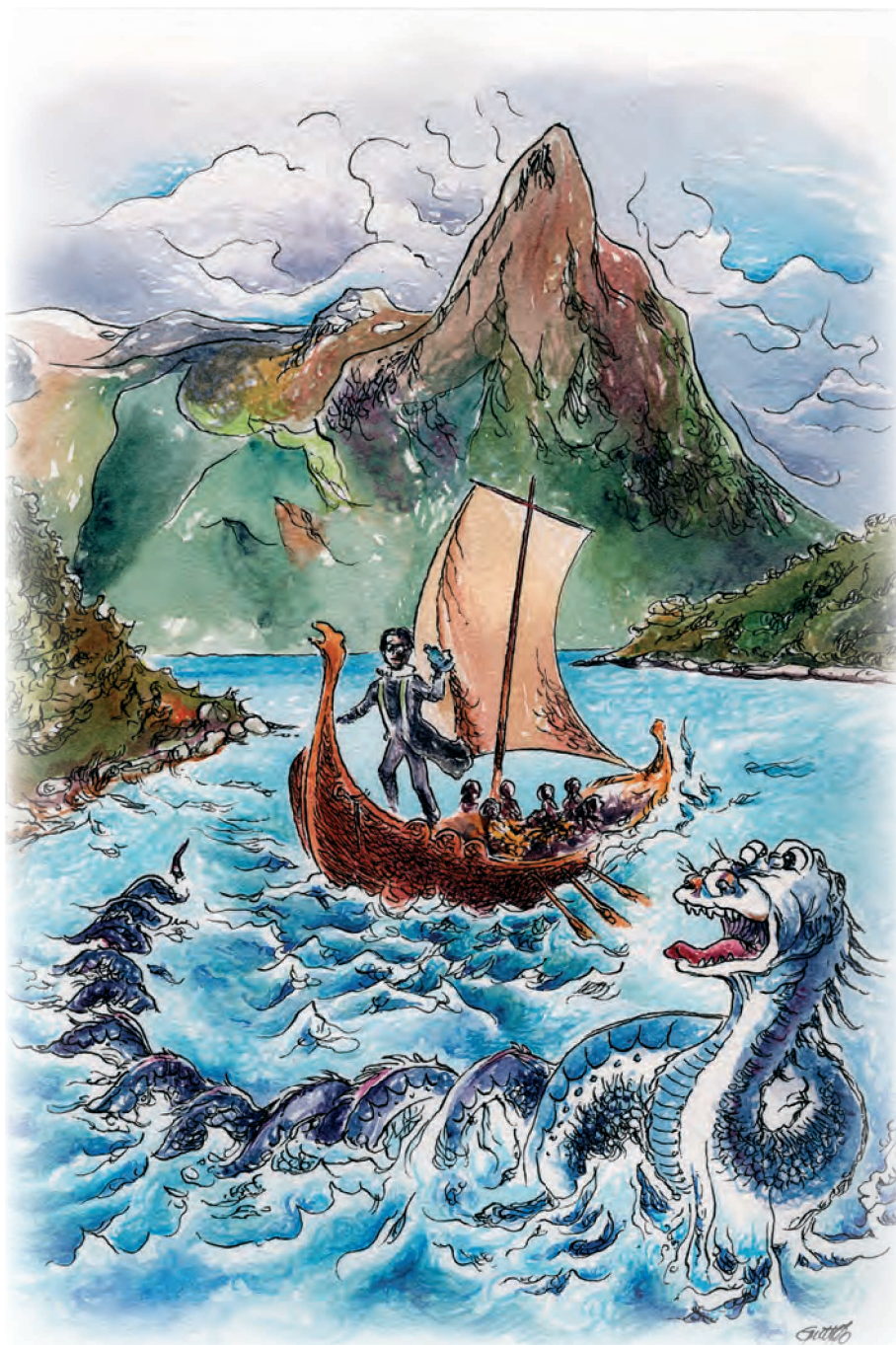
One of these stems from his stay in Norway when Gudmund was travelling from Trondheim to Bergen.

On the way, he and the crew wanted to put in port in Hjørungavágr, which would then most likely lie along the route he chose in Sunnmøre.

The sea serpent here, according to *Biskupa sögur* had 12 loops. Sometimes he was seen at the sea level, other times he hid in the depths. Often the sea serpent lay across bays and obstructed the seafarers. He also did so when Gudmundr came sailing. The crew was reluctant to meet the sea serpent. But Gudmund commands: “Stem for the harbour, God will take care!”

This put courage to the crew who cursed towards the sea serpent. Gudmundr went forward in the boat with prayers and holy water, which he threw over the serpent’s loops. The

boat continued forward and the serpent gave way so that they reached the harbour. Here they laid overnight. In the morning they could see the king of heaven’s masterpiece: the sea serpent had been cut into twelve pieces and thrown ashore. And later no one has been bothered by this beast.



*According to Biskupa sögur; it was Bishop Guðmundr Arason who killed the sea serpent in Hjørungavágr by throwing holy water at him. This sea serpent was said to guard the gold chests of Búi inn digri.*

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## A made-up story

Opinions have differed with regard to how much you can rely on the old Icelandic sagas. Some people tend to accept everything that is written there. Still others have problems finding tangible evidence which can confirm the stories. For that reason, they tend to reject everything.

It is difficult to believe that the detailed description in *Jómsvíkinga saga* could have happened exactly as it is told. Partially it is so detailed that a modern journalist would not have managed to get it nearly as precise, as for example that the farmer Ulfr drove three cows and twelve goats in front of him on the island of Høð. Mostly, people have nevertheless assumed that there may be a kernel of truth, that a battle between Jarl Hákon and Jómsvíking/Danes has taken place. But that many of the details in what is otherwise told, whether it is the inheritance banquet, the battle itself and the execution scenes, can be more or less free poetry.

Other factors can also throw doubt upon the battle. Why is it not mentioned in such a central Norwegian historical work as *Ágrip* (*Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum*), which otherwise tells much about Jarl Hákon? Could it indicate that the battle was not as big as the sagas would like it to be – or that it may not have taken place at all?

*Ágrip* was written at the end of the 12th century and is thus earlier than existing Icelandic sources which tell us about the Jómsvíking. *Ágrip* is without doubt a Norwegian work and with a special connection to Trøndelag. The author shows especially good geographical knowledge of Trøndelag where Jarl Hákon was living.

*Ágrip* presents a good friendship between Jarl Hákon and the Danish king Haraldr Gormsson after Jarl Hákon had taken the life of Gull-Haraldr, who challenged Harald Gormsson, during a trip to Denmark. It was also the jarl who supposedly persuaded Haraldr Gormsson to lure Gunnhildr to Denmark with a proposal of marriage, but instead she was killed.

*Ágrip* tells that through the years Hákon got into a lot of troubles. It was such enmity which also led to his death after being on the run together with his slave Kark. In contrast, *Ágrip* does not tell us about later enmity with the Danish king. *Ágrip* also reports that when Óláfr Tryggvason was on a Viking campaign, he had his winter seat in Jómsborg in Vendland, but does not mention anything about the Jómsvíking who were supposed to be on a campaign to kill Jarl Hákon.

One might also have expected that the Jomsviking battle could have been mentioned by Adam of Bremen. Adam of Bremen (born ca. 1040 – dead ca. 1085) reports about the battle between Harald Gormsson and the German emperor Ótta II without telling anything about Jarl Hákon. Adam mentions the rebellion which Sveinn tjúguskegg made against Haraldr. In this context, he also tells that Haraldr, after being wounded, escapes to Jumne (Jom), where he dies. When Adam presents this large and well-known society at the mouth of the Oder, he presents the city as a multicultural society and makes no mention of Jómsborg and Jómsvíking.

There are also those who regard *Jómsvíkinga saga* just as entertaining poetry. Among them is the archaeologist Per Fett, who through a long working life at Bergens Museum was the person who had the best overview of ancient monuments in Sunnmøre. Among other things, he was also responsible for the publication of booklets reporting the monuments of the past which had been found in the municipalities.

“All old religious literature is full of imagery, and it is interesting to notice that the images are the same in different religions”, says Per Fett before he goes into more detail about the saga of the Icelander Grettir's stay on the island called Haramsøya. People interested in the story have been trying to locate a problematic place name – Vindheim. Fett further tells us that Peder Fylling in his time travelled to Haramsøya with the purpose of locating the place names in the saga of Grettir.

In many ways, Fylling's investigation is model of the procedure which has been used in various localization works when it comes to Hjørungavágr. Hans Strøm wrote in his time that this unknown farm name, Vindheim, must be today's Ulla. Something that Fylling doubted. He therefore went to Haramsøya in September 1878 to solve the name riddle.

The Icelander Grettir, who had been allowed to live at the farm Haram after a shipwreck in 1015, often visited the farmer Auðun at Vindheim until late in the evening. One evening Grettir saw a light on a headland north of Vindheim. Grettir thought that the light came from a treasure. The next day Grettir and Auðun dug up this treasure which they found in a burial mound.

Later, Grettir is said to have managed to save the people at the farm Haram, when the master Þorfinnr was away at a Christmas party. 12 berserkers then came with a ship to take revenge on Þorfinnr. Finally, all the berserkers lost their lives in different ways.



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Based on various details in the saga, such as that Grettir could see light from the uppermost garrets at Haram when he was out in the dark and snow, Fylling concluded that Ström was wrong when he wanted to place Vindheim at Ulla. In contrast, one would be able to see such a light from the farms Åkre and Myskja.

The burial mound would have been on a headland north of Vindheim. At Ulla, there were no traces of burial mounds. In contrast, there were several burial mounds at Myskja and Austnes. These were also examined by Fylling, who concluded that one of the mounds he came upon at Austnes must be the one in which Grettir had found the treasure. By this mound, Grettir was also supposed to have killed two of the aforementioned berserks. Two other berserks had died of cold by a rock. During Fylling's visit to the island, people could point out this rock just south of the farm Myskja.

Fylling reached his "clear and doubtless conclusion in accordance with the opinion of everyone who lived on the island. The legend which they had inherited from their ancient ancestors said that the old Vindheim, where Auðun lived and where Kárr the old was buried north of this farm, had to be the farm Myskja." Fylling claimed that the etymology also provides "the surest evidence" that the name Myskja, which he believes originates from musk, wind and sea drift, must be the historical Vindheim.

According to Per Fett, Fylling was on the wrong track. The farm Vindheim, where Grettir could have dug up the treasure, is, in Fett's opinion, no more concrete than the word heaven. The use of the word Vindheim, home of the winds, was to tell the listeners that one has now left the physical world and is wandering into the world of the soul. People in old times understood that the story was full of figurative language, among other things in the use of names of persons who are mentioned. But modern people have not understood this, and they therefore struggle to locate places which do not exist.

In the stories about the battle in Hjørungavágr, the name Primsgnd stands out, in Fett's opinion, far more strongly than Vindheim in *Grettir's saga*. Why does this name, which is difficult to locate, appear? Could the explanation simply be that the author now wants to tell that he is elevating the history above the historical-geographical? Þorgerðr Hqrðabruðr also appears here. In a completely different saga, we meet her brother, Jarl Sóti, just like Kárr in *Grettir's saga*.

If one connects this to the fact that the Jómsvikings were a men's union or mystery society, then we must consider if Hjørungavágr has only been in the mind of a writer of yarn. Fett points here to the Norse male

name Hjórr, which is connected to another male community, the lineage of Hálfir. And Hjórr's offspring can be called hjörungar, like árnungane after Árni at Giske.

Hjórr means sword. The son of one of the Hjórrs was the scald Fleinn. Fleinn means arrow. The arrow is a descendant of the sword, a hjörung, but this word is not found in isolation in ancient language, says Fett. But on the other hand, we can find the composition hjórlog in the meaning blood.

And Fett concludes his contribution in 1967 with: "The storm that Þorgerðr sent against the Jómsvikings was like a rain of arrows, like a wave of sword descendants, as a Hjørungavágr. But this last word could at the same time bring to mind the bloodbath, the sword blood, which followed, and to the lineage of Hálfir as a nearby comparison."

It can also be mentioned that when Per Fett was asked in 1976, in connection with preparing a possible 1,000-year commemoration, whether the battle was worth commemorating, the answer was that he did not think "that the battle was a historical event."

Another person who is strongly critical of whether the story about the Jómsvikings has real content is the Icelandic Nobel Prize winner Halldór Laxness. He believes that "heroic poetry in prose" is an appropriate characteristic of Jómsvíkinga saga. Laxness says that the author of *Jómsvíkinga saga* must, in order to put history on the right track, build a Viking castle. Later, when the author no longer needs the Jómsvikings, he therefore gets rid of them by arranging a battle in Hjørungavágr.

Besides, Laxness points to Jarl Hákon's sacrifice of his seven-year-old son Erlingr on the island, who has the "strange name Primsgnd". After the negotiations between the jarl and Þorgerðr Hqrðabruðr the fortunes of war turned. Þorgerðr sends her hailstones against the Jómsvikings. Laxness concludes that the episode appears to be "a vicious distortion of the biblical motif of sacrificing a son. Involuntarily, the reader feels like making a pilgrimage to this place and wonders, where is Hjørungavágr? But here we are at the precincts of the saga. Hjørungavágr is a place like Svqlðr, where Olaf Tryggvason fell, and which was not created by God, but made by islanders. Not even the philologists know where these places are."

Laxness further says that the author of *Jómsvíkinga saga* resorts to well-known tricks, such as showing truthful Icelanders as witnesses to great events. One lets men recite gnarled and trivial verses in an intricate manner. These verses may as well have been written several hundred years after the alleged event. These later writers were also able to write such verses in an old-fashioned style and insert them into texts where



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appropriate. The four Icelanders who are dragged in as witnesses of the truth in *Jómsvíkinga saga* had been buried in their graves around 200 years when the saga was written. One must then be allowed to ask the question of how accurate those statements are six generations later. Laxness also refers to the four eye-witnesses. Vigfúss Víga-Glumsson is only known as a novel character in a younger saga. Einarr skálaglamm is fairly known. But we don't know more about the last two than that their names appear in the *Landnámabók*.

Laxness says towards the end of his review that it is not always clear what has “led our author to write a novel about Denmark. Knowledge of this country is not at all his strongest points. In everything related to Danish history, his chronology is, to say it in a generous way, dubious.” So, the question is whether the writer’s knowledge of the geography of Sunnmøre is better?

It is also interesting to note that the surviving Jómsvíkings do not return to Jómsborg, but to Denmark.

We know that much of *Jómsvíkinga saga* is pure fantasy. We are told that central participants in the Jómsvíking battle are Ármóðr from Qundarfjörðr and his

son Árni. They are not mentioned in *Heimskringla* and *Fagrskinna*. However, in the different versions of *Jómsvíkinga saga* they are set up against Vagn Ákason or Sigurðr kápa. I can't find Qundarfjörðr in Norway, but in Iceland it's a neighbouring fjord to Dýrafjörðr.

Since they are also not to be found in the *Landnámabók*, one might allow oneself to ask: can it be the saga writer who, for some reason, has placed Icelanders in the battle even if they do not participate?

And has the author also used his imagination when he places the battle at the island of Høð. The name of this island just means battle. Could this be an attempt to make the story more trustworthy?

Here it might be appropriate to insert a comment by Ólafur Halldórson: “Actually, I have never put forward any seriously intended theory as to where Hjørungavagr in *Jómsvíkinga saga* is located. If I am asked for my opinion, for example whether it could be Liavågen on Hareidlandet, I have referred to a small passage in a chronicle by Halldór Laxness. ... And if one cannot find a vágr which satisfies the depiction in the sagas, I can see nothing else than that we must settle for Halldór Laxness's theory. At least it has the advantage of being amusing.”

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# Differences in the sagas

A perusal of the sagas shows us that the presentations can vary. A central point when deciding how many men taking part in the battle is the number of ships belonging to the fleets. A problem in this context is whether one should always assume that a hundred, even when it is written with the symbol *c*, as in Roman numerals, should mean long hundred, i.e., 120 and not 100 which is common today.

From the table below, we see that the number of Jómsviking ships (J) varies from 60 in *Heimskringla* and *Fagrskinna* to 190 in *AM 510 4to*. The number of

Norwegian ships (N) also varies widely. *Heimskringla* and *Fagrskinna* say 180 ships, while the other versions operate with 360 ships. Based on these lists, the number of participants can be more than twice as many in one version compared to another.

Some local debaters have tried to calculate from the number and the size of the ships how many people participated in the battle. Ole Barman said, for example, that the ships had a total of around 18,000 men on board. In personal discussions I have even heard assertions of 36,000 participants.

## *The number of ships in the various versions:*

**AM 291 4to**            J: 120    N: 360  
J: and had a hundred big ships  
N: the fleet consisted of three hundred ships

**Stock. Perg. 4to no7** J: 120    N: 360  
J: and had *c.* big ships  
N: together they had *.ccc.* ships

**Flateyjarbók**            J: 185    N: 360  
J: They had 120 longships and 65 smallships.  
N: Together they had three hundred ships, but many were small

**AM 510 4to**            J: 190    N: 360  
J: *.c.* large ships and *.lxx.* smaller ships  
N: They had *.ccc.* ships

**Heimskringla**        J: 60            N:180  
J: they had sixty ships  
N: They had one and a half hundred ships

**Fagrskinna**            J: 60            N: 180  
J: had *.lx.* longships  
N: one and a half *.c.* ships

**Hanssøn**                J: 190            N: 360  
J: *j c lxx* big and small ships  
N: they had *ijj c* small and large ships

**Arngrímur**            J: 70            N: 360  
J: 70 vessels  
N: three hundred vessels

## *Some other differences*

	<b>Landing place</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Who reports</b>
<b>AM 291 4to</b>	Tønsberg		Øgmundr hvíti
<b>Stock. Perg.</b>	Tønsberg		Geirmundr huiti
<b>Flateyjarbók</b>	Tønsberg	after Christmas	Augmundr hute
<b>510 4to</b>	Tønsberg	Christmas time	Geirmundur
<b>Heimskringla</b>	Agder		Jarl Eirik/Geirmundr
<b>Fagrskinna</b>	Jæren	Christmas time	Geirmundr
<b>Hanssøn</b>	Tønsberg	Christmas time	Amund huid
<b>Arngrímur</b>	Jæren		Augmundus Albus
<b>Normalized to</b>			<b>Øgmundr hvíti/Geirmundr (hvíti)</b>

	Meeting place?	Beach logger at Høð?	Farmer tells
AM 291 4to	Hjörungavágr	Vagn Ákason	Inside Høð in Hjörungavágr
Stock. Perg.	Hjörungavágr	Vagn Ákason	Inside the island in Hjörungavágr
Flateyjarbók	Hjörungavágr	Vagn Ákason	Inside the island in Hjörungavágr
AM 510 4to	Hjörungavágr	Vagn Ákason	Inside Høð in Hjörungavágr
Heimskringla	Hallkelsvík/Áskelsvík	Búi inn digri	Hørundarfjörð/Hjörungarfjörð
Fagrskinna		Búi inn digri	Eltrane/Almehamrane
Hansson	Hiarundo wogh	Vagn Ákason	Inside the island
Arngrímur	Hjörungavágr	Vagn Ákason	vágr near the island

Some of these differences have led to much discussion. All sagas that mention the time of the battle date it to Christmas time/winter. Some have completely rejected that the Jomsvikings would have taken off at this time of the year. The weather conditions would have made it impossible, it is claimed. Others say that the climate in the Viking Age was better than today. And if you want to come upon an enemy unexpectedly, the winter season is suitable.

In *Jómvíkinga saga*, the various versions say that the Norwegians gathered in Hjörungavágr/Hiarundo wogh and that the battle was performed at the same place. Heimskringla, on the other hand, tells that Jarl Hákon was in Hallkelsvík/Áskelsvík and rowed from the south to meet the Jómvíkings who had been seen at the outside of Høð. Fagrskinna does not give a clear answer as to where the Norwegian fleet was assembled.

Most people agree that the farmer at Høð gives misleading information when it comes to how many ships Jarl Hákon had. Then one must wonder if he lies just as much when he reports where Jarl Hákon is to be found.

In *Fagrskinna*, where the farmer keeps both his cattle and his life, seems to have the representation where the Jomsvikings are most thoroughly mocked. In the other versions, the farmer has to go to the battleground and then loses his life. In my opinion, it is not unreasonable to be critical of the farmer's story in *Fagrskinna*, not only to the number of ships, but also to the information that Jarl Hákon was supposed to stay at Eltrane/Almehamrane and that his army had to be further north. It may also be reasonable to question what is meant by Hørundarfjörð/Hjörungarfjörð in *Heimskringla*.

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# Battle formations

The presentation of the battle formations may change slightly from version to version. We can also notice that the rule of three appears clearly also in the battle formations. In almost all arrays, there are three prominent Norwegians against each chieftain of the Jóms-

vikings. In addition, some versions have also grouped the armies themselves into three, as for example in *Heimskringla*, *Stock. Perg.*, *AM 510* and *Laurents Hanssøn*.

## ***Battle formation AM 291 4to***

Sveinn Hákonarson, Guðbrandr hvíti, Styrkár from Gimsar against Jarl Sigvaldi.  
Yrja-Skeggi, Sigurðr steiklingr, Þórir hjörtr against Þorkell inn hávi.  
Þorkell miðlangr, Hallsteinn kerlingabani, Þorkell leira towards Búi inn digri.  
Ármóðr from Qnundarfjörðr and Árni (his son) against Sigurðr kápa  
Eiríkr Hákonarson, Erlingr of Skuggi, Qgmundr hvíti against Vagn Ákason  
Einarr litli, Hávarðr from Flyðrunes, Hallvarðr uppsjá against Björn inn brezki  
Jarl Hákon himself was to be free to assist where he thought it most needed.

## ***Battle formation Stock. Perg. 4to no 7 (from north to south)***

Yrja-Skeggi, Sigurðr steiklingr, Þórir hjörtr against Búi inn digri  
Þorkell miðlangr, Hallsteinn kerlingabani, Þorkell leira against Sigurðr kápa

Sveinn Hákonarson, Guðbrandr hvíti against Jarl Sigvaldi  
Styrkár from Gimsar against Þorkell inn hávi

Ármóðr, Árni and Finnur against Vagn Ákason  
Eiríkr Hákonarson, Erlingr of Skuggi, Geirmundr hvíti against Björn inn brezki  
Jarl Hákon, Einarr litli and Hávarðr from Flyðrunes should be free to support where needed.

## ***Battle formation Flateyjarbók***

Sveinn Hákonarson, Guðbrandr hvíti, Styrkár from Gimsar against Jarl Sigvaldi  
Yrja-Skeggi, Sigurðr steiklingr, Þórir hjörtr against Þorkell inn hávi  
Þorkell miðlangr, Hallsteinn kerlingabani, Þorkell leira towards Búi inn digri  
Ármóðr from Qnundarfjörðr and Árni, his son, against Sigurðr kápa  
Eiríkr Hákonarson, Erlingr of Skuggi, Qgmundr hvíti against Vagn Ákason  
Einarr litli, Hallvarðr uppsjá, Hávarðr from Flyðrunes against Björn inn brezki  
Jarl Hákon was to be free to support where needed.

## ***Battle formation AM 510 4to (from north to south)***

Þorkell miðlangr, Hallsteinn kerlingabani, Þorkell leira against Búi inn digri  
Sigurðr Jarlsson, Ármóðr from Qnundarfjörðr and Árni, his son, against Sigurðr kápa

Sveinn Hákonarson, Guðbrandr hvíti, Sigrek from Gimsar against Jarl Sigvaldi  
Yrja-Skeggi, Sigurðr steiklingr, Þórir hjörtr against Þorkell inn hávi

Jarl Eiríkr, Erlingr of Skuggi, Erlendr Hákonarson against Vagn Ákason  
Einarr litli, Hallvarðr uppsjá and his brother Hávarðr against Björn inn brezki  
Jarl Hákon was free to assist where needed.





If you want to row with many ships side by side, the width can be quite large when the oars are in use. Defenders of the Liavåg theory therefore often place the battle outside the approximately 300-metres wide vågr. But they still use battle formations from sagas which say that the battle took place in a vågr. Here we see a battle formation that V. Voss presented in 1888. Most adherents of the Liavåg alternative maintain that Sula is Primisignd. Jómsvíkings saga tells us that during a break in the battle when the Norwegians had returned to the shore, Jarl Hákon decided to go to Primisignd. When Jarl Hákon left his army heading for Sula, he had to get past the Jómsvíkings, who were out on the fjord, according to this battle array. Is it reasonable to assume that the Jómsvíkings would let Jarl Hákon pass unhindered with only one ship. The purpose of the whole expedition was just to kill or capture Jarl Hákon!



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***Battle formation Heimskringla***

Jarl Hákon, Þórir hjörtr, Styrkárr from Gimsar against Jarl Sigvaldi  
Jarl Eiríkr, Guðbrandr hvíti, Þorkell leira against Búi inn digri and his brother Sigurðr  
Jarl Sveinn, Yrja-Skeggi, Rognvaldr from Ærvík against Vagn Ákason

***Battle formation Fagrskinna***

Skopti and Rognvaldr from Ærvík, Jarl Hákon against Jarl Sigvaldi  
Sigurðr Hákonarson, Eyvindr Finnsson, Erlendr Steik against Sigurðr kápa  
Jarl Eiríkr, Þorsteinn miðlangr, Þórir hjörtr against Búi inn digri  
Erlingr Hákonarson, Yrja-Skeggi, Styrkárr from Gimsar against Þorkell inn hávi  
Sveinn Hákonarson, Gissur hvíti, Þorkell leira against Vagn Ákason

***Battle formation Laurents Hanssøn (from north to south)***

Þorkell miðlangr, Kolbjörn kerlingabani, Þorkell leira against Búi inn digri  
Ármóðr from Qnundarfjörðr, Árni Ármóðsson against Sigurðr kápa  
Sveinn Hákonarson, Guðbrandr hvíti, Styrkárr from Gimsar against Jarl Sigvaldi  
Yrja-Skeggi, Sigurðr steiklingr, Þórir hjörtr against Þorkell inn hávi  
Eiríkr Hákonarson, Erlingr of Skuggi, Qgmundr hvíti against Vagn Ákason  
Árni, Hallvarðr uppsjá, Hávarðr from Flyðrunes against Björn inn brezki  
Jarl Hákon should be free to intervene where necessary.

***Battle formation Arngrímur Jónsson***

Sveinn Hákonarson, Sigurðr steiklingr, Þórir hjörtr, Guðbrandr hvíti against Jarl Sigvaldi  
Yrja-Skeggi, Styrkárr from Gimsar against Þorkell inn hávi

Þorkell miðlangr, Rognvaldr from Ærvík, Hallsteinn kerlingabani towards Búi inn digri  
Þorkell leira, Ármóðr from Qnundarfjörðr, Árni Ármóðsson against Sigurðr kápa

Eiríkr Hákonarson, Erlingr of Skuggi, Gissur hvíti against Vagn Ákason  
Einarr litli, Hallvarðr and Hávarðr against Björn inn brezki

Jarl Hákon should be free to intervene where necessary.

# Variations of names in the sagas

	<b>The island</b>	<b>The stones</b>	<b>Battle site</b>
AM 291 4to	haþ	hiorvngar	Hiorvnga vagr
Stock. Perg. 4to	Hauð Hǫð		Hiaurungauagr Hiorunga uági
Flateyjarbók	Hǫdd	Hiorungar	Hiorungauoge Heorungauoge
AM 510 4to	Haud	Hiorungar	Hiorunga-uog
Heimskringla	Hǫð		Hjǫrungavágr
Fagrskinna	Hoð		Hiorunga vag
Hanssøn	hawud	hiarunder	Hiarunda wogh Hiarundowoghin
Arngrímur	Hod		Hiorungavog
	<b>Inside</b>	<b>Fjord</b>	<b>Place of sacrifice</b>
AM 291 4to	harvnd	harvndar fiórþr	þrjmsigþ
Stock. Perg. 4to	Haurund		Primsignd
Flateyjarbók	Harundar	Harundarfiordr	Primsigd
AM 510 4to	Hiorund	Haurundar-fiordur	Primsignd
Heimskringla		Hǫrundarfjǫrð Hjǫrundarfjǫrð	
Fagrskinna			
Hanssøn			Primsigd
Arngrímur			(forest nearby)

# Hqð/Hareidlandet



One of the theories is that Hqð means foam. The island's name should then originate from the foam which is created along the shores, such as here at Flø.

Most people agree that the island of Hqð, which we find mentioned in *Heimskringla* and in *Jómsvíkinga saga*, is the same island which is called Hareidlandet today. It is further assumed that in addition to the Hareid name, the farm names Hasund, Haddal and Havåg also can be linked to the island's name. But there are varied opinions about the meaning. It is in the vicinity of this island that the Jómsvíking battle most likely was fought.

But is it a coincidence that an interpretation which is often brought forward says that the island's name, Hqð, means battle?

In *Áslákr Bolt's land register* from around 1430, we find the name Hadareidz parish. It is assumed that the form Haðar is the genitive of Hqð, where we get an alteration from q to a. Furthermore, we have got today's pronunciation – Hareid – from the earlier form Haðareid. In *Norske Gaardnavne* one expects a corresponding naming, so that Haðarsund has become Hasund, Haðardalr has become Haddal and Haðarvågr has become Havåg.

Oddvar Nes says in the article *Nokre gamle øynamn på Sunnmøre* that the names Hasund and Haddal are

composed of a stem form of the island's name. The stem form of Hqð is Hað. The oldest forms of these names should thus have been Haðsund and Haðdalr. The farm name Havåg is also composed with a stem form. If the more modern genitive form Haðar was the basis, one might have expected the pronunciation Harsund, Hardal and Harvåg instead of Hasund, Haddal and Havåg. This ancient naming suggests that the Hqð names in Ulstein are older than the name Hareid.

It can be mentioned that Gustav Storm, in his attempt to place the battle in Liavågen, said that the farm names Håheim and Håbakkane also are connected to the island's name, Hqð. This has been cited in other works, but Hå- had nothing to do with the island's name. It just means high.

## ***The battle interpretation***

If we look up in the dictionary, *Norrøn ordbok*, we read the following: Hqð (f=female) can mean battle. We find the name used in skaldic poetry. Hqð (f) the island of Hareidlandet (actually *Haðar-eið*). Hqðr (m=male) (gen. *Haðar*, dat. *Heði*) 1. one of the old Norse gods, the blind god who killed Baldr. 2. a king



Map of Hareidlandet. The sea area between Eika/Måløya and Hareidlandet is far more spacious than the narrow gut where Liavåg supporters want to place the battle.

of *Haðaland* (in legends). The dictionary also questions whether Haudr can be a byname for Høðr.

According to Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymological Wörterbuch*, Indo-Germanic *\*kat-* has developed into *haðna* in the meaning young goat in Norse. Another interpretation of *\*kat-* is to braid, tie together. While *\*kat-* (with bow over k) we later find as Høð in the meaning battle. These interpretations can also be found in other dictionaries. The meaning battle is based on the interpretation of personal names we find in old poetry. But there are also other opinions about the content of these words, and thus scholars have also brought forward other explanations.

### The god theory

The name scholar Magnus Olsen tended to refer to names from the old mythology when certain place names were interpreted. This tendency has in many cases been reinforced by others when explaining place names. Names connected with gods often give “status names”. It is thus an explanatory model which has easily gained followers, no matter how unreasonable the interpretations of the name may be.

In an earlier debate about the island’s name, Vilhelm Ringstad claimed that the island’s name, Høð, comes from a great man's name. The island should originally have been called Hodsøy or Hodda. This Høð could

have been a descendant of Óðinn. Around 2,000 years ago, he is said to have fought for dominion over the island which we today call Hareidlandet, and perhaps most of outer Sunnmøre. The island is supposed to have received its name from him.

Magnus Bjørndal also connects the Høð name to old mythology: “Ulstein must certainly come from the Norse Ullsteinr, which was a stone where one sacrifices to the old god Ullr, the son of Óðinn.

If we think about it, we don't need much time to find this stone. It lies up at Hovsethagen to this day... Hovset (...) there was a heathen temple where sacrifices were made to the gods Óðinn and Þórr. We also know from *Heimskringla* that Eiríkr Jarl hurried here in the middle of the battle in Hjørungavágr and sacrificed his youngest son on this stone so

that he should win the battle. They needed a long intermission if he was going to ride from Liavågen out to Hovset and back, but he did, and it shows how important this stone was at that time. It is therefore evident that the name Hodd is based on this shrine which was widely known at that time. Ullsteinr with the derivation Ulstein is in the same way the name of the stone, the holy place, where many a poor slave was put to death.”

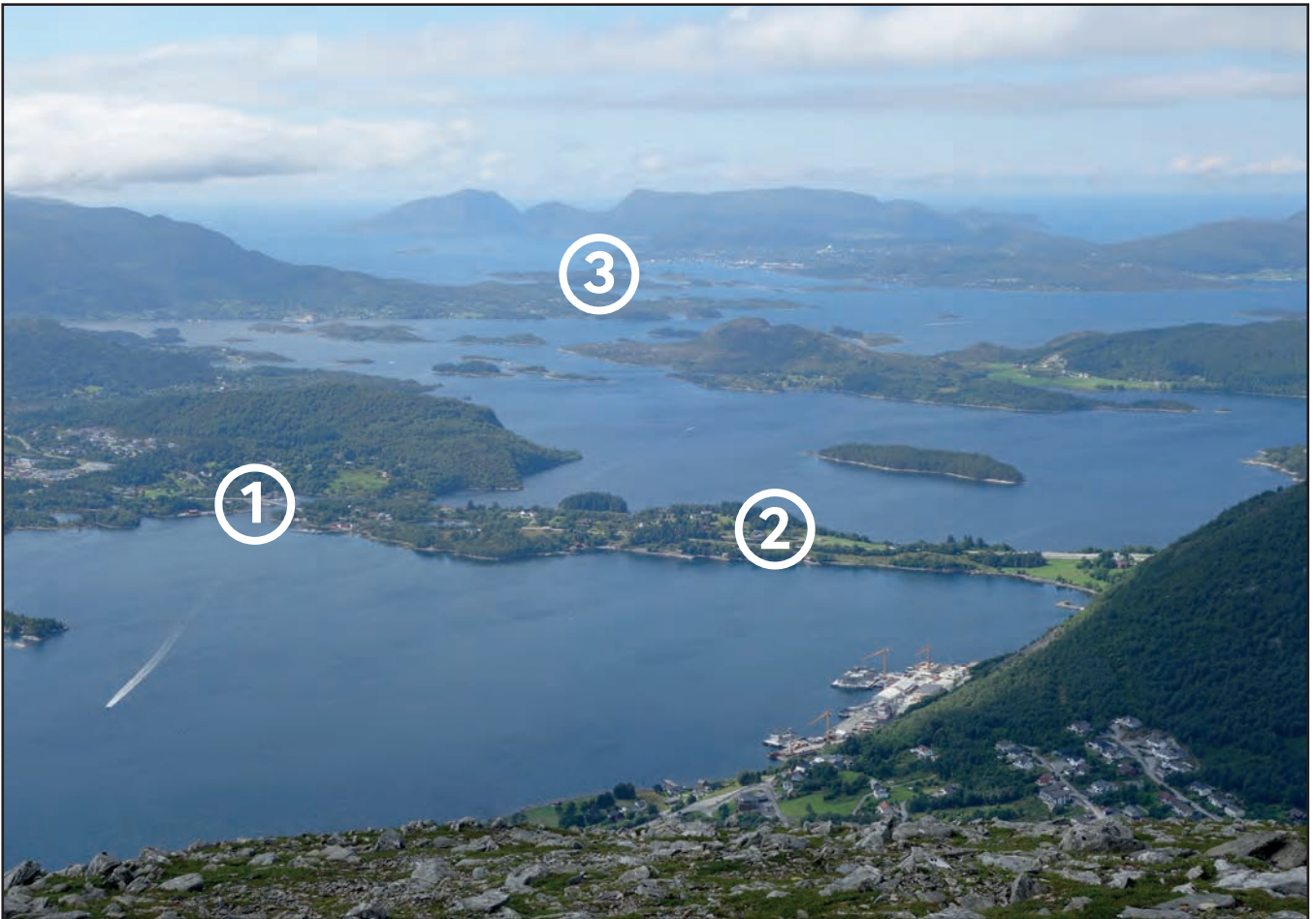
### The goat theory

The name scholar Oluf Rygh based many of his interpretations on a theory that river names often form the basis for farm names. Eivind Vågslid has interpreted the island’s name from such a starting point. He believes in *Stadnamntydingar II* that Høð means young goat. The name may first have been used for the largest river on the island. Vågslid believes that the god's name, Høðr, is connected with the island’s name, but he interprets it to mean goatherds or goat herders.

Vågslid also asserts that the god's name Høðr is connected with warrior, god of war, on the basis of the legend about Høðr who shot Baldr. Vågslid thinks here that the blind, unarmed man with the mistletoe rather is an old goatherd than a god of war.

Vågslid is correct that the god Høðr, as Snorri portrays him, bears little resemblance of a warrior. But it





One interpretation of the island's name links Hqð to the narrow strait between Hareidlandet and Gurskøya. The farm Gardnes (2) lies as a stone wall between the islands. At Dragsundet (1) we find the narrowest passage. Further out we see Hereyjar (3).

is a completely different and combative Hqðr who is portrayed by Saxo Grammaticus in *Gesta Danorum*. There, Hqðr and Baldr compete for a woman, Nanna. This leads to repeated battles between the armies of these two. At the end Hqðr gives Baldr a mortal wound.

### **The foam theory**

Sophus Bugge, who has also been the central interpreter for linking the names Hjørundfjord, Jørneset and Jørdalen to sword, believes in *Norske Gaardnavne* that the island's name, Hqð, can be connected with Gothic *hwaþo* which means foam.

Those who adhere to the foam theory usually start from the coastal traveller's experience of the islands he passes. In order to be able to explain the seaway to others without having a map, one had to start from specifics. Thus, the names of the islands are not based on rivers which the passer-by hardly sees, but on what he sees from the sea. It has been emphasized that the sea which breaks against the island or against the grounds by the outer shore, creates white foam. But if we find more foam by Hareidlandet than at other islands along

the coast – yes, there may be divided opinions about that. Vilhelm Kiil has refuted Bugge's “foam theory”, and he points out that *hwaþo* could not have developed into Hqð, but one would rather have expected *hvøð* instead.

### **The sea theory**

Hans Kuhn has in an article – *Hadbarden und Hadraumer* – discussed whether Hadraumer could have lived on the island of Hqð. Kuhn believes that the island's name, Hqð, and the first element in Hadeland have the same origin. In Anglo-Saxon sources you find a corresponding word – *haðo*. Based on the contexts in which this word is used, Kuhn believes it must refer to sea in one form or another and only exceptionally to battle.

This old, extinct name for a certain type of sea by the island, has subsequently become the name of the island, in Kuhn's opinion.

### **The narrow sound theory**

In 1908, a whetstone with runic inscriptions was found in a burial mound at the farm Straum on Hitra. One of

**\*hapu-** f. ‘battle’ — ON *hǫð* f. ‘id.’, OE *heaðo-* ‘id.’, OS *hathu-* ‘id.’, OHG *hadu-* ‘id.’ ⇒ *\*(kʰ)h<sub>3</sub>-tu-* (IE) — Hitt. *kattu-* n. ‘enmity, strife’, OIr. *cath* m., OW *cat*, MW *cad* f. ‘strife, battle’ < *\*(kʰ)h<sub>3</sub>-tu-*; Gr. *κότος* m. ‘spite, anger’ < *\*(kʰ)h<sub>3</sub>-to-*.

*Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Germanic says that Hǫð means battle.*

the inscriptions was interpreted by Magnus Olsen as follows: “haha skapi hapu ligi”. Olsen interpreted the word hapu as battle. But Vilhelm Kiil has claimed in an article, *Runerimet på Straumsbrynet*, that this does not make sense. He believes that hapu must have the same root as Anglo-Saxon heaðorian and other closely related words which mean press together, lace in. Kiil believes from the example he gives that in Norse there was a word Hǫð (f), and possibly a Hǫðr, which in meaning has almost coincided with Norse þrong and would mean compression, tight passage, ensnaring. According to Kiil, the old name of the island, Hǫð, originates from the tight and tortuous sail course which is formed by Hareidlandet on one side and by Gurskøya together with other smaller islands on the other side. The fact that three of the four Hǫð/Haðar names, and probably the oldest ones, lay close to this passage could support an interpretation that links the origin of the name to a characteristic there.

Jan de Vries has in *Altnordisches etymological Wörterbuch* commented on Kiil's interpretation of the island's name. De Vries believes that the interpretation of Hǫð as battle assumes that the fight takes place in an enclosed area. Hǫð, according to de Vries, should not have an abstract meaning of constriction, as Kiil says, but have a concrete meaning – fence, enclosure. Hjalmar Falk and Alf Torp have in *Wortschatz der germanischen Spracheinheit* separated between *hap* meaning to fight, and *hap* meaning to shut in, hide. It is this last word stem that Kiil links to his interpretation of narrowing. On the other hand, Kiil's interpretation does not need to be in conflict with Kuhn, who links Hǫð to one or another form of sea, if we are talking here about a narrow, fenced or hidden stretch of sea.

### **Other interpretations**

We can also add that Hans Strøm believes that Hareid-

landet may previously have had two names. On the east side where Hareid lies, the island has been called Harund. But on the other side, the name has been Houd or Hovd from hills or heads (protruding forelands). According to Strøm, Hareid must otherwise be composed of a Norse word *har* and *eid* (isthmus – to Hareidseidet) between Ulstein and Hareid.

In 1877, Peder Fylling came up with a counter-post to Gustav Storm. Storm had claimed that the Jómsviking battle had been in Liavågen. He had also derived the island name from “Hadar” and “Hadareid”. Fylling believed that this was “a distortion and destruction which this island name has been given at the end of the 14th century.” Fylling himself believed that the name came from head in the meaning protruding tongues of land.

Fylling goes on to refer to dean Baade who, at a question to a farmer, had received the answer: “Not on the northern Haud, but on the southern Haud.” By “northern Haud” the farmer meant Hareidlandet, and “southern Haud” was Gurskøya.

In this context, we can mention that we do not have particularly old forms of writing of Gurskøya. Hans Strøm uses both Gurskøe and Hiidsegg-Landet about this neighboring island to Hareidlandet. If this information from Fylling – that the northern and southern islands have a common name, Haud – may have a substance, it is not unreasonable to think that the name Hǫð originally came from the narrow strait between these two. Many of the old Norwegian island names which we find in *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* have fallen into disuse. Just as with Hǫð. Several of these island names are difficult to decipher because they are from the oldest language material we know. Therefore, there are also divided opinions in the professional community about the origin of some of them, as this review of the name Hǫð has shown.



# Hjørund and Hjørundarfjørðr



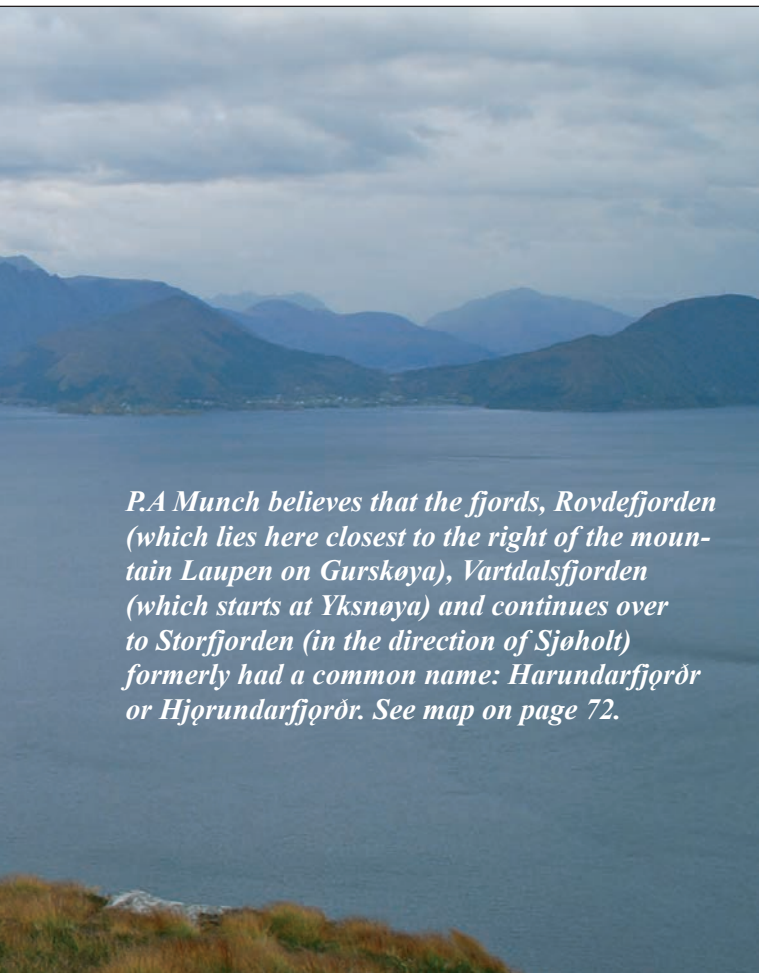
In the saga versions which describe the Jómsviking battle, the place names have many different written forms. Hjørund is written Hiorund (*AM 510 4to*), Harund (*AM 291 4to* and *Flateyjarbók*) and Haurund (*Stock. Perg. 4to no7*). The same applies to *Hjørundarfjørð*, which is used in one version of *Heimskringla*, while another version has *Hjørundarfjørð*. This name is also written *Harundarfjørður* (*AM 291 4to*), *Harundarfjorðr* (*Flateyjarbók*) and *Haurundarfjorður* (*AM 510 4to*).

*AM 291 4to* says that Harund lies south of the vágr and *Harundarfjørður* enters from this. *Flateyjarbók* says the same, but tells that Harund lies south of the fjord. *AM 510 4to* calls Hiorund an island which is south of Hjørungavágr and that *Haurundarfjorður* enters from this. *Stock. Perg. 4to no7* only says that Haurund lies south of the vágr. From *AM 291 4to* and *Stock. Perg. 4to no7* it is difficult to decide whether Hjørund is meant as a fjord name or a landscape name. After *Flateyjarbók* and *AM 510 4to*, it is most reasonable to see Hjørund as a landscape or peninsula/island name.

It is not unusual that the ending fjord is added to a previously uncompounded name of a fjord. As an example of this, we can mention the old fjord name *Sikifliir*, which today is called *Sykkylvsfjorden*. In the

same way, today's Hjørundfjord may be a newer form of the fjord name Hjørund/Harund, but it may also be derived from the landscape name Hjørund/Harund.

In *Jómsvikinga saga*, a distinction is made between Hjørund and Hjørundarfjørðr. They can therefore be different locations. If Hjørund is used as a fjord name in these sagas, it may be an earlier name for the fjord bed from Åram and farther within Gurskøya and Hareidlandet. And the name may have continued farther as well. I here refer to Peter Andreas Munch who says that within the chain of the four large islands, Gurskøya, Hareidlandet, Sula and Yksnøya, the inner seaway runs, with fjords along the islands, which now have different names, such as: Rovde-, Vartdals- and Storfjorden, which previously had the common name *Harundarfjørðr* or *Hjørundarfjørðr*. The cross fjords starting from this large fjord will be *Slygsfjorden*, *Sykkylvsfjorden*, *Ørstafjorden*, *Voldsfjorden* and *Syvdsfjorden*. Munch also operates with the inner *Harundar-* or *Hjørundarfjørðr* (*Hjørundfjord*). In the further presentation here, we use, in the same way as Munch, “outer *Harundar-* or *Hjørundarfjørðr*” as a common name for *Rovde-*, *Vartdals-* and *Storfjorden*. This is to distinguish it from inner *Harundar-* or *Hjørundarfjørðr*, which now is the name for the



*P.A Munch believes that the fjords, Rovdefjorden (which lies here closest to the right of the mountain Laupen on Gurskøya), Vartdalsfjorden (which starts at Yksnøya) and continues over to Storfjorden (in the direction of Sjøholt) formerly had a common name: Harundarfjørðr or Hjørundarfjørðr. See map on page 72.*

fjord from Hundeidvika towards Bjørke. Research has shown that old fjord names can become names for the landscape around the fjord. An example of this is Hardanger, which today is a landscape name. Originally, Hardangerfjorden was just called Hardanger, but ended up being called Hardangerfjorden because the surrounding landscape took over the first name of the fjord. The next step was that the landscape gave its name to the fjord. We can also find a similar naming connected to rivers. Usta, the original name of a river, gave its name to Ustedalen. Today, the river Usta is called Ustedalselva. In the same way has Hardanger, Hjørund/Harund started as a name of a fjord to which the ending fjord later has been linked. During a transition period, Harund/Hjørund and Harundarfjørðr/Hjørundarfjørðr can thus be used for the same locality, the same fjord.

The sources which say that Hjørund/Harund lies south of the vågr, did not omit Hjørund/Harund as a fjord name. But the saga versions which call Hjørund an island or place it on the south side of the fjord, assume that Hjørund is the name of a land area. It can be an island or a peninsula, for which the name of island is also sometimes used. Or it can be the entire landscape which lies along the fjord or just a part of

this landscape, such as Vartdalsstranda or the peninsula between Voldsfjorden and Hjørundfjorden. This peninsula is sometimes called Kolåshalvøya today. We can also mention that Amund Helland has suggested that Harund (Hjørund) may be an earlier name for Vartdalsstranda. In the transition period when changing from Hjørund to Hjørundarfjørðr, it can be difficult to determine whether Hjørund is used as a fjord name or as a landscape name. Likewise, it can be difficult to know what kind of fjord is meant by Hjørundarfjørðr. Is it the fjord from Åram to Ørskogvika, as P.A. Munch thinks? Or is it the fjord from Hundeidvika in the direction of Bjørke? Or can it be both, based on a demarcation between inner and outer Hjørundarfjørðr?

From the old fjord name Hjørund, as name of the inner seaway, we can get the landscape name Hjørund. From the landscape name Hjørund, the name Hjørundfjord may have been created later and was used for a period on the outer Hjørundarfjørð. The old fjord name disappears and is replaced by new names such as Rovde-, Vartdals- and Storfjorden. There may also have been an ambivalence in the use of names during a transitional period before the name Hjørundfjord stuck to the fjord in the direction of Bjørke, perhaps mostly because of the administrative division into skipreide. We can also mention here that this ambivalence, between what I call the fjord Hjørund and the Hjørundfjord, may be the basis when Snorri quotes that Jarl Hákon has travelled into Hjørundarfjørðr and later says that the jarl was in Hallkjellsvik in Volda. We can also notice that the fjord names as we find them in *Jómsvíkinga saga*, and in later written representations, have a genitive composition. They are thus rather young forms since they do not have a stem composition such as, for example, the three oldest Høð names – Hasund, Haddal and Havåg – in contrast to the younger Hareid (Haðareid).

In other cases, the old fjord name may be lost and replaced by a new one, but then you can sometimes find traces of the old fjord name in place names by the fjord. It has been suggested that Fold is an earlier name for Oslofjorden. After the fjord name Fold was supplanted, traces of it can still be found in the landscape name Follo in Akershus.

When trying to find the original names of fjords, farm and parish names along the fjord and especially in the innermost part of the fjord can be of great help. At the head of Syvdsfjorden, which is thought to have been called Syfðir in the past, lies Syvde. At the head of Voldsfjorden, in Austefjorden, we find Fyrde (from *firði* = dative form of fjord) and further out by the fjord we find the village called Volda. The fjord name which is the basis for Voldsfjorden, one has reckoned





*P.A Munch calls today's Hjørundfjord the inner Harundar- or Hjørundarfjorðr to separate it from the far bigger outer Harundar- or Hjørundarfjorð.*

is *Valdr*. The farm Kile is also located at the innermost end of Kilsfjorden. By Dalsfjorden lies the farm, Dale. The village of Ørsta lies at the head of Ørstafjorden, which was formerly called *Ærstr*.

In today's Hjørundfjorden, you do not find any farm or village names that can be connected to Hjørund. In contrast, the inner farm here is called Bjørke. In a side arm of this fjord, Norangsfjorden, lies the farm Norang at the head of the fjord. Locally, a distinction now is made between the inner and outer parts of Hjørundfjorden. The fjord from the mouth of Norangsfjorden inwards is called Storfjorden, while the fjord from this mouth outwards is called Hjørundfjorden.

Why do we have this distinction? The name form Storfjorden on the inner part may indicate that a new name has replaced an old name for the fjord. And it was perhaps a completely different name than Harund/Hjørund! And why should one use the name Storfjorden (The large fjord) for the innermost, smallest and narrowest part of the fjord if the entire fjord once was called Hjørundfjorðr? At the head of the fjord we find, as mentioned before, Bjørke. The fact that the name Hjørundfjord has stuck to the outer part of the fjord may come from the administrative division into skipreide, which has also encompassed the landscape outside the mouth along the outer and largest Storfjord, which may previously have been called Harund/Hjørund. Compare here that Hjørundfjord skipreide around the year 1600, which is the oldest division we have details about, also covering Hundeidvika and on to Tusvika, an area which today is in Sykkylven

municipality. It can also be mentioned that tax collectors about 1520 places Bjørke both at Fyrde skipreide, Fyrde lies in Voldsfjorden, and in Hjørundfjord skipreide.

The part of the "outer" Storfjord which passes the villages of Stordal and Stranda may have previously been called Slygsfjord or just Slygs. One thinks that the name can be found in the farm name Sløgstad in Stranda. Further along the fjord there is Dale (Norddal) in Norddalsfjorden, which goes over to Tafjorden with the innermost farm called Tafjord. And in Geirangerfjorden, where one traditionally has reckoned that the first element comes from *geira* in the meaning steer crooked, Oddvar Nes believes that the farm Gjorva may have a connection to this fjord name. This fjord has been called Jårångjen/Jørungen in oral tradition in Sunnmøre right up to our days. We also find the name Jørungsløftet on a mountain pass from Geiranger to Grasdalen in Stryn. Could this be connected to Jårångjen/Jørungen as the innermost and smallest end of the large fjord that started much further out at Åram? Those who passed Stad had the choice of whether they wanted to go the inner or outer seaway – and they needed a distinctive name for the alternatives.

This fjord system, the inner seaway, is characterized by mountains on both sides, in contrast to the outer seaway. The route is relatively free of islets and rocks. The exception is the stretch of sea at the end of Haraidlandet, where one can find a number of islets and rocks close to the seaway. The *vågr* here is Havåg. There are also three smaller islands: Måløya, Yksnøya

and Eika (as the largest). But can we find traces of the former fjord name Hjørund at the inner seaway? At the eastern tip of Hareidlandet we find a name which is pronounced Jørneset, but which today, based on the sword interpretation, is written Hjørungneset. Could this name rather be related to the fact that the fjord Hjørund ran inside?

The *vágr* at the fjord/landscape Hjørund/Harund could thus be the stretch of sea that lies between Gurskøya, Hareidlandet and Eika/Måløya. In my opinion, it is possible to assume that the Hjørund name may be the basis for the name of the *vágr*. The most correct spelling of the name would then be Hjørundarvág. The first element then has nothing to do with sword as it is usually interpreted, but tells us about the connection to the name Hjørund. The old name Hjørundarfjørðr is today most often pronounced Jøring- or Jøringfjorden. The *ø* (o with twig) in *hjør* is pronounced *ø*, and the *d* in *-und* is pronounced *g*. If we base the same sound development in Hjørundarvág, the pronunciation would most likely be Hjørungavág if the name had survived to this day.

### **What does the name mean?**

Eva Nyman, who has written a doctoral thesis on names ending in *-und*, has also discussed the name Hjørundfjord/Harundarfjord. The thesis, *Nordiska ortnamn på -und*, appeared in print in 2000. Nyman believes that the name Hjørund has not only been found in Sunnmøre. In addition to being part of today's name, Hjørundfjord, it can also be found in Harestad (parish in Bohuslän), Harndrup (city on Fyn), Harundan (lake in Dalarna), Horunda (river in Rennebu) and perhaps also in Hårrenna (river in Rendalen).

In her discussion of the name Hjørundfjord, Nyman refers to the name forms which we find in two old diplomas: Harundar fyrði (in 1325) and Jorundar fyrði (in 1356). She also refers to later writing forms such as Jørenffjord Skibrede, Jørenfiord parish, Jørgenfiord. It is these forms of writing, in addition to today's pronunciation, which the place name scholars have combined, and they tend to agree that Harundar fyrði and Jorundar fyrði is the name of the same area.

When one then comes to the first element in the name Hjørund, opinions are divided. In *Norske Gaardnavne*, it has been suggested that it may be *hjør* in the meaning of sword. It could thus mean the fjord with peaks which are sharp as swords. In my opinion, Nyman has proven – after going through a lot of *-und* names in Norway, Sweden and Denmark – that it is unlikely that a man-made object such as a sword can be the first element. We can mention here that we don't find *-und* names in Iceland. This is such

an old form of naming which was no longer productive when Iceland was settled. When it comes to the last element *-und*, according to Nyman, this refers to what the place is abundant of, or which is characterized by what the first element refers to. Eva Nyman believes that the first element *har*, as we have in the previously mentioned Harund names, refers to stone. An old fjord name like Harund, Hjørund will thus mean the stony one; mountainous. Such a name fits the fjord, which is surrounded by high mountains and where long stretches are inaccessible shores, where the cliffs rise almost straight out of the water.

Nyman believes that the forms Harund/Hjørund are the oldest. Based on these, the forms with *j*, Hjørund, have been developed by placing the preposition *i* in front. Compare here the development from *i hel* to *ihjel* in Swedish and Danish. Thus, we get the more modern forms such as Hjørund, Jorundar. An objection here is that in Sunnmøre people still says *i hel*. Nyman also points to the male name Jørund, and she believes that the genitive form of this – Jørundar, which we find in several place names – has influenced the pronunciation with *j*.

Oddvar Nes says that Hjørundfjord comes from an old fjord name Hjørund. Instead of the preposition *i* in front of the original name having influenced the pronunciation; Nes believes that the oldest written forms have been influenced by Norse *Hjørund*, which means meat, penis. Thus, we have got forms like Harund/Hjørund in written representations.

Nes thinks of two possible explanations for the name Hjørund. One is that the first element is related to an old West Norse verb *harka*, which means noise, stir. It can indicate harsh weather conditions with sudden, dangerous and strong blast of wind in the fjord.

Preferably, Nes thinks that Hjørund is connected with an old word for top, horn. The oldest form may have been *\*Herundø*, the one characterized by peaks. The starting point may then have been a Germanic *\*heraz* which is derived with *-und*. The name can then be linked to a word for brain, head, skull.

John Strandabø has, in connection with a theory that Hjørungavág is the same as Norangsfjorden, maintained that Harundar fyrði (used in 1325) and Jorundar fyrði (used in 1356) are different locations. Leira is located in Harundar fyrði, while the farm Hustad is located in Jorundar fyrði. Strandabø says that the first element, *Har*, can mean “high, deep, long, important, large, of high status, generous, hard and strong.” He further believes that the fjord had its name changed during the Danish occupation in the 16th century, and that Harundarfjord can be translated directly to Stor-fjord.



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# Hjørungavágr and Hjørungavåg



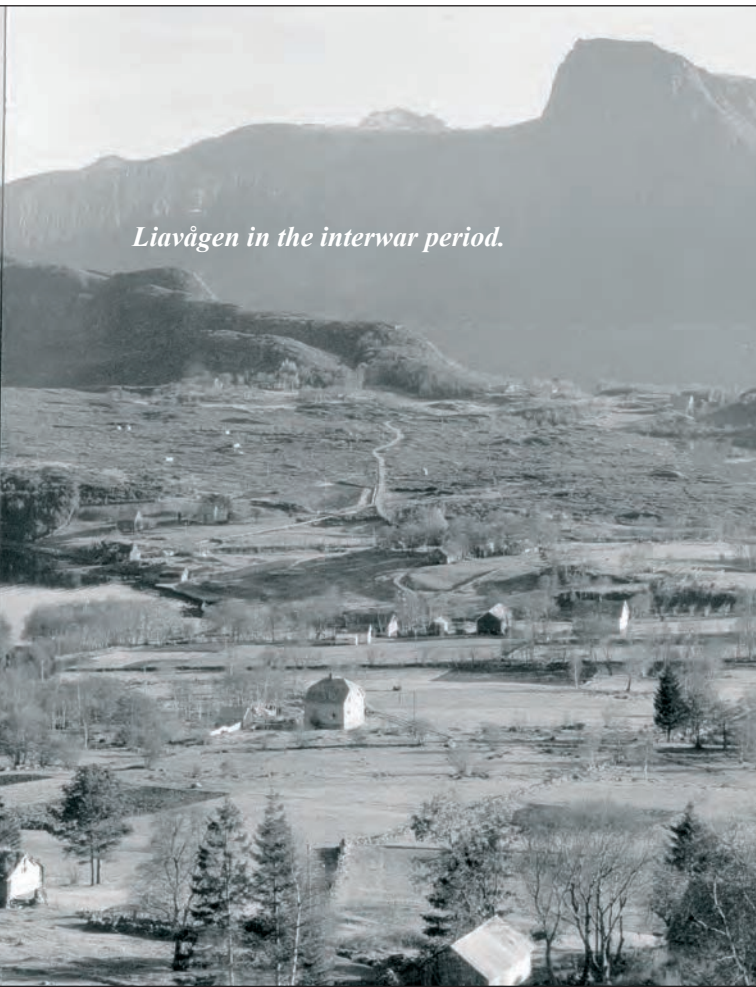
*Jómsvikinga saga* tells us what is to be the basis for the name *Hjørungavágr*. According to the saga versions *AM 291 4to* and *AM 510 4to*, the name comes from three stones called *Hjørungar*. They stand out at the *vágr*, and one stone is somewhat larger than the other two. *Flateyjarbók* also refers to these stones, but does not explicitly say that they are at sea. *Stock. Perg. 4to no7* does not mention anything about these stones, but refers to a rock which lies in the middle of the *vágr*. The versions *AM 291 4to*, *AM 510 4to* and *Flateyjarbók* also refer to this rock. Here it is told that all the ways to the shore from this rock have the same distance, both to the head of the *vágr* and to the sides.

Laurents Hanssøn uses the names *Hiarundowogin* and *Hiarunda wogh* in his translation. Here the name has an *-und* suffix, as in Harund/Hjørund, and not an *-ung* suffix. He does not use the term stone about *Hjørungar*. *Hiarunder* (*Hjarunder*) he calls three rocks that lie at the mouth of the *vágr* and says that ships can sail between them on their way into the *vágr*. According to Hanssøn, it is these rocks which have given name to the *vágr*. Since Hanssøn does not write anything about Hjørundfjorden, we cannot know whether he has linked the writing form for these rocks to the fjord's name in his translation. Furthermore, it can also

be mentioned that a genitive form of *hjorr* (sword) has been *hjarar*.

According to *Norske Gaardnavne*, Sophus Bugge believes that the mentioned stones, *Hjørungar*, got their name because they resemble swords. Here the conclusion is that *Hjørungavágr* is an earlier name of today's Liavågen. Based on the description of the *vágr* with reference to *Flateyjarbók*, he believes that although the saga has major errors in its description of the place, this narrative may still be correct. Then, it is those who have written the sagas and not today's name scholars and Liavåg supporters who are wrong when Liavågen does not match the sagas. Sophus Bugge further believes that it is the same word, *hjorr* (*herû*), which is the basis for the name Hjørundfjorden. As previously pointed out, it is unlikely that a man-made object such as a sword would form the basis of such an old name as Hjørund/Harund.

Gunnar Hjørungnes has another starting point for linking the name to sword. He says that Masdalskloven, which he sees as a large and marked sword cut into a mountain, is the origin of the name Hjørungnes, which lies on the other side of Vartdalsfjorden in relation to this cut. Based on *hjorr* = sword, the place name Hjørungnes means the headland in the sword-



*Liavågen in the interwar period.*

shaped landscape. Later, the *vågr* and the valley have been named. I will find it more reasonable that this “sword cut” would be reflected in *hjorr*-names closer to Masdalskloven rather than at Hjørungnes/Jørnes.

Hans Strøm, who was the first to write down the suggestion to place the battle at Liavågen, believed that Hjørungar were victory stones. He believed that they had been set up at Jørneset, and not by Liavågen, after the battle. If one supports this theory, the name *Hjørungavågr* will be a rather newly created name. But this name connected to sword, has despite the

greatness that followed it, been replaced by the name Liavåg. And if the name of *Hjørungavågr* was older than Liavåg, it seems strange that the name, of which the inhabitants claim to have an unbroken tradition back to the battle in *Hjørungavågr*, was substituted with Liavåg.

The two names which are often used when arguing that the Jómsviking battle stood in Liavågen are the farm names which now are pronounced Jørneset and Jørdalen. It has been suggested that these farm names can be linked to the historical *Hjørungavågr*, which is asserted to be an earlier name for Liavågen.

This is also the reason why the name Hjørungavåg was launched in the late 1890s as a name for a new postal office. The family names of those who live on these two farms have changed over the years in accordance with the different spellings of the farm names. Today, the family names are written Hjørungnes and Hjørungdal.

The first element in the writing forms for Jørdalen and Jørneset were more different in the very oldest sources we have. Later, the names have been “coordinated” and written in the same way, even if the pronunciation of the first element differs. Based on the fact that it is these two farm names which are used as proof of Liavågen for the historical *Hjørungavågr*, we shall take a closer look at the real basis for this.

Oddvar Nes has written about the names Jørneset and Jørdalen in the book *Striden om stedet*. He says that it is “doubtful whether the two names have had the same first element. The reason for this position is the difference in pronunciation: /jø:rnè:sè/ with tonem 2, versus /'jø:rd:aleN/ with tonem 1.”

He finds it problematic that the -ing /-ung spelling is preserved in the pronunciation of nearby names such as Nøringset and Hjørundfjorden, while these should have been lost in names such as *Hjørunganes* and *Hjørungadalr*, which would have been the Norse forms for Jørneset and Jørdalen if they are connected

**Historical writing forms of the farm names Jørneset, Jørdalen and Hjørundfjord.  
(Most of them are from *Norske Gaardnavne*):**

1325			Harundarfjord
1356			Jorundar fyrði
1515 (Ørskog church)	Iøringness		
NRJ (Ca. 1520)		Iwrendall/Jærmedall,	Jørenffjord
1603		Jørenndall	
1606	Jørnnes,	Jørenndall,	Jørgenfjord
1616/1617	Jøergenes,	Jøergendall	
1666	Jørgenes,	Jørgendal	
1723	Jøringsnes,	Jøringdahl	

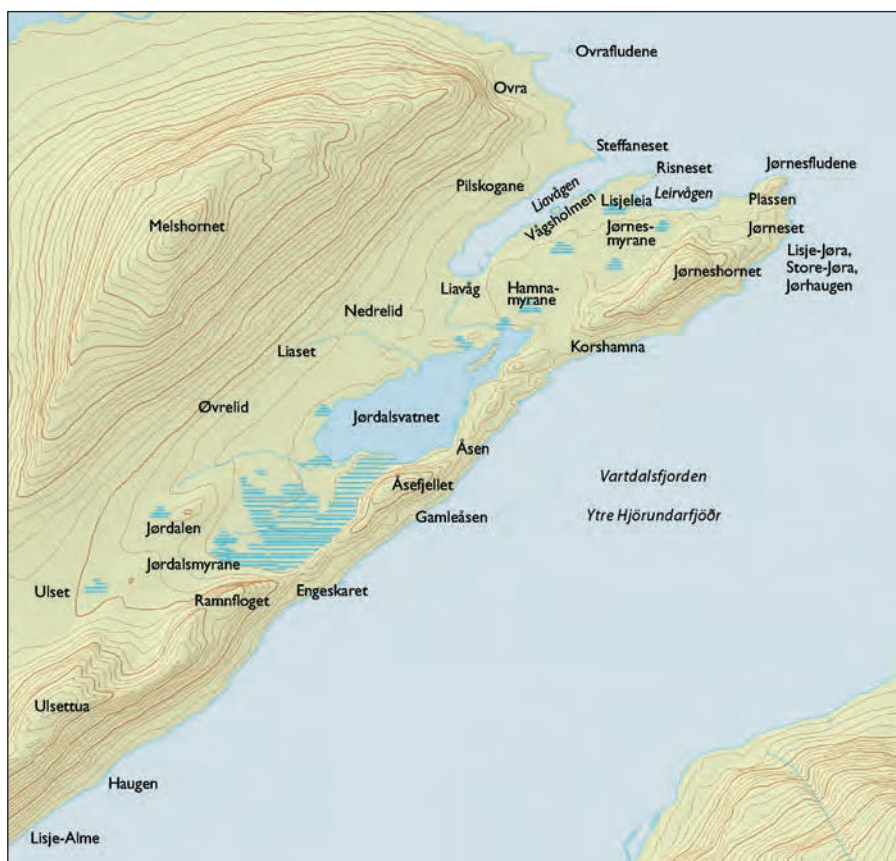


with the historical *Hjørungavágr*. The local dialect no longer has any distinction in the pronunciation of old farm names which begin with *J*, *Dj*, *Gj* and *Hj*. *D*, *g* and *h* have here become mute sounds. Thus, the spelling of farm names can change depending on how the Danish “place name consultants” interpreted the Norwegian names. We see that they have almost consistently used *J* as the first letter in these names. The noun forms with *Hj* are of rather recent date. We can here mention that names which are pronounced *jø* in the first element have also been used in arguing of other battle sites than Liavågen. We have Hjørundfjorden, Hjørunddalen (Vegsund theory) and Hjøna/Gjøna (Gurskevågen theory).

In my opinion, the distinctive features of the landscape where we find the two farms, Jørneset and Jørdal, is the large marshlands which are called Jørnesmyrane, Jør-dalsmyrane and Hamnamyrane. There is plenty of wet land and mud here. A lake – Jørdalsvatnet – is also located here. Another connecting element between Jørdalen and Jørneset is the mountain range between them. It might be appropriate to connect this to *jadarr*, which means edge, as has been done with some place names of *Jør-*. But it is also possible to see the mountain range as a *gjørð* which held into place the lake and the marshes within.

We know that a person called Jørgen, now Jørn in the dialect, owned Jørneset around 1650. Based on the forms of writing at that time, it could be conceivable that a man called Jørgen had also lived there earlier and that the name refers to him.

Today, we find place names at Jørneset pronounced Lisjejøra, Storejøra and Jørhaugen down towards Vartdalsfjorden. Lisjejøra and Storejøra are two small depressions/gorges, and between them lie Jørhaugen. I do not know other names with *jør* (f) in the district here. But when the only place is perhaps at Jørneset, it is not unreasonable to consider whether the name – *jør* – locally is transformed from the word (g)jøtt, usually used about such formations, as we find here, because they are thought to be connected to the farm name. These names started with *Hj* in a newspaper polemic in 1939. They were then called Store-Hjøra and Litle-Hjøra as a proof for placing the battle in Liavågen.



### *-ung or -und?*

By adding the suffix *-ga* to an *n*-suffix, we got a Germanic suffix *-unga*, *-inga*. This suffix has been widely used and can distinguish what the main word indicates. It can also be linked to clans, people, such as Arnungane. Sometimes it can also be a diminutive word, such as *kroppung*, small cod.

Derivations of *-ung* and *-ing* are common in coastal names, and they are used both of islets, rocks and submerged rocks. We have examples such as *Geitungen*, can be used for goat grazing, and *Svortungen*, is black in colour. *Hurrungane* is also said to be an example of this derivation being used for mountains.

*Hjørungar* can also be such an *-ung* name. In this case, the meaning would correspond to an *-und* derivation. Compare here Laurents Hanssøn's translation where he uses *Hiarunder* instead of *Hjørungar* about the rocks which would have given name to the *vågr*.

*Hjørungavágr* can also mean the *vågr* with the stones – or rocks – if we take Nyman's interpretation of the *Hjørund* name as a starting point. Based on Nes's interpretation of the name, it may mean the *vågr* with the tops.

From coastal names we also know the ending *-unge*, which is used to characterize something small, a child, a kid. *Kråkungane* are, for example, two small shallows by the rock *Kråka* southwest of *Flåvær*. (*Hjør*) *ungar* has been understood by the writers as a plural



*I believe that the oldest and largest farm in what was earlier called Liabygda, now renamed Hjørungavåg, was the farm Lid on the sunny side of the valley. This large farm has been divided throughout the years. Nearest to the left lies Øvrelid (Upper Lid), then Øvre Liaset (Upper Liaset), Nedre Liaset (Lower Liaset), Nedrelid (Lower Lid) and Liavåg by the sea. Nearest on the right side is Jørdalen, then follows Jørdalsvatnet and furthest out on this stretch of tops along Vartdalsfjorden lies Jørneset.*

form. The stones, which reflect the name of the vágr, are rather small. They could thus have been perceived as “rock kids” based on the *ung* pronunciation. From this, in writing, a correct inflectional form has been obtained in the plural: Hjørungavágr is a vágr with small peaks or small stones.

### **Conclusion**

I am most inclined to believe that the name Jørneset may have the same origin as the old fjord name Hjørund. It may also have arisen on an independent basis based on the shape of the landscape, but I think it should preferably be linked to the fjord name Harund/Hjørund, especially from an earlier form of writing. The written form used in a document from Ørskog church also corresponds to the old pronunciation of Hjørundfjorden.

We see that the writing forms for Jørneset, Jørdal and Hjørundfjord resemble each other over the centuries. Jørneset is the promontory that you have to round if you follow the inner seaway, Hjørund (outer Harundar- or Hjørundarfjørðr).

Perhaps it might be natural to end with the following question: Has the name Hjørungavágr only existed in saga manuscripts?

In that case, it is hopeless to look for the name in Sunnmøre. It was people in Iceland who wrote down the history of the battle around 200 years after it happened.

In Iceland we find Hjørungar as the name of three rather piked rocks in the strait between Heimaey and

Skeley in Breiðafjørðr. Would it be far more reasonable to connect these rocks with swords than the rounded Ovrfludene, which some believe may be the distinctive mark of Hjørungavágr.

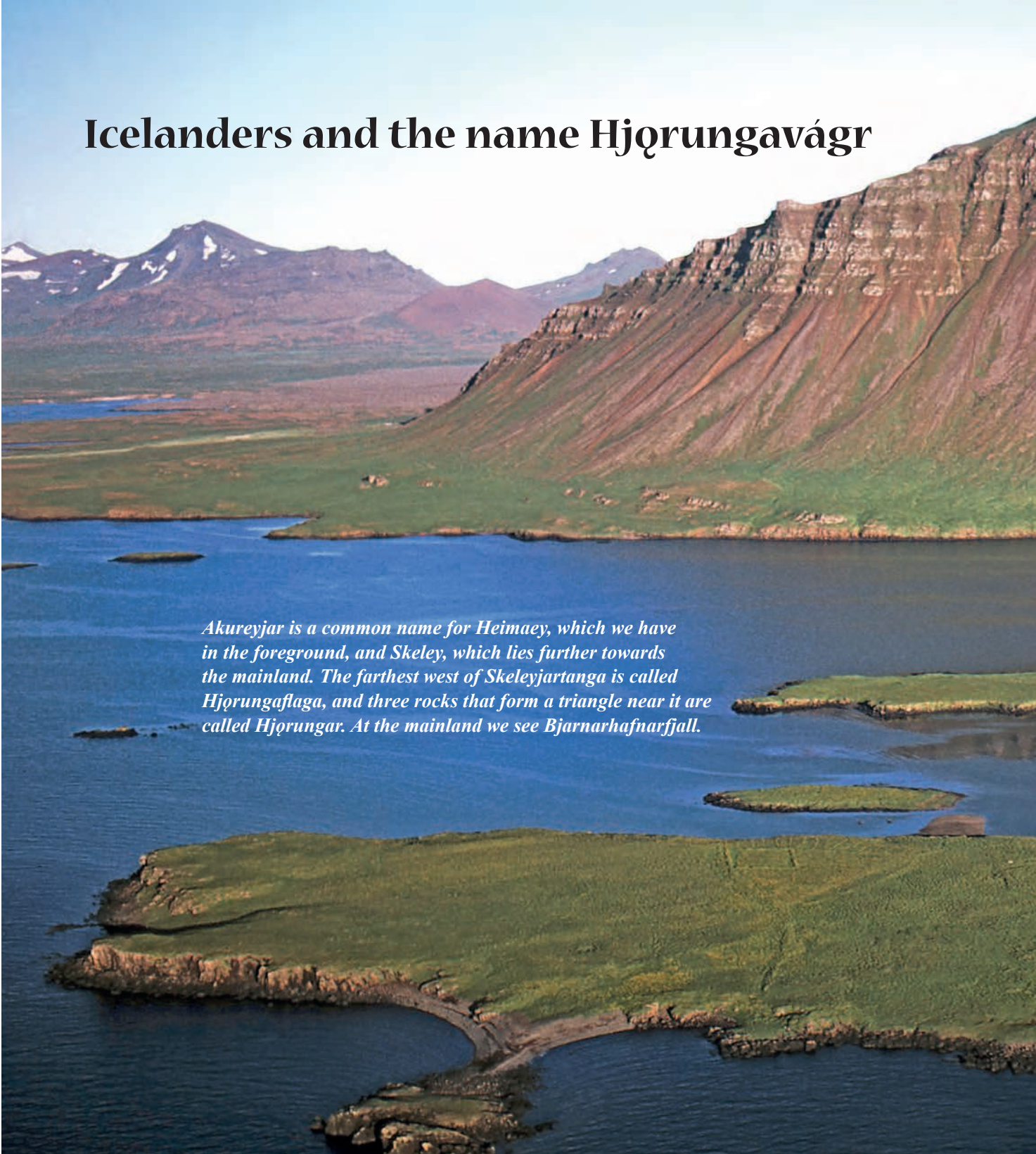
Otherwise, it must also be possible to ask questions of how literally one should take the number of stones as being three? The rule of three is applied many places in the construction of *Jómsvíkinga saga*. The author may then have used the number three as an epic form for many.

There is hardly any battleground in Norway which has been as carefully depicted as Hjørungavágr. We are told about stones, rocks and distances in the vágr itself. In addition, we learn about names in the neighbouring area. Could these detailed descriptions indicate that the name of the vágr was unknown to the saga writers? Is that why they outline so much about the geography?

So perhaps the most reasonable explanation for the name is that Hjørungavágr clearly is a literary name which means the sword vágr, the vágr where the swords were swung. Thus, it has no connection with existing or former place names in Sunnmøre. The starting point can then be *hjør* which indicates sword. A similar interpretation is given by Per Fett, who says that it can mean the vágr with swarms of arrows. The arrow is a descendant of the *hjør*, sword, and can be called a *hjørung*. The name Hjørungavágr then points to the central, decisive element in the battle. Þorgerð and Irpa send their storm of arrows, *hjørungar*, against the Jómsvíkings and turn the battle in favour of the Norwegians.



# Icelanders and the name Hjörungavágr



*Akureyjar is a common name for Heimaey, which we have in the foreground, and Skeley, which lies further towards the mainland. The farthest west of Skeleyjartanga is called Hjörungafloga, and three rocks that form a triangle near it are called Hjörungar. At the mainland we see Bjarnarhafnarfjall.*

According to most versions of *Jómsvíkinga saga*, four Icelanders took part in the battle. It was Einarr skálaglamm (Skjaldmeyjar-Einarr), Vigfúss Viga-Glumsson, Þórðr ǫrvahǫnd and Þorleifr skúma. It is said that the first three, the survivors, travelled back to Iceland after the battle. Þórðr ǫrvahǫnd went to Dýrafjörðr, where he and his brother Þorleifr skúma were from. We can add here that *Jómsvíkinga saga* also mentions Ármóðr from Qnundarfjörðr and his son Árni as participants in the battle. But they are not counted among the Icelanders. The name Qnundarfjörðr is un-

known in Norway, but in Iceland it is the neighbouring fjord to Dýrafjörðr. Einarr skálaglamm moved to Breiðafjörðr and later drowned there. The body drifted ashore at Skáleyjar, which is said to have been named after him. This island lies some distance north of Akureyjar. *Jómsvíkinga saga*, version AM 510 4to, also has a fifth Icelandic, Tindr Hallkjellsson.

In addition, *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla* refer to verses by Tindr Hallkjellsson and Þórðr Kolbeinnsson when describing the battle. But how reliable were these Icelanders' detailed knowledge of geographical





directions and names of islands, islets and rocks where the battle took place? It wasn't like today, just looking in a detailed atlas to find relevant information. And to ask further questions: Did these convey information to the writer or the narrator of *Jómsvíkinga saga*? Or are these names just constructed to make a dubious story more believable, as Halldór Laxness writes?

The most central names when locating the battle site will be Hjørungar and Hjørungvágr. None of these names has an old, reliable source which can tell us that they existed in Sunnmøre. We only have statements

which go back 200–300 years. In contrast, we find the name Hjørungar in Iceland. Here the name is used for three small stones in Breidafjörðr near Akureyjar.

The place name scholar Þórhallur Vilmundarson says that these stones lie in the seaway from Akureyjar to the mainland and can be dangerous for foreigners. At high tide, they lie below water surface. He points out that Sophus Bugge has interpreted the first element in Hjørungavágr, hjørr, to mean sword. Vilmundarson believes that blind rocks both by Ovra in Hareid and by Akureyjar may have been named because they





*In Iceland, three pointed rocks in this strait near Akureyjar are called Hjørungar.*

can pierce a boat in the same way as a sword. In his opinion, the name in Iceland may have been imported from Norway, where it had an established form and meaning. Vilmundarson refers here to the fact that the first settler in the Akureyjar area was Björn Austræni Ketilsson. His father came from Romsdal and thus in the neighbourhood of Liavågen – in Vilmundarson's opinion.

For me, it is difficult to understand that these aforementioned rocks in Sunnmøre – Ovrafludene – should have been so distinctive that they could have given name to what is today written Hjørungavåg, and to Jørneset, which lies approximately 2 kilometres away, and not to the headland where they lie, Ovraneset, and the farm Ovra. If there is a question of transferring a name from Norway to Iceland, I think the Havåg area with its many islands, islets and rocks is far more reminiscent of the Akureyjar area than the Liåvåg area.

But perhaps one can ask the question as Oddvar Nes has done: Could it be Icelandic authors of *Jómsvíkinga saga* who have placed the Icelandic name in Norway?

Did these authors have detailed knowledge of Sunnmøre so that they found islands and islets on the battle site to be similar to the area around Akureyjar? Or could the name Hjørungar derive from the fact that the writers in Iceland, who knew of the three rocks at Akureyjar, more or less randomly just chose to use this name based on the fact that three stones should be the identification of the vágr? If these blind rocks can be

compared to swords that pierce boats, one would expect that here could be similar names among the many blind rocks along the coasts of Norway and Iceland. These could similarly have given names to farms along the coast, especially if Vilmundarson is right that the name Hjørungar had an established form and meaning in Norway before the transfer to Iceland. But so far, I have not found hjórr names of farms or rocks in North Western Norway apart from Bugge's disputed interpretation of the names Jørneset and Hjørundfjorden.

So perhaps the most reasonable explanation is that the name Hjørungvágr first was created by an Icelandic writer, in the meaning of the sword vágr, the vágr where the swords was swung. Subsequently, one chose to call the stones which would distinguish the vágr Hjørungar. In that case, there is no help in finding similar-sounding names in Sunnmøre.

It is also possible to ask questions about the origin of the Hjørungar name in Iceland. Did someone simply take it from *Jómsvíkinga saga* since the saga reports about three stones which lie close to each other? Compare here the name St. Helena, which we find in several places in Norway. Based on the story about Emperor Napoleon who was placed on a lonely island in the Atlantic Ocean, this island name has been used in Norway for rocks, small islets which lie lonely. The name has been adopted because it gives association to a story in a book. And can there be a corresponding origin of the place name Hjørungar in Akureyjar?

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# Primsignd/Primsigð

In addition to *Hjörungavágr*, it is probably the name Primsignd/Primsigð which has caused most difficulties for those who want to locate the Jómsviking battle. As for Primsignd/Primsigð, it is said that during the battle Jarl Hákon went to this island, where there was a large forest, and then into the forest. Here he sacrificed his son, Erlingr. One source says that he went ashore on the northernmost part of this island.

The name of this island has been written in many different ways in the sources, and the name has been interpreted in several ways. The written form *Primsignd* points to a Latin origin. The fact that the name starts with P also tells us that it is a rather new name without Norse roots.

Prima signatio means first signing, the marking with the sign of the cross, in Christian tradition. Primsignd can thus refer to a kind of signing which has taken place on this island, or that it is an island marked with the sign of the cross. Primsigning, mark with a sign of cross, was often a first step on the way to baptism in the early Christian era. One group who is often said to choose primsigning was traders. Otherwise, children, who were in danger of not surviving to grow up, were primsigned. Those who were primsigned could take part both in the traditions linked to the old belief of the gods, and to Christianity. The word signing is not solely linked to the Christian faith. The name was also used before the introduction of Christianity. A pagan signing was consecration to one of the gods in the old mythology. Instead of setting a child forward for primsigning, Jarl Hákon placed his son Erlingr in front of Þorgerðr Hjörðabruðr.

People who assume that this problematic name originates from an act, and preferably a sacrifice, tend to choose the name *Primsignd*. But usually, names are created from special features of the place. Didrik Arup Seip therefore believes that the correct name form is *Primsigð*. The first element *prim* should mean new moon. The second element is *sigð*, sickle, which must also have been used alongside the main form of *sigðr*. The composition will then mean the new moon sickle. The name *Primsigð* therefore comes from the fact that this island has a curved form that resembles such a sickle. He further says that on the map Sula looks like a moon sickle. Seip also adds that it is not certain that the name was used by the local population. But it may have been used by learned men; and the person who first created the saga of the battle in *Hjörungavágr* must reasonably have known the island well. To me,

this argument does not seem convincing. It is possible that in a bird's eye view the island on a map may have a curved shape that may resemble a sickle. But it will also be possible to find many other islands with a curved shape – depending on which point of view you choose to use. Otherwise, I see a new moon as something thin and flimsy. It does not resemble a high and towering island like Sula, which, according to the dominant interpretation, have been named so because it is clefted, divided. In my opinion, it is also possible to connect the name Sula to pole, pillar. Otherwise, one must not forget that *sigð*, sickle, can be a synonym for sword.

The sources differ a little when it comes to the location of Primsignd/Primsigð in relation to *Hjörungavágr*. The Norse sources say that the island lies “towards north” or “north of the vágr”. In contrast, Laurents Hanssøn says that Jarl Hákon went to *Primsigð*, which is “*harrt hoss*”. *Harrt*=hard is used in old language to “express a high degree of closeness (in time or place)” according to *Ordbog over det danske sprog*. In Arngrímur Jónsson's Latin edition, it is only said that Jarl Hákon sought to a forest in the neighbourhood, without mentioning that the forest is on an island.

In some localization theories, Jarl Hákon must have travelled a long way to get to Primsignd/Primsigð. It seems strange to me that the leader of the Norwegian army should have left his people to travel to a sacrificial location which was 10–15 km away, as in Megaard's Aspevåg theory. By acting in this way, the commander exposed the remaining fleet to a possible attack from the Jómsvikings while he himself was away. And it can take a lot of time to sail/row a total distance of 20–30 kilometres round trip.

In *Norske Gaardnavne*, Oluf Rygh has noted that the easternmost part of Sula, east of Solavågen, may have been called Veig. Here we find the farms Vegsund and Veibust. In *Soga om Hareid og Ulstein*, which adheres to the Liavåg theory, the author has interpreted Primsignd to be this area furthest east on Sula. It seems to be a rather long way to row for the jarl if this battle took place in Liavågen and the Norwegians were located at the innermost end there. The book links its Primsignd interpretation to *veig* which could mean “to dedicate, to sign”. But Rygh did not see *veig* in connection with dedication, but rather with *veig* in the sense of “strong drink.” Others have connected the name to a well-known spring with curative water at Vegsundet. The spring is today called Olavskjelda and





Over the years, many different suggestions have been presented as to where Primsignd/Primsigð is located. In Haugsfjorden theory, it is Kvamsøya (1). In Gurskevågen theory Primsignd/Primsigð is on the south side of the vágr (2). The various supporters of the Liavåg alternative differ between the eastern part of Sula (Veig) (8), the whole of Sula (6), Godøya (3) and Steffaneset (13). In the Aspevåg proposal, John Megaard believes that the place is Vigra (4), while Einar Klokkersund places the sacrificing to Korsen (5) in Ålesund. Opinions are also divided between the campaigners for the Vegsund alternative. Olav Nørve wants to place Primsignd at Korsneset (7) on Sula, Arne Øvrelid prefers a wooded area north of Vågane (9), and Ole Barman points to a sacrificial stone that stood at Veibust, which is connected to the farm name Veig (8). Einar Landmark, who writes that the battle took place in Ørskogvika, believes that the sacrifice was carried out on Langskipsøya (10). John Strandabø says that Primsignd is Lekneset (12), while those who want the battle further out the fjord, believe that the jarl's son Erlingr was sacrificed on Holm (11). In the theories which place the battle at Ørsta fjorden, the location of sacrifice has been Raudøya (14). In the Havåg alternative, it is proposed that Primsignd/Primsigð is Eika (15). In the Ulsteinfjord theory Olaf Welde thought the sacrificial site must be on Håkonsholmen (17a), and Magnus Bjørndal located it to the farm Hovset (16). Later Welde placed Primsignd on Hatløya (17b). And as a last alternative, we can also add that several people doubt that the mentioned place of sacrifice ever existed.

### **Sources which use Primsigð:**

*AM 291 4to*: an island north of the vágr is called Primsigð/ En ey liggur sú fyrir norðan voginn, er heitir Primsigð.  
*Flateyjarbók*: an island lying by the north of the vágr is called Primsigð/ en ey su liggr fyrir uoginn norðr er Primsigð hæitir.

*Hanssøn*: Jarl Hákon go to a nearby island called primsigð/ Hakon J: ffloor vði en øe ther hardt hoss som heder. primsigð.

### **Sources which use Primsignd:**

*Stock. Perg. 4to no7*: an island north of the vágr is called Primsignd/ en ey fyrir norðan er Primsignd heitir  
*AM 510 4to*: an island lying north of the vágr is called Primsignd/ en ey fyrir norðan er Primsignd heitir

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is named after Óláfr inn helgi. In Megaard's Aspevåg theory, Primsignd is interpreted to be Vigra. He also sees the name Primsignd in connection with dedicate to, sign, although it is problematic to connect the pronunciation of the name Vigra to the word to dedicate. As mentioned before, I think the distance from Aspevågen to Vigra is too long. Why should Jarl Hákon row past Aspøya/Heissa, further past Valderøya and all the way to a forest on Vigra to carry out an errand?

Peder Fylling writes in his polemic against Gustav Storm that Primsignd cannot be Sula. He first claims that the island names Primsignd and Sallarø appear in *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* under the part *Eyja heiti*. As Fylling interprets Sallarø (Salarey) to be the same as Sula, Primsignd must be the name of another island. It can be added that scholars today believe that Salarey is an earlier name for Kvaløya in Troms and not for Sula.

Otherwise, “during the ongoing battle” it would be almost impossible to get to Sula since the Jómsvikings were nearby. Fylling was therefore very inclined, as many others, to assume that Steffaneset, at the north side of the outlet of Liavågen, had previously been an islet. It is this islet, earlier forested, which is the historical Primsignd and is named after the pagan sacrifice which took place there.

Of the four existing Norse *Jómsvíkinga saga*, two are using *Primsigð* and two *Primsignd*. If Primsignd/Primsigð was a large island near the coast of outer Sunnmøre, such as Vigra and Sula, I would find it natural that the writers used the old Norwegian names which would then be widely known. In contrast, in Iceland it would be more difficult to have knowledge of small islands further in from the coast. So instead of renaming large islands in Sunnmøre through conversion to Latin and possibly back to Norse, I find it more reasonable that the island Primsignd/Primsigð, if it has existed, could have been so small that the writers might not have known the Norwegian name. Thus, it is possible that they gave the island a name that we have trouble of understanding today. A small forested island, a thin new moon in relation to Hareidlandet and else to the mountains across the fjord, by a battleground, could be Eika. Eika is today the only uncomposed island name in Sunnmøre named after a type of tree, oak (quercus). This island is also so close to a battle alternative that it could be reasonable to seek there during a break in the battle.

It is also worth noting that the sources emphasize that we find a large forest (*mork mikil*, *skogur mikill*)

on Primsignd/Primsigð. This may indicate that the island's name, or what characterized the island, was known to the writers, but that the name Primsignd/Primsigð was used based on events in connection with the battle.

Per Fett believes that the name Primsignd/Primsigð is of the same type as Vindheim in *Grettis saga Ásmundssonar*. The island's name then tells simply and plainly that one now leaves the real world and is moving to the supernatural, where Þorgerðr Hǫrðabrúðr and her sister Irpa appear.

Gustav Storm says that Þorgerðr Hǫrðabrúðr (Hǫlgabrúðr, Hǫlgatroll), the name is written and interpreted in many ways, seems to be a special goddess for Jarl Hákon and his lineage. She was believed to be the daughter of a Finnish king. Þorgerðr was, therefore, seen as half a troll, demon. According to Storm, the male name Hǫlgi is used in the name of Hålogaland. After *Njáls saga*, Jarl Hákon together with Dala-Guðbrandr built a temple with images of three gods: Þorgerðr, Irpa and Þórr. Þórr has over time replaced Hǫlgi.

When it is said in *Jómsvíkinga saga* that Jarl Hákon turns to the north, and that the subsequent storm comes from there, the mentioned sky direction can also be used from the fact that Þorgerðr stays in Hålogaland. Thus, some uncertainty can be linked to the fact that a possible storm had the same direction.

We can also add that in a Faroese lay about the Jomsvikings, Vagn Ákason is the central one. In the lay it is Guðrun illgerðsfrú who have the same role as Þorgerðr. She destroys the Jomsvikings army with the help of a hailstorm from Kingilvág.

In the various versions of *Jómsvíkinga saga* and in *Gesta Danorum*, where Hákon sacrifices two sons, the efforts of the sorceresses, Þorgerðr and Irpa, are emphasized. But at the same time, we can notice that *Fagrskinna* is completely missing the story about the sacrifice at Primsignd/Primsigð. *Heimskringla* does not mention this island either, but says that according to what people tell, Hákon should have sacrificed his son Erlingr to get help to win the battle. I interpret this to mean that Snorri distances himself from the story about the sacrifice at Primsignd/Primsigð, but refers to “told by people” when he includes it.

The authors of the last two books may therefore have made the same assessment as Fett. The island Primsignd/Primsigð only exists in an imaginary world, and thus does not refer to a real place in Sunnmøre.



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## The word vágr

In the debate about the Jómsviking battle some have claimed that only places where the name contains vágr can be relevant as battle site. Thus, alternatives such as Haugsfjorden, Ulsteinfjorden, Vegsundet, Ørskogvika, Hjørundfjorden, Norangsfjorden and Ørsta fjorden will be excluded. Such a position may seem reasonable if one can be sure that new names have not replaced old ones during the last millennium. Compare here that adherents of the Liavåg theory say that the older name Hjørungavágr has been replaced by Liavågen after the battle. And indirectly, many of

the adherents of the Liavåg theory have defined away their own alternative. They say the vágr is too small for a battle. Instead they place the battle on a fjord.

The whole thing becomes more complicated if we also have to take into account that the name Hjørungavágr was created by writers. It could then be more or less random if the writer let the name of the battle site have the ending vágr, fjord, sound or vik.

In the introduction to *Norske Gaardnavne*, the following explanation has been given for vágr: “small bay, preferably somewhat enclosed”. This applies



to place names. Otherwise, in written presentation, the word *vágr* can have a wider meaning. And if one reckons that large parts of *Jómsvíkinga saga* can almost be seen as a novel, the less certain one can be that the name *vágr* is used in a strict sense as in old place names. Perhaps then, the word only stands for sea, ocean? We can here point out that in *Våre arveord*, one says that *vágr* (m) in Norse means: “swell, sea, ocean, bay, creek” and “matter, pus, liquid”. The linguistic origin of the word *vágr* is related to Germanic *\*wegan*, which means set in motion. We can also link the verb *to weigh* to the same origin. Compare here equivalent nouns such as *vágr* (weight, lever). We have *vágr* which cut into the landscape, such as *Liavågen*. Here is only one inlet. But we also have *vágr* which are

formed by nearby islands. These can also have several inlets, such as *Aspevågen* in *Ålesund*. Here the islands of *Heissa*, *Aspøya* and *Nørvøya* form the land around the *vágr*.

In place names, *vágr* in the meaning enclosed sea area is widely used from *Lindesnes* and northwards along the coast. Eastward from *Lindesnes*, this word is more seldom. In *Iceland* and other islands in the west where *Norwegians* settled earlier, we find many names with *vágr* as the last element. In these areas, the writing form over the years has become *vogur* (as *Kópavogur*), *way* (as *Scalloway*) and *wall* (as *Kirkwall*).

If we look at *vágr* names in southern *Sunnmøre*, we notice that many place names have acquired plural forms in the dialect, even though in most cases there is only one *vágr*. *Vågane* and *Etsvågane* are place names on *Dimna*. In *Eiksund* we have *Havågane* and *Selvågane*. In outer *Herøy*, the place names are in singular forms: *Frøystadvågen* and *Fosnavågen*. In inner *Herøy*, plural forms prevail: *Myrvågane*, *Aurvågane* and *Tjørnvågane*.



*A typical western Norwegian vågr is Håheimsvågen, which lies north of the end of the island Høð's western side. Here with the head to the east and the mouth to the west. On the shallows in the middle of the vågr we see the rock called Skarveskjeret. At low tide we can also see another peak called Kobbeskjeret, which lies at the inner side. This vågr is approximately twice as wide as Liavågen.*

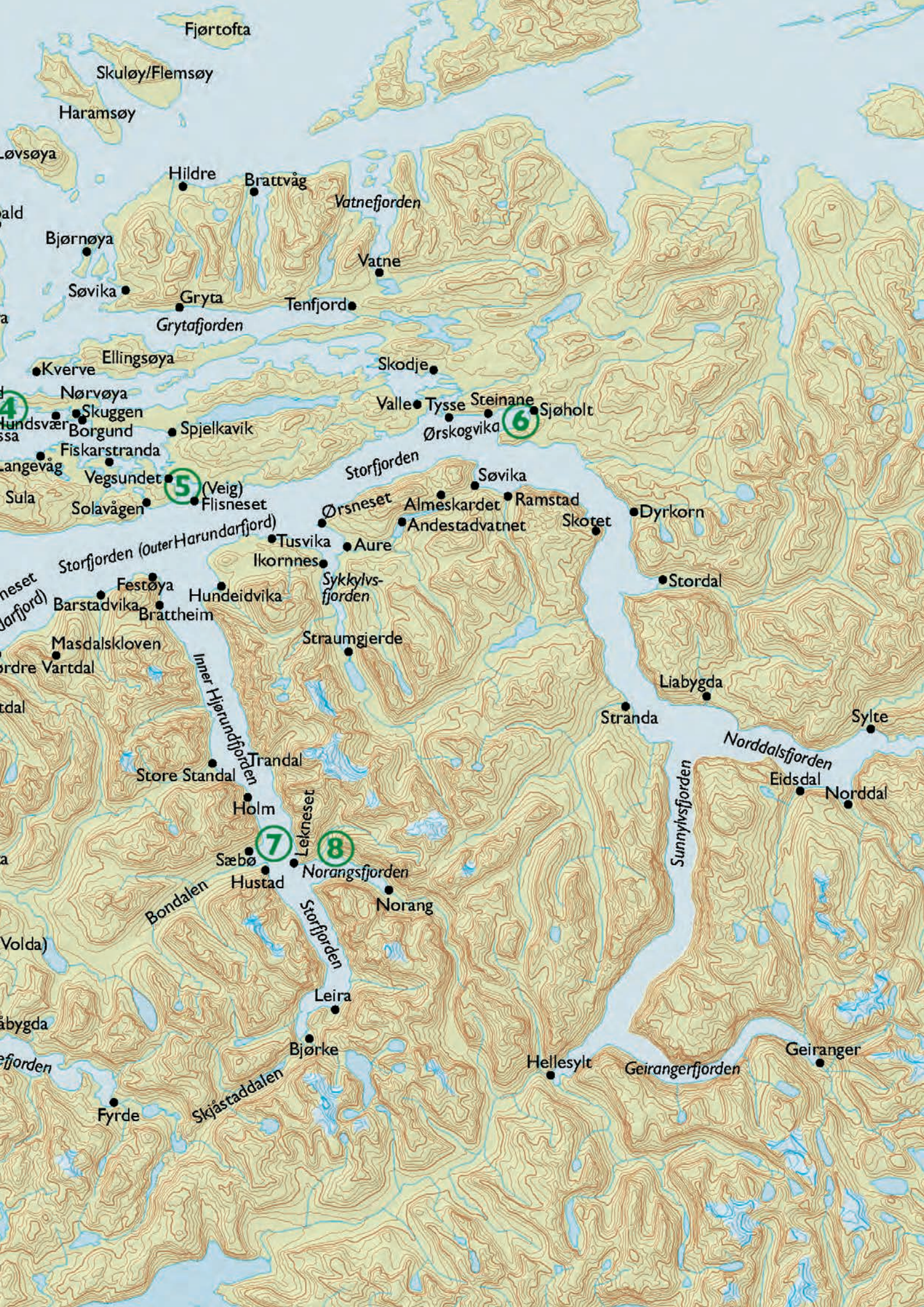


## Suggested battle sites:

1. Haugsfjorden
2. Gurskevågen
3. Ulsteinfjorden
4. Aspevågen
5. Vegsundet
6. Ørskogvika
7. Hjørundfjorden
8. Norangsfjorden
9. Liavågen
10. Ørstafjorden
11. Havågane







Fjørtofta

Skuløy/Flemsøy

Haramsøy

Øvsøya

Hildre

Brattvåg

Vatnefjorden

Bjørnøya

Vatne

Søvika

Gryta

Tenfjord

Grytafjorden

4

Ellingsøya

Skodje

Nørvøya

Valle

Tysse

Steinane

6

Sjøholt

Hundsvær

Skuggen

Spjelkavik

Ørskogvika

angevåg

Fiskarstranda

5

(Veig)

Storfjorden

Søvika

Sula

Solvågen

Flisneset

Ørsneset

Almeskardet

Ramstad

Dyrkorn

neset

Storfjorden (outer Harundarfjord)

Tusvika

Aure

neset

orfjorden

Barstadvika

Festøya

Hundeidvika

Ikornnes

Sykkylvsfjorden

Stordal

tdal

Masdalskløven

Straumgjerde

Liabygda

rdal

rdre Vartdal

Inner Harundarfjorden

Stranda

Norrdalsfjorden

Sylte

a

Store Standal

Trandal

Holm

Liabygda

Eidsdal

Norrdal

a

7

Sæbø

Lekneset

8

Norangsfjorden

Norang

Volda)

Bondalen

Hustad

Storfjorden

Sunnylvsfjorden

abygda

Fyrde

Leira

Hellesylt

Geirangerfjorden

Geiranger

efjorden

Skjåstaddalen

Bjørke



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## Where did the battle take place?

In the attempts to locate the Jómsviking battle, people use Jómsvíkinga saga and other older historical works as their starting point. Central for many has been finding the solution to the name riddle Primsgind/Primsgid. In the same way, one tries to place the Hjørungar which alter between being rocks, mountain peaks or victory stones set up after the battle. The vágr where the battle took place bottoms towards east and have its mouth towards west. The storm which hit the Jómsvikings right in the face came from the north. Thus, during the battle, they must have been lying south of the Norwegians. Opinions are divided when it comes to the location of other place names such as Hjørund, Hjørundarfjørðr and Hqð. Burial mounds are also drawn in – even if they originate from a completely different time. And the closer the burial mounds are, the more often people believe that the mounds are from an earlier battle.

Presumably, the written history of the Jómsvikings must have been known in southern Sunnmøre around the year 1600 at the latest. Laurits Hanssøn was for a time a chief administrative officer and one of the mayors in Bergen. Povel Helgeson (ca. 1541– ca. 1625), who was also a chief administrative officer in Bergen for a while, later became major judge for Bergen and Gulatinget. Hanssøn and Helgeson were well acquainted with each other in their duties. We know that these two exchanged Norse manuscripts. We can also mention that Povel Helgeson translated Magnús Lagabætir's national law from Norse to Danish. When Helgeson was discharged from his job in 1603, he moved to Brandal, in the same parish as Liavågen. He carried with him a lot of knowledge about the old writings. As citizen in Bergen Helgeson had close contact with others much interested in the ancient history of Norway. After moving to Brandal Helgeson was for a time the richest and the most influential person in the clerical district.

One son, Rasmus Povelson Brandal, later became parish priest in Ulstein and Hareid. It has even been claimed on geni.com that Povel and a son Helge Povelson should have lived at Øvre and Nedre Liaset in Liabygda (today renamed Hjørungavåg). What we do know, however, is that his son Rasmus used the neighbouring farm Nedrelid and was granted tax exemption for this as a part of the vicarage in Brandal. In addition, he owned parts of the cadastral farms Pilskog

and Øvrelid. Thus, there can have been great contact between the family of Povel Helgeson and Liabygda.

Probably, the saga of the Jómsvikings was also known in Sunnmøre long before this. Bjørn Bandlien says that there are many indications that the stories about the Jómsvikings were known and very popular throughout the Nordics already at the end of the 12th century. The first theories about where the battle took place were based on similar-sounding names such as Hjørundfjord and Jørneset and paid little attention to the depictions of the battle site itself. Later theories have placed more emphasis on what the sagas present as a distinctive feature of the vágr.

The first person to point out in writing a specific location in Sunnmøre as the site of the battle is Jonas Ramus. He says in a book published in 1735, manuscript finished in 1715, that the battle took place in Hjørundfjorden. Hans Strøm wrote some decades later that the battle was fought in Liavågen.

It is especially the adherents of these two alternatives who refer to “man's memory”. Both places are believed to be based on over a thousand years of coherent oral tradition, which should confirm that the battle took place exactly here. So far, no theory has gained acceptance to satisfy all the differing sources. There is always a “but” to all theories. People emphasize different aspects. This will also follow the wider debate. In theories which have many supporters, the emphasis can also be different. Some of those who want to place the battle in Liavågen say that the vágr, as we see it today, is big enough for the battle to have been there. Others operate with a formidable elevation of land to make the vágr large enough for the many ships. And a third group believes that the vágr is too small. That's why the battle was at the outside of the vágr, on the fjord, they say.

Similarly, the supporters of Aspevågen and Vegsun-det use different arguments for placing the battle just there.

Today, the Liavåg area has received most attention of being the most likely battleground. The monument which shall tell us about this battle, which is supposed to have been somewhere in Sunnmøre, is located at Ovranset. Since the Liavåg theory has become the prevailing one, the argument of others has often been to point to flaws in this theory, and then to point to factors that support alternative locations.

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# Haugsfjorden



*Could the battle have taken place right after the Jómsvikings had passed Stad, as we see here in the background? But we can also mention that not everyone believes that the Jomsvikings travelled north of Stad. In 2008, a resident in Har- eid presented a theory that the battle took place in Skavøypollen at the mouth of Nordfjorden. Here Primsignd was the island of Selja and the mountain Hornelen was Horund. Towards the left edge of this photo lies Storholmen. Bernt Stok- kenes thought that the Hjørungar were some mounds there. Kvamsøya was to be the historical Primsignd. On the side of Kvamsøya which faces Storholmen, you will find many burial mounds. Here we also find the farm which was renamed Birkestrand.*

In 1993, Bernt Stokkenes presented a theory that the Jómsviking battle had been at Haugsfjorden on the south side of Kvamsøya. He says that the old sources just as well can be used as an argument for a battle here as in Liavågen. Placing an army at the innermost end of Liavågen would never have been thought of by a wise army commander. Besides, with the Norwegians at the inner end here, Jarl Hákon would not have been able to get to Primsignd to sacrifice his son, Erlingr. With such an army formation, the Jómsvikings would after all not get the hailstorm from the north in their face either.

On the other hand, Haugsfjorden would in every respect be a strategically suitable place for the Norwegians to meet the Jómsvikings, Stokkenes said.

The three peaks Klettane on Storholmen fit perfect to the form of the three Hjørungar. Three stone chests have also been found on this islet. Stokkenes believes

that these chests must be chieftains' graves. These, together with the many burial mounds on Kvamsøya, tell us that a great battle must have been fought here earlier.

And this battle must be the Hjørungavágr battle, claims Stokkenes. He further says that Kvamsøya previously had names such as Bringsinghaug and Brimøy. And the name change from Primsignd to Brimøy should not be problematic if you look at it in a historical context. Stokkenes also believes that a child's skull which was found in a grave on Kvamsøya could be from the jarl's son Erlingr, who was sacrificed to Þorgerðr Hqrðabrúðr at Primsignd. Hans Strøm, who has been seen as perhaps the most important source for those who want to place the Jómsviking battle at Liavågen, also has other battle theories. With reference to *Heimskringla*, he thinks that it must be the battle at Rastarkálf and not the Jómsviking battle that



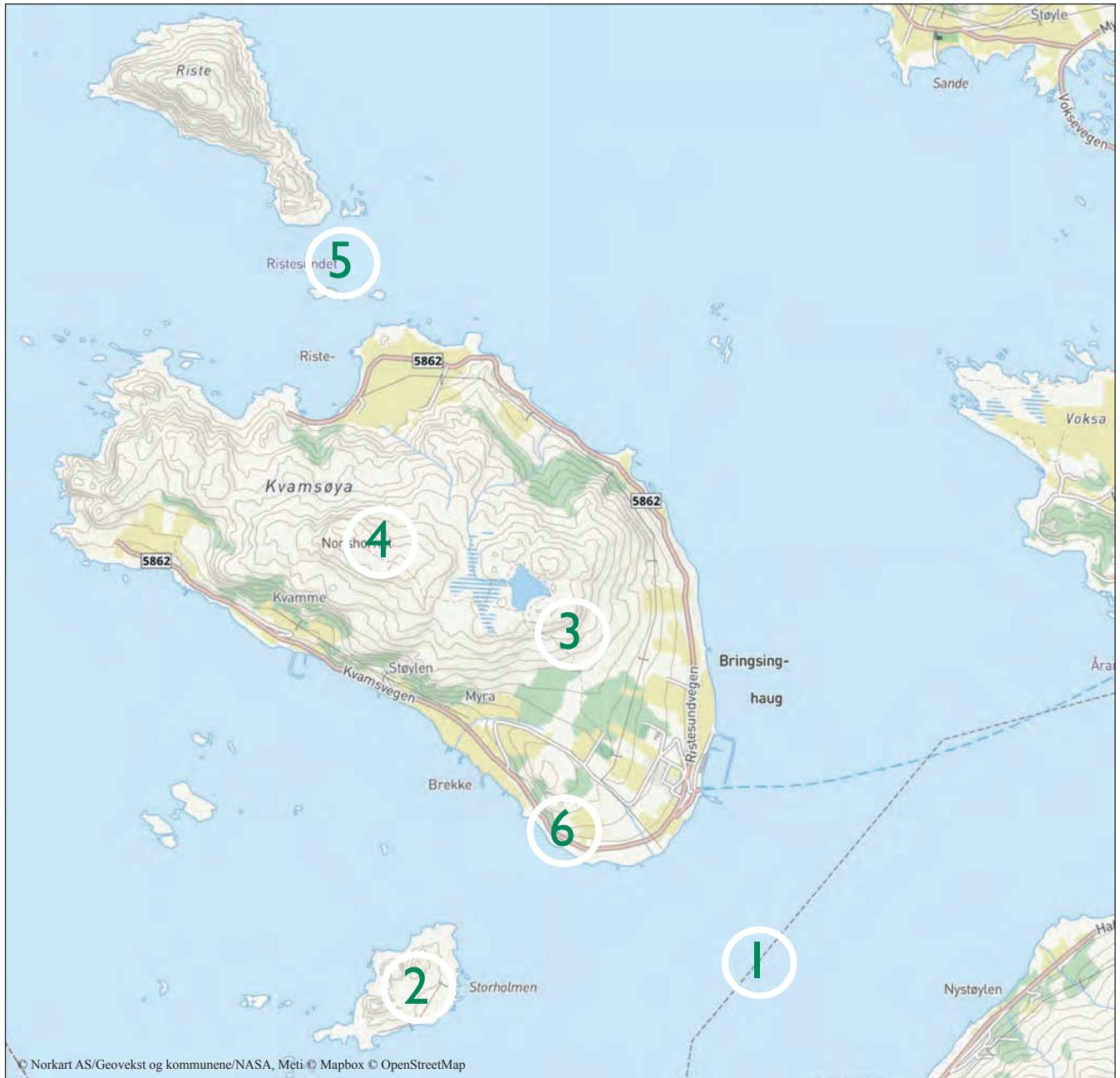
took place at Kvamsøya. Hákon inn góði was at his farm Birkiströnd when the Eirikssynir, sons of Eiríkr blóðøx, came. Strøm believes that Kvamsøya was formerly called “Freidøe”.

The rather high mountain on the island has historically been called Fræðarberg, and the strait by the island, which is now called Ristesund, has been called Féeyjarsund. Based on this theory that the battle took place here at Kvamsøya and not at Frei on Nordmøre, a farm on Kvamsøya was renamed Birkestrand in its

time. But this change of name has not had the same break-through as Liavågen/Liabygda to Hjørungavåg.

Otherwise, my main objection to the Haugsfjorden alternative is all the sources saying that the Jómsvikings did shore raid on Hareidlandet (Høð), and the vast majority also say that Hjørungavágr lies in the vicinity of this island.

In my opinion, it is unlikely that both Jarl Hákon and the Jómsvikings would have returned to Kvamsøya and met there.



On this map, we see the battle area by Kvamsøya. Stokkenes believes that Hjørungavágr (1) is Haugsfjorden. Hjørungar (2) are some mounds on Storholmen, and Primsignd (3) is today called Kvamsøya. Hans Strøm, who wanted to place the battle of Rastarkálf to Kvamsøya, calls the mountain on the island Fræðarberg (4). Today's Ristesund would then be the historical Féeyjarsund (5). On Kvamsøya we also find a farm which was renamed Birkestrand (Birkiströnd) (6). Hákon inn góði is supposed to have stayed here.

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# Gurskevågen



*Boats can go between all three rocks outside Gjøneset. Between the innermost rock and land lies a submerged rock, now with a pole. The local tradition says that when Búi inn digri jumped overboard, he landed here. The chests were rescued and hidden in the nearby mountains.*

The last alternative which has been presented as the historical Hjørungavágr was brought up by Harald Sydhagen in 2011. He believes that the battle took place in Gurskevågen.

Liavågen is far too small for all the ships participating in the battle. Gurskevågen is large and wide enough to accommodate the many ships which took part.

Most of the writers who tell us about the battle in the sagas refer to an island called Hǫð, which means head. This island name has nowadays been interpreted as Hareidlandet because of the appearance of the island. But the shape of Gurskøya resembles a human head much more than Hareidlandet does when you look at these islands from a bird's eye view. Those who lived over 1,000 years ago hardly saw these islands from this position, but Sydhagen believes that they still had a clear idea of the shape of the island.

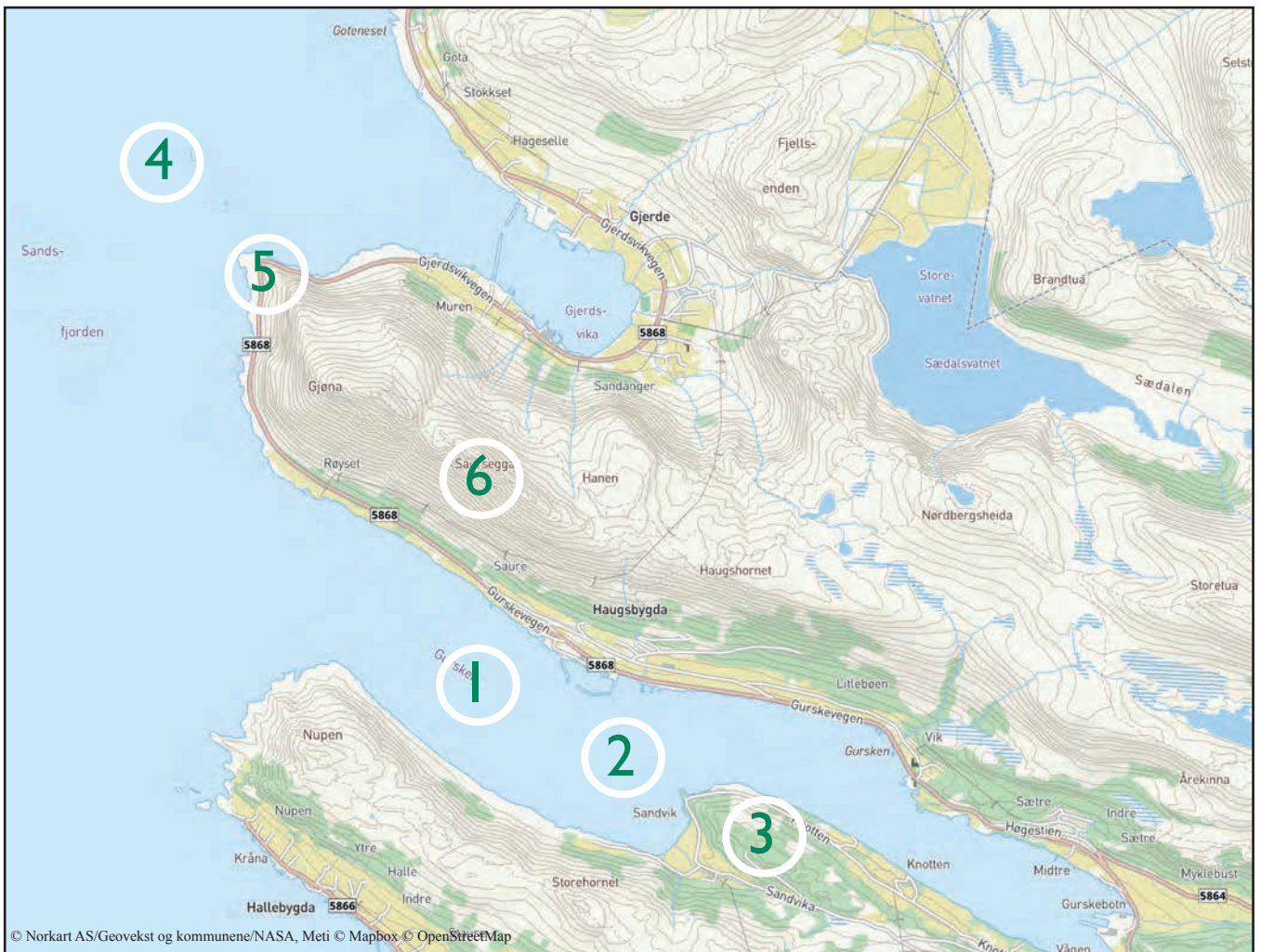
At Hidsegga, just above Hide, there has been a beacon which was used in the warning service. What these names mean is difficult to say for sure, but Hide is easy

to compare with Hod/Hǫð. That could also indicate that Gurskøya is the island of Hǫð.

The sagas tell us that the battle must have taken place in a vágr where the bottom lies in the eastern end just like Gurskevågen. In the vágr, there is a rock which lies approximately as far from the head as from the inlet. And in the middle of Gurskevågen lies Sandvikskjeret. It fits well with the sagas, which also say that three rocks called Hjørungar lie at the entrance to the vágr, One of the rocks would have been somewhat larger than the other two. This suits excellently with the rocks called Gjøskjera, which lie just outside Gjøneset and the mountain Gjøna. It is also possible to go by boat between the rocks. Originally, these place names would have been written with H as the first letter, but later this was changed to G.

A third locality, which is not mentioned in all the sagas, is Primsigð/Primsignd. There is a wooded hollow in the inner part of the vágr, and seen from the north side of Gurskevågen, the mountain formation between





*Harald Sydhagen says that Gurskevågen (1) is the historical Hjørungavågr. The rock in the middle of the vågr is Sandvikskjeret (2). Primsignd/Primsigø (3) is a formation between Sandvika and Knotten. And Hjørungar are Gjøskjera (4) outside Gjøneset (5).*

Sandvika and Knotten resembles a curved sickle. Sydhagen believes that the exceptional hailstorm must have come from the north-east, and not from the north, if the Jómsvikings should have it right in their face.

Some have argued that it is clearly suicidal, from a purely military point of view, to place oneself in a situation without an escape route. But Sydhagen believes that Jarl Hákon deliberately chose such a vågr. If there was an easy escape route, many of the Norwegian ships would perhaps have tried to escape from the battle when it seemed to be tipping in the favour of the Jómsvikings.

Because the Norwegians had to stand with their backs to the wall, they had to fight harder than if they had an easy escape route. But as a last resort, if things went really bad, one could escape over land. Perhaps there were ships at Leikong waiting for Jarl Hákon in the event of an unfortunate outcome of the battle? Sydhagen believes that the parish Haugsbygda probably got its name from of the many burial mounds, most

of which nevertheless date from the Bronze Age. Likewise, there are many burial mounds on the stretch further to Løsetstranda. But the burial custom of mounding had probably expired by the time of the battle. It is therefore a greater chance of finding remains from the battle at the seabed in the area.

At Nupen, a farm south of the mouth of Gurskevågen, stories have been told since ancient times about the Jómsviking battle which was supposed have been fought on the outside of Høð, in the past a joint name for Gurskøya and Hareidlandet.

According to Mathias Nupen, Jarl Hákon had before the battle come to Gjerdsvika and the Jómsvikings to Gurskevågen. The armies then met at Gjøskjera. The storm from the north came as if from a sack over Hids-egga. On a shallow place between Inste Gjøskjeret and Gjøneset, it is possible to stand without water over the knees by ebb tide. Today, a pole is placed there. It was here Búi inn digri jumped. Afterwards, the gold chests were saved and hidden in a mountain not far away.



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## Lyngnesvika/Ulsteinfjorden

In the local newspaper, *Vikebladet*, there have been many debates regarding the site of the Jómsviking battle. The fiercest discussions were in 1958 and throughout the 1960s. Central in these disputes was the theory of Olaf Welde. According to Welde, the Jómsvikings first rowed to the island of Høð/Haud, which he believes is today's Dimna. Here they learned from the farmer Ulfr that Hákon Jarl had sailed further in the fjords. Today's Hareidlandet is not Høð, in Welde's opinion. In the past, this island was called Hadarøy and got its name from the pass (eid) over Hadar, between Hareid and Ulsteinvik. Compare with Hareid, which was formerly called Hadareid.

Since Hjørungavágr has its head to the east and its mouth to the west, this vágr must lie on the Ulstein side of Hareidlandet and not on the Hareid side.

Welde placed great emphasis on the strange appearance of the mountains on Dimna: “When seen from Osnes in the morning at 7–8 when the sun shines, it forms a sleeping woman's head. The head on the pillow is turned slightly to the left, the mouth is open and the teeth are visible. The shoulders are turned somewhat to the right, a very strong jaw, and the neck is visible all the way down to the breast. Late in the day, even in sunshine, the blanket which she has pulled up

to her neck is also visible. So, there is probably no room for doubt. Here is the old Høð or Haud, as Fagrskinna writes.”

The Jómsviking fleet first passed the northern headland of Dimna. A stiff gale was then blowing from the east. Plugs of moss flew around the Jómsvikings' ears as they passed the tip of the headland, Lyngneset. This was the proof of a large crowd gathering within. The armies thus met inside Osneset, in Hjørungavágr, today called Lyngnesvika. Welde also says that Hjørungavágr is suspiciously close to the southern end of Dimna in Lyngnesvika.

The Jómsvikings with their larger ships gained the upper hand over the Norwegians, who had smaller, lower and undecked boats. The inferior Norwegians must retreat. In a miraculous way, the Norwegians manage to get past the Jómsvikings at the outlet of the vágr. The armies therefore gradually move to Ulsteinfjorden. Here at the fjord, the Jómsvikings get the hailstorm right in the face, which Þorgerðr Hjørðabrúðr (Hødr troll = head troll) sends towards them from the north. The fight lasts until Búi inn digri jumps into the sea with his gold chests, not too far from Ryssholmen. Vagn Ákason, who later tries to get ashore in the dark, ends up on Byholmane, which 1,000 years ago, in Wel-



*If one sees the mountains on Dimna from Osneset in the morning, the sun will shine on a sleeping woman's head, according to Olaf Welde, who gives a detailed description of how this woman lies. She must be the old Hod or Haud as it is also written. Thus, Welde concludes that today's Dimna is earlier called Høð and is not an old name for Hareidlandet. Later, Welde would also claim that this woman's name was Jøra (Þorgerðr Hjørðabrúðr), and that some hills in the vicinity were (H)jørungar. Closest to the left of Dimna is Lyngneset, and the battle is said to have started at Lyngnesvika further to the left.*



*On this map, we have placed the central names in the theory of Olaf Welde. The battle begins at Hjørungavágr (1) located at the southern end of Lyngnesvika (1), but gradually moves to Ulsteinfjorden (2). Høð (Haud) (3) should be the island which is called Dimna today. Welde called a formation on Dimnafjella Jøra, and here we also find the Jørungar (4). The rock which would lie in the middle of the vágr is Byholmane (5), and Búi inn digri would have gone overboard with his gold chests by Ryssholmen (6). Primsignd shall be Håkonsholmen (7). Some have even claimed that the last name is connected with Jarl Hákon. In a later version Welde placed Primsignd on Hatløya (8) and also says that Búi inn digri jumped overboard by Boholmen (9). The three rocks, Hjørungar (10), are now laying between Boholmen and Håkonsholmen. We can also mention that adherents of Welde also have placed Primsignd at Hovset (11).*

de's opinion, would have been about 2 metres lower in relation to today's water's surface and was then the rock which would lie in the middle of Hjørungavágr. Later, victory stones were raised at Skeide and Ulstein where the execution of the Jómsvikings was carried out. Likewise, many of the burial mounds along the beaches here, according to Welde, contain those who fell in the battle. The script for the articles in 1958, says at the very end that Jarl Hákon sacrificed his son at Håkonsholmen, a name which the islet still has today. Other adherents of the Welde theory, such as Magnus Bjørndal, have further placed the sacrificing at Hovset, to the "large, world-known stone" there. In

a later memo, from 1974, Welde writes that Primsignd is Hatløya. He says further that the forest on this island consisted of pine or spruce, but later has been replaced by hazel. In this last memo the three rocks which skips could sail between on their way into the vágr is now located to the area between Boholmen and Håkonsholmen. The place where Búi inn digri jumps overboard with his gold chests, is now said to be Boholmen.

Although Welde corresponded with, among others, Halvdan Koht in his work on locating the battle, he was still completely wrong when it came to renaming the island of Dimna to Høð. Thus, the basis for the localization of Ulsteinfjorden also fell away.



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# Aspevågen



*Aspevågen seen from above Heissa in 1954. Below to the right we have Sukkertoppen. The smaller peaks which we see further to the left are Pila and Olsfjellet.*

The depiction in the *Flateyjar* book of the vágur where the battle took place matches neither Liavågen nor Hjørundfjorden. On the other hand, it fits 100 per cent in with Aspevågen, said Einar Klokkersund in 1982 when he presented his theory. Purely linguistically, he will also explain that the name Hjørungavágr earlier has been used of Aspevågen. The word *hjørung* in Norse, according to Klokkersund, must have meant a mountain kid, a small mountain. If you use *Hjørungar* about the three mountains on Heissa – Sukkertoppen, Pila and Olsfjellet – you can further infer that Hjørungavágr has been the vágur inside these Hjørungar. When *hjør* and stone can have the same meaning, the transition is not so far between *Steinvågen* (*Steinvágr*) and *Hjørungavágr*.

Klokkersund believes that the mouth of the vágur to the west is *Steinvågsundet*, and *Primsignd* must be *Nørvøya*. Earlier, this island's name was written *Nørve*. The last element, *ve*, tells us about a pagan shrine, compare here *Vøya* in Romsdal. Could *Nørve*, where we find the old name *Korsen*, be the place for the hitherto

unlocated pagan temple for Sunnmøre? John Megaard believes, based on the detailed description we have of the historical Hjørungavágr in the oldest sources, that the localization to Liavågen seems completely absurd. But where can we find a battleground which will fit better? Here Megaard also concludes with Aspevågen.

Megaard first tries to locate *Primsignd/Primsigð*. He refers to Didrik Arup Seip's opinion that *Primsigð* is the original form. The name can then be conceived as new moon sickle and must be used for *Sula*. At the same time, Seip admits that the name has probably not been used by ordinary people, but have been “used by learned men”. Megaard here replies that if the name is a learned construction, then the basis for choosing one name form instead of the other falls away. Purely phonetically, *-sigð* can also be seen as a simplification of *-signd*. Megaard therefore links the island name to Latin *prima signatio*.

Where do we find an island's name linked to words which denote to sign. In connection with conversion between Latin and Norse, puns can also be used. As an





On this map, we have placed the central names in the Aspevåg theory. *Aspevågen* is the historical *Hjørungavágr* (1). *Hjørungar* are the mountains *Sukkertoppen* (2), *Pila* (3) and *Olsfjellet* (4). According to *Megaard*, *Primsignd* (5) is the same as *Vigra* (5a), at least 8 kilometres away. *Klokkersund* believes that *Primsignd* is *Korsen* (5b) on *Nørvøya*. *Megaard* also says that *Hjørund* (6) is today's *Sula*. The mouth of *Hjørungavágr* is said to be *Steinvågsundet* (7). Names that are also used in old writings are *Steinvågen* (8) and *Hundsvær* (9). Other names that we have marked are *Heissa* (10), *Aspøya* (11), *Nørvøya* (12) and *Slinningsodden* (13).

example of such a play on words, *Megaard* refers to the story of Óláfr inn helgi Haraldsson. On the way home from England, the king encounters a severe storm, but finally he lands safely at the island called *Sæla*. This name, which means felicity, great joy, is used for the island of *Selja*, the island with the monastery. In the same way the island name *Vigra*, based on the similarity of form with *vie* (dedicate), has been translated into *Prima signatio*, which has become *Primsignd*, according to *Megaard*. But linguistically, it is impossible to connect *Vigra*, which is said to come from a word meaning spear (*vigr*), to the word to dedicate.

*John Megaard* believes that the name problems *Hjørund* and *Primsignd/Primsigð*, can be explained by the fact that the Norse place names for the parishes were first translated into Latin, and then later again translated from Latin into Icelandic. During this conversion process, some place names have been given the Norse form, while others have received name forms which in writing differ greatly from the original name, even though they may be close in terms of meaning.

As an example of such a transformation, *Megaard*

says that *Hjørund* is the last link in such a change of name. The Norwegian name has always been *Sula*. *Hjørund* is said to be the Norse word *hjørund*, meaning flesh or skin. *Hjørund* has often been used in a religious context when one refers to carnal desires. It has also been used for penis. Thus, *Sula*, which writers had interpreted to mean a pole, would initially have been given a Latin name for penis. When the name was to be transformed back to Norse, it became *Hjørund/Hjørund*.

Through a similar translation process, *Vigra* would have become the Latin name *Primsignd* in the *Aspevåg* theory. But for one reason or another, this process has not been completed further to Norse again.

With the location of *Primsignd* (*Vigra*), which is to be located north of the battleground, and *Hjørund* (*Sula*), which is to be located to the south, the battleground must lie between these two islands.

*Megaard* chooses *Sula* to explain why an island has been named *Hjørund*, penis. Perhaps it would have been at least as reasonable to associate these words with *Vigra*, which means spear?

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We have read in the sagas that the vágr got its name from stones which stand there. We know from other sources that Steinvågen was seen as a central port. A nearby conclusion can then be that Hjørungavágr has been confused with Steinvågen by Icelandic writers. Megaard points out that the three islands consisting of Nørvøya, Aspøya and Heissa form a “protected harbour in the east-west direction. The name today is Aspevågen, while the narrow strait between Aspøya and Heissa is called Steinvågsundet (...)

The question is, has the name Steinvågr been used for the whole harbour?

In the description in *Jómsvíkinga saga*, it is said that the head of Hjørungavágr faces east and the mouth faces west.” Megaard believes that Steinvågsundet must be the mouth to the west.

Megaard presumes that the old centres of power were out on the coast. It would therefore be natural that Jarl Hákon also would place his army here to protect them. It is therefore illogical, in Megaard's opinion, that Jarl Hákon, who would have up to five times as many people, should place his army in Liavågen or further in, such as in Hallkjellsvik, where Snorri says that Jarl Hákon was until the Jómsvikings had docked at the outside of Høð. In retrospect, it may be possible to determine the size of the armies. But no one knew for sure until the armies met?

But is it only on the coast we find centres of power in the Viking Age? Couldn't, for example, Hallkjellsvik in Volda be named after a chieftain? Compare here that the largest boat mound in Norway has been found at Myklebust in Nordfjordeid, which lies far into a fjord.

When it comes to the versions of *Fagrskinna* with “inn a Ælftrum” and “inn a Almunnd hamrum”, Megaard concludes that it is most reasonable to start from within Eltrane, since version B has pedigrees linked to Arnungane at Giske. It is this version of *Fagrskinna* which says that the Jómsvikings only went inside Høð to get to the battle site, which is used by those who want to place the battle north of Breisundet.

Instead of accepting the construction Hjørund, as a newly created name of a saga translator almost a thousand years ago, as Megaard does, I find it far more reasonable to assume that Hjørund is one of the many very old place names that end in *-und*. Sula has prob-

ably been called Sula all the time, and the Hjørund name has lived very well as a fjord name within Sula.

Regarding the renaming of Vigra to Primsgnd, I think that the distance between Aspevågen and Vigra is too long. Why would Jarl Hákon row through Steinvågsundet, passing Aspøya/Heissa, then past Valderøya and all the way to Vigra, to a forest lying perhaps on the northernmost part of the island, to carry out an errand during a pause in the battle? If the theories about Aspevågen and Flisvågen were reliable, the tradition about where the battle took place must have been broken already early in the 13th century. Snorri tells in *The saga of Óláfr inn helgi Haraldsson* that the king lay in Steinvågen (Steinvågr) before his journey to Russia. From here he escaped further past Hundsvær, through Vegsundet, and thus also through Flisvågen, past Skotet to Sylte in Valldalen. Here he abandoned the ship before fleeing further over land. This description shows that Snorri had very good and detailed knowledge of the geography of the Borgund area.

If Hjørungavágr were to be identical to Aspevågen or Flisvågen, it seems completely unreasonable that Snorri does not point to Steinvågen or other place names near Flisvågen, such as Vegsundet, when he tells us where the Jómsviking battle was fought, since these are names which he knows well.

Otherwise, some will say that Aspevågen does not open to the west. Geographically, the direction is rather east-northeast. And instead of regarding Steinvågsundet as the mouth of Aspevågen, others will probably think that the head of this vágr is the Skarbøvik area and the mouth lies towards Slinningsodden. In that case, the vágr has the same direction as Liavågen, which the supporters of Aspevågen believe face the wrong direction.

It is possible that Jarl Hákon wished to know how many the Jómsvikings were before he went to battle against them. But one reason why he settled at the inner seaway may also be that he considered it most reasonable for the Jómsvikings to take this seaway. They had little information of the area, and that route is free of islets and rocks and would be easier, instead of sailing/rowing in a more foul and partly narrow outer seaway.

# Vegsundet

In 1861 the county governor Guldbrand Thesen writes in *Beskrivelse af Romsdals Amt* that the ardent pagan Jarl Hákon had a castle and a temple for his favourite goddess, Þorgerðr Hǫrðabrúðr, and her sister, Irpa, in Sunnmøre. Thesen says that the castle and the temple stood on a small island by Borgund, which got its name from this castle.

Thesen did not believe that the Jómsviking battle could have taken place in Liavågen. After Jarl Hákon had received the last contingent of helpers from Volda the day before the battle, he himself could decide where the battle would take place. In Thesen's opinion, the battle could have taken place at "Harundarfjorden, now Storfjorden". Since there are no islets other than Flisholmen by Storfjorden, this must be the place where Jarl Hákon executed the captured Jómsvikings after the battle in Hjørungavágr.

Jarl Hákon had gathered much of his army in Sunnmøre. It was therefore reasonable to assume that the loss of life struck this district extra hard. Thesen mentions remnants of the many fallen can be found in the huge stone mounds on protruding headlands near Borgund, at the farms of Hatlane.

A similar argument was expressed by Olav Nørve in 1939: "Where several thousand have fallen, there must

also be marks left by them." In this context, Nørve refers to burial mounds in the vicinity of Vegsundet, but also to large burial mounds at Kursetstranda by Storfjorden.

Ole Barman (especially in 1930) and Olav Nørve (especially in 1939) have, through articles in *Sunnmørsposten*, been the most ardent campaigners for placing the battle at Vegsundet. Barman first refers to an oral tradition which says that the battle took place in Vågane at the outlet of Vegsundet. He then asks the question: Did the battle take place inside a cove or out on a fjord? If the Norwegians rowed north from Hallkjellsvik and the Jómsvikings came inwards Storfjorden, a possible meeting place could have been on the fjord east of Hareidlandet.

Barman continues: "Jarl Hákon had gathered 'all the ships which were usable'. But with small ships out on a fjord, Jarl Hákon could not get any support from people at land. One must therefore assume that the battle took place on a vágr – as the sagas also tell. The sources simultaneously say that the vágr is 'inside' and 'in past' Hǫð (Hareid). Then, in my opinion, it can be no other place than Vågane at Vegsund." Barman further says that the vágr must be round from equal distances to land from the rock which lies in the middle. He



*Vegsundet 1950. The rock in the middle of the vágr is Flisholmen, says Arne Øvrelid. Others believe that it must be Haneskjeret, which we see in the vágr further to the left.*

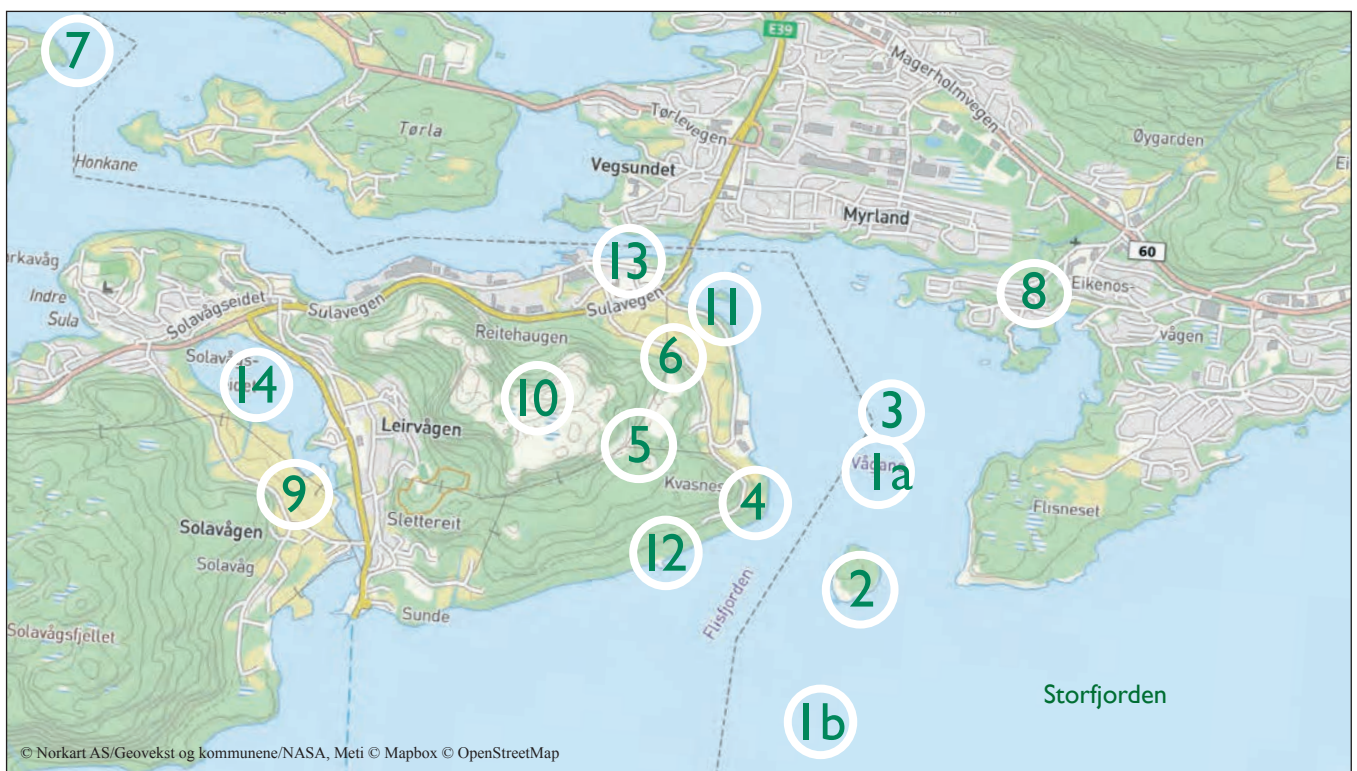


also points out that Liavågen is long and narrow, has a mouth to the north and that the rock in the middle of the vågr is missing. Thus, the description of the battle site “without doubt” is Vågane, which is excellent both as a gathering place and as a battle site. Among other things, Barman points here to Haneskjeret, which lies in the middle of the vågr. Until around 60 years ago, a large sacrificial stone lay by the houses on Veibust. It was then splintered and used in a house wall. A little above here laid also “Jarl Håkons temple for Þorgerðr Hǫrðabrúðr”.

Olav Nørve believed that the victory stones which were erected after the battle were placed at Gjøriplassen/Hjøruplassen at Kvasneset, which would have been named after these pointed, sword-shaped stones. The vågr beyond this place was Hjørungavågr. North of Kvasneset lies Kongshaugen (The king’s mound). Furthermore, one comes to the farm Veibust, which ac-

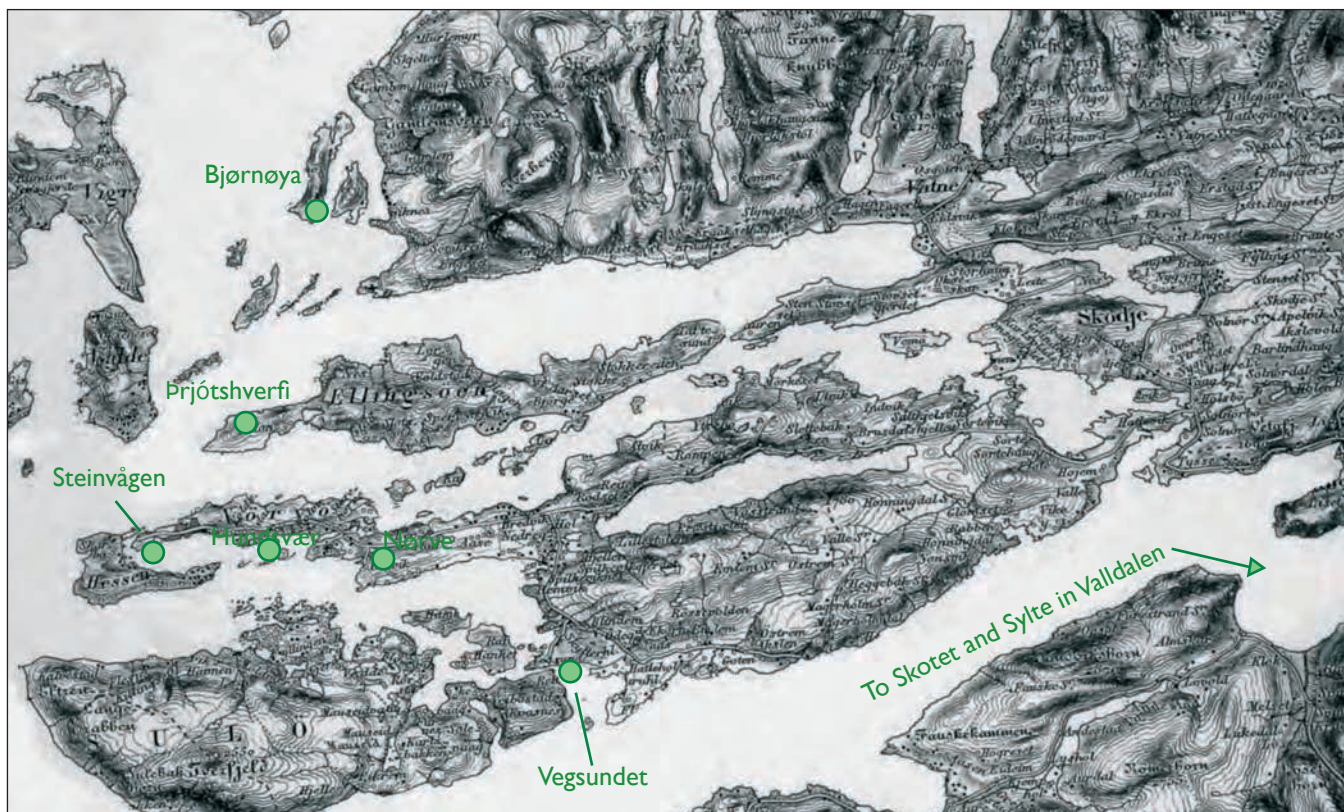
ording to Nørve meant the farm by the temple. Here must have been a pagan temple with sacrificial flags. A little further out is Korsneset (The cross headland), the old Primsignd. The losing Jómsvikings who had sought refuge on Flisholmen were brought ashore to be executed. Nørve says that names as Pina (pain) and Pinestranda come from this incident.

In 1981 Arne Øvrelid introduced the most recent presentation that argues for placing the battle in the Vegsund area. He says that if we use a strict source-critical examination of the material, we can say no more than that the battle took place on the coast of Sunnmøre. And there is absolutely no solid evidence that Liavågen is the place where the battle took place. On the other hand, there is an indication which can make a battle site further inside the Storfjorden more trustworthy. Strongest in this respect is a vågr at the north side of the fjord, Flisholmvågen. Øvrelid here



Those who want to place the battle in the Vegsund area believe that Hjørungavågr (1a) is the same as Vågane/Flisholmvågen. We can here mention that Guldbrand Thesen places Hjørungavågr (1b) at Storfjorden. Arne Øvrelid says that the rock in the middle of the vågr is Flisholmen (2), while others say the same about Haneskjeret (3). According to Olav Nørve, the victory stones, Hjørungar (4), stood at Kvasneset. Here you can also find Hjørunddalen (5). Nørve further says that at Veibust stood a pagan temple (6), and Primsignd (7) was the same as Korsneset. Here, Øvrelid believes that Primsignd (8) is a forested area north of the vågr. It is the peninsula east of Solavågen (9) which is called Primsignd/Veig (10) in one of the Liavåg theories. Names like Pina (11) and Pine(haug)stranda (12) will tell us where the Jómsvikings were executed. A curative spring, which is often mentioned in historical context, is to be found on the Veibust side of Vegsundet (13). Ole Barman also refers to a sacrificial flag which has previously been said to lie at Veibust. He places the sacrifice of the jarl's son Erlingr, which was carried out at Primsignd, to the pagan temple (6). In connection with a search near Tyssefossen at Bjørke for the gold chests of Búi inn digri, there was a clairvoyant who believed that the battle was in Storevalen (14). He also believed that it was greater hope of finding the chests here since Bue had jumped into the sea and not buried them far up on land in Hjørundfjorden.





*Snorri gives a detailed description of the route of Óláfr inn helgi Haraldsson when he was on the run from the peasant army. After coming north of Stad, he first stayed at Herøy and then travelled on to Steinvågen. The king's men observed from a mountain that the peasant army, which came from the north, was on its way from Bjørnøya and on towards Prjótshverfi (which one reckons is the same as today's Kverve). The king then set his course within Nørve and passed Hundsvær, before sailing through Vegsundet. From here the journey went past Skotet and to Sylte in Valldalen.*

first points to the fact that the sagas write the names Hjørungavágr and Hjørundarfjørð, where the first element can mean sword, in different ways. Therefore, these names probably do not have the same origin. Øvrelid also mentions that a small valley from Kvasneset and up towards Veibustfjellet is called Hjørunddalen. He further says that many see the Vegsund area as a continuation of the “sword”, which is Hjørundfjorden. Compare here Bjåstad's interpretation of the name Hjørungavágr.

When it comes to the strategic location, Flisholmvågen is excellent, says Øvrelid. The vágr has also a good retreat route through Vegsundet. Lying in Liavågen and waiting for the enemy must, in comparison, be called suicide tactic. Liavågen is otherwise too small for Jarl Hákon to benefit from the advantage of having many ships and people. On the other hand, Flisholmvågen is large enough for the Norwegians to utilize their striking power.

There are several sources which say that the Jómsvikings rounded north and inside Høð. Then they can easily end up in Flisholmvågen, where Flisholmen must be said to lie in the middle of the vágr. You don't find a rock like this in Liavågen. When it comes to Primsigð/Primsignd, one can hardly call Sula a forest-

ed island. On the other hand, north of Flisholmvågen there is a flat and once forested area, says Øvrelid further in his argumentation.

The vágr which is proposed by the Vegsund supporters is, after all, round and has roughly the same distance from the rock in the middle, Haneskjeret, and out to the sides. That fits well with *Jómsvíkinga saga*. On the other hand, it is unlikely that the name Kvasneset can be set in connection with sharp, pointed. This also eliminates the basis for placing the Hjørungar there. In *Sulasoga*, the names Jøriplassen, Jørinakken and Jøridalen are used. The first element here is expectedly the female name Gyri(d). Just like in Liavågen, here, people have tried to adapt the writing forms to what is desired. Thus, supporters of the Vegsund alternative write Hjørunddalen instead of Jøridalen. In the same way, the Liavåg patriots write Hjørunddalen rather than Jørdalen. Whether there has been a pagan temple at Veibust, and that Korsneset is supposed to be Primsignd, is not well documented either. But my main objection to this alternative is the same as to Aspevågen. Why does not Snorri, who documents good local knowledge of this area, locate the battle here at Vegsundet? In *The saga of Óláfr inn helgi* Snorri reports that the king passes here.



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# Ørskogvika



*The forested Osberget which we see here at Ørskog church, according to Landmark, would have been the rock in the middle of the vágr, when the sea level was higher a thousand years ago. The photo is from 1950.*

In 2009, Einar Landmark presented a new theory about the site of the Jómsviking battle. In his theory Landmark starts with *Fagrskinna*. The inner end of the vágr where the battle took place must face east and the mouth west. Therefore, the Jómsvikings had to continue their journey further east after travelling north and past Høð in order to reach a vágr which is in accordance with the saga.

Based on his interpretation of the names Harund and Harundarfjord, Landmark believes that one must look more closely at Ørskogvika as the historical Hjørungavágr. This is also a stretch of sea which is large enough for two armies and where the Jómsvikings, the last ones to arrive, have the opportunity to escape with many ships.

Where do we find Hjørungar? On the north side of Ørskogvika, one kilometre west of the bottom, we find the farm Steinane (Stones) at Apalset. This farm may perhaps have its name from upright stones, according to *Norske Gaardnavne*. Could these be the large stones which later have been used to build a boat landing by the beach here? Landmark here refers to the many previous writers who have thought that Hjørungar must have been memorial stones which were set up after the battle. The name of the vágr was thus created afterwards. Such victory stones are usually a much-used argument when one is missing natural formations.

Where is the rock which would lie as far from the bottom of the vágr as out to each side? Landmark here points at Osberget next to Ørskog church. The sea le-



vel was 1–2 metres higher a thousand years ago. In addition, oral tradition says that the river, Ørskogelva, in connection with a change in its course, replaced large quantities of masses which remained lying close to the mouth of the river. Otherwise, the name Vågen, which we find in the vicinity, is evidence of an earlier vágr, which today has become land. If you take a look at these changes in the landscape, Osberget can be well suited to be the rock which the sagas tell about.

Primsigð has been a problematic name for most people. But a little outside Sjøholt, on the north side of Ørskogvika, lies Langskipsoya.

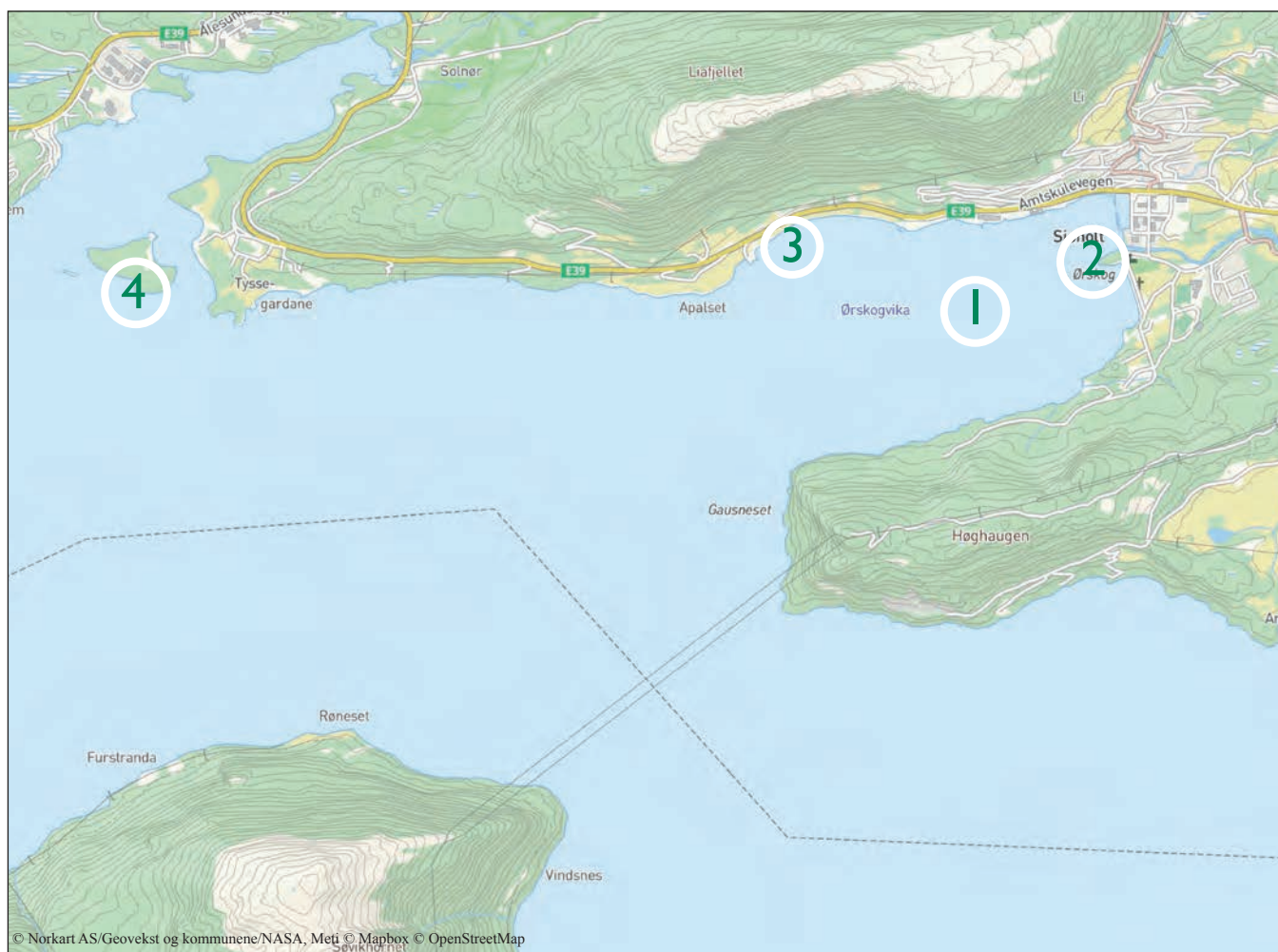
In *Norske Gaardnavne*, one expects that the farm Tysse on the mainland here may be named after this island. Landmark believes that the name can be set in connection with the word tjo, sickle, which indicates the curvature at the back towards the shaft of a scythe or sickle.

If you set this in connection with Primsigð, which Didrik Arup Seip interprets to mean new moon sickle, today's Langskipøya could resemble a tjo. In *Fagr-*

*skinna*, version A, the farmer Ulfr says that Jarl Hákon lies by Almunnd hamrum.

In version B, he is to lie by Ælftrum, a name which has been linked to the bird swan. Landmark believes that traces of both these names in *Fagrskinna* can be found near Ørskogvika. We have the name Almeskar-det in Søvika. And Andestadvatnet, a gathering place for swans, is not far from there either.

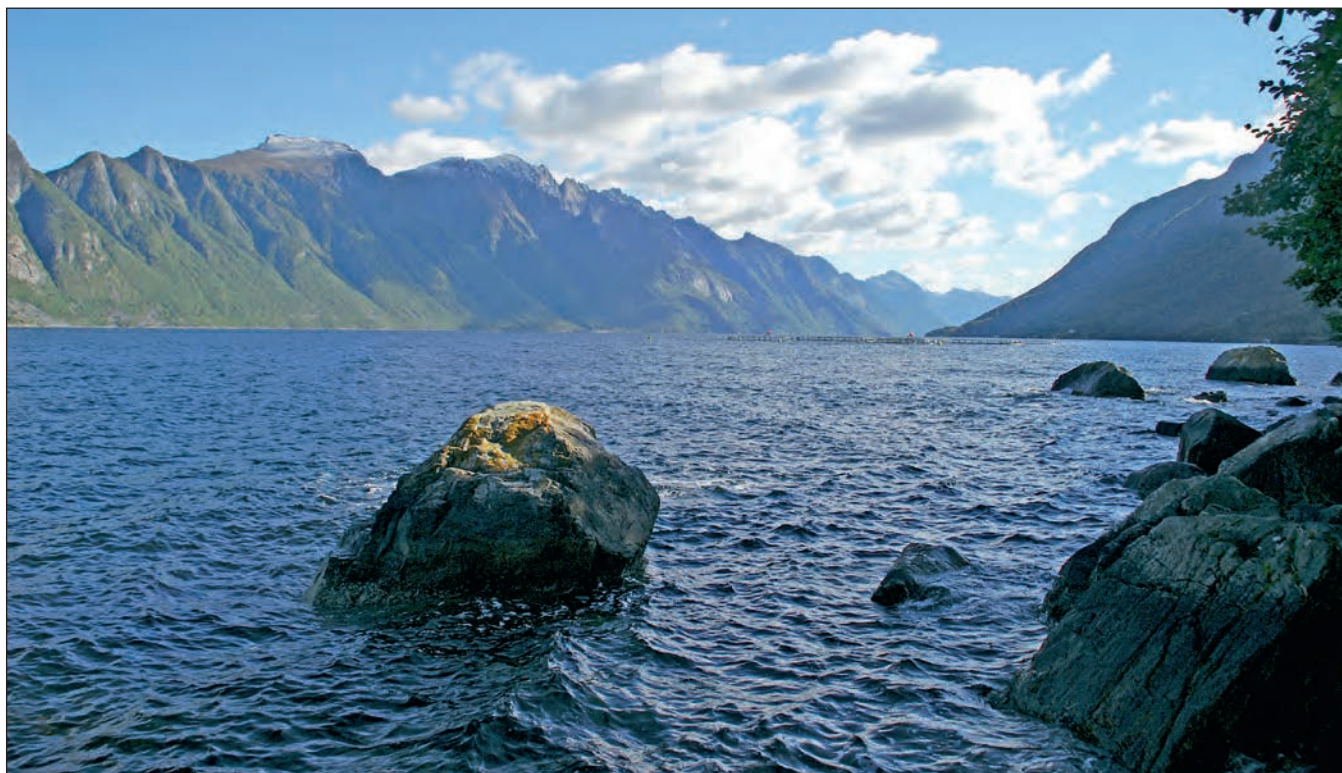
Landmark has a correct assessment of the sea level changes in the Sjøholt area. After all, in addition to the upheaval, there could have been major changes in the course of the river, which also has added masses. But I still doubt that Osberget was located in the middle of Hjørungavágr with an equal distance on all sides to land. As Landmark starts from *Fagrskinna*, he tries to find both Eltrane and Almemamrane to support that Jarl Hákon's army would have stayed north of these. To me, it seems unreasonable that in this location theory you cannot find these names by the sea, but have to go far inland in Sykkylven municipality to find Almeskar-det and Andestadvatnet.



*Einar Landmark says that Ørskogvika (1) was the historical Hjørungavágr. The rock in the middle of the vágr would be Osberget (2). Hjørungar, memorial stones which were erected after the battle, are said to have stood at the farm Steinane (3). Further west by the fjord we find Primsigð (4), today called Langskipsoya.*

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# Hjørundfjorden



*Hjørungar*, the stones which are said to have given name to the battle site further in the fjord, are said to be these stones by the beach at Brattheim. Locally, they are just called *Fjellsteinane*.

“Hjørundfjorden, where the Jómsvikings were defeated, has its name from three stones that stand upright as memorial stones, and are called Hjørungar, these have given the name to Hjørundfjorden.” Jonas Ramus wrote this in a book published in 1735, manuscript finished in 1715. Gustav Storm says that Torfeus in his translation of *Flateyjarbók* uses *sinus* both for *vágr* and *fjord*. This has misled Ramus to perceive *sinus Hiorungensis* and *sinus Harundensis* as the same location.

It can be told that Jonas Ramus has mentioned the Jómsviking battle twice. In 1719 he reports about Harald Gormson’s expedition to Norway with 1200 skips. This time the king turned after rampaging along the coast to Sogn. When Ramus in the same book tells about the Jómsvikings, which Sveinn tjúguskegg sends off, he follows Snorri and says that the battle was in Hjørungavágr. But in the book from 1735 he places the battle in Hjørundfjorden.

In addition to the traditional written material, the supporters of placing the battle in Hjørundfjorden refers to oral traditions which say that the battle would have been here.

An ardent advocate for the Hjørundfjord alternative was Anders Hustadnes. He wrote many newspaper

articles in the early 1980s. He arranged a search for Viking ships at the seabed off Bjørke and organized to dig for Búi inn digri’s gold treasure at Tyssefossen, but without result.

The farmer Ulfr at Høð is said to have told the Jómsvikings that Jarl Hákon was in Hjørundfjorden (Hjørundarfjørð) with only a few ships. The Jómsvikings believed in this stratagem of war which Jarl Hákon would have made known on the islands. Thus, the Jómsvikings immediately went north and passed the island of Høð and further inwards Hjørundfjorden, where the Norwegians were waiting for them. According to a legend, the Norwegians should have covered their ships with branches of floriferous trees. When the Jómsvikings came to Trandal, the Norwegians who were in the harbour there, attacked from that side. The rest of the Norwegians who were hiding at Holm attack the invaders from the other side. A bloody battle then follows in the fjord towards Brunsvika. A legend says, this *vágr* got its name because the sea was stained brown-red with blood.

After the battle, some of the Jómsvikings are said to have escaped with 2–3 Viking ships through Skjåstaddalen, by dragging them on sliding barks and rowing them across the lakes. Another version says



that they travelled up Skipedalen. These warriors would have otherwise buried a gold treasure on Bjørke before they escaped.

Hustadnes refers to *Flateyjarbok* where it is said that the bottom of the vágr faces east and the mouth faces west. This fits with the fjord inwards to Bjørke. Three stones called Hjørungar will stand out on the vágr. Hustadnes writes that these stones stand at the outlet of the vágr, on the outermost west side of Hjørundfjorden, near Brattheim.

Between Sæbøneset and Store Standal we find today the name Holm. Now there is no islet. But Hans Strøm writes that in the past a person could row a boat between the islet and the beach by high water. Local legends say that Jarl Hákon sacrificed his son on this islet, which must therefore be Primsignd/Primsigð.

In several versions of *Jómsvíkinga saga*, we can read that at the end of the battle Búi inn digri jumps overboard with two chests of gold. Many have seen a discovery of these gold chests as a possible proof of the battle site. In the search for these chests in Hjørundfjorden, Anders Hustadnes received help from, among others, a clairvoyant. He could tell that Búi did not jump overboard with the chests, but that they were carried ashore from the Viking ship and buried at Tyssefossen.

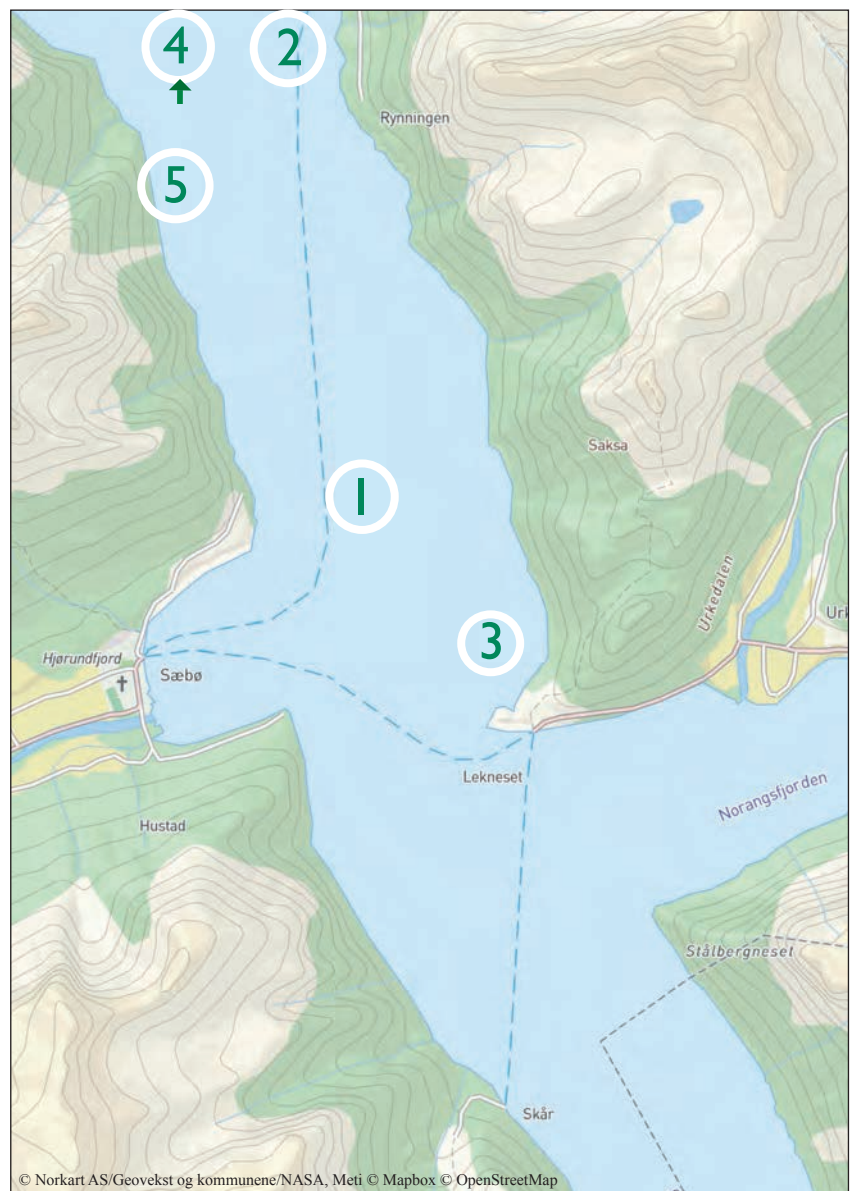
Another clairvoyant claims in *Sunnmørsposten* that the gold chests must lie inside Storevalen in Solavågen, where, in his opinion, the battle had taken place. But people in Hjørundfjorden relied on the clairvoyant who placed the battle in their vicinity – and therefore started digging at Tyssefossen. In addition to relying on clairvoyants, they also referred to other legends from Hjørundfjorden which told of the burial of chests, before the surviving Jómsvíkings took ships overland to Voldsfjorden and sailed from here to Denmark.

This excavation in 1982 created a pure gold fever at Bjørke. After getting some golden sand on a stick which one drove down through the soil where the clairvoyant had said the gold chests would lie, people from the Historical Museum in Bergen also came to the site. But none of what was found dates

from the Viking Age. During later excavations, nothing was found to prove that the battle had taken place at Bjørke. But the fruitless digging for the gold chests of Búi inn digri and the underwater search for Viking ships at the seabed became one of the most media-covered treasure hunts in Norway in recent times.

The problem for those who want to place the battle in Hjørundfjord is the lack of rocks and stones out in the sea.

They have therefore pointed at some rocks by the shore at Brattheim, by the inlet to the fjord. It is difficult to understand that these stones could identify the battle site, which is said to be at least 15 kilometres further inland.



*Hjørungavágr (1) lies, for those who want to place the battle in Hjørundfjorden, between Trandal (2) and Brunsvika (3) by Lekneset. Hjørungar (4), the stones which shall be distinctive marks for the vágr, we find about 15 kilometres further out. Primsignd (5), where the jarl's son Erlingr was sacrificed, will be the same as Holm.*



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# Norangsfjorden



*One of the alternatives for the battle site is Norangsfjorden. On the far-right side of the fjord lies Lekneset, which is supposed to be the historical Primsigð. The photo is from 1954.*

There is only one place in Sunnmøre where everything agrees with the old writings when placing the historical *Hjørungavágr*, and that is Norangsfjorden, wrote John Strandabø in a newspaper article in *Møre-Nytt* in December 2007. This fjord's head lies to the east and opens towards west. Based on a modern Icelandic edition of *Flateyjarbók*, he believed that Norangsfjorden must be the place which is called *Hjørungavágr* in the sagas. *Primsigð*, the unknown and mysterious island, which will lie in front of the vágr on the northern side, is Lekneset. This peninsula juts out from the mountain massif and separates Hjørundfjorden from Storfjorden, in Strandabø's opinion.

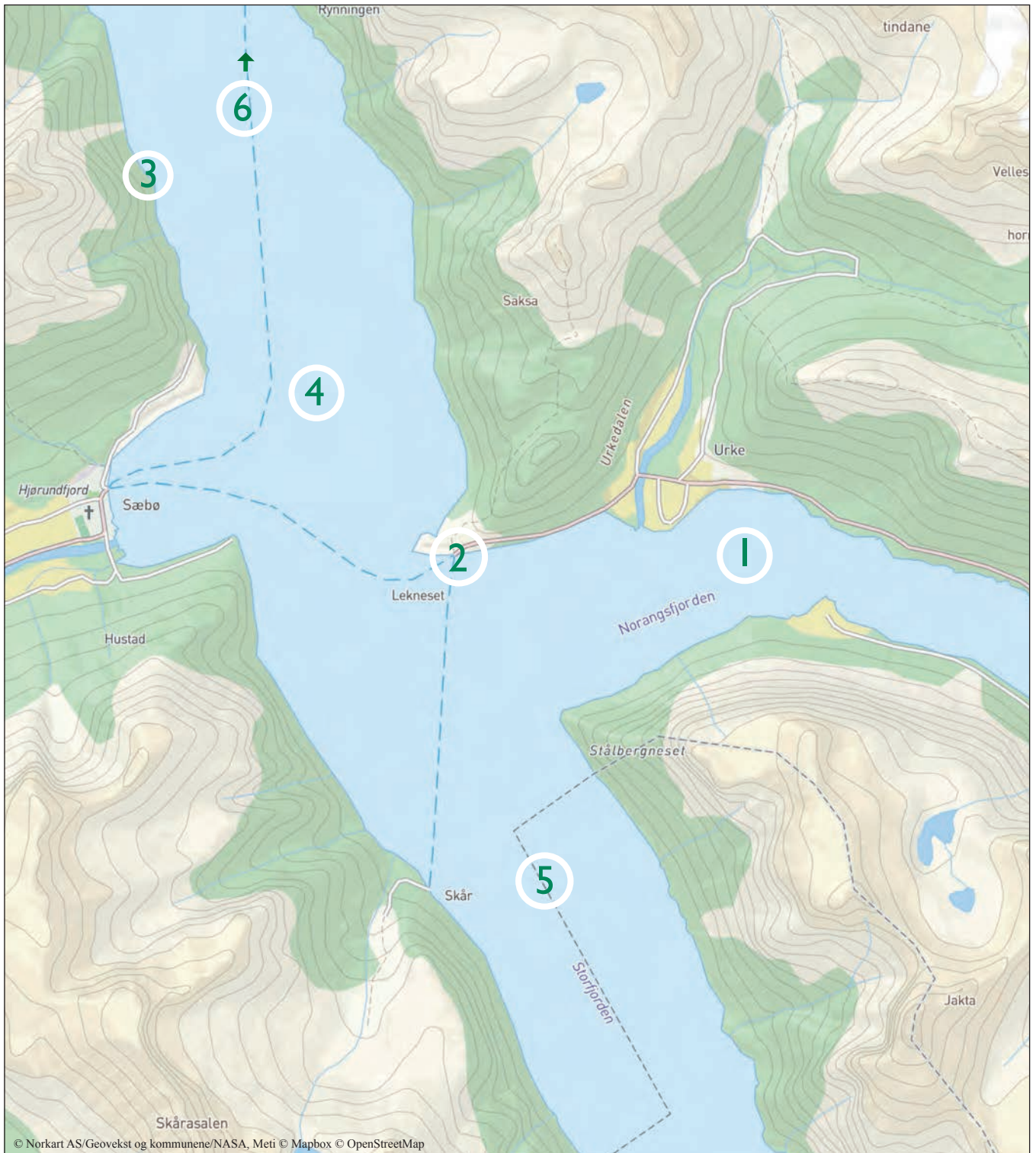
Based on diplomas from the 14th century, where one in 1325 says that Ledrene (Leira) is located in *Harundar fyrði* and that Hustad in 1356 was located in *Jorundar fyrði*, Strandabø believes that Harundarfjørð

and Jørundarfjørð are two different fjords. Harundarfjorden is what is locally called Storfjorden and which stretches from the mouth of Norangsfjorden and inwards to Bjørke. This means that Harundarfjorden lies inside Hjørundfjorden. Strandabø interprets the first element in Harundarfjorden, *har*, to mean large (*stor*). Thus, Storfjorden (The large fjord) is the modern and direct translation of Harundarfjorden. In contrast, Hjørundfjorden is the name of the fjord from Lekneset outwards. The rock, on which the Jómsvikings sought refuge after the battle, later collapsed into the fjord. This rock supposedly lay at Holm, which they earlier called a place between Standal and Sæbø. The Hjørungar are, in Strandabø's opinion, the stones one finds at Brattheim, which lies at the entrance to Hjørundfjorden. In the edition of *Flateyjarbók* which Strandabø took as a starting point, the sentence reporting about the



rock in the middle of the vágr is missing. Although he has found a cove/fjord with the head to the east and the mouth to the west, the rocks are still missing. So far, I have not found any name scholar which distinguishes be-

tween the names Harundfjorden and Hjørundfjorden as Strandabø does. They have chosen to see the different forms as different ways of writing for the same administrative district.



*In the theory which will place the battle to Norangsfjorden, Hjørungavágr (1) is the same as Norangsfjorden. The sacrifice at Primsigd (2) was performed at Lekneset. The rock where the remaining Jómsvikings escaped would be Holm (3). Otherwise, we have marked Harundar fyrði (5), which is called Storfjorden today. Jorundar fyrði (4), where the farm Hustad is located, is today called Hjørundfjorden. The distinctive mark of the battle vágr, Hjørungar (6), lies about 20 km further out, at Brattheim.*

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# Liavågen



*Liavågen by 1953.*

Hans Strøm says in his book about Sunnmøre that Jarl Hákon, after the victory against the Jómsvikings, set up some stone pillars, Hjørungar. They are said to have subsequently given name to the vágr where the battle had taken place. Later the stones have been removed, and the name Hjørungavágr died out. Strøm's proof of Liavågen as the battle site is the inhabitants' report that this is the historical Hjørungavágr. Strøm also believes that these victory stones were undoubtedly erected at Jørneset. In addition, Jørdalen is also said to have gotten its name from these stones.

The theories of victory stones have not gained much approval in the academic community. Later authors, on the basis of Gustav Storm's theory, believe that the rocks called Ovrfludene is the historical Hjørungar. In the dictionary *Norrøn ordbok* one earlier even states that Ovrfludene are the Hjørungar. Another explanation for Liavågen to have been called Hjørungavágr in the past can be found in *Soga om Hareid og Ulstein*: "Hjørungar is derived from hjørr, which means sword. Perhaps it could be the shape of the vágr which is the origin of the name. The vágr is long and narrow. Compare Geiranger, which in older times was pronounced Jørången". The supporters of the Liavåg alternative point to the fact that several sagas describe the Jómsvikings travelling north and inside Høð, which is where Liavågen lies. There are otherwise varied opinions as to whether the battle took place inside or outside the

vágr itself. Today, most adherents of the Liavåg theory do not accept Jómsvikinga saga, which says that the battle took place inside a vágr. They prefer to write "ved Hjørungavåg" meaning in the vicinity of Liavågen, since they now realize that Liavågen, which they have renamed Hjørungavágr, is too small for the battle.

Ingvard Bjåstad, author of *Soga om Hareid og Ulstein*, writes that Liavågen is the most tactical place to choose for an army expecting enemies from the south. Here is also a sheltered harbour in the winter. With their many smaller ships, the Norwegians also needed more open waters to take full advantage of the larger army they had. Thus, the battle itself must have been outside the vágr – on the stretch of sea between Sula, Hareidlandet and Vartdalsstranda. Ingvard Bjåstad says that Primsignd is the Latinized form of the island name Veig, which must have been used for the part of Sula which lies east of Solavågen. Traces of this island name can be found in the farm names Veibust and Vegsund. And perhaps the armies had drifted towards Sula at the time when Jarl Hákon went ashore to sacrifice his son, Erlingr. Otherwise, Bjåstad does not explicitly say where Harund is located, but points to the fact that Amund Helland believes that this must be an older name for Vartdalsstranda. Martinus Rogne, who also wanted to lay the battle to Liavågen, believed that Primsignd was Godøya, where there would have been a pagan temple. The name of this island would



otherwise mean “signed to God in heaven”. Rogne also claimed that the island of Harund, which would lie south of the vágr, was Runde. He points out that they “used south and north as now – along the coast.” The seaway between Runde and Godøya he thought was Harundarfjord. We can add here that an older written form for Runde has been Hrund. Peder Fyilling claims that Primsignd is on the north side of Liavågen, at Steffaneset.

In an article in 2020 Sten Øvrelid says for sure that the battle was fought in a vágr and Liavågen is big enough. He argues that the Hjørungar was placed at the mouth of the vágr. These three stones were not victory stones, but sailing marks for ships which passed in the fairway. The name Hjørungavágr was used by the seafarers, and the name Liavåg was mostly used by the local inhabitants.

In one version of *Fagrskinna*, the farmer Ulfr tells us that Jarl Hákon was supposed to be at Eltrane and that he had not rowed north to his army. This farmer's story has often been the crucial argument for those who want to locate the battle north of Breisundet. But it is also possible to use *Fagrskinna* in favour of Liavågen. One can then refer to the other version which says that Jarl Hákon was inside by Almehamrane, and then Liavågen lies north of that place.

The names written Hjørungneset and Hjørungdalen, which in traditional pronunciation are Jørneset and Jørdalen, have also been used as a proof that Liavågen is the historical Hjørungavágr. But as we have previously discussed, the name of the vágr may have been created by Icelanders. Otherwise, the two farm names may have a completely different origin than hjorr = sword.

The support of the Liavåg alternative is usually based on *Jómsvíkinga saga*. They locate Hjørungar and Primsignd, but still do not always accept, that the battle was in a vágr, where Jarl Hákon, who was initially on the retreating front, was furthest in, according to the same saga. How could the jarl then go to the most remote part of Sula, to Primsignd? Compare the drawing of battle formation by V. Voss. It is otherwise

difficult to understand that Ovrafludene, Hjørungar, which were lower in relation to the water surface a thousand years ago, should be the identification of the vágr. If it is the shape of the vágr, narrow and long like a sword, which has given name to Hjørungavágr, one would expect that the name would be in continuous use on the vágr and not only live on as a first element in names of some farms which lie some distance away. The headland which most naturally would have been called Hjørunganeset, if Liavågen was the historical Hjørungavágr, would have been Steffaneset or Risneset. Today, Leirvågen is also located between Risneset and Jørneset. Based on the theory that the battle could have been fought in Liavågen, the new post office in the village was named Hjørungavåg in 1897.

In a petition in 1895 the inhabitants of Liabygden, as themselves called the parish at that time, ask for establishing a post office in Hjørungavåg (also called Lia-



*In the Liavåg alternative, Liavågen (1) would be the historical Hjørungavágr. The advocates have different opinions about where to find the stones which would be called Hjørungar. Hans Strøm says that they are stone pillars which were erected on Jørneset (2). Others believe that Hjørungar is the same as Ovrafludene (3). At the estuary of Liavågen we find Risneset (4) on the south side and Steffaneset (5) on the north side. According to Peder Fyilling, Primsignd would be the same as Steffaneset, while Ingvard Bjåstad says that Primsignd (6a) is Veig at the eastern end of Sula. This is around 15 km from Liavågen. Martinus Rogne says that Godøya (6b), 10 kilometres away, is Primsignd. Inside the vágr we find Vågsholmen (7), as the rock in the middle, on the south side. We have also marked Jørdalen (8) and part of Vartdalsstranda (9), which Amund Helland believes may have been called Harund earlier. And if one assumes Jørneset as the naming element, it would be more reasonable to consider Leirvågen (10) as the old Hjørungavágr rather than Liavågen.*

våg). Claiming that the battle should have taken place in Liavågen they hoped “that the historically famous Hjørungavåg in the near future will be counted as one of our country’s postal offices.” In the further process, the municipal bailiff in Ulstein said that there “was actually only a choice between two alternatives: Liavåg and Liabygda. Since the latter is, however, recorded in the Register of post offices, I suggest that Liavåg becomes the name of the post office.”

The name of the school district, Liabygda, could not be used for the post office. The other place in Sunnmøre which was called Liabygda, in Stranda – had already been given a post office address in 1890. Thus, the village in Hareid, Liabygda, had to adopt a different postal name.

But in the postal administration there was greater enthusiasm for using the alledged historical name, Hjørungavaag. And the new post office opened 01.04.1897 with Knut J. Liavaag as manager.

The decision of the postal administration is a reflection of the opinion which prevailed in the country. Many in the nation-building movement before Norway became an independent state in 1905, focused on the great Viking age, when Norway was not a subject of Denmark or Sweden. And one of the events worth remembering was the victory in the battle of Hjørungavågr. It took time to get acceptance for the

new name. People in the neighbourhood continued to use the name they were familiar with – Liabygda and Liavågen. As late as 1947, a submitter in the local newspaper *Vikebladet* complained that people at Hareid still were using the name Liabygda instead of Hjørungavåg. It was around 1920 that the steamship stop changed its name from Liavåg to Hjørungavåg in the time tables. It can be mentioned that Jac Skylstad, from Hjørundfjorden, was involved as a name consultant when the new route booklet for the newly formed county route company (MFR, later MRF) was to be prepared. Several written old forms were modernized, and Hjørungavåg was, in his opinion, seen as “a good name that can easily be used again.” But by going for this suggestion, he would later meet his former self when he wanted to prove that the Jómsviking battle had not stood at Hareidlandet, but at Flisvågen.

We can also mention that the fishermen's association which was established in 1925, in the first years was called Liabygden's fishermen's association before the name change to Hjørungavåg's fishermen's association.

Liabygda was also the name of the school district as long as Ulstein and Hareid were one municipality – until 1917. This shows that the incorporation of the name Hjørungavåg name largely dates back to the last century.



On the map which accompanied the petition for a post office in Liabygda, the inhabitants have placed Liavåg at the bottom of the vågr, further out they call it Hjørungavaag. Later the letters, aa, have been replaced by å.



# Ørstafjorden



In this photo we see Raudøya and Raudøyholmen (closest to the right) at the outlet of Ørstafjorden. On the left edge of the image lies Steinnes, where two of the three menhirs stand today. People believe that these stones would have been the Hjørungar. One of the stones no longer stands at the original place. Out on the fjord between Steinnes and Berkneset we see Vindfarholmen. Further to the right we see Yksnøya, Eika and the sound between this and Hareidlandet.

In 1992, Martin Furseth published the book *Jomsvikingslaget*, where he argues that the battle took place at the mouth of Ørstafjorden. According to Furseth, the Norwegians had during the mobilization pointed out *Hjørungavágr* as the gathering place. The leidang army was supposed to meet in this *vágr*, which lay below or by the island of Høð. A good strategy of war is to choose a favourable battle site and let the enemy come there, more or less prepared, instead of meeting the enemy at a random place while you are out rowing yourself, says Furseth. From this point of view, it is natural that Jarl Hákon could have used Ørstafjorden as a base for his army. This was a strategically well-placed meeting-point with reasonably good harbour conditions in mid-winter – the time of the year when the battle took place.

Just above Steinnes, from Lidaveten, one can observe at long distance ships coming from the south whether they choose the inner seaway, into Rovdefjorden, or the outer seaway, on the outside of Gurskøya and Hareidlandet. Likewise, there is a good view north of Vartdalsfjorden – would an army come from the north.

In his interpretation of the place names used in the sagas, Furseth points to the Norse word *orrosta* which means war, battle. It is close to the first written form for Ørsta, Ørstr, in a document from 1385. Thus, one can imagine a development from *Orrosta-fiordr* (= the fjord where the battle took place) to Ørstafjorden. Furseth argues that the geographical direction for Ørstafjorden suits far better with the sagas than Liavå-

gen. At Steinnes, until recently, there have been three menhirs, which must be the three Hjørungar. When it comes to the written forms *Primsignd* and *Primsigð*, Furseth finds it strange that the Latin form *Primsignd* should belong in a text which is otherwise only Norse. It would therefore be most reasonable to choose the form *Primsigð* in the meaning new moon sickle. And seen from Rjåneset, Raudøya has the shape of such a sickle. On the other hand, Didrik Arup Seip's interpretation that Sula would have such a shape seems completely incomprehensible to everyone who is familiar with Sunnmøre. On Raudøya, an old stone structure also has been found which may have been the place where Jarl Hákon sacrificed his son to Þorgerðr Hjørðabrúðr. Furthermore, Furseth considers Lianesholmen to be the rock which is said to lie in the middle of the *vágr*. I agree with Furseth that Raudøya will be far more similar to a thin new moon than, for example, Sula. If one accepts *Heimskringla's* version that Jarl Hákon and his army were in Hallkjellsvik and rowed from the south in search of the Jómsvikings, the outlet of the Ørstafjorden could be a relevant clashing point. On the other hand, it is rather impossible to interpret Ørstafjorden as having something to do with *orrosta* = *strife*, battle. *Norsk stadnamleksikon*, a Norwegian place name encyclopaedia, thinks it is most reasonable that the name rather means “the wavy, hasty one” because of the winds and currents.

In 2009, Odd Karstein Fløtre came up with a theory which differs from Furseth's. Fløtre builds on Gerhard



Schøning's (1722–1780) presentation of *Jómsvíkinga* saga and combines it with Sivert Aarflot's theory that Hákon inn góði for a period should have lived on Raudøya, which previously was called “Freya Island”. Aarflot believed that the names Berkneset and Berkvika together with the names Ørsta(d) and (Lida) veten indicated that the historical Birkestrand, which we have mentioned in connection with the theory of the Jómsvíking battle at Kvamsøya, would have lain here at the municipal border between Ørsta and Volda. Fløtre says that people who were primsignd, marked with the cross, by Hákon inn góði, stopped using the pagan name “Freya Island”. Instead, they gave today's Raudøya the name Primsignd.

As a persistent opponent of Christianity, Jarl Hákon chose to sacrifice his son Erlingr on Primsignd (Raudøya). The battle is supposed to have been between Raudøya and Berkneset, and the losing Jómsvíkings stayed on Raudøya before they escaped. Fløtre further says that, according to old legends, Raudøya got its name because it was coloured red by blood. In addition to placing the battle of Hjørungavágr by Raudøya, we can also mention that Fløtre placed the battle of Rastarkálf on Raudøya.

Fløtre shares the views of Furseth regarding the stones, Hjørungar, at Steinnes. He also believes that

the name Ørsta is connected with orrosta. The islet which the fleeing Jómsvíkings later ended up on is Vindfarholmen. According to Fløtre, the islet is said to have been named from the fact that the Jómsvíkings sailed hitherto with the help of the wind. Since it was easier to dock a ship at Yksnøya, the captured Jómsvíkings were transported there. The name of this island, Øksøya, as Fløtre writes it because he claims that the Jómsvíkings were executed with axes (øksar) there. On Yksnøya, named of oxen, we also find Kjemperøysa, a large burial mound. In place names, kjempe, is used to characterize something which is very large. But Fløtre connects Kjemperøysa to kjempe = fighter, hero in war. In the burial mound we will find fallen Jómsvíkings who were buried here by their surviving comrades. This burial mound is located by the strait towards Eika. Furthermore, Fløtre refers to old maps with names such as Liavardane, Liadal, Liadalsnipa and Lianeset. It was then also natural that the Vikings had their Liavåg there. Fløtre's interpretations are based on history writing which dates back around 200 years. Later historians have not found reason to mention them more in a serious context. Furthermore, it is justifiable to claim that Fløtre's interpretations of the names are so peculiar that no place name scholar will vouch for them.



A central observation post in the version which will place the battle to the outlet of Ørstaffjorden is Lidaveten (1). Martin Furseth says that Hjørungavágr (2) is the same as Ørstaffjorden, and that the rock in the middle of the vágr may be Lianesholmen (3). Odd Karstein Fløtre says that we find Hjørungavágr (4) outside Steinnes. He says that the rock to which the losing Jómsvíkings fled is Vindfarholmen (5), and they were executed on Øksøya (Yksnøya) (6). Both authors agree that Hjørungar are menhirs which have been placed on Steinnes (7). Furseth says that Raudøya (8) is the historical Primsigð, while Fløtre seems inclined to believe that the name was Primsignd. Based on names in the area which begin with Lia-, Fløtre also believes that we find a Liavåg (9) in the area here.

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## A lengthy process

Through the transmission of stories about the Jómsviking battle from generation to generations, several places in Sunnmøre, especially in Liavågen and Hjørundfjorden, have built up an identity linked to what is believed to be the site of the battle.

A similar identity development can also be found, to a lesser extent, in the newer battle alternatives. Oral traditions have also been presented in connection with the Vegsund theory.

Growing up at Osnes in the 1950s I heard the adults discussing the Jómsviking battle. People found it especially fascinating that Olaf Welde's theory suggested Ulsteinfjorden as the main site of the battle.

A new debate in *Vikebladet* in the late 1960s also caught attention. In articles in the local newspaper people wrote that the Norwegians have been hiding in Ottavika, which was on my own farm, when the Jómsvikings came sailing. Furthermore, the burial mounds on the shores were supposed to originate from this battle.

From local patriotic considerations, it could have been tempting to support such a theory. But it was difficult to understand that the island of Hqð should be the same as Dimna, as Welde and his followers claimed. It seemed most reasonable that the battle must have taken place in Liavågen, as the debaters from Hareid believed.

In the late 1970s I registered place names in what today is Hjørungavåg school district. Was it possible to find names and formations which could be combined with the presentation in the saga of the Jómsvikings? I

searched and searched. Could the answer to the riddle be that the peaks of the mountain range from Jørneset to Ulsettua were the mentioned Hjørungar? So far, I thought it was the most reasonable explanation.

As it approached the 1000th anniversary of the battle, which is believed to have been in 986, discussion flared up again about where the battle has been fought. Anders Hustadnes, a committed campaigner for proving that the battle site was Hjørundfjorden, also received help from clairvoyants in order to find the gold chests of Búi inn digri.

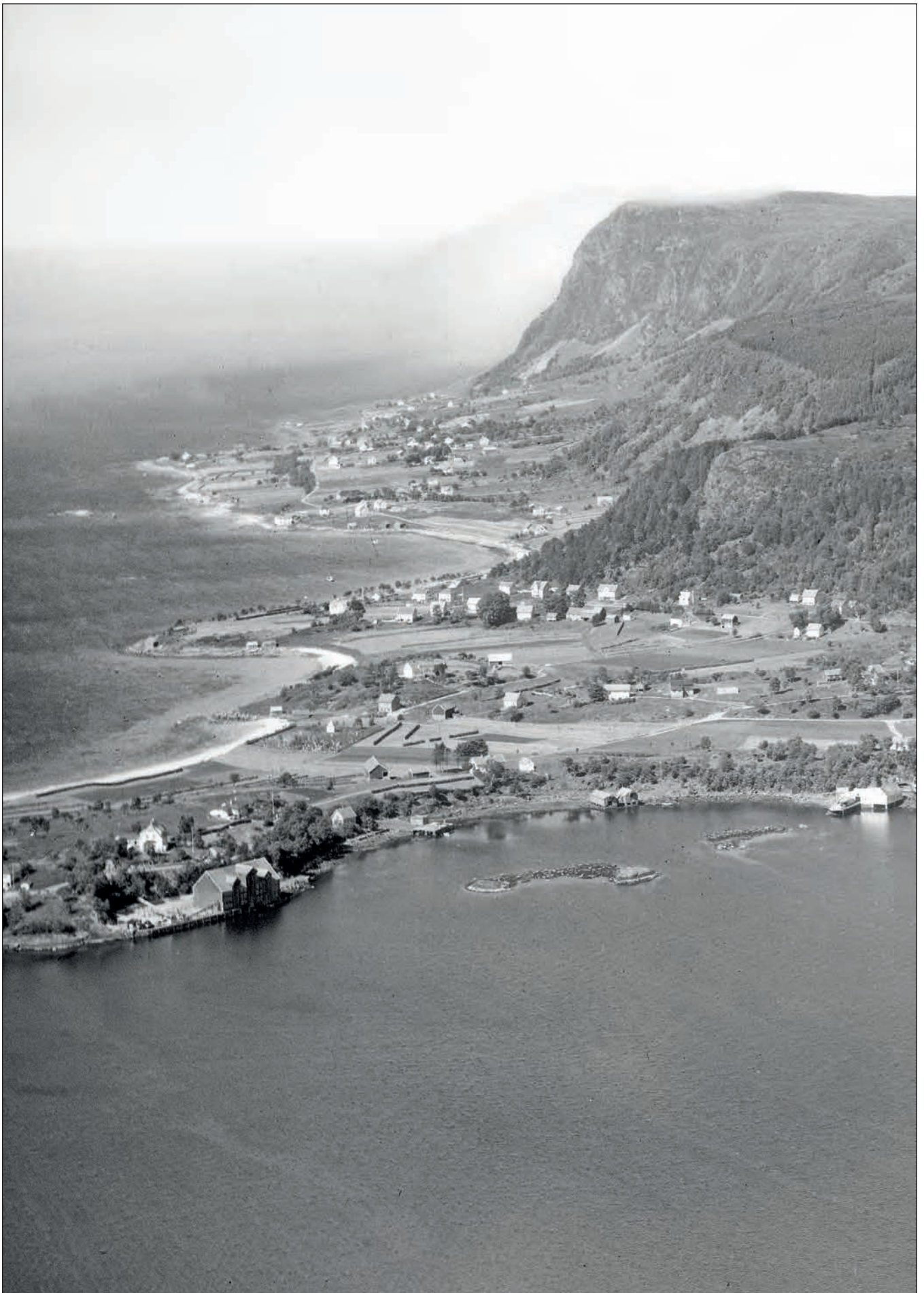
I commented on this search when writing to *Sunnmørsposten*, three months after the 1000-years' festivities, suggesting that Hustadnes should rather dig for the gold treasure on Eika instead of Hjørundfjorden. I further pointed out that in the Eiksund area one would also be able to find the islets and rocks which one definitely misses in Liavågen and Hjørundfjorden. There was no reaction to the post.

But in the autumn of 2002 I attended a meeting where one of the participants happened to say that the Jómsviking battle had been in Liavågen. I presented my views. There was a useful exchange of words. For me, it was the start of a further development of the ideas which I had outlined around 15 years earlier.

As I have dug further and further into the material, some details have been adjusted. But the main theory – that the battle took place near the end of the island of Hqð, in the vágr which is formed between Hareidlandet, Eika, Måløya and Gurskøya – stands firm and is presented here.

*According to local writers, before the battle the Norwegians would have been waiting in Ottavika, which lies to the right of the large storehouse. Near Kyrkjestøa in the left part of the cove, iron weapons have been found. The battle itself would have started on the sea area here in the foreground before moving beyond Osneset. On this other side of the headland, between two sandy beaches, lies Oshaugen. It is one of the largest burial mounds in Western Norway. Further out, on Halseneset, a boat grave was found early in the 20th century. Further out on the beaches in the direction of Ryssholmen, there have been several more menhirs than those standing today. In addition to Oshaugen, there are also several other burial mounds along the shore. These many ancient monuments have also been used in the arguing for laying the battle to Ulsteinfjorden. The photo is from 1956.*









## The vågr with stones

Of the alternatives which have been presented as a possible battleground, the stretch of sea between Gurskøya and Hareidlandet is the “stoniest”. It is also the area by the inner seaway where we find most islets and rocks. But here are also large areas without troublesome shoals, such as Selvågdjupet, Leikongvika and Haddalvika.

In this chapter, we present a number of archipelago names from Eika and Måløya and further north to Dragsundet. In addition, some place names which are mentioned elsewhere in the book have also been placed on the map. The farm **Eiksund (1)** got its name because

it lies across the sound between Eika and Hareidlandet. The farm name **Havåg (2)** is now pronounced in the plural: Havågane. The first element is the same as in Hasund, Haddal and Hareid and is connected with Høð, the old name of Hareidlandet. Havåg thus means the vågr by the island of Høð. Or as it could have been written in modern parlance: Hareidlandsvågen.

At **Orstødneset (3)** there was a ferry quay from 1959 until Eiksundsambandet opened in 2008. This connects Hareidlandet to Eika by bridge. From Eika to the mainland goes an underwater tunnel. North of Orstødneset lies the farm **Øggarden (4)**. A tradition says





*In this photo with Havåg in the foreground, we have Havågslangholmen out on the sea to the right. At the entrance to the vågr from Vartdalsfjorden we can see several islets and rocks. Langholmen, Kubbeteholmen and Smeltholmen lie here in the sound. Today, the bridge between Eika and Hareidlandet passes here. Behind the northern tip of Eika we see Raudøya at the outlet of Ørstafjorden. To the right of Lidaveten and Helgehornet, Voldsfjorden opens. Hallkjellsvik is further inside this fjord. Compared to this photo, the sea level would be 0,7 m higher in the same situation at the time of the Jómsviking battle.*

that Jarl Hákon stayed here the night before the battle. By the shore from **Alstranda (5)** and northwards lies Almehamrane (Almunnd hamrum). **Sjøbudholmen (6)**, **Langholmen (7)**, **Kubbeteholmen (8)**. Today the bridge from Hareidlandet to Eika passes these islets.

Nearby we also find **Smeltholmen (9)**. The strait between Eika and Hareidlandet is called **Eiksundet (10)**. On the island of Eika, see separate article, there are two land registry farms: **Sundet (11)** and **Eika (12)**. The northernmost has been named after the sound between

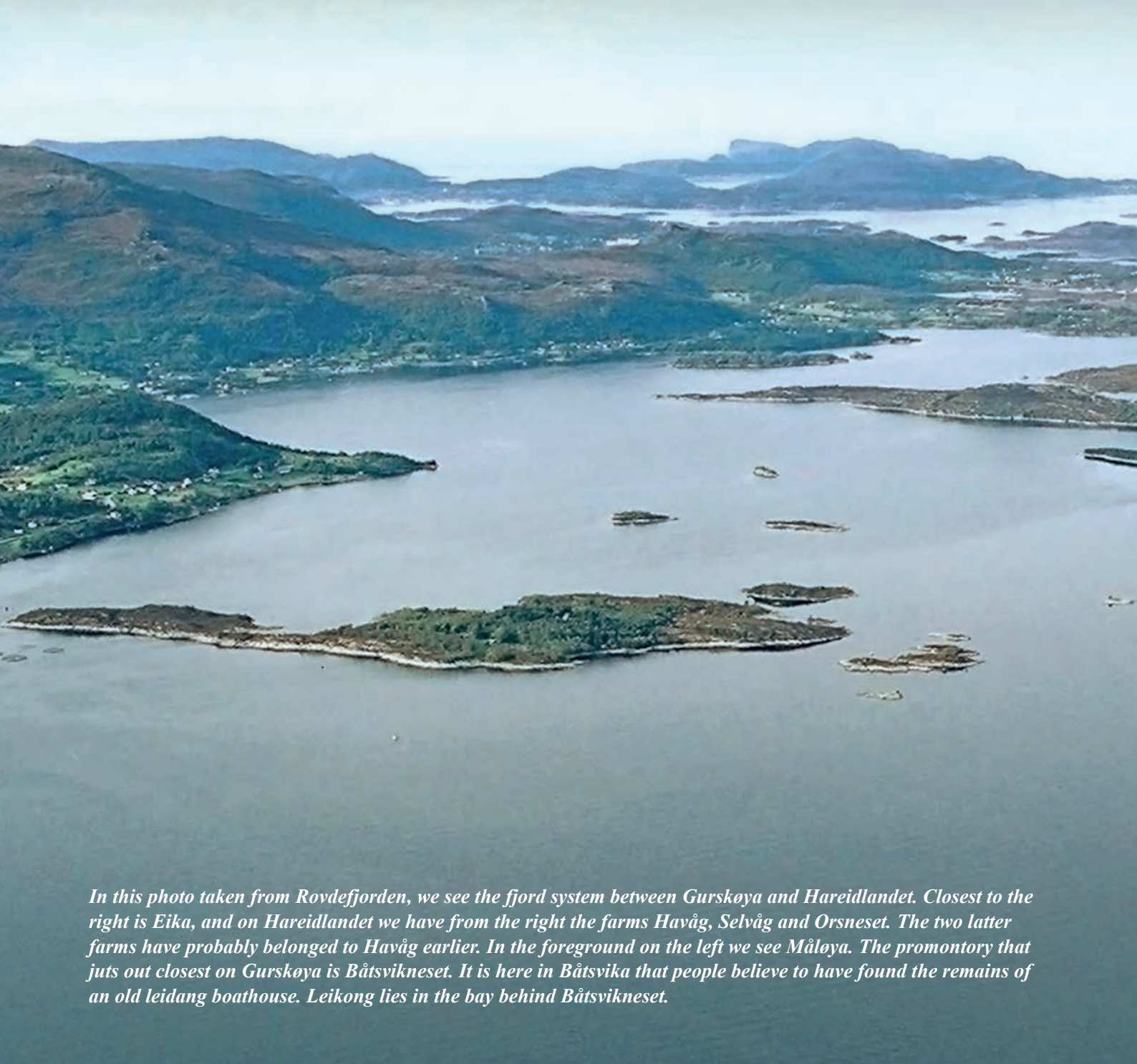












*In this photo taken from Rovdefjorden, we see the fjord system between Gurskøya and Hareidlandet. Closest to the right is Eika, and on Hareidlandet we have from the right the farms Havåg, Selvåg and Orneset. The two latter farms have probably belonged to Havåg earlier. In the foreground on the left we see Måløya. The promontory that juts out closest on Gurskøya is Båtsvikneset. It is here in Båtsvika that people believe to have found the remains of an old leidang boathouse. Leikong lies in the bay behind Båtsvikneset.*

Hareidlandet and Eika. The second farm is named after the oak tree, and the farm name is identical to the name of the island. At the north side of **Langevågen (13)** the headland it is called Meisterneset. An islet further out is called **Meisterholmen (14)**. Here we also find Meistervågane. The first element *meister* is said to refer to *meister* in the meaning executioner.

The border between Ulstein and Herøy municipalities is now in **Nøre Måløystraumen (15)**. The seaway past Gulskeret and north along Eika is marked with poles and is called **Gulskjerleia (16)**. Near the shore at Havågane we find **Breiholmane (17)**, **Langholmen (18)** and **Havågsholmen (19)**. By **Selvågane (20)** lies **Selvågsholmen (21)**. The deep-sea area outside **Selvågsholmen** is called **Selvågdjupet (22)**. The strait

between Kleppane and Måløya is called **Måløystraumen (23)**. Near Måløya, see separate article, lie **Hamnholmen (24)**, **Bjørnholmen (25)**, **Fureholmane (26)** and **Klubbholmen (27)**.

Kleppeholmane is a common name for the islets that belong to the farm Kleppe. Separately they are called **Kleppeholmen (28)** and **Stegleholmen (29)**. Nearby lies **Tjuvholmen (30)**. See separate article. In **Båtsvika (31)**, remains of a large old boathouse have been found. See separate article.

Theories have been put forward that the farm name **Orneset/Aurneset (32)** in Ulstein can be connected with the earlier name of the island Høð, such as the names Havåg, Haddal, Hasund and Hareid. In a discussion with Ole Barman about the Jómsviking





battle in Sunnmørsposten in 1967, Bjarte Alme considered whether “the unexplained name Aursneset (pronounced Orsneset or Hørsneset) on the southern tip of the island, may be a derivation of Hod. This is nevertheless quite uncertain, – mostly because of the s (aur-).”

In my opinion, Alme's rejection is completely correct. The cadastral name is now Aursnes. Here we find four islets: **Langholmen (33)** and **Indre Orsnesholmane (34)**, which is a common name for three islets. The first element, hå-, in the farm name **Håheim (35)** means high. By the farm we find **Håheimsvågen (36)**. In the middle of the vågr here, on a shallow, lie **Skarveskjeret (37)** and **Kobbeskjeret**. The cove on the east side of the headland where the farm is located

is called **Nøre Håheimsvågen (38)**. By Håheim lie the islets **Olaholmen (39)**, **Toholmen (40)**, **Rundeholmen (41)**, and **Furøya (42)**. The deep-sea area outside the Haddal farms is called **Haddalvika (43)**. **Haddalholmane (44)** also lie here. **Gardneset (45)** got its name because the promontary is like a fence, a stone wall, and is an obstacle in the seaway. **Dragsundet (46)**, earlier people had to drag the boats past here. See the separate article.

By the shore towards Leikong lie the islets **Hestholmen (47)**, **Rundeholmen (48)**, **Bakarholmen (49)**, **Kiholmen (50)** and **Nykreimsholmen (51)**. On **Leikongvika (52)**, which lies outside **Leikong (53)**, there are few shallows. **Kjellsund (54)** is an old trading place. Today it is usually written Kjeldsund.

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## Måløya – a central meeting place

Near Måløya in inner Herøy, Vartdalsfjorden, Ørsta-fjorden, Voldsfjorden and Rovdefjorden meet. Måløya is along the route for those travelling through Dragsundet on their way between outer and inner southern Sunnmøre. This seaway is also called Fjordemannsleia.

But can today's name of this central meeting point tell us more about the history of this island?

Arnfred Slyngstad writes in *Skjergardsnamn frå Sunnmøre* that Måløya, based on the pronunciation, cannot have its name from *mol* in the meaning stony beach. He therefore says that it is natural to consider what Gustav Indrebø has written about Måløya in Nordfjord. The name of today's town – Måløy – was originally used of an island in the strait between Vågsøya and the mainland. Around 1921, the name of the small island was “moved over” to the new town which developed on Vågsøya. Today, the old buildings on the island have been removed. As the first element *mål* can have several meanings, Indrebø first discusses whether the first element in the Nordfjord name could be Norse *mál*, which we have today in a meal. Måløya could thus be a decent place along the seaway where you stopped and ate.

But Indrebø mostly leans towards the name being composed of *mál*, as in *málstofa*, *málstefna*. In that case Måløya means council island, convention island or thing island. The name will thus be a reminder that the island has been a court place in the past. In Icelandic, *málstefna* and *málstofa* are still in use. They

use *efri málstofa* and *neðri málstofa* of upper house and lower house in a parliament. The first element *mál* can also be found in other European languages. Rob Rentenaar points out that Dingstat and Malstat, Middle Dutch Dingstede and Maelstede, are names for places where public gatherings were held, especially court sessions.

In an article about Måløy in Nordfjord, Reidar Djupedal has gone against Indrebø's interpretation. Djupedal believes that things, assemblies, cannot have been performed on the island. In his opinion, the harbour conditions are not particularly good either. He suggests that the name should preferably be spelled Moløy and should then mean “the stony island or the island with the stony beach.” Still others will object to Djupedal that one does not find heaps of small stones on Måløya in Nordfjord – as with Måløya in Herøy.

“The Sunnmøre island name Måløy has been exposed to wild distortions throughout the ages by Danish-born and Danish-infected writers – and similar misunderstandings from name scholars.

In the period 1603–1723, Måløy was thus called *Molde*, *Mallern*, *Moelløear*, *Mållar*, *Moløen* – to mention the most obvious distortions. The new land registry has settled down with *Måløen* – which, in the circumstances, must be considered somewhat satisfactory,” says Knut Kopperstad.

In *Norske Gaardnavne*, the name is interpreted as coming from *møl*, which means a bank of small stones



*Måløya in Herøy with Eika in the background*



on the beach. Kopperstad objects to this and says that the first element Norse *mál*, has many different meanings. Kopperstad says in his article that the first element means: “goal, marking point or border, where something reaches.” He says that “like Måløya in Vågsøy municipality, Måløya in Herøy municipality was a temporary end of a long journey. The seaway from Bergen reached Måløya in Nordfjord. It reached Måløya in Sunnmøre by the roaring Voldsfjord; outside beckons the rather the calm Leikongbukta, and passing this the sailor continues out into calm waters between Hod and the inner Herøyane.”

Based on what Slynstad wrote in *Skjergardsnamn frå Sunnmøre*, it seems that Kopperstad later changed his mind and supports Indrebø's interpretation that Måløya must have meant convention island, thing island. Måløya in Nordfjord can also be seen as a central gathering point. It lies at the southern end of Ulvesundet, which is the name of the sound between the mainland and Vågsøya. And the island is always in the seaway, whether you come from the north or the south. Not far from here, the Nordfjord also opens up.

We know from *Heimskringla* that Magnus inn góði, in connection with his being made king, had promised more than he seemed to fulfil. When people began to murmur, Sigvatr skáld was given the task of telling

the king about the discontent which was spreading. In *Bersøglisvísur*, the scald says to Magnus:

*“The people, if what they say is true,  
now get worse laws  
and others than the ones you once  
promised in Ulvesundet.”*

And a very suitable meeting place in Ulvesundet is precisely Måløya. Here, is a good view to all sides, so that you can prepare yourself against unexpected attacks. And the island is so small that no army can hide there either.

The same arguments can also be used about Måløya in Sunnmøre. Another point which strengthens a theory that Måløya has been an old court place is the nearby Stegleholmen. Execution by beheading was a “public amusement” and was carried out at places where people gathered. But sometimes being beheaded was not a severe enough punishment. After the execution, the body could be broken on a wheel. Maybe body parts were crushed. The word *radbrekken*, which comes from the German *radebrechen* (*rad* = wheel), originates from this further mistreatment. Later, body parts, especially the head of the executed person, were placed on a stake, for fear and warning.

Another element that can strengthen a theory of Måløya as a meeting place is the remnants of a boathouse that has been found in Båtsvika close by. Per Fett believes that the boathouse which stood there, measuring 24 metres long and 7 metres wide, was a *leidang* boathouse.

The *leidang* system and the division of the coast into *shipeide* is said to have been introduced by Hákon inn góði. It was thus in operation when the *Jómsviking* battle was fought.

According to *Jómsvíkinga saga*, Jarl Hákon's men were supposed to assemble in a *vágr* under the island of Høð. The most natural in such a context was to assemble where you used to meet. Thus, the area near Måløya is the most reasonable meeting place, in my opinion.



*Måløya in Nordfjord lies in the sound Ulvesundet between Vågsøya and the mainland. This name has been connected with an old courtplace, a gathering place in the past. Later here was a post office and a stop for The Coastal Steamer. In this photo from 1952, a breakwater has recently been built to connect Måløya and Vågsøya. Today, the name Måløy has been transferred to the town which we see in the background on Vågsøya.*

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# Tjuv- and Stegleholmar



*In the waters between Gurskøya and Hareidlandet, we find several place names which reflect earlier punishment methods. An executioner who lived on Eika gave names to Meisterneset, Meistervågane and Meisterholmen. Stegleholmen (1) lies left of Kleppholmen (2). Behind them we see Måløya (3) which could have been the court place where criminal cases were recorded. Tjuvholmen (4) is a little further in the direction of Leikong.*

Gustav Indrebø has in an article considered the name Tjuvholmen, which we find at many places along the coast. What mainly characterizes these islets is that they are close to old traffic routes. They are usually small.

They are somewhat secluded, and are often easily visible from a nearby church. His conclusion is that islets called Tjuvholmen have not been suitable as hiding places for thieves. On the other hand, they have suited well for executions. Punishment should act as a deterrent. By hanging thieves in gallows in highly visible places, it would help to maintain respect for other people's property. This is the reason why we most often find Tjuvholm near seaways and meeting places, says Indrebø.

The question is whether executions have been carried out on all islets which are called Tjuvholmen. It is also conceivable that certain islets, which have not been used as a judiciary place, have received their

name from a resemblance to an islet where the executioner performed his duties. Indrebø points out that the use of thief (tjuv) in the name of a location can tell that a pack of thieves once only stayed there without the need to link the name to punishment.

Names with the element thief can also tell us that ownership of the area has been disputed. In that case, it is preferably the losing party which has subsequently given the place a distinctive name.

Another islet's name which indicates a place of court is Stegleholmen. Stegleholmen near the old church site at Herøy absolutely satisfies the criteria for being that kind of location. This lies close to, and is easily visible from, the church which stood there earlier. It is also in the centre of view for those who pass in the outer seaway.

In inner Herøy we find Stegleholmen and Tjuvholmen side by side. They lie near Måløya and Kleppane on Gurskøya. Tjuvholmen here is flat in shape and





*Not far from the church at Herøy, lies Stegleholmen. Here we see the islet behind the yacht Anna Olava.*

looks completely different from the hemispherical islet with the same name in Ulstein.

From *Herøyboka* we know that there lived an executioner, a master, at Eika in the 17th century. The names Meisterholmen, Meistervågane and Meisterneset on the side of Eika facing Stegleholmen and Tjuvholmen are said to refer to the executioner.

We also know that the executioner around 1650 was called Jørgen. From other places in the country, we

have traditions and writings describing criminals who were tied to bars and wheels. We do not have such old detailed information about the executions carried out in Herøy.

Thieves were hanged on gallows. On old Dutch maps, gallows are drawn on several thieves' islets along the Norwegian coast. The gallows were simply useful sailing marks for the coastal voyagers since they were placed centrally in the seaway.

## Leidang boathouse in Båtsvika?



*The four sticks show the corners of the 24-metre-long boathouse which stood here before. We can mention that the boathouse in the background is 12.4 metres. A leidang boathouse here in Båtsvika will be centrally located in relation to a court place on Måløya, which we see here closest to the sea. The boathouse, which was excavated in the 1930s, is not the only ancient monument in Båtsvika. In addition, B.B. Bendixen in *Iagttagelser paa en Stipendiereise i Søndmøre 1880* mentions that there was probably a burial mound with a cross measurement of 9.5 metres at the far end of Båtsvikneset.*

It is a traditional view that the leidang, the defence system introduced by Hákon inn góði, has its roots in western Norway. But Geir Atle Ersland finds it difficult to ignore the hypothesis that the Norwegian leidang system has an Anglo-Saxon model. In this context, he points out that regions in Europe which were plagued by the Vikings' ravages, developed defence systems. Hákon inn góði, who was brought up in England, could thus have taken these principles home to Norway. Ersland indicates that the unit which was supposed to equip a ship was called a *ship's sockn* (scypsocne) in England. In Norway, the name was skipreide.

The Gulating Law states that the counties should be divided into shipreide. The intention of the skipreide was to build, equip and maintain the leidang ships. It was also part of the duties to maintain a boathouse for the ship, keep watch and send war summons.

Knut Helle says that Gulatinget originally comprised Hordafylket, Sygnafylket and Firdafylket. Later, the judicial district was first extended to the south and then to the north. Sunnmøre, which is most interesting to

us, was perhaps not incorporated until Óláfr Haraldson's reign.

Helle goes on to say that in the early days it was common to equip skips with 20 seats in Gulating law district, but sometimes before 1250 the royal power ordered the equipment of 25 seats in the Gulating district. The oldest preserved law, written down around 1250, says that Sunnmøre was to provide 16 leidang ships each of 25 seats.

Does this mean that all leidang ships were 20 seats, and later the ships were made larger so that all ships had 25 seats? Here, Ersland believes that one must start from the number of seats. Each county could then decide how these should be distributed between the skipreide. Thus, the shipreide becomes a crew unit, and not a ship, which corresponds to 25 seats in most counties.

We know from *Jómsvíkinga saga* that Jarl Hákon's fleet included many different types of ships: snekker, skeider and trading skips. This suggests that, in the early days, commercial vessels of varying sizes also



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were provided. Much indicates that commercial vessels were also part of the *leidang* fleet later on. These ships could be used for other activities when they were not mobilized. But gradually as the king's power increased, it was possible seen as desirable to have a certain coordination of ship types and size. This *leidang* fleet was primarily intended for defense against foreign armies which came to the country. In the *Gulating Law*, we learn about the duties which were attached to the inhabitants of the *shipreide*, both with participation in mobilization and the building and maintenance of ships and boathouses.

Jarle Sulebust believes that the old administrative arrangement was dissolved after the Black Death. The boundaries of the various *shipreide* were probably adjusted in accordance with changes in settlement patterns and population. He says that the boundaries as they appeared in the 16th century have become unclear.

We can add here that at a congress of name scholars in 1976, Per Hovda had a review of *skipreide* boundaries and parish boundaries in Rygja county. He concluded that a *skipreide* is by no means distinctive geographical areas. Districts which one would think should belong together are divided into several *skipreide*. In contrast, the parish boundaries seem to follow more natural geographical divisions.

This could indicate that the parish division was based on a division from pre-Christian times. Hovda further concludes that both parishes and *shipreide* can be subjected to name changes without the boundaries being changed, because places of assembly can be moved and that powerful persons can give certain farms greater glory. In the subsequent debate at the congress, it was also claimed that from the 12th to 13th centuries the in-kind *leidang* went from being a levy to becoming a tax. Thus, the *shipreide* became a tax district.

### ***The boathouse***

In *Maal og Minne*, year 1947, Per Fett has an article which he calls *Eit stadnamn og ei nausttuft*. He here refers to the site of a boathouse which was excavated in Båtsvika in 1935. The boat house which was found here had been 24 metres long and 7 metres wide. The distance to the sea was 16 metres. Fett writes that it is unlikely that the boathouse had been built for a private ship. But “it could fit well for a *leidang* ship; we come up to the size of our ocean-going Viking ships:

the Oseberg-, Gokstad- and Tuneskip at a length of 20–22 m, the Kvalsund ship somewhat smaller. The Oseberg ship of approx. 21.5 m has 15 pairs of oars.”

Fett further points out that Gustav Indrebø has written an article about Måløya in Nordfjord, where “he most rightly claims that the name refers to a place where people held *málstefna*. This interpretation can easily be used about Måløya in Herøy, especially because the *Leidang* ship boathouse is close by. We are here in an area which, in Hans Strøm's time (1760s), belonged to Rovde *skipreide*, which according to the same source had the courthouse at Eiksund a little further in the fjord, but this does not need to change our opinion about the boathouse.”

It was while breaking land in 1935 that Paul Båtsvik discovered two rows of poles near the beach. All the poles were covered with earth. There had previously been a hayfield, but no one knew about a boathouse. Båtsvik found 24 ends of poles lined up in a row. 7 metres away were 10 poles in another row. Then he stopped the excavation. Bergen's museum was contacted. Eva Nissen Meyer (later married Fett) came to the site in July 1935 and was responsible for the further excavation. The best-preserved poles were around 50 cm in diameter. The other poles were of varying thickness depending on how far deterioration process had come. The best parts of the trunks were in the wettest places, and all had their rotten part closest to the surface. The distance between each pole was 50 to 70 cm.

Based on what was found in the ground, Eva Nissen Meyer concluded that the standing poles were from the walls of the boathouse, which had probably been without boarding. The pieces of wood which she found in the soil could have come from the roof, which she thought had been covered with shingles.

Perry Rolfsen, who has examined boathouses on the coast of Jæren has calculated, based on the distance between the oar holes on other ships, the minimum length of a 20-seat to 23.6 metres and a 25-seat to 27.5 metres. He further says that the width of these boats would be around 4 metres.

We can only add here that Rolfsen, in his examination of boathouses in Rogaland, did not find any boathouses which were long and wide enough for *leidang* ships. But based on Rolfsen's measurements, we can determine that the boathouse in Båtsvika is large enough for a 20 seats *leidang* ship.



Overview photo with Leikong in the foreground down by the sea. Further out lies Måløya and Eika. Behind Eika we see Berkneset with Ørsta fjorden to the left and Voldsfjorden to the right. Rovdeffjorden enters from the right edge of the photo, and Vartdalsfjorden goes to the left between Rjåneset and Hareidlandet. The peaks inward at the left side of Voldsfjorden are Lidaveten, Helgehornet and Rotsethornet. By the sea near Rotsethornet lies Hallkjellsvik, where Jarl Hákon was supposed to lie, according to Snorri.

## Leikong – an old meeting place

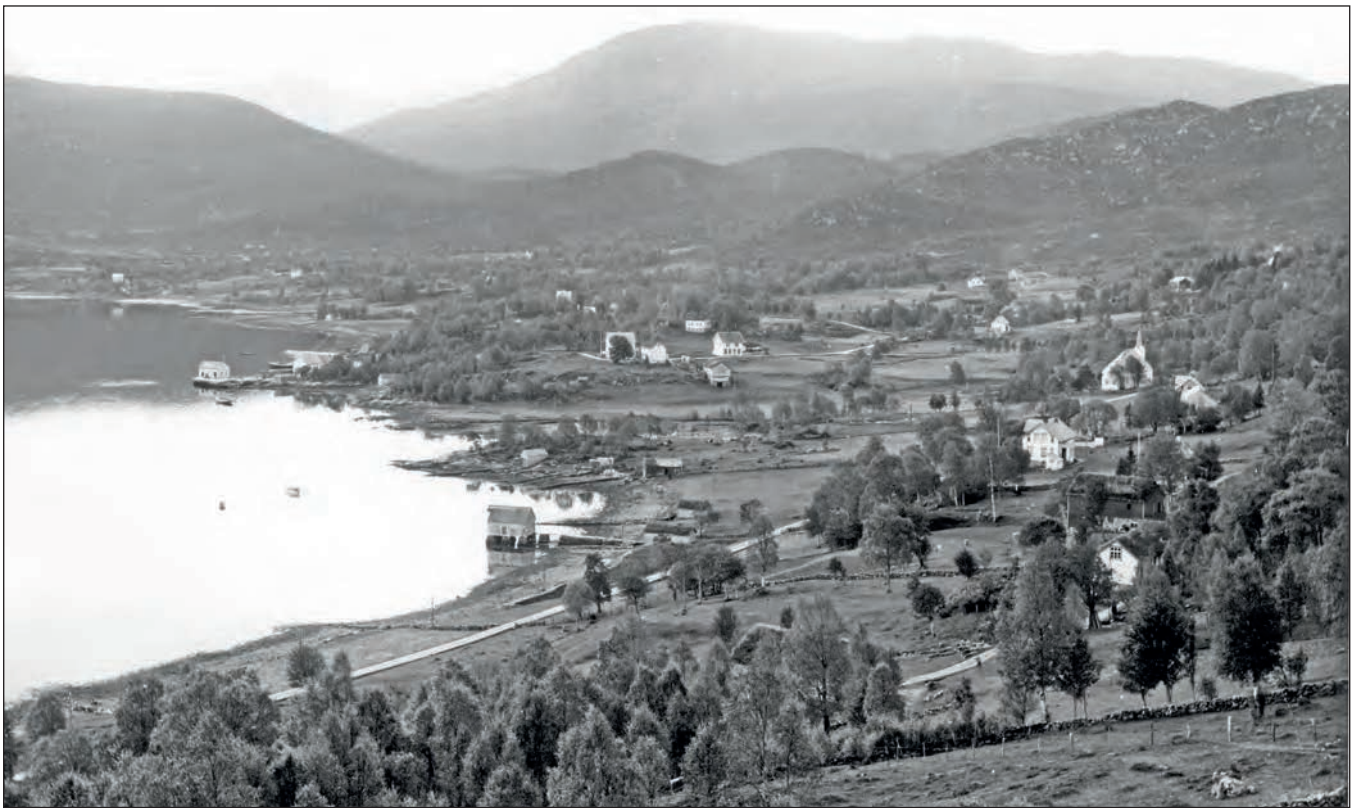
In *Norske Gaardnavne*, one says that the name of the farm Leikanger, which today is pronounced Leikong, must originally have been Leikvangr. It originates from *leik* (play) and *vangr* (grassy plain). “The name describes a place where the people in the district have assembled for various kinds of games. The name is found in several places, partly in something unrecognizable forms (such as Leikvam, Lekvam, Lekum). When the written forms here, and often elsewhere, have *-er* in the end, it must be explained by the fact that after that *v* was dropped in the pronunciation, people have confused the last element with *angr*, which is often used in place names.” According to Gösta Holm, the word *angr* “means narrowing”, specialized to “narrow bay or fjord”, or that it originally had the general meaning “bay, fjord”. We find many *angr* names in Norway. Among the most widely known are Stavanger, Hardanger, Høyanger, Bremanger, Geiranger, Orkanger, Levanger and Varanger.

In the 16th century, Leikanger was written Lekanger and Leganger. These name forms were also used later together with variants such as Leckanger (1606), Lickanger (1617) and Lechanger (1666). Magnus Olsen,

who had great interest in pagan cult memorabilia, has taken a closer look at the word *vang*. He points out that we find the uncomposed name *Vang* central in many of today's church parishes. Olsen here points to names such as Ullensvang and Gudvangen, and he sees these as central to earlier pagan worshipping of the gods. He therefore thinks it reasonable that the name *Vang* can tell us about central gathering places even before Christianity was introduced. Later, the name *vang* is said to have been replaced by *voll* (grass-grown field) as a reference to gathering places.

Ingvard Bjåstad, who wrote *Soga om Hareid og Ulstein*, reports that Ulstein and Hareid lack a centre for community life and local worship in the early Iron Age. But he says that we will find such a centre at Leikong (Leikvangen). Therefore, we have to look at farms in Ulstein such as Eiksund, Haddal, Hasund, Dimnasund, Dimna, Vik and many, many others here in the south as secondary in relation to this ancient community centre Leikong. Together with many other old farms in the southern district, they form a very early legal-religious society, the contours of which we can only trace through the oldest place names (farm





*The farm, which in the land register has been written Leikanger, formerly also covered the land between the farm Nykreim, where the telegraph station stood, and the farm Kleppe. The land register tells us that the farms Leikangerøy, Leikangerstrand and Raudvik are separated from Leikanger. In the first part of the 20th century, the telegraph station here was the main station for the telephone stations in the municipalities of Herøy, Hareid, Ulstein, Vanylven, Syvde, Sande, Rovde and Dalsfjord. Photo ca. 1925.*

names). The centre of this ancient social order here in the south, Leikong, lay outside the boundaries of the present Ulstein and Hareid municipalities.

In 1931 and 1932, there was an extensive discussion in *Sunnmørsposten* about the preferred spelling of the name: Leikong or Leikanger. Knut Kopperstad asserts that the last element was vang, and this was because Leikong was a suitable meeting place for plays.

Here, Kopperstad also received strong support from Wilhelm Kvalheim, who wrote: “We must remember that in former times it was the sea that bound the villages together.

The expression ‘There is a fjord between friends’ originally meant that friends could be found. And if you look at the map, you will find that Leikong is the meeting point for Søre Sunnmøre. People could come south of Vartdalsfjorden, out of Ørsta-, Volds- and Dalsfjorden, north of Rovdefjorden, into Kjelsundet, across the pass from Gursken, etc. There is no place in Søre Sunnmøre which was so centrally located in the days of rowing and sailing boats.

If the name comes from Leikvangr, as many knowledgeable men think, then it can be mentioned that the name Vangr often testifies a meeting place in ancient

times, with a pagan sanctuary. A church was then built in such places, and the whole parish was named after this Vangr. It is therefore not the least bit strange that there could be sports events at Leikong in connection with things related to an ancient shrine.

Close to Leikong lies Måløya. The name can mean ‘convention island’. I am therefore absolutely sure, Måløya, the islet in the middle of the strait, in Ulvesundet south of Stad, was used as a thingstead, and that it was here the thing in Ulvesundet was held, as Sigvatr skáld mentions in *Bersøglisvísur*.

When they all came to the thing, the assembly, by boats, it was natural that they met on an island. Just like on Nerøya in Herøy. Yes, Herøya itself is also an old meeting place, mainly because it is a small island by the main sea route, easy to get to from all sides.

Meisterholmen and Stegleholmen near Leikong also have names associated with things, court, and executions, probably in the Danish era. But ‘steglet’, where executed criminals were exhibited to ‘horror and warning’, was always erected near the main road.

Kjelsundet, Dragsundet and Vartdals- and Rovdefjorden were the highway. But in the crossroads, we find Leikong as an especially central place.”

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## Dragsundet – a hindrance



When one passes Dragsundet today, it is hard to imagine that it used to be problematic to get through here by boat. But the name tells us that before the first deepening a hundred and fifty years ago, boats had to be pulled over because the sound was too shallow.

The shortest sea route, Fjordemannsleia, between the inland villages of southern Sunnmøre and Ulstein/Herøy went through Dragsundet. By this central seaway between Hareidlandet and Gurskøya, we find earlier important meeting places: Herøy at the outer part and Måløya at the inner part.

Sagas tell us that the Jómsvikings came to Hereyjar, today Herøy. The oldest form of the name is plural and presumably refers to the island with the old church site and the surrounding islands. In Nordland, too, we find the name in plural form. Otherwise, we find the name

used in the singular form in several places in Norway.

For these names, it has been assumed that the first element is *herr (m)* in the meaning skipaherr, a fleet of warships. The name may thus indicate that Norwegians also used to gather fleets here before the Jómsvikings stopped. We can also notice that Arngrímur Jónsson in his Latin translation uses “insulas Militares” of the place where the Jómsvikings came after passing Stad. The location of this gathering place is at the exit of the strait between Hareidlandet and Gurskøya and probably tells us how important this connection was in a time when it was far more natural to draw boats across land if that was most convenient. Compare the name Drageidet on Stadlandet.

Why didn't the Jómsvikings take the course through Dragsundet if they knew that the Norwegians were in





*Dragsundet has been deepened in several stages. This photo shows deepening and bridge work in the sound just before the First World War.*

the Eiksund area? The name Dragsundet tells us that it was not easy to pass, and the bigger the ship was, the more difficult it was to pass. Firstly, the enemy forces, who had little local knowledge, had to enter narrow and unpredictable waters. Large ships had to be towed one by one past the narrow passage between Gardneset and Gurskøya – if one could do this undisturbed. At low tide it was perhaps almost impossible to get a ship through, even if the strait was a little deeper 1000 years ago due to later land elevation. Thus, the Jómsvikings could risk that if they came into battle, they only had at their disposal the part of the fleet that had been dragged through the strait. Therefore, the solution was to go with the total fleet north and afterwards inside Hareidlandet. We get an insight into the situation before the deepening through a story told by Ole O. Re-

ite. In 1919 he wrote about a trip he had to Fosnavåg in 1860. On the return trip “we came to Dragsundstraumen. Here 7–8 boats of various kinds were waiting. These were loaded with herring and other types of fish. But they did not get through the current until the sea was at least at mid high tide. Now here was completely dry. For our part, we could go fast with the rowboat, because we emptied the boat and pulled him over the dry land. But the others had to wait. Later, travelling through here, I was many a time tied up for several hours and suffered. Everyone complained and felt bad about the obstacle.”

Because of the frequent interaction between the fjords and the islands, it was people from Volda who worked most diligently to deepen the strait. Dragsundet was first deepened in the 1870s. This was seen as insufficient, and it was not long before the desire for further deepening came. A new deepening was started in 1910 and finished in 1914. It can be added that the channel was also widened in 1945.

As an apropos to the assessment of why the Jómsvikings did not take the way through Dragsundet, we can mention that during the last world war the Germans realized how important it was to have control of this strait, which was then considerably deepened. In March 1942, a German guard force was quartered in the bridge guard's residence in Dragsundet. It was supposed to control traffic both on land and at sea.

German merchant ships used to lie in Syvdsfjorden and then hurry around Stad in the dark. In Syvdsfjorden, the ships were well protected by the fortifications at Åram and it was not possible for allied ships to enter Breisundet because of the fortress at Kvitneset.

“British intelligence reports said that there were no guards in Dragsundet. Thus, two motor torpedo boats, MTB-618 and MTB-627, were sent out to torpedo a German convoy lying in the Syvdsfjorden”, said Harald Notanes, who was the local pilot at this mission on the night of 23 March 1943. The plan was to land commandos in Dragsundet. They should secure the retreat, while the boats set course on to Syvdsfjorden.

From the quay at Gardneset, soldiers should go to the sliding bridge, open it, and keep watch. But the Germans discovered that unauthorized persons made their way to the engine house of the bridge.

There was an exchange of fire, and a German soldier was killed. The allied soldiers then returned to the boats, which immediately left. And after the raid, the German guard force was tripled.

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# Eik og Eika

Oak was a sacred tree which old Germans worshipped, whether the tree stood alone or formed a grove, forest. Especially in the worshipping of the god Þorr, the oak was central. Perhaps the most famous oak tree in this cult was Þorr's oak in Hesse, Germany. This tree stood near the village of Geismar and was a meeting point for those who worshipped this god. In the year 723, the Anglo-Saxon monk Winfrid, later called St. Bonifacius, came to the oak and cut it down.

The oak was felled without Þorr sending his deadly lightning bolts at the perpetrator, and the Germans who were present thus lost their trust in Þorr, and consequently allowed themselves to become Christians. This oak felling is therefore seen as the first Christianization, the first dedication, of the tribes which lived in Northern Germany, according to Christian tradition.

The name Eika, pronounced Eikå, is today both used as a name of a farm and of an island. The family name is usually written Eiken, while in older documents, like other old island names in Sunnmøre, such as Skorpa, Runde, Dimna, Sula and others, has sometimes been erroneously given the endings ø(e) and øy.

Knut Kopperstad writes in *Maal og Minne* that in *Norske Gaardnavne* the name Eika has been given a monosyllabic tone and a completely misleading explanation. There it is said that the name of the island, as well as the name of the farm, is the definite form of the tree species oak. But then the pronunciation should have been eikja and not eikå. The name Eika is a derivation, a weak female word, from the strong female word eik. In the same way that Aspa in Ålesund comes from aspen. Eika thus means the “oak-filled (island)”, says Kopperstad.

Eika and Eiksund are names which we do not find in the sagas about the Jómsvikings. From *Jómsvíkinga*

*saga* we can conclude that oak grew near the battleground. *Jómsvíkingadrápa* also tells that there are torrential sounds. It fits to the area by Eiksund, where one of the two farms on Eika is called Sundet (The Sound).

In Sunnmøre we find some farm names which have been linked to the oak tree. In addition to Eika and Eiksund, we have Eikrem (both in Syvde, Volda and Sula), Eikrol (in Skodje) and Ekset (in Volda). Eikenosa (near Flisvågen) has also been interpreted to come from oak.

The basis for these names is that this kind of tree, oak, was rather rare in Sunnmøre. We are at the borderland for expansion. In this way, we can localize oak to warm growth sites.

Just before the battle started, the Icelandic scald Þorleifr skúma made a club from an oak root he found in the forest, according to various versions of *Jómsvíkinga saga*. In Fagrskinna it is Vigfúss Vigaglúmsón who swings an oak club.

When asked by Jarl Eiríkr what he wanted to do with this club, Þorleifr said, among other things: *For the Danes, the oak club will be extremely dangerous, if I live*. Based on this information about the type of wood, it would therefore be more natural to link the battleground to the Eiksund area rather than Liavågen and Aspevågen.

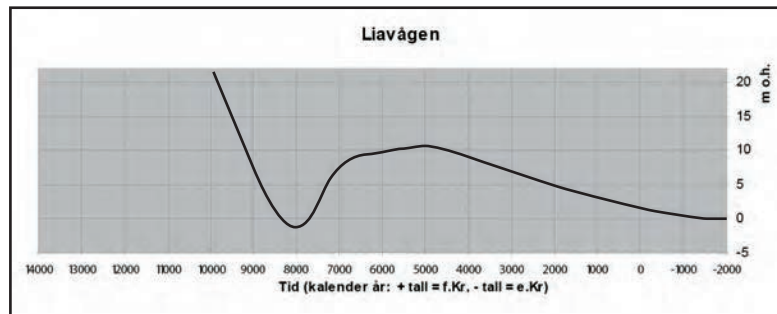
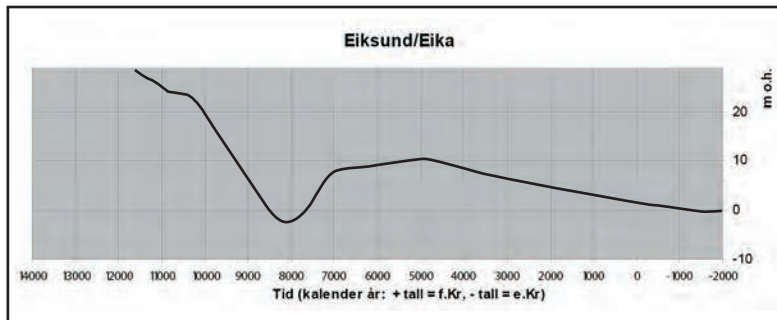
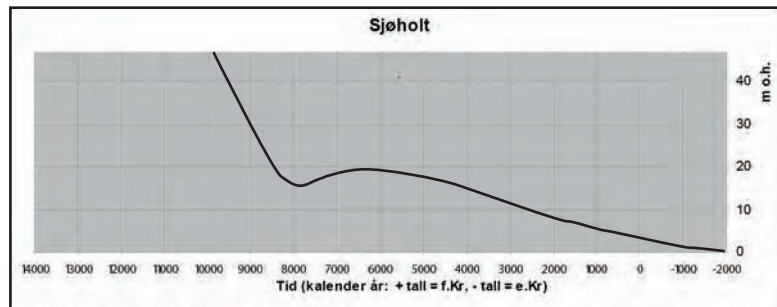
In a post in 1986, I wrote that it was better to look for the gold chests of Búi inn digri, for example, at Eika instead of Hjørundfjorden. The background for this suggestion was the tradition of the great treasure buried on Eika.

Some have said that it would have been pirates who buried the treasure in the forest on Eika. One version says that the treasure can be found under Kistevegen (The chest road).



# Landupheaval and battle theories

John Inge Svendsen and Jan Mangerud have constructed a shoreline diagram for Sunnmøre and Sør-Trøndelag based on historical changes in the sea level in this area. On the basis of these findings, archaeologist David Simpson has created a spreadsheet for calculating shoreline displacement curves. It is this spreadsheet which is used when calculating curves in this article.



*Change in metres between sea and land.*

Period	Liavågen	Eiksund	Sjøholt
From 1260 BC to now	4,1	3,8	6,7
From 60 BC to now	2,1	1,9	3,6
From 980 AD to now	0,8	0,7	1,4

One must also expect a degree of uncertainty due to the fact that we have few data from recent times. But this uncertainty is not great enough to change the general impression. The table also operates with mean high tide. It is about 180 cm above Norwegian Chart Datum (lowest astronomical tide (LAT)). The mean low tide in our district will be about 60 cm above Norwegian Chart Datum.



*Ovrafludene and Ovraneset with a water level of approx. 140 cm above Norwegian sea chart datum. This corresponds to the expected situation at mean low water around 1,000 years ago with a change in sea level of 80 cm. On the outermost rock we only see the cairn, which has been built in recent times. The innermost and largest rock, which lies closer to Ovraneset, is barely at sea level. At mean high water 1,000 years ago, the sea would have stood around 120 cm above the water level at this photo. But still, there are those who believe that these shallows should be the distinction of Hjørungavágr at the time of the Jómsviking battle. At the headland to the left we see the national monument raised to commemorate the battle in Hjørungavágr. It was unveiled by King Olav V on August 14th 1986. The artist Einar Magne Flø designed the monument showing four ships rising against each other.*

People who want to place the Jómsviking battle at Liavågen often talk about the large upheaval of land which has occurred in the area. Sometimes this elevation is also quantified in written posts.

“It is not unreasonable that the land has risen seven or eight metres in 1,000 years. Hjørungavågen would then be at most twice as wide and perhaps twice as large as it is now.” (Submitted in *Sunnmørsposten* 1982-10-15)

Later writers have adjusted the sea level to be “at least 10 metres higher than today's level” around 4,000 years ago. (Submitted in *Sunnmørsposten* 2007-01-30) Why do they prefer to operate with the situation 4,000 years ago when the battle was 1,000 years ago?

With the help of such formidable uplifts, the adherents of the Liavåg theory try to reshape the landscape so much that they can manage to adapt the terrain better to the depiction in the old sagas. But do these local suggestions about land uplift coincide with the results

of the researchers? We know that the land has risen in the recent millennia, but how much?

Let's first take a look at what factors affect the relationship between land and sea. In today's climate debate, it is emphasized that in the future, the sea will rise due to an increase in sea temperature and the melting of glaciers on land. But the scientists can also report about previous periods where the volume of the sea has decreased due to lower temperatures in the sea and increases of ice masses on land.

In Scandinavia today we also have another ongoing factor. The thick ice which previously lay over the area pressed down the land. When the weight of the ice disappeared, the land began to rise again. The rise was greatest in the first period. Later it has subsided, but the earth's crust is still adjusting itself back to “normal level”.

Where the ice was thickest and disappeared last, the uplift is now greatest. Therefore, today there is a big



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difference in land elevation at, for example, the coast of Sunnmøre compared to the corresponding latitude by the Baltic Sea. How can we find out how much the landscape in the coastal area of southern Sunnmøre has changed in the last millenniums? In this context, it is interesting for us to see how the relative relationship between land and sea has changed. The researchers have examined this by analysing samples from lake basins which today lie on land, but which formerly had been lying under the sea level. By drilling in freshwater basins which lie at different heights above sea level, you get sediments which tell us about the transitions between seawater, brackish water and fresh water. With the help of C-14 dating of the times of these shifts, it is possible to find out when the individual basins were cut off from the sea.

By compiling many data from different areas, one can reconstruct the height of the shorelines from the coast into the fjords and see how these levels have changed over time. One must probably expect some margin of error, but archaeological excavations seem to confirm that the reconstructed shorelines are, broadly speaking, drawn correctly. In any case, we can conclude that if the uplift theories of some debaters were correct, then underwater farming would probably have been carried out here in the past, and the boathouses were preferably for submarines!

The reconstructed shorelines in Sunnmøre show that the sea level in Liavågen was around 0.8 metre higher 1,000 years ago than today.

The change in Eiksund is slightly smaller. Further into the fjords, for example at Stranda, where the land uplift has been somewhat larger, the shoreline at that time was around 2 metres higher.

On the basis of these figures, it makes little sense, in my view, to start from formations which could have been when the sea level was at least 10 metres higher than today, when arguing for the localization of the Jómsviking battle.

The writings which depict the characteristic marks of the vágr where the battle took place, point, among other things, to three stones, the Hjørungar, which stood there around a thousand years ago, and not 4,000 years ago. In Laurents Hanssøn's translation into Danish, it also says that the vágr has been named after three rocks which lie by the mouth of the vágr, and that ships can sail between each rock.

In the attempt to find formations in the Liavåg area that could be the mentioned Hjørungar, some supporters of the Liavåg theory have previously focused on the low rocks, Ovrafludene. Compare here *Norrøn ordbok*, which until recently directly "states" that the Hjørungar are Ovrafludene.

If the changes in the shoreline have been as formidable as some local writers say, these low rocks must have been far below sea level when the Jómsvikings came sailing. A thousand years ago, these shallows would hardly have been presented by Icelanders as distinctive of the vágr. If we also ignore the fact that they are at a far distance from the vágr, these shallows would have been even less visible a thousand years ago than they are today, if we consider the real change, and not fantasy, as the basis.

In short, the change in the shoreline over the last millennium is so small that this undermines the local ideas of major changes in the landscape. But at the same time, the changes are big enough to weaken the position of the two Ovrafludene as the three Hjørungar.

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## Was the battle in the vágr at Høð?

In our review of the various localization theories, we see that people attach importance to different information. Since the old sources do not correspond entirely, this also opens up for very varied interpretations. In addition, some of the place names which the sagas use as names for localities do not exist today. And if you are to take literally everything that is written in the sagas, it can be difficult to find a vágr in Sunnmøre where everything fits in. You therefore have to make a choice based on what you think is most reliable in the various presentations.

In most cases, it will be most reasonable to place the greatest emphasis on the oldest texts, which were written closest in time to the battle. But in our case, the oldest versions which have been preserved were writ-

ten down around two hundred years after the battle. At the same time, we do not have an overview of which sources have been lost, and which may have affected other later versions.

A study of the various versions gives us bits of conflicting information. We see, for example, that the number of Norwegian ships varies from 180 to 360. Whether one of these numbers is more correct than the other is difficult to decide. Maybe they just say that there were many ships. The sagas are also very vivid and detailed in the presentation of the battle. Many have asserted that very much is pure poetry. So, the question is whether the details regarding the location and characteristics of the battleground are reliable, or can also there be elements which are fabricated?

*Here from Lidaveten you have a good overview of the land both southwards Rovdefjorden, northwards Vartdalsfjorden and all the way out to the sea between Hareidlandet and Gurskøya. Closest to the left edge of the photo, Voldsfjorden opens up. Just off the shore at Berkneset is Vindfarholmen. Further to the right, parts of Raudøya stick out. Ørstaffjorden opens between Raudøya and Rjåneset. Further northwards Vartdalsfjorden, we can see as far as Alme at Hareidlandet on the left side. The steepest mountains on the shore between Alme and Eiksund can be found at Laupsfloget. The long narrow island that forms an angle towards Hareidlandet is Eika. On the nearest side of Eika lies Yksnøya, and between Eika and Gurskøya lies Måløya. To the south along the Rovdefjord, we have a clear view all the way to Sør-Brandal.*





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### *Those who were tricked by the farmer at Høð*

Most theories accept that the Jómsvikings sailed past Ulstein, north of the island of Høð (today Hareidlandet) and further inside the island. But where is inside? Now the disagreement starts. Some interpret inside as eastward/northward. They therefore place the battle in Aspevågen, Flisvågen, Ørskogvika, Hjørundfjorden and Norangsfjorden.

The main source for those who want to place the Jómsviking battle away from Høð are some lines in one version of *Fagrskinna*.

During the shore raid on Høð, a farmer who the Jómsvikings meet reports, according to *Fagrskinna*, that Jarl Hákon is lying at Eltrane with at most three ships and that his army is further north. But the farmer only presents lies. The gullible Danes, the Jómsvikings, bite on. They rush off, even though Sigvaldi has a suspicion that they have been fooled. The farmer happily gets back his animals which the Jómsvikings wanted to rob. And instead of meeting a maximum of three ships that were supposed to be unaware of the invasion army, as the farmer says, the Jómsvikings met at least one and a half hundred ships which were prepared for battle.

Unfortunately, it is not only the Jómsvikings who have bitten on the misleading information that the farmer serves in *Fagrskinna*. In my opinion, those who want to place the battle north of Eltrane have also swallowed the same bait.

### *The vágr at Høð, Havåg*

So far, Liavågen on Hareidlandet has got the widest acceptance as a battleground. But many have problems accepting this based on the descriptions in the old sources. Some have claimed that placing the battle here borders to falsification of history. The reasons for accepting Liavågen can vary. Some believe that there is evidence in the place names, which today are written Hjørungneset and Hjørungdalen. It is claimed that these names must have come from the fact that Liavågen was formerly called Hjørungavágr. Still others have not found alternative battle sites which stand out. In any case, the battle took place somewhere near the island of Høð, and then one might as well unite around Liavågen for want of good alternatives.

Most versions of *Jómsvikinga saga* say that Hjørungavágr is close to the island of Høð. Hjørungavágr is a rallying point before the battle, and it is here the armies met. Snorri also locates the battle in the vicinity of this island. *Heimskringla* reports that the jarls Hákon and Eiríkr were in Hallkjellsvik before the battle, and that the Norwegians rowed from the south in search of the enemy after receiving a message that the Jómsvikings had docked on the outside of Høð. So, the question is how far the Jómsvikings could have advanced along the island during the time the messenger would have needed to Volda and what time Jarl Hákon needed to prepare for breaking up and rowing out the fjord?



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A natural meeting place could thus be the Eiksund/Leikong area, which is right at the mouth of Voldsfjorden. And having come outside Voldsfjorden, would Hákon prefer to meet the Jómsvikings on the open sea, at the wide Hjørungavágr as *Jómsvíkingadrápa* formulates it, or would he lay his army at a place where he could benefit from local knowledge? We have several vágr along Hqð. Is it a coincidence that one of them, Havåg, had the name of the island of Hqð attached to it? Could this connection indicate that Havåg (Hareidlandsvågen) was previously seen as the most central vágr at Hareidlandet?

When reports of the Jómsvikings' ravages further south along the coast reached Jarl Hákon, he asked both friends and enemies to join forces to fight the invaders. It was agreed that the Norwegians should meet under the island of Hqð. Here they laid the ships into a vágr, which was called Hjørungavágr, and counselled, says *Jómsvíkinga saga*. In Hanssøn's version, it is said that the jarls left Skuggen after agreeing to meet by the island of Hawud (Hqð), where they held meetings and prepared for the battle.

In my opinion, it is reasonable to assume that this meeting place would be a place where people used to assemble on other occasions. Most likely the meeting place was not at random, but rather a place where people used to meet. Names that tell us about such gathering places are Måløya and Leikong.

### **North and inside**

By way of introduction, it must be mentioned that geographical directions according to the compass do not always correspond completely to the directions as they are usually used by people. Along the coast, one will most often use north – south, although the direction along parts of the coast of Sunnmøre can be close to east – west. A person from Ulstein will say north to Hareid, even if the compass preferably points east. North of the island will not be off Flø, but rather the island side from Kvitneset to Liavågen. If you come from the south, turn to starboard and choose the inner seaway into the fjord at Åram, you will say that this ship is heading north, even if the compass direction inside Gurskøya is nearly east. If the ship continues through Vartdalsfjorden, the compass direction turns to the north-east. But here, too, one would say that one is sailing towards the north. Due to the fact that north/south is defined according to the course of the fjord and the coast, the current between Eika and Måløya is also called the Nøre Måløystraumen, even though the southernmost part of Eika and this current are quite directly east of Måløya.

So, what do the sources tell us which can make it possible to locate the battle site?

One saga version tells that the Jómsvikings first went north of Hqð and then to the inner side of the island and “to the cove by the north end of the island, where it is called Hjørungavágr.”

To a certain extent, the shape of the island of Hqð can be compared to a head. The top of the head is the outer part of the island. The head narrows towards Eiksund, where the neck is cut and forms the end of the island. The end of the island, on which Hjørungavágr is to be located, then stretches from Orstøneset (at the former ferry site) to Orstøneset, which is the westernmost tip. Hjørungavágr then becomes the vágr between Hareidlandet on one side, Eika/Måløya on the other and Gurskøya on the third.

### **The vágr with stones**

The name which the old sources most often use for the battleground is Hjørungavágr, but also Hiarunda wogh is used. We do not find these names in more recent written sources nor in oral tradition.

Through *Jómsvíkinga saga* we are told that the name Hjørungavágr originates from three stones called Hjørungar. One is said to be larger than the other two. Some versions place the stones out on the vágr, others do not say anything about whether they are out on sea or on land. In his translation, Laurents Hanssøn uses the name Hiarunder for these three formations. He says that they are rocks you can pass between by boat.

Hjørungar, the rocks which would have given the vágr its name, have been linked to Ovrafludene by supporters of the Liavåg theory. But these low rocks are at some distance from Liavågen and not at the vágr as the sagas say. But can there be three stones in another vágr which suit this description? If you came sailing inwards by the south-east side of Hareidlandet and continued through Eiksundet, you will pass several small islets splitting the current in the sound between the farms Sundet (The Sound) on Eika and Eiksund on Hareidlandet. In Hanssøn's account, the farmer also says that there is a sound leading into the vágr. The formations closest to the middle of the sound are Langholmen, Kubbeteholmen and Smeltholmen. Today, the new Eiksund bridge crosses these islets. Although these islets are rather small, and were somewhat smaller 1,000 years ago due to land uplift, it is still more likely that these are the origin to a name of a vágr than the underwater rocks north of Liavågen. Another triangle, if one were to choose a different inlet, is the islets of Stegleholmen, Tjuvholmen and Kleppeholmen.

Þórhallur Vilmundarson reports about the name Hjørungar, which is used for three small rocks on the south side of Breiðafjörður near Bjarnarhöfn in Iceland.



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They lie between several other shallows in an unclean strait. These rock formations, which form a triangle, are identical. The distance between them is around 20 metres, and each has a cross measurement of around 1 metre. At low tide they almost have the height of a person, and at high tide they are submerged.

If those who created *Jómsvíkinga saga* had local knowledge of the battle site in Norway and used the name Hjørungar from a real Icelandic background, the islets and rocks in the foul waters between Eika and Hareidlandet will remind us far more of the conditions surrounding the name Hjørungar in Iceland than Ovrafludene.

In some saga versions, we can also read that in the middle of the vágr there is a rock with an equal distance to land and to the bottom of the vágr. This description assumed that the vágr was fairly round and not elongated. We do not find such a rock in the middle of Liavågen. On the other hand, Håheimsvågen for example, will fit the sources better. Nevertheless, I will not place the battle here.

Otherwise, it must also be possible to question how literally one should take the number 3 concerning how many stones, Hjørungar, one finds on/near the vágr? Since the 3-number rule is a regular feature in *Jómsvíkinga saga*, I think the number 3 is just an epic form for many. The number 3 goes, among other things, in the battle formations. In almost all setups, there are three prominent Norwegians against one chief of the Jómsvíkings. In most formations, the Norwegians have three hundred ships. We can also point out that the farmer Ulfr has 3 cows and 12 goats. In my opinion, one cannot take it quite literally that the distinctive mark on the vágr is a formation of only three stones, but rather assume that the vágr is characterized by stones – rocks and islets – of different sizes. And the most distinctive vágr in this respect can be found here at Havåg.

### ***Bottom towards the east***

The sources further say that the head of Hjørungavágr is in the east end and the outlet to the west. The geographical directions in Liavågen are the opposite, while they fit on the vágr between Hareidlandet and Eika/Måløya. It tapers to the east and widens to the west. We can also mention here that in several versions of *Jómsvíkinga saga* we learn that Hjørungavágr is close to the island (not far from). It is thus not a vágr that breaks into the land (such as the Liavågen), but can instead be a vágr which lies on the side of the island and which is created by neighbouring islands, islets and rocks creating an enclosed area of sea, as here at Havåg. The vágr is then formed in the same

way as Aspevågen by the islands of Heissa, Aspøya and Nørvøya. Flisvågen is also created by the surrounding islands.

### ***Primsignd/Primsigð***

A name which has caused great difficulty for those who want to locate the Jómsvíking battle is the island Primsignd/Primsigð. The name has also been written differently in the sources. Writing form Primsignd preferably tells of a Latin origin. Prima signatio means first signing, to mark with the sign of the cross before baptism. In contrast, the name Primsigð has been interpreted to mean a new moon sickle. Based on this interpretation, some believe that the island may have a shape that resembles a sickle. In this connection one must have in mind that sigð can also be used for sword, hjórr.

Basically, I think that one with good reason can question the whole story about the sacrifice on Primsignd/Primsigð, like Per Fett does. But if you were to place your trust in it, I think that Eika stands out as the best alternative.

If Primsignd/Primsigð had been one of the large islands in outer Sunnmøre, one might have expected the writers to use the widely known names, such as Vigra and Sula. In contrast, one can expect to find less knowledge among Icelanders about the names of small islands. This makes it easier to create a name like Primsignd/Primsigð on a small island. And based on events in the battle, they may have created a name which we have trouble interpreting today. Most of the versions tell about a large forest on the island. We can also mention that Arngrímur Jónsson in his Latin translation does not place the sacrifice on an island with a forest, but says it was carried out in a nearby forest. And an island in Sunnmøre which has been named after a kind of tree is precisely Eika.

If one interprets Primsignd as new moon sickle, as Didrik Arup Seip has done, it may be possible to find rounded terrain formations on many islands, depending on which angle of view one chooses to use. But strangely enough, most supporters of the Liavåg theory repeat that Sula must be Primsigð. The traditional explanation for the name Sula has been that the island has a clefted formation. I don't think it looks much like a crooked new moon. On the other hand, Eika, and also Raudøya, which are rather long narrow and low islands, will remind more of a new moon sickle than, for example, Sula.

### ***Heroes and cowards***

Based on the detailed execution scenes in the saga of the Jómsvíkings, one can get the impression that these



*In the area from Måløya/Eika, where we see that the islets of Stegleholmen, Kleppeholmen and Tjuvholmen form a triangle, and inwards towards Dragsundet, which lies on the right edge of the photo, there are many coves where the Norwegians could hide if they wanted to avoid a battle against the Jómsvikings. Haddal lies in the nearest left-hand corner of the photo. In the background we see Måløya and Eika to the left.*

Vikings were not afraid of anything. They are people who want to take up the fight against the enemy, even if they face crushing superiority. According to Alison Finlay, the Jómsvikings are a brotherhood which emphasizes extreme heroism and loyalty. But the formulation of the rules which is said to apply in Jómshorg in 986 may also be influenced by the crusader ideology which prevailed at the time when the sagas were written down a couple of hundred years later. The internal bonds of loyalty were weakened when Sigvaldi took over as leader after Pálnatóki. It is the failing loyalty between these professional warriors which leads to the defeat in Hjørungavágr. Sigvaldi escapes when he sees that the battle is going in the wrong direction, while Vagn fights on heroically. Much of the Norwegian army was a leidang army. The many detailed sections in old laws on the maintenance of ships and boathouses may indicate that the farmers had an aversion to the leidang system. Perhaps they weren't always so motivated to fight either. We can mention here that when Haraldr inn Hárðráði fought against the Danish king Sveinn Úlfsson, he relied primarily on his own men and vassals. He sends home the peasant army with the exception of those who lived closest to the Danes. And the Norwegian leidang people who Úlfsson came across at Læsø, begged for life and peace and offered ransom money for themselves instead of taking up the fight.

We can also point out that when the Danish king comes across Haraldr inn Hárðráði during this journey, the latter tried to escape. But the Danes catch on. The Norwegians then began to throw clothes and other belongings overboard. The Danes, who thought it was easier to catch what was floating than to take it on board from the Norwegians, were in this way delayed.

When the Danes again tailed in, the Norwegians eased their ships by hauling over the rail malt, wheat and pork. They also emptied all the drinks. This helped for a while. The last measure for the Norwegians was to throw overboard the woodwork and the prisoners they had on board. This delayed the Danes so much that the Norwegians escaped. Óláfr inn helgi's journey through Valldalen to Gardarriike is another example of how the old Vikings also chose to flee if the overwhelming force seemed to be too great. It would thus be natural for the Norwegian army to consider whether, where or when to take up the fight against the Jómsvikings.

### ***Strategically the best place***

Adherents of the Liavåg theory have pointed out that this narrow vágr is a perfect hiding place for those who want to come unexpectedly upon the enemy or as a meeting place during mobilization.

The vágr is said to lie strategically both if the Jómsvikings should choose the seaway outside of Hqð or





inside of Høð, starting through Rovdefjorden. But many admit at the same time that the vágr is probably too narrow for the battle. Still others have called it a suicide tactic to lie into this vágr. Supporters of Liavågen therefore often place the battle site on the fjord outside the vágr, even though *Jómsvíkinga saga* says that the battle took place in a vágr.

In my opinion, the Havåg area has a better strategic location with regard to whether the Jómsvikings should have chosen the inner or outer seaway when they were hunting for Jarl Hákon. Here, too, it is possible to hide a large army until the enemy is close. The vágr at the end of Høð, Havåg, is also far wider than Liavågen, so that the battle could have been on the vágr itself. It can also be mentioned that from the centrally located warning place Lidaveten on Berkneset, one has a view over large parts of southern Sunnmøre.

From Lidaveten, which lies across the fjord from Eika, one can see along the Rovdefjord almost all the way to Åram. From the beacon, it would also be possible to see the Jómsviking army as it passed Herøy on the outer seaway towards Høð. The range of view north of Vartdalsfjorden runs from Eiksund, where Øggarden is the northernmost farm, and proceeds the rugged mountain section at Alme (Almunnd hamrum). Alternatively, a beacon burning on Lidaveten will also be seen in the entire Ørsta fjorden and in the outermost part of Voldsfjorden.

But also from a lower starting point, such as for example from Eika, you will have an overview of the entire Vartdalsfjord and large parts of the Rovdefjord, and thus have good control over what time the Jómsvikings would arrive.

Most of the sagas reporting about the Jómsvikings agree that the invasion was at Christmas time. Many have doubted whether this is right. But both then and at other times of the year, it would be natural to find a meeting place which was sheltered from wind and weather, such as here between Gurskøya and Hareidlandet. At the same time, we know that the Jómsvikings had large sea-going ships, while the Norwegian fleet consisted of generally smaller and partly small ships. In the winter, when the weather often was bad, it would be a disadvantage for the Norwegians to take up the fight in open waters. It is difficult to get good precision on both arrows and spears from a small and wobbly boat. Being able to place the battle to a larger, calm and enclosed sea area would thus be to the advantage of the Norwegians. And if one could locate the battle to foul waters, an area with islets and rocks where the enemy was unknown, he would not be able to use his usual tactics from more open waters. The area between Gurskøya and Hareidlandet and inside Måløya and Eika will therefore be far better for the Norwegians than the open Sulafjord. At the same time, there is also a rather large sea area, where the many Norwegian ships can be used freely.

If the Norwegians, after observing what kind of army going past Stad, did not wish to take up the fight, one could hide in the area towards Haddalvika. Thus, the Jómsvikings could, even if they were to choose the inner route, sail past the Norwegian army without discovering him. Otherwise, the many sounds and coves from Måløya to Gardnes are also ideal for those who plan an attack from an ambush. The area is unforeseeable to an unfamiliar army. Large parts of the army could be hiding. The enemy could thus have gotten the impression that the antagonists were fewer than they really were when one decided to attack and thus walk into a trap. In addition, here the Norwegians had several escape routes. One could draw one's ships through Dragsundet – if one was not yet prepared for the battle, or as an escape route in case one had to flee from a superior power. Before the deepening, this strait was a bigger barrier for large deep-going boats than for small and light ones. Other escape routes would be through Eiksundet between Hareidlandet and the farm Sundet on Eika, Måløystraumen between Måløya and the farms Jøsok and Kleppe on Gurskøya, or Nøre Måløystraumen between Måløya and Eika. Jarl Sigvaldi and the Jómsvikings probably took advantage of one of these routes when they escaped with the remains of the Jómsviking fleet.

### *Oak used in skaldic verses*

We have already mentioned that there would have

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been a large forest on the island where Jarl Hákon sacrificed his son. The sagas and skaldic epics tell us that Icelanders before the battle found an oak root for making a club to be used against the Danes in the battle.

In Sunnmøre, we have some farms with oak in the name. What they have in common is that the heat-loving and rare tree species – oak – grow there. Eika and Eiksund are names which we do not find in the sagas about the Jómsvikings. But we can still state that oak grew near the site of the battle, and that this information will exclude places where there was less hope of finding this type of tree. The skaldic stanzas in the various sagas about the Jómsvikings are considered to be from the oldest sources. These stanzas give few geographical points of reference. But one can conclude from these stanzas that oak grew near the battleground. And in the same way that one assumes that the use of the male name Ulfr would refer to Ulstein (Ulfsteinn), one must consider whether the type of wood that was chosen to make the club, made of oak (eik) can also point to a geographical location.

### **Oral traditions**

A problem in connection with the presentation of theories about battlegrounds is that new oral traditions are created to support the theory. Such stories are passed on to the next generation in order to build up the identity linked to this event. Such traditions abound in Liavågen and Hjørundfjorden. And at least in one of the places they must lack a real basis.

In contrast, an oral tradition, which has been documented before presenting a theory about where the battle took place, can be far more interesting. After my theory about the Eiksund/Leikong area was presented, I noticed that *Bygdebok for Herøy* refers to a tradition that Jarl Hákon would have spent the night before the battle at Øggarden in Eiksund. But at the same time, I notice that some people in the very last few years

are also starting to “remember” better about what happened in the Havåg area around 1,000 years ago.

### **Conclusion**

In contrast to *Gesta Danorum*, which gives us no clue as to where the Jómsviking battle took place, we can conclude from the other sources that the battle stood somewhere in Sunnmøre, if we can trust the old sources. The various versions of *Jómsvikinga saga* place the battle in a vágr in the vicinity of Hqð, today Hareidlandet. If we take Snorri Sturluson as our point of departure, it may be unclear whether the meeting between the two armies was on the open fjord somewhere along Hqð or whether it took place in more enclosed waters. One version of *Fagrskinna* also links the battleground closely to Hqð. Another version says only inside Hqð. It is the latter which is often used by those who want to place the battle away from the island.

At the end of the island called Hqð (today Hareidlandet), we also find the old place name Havåg, which means the vágr at Hqð. In today's language it could have been called Hareidlandsvågen (The bay of Hareidlandet). The name tells us that this vágr has been a central vágr at Hqð in earlier times, since the name of this large island is connected to this vágr. Here is also a sea area that is characterized by many islets and rocks in contrast to Liavågen, where you have problems finding rocks in reasonable proximity. Here, near the end of the island, we also come across place names such as Måløya and Leikong. They are old gathering places – places where it would also be natural to assemble for other purposes. Here are also excellent places to hide if you want to avoid meeting the enemy, and escape routes if the battle goes wrong.

In short: Of the alternative battle sites at Hqð, and elsewhere in Sunnmøre, the Eiksund/Leikong area is the most plausible.



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# Can the archeologist help?



*Here on the beach at Løsetstranda are a number of burial mounds.*

In several of the localization theories for the Jómsviking battle, old burial mounds are central. Guldbrand Thesen used the many mounds at Hatlegardane in Borgund as his starting point when he tried to locate the battle near the Vegsund area. The many burial mounds on Kvamsøya have led some to believe that the battle of Rastarkálf took place there. Others claim that it must be the historical Hjørungavágr which lies there, starting from the same mounds.

Funeral customs have changed over the years. On basis of excavations, the largest burial mounds in Sunnmøre have often been dated to the Bronze and Stone Ages. Then there have been periods where you can generally say that the graves were less marked. From the Viking Age, there are also some larger burial mounds on a national basis – before people stopped using grave-mounds. Thus, large burial mounds in our district do not need to be a reliable indication that the Jómsviking battle must have been here. As far as I know, one has so far not been able to link any burial mounds in our relevant area to the time when the battle was supposed to have taken place. In this context, we can also add that the size of the burial mounds may depend on easy access to building material. It is perhaps not entirely coincidental that many burial mounds are located where there are large quantities of pebbles, such as at Løsetstranda by Moltustranda, where over 60 burial mounds have been located.

Others have searched for the gold chests of Búi inn digri – and perhaps somebody will continue to search for them. I still think that the result will be meagre. In the case of battles which are localized to places on land, such as the battle at Stiklestad, no objects have been found which can document that a battle took

place. Weapons and other things have been picked up immediately after the battle. Nor have any burial mounds been found there where one with reliability can date back to the battle. There are certainly many burial mounds which are known to be older. This may also indicate that there is little hope of finding buried Norwegians and Jómsvikings by Hjørungavágr. On the other hand, at the seabed we can hope to find weapons which have been used in a naval battle, ballast from ships that have sunk. But one must also be aware that seawater can corrode wood and base metal – unless it has ended up in muddy bottom and has been well preserved for that reason. Over the years, there have been sporadic attempts to find remains after the Jómsviking battle also at the seabed. In 1963, a group of frogmen led by an English researcher, Dr. Taylor, searched at the bottom of Liavågen. They were engaged by people who believed that the battle had taken place there. The result was negative, and *Vikebladet* concluded that nothing has been “found in Hjørungavåg – for the time being.” The most extensive research at the seabed was done in Hjørundfjorden in the 1980s. Nothing was discovered that could be linked to a battle. Likewise, no objects have been found which can confirm the battle being fought in Hafrsfjord in the recent search there.

New methods in archaeology have been used in the last hundred years – and new methods may come. Perhaps one day discoveries which are made in connection with projects in Sunnmøre can be linked to places abroad where it is believed that the Jómsvikings have stayed? Perhaps will modern underwater technology, which has become available in recent years, give the final answer of the mystery of where the battle took place?

## *The spelling of some personal names*

In the various versions which report about the battle, the gallery of characters varies. The spelling of the name of the same participant can vary between the different representations and even within the same version of the saga. In order that the changing spell-

ings shall not confuse the reader, the personal names in this book have been given a common form. But the interested reader can find the main forms used in the sources in the table below.

<b>AM 291 4to</b>	Yria scegi	Sigrþr kapa	Sigrþr stæiclingr
<b>Stock. Perg.</b>	Yriarskegi	Sigurðr kapu	Sigurðr steiklingr
<b>Flateyjarbók</b>	Yriarskeggi	Sigurdr kapa	Sigurðr stæiklingr
<b>AM 510 4to</b>	Iarnskeggi af Eyrium	Sigurdur kapa	Sigurdur steiglingur
<b>Heimskringla</b>	Skeggi af Yrjum	Sigurðr	*
<b>Fagrskinna</b>	Iarnskæggi af Yrium	Sigurðr hviti	Ærlæendr stæik
<b>Hanssøn</b>	Skegge aff yrien	Sigurd Kaffve	Sigurt steding
<b>Normalized</b>	<b>Yrja-Skeggi</b>	<b>Sigurðr kápa</b>	<b>Sigurðr steiklingr/ Erlendr Steik</b>
<b>AM 291 4to</b>	Gvþbrandr or dalvm	Styrkar af Gimsvm	Þorkell miþlangr
<b>Stock. Perg.</b>	Guðbrand af Daulum	Styrkar af Gymsum	Þorkell miðlangr
<b>Flateyjarbók</b>	Gudbrandr ór Daulum	Styrkarr af Gimsum	Þorkell midlangr
<b>AM 510 4to</b>	Gudbrandur huite	Sigrekur af Gimsum	Þorkell midlangur
<b>Heimskringla</b>	Guðbrandr hviti	Styrkár af Gimsum	Þorsteinn miðlangr
<b>Fagrskinna</b>	*	Styrkar af Gymsum	Þorstæinn miðlangr
<b>Hanssøn</b>	Gudbrand hvid/ Gudbrandh aff gudbrandzdalen	Styrkar aff Gimsøn	Þorstæinn miðlangr
<b>Normalized</b>	<b>Guðbrandr hvíti</b>	<b>Styrkár from Gimsar/ Sigrekr from Gimsar</b>	<b>Þorkell miðlangr Þorsteinn miðlangr</b>
<b>AM 291 4to</b>	Armoþr ór anvndar firþi	Havarþr vpsia	Hallvarþr af flyþro nesi
<b>Stock. Perg.</b>	Arnmóðr	Hauaðr af Flyðru nesi	*
<b>Flateyjarbók</b>	Arnmodr ór Aunundarfirde	Hauard af Flydrunese	Halluardr uppsia
<b>AM 510 4to</b>	Armodur ur Aunundar-firdi	Hauardur	Halluardur uppsa
<b>Heimskringla</b>	*	*	*
<b>Fagrskinna</b>	*	*	*
<b>Hanssøn</b>	Armoder aff anundzfiord	Horder aff Flydrenes	Haluard aff vpsio
<b>Normalized</b>	<b>Ármóðr from Qunundarfjörðr</b>	<b>Hávarðr from Flyðrunes</b>	<b>Hallvarðr uppsjá</b>



<b>AM 291 4to</b>	Þorgerþe harða troll	Hallstein kerlingabane
<b>Stock. Perg.</b>	Þorgerði Haulgabrúði	Hallzsteinn kerlingr
<b>Flateyjarbók</b>	Þorgerde Hørdabrude	Hallstein kellingabani
<b>AM 510 4to</b>	Þorgerdi Hølda-brudi Þorgerdi Hølda-troll	Hallsteinn kellinga-bani
<b>Heimskringla</b>	*	*
<b>Fagrskinna</b>	*	*
<b>Hanssøn</b>	Torgerda holgabrudh	Kolbiørn Kerllingebane
<b>Normalized</b>	<b>Þorgerðr Hørdabrúðr</b>	<b>Hallsteinn kerlingabani/ Kolbjørn kerlingabani</b>

## Photos and illustrations

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“Egentlig har jeg aldrig fremsat nogen alvorlig ment teori om hvor Jomsvikinge sagaens Hjørungavágr befinder sig. Hvis jeg bliver spurgt om min mening, f. eks. om den kunne være Liavågen på Hareidlandet, har jeg henvist til en lille passus i en kronik af Halldór Laxness. ... Hvis denne våg er ikke til at finde kan jeg ikke se andet end at vi må slå os til freds med Halldór Laxness teori. Den har i det mindste den fordel at den er morsom.”

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*Where are the Hjørungar, the stones which will be the identification of the Hjørungavágr where Jómsvíking battle took place? We find no trace of this name in Sunnmøre. But in the vágr between the islands Eika and Hareidlandet we find stones which are missing in the other alternatives.*

Many people have asked the question: Is the renaming of Liavågen to Hjørungavåg about hundred years ago built on erroneous foundations? Or could there be other places on Sunnmøre which would correspond better with the old writings when locating the site of the Jomsviking battle?

There have been many other suggestions: Hjørundfjorden, Aspevågen, Vegsundet, Flisvågen, Ørskogvika, Norangsfjorden, Ørstafjorden, Ulsteinfjorden, Haugsfjorden and Gurskevågen. In addition to describing the many theories, Johan Ottesen also presents his own opinion.

Most versions of the Jómsvíkinga saga say that the Norwegians planned to meet in a vágr (bay) by the island of Høð (Hareidlandet) before the battle. A central vágr at Høð is Havåg. This vágr is named after the island, and it was in this area that the battle took place, says Johan Ottesen.

In the book you also will find a presentation of the central parts of the different sources. In addition, the author presents two shortened versions of Jómsvíkinga saga. These versions have not previously been translated into English.



*Johan Ottesen (b. 1944) has written many books of local history. He also runs an archive of old aerial photos.*

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