An Investigation of Advice Giving in the *Íslendingasögur*

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This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Declarations

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any work that has already been submitted before for any degree or other qualification except as declared in the preface and specified in the text.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the advice-giving practices depicted in the *Íslendingasögur* (Sagas of the Icelanders), especially how they form, structure, and alter relationships. It argues that Icelandic society as depicted in these sagas benefits from advice-giving norms, which can facilitate peacekeeping, alliance and even authority.

Ascertaining a medieval Icelandic literary definition of advice allows for the systematic and rigorous identification of advice-giving incidents in the *Íslendingasögur*. This thesis first investigates advice lexemes through a semantic field analysis of Old Norse textual evidence. This analysis indicates that advice can be identified mostly using phrases containing *ráð*, although a more holistic understanding of advice necessitates considering contextual criteria as well. Informed by these findings, a database was made of advice-giving incidents in the *Íslendingasögur*. This approach allows for quantitative comparisons as to who gives advice, to whom and in what circumstances. Advice-giving patterns are compared to quantitative data from *Sturlunga saga* to help determine the existence and cessation of patterns for the role of advice in these narratives.

In Chapter I, this thesis argues that advice has an essential function in preserving the security and reputation of the family. This chapter suggests that the sagas depict an informal hierarchy of advice givers, advice giving first being the responsibility of fathers and older male kinsmen. Younger men, who do not generally advise those older, can seek to disrupt this, attempting to establish authority through protesting advice-giving practices. Women, although existing outside of this hierarchy and often being dismissed as advice givers by male characters, mostly use advice to urge safety and caution, despite the scholarly focus on women as vengeful whetters.

Whereas Chapter I investigates advice giving within the family, Chapter II explores these practices outside of it, examining non-familial advice givers, such as friends, strangers, enemies, hosts and leaders. This chapter argues that the sagas depict advice acts as a social glue, since friends commonly reenforce alliances through advice giving, even recontextualising their relationships when giving marriage advice. This chapter also suggests that the sagas depict advice as protecting communities. Where no social bond exists between giver and receiver, advice is given to benefit not the receiver but rather the wider community. Good hospitality includes a duty to advise guests. How the sagas depict advice as given by Icelandic chieftains is compared to advice from foreign kings and it is shown that only in the Icelandic system is advice giving treated as an obligatory service for leadership roles.

Informed by these findings on relationships between advice givers and receivers, this thesis then considers advice in its situational context. Advice is usually given during conflict and this is the focus of Chapter III. This chapter explores how advice is given not only to improve a combatant's chance of success, but also to reduce violence in the community. This chapter identifies the role and the qualities of 'lawmen' and others with a reputation for giving good advice. However, this chapter also argues that the sagas demonstrate a preference for advice from those with close pre-existing social attachments. Advice-giving expectations first protect the family circle and then the community.

The study of advice giving is the study of relationships and roles in the *Íslendingasögur*, as well as aspects of social authority and obligation not previously explored in scholarship. This thesis ultimately suggests that, while on a smaller scale, advice is given to benefit a single individual, on a larger scale, advice giving in saga society mirrors the underlying structures of that society and even shapes them.

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Introduction

Giving advice is a pro-social behaviour, observed and perpetuated in so many languages and cultures throughout history that it may well be termed universal. Across communities, advice giving is not just characteristic of society but itself structures society. Advice is integral in alliance, affection and obligation and whom advice is given to or sought from reveals much about a relationship. What is not universal is the purpose of any piece of advice and its place in the ongoing relationship of advice giver and receiver within their community. Advice giving in the medieval Norse sagas can reveal, structure, or alter affiliations, encourage peace and safety and reenforce patterns of authority. Although advice incidents are both frequent and important, often appearing before a critical decision, the subject of advice in Norse literature has received little scholarly attention.[1] This study defines and investigates advice-giving practices in the *Íslendingasögur* (sagas of the Icelanders): how both authors and saga characters understand the concept of advice, the way advice giving informs the portrayal of relationships and how advice-giving practices are embedded into the very institutions of saga society.[2] 'Saga society' for the purposes of this study denotes the depiction of society found in the *Íslendingsögur* as created by saga authors and not the historical society of early medieval Iceland. This thesis uncovers some of the ways this society is affected by these advice-giving expectations within the *Íslendingasögur*.

The *Íslendingasögur*

The *Íslendingasögur* are set in the historical period of Saga Age Iceland (*c.* 870 - *c.* 1100).[3] This astonishing corpus of forty sagas illustrates the lives of Icelandic families, their

[1] An advice incident refers to an episode where a text refers to advice or advice-giving practices.
[2] Recent overviews of the *Íslendingasaga* genre include Carol Clover, 'Icelandic family sagas (*Íslendingasögur*)', in *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature*, ed. by Carol Clover and John Lindow (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 239–315, and Margaret Clunies Ross, *The Cambridge Introduction to the Old Norse-Icelandic Saga* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[3] The *Íslendingasögur* analysed for this thesis are: *Bandamanna saga, Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss, Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa, Brennu-Njáls saga, Droplaugarsona saga, Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar, Eiríks saga rauða, Eyrbyggja saga, Finnboga saga, Fljótsdœla saga, Flóamanna saga, Fóstbrœðra saga, Gísla saga Súrssonar, Grettis saga, Grœnlendinga saga, Gull-Þóris saga, Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls, Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu, Hallfreðar saga, Harðar saga, Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings, Heiðarvíga saga, Hœnsna-Þóris saga, Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða, Kjalnesinga saga, Kormáks saga, Króka-Refs saga, Laxdœla saga, Ljósvetninga saga, Qlkofra þáttr, Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu, Svarfdœla saga, Valla-Ljóts saga, Vápnfirðinga saga, Vatnsdœla saga, Víga-Glúms saga, Víglundar saga, Þórðar saga hreðu, Þorsteins saga hvíta* and *Þorsteins saga Síðu-*

conflicts, celebrations and beliefs. They are the earliest written artefacts portraying a detailed interpretation of social dynamics in this period, but they are likewise influenced by the time period of their authors, centuries later (*c.* 1200 - *c.* 1450). The authors of these sagas made clear narrative choices. For example, time frames sometimes years long are glossed over when the events might be considered less important, but small interactions that seem significant are richly described. Although these narratives are remembered today for themes of feuding or geneaology, advice giving affects nearly every aspect of the sagas, maintaining a consistent presence whenever decisions must be made.

The *Íslendingasögur* contain many instances of advice giving and provide a relatively large body of text for broader reflections on the literary treatment of advice giving than a small corpus could provide. Jesse Byock comments that 'one small story like Mord's [in *Njáls saga*] only hints at values. A whole collection of such stories is a different matter. In some, though certainly not all ways, the sagas approach the type of ethnographic material collected by anthropologists in the field.'[4] Unlike much other medieval literature, the *Íslendingasögur* often detail the minutiae of social communications and conflicts. This focus on the social dynamics within the text often portrays spoken interaction, the consequences of this interaction and the reasons it happened, allowing patterns of advice to be discerned.

This thesis also questions whether patterns in advice giving are unique to the *Íslendingasögur* or if they persist in other periods and genres of saga writing. This is why comparison with contemporary texts such as *Sturlunga saga*, a collection of sagas written during and set in the Sturlung Age (mid-thirteenth century in Iceland), is beneficial. As explored below, *Sturlunga saga* represents advice giving with some differences. This respectively implies an awareness that the contextual setting and relationships have changed through the centuries, the desire to depict the two eras as different, or changing patterns in the portrayal of advice giving.

Other textual depictions of advice giving were considered for the purposes of this study. However, there are no other texts or evidence as suitable as the *Íslendingasögur* for research into the depiction of advice-giving practices in a saga society, Saga Age Iceland or, more generally, medieval Icelandic literature. The evidence that depicts advice giving is limited. Eddic poetry, while perhaps written at a similar time to the *Íslendingasögur*, does not

Hallssonar. For arguments for including *Ǫlkofra þáttr* among the *Íslendingasögur*, see Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, 'The Long and the Short of it', in *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*, ed. by Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson (London: Taylor & Francis, 2017), pp. 151–163 (p. 153).

[4] Jesse Byock, *Viking Age Iceland* (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 22.

portray the lives of ordinary Icelanders, instead depicting advice giving between paranormal figures, legendary heroes or deities. The *konungasögur* (sagas of kings) are composed at a similar period to some of the early *Íslendingasögur* but focus on royalty outside Iceland. While some *Íslendingasögur* do portray interactions with monarchy and advice giving at court, the primary subject matter of these sagas remains communities in Iceland.

Saga Historicity

Although this study acknowledges the contextual importance of the social history of medieval Iceland to any analysis of saga society, it does not primarily aim to discover socio-historical structures. The long-standing scholarly debate over the value of medieval Icelandic texts as historical sources is extensive.[5] The controversy surrounding the use of sagas as precise historical evidence is that they were written centuries after the events they purport to chronicle are set. Additionally, fantastical elements potentially influenced by a variety of literary and mythic traditions are further evidence that episodes may be invented by authors. Most importantly, advice giving incidents take the form of conversations that must have been invented by saga authors.

However, although this study does not attempt to use the *Íslendingasögur* as evidence for historical enquiry, it does not dismiss studies that do.[6] A number of well-regarded scholars of early Iceland, including Gísli Sigurðsson, Helgi Þorláksson, Jesse Byock, William Ian Miller, and Pragya Vohra do analyse social history through saga evidence.[7] Certain scholars have argued that even paranormal elements should not preclude a saga from being

[5] For a summary of this debate, see Byock, *Viking Age Iceland*, pp. 149–158. See also Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition: A Discourse on Method* (Cambridge: Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature, 2004). See also Oren Falk, *Violence and Risk in Medieval Iceland: This Spattered Isle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 289–291. As this study does not aim to be a review of scholarship, the history of scholarly views regarding the historical merit of sagas in general is not described here.

[6] In brief, the freeprose theory suggests that the content of the *Íslendingasögur* was conceived during the Saga Age, circulated in oral tradition and finally written down in the Sturlung Age. The bookprose theory suggests the content of the sagas was created by Sturlung Age authors as literary compositions. For further discussion of the bookprose vs. freeprose controversies, see Jesse L. Byock, 'Saga Form, Oral Prehistory, and the Icelandic Social Context', *New Literary History*, 16.1 (1984), 153–173; Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Chieftains and Power in the Icelandic Commonwealth*, trans. by Jean Lundskær-Nielsen (Odense: Odense University, 1999); Theodore M. Andersson, *The Problem of Icelandic Saga Origins: A Historical Survey* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964); Clover, 'Icelandic Family Sagas'; Ralph O'Connor, 'History and Fiction'.

[7] As above, see Byock, *Viking Age Iceland*; Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition*; William Ian Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking: Feud, Law, and Society in Saga Iceland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Helgi Þorláksson, 'Sagas as Evidence for Authentic Social Structures', unpublished paper delivered at *The 15th International Saga Conference, Sagas and the Use of the Past* (Aarhus University, 5–11 August 2012); Pragya Vohra, 'Creating Kin, Extending Authority: Blood-Brotherhood and Power in Medieval Iceland', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Masculinity and Political Culture in Europe*, ed. by Christopher Fletcher et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 105–132.

considered valid historical material as these do not necessarily indicate the author is intentionally inventing material. Ralph O'Connor indicates that modern scholarship has an increasingly inclusive view of belief in medieval Iceland.[8] Ármann Jakobsson comments that 'if the author […] believed in the existence of trolls and suchlike, their presence in his work would not exclude it from being intended as a work of history.'[9] To the medieval author, the paranormal could well be plausible. Not all scholars indicate a strict choice must be made between historical and literary saga studies. Paul Bibire suggests that both approaches are inadequate as a 'saga […] is direct and immediate evidence for how individuals of (perhaps) the thirteenth or fourteenth century viewed the past: what they thought had happened, or might have happened, or should have happened.'[10] Oren Falk proposes the idea of examining uchronia (coined by anthropologist Kristen Hastrup), therefore viewing sagas as a history out of time, because 'as the past is never accessible to the present except through the mediation of representations, these visions attain a kind of functional authenticity—authenticity for all practical purposes—within the present'.[11]

Although particular utterances in the sagas can confidently be termed inventions, it does not necessarily follow that advice-giving conventions and the social practices recorded in the sagas are entirely fictive. William Ian Miller, an advocate for using sagas to establish the existence of legal norms, states that 'if there might have been a reason for an author to invent a particular character's psychology, there was simply no reason for him to invent *ex nihilo* the social and cultural setting in which these characters moved about.'[12] The authors of the *Íslendingasögur* did know a certain amount about the Saga Age Iceland that served as a setting to their writing. They may still have understood a number of social norms pertaining to the generation they wrote about. Iceland's relative isolation did not encourage the same rapid social shifts compared to countries in continental Europe in the same period. Many formal institutions such as legal structures were largely continued between the Saga Age and the period of writing. The awareness of saga authors of the ways these institutions changed

[8] Ralph O'Connor, 'History and Fiction', in *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas* ed. by Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 88–110 (p. 101).
[9] Ármann Jakobsson, 'History of the Trolls? Bárðar saga as an Historical Narrative', *Saga-Book of the Viking Society* 25.1 (1998), 53–71.
[10] Paul Bibire, 'On Reading the Icelandic Sagas: Approaches to Old Icelandic Texts', in *West over Sea: Studies in Scandinavian Sea-Borne Expansion and Settlement before 1300* ed. by Beverley Ballin Smith, Simon Taylor, and Gareth Williams (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), pp. 3–18 (p. 17).
[11] Falk, *Violence and Risk in Medieval Iceland*, p. 301. For earlier discussions of similar ideas and how writing or retelling has a transformative effect on source materials, see Judith Jesch, 'Narrating "Orkneyinga Saga"', *Scandinavian studies* 64.3 (1992), 336–355 and Jesch, 'Presenting Traditions in "Orkneyinga Saga"', *Leeds Studies in English* 27 (1996), 69–86.
[12] Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*, p. 46.

and how specific power structures had altered within and after the Saga Age shows that authors were likely aware of how other social structures might have changed. Historical context is therefore useful and is included when analysing the depictions of social conventions in the sagas.

It is important to note that, when exploring advice-giving practices, dialogue in the sagas is almost certainly invented by the author, as it is unlikely that specific speech acts could survive being transmitted over centuries of oral tradition. This study of advice giving, a behaviour originating in speech, therefore focuses on saga society rather than Saga Age Iceland. Advice incidents may have some implications for the socio-historical study of medieval Iceland, as this study is a quantitative one that focuses largely on cultural and social interactions rather than the specific and likely-invented wording of speech acts in the sagas. However, this would require extensive examination into each advice incident in this study to evaluate it for evidence of either historicity or authorial invention, which is outside the scope of this thesis.

There is little to suggest literary borrowing of advice incidents between the sagas, implying that it is unlikely that advice incidents correspond directly to a strict literary tradition. Even though a few sagas contain the same characters, based on historical figures, very rarely is the same advice repeated across sagas even when certain individuals are characterised as consummate advisors. There are very limited exceptions to this, the most notable indicating literary borrowing being Guðríðr in *Grœnlendinga saga* and *Eiríks saga rauða*. She is given similar advice in similar language by her Greenlandic host when the same situation plays out. The duplication can be accounted for by the close intertextuality of the two Vinland sagas.[13] The extent to which sagas should be considered valid historical sources and whether they should be categorised instead as literary works continues to be debated. However, the value of analysing the literary effects within sagas, such as characterisation, foreshadowing or narrative suspense, should not be dismissed.

[13] For a discussion of the intertextuality of the two sagas, see Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson, *The Vinland sagas: the Norse discovery of America* (London: Penguin, 1973), n.p.; Helgi Þorláksson, 'The Vinland sagas in a Contemporary Light', in *Approaches to Vinland*, ed. by Andrew Wawn and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, 4 (Reykjavík: Sigurður Nordal Institute, 2001), pp. 63–77; E. A. Williamsen, 'Boundaries of Difference in the Vínland Sagas', *Scandinavian Studies*, 77.4 (2005), 451–78.

Advice in Scholarship

There is no scholarship solely dedicated to investigating advice giving in the *Íslendingasögur*. However, some studies on medieval literature brush against the subject of advice, which indicates that advice giving has implications for a range of sub-disciplines of medieval scholarship.

Scholarship on the advice giving of non-Norse medieval cultures generally investigates written texts as a means for the author to give advice to the intended reader, instead of examining the advice given between figures within the text. More emphasis is given to the content of advice than advice-giving conventions. Most scholarship of early advice giving pertains to late medieval England and focuses on women giving advice. Misty Schieberle explores how poets used the *topos* of the woman counsellor to criticise and advise powerful readers in a tradition influenced by mirrors for princes, a genre of educational political texts aimed at ruling authorities.[14] Shawn D. Ramsey states that 'medieval women engaged in civic persuasive practices [through letters] on their own behalf and on the behalf of others at the highest levels through consular practice' and that this was 'influenced by the deliberative rhetorical tradition inherited from Antiquity'.[15] Other studies explore the transmission of marital advice,[16] and the careful nature of mirrors for kings and princes.[17] These studies establish rhetorical, political and gendered advice-giving traditions in medieval literature and history. However, no study yet compares advice-giving conventions across multiple demographics.

Few studies examine advice as a literary tradition. One by J. M. Sullivan states that French poet Chrétien de Troyes creates a romance-specific type of private counsel in his works, allowing 'for the first time in courtly fiction a full and critical treatment of many of the counsel-related issues […] to audiences whose members defined their political existence largely in terms of their right and duty to provide counsel to their superiors'.[18] These advice

[14] See Misty Schieberle, *Feminized Counsel and the Literature of Advice in England, 1380–1500* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014).
[15] Shawn D. Ramsey, 'The Voices of Counsel: Women and Civic Rhetoric in the Middle Ages', *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 42.5 (2012), 472–489 (p. 473).
[16] See Oded Zinger and David Torollo, 'From an Arab Queen to a Yiddische Mama: The Travels of Marital Advice around the Medieval Mediterranean', *Medieval Encounters*, 22 (2016), 471–516.
[17] See Judith Ferster, *Fictions of Advice: The Literature and Politics of Counsel in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).
[18] J. M. Sullivan, 'The Lady Lunete: Literary Conventions of Counsel and the Criticism of Counsel in Chrétien's Yvain and Hartmann's Iwein', *Neophilologus*, 85.3 (2001), 335–354 (p. 350).

conventions, specific to the status and region of the envisioned readers, are intended to be relatable. A specific Norse advice culture could be implied by comparison. Geraldine Barnes, in a study of the *Riddarasögur* (romance sagas or 'sagas of knights'), notes that translations of Chrétien de Troyes into Old Norse often feature counsel that 'drives the action and defines the ethos'.[19] This may suggest that Old Norse literary culture lays particular emphasis on advice giving as a narrative catalyst.

Most scholarship touching on the topic of advice in Norse literature focuses on poetry. Carolyne Larrington acknowledges that much poetry contains or is comprised of advice, whether to a character within the poem or the reader: 'The counsel, "ráð" […] offers maxims for the hero in everyday situations: how to deal with kin, friends, fools, drunkards, and women.'[20] She implies that advice exists as part of a literary sub-genre: 'The use of "ráða" and "ráð", exhorting the listener to take to heart what is said, locates the advice within the same instruction-tradition as the *Loddfáfnismál*.'[21] She also suggests a strong connection between advice and wisdom: 'The hero [Sigurðr] has proved his courage in attacking the dragon; by acting on the nuthatches' advice, he proves his wisdom.'[22] From this, it is clear that Larrington considers advice to be an important element of the Norse poetry tradition, as an expression of wisdom, a segment of characters' decision-making processes or simply as much of the content of certain poems. However, her work does not come to conclusions regarding social expectations, advice-giving customs and whether advice has a consistent role in the poetical narrative.

Most discussion of advice in Eddic poetry examines the god Óðinn's advice, how a reader might need to interpret this advice, and his relationship with the addressee. Judy Quinn states that 'the focus of advice shifts unpredictably. The importance of being able to assess the right degree of caution—or of anything—underlines the fact that there is more to learning from advice than simply remembering the formulation of it.'[23] Brittany Schorn similarly notes that 'Óðinn's divine status thus holds him at some remove from his addressee and his audience and in a few cases at least there is reason to doubt that his advice should be applied

[19] Geraldine Barnes, 'The "Discourse of Counsel" and the "Translated" *Riddarasögur*', in *Learning and Understanding in the Old Norse World: Essays in Honour of Margaret Clunies Ross*, ed. by Judy Quinn, Kate Heslop, and Tarrin Wills (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 375–97 (p. 381).
[20] Carolyne Larrington, *A Store of Common Sense: Gnomic Theme and Style in Old Icelandic and Old English Wisdom Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 93.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 83.
[22] *Ibid.*, p. 85.
[23] Judy Quinn, 'Liquid Knowledge: Traditional Conceptualisations of Learning in Eddic Poetry', in *Along the Oral-Written Continuum: Types of Texts, Relations and their Implications*, ed. by Slavica Rankovic, Leidulf Melve and Judy Quinn (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), pp. 183–226 (p. 216).

indiscriminately or taken at face value.'[24] These studies depict advice as a pedagogical tool, primarily for a reader, and, like Larrington, consider advice and wisdom connected.[25] Such scholarship investigates the relationship between narrator and addressee, but does not seek to establish advice-giving norms between individuals sharing a society.[26]

Like scholarship of advice in medieval literature more widely, studies on advice from certain demographics in Norse literature typically focus on women. These usually examine 'cold counsel', which conflates advice given by women with whetting or inciting men to vengeance.[27] Some studies attempt to move the discussion of women's advice giving away from whetting. Although Barnes notes that women in the *Riddarasögur* give 'wholesome advice',[28] she portrays the advice of women in the *Riddarasögur* as a contrast to the colder counsels of women in the *Íslendingasögur*. In contrast, Giselle Gos suggests that 'we can see in *Fóstbrædra saga* quite a different social role for Icelandic women. Through their "*heilræði*" (sound counsel) they uphold the values of the community and attempt to integrate the community's troublesome men'.[29] This depicts women's advice giving as culturally and narratively functional. Both views, whether women give cold or sound counsels, suggest that there are distinct gender-based advice-giving roles that enforce social expectations. However, there has yet to be a focused study to ascertain what these advice-giving roles might be across a large corpus of Norse literature.

Several studies comment on advice giving in a single saga, but very few are focused on advice as a main topic of study. Typically, scholars analyse whether one scene in *Njáls saga* where the titular character gives deliberately bad legal advice would be ethical to medieval readers.[30] Henry Ordower states, 'It is curious and somewhat ironic that the saga continually portrays Njal as a wise, benevolent, and trustworthy counselor […] [It] appears that evil motives must accompany the questionable behavior if the author is to condemn it.'[31]

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[24] Brittany Erin Schorn, *Speaker and Authority in Old Norse Wisdom Poetry* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), p. 82.
[25] See also David Clark, and Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 'The Representation of Gender in Eddic Poetry', in *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry: Myths and Legends of Early Scandinavia*, ed. by Carolyne Larrington et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 331–348, p. 343.
[26] See also L. G. Canevaro, 'Hesiod and *Hávamál*: Transitions and the Transmission of Wisdom', *Oral Tradition*, 29.1 (2014), p. 116–177.
[27] See Sarah M. Anderson, and Karen Swenson, eds, *Cold Counsel: The Women of Old Norse Literature and Mythology: A Collection of Essays* (London: Routledge, 2002).
[28] Barnes, 'The "Discourse of Counsel" and the "Translated" *Riddarasögur*', p. 380.
[29] Giselle Gos, 'Women as a Source of *Heilræði*, "Sound Counsel": Social Mediation and Community Integration in *Fóstbræðra saga*', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 108/3 (2009), 281–300 (p. 299).
[30] Lars Lönnroth *Njáls Saga: A Critical Introduction* (Oakland: University of California, 1976), p. 191.
[31] Henry Ordower, 'Exploring the Literacy Function of Law and Litigation in Njal's Saga', in *Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature*, 3/1 (1991), 41–62 (p. 47).

Other studies compare Njáll to mythic figures. Jeffrey L. Slusher states that 'Njal stands in the tradition of Týr and Odin. True to his reputation, he gives Gunnar sage advice that illustrates both the importance of the spoken word in the legal system outlined in the saga and the view of the lawyer as a man of wits rather then [sic] iron.'[32] Yoav Tirosh compares Njáll to Kronos, controlling of his sons, but a figure of reliable advice until it is more advantageous to lie for his foster-son.[33] Overall, these studies suggest that advice giving can be a key component of characterisation, and that major decisions in the *Íslendingasögur* are often done after receiving advice. However, these studies only examine one advice giver in one saga and are not focused predominantly on advice giving.

Only one study exclusively investigates advice giving in a saga. Russell Poole, examining an advice-giving scene in *Hrafnkels saga*, asserts that there is a 'ritual of *ráð* [advice] […] where there is no strictly repeated or reiterated or "template" behaviour but rather a constant process of reproduction with variation'.[34] He suggests that there are several elements the episode might have in common with advice given in Eddic poetry, other sagas and even the Old English poem *Deor*. He identifies the following as aspects of the ritual: performative utterances, something being done to a person's body for persuasive purposes, and being incapable of movement during a decision. However, because of this focus on a single episode in *Hrafnkels saga*, the comparisons are highly specific. This approach nevertheless highlights the potential for a study of advice across a larger corpus of sagas to establish advice-giving conventions and 'its function in social praxis'.[35]

Although no study has yet codified norms in advice giving in the *Íslendingasögur*, an examination of existing scholarship reveals that advice is an important aspect of medieval literature. Many medieval texts contain advice to monarchs, deities, heroes and the unnamed reader and is therefore important for the intellectual and moral development of these individuals. Scholarship suggests that in communities there are advice-giving roles, with women expected to behave differently to men. Studies on specific sagas imply that advice is used for narrative effects, for characterisation or humour, and that advice is especially important when legal expertise is required. The implications of advice giving are therefore of

[32] Jeffrey L. Slusher, 'Runic Wisdom in Njal's Saga and Nordic Mythology — Roots of an Oral Legal Tradition in Northern Europe', *Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature*, 3/1 (1991), 21–40 (p. 24).
[33] Yoav Tirosh, 'Víga-Njáll: A New Approach Toward *Njáls saga*', *Scandinavian Studies*, 86/2 (2014), 208–226.
[34] Russell Poole, 'Counsel in Action in *Hrafnkels saga*', in *The Fantastic in the Old Norse, Icelandic Literature: Preprints from the Thirteenth International Saga Conference*, 2 vols, ed. by J. McKinnell et al. (Durham: Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006), 779–88 (p. 786).
[35] *Ibid.*, p. 787.

interest to literary scholars, sociologists, legal scholars, linguists and gender theorists seeking an understanding of the society of the *Íslendingasögur*.

Through identifying advice conventions, the structures of interactions as well as societal structures, such as law, present in the *Íslendingasögur* can be better understood. This thesis codifies advice-giving norms through examination of the relationship between advice giver and receiver. Furthermore, this thesis investigates advice giving in families and communities to establish whether advice in sagas enforces societal roles and authority. This thesis also identifies advice-related literary tropes indicative of a shared literary culture and how advice might be used as a device to communicate information to characters and readers.

Thesis Structure

The first topic that this thesis analyses is the semantic field of advice lexemes. This is essential to the methodology of this study, as advice incidents are identified foremost by the existence of advice-like language or phrasing in Old Norse. Furthermore, themes are established that contextualise the findings of this thesis, primarily the linguistic connection between advice and knowledge, planning and consent.

Following this is an investigation into advice within the family because this is the primary relationship unit in the *Íslendingasögur*. As this study takes an evidence-led approach, it is logical to foreground how advice giving operates within the family structure, considering that most advice within the *Íslendingasögur* is given by family members. This analysis is structured according to advice giver, allowing the study to investigate how the role of advice giver differs depending on the relationship between advice giver and receiver. This chapter first examines the advice-giving relationships between Non-Immediate Family Members (NIFM) and then compares these to those between immediate male relations (paternal, fraternal and filial). It then analyses uncle-nephew advice-giving relationships and same-sex familial relationships wherein advice is refused or not solicited. Finally, this chapter explores the outliers within this patriarchal structure: the role of women as advice givers (maternal, sororal and spousal).

This is followed by a chapter about advice outside the family. This chapter recalls structures established earlier in inter-familial communication, making it easier to determine where these structures are different, the same, deliberately mimicked or mocked. It begins by analysing the role of friends as advice givers, one of the most common advice-giving roles. This is contrasted with an investigation into advice giving between enemies and then

strangers, revealing the differences in advice giving between those with pre-existing social bonds and those without. This chapter then questions whether there are roles in saga society outside of personal bonds where advice is a duty, firstly in the host-guest relationship. The same is determined for advice-giving practices of *goðar* (Icelandic chieftains) and foreign kings, which are juxtaposed as leadership roles in and outside of Iceland. The chapter ends with an examination of religious advice and advice from religious authorities.

However, some aspects of advice-giving practice are less dependent on who is giving the advice and more on the situation wherein the advice is given. This necessitates an investigation into conflict, the main reason that advice is required in the sagas. Advice is explored in the context of combat, circumstances when social hierarchies are unclear and ambushes. This is contrasted by analysing the role of advice giving as a moderating tool within communities. Finally, the use of advice in the context of law and legal procedure is examined, questioning the role of *lǫgmaðr* (‘lawman’) as the source of most legal advice.

Finally, this thesis presents its findings about the nature of advice-giving practices and social roles in saga literature, concluding that advice giving is both very present and very necessary to the depiction of social bonding and society structure in the *Íslendingasögur*.

Semantic Field Analysis of Advice Lexemes

This methodology relies on identifying advice lexemes, words in Old Norse textual sources that indicate the presence of advice in any particular scene. This allows for the rigorous and systematic determination of advice incidents. It was therefore necessary to analyse the semantic field of advice prior to creating a database of advice incidents in the sagas.

Ráð is by far the most common marker of advice in Old Norse literature, making it key to understanding advice in Old Norse prose and poetry. According to the ONP, the noun *ráð* appears 998 times in Norse prose, and the corresponding verb *ráða* appears 1106 times. The disparities in English and Norse definitions of advice are highlighted by the fact that advice is not the only definition of *ráð*.[1] Any semantic field analysis on the topic of advice in Norse literature is necessarily challenged by the numerous other definitions of *ráð*, the limited number of other words directly indicating advice, and the wide range of circumstances that are advised upon in Norse literature.

Snorri Sturluson's *Skáldskaparmál* (*c.*1220) provides a series of *heiti*, a kind of poetic synonym, that offers a starting place for ascertaining whether there is a Norse definition of advice. Mentions of advice or counsel among the *heiti* make it clear that Snorri associates advice closely with authority, wisdom, speech, and friendship. Although advice-related synonyms appear in a few of these lists, it is significant that Snorri does not begin any of his *heiti* with a headword meaning 'advice'.

The impreciseness of advice-related words is evident in their first mention in the *heiti*: 'heitir spekingr ráðvaldr'.[2] Cleasby and Vigfússon in *An Icelandic-English Dictionary* (C-V) translate the word *ráðvaldr* as 'wielder of authority'.[3] They define the noun *vald* as 'power, might, authority', whereas the verb *valda* is defined as 'to wield'. Snorri's use of *ráðvaldr* results in both an association of wise men with advice, and wise men with authority. However, the relationship between authority and advice may not be incidental, as Snorri also connects advice with friendship, something closely associated with power. Snorri writes that 'heitir ok vinr ok ráðunautr, ráðgjafi, máli, rúni, spjalli, aldaflopti, einkili, sessi, sessu-

[1] *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog*, University of Copenhagen, <https://onp.ku.dk> [accessed 07 September 2018].
[2] Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Skáldskaparmál*, ed. by Anthony Faulkes (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1998), p. 106, 'A wise man is called wielder of authority/ counsel'. All translations are my own unless stated otherwise.
[3] *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, Richard Cleasby and Guðbrandur Vigfússon, <http://norse.ulver.com/dct/cleasby/r.html> [last accessed 18 May 2021].

nautr.'[4] The first words in this list indicate that counsel is an essential element to friendship. Jesse Byock describes how friendship is instrumental to authority: 'power was dependent upon a network of kin, thingmen, advocacy and *vinfengi* ties.'[5] He earlier defines *vinfengi* as 'friendship'.[6] Miller suggests that Icelandic men often engineered friendships in order to have support in the event of a legal case: 'The work of assembling bodies was an ongoing enterprise. The groundwork coincided with all those activities by which bonds of kinship and affinity, clientage, and neighbourhood were maintained; it was the ongoing process of creating obligation.'[7] Therefore, having friends meant having supporters, advisers and some level of authority.[8]

Snorri includes the *heiti* for wisdom at the end of a particularly long list of synonyms for speech: 'Vit heitir speki, ráð, skilning, minni, ætlun, hyggjandi, tǫlvísi, langsæi, bragvísi, orðspeki, skǫrungskapr.'[9] Brittany Schorn, in examining this list for the purpose of defining wisdom, remarks that most of these terms relate to cognitive ability and learning. She adds that 'the two terms that come closest to suggesting actual action, *ráð* and *orðspeki*, both relate to speech, which is necessary for the expression of *vit* or *speki*, or at least to any discourse informed by it.'[10] Advice itself is primarily a speech act. Although advice given through body language can be easily imagined, such an action would more closely resemble a suggestion or instruction open to interpretation. The association between advice and wisdom is also fairly transparent, with the act of wisdom being shared through the giving of advice featuring prominently in *Hávamál*.[11]

Nevertheless, advice and wisdom are not inextricably linked in Norse language or literature. Sometimes, saga characters give bad but well-meant advice, which would indicate a lack of wisdom. Per Schorn's suggestion, *ráð* is used to express wisdom, although sometimes this is substituted for different phrasing. Wisdom is often self-contained, an internal knowledge that, unlike advice, is not necessarily shared. The Óðinn of Eddic poetry is an example of a deity who does not always share what he knows, a fact that he uses to his

[4] Snorri, *Edda: Skáldskaparmál*, p. 107, 'A friend is called counsel-mate, adviser, confidential friend, intimate friend, converser, old (?), fondling, seat-mate, bench-fellow'.
[5] Jesse Byock, *Viking Age Iceland* (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 250.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[7] Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*, p. 188.
[8] For further discussion of friendship in the Icelandic Saga Age, see Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Viking Friendship: The Social Bond in Iceland and Norway, c. 900–1300* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017).
[9] Snorri, *Edda*, p. 109, 'Wit is called wisdom, advice, understanding, memory, reason, intelligence, skill in numbers, far sight, subtlety, word-wit, nobleness.'
[10] Schorn, *Speaker and Authority in Old Norse Wisdom Poetry*, p. 17.
[11] *Hávamál*, in *Edda: Die Lieder Des Codex Regius Nebst Verwandten Denkmälern*, ed. by Hans Kuhn (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 1962), 17–44 [most recent edition available].

advantage in *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Hervarar saga* when asking a riddle only he can answer.[12] Wisdom therefore only becomes advice when expressed.

Although the *Íslendingasögur* constitute most of the primary sources analysed for this study, other works of Old Norse literature are also used as objects of comparison for the purposes of analysing the semantic field of advice-giving lexemes in Old Norse. This is in order to ascertain the ways in which particular lexemes are used across the Norse language. It is therefore important to note if the words are used consistently across Norse literature or are specific to the *Íslendingasögur*, although advice lexemes in the *Íslendingasögur* are prioritised as examples here. Information about Norse poetry is gained from the *Skaldic Project*, an online database, whereas Eddic poetry is accessed through *A Concordance to Eddic Poetry* by Robert Kellogg and *Die Lieder der Älteren Edda (Sæmundar Edda)* edited by Karl Hildebrand and Theodor Möbius.[13] The Old Norse prose represented in this semantic field analysis is accessed through *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog*, the ONP.[14] Initial definitions of words are from such dictionaries as the C-V, the ONP, *Lexicon poeticum antiquæ linguæ Septentrionalis* edited by Sveinbjörn Egilsson and Finnur Jónsson, and *Ordbog over det gamle norske sprog* by Johan Fritzner.[15] Etymological information is gathered from Jan de Vries' *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*.[16] These resources made it possible to ascertain the meanings most commonly utilised by linguistic scholars before an examination of advice lexemes could take place.

The Lexemes *Ráð* and *Ráða*

As previously mentioned, the topic of advice in Old Norse prose or poetry cannot be evaluated without examining what the word *ráð* means in context to a Norse audience. *Ráð* is a noun, cognate to Runic Norwegian *wa[n]ðaraðas*, Old English *reed*/ *ræd*, Old Frisian *rēd*, Old Saxon *rād*, Old High German *rāt*, and Sanskrit *rādkas*. Most dictionaries, most notably

[12] *Vafþrúðnismál*, ed. by Tim William Machan, 2nd edn (Durham: Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2008). *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, ed. by G. Turville-Petre (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1956).
[13] *Skaldic Poetry Project* or *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. by Margaret Clunies Ross et al. [accessed 07 September 2018], <http://skaldic.abdn.ac.uk>. Robert Kellogg, *A Concordance to Eddic Poetry* (East Lansing, Mich.: Colleagues Press, 1988). *Hávamál*, in *Die Lieder der Älteren Edda (Sæmundar Edda)*, ed. by Karl Hildebrand and Theodor Möbius (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1876).
[14] *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog*.
[15] *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, Cleasby and Vigfússon; *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog*. *Lexicon poeticum antiquæ linguæ Septentrionalis/ Ordbog over det norsk-islandsk skjaldesprog*, ed. by Sveinbjörn Egilsson and Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Møller, 1913); Johan Fritzner, *Ordbog over det gamle norske sprog* (Oslo: Feilberg & Landmark, 1957).
[16] Jan De Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Leiden: Brill, 1957).

C-V, agree that the foremost definition of *ráð* is 'advice' or 'counsel'. However, the meaning of *ráð* is not parallel with the modern English word 'advice'. Most dictionaries suggest additional context-dependent definitions for the lexeme *ráð*. Aside from 'advice', C-V also defines *ráð* as 'a settled plan, foresight', if plural; 'wise, true counsel, what is advisable'; and, 'consent, will, agreement, wish'. C-V also adds that in cases when *ráð* denotes action, it is also potentially translated as 'household affairs, management, business' usually only if plural; 'a state of life, condition'; 'marriage'; or, in a personal sense, 'a counsellor, a council'. De Vries' *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* defines the lexeme as 'rat; entschluss; lage; haushalt; heirat' (advice; decision; circumstance/ location; household; marriage). The *Lexicon Poeticum* defines *ráð* as 'meningstilkendegivelse om en sag' (a statement of opinion on a case). Fritzner's *Ordbog* defines the term as 'hvad der i et vist Tilfælde er eller synes raadeligt, tilraadeligt' (in a particular case what is or seems advisable, advisable).

With such a wide range of definitions, it could be questioned whether *ráð* has a particularly fixed meaning. To answer this, the present analysis will examine examples of *ráð* in Old Norse prose and evaluate the different meanings of *ráð*, how they can be discerned contextually and grammatically, and the potential implications of alternative definitions of *ráð* on any study of advice in Old Norse. This study simultaneously examines the lexeme *ráða*, the verb corresponding to *ráð*. Finally, this analysis will investigate a few compounds involving either *ráð* or *ráða* to conclude what semantic effect a *ráð*-related morpheme produces within a word. The addition of the *ráð* morpheme most often makes an adjectival compound advice-related, regardless of where it appears in the compound, which is a convincing argument for 'advice' being the most common meaning of *ráð*.

In most contexts, if someone is following or accepting *ráð*, it is difficult to differentiate whether the person is accepting advice (a suggestion) or a plan (more detailed steps that the listener may feel obligated to carry out). The two concepts in Old Norse are sometimes inextricable. In *Eyrbyggja saga*, Þorgerðr approaches a number of men in turn to help her avenge the death of her husband, Vigfúss. After one rejection, a man called Vermundr promises some support and tells her who to approach next and how. When Þorgerðr goes to one potential supporter, taking her husband's decapitated head to shame the man into support, he capitulates but says that 'sé ek, at þetta eru ráð Vermundar, er þú ferr nú með'.[17] The reader is already aware that Vermundr did not merely suggest *who* to seek help

[17] *Eyrbyggja saga,* in *Eyrbyggja saga, Grænlendinga saga,* ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson, Íslenzk fornrit, 4 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1935), pp. 1–184 (p. 69), 'I see that it is the advice [plural] of Vermundr that you are now following.'

from, but also *how* to do it, suggesting the addition of Vigfúss' head as part of an emotional ploy. The *ráð* of Vermundr can therefore be translated not only as 'advice' or 'counsel' but also as a 'plan' or 'tactic'. This incident will be examined in more detail below.

Not surprisingly the word 'plan' is already represented by a *ráð*-related compound in Old Norse dictionaries. C-V defines *ráðagörð* as 'a taking councel [sic], plan, design'. This proposed translation for this compound can be contested to some extent. *Görð* stems from *göra*/*gera*, which is most commonly translated as 'to make' or 'to do', and not 'to take'. Therefore, a more literal translation of *ráðagörð* might be 'the making of a plan'. However, where variations of *ráðagörð* are used in prose, it is often focalised through or said by one who is receiving a plan, and this could explain why C-V defines the term as 'taking counsel'. In *Gull-Þóris saga*, when Þórir *sneri* comes as a supplicant seeking out Heimlaug *völva* (a prophetess), he gives her gold and 'bað hana liðveislu ok ráðagerðar.'[18] There are certain connections between 'liðveislu' (support) and advice that will be analysed subsequently. In *Laxdœla saga*, Halldórr tells someone that he expects him to join an attack on Bolli. Halldórr anticipates the challenge, saying 'sýnisk mér Bolli torsóttligr; hann hefir mart manna um sik, en er sjálfr inn mesti garpr; þar skortir ok eigi vitrligr ráðagørðir, er þau eru Guðrún ok Ósvífr.'[19] In both these examples, the plan in question could be termed 'advice', because they have been specifically sought from a *völva*, in the former case, and from people well-known for their wisdom, in the latter. Bolli's *ráðagørðir* in particular is held up as an advantage that will make him difficult to defeat in combat and therefore may not only indicate plans invented by Guðrún and Ósvífr but also a battle strategy.

Giving advice and creating a plan are further conflated in *Njáls saga*. When Hallgerðr begins detailing to several men where and how to kill Þórðr, she begins her speech with 'nú mun ek gefa ráðit til.'[20] At this point, she uses *ráð* with a suffixed definite article. In English, if the definite article is to be translated, the translation must be 'the plan', as 'the advice' is not idiomatic. To translate for the predominant sense of *ráð* as 'advice', it would be necessary to say 'the piece of advice [that you need for this]'. It is more appropriate then that this should be translated as a premeditated plan. When she finishes, readers are told that 'þeir

[18] *Þorskfirðinga saga eða Gull-Þóris saga*, in *Harðar saga, Bárðar saga, Þorskfirðinga saga, Flóamanna saga*, ed. by Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 13 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1991), pp. 175–227 (p. 220), 'asked her for support and a plan/ advice making'.
[19] *Laxdœla saga*, in *Laxdœla saga, Halldórs þættir Snorrasonar, Stúfs þáttr*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 5 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1934), pp. 3–248 (p. 163), 'Bolli seems to me hard to overcome; he has many men around him, and is himself a dauntless man. Nor is he short of wise plan making, both from Guðrún and Ósvífr.'
[20] *Brennu-Njáls saga*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 12 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1954), p. 107, 'Now I will give [the] advice to you [how to do it].'

játtu, at þessi ráðagerð skyldi fram koma.'[21] In this instance, the *ráð* and *ráðagerð* are clearly associated, as Hallgerðr refers to this set of instructions with the word *ráðit*, and then the men are referred to agreeing with her *ráðagerð*. This plan of vengeance, however, the ultimate goal being more for Hallgerðr's benefit than for the avengers', could perhaps be called a plan or a strategy more than it could well-meant advice.

Nonetheless, advice is not always the same as a plan. The refrain of 'ráðumk þér, Loddfáfnir, | en þú ráð nemir' is found in twenty-one verses in the Eddic poem *Hávamál*.[22] The speaker assures the listener that he will profit from this advice. A series of statements follow this refrain in each verse, from warnings about dangerous women to guidelines about safe travel. None of these instructions to the listener are concrete or immediate enough to constitute the creation of plans, nor do all these recommendations follow a consecutive pattern, as a strategy would. Therefore, the circumstances in which *ráð* can mean 'plan' instead of 'advice' are dependent on context, and there are many occasions when translating the word as 'advice' or 'counsel' is more appropriate.

Up to this point, this analysis creates the impression that *ráð* is given only in speech acts involving two people. However, in Old Norse, the lexeme *ráð* covers both 'advice', which necessitates at least one listener, and a 'decision', which is often an internal process. One of the translations given for *ráð* in de Vries' *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* is 'entschluss' (decision), although no similar definitions are supplied by C-V. For example, in *Njáls saga*, after being scolded by his brother, 'Glúmr svaraði vel ok brá þó á sitt ráð.'[23] It would be inappropriate in English to say that Glúmr takes his own advice unless he had counselled someone else to do something that he later does himself. Therefore, in this instance, *ráð* likely represents a 'decision'.

Ráð can also be used in the context of urging someone to make their own decision, thereby implying that he or she should substitute his or her personal 'decision' for the speaker's 'advice'. In *Laxdœla saga*, after Melkorka suggests that she marry, mostly for the benefit of her son Óláfr, 'Óláfr bað móður sína eina ráða.'[24] In the same saga, when Ásgeirr is deciding whether to marry his daughter Hrefna to Kjartan, Hrefna 'bað [...] fǫður sinn ráða.'[25] It is appropriate to point out that one of the definitions that C-V gives for the verb

[21] *Brennu-Njáls saga*, pp. 107–8, 'They [the men] agreed that this plan ought to be carried out.'
[22] See verses 111–116, 118–121, 124–131, 133–134, and 136 of *Hávamál*, in *Die Lieder der Älteren Edda (Sæmundar Edda)*, ed. by Karl Hildebrand and Theodor Möbius (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1876), pp. 102–106, 'I counsel you, Loddfafnir, that you take advice'.
[23] *Brennu-Njáls saga*, 'Glúmr answered well but went by his own decision'.
[24] *Laxdœla saga*, p. 60, 'Óláfr told his mother alone to decide.'
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 170, 'told her father to decide.'

ráða is ‘to rule, prevail, have one’s own will, as also to manage, lead, have authority, management, and similar usages’, although it does not provide ‘to decide’ as a definition. In these examples, it is most suitable to translate *ráða* not as ‘to rule’, but ‘to make a ruling’ or ‘to decide’. In both cases, the characters urging this are essentially in agreement with what they know their parent will choose: Óláfr knows his mother’s proposed plan is designed to secure him finances and status, and Hrefna knows her father will choose in favour of the marriage, which she desires. Therefore, a phrase indicating that someone should make a ruling or a decision is at least sometimes a formulation of polite speech, an acknowledgement of the agency and authority of the planner to make a decision that the listener has already agreed with.

Ráð in use gives few implications about the number of people involved, even when it is translated as ‘advice’. As indicated above, *ráð* can be an internal decision or plan made by a single person. There are also two- and three-part *ráð* structures, or deferred *ráð* structures. This is illustrated above in the example from *Eyrbyggja saga*, where Þorgerðr is told by someone to approach Arnkell for support and advice. In *Njáls saga*, pertaining to a lawsuit, Hrútr asks Gunnarr what advice Njáll has for Gunnarr. Gunnarr replies that ‘hann bað mik finna ykkr bræðr ok segja svá, að eitt ráð myndi honum um þat sýnask sem ykkr.’[26] In the *Íslendingasögur*, sometimes an individual gives counsel recommending the advice seeker approach another certain person for guidance. In this way the giving of *ráð* is deferred or prolonged and involves more participants than the original advice seeker and giver. The particular social structures involved in such incidents will be investigated subsequently.

Whereas most of the previous examples of advice giving are benevolent, under particular circumstances there is an association between *ráð* and coldness. Typically this is when the *ráð* in question seems particularly cruel or targetted and is designed primarily to benefit the aims of the adviser and not that of the recipient. It is given the adjective *kaldr*, or cold, and is sometimes expressed as the compound *kaldráðr*. Cold counsel is associated less with advising and more with acts of goading or whetting.[27] This is epitomised by the most famous usage of the proverb ‘eru köld kvenna ráð’ in *Njáls saga*.[28] Contrary to what much scholarship on the topic of cold counsel implies, it is not a term used exclusively to refer to advice of a female origin. In the saga of Magnús Erlingsson in *Heimskringla*, the male

[26] *Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 131, ‘He told me to come to you brothers and say that he would agree with whatever advice you had.’
[27] See Sarah M. Anderson and Karen Swenson, eds, *Cold Counsel: The Women of Old Norse Literature and Mythology: A Collection of Essays* (London: Routledge, 2002).
[28] *Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 292, ‘cold are the counsels of women’.

Erlingr is described as ‘kalldráðr’, alongside the adjective ‘grimmr’.[29] In Old Norse, ‘grimmr’ when applied to people does not necessarily carry negative connotations. The syntactic closeness of these two descriptive words likely indicates that, similar to ‘grimmr’, ‘kalldráðr’ carries connotations of seriousness and ferocity. In *Laxdœla saga*, Þorgils realises he has been tricked out of a promised marriage through a plan devised by Snorri, saying ‘gǫrla skil ek, hvaðan alda sjá rennr undir; hafa mér þaðan jafnan kǫld ráð komit; veit ek, at þetta eru ráð Snorra goða.’[30] Here he gives liquid associations to cold counsels, but there is little indication elsewhere that counsels are necessarily cold due to liquidity. However, in this context, the ‘kǫld ráð’ in question likely refers to Snorri’s advice or plan, rather than a whetting episode. Therefore the addition of the adjective *kaldr* does not necessarily restrict the scope of meaning for *ráð* to non-advice semantics.

This example underlines the importance of contextual clues for determining whether *ráð* relates to advice. C-V stipulates that, if plural, *ráð* can refer to ‘a settled plan, foresight’, or ‘household affairs, management, business’. However, the citation above — ‘þetta eru ráð Snorra goða’ — demonstrates that a plural *ráð* can also mean counsels. It is important to note that there is no established grammatical structure that reveals when *ráð* certainly refers to advice. As this present analysis deals primarily with advice semantics, it will not explore alternative definitions of *ráð* in depth. Although the most common translation of *ráð* is advice, *ráð* is not the most frequent word used to refer to any of its alternative definitions in C-V. For example, although *ráð* can indicate a household, or household affairs, the word most used in literature for this purpose is *bú*. However, one alternative definition for *ráð* does deserve special attention, and that is the third definition given by C-V: ‘wise, true counsel, what is advisable’. Fritzner’s *Ordbog* agrees with this somewhat. However, the definition *hvad der i et vist Tilfælde er eller synes raadeligt, tilraadeligt* (in a particular case what is or seems advisable, advisable) may better suit the word *ráðligra* or *ráðligast*, both words commonly used to introduce concepts that are seen by a character as the best course of action.

To be ‘advisable’, an action might equally be described as ‘wise’ in English. As mentioned above, it is clear from Snorri’s *heiti* that *ráð* and wisdom have certain associations in Old Norse.[31] The introduction of a notably wise character in the *Íslendingasögur* is

[29] *Heimskringla* in *Codex Frisianus: En Samling af norske Konge-Sagaer,* ed. by C. R. Unger (London: British Library, 1871), p. 381, ‘cold-counselled’, ‘grim/stern’. Unger’s edition of *Heimskringla* is cited here, as it is the Codex Frisianus text that provides this phrase.
[30] *Laxdœla saga,* p. 195, ‘I can see clearly from where the current came from under this wave; they have generally been cold to me. I know that these are the counsels of Snorri the *Goði*.’
[31] Snorri, *Edda*, p. 109.

typically accompanied by some mention of *ráð*. The introduction of the titular character of *Njáls saga* follows this pattern:

> Hann var lögmaðr svá mikill, at engi fannsk hans jafningi, vitr var hann ok forspár, heilráðr ok góðgjarn, ok varð allt at ráði, þat er hann réð mönnum, hógværr ok drenglyndr, langsýnn ok langminnigr; hann leysti hvers manns vandræði, er á hans fund kom.[32]

Although Njáll is *vitr* (wise) and *heilráðr* (sound of advice), the inclusion of both terms in this description, in a literature that rarely describes its characters with much depth, implies that these are different, albeit related, qualities. It later becomes evident that Njáll is thought intelligent because his advice is well-crafted and usually beneficial to the receiver. This ability to advise well is closely associated with his gift of foresight, something that will also be examined. *Speki* is the only word appearing before *ráð* that Snorri lists as a synonym for wisdom, but these lexemes do not have identical meanings. *Spekiráð*, a compound of the two words, exists in such texts as *Vǫlsunga saga*, when Sigurðr implores Brynhildr to teach more 'spekerad'.[33] Previously, Brynhildr had instructed Sigurðr in verse to learn runes with practical uses, while also imparting knowledge about these runes. If *speki* here is 'wise', the *ráð* of *spekiráð* in this context is almost certainly 'advice'.

The use of *ráð* in verse also highlights the usage of this lexeme in poetry. Searching the term *ráð* in the *Skaldic Poetry Project* finds that, across all the poetry in the database, the lexeme appears 113 times across a total of 127,911 stored words. Of these, fifty-five are translatable as variations of 'advice' or 'counsel'. Other definitions are much less consistent. There are no remarkable discrepancies between how *ráð* acts in skaldic poetry in comparison to Norse prose. In Eddic poetry, the most remarkable difference is that the source of *ráð* is often paranormal or divine. In the Eddic poem *Vafþrúðnismál*, *ráð* is mostly used to mean 'rule'. The exception is the very first line of the poem, where Óðinn asks for his wife's advice: 'Ráþ þú mér nú, Frigg'.[34] Curiously, this phrasing seems phatic, or at least

[32] *Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 57, 'He was so great a lawman that his equal could not be found. He was wise and prophetic, sound of advice and benevolent, and the advice that he gave to people all turned out well. He was modest and noble-tempered, seeing far ahead and remembering long; he solved the problems of whoever came to visit him.' See Chapter III: Conflict.
[33] *Vǫlsunga saga*, in *Vǫlsunga saga ok Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, ed. by Magnus Olsen, *STUAGNL*, 36 (Copenhagen: 1906–1908), p. 54.
[34] *Vafþrúðnismál*, p. 59, 'Advise me now, Frigg'.

expositional, because when Frigg replies that Óðinn should remain safely at home, he ignores this and continues expressing his desire to test his wit against the eponymous giant.

Ráð often appears as part of advice-related compounds. When this occurs, the compound is usually adjectival and describes a person. Because of the high number of *ráð*-compounds in Norse literature, this analysis will restrict itself to only a few examples. C-V defines *ráðsnjallr* as 'sagacious, wise in counsel'. It also provides the compounds *ráðsnotr* and *ráðspakr*, which it suggests are directly equivalent to *ráðsnjallr*. The word *snjallr* is defined separately as 'eloquent, well-spoken', whereas *snotr* and *spakr* can both be translated as 'wise'. Snorri includes a derivation of *ráðsnjallr* in one of his *sannkenningar* (true epithets), saying that 'þetta kollum ver sannkeningar at kalla mann speki mann. ætlanar mann. orþspakan. raðsniallan.'[35] Just like the previously discussed *heiti* that included the lexeme *ráð*, this list is very heavily associated with wisdom. Whereas an *ætlanar mann* (man of thought) has connotations of inward thoughts and intentions, the term 'orþspakan' (word-wise) has the impression of presenting wisdom outwards as speech. It is therefore very probable that *ráðsnjallr* is likewise a complimentary term incorporating elements of the internal formulation of wisdom and the external expression of that wisdom as counsel.

There are two notable *ráð* compounds that suggest a pliant nature and a willingness to accept the advice of others. The first of these terms is *ráðþægr*, which C-V defines as 'open to advice, pliable'. In *Orkneyinga saga*, Erlendr is described thus: 'Hann var inn manvensti maþr ok milldr af fe, bliþr ok raþægr ok allra manna vinselstr af sinum mannum; hann hafþi sveit micla.'[36] None of the attributes given to Erlendr are unflattering, and if his traits may be taken as causal rather than coincidental, it is likely that his generous and 'raþægr' nature is responsible for his popularity. As a leader, the inclination to listen to the counsel of others is portrayed in Norse literature as a desirable characteristic, although not necessarily common. Openness to advice or instruction is not merely a leader-like trait. C-V defines *auðráðr* as 'easily guided, pliable, yielding'. This definition does not mention 'advice' or 'counsel', and indeed *auðráðr* has different connotations to *ráðþægr*. In *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*, readers are informed that 'þau Hávarðr ok Bjargey unnu Óláfi mikit; hann var þeim ok hlýðinn ok

[35] *Snorre Sturlassons Edda: Uppsala-handskriften*, ed. by Anders Grape, Gottfrid Kallstenius and Olof Thorell, 2 (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1977), 'That we call true kennings, to call a man a wise man, a thoughtful man, wise-speaking, wise in counsel', p. 76.
[36] *Orkneyinga saga*, ed. by Sigurður Nordal, *STUAGNL*, 40 (Copenhagen: Møller, 1916), 'He was a very promising man, and generous with money, gentle, open to advice, and popular with his men. He had a large following', p. 264.

auðráðr.'[37] Hávarðr and Bjargey, in return for the love they give to their child, receive his obedience and his willingness to learn from them. In terms of the parent-child relationship, it would be strange to describe Óláfr as 'open to advice', rather than 'obedient', but the result, that Óláfr listens and accepts doing what is suggested, is relatively similar. C-V defines *auð-* as an adverbial prefix to a large number of adjectives, adverbs, and participles, meaning 'easy'. Therefore, in a more literal sense, *auðráðr* may mean 'easily advised'.

Not all adjectival *ráð* compounds are complimentary. *Ráðlauss* is defined by C-V as 'shiftless, having lost one's head', whereas *ráðalauss* is defined as 'shiftless, helpless, having no resource'. In *Ljósvetninga saga,* when Hrólfr tells Skegg-Broddi his plan for dueling Eyjólfr, if he cannot prosecute him successfully, Skegg-Broddi says that 'þú ert hetja mikil, ok ertu eigi ráðalauss'.[38] Here, Skegg-Broddi clearly approves of Hrólfr's plan, but whether the phrase 'eigi ráðalauss' compliments Hrólfr's current demonstration of his ability to strategise, or compliments him in general, is vague. Although C-V defines *lauss* as 'loose', 'advice-loose' has little meaning in English and *ráðalauss* is more appropriately translated as 'without advice' or 'without personal resourcefulness'. Although the 'resource' is in this case could refer to problem-solving skills, it is also possible to interpret advice as a non-material resource. However, the definition provided by C-V for *ráðalauss* as 'having no resource' is not necessarily without merit. Advice, as demonstrated by previous examples, has value, whether as a prized trait in a follower or friend, or as something that is sought out in dire situations, and therefore is something that is in demand. Thus, advice is perhaps perceived as a resource in Norse literature. Being without advice is potentially equivocal to being without an important resource.

Although most are adjectives, some *ráð* compounds fall into other word classes. In Norse literature, the noun *ráðrúm* is most used in a legal context. According to the ONP, *Grágás* uses this compound five times, usually as part of the phrase 'ef ráð rúm er at þvi'.[39] Literally, *ráðrúm* means 'advice-space' or 'advice-room', and C-V translates it as 'respite for taking counsel'. The first instance of *ráðrúm* in *Grágás* pertains to proper baptism practice. If there is not enough *ráðrúm*, the baptiser may dip the child only once or simply sprinkle

[37] *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*, ed. by Björn K. Þórólfsson, *STUAGNL*, 47 (Copenhagen: J. Jørgensen, 1923), 'Hávarðr and Bjargey loved Óláfr a lot; he was also obedient and pliable to them', p. 2.
[38] *Ljósvetninga saga*, in *Ljósvetninga Saga með Þáttum: Reykdœla Saga ok Víga-Skútu, Hreiðars þáttr*, ed. by Björn Sigfússon, Íslenzk Fornrit, 10 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1940), pp. 1–147, 'You are a gallant man and not without resources,' p. 102.
[39] *Grágás: Elzta lögbók íslendinga ... eptir skinnbókinni í bókasafni konungs 1–2* ("Ia-b"), ed. by Vilhjálmur Finsen (Copenhagen: Brødrene Berling, 1852), p. 50, 'if there is time enough for that'.

water.[40] The second appearance of the compound is in relation to a chieftain nominating a man to court. He is to have named him before the sun comes to Þingvöllr 'ef ráð rúm er at þvi'.[41] In the context of *ráðrúm* usage in *Grágás*, the succinctness of the text leaves it ambiguous whether the phrase 'ef ráð rúm er at þvi' is concerned with the involved parties having enough time to consult, or enough time to enact the next part of the legal proceeding. It should, however, be noted that there are a few alternative words for 'a period of time' in Old Norse, such as *stund*, and therefore the use of *ráðrúm* in this legal context is likely to be deliberately and specifically chosen.

In summary, the lexeme *ráð* is the closest equivalent to modern English 'advice' yet has a far broader meaning. This does not mean that it has no use in determining advice incidents. Context remains the most vital aspect to translating *ráð*. *Ráð* as a lexeme connects the internal decision-making process to the external act of communicating wisdom to someone else. A commonly used word in Norse literature, the study of *ráð* reveals the core values of Old Norse-speaking societies. Good *ráð* is nearly always associated with speech acts, effective leadership, friendship, kinship, and wisdom.

The Lexeme *Forsjá*

Although *ráð* and *ráð*-related words form most advice-related lexemes in Old Norse, there are a few other words that approach a similar meaning in specific contexts. For example, 'advice' is not the standard translation of the noun *forsjá*, but *forsjá* can have associations with *ráð*. C-V identifies *forsjá* as 'foresight, prevision'. To reduce this to its components, C-V defines the prefix *for-* as meaning 'before, above, in the widest sense, local, temp., and metaph. furthering or the like' and *sjá* primarily as 'to see'. In modern English, it could be most closely correlated to the concept of foresight. *Forsjá* appears most commonly in text when the future is predicted, either in the prophetic and paranormal sense, or in preparations for a future event. However, aside from *ráð*, and a few words that are discussed below, it is one of the only other words that ever refers directly to advice in the Old Norse language.

Forsjá and *ráð* are occasionally associated in literature. In *Laxdœla saga*, Guðrún tells Snorri that she will only consent to the marriage between herself and Þorkell that he is encouraging if her sons also agree with it. However, when presenting the idea to her sons, she

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 6.
[41] *Ibid.*, p. 50, 'if there is time enough for that'.

says that ‘mjǫk munu vér hlíta forsjá Snorra um þetta mál, því at oss hafa þín ráð heil verit.’[42] Here, *forsjá* and *ráð* are parallel concepts, used as synonyms. The sons should listen to his current *forsjá* because his *ráð* in the past has been beneficial. Despite this, it is still possible that *forsjá* means something closer to ‘provision’ than ‘advice’, although ‘provision’ is not a definition provided by C-V. Marriage can be interpreted as an economic and social resource, and the act of ensuring the marriage of single relatives as giving them extra networks of support and subsistence. This is particularly noteworthy elsewhere in the same saga, when Unnr is determined to have Óláfr married before she dies and Óláfr ‘tók því vel ok kvezk hennar forsjá hlíta mundu um þat mál.’[43] In this context, it is unclear whether Óláfr knows that Unnr will soon pass away. It is therefore ambiguous whether he is treating her *forsjá* as predictive, that he should marry before she dies, or as providing, that she simply wants to ensure he has entered a stable union. In either situation, it would be appropriate to translate *forsjá* as ‘foresight’, ‘provision’ or ‘advice’.

Forsjá is used relatively often in the specific context of encouraging, arranging or suggesting a marriage between two others. In *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, Ingibiǫrg tells King Óláfr that he has treated her well and cared for her like a brother since she has lived with him, and therefore ‘nu fyrir þvi uil ek íata yðuari forsea vm gíaforð mítt.’[44] In this context, there is ‘gíaforð’, a distinct word meaning ‘marriage’, so it is unlikely that ‘forsea’ can be translated specifically as ‘marriage advice’ without supporting context. Additionally, in certain cases the person listening is in a definite position to refuse the *forsjá*, but in the circumstances around Óláfr and Ingibiǫrg, where the latter is dependent on the former, refusal is much less an option. In these instances, it might be more appropriate to translate *forsjá* less as ‘advice’, because the listener has little power to make a choice in the case of an arranged marriage, but as some combination of ‘provision’, ‘instruction’ and ‘foresight’.

In the context of advice, *forsjá* does not always refer to the circumstances surrounding marriage. In *Ljósvetninga saga* Gellir advises Þorvarðr not to go to court, because ‘meir hyggr þú nú á ofrkapp en forsjá, er þú gengr at, slíkt ofrefli sem fyrir er.’[45] In this context, *forsjá* could easily be translated as ‘foresight’, because Þorvarðr is considering what Gellir thinks is a bad decision, and therefore is not anticipating the consequences, or not being

[42] *Laxdœla saga*, p. 201, ‘We should very much trust Snorri’s foresight about this matter, because your counsel has been good to us.’
[43] *Ibid.*, p. 11, ‘took this well and said that he would trust her foresight about this matter.’
[44] *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, ed. by Ólafur Halldórsson, 1–3 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1958–2000), p. 177, ‘I willingly, therefore, submit to your advice on my marriage’.
[45] *Ljósvetninga saga*, p. 91, ‘Many think that you are now going about this with more stubbornness than foresight, considering the overwhelming odds.’

foresighted. However, Gellir is still effectively giving advice for how Þorvarðr should not behave, and therefore is telling him that he is acting against 'what is advisable'. In many instances where *forsjá* is used to indicate a type of foresight that is not confined to paranormal prophecy, it may be translated as 'what is advisable', because foresight, which prepares for the future, is itself 'what is advisable'.

Curiously, *forsjá* is not used in skaldic diction, but the related adjective *forsjáll* is. *Forsjáll* is glossed by the *Skaldic Poetry Project* as 'foresighted', or as '*for-* ((prefix)) "exceedingly"' and '*sjáll* (adj.) "sighted"'. In *Hugsvinnsmál*, an anonymous translation of the Latin poem *Dicta* or *Disticha Catonis*, verses give snippets of advice, but *forsjáll* does not itself mean 'advice'. In the verse 'um lítaz/ þarf maðr á alla vegu/ ok við villu varaz;/ glöggþekkinn/ skyldi gumna hverr/ ok fróðr ok forsjáll vera', *forsjáll* appears as a part of a list.[46] In addition to being *glöggþekkinn* and *fróðr*, it is another way a man can be wise, and in this manner *forsjáll* acts similarly to *ráð*, as an aspect of wisdom, reenforcing the association between wisdom and advice.

Although *forsjá* rarely translates directly to 'advice', it is strongly associated in Norse prose with the act of advising, because of its connotations of having some future knowledge it would be prudent to adhere to. It does not by itself mean 'marriage advice' but is commonly used in the context of advising on a marriage. From this, *forsjá* has implications of 'providing' and 'provision', as the act of arranging or encouraging a marriage can be viewed as providing for someone's future.

The Lexeme *Tillag*

Unlike *ráð*, *tillag* is not a common word. *Tillag* is a noun that C-V translates primarily as 'a help, contribution'. C-V also gives *tillag* the secondary definition of 'counsel, advice'. At times, these definitions are interchangeable, as 'counsel' can be considered 'a help', yet there are certain circumstances in literature where the use of *tillag* is more clearly either verbal advice or a physical act of support. Much like the word *forsjá*, there are circumstances when *tillag* translates well to 'provision', which is itself a kind of support but not advice. For example, in *Færeyinga saga*, 'til lag' is used to indicate 'help' or 'provisions' twice in close proximity. When Sigmundr is given a ship and armed men by Jarl Hákon, 'Sigmundr

[46] Anonymous, *Hugsvinnsmál*, ed. by Tarrin Wills and Stefanie Gropper, in *Poetry on Christian Subjects*, ed. by Margaret Clunies Ross, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages, 7 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 358–449 (p. 409), 'A man has to look around in all directions and beware of falsehood; every man should be clear-sighted and wise and foresighted.' Translation of normalised verse by Wills and Gropper.

þakkade j(arli) ok segir Æireki til lag fodr síns.'[47] The *tillag* to which Sigmundr refers is ships and men, with no indication that he is being given any verbal advice aside from the subtle encouragement of his venture that such gift giving might imply.

However, in other sagas, *tillag* does not have a meaning so evidently connected to physical contributions. In *Njáls saga*, a saga with a notable selection of advising characters, *tillag* and variations of *tillag* are almost exclusively indicative of 'counsel'. In one description, the reader is informed that 'Hrútr var vænn maðr, mikill ok sterkr, vígr vel ok hógværr í skapi, manna vitrastr, harðráðr við óvini sína, en tillagagóðr inna stœrri mála.'[48] In this instance, *tillagagóðr* stands in antithesis to *harðráðr*, implying a parallel meaning between the morphemes *tillaga* and *ráðr*, if *harðr* and *góðr* are to be considered opposites in context. It should therefore be acknowledged that, although in most cases *tillag* does not translate as 'advice', as in *Færeyinga saga*, occasionally the help or contribution that is being given is in fact 'counsel'.

The Lexeme *Gæta*

Gæta, a verb defined by C-V firstly as 'to watch, tend, take care of' is unusual as an advice lexeme. Most Old Norse dictionaries do not provide any translations of *gæta ráðsins* related to advising, except for a single mention in C-V that in the form of *getask um e-t* it can be translated as 'to deliberate or take counsel about'. However, the ONP does not provide any examples of *gæta* in use this way and there are otherwise no prose examples of this. Nevertheless, the Eddic poem *Vǫluspá* contains a refrain in which gods seek advice from each other: 'Þá gengu regin ǫll | á rǫkstóla, | ginnheilug goð, | ok um þat gættusk'.[49] Counsel, or advice, is at times closely associated with king's followers and royal council. The reflexive use of *gættusk* in *Vǫluspá* conveys a similar idea of mutual advising among high-status individuals, although the fact that it only exists in Eddic poetry could signal that this use of *gæta* is either particularly formal or exclusively poetic.

[47] *Færeyinga saga*, ed. by Ólafur Halldórsson, Rit, 30 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1987), p. 39, 'Sigmundr thanked the earl and told Eiríkr what help his father had given him'.
[48] *Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 6, 'Hrútr was a handsome man, tall and strong, well skilled in arms, and mild of temper; the wisest of men – hard in counsel against his foes, but good in counsel on great matters'.
[49] See verses 6, 9, 27, 29 of *Vǫluspá*, in *Die Lieder der Älteren Edda (Sæmundar Edda)*, pp. 2–8, 'Then all the gods went | to their ruling seats, | high holy gods, | and consulted each other [took counsel together]'.

A Brief Analysis of Speech-related Lexemes

Although advice lexemes are certainly important to developing a rigorous methodology that defines what may be counted an advice incident, the existence of advice in Old Norse texts is not always indicated through specific advice lexemes. It is not uncommon for an advising speech act to occur signposted only by the lexemes that typically indicate speech. In many cases, these are only later described as 'advice', using the above advice lexemes. An example of this is found in *Hœnsna-Þóris saga*. It is during a conversation with his son Hersteinn that 'Blund-Ketill svarar' with instructions of where to go and whom to seek out, as well as an offer of future help.[50] Although Blund-Ketill does not 'advise' but rather 'answers' him, soon 'Hersteinn kvað þat gott ráð ok drengiligt.'[51] Although this utterance was not originally introduced with a specific advice lexeme, the text informs the reader that Blund-Ketill's words can be considered *ráð*. It follows then that speech acts occur that do follow advice conventions, but which are described in only speech-related lexemes.

In C-V, the verb *tala* is defined as 'to talk', and for the most part it is not used to indicate that statement is intended to advise. However, the speech it refers to is sometimes, almost coincidentally, advice. This is most noticeable when a text portrays advice that comes from a general or group source, rather than a single speaker. It is a regular occurrence for Norse literature, particularly the *Íslendingasögur*, to represent the opinions and rumours of the general populace as belonging to *margir* or *margir men* (many people). Although these terms are usually employed to depict shifts in a character's reputation, by presenting what *margir* think of them, occasionally *margir* will be shown to give advice. In *Laxdœla saga*, Guðrún tells Gestr that in a dream she saw herself wearing a headdress that she did not think suited her, and 'var ek fúsari at breyta faldinum, en margir tǫlðu um, at ek skylda þat eigi gera. En ek hlýdda ekki á þat.'[52] Gestr tells her that the headdress is symbolic of her first husband, whom she will leave. The dream is the only explicit indication in the saga that the community around Guðrún strongly approves of the marriage. Although she imagines *margir* telling her to keep the headdress, later no one verbally tells her to remain married. The use of *margir tǫlðu* here is slightly ambiguous in whether it refers to a general opinion or advice coming from a general source.

[50] *Hœnsna-Þóris saga*, in *Borgfirðinga sögur*, ed. by Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 3 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1938), pp. 1–47 (p. 10), 'Blund-Ketill answered'.
[51] *Ibid.*, p. 10, 'Hersteinn said that this was good advice and valiant.'
[52] *Laxdœla saga*, p. 88, 'I was eager to change the headdress but many people said that I should not do that. I did not heed that.'

A second and less ambiguous example of *margir* giving advice is found in *Víga-Glúms saga*, where 'margir tǫluðu við Glúm, at hann skyldi eigi fámennr fara.'[53] Glúmr does not listen and is ambushed. This follows a pattern in the *Íslendingasögur* where men are given advice that would avoid or diminish the danger of an ambush, and yet resist it. In *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, an old man who has recently befriended Egill tells him that 'snimma búizk þér, Egill, en hitt myndi mitt ráð, at hrapa ekki ferðinni, sjásk heldr fyrir, því at ek ætla, at menn muni settir fyrir yðr á skóginn.'[54] This very similar circumstance uses the advice lexeme *ráð*, so it can be surmised that safety warnings like this are to be considered 'advice' in Old Norse. The main difference between the two incidents is that in *Egils saga* the advice comes from one individual who gives *mitt ráð* (my advice). The formulation *margir tǫluðu* in *Víga-Glúms saga*, by comparison, does the double duty of revealing the mood and judgement of the community, as well as occasionally conveying that advice is being given.

There are other instances where common speech lexemes substitute for dedicated advice lexemes. Whether or not these portray advice can be ascertained through comparing these episodes with similar situations where more obvious advice-related lexemes are used. In *Eyrbyggja saga*, there are two significant occasions where an old woman gives paranormal-related advice and is ignored.[55] In the first instance, the text describes how 'mælti Geirríðr við Gunnlaug' and she tells him not to go home that night due to the presence of malevolent spirits.[56] Gunnlaugr ignores this and is shortly injured by a night-rider. This parallels the previously described scenes where advice is given to mitigate ambushes, yet this is not 'advised' as such, but simply *mælti* (spoken). In the second instance, a foster-mother 'mælti' with and 'sagði' to her foster-son that he should kill an unnatural calf before it grows up and becomes dangerous.[57] He ignores this, to his detriment. Contrary to the examples supplied in this analysis, counsel conveyed without specialised advice lexemes such as *ráð* is not always rejected and ignored. However, what these examples do demonstrate is how *mæla*, defined in C-V as 'speech', and *segja*, defined as 'to say', can sometimes preface

[53] *Víga-Glúms saga*, in *Eyfirðinga sǫgur: Víga-Glúms saga, Ǫgmundar þáttr dytts, Þorvalds þáttr tasalda, Svarfdœla saga, Þorleifs þáttr jarlsskálds, Valla-Ljóts saga, Sneglu-Halla þáttr, Þorgríms þáttr Hallasonar*, ed. by Jónas Kristjánsson Íslenzk fornrit, 9 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1956), 3–98, p. 93, 'Many people spoke to Glúmr and told him that he should not go with few followers.'
[54] *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. by Sigurður Nordal, Íslenzk fornrit, 2 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka fornritafélag, 1933), p. 234, 'You're making an early start, Egill, but it is my advice that you do not rush the journey, be rather vigilant, because I expect that men are waiting [in ambush] for you in the forest.'
[55] For the purposes of this study, advice is considered ignored if it is not enacted, even if the advice receiver agreed to adhere to it at the moment of advice giving.
[56] *Eyrbyggja saga*, pp. 28–9, 'Geirríðr spoke with Gunnlaugr.'
[57] *Ibid.*, pp. 171–2, 'spoke', 'said'.

advice, despite being standard speech lexemes. In these cases, defining a speech act as a piece of advice is dependent on contextual evidence.

Selected Collocations to Advice-related Lexemes

It was necessary to limit the number of collocations in this analysis, because advice lexemes occur so frequently in literature. A complete analysis of all the common collocations of *ráð* alone would be both lengthy and unlikely to contribute much to a better understanding of advice in the Old Norse language. For example, one of the most common collocations for *ráð* is the word *fara* (to go), because advisers often tell their listener to go to a specific place before performing the task they are advised to do. However, variations of *fara* are also some of the most common words that appear in the Old Norse corpus of literature, much of which describes travel of some sort. An analysis of *fara* thus provides little meaningful addition to contextualising the use of *ráð* on a linguistic basis. Therefore, this analysis of the collocations of advice lexemes will focus not on the most frequent collocations but instead those that might shed light on how advice lexemes are presented in context.

The verb *hlýða* is primarily defined by the C-V as 'to hearken, listen' and is a relatively common collocation to advice lexemes. It is often used in literature when someone is responding to advice, in order to describe whether someone listens or does not listen to the guidance they have been given. A number of examples in previous subcategories have incidentally included the verb. As mentioned previously, in *Laxdœla saga*, Guðrún tells Gestr that 'ek hlýdda ekki á þat'[58] when advised to keep a headdress within her dream. The use of *hlýða* can indicate that the speech that is being responded to is advice. However, it is problematic if *hlýða* is the only evidence for deciding if a phrase indicates advice, because it is as possible to listen, or to not listen, to both advice and likewise any other statement. In *Helgakviða Hiǫrvarðssonar*, *hlýða* is utilised in one verse to make an instruction more tentative and advice-like: 'Bið ek þik, Sváva | - brúðr, grátattu! | ef þú vill mínu | máli hlýða, | at þú Heðni | hvílu gørvir | ok iǫfur ungan | ástum leiðir.'[59] Although the imperative *bið* from the verb *biðja* usually occurs when someone is ordering or requesting someone to do something, the insertion of the subclause *ef þú vill mínu máli hlýða* modifies the command to imply that Sváva has a choice in whether she submits. Even though the insertion of this

[58] *Laxdœla saga*, p. 88, 'I did not heed that.'
[59] *Helgakviða Hiǫrvarðssonar*, in *Die Lieder der Älteren Edda (Sæmundar Edda)*, p. 149, v. 41, 'I ask you, Sváva, | do not cry, bride, | if you will | listen to my words | that you for Heðinn | prepare a bed, | and give up your love | to the young hero.'

conditional phrase does make the verse more advice-like, this does not mean that it is necessarily advice for the benefit of Sváva alone.

Lið is a noun translated by C-V firstly as 'a host, folk, people'. One of the alternative definitions provided for *lið* is 'help, assistance'. It is *lið* under this latter definition, or *lið* as a help-related prefix such as *liðveizla*, or 'the granting help, support' in C-V, that is a relatively common collocation to advice lexemes. When Egill in *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar* encounters trouble, he tells his friend Arinbjǫrn that 'nú skaltu fyrir sjá, hvert ráð ek skal taka, ef þú vill nǫkkurt lið veita mér.'[60] *Ráð* and *lið* are closely associated not only as collocations but semantically. Egill makes it clear that if Arinbjǫrn is to offer his support, he must also or first offer his advice. When Arinbjǫrn gives his counsel, he indeed gives his *lið*, not only advising Egill to stay up all night writing praise poetry to placate a king but also physically guarding him from paranormal disturbances. Although there are many cases in literature where *lið* is given and not *ráð*, it is not uncommon for promises of support to be followed by advice, particularly in *Íslendingasögur*.

In conclusion, the most direct translation of 'advice' in Old Norse is *ráð*, but it is not the only one. The close associations that *ráð* has with speech, support and provision cause its meaning to overlap with other words such as *tillag* and *forsjá*. In some cases, the use of these other words create implications that suggest the type of advice given, as *forsjá* is more likely to be rooted in prediction. However, *ráð* itself can encompass a large variety of different counsels, from combat strategies to legal counsel.

Advice is given and received very frequently in Old Norse literature. It can be problematic to determine whether advice is truly being given when all advice lexemes have alternative definitions not related to advice. Furthermore, there are many circumstances where advice is given without the presence of obvious advice lexemes. In these cases, the most appropriate solution is to compare similar happenings between texts, paying attention to the language in each, to conclude whether a situation is truly advice-like in a medieval Norse sense.

[60] *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, pp. 178–9, 'now you shall decide, what advice I shall take, if you wish to give some support to me.'

Methodology

The goal of this study is to identify and analyse advice-giving conventions in the *Íslendingasögur*. The preceding semantic field analysis was conducted to ascertain advice lexemes. Informed by these findings, advice incidents were then identified in the sagas through close reading and programming, which led to the creation of a comprehensive database of advice-giving incidents in the *Íslendingasögur*. Finally, when appropriate, patterns in this data were compared to data from *Sturlunga saga*, for which a similar database was created, to determine whether there were similarities in the depiction of advice giving.

The database of advice incidents in the *Íslendingasögur* takes its data from forty *Íslendingasögur* and does not include additional *þættir* (shorter stories) or *Sturlunga saga*. Although the corpus of *Íslendingasögur* provides data for this research, not all instances of advice giving that are identified can be analysed in depth, partly due to repetition in demonstrated behaviours and partly to limit the length of the study.

Locating Advice with Close Reading

Advice incidents were located through a combination of close reading and programming. Broadly, an advice incident can be defined as one party giving another party a suggestion to assist with a decision (whether occurring currently in the narrative or being reported on). Close reading was the primary method for identifying advice incidents for the database and programming supplemented this so that as many advice incidents could be found as possible.

The sagas were read first in Old Norse. Advice incidents were included in the database if they included speech acts or reported on past speech acts, and advice must have been given (whether this is determined linguistically, contextually, or by a combination of the two). Non-speech acts were not classified as advice because advising inherently requires speech.[1] Incidents were excluded if they could be more appropriately defined as established social customs other than advice giving, e.g., whetting, dream interpretation, threatening,

[1] Although certain actions might imply approval, disapproval, or encouragement, these never contain advice lexemes. The type of subtle behaviour that perhaps acts somewhat akin to advising, such as encouraging body language or gifting, would broaden the definition for what is to be considered as advice to the point of extreme ambiguity.

ordering, etc. There is an exception granted to second-order phenomena,[2] which imply that first-order advice-giving conventions are so established that they can be mimicked for certain narrative effects. A further exception was given for incidents wherein advice is solicited from an individual who then refuses to give it, as this reveals much about who is considered a suitable advice giver. Additionally, some leeway was given for overlap. For example, planning and instructing can also involve advice giving and may use advice lexemes, but instances were evaluated on an individual basis for whether they can be considered as including advice.

Advice lexemes identified through the semantic field analysis allowed for the identification of some advice incidents. When the use of an advice lexeme was used, it had to be determined whether it was being used to indicate advice was being given, as words such as *ráð* have alternative definitions. Only when context indicated advice was given could such an episode be entered into the database as an advice incident.

Other advice incidents were identified through context alone, as some advice incidents contain no clear advice lexemes or phrases but can be identified by language deployed in later situations. For example, certain advice is, in the moment it is given, described in the sagas as speech, instruction or perhaps not described through any speech-related lexemes at all. Sometimes this is later recounted by another character and only then defined using an advice lexeme and from here, the earlier incident can be termed an advice incident. Advice can also be identified by similar occurrences. If an episode mentioning no advice lexemes has parallels, particularly in the content and circumstances of the advice, to an event or multiple events that use advice lexemes elsewhere in the saga or corpus of sagas, it may be considered to contain advice. An example of this is in *Eyrbyggja saga*, where there are no advice lexemes when Geirríðr tells Gunnlaugr not to go home as this night has much spirit movement.[3] However, this pattern of older characters, often women, similarly fruitlessly advising someone to avoid an ambush is seen in a number of other sagas.[4] Moreover, this scene can be compared to incidents that do use advice lexemes, where a paranormal danger is warned about and the advice is ignored, such as in *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja*. There, the titular character advises men to avoid a gust of bad air, but they fail to

[2] If sincere advice giving was considered a first-order phenomenon, then conscious mimicry of those behaviours is a second-order phenomenon. This is seen in some threatening or goading, which parody first-order advice phrasing.
[3] *Eyrbyggja saga*, pp. 28–9.
[4] See Chapter III: Conflict for discussion of this trope.

do so, two dying because 'þeir höfðu forvitnazt um ok haft eigi ráð Harðar'.[5] It was therefore essential to consider the immediate context surrounding the potential advice, and the events of the saga itself, to ascertain whether the character and author intend the utterance to function as advice.

Advice may also be identified by structure. If the above criteria were not met, a potential advice incident had to contain the structural or syntactic markers of an advice exchange. An example of this might involve advice given between two people in a private space before an action precipitated by this advice. There are also two-part or three-part advice sequences, where someone seeks advice and then is advised to seek it from another specific person and so on, until they gain the counsel they seek. Comparison to other sequences reveals whether such structures are characteristic of advice-giving practice or are more likely part of a set of established social customs that overlap with advice-giving practice. Therefore, locating advice incidents was an iterative process, with some incidents marked down as potentially containing advice until it could be confirmed they had either semantic, structural or contextual similarities to more well-defined advice incidents.

Locating Advice with Programming

Despite the above measures, there was still the potential for human error in locating all instances of advice giving in the *Íslendingasögur*. To mitigate this, programming supplemented the close reading method. Specifically for this study, a program in Python called SagaSearcher was built for the purpose of searching the *Íslendingasögur* for key terms (in this case, advice lexemes) and collocations. For example, SagaSearcher ascertains that the noun *ráð* appears 447 times in the *Íslendingasögur*, and the corresponding verb *ráða* 344 times. SagaSearcher searches a modern Icelandic translation of the sagas, as found on Snerpa,[6] which is based on the Old Norse of the *Íslenzk fornrit* editions but does not account for the alternative manuscripts that the *Íslenzk fornrit* editions sometimes display. Texts in modern Icelandic were used as the basis of searches because the *Íslendingasögur* have yet to be digitised online in Old Norse. However, all quotes and examples used in this thesis are in Old Norse and are checked in the *Íslenzk fornrit* editions. SagaSearcher does not just return

[5] *Harðar saga Grímkelssonar eða Hólmverja saga*, in *Harðar saga, Bárðar saga, Þorskfirðinga saga, Flóamanna saga*, ed. by Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 13 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1991), pp. 3–97 (pp. 40), 'they had been curious and had not listened to Hǫrdr's advice.'
[6] *Íslendingasögur*, <https://www.snerpa.is/net/isl/isl.htm> [accessed 24 May 2021].

key word searches but also conjugates search terms and creates frequency-based concordances.

The collocation finding function underlines connections even outside the semantic field of advice, highlighting potential patterns for analysis. If someone were to search a saga for a key word, SagaSearcher would return every sentence containing that word along with the chapter number. Simultaneously, it would create a list of frequencies for every word or phrase that more than once occurred in a sentence containing the key word. However, as the semantic field analysis shows, the presence of an advice lexeme does not necessarily mean an advice incident is occurring, as words such as *ráð* can have multiple definitions. Therefore, the results from SagaSearcher were selected for insertion into the advice database based on the same inclusion and exclusion criteria used for identifying advice incidents through close reading.

Analysis and Evaluation of Advice Incidents

Advice incidents were assigned to categories prior to analysis. Additional contextual fields of data were noted into the database for each incident.[7] Each incident was placed within a grouping according to the major theme that would be most appropriate for it.[8] For example, an event where a character gives legal advice was placed in a grouping on the topic of law and advice giving. As it was possible that further reading of the sagas would reveal other themes, some themes were revised or advice incidents given more than one theme. For example, an advice utterance may contain legal guidance, but the advice giver may also be a woman, thereby making it applicable to both advice from a woman as well as law. In this case, the event would be tagged as appropriate for both, and singular advice incidents discussed as relevant to multiple thematic categories.

Advice incidents were then grouped further according to the social structure to which they pertained and episodes belonging to multiple groups were clearly marked. Some social

[7] Each incident was annotated with the following contextual information, as it applied: 'advice in a chain or not', 'advice giver name', 'advice receiver name', 'giver's relation to receiver', 'receiver's relation to giver', 'advice value', 'ignored or not', 'solicited or not', 'distance travelled', 'location', 'transactional or not', 'giver ethnicity', 'receiver ethnicity', and 'saga date'. This allowed the database to be fully searchable for specific results, such as advice incidents in Norway.

[8] The groupings that categorised the data are as follows: 'advice spaces', 'ambush-related', 'character description', 'combat-related', 'elderly-related advice', 'female advice giver', 'game', '*goðar* duties', 'peace-keeping', 'kingship', 'law-related', 'marriage-related', 'male-to-female advice', 'paranormal', 'poetry', 'proverb', 'religion-related', 'revenge-related', 'self-advice', 'support offer', 'threat-related', 'travel-related', 'warning' and 'women-related'.

structures identified included gender divisions, mechanisms to maintain law and order, formal friendship and other alliances, bilateral kinship and transactional relationships. Many of these structures exist within or provide new reflections on well-studied structures, such as male friendship and gift giving.[9] This method can initially appear to dislocate an individual advice utterance from its context within the saga. However, careful attention to and knowledge of the saga itself, which is especially essential in the analysis of advice sequences, was maintained when analysing episodes. To aid this, the notes created from the process of identifying advice incidents, which feature every advice utterance, separated by saga, were preserved as a reference.

This system of categorisation pays particular attention to who is involved in the advice giving, what happened to lead to the advice being given, and the outcome. This methodology was designed to be flexible to accommodate categories and subcategories identified at the outset no longer being appropriate. Categorisation of episodes promotes comparison between sagas on a socio-structural basis but does not preclude chronological analysis, such as the comparison of early and late sagas and their portrayals of advice, because the database of advice incidents could be ordered in several ways, including chronologically.

A case study model was utilised for each theme to limit analysis to the most significant findings and to avoid a mere survey of the topic, prioritising depth over breadth. This model analyses a small number of advice incidents in great depth to present a common occurrence or pattern in the way advice giving is portrayed. Advice incidents selected from the database for explicit analysis in this study were chosen via the below criteria.

Representative incidents were chosen based on frequency. An incident that is quantitatively selected is representative of a high-frequency subcategory of episodes that portray advice giving in a similar manner, having socio-structural implications. An example of a high frequency subcategory is the recurrent instances in which hosts are ignored when giving advice, with disastrous consequences. A representative incident in this subcategory should be as typical of its grouping as possible, for example through the social result of the advice, whether the advice was followed and the like. In opposition to this, an anomalous incident contrasts with how advice is portrayed in higher frequency subcategories, and this

[9] For examples, see Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, 'The Changing Role of Friendship in Iceland c. 900–1300', in *Friendship and Social Networks in Scandinavia c. 1000–1800*, ed. by Jón Viðar Sigurðsson and Thomas Småberg (Belgium: Brepols, 2013), 43–64. See also William Ian Miller, 'Gift, Sale, Payment, Raid: Case Studies in the Negotiation and Classification of Exchange in Medieval Iceland', *Speculum*, 61.1 (1986), 18–50.

can at times provide useful additional perspective on the implications of more representative incidents. However, incidents that were extremely anomalous, in many cases portraying advice giving in a manner that occurs only once across the corpus, were often omitted to limit the length of the study. Not every incident could be either representative or anomalous, however. The other episodes that constitute the remainder of the common occurrence or pattern are sometimes brought forward as comparisons due to their minor differences from representative episodes or omitted in favour of representative incidents.

Although the study of advice lexemes is necessary to the identification of advice incidents, linguistic analysis is not the focus of this research. Features of a linguistic significance, such as the syntactical structure of advice giving, are noted when this supports a social or narrative analysis or occurs with high frequency. Advice incidents were evaluated for evidence of consistent advice-giving practices according to the following criteria.

Analysis discerns firstly whether the incident contextually portrays advice giving as consistent with other established structures of saga society or Saga Age Iceland, such as formal friendship, hierarchical relationships, gender divisions, hospitality, and family, or else for advice-giving practices of the author's own time. Advice-giving practices that have been identified were compared with other literary works outside the genre of *Íslendingasögur* — the *samtíðarsögur* (contemporary sagas) preserved in *Sturlunga saga* — although these other works are not the focus of the analysis. This was necessary to evaluate the likelihood that the advice convention is part of a greater literary tradition or even influenced by the period of the saga author. However, the comparison of the *Íslendingasögur* to the *samtíðarsögur* is still a comparison of two saga societies. After the evaluation of representative incidents, they were then closely analysed according to the advice-giving custom they establish or support, and for possible wider implications for the society depicted in the *Íslendingasögur*.

Advice incidents were also evaluated for authorial motivations, seeking to establish what role the incident has in the wider narrative. Many incidents result from literary devices, either achieving something plot-related or directly pertinent to their place within the structure or drama of the literary work. Finally, this analysis is sensitive to the possibility that an advice incident is influenced by socio-historical practices.

This methodology was designed to be as rigorous as possible, using close reading supplemented with programming to locate advice incidents. The advantage of examining data quantitatively is that patterns in the portrayal of advice giving may be more evident and anomalous incidents can be identified. There are a substantial quantity of examples of advice giving in the database, which allows for direct numerical comparisons as to who gives

advice, to whom and in what circumstances. This ensures that there are as few assumptions as possible made about the advice-giving tradition that cannot be supported by the source material.

I: Advice Within the Family

Family is the foremost social structure in the insular community of medieval Iceland, where the *Íslendingasögur* are primarily set.[1] Kári Gíslason summarises why an alternative name for the *Íslendingasögur* is the family sagas, noting that 'family is the central and unifying cultural concern of saga authors and their contemporaries.'[2] There are 432 advice incidents in the *Íslendingasögur*,[3] of which 410 are advice utterances.[4] As family is a central concept that holds together the action of many *Íslendingasögur* across generations, it follows that as many as 172 advice incidents, which is forty percent of all advice incidents, occur between family members.[5] Although it can be assumed that those who live together might exchange advice at some point, advice giving can transcend spatial separation as family members are depicted travelling to seek advice. Within the family unit, advice giving is a vital mechanism for bonding, personal protection and the protection of the lineage, and all immediate family members have very specific roles in this advice network.

Non-Immediate Family Members

For the purposes of this study, NIFM refers to any character that is a family member of an individual but is not a member of their immediate family.[6] Uncles and aunts are specifically separated from NIFM as uncle-nephew relationships are shown to adhere to specific advice-giving conventions. Almost all NIFM advice givers are men and only one is a woman (Unnr in *Njáls saga*). NIFM make up the second largest category of advice givers in the

[1] The term 'family' should be viewed as roughly parallel to the Norse *ætt*. In this study, a family member or kinsman indicates that an individual is related in any way to another individual, whether biologically or through marriage or fosterage.
[2] Kári Gíslason, 'Within and Without Family in the Icelandic Sagas', *Parergon*, 26.1 (2009), 13–33 (p.14).
[3] These 432 advice incidents come exclusively from the *Íslendingasögur*. A independent analysis of *Sturlunga saga* was made and this study makes clear where this separate data from *Sturlunga saga* is referred to.
[4] An advice utterance is either direct or indirect speech where advice is referred to or given. There are only twenty-two advice incidents that include no advice utterances. These are a summary of the advice incidents where there is no advice utterance: a) incidents where a character complains about not being consulted for advice, b) incidents where a character is solicited for advice but does not give any, c) incidents where characters are described as particularly good or bad at giving advice, or d) one incident of a space being designated for advice giving.
[5] All percentages are rounded to the nearest integer. See Appendix: Table 2.
[6] NIFM include cousins and individuals more distantly related or that the saga refers to as a *frændi* or *mágr* (kinsman) of unclear relationship immediacy. Immediate family members include parents, siblings, grandparents, uncles, aunts and children.

Íslendingasögur by a small margin. Among family members, NIFM are the most likely to give advice, being responsible for twenty-two percent of all advice given by family members.[7] In Old Norse, kinsmen are referred to as *frændi* or *mágr*, but the language makes no distinction between immediate and more distant family members. However, this is an important distinction to make in this study as behavioural roles differ with the immediacy of the relationship.

An issue with looking at family relations in the sagas is categorising or even determining the degree of kinship in all instances. For example, in five incidents, the advice receiver is a group of individuals and in another eight, the advice givers are a group.[8] Sometimes these groups of advice givers or receivers have only vaguely defined members and individuals in that group might have different relationships with the advice giver or receiver. In a small minority of cases, the category of NIFM includes individuals whose actual relationship with their advice-giving or advice-receiving partner is ambiguous, although the saga author has referred to them as a family member, usually either *frændi* or *mágr*. Medieval Icelandic households were not generally arranged like a 'nuclear' family, instead often consisting of a complex household.[9] However, the immediacy of the relation is still a large factor in determining advice-giving relationships.

It can be definitively stated that most advice by family members is given by those related by blood. Whether NIFM are included or excluded from the data, biological relatives give most of the advice that comes from a family member. There are ninety-two advice incidents where the advice giver is the biological relative of the receiver, which if NIFM were completely excluded from the data, would be sixty-nine percent of all advice given by family members or fifty-three percent even if NIFM were included and not considered blood-related.

Ljósvetninga saga demonstrates a very typical example of how NIFM give advice albeit during very atypical circumstances. Þorgeirr *goði* means to oppose his sons' prosecution of their enemy Sǫlmundr. Þorgeirr's cousin Arnórr urges Þorgeirr not to fight the prosecution. When he is ignored, Arnórr rides to Þorgeirr's sons and tells them that 'þat

[7] See Appendix: Table 2.
[8] 'Group' is used to denote advice givers or receivers that number two or more. A group of NIFM receive advice in the following five incidents: *Laxdœla saga* pp. 4, 101–2, 111–2 and 209, and *Ljósvetninga saga* p. 8. A group of NIFM give advice in the following eight incidents: *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* p. 150, *Fljótsdœla saga* p. 233, *Flóamanna saga* p. 249, *Heiðarvíga saga* pp. 227–8 and 237, *Kormáks saga* p. 264, and *Laxdœla saga* pp. 14, and 163.
[9] For more detail about medieval Icelandic family structures, see Jenny M. Jochens, 'En Islande Médiévale: à la Recherche de la Famille Nucléaire' *Annales ESC*, 40.1 (1985), 95–112 (p. 107).

þykkir mér ráð […] at þér brœðr hittið Þórð fǫðurbróður yðvarn, vitran mann ok yðr vel viljaðan.'[10] The saga gives no information about how receptive Þórðr is to this plan but simply adds that the brothers do as their kinsman Arnórr advises. Shortly afterwards, Arnórr dies fighting alongside the sons of Þorgeirr as part of this conflict. Although the saga does not explicitly attribute credit to Arnórr's advice, the brothers' plans then proceed relatively smoothly, the case eventually turned over to arbitration, and Þorgeirr's sons gaining in reputation.

These are unusual circumstances for an advice incident. Þorgeirr's determination to place other alliances above his familial ones is a rare decision in a saga given that fathers and sons tend to be devoted legal supporters to one another. Moreover, Arnórr's decision to support the sons leads to his death, which is a much greater sacrifice than advice givers generally must endure to give aid. Despite this, it must be acknowledged that most advice incidents are characterised by extreme events that mark a scene as being saga-worthy, and any given incident is rarely wholly typical.

There are numerous markers of a very typical advice incident in these scenes. It is typical that Arnórr's advice is proven reliable, which is evidenced by the brothers being able to stay with their uncle and undertake both a combat and legal operation presumably because they have this safe haven. Most advice given in the sagas benefits the receiver and likewise sixty-six percent of advice given by NIFM is unambiguously 'good' advice.[11] Moreover, Arnórr is far from the only kinsman who advises physical relocation during strife, or whose advice is underlined by his willingness to become fully involved in conflict even if the advice itself is neither legal nor militant. It is typical that the person the brothers are advised to meet has a small measure of expertise, is wise, and is likely to take on their case. Although advising family members to seek a specific other person who may be able to help them better is a strategy more proportionally common among female advisors, men also do this. Moreover, the advice is seemingly altruistic. Like most advice-giving family members,

[10] *Ljósvetninga saga*, in *Ljósvetninga Saga með Þáttum: Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu, Hreiðars þáttr*, ed. by Björn Sigfússon, Íslenzk fornrit, 10 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1940), pp. 1–147 (p. 8), 'It seems advisable to me that you brothers meet your paternal uncle Þórðr, a wise man and well-disposed to you.'

[11] See Appendix: Table 5 for the forty-seven advice incidents wherein unambiguously bad advice is given. NIFM give 'good' advice in the following twenty-five incidents: *Bandamanna saga* p. 313, *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* p. 181, *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 58, 106 and 167, *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* pp. 64, 150 and 182, *Eyrbyggja saga* pp. 69–70 and 119, *Finnboga saga* p. 306, *Flóamanna saga* p. 249, *Gull-Þóris saga* p. 186, *Heiðarvíga saga* p. 237, *Laxdœla saga* pp. 14, 100, 101–2, 111–2, 177, 178 and 195, *Ljósvetninga saga* pp. 8 and 86, *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu* p. 163, and *Valla-Ljóts saga* p. 249.

Arnórr gives no appearance of expecting a reward for advice and his advice is outwardly non-transactional.[12]

Perhaps most characteristically of all for NIFM advisors, Arnórr gives this advice when the father is absent or indisposed. This is reflected in the way in which Arnórr is portrayed as giving advice. Although Arnórr rides to his cousin's sons to help them in what might be termed a decisive action, the phrasing is quite tentative. 'Þat þykkir mér ráð' (it seems advisable to me) is a more tentative alternative to the far more common formulae *er þat mitt ráð at* (it is my advice to) and *þat ræð ek* (I advise that). For example, in the same saga, Þorkell, the father of Brandr, tells his son: 'Nú er þat mitt ráð, at þú farir aftr á hans fund.'[13] Arnórr is encroaching on Þorgeirr's paternal role within the family by giving this unsolicited advice. At most points when a NIFM steps into position to advise a young man, it is because the father cannot, although in this case it has been Þorgeirr's choice to oppose his sons and remove himself from that position of trust.

Though the motives for Þorgeirr's hostility are made clear to the reader, it is reasonable to assume that it would be somewhat shocking for observers within the saga. Theodore M. Andersson and William Ian Miller expound on the necessity of support networks in Saga Age Iceland: 'The fact that people had to protect themselves, and that they bore the primary responsibility for asserting their own rights, meant that they needed to maintain a support system for both protection and aggression. No one in this society could act without the support of others.'[14] This emphasises systems of obligation, of which the most reliable support system for the saga character embroiled in conflict is most often their biological and marital relations. The structure of Icelandic governance, in which many disputes were privately settled and which had no executive branch of government to enforce legal rulings, was reliant on groups brought together by kinship bonds and alliances to uphold the law. Þorgeirr is a father who would prioritise material gain, good standing with a foreign *jarl* and a formal friendship over his relationship with his sons. It would be doubly shocking to any individuals in the saga who would not know Þorgeirr's motivations, as Þorgeirr is seen associating himself with Sǫlmundr, who is cultivating a reputation for troublemaking by visiting an Icelandic woman against the wishes of her NIFM and refusing to pay a Norwegian

[12] Transactional advice refers to advice where the advice giver expects repayment (not necessarily monetary). Threats are not transactional, and neither are strictly hierarchical relationships such as that between *þingmaðr* and *goði* where it is implied that fulfilling one's role may engender a nebulous future benefit. Advice may be considered transactional if there is a direct exchange of money or goods, even between employer and employee.
[13] *Ljósvetninga saga*, p. 131, 'Now it is my advice that you return to him.'
[14] Theodore M. Andersson and William Ian Miller, *Law and Literature in Medieval Iceland:* Ljósvetninga saga *and* Valla-Ljóts saga (California: Stanford University, 1989), p. 8.

for goods. The age of Þorgeirr's sons is not determinable from the saga, but perhaps if they were younger and more dependent, or if the poor reputation of Sǫlmundr not so established, the pressure would be on the sons to obey rather than the father to support. By going to some lengths to advise the Þorgeirsons of where they may find physical safety, Arnórr is not replacing Þorgeirr as a father but is instead providing the younger men with some of the masculine familial support that they cannot seek from more closely related sources. Such an action reflects well on the character of Arnórr and poorly on Þorgeirr but most of all reveals that there is some incentive or duty for more distantly related NIFM to extend their support to younger men in the absence of support from the immediate family. The advice itself does not necessarily lead to Arnórr's death, but it acts in the saga as a declaration of support.

Arnórr, like most familial advice givers, seems to receive nothing in return for giving advice. If anything is recouped from his actions, it is on the part of the Þorgeirsons, who gain not only a haven but also compensation after Arnórr's death. This parallels one facet of the medieval Scandinavian societal structure of gift exchange. Elizabeth Vestergaard comments that 'exchange is social communication, and what is important is that an exchange is going, not what is exchanged.'[15] It is very appropriate that here Vestergaard refers to exchange, rather than gift exchange, because her statement could be equally applied to advice exchange, particularly within the family. Arnórr advises his cousin's sons, which leads them to reach out to their uncle and eventually leads to their father withdrawing his hostility. Social communication, and therefore advice giving, is a necessary and central part of the saga Icelandic family. It must not be forgotten that Arnórr only advises the Þorgeirsons after their father refuses to support them. The sons survive long enough for their father to regret his opposition and withdraw it. The intervention of a more distant family member preserves the family structure for a future time when it can experience a better reconciliation. All of this suggests that some relationships oblige people to give their advice more than others.

Only 102 pieces of advice are solicited by an advice seeker, which is twenty-four percent of all advice incidents.[16] No one relationship overwhelms the data around sought counsel enough to suggest that advice is almost always solicited from a particular relation, although the most common person to solicit advice from is a NIFM at fourteen advice

[15] Elizabeth Vestergaard, 'Gift-Giving, Hoarding, and Outdoings', in *Social Approaches to Viking Studies*, ed. by Ross Samson (Glasgow: Cruithne Press, 1991), 97–104, p. 98.
[16] See Appendix: Table 3.

incidents.[17] Friends, fathers and *goðar* are also often asked for their advice.[18] Thirty-one percent of fatherly advice is solicited, usually by sons in close vicinity, although when both solicited and unsolicited advice is examined, brothers give advice marginally more than fathers.[19] However, although there is some flexibility for particular circumstances, perhaps where an advice giver with particular expertise is sought, the sagas present the impression that fathers and father-figures are more obliged to offer advice than other relations.

Occasionally, loyalties are in conflict and advice can benefit a kinsman even when the advice in question is not specifically given to that kinsman. This is exhibited in *Gísla saga Súrssonar* wherein Bergr, accompanied by Helgi, kills Þorkell Súrsson. A man called Bǫrkr, who is pursuing Bergr and Helgi, approaches Gestr, previously established as very wise and prophetic, and requests that 'gef þú til ráð, hversu málit skal upp taka.'[20] It is not clear in *Gísla saga* whether Gestr and Bǫrkr have any preexisting relationship before this interaction, or if Gestr is simply approached for his wise reputation. Gestr tells him that 'Kunna mynda ek mér ráð, ef ek hefða vígit vegit, at hafa þat undanbragð, at málit mætti ónýtt verða, ef á mér yrði haft, at nefnask annan veg en ek héta.'[21] Giving intentionally poor advice is extremely rare in the sagas, so Gestr must have compelling motivations. This fragile hypothetical projection thwarts any attempts from Bǫrkr to take the case further, even though the fugitives do not ultimately alter their names. It is revealed to readers that Gestr is a blood relation of Helgi and Bergr. There is no further explanation given, suggesting that it would be implicitly understood by the reader that this familial loyalty supersedes any necessity to give good advice to their pursuer. Advice here, even when not received by a kinsman, is wielded in the family's defence.

[17] NIFM give solicited advice in the following fourteen incidents: *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* pp. 150 and 182, *Heiðarvíga saga* pp. 227–8, *Laxdœla saga* pp. 4, 100, 177, 178 and 195, *Ljósvetninga saga* p. 86, *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 58 and 167, *Víga-Glúms saga* p. 29, and *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu* pp. 163 and 228.
[18] Friends give solicited advice in the following ten incidents: *Bandamanna saga* p. 351, *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* pp. 8–9, *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 71, *Fljótsdœla saga* pp. 289–90, *Hallfreðar saga* p. 144, and *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 28, 58, 130–1, 139 and 160–1. *Goðar* give solicited advice in the following seven incidents: *Hallfreðar saga* p. 188, *Ljósvetninga saga* pp. 66–7 and 118, *Vatnsdœla saga* pp. 95 and 130, and *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu* pp. 209 and 240.
[19] Fathers give solicited advice to their children in the following eight incidents: *Bandamanna saga* p. 294, *Gull-Þóris saga* p. 207, *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* pp. 348 and 377–8, *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 24–5 and 226, *Vatnsdœla saga* p. 99, and *Víglundar saga* p. 97. For advice incidents wherein fathers give advice and wherein brothers give advice, see Appendix: Table 2.
[20] *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, in *Vestfirðinga sögur*, ed. by Björn K. Þórólfsson and Guðni Jónsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 6 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1943), 3–118 at 92, 'Give me advice how I should proceed with the case.'
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 92, 'I know what I'd plan if I had done the killing. I would have that deception of naming myself another way to what I was called, so that any case brought against me would come to nothing.'

A study of NIFM both reenforces what is known about familial obligations and reveals new evidence for how advice giving is practised in the sagas. As above, scholarship already notes the importance of non-immediate familial ties for the safety and power of families, especially when those ties are to male relatives, who may be able to lend legal, physical, or even financial support. Advice is often a first response to disruptive forces threatening family members. It does not waste resources, respects the independence of the younger men who are most often in need of advice and unrelated NIFM can avoid being perceived as interfering in matters they are only tangentially related to. In some cases however, if the situation persists, NIFM will become involved in the dispute themselves, giving weight to the connection between advice and support.[22] NIFM are both significant and frequent advice givers, but their most important role may be to provide advice when more authoritative relations, such as fathers, cannot intervene.

Fathers and Foster-fathers

Fathers give advice to their children twenty-six times in the *Íslendingasögur*.[23] 'Children' is defined here as a person's direct offspring, regardless of age and gender. This is an appropriate term because the *Íslendingasögur* rarely make any distinction between adult and pre-adult states in character description, except to point out the young age of someone who has achieved unusual size or accomplishment relative to that age.[24] Gareth Lloyd Evans points out that although many legal codes show sixteen as the age of majority, there is a flexible period between twelve and twenty where manhood may be attained: 'this flexible period means that there is not a fixed age at which all males *must* be considered men (or act accordingly) but rather, that there is a period in which such transitions and developments of manliness might be tested, proved, and consolidated.'[25] In many respects, age has little bearing on the content of paternal advice, because parental advice presents children with safer options even into full adulthood.

Fathers are the first and most reliable sources of advice for younger men. The usual recipients of paternal advice are sons and not daughters, and father-son advice goes generally

[22] See Semantic Field Analysis.
[23] See Appendix: Table 2.
[24] For representations of young children in the sagas, see Ármann Jakobsson, 'Troublesome Children in the Sagas of Icelanders', *Saga-Book of the Viking Society for Northern Research* 27 (2003), 5–24.
[25] Gareth Lloyd Evans, *Men and Masculinities in the Sagas of Icelanders* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 65.

in one direction, from father to son. This seems logical as fathers, simply through age, have had far more years to acquire skills, knowledge and experience and also have the most authority within the family. Even when fathers rebuke sons for unwise decisions, they still provide counsel, which occurs in *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*. Þorbjörn has two sons, Helgi and the eponymous Gunnarr. When Helgi decides to attend the games being hosted in Hörgsland, his father offers unprompted advice: 'Eigi er það mitt ráð, ok vildi eg, frændi, að þú færir hvergi, því að þér er ekki hent við kappi þeira og uppivöðslu.'[26] Helgi ignores this. When initially faced with a disobedient son, Þorbjörn argues for Helgi to at least bring his brother Gunnarr along, presumably for protection, and Helgi does this on his second day at the games. Helgi now has a potential second to any duel he participates in, a witness in the event of a crime and, most of all, an ally. Whether this makes the situation any safer is debatable. Because of Gunnarr's presence, the additional death of Svartr occurs, engendering further danger to the brothers. Helgi asks his father, '[H]vert ráð villtu þá leggja á með okkr bræðrum?'[27] Children solicit paternal advice only eight times in the sagas, still making fathers the third most solicited advice-giving category, after NIFM and friends.[28] This seems warranted, as the vast majority of paternal advice is of good value.[29] Despite his sons' disobedience in going to the games, Þorbjörn gives them further advice his sons finally follow. He tells them to go to his good friend Þorgeirr in Mörtunga for the winter. Þorgeirr proves a good ally, keeping the brothers in a cave that winter and advising them to hide in an underground chamber when they are sighted. The brothers survive and are able to move back to their father in the summer.

The father sending his sons to his friend for protection is a common theme among relatives in sagas. By doing so, Þorbjörn sends the younger men away from the source of conflict until the initial outrage has settled. A study by Markel Palmstierna, Anna Frangou, Anna Wallette and Robin Dunbar concerning three *Íslendingasögur* concludes that on average killers have twice as many relatives as their victims, implying that a larger kinship

[26] *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*, in *Kjalnesinga saga, Jökuls þáttr Búasonar, Víglundar saga, Króka-Refs saga, Þórðar saga hreðu. Finnboga, saga, Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfifls*, ed. by Jóhannes Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 14 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1959), pp. 343–379 (p. 345), 'That is not my advice, and I want, kinsman, that you never go there, because you are not suited to their contest and trouble-making.'
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 348, 'What advice do you wish to give to us brothers?'
[28] See above for the eight incidents wherein fathers give their children solicited advice.
[29] Advice value, whether good, bad or ambiguous, refers to whether the outcome of the advice given is favourable to the recipient. Fathers give good advice to their children in the following nineteen incidents: *Bandamanna saga* pp. 320 and 328, *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* p. 150, *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 24–5 and 226, *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* pp. 45–6, *Fljótsdæla saga* p. 87, *Fóstbræðra saga* p. 176, *Gull-Þóris saga* p. 207, *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* pp. 345, 348 and 377–8, *Laxdæla saga* pp. 62 and 142, *Ljósvetninga saga* p. 131, *Svarfdæla saga* p. 182, *Víga-Glúms saga* p. 63, *Víglundar saga* p. 97, and *Þorsteins saga hvíta* pp. 5–6.

network is an implicit source of protection.[30] What falls outside the scope of their study is how it is also the friendship connections of family that may provide safety for endangered parties. Large support networks represent both safety from those who will physically protect a fugitive in trouble and a location sufficiently far away as a temporary haven. This manner of advice makes an assumption that the distant ally will take in the young men, will expend resources on them and will potentially risk his own life in the process. This duty of harbouring shows how parents rely on friendships, alliances or kin-relations protecting their children. The father who sends his son away for safety is not merely giving advice but also consciously extending his social support network to cover his son, something that may strengthen ties of obligation and trust or ultimately obligate the father to his chosen ally.

The father-son flow of advice is very one-sided, requiring effort and forethought on the side of the father, and it would be reasonable to ask what reward the father gains, if any. In a social sense, the father gains trust and respect and occasionally even reconciliation, when relationships have turned sour, such as in *Bandamanna saga*, which ends with amicability between Ófeigr and his son Oddr after Ófeigr has been generous with legal support and advice.[31] Simply put, the need to gain advice from a trustworthy source even when a son may be financially and physically independent ensures the continuation of father-son relationships past adulthood. Jenny M. Jochens suggests that the paternal treatment of sons is strongly associated with inheritance:

> En effet, l'attitude peu conventionnelle à l'égard du mariage et de la monogamie est une des caractéristiques principales de l'Islande médiévale. Dans sa famille, le père divisait ses biens entre ses enfants, mais pas de façon égale comme dans la *Sippe*. Au contraire, il favorisait l'un de ses fils, en lui permettant de s'établir indépendamment de lui, même s'il continuait à compter sur son aide dans la poursuite de ses querelles. Ce traitement qui favorisait le meilleur fils était, indubitablement, le premier pas vers le droit d'aînesse et le lignage.[32]

[30] See Markel Palmstierna, Anna Frangou, Anna Wallette and Robin Dunbar, 'Family counts: deciding when to murder among the Icelandic Vikings', *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 38.2 (2017), 175–180.
[31] *Bandamanna saga*, in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar, Bandamanna saga, Odds þáttr Ófeigssonar*, ed. by Guðni Jónsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 7 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1936), pp. 291–363 (p. 363). References to *Bandamanna saga* are to Möðruvallabók, AM 132, fol. unless stated otherwise.
[32] Jenny M. Jochens, 'En Islande Médiévale: à la Recherche de la Famille Nucléaire' *Annales ESC*, 40.1 (1985), 95–112 (p. 108), 'Indeed, the unconventional attitude towards marriage and monogamy is one of the main characteristics of medieval Iceland. In his family, the father divided his property among his children, but not equally as in the *Clan*. On the contrary, he favoured one of his sons, allowing him to establish himself

When the father favours Helgi with advice over his brother Gunnarr in *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*, it is perhaps because Helgi is heading into more immediate danger or because Helgi is the preferable successor and household manager, as the more intelligent son. Advice ensures the continuation of the lineage, if it can save the son's life.

The more instinctual paternalistic drive to love and protect offspring must not be discounted as a reason to deliver advice of good quality. *Grágás* refers to *arfborinn* or *arfgengr*, the lawful heir, but the sagas almost always prioritise social bonds to legal ones, referring to sons or kinsmen receiving advice.[33] Maintaining a good relationship with a son can have benefits, as sons are support sources in combat and legal situations. However, if the only purpose for a father to advise his son were to ensure the son's future service in moments of animosity against external parties, it would follow that a son would use a similar strategy, becoming a useful adviser to the father. Young men in the sagas involve themselves far more in competition against paranormal enemies, court-related strife and complicated love quests than their older counterparts, just to name a few circumstances where their father's skills, power and influence might be a benefit.

In the sagas, it is not unusual to choose a parental advice giver over one with similar or perhaps more expertise, as will be explored in more detail below.[34] In *Njáls saga*, when Unnr is seeking legal advice to divorce her husband, she at first seeks it from her father Mǫrðr.[35] It is a not a trivial journey. She travels from Hrútsstaðir to Þingvellir for her father's help, a minimum distance of 95 km even if journeyed directly.[36] She makes this journey twice, because her first attempt fails with miscommunication. Travelling some distance to Þingvellir to deal with a legal matter may be expected of men going to the Althing, but Unnr is initially only asking for how to divorce her husband, a task which must be completed, according to Mǫrðr, from her husband's home in the West. Readers would be aware of the

independently of him, even if he continued to count on his help in the continuation of his quarrels. This treatment, which favoured the best son, was undoubtedly the first step towards birthright and lineage.'

[33] See glossary in *Grágás: lagasafn íslenska þjóðveldisins*, p. 244. See also Jeffrey Love et al., *A Lexicon of Medieval Nordic Law* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2020), p. 28.

[34] See Chapter III: Conflict.

[35] *Brennu-Njáls saga*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 12 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1954), pp. 24–5.

[36] Where a distance is given in this thesis, this refers to the distance in a straight line between where the advice seeker begins travelling and where they meet the advice giver. To calculate this, the location of the advice seeker at the beginning of their journey (or the location of their home if appropriate) and the location of the advice giver (or, again, their home if appropriate) was input into the online Icelandic Saga Map project to find co-ordinates. This does not reflect the actual route advice seekers took but is intended to be an estimate of the distance between the start and end points. Distances are rounded to the nearest kilometre. See Emily Lethbridge, *Icelandic Saga Map* <http://sagamap.hi.is/is/> [accessed 12 May 2021].

location of Hrútsstaðir and how it suggests Unnr's physical isolation from her male relatives, emphasising her determination to gain legal advice even despite the distance. Not only is Mǫrðr skilled with law, but he is the man most socially obligated to help Unnr now she is separating from her husband. Only when Mǫrðr fails at intervening legally on Unnr's behalf, refusing to participate in a duel he cannot win, does she seek representation from her kinsman Gunnarr. She does this not for Gunnarr's legal skills, or lack thereof, but for his connection to the wise Njáll. This particular situation mixes what it means to advise and what it means to support. When Unnr first goes to her father, she asks for advice, and he tells her 'mun ek leggja ráð á með þér'[37] and then presents her with a plan she can enact to declare herself divorced. As a woman, Unnr is reliant on the men around her for representation in court, so when she decides to reclaim her possessions and money from her erstwhile husband, her father must follow up his advice with legal support.

Those who are obligated or more likely to advise are not necessarily biological relatives, so it is important to discuss the role of foster-fathers. *Grágás* provides a legal definition of familial closeness. However, the implied hierarchy of advice givers does not always reflect the 'law-listed to inherit' sequence in *Grágás*, which prioritises legitimate successors over illegitimate, men over female counterparts and says nothing of spouses or fostered family members.[38] Nevertheless, this sequence as well as the wergild ring list shows that the law gives preference to degree of blood relation and men over women in determining which person is responsible for the affairs of a deceased member.[39] Nevertheless, it has been long acknowledged in scholarship that kinship ties in the Norse world are not limited to genetic links. Richard Gaskins explains that:

> [Kinship ties] can be stretched and recalibrated by competing loyalties built up through marriage, fostering, friendship, and looser pledges of political and social support. Compared to static kinship structures these developing relationships may seem weak in themselves. But they represent critical links between discrete nodes in an expanding network. In terms of network theory, these "weak" links serve as bridges between otherwise disparate centers of power. The impact is clear in the

[37] *Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 24, 'I will furnish you with advice'.
[38] *Grágás: lagasafn íslenska þjóðveldisins*, ed. by Gunnar Karlsson, Kristján Sveinsson and Mörður Árnason (Reykjavík: Mál og Menning, 1992), pp. 47–74.
[39] *Ibid.*, pp. 447–548.

> case of marriage [and in] the same way, relationships of fostering, friendship, and political allegiance generate more complex webs of loyalties and support.[40]

It is reasonable then that foster-fathers would be loyal to their foster-sons. Scholarship has yet to explore how advice features as part of these support systems. Only six advice incidents in total involve a foster-father giving advice.[41] In three, the biological father is dead and in two other examples not physically close to the developing situation. In one of the latter situations, the foster-father fails in his duty of care, giving ultimately bad advice that leads to the death of the foster-son and is thoroughly rebuked by the biological father.[42] In most cases, however, the foster-father acts instead of the father, ensuring the well-being of his foster-son through good advice but never supplanting the biological father as foremost authority to the young man. In *Ljósvetninga saga*, after the death of their father, Eyjólfr refuses to give his younger brother Kóðrán a division of the property. When Kóðrán goes to Hlenni, his foster-father, saying he is being robbed of his inheritance, Hlenni tells him that 'eigi kemr mér óvart ofsinn Eyjólfs. En eigi ræð ek, at þú dœmir þik sjálfr af arfinum; heldr ger þú hús út frá garði á Mǫðruvǫllum [the land belonging to Eyjólfr, which Kóðrán has some claim to].'[43] The plan succeeds, and Kóðrán is able to live there. The death of the biological father leaves no paternal authority able to mediate between the brothers. The next most reliable source of advice that Kóðrán has access to is his foster-father. Hlenni does not offer physical or legal support but does give legal advice, and this demonstrates how advice can be given in lieu of other forms of help.

Paternal advice is not merely preferred to advice from foster-fathers. It can be chosen above advice offered by wise men, those who either have reputations for good judgement or have specialist knowledge. This could be prevalent in medieval Scandinavian cultures even in texts outside of the sagas. *Konungs skuggsjá* (The King's Mirror) is a mid-thirteenth-century Norwegian text following a literary tradition of didactic *speculum* literature. Ian Whitaker

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[40] Richard Gaskins, 'Network Dynamics in Saga and Society', *Scandinavian Studies*, 77.2 (2005), 201–216 (p. 202).

[41] See Appendix: Table 2.

[42] See *Þorsteins saga hvíta*, in *Austfirðinga sögur: Þorsteins saga hvíta, Vápnfirðinga saga, Þorsteins þáttr stangarhǫggs, Ölkofra þáttr, Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða, Droplaugarsona saga, Brandkrossa þáttr, Gunnars þáttr Þiðrandabana, Fljótsdœla saga, Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar, Draumr Þorsteins Síðu-Hallssonar, Þorsteins þáttr austfirðings, Þorsteins þáttr sǫgufróða, Gull-Ásu-Þórðar þáttr*, ed. by Jón Jóhannesson, Íslenzk fornrit, 11 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1950), 3–19 at 16. Hrani, Þorgils' foster-father, urges Þorgils to chase after opponents to prove his courage. Underlining his cowardice, Hrani tells Þorsteinn *hvíta*, Þorgils' father, about his son's death only when Þorsteinn specifically asks where Þorgils is.

[43] *Ljósvetninga saga*, p. 62, 'Eyjólfr's overbearing behaviour comes as no surprise to me. And I do not advise that you forfeit your inheritance; rather you should build a house outside the hayfield wall at Mǫðruvellir.'

notes that 'it is presented in a didactic mode that was especially common in the mediaeval period, though the dialogue is between Father and Son rather than the more familiar Master and Disciple.'[44] More specifically, the son asks his father about social, practical and moral concerns and his father gives him advice. Although the text was neither written in Iceland nor intended for Icelandic readers, examining *Konungs skuggsjá* reveals a wider cultural perception of advice-giving relationships within a country with close ties to Iceland. Thought to have been written for the instruction of the sons of King Hákon Hákonarson, the attachment of the master-disciple dialogue to a father-son dynamic establishes two ideas. The first is that the father is the expert, the person whose own experience makes for the best advice and whom the son should seek out in moments of doubt. This would not be an unreasonable message in the context of the creation of this text if this father were a king and the son destined for political life. The second is that the author, working within the bounds of an established literary tradition, chose to alter the standard Master-Disciple advice-giving relationship to a paternal one. This conceit is perhaps more familiar to Norwegian readers and better fits their social expectations that advice from within the family should be preferred to advice from outside it. *Konungs skuggsjá* is not dismissive of advice from outside the family. In fact, it establishes the existence of wise men who advise the son to write down his conversations with his father into a book, thereby crediting this unnamed group for the book's creation.[45] In the *Íslendingasögur*, groups of wise men that stand ready to give advice are often used by authors to portray public perception and encouragement.[46] The fact that these wise men are conveniently nearby but do not participate in the dialogue between father and son in *Konungs skuggsjá*, however, indicates a clear preference for the advice of the father than from others, even if those others are wise.

Fathers are the preferred advice giver in the sagas, supported by how foster-fathers and NIFM mostly step in to offer advice in situations when fathers are absent. Saga authors are judgmental towards characters who ignore their fathers' advice, and doing so leads almost entirely toward negative outcomes. Fathers can be considered ideal advice givers. They have the most reason to care about the safety and prosperity of their advice receivers, whether for emotional or inheritance reasons. As the sagas most commonly depict families of regional significance, fathers with established households typically have a support network they can

[44] Ian Whitaker, 'North Atlantic sea-creatures in the King's Mirror (Konungs Skuggsjá)', *Polar Record,* 23.142 (1986), 3–13 (p. 3).
[45] *The King's Mirror (Speculum Regale – Konungs Skuggsjá)*, trans. by Laurence Marcellus Larson (New York: The American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1917), pp. 73–4.
[46] See Chapter III: Conflict.

advise their sons how to seek further advice or help from. Advice giving itself can even be a tool for reconciling or strengthening the father-son bond. Assuming the role of patriarch in a saga narrative means gaining responsibility for the wellbeing and fortune of sons through advice giving, a method that, when listened to, produces high levels of success without overly interfering.

Sons and Foster-sons

Children-parent advice is a deviation from social norms and its rarity and unfavourable depiction signals that it is a transgression within familial internal hierarchies. The scarcity of advice from children does not correlate to their willingness to provide their fathers with social, martial or legal support. Children are much more likely to act either in defence of the family or its status than to provide advice. Evans lists participating in certain games, viking raids and violent acts as ways young men prove their masculinity in the sagas, but perhaps giving advice successfully could be considered another action reserved only for mature men.[47] In the *Íslendingasögur*, a total of only five sons and one daughter advise their fathers and one son advises his mother. The only foster-son to advise his foster-father is Eiðr in *Þórðar saga hreðu*, which may be explained by the fact that the foster-father Þórðr is a Norwegian and a newcomer to Eiðr's district.[48] Eiðr may therefore be acting in a host-like capacity.[49] No advice is given by either a son-in-law or a nephew.

The content of advice given by biological sons is dissimilar to the typical safety advice given by parents. Instead, sons advise to further their own agendas. The exception to this is the advice of the Norwegian Sveinn in *Njáls saga*. He instead advises his father against pursuing the sons of Njáll, to highlight their innocence for characterisation reasons, foreshadowing the father's later regret and difficulty producing a reconciliation.

[47] See Evans, *Men and Masculinities in the Sagas of Icelanders*, pp. 68–74.
[48] *Þórðar saga hreðu*, in *Kjalnesinga saga, Jökuls þáttr Búasonar, Víglundar saga, Króka-Refs saga, Þórðar saga hreðu. Finnboga saga, Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfifls*, ed. by Jóhannes Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 14 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1959), pp. 163–226 (pp. 179 and 192).
[49] See Chapter II: Advice Outside the Family.

Saga	Saga date	Advice content
Heiðarvíga saga, p. 320–1.	Early	Eyjólfr manipulates his father Guðmundr into agreeing to his advice to host some outlaws.
Víga-Glúms saga, p. 4.	Early	Eyjólfr manipulates Ingjaldr into agreeing to let a skipper stay, accusing his father of belittling his son's authority/advice.
Brennu-Njáls saga, p. 221.	Classical	Sveinn tells his father Jarl Hákon not to pursue innocent and honourable men.
Fljótsdæla saga, p. 243.	Late	Young Helgi advises his widowed mother Droplaug not to be upset by vicious rumours about her infidelity.
Harðar saga, p. 9.	Late	Valbrandr marries his daughter Signý away without consulting his son Torfi. Torfi later advises against it and is insulted that his advice was not asked initially.
Grettis saga, p. 38.	Late	Ásmundr attempts to have young Grettir complete chores, but Grettir finds (violent) ways around them, giving ominous proverb-like advice to his father the whole time.

Table 1. All instances of son-to-parent advice in the *Íslendingasögur*.

As Table 1 demonstrates, although there are very few examples of son-father advice, certain similarities are apparent. Children give their rare advice at moments in the narrative where some power struggle is occurring between child and parent. In *Víga-Glúms saga* and *Harðar saga*, sons emotionally coerce their fathers with different degrees of success by eliciting a sense of guilt that they do not value their son's advice. This particular pattern will be explored in more depth below, but it does highlight a common element in advice given by saga progeny: sons give advice to manipulate their fathers. In *Heiðarvíga saga*, Eyjólfr knows that his father Guðmundr believes that Barði and his men, who have been convicted of lesser outlawry, are long gone or dead. Eyjólfr poses the hypothetical scenario, asking his father what he would do if these fugitives have turned back, to which Guðmundr asks what his son thinks would be advisable. Eyjólfr replies that 'bjóða þeim ǫllum heim til vistar, þat væri þínsligt', appealing to his father's pride as a generous host.[50] Only once Guðmundr has admitted that this would not be inadvisable does Eyjólfr reveal that Barði and his men were shipwrecked and their cargo lost. Guðmundr must now live up to his word. Although the son adds that he believes that hosting the men will bring his father honour, this incident

[50] *Heiðarvíga saga*, in *Borgfirðinga sögur*, ed. by Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 3 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1938), pp. 215–328 (p. 321), 'Invite them all home to stay; that would be like you.'

demonstrates how sons gain, or attempt to gain, authority within the household through the giving of advice. Even the twelve-year-old Helgi's advice to his mother Droplaug in *Fljótsdæla saga* can be taken as self-interested. Although Helgi later kills the source of the gossip against his mother, he initially asks her to ignore rumours because 'svó mun ek gjöra'.[51] Helgi is at first a young boy who does not fully grasp the extent of damage a rumour of infidelity can have on both his mother's status and his own legitimacy. While this could be a genuine attempt to help Droplaug calm herself before Helgi avenges her reputation himself, there is no indication that Helgi plans to take action at all until his mother's discontent at his indifference harms their relationship. In this way Helgi both tries and fails to assert his authority within the family with advice after the death of his father, initially overreaching and upsetting his mother.

In some ways, advice-giving practices show that sons provide value to their families simply by existing. Advice flows towards them and rarely away. Their potential to survive and produce future generations represents lineage, and their feats in saga narrative bolster their family reputations. Younger men support their families through actions, not words. Most advice is given to younger men to save them from danger and sometimes even their own decisions. With a precedent like this, any deviation can be observed as a transgression and when children advise their parents, authority is being challenged. This demonstrates that advice is not merely beneficial to the receiver. Advice giving is an instrument of power and having the recognition, respect and even masculinity to be expected to give advice is the equivalent of having authority within the family structure.

Brothers

Advice giving within the family is not always a matter of authority and testing dominance. There are twenty-eight incidents involving fraternal advice in the *Íslendingasögur*.[52] Brotherhood most closely represents a peer group within the family. The potential for bilateral advice giving between brothers supports Carolyne Larrington's statement that '[t]he norm of fraternal love comes second only to the requirement for filial obedience to the father

[51] *Fljótsdæla saga*, in *Austfirðinga sögur: Þorsteins saga hvíta, Vápnfirðinga saga, Þorsteins þáttr stangarhǫggs, Ölkofra þáttr, Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða, Droplaugarsona saga, Brandkrossa þáttr, Gunnars þáttr Þiðrandabana, Fljótsdæla saga, Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar, Draumr Þorsteins Síðu-Hallssonar, Þorsteins þáttr austfirðings, Þorsteins þáttr sǫgufróða, Gull-Ásu-Þórðar þáttr*, ed. by Jón Jóhannesson, Íslenzk fornrit, 11 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1950), pp. 215–296 (p. 243), 'that is what I will do'.
[52] See Appendix: Table 2.

in medieval European minds.'[53] Brothers, particularly adult brothers, are not always equal in the sagas in terms of property, status or social influence. However, this does not mean that there is a strict formal hierarchy that dictates the interactions brothers have with each other. Indeed, authors do not always clearly mark which sibling is the elder, the wealthier or the legal heir, especially if these brothers are still dependants. Even when these factors are mentioned, they do not necessarily define advice-giving relationships. Therefore, power dynamics between siblings are not as asymmetrical as those between parent and child and are sometimes mediated more by personal characteristics than familial role.

Unlike advice from fathers to sons, advice between brothers can be mutual instead of unidirectional. In both *Víglundar saga* and *Vatnsdœla saga*, all brotherly advice is bilateral. This pattern of mutuality also extends to all three pieces of advice given by foster-brothers, although this occurs only in *Harðar saga Grímkelssonar* wherein Hǫrðr advises his foster-brother Geirr twice and is advised by Geirr once.[54] Even though these examples are limited to a minority of sagas, they represent a significant pattern because of the astonishing rarity of reciprocated advice giving between people of any relationship. One such pair of mutually advising biological brothers are the sons of Ingimundr in *Vatnsdœla saga*, who give three pieces of advice each. One example of this occurs at the arrival of the antagonistic Þórólfr, who is characterised with exaggerated bad neighbour traits, stealing livestock, possessing nine disruptive supporters and being rumoured to make human sacrifices. Þorsteinn Ingimundarson, a *goði*, is asked to put an end to the man. Nineteen men, including Þorsteinn and his brothers Jǫkull and Þórir, approach Þórólfr's fortification, but Þorsteinn admits that he does not know how to attack because of a river chasm in their way. Þorsteinn's admission prompts his brother Jǫkull, who has thus far been the more aggressive and combat-oriented sibling, to suggest a strategy. Jǫkull tells Þorsteinn that 'Þetta er engi torveldi, ok mun ek gefa hér ráð til. Þú, Þorsteinn, ok menn með þér skuluð skjóta at þeim ok glettask við þá, en ek mun fara upp með ánni við fá menn ok vita, ef ek mætta komask á bak þeim í virkit.'[55] The plan works and Jǫkull is perceived as being particularly courageous as a result.

[53] Larrington, '"Berr er hverr á bakinu nema sér bróður eigi": Fraternal Love and Loyalty', in *Brothers and Sisters in Medieval European Literature* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2015), pp. 46–75 (p. 48).
[54] See *Harðar saga*, pp. 12, 22 and 35.
[55] *Vatnsdœla saga*, in *Vatnsdœla saga*: *Hallfreðar saga, Kormáks saga, Hrómundar þáttr halta, Hrafns þáttr Guðrúnarsonar*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 8 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1939), pp. 3–131 (p. 83), 'That's no great difficulty, and I will give advice to you. You, Þorsteinn, and the men with you should shoot at them and provoke them; and I will go up along the river with a few men and find out if I might come into the stronghold from the back.'

This is a very typical example of brotherly advice giving. Brothers enter a potential battleground and combat advice is given. There is a tendency for saga brothers to already be near each other when the need for advice occurs, meaning that unlike many other advice seekers, brothers do not need to travel to gain advice. This is convenient from a literary perspective, but it is also likely a historical reality that brothers travelling or staying together was relatively common, an effect of Norse homosocial bonds between brothers or complex households.[56] Prior to this, there have been three instances of Þorsteinn advising Jǫkull, primarily for paranormal conflict. Jǫkull then gives Þorsteinn three pieces of combat advice.

However, Jǫkull gives a more detailed strategy than most brothers give. Jǫkull has previously been characterised as the more martial brother and therefore the tactical expert. It makes sense for the development of this ambitious character that he would place himself in the most dangerous position because it utilises his key skills and will gain him the most glory. In comparison, Þorsteinn earlier gives paranormal-related advice despite not being described as having particularly strong associations with the paranormal, characterising Þorsteinn, who is after all a *goði*, at the outset as a wise man and a leader among the brothers. The pair have a third brother, but there is little in the way of an advice-giving relationship with him. Thus, the brothers define themselves through their advice giving. Larrington comments, 'The key to harmonious fraternal relations is thus the pursuit of separate destinies, though brothers will usually provide mutual aid when it is requested.'[57] Although Larrington refers to brothers physically separating from each other to pursue futures dictated by inheritance, it could still be said that advice giving is another way in which '[f]raternal differentiation is thus crucial for the narrative hero.'[58] The saga author emphasises their differing specialities, making the brothers more effective together than apart and therefore elevating such a bond as ideal.

Brotherly advice most often concerns a discussion of combat strategy, often in which both brothers will be fighting.[59] Even Þorsteinn's paranormal-related advice is itself concerned with both defensive and offensive tactics against magically enhanced opponents.[60] Aside from usually being nearby, brothers are sometimes equally complicit in causing the issue at hand and, often similar in age, are sometimes the best equipped to provide

[56] See Evans, *Men and Masculinities in the Sagas of Icelanders*, pp. 34–5. For a discussion of complex households in an Icelandic context, see William Miller, 'Some Aspects of Householding in the Medieval Icelandic Commonwealth', *Continuity and Change*, 3 (1988), 321–55 (p. 321).
[57] Larrington, '"Berr er hverr á bakinu nema sér bróður eigi": Fraternal Love and Loyalty', p. 49.
[58] *Ibid.*
[59] Brothers advise their brothers on combat involving both brothers in the following eleven incidents: *Fljótsdæla saga* p. 278, *Gísla saga Súrssonar* p. 64, *Ljósvetninga saga* pp. 9, and 38, *Reykdæla saga ok Víga-Skútu* p. 215, *Valla-Ljóts saga* p. 254, *Vatnsdæla saga* pp. 60, 74, 83, and 93, and *Víglundar saga* p. 109.
[60] See *Vatnsdæla saga* at 60 and 74.

reinforcement in violent disputes. Nevertheless, it is rare that Icelanders of status travel any sizable distance alone, particularly in times of conflict, and therefore in the sagas there are almost always other men around, friends or followers, who might be able to give similar strategic advice. Nevertheless, if a brother is present, it usually falls to them. This is quite possibly due to another facet of brotherly advice — it is very rarely solicited. Among twenty-eight advice incidents between brothers, only four are solicited.[61] This could mean that brothers are less inclined to ask each other for advice, implying that brotherly advice is of less value, but this is unlikely, because only five pieces of brotherly advice are not acted upon in the sagas. It is more likely that brothers due to their close familial bond are more bold in offering their opinions at critical moments, underlined by the mutuality that such advice can have. Rather than giving standard paternal safety advice, brothers exchange more immediate combat strategies because they usually journey into the conflict together.

Uncles

The uncle is much less common as an advice giver and the uncle-nephew relationship operates like neither fraternal nor paternal relationships. The sample size of uncles involved in advice incidents is only nine, five from paternal uncles and four from maternal.[62] Despite this, they advise on a variety of topics, particularly advising not to provoke an enemy, or giving marriage advice. Whether an uncle is related matrilineally or patrilineally is defined clearly in the Old Norse language, with a maternal uncle referred to as *móðurbróðir* (mother's brother) and a paternal uncle being a *föðurbróðir* (father's brother). The clear linguistic distinction between the maternal and the paternal uncle implies that these roles are different, and indeed *Grágás* shows that those related to a person through the female line have a different legal relationship from someone related through the male line.[63] This is somewhat reflected in advice giving, but in a surprising manner.

Maternal uncles give advice that echoes the safety advice that is typically the domain of parents. In *Kjalnesinga saga* and *Þórðar saga hreðu*, this comes in the form of very practical advice to be careful of enemies either by taking more men when travelling or not

[61] Brothers give their brothers solicited advice in the following four incidents: *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 64, *Gísla saga Súrssonar* p. 64, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* pp. 106–7, and *Vatnsdœla saga* p. 90.
[62] See Appendix: Table 2.
[63] This is evident in the 'Wergild Ring List', a list of compensation payers and receivers, where those related through the male line are listed before those related through women. See *Grágás: lagasafn íslenska þjóðveldisins*, pp. 447–548.

courting a woman with dangerous brothers.[64] In two other instances, the uncle tells the nephew to leave a dangerous situation for his own safety. In *Hallfreðar saga*, this occurs in Norway when Galti, the maternal uncle of Óttarr, gifts him trading goods and tells him to leave for England just as Gunnhildr's sons assume power in Norway.[65] In this case, Galti is acting partly as a father, because he has taken care of the foster-brothers Óttarr and Ávaldi since the home of Ávaldi's father was burned down and the people inside, including Óttarr's father, were killed. This advice ends up being extremely beneficial, with the foster-brothers becoming wealthy travelling between Norway and England.

However, maternal uncles do not always feel so responsible for their nephews. In *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, when Háls is framed by a friend and accused of stealing wethers, he travels 23 km to ask his maternal uncle, Áskell *goði*, and his brother Hávarðr for help.[66] Háls' uncle, thinking the friend troublesome, does not give legal assistance but instead advises him to go abroad. Háls is then outlawed for sheep stealing, explicitly because Áskell did not want to answer for him. Most advice in the sagas where one person advises another to leave for their own safety represents the most that person can reasonably do for them. However, Áskell is a *goði*, someone in a position of power and influence, and simply telling his nephew to leave seems a conscious choice not to interfere much. It demonstrates that, as a nephew is a member of the family, an uncle may have some social obligation to give protective advice, but this does not require him to utilise the extent of his powers, as he might if it were a son in trouble.

Paternal uncles provide a good example of unreliable advice giving. It is very unusual for uncles to truly exert themselves on behalf of their nephews such as in the rather unlikely circumstances of *Víglundar saga*, which is influenced by romance conventions. There, a Norwegian paternal uncle appears in Iceland and marries the woman his nephew desires to preserve her availability, despite never having met this nephew before.[67] This uncle advises him to reconcile with the bride's father. Other paternal uncles are more likely to give sensible

[64] See *Kjalnesinga saga*, p. 24. See also *Þórðar saga hreðu*, in *Kjalnesinga saga, Jökuls þáttr Búasonar, Víglundar saga, Króka-Refs saga, Þórðar saga hreðu. Finnboga, saga, Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfifls*, ed. by Jóhannes Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 14 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1959), pp. 163–226 (p. 177).
[65] *Hallfreðar saga*, in *Vatnsdœla saga*: *Hallfreðar saga, Kormáks saga, Hrómundar þáttr halta, Hrafns þáttr Guðrúnarsonar*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 8 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1939), pp. 135–200 (p. 137).
[66] *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, in *Ljósvetninga Saga með þáttum: Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu, Hreiðars þáttr*, ed. by Björn Sigfússon, Íslenzk fornrit, 10 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1940), pp. 151–243 (p. 156–7).
[67] *Víglundar saga*, in *Kjalnesinga saga, Jökuls þáttr Búasonar, Víglundar saga, Króka-Refs saga, Þórðar saga hreðu. Finnboga, saga, Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfifls*, ed. by Jóhannes Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 14 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1959), pp. 63–116 (p. 114).

advice in lieu of physical support. This occurs in *Vatnsdœla saga*, where a Norwegian uncle seems to dislike his troublesome nephew, advising him to move away and furthermore fruitlessly counselling him to foster a good rapport with his new neighbours.[68] Most paternal uncles are less detailed and less committed in providing advice and support than fathers or brothers likely because their connection to the advice recipient is more distant. However, this does not explain why maternal uncles echo parental models of advice giving.

The scholarship on other European medieval literatures acknowledges that a relationship between maternal uncle and nephew is of great importance. On the topic of kinship structures in Northern France in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Georges Duby notes 'la position privilégiée qu'occupaient alors les liens entre neveu et oncle maternel'.[69] In an analysis of kinship structures in the early English text Beowulf, Rolf H. Bremmer Jr. expresses that Beowulf is likely Wiglaf's maternal uncle, that Wiglaf takes the role of son to the dying Beowulf and that 'the bond between MoBr [mother's brother] and SiSo [sister's son] functions in the poem as a mirror to the bond between father's brother (=FaBr) and brother's son (=BrSo). The one is always positive, the other is troubled.'[70] There has yet to be extensive scholarship about maternal uncles in medieval Scandinavian families.

Maternal uncles, although not as accountable for the welfare of children as parents, are likely to offer aid and advice. As discussed below, mothers are far more likely than fathers to advise their sons to seek aid from other male relatives, probably due to the restricted amount of help women in medieval Icelandic society could provide in both legal and combat domains. Some uncles or NIFMs of a person requiring help behave as though responsibility can be shifted onto another male relative, usually the father. As Iceland was a patriarchy, it is possible that seeking aid from those related matrilineally was rarer and therefore more reserved for more desperate situations. However, the advice incidents from uncles in the sagas, although few, are split fairly evenly between advice given by maternal and paternal uncles and therefore the data does not support this. It is more likely that maternal uncles give careful advice and support as a holdover from obligations to the mother of the child as, prior to marriage and in the case of divorce, brothers could represent a woman's most secure allies and legal representatives. One episode from *Laxdœla saga* stands out as an

[68] See *Vatnsdœla saga*, p. 51.
[69] Georges Duby, 'Structures de parenté et noblesse dans la France du Nord aux xie et XIIe siècles', *Hommes et structures du moyen âge* (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2020), pp. 267–286 (p. 275), 'the privileged position occupied by the links between nephew and maternal uncle'.
[70] Rolf H. Bremmer Jr., 'The Importance of Kinship: Uncle and Nephew in *Beowulf*', *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik*, 15 (1980), 21–38 (p. 36).

example of a paternal uncle deprioritising a nephew and gives rise to one of the most important issues within advice-giving practices: reasons to refuse to give advice. This is examined below.

Uncles have a similar role to NIFM, generally giving their advice only when men more closely related are unavailable. It is possible that uncles may advise more often than is easily apparent in the *Íslendingasögur*, as saga authors may sometimes use broad terms for kinsmen when referring to them. Maternal and paternal uncles advise in different ways, despite giving a similar quantity of advice. Although paternal uncles may give unreliable advice or may not exert themselves on behalf of their nephews — in short, showing little obligation towards nephews — maternal uncles advise almost like parents, prioritising safety. In a society where a woman may need to rely on her brothers for legal or martial support in the absence of her husband, it is reasonable that her brothers' support might extend to her sons.

Refusing to Give Advice

A person can only refuse to give advice if their advice was initially solicited. Considering that only twenty-four percent of all advice incidents involve advice being solicited, it can be assumed that either that person is near when immediate advice is needed or the advice seeker considers them likely to give wise counsel.[71] In *Laxdœla saga*, conflicting loyalties are the reason that Óláfr does not advise Bolli when Bolli requests 'á þá leið er, frændi, komit, at mér væri á því hugr, at staðfesta ráð mitt ok kvángask; þykkjumk ek nú vera fullkominn at þroska. Vilda ek til hafa þessa máls þitt orðafullting ok framkvæmð, því at þeir eru hér flestir menn, at mikils munu virða þín orð.'[72] Óláfr reacts coolly when Bolli specifies that the woman he wants to marry is Guðrún, because of the affection between Guðrún and Kjartan, Bolli's foster-brother, who is currently abroad. They agree that the question will be ultimately be for Guðrún's father to decide. Óláfr is not enthused that Bolli successfully gets betrothed to Guðrún. Óláfr is both the half-brother of Bolli's father and Bolli's foster-father. The immediacy of these relationships should mean that there is no impediment to giving Bolli marriage advice. However, Kjartan, who would be slighted if the marriage between Bolli and Guðrún occurred, is Óláfr's biological son. Óláfr therefore has two reasons not to facilitate

[71] See Appendix: Table 3.
[72] *Laxdœla saga*, p. 128, 'it has come to mind, kinsman, that I should settle down and marry; now I feel myself in the prime of life. I wish to have the assistance of your words and prowess to accomplish this, because most men here would listen to your word.'

the union. His loyalty to his own son is one conflicting interest. The preservation of the good relationship between the foster-brothers Bolli and Kjartan, and therefore the preservation of the family, is the other.

It is not common to refuse to give advice when asked. Those who are solicited but refuse to advise are typically family members, usually men, and the prioritisation of other loyalties is typically the main reason a person might be unwilling to give advice. Aside from conflicting loyalties, there are otherwise three more reasons a person might fail to advise. The first is simply that the potential adviser cannot think of a plan. This is exemplified best in *Gísla saga Súrssonar* wherein two married women are caught gossiping about their ex-lovers and seek counsel for how to get out of trouble. One of the women, Auðr, asks her husband Gísli for a plan, presumably to keep the peace between sworn brothers her gossip has reflected poorly on. He tells her, 'Eigi sé ek hér ráð til […] þat sem duga mun. En þó mun ek ekki kunna þik um þetta, því at mæla verðr einnhverr skapanna málum, ok þat mun fram koma, sem auðit verðr.'[73] It would be reasonable to ask why scenes where a character cannot think of advice are included in sagas at all as they do not advance plot. However, such episodes serve a narrative purpose. When Gísli is asked for advice, even if he cannot think of a solution, the character and reader is made aware that there is a severe problem which will cause sworn brothers to clash. The scene also foreshadows Gísli's later helplessness as events spiral out of his control, beginning with his inability to conceive of a strategy for his wife. The incident also sheds light on the relationships between these characters. Auðr is characterised as an archetypal good wife, ever loyal to her husband, and an intelligent woman, later tricking and assaulting Gísli's enemy. The fact that her first response to potential trouble is to consult her husband reveals not only a strong marriage but what a socially aware woman might do in such a situation. Gísli has a calm response to his wife's gossip, perhaps because his wife's first actions were to make him aware of the coming trouble and put value on his counsel. Moreover, being unable to think of advice highlights the fallibility of saga characters and adds a realistic facet to advice-giving practices as depicted in the *Íslendingasögur* that sometimes the shrewdest person cannot think instantly of a solution.

Self-protection or self-interest are other reasons someone will refuse to advise. This can coincide with issues of conflicting loyalty. In *Víga-Glúms saga*, for example, Þorkell, the father of a murdered son, asks Þórarinn, a kinsman through marriage, for advice and support,

[73] *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, p. 33–4, 'I do not see here advice that will succeed [...] but I will not be angry with you about this, because fate must speak through someone and that will come, whatever luck wills.'

but he cannot comply because he is biologically related to the murderer.[74] This is not merely blind loyalty to more immediate family. Refusing to give advice prevents Þórarinn from involving himself in a dispute that can only damage his reputation, as through any intervention at all, he would be providing the means to attack his own relatives and allies. This can be framed as remaining neutral to protect a familial network, but such a decision is also self-protective. In *Gísla saga*, when Bǫrkr prepares a case against Gísli for killing Þorgrímr, Gísli's own brother-in-law and Bǫrkr's brother, Gísli approaches his elder brother Þorkell for advice and help: 'Hann [Gísli] spyrr Þorkel bróður sinn ráða eða hvat hann legði til með honum eða hvárt hann vill nǫkkura ásjá veita honum. Hann svarar sem fyrr, at hann kvezk mundu gera honum njósn, ef honum væri atfarar veittar, en kvezk mundu firra sik sakagiptum.'[75] Þorkell does not entirely reject Gísli, as he offers to provide information. However, he denies Gísli both his mental resources and efforts when he fails to offer advice or support. Gísli is evidentially displeased with his compromise. Unlike Þórarinn in *Víga-Glúms saga*, Gísli has previously made a conscious decision to disrupt family ties by killing a brother-in-law to avenge another brother-in-law. This controversy may explain Þorkell's attempted distance, but it is not the reason that the author provides for Þorkell's lack of advising. Instead, Þorkell's reticence is characterised as an attempt to remain clear of the same legal trouble that Gísli experiences, possibly a remnant of resentfulness due to previous disagreements the two brothers have had within the saga. Regardless of the character's motivations for failing to provide even a small measure of advice, it is apparent that his justification — that he does not wish to risk his own comfort or safety to prevent his brother's outlawry — is perceived poorly by Gísli, who then asks for wool and silver, which is granted in exchange for a cessation of contact. The social bonds between brothers are severed due to the reluctance to provide advice for ostensibly cowardly reasons. To give advice is to take a side and refusing to do this can break bonds.

The third and final reason why a person might fail to give requested advice lies within the connection between advice and support. In *Vatnsdœla saga*, Ingólfr keeps visiting Valgerðr without her father Óttarr's consent. When presented with an ultimatum, Þorsteinn, Ingólfr's father, allows Óttarr to take his son to court: 'Ok er várþing kom, bað Ingólfr

[74] *Víga-Glúms saga*, in *Eyfirðinga sǫgur: Víga-Glúms saga, Ǫgmundar þáttr dytts, Þorvalds þáttr tasalda, Svarfdœla saga, Þorleifs þáttr jarlsskálds, Valla-Ljóts saga, Sneglu-Halla þáttr, Þorgríms þáttr Hallasonar*, ed. by Jónas Kristjánsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 9 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1956), pp. 3–98 (p. 29).
[75] *Gísla saga*, p. 64, 'He [Gísli] asked his brother Þorkell for advice or what he was prepared to do for him and whether he wished to give him help. He [Þorkell] replied as before, that he said he would do his scouting, if there were any planned assaults, but said that he would absent himself from any accusation.'

Þorstein leggja ráð til um málit, ella kvazk hann mundu fœra øxi í hǫfuð Óttari.'[76] Instead of advice, Þorsteinn gives Ingólfr a *goðorð*, and Ingólfr and his men break up the court proceedings violently so that Óttarr moves away. The author is vague at this point about the causal relationship between these two events. Ingólfr is perhaps only able to derail the case because of his newfound power and supporters from the *goðorð* (chieftaincy). It is possible that Ingólfr is satisfied with his father's show of support, and then is independently able to disrupt the *þing* with the combative nature he has always possessed. Þorsteinn's motivations are clear when he delivers the *goðorð*. By doing so, he attempts to prevent violence between his family and Óttarr's and pays a penance for his involvement leading to a legal case against his son. However, why he gives such a valuable asset and seat of power instead of the minimum required contribution of verbal advice is less clear. In other sagas, when a valuable object or excessive effort is given instead of advice, it usually indicates that the giver has exceptional qualities, either in loyalty, honour or generosity, and that they have an unusually close friendship with the advice seeker. An example of this can be found in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, where the Norwegian Arinbjǫrn is Egill's friend and affinal kinsman. When Egill experiences alienation from the Norwegian royal family, Arinbjǫrn could limit himself to advising Egill to write praise poetry to save himself, but he chooses also to vouch for Egill and guard his room against a paranormal shape-changer.[77] This friendship is held in the saga as especially loyal, to the extent that even in his old age, Egill grows upset when one of Arinbjǫrn's gifts to him is thoughtlessly ruined by his son.[78] Stephen Pax Leonard states that in early Iceland:

> To ensure the family relationship, friendship had to be used in many instances. Blood was no guarantee of support. This is evident from the phrase "they were relatives and friends." The difference between friendship and kinship was that relations of friendship were most often contracted willingly, unlike bonds of kinship that were established at birth. However, because of all the overlapping of family relationships and the limited support kin could give most people in

[76] *Vatnsdœla saga*, p. 99, 'And when the Spring Assembly arrived, Ingólfr asked Þorsteinn to give advice in the case; or else he said that he would bury his axe in Óttarr's head.'
[77] *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. by Sigurður Nordal, Íslenzk fornrit, 2 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka fornritafélag, 1933), p. 182.
[78] *Ibid.*, p. 125.

> conflicts, kinship took a back seat to friendship, except among the chieftain families.[79]

Therefore, Þorsteinn's actions in *Vatnsdœla saga* could be a drastic effort to safeguard his relationship with his son by giving such an outrageous gift. Giving support in lieu of, or as well as, advice is not restricted to those in the same family. A similar event happens in *Hœnsna-Þóris saga*, when Þorkell makes an offer of hospitality when he is asked for advice.[80] Consequently, these examples demonstrate that there are situations when decisions should ideally not be made by a single person, and characters in any sufficiently detailed saga episode will generally solicit advice when in these situations. To refuse to give advice breaks the social contract, particularly if the reasons for refusing are not concrete.

There are narrative reasons a person may be approached for advice when they will not or cannot give it. Scenes like this foreshadow conflict and develop the relationship between the one seeking the advice and the one not giving it. These relationships can be improved by refusal, if the advice non-giver gives material aid or personal involvement instead, or the relationship can be utterly severed if the advice seeker does not believe the reasons for refusal are legitimate. Due to this, two things are revealed about the act of advice giving. The first is that giving advice is the lesser cousin of giving support from an alliance-retaining or relationship-nurturing perspective. The second is that there are situations where giving advice is, at least from through the eyes of an advice seeker, an owed act and perhaps the minimum effort someone could make to maintain a pre-existing relationship. The only reason for refusing to advise that advice seekers typically have a neutral reaction to is if the non-giver cannot imagine a solution. The other reasons, such as self-interest, self-protection or conflicting loyalties, demonstrates to the advice seeker that the non-giver's priorities do not lie with them.

Not Being Consulted for Advice

There are also situations where individuals object to not having been asked for advice, although whether this is a true violation of social loyalty or authority is more nebulous. Younger men are rarely solicited for advice and therefore in a small number of cases assert

[79] Stephen Pax Leonard, 'Social Structures and Identity in Early Iceland', *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia*, 6 (2010), 147–159 (p.106).
[80] See *Hœnsna-Þóris saga*, in *Borgfirðinga sögur*, ed. by Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 3 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1938), pp. 1–47 (p. 27).

themselves in the family hierarchy by demanding to be consulted. This is a method predominantly targeted at fathers. In *Harðar saga*, Valbrandr has a son, Torfi, and a daughter, Signý, who is a widow. Valbrandr agrees to marry her to Grímkell *goði*, but Torfi is only told when Valbrandr returns home from an assembly. Although Torfi can change little now the agreement is made, he still complains that 'Alllítils þykkja yðr verðar mínar tillögur, er mik skyldi ekki at spyrja slíku.'[81] He adds that he feels that his sister will not appreciate such an old and tyrannical husband, which is later confirmed when Signý and her new husband are cool towards each other. Torfi's protests are only quelled when Signý herself tells her brother to remain placid and arranges for him to gain property from the marriage. This suggests that Torfi's interest is not merely in Signý's welfare but also what he might have gained from influencing her marriage. A brother-in-law represents a new ally and this choice of connection is taken from Torfi, unfairly in his view. This is not the only instance of someone discontent at not having been consulted for advice in *Harðar saga*. Later, this situation is echoed when Grímkell engages his daughter by his first marriage, Þuríðr, to Illugi when his son by his second marriage and Torfi's nephew, Hǫrðr, is not present. Hǫrðr initially refuses to go to the wedding because he was not consulted on the match.[82] These situations are somewhat similar to advice that is given from sons, like Helgi's advice to his mother Droplaug in *Fljótsdæla saga* to calm herself, as discussed above, which is received with much offence.

These instances of young men reacting emotionally to having been overlooked as a source of advice can be taken as a manipulation to supplant parental authority. These also suggest that sons are not reliable sources of advice. That other figures in saga literature are surprised not to be consulted for advice is perhaps more expected. In *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*, friends and family alike are concerned when litigants make settlements without asking anyone for advice. Ásgrímr and Þorsteinn are in charge of the prosecution of Þórðr for killing Bjǫrn. Þórðr persuades Ásgrímr, in secret, to accept compensation. Þorsteinn is horrified to find this out, feeling that Ásgrímr has cheated. The text notes the shock of the observers, stating that 'engan mann varði þessa, at Ásgrímr myndi við engan um ráðask.'[83] Others scramble in an attempt to invalidate the settlement. Unlike the sons of *Harðar saga*, who exaggerate their dismay at not being sought for advice and demonstrate their immaturity,

[81] *Harðar saga*, p. 9, 'Your consideration for my advice has little value when you don't ask for such from me.'
[82] *Ibid.*, p. 30.
[83] *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*, in *Borgfirðinga sögur*, ed. by Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 3 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1938), pp. 111–211 (p. 208), 'No one would expect this, that Ásgrímr would consult nobody.'

NIFM, allies and wise men with legal knowledge have a reason to expect to be consulted in a case involving so many people. The violation of this expectation provokes outrage, as well as demonstrating Ásgrímr's selfishness in not considering either the desires or potentially advantageous counsel of his social network.

Younger men are not generally solicited for advice in the sagas, much like female characters. Unlike female characters, they do not allow this to go unremarked upon. Younger men exist within the advice giver hierarchy and recognise that to be the one giving advice is to hold a position of respect within the family. To be unconsulted is to miss opportunities to make important decisions. Wiser and older men also take offence to not being asked for advice when they feel they have expertise or a stake in the outcome, but this indignation is usually legitimised by the author. Only younger men are shown to be too irresponsible to contribute to the decisions to which they object. It is interesting to note that in none of these cases is the strategy of acting disappointed or angry at having not been consulted successful. The outcome of these events is not altered simply because someone has expressed displeasure. The expression of shock or anger is an attempt to assert a desirable social framework and an attempt to gain power over situations that affect the whole family.

Women

Women exist outside of these paternally determined hierarchies. For the purposes of this dissertation, advice given by men is delineated from advice given by women because these are important distinctions when analysing data concerning whether social roles change the depiction of advice giving. This does not mean that this advice is necessarily masculine or feminine in nature. Indeed, there is much overlap in the nature and phrasing of advice given or received by both men and women, as discussed below. This analysis does not imply that gender identity in medieval Icelandic society should be conceptualised as a strict binary or associated with modern ideas of gender. The Norse perception of gender and sex is still under much debate.[84]

Women are generally under-represented in saga narratives despite making up a large percentage of the population in Saga Age Iceland, which hinders any investigation of their relationship with advice-giving practices. It is believed that almost all saga authors were men

[84] For a more in-depth discussion of Norse gender and sex, see Carol Clover, 'Regardless of Sex: Men, Women, and Power in Early Northern Europe', *Speculum*, 68.2 (1993), 363–87. See also Gareth Evans, *Men and Masculinities in the Sagas of Icelanders* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

and therefore may have less experience with all-female interactions.[85] There is also the question of what saga authors thought important to include in their narratives, as much saga action is comprised of male-dominated conflict. In seventy-three cases, women give advice, yet in twenty-eight, women are given advice by men.[86] Of these seventy-three pieces of advice given by women, only twelve instances are solicited.[87] This scarcity of soliciting advice from women could be a symptom of male-dominated narratives, or it could be indicative of how women attempt to exert power for the benefit of family, as will be discussed below. It should be noted that just over a third of advice given by women is unheeded, indicating the varying worth assigned to female-given counsel.[88]

The sagas depict women as occupying different roles from men. The *Íslendingasögur* have a keen interest in family lines, often introducing characters through genealogy. Women are seen as able to move outside a family, meaning that a married woman often retains links to both her biological family and her husband's kin, even disregarding additional relationships gained through fosterage or previous marriages. The relationships a woman obtains to affinal kin do not exactly correlate to those of a man to his in-laws. Pax Leonard claims that 'at the time of the Settlement the kin system appears to have been patrilineal; the implications of the phrase *at leiða í ætt* ('to adopt') are that one was becoming a member of the paternal *ætt* (Jónsbók, 87).'[89] This means that a medieval Icelandic woman may rely on her married family, primarily her husband, or her biological family in times of distress. A woman's loyalty could be foremost to her biological family despite marriage. Þórdís Súrsdóttir in *Gísla saga* is one example of a woman whose loyalties are caught between husband and brother. She initially betrays her brother Gísli, telling others she suspects him of killing her husband, yet in her next marriage risks her husband's displeasure, attempting to

[85] Jenny Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1996), p. 88. An exception to this is *Laxdœla saga*, which is suggested to have been written by a woman. For further discussion on the gender of the author of *Laxdœla saga*, see Loren Auerbach, 'Female Experience and Authorial Intention in *Laxdœla saga*', *Saga-Book*, 25 (1998), 30–52 (p. 46).
[86] See Appendix: Table 4. Men advise women in the following twenty-eight incidents: *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* p. 150, *Eiríks saga rauða* pp. 419 and 422, *Eyrbyggja saga* pp. 19 and 69–70, *Finnboga saga* p. 306, *Fljótsdœla saga* pp. 243 and 245, *Flóamanna saga* p. 249, *Gísla saga Súrssonar* pp. 33 and 33–4, *Grœnlendinga saga* p. 259, *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* p. 377, *Kormáks saga* pp. 235, 262, 264 and 293, *Króka-Refs saga* p. 121, *Laxdœla saga* pp. 14, 88, 94, 100, 177, 178 and 195, *Ljósvetninga saga* p. 64, *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 24–5, and *Víglundar saga* p. 86.
[87] Women give solicited advice in the following twelve incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* p. 136, *Flóamanna saga* p. 276, *Grœnlendinga saga* p. 258, *Gull-Þóris saga* p. 220, *Laxdœla saga* pp. 12 and 96, *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 50 and 58, *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar* p. 304, *Vatnsdœla saga* pp. 120–1, *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu* pp. 191–2, and *Víglundar saga* p. 100.
[88] See Appendix: Table 4.
[89] Pax Leonard, 'Social Structures and Identity in Early Iceland', p. 156.

kill a guest who is hunting Gísli, now a fugitive.[90] Women therefore represent a more nebulous grouping within the family than men, occupying a space between their original family and their affinal kin. Advice from women is typically family-oriented, rarely advising those outside of the immediate family, yet it is perhaps partially because of the liminal position of women between two families that their advice is not as sought after and respected as that of men.

The role of female advice givers is complicated by the literary depiction of women more generally. There is more scholarship concerning advice given by women than by men in Norse literature, although the word 'advice' is rarely used in these cases. Clark and Jóhanna, in a study of Eddic poetry, link female wisdom and advice inseparably:

> Women are also expected to impart some of their wisdom to male recipients. *Hávamál* (st. 115) refers to a woman as a man's *eyrarúna* (a woman into whose ears one tells secrets, a confidante), suggesting that they have a role of giving counsel, and we consistently find female characters performing the role of advisor.[91]

In Eddic poetry, female wisdom is rarely internal and self-contained but is instead expressed outwardly as advice for male ears. In scholarship, women are usually associated with whetting, not advising. Whetting, also known as inciting or goading, serves to stimulate men in Norse literature to take vengeance for either a death or a slight to their honour. It does not provide guidance, instead using shame to ensure compliance and giving little element of choice. The study of whetting has eclipsed scholarship of advice giving. For example, counsel is a close synonym to advice, yet the term has taken a new gendered meaning in scholarship due to the often-quoted saying in *Njáls saga*: 'eru kǫld kvenna ráð'.[92] This phrase is said in response not to a woman who has given advice but rather about a woman who has flung a bloody cloak around a man she wishes to avenge her husband. Cold counsel is associated not with advice but with whetting.[93] Examining female adviser roles, Clark and Jóhanna are hesitant to conflate whetting and advice: 'if whetting also functions as a type of

[90] *Gísla saga*, p. 61.
[91] David Clark and Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 'The Representation of Gender in Eddic Poetry', p. 343.
[92] *Njáls saga*, p. 292, 'the counsels of women are cold'.
[93] See Anderson and Swenson, eds, *Cold Counsel*.

advice (rather than a request or command or a female duty), then women do have an important part to play in this aspect of heroic life.'[94]

The difference between whetting and advice must be defined to explore the relationship between women and advice giving. Whetting is a separate and specific literary trope. The brutal way in which female inciters play on men's anxieties over honour and masculinity is likely why the term 'cold counsels' is most often applied to women. However, this term has become perhaps too closely associated with female saga characters in scholarship. As this study explores, the term 'cold counsels' seems to refer to the specific act of whetting, where the goal is vengeance, and not to female-given advice in general. Judith Jesch states that female inciters 'were a useful and colourful myth that accounted for the horrors of violence while removing the blame for it from male shoulders.'[95] Jesch furthermore suggests that female inciting as portrayed in the sagas is not necessarily a historical reality. The phrase 'cold counsels' does not only apply to women, as in *Laxdœla saga*, a male character gives 'cold counsels'.[96] Furthermore, in other saga genres, women are not primarily inciters. Barnes notes 'the wholesome counsel of women' in the *Riddarasögur*.[97]

Whetting is not always completely divorced from advice giving. Female advisers either advise men to do what is best for their safety and honour or else for the family's safety and honour. That concern for masculine or family reputation is also shared with female whetting. Providing plans and tactics, much like what Þorgils accuses Snorri of doing for Guðrún in *Laxdœla saga*, is a key element of advising in the sagas. Some women invent the vengeance strategy, as well as urging men to execute it. In *Njáls saga*, Hallgerðr tells three men how to kill Þórðr with specific directions and dates for where they must be and whom they must avoid to complete the murder.[98] Readers are told that 'þeir játtu, at þessi ráðagerð skyldi fram koma.'[99] This is not advice for the benefit of the men she speaks to, but instead instructions for how to complete her wishes. Additionally, although Hallgerðr aims here to encourage men to avenge the killing of her relative via the killing of Þórðr, she does not recruit them through typical whetting means. Instead, the action is treated like a social transaction. She waits on Sigmundr while he stays with her, giving him money, and tells

[94] David Clark and Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 'The Representation of Gender in Eddic Poetry', p. 344.
[95] Judith Jesch, *Women in the Viking age* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1991), p. 191.
[96] See Semantic Field Analysis of Advice Lexemes.
[97] Barnes, 'The "Discourse of Counsel" and the "Translated" *Riddarasögur*', p. 380.
[98] See Semantic Field Analysis of Advice Lexemes.
[99] *Brennu-Njáls saga*, pp. 107–8, 'They [the men] agreed that this plan should be carried out.'

Þráinn that she would consider him a true son-in-law if he attacked Þórðr for her. In this way, *Njáls saga* portrays a woman capable of coercing men into revenge without shaming them. The episode also highlights that certain elements of whetting and advice giving cannot be strictly separated, as some instances of strategising may also have vengeful goals or use *ráð*-related language.

Women should foremost be considered protectors. Most combat-related advice given by women emphasises preserving safety and sometimes avoiding trouble altogether. Women often take a role very different from the archetypal whetter. Giselle Gos, in an examination of women's sound counsel in *Fóstbrœðra saga*, comments on how women 'actively enforce proper male behavior in the community, and mediate social integration, as far as it is possible.'[100] This is demonstrated in *Laxdœla saga*, when Hǫskuldr denies his half-brother Hrútr inheritance from their mother. Jórunn, Hǫskuldr's wife, urges her husband not to go after Hrútr when he robs cattle and kills his men. She explains that many people think Hrútr is only taking what is his by right, and Hrútr has a powerful supporter. Jórunn tells Hǫskuldr that 'nú þœtti oss hitt ráðligra, at þú byðir Hrúti, bróðir þínum, sœmiliga, því at þat er fangs ván af frekum úlfi; vænti ek þess, at Hrútr taki því vel ok líkliga, því at mér er maðr sagðr vitr; mun hann þat sjá kunna, at þetta er hvárstveggja ykkar sómi.'[101] Hǫskuldr listens to her, acknowledging the truth in her arguments. Instead of goading her husband, who is already prepared to inflict violence, Jórunn is the more objective voice, not overcome by emotionality. She sees that Hrútr is a dangerous opponent with a formidable ally, that the community would not support Hǫskuldr's vengeance, and that a settlement would leave Hǫskuldr's honour intact. She also recognises that Hrútr has been treated somewhat unfairly, and that a settlement would rebalance what the half-brothers owe to each other better than death. Settlements are not a practical option in all cases where whetting is employed in sagas, yet in this instance, it is a woman who recognises that a peaceful method will leave all parties satisfied. In this way, through giving advice instead of goading, Jórunn emerges in the role of level-headed problem solver.

Some aspects of women's advice giving confirm features of the insular patriarchal society. Women are not as represented in speaking roles, let alone advising roles, as men. Only sixteen percent of women's advice is solicited, compared to twenty-four percent of all

[100] Gos, 'Women as a Source of *heilræði*, "Sound Counsel"', p. 299.
[101] *Laxdœla saga*, p. 48, 'I think it advisable that you do right by Hrútr, your brother, because a hard battle is fought by a hungry wolf. I expect this, that Hrútr will take this, an offer of settlement, well and favourably, because people say to me that he is wise. He would see that it would do honour to the two of you together.'

advice incidents overall being solicited.[102] Solicited or not, advice from women is evidently valued less, as over a third of advice incidents are unheeded. Women mostly advise men, typically their sons and husbands. Women giving advice in the *Íslendingasögur* are family-focused, under-appreciated as advisors by male characters and rarely portrayed forming same-sex social bonds.

However, this all points to perhaps the most surprising and significant finding of women's advice giving. Despite the predominance of scholarship on female whetters, women tend to give cautious and trouble-avoiding advice. Women who give advice are principally protectors. Whetting is not the main way women in the sagas recommend action or inaction. Some women in the sagas goad, prioritising their family's restitution above a potential revenger's wellbeing. However, as Zoe Borovsky points out, this is still an act that protects: 'Performances by women were enacted in crisis situations in order to maintain an equilibrium between the household and the outer world and to restore a sense of wholeness.'[103] Generally, authors portray women's advice as beneficial for the individual and family, implying that men's undertakings would be more successful and safe if they would listen. The counsels of women are usually not as cold as the proverb suggests.

Mothers

Advice coming from men and women often conforms to different social expectations and functions within the saga. On the surface, like paternal advice, the purpose of most maternal advice is to contribute to the future safety of one or more sons. Mothers give advice on thirteen occasions in the *Íslendingasögur* in comparison to fathers, who advise twenty-six times.[104] This is impressive, considering that women are less present in the sagas and therefore engage in less dialogue than men. Mothers, however, are much more cautious and distrusting of potential dangers, occasionally disagreeing with fathers on the seriousness of a threat. An example of this is from *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*. Þórðr, long since an enemy of Bjǫrn before a settlement was agreed, invites him to stay the winter with him. Þórdís, Bjǫrn's mother, tells Bjǫrn to remember that the more fairly Þórðr speaks, the falser he thinks.

[102] See above for the twelve incidents where women are solicited for advice. See Appendix: Table 3 for all 102 incidents of solicited advice.
[103] Zoe Borovsky, 'Never in Public: Women and Performance in Old Norse Literature', *The Journal of American Folklore*, 112 (1999), 6–39 (p. 32).
[104] See Appendix: Table 2. See above for the twenty-six incidents wherein fathers give advice.

Arngeirr, his father, urges him to go and be more reconciled, which Bjǫrn does.[105] Þórdís is ultimately correct in her warning. It becomes apparent that they are jealous over the same woman, leading to insults, legal action and, eventually, violence. This illustrates how maternal advice can serve a narrative function. Mothers often speak from a place of almost or outright paranormal foresight, warning accurately against distant dangers. Þórdís' actions can be interpreted both as foreboding against Þórðr's unfriendly nature and a method of directly characterising Þórðr for the reader, foreshadowing his later threat to Bjǫrn. If maternal advice is almost always accurate, it seems strange that advice-giving mothers are often treated with suspicion within the text.

Furthermore, an advice-giving mother is portrayed as somehow witch- or troll-like in some circumstances. Paranormal families may give advice-giving mothers more agency in strategizing and command, but ultimately, as explored below, even paranormal mothers exhibit very typical advice-giving behaviours. In these cases, the son is also generally portrayed negatively. This is the case for six instances involving maternal advice, yet these six pieces of advice can be divided between only three mothers. One such mother, in *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, is a literal troll. Skrukka is something of a sorceress as well as mother to Kolbjörn. When Kolbjörn sleeps and a guest begins killing the various rock dwellers, Skrukka is alerted by trollish insight and is able to advise the oblivious Kolbjörn to rise, strategise and pursue the slayer, and then takes part in the attack herself.[106]

At three pieces of advice, Dalla in *Kormáks saga*, the mother of the eponymous Kormákr, is the most advice-giving mother in any of the *Íslendingasögur*. She too has connections to the paranormal. Bersi, whose nickname is *hólm* (duel), marries Steingerðr, the woman whom Kormákr loves. Kormákr subsequently challenges Bersi to a duel. When Kormákr tells his mother about this, she proclaims it an unpromising business, asking how Kormákr will stand up to Bersi's sword Hvítingr and the healing stone that goes with it. Dalla next 'telr ráðligt at finna Miðfjarðar-Skeggja ok biðja Skǫfnungs.'[107] This sword has a list of specific instructions for its use, which Kormákr fails to follow, causing his mother to call him 'óráðþægr' (not amenable to advice/ disobedient).[108] On a separate occasion, Dalla counsels her son to see a prophetess for protection in a duel, which is incidentally the same prophetess

[105] *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*, p. 138.
[106] *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, in *Harðar saga*, ed. by Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 13 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1991), pp. 101–172 (p. 155).
[107] *Kormáks saga*, in *Vatnsdœla saga*: *Hallfreðar saga, Kormáks saga, Hrómundar þáttr halta, Hrafns þáttr Guðrúnarsonar*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 8 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1939), pp. 203–302 (p. 234), 'considered it advisable to find Skeggi of Midfjord and ask for [the sword] Skǫfnungr.'
[108] *Ibid.*, p. 235.

whom the opposing dueller has already sought aid from.[109] In these situations, Dalla is not the person who possesses either special weaponry or powers. She refers her son to the relevant helpers, acting as the bridge between the titular character and those with strong paranormal links. It could be said that Dalla herself has a special knowledge, not only knowing what items or people might be most useful to Kormákr but also implied to know somehow when Kormákr's opponent has already pursued magical help. William Sayers, supposing Kormákr to have Celtic links, suggests that Dalla has a greater relationship with magic: 'Dalla has a name suggestive of Ir. *dall* "blind" (cf. the early Irish poet Dallán mac Forgaill and *Laxdœla*'s *Grima* "hood, night"), while her father Önundr is called *sjóni* "the Seer"'. He adds that physical sightlessness pairs with mental foresight.[110] However, possibly because Dalla's connection to the paranormal is not direct, acting only as an intermediary to magic, Kormákr escapes the evil associations sometimes attributed to the sons of witches or trolls. Dalla is perhaps a device to excuse Kormákr's decision to resort to magical means, something often culturally associated with women and encountered in sagas either with great negativity or practical ambivalence.[111] However, Dalla's advice-giving behaviour is similar to the actions of other women in saga literature.

Like a father, Dalla provides a network of contacts useful to her son when he encounters conflict. However, the reason mothers and fathers differ in advice giving is that a male kinsman is more likely than a female one to supply direct advice, only referring their younger relatives to other helpers when they themselves are particularly powerless. This usually follows the same pattern as Dalla's advice. A son requires either safety from or success against a formidable enemy. The mother, not able to offer either defence or expertise herself, sends the son to a relative, a friend or a specialist in the type of conflict occurring. If approached by the son, the third party is willing to offer support or advice, usually due to their relationship with the mother, and because of their help the son is successful. In *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, Eyjólfr decides to seek restitution for the death of his father and so tells his mother Þorbjǫrg that he will meet with his kinsman Þorsteinn and also Einarr, but 'Þorbjǫrgu móður hans þótti mest traust at Skútu, ok kvað honum verr mundu þykkja, ef aðrir væri fyrr at sóttir en hann.'[112] Although Skúta immediately takes Eyjólfr in and

[109] *Ibid.*, p. 282.
[110] William Sayers, 'Sexual Identity, Cultural Integrity, Verbal and Other Magic in Some Episodes of *Laxdœla saga* and *Kormáks saga*', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 107 (1992), 131–155 (p. 142).
[111] See Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 'Women's Weapons: A Re-Evaluation of Magic in the *Íslendingasögur*', *Scandinavian Studies*, 81.4 (2009), pp. 409–436 (pp. 411–412).
[112] *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, p. 223, 'Þorbjǫrg his mother thought [Killer-] Skúta was the most reliable, and said that he would be offended, if others were sought out before him.'

promises him help, Eyjólfr has trouble convincing him to make this conflict a legal one. Skúta decides instead that they should take revenge. They part, disagreeing, yet Eyjólfr happens to come across and then kill his father's murderer. Eyjólfr receives restitution, albeit not in the manner he initially wished. Þorbjǫrg tells Eyjólfr to gain his uncle's support likely because Skúta has the nickname 'killer' and is infamous for violence. Either desiring revenge for her husband's death or assuming that is her son's goal, Þorbjǫrg identifies Skúta as an expert with close enough family ties to be convinced to become involved. Skúta's expectation that he be consulted suggests both that he considers himself enough an expert to be offended if he were not asked and that people in a mother's network should be relied on, similar to maternal uncles.[113] Þorbjǫrg cannot herself help. Women could not participate in court cases in the way men could and, even in the most fanciful of sagas, it is rare for a female character to wield a weapon. Jenny Jochens notes that:

> The *Grágás* texts do concur […] that women and men under sixteen were not allowed to prosecute as principals in cases of *vigsǫk* (homicide). In both manuscripts the list of men assigned this role was headed by the victim's son, provided he was over sixteen, freeborn, a lawful heir, and of such mental capacity (*hyginn*) that he was able to manage his inheritance. If no son existed, the case devolved in sequence upon the victim's father, full brother, half-brother, or illegitimate son (*Gg* Ia: 167–8; 2:334–5). The omission of women speaks loudly enough, but *Staðarhólsbók* eliminated remaining ambiguity by adding that "in no circumstances does a killing case fall to a woman" (*Gg* 2:335).[114]

Jochens goes on to comment that women could be a principal for rare cases, albeit not on their own behalf, and usually for cases involving their daughters. The domestically focused role assigned to women prevented them from making more concrete contributions against male-dominated antagonism. In those cases where something more than simply advising someone to stay away from danger is required, women resort to the other resources they have. These resources are typically men with power, either in physical strength, land ownership, or particular knowledge.

[113] See above for reactions to not being consulted for advice and the role of maternal uncles.
[114] Jenny Jochens, 'Gender symmetry in law?: The case of medieval Iceland', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 108 (1993), 46–67 (p. 48).

An unusually large amount of maternal advice is ignored, although maternal advice in the sagas would almost uniformly have positive results for the advice receiver if followed.[115] Mothers are also never solicited for advice. Nonetheless, there is nothing substantially different about the phrasing used by mothers when compared to other advice givers, using standard advice formulations such as 'þat sýnisk mér ráð.'[116] What differs is the content of maternal advice. As previously established, women often present more cautious advice than men, urging the prioritisation of safety and scepticism of people's intentions, and when ignored advice is examined, it is indeed specifically this that is advised. In some respects, mothers act in a way that is narratively functional. They warn against the possible consequences of an action to either foreshadow future dangers occurring because of sons taking the more hazardous action. This parallels the narrative function of women's advice in general, for thirty-eight percent of all maternal advice is ignored, which is only slightly higher than the thirty-four percent of all advice given by women that is ignored in the *Íslendingasögur*.[117] Sons are characterised as generally failing to recognise their mothers as valuable advice sources. It is possible that the reasons for this are the same as for why mothers might refer their sons to other men for further help or support: that women lack power or experience in certain domains such as law courts or battle. Cultural patriarchy and division of gender roles specific to medieval Icelandic society perhaps plays some part in the disregarding of maternal advice. This is not necessarily portrayed positively. The sagas largely acknowledge that sons miss the opportunity to avoid danger when they ignore the safety advice of their mothers. There is often a sense that masculine bravado interferes with sensible decision-making,[118] or a generational complaint that young men do not listen to their

[115] Advice from mothers is outright ignored by children in the following five incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* p. 138, *Kjalnesinga saga* pp. 10 and 18, *Kormáks saga* p. 235, and *Brennu-Njáls saga* p. 187. Mothers give 'good' advice to their children in the following eleven incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* p. 138, *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 41, *Fóstbrœðra saga* p. 132, *Kjalnesinga saga* p. 18, *Kormáks saga* pp. 234, 235 and 282, *Laxdœla saga* p. 201, *Brennu-Njáls saga* p. 187, *Vatnsdœla saga* p. 64, and *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu* p. 223.

[116] *Fóstbrœðra saga*, in *Harðar saga*, ed. by Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 13 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1991), pp. 121–276 (p. 132), 'it seems to me advisable'.

[117] See above for the five incidents wherein advice from mothers is outright ignored. Advice from women is ignored in the following twenty-five incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* pp. 136, 138, 157 and 177, *Eyrbyggja saga* pp. 141, 142 and 171, *Finnboga saga* p. 321, *Fljótsdœla saga* p. 235, *Flóamanna saga* pp. 248 and 269–70, *Fóstbrœðra saga* p. 163, *Gull-Þóris saga* p. 222, *Heiðarvíga saga* p. 234, *Þórðar saga hreðu* p. 201, *Kjalnesinga saga* pp. 10, 18 and 34, *Kormáks saga* p. 235, *Ljósvetninga saga* p. 50, *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 187, 320 and 425, *Vatnsdœla saga* p. 110, and *Víglundar saga* p. 90. For context, 24% of all advice, regardless of advice giver, is ignored.

[118] Falk, *Violence and Risk in Medieval Iceland*, p. 5.

mothers. In *Kjalnesinga saga*, the long-suffering Þorgerðr repeats the phrase 'þú munt ráða vilja' when talking to her stubborn son who will not take her advice.[119]

Women's advice giving exists outside of the male social hierarchy. Maternal advice is never solicited, which implies two things. The first is that sons overlook mothers for advice. The second is that mothers, who overall have much less of a role in the sagas than fathers or sons, use advice giving as a method of asserting power rather than expressing outright aggression or interfering in male-dominated matters directly. This is not the same assertion of power that can be associated with sons trying to rise within the family hierarchy or supersede their fathers' decisions. Most maternal advice is given to benefit sons and not the mothers giving it. Instead, mothers advise to assert themselves within the family and make their opinions heard when it is most important, which is primarily when the lives of their children are at stake.

Sisters

Sisters in the sagas only give five pieces of advice, but in many respects this counsel is similar to maternal advice.[120] Sisterly advice is only received by a sister rather than a brother in one instance, highlighting the large discrepancy in how frequently women advise men in comparison to advising other women. Sister-sister advice giving occurs in *Heiðarvíga saga*, where a younger sister tries to dissuade her elder from approaching a corpse that soon sits up and speaks. This episode is doubly anomalous because of the unusualness of younger persons advising older and because the dissuasion has few typical markers of advice-like language.[121]

Like maternal advice, no sisterly advice is solicited, and even when the advice seems to have some benefit for the advice giver, it has a greater benefit to the family. This is demonstrated in *Laxdœla saga* when Þuríðr urges her brother Kjartan to marry Hrefna, hopefully relieving the enmity between himself and his foster-brother Bolli, who has married Kjartan's love Guðrún. She tells Kjartan to 'ger svá vel ok hœfiliga, at þú lát þér ekki at þessu þykkja, ok unn frænda þínum góðs ráðs; þœtti oss þat ráðligast, at þú kvángaðisk, eptir því sem þú mæltir í fyrra sumar, þótt þér sé eigi þar með ǫllu jafnræði, sem Hrefna er, því at

[119] *Kjalnesinga saga*, pp. 19 and 21, 'you will do as you wish'.
[120] See Appendix: Table 2.
[121] *Heiðarvíga saga*, p. 234.

þú mátt eigi þat finna innan lands.'[122] Kjartan takes this advice, but the tension between himself and Bolli does not resolve as easily as Þuríðr suggests it will and ultimately leads to both Kjartan and Bolli's deaths. Þuríðr does not manage to predict this, dissimilar in this way to more prophetic advice-giving women in sagas, but the intent of the advice reveals why it is given. Þuríðr would benefit from proposing her brother's wife for the same reason that some saga brothers are disappointed not to have been consulted on their sisters' betrothals: because the new affinal kin would become part of their family and thus their new allies and acquaintances. Þuríðr and Hrefna are two rare female friends in the *Íslendingasögur*, one of the three instances where 'it may be possible to infer friendship between women' according to Natalie M. Van Deusen.[123] Male family members sometimes counsel one another on the subject of potential spouses, to bring to attention unmarried women of status, advantageous regional connections or desirable kinship ties.[124] In the *Íslendingasögur*, men are portrayed as structuring and rekindling formal friendships in the ongoing construction of a network of alliances to draw upon in future conflict. Although women may retain useful contacts, as is clear when mothers send their sons to experts and NIFM for advice or support, the sagas rarely show women making efforts to build formal friendships. Van Deusen states that:

> Female friendship not only encroached upon masculine political structures and philosophies of friendship, but it also posed a threat to kinship. In societies with strong kinship values, men were allowed to have friends, but women, who were assumed to have greater commitments to their families, were expected to fulfill their needs for close, interpersonal relationships through their kin, who would provide them with both the practical support and emotional fulfillment normally associated with friendship.[125]

Therefore, if Þuríðr suggests Hrefna as a wife to Kjartan for selfish reasons, it would be for a potentially transgressional affection for a friend that she would rather have as a sister. Clover states that Norse society judged women to a male ideal: 'there was finally just one "gender", one standard by which persons were judged adequate or inadequate, and it was something

[122] *Laxdœla saga*, p. 137, 'do the right and fitting thing, that you release yourself of any malice, and love your foster-brother's good match. I think it would be most advisable if you got married, after what you discussed last summer, although Hrefna is not quite your equal, because you won't find that in this country.'
[123] Natalie M. Van Deusen, 'Sworn Sisterhood? On the (Near-) Absence of Female Friendship from the *Íslendingasǫgur*', *Scandinavian Studies*, 86/ 1 (2014), 52–71 (p. 59).
[124] See Chapter II: Advice Outside the Family.
[125] Natalie M. Van Deusen, p. 65.

like masculine.'[126] If considered by male standards, Þuríðr may be acting on feelings similar to those of younger men who protest when not asked for their opinions on their sister's marriage.[127] Þuríðr could be seeking the power to engineer family membership for a friend. However, Þuríðr and Hrefna's friendship never gains much emphasis in the saga, and readers are never made privy to Hrefna's emotions towards Þuríðr. Instead, the saga emphasises Kjartan's relationships. It is therefore more likely that Þuríðr is portrayed as presenting a practical solution to hold together the family. Bolli, by virtue of his fosterage, is not just Kjartan's friend but a part of the family. Hrefna is an appropriate match due to both proximity and familiarity to Kjartan and his family. Þuríðr suggests the *hæfiliga* (fitting) thing, which is to prioritise Kjartan's bond to Bolli over that to Guðrún and relinquish his resentments by taking a new wife, thereby removing conflict from within the family.

Sisters give very little advice in the sagas, unlike brothers. Although some of this is certainly due to the fewer depictions of women, the scarcity of sororal advice giving suggests that sisters are not expected to involve themselves in their brothers' conflicts. Although some sisters give advice that benefits the family more than themselves, supporting the idea that women focus on protecting their family with their advice, there are not enough advice incidents for a pattern to be firmly established.

Wives

Wives give advice fourteen times in the *Íslendingasögur*, like mothers who give advice thirteen times.[128] There are some superficial similarities between how advice is given to NIFM when compared to husbands or lovers.[129] Like female NIFM, most advice given by wives urges a man to prioritise his safety, not to pursue dangerous enemies or go dangerous places and to seek reconciliation instead of violence. However, wifely advice has a few unique aspects. Occasionally, a wife's advice is solicited, but only when she is in proximity and when matters directly concern where she travels or interactions the husband will have with her relations or former lover.[130] This is the opposite of how brothers advise, because

[126] Clover, 'Regardless of Sex', p. 379.
[127] See above for reactions to not being consulted for advice.
[128] See Appendix: Table 2. See above for incidents wherein mothers give advice.
[129] A lover refers to any individual that is not married to their romantic partner, for example an extramarital or pre-marital romantic partner.
[130] Wives give solicited advice to their husbands in the following four incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* p. 136, *Flóamanna saga* p. 276, *Grœnlendinga saga* p. 258, and *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar* p. 304.

brothers are less likely to solicit advice when together, further demonstrating that women's advice giving is delineated from men's.

Advice from wives is not highly valued in sagas. Half of all advice given by wives is ignored by their husbands, and no husband travels any distance to seek advice from his wife, even though most advice given by women is to their significant other.[131] Much of this advice is an attempted dissuasion against a decision the husband has already taken, given in blunt and sometimes unflattering language. Two similar episodes in *Flóamanna saga* suggest that a value judgement is being applied to spousal advice by the author. In the first instance, Þórðr buys a ship to claim the lands which his kinsmen had owned in Sogn and tells Þórunn, his wife, to accompany him. She does not, demonstrating a measure of prescience by instead saying that she 'vilja eptir vera ok kvað þat ráðligra. Þórðr reiddist við þessi orð.'[132] This is less direct than most advice, because rather than telling Þórðr what to do explicitly, Þórunn simply makes a pointed comment about the more advisable course of action, perhaps a polite concession to his resulting anger. She is ultimately correct. Þórðr's ship disappears and he never gains the wealth he left to seek. A very similar episode occurs a little later in the saga, albeit between a husband and wife who have a warmer dispoition towards each other. Messages from Greenland invite Þorgils to come and take his pick of the best land available. Þorgils discusses whether they should go with Þórey, his wife, even offering to let her stay behind. Like Þórunn, Þórey clearly has foreboding feelings towards his voyage and comments that 'misráðit mun [...] at þangat sé farit, en þó skal ek fara, vil ef þú ferr.'[133] She dies after giving birth on this journey, having been stabbed. These events are not included merely to demonstrate social interactions between men and women. There are particularly strong Christian influences leading to this scene, as this part of the saga is very concerned with Þorgils becoming Christian and how the god Þórr tries to tempt him back to pagan belief.

However, it is intriguing that two very similar journeys occur in *Flóamanna saga* with the key difference being the wife's decision to join, influenced directly by the level of attachment she has to her husband. Neither wife tries especially hard to prevent the journey altogether, acknowledging that they only have power over whether they themselves

[131] Wives give advice to their husbands that is ignored in the following seven incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* p. 136, *Fljótsdœla saga* p. 235, *Flóamanna saga* pp. 248 and 276, *Gull-Þóris saga* p. 222, *Ljósvetninga saga* p. 50, and *Vatnsdœla saga* p. 110.
[132] *Flóamanna saga*, in *Harðar saga*, ed. by Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 13 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1991), pp. 231–327 (p. 248), 'wished to stay behind and said that was more advisable. Þórðr was enraged at these words.'
[133] *Ibid.*, p. 276, 'it is unadvisable to go there, but I will go if you want to go.'

participate. Þórey may represent a device that enables the religious trial that her husband experiences and is therefore doomed, but she is granted enough agency to predict and disapprove of the danger in such a long journey to Greenland. In both wives' misgivings and ignored advice, death is foreshadowed and the power dynamics between each couple revealed. In each case, the author seems to make the judgement that it would have been more advisable were the wives heeded more, suggesting how women's advice is often ignored even when the advice is good.

The impression given by reading the *Íslendingasögur* is that the advice of wives is generally ignored and that it should not be. There are slightly more incidents wherein wives give advice to their husbands than mothers give advice to their sons, showing that female advice givers prioritise these two relationships. More wifely advice is ignored than maternal, but the quantity of both is still proportionally higher than ignored advice from male family members. Moreover, wives are only solicited for advice when nearby and only if decisions will directly affect them. By not taking advantage of potentially good advice, male characters are swept up in dangerous or deadly circumstances and these consequences are foreshadowed for readers. However, these situations point towards a gentle criticism by authors either of overconfident saga characters or historically accurate men who fail to listen to adult women.

Conclusion

Evidence shows that those who give advice and how in the *Íslendingasögur* are authorial decisions. Although advice may benefit the individual, much advice is given to protect the family and reenforce social structures of kinship. Advice has an essential role in preserving the safety and status of the family, with most familial advice received by younger men, particularly sons. This is perhaps because younger men, often requiring advice due to experiencing conflict and adventure, are more likely the focal point of sagas. On the other hand, there is some verisimilitude to the idea that headstrong younger men most often engage in situations that require decision-making powers beyond their resources. Much advice given within the family contains practical methods of personal safeguarding after all.

There is a hierarchy of advice givers for the protection of the family. Advice comes first from those with responsibility and affection for the receiver. Although not the most prolific advice-giving role, fathers are the default adviser within the family. Older NIFM and foster relatives advise when fathers cannot or will not. When fathers cannot provide protection directly, they may advise sons to seek other relatives or friends. There are some

benefits to being the adviser. In several examples, fathers gain trust, reconciliation and the protection of their lineage.

This potential for control through giving advice is a draw for younger men, usually sons, who manipulate advice-giving practices to challenge family dynamics. Within the typical family, there is a patriarchal hierarchy of advice givers. There are clear boundaries between the advice givers, those who possess greater experience, social status and connections, and the advice receivers, whose youth and reckless inexperience would have them appealing to older NIFM for solutions and support. The greatest transgressors of this structure are younger men, a demographic rarely solicited for advice. Younger kinsmen might advise to achieve their own goals or employ emotional manipulation when they are overlooked as advice givers. The success, or lack thereof, of these tactics suggest that these instances are very much exceptions that prove advice hierarchy rules. Younger men reinforce their characterisation as poorly suited to give advice when demanding to be consulted because they highlight their self-interest over family interests. These younger men find greater success as advisers when counselling peers, typically brothers, but this might be explained by the fact that brothers do not travel to give advice. When advice is required, brothers are usually nearby, finding trouble together.

A relationship or degree of relation may obligate someone to give advice. Maternal but not paternal uncles give parental-style advice, much like in other European literatures. Rarely will male family members refuse to give advice when asked. In the instances where advice is intentionally withheld, there are a very small number of justifications apparent: a) conflicting loyalties, b) a solution is not obvious, c) self-interest/protection, and d) the potential adviser has instead chosen to give active support or gifts. Only self-interest and self-protection are portrayed as truly poor reasons to withhold advice and have connotations of cowardice.

The advice given by female relatives must be examined separately, as women do not conform to the same advice hierarchy as men. Female loyalties are sometimes divided between affinal and biological kin, making it less clear whom they owe advice to and who owes them advice. Women tend to favour preserving safety, and they give more cautious advice than men tend to give, contrary to the scholarly focus on women as whetters who urge revenge. Just as in the male advice-giving social structure, the receiver of most female familial advice is younger men, and again particularly sons. In some cases, advice-giving mothers exist to excuse sons for resorting to magic. In other ways, the role of mothers seems more socially plausible. Mothers quite often refer sons to other people for advice, perhaps

because women may not be in a position to provide the same help and support a man of the same status might, whether in combat or court. Furthermore, although respected female characters exist in the *Íslendingsögur*, medieval Icelandic society was a patriarchy. This is reflected in the fact that much maternal advice is ignored and is never solicited. Although men use advice giving in a more influential way, reinforcing direct hierarchies between the young and the old, women advise as a gentle method of asserting themselves within the family and usually to protect it. Despite this, in advice-giving relationships men often remain dominant even when the woman is the adviser. This is most evident in the advice exchange between spouses. Wives are only consulted when in proximity, when matters directly concern her and, even then, not often. Wives with better relationships with their husbands are more likely to concede to their husbands' wishes, even if they themselves have advised against them.

II: Advice Outside the Family

Much scholarship on medieval Iceland portrays it as a society predicated on violence, where the threat of feud or the need to mitigate feud-related consequences is responsible for many relationships and social structures.[1] Violent conflict is very much part of the *Íslendingasögur*, but the scholarly focus on feuding as being at the heart of alliance gives the impression of a purely functional society, where relationships outside of the family are formed for the sole purpose of defeating common enemies. Icelanders in the *Íslendingasögur* are portrayed as a community. Some individuals in the sagas are characterised as advice givers — Snorri Þorgrímsson and Njáll Þorgeirsson give advice on fourteen and eleven occasions respectively — to portray their authority and respect within their communities.[2] However, this is a rarity. Although most advice is given by one individual to another, the data shows that groups give advice in twenty-nine incidents and receive it in fifty-six incidents,[3] implying a communal aspect to advice giving.

Viewing the setting of medieval Iceland as one centred on violence impedes the ability to conceive of it as containing communities, of non-familial relationships being neighbourly or formal friendships being founded on genuine affection. Moreover, it ignores the non-ceremonial interactions that form the basis of such relationships and how these

[1] See Jesse Byock, *Feud in the Icelandic Saga* (London: University of California Press, 1982). See also Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*.

[2] Note that in all following footnotes and tables referring to (advice) incidents, each page number or page range refers to a separate advice incident. Where two incidents occur on the same page, the page will be listed twice. Snorri gives advice in the following fourteen incidents: *Eyrbyggja saga* pp. 26–7, 71, 116 and 150, and *Laxdœla saga* pp. 100, 101–2, 111–2, 174, 177, 178, 195, 200, 203 and 209. Njáll gives advice in the following eleven incidents: *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 58, 107, 113, 130–1, 139, 160–1, 226, 241–2, 255, 298 and 326.

[3] Groups give advice in the following twenty-nine incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* pp. 155–6, *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* pp. 8–9, 130–1, 134, 150 and 224–5, *Eiríks saga rauða* p. 425, *Fljótsdœla saga* pp. 233 and 95, *Flóamanna saga* pp. 249 and 312, *Grettis saga* pp. 85 and 92, *Heiðarvíga saga* pp. 227–8 and 237, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* pp. 123 and 132, *Kormáks saga* p. 264, *Laxdœla saga* pp. 14, 88, 120 and 163, *Ljósvetninga saga* p. 12, *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar* pp. 313–4, *Svarfdœla saga* p. 198, *Vápnfirðinga saga* p. 46, and *Víga-Glúms saga* pp. 22, 84 and 93. Groups receive advice in the following fifty-six incidents: *Bandamanna saga* p. 324, *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* pp. 120 and 155–6, *Egils saga* p. 233, *Eiríks saga rauða* p. 426, *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 151, *Fljótsdœla saga* p. 95, *Flóamanna saga* pp. 307 and 312, *Fóstbrœðra saga* pp. 122 and 137, *Gísla saga Súrssonar* p. 22, *Grettis saga* pp. 31–2, *Grœnlendinga saga* p. 256, *Harðar saga Grímkelssonar eða Hólmverja saga* pp. 40, 67, 69, 69–70, 76 and 97, *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* pp. 331, 340 and 350, *Heiðarvíga saga* pp. 301 and 317, *Hœnsna-Þóris saga* p. 12, *Laxdœla saga* pp. 4, 12, 34, 53, 87, 101–2, 111–2, 201 and 209, *Ljósvetninga saga* pp. 8 and 13, *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 107, 113, 226, 241–2, 255, 307 and 320, *Vápnfirðinga saga* p. 46, *Vatnsdœla saga* pp. 63, 107, 120–1, 120 and 131, *Víga-Glúms saga* pp. 22 and 69, and *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu* pp. 169, 169–70, 201–2, 218, 240.

relationships can be cemented or changed depending on how well social expectations are fulfilled.

Pax Leonard states that 'the emergence of Icelandic social structures may be attributed to factors such as new patterns of social liability […]. The scattered population, individualistic land-taking, and new principles of land-transfer led to a dissociation or decoupling of kinship and locality. It is not suggested that kinship became a less important part of the fabric of Icelandic society, but it seems that a communal system developed alongside it.'[4] The present analysis of advice-giving supports this view, insofar as advice giving is practiced outside the family as well as within it. Although the giving of advice in many respects is an unselfish act, it does serve some utilitarian functions. It is just as much a useful mechanism for alliance as it is a way of expressing affection. More surprisingly, when given between those in conflict, advice may constitute an effective threat or warning. Much advice given by non-family members in the *Íslendingasögur* mimics advice given within the family, either in a persuasive echo of those close relationships or in mockery of the same.

In general, however, the structures in which advice is given by non-family members are less well-defined than advice-giving structures within the family. As discussed previously, advice between family members is strongly founded on exactly who the advice giver and receiver are to each other within the family's internal structure. For male relatives, these relationships can be placed in a hierarchy. Within the family structure, a scholar may be able to definitively pinpoint the degree of relation between advice giver and receiver, whether this is through biological relation, marriage or fosterage. However, advice-giving roles outside of the family tend to be poorly defined. There is much overlap in relationships. An individual's *goði* may also be their friend, a neighbour may be their enemy and a host may be a close relative's friend. Furthermore, there is ambiguity surrounding terms such as *vinr* (friend). The sagas do not always indicate how frequently pairs of friends meet, if ever, whether they consider themselves equals, the newness of the relationship or the level of formality that exists between them. Considerations such as interpersonal comfort, physical distance and status might be expected affect the advice-giving relationship between non-family advice givers and receivers, but sagas rarely give this level of detail. In this thesis, advice givers are categorised via their primary relationship to the advice receiver even if they may represent more than one role to the receiver.

[4] Stephen Pax Leonard, 'Social Structures and Identity in Early Iceland', *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia*, 6 (2010), 147–159 (p. 149).

There are further differences in advice given by family and non-family advice givers. Very little advice given in the sagas is 'bad', as only eleven percent of all advice incidents involve 'bad' advice, but most of this 'bad' advice is given by non-family members.[5] This reinforces an impression that most loyalty and effort is owed to kin and that advice givers may be better equipped to understand and help with problems within their family.

There are 172 incidents in the *Íslendingasögur* where the advice giver is identified as not a member of the advice receiver's family, either through marriage, fosterage or biology.[6] These account for forty percent of all advice given. There is no difference between the quantity of advice given by those with a family relationship to receivers and those without. Eighteen percent of all advice given is given by a person whose relationship with the advice giver is in doubt, ambiguous, or by a group of people with their own differing relationships to the advice receiver, leaving some margin of error. The relatively equal distribution of family to non-family advice suggests that the *Íslendingasögur* portray a society in which maintaining ongoing communication with non-family members holds equal weight to maintaining relationships within the family. Significantly, within and outside of the family, women give and receive little advice compared to men.

This chapter focuses on the most frequent and most significant of the non-familial advice-giving relationships. Although it is common for friends and hosts to give advice, there are a small number of advice-giving relationships that only occur once across all *Íslendingasögur*. These range from the very specific, such as an ex-lover's father, to the broad, such as priest. Some roles, such as an employer's son, a host's family member and a *goði*'s wife, are very specific because the relationship that the advice receiver has with their advice giver is second degree. This means that the advice giver and receiver have no pre-existing relationship but instead know each other through someone else with a more primary relationship, usually the advice giver's family member. These relationships are rare and given little emphasis in this study, as they do not establish much in the way of patterns.

[5] See Appendix: Table 5, which shows that the advice giver is not a family member to the receiver in 60% of all bad advice incidents.
[6] See Appendix: Table 6.

Friends

The largest advice-giving demographic in the sagas is friends. If advice is perceived as a form of social grooming, creating or maintaining social structures, this makes sense.[7] Jón Viðar Sigurðsson draws a distinction between vertical friendship and horizontal friendship.[8] He describes the former as occuring foremost because 'without the householders' support the chieftain possessed little or no power, and without the chieftain's protection the householders' existence was uncertain', although this relationship altered as political changes saw a reduced number of chieftains.[9] Horizontal friendship is described as a political alliance: 'The chieftains supported each other by giving aid in disputes; they exchanged favours.'[10] While vertical and horizontal are useful descriptive terms for friendship in medieval Iceland, many saga friendships are between men with no chieftaincies. However, as the sagas are preoccupied with men of status, this means that many relationships are likely to be vertical, with one participant of a higher status than the other, even if the saga author does not explicitly mention this. Friendship is rarely framed in terms of a hierarchy by authors. In many ways, friendship is an extension of the family-based advice-giving relationship. Friends still give safety advice, although the content of advice is overall more varied, as much advice given by a friend is in the marriage, combat or legal domains.

Ten pieces of advice are solicited from a friend, which is not as much as is solicited from NIFM but is still significant.[11] On six occasions, the solicited advice is legal advice.[12] It must be acknowledged that much of this solicited legal advice is solicited from Njáll in *Njáls saga* and therefore is perhaps more representative of his extreme characterisation as a man of law or his unusual relationship with Gunnarr, the advice seeker. [13] Whereas brothers are often in close proximity when the need for advice arises, there are at least eight instances in which an individual must specifically travel to seek advice from a friend, demonstrating that a friend may sometimes be the preferred advice giver, rather than being merely convenient.

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[7] In this thesis, 'social grooming' means actively bonding and improving a relationship, often through favours, advice and gift giving, similar to how primates might connect through cleaning or maintaining others' bodies.
[8] See Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, 'The Changing Role of Friendship in Iceland, c. 900–1300' in *Friendship and Social Networks in Scandinavia, c. 1000–1800* (2013), 43–64 (pp. 44–55).
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 44.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 52.
[11] Friends give their friends solicited advice in the following ten incidents: *Bandamanna saga* p. 351, *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* pp. 8–9, *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 71, *Fljótsdæla saga* pp. 289–90, *Hallfreðar saga* p. 144, and *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 28, 58, 130–1, 139 and 160–1. See Chapter I: Advice within the Family for the fourteen incidents wherein NIFM give solicited advice.
[12] Friends give their friends solicited legal advice in the following six incidents: *Bandamanna saga* p. 351, and *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 28, 58, 130–1, 139 and 160–1.
[13] See *Brennu-Njáls saga*, pp. 58, 130–1, 139 and 160–1.

Advising friends is not necessarily a case of determining authority, but may give status hints. As established, within the family the advice giver is typically older, more experienced, and authoritative. Although advice receivers make decisions, advice givers tend to have more control within relationships. This is a pattern that also encompasses advice outside the family, with hosts advising guests and *goðar* advising *þingmenn*, but to a much lesser extent. Between the eponymous Njáll of *Njáls saga* and his friend Gunnarr, there is not much to suggest a vertical hierarchy or that one friend is significantly higher in status than the other, except that Njáll is the advice giver.[14] Gunnarr solicits his advice on four occasions, even travelling to do so. Their unidirectional advice-giving relationship might imply that Njáll is older or that his legal advice skills are a better social quality than Gunnarr's facility as a warrior. In a strictly equal friendship, it might be expected that Gunnarr would have the same power within the relationship, but Njáll proves consistently authoritative in his dealings with his friend. This could also be because of the subject area. Gunnarr is not an expert on the law, but his friend is. Similarly, Snorri is a *goði* who gives four pieces of advice to friends, also men of power, across *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Laxdœla saga*.[15]

Although friends give very little transactional advice, there may be remuneration to one aspect of advice: marriage. On six occasions friends advise whom to marry or whom not to marry.[16] Consulting friends for marriage-related advice is so accepted that in *Eyrbyggja saga*, Víga-Styrr delays his daughter's overly demanding suitor, a berserker named Halli, by claiming the need to consult his friends about the marriage.[17] Marriage advice is typically the purview of friends and family members, but for the latter, the reward for giving such advice is generally a new relative and ally. When a friend is not also a family member, they do not receive the same benefit. Marriage advice may at times come from a place of compassion. In an unusual instance, Bersi gives a long monologue advising his friend Hallsteinn not to marry the widow Droplaug in *Fljótsdœla saga*. The scene is possibly included to add tension but if so, it is strange that Bersi's dire predictions do not come to pass, Hallsteinn and Droplaug's marriage remaining civil, albeit loveless. Instead, it is Hallsteinn's and Bersi's relationship that suffers, Hallsteinn accusing Bersi of betraying him. Bersi has nothing to gain by

[14] See *Brennu-Njáls saga*, pp. 58, 130–1, 139 and 160–1.
[15] See *Laxdœla saga*, pp. 174, 200 and 203. See *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 71.
[16] Friends advise their friends about who to marry in the following six incidents: *Fljótsdœla saga* pp. 289–90, *Hallfreðar saga* pp. 144 and 145, *Harðar saga* p. 14, and *Laxdœla saga* pp. 174 and 200. On one occasion, this advice is not about the marriage prospects of the receiver, but instead advice to whom he should marry his daughter. See *Hallfreðar saga*, p. 144.
[17] *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 71.

opposing the match, other than trying to prevent his friend's misery. The fact that Hallsteinn responds with rage and because a similar scene is not included elsewhere in the sagas, making this a rare episode, friends advising against a marriage that a suitor has already decided upon is perhaps an overstepping of social boundaries.

In contrast, when a friend advises in favour of a marriage or suggests the marriage, there are sometimes implications of the advice receiver owing something to the adviser. In *Laxdœla saga*, Snorri, a *goði*, uses his established relationship with Þorkell, also a *goði*, to advise him whom to marry. This is done explicitly to help this suggested bride, Guðrún, Snorri's kinswoman, acquire someone to help her plot revenge. Þorkell demonstrates trust in Snorri and even alludes to previous times that Snorri has provided good advice with the phrase 'opt hafa mér vel gefizk yðr ráð'.[18] When Snorri reveals that the bridal candidate is Guðrún, Þorkell expresses hesitation, pointing out that the woman is currently seeking revenge for her late husband Bolli and that any new bridegroom would find himself involved. Additionally, Þorgils, who is looking after Guðrún's son, also named Bolli, would oppose the marriage. Snorri promises to remove Þorgils as an impediment and Þorkell again trusts him. In a seemingly unrelated incident, when Þorkell and Guðrún are married, Guðrún harbours the outlaw Gunnarr in her household. Þorkell discovers him, and because he had previously promised his friend he would kill Gunnarr, tries to have his men seize him, but Guðrún urges her own followers to assist Gunnarr, even with violence. Snorri intervenes, telling Þorkell that 'miklu er þér meiri vandi á at gera eptir várum vilja; er þér ok þetta sjálfum hǫfuðnauðsyn, því at þú fær aldri slíkrar konu, sem Guðrún er, þótt þú leitir víða.'[19] Apart from the implication that Þorkell should please Guðrún because she is such an impressive wife, this statement suggests an aspect of *vandi* (duty or obligation) in the relationship between Þorkell and Snorri because of the latter's assistance in selecting the bride. This is one of the only occasions in which an advisor mentions a recipient is in their debt for having received advice. This debt is not merely for suggesting a marriage but for suggesting and helping to procure such a high-status wife and therefore for giving good advice.

The relationship between Þorkell and Snorri is atypical. Most friends do not advise others as much as Snorri advises Þorkell, which he does on three separate occasions within the text, with the implication that Snorri has also advised Þorkell outside of the explicit

[18] *Laxdœla saga*, p. 174, 'Often has it turned out well for me because of your advice'.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 203, 'Greatly are you under duty to do as I wish; also you yourself have high need, because you will never get such a woman as Guðrún is, even if you search widely.'

narrative.[20] Snorri's loyalties are also obviously attuned more to Guðrún, his kinswoman and mother of his foster-son, than to her new husband. This is not a secret. Þorkell demonstrates his awareness that Snorri has ulterior motives in arranging the marriage when he comments both on Guðrún's desire to avenge her previous husband and when he states 'djúpt standa ráð þín, Snorri, ok at vísu vil ek at venda þessu máli.'[21]

Matchmaking is different from merely advising, as often there is an implicit offer to become involved in arranging the match. As established in *Grágás*, men were most responsible for betrothing or arranging the marriages of their kinswomen.[22] This is perhaps the role that Snorri takes when advising Þorkell to settle down with Guðrún. However, Jenny Jochens suggests that 'Old Norse sources indicate clearly that a father, either in life or literature, was not free to solicit a suitor actively but had to wait for one to appear'.[23] Friends act much more like older family members, usually fathers and uncles, who may advise in favour of or against marriages, than like brothers or NIFM of similar age and status. Snorri's interference echoes a situation in *Hallfreðar saga*. Ávaldi is not pleased that Hallfreðr keeps visiting his daughter Kolfinna, yet Hallfreðr refuses to marry her. Ávaldi travels to his friend Már and tells him his problems.[24] Már says he will have another man marry her and advises his friend Gríss to marry her.[25] Although it is Már who conceives of the plan to marry Kolfinna to another party, it is Ávaldi who travels to solicit this advice, likely unable to arrange an alternative match without an intermediary. If fathers cannot solicit suitors actively, then seeking advice from friends could be an effective way of putting out the word that they are looking for suitors for their daughters. The Snorri of *Laxdœla saga* is therefore fully utilising both of his roles, as Guðrún's trusted kinsman and Þorkell's good friend, to engineer their match, able to both secure the consent of the bride and seek out the suitor. As a result, Snorri pleases his kinswoman, maintaining a good relationship, and gains the compliance and respect of her husband.

The ability to give marriage advice or opinions on marriage candidates is just one of the privileges afforded to friends that is usually only reserved for family members. As mentioned, Dalla of *Kormáks saga* uses her network of contacts to provide support and advice for her son Kormákr. In one case, this behaviour may not be especially different from

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 174, 200 and 203.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 200, 'Deep do your counsels run, Snorri, and clearly I will follow this way.'
[22] *Grágás: lagasafn íslenska þjóðveldisins*, pp. 109–153.
[23] Jenny M. Jochens, 'Consent in Marriage: Old Norse Law, Life, and Literature', *Scandinavian Studies* 58.2 (1986), 142–176 (p. 149).
[24] *Hallfreðar saga*, p. 144.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 145.

sending Kormákr to another relative for assistance. The advice relationship between Dalla and Skeggi in some ways mimics that of family members. The advising prefaces the friendship: 'Skeggi veitti Dǫllu umsjá í sínum tillǫgum, ok var vingott með þeim.'[26] This is evidence that some friendships could be based on advice giving. Even though the primary relationship is between Dalla and Skeggi, Dalla expects Skeggi to likewise advise and assist her son in times of trouble, much as a maternal uncle might. Skeggi, with much urging, does so, presenting Kormákr with a special sword and instructions on how to use it.

Most advice is given by a friend in the *Íslendingasögur* and this makes the sharing of advice an integral part of bonding and alliance. Friends have a different advising role to family members, able to advise on a greater range of subjects and without concern for the overall unity of a family, yet their advice is more family-like than any other advice-giving role. Some friendships in saga literature involve so much advice giving that much of the relationship is dependent on this practice and gaining advice might be a reason to visit a friend. It might be expected that marriage advice might be reserved for family members, but friends have an important role in matchmaking. Friends can make suitors appear, which fathers cannot, can suggest marriage candidates from their own families to deepen their relationships and may even be owed something if the match is good. This is not to say that there are not boundaries for those outside the family. Questioning decisions already in place, for example, is a transgression of friendship in this context.

Enemies

In direct contrast to advice from friends is advice given by an enemy. There are sixteen incidents where advice is given by an enemy, ten of which involve a form of threat that is framed as advice.[27] This threatening advice is used for two purposes. The first is to goad an enemy. In *Finnboga saga*, Bersi is Finnbogi's enemy, declaring himself thus before Finnbogi strikes him across the ear. When Bersi is involved in an ambush on Gunnbjörn, Finnbogi's son, Gunnbjörn wounds Bersi just before Finnbogi arrives. Finnbogi goads him, saying that

[26] *Kormáks saga*, p. 235, 'Skeggi often gave Dalla guidance with his advice, and there was a good friendship between them.'

[27] Enemies give advice to their enemies in the following sixteen incidents: *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 159, *Finnboga saga* pp. 308, 322, 327 and 335, *Flóamanna saga* p. 263, *Gísla saga Súrssonar* p. 111, *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* p. 311, *Þórðar saga hreðu* p. 187, *Brennu-Njáls saga* p. 132, *Svarfdæla saga* p. 203, *Valla-Ljóts saga* p. 242, *Vápnfirðinga saga* p. 34, *Vatnsdœla saga* pp. 9 and 53, and *Víglundar saga* p. 93. Enemies communicate a threat framed as advice in the following ten incidents: *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 159, *Finnboga saga* pp. 308, 322 and 335, *Gísla saga Súrssonar* p. 111, *Brennu-Njáls saga* p. 132, *Valla-Ljóts saga* p. 242, *Vápnfirðinga saga* p. 34, *Vatnsdœla saga* p. 53, and *Víglundar saga* p. 93.

‘þat er nú ráð, Bersi, at ganga vel fram ok gjalda kinnhestinn.’[28] Finnbogi does not actually give Bersi the opportunity to rise to the challenge as he swiftly beheads him. The second purpose of a threatening style of advice is to encourage an enemy to withdraw or submit. In *Vatnsdœla saga*, Hrolleifr, a Norwegian in Iceland, is aggressive and becomes very unpopular with his new neighbours. Hrolleifr keeps visiting Hróðný against the wishes of her family. Oddr, her brother, tells him that ‘þat er þér tíðast, at ganga jafnan þessa stígu, en oss þœtti betr, at þú fœrir eigi svá opt.’[29] Hrolleifr’s response is simply to have a slave begin accompanying him for visits. Oddr soon ambushes them, with Hrolleifr left injured and Oddr killed.

Threatening in this way is a second-order phenomenon in that it is deliberate parody of sincere advice giving.[30] Various forms of the phrase *oss þœtti betr* are commonly used in advice-giving language between those with amicable relationships. Most enemies in the sagas do not present threats as advice if they have much conversation with their enemies at all. However, when these advice-like threats are communicated, typical advice language, as might be uttered by a friend or relative, is used. This is usually a variation of *þat er ráð* (it is advisable) or *er þat ráð mitt* (it is my advice). These advice-like threats are not declared as a matter of posturing; they are declared by those who are prepared to fight. Such intimidation is easily understood as threatening by a reader, especially as violence often follows when the advice receiver does not retreat. This linguistic mimicry of genuinely helpful advice by friends and family members could be perceived in several ways. The receiver of the threat may be more likely to submit if the threat masquerades as kind and familiar, control of the situation expressed as calmness. Alternatively, the over-familiarity and the dissonance between the comforting advice-like language and the dangerous individual who utters it could rile the recipient to respond aggressively.

There is a literary culture surrounding advice-like threats, as there are several incidents of this in the sagas. Despite this, none of the instances within the *Íslendingsögur* echo another either in circumstances, character or language closely enough to establish direct borrowing. In viewing this practice as a rhetorical technique, the humorous understatement and irony of the speaker may be better discerned. For example, in *Eyrbyggja saga* when a whale is being divided up, Óspakr and his men arrive armed. After a small skirmish in which

[28] *Finnboga saga*, p. 322, ‘it is now advisable, Bersi, to come forth and repay the blow to the ear.’
[29] *Vatnsdœla saga*, p. 53, ‘Frequently you are going on this path, but we think it better that you do not go so often.’
[30] See Methodology.

a man called Þórir is knocked unconscious, Álfr asks them not to take the whale meat and Óspakr responds, 'far þú eigi til, Álfr, […] þú hefir haus þunnan, en ek hefi ǫxi þunga; mun ferð þín verri en Þóris, ef þú gengr feti framar.'[31] The saga relates that 'þetta heilræði hafði Álfr, sem honum var kennt.'[32]

One further piece of evidence signals that advice-like threatening may be either a literary device or an aspect of the authors' own period. In *Guðmundar saga dýra*, one of the sagas in the compilation known as *Sturlunga saga*, Erlendr supports Önundr, the enemy of Söxólfr Fornason. Erlendr makes a journey to see Önundr and is stopped by Söxólfr. Söxólfr tells him, 'Þat ráð mun ek þér kenna, at þú far eigi lengra en nú ertu kominn, ok ætla ek þetta vera heilræði.'[33] Later, after Erlendr continues on, Söxólfr stops him again with even more men. Unlike many of the examples in the *Íslendingasögur*, Söxólfr seems earnest in attempting to prevent further violence. He seems to try to stop Erlendr, whom he seems to respect, involving himself in another man's quarrel. However, preventing Erlendr from continuing on his path, both physically and metaphorically, with advice-like threatening parallels the situation in *Vatnsdœla saga* between Oddr and Hrolleifr. Ultimately, it appears in *Sturlunga saga* is part of the same literary tradition of advice-like threats as the *Íslendingasögur*.

The advice from enemies is very different from that of other advice givers because enemies have an antagonistic relationship with the advice receiver, whereas most other advice is given from a position of benevolence. Advice language in intimidation scenes is both a de-escalation and an escalation attempt. It represents a dramatic way of encouraging an enemy to withdraw, submit or develop a worse temper.

Strangers

There has thus far been much discussion of how the relationship between advice giver and receiver affects how and why advice is given. This raises the question whether advice is given outside of pre-existing relationships and whether there are any social expectations surrounding such advice. There are twelve advice incidents in the *Íslendingasögur* wherein a

[31] *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 159, 'Do not come closer, Álfr, […] you have a thin skull, but I have a heavy axe. You will end up worse than Þórir if you come closer by one step.'
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 159, 'Álfr took this good advice, as he was taught.'
[33] *Guðmundar saga dýra*, in *Sturlunga saga*, ed. by Kristján Eldjárn, Magnús Finnbogason, and Jón Jóhannesson, 1 (Reykjavík: Sturlunguútgáfan, 1946), pp. 160–212 (p. 188), 'this advice I want you to know, that you go no further than this, and I intend this as good advice.'

stranger gives advice or, to be more specific, wherein the advice giver and receiver have no prior relationship.[34] Some of this advice involves warning those abroad about local danger, possibly because the stranger identifies with the traveller. Seven advice incidents involving strangers take place in Iceland, but five take place abroad.[35]

In *Eyrbyggja saga*, an Icelander called Bjǫrn, aged and in Ireland, saves an Icelandic crew from becoming slaves, saying that 'en þó at yðr þykki nú mjǫk á liðit sumar, þá vil ek þó þat ráða yðr, at þér látið á brott héðan, því at hér er fólk ótrútt ok illt viðreignar.'[36] Bjǫrn's decision to warn the crew seems to stem only from his recognition of them as fellow Icelanders, a form of community solidarity that does not necessitate remaining or continuing to aid them. However, this altruistic advice giving is rare. When the advice giver is a stranger, the intended result of the advice being given often benefits the giver just as much as, if not more than, the receiver. In *Laxdœla saga* Geirmundr, a wealthy troublemaker and a follower of Jarl Hákon, finds out that Óláfr, a visiting Icelander, is looking for timber in Norway. Unprompted, Geirmundr tells him that 'Hákon jarl á bezta mǫrk, ok veit ek víst, ef þú kemr á hans fund, at þér mun sú innan handar, því at jarl fagnar vel þeim mǫnnum, er eigi eru jafnvel menntir sem þú, Óláfr, ef hann sœkja heim.'[37] This is good advice. Óláfr receives the timber he had wanted, in addition to several gifts. However, when he returns, he sees that Geirmundr has had his possessions secretly loaded aboard Óláfr's ship. Óláfr is displeased that Geirmundr intends to travel to Iceland with him but invites him to stay at his farm nonetheless. This sets the tone for the future relationship. Later, Óláfr disapproves of Geirmundr marrying his daughter Þuríðr, but Geirmundr recruits Óláfr's wife through bribery to support his cause and Olaf capitulates. Geirmundr and Þuríðr have a cold relationship to each other.

[34] Strangers give advice to strangers in the following twelve incidents: *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 178, *Flóamanna saga* p. 263, *Gísla saga Súrssonar* p. 86, *Grœnlendinga saga* p. 256, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* p. 113, *Laxdœla saga* p. 78, *Ljósvetninga saga* pp. 111 and 111, *Vatnsdœla saga* p. 8, and *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu* pp. 182, 217 and 218.
[35] Strangers give advice to strangers in Iceland in the following seven incidents: *Gísla saga Súrssonar* p. 86, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* p. 113, *Ljósvetninga saga* pp. 111 and 111, and *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu* pp. 182, 217 and 218. Strangers give advice to strangers in Norway in the following two incidents: *Laxdœla saga* p. 78, and *Vatnsdœla saga* p. 8. Strangers give advice to strangers in Ireland in the following two incidents: *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 178, and *Flóamanna saga* p. 263. Strangers give advice to strangers in Vinland in the following incident: *Grœnlendinga saga* p. 256.
[36] *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 178, 'although you think it is now very late summer, I want to advise you to get away from here because here the people are untrustworthy and difficult to manage'.
[37] *Laxdœla saga*, p. 78, 'Jarl Hákon has the best forest and I am sure if you came to meet him that it would be within your reach, because the jarl has rewarded men who are not equal in accomplishments to you, Óláfr, if they visited his home.'

Advice giving that begins with no prior relationship between giver and receiver is often transactional in some way, something that would not be expected between family or friends, but there seems to be no conscious mockery of advice-giving language or practices, as is common among enemies. Considering that much of the advice given by strangers ends better for the advice giver than the advice receiver, it is surprising to note that none of this advice is turned down by the recipient. It might be logical that in some cases travellers in unfamiliar parts would be reluctant to ignore advice from potentially more knowledgeable strangers or natives or insult a potential future ally. However, as will be expanded upon below, guests are travellers who are very likely to ignore advice.

Advice coming from strangers in the sagas implies some level of community obligation, which may be the reason advice receivers never fail to trust it. There may even be an element of hospitality if someone local to an area gives good advice to a person visiting it. There is some irony then in the fact that the lack of ties between speakers means that such advice sometimes benefits the community or even the advice giver above the advice receiver.

Hosts

Medieval Scandinavia had a culture of hospitality, yet the title of host was an unofficial one. Any person allowing another to stay with them may inherit the responsibilities of hosting, whether the visit is a few days or over the winter. The poem *Hávamál* in the *Poetic Edda* outlines some guidelines for hospitality, suggesting a requirement for the offer of kindness and provisions.[38] Arnfrid Opedal and Endre Elvestad suggest that there is a measurable difference between good and bad hospitality and that giving good hospitality is closely connected with ritualised obligation and retaining power.[39] However, scholarship on hospitality in Norse cultures has largely focused on the hospitality of kings, neglecting the investigation of social expectations for hosts within Iceland or hosts from a different social stratum.[40] There are twenty-five incidents wherein a host is the advice giver, indicating that the giving of advice is part of good hospitality, especially because most advice given by hosts

[38] *Hávamál,* in *Edda: Die Lieder Des Codex Regius Nebst Verwandten Denkmälern*, p. 19.
[39] Arnfrid Opedal, and Endre Elvestad, 'Óðinn Visiting Christian Kings: Storytelling and the Construction of Royal Authority in Medieval Norway', *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 12 (2016), 173–197 (p. 182).
[40] For more discussion of kingship and hospitality see Levi Roach, 'Hosting the king: hospitality and the royal *iter* in tenth-century England', *Journal of Medieval History,* 37.1 (2011), 34–46. See also Sirpa Aalto, 'Commercial Travel and Hospitality in the Kings' Sagas', *Mirator,* 10.1 (2009), 31–43.

is unequivocably good advice.[41] Much of this advice from both male and female hosts features a recommendation not to go somewhere dangerous or take a dangerous route.[42] Frequently hosts offer extended hospitality until a danger has passed. In nine instances, ignoring a host's advice leads to danger or death for the recipient, although this danger occasionally results in glory from a peril overcome.[43]

Often this danger is paranormal or somehow unusual. In *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*, Gunnarr flees Iceland after killing a pair of brothers. Gunnarr and his brother Helgi travel with a Norwegian skipper called Bárðr whom they previously hosted in Iceland. Against Bárðr's wishes, Gunnarr invites himself to a feast held by Jarl Hákon Sigurðarson, whom readers are informed is ruling over Norway, that Bárðr is also attending. The jarl invites Gunnarr to stay with him afterwards. Bárðr advises against that, warning that the jarl will want Gunnarr dead, but Gunnarr accepts the invitation.[44] Bárðr nevertheless tells Gunnarr to come visit him if he needs anything at all and Gunnarr agrees. Later, the jarl organises a wrestling match for Gunnarr. The opponent is described as having already killed many people. Bárðr continues to support Gunnarr, giving him a doublet to wear while wrestling. When Gunnarr kills his opponent, the jarl orders him captured, but Bárðr and his men prevent this. There are Christian overtones to this. Jarl Hákon was a pagan with a poor reputation and characters opposing him might be understood as proto-Christians. However, the jarl is not involved at every stage of the relationship. Gunnarr goes home with Bárðr for the winter, becoming his guest again. Bárðr's generosity yet again continues, giving Gunnarr three ships and any men he wishes for when Gunnarr expresses the desire to go raiding. This characterisation is an exaggeration of guest-host relationships and in many ways is not typical

[41] Hosts give advice to guests in the following twenty-five incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* p. 177, *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* p. 234, *Eiríks saga rauða* p. 419, *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 62, *Finnboga saga* pp. 272 and 277, *Fóstbrœðra saga* pp. 137 and 251, *Grœnlendinga saga* p. 259, *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* p. 365, *Hœnsna-Þóris saga* p. 27, *Þórðar saga hreðu* p. 201, *Kjalnesinga saga* p. 29, *Laxdœla saga* pp. 149, 216 and 222, *Ljósvetninga saga* p. 64, *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 50, 107 and 425, *Þorsteins saga hvíta* p. 18, *Valla-Ljóts saga* p. 252, *Vápnfirðinga saga* pp. 45 and 51, and *Víga-Glúms saga* p. 9. Hosts give 'good' advice to guests in the following fifteen incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* p. 177, *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 62, *Finnboga saga* pp. 272 and 277, *Fóstbrœðra saga* pp. 137 and 251, *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* p. 365, *Þórðar saga hreðu* p. 201, *Kjalnesinga saga* p. 29, *Laxdœla saga* p. 222, *Ljósvetninga saga* p. 64, *Brennu-Njáls saga* p. 107, *Þorsteins saga hvíta* p. 18, *Valla-Ljóts saga* p. 252, and *Vápnfirðinga saga* p. 45.

[42] Hosts give advice to guests not to take a dangerous route or go to a dangerous location in the following eight incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* p. 177, *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* p. 234, *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* p. 365, *Laxdœla saga* pp. 149 and 222, *Ljósvetninga saga* p. 64, *Valla-Ljóts saga* p. 252, and *Víga-Glúms saga* p. 9.

[43] Hosts give advice to their guests and are ignored, resulting in danger in death, in the following nine incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* p. 177, *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 62, *Finnboga saga* p. 277, *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* p. 365, *Þórðar saga hreðu* p. 201, *Laxdœla saga* pp. 216 and 222, *Ljósvetninga saga* p. 64, and *Valla-Ljóts saga* p. 252.

[44] *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*, p. 365.

of hospitality in the sagas. It is extremely rare for a host to give advice in return for the previous hospitality they have received. Almost all host-given advice is not given in expectation of a direct repayment. This episode might be viewed through the lens of wistfulness. It represents a hope that Icelanders treating a foreign guest well in their own country might be in turn treated well if staying with their erstwhile guest abroad.

Hosts bear more responsibility than guests. There are only three examples of a guest giving their host advice, twice in *Eyrbyggja saga* and once in *Egils saga*.[45] Forty percent of all advice given by hosts is ignored by their guest, making hosts more likely to be ignored than any other advice-giving demographic in the sagas.[46] Nearly half of all hosts with advice-giving relationships are Norwegian or Greenlandic, whereas all guests are Icelandic.[47] However, the propensity for guests ignoring advice cannot be explained simply as a lack of relationship between guest and host prior to the guest's arrival in a foreign country. After all, advice from strangers is remarkably well-heeded.[48] The gender and nationality of the host seems to have little effect on the willingness of guests to accept advice. Female hosts are proportionally just as ignored as male hosts. An equal amount of advice by Icelandic and Norwegian hosts is ignored. Two possible explanations arise. Either guests feel they have little social obligation to take their host's suggestions, perhaps feeling like nothing less is owed in return for hospitality than an implied promise of future hospitality, or guests do not trust their host's knowledge. The latter impression is given in *Valla-Ljóts saga*. Bǫðvarr stays with Þorgrímr, who is incidentally the brother of Ljótr who has killed Bǫðvarr's brother and thus might be expected to have an antagonistic relationship with Bǫðvarr. This occurs because it is snowing terribly and Þorgrímr has therefore invited the travellers inside. When the guests make ready to leave, Þorgrímr speaks out, saying that 'ekki er mér um Böðvar að þú farir almannaleið. Eg veit gjörla að maður hefur í burt komist í nótt og mun sagt hafa um ferðir þínar en eg vildi að ekki yrði að yður er þér hafið mig heim sóttan.'[49] It is remarkable that Þorgrímr explicitly justifies his worry in these terms. Þorgrímr says directly that because

[45] *Eyrbyggja saga*, pp. 159 and 197. *Egils saga*, p. 221.
[46] See above for the nine incidents wherein hosts advise their guests and are ignored, resulting in danger or death. See also *Brennu-Njáls saga* p. 425, which does not result in an unfavourable outcome.
[47] Norwegian hosts give advice to Icelandic guests in the following ten incidents: *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* p. 234, *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 62, *Finnboga saga* pp. 272 and 277, *Fóstbræðra saga* p. 251, *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* p. 365, *Kjalnesinga saga* p. 29, *Laxdœla saga* pp. 216 and 222, and *Víga-Glúms saga* p. 9. Greenlandic hosts give advice to Icelandic guests in the following two incidents: *Eiríks saga rauða* p. 419, and *Grœnlendinga saga* p. 259.
[48] As above, no advice given by strangers is ignored.
[49] *Valla-Ljóts saga*, p. 252, 'I don't want you to take the main path, Bǫðvarr. I know with certainty that a man has gone away in the night and will have told of your journey, but I want nothing to happen to you when you have stayed with me.'

Bǫðvarr was his guest, he cares that nothing happens to him on his journey away, suggesting that he is still responsible for the safety of his guest even when the guest has left his home. This follows a pattern of hosts caring about the safety of their erstwhile guests, although the longevity of this obligation is unclear. It might be said that a guest who stays for an entire winter may naturally become close to their host and that a host's advice is then naturally born from affection. However, Bǫðvarr has stayed for only the duration of a snowstorm yet still receives valuable safety advice, even when Þorgrímr has good reason to withhold it due to the past violence between their brothers. Despite Þorgrímr's generosity, and although Bǫðvarr praises his host for behaving fairly and says he will do the same, he does take the main path. He and the people with him are killed in an ambush. Hosts may continue to care about guests on their journey away because, if something unfortunate happened to a guest leaving, it may be difficult to prove that the event did not happen while the guest was still staying with the host.

Ignoring a person's advice, whether host or otherwise, as the prelude to ambush is common in the *Íslendingasögur*. From a literary perspective, the warning that falls on deaf ears foreshadows conflict and at least partially draws on pagan beliefs of fates predetermined by the *nornir*.[50] However, there may be some reality to the stereotype expressed in the sagas of the seemingly nonsensical practice of ignoring a host's good advice. For a guest-host relation to be the primary relationship between an advice-giving pair, there is typically little to no interaction between guest and host prior to the period of hospitality. This definition of a guest excludes those with an established familial or friendly relationship with their host, leaving those who have less reason to trust their host and likely fewer years in their host's company. However, as already stated, even the advice of strangers is more likely to be adhered to than that of a host, implying that the ignoring of a host's advice may have less to do with the lack of prior relationship and have a more situational explanation. Oren Falk suggests that medieval Icelanders managed risks by 'not just limiting them (though there's that, too) but creatively reworking them to one's advantage.'[51] Danger is relative. Guests in the sagas are likely to be healthy enough to travel, sometimes abroad, and to have reason to do so, whether this is in fleeing conflict or seeking profit. Guests are often younger men. Hosts, in contrast, are established in their local area enough to own or rent a property and are typically the head of the household, meaning that they are likely to be older than their guests.

[50] See Karen Bek-Pedersen, *Norns in Old Norse Mythology* (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2013), p. 179.
[51] Falk, *Violence and Risk in Medieval Iceland*, p. 125.

It may therefore seem to a guest that what is perceived as dangerous to the host may not be so to the guest. Guests may distrust their host's advice not from any ill-feeling but from a belief that they, as younger men, can mitigate a danger that they believe the host is exaggerating, in the belief that they are fitter and a better fighter than their host. Danger is an opportunity to demonstrate boldness. By seeking a physically more hazardous path, younger men may be avoiding the hazards of seeming cowardly in front of their hosts.

These are not the only reasons why guests ignore their host's advice. A particularly atypical phenomenon exists in both *Njáls saga* and *Þórðar saga hreðu* where a wife advises her guest not to rely on her husband's courage in a crisis. In *Njáls saga* readers are informed that Valgerðr is married to Bjǫrn for his money and does not love him much. When Bjǫrn promises Kári his help, Valgerðr, identified simply as 'húsfreyja' says that 'trǫll hafi þitt skrum ok hól, […] ok skrum ok skyldir þú eigi mæla báðum ykkr tál ok hégóma í þessu. En gjarna vil ek veita Kára mat ok aðra góða hluti, þá er ek veit, at honum má gagn at verða. En á harðræði Bjarnar skalt þú ekki treysta, því at ek uggi, at hann muni eigi hugtrúr reynask svá sem hann lætr.'[52] Kári ignores this advice. At first Bjǫrn justifies his wife's remarks, undecided between fleeing or fighting, although he is boastful of his bravery and intelligence. However, Bjǫrn ultimately fights and saves Kári's life, conceives of a good strategy and, when Kári verbally gives him permission to ride away from a dangerous situation, Bjǫrn thinks of his reputation and decides to stay. Kári reports to Bjǫrn's wife that her husband was dependable, having injured three men and been wounded himself. Valgerðr begrudgingly admits that her husband is at least not traitorous and although it is unclear whether their relationship improves, Bjǫrn is rewarded with an increase in reputation, two farms and all his disputes settled for him.

Þórðar saga hreðu contains a similar incident, although the outcome is vastly different. Þórðr, on the advice of a former enemy, goes to a woman called Ólof for the treatment of injuries. When Þórðr decides to accept an invitation to a Yuletide feast, Þórhallr, Ólof's husband, boasts in response to his wife's warning that they won't abandon their plans, even if the forces against them are greater. Ólof, in front of her husband, tells Þórðr that 'ræð ek þér, Þórðr, at þú treystir ekki á harðfengi Þórhalls.'[53] Þórðr insists to Ólof that her husband will be reliable. Travelling together, they notice they will ambushed. Þórðr offers Þórhallr the

[52] *Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 425, 'May trolls have your swaggering and boasting, […] you should not try to fool both of you with this deceit and lying. I will eagerly give Kári food and other good things which I know will be worthwhile to him. But do not count on Bjǫrn for hardiness, because I fear he may not prove to be as true as he claims.'
[53] *Þórðar saga hreðu*, p. 201, 'I advise you, Þórðr, not to count on Þórhallr's valour.'

chance to leave. Þórhallr tells him to decide, but he adds that his enemies will say Þórhallr is a coward for leaving him. Later, Þórhallr betrays Þórðr, intimidated into telling his enemies where he is, although Þórðr convinces Ólof not to leave Þórhallr because of it. When Þórhallr is killed by a frustrated enemy of Þórðr, Þórðr eventually marries Ólof.

These events in *Njáls saga* and *Þórðar saga hreðu* bear several striking similarities. A wife advises her guest, a man currently at odds with various dangerous enemies, not to trust her husband's support and her advice is deliberately ignored. These two examples are unique among the *Íslendingasögur*. The language used in each case is also somewhat similar. Both wives tell their guest not to *treysta* (count on) her husband's *harðræði* (hardiness) or *harðfengi* (hardihood or valour). This is not enough evidence to say that there is a direct borrowing between the sagas, particularly as the rest of the wives' speeches are so different. It must also be considered that the purpose of the advice in each saga is different. In *Njáls saga*, Bjǫrn is almost cartoonish in his boastfulness and this is matched by the exaggerated distrust of his wife. The purpose of Valgerðr's advice to Kári is not simply to warn him that his companion is not a useful one but to goad Bjǫrn into courage through insults in a manner reminiscent of whetting, although without the aim of revenge. Ólof's advice in *Þórðar saga hreðu*, in contrast, lacks the same hyperbole. The situation is likewise more complex. Although speaking in front of her husband, she does not seem to want to offend him but instead to offer her guest a genuine warning. Ólof is characterised as skilled at healing and is respected or desired enough by Þórðr that, once widowed, she becomes his wife. It is intriguing then that he does not heed her advice when he has in the saga so recently taken advice from two separate men, one a former enemy. It would not be fair to Þórhallr to say that he is entirely characterised as a coward. He ultimately demonstrates his loyalty, dying by the hand of Þórðr's enemy. Very likely there is a plot-related explanation for Þórðr's faith in Þórhallr: it facilitates his later marriage to Ólof. Þórhallr never quite overthrows the shackles of his cowardice in that manner that Bjǫrn in *Njáls saga* does and thus is not rewarded in the same way. Therefore, the type of advice given by a host, as well as the reasons for a guest to ignore it, are placed within sagas to enable later events or to demonstrate moralistic judgements on the nature of cowardice.

Advice from hosts is ignored, just as advice from women is ignored, to serve a utilitarian function within a narrative. It may facilitate later events, escalate danger, or allow an author to pass judgement on a certain character's behaviour. However, there are enough cases of hosts giving advice that imply that there is a connection between advice and hospitality. Advice from hosts usually warns about local danger, and a host may feel

motivated to give this advice not only because of the performance of hospitality but because they have developed fondness for their guest or do not wish to be blamed should the guest meet with hazards while leaving. Guests do not have the same obligations to their hosts and value their advice less than strangers, ignoring hosts more often. The sagas often reveal this to be a foolhardy attitude with consequences.

Goðar

Goðar act in the capacity of their positions in twenty-two advice incidents, not including when a group including a single *goði* gives advice.[54] Quite often the advice receiver is not explicitly a *þingmaðr*, although the recipients are often framed as *þingmenn* and in at least five incidents are unambiguously called such. In the *Íslendingasögur*, *goðar* receive advice only twice in their capacity as *goðar*, once from a lawman and once from another *goði*, showing how formal authority affects advice-giving practices. Just as within the family, the figure of most authority gives the advice. This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that seven pieces of advice are solicited from *goðar*, who clearly act in a formal advice-giving capacity, and that individuals are willing to travel distances upwards of 20 km to seek this advice.[55] *Goðar* are heavily involved in the resolution of disputes, giving either legal or combat-related advice. Jón Viðar Sigurðsson emphasises that *goðar* could be expected to mediate in major disputes, whereas householders mediated for relatively minor ones.[56] A very typical example of this is in *Hallfreðar saga*. Although Hallfreðr is happily married, he has long been in love

[54] *Goðar* are chieftains of the Icelandic Commonwealth (sing. *goði*). This study defines the relationship between advice giver and receiver according to how they interact in the saga and how the saga author describes them. Characters are considered to be acting as chieftains if they are described as *goðar* or *hǫfðingjar*, if the character is speaking to a *þingmaðr* (a follower of a *goði*, pl. *þingmenn*) in the incident or if the scene depicts the *goði* character exerting authority in a way consistent with the *goði* role. For the latter, this typically means any advice incident related to obtaining the *goði* position or *goði* characters fulfilling requests from, arbitrating for or otherwise fulfilling responsibilities towards *þingmaðr* characters. Not all advice incidents with a *goði* advice giver are considered related to *goðar*. For example, the relationship between that *goði* and the advice receiver is termed friendship in this study if a) the saga notes they are friends and b) the advice incident does not demonstrate hierarchial behaviour. This study does not consider *goðar* as primarily religious figures. For discussion of the scholarly debate over the religious function, or changing role, of *goðar*, see Orri Vésteinsson, *The Christianization of Iceland: Priests, Power, and Social Change 1000–1300* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 7 and 76. *Goðar* give advice in their capacity as *goðar* in the following twenty-two incidents: *Finnboga saga* p. 303, *Hallfreðar saga* pp. 143 and 188, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* pp. 123 and 132, *Þórðar saga hreðu* p. 171, *Ljósvetninga saga* pp. 10, 13, 66–7 and 118, *Vápnfirðinga saga* pp. 39–40, *Vatnsdæla saga* pp. 95, 107, 130, 130 and 131, *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu* pp. 130, 169, 169–70, 201–2, 209 and 240.
[55] *Goðar* give advice to individuals who have travelled more than 20 km in the following three incidents: *Ljósvetninga saga* pp. 66–7, *Vatnsdæla saga* p. 130, and *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu* p. 209.
[56] Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, 'The Role of Arbitration in the Settlement of Disputes in Iceland c. 1000–1300', in *Law and Disputing in the Middle Ages: Proceedings of the Ninth Carlsberg Academy Conference on Medieval Legal History 2012*, ed. by Per Anderson et al. (Copenhagen: DJØF Publishing, 2013), pp. 123–35 (p. 3).

with Kolfinna, now the wife of his rival Gríss, who is the *þingmaðr* of Húnrøðr. When Hallfreðr returns to that part of Iceland after being away for some time, he resumes his rivalry, composing a verse about Gríss. Gríss, concerned at Hallfreðr's growing hatred, asks Húnrøðr for advice. Húnrøðr tells his *þingmaðr* to prepare a case and summons Hallfreðr.[57] Gríss agrees and summons Hallfreðr for the previous killing of Einarr, the result of which is eventually a settlement between Gríss and Hallfreðr. When faced with a bitter rival, Gríss does not make a decision by himself and has no hesitation in travelling to his *goði* in the expectation of good advice. There are two reasons a *þingmaðr* like Gríss might go to a *goði* for legal advice. It is quite possible that he would not know the law well enough to be sure of his entitlement to take a case against Hallfreðr. Gríss does not summons Hallfreðr for defamation but instead for a previous killing, although the verse is what has incited him to action. This indicates that either he is prioritising the heavier crime or is unsure of what he may accuse Hallfreðr of according to law. Alternatively, Gríss may be familiar with law and the act of approaching Húnrøðr for advice is artificial. Instead, Gríss may be requesting legitimacy. Byock states, 'Through the mechanisms of advocacy, *goðar* and some *bændr* acquired lands and received gifts. Success bred success, and the better an individual's reputation for bringing about advantageous settlements, the more often questions of inheritance, prosecution, and mediation were submitted to him.'[58] Although not advocacy in a more direct fashion, if Húnrøðr has encouraged the legal case he may be more likely to give his support and authority to it later. The act of utilising a *goði* for advice may therefore reinforce the relationship between *þingmaðr* and *goði*. While *goðar* could be expected to provide loans, hospitality, gifts and other services, they benefitted from taxes and other sources of income exclusive to *goðar*.[59] *Goðar* could also rely on their *þingmenn* as an entourage as a source of authority and status, an incentive for building a reputation as a good advice giver. In theory, the *goði-þingmaðr* relationship must necessarily be reciprocal because a *þingmaðr* had the freedom to choose his *goði* and could leave a *goði* he felt was not fulfilling his duties.[60] In practice, it is ambiguous just how easy committing to another *goði* would be, especially if a *þingmaðr* lived much closer to one than another. It is

[57] *Hallfreðar saga*, pp. 188–9.
[58] Jesse Byock, *Medieval Iceland: Society, Sagas, and Power* (London: University of California Press, 1988), p. 125.
[59] Jesse Byock, *Viking Age Iceland*, pp. 252–261.
[60] Gunnar Karlsson, '*Goðar* and *höfðingjar* in Medieval Iceland', *Viking Society for Northern Research*, 19 (1974), 358–70 (p. 360).

interesting to note that most instances involving *goðar* acting as advice givers occur in the early sagas, with just two instances occuring in the classical and late sagas respectively.[61]

Goðar, while advising, often get involved in the matter and provide additional support. They also straddle the divide between advocating for peace and reconciliation and offering revenge strategies, but the choice to do either depends on the individual *goði*. This can be seen most clearly in *Reykdœla saga*, where two *goðar* are portrayed as being involved in different types of conflict resolution. The *goði* Áskell continually advises peaceful means and much of his characterisation is centred on his more peaceable traits. This is demonstrated when a battle occurs over the life of the outlawed Hánefr, who dies in the battle anyway. Áskell arrives with thirty men to reconcile the opposing sides. Þórhallr, described as a good farmer and truthful man, also arrives with thirty men and gives the ultimatum that both sides will stop fighting or they can fight him. The violence ends and the case is to be resolved on the spot, with Áskell arbitrating. Áskell then, in a formal capacity as arbitrator, gives advice: 'Sú var gørð Áskels, at vígin skulu á standask, Þorkels ok Helga bróður Hróa, Hánefs ok þrælsins, en Þórodd skal bœta hundraði silfrs. Land var goldit í Reykjahverfi, ok váru þat ráð Áskels. Eru þeir nú sáttir eptir þetta, ok fara nú hvárirtveggju til sinna heimkynna.'[62] Part of Áskell's forgiving nature is likely to stem from his portrayal as a noble heathen or proto-Christian.[63] Áskell's nature is most apparent during a hard winter. When temple priests wish to make sacrifices for improved weather, Áskell advises honouring the creator by instead supporting the children and elderly instead of sacrificing them.[64] The saga is set in the tenth century before the Christianisation of Iceland, yet Áskell's speech and actions are strongly coded as Christian. Even on his deathbed, Áskell advises his family not to pursue revenge.[65] Although Áskell's actions can be interpreted as having Christian overtones that support the idea of natural religion, it is otherwise not uncommon in the sagas for *goðar* to advocate for peace. Theodore M. Andersson suggests that the sagas promoted moderation as a social ideal.[66] Usually, it is groups of *goðar* or groups that include *goðar* rather than individuals that

[61] Vésteinn Ólason's 'Family Sagas' defines saga dates as the following: early sagas (ca. 1200–1280), classical sagas (ca 1240–1310), and late sagas (ca. 1300–1450).
[62] *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, p. 169, 'This was Áskell's settlement: that the killings of Þorkell and of Helgi, the brother of Hrói, of Hánefr, and of the slave, should cancel each other out, but that Þóroddr should be compensated for with one hundred silvers. Land in the Reykir district was taken in payment and that was Áskell's advice. Now they were all reconciled and each went home to their households.'
[63] Lars Lönnroth, 'The Noble Heathen: A Theme in the Sagas', *Scandinavian Studies*, 41.1 (1969), 1–29 (p. 2).
[64] *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, p. 266.
[65] *Ibid.*, pp. 281–2.
[66] Theodore M. Andersson, 'The Displacement of the Heroic Ideal in the Family Sagas', *Speculum*, 45.4 (1970), 575–93 (p. 588).

advise in favour of lawsuits or reconciliation over physical violence. However, *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu* also portrays *goðar* as individuals with different characteristics. The *goði* Þóroddr is sought after for revenge plans, which he seems to be formulating before the lacuna in the text: 'Svá er sagt, at þeir kómu at máli við Þórodd goða Eyvindarson, frænda sinn, synir Þóris flatnefs. Hét annarr þeira Þórðr illugi, en annarr Bjǫrn. Þeir báðu hann ráðagørðar til at drepa Skútu Áskelsson, því at hann hafði drepit fǫður þeira ok bróður.'[67] Þóroddr suspects Illugi may not be committed to vengeance, and so he asks him to come back after six months. In the meantime, he begins to fulfil his side of the bargain, recruiting a spy to find out more about Víga-Skúta's residence. Þóroddr does advise the brothers of something, but the lacuna obscures what he says. Illugi manages to kill Skúta, but Skúta kills Bjǫrn at the same time. As the brothers solicit his advice, it is reasonable to assume that something about Þóroddr's reputation indicates that he is the type of person who would be able and willing to formulate revenge plans. What might be assumed about his character contrasts with the more merciful Áskell, who is given more attention within the saga. Although the saga is influenced by the Christianity of the author's time, the fact that it and other sagas go to great lengths to portray the individuality of *goðar* implies that there is well-known variation. Some *goðar* might be recognised as reliable authorities on reconciliation and others on revenge.

For *goðar*, advice giving is an obligation. Their advice is valued when given and sometimes even sought to add legitimacy for important decisions. The act of giving advice is not just one of authority and control and may improve the relationship between *goðar* and *þingmaðr*. Although some *goði* characters are shown to have different approaches to problems, there is some expectation that *goðar* will involve themselves in giving advice for dispute resolution. Moreover, this can greatly benefit the community, especially when *goðar* throw their support at an individual to achieve resolutions.

Kings

Although this dissertation is most concerned with how Icelandic characters practice advice giving, it is of great interest to examine how authors might perceive foreign advice giving, particularly from leaders, because such a comparison illuminates what aspects of advice giving are perceived as uniquely Icelandic. Although the Icelandic *goðorð* does not equate to

[67] *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, p. 240, 'So it is said, that the sons of Þórir *flatnefr* came to speak with Þóroddr Eyvindarson the *goði*. One was called Þórðr *illugi* and the other Bjǫrn. They both asked him for a plan for killing Skúta Áskelsson, because he had killed their father and brother.'

a position of hereditary aristocracy, comparing figures of authority and how they give and receive advice reveals aspects specifically about Icelandic leadership roles in an international context. However, as discussed below, the description of advice giving around kings in the *Íslendingasögur* is affected by circumstances surrounding Icelandic authors' relationships with Norway. Authors commenting on the *goðar* of an earlier Iceland could be relatively assured that these portrayals would probably not have personal repercussions, even if the descendants of these *goðar* found offense in these depictions. Commenting on past kings, however, was a different matter. Until the thirteenth century, when Iceland came under the rule of Norway, the Icelandic Commonwealth had never itself experienced a monarchical government. Instead, native Icelanders' only experience with kings and kingship came from travel abroad. However, this is does not mean that Icelanders prior to this period were necessarily anti-monarchical. According to the *Íslendingasögur*, several travelling Icelanders, most notably poets or skilled fighters, found acclaim at the courts of foreign kings, although much of this is likely to be exaggerated. Sagas acknowledge above all that the institutions of power and the people with authority were different within Iceland when compared to other countries with kings in the North Atlantic.

In the *Íslendingasögur*, there are nine advice incidents that involve kings as advice givers.[68] This is quite a high amount of advice when considering that the sagas take place mostly in Iceland and that advice from kings is only given abroad (with the exception of one occasion where advice is given in a dream).[69] Almost all advice-giving kings are Norwegian, the exception being from England.[70] Despite this, most of the individuals receiving advice from kings are Icelandic. Curiously, almost all depictions of advice-giving kings are from late sagas, as only two advice incidents from the early sagas exist and there are none from the classical sagas.[71] This might be explained by an increasing Norwegian influence on the late sagas, as these were likely written well after the beginning of Norwegian rule.

It is appropriate to examine briefly what kind of advice kings give in the early sagas, of which there are just two examples. This advice is similar in content to what family members, particular fathers, might give. In *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*, Bjǫrn befriends King Óláfr Tryggvason after the king arbitrates a settlement between the enemies Bjǫrn and Þórðr.

[68] Kings give advice in the following nine incidents: *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* p. 162, *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* p. 133, *Flóamanna saga* p. 274, *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* p. 316, *Hallfreðar saga* p. 192, *Þórðar saga hreðu* p. 165, *Króka-Refs saga* pp. 143 and 144, and *Víglundar saga* p. 72.
[69] See *Hallfreðar saga* p. 192.
[70] See *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* p. 316.
[71] Kings give advice in the early sagas in the following two incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* p. 133 and *Hallfreðar saga* p. 192.

Bjǫrn expresses that he would like to stay with the king, but the king insists it would be advisable to set out to Iceland, because a friend of Þórðr's will soon be there, creating further conflict.[72] This is reminiscent of family members who might advise a younger man to travel away in order to avoid a dangerous enemy, as it might be expected that a king would have power to protect his favoured individuals. There might be two reasons for a king to be depicted advising rather than taking action. On the subject of the Icelandic *þættir*, Anthony J. Gilbert points out that:

> [I]t was not always possible for a king to exercise the absolute power he might have to resort to at critical moments; more often, a king maintained, or attempted to maintain, some form of consensus and agreement with those he ruled. Techniques of a pragmatic kind were needed in the management of the unruly and difficult persons he governed in his court.[73]

It is not difficult to imagine that a king may wish to avoid conflict beginning in his court by sending away the potential catalyst. Furthermore, missionary kings are sometimes portrayed as spiritual fathers to the Icelanders who come to them and accept Christianity, so giving advice in a paternal manner is not unexpected. The other example of a king giving advice in an early saga is from *Hallfreðar saga*. Now deceased, King Óláfr Tryggvason appears in a dream to the Icelandic Hallfreðr to advise him to settle a case instead of duelling because his opponent has prayed to God that the man with better cause take victory. Although a dream vision and containing strong religious overtones, the dream Óláfr acts in his capacity as Hallfreðr's godfather, as he was the sponsor at Hallfreðr's baptism.[74]

Authors would have reasons to write about the advice of kings. There is not enough evidence from the early sagas to say that any difference between the portrayal of kingly advice givers in early and late sagas constitutes a pattern. However, the difference that does exist indicates that kings who give advice in later sagas do not act like concerned family members but instead like wise men who are conveniently benevolent enough to intervene in the lives of Icelanders in trouble. Unlike the depiction of most Icelandic *goðar*, who give advice as a practical and obligatory service, there is something typically mystical or prescient

[72] *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*, p. 133.
[73] Anthony J. Gilbert, 'The Icelander Abroad: The Concept of Social and National Identity in Some Icelandic Þættir', *Neophilologus*, 75.3 (1991), 408–424 (p. 423).
[74] *Hallfreðar saga*, p. 192. See Marianne E. Kalinke, '*Stæri ek brag*: Protest and Subordination in *Hallfreðar saga*', *Skáldskaparmál*, 4 (1997), 50–68.

about advice-giving kings, although the degree of this is specific to each saga. This is true even in the case of the one non-Norwegian king to give advice. In *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, Gunnlaugr is favoured by England's king, Aðalráðr (Æthelred). When Þórormr, a *berserkr*, will not return the money Gunnlaugr has loaned him, Gunnlaugr challenges him to a duel, according to law. The king explains that Þórormr can blunt any weapon by looking at it, gives Gunnlaugr a sword and instructs Gunnlaugr to fight with it but to show his opponent a different weapon. Gunnlaugr follows this advice exactly and kills the *berserkr*, winning great fame and being thanked by the king.[75] The king here demonstrates a special knowledge of an enemy's fantastical skill as well as the exact method of frustrating it, exhibiting a mysterious insight that could be attributed to either the resources available to a king or a semi-paranormal clairvoyance. Ann-Marie Long writes that 'the placement of Icelanders outside of their natural environment enables the articulation of identity'.[76] Authors assert a distinct national identity through showing Icelanders forming special relationships with kings, which Long portrays as 'quite a different type of relationship to that between a vassal and his lord'.[77] Representations of kingly kindness may have additional political and social motivations. That an English king would freely give this advice and a sword to a foreign individual of his liking seems to pass without comment in the saga, either an expectation or hope of monarchical benevolence implicit in the words of the saga author.[78]

This skill of knowing precisely what to do to impede paranormal dangers as associated with kings is reflected in *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, within a more religious context. On the request of King Óláfr Tryggvason, Gestr goes to take treasures from King Raknarr, a *draugr* (revenant) who had challenged Óláfr's court to try. Gestr requests two magicians to go with him. The king also wants Gestr to bring a priest. Gestr has previously been resistant to adopting Christianity and is reluctant, but the king insists that the priest will serve him best when he needs him most. Gestr concedes that the king has been credited with foresight and agrees. The priest proves useful, striking a disguised Óðinn with a crucifix and also striking a bull that attacks Gestr. However, the king's interventions do not end here. When walking on a lava field, the priest's feet become bloody. Gestr offers to carry the priest

[75] *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, p. 316.
[76] Ann-Marie Long, *Iceland's Relationship with Norway c. 870 – c. 1100: Memory, History and Identity* (Boston: Brill, 2017), p. 225. See also Ármann Jakobsson, *A Sense of Belonging: Morkinskinna and Icelandic Identity, c. 1220*, trans. by Fredrik Heinemann, The Viking Collection: Studies in Northern Civilization, 22 (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2014), 275–292.
[77] Long, *Iceland's Relationship with Norway c. 870 – c. 1100*, p. 225.
[78] For a discussion of this trope, see Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, 'Helpful Danes and Pagan Irishmen: Saga Fantasies of the Viking Age in the British Isles', *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia*, 5 (2009), 1–21.

after no one else volunteers, adding that 'konungr mælti þar mikit um, en oss mun þat bezt gegna at bregða ekki af hans ráðum.'[79] When Gestr is about to die at the hands of Raknarr, he promises to convert to Christianity and King Óláfr suddenly appears, helps him fight, and then disappears. The acceptance of Christianity does not yield entirely positive results. When Gestr is baptised, he dies still in baptismal clothing as a dream of his father causes his eyes to burst. Although Aðalráðr's advice in *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* might focus on the social situation of a king wishing to advise a favourite how to triumph in a duel, this episode in *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* is extremely eventful, involving a pagan god, a crucifix-defeated bull and a teleporting missionary king.[80] Óláfr Tryggvason is portrayed in an extremely flattering light, praise that could be meant to reflect on the contemporary Norwegian monarchy of the author's day. These events reveal something about advice given by kings and the character of this literary interpretation of Óláfr Tryggvason in particular. Several kings in the sagas give advice concerning combat strategy or defeating the paranormal, but only Óláfr Tryggvason gives such overtly religious advice, just as he does in *Hallfreðar saga*. Much like the *goðar*, authority figures are characterised according to their reputations. Óláfr Tryggvason, known for his missionary efforts and in large part responsible for the conversion of Iceland, gives the advice characteristic of this, suggesting that the original conceiver of this part of *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* bases the invention of Óláfr Tryggvason's advice giving on what has been said about him.

The advice of kings is not merely paranormal in nature, and their expertise extends to a variety of matters. In *Króka-Refs saga*, Bárðr, on behalf of Gunnarr, travels all the way from Greenland to Norway in order to consult King Haraldr Sigurðarson about how to defeat the advanced water defence systems of the isolated fortification that the eponymous Refr has created in Greenland.[81] Refr is a master craftsman, so when Haraldr Sigurðarson is able to give Bárðr very explicit instructions about how a team of men can cut off the water supply to Refr's building, it implies that the king has a similar level of engineering proficiency. Refr correctly identifies that a man wiser than his enemies gave them the advice. Gunnarr is the leading man in the Western Settlement of Greenland, and King Haraldr's location is given as

[79] *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, p. 165, 'the king spoke well of him, and it would be better not to break with his advice.'
[80] For further discussion on the fantastical in *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, see Ármann Jakobsson, 'History of the Trolls? *Bárðar saga* as an Historical Narrative'. See also Eleanor Rosamund Barraclough, 'Following the Trollish Baton Sinister: Ludic Design in *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*', *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia*, 4 (2008), 15–43.
[81] *Króka-Refs saga*, in *Kjalnesinga saga, Jökuls þáttr Búasonar, Víglundar saga, Króka-Refs saga, Þórðar saga hreðu. Finnboga, saga, Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfifls*, ed. by Jóhannes Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 14 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1959), pp. 119–160 (p. 143).

Trondheim. The distance between the two is over 2,800 km, meaning that Bárðr makes an incredible sea journey travelling there and back for this advice. It is curious that this journey is not made to ask the king to refer Bárðr to another possible expert that the king may have had access to, but to acquire the advice from the king himself. The expectation of the king's knowledge simply exists. However, it is important to note that, particularly in the case of kings, there appears to be a gap between advice and knowledge. Advice givers are solicited either for their proximity or the esteem they are held in from the perspective of the advice seeker. The sagas rarely attempt to establish the source of a king's or wise man's knowledge, instead attributing the king Haraldr Sigurðarson with the same expertise as a master craftsman. The king's improbable knowledge is perhaps a metaphor for his resources, something suggested by a comparison with *samtíðarsögur*. Only once in *Sturlunga saga* is a king giving advice mentioned. In *Þorgils saga skarða*, King Hákon asks Þórðr why he hasn't done anything about his kinsman's, Þorgils', harelip. He replies that 'Þar þurfum vit, herra, at njóta við þinna ráða, en ek vil þar eigi fé til spara, ef þér ætlið, at at megi gera.' [82] On the king's advice, he sends for and pays a doctor to treats Þorgils' lip, resulting in a handsome appearance. This is a much more intimate and personal volunteering of advice than anything in the *Íslendingasögur*, supposedly provoked by the king's discomfort over or sympathy for his guest's appearance. Lois Bragg suggests that 'why the surgery was not done back home probably had more to do with the lack of professional surgeons than any cultural difference.'[83] Indeed, this advice emphasises what an asset the foreign king's great resources are, as he is able to directly suggest an appropriate medical expert for the procedure. There is potentially some grounding of truth to saga depictions of asking a king's advice. To return to *Króka-Refs saga*, the length of the journey one pursuer would make to ask for advice about apprehending a single man is extreme, but the expectation of the king's bountiful knowledge in many areas unrelated to statesmanship is perhaps not. After all, as shown in *Þorgils saga skarða*, a king would have access to the experts.

Vast resources aside, royal advice-giving practices are not remarkably different from any other demographic when all that is being examined is the advice that is given by kings. The most unusual aspect of advice giving in the courts as portrayed by Icelandic saga authors occurs when kings receive advice. Seven pieces of advice are received by kings, almost as

[82] *Þorgils saga skarða*, in *Sturlunga saga*, ed. by Kristján Eldjárn, Magnús Finnbogason, and Jón Jóhannesson, 2 (Reykjavík: Sturlunguútgáfan, 1946), pp. 104–226 (p. 114), 'We need, lord, the support of your advice, but I will spare no cost if you think anything can be done about this.'
[83] Lois Bragg, 'Disfigurement, Disability, and Dis-integration in Sturlunga saga', *Alvíssmál*, 4 (1994 [1995]), 15–32 (p. 17).

many as are given by kings.[84] Five of these occur within *Egils saga*. An advice giver is almost always higher in authority than a person receiving advice, either due to an informal familial or formal societal hierarchy. However, this is not the case for kings, who are a special case due to systems that involve official advisors and counsellors. This political system is inherently different from anything existing in Iceland, which may clarify why *goðar* and other leadership roles are not similarly depicted receiving much advice. Those who advise kings are all either counsellors, followers, or friends, and five pieces of this advice, the majority, concern military strategy.[85] However, authorial motivations should be considered when examining the depiction of kings receiving advice in the sagas. Most of the counsel received by kings is shown to be bad advice, and therefore some of these episodes might have been written to displace blame for military failures.[86] If a king operates on bad advice, any decision with poor results cannot be entirely the king's fault. This would make sense in the context of the late sagas. Three of the kings receiving bad advice in the sagas are Norwegian. It might be assumed that, under Norwegian rule, avoiding extensive criticism of monarchies and reassigning royal fault to inept advisors might be favourable. However, no kings at all receive advice in any of the late sagas when Norwegian authority is at its highest in relation to Iceland. It must not be forgotten that prior to Norwegian rule, Iceland still had a relationship with Norway, including an economic and ecclesiastical relationship, and many Icelanders had relatives in Norway. It was not uncommon for Norway to be a destination for Icelandic authors. As Ármann Jakobsson points out, 'Most of the prominent court poets of Norwegian kings were Icelanders from the late tenth century onwards, and later they became royal biographers as well.'[87] However, the portrayal of kings as advice receivers may also be used to a derisive effect.

The author of *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar* is not always complimentary towards kings. Six of the advice incidents where a king receives advice occur in the early sagas, five of which occur in *Egils saga* alone, and just one incident occurs in a classical saga.[88] *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar* is truly unique in terms of advice giving. There are sixteen advice

[84] Kings receive advice in the following seven incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* p. 120, *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* pp. 8–9, 32, 130–1, 134 and 135, and *Laxdœla saga* p. 120.
See above for advice incidents wherein kings give advice.
[85] Kings receive advice concerning military strategy in the following five incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* p. 120, and *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* pp. 8–9, 130–1, 134 and 135.
[86] Kings receive 'bad' advice in the following four incidents: *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* pp. 8–9, 32 and 135, and *Laxdœla saga* p. 120.
[87] Ármann Jakobsson, 'Our Norwegian Friend: The Role of Kings in the Family Sagas', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 117 (2002), 145–160 (p. 145).
[88] The only example of a king receiving advice in a classical saga occurs in *Laxdœla saga* p. 120.

incidents in the saga altogether, five of which involve advice being given to a king, as established above. Of the remaining eleven advice incidents, seven are advice explicitly about a king, usually advice how to gain a particular aggravated king's favour or advice to stay away from a specific king. Another two advice incidents occur because a jarl, in fear of a king, would rather kill the tribute collector than have him report back that the jarl gave less in tribute than was required. Considering that the eponymous Egill and his family spend much of the saga in the disfavour of Norwegian royals, it perhaps comes to no surprise that they would be warned against royal disapproval. It is the frequency of such advice throughout the saga and the variety of the advice givers, many of whom are Norwegian, that is more remarkable. It has been suggested due to stylistic and other similarities that *Egils saga* was authored by Snorri Sturluson, who also wrote *Heimskringla*.[89] There are contradictions between *Egils saga* and *Heimskringla*, but it is useful to examine how *Heimskringla*, which most likely written at a similar time as *Egils saga*, depicts kings.[90] Anthony J. Gilbert suggests that Snorri:

> experienced the conflicting loyalties of an Icelandic chieftain who was also a member of the Norwegian *hirð*, or king's bodyguard, and betrays that conflict in his attempts to assert ideas of independence and order in society. […] Snorri adapts his history to the Icelandic audience, perhaps in the hope to advance the argument for kingship and at the same time to defend his own position as a chieftain.[91]

Therefore, the depiction of kings in *Egils saga* is likely to be affected by the precarious position of its author.[92]

Kings who give advice in the sagas are typically portrayed as having paranormal connotations or vast and unusual knowledge, both of which may be a representation of their access to resources. All that is attributed to the typical advice-giving Icelandic *goði* is perhaps an above-average knowledge of law. Much kings' advice is given to Icelanders, implying a hope that foreign kings will show benevolence to Icelandic travellers, or serving as evidence

[89] See Ralph West, 'Snorri Sturluson and *Egils saga*: Statistics of Style', *Scandinavian Studies*, 52.2 (1980), 163–193.
[90] See Melissa A. Berman, 'Egils saga and Heimskringla', *Scandinavian Studies*, 54.1 (1982), 21–50.
[91] Gilbert, 'The Icelander Abroad', p. 409.
[92] For more on how the author of *Egils saga* depicts kings, see Theodore M. Andersson, *The Growth of the Medieval Icelandic Sagas (1180–1280)* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), pp. 102–118.

that Icelanders have qualities and skills that warrant royal favour. Unlike authorities in Iceland, kings receive as much advice as they give, despite being of higher status than their advisors. Most of the advice that kings receive is bad, either displacing blame for military failures or calling into doubt the king's ability to choose skilful advisors. This is likely because Icelandic authors were careful in their depictions of kings. For example, the author of *Egils saga*, if indeed Snorri, was particularly preoccupied with the subject of kings in his portrayal of advice giving and this is likely because of the delicate nature of his political career. However, the differences between how kings advise or receive advice and how Icelandic *goðar* do the same indicate a number of things unique to the Icelandic system. Icelandic *goðar* are depicted as building their relationships with individuals they have less direct control over than a king might to maintain their authority. Their office and reputation are shown to depend, at least partially, on what they can offer their *þingmenn,* which in troublesome times might most appropriately be their advice.

Religion

Contextually, the development and role of the church in medieval Icelandic life is one of the starkest changes between Saga Age Iceland and the Sturlung Age. This is evident from the portrayal of clergymen of the *samtíðarsögur*, which contrasts sharply with that of the *Íslendingasögur*. Despite the religious changes Iceland was undergoing throughout the Commonwealth period, it was never without religion. Saga authors living alongside a fully established Christian faith addressing an earlier period of Iceland's history must therefore choose whether to depict aspects of paganism and then early Icelandic Christianity or to omit large facets of religious life altogether. It is a choice taken by authors whether to engage predominantly with religious themes, not a sign that religion, whether pagan or Christian, had no bearing on daily life or indeed more life-altering decisions. Even so, there is a dramatic difference between *Sturlunga saga*, where most advice is given by a priest, and the *Íslendingasögur*, where only one piece of advice is given by a priest, and only twelve advice incidents relate to religion in total.[93]

[93] The only example of a priest giving advice in the *Íslendingasögur*: Eyrbyggja *saga* p. 151.
Advice incidents relating to religion occur in the following twelve incidents: *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* p. 162, *Eiríks saga rauða* pp. 425 and 426, *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 151, *Gísla saga Súrssonar* p. 70, *Grænlendinga saga* p. 256, *Laxdœla saga* p. 120, *Ljósvetninga saga* p. 94, *Brennu-Njáls saga* p. 255, *Valla-Ljóts saga* p. 242, *Vápnfirðinga saga* p. 34, and *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu* pp. 169–70.

Although Christians are always portrayed positively when their Christianity is overtly mentioned, very little advice is given to pagans to convert, even in sagas where conversion occurs. The implication is either that the authors omit the long conversations and repeated interactions between missionary and pagan that lead to conversion or else that conversion is considered more influenced by actions than speech acts. An essential aspect of Christian doctrine is quite literally submitting to advice.[94] It might be assumed that religion would be one of the most significant and most common reasons to give and receive advice in the post-conversion era, but this is not what the *Íslendingasögur* represent. As mentioned above, some advice in the sagas, set in the pre-Christian period, carries a form of retroactive Christianisation where authors characterise certain figures as 'proto-Christians'. These are the most obvious examples of the author's cultural beliefs colouring the actions of saga characters. On two occasions, religious advice is given or received by a Norwegian king.[95] On two other occasions, the advice givers are a group and in five instances, the advice receivers are a group, suggesting that giving religious advice is as much a public act as a private one.[96]

Few clerical figures give or receive advice in the *Íslendingasögur*. Religious life is not a focus of the *Íslendingasögur*, although saga authors do include references to both paganism and Christianity, mostly if relevant to the events of the saga or the characterisation of key individuals. The genre of saga literature most focused on religion is the *biskupasögur*, or bishops' sagas, which are written mostly in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a similar period to the *Íslendingasögur*.[97] However, these sagas are intended as histories of the two Icelandic dioceses or biographies of the bishops therein, written partially for the purpose of advancing the local cults surrounding selected Christian role models. The *biskupasögur* exaggerate the good qualities of particular bishops, describing their Christian virtues above their role within the community. These sagas also lack much of the detail on close social interaction that distinguishes the *Íslendingasögur* and place more emphasis on the

[94] As in Ecclesiasticus 6:23–25, *Biblia Sacra Vulgata* [accessed 02 November 2017], <https://www.biblegateway.com>.
[95] A king gives religious advice in the following incident: *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* p. 162, and receives it in the following incident: *Laxdœla saga* p. 120.
[96] Groups give religious advice in the following two incidents: *Eiríks saga rauða* p. 425 and *Laxdœla saga* p. 120. Groups receive religious advice in the following five incidents: *Eiríks saga rauða* p. 426, *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 151, *Grœnlendinga saga* p. 256, *Brennu-Njáls saga* p. 255, and *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu* pp. 169–70. For further discussion of the public nature of religious acts, see Haki Antonsson, *Salvation and Damnation*.
[97] For a general background of the bishops' sagas, see Margaret Cormack, 'Christian Biography', in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. by Rory McTurk (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 27–42 (pp. 30–32).

relationship between mortal humans and the divine, as much of the advice given in the *biskupasögur* comes directly from God. This thesis therefore does not investigate the *biskupasögur* in depth.

However, this thesis does examine *Sturlunga saga* as a point of comparison. Iceland's conversion to Christianity occurred at least in part due to pressure from the missionary king Óláfr Tryggvason who died during a naval battle in the year 1000 or shortly afterwards.[98] There is no evidence of a pagan revival in Iceland after this, affirming a missionary presence in Iceland was likely to have become less of a priority in the ensuing political upheaval. Whether Iceland's conversion can be attributed to internal political shrewdness – forcibly converted nations in this period were considered to have lost their political autonomy – or overwhelming external pressure, Icelanders may have been slower to adopt Christian customs in their daily lives than a firm date for conversion might suggest. Christian institutions were slow to develop in the eleventh century.[99] According to Ari's *Íslendingabók* the first native Icelandic bishop was not consecrated until 1056, indicating a long transition period of around fifty-six years for the Icelandic population.[100] Although certain *Íslendingasögur* describe events that occur after Iceland's conversion, this only covers a very early period of Christianity. It would be unreasonable to assume that clerical authorities were as numerous or religiously uniform as in the Sturlung Era, the period portrayed by *Sturlunga saga*.

In *Sturlunga saga* most advice givers are not members of the family. Most instead are religious figures. There are ten advice incidents involving a priest as advice giver, five where a bishop is the advice giver, and an abbot and an archbishop each advise once respectively.[101] Nevertheless, their advice is rarely religious in nature. Those who could become priests held prominent positions in society and typically were men of influential families, giving them authority in addition to their religious offices. However, there are other reasons such men would have advice giving roles. In *Sturlunga saga* priests have a demonstrable role in healing and physical care. If a person has been injured in a fight, they will commonly be taken to the

[98] For more information on the Icelandic Conversion, see Jenny Jochens, 'Late and peaceful: Iceland's conversion through arbitration in 1000', *Speculum*, 74.3 (1999), 621–655.
[99] See Orri Vésteinsson, *The Christianization of Iceland*, p. 37–58.
[100] *Íslendingabók*, in *Íslendingabók, Kristni Saga. The Book of the Icelanders. The Story of the Conversion*, trans. by Siân Grønlie (London: College London, 2006), pp. 3–14 (p. 10).
[101] Priests give advice in the *Sturlunga saga* in the following ten incidents: *Prestssaga Guðmundar góða* pp. 126 and 147, *Sturlu saga* pp. 70, 80 and 86, *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða* pp. 39, 43 and 48, *Þorgils saga skarða* pp. 136 and 150. Bishops give advice in the *Sturlunga saga* in the following five incidents: *Prestssaga Guðmundar góða* p. 159, *Guðmundar saga dýra* pp. 167 and 168, *Sturlu saga* p. 112, and *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða* p. 46. An abbot gives advice in the *Sturlunga saga* in the following incident: *Þorgils saga skarða* p. 174. An archbishop gives advice in the *Sturlunga saga* in the following incident: *Íslendinga saga* p. 255.

church for rest and recuperation. Priests may then have a special interest in keeping the peace and therefore give practical advice based on the situation.

Occasionally, members of the clergy are sought for specifically religious advice, but this is not a frequent occurrence. One of the only instances of this is represented in *Prestssaga Guðmundar góða*. The priest Ingimundr goes overseas, receiving passage with a number of Norwegians and Icelanders. At a particularly dangerous part of their voyage, the captain, Hávarðr, and others wish to make confession. Ingimundr tells them that there is no impetus to do so now because they did not listen to him before when he instructed them to confess each Sunday. They claim instead that they want him to join in making vows to undertake pilgrimage and other penances. The priest refuses, saying that he can no more submit to their counsel now than they did to his advice (to confess weekly) last autumn. The group tells him that 'þú skalt ráða, prestr, því at eigi megum vér nú missa þinnar forsjá.'[102] They capitulate to making a vow to give to the churches or the poor a tenth part of everything that comes ashore as the bishop sees fit. This is an unusual incident for a variety of reasons. The sagas within *Sturlunga saga* do not often portray divine intervention or attribute extraordinary power to priests, something that is implied when the priest's actions lead the sailors to safety. Additionally, it is unusual for anyone in *Sturlunga saga* to give advice concerning good religious practice. Most religious figures advise what step to take next in a conflict, prioritising the advice receiver's safety. Haki Antonsson gives context to this episode, pointing out that in 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council stipulated that everyone confess their sins at least once a year and that some ecclesiastics had trouble convincing laymen to recount their sins.[103] *Kristniréttr inn eldri* (The Older Church Law), which in the early twelfth century was merged into Icelandic laws, further specified that a person must have confessed their sins to be allowed burial in hallowed ground.[104] Therefore, although Ingimundr's refusal to follow the pleas of the sailors because they did not previously adhere to his religious advice is still an unusual occurrence in saga literature, it is clear that it is included for reasons exclusive to the time of *Sturlunga saga*. The sailors have not merely ignored the priest's advice but the Church's. Even if an author writing *Íslendingasögur* wished to include a more contemporary portrayal of characters advising in favour of

[102] *Prestssaga Guðmundar góða*, in *Sturlunga Saga*, ed. by Kristján Eldjárn, Magnús Finnbogason, and Jón Jóhannesson, 1 (Reykjavík: Sturlunguútgáfan, 1946), pp. 116–159 (p. 126), 'You will advise us, priest, because we cannot do without your foresight now.'
[103] Haki Antonsson, *Damnation and Salvation in Old Norse Literature* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2018), pp. 23, 26.
[104] See *Grágás: Elzta lögbók íslendinga ... eptir skinnbókinni í bókasafni konungs 1–2 ("Ia-b"),* ed. by Vilhjálmur Finsen (Copenhagen: Berling, 1852).

confession, this may appear contrived to readers, as comparatively few priest characters to whom to confess to exist in the setting of the *Íslendingasögur*.

For those advising family members or friends in *Sturlunga saga*, religious advice is given exclusively to comment on whether Guðmundr Arason should be bishop. In *Prestssaga Guðmundar góða*, Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson, who is the head of his family, strongly urges his nephew Guðmundr to submit to his advice and become a bishop.[105] Later, an established bishop writes to his brother asking whether he should encourage Guðmundr to continue in the role after Guðmundr expresses his misgivings, the implication being that he is unsure of how easily influenced Guðmundr will be for them.[106] In *Íslendinga saga*, a friend advises Kolbeinn Tumason, a powerful *goði* in the north of Iceland, to select Guðmundr Arason as bishop, although the saga notes that Kolbeinn has additional motivations for his choice.[107] Guðmundr is, after all, at this time the chaplain of Víðimýr for Kolbeinn and also the cousin of Kolbeinn's wife. Presumably Guðmundr's appointment as bishop would increase Kolbeinn's authority. Joanna Skórzewska argues that the various literary depictions of the controversy surrounding Guðmundr Arason's rise are a feature of the construction of a cult surrounding his sainthood.[108] However, Guðmundr's life was not without controversy, as he spent much of it in a battle to uphold the rights of the Church and clergymen against those of the Icelandic *goðar*. In depicting the discussions and advice given around Guðmundr's appointment, authors took the opportunity to explore and comment on the character of the influential bishop who would later become a saint, as well as the hurdles and controversies of his status.[109] However, by portraying the advice surrounding Guðmundr's appointment and not the advice that Guðmundr himself gave, authors could bypass the potential controversy of specific religious doctrine.

Religious advice in the *Íslendingasögur* unfortunately does not offer much evidence for the religious practices or beliefs of saga characters, other than the implication that religious advice was sometimes a group or public act. There are not many examples of religious advice, and scenes of conversion omit, whether purposefully or not, any advice giving. This lack of explicitly religious advice continues in *Sturlunga saga*, albeit with an

[105] *Prestssaga Guðmundar góða*, p. 151.
[106] *Ibid.*, p. 157.
[107] *Íslendinga saga*, in *Sturlunga Saga*, pp. 229–534 (p. 238).
[108] See Joanna Skórzewska, *Constructing a cult: the life and veneration of Guðmundr Arason (1161–1237) in the Icelandic written sources*, 51 (Leiden: Brill, 2011).
[109] For more detail on the life of Guðmund, see Gabriel Turville-Petre and Elizabeth Stefanya Olszewska, 'Introductory Notes', in *The Life of Gudmund the Good, Bishop of Holar* (Coventry: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1942).

increase in advice given by those with religious offices, demonstrating a continuation of what authors consider saga material. However, it is this absence that reveals a certain attitude towards religious advice giving. It is possible religious practice and conversion were associated with action rather than advice. It is also possible that religious daily life was either considered too sincerely sacred to be depicted or too mundane to be worthy of inclusion. Just as Icelandic authors might be cautious in portraying kings, religious advice may have been omitted so as not to risk penning something that would later be misinterpreted, to the author's detriment.

Conclusion

Advice-giving relationships outside of the family are less structured and consistent than familial relationships. Although formal friendship shares many aspects of responsibility with being a member of the family, friends still are not bound by the same economic, legal and cultural duties as family members. Therefore, friendships are more open to change and conflicts of loyalty. It is thus easier to categorise and pinpoint patterns of advice giving common to family members. Relationships between enemies, strangers and hosts are somewhat ambivalent, temporary or informal, whereas any depiction of religion or monarchy must necessarily be affected by the religious and political climate of the author's period. However, this is also the reason advice giving is such an important practice to examine outside of the family. Advice acts as a social glue, giving individuals reasons to seek each other out, reenforcing friendships, alliances and obligations, and, in the case of marriage advice, even recontextualising relationships altogether. Just as advice from a family member often serves to protect the family, advice from someone unrelated to the receiver often plays a part in protecting the community.

Although being an enemy, stranger or host may be a temporary state, the relationship dependent on circumstance alone, that is not to say there exist no behavioural expectations or norms during transitory relationships. *Goðar-þingmenn* relationships constitute very formalised hierarchies, with some of the expected behaviours even encoded into law. In Iceland, giving advice is portrayed as an obligatory service from leaders. This is not the case for foreign leaders, where commands to subordinates might be more direct. Although Icelanders in sagas could expect kings to have almost mythic knowledge or resources at their disposal and a willingness to share these with favourite travellers, this is portrayed as a benevolent act, rather than an expectation. Strangers are not uncommon advice givers, and

their intervention is often portrayed as bringing peace or caution into conflicts, or alternatively giving help to their countrymen abroad. Where no social bond exists between advice giver and receiver, advice can still benefit the community at large.

Counsel from non-familial advice givers at times mimics that given by family members. For example, the male friend of a woman might advise her son much in the mode of a maternal uncle. A host might express a temporary duty of care towards a younger guest, voicing concern over possible ambushes, an expression of good hospitality. Familial mimicry might be clearly conscious and for emotional effect. Enemies may goad their adversaries by giving overly familiar advice, or missionary kings may present themselves as fatherly in their safety warnings. Advice giving can also create relationships that have not previously existed. This is particularly pertinent to marriage, when a friend or acquaintance may suggest a match. The result of this is often that a kinswoman is put forward, engineering a new family relationship between advice giver and receiver through the betrothal.

In general, non-familial advice-giving relationships operate to benefit a whole community rather than just a family. There is an expectation that *goðar* can be relied upon for advice gives weight to the decisions of their *þingmenn*. There is a hope that hosts, even in foreign places, will volunteer to care for and bestow local knowledge upon guests may be a cultural hope that Icelandic travellers will find places to stay in unfamilial territories. Not all relationships are strictly reciprocal, but most represent social aspects that allow saga communities to function on a veneer of trust and expected behaviours, even outside of the family.

III: Conflict

This study has thus far been concerned with the individuals who give advice, and their relationship with the receiver. There are, however, compelling reasons to look beyond advice giver-receiver relations and instead look at some of the situations where advice giving occurs. Both interpersonal relationships and the context of advice incidents suggest much about societal structures. Advice and the need for advice is always motivated by something, and advice is usually given during moments of conflict out of necessity.

Authors decide what types of advice and interactions take place in their writing. It may be assumed that advice in medieval Iceland during daily socialising might be given casually, intended to critique regular work or benefit an unlikely situation that may never happen. However, this may not be deemed worthy of being included. If space is given in text to portray an advice incident, that advice is worth commenting on. It must be acknowledged that the *Íslendingasögur* are likely to skew towards depicting more crucial, life-changing advice incidents.

Situationally, advice is given to improve an individual's chance of success in a fight and to reduce violence in communities. This chapter therefore examines aspects of combat, peacekeeping and law and how advice affects the safety and bonds of those involved.

Combat

Combat-related advice is the most common type of advice given in the *Íslendingasögur*. This includes any advice given with the intent to help the recipient emerge either safer or victorious from a violent situation against opponents. There are 171 advice incidents involving combat-related advice, which is forty percent of all advice incidents overall.[1] Many reasons exist for why combat advice is the most common type of advice in the *Íslendingasögur*. The first are social reasons. Most combatants are young men in dangerous situations. This bears similarities to the reasons why guests receive so much advice from their hosts. Just as a host may know the local area and dangers better, an older and wiser advisor who has experienced or witnessed violence would know how best to avoid mortal injury. *Grágás*' laws concerning *weregild*, fiscal responsibility for violence, and the various offenses

[1] See Appendix: Table 7.

for which killing is a legally sanctioned response indicate a setting where clashes occur with some level of frequency, and the feud culture of medieval Iceland has been well-established.[2] Battles, ambushes, duels and other combat-related circumstances present an urgent need for advice. Older, helpful individuals who have been raised amongst community disputes provide a source for this advice. Perhaps surprisingly, thirty-three incidents of combat-related advice are given by women, who are often able to offer a combat perspective from a side-lined population.[3] The other reason that the sagas are imbued with so much combat-related advice is narrative. Twenty-six percent of all combat-related advice is not followed.[4] Just as violent conflict is entertaining and therefore worthy of saga inclusion, authors may want to demonstrate why certain decisions were made and what alternatives there could have been, to create literary effects such as suspense or trepidation.

Most combat-related advice given in the sagas is not given during combat itself, which is reasonable. Although advice shared in the heat of battle is dramatic from a story-telling standpoint, practically it is poor tactically to offer more than a brief word of counsel where enemies can hear and companions may not. Most combat-related advice is therefore given prior to violence and is aimed at preparing an individual for combat, potential or certain.

In combat, advice replaces instructions or orders when authority is unclear. Unfortunately, combat-related advice is ill-defined. Much of what is said on the battlefield is undoubtedly a command, and many strategies arranged beforehand are outright orders. When an utterance consists of an instruction that must necessarily be obeyed, ordinarily it is not classified as advice. There is nuance to this, however. For example, instructions may be given between two parties of relatively equal social rank, such as brothers, or one party could have

[2] See *Grágás I*, p. 175, for the Wergild Ring List. See Byock, *Feud*, for a discussion of how feud affected medieval Icelandic culture. See also Falk, *Violence and Risk in Medieval Iceland*.

[3] Women give combat-related advice in the following 33 incidents: *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* p. 155, *Eyrbyggja saga* pp. 41 and 142, *Finnboga saga* p. 32, *Flóamanna saga* pp. 269–70, *Fóstbræðra saga* pp. 137, 163 and 25, *Gísla saga Súrssonar* p. 70, *Gull-Þóris saga* p. 222, *Harðar saga* p. 97, *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* pp. 304–5, *Kjalnesinga saga* pp. 10, 18 and 25, *Kormáks saga* pp. 234 and 282
Laxdæla saga pp. 48, 143–4, 149 and 155, *Ljósvetninga saga* p. 50, *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 50, 107, 187, 320 and 425, *Reykdæla saga ok Víga-Skútu* p. 223, *Vatnsdæla saga* p. 119, *Víglundar saga* p. 90, *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar* pp. 304 and 316, and *Þórðar saga hreðu* p. 201.

[4] Combat-related advice is ignored in the following forty-four incidents: *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* pp. 45–6, *Eyrbyggja saga* pp. 142, 119 and 124, *Finnboga saga* pp. 296, 312 and 321, *Fóstbræðra saga* pp. 163 and 237, *Gísla saga Súrssonar* pp. 81 and 111, *Grettis saga* p. 57, *Gull-Þóris saga* p. 222, *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* pp. 345 and 365, *Harðar saga* pp. 40 and 67, *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* p. 329, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* p. 132, *Þórðar saga hreðu* p. 201, *Kjalnesinga saga* pp. 10 and 18, *Kormáks saga* pp. 235–6, *Króka-Refs saga* p. 143, *Ljósvetninga saga* pp. 50, 75 and 86, *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 48, 107, 139, 187, 221, 320 and 425, *Svarfdæla saga* p. 194, *Valla-Ljóts saga* pp. 252 and 249, *Vatnsdæla saga* pp. 60, 93 and 107, *Víga-Glúms saga* pp. 63 and 93, and *Víglundar saga* pp. 90 and 91.

no obligation to obey the other because they are practically strangers. The presence of advice-related lexemes clarifies which instances would be considered advice by the standards of the Old Norse language, but the line between tactics and advice remains blurred. However, orders disguised as advice can imply certain things about command structures. In *Egils saga*, Jarl Arnviðr gives Egill, who is collecting tribute on behalf of the king, much less tribute than King Hákon has demanded. He is worried that Egill will speak badly about him to the king, so he calls in two brothers both called Úlfr and tells them to kill Egill and all his companions. The exact wording of the jarl's strategy is 'þykki mér þat ráðligast, at þér sætið þeim á Eiðaskógi.'[5] This wording is more tentative than a typical command given by a leader to a subordinate, even though the jarl has a greater social rank than the two Úlfrs he employs. It is unclear whether the men are able to choose the ambush's location, but they ultimately ambush Egill where the jarl suggests. This suggestion is not necessarily the most tactically sound decision, as twenty-five men perish during this ambush, including both brothers. Jarl Arnviðr is otherwise an assertive individual in *Egils saga*, so it is unlikely that this wording is meant to characterise him as hesitant. It is necessary then to examine other instances wherein combat commands are phrased as advice.

In *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu,* an outlaw is killed performing the murderous plan of those who offer him support. Grímr has been outlawed for inflicting a wound and asks Þorgeirr to take him in. Þorgeirr says he will if he kills Skúta. Þorgeirr sends Grímr to Þorbergr 'at hann réði honum ráð til at drepa Skútu.'[6] Grímr is to ask Skúta for shelter and protection, attacking once Skúta has let down his guard. Grímr does this but strikes Skúta's coat and mail, failing to kill him. Grímr confesses everything, and Skúta ties him naked to a stake on an island. Þorgeirr, Þorbergr and Þorbergr's son all refuse to help Grímr, who dies horribly. Just like Jarl Arnviðr's plan in *Egils saga*, this plan goes poorly, signalling that perhaps the advice giver may not be proficient at devising combat strategies. More pertinently, it implies that this chain of command is not ordinary. Grímr in *Reykdœla saga* is an employee of opportunity for Þorgeirr. He is an outlaw, forced by circumstance to offer whatever extralegal assistance will obtain him shelter, and he has no firm ties with Þorgeirr that will result in legal trouble for the latter if he is caught. Therefore, in *Egils saga* it is perhaps the case that the two Úlfr brothers are called upon just for the ambush and are not

[5] *Egils saga*, p. 233, 'it seems to me advisable that you ambush them in Eideskog.'
[6] *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, in *Ljósvetninga Saga með þáttum: Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu, Hreiðars þáttr*, ed. by Björn Sigfússon, Íslenzk fornrit, 10 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1940), pp. 151–243 (p. 217), 'that he advised a plan for him to kill Skúta.'

usually part of the jarl's normal entourage. As these men are not part of their employers' usual followers, different language is used. Although it is possible that phrasing commands as advice gives the advice giver plausible deniability, this defence is never used in the sagas. Instead, it is likely that commands voiced as advice are typical when direct authority is absent.

Gender is another aspect relevant to combat strategy framed as advice. In the context of combat, unsolicited strategies phrased with advice-like language are usually given by women. In *Njáls saga*, Hallgerðr's husband Gunnarr urges his guests Sigmundr and Skjǫldr to ignore his wife, as her wishes rarely align with his. However, Hallgerðr waits on them and gives them money, expressing discontent at the compensation received for her kinsman Brynjólfr. As mentioned above, Hallgerðr tells Sigmundr, Skjǫldr and Þráinn how to kill her enemy Þórðr with the words 'nú mun ek gefa ráðit til.'[7] The plan she conceives of is detailed compared to other strategies in the sagas and includes locations and dates. Notably, the plan works and Þórðr is murdered. This is unusual, even if it were overlooked that women in medieval Scandinavia were not typically military leaders and therefore might not have knowledge of combat tactics. The wishes of her husband Gunnarr must be actively ignored for this plan to take place. Hallgerðr endears herself to her guests before the murder with good hospitality and pays them, outweighing Gunnarr's hospitality. Hallgerðr has therefore employed individuals who are not part of her ordinary household, much like the murderous employers of *Egils saga* and *Reykdœla saga*, and arguably has overstepped her marital role by secretly organising the ambush.

Unusual command structure seems to be the precursor for premeditated combat strategy to be phrased as advice. This is indicated by *Harðar saga* after Þorbjörg learns of the killing of her brother Hǫrðr. The saga notes that 'fjórir menn ok tuttugu váru drepnir í hefnd eptir Hörð; engi þeira var fé bættr; synir Harðar drápu suma ok frændr ok mágar, en suma Hróarr; flestir allir váru drepnir með ráði Þorbjargar Grímkelsdóttur; þykkir hon mikill kvenskörungr verit hafa.'[8] As the men are killed 'með ráði Þorbjargar Grímkelsdóttur' there is some ambiguity as to whether it is meant that they are killed at Þorbjörg's behest or through the combat plan she devises. It is significant, however, that the saga points out that

[7] *Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 41, 'now I will give advice to you how to do it.' See Semantic Field Analysis of Advice Lexemes.

[8] *Harðar saga Grímkelssonar eða Hólmverja saga*, in *Harðar saga*, ed. by Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 13 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1991), pp. 3–97 (p. 97), 'twenty-four men were killed to avenge Hord; no compensation was paid for any of them. Hǫrðr's sons killed some, his kinsmen and brothers-in-law some, and Hróarr killed some. Almost all of them were killed with the advice of Þorbjörg Grímkelsdóttir. She was considered to have been a great noblewoman.'

most of the avenging is done personally by the friends and relatives of Hǫrðr and not only by his followers. This means that Þorbjörg either advises strategy for or commands her kinsmen, men who are almost certainly not in her employ. It is therefore evident that combat strategy is often phrased as a variation of *ráð* (advice), when the advice giver does not typically command the advice receiver.

The overlap of advice and strategy in combat is apparent when evaluating incidents wherein advice seekers ask for a plan. Combat-related advice is solicited forty times in the sagas.[9] Asking for combat-related advice is uncommon, possibly because this situation only occurs with a few prerequisites. The first is that the advice seeker must want to attack someone, usually for revenge, which is not itself a rare circumstance. However, the advice seeker must furthermore believe that the advice giver is somehow obliged to help commit the violent act, in which case planning substitutes for taking part in the action itself. In *Laxdœla saga*, Guðrún reminds her kinsman Snorri that he has promised assistance in avenging her husband's death. It has been twelve years since the murder and she demands a plan from Snorri taking revenge, claiming that she has waited as long as she can. Snorri suggests possible allies, eventually producing a full plan.[10]

The solicited advice giver is typically of a respected social status, and their consent gives credibility and sometimes additional manual support to the plan. As above, in *Reykdœla saga*, the brothers Þórðr *illugi* and Bjǫrn ask a *goði* for a plan to kill the slayer of their father and brother. It is possible that these men were capable of enacting revenge without the *goði*'s input. However, while the *goði* delays the brothers' attack, he uses his resources to send a spy, an advantage the brothers would not otherwise possess.[11] They kill their enemy successfully, although one of the brothers dies. The last condition is that the advice seeker must ostensibly believe that he himself would not be capable of creating this combat strategy. For the most part, the intermediary step of locating someone to advise on an attack is unnecessary. Usually, the individual who decided that an attack needed to occur would create

[9] Solicited combat-related advice is given in the following forty incidents: *Bandamanna saga* p. 328, *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* p. 120, *Droplaugarsona saga* p. 159, *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* pp. 8–9, and 130–1, *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 71 and 150, *Finnboga saga* p. 327, *Flóamanna saga* p. 307, *Gísla saga Súrssonar* pp. 64, 81, 86 and 97, *Gull-Þóris saga* pp. 207 and 220, *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* p. 348, *Heiðarvíga saga* pp. 227–8 and 255–6, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* p. 119, *Kormáks saga* p. 262, *Króka-Refs saga* pp. 143 and 144, *Laxdœla saga* pp. 4, 34, 163, 177, 178 and 195, *Ljósvetninga saga* p. 86, *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 28, 50, 130–1, 139, 167, 226, 319 and 353, *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar* p. 304, *Svarfdœla saga* p. 157, and *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu* pp. 228 and 240.
[10] *Laxdœla saga*, p. 177.
[11] There is a lacuna in the text here, so while he advises the brothers, it is unknown what this advice is.

the strategy or else leave it to those he had recruited to finish the deed. However, when these very specific conditions occur, the plans are successful.

This formula is nevertheless inverted. In *Reykdœla saga*, an advice seeker also requests advice for a strategy that he himself creates. Áskell *goði*'s dying wish is that settlements and not violence should be the result of his death. His son Þorsteinn tries to live by this, but his other son Skúta was abroad at the time and therefore not bound by any settlements. Skúta kills as many people involved in his father's death as he is able to and evidently believes that Þorsteinn has a duty to become involved. Þórir, the son of Ketill *flatnefr*, dealt the death-blow to Áskell. The saga depicts how 'svá er sagt, at Skúta kemr nú at máli við Þorstein bróður sinn ok spyrr, hvárt hann vill heldr vinna á Þóri eða setja ráðin til, ok sagði þá eiga honum mikla harma at gjalda, er hann hafði drepit fǫður þeira.'[12] Þorsteinn says he cannot choose because both roles are too difficult. Skúta makes the plan, having Þorsteinn pretend to be interested in reconciliation to lure Þórir out with few allies. Skúta kills him, although it is not apparent Þorsteinn is aware of the reconciliation as a murder plot. The force of Skúta's will overrules his brother's preferences, although Skúta seemed he would be prepared to listen if his brother had been willing to engineer a revenge strategy. Skúta's request for a plan begins with the same phrasing used when Þórðr and Bjǫrn ask for a plan of attack against the killer of their father and brother: *svá er sagt*. In one respect, this is quite a common saga formulation. Many chapters begin with a variation of 'so it is said'. However, the fact that it prefaces similar incidents has implications. The author was keen to justify that the knowledge of these incidents had a source other than the author themselves, possibly as an attempt to establish a sense of historical veracity in these invented discussions. There is at least a veneer of believability in the social ritual of soliciting advice before battle. In instances where plan-seeking does occur, authors establish a connection between seeking good advice, thereby allowing time to plan subterfuge, gather resources and information, and the success of an attack. This contrasts with *Sturlunga saga*, which contains thirty-one combat-related advice incidents that are more peace-oriented under more violent circumstances.[13] Additionally, combat strategies tend to be more detailed in *Sturlunga saga*,

[12] *Reykdœla saga*, p. 215, 'it is said that Skúta came now to speak with his brother Þorsteinn and asked if he would rather attack Þórir or make the plan to do it, and said they had to repay him for a great injury, as he had killed their father.'

[13] Combat-related advice is given in *Sturlunga saga* in the following thirty-one incidents: *Prestssaga Guðmundar góða* 1 p. 120, *Guðmundar saga dýra* 1 pp. 167, 187, 179 and 209, *Sturlu saga* 1 pp. 67, 84, 92, 108 and 112, *Íslendinga saga* 1 pp. 249, 269, 277–8, 277–8, 316, 316, 365, 415 and 428, *Þórðar saga kakala* 2 pp. 41 and 53–4, *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða* 1 pp. 22, 33, 36, 37, 39 and 46, and *Þorgils saga skarða* 2 pp. 133, 135, 174 and 177.

which is not surprising as authors may well be writing about contemporary situations known to them.

Giving advice before the danger rather than during it is typical and arguably an attempt by authors to give combat situations greater verisimilitude. For example, in *Kormáks saga*, Dalla advises her son to seek out a special sword before a duel takes place.[14] Some advice incidents occur only just before combat, such as in *Vatnsdœla saga* wherein Þorgrímr advises his neighbour to confront approaching attackers.[15] The primary exception to this is when enemies give advice, which is exaggerated and unrealistic in several ways.[16] Giving advice in the middle of combat requires readers to suspend their disbelief that more than a few words could be shared between companions during violent and often physically exerting or noisy circumstances. However, narrative tension is favoured over realism at other points. In *Harðar saga*, Hǫrðr, a leader of outlaws, tells his men to follow his advice when venturing into a witch's territory, because nothing there is as it seems.[17] He and twenty-three men go to test the claim of Þorsteinn *öxnabroddr* that his foster-mother Skroppa could prevent any harm coming from the outlaws in question. The men taunt a large bull despite Hǫrðr's disapproval and are promptly killed by their own spears. Aside from the magical nature of the men's deaths, the entire premise of the saga, that there is a society of outlaws that has accepted Hǫrðr as leader, is fanciful.

However, Hǫrðr experiences problems trying to control the unruly outlaws under his command, which is one of the essential conflicts portrayed within the saga. Alexander Wilson suggests that this loss of control is because of the addition of men outside his and his friend's households, thereby losing the exclusivity of the group's structure.[18] In *Vápnfirðinga saga*, there is also an issue with leadership. Geitir and Brodd-Helgi attempt to claim from Þorleifr *inn kristni* the property of Hrafn, a Norwegian skipper who died while staying with Geitir. Þorleifr, regardless of whatever the law is, is determined to transport the goods to Hrafn's heirs. Þorleifr insists that the co-conspirators will have to do battle before they can gain anything. Geitir tells Brodd-Helgi that it does not seem advisable to attack them from small boats when they cannot predict a headwind. Everyone speaks well of Geitir's counsel

[14] *Kormáks saga*, p. 234.
[15] *Vatnsdœla saga*, p. 78.
[16] See Chapter II: Advice Outside the Family.
[17] *Harðar saga Grímkelssonar eða Hólmverja saga*, p. 67.
[18] Alexander Wilson, '*Engi maðr skapar sik sjálfr*: Individual agency and the communal creation of outsiders in *Íslendingasögur* outlaw narratives' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Durham University, 2017), p. 149.

and agrees to act on it.[19] Geitir's plan is structured around what they should not do rather than what they should, but this aside there are no orders given here because there is no clear hierarchy. The two men are characterised simply as almost comically greedy plotters. When Þorleifr succeeds in giving Hrafn's heirs the goods, Geitir and Brodd-Helgi bemoan the loss. They fall out over the goods that may yet remain: a casket and a gold ring, which each suspects the other to have. The incompetence of the would-be robbers and the outcome of their erstwhile friendship seems to be the entertainment value of the episode. A pattern emerges when all the incidents wherein commands during active combat are given as advice are examined. These examples represent what is truly a suggestion and not an order.[20] Each time, the combat strategy cannot simply be imperative. There is no direct chain of command between advice giver and receiver or else that hierarchy is somehow troubled. Where authority does not exist, advice phrasing is the only option.

Advice given in combat situations heightens tension, puts pressure on decisions and displays the options available to a character. For this reason, combat-related advice has many narrative reasons to exist and, because of this, is often not followed. Hierarchies of advice givers are usually adhered to, with the advice giver typically of favourable social status or of greater authority or expertise than the advice recipient or seeker. However, there are some ways advice giving can expose particulars of combat. For example, advice is given when the chain of command is not certain or somehow unusual, revealing complicated dynamics between the advice giver and receiver.

Ambushes

Some aspects of combat-related advice portrayed in the sagas are part of a wider literary trope. One such type of combat-related advice aims to help a person avoid the danger altogether, which is termed here as 'ambush' advice. Ambush advice is the advice given to a person preparing to travel along a dangerous route and usually consists of the advice giver warning the person to choose another path, travel at a safer time or bring additional

[19] *Vápnfirðinga saga*, in *Austfirðinga sögur: Þorsteins saga hvíta, Vápnfirðinga saga, Þorsteins þáttr stangarhǫggs, Ölkofra þáttr, Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða, Droplaugarsona saga, Brandkrossa þáttr, Gunnars þáttr Þiðrandabana, Fljótsdœla saga, Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar, Draumr Þorsteins Síðu-Hallssonar, Þorsteins þáttr austfirðings, Þorsteins þáttr sǫgufróða, Gull-Ásu-Þórðar þáttr*, ed. by Jón Jóhannesson, Íslenzk fornrit, 11 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1950), pp. 23–65 (pp. 31–2).
[20] See *Vatnsdœla saga*, in *Vatnsdœla saga*: *Hallfreðar saga, Kormáks saga, Hrómundar þáttr halta, Hrafns þáttr Guðrúnarsonar*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 8 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1939), pp. 3–131 (p. 118). See also *Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 89.

companions or weaponry for support. This is not to be confused with strategic advice given to aid someone in planning an ambush. Ambush advice seems on the surface as if it could reflect real events. Indeed, if an Icelander were alerted to a planned attack on a family member or friend, it is difficult to believe that no warning would be forthcoming. However, it is the provenance of these episodes, both in the foreknowledge of the characters and the sagas in which these situations occur, that gives ambush advice a more dubious claim to even slight verisimilitude.

First, it is important to confirm that similarities between instances of ambush advice exist and therefore establish a trope. There are seventeen in the *Íslendingasögur*, nine of which involve a woman giving ambush advice, of which six are ignored by the advice receiver,[21] which is consistent with previous observations that women giving advice are proportionally more likely to be ignored than their male counterparts.[22] Ambush advice incidents are spread almost evenly between the early, classical and late sagas, marking them as a fairly consistent part of the saga-writing toolbox.[23] Ambush advice is remarkably similar across early, classical and late sagas. This is important to note, as the main deviation between ambush advice given in the early and classical sagas, when compared to the late sagas, is in respect to the paranormal. There are five advice incidents from early or classical sagas with paranormal implications, for example the knowledge of the ambush having been gained through prophetic dreams or the ambush itself occurring due to paranormal influence.[24] There is no link between ambush advice and paranormal happenings in the late sagas, yet otherwise advice incidents across saga periods are similar.

Víglundar saga, a late saga, has strong romance influences, and it has even been proposed that this saga should even be reclassified as a bridal-quest romance rather than an *Íslendingasaga*.[25] Two typical incidents of ambush advice occur in *Víglundar saga*. In the

[21] Women give ambush advice in the following nine incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* pp. 157 and 177, *Eyrbyggja saga* pp. 78 and 142, *Finnboga saga* p. 321, *Fóstbrœðra saga* p. 163, *Kjalnesinga saga* p. 25, *Laxdœla saga* p. 149, and *Víglundar saga* p. 90. Women give ambush advice that is ignored in the following six incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* pp. 157 and 177, *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 142, *Finnboga saga* p. 321, *Fóstbrœðra saga* p. 163, and *Víglundar saga* p. 90.
[22] Men give ambush advice that is ignored in the following five incidents: *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 119, *Finnboga saga* pp. 296 and 312, *Vatnsdœla saga* p. 53, and *Víglundar saga* p. 91.
[23] Ambush advice is given in the following seventeen incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* pp. 157 and 177, *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* p. 234, *Eyrbyggja saga* pp. 78, 119 and 142, *Finnboga saga* pp. 296, 313 and 321, *Fóstbrœðra saga* p. 163, *Gísla saga Súrssonar* p. 64, *Grœnlendinga saga* p. 256, *Kjalnesinga saga* p. 25, *Laxdœla saga* p. 149, *Vatnsdœla saga* p. 53, and *Víglundar saga* pp. 90 and 91.
[24] Ambush advice with paranormal implications is given in the following five incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* pp. 157 and 177, *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 142, *Grœnlendinga saga* p. 256, and *Laxdœla saga* p. 149.
[25] Marianne E. Kalinke, '*Víglundar saga*: An Icelandic Bridal-Quest Romance', *Skáldskaparmál*, 3 (1994), 119–43 (p. 120).

first, a series of games occur. The eponymous Víglundr *inn væni* and his brother Trausti are rivals with the brothers Jökull and Einarr. Víglundr's great love is Ketilríðr, the sister of his rivals, but her brothers want her to marry a Norwegian called Hákon. At this moment, Víglundr receives his first piece of ambush advice from Ketilríðr: 'Víglundr kveðst fara sem áðr, eptir því sem hann hafði ætlat, ok svá gerðu þeir.'[26] Víglundr deliberately ignores this advice, determined to not deviate from his original travel plans. He and his men are ambushed by twelve enemies, led by Ketilríðr's brothers. Víglundr and Trausti nonetheless fare very well, killing three men between them. Jökull calls off the attack, going home and blaming the incident on the ambushed brothers. Thinking the attack is the fault of Víglundr and Trausti convinces Hólmkell, Ketilríðr's father, to marry his daughter to Hákon. When the games resume, Jökull and Einarr disappear with Hákon and several other men. Hólmkell regrets his haste when he learns the truth about the aforementioned ambush and tells Víglundr that he should not go home this evening, as he does not trust his sons' doings. This becomes the second piece of ambush advice that Víglundr receives, and there is a clear parallel to Víglundr's earlier refusal to listen when readers are told 'en hann kveðst fara mundu sem hann hefði ætlat fyrir því.'[27] The language used to depict Víglundr's reticence and the lack of other justification is so similar that there can be no doubt that there is an intentional echo of Víglundr's previous refusal to follow advice, even though the advice giver is a different person.

This episode is typical of ambush advice. The advice receiver is always male and always ignores counsel where the advice is direct and unsolicited,[28] usually resulting in danger or death for the advice recipient. There is little in common between the advice givers, except that they are often women. The sense is that an upcoming danger could have been easily avoided. The sagas are purposefully ambiguous about the reasons behind any person's refusal to follow ambush advice. If a reason is given, it is similar to Víglundr's refusal to deviate from his plan, giving a sense of predetermination that not only has connotations of fate but reminds readers that these are characters within a story who have no agency to change their outcome. Ambush advice allows readers to anticipate the coming jeopardy but is not a useful tool for characters with an interest in avoiding it, giving ambush advice a clear narrative role.

[26] *Víglundar saga*, p. 90, 'Víglundr said that they would nonetheless go as he had intended, and that is what they did.'
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 91, 'but he said that he would go as he had intended.'
[28] See above for incidents wherein ambush advice is ignored.

The discussion of ambush advice in *Víglundar saga* leads to the topic of late sagas more generally. Margaret Clunies Ross states that, historically, saga scholarship has not examined late *Íslendingasögur* favourably. She details how the Icelandic 'bookprosists' of the twentieth century held that the classical sagas were 'followed by a decline into a "post-classical" fantastic group of sagas that largely lost touch with historicity and realism and were generally of inferior literary merit.'[29] The long-lasting result of this disregard has been a scholarly lack of interest in the late sagas when compared to the classical, as well as a dismissal of these sagas as a source for sociological findings. In a more specific vein, Arngrímur Vídalín points out that in *Víglundar saga* 'the plot is mostly borrowed from two *Fornaldarsögur* [sagas of ancient times]: *Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar* and *Friðþjófs saga frækna.*'[30] He adds that this shared plot involves, among other similarities, two brothers who are against their sister marrying the man she loves, obstructing the suitor's mission. Clunies Ross draws parallels between the *fornaldarsögur* and the *lygisǫgur* (lying sagas) referred to in *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða* associated perhaps with an entertaining 'lack of historicity'.[31] Torfi H. Tulinius echoes scholarly consensus when writing that 'the historical value in *fornaldarsögur* is practically non-existent.'[32] The imitative nature of *Víglundar saga* indicates the literary origin of its plot. The ambush advice here is so typical of other instances of ambush advice throughout the other early, classical and late *Íslendingasögur* that it becomes important to mention that *fornaldarsögur* and *Íslendingasögur* are modern genre divisions.[33] Víglundr's decision to ignore consecutive instances of ambush advice could be the result of more than one type of literary influence.

Víglundar saga is relatively restrained in its portrayal of ambush advice. It is curious that late sagas are considered more fantastical than their early and classical counterparts when the opposite is true for ambush advice in late sagas. Unlike any of the ambush advice given in the late sagas, almost half of the advice in the classical and early sagas is related to the paranormal. Medieval readers would find it sensible that advice is associated more with paranormal enemies than ordinary foes. It is reasonable to assume that seasoned fighters would know how to approach combat with typical warriors, but when the enemy is

[29] Margaret Clunies Ross, *The Cambridge Introduction to the Old Norse-Icelandic Saga* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 55.
[30] Arngrímur Vídalín, *The Supernatural in Íslendingasögur* (Reykjavik: Tower Press, 2012), p. 56.
[31] Ross, *The Cambridge Introduction to the Old Norse-Icelandic Saga*, p. 28.
[32] Torfi H., Tulinius, 'Sagas of Icelandic Prehistory (*Fornaldarsögur*)', in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. by Rory McTurk (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 447–461 (p. 459).
[33] For further discussion of genre, see Judy Quinn et al., 'Interrogating Genre in the *Fornaldarsögur*: Round-Table Discussion', *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia*, 2 (2006), 275–296.

specialised and has mysterious capabilities, advice from wiser individuals must be sought. Some instances are associated with the paranormal because they are given to prevent the advice receiver from walking into an ambush by paranormal forces or creatures. Not all advice incidents involving the paranormal involve a fight with a magic-using opponent, however. Certain incidents are paranormal because the knowledge of an ambush comes from a prophecy or precognition, typically a dream. An example of this is in the early saga *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*. The eponymous Bjǫrn is ambushed on several occasions. When Bjǫrn visits his relatives, his aunt Þórhildr says that 'þat er mitt ráð [...] at Bjǫrn fari eigi héðan fámennri en við tólfta mann inn yfir Beruvíkurhraun, því at svá hefir mik dreymt til, at Þórðr muni þar sitja fyrir þér, því at hann er ráðugr.'[34] Bjǫrn disagrees, saying Þórðr will ambush him closer to his farm if he does, and leaves. Þórhildr then tells her husband Arnórr that if harm comes to Bjǫrn, he will not share her bed tonight. Arnórr rides out with nine men. Both nephew and uncle are injured in an ambush yet manage to kill their attackers. Later, when staying with his friend Þorbjǫrg, Bjǫrn has a nightmare. His hostess interprets it to mean that these are the fetches of men with bad intentions.[35] She advises him to stay until they have established whether there is a threat or to use a different route than the one by which he arrived.[36] He agrees to use this different route but changes his mind after leaving, and is ambushed but survives. Later, he has more nightmares, this time at his sister's home, but his sister does not give him ambush advice and he is injured in the ensuing ambush. There are a number of similarities in each case. The prophetic dreams do not deter Bjǫrn from leaving his place of safety on any occasion. He is only warned to take precautions twice, but both times by women.

Significantly, it is the second instance that most closely parallels an unusual incident in *Laxdœla saga*. In the only example of ambush advice in *Laxdœla saga*, Án dreams of a woman slitting him open and placing twigs in his belly. Other men laugh and call him Án *hrísmagi* (twig-belly). Auðr, the wife of Þórðr Glúmsson, says that there's nothing to joke about and suggests to Kjartan, the leader of the group, that they should either stay there for longer or take more men when they do leave.[37] Kjartan replies that he does not believe the dream prophetic and leaves, only taking Auðr's brothers with him on her insistence. He

[34] *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*, p. 157, 'It is my advice that Bjǫrn doesn't go in over Beruvíkurhraun from here with fewer men than twelve, because so have I dreamed it that Þórðr will wait there for you, because he is cunning.'
[35] Fetches in this context are spectral entities, often omens.
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 177.
[37] *Laxdœla saga*, in *Laxdœla saga, Halldórs þættir Snorrasonar, Stúfs þáttr*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 5 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1934), pp. 3–248 (p. 149).

insinuates that Auðr is attracted to Án. During an ambush, Án fights for some time with his entrails exposed and then dies. Later, he comes back to life after another prophetic dream, perhaps to fulfil his role in avenging Kjartan. Just as in *Bjarnar saga*, the advice giver's foreknowledge of the danger comes from the dream of the advice receiver. The fact that the advice giver is a woman signals the advice will likely be ignored, allowing the ensuing events to take place.

Instead of providing such distinct and unlikely accounts of ambush advice, as the early and classical sagas typically do, the late sagas attempt to portray a relatively plausible way ambush advice could have been given. Nevertheless, the examples from *Víglundar saga* are not necessarily indicative of how historical ambush advice occurred or that these incidents were likely inspired by external literary influences. The authors of the late sagas do, however, provide instances of ambush advice where knowledge of the ambush is accounted for through generally mundane means, instead of plot-convenient prophecy. Therefore, it is likely that ambush advice in the late sagas are imaginings based on the author's understanding of societal expectations. Although to most modern readers, paranormal aspects are clear signs that an incident could not have occurred, this would not necessarily be the reaction of a medieval audience.[38] It is likely that the portrayal of ambush advice is the result of both a literary tradition and also of stereotyping. Women with a greater connection to prophecy, or a greater fear of it, are those pushing for prophetic warnings to be heeded. Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir suggests that magic is the primary tool in saga narrative for women who are without male kin and unable to use male strategies to achieve their ends.[39] Such episodes are made even more plausible because it is the more headstrong and adventurous characters of saga literature, such as Kjartan Óláfsson and Egill Skallagrímsson, who ignore ambush advice.

Ambush advice with a different fictitious element is found in *Eyrbyggja saga*, which subverts the trope at its third use of it. Steinþórr tells his kinsman Þórðr *blígr* that he and his men should remain as guests of Steinþórr's brother instead of travelling through a hazardous area and igniting conflict with his enemies. Þórðr instead decides to go on his journey to make a legal payment for a murdered slave because he does not want to be mocked as afraid. In this case, it is caution that kills. In a reversal of typical ambush advice situations, it is Steinþórr and the men with him who are attacked. A temporary truce must be arranged after

[38] See Ralph O'Connor, 'History and Fiction'.
[39] Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 'Women's weapons', p. 433.

much killing. The reason for the inclusion of this subversion lies with the character Snorri, here an enemy of Þórðr. Steinþórr had previously sent a messenger to Snorri to see what he would do when he learnt of the gathered band of men. Snorri continues acting in his normal manner and completing his daily business, which Steinþórr treats with great caution. It seems likely that Steinþórr's prudence would be rewarded, as most ignored advice signals a negative outcome within the sagas. It is therefore significant that the saga is careful to note that the attack on those staying is made against the wishes of Snorri, who is adamant that Steinþórr must get his legal rights. The implication is that Steinþórr has taken the precautions expected of him, and that his enemies have broken societal rules and incited violence when legal action is more appropriate. This anomalous episode is evidence that there is enough awareness of ambush advice as a distinct formula at the time of writing to be effective in subverting reader expectations and indicating friction between Snorri and his allies.

As above, ambush advice is observable across early, classical and late *Íslendingasögur* with an almost even distribution. It is perhaps surprising then that *Sturlunga saga* only contains one instance of ambush advice. In *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða* a priest advises his friend to come to his home to avoid the ambush, with the hope that things will resolve in reconciliation. Despite the urging of several others, his friend reveals that he intends to ride on to the *þing*. The ambush never materialises, being broken up due to the intervention of a bishop.[40] *Sturlunga saga* does not lack for portrayals of ambushes, so the fact that there is only one example of ambush advice is itself remarkable. This lack of ambush advice in contemporary sagas gives greater support to the argument that ambush advice is a literary conceit, if it is assumed that saga authors would write more accurately about violence taking place in their own period rather than in the Saga Age. It is likely that ambush advice, in the manner portrayed by the *Íslendingasögur*, is a trope that emphasises certain qualities in characters, foreshadows plot-related disasters and indicates how far societal expectations were followed. In reality, ambushes must remain secret to be effective. When warning someone of an upcoming ambush in the *Íslendingasögur*, the advice giver rarely reveals where they gained the knowledge of the ambush, unless the reason is from prophecy or magic. Most advice givers are those who have an interest in preserving the life of the advice recipient, either lovers, family members or friends. Despite the invented elements of ambush advice, the giving of this advice by family and friends nevertheless resembles how other

[40] *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, in *Sturlunga saga*, ed. by Kristján Eldjárn, Magnús Finnbogason, and Jón Jóhannesson, 1 (Reykjavík: Sturlunguútgáfan, 1946), pp. 12–50 (p. 22).

types of advice are given in the sagas and corroborates what can be discerned about patterns of advice giving in the *Íslendingasögur*.

Peace-keeping

Advice given to ensure peace or to moderate violence is closely related to advice given to improve combat success. After all, the aims and priorities of those involved in combat must be interrogated. In some cases, the goal is simply victory, often at the expense of enemy lives. However, not all combat situations involve two groups in a fair battle. Sometimes an individual caught in a combat situation prioritises escape or safety, which is why combat-related advice is as much about people who are advised to avoid doing something as to do an action. In many cases, there is a narrative reason for men being advised to not provoke combat. In *Njáls saga*, Gunnarr's mother tells him not to stir up his enemies as they turn away, but he decides instead to shame his retreating attackers by using one of their own arrows.[41] The enemies interpret this as Gunnarr having run out of arrows, making it now possible to burn the residents inside. Gunnarr's mother may well intend her shout to be an order. Gunnarr interprets it as advice or else regards his mother as having no authority during combat. In *Njáls saga*, where Gunnarr is warned multiple times by different characters not to engage with the feud that will lead to his death, this is the last and most urgent instance of a pattern in which Gunnarr is given advice and ignores it. These instances are responsible for why this text has more instances of combat-related advice than any other saga.[42] The reader is shown what action Gunnarr could have taken, an untrodden path that haunts the narrative and enforces the idea that lethal fates cannot be avoided. His mother's warning is the only one where danger is clear and present, in comparison to a prediction that has not been triggered by a discernible catalyst. Because the consequence of Gunnarr's actions should be evident to him, it is apparent that his mother's advice being ignored is a deliberate authorial choice. Combat-related advice is ignored on forty-four occasions in the *Íslendingasögur*, probably because the most common advice receiver is a son and younger men are the least likely to follow beneficial advice.[43] Advice in combat situations is more often a case of advice receivers being told not to do something than to do it.

[41] *Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 187.
[42] Combat-related advice is given in *Brennu-Njáls saga* in the following eighteen incidents: pp. 28, 48, 50, 107, 107, 130–1, 139, 151, 167, 187, 221, 226, 319, 320, 326, 353, 354–5 and 425.
[43] Combat-related advice is ignored in the following forty-four incidents: *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* pp. 45–6, *Eyrbyggja saga* pp. 142, 187 and 189, *Finnboga saga* pp. 296, 312 and 321, *Fóstbræðra saga* pp. 163 and

Feud is a key source of risk and much has been written on feud in medieval Icelandic society.[44] Feuds were managed by a range of codified legal consequences and forceful extra-legal interventions. However, conflict in Saga Age Iceland was not mitigated by combative measures alone. The *Íslendingasögur* provide many examples where immense social pressure is applied to resolve disagreements before they can affect other areas of society.[45] There are twenty-nine advice incidents in the sagas where this occurs, specifically during circumstances where others advise a full reconciliation or a limiting of the violence.[46] The relationship of the advice giver to the advice receiver varies widely in this context. Often those advising conciliation are family members, but equally they fill roles not limited to *goðar*, friends, unnamed wise men or even relatives of potential enemies.

Peace-urging advice is ignored in twelve advice incidents and absolutely followed in thirteen.[47] In *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*, for example, Bjǫrn raises a scorn pole that depicts Þórðr having sexual intercourse with another man and speaks an insulting verse implying something similar. Þórðr summons him to the Althing, although 'rœddu þat vinir þeira, at þeir myndi heima sættask heldr en fœra svá ljótt mál til alþingis.'[48] What Þórðr's friends fear is not necessarily further violence, although there is a chance that bringing the case to court will increase tensions and lead to later violence. Instead, his friends are concerned about the formalisation of conflict into a legal dispute, leaving Þórðr vulnerable to public scrutiny and risking his reputation should the case not be resolved in his favour. This well-meaning advice is ultimately unnecessary, and a legal resolution is demonstrated to be a peaceful, if

237, *Gísla saga Súrssonar* pp. 81 and 111, *Grettis saga* p. 57, *Gull-Þóris saga* p. 222, *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* pp. 345 and 365, *Harðar saga* pp. 40 and 67, *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* p. 329, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* p. 132, *Þórðar saga hreðu* p. 201, *Kjalnesinga saga* pp. 10 and 18, *Kormáks saga* pp. 235–6, *Króka-Refs saga* p. 143, *Ljósvetninga saga* pp. 50, 75 and 86, *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 48, 107, 139, 187, 221, 320 and 425, *Svarfdœla saga* p. 194, *Valla-Ljóts saga* pp. 249 and 252, *Vatnsdœla saga* pp. 60, 93 and 107, *Víga-Glúms saga* pp. 63 and 93, and *Víglundar saga* pp. 90 and 91. See Chapter I: Advice within the Family for discussion of younger men and sons.

[44] As above, see Byock, *Feud*; Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*; Falk, *Violence and Risk in Medieval Iceland*.

[45] See Judith Jesch, '"Good men" and Peace in *Njáls saga*', in *Introductory Essays on Egils saga and Njáls saga*, ed. by John Hines and Desmond Slay (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1992), 64–82. See also Andersson, 'The Displacement of the Heroic Ideal in the Family Sagas'.

[46] Peace-keeping advice is given in the following twenty-nine incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* pp. 138 and 155–6, *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* p. 91, *Eyrbyggja saga* pp. 119 and 124, *Fljótsdœla saga* pp. 95, 245 and 261, *Gísla saga Súrssonar* pp. 33–4 and 70, *Grettis saga* pp. 85 and 92, *Heiðarvíga saga* p. 317, *Laxdœla saga* pp. 101–2, 111–2, 142 and 209, *Ljósvetninga saga* pp. 7, 10, 13, 53 and 90, *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar* pp. 313–4, *Svarfdœla saga* pp. 182 and 194, *Vápnfirðinga saga* p. 64, *Vatnsdœla saga* pp. 51 and 80–1, and *Víga-Glúms saga* p. 84.

[47] Peace-keeping advice is ignored in the following twelve incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* pp. 138 and 155–6, *Eyrbyggja saga* pp. 119 and 124, *Fljótsdœla saga* p. 261, *Ljósvetninga saga* pp. 7, 10 and 13, *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar* pp. 313–4, *Svarfdœla saga* pp. 182 and 194, and *Vatnsdœla saga* p. 51.

[48] *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*, pp. 155–6, 'their friends advised that they should settle this at home rather than take such an ugly case to the Althing.'

temporary, solution. At the Althing it is settled that Bjǫrn has to pay three marks of silver, and calm ensues for two years. This instance allows the author to demonstrate that there was potential for the rivalry to continue in a more dramatic fashion, if Þórðr had followed the advice of his friends. By making his own decisions, Þórðr has his restitution legitimised legally and there is no immediate violence. However, Þórðr also makes a reputational sacrifice to do this. The scorn pole and scandalous verse could have been kept relatively private, as simply insinuating homosexuality would be status-damaging. All of this helps to characterise Þórðr, who refuses to cower before rumours. The mere suggestion of divergent sexuality was recognised as defamation, with legal implications in medieval Iceland.[49] Individuals in this instance must decide what might be most damaging to their friends. Either Þórðr is humiliated among a much smaller group of witnesses for tolerating the erection of a scorn pole, or else he might have legal recourse but it becomes public knowledge that he has been accused of homosexual behaviour. Furthermore, those possessing formal friendships with someone in such a position may want to preserve their own reputations, not wishing to be closely associated with a defamed man. Reputation in saga society is often valued above life and therefore it is possible that people like Þórðr's companions might attempt to keep the peace and protect their friends by giving ultimately poor advice to resist starting legal action.

Most sagas represent various forms of settlement and compensation as the most effective peace-keeping mechanisms. Therefore, advice givers who advocate for peace through social contracts and material restitution tend to be depicted as offering good advice. In *Ljósvetninga saga*, Tjǫrvi Þorgeirsson advises that compensation for a killing should not be rejected.[50] Because of this, the compensation is made and both parties are technically reconciled. Again, a legal process is responsible for a respite in an ongoing conflict, albeit a more violent one. Conciliation is made possible on the advice of others.

Advice givers are not always previously involved in the conflict. In *Vatnsdœla saga* an individual whose only connection to the conflict in question is his proximity becomes the peace-keeping advice giver. In the course of a land dispute, Már assembles forty men to fight the sons of Ingimundr. In the fight, participants are both injured and killed. Men from a nearby farm intervene and stop the fight. Among them is Þorgrímr *at Kárnsá*, who states that

[49] See Kari Ellen Gade, 'Homosexuality and rape of males in old Norse law and literature' *Scandinavian Studies*, 58.2 (1986), 124–141; Oğulcan Çelik, 'The Representation of Homosexuality in Old Norse Literature and Law', *Kültür Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 8 (2021), 175–185; Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, *The Unmanly Man: Concepts of Sexual Defamation in Early Northern Society* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1983).
[50] *Ljósvetninga saga*, p. 53.

Már is losing and that 'er þat nú mitt ráð, at þú vægir til við þá ok selir Þorsteini sjálfdœmi.'[51] Már admits that this is good advice, a settlement is reached and both parties are reconciled. Þorgrímr has less stake in the outcome of the dispute and therefore is able to give a more objective opinion both on the outcome of the battle and how to resolve it. He and the other nearby farm dwellers could be required to attend as witnesses in court if the case cannot be settled elsewhere and their proximity would be a good incentive for them to urge peace.[52]

However, even when advice is followed, community cohesion does not always ensue, with tensions lingering and violence merely delayed. Families are key to the structure of medieval Icelandic society. Although disputes between family members are compelling saga content, saga authors often make a distinction between this and extra-familial conflict. The implication is that severe disagreements within families are damaging enough to the network of society to justify special efforts to reconcile them, often from the uninvolved. This is why situations where advice givers have ties to more than one family in conflict are depicted as great dilemmas,[53] with members of the community often going to great lengths to reconcile families. In *Laxdœla saga*, Kjartan is upset when Þórólfr Ósvífrsson and his companions hide his sword, given to him by a king, in a bog. He recovers the sword but never finds the sheath. He tells his father Óláfr, who responds that he should tolerate the trick and not give others something to laugh at by starting a quarrel with friends and kinsmen over a thing like this.[54] Soon Kjartan is dismayed to find a valuable headdress, given to him by Ingibjǫrg the sister of King Óláfr Tryggvason, has gone missing, suspecting his foster-brother Bolli of stealing it. Óláfr, who is both Kjartan's father and Bolli's uncle, is fearful of a split between the foster-brothers. Óláfr asks Kjartan to do nothing again and let him see what he can do privately. Kjartan, however, chooses to confront Bolli and eventually enmity grows into violence. Óláfr has good reason beyond his emotional bonds to attempt to mitigate internal familial conflict. His own lineage, through fostered and biological sons, is weakened considerably if his descendants are at risk of killing each other. Additionally, the most peaceable way of solving conflicts of loyalty resulting from feuding kinsmen is if all family members can be reconciled to show a united front.

Óláfr's appeal to consider family and friend relationships above personal grievances is common in the sagas. *Ljósvetninga saga*, for example, engages heavily with themes of sons

[51] *Vatnsdœla saga*, pp. 80–81, 'It is now my advice that you surrender to them and offer Þorsteinn self-judgement.'
[52] *Grágás I*, 141–2.
[53] See Chapter I: Advice Within the Family.
[54] *Laxdœla saga*, p. 142.

set against their father. Sǫlmundr refuses to pay a Norwegian for goods he says are rotten, and his brother Sǫxólfr kills the Norwegian over this. Sǫlmundr is given lesser outlawry. After gaining the favour of Jarl Hákon, Sǫlmundr sends gifts to Guðmundr and Þorgeirr *goði* for their support and they accept. However, Þorgeirr's sons support the prosecution against Sǫlmundr. At first, Arnórr *í Reykjahlíð*, Þorgeirr's cousin, advises him not to stake his reputation on a dead foreigner.[55] Arnórr further advises the sons in question to go to their uncle Þórðr, a wise man, who has also rebuked Þorgeirr for standing against his sons in battle. Ófeigr, another *goði*, becomes involved, restraining the brothers after their father withdraws from the legal case due to their carefully engineered rumours. He tells them it is unfitting they should quarrel with their father and offers to seek a reconciliation between them, adding that he will not abandon them should it result in a confrontation.[56] This is far from the only time in the sagas where others urge reconciliation between clashing parties. Nevertheless, the repetition of the argument that fathers and sons should not fight makes it explicit that there is a well-known social taboo that is being violated whenever father or son escalates the conflict. It is likely that major violent conflicts within families were not as common as those between different families. The former is portrayed far less commonly in the sagas, and major interfamilial conflict is frowned upon by the wider community. After all, if a person cannot count on their family for alliance instead of enmity, that family is severely destabilised and its collective power in danger of dissipating when faced with internal and external pressures.

For the most part, however, explicitly accepting peace-keeping advice leads to a conciliation, defusing a confrontation in an often-mundane manner. Perhaps the best examples of how communities advocate for non-violent resolutions are instances wherein advice givers are depicted as wise men. In *Grettis saga*, Þorgeirr kills Þorgils Másson and others in a dispute over a whale. Þorsteinn Kuggason takes charge of the case against Þorgeirr, while Þorgils Arason offers Þorgeirr a place to stay. Then, in the autumn, 'sendi Þorgils mann til Þorsteins Kuggasonar at leita um sættir, en hann var þverr í því, at taka fé fyrir vígsmálit við Þorgils, en um ǫnnur víg kvazk hann gera mundu eptir skynsamra manna tillǫgu.'[57] Þorgeirr is ultimately outlawed and the other killings settled. The identity of the wise men and the extent of their advice is unspecified. It is simply assumed that the reader

[55] *Ljósvetninga saga*, p. 8.
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 10.
[57] *Grettis saga*, p. 92, 'Þorgils [Arason] sent a messenger to Þorsteinn Kuggason to approach him about a settlement. Þorsteinn was absolutely against accepting any compensation for the killing of Þorgils Másson but said he would settle the other killings as rational men suggested.'

will accept that there are influential men willing and ready to offer advice on a legal case that they may not be directly involved in.

In *Grettis saga*, it is unclear whether all the rational men's advice was taken; perhaps the wise men here advise that all of the killings be settled. What is clear is that their advice prevents the further escalation of conflict. If Þorgeirr can be outlawed for one death alone, the time and effort to prosecute him for multiple killings would be wasted and possibly draw the ire of further parties who would then continue tensions in Þorgeirr's absence. The advice is both practical and looks ahead to this possible consequence of using the legal system. Unspecified wise men offering advice is a popular technique among saga authors to portray a decision as the best one for the community. Lars Lönnroth comments that the sagas maintain the illusion of an objective narrative yet indicate value judgments and emotive reactions to incidents through anonymous representatives of the community at large. He suggests that there is rarely any conflict between this public opinion or the narrator's views. In particular, Lönnroth notes the existence of a 'wise community spokesman' as the key indicator of community attitudes.[58] In *Víga-Glúms saga*, a court case is veering dangerously close to breaking out into violence to the extent that Glúmr can only arrive at the Hegranes Assembly by having his men follow him with spears in a wedge formation. When he is being prosecuted, his relatives help him to get his legal rights and then 'er þat af gǫrt með vitra manna ráði, ef Glúmr vill vinna eið fyrir málit, at eigi vægi hann Þorvald krók.'[59] However, they specify that he should swear the oath in three different temples. Glúmr complicates the case by swearing an oath that he did not kill Þorvaldr *krókr*, with wording that could be interpreted as him admitting that he had. Glúmr is a powerful figure and, if not for his clumsy deception, an oath may well have appeased his enemies. The advice of wise men here prevents a battle from occuring during the legal gathering by judging in favour of neither side and possibly giving reason for Glúmr to travel away in order to fulfil their condition.

In *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, the presence of wise men gives legitimacy to certain major decisions. Gunnlaugr and Hrafn fight an unresolved duel that ends when men run between them to break them up. The next day it was laid down as law by the *lǫgrétta* (law council) that all duelling should be permanently abolished and 'var þat gǫrt at ráði allra

[58] Lars Lönnroth, 'Rhetorical Persuasion in the Sagas,' *Scandinavian Studies*, 42.2 (1970), 157–189 (p. 170).
[59] *Víga-Glúms saga*, p. 84, 'it was settled on the advice of wise men, if Glúmr wanted to take an oath about the case, to swear that he had not killed Þorvaldr *krókr*.'

vitrustu manna, er við váru staddir; en þar váru allir þeir, er vitrastir váru á landinu.'[60] It is not enough that this was an action taken by the *lǫgrétta*, who have the full legal means to do so. It must be done on the counsel of all the wisest men. The support the author gives to the decision to end duelling likely has roots in Christian values at the time of writing.[61] If so, it can be assumed that the incident is invented in the same manner that Christian authors might characterise pagan characters as proto-Christians.

The depiction of the unnamed wise men whose inclusion signals that a decision is an improvement might reflect the values expressed by the *Íslendingasögur*. Jesch suggests that the idea of 'good men' is 'where secular ideas of conflict resolution and religious ideas of appropriate behaviour come together' as the 12th-century Icelandic Homily Book usually refers to 'good men' in a 'purely Christian sense of "righteous, heaving according to Christian principles".'[62] However, Christianity is unlikely to be the only influence on how these advice givers are portrayed. Andersson states that the sagas are consistent in 'a sense of proportion and moderation. They are written against excess […] or they are written in praise of moderation.'[63] He adds that 'the concept of moderation is older than Christianity and has hardly been a notable feature of Christian teaching. What we probably have in the sagas is not so much the replacement of a pagan ideal with a Christian ideal as the replacement of a warrior ideal with a social ideal.'[64] If moderation is an ethical ideal, there might be a social duty for wise moderating groups to mitigate violence through advice.

Much societal pressure to avoid combat is legitimised through legal means. Hannah Burrows notes that:

> [V]iolence is prevented from breaking out more often […] [by] the presence at the *Alþing* of an interested community wishing to maintain peace, and of individuals or groups prepared to make peacekeeping interventions. The presence of arbitrators is actually the third most popular element in 'dramatic' *þing*-scenes, occurring in 43% of these.[65]

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[60] *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, in *Borgfirðinga sögur*, ed. by Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 3 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1938), pp. 51–107 (p. 95), 'that was done on the advice of all the wisest men who were there, and they were all there, who were all the wisest people in the land.'
[61] For further discussion of the medieval Icelandic duel and the end of duelling, see Marlene Ciklamini, 'The Old Icelandic Duel', *Scandinavian Studies*, 35.3 (1963), 175–194.
[62] Judith Jesch, '"Good men" and Peace in *Njáls saga*', p. 79.
[63] Andersson, 'The Displacement of the Heroic Ideal in the Family Sagas', p. 588.
[64] *Ibid.*, p. 592.
[65] Hannah Burrows, 'Some *Þing* To Talk About: Assemblies in the *Íslendingasögur*', *Northern Studies*, 47 (2015), 47–75 (p. 64).

She highlights this as a marked difference with *Sturlunga saga*. The fact that cases are brought only by a small group of the most dominant factions, she adds, means that only the most powerful achieve their aims outright or else the participants forgo the *þing* entirely. This evidence seems to indicate that *Íslendingasögur* authors were inventing or romanticising a less violent period than their own, where peace could be responsibly urged and mediated through legal process. However, a study by Hugh Firth, wherein estimated homicide rates are derived from *samtíðarsögur*, revealed that in a cross-cultural context these texts do not demonstrate the same level of violence, reaching the point of killing, as other competitive societies where feuds may occur.[66] This comparative lack of homicide is credited to several features of medieval Iceland. One feature, the existence of arbitration and conciliation methods, makes the structure of Icelandic society markedly different from the societies with higher rates of homicide.

There are twenty-two incidents in *Sturlunga saga* where advice givers urge others to keep the peace, almost as many as are found in the *Íslendingasögur*,[67] suggesting that social conciliation methods survived past the Saga Age. Considering that *Sturlunga saga* represents a smaller corpus of text, it therefore contains a proportionally larger quantity of peace-keeping advice. In both corpora, the advice is given by a group of people on six occasions.[68] Likewise, the advice is received by a group on six occasions in *Sturlunga saga* and seven in the *Íslendingasögur*.[69] This group activity suggests that peace-keeping advice is in many cases given and received in a public context, therefore lending more weight to social pressure in these circumstances.

Peace-keeping advice is almost exclusively given and received in Iceland by Icelanders, indicating that social pressure to disengage from or not incite violence is a consistent feature of saga societies. Peace-keeping advice may have become even more

[66] See Hugh Firth, 'Coercion, Vengeance, Feud, and Accommodation: Homicide in Medieval Iceland', *Early Medieval Europe*, 20.2 (2012), 139–75.
[67] Peace-keeping advice is given in *Sturlunga saga* in the following twenty-two incidents: *Prestssaga Guðmundar góða* pp. 120 and 147, *Guðmundar saga dýra* p. 184, *Sturlu saga* pp. 70, 74, 86, 107 and 112, *Íslendinga saga* pp. 277–8, 301, 319, 334, 348 and 526, *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða* pp. 33, 36, 37, 39, 43 and 48, and *Þorgils saga skarða* pp. 109 and 109. See above for the twenty-nine incidents wherein peace-keeping advice is given in the *Íslendingasögur*.
[68] A group gives peace-keeping advice in *Sturlunga saga* in the following six incidents: *Sturlu saga* pp. 74 and 107, *Íslendinga saga* pp. 334 and 526, and *Þorgils saga skarða* pp. 109 and 109.
[69] A group receives peace-keeping advice in *Sturlunga saga* in the following six incidents: *Prestssaga Guðmundar góða* p. 120, *Sturlu saga* p. 107, *Íslendinga saga* pp. 334 and 348, and *Þorgils saga skarða* pp. 109 and 109. A group receives peace-keeping advice in the *Íslendingasögur* in the following seven incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* pp. 155–6, *Fljótsdœla saga* p. 95, *Heiðarvíga saga* p. 317, *Laxdœla saga* pp. 101–2, 111–2 and 209, and *Ljósvetninga saga* p. 13.

important to Iceland's social structures towards the period of *Sturlunga saga*. Social pressure through advice giving may have become a more essential peace-keeping method when parties increasingly preferred seeking solutions outside courts due to the concentration of power among few factions. Similarly to the *Íslendingasögur*, peace-keeping advice in *Sturlunga saga* usually comes from either groups of wise men or individuals with authority. A confrontation brews until a man called Þorleifr *beiskaldi* begs a leader not to call people into such life-threatening danger. The audience is then told that many other good men also advise against fighting, resulting in a truce.[70] As Judith Jesch points out, the idea of good men striving for conflict resolution is also a central theme of the *Íslendingasögur*: 'where the law cannot resolve a conflict, [the] active intervention [of good and honourable men] can bring about a private settlement.'[71] Later in *Sturlunga saga,* during an inheritance dispute, a group of *goðar* intervene and urge disgruntled parties not to add to the problems in the district, urging them to let the matter wait until the Althing. In *Þorgils saga skarða*, twice there is advice giving after a brawl has occurred between a guest and a household member, albeit this time in Norway. The saga reports that many give advice, but the best advice is given by the retainers of King Hákon, who suggest they yield to the host and the advice of the worthiest men present.[72] The so-called worthiest men advise the host that each offence should be squared off against another and no compensation given, opting for a non-violent solution. There is an understated comedy to crediting the retainers with giving the best advice when their advice is merely to listen to other men. This supports the idea that there are expectations or conventional wisdom within saga society that advocates that the wisest action in difficult situations is seeking advice from respected persons, even when away from Iceland. In *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, it is Guðmundr, a friend and cousin, who, in a speech that warns against fighting large forces, advises Hafliði to proceed cautiously in an approaching legal case.[73] He recommends fully prosecuting the case, but no further than will endanger Hafliði's life or reputation.

There are nevertheless some differences between peace-keeping advice in *Sturlunga saga* and the *Íslendingasögur*. In six of these *Sturlunga saga* incidents the advice giver is a

[70] *Sturlu saga,* in *Sturlunga saga*, ed. by Kristján Eldjárn, Magnús Finnbogason, and Jón Jóhannesson, 1 (Reykjavík: Sturlunguútgáfan, 1946), pp. 63–114 (p. 74).
[71] Judith Jesch, '"Good men" and Peace in *Njáls saga*', p. 71.
[72] *Þorgils saga skarða*, in *Sturlunga saga,* ed. by Kristján Eldjárn, Magnús Finnbogason, and Jón Jóhannesson, 2 (Reykjavík: Sturlunguútgáfan, 1946), pp. 104–226 (p. 109).
[73] *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, in *Sturlunga saga,* ed. by Kristján Eldjárn, Magnús Finnbogason, and Jón Jóhannesson (Reykjavík: Sturlunguútgáfan, 1946), pp. 12–50 (p. 36).

priest, whereas no priest gives this type of advice in the *Íslendingasögur*.[74] This is because of the increased presence and importance of priests to both *Sturlunga saga* and this later historical period.[75] However, this also points towards the influence of priests gradually emerging beside and even in some cases replacing *goðar* as moral authorities in a post-conversion Iceland. The pattern of wise and important men who intervene in conflicts that threaten to disrupt the wider community is deeply entrenched in both Saga Age Iceland and saga society.[76]

Peace-keeping advice in the *Íslendingasögur* benefits the community and the individual. Peace-keeping advice is a public spectacle, which is consistent with its portrayal in *Sturlunga saga*. Social pressure is a tool to end or prevent conflict across a range of advice giver-receiver relationships. Although the sagas depict peace-keeping advice being ignored and followed in equal measure, they consistently depict settlement and compensation as, in theory, the most effective peace-keeping tools. Uninvolved parties give particular focus to reconciling families fractured by conflict, implying that internal familial quarrels are the most damaging to society. Wise men have a special role in reconciliation, often appearing in sagas, sometimes as unnamed individuals, simply to urge people to peace. These men represent community opinion and are an established mechanism working in tandem with social conciliation.

Law

Advice giving is one of the most intriguing and overlooked aspects of legal strategy in the Icelandic Commonwealth, given the importance of the legal process in mitigating violence. Legal cases are often depicted in the same manner as physical conflicts, with a disagreement, individuals planning their response or seeking help and finally a confrontation. Alan Berger comments that 'if episodes are to turn on points of law, then heroes and villains must be made lawyers to accommodate such conflicts.'[77] The *Íslendingasögur* portray how legal cases and, more particularly, the relationships formed and challenged by them, can be structured around advice giving. However, although advice giving in legal contexts can

[74] A priest gives peace-keeping advice in *Sturlunga saga* in the following six incidents: *Preststssaga Guðmundar góða* p. 147, *Sturlu saga* pp. 70 and 86, and *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða* pp. 39, 43 and 48.
[75] See Chapter II: Advice Outside the Family.
[76] See Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, 'The Role of Arbitration'.
[77] Alan Berger, 'Lawyers in the Old Icelandic Family Sagas: Heroes, Villains and Authors', *Saga-Book of the Viking Society*, 20 (1978–81), 70–9 (p. 78).

adhere to a similar format as advice outside it, the structure of the legal process and the existence of individuals well-known for legal expertise creates certain differences. The legal process is primarily a verbal one, where weapons are initially limited to words. Gudmund Sandvik and Jón Viðar Sigurðsson state that the Althing, a key location in resolving disputes, had certain advantages: 'Friends and allies could foregather there and greater pressure could be put on disputants than could be brought to bear in their home districts. Men of prestige could be involved in settlements and add weight to arbitration and negotiation. It was primarily a forum where political alliances were forged and tested.'[78] This suggests that a legal space is also a social space, where networks of 'friends and allies', particularly intelligent or influential ones, are necessary to weight an outcome in one party's favour.[79] Better allies could mean better advice, and better advice could increase the probability of winning a case. There was also a reason for powerful individuals to involve law, rather than exacting their own penalties. Miller comments that 'The law, it seems, conferred practical advantage by conferring moral advantage.'[80] Legal strategies meant that revenge and retribution might seem more legitimate in the eyes of the public and the plaintiff's potential supporters.

One hundred and two advice incidents in the *Íslendingasögur* pertain directly to law.[81] In twenty-eight incidents, the advice giver or receiver is a group, demonstrating how the structure and spectacle of law courts can permit advice giving on a larger scale than in other contexts.[82] Although slightly more law-related advice is given to non-family members overall, in cases where advice givers and receivers are individuals, it is still the case that most legal advice is given to family members.[83] This confirms earlier findings of this study that even when widely acknowledged experts are available, it is just as preferable to receive advice from those with a personal attachment to the case. Much legal advice between family

[78] Gudmund Sandvik, and Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, 'Laws', in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. by Rory McTurk (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 223–244 (p. 227).
[79] For more detail on the culture of going to the law in sagas, see Andreas Heusler, *Das Strafrecht der Isländersagas*, (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1911), pp. 98–123.
[80] William Ian Miller, 'In Defence of Revenge', in *Medieval Crime and Social Control*, ed. by B. A. Hanawalt and D. Wallace (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp. 70–89 (p. 75).
[81] See Appendix: Table 8.
[82] Groups give legal advice in the following ten incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* pp. 155–6, *Fljótsdœla saga* p. 95, *Grettis saga* p. 92, *Heiðarvíga saga* pp. 227–8 and 237, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* p. 115, *Ljósvetninga saga* p. 12, *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar* pp. 313–4, and *Víga-Glúms saga* pp. 22 and 84. Groups receive legal advice in the following eighteen incidents: *Bandamanna saga* p. 324, *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* pp. 155–6, *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 151, *Fljótsdœla saga* p. 95, *Grettis saga* pp. 31–2, *Harðar saga* pp. 69–70 and 76, *Heiðarvíga saga* p. 317, *Laxdœla saga* p. 209, *Ljósvetninga saga* pp. 8 and 13, *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 226, 241–2 and 307, *Vatnsdœla saga* pp. 120–1, *Víga-Glúms saga* p. 22, and *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu* pp. 169 and 201–2.
[83] See Appendix: Table 8.

members is given in isolated and understated incidents. For example, in *Ljósvetninga saga*, Icelanders are informed that monetary compensation will be paid for killing Þorkell. Hǫskuldr Þorgeirsson, one of those being compensated, warns their reconciliation will not be reliable. His brother Tjǫrvi replies that it is not his advice to reject the compensation.[84] The money is paid and the saga points out that both sides are now technically reconciled. Tjǫrvi is present and involved in the case and the family member of the advice receiver, so his advice is given without ceremony or solicitation, which in many ways is an extension of peace-keeping advice practices. Tjǫrvi's open disagreement with his brother's scepticism pushes Hǫskuldr into accepting the compensation, preventing an immediate prolonging of conflict. However, as settlements are an aspect of legal society, there is another dimension to this interaction. Tjǫrvi protects his family's reputation, an important element in retaining and gaining supporters in future struggles. If they declined compensation when offered, the brothers would be regarded as needlessly disruptive community members by comparison with the other party, who had taken steps to offset the injustices caused by the slaying of Þorkell. This short exchange between brothers is typical of most legal advice incidents in several ways. It is good advice given by a family member occurring in Iceland, where *Íslendingasögur* authors are most concerned with portraying the intricacies of law. It is unsolicited, non-transactional and the advice is accepted and implemented by the receiver. Despite the existence of 'lawyer' characters in the sagas, this is the most common type of legal advice.[85]

It is important to note that any discussion of legal advice giving in medieval Iceland is primarily about men. There are only eight advice incidents in the *Íslendingasögur* wherein a woman is the giver of law-related advice (compared to the ninety four incidents wherein men give legal advice).[86] Although in select circumstances women could directly interact with processes of law, women were not typically considered *þingfœrr* (assembly-fit), meaning that they would not be required to go to Þingvellir or participate in court proceedings in the same way as male counterparts.[87] Women in the sagas are often depicted as turning over cases to

[84] *Ljósvetninga saga*, p. 53. See above, Chapter III: Conflict.
[85] For a full discussion of legal titles in medieval Iceland, see Hannah Burrows, 'Expertise and Experience: Nuancing Terms for Legal Practitioners in the Íslendingasögur', in *Law | Book | Culture in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Thom Gobbitt (Leiden: Brill, 2021), pp. 296–316.
[86] Women give legal advice in the following eight incidents: *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 41, *Harðar saga* p. 196, *Laxdœla saga* pp. 48 and 96, *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 50 and 58, *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar* p. 304, and *Vatnsdœla saga* pp. 120–1.
[87] For more information about the relationship between women and law in medieval Iceland, see Jenny Jochens, 'Gender symmetry in law?: The case of medieval Iceland', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 108 (1993), 46–67 (p. 48).

their male relatives, a provision likewise described in *Grágás*.[88] When women are involved in legal cases in the sagas, they are usually either the subject of a quarrel such as a seduction, a property dispute or else, more intriguingly, a tool. In *Njáls saga* after the burning of Njáll's sons, Kári is responsible for vengeance. Gizurr advises Kári exhort Gizurr's son-in-law to take over the case, threatening both an axe to the head and that Gizurr will take his daughter back. Gizurr implies the latter is the greater threat, adding that his son-in-law loves her more than the eyes in his head.[89]

It is not always threats that result in legal support. Ófeigr in *Bandamanna saga* arranges his son's marriage to the daughter of a chieftain opposing them in their case.[90] In *Hœnsa-Þóris saga*, Gunnarr, the father of a bride, persuades Þórðr, her uncle and here the desirable supporter, to give her away to the groom, the son of Blund-Ketill, at her wedding. Þórðr realises he is now obligated to help seek redress for the burning of Blund-Ketill. Gunnarr tells Þórðr that 'er þér nú skylt at veita mági þínum, en vér erum skyldir at veita þér, því at margir heyrðu, at þú fastnaðir konuna.'[91] In these examples, men involve women as part of the legal strategies they advise. The exclusion of women during legal processes is the reason legal advice incidents, which represent nearly a quarter of all advice incidents in the *Íslendingasögur*, rarely feature women. However, this does not mean that female characters are never involved in legal advice giving.

The depiction of women giving legal advice serves to influence the plot rather than to demonstrate distinct female roles in saga society. The way in which women give advice even tangentially related to law in the *Íslendingasögur* is inconsistent and very particular to the situation. There are only twelve instances where a woman gives solicited advice,[92] of which five are law-related.[93] In *Vatnsdœla saga*, people approach Þórdís, a prophetess, for a plan to prevent a murderer from being outlawed. She first suggests that she become the arbiter in the case. When the other party refuses, she causes a key individual to lose his memory to delay the case to the point that it becomes impossible to prosecute. She is rewarded in silver and the

[88] *Ibid*., p. 48.
[89] *Brennu-Njáls saga*, pp. 354–5.
[90] *Bandamanna saga*, p. 344.
[91] *Hœnsna-Þóris saga*, in *Borgfirðinga sögur*, ed. by Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson, Íslenzk Fornrit, 3 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1938), pp. 1–47 (p. 33), 'you now have the duty to stand by your brother-in-law, as we must stand by you, because many heard you betroth the woman.'
[92] Women give solicited advice in the following twelve incidents: *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* p. 136, *Flóamanna saga* p. 276, *Grœnlendinga saga* p. 258, *Gull-Þóris saga* p. 220, *Laxdœla saga* pp. 12 and 96, *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 50 and 58, *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar* p. 304, *Vatnsdœla saga* pp. 120–1, *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu* pp. 191–2, and *Víglundar saga* p. 100.
[93] Women give solicited law-related advice in the following five incidents: *Laxdœla saga* p. 96, *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 50 and 58, *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar* p. 304, and *Vatnsdœla saga* pp. 120–1.

case eventually settled through compensation.[94] It is possible that there were women in society known and respected for perceived paranormal foresight, which would qualify someone for a role of legal adviser or arbiter to major cases, a role that Þórdís is described as having in the saga. However, there are no other examples of prophetesses in the sagas giving legal advice. The fact that the case is waylaid by paranormal power rather than legal prowess may be why the author selected a prophetess as the advisor on this occasion. There is little in common between instances wherein women give legal advice. Very little advice given by women is presented at an assembly site and none of the advice given demonstrates technical knowledge of the law. This indicates that in these cases women may merely represent useful plot devices for explaining the decisions of male plaintiffs.

As mentioned previously, Miller, one of the most prolific authors on the topic of law in medieval Iceland, comments that it was necessary to assemble alliances to triumph in legalities.[95] In the context of medieval Iceland, popularity frequently meant power. The act of gaining supporters, either as part of the legal process itself, as witnesses, arbitrators or simply a quantity of 'bodies', was an important facet of men's relationships. Little scholarly attention has been paid to these assembled alliances where the legal support provided is in the form of advice.

There are a few traits that are commonly shared among advice-giving figures in the *Íslendingasögur*, which describe certain individuals forming reputations for being good advice givers independently of their relation to the advice receiver. Perhaps the clearest signal that an author is presenting someone as an adviser figure is during the character's introduction. Advice givers are usually described as wise, often popular, and occasionally prophetic.[96] They often prove themselves indispensable to extricating a close ally from trouble. Most saga advice givers do not occupy formal advice-giving positions, although some take such an active role in court proceedings that certain studies term them 'lawyers'.[97] Despite this, few characters share advice on exclusively legal matters, most advising on a range of topics such as marriage and battle. Explicit character descriptions are not altogether common in the sagas. For example, although Snorri *goði* is described as a wise, foresighted man who gives good advice to his friends in *Eyrbyggja saga*, the same cannot be said for

[94] *Vatnsdœla saga*, pp. 120–1.
[95] See Semantic Field Analysis of Advice Lexemes. Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*, p. 188.
[96] Specific characters are described as good at giving advice and described as wise, popular and/or prophetic in the following six incidents: *Eyrbyggja saga* pp. 26–7 and 33, *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* p. 303, *Laxdœla saga* p. 87, *Brennu-Njáls saga* p. 57, and *Vatnsdœla saga* p. 22.
[97] See Alan Berger, 'Lawyers in the Old Icelandic Family Sagas: Heroes, Villains and Authors', *Saga-Book of the Viking Society*, 20 (1978–81), 70–9.

Snorri in *Laxdœla saga*, where his character must be surmised from his actions.[98] Few individuals are explicitly characterised as advice givers, and there are some traits, such as wisdom, popularity and sometimes foresight, that are commonly shared among these people.

Examining how authors overtly present characters as advice givers, particularly in a legal sense, determines how this relates to the quantitative evidence of who actually gives advice in the sagas. Of the thirty-nine advice incidents wherein legal advice is solicited, roughly a quarter depict advice being solicited from outside the immediate circle of family or friends.[99] This is a distinct pattern particular to legal advice and may suggest the existence of special legal advisors, some of whom intervene in the case directly and others who merely advise. *Njáls saga* is a fascinating intersection between fact and fiction, where anachronisms and passages from contemporary law are used by the author to create scenes meant to portray tenth-century cases, yet the saga accurately depicts a journey between farmsteads. The introduction of the titular Njáll, however, reveals the most about the role of men skilled in law, underlining two major aspects – his favorable status as a lawman, and his interactions with others:

> Hann var lögmaðr svá mikill, at engi fannsk hans jafningi, vitr var hann ok forspár, heilráðr ok góðgjarn, ok varð allt at ráði, þat er hann réð mönnum, hógværr ok drenglyndr, langsýnn ok langminnigr; hann leysti hvers manns vandræði, er á hans fund kom.[100]

Njáls saga is not the only text that explicitly describes the advising natures of certain characters, however. Some advice givers are less legally inclined but share similar traits. Vermundr *mjóvi* in *Eyrbyggja saga* and Ófeigr in *Bandamanna saga* are introduced with an

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[98] *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 26.

[99] Law-related advice is solicited in the following thirty-nine incidents: *Bandamanna saga* pp. 328 and 351, *Droplaugarsona saga* p. 148, *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 151, *Gísla saga Súrssonar* pp. 64 and 92, *Grettis saga* pp. 31–2, *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* pp. 377–8, *Hallfreðar saga* p. 188, *Heiðarvíga saga* pp. 227–8 and 255–6, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* pp. 106–7 and 113, *Laxdœla saga* pp. 94 and 94, *Ljósvetninga saga* pp. 62, 66–7 and 86, *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 24–5, 28, 50, 58, 58, 125, 130–1, 139, 160–1, 167, 226, 353 and 377, *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu* pp. 156–7, 163 and 209, *Vatnsdœla saga* pp. 99, 120–1 and 130, *Víga-Glúms saga* p. 29, and *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar* p. 304. Advice givers whose primary relationship to the recipient is neither family member nor friend give solicited law-related advice in the following ten incidents: *Eyrbyggja saga* p. 151, *Grettis saga* pp. 31–2, *Hallfreðar saga* p. 188, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* p. 113, *Ljósvetninga saga* pp. 66–7, *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 50 and 377, *Vatnsdœla saga* pp. 120–1 and 130, and *Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu* p. 209.

[100] *Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 57, 'He was so great a lawman that his equal could not be found. He was wise and prophetic, sound of advice and benevolent, and the advice that he gave to people all turned out well. He was modest and noble-tempered, seeing far ahead and remembering long; he solved the problems of whomever came to visit him.' See Semantic Field Analysis of Advice Lexemes.

emphasis on their intelligence and their advising. Vermundr is 'vitr maðr ok stundar heilráðr'.[101] Ófeigr is 'spekingr mikill ok inn mesti ráða gørðamaðr'.[102]

Njáll is described as wise, prophetic, and is certainly implied to be popular. Other characters, such as Gestr Oddleifsson in *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* and *Laxdœla saga*, whose major role in the sagas is to give advice, are given similar traits.[103] These traits are feasibly connected. It makes sense that prophecy and wisdom give the ability to grant good advice and that good advice enhances popularity. The promise of popularity, or at least the promise of a good reputation, might even be an enticement to give advice. Although a character's initial description is not always supported by his or her actions in a saga, saga authors often take pains to portray a character's proficiency in advice giving if they have been introduced in reference to it. The author introduces Njáll as a *lögmaðr* without equal, which is justified by accentuating the help Njáll can offer to suppliants. Notably, the focus of Njáll's description is this and not the ways in which he is able to advance his own legal cases. Miller comments that in legal cases 'special people were also recruited because of their pleading skills', and it is easy to see how someone might likewise be recruited for their advising skills, or knowledge of law.[104] Burrows states that advice was a valuable commodity as having legal expertise might benefit those who were willing to offer counsel both socially and financially.[105] In the *Íslendingasögur*, Njáll's cultivation of his trustworthy reputation makes him a desirable ally. How Njáll utilises his advising skills is investigated in greater depth below.

Njáll is not the only advice-giving character in *Njáls saga*. His protégé Þórhallr is taught law by Njáll and assumes a respected Njáll-like position in the community after the death of his mentor. It could be said that the true test of Njáll's legal knowledge and ability to advise occurs after Njáll dies. Þórhallr's advice rescues Mǫrðr's case and he is highly praised for it.[106] Eyjólfr tries several times more to get the case dismissed and it only ends in praise for Þórhallr, others comparing him to Njáll.[107] When the prosecution then overlooks the need to remove a few men from court and the case is quashed, Þórhallr even remarks that the case would have gone otherwise if he had been physically present. The displacement of the advice

[101] *Eyrbyggja saga,* p. 33, 'a wise man and always giving good counsel'.
[102] *Bandamanna saga,* p. 293, 'very wise and a great strategiser'.
[103] Gestr is described as wise, popular and prophetic in the following two incidents: *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* p. 303 and *Laxdœla saga* p. 87.
[104] Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking,* p. 188.
[105] Burrows, 'Expertise and Experience', p. 315.
[106] *Ibid.*, p. 385.
[107] *Ibid.*, pp. 389–90.

giver at this critical point, when Þórhallr is far away due to injury, is depicted as the reason that the prosecution fails. It cements in the saga the indispensability of an advice giver who knows law well when there is still potential for mistakes.

Cleverness is almost always mentioned when describing good advice givers, but other features are also highlighted. Gestr Oddleifsson, for example, is established in *Laxdæla saga* as 'hǫfðingi mikill ok spekingr at viti, framsýnn um marga hluti, vel vingaðr við alla ina stœrri menn, ok margir sóttu ráð at honum.'[108] In *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*, Gestr is 'spekingr mikill, vitr ok vinsæll ok manna framsýnastr ok hafði mart mannaforráð.'[109] The language used is at times very alike and it is possible that the author of *Hávarðar saga* based this description of Gestr on the one given in *Laxdæla saga*. Despite this, the latter portrayal omits Gestr's advice giving, although he is still wise, popular and prophetic. What *Hávarðar saga* does mention, however, is Gestr's *mannaforráð* (authoritative position), likely analogous to his chieftaincy. That his authority is consolidated by popularity is implicit. Therefore, although not all characters described explicitly as advice givers in the sagas are *goðar*, they do express similar ideal traits.

However, as previously mentioned, overt character descriptions are somewhat uncommon in the sagas. Sagas such as *Njáls saga* and *Bandamanna saga* are uniquely dedicated to depicting legal strategy and Njáll and Ófeigr are offered to audiences as heroes of a nonviolent conflict. Contextually, legal advisors were key agents in Saga Age court cases. As above, family members unable or unwilling to offer advice may refer an advice seeker to a specific person, especially when that person has specialist knowledge.[110] However, dedicated 'lawyers' were not the only figures capable of giving legal advice in the *Íslendingasögur*.

Most of all legal advice is given to family members or friends, not unrelated parties. In *Njáls saga*, roughly half of all advice Njáll gives is solicited.[111] However, with the exception of four incidents wherein Njáll is advising a group of people, every person Njáll advises is either a friend, a son or his foster-son's father.[112] Despite being the quintessential

[108] *Laxdæla saga*, p. 87, 'a great chieftain and very wise man, foresighted about many things, well-liked by very powerful men and many sought advice from him.'
[109] *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*, in *Vestfirðinga sögur*, ed. by Björn K. Þórólfsson and Guðni Jónsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 6 (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1943), p. 303, 'a wise man, clever and well-liked, and a very prophetic man, and he had a position of authority.'
[110] See Chapter I: Advice Within the Family.
[111] Njáll gives solicited advice in the following five incidents: *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 58, 130–1, 139, 160–1 and 226.
[112] See Chapter II: Advice Outside the Family for the eleven incidents wherein Njáll gives advice. Njáll gives advice to a group in the following four incidents: *Brennu-Njáls saga* pp. 113, 226, 241–2 and 255.

'lawyer' character of the *Íslendingasögur*, Njáll, like all individuals introduced in the sagas for their advice-giving reputations, gives most of his advice to family and friends. Authors sometimes have a clear agenda for their characterisations, attempting to portray characters with special foresight, expertise or popularity. This gives some verisimilitude, with certain individuals simply knowing the law better than others. However, in the sagas even these characters mostly give advice to their personal connections, suggesting that despite renown, it is more common or preferable to receive advice from those who have more invested in the safety and happiness of the advice receiver, as either an emotional attachment or an alliance.

Advice is shown to be critical in several legal cases in the *Íslendingasögur*. The Althing, the venue for more formal legal disagreements, provided a public forum where reputations, wealth and status could all depend on the value of legal counsel. Twenty-four percent of all advice incidents involve legal advice. Most of this is given to family members, demonstrating that, despite the existence of characters skilled in law, familial ties and not expertise brings together advice givers and receivers even when highly specialised advice is required. Women are mostly absent from these legal processes and the advice giving therein, but when they are involved, it almost always as a catalyst for plot rather than a portrayal of consistent social relations. Characters described as habitually giving legal advice are typically characterised as wise, well-liked and prophetic, yet even they are usually shown in the narrative giving most of their advice to family members and friends. The *Íslendingasögur* mostly focus on family and imply that much more advice is being given by these advising characters, perhaps to a broader range of people, than is explicitly narrated.

Conclusion

Situations of conflict that engender advice giving in the *Íslendingasögur* come in many forms such as physical combat, verbal dispute and legal competition. Although the advice received, if it is received at all, may not be heeded in the saga, authors show a link between taking the time to consult on a combat strategy and the success of that strategy. Investigating conflict situations confirms and adds to previous findings from this study that advice-giving structures are foremost based around social attachment and alliance. There are individuals in the sagas who have a reputation for experience and wisdom either generally or in terms of battle strategy or legal knowledge. However, most advice in the form of combat plans is given by family members, and most legal advice is likewise given by family or friends. This is the case even when the advice giver is described as having specialist knowledge or a

reputation for giving good advice. The sagas suggest that, without a personal stake in the advice receiver's future, it is more likely that advice given by individuals unrelated or without a close friendship to the receiver benefits either the advice giver's self-interest or the community at large. Advice is generally given first to protect the family and then the community.

Advice-like language is sometimes used instead of orders in combat situations in specific situations. This is only the case when there is an atypical chain of command. In general, giving advice can imply that the advice giver is, like a father to a son, someone of greater experience or authority than the receiver. However, giving advice does not necessarily imply a direct and formal hierarchy, where the advice giver has power over the receiver. Advice-like constructions are more likely to replace orders when the hierarchy between giver and receiver is convoluted, because giving advice is more tentative and polite than giving commands.

Ambush advice likely represents a literary trope that has yet to be fully explored in scholarship. On the surface, it demonstrates features that are shared with other advice incidents, as the advice is given primarily by family members or friends and advising women tend to be ignored. However, ambush advice fulfils a key narrative motive. Unpleasant outcomes are foreshadowed, as the audience is allowed to know that an ambush will occur and that it is inevitable. The giving of ambush advice that is then ignored is such an established trope that it is even inverted for tension between characters in *Eyrbyggja saga*. Furthermore, ambush advice is unlikely to echo the events of real ambushes occurring during the author's time because this advice is not replicated in *Sturlunga saga*, despite the high number of ambushes. The *Íslendingasögur* do not provide a reason for advice givers to know about an ambush unless that reason is paranormal. Ambush advice succeeds only on the basis that the advice giver must know beforehand that an ambush will occur, and the advice receiver then must ignore that good advice, sacrificing verisimilitude so that the plot may proceed.

Peace-keeping advice is established as a precursor to social conciliation in the sagas, with influential wise men often available to issue it. Although there are a range of advice giver-receiver relationships involved when urging peace occurs, these advice incidents share common traits, often taking place in public with social pressure being used to reconcile. The most urgent of these reconciliations are when family members have an altercation, suggesting the importance of united familial fronts to saga society.

Saga characters do not give legal advice as often as combat-related advice, but law-related advice is still deemed engaging enough to appear in the *Íslendingasögur* and represents almost a quarter of all advice given. Characters associated with giving frequent and good legal advice are often correlated with traits such as being wise, popular and paranormally foresighted, revealing traits sagas authors associate with remembering, communicating and creatively applying the law. Despite this, most legal advice, even from characters skilled in the law, mostly comes from advice givers with close familial or friendly relationships with their advice receiver.

Conflict necessitates advice within a wide range of advice giver-receiver relationships, demonstrating the importance of examining advice-giving practices situationally as well as within particular relationships. In doing so, it becomes apparent that people in a range of social roles come together to preserve the safety and reputations of individuals, particularly younger men, through delivering combat strategies, urging conciliation, warning against unsafe travel routes and giving legal counsel. Much of this advice encourages nonviolent methods in dangerous conflicts, suggesting that advice giving is part of a system of temperance.

Conclusions

This study is the first to examine advice giving in the *Íslendingasögur* in depth. It quantitatively investigates advice incidents to determine patterns in advice-giving behaviours and whether any societal structures, behavioural conventions or character relationships are unique to advice giving. Advice lexemes in the Old Norse language were established in a semantic field analysis and used to define episodes of text that could be termed advice incidents, which were located through close reading and programming. Advice incidents were categorised according to theme, typically the social institution or behaviour displayed, such as 'marriage' or 'legal advice'. These incidents were then compared to relevant historical documents such as *Grágás* to give historical context and the patterns of advice giving uncovered brought into dialogue with scholarship. Advice-giving patterns in the *Íslendingasögur* were compared to those in *Sturlunga saga* to determine whether it was likely saga authors were influenced by advice-giving behaviours in the contemporary period, if there was a continuing literary tradition or if certain behaviours were unique to the society depicted in the *Íslendingasögur*. Above all, advice incidents were considered in the context of the saga plot and characterisation.

The study of advice giving in the *Íslendingasögur* is not just the study of utterances or ephemeral alliances between individuals, but rather the study of what advice incidents could reveal about the literary creation of social structures within families and communities. There are three major findings of this study. Firstly, in saga society there is a hierarchy of advice-giving roles, and this hierarchy does not strictly correlate to status within society or even level of expertise. Second, advice giving has an essential function towards maintaining alliances and communities, often as a peacekeeping, moderation, or safety tool. Finally, advice-giving practices in the sagas are sometimes part of larger literary conceits, with advice-giving behaviours often serving a narrative function, repeating similar patterns across different sagas.

This thesis expands on previous scholarship, on topics such as the 'cold counsels' of women and the tension of saga father-son relationships, to identify and characterise the large-scale structures influencing advice giving in the *Íslendingasögur*. The study of advice giving has much to add to what is known about familial, extra-familial and gender roles. Anthropologically, advice is essential to the functioning of societies formed around verbal

communication and social bonds. It therefore is logical to examine the way advice operates within a culture, even the fictionalised culture depicted in the sagas, to produce a concept of what advice-giving practices do on a structural level.

This thesis finds that there are clear, quantifiable patterns as to how the act of advice giving is portrayed in the *Íslendingasögur*. This implies that different saga authors writing across the corpus had similar expectations for advice-related social conduct. This study is divided between examining advice socially within and outside the context of the close family unit, as defined by Norse values, as well as situationally, in the circumstances around conflict or potential conflict. The division of these chapters does little to disguise the similarity of how advice giving operates across scenarios and sagas. There is a standard to who can give advice and how, as advice givers are usually older, wiser or in some way paternal. Even more interestingly, there is a commonality as to who receives advice, as these are usually younger men.

Advice does not often operate in a material transactional sense or function like gift giving, although there are similarities. Miller states that 'gift giving […] gave rise to social relations and adjusted the status of the parties in relation to each other. The giver gained prestige and power from the exchange', which is like advice giving. However, he continues that '[the gift giver] exacted deference from the receiver and obliged him to reciprocate,' which differs from advice giving.[1] There are some rare instances where advice is transactional and the advice receiver feels the need to directly reward the advice giver with a material object (a ring, a sword etc.) or a service (hospitality, more advice), but these instances are rare. The overall scarcity of transactional advice shows that advice has the potential to be an economic asset with financial value, but that it is only treated this way in a small minority of cases. This is likely because the service rendered in exchange for giving advice is either the reinforcement of the pre-existing relationship between advice giver and receiver or simply the safety of the advice receiver, which interests the giver due to emotional attachment or formal bonds. Where transaction occurs in advice giving, it is usually not material. Advice can create relationships that did not previously exist in terms of friendship or family relations. In a society where the obligations of others are a sort of social currency, the return on advice can be of higher value than a material reward. Advice structures relationships and provides an implicit promise of future reliability and support.

[1] Miller, 'Gift, Sale, Payment, Raid', p. 23.

Where the advice receiver's relationship to the giver is known, the most common people to receive advice are sons and friends. Most advice recipients are male, and most receivers are younger than the individual giving the advice. This is consistent with the likelihood of young male risk-taking behaviours creating the need for good advice.[2] It is important here to consider the role of advice giving in the sagas. The purpose of delivering *ráð* in a general sense is to offer some form of support to the advice receiver so that this receiver may experience a better outcome than when making decisions alone. This implies that the giver of this advice has some stake in this better outcome, usually meaning that some emotional attachment or sense of duty motivates them to feel invested in the welfare or happiness of the receiver. This attachment is often familial.

Advice preserves security and reputation within families, where the direction of advice giving suggests a structure to personal relationships and alliances. There is, first and foremost, a patriarchy. Most advice is given and received by men. Within families, brothers and fathers, the closest biological male relatives, tend to give advice. Even here, there is a hierarchy of advice givers. Although most familial advice is given by brothers, twice as much advice is solicited from fathers than from brothers. This implies that it is better to seek advice from a father than a brother, although brothers may be more accessible when within an urgent situation. It should be noted that often advice between brothers is mutual in the sagas, despite age discrepancy, indicating that the level of experience and authority between brothers can be construed as similar in a way that the same in a father-son relationship cannot. Older NIFM, foster relatives and more distant relatives are common advisors but typically only give advice when the father of the person requiring advice is unavailable or unwilling to advise. A father may advise his son to seek out other relatives and friends in cases where he cannot offer any support to a son in trouble. This implies that even when the father is not the person most ideal in experience or knowledge to give advice, he may still have access to appropriate support networks. It is logical that fathers are primary advisors, as they have a more direct stake in the welfare of their sons than almost any other relation, including brothers. A son represents not only a close attachment and ally but lineage, inheritance and legacy. The content of paternal advice reflects this, as most of this advice involves the father urging the son to secure his own physical safety.

[2] Margo Wilson and Martin Daly, 'Competitiveness, risk taking, and violence: The young male syndrome', *Ethology and Sociobiology*, 6.1 (1985), p. 59.

There is a conflict between such advice-giving practices and heroic ideals. Saga society prizes courage and combat readiness in potentially fatal situations. Many characters act according to a culture that holds that violence rebalances the scales of honour. Falk conceives violence as a risk-mitigating strategy: 'violence can also serve to offset and redirect perils, to assume jeopardy or impose it on others.'[3] It might be assumed that men learn these values from their fathers, but examining paternal advice reveals that fathers, as wiser and often more socially adept individuals, tend to advise against further danger. However, it may not be a heroic ideal that advice giving usually portrays in the sagas. Andersson states that the saga hero's 'morality [lies] in his social instincts […] The highest values in this society are flexibility and moderation.'[4] In this way, advice is non-judgemental and practical, adhering to a social ideal of moderation.

By comparison, brothers do not have the same moderating influence. They tend to give advice at the point of combat and their advice is rarely solicited, because brothers are usually travelling together when they encounter problems. Although reciprocated advice is rare for all relationship types, there are several pairs of mutually advising brothers. Advice between brothers does not follow a strict hierarchy between eldest to youngest and often depends on the personalities of the brothers and their areas of expertise. Unlike fathers, brothers giving advice often encourage solving problems through more risk, demonstrating that sometimes these younger men value violent solutions more and may have less care for community cohesion.

Another finding from this study involves the roles of uncles within the family. There is not much to distinguish the advice of paternal uncles from the advice that is given by other, more distant family members. Maternal uncles, whose advice is marginally more solicited than that of paternal uncles, advise like parents, focusing on the safety of the nephew. There is no transactional element to maternal uncle advice, which is meant to benefit primarily the receiver. This implies that the role of maternal uncles in the sagas can be compared to their role in other medieval European literatures. As the closest male relatives on the maternal side, there is a sense that maternal uncles have the continued obligation to support their sisters after marriage and by extension their sisters' sons. This differing social role between maternal and paternal uncles is reflected in the content of advice given, although not in the quantity of advice given, which is very similar. By contrast, paternal uncles do not need to

[3] Falk, *Violence and Risk in Medieval Iceland*, p. 113.
[4] Andersson, *The Displacement of the Heroic Ideal in the Family Sagas*, p. 593.

fulfil a male support role that the father, the closest male relative on the paternal side, already fulfils.

A hierarchy based on familial and attachment factors even takes precedence over societal hierarchy when it comes to advice giving. An individual in the sagas is more likely to seek out a family member or friend for advice than an authority figure, such as a *goði*, or a person known to have specialist knowledge, such as a legal expert. This suggests that the close emotional bond that causes advice givers to have a stake in the advice receiver's plight is a preferrable trait in advice giving than additional resources, power or even information.

As above, advice giving is not a behaviour of mutual exchange like gift giving, and this is exemplified in the case of sons, who receive much advice but are among the least likely to give it. Although the age of an advice giver in relation to a receiver cannot always be ascertained, it is clear that it is far more common for older men to give advice to those younger instead of the reverse. When younger men either give advice or attempt to give advice and are thwarted, the role of advice giving, authority and respect becomes evident. Younger men are the greatest transgressors of the unspoken advice-giving hierarchy. Younger kinsmen are likely to give self-serving advice, ignoring good faith advice-giving conventions that the advice should benefit foremost the receiver. Younger men are also more likely to exhibit resentment when their advice is not solicited, indicating a measure of status attached to the role of advice giver. Advice giving, after all, allows the giver to exercise control and authority by helping another in decision-making. It can therefore be understood that younger men attempt to disrupt the advice-giving hierarchy when demanding to be consulted.

When advice is solicited by family members, it is unusual to refuse to give it. There are only three reasons a person refuses to give advice when asked. One is that the person is unable to conceive of a plan. Another is that a person gives something more tangible than advice, in the form of their physical support or position of power, suggesting strong links between advice giving and support. Finally, a person may have conflicting loyalties that make it unclear whom he is obliged to advise, perhaps being related to multiple parties in conflict. In this last case, the individual thinks giving advice will either cause physical or emotional harm to someone he is close to or will place him in harm's way by choosing a side, thereby damaging his own network of allies.

When women give advice, they most often do so within the family and to protect it. Women advising women is severely underrepresented in the sagas, with a sister advising another sister in only five advice incidents. Women are not rivals within the family for the

role of patriarch and are therefore often overlooked as advice givers. Mothers, for example, are never solicited for advice by their children, having to assert themselves in the advice-giving exchange. When women do give advice, 34% of that advice is ignored, whereas only 20% of advice given by men is ignored. When women receive advice, which happens rarely, it is usually solicited and given almost entirely by male family members instead of friends or authority figures. Part of the reason for women remaining separate from the advice hierarchy is due to the place of women in medieval Icelandic society in general, and another part is due to the priorities of women advice givers. In Saga Age Iceland, women belong to two families in a way that men do not. They typically have both affinal and biological kin, and at times this means that the decision of whom to advise and whom to seek for advice seems an individual decision entirely revolving around circumstance and trust. While men treat affinal kin as important allies, their primary relationships and alliances are typically to their biological family. Women, on the other hand, are depicted transferring their loyalties to the family they have married into, even often moving her physical self and possessions to the property of their husbands. However, the sagas note the tension inherent in the women's two families, explored when women desire divorce or simply disagree with their husbands' decisions. The continuing attachment between a woman and her biological kin is likely also why maternal uncles feel obligation towards their sisters' children, who are precious to the women these uncles have grown up with.

Advice giving between men structures or reinforces their relationships, marking the more experienced or authoritative advice giver as distinct from the less experienced and often younger receiver, but this does not seem to be the case for advice given by women. The advice given between a married couple is not clearly correlated with age or experience, but there are still possible links to authority and the patriarchal structure of medieval Icelandic society. Most advice given by women is directed at their husband or lover, whereas by comparison men rarely advise their wives or lovers. It might be questioned why women would advise their husbands and lovers more than the reverse. It is not as simple as stating that men are more likely to enter problematic situations in the sagas where advice is necessary. If this were the only reason, it could be questioned why wives and not other male relatives would be giving advice, especially since most of this advice is unsolicited. Instead, it must be noted that advice giving is not just a manner of displaying authority and control in relationships that is already present, but a means of attempting to gain such. Younger men are eager to be advice givers, for others to take them seriously, and therefore to be perceived as having more experience and wisdom than they may actually have. Unlike these younger men,

however, women are not seeking to improve their own status and reputation in the family or community when they give advice. The priority of women in the *Íslendingasögur* is to guard the family. When women advise, they almost always advise family members and, similar to fathers, almost always in favour of the protection of those family members or the family at large. However, women are not typically sought out or heeded as advisors, indicating that that they stand outside advice-giving hierarchies. Women, who are locked out of much of the legal and political scene of saga society, may not have the resources or combat ability to help a male relative in trouble, and therefore may offer advice as a replacement for that support. It should also be noted that women only advise men in the sagas and therefore no information can be gleaned about how advice-giving influences relationships between women. This limits what can be inferred about domestic and same-sex social hierarchies, although it does suggest that saga authors focus on male socialising.

Examining the content of advice given within the family, and how it changes or highlights relationships between advice giver and receiver, is vital to understanding how saga characters who do not share familial ties advise each other. Relationships outside of the family can be difficult to define, as 'strangers', 'hosts' and 'friends' can be nebulous labels, and relationships can change throughout the narrative. Observing how family members, who have more defined relationship ties, advise one another provides a model for how non-familial advice givers attempt to be perceived by a receiver. It is not uncommon for individuals to mimic the ways those in certain familial roles might advise. For example, a host seems to assume a burden of responsibility when they issue safety and travel advice in a somewhat parental manner.

Friendship, patron-client relationships and social networks are important factors for advancement and security in medieval Iceland, as Jón Viðar Sigurðsson states.[5] In a friendship, the older or higher status friend does not necessarily advise the most, but being the advice giver can grant more power over the relationship. Advice giving is a method of social grooming between friends and can feature in the forming of entirely new relationships, and this is quite common when marriage advice is given. Sometimes, the advice giver suggests their own female relative as a potential wife, essentially proposing that advice giver and receiver become part of the same family. Suggesting a bride also gives the advice receiver some indication of the woman's reputation in the community, even if the bride is not the friend's family member. Furthermore, friends are valuable as they can make suitors come

[5] Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, 'The Changing Role of Friendship in Iceland c. 900–1300', 43–64.

forward when fathers should not. Helping with a friend's life-changing marital decision reinforces friendships, bringing the advice giver into greater esteem with the receiver.

Advice is typically given to benefit the community in cases where advice givers are strangers. Typically, wise and well-regarded men in the community give advice to keep the peace or dissolve tensions, even if the advice receiver is not the person who ultimately benefits. This motivation is not disguised, and at times this advice is followed only because of the community trust that these wise men have engendered. It is also common for members of the community, whose wisdom or reputation is unstated by the saga author, to intervene in conflicts and advocate for non-violent reconciliation, formal or otherwise. Part of the reason for this sudden and often unsolicited intervention is, again, for the sake of community cohesion. Feuds and rivalries are disorderly forces and are particularly damaging in a small, isolated community such as Iceland's. Community members may go to further lengths to urge peace when the clashing parties are within the same family, as this is a greater disruptor of saga society's system of alliance and trust than almost any other conflict.

Despite the existence in the sagas of either indeterminate wise men or remarkable individuals with specific knowledge, they are not the most common source of specialist advice in the sagas in situations regarding, for example, combat, law or the paranormal. Even Njáll, a protagonist skilled in law, mostly advises close family or friends. Personal relationships take precedence in advice giving over expertise, and most advice is given by family members and friends even when specialist knowledge would be advantageous. This implies that within the *Íslendingasögur*, the ability to advise is not typically relegated to who may be the most helpful but instead to those who are likely to be more invested in helping the receiver. Icelanders in the sagas are willing to travel long distances to receive advice, implying that this preference cannot be completely explained by the fact that family and friends tend to be more accessible than prophetesses, individuals reputed for wisdom or those with an extensive knowledge of law.

Obligation-based relationships extend beyond formal friendship and family ties. Good hospitality is often accompanied by the providing of good advice, perhaps on the assumption that hosts would know the local dangers and travel routes better than their guests. Hosts seem to take on some of the paternal role of caring from their guests by advising safety measures. This relationship is not reciprocal. Roughly half of all advice given by hosts is ignored but, considering that most guests as depicted by the *Íslendingasögur* are impulsive younger men, this is perhaps unsurprising.

Goðar are another category for whom advice is affected by social structure. They rarely receive advice in comparison to how often they give it in their capacity as *goðar*, demonstrating the flow of advice from leaders to followers in saga Iceland. Most of the advice given by *goðar* concerns the resolution of violent or legal disputes. It is true that the advice giver typically has more authority than the receiver and this extends neatly to the *goði-þingmaðr* relationship. However, advice can be seen as a service, alongside physical, legal and social support that *goðar* provide for their *þingmenn* in return for their loyalty.[6] *Goðar* are not able to exercise their authority on others of the same position, so the social framework of *goðar* advising each other is friendship. The evidence does not show *goðar* using their authority to influence each other. Specific *goðar* are characterised in different ways, some more likely to advocate either for revenge or reconciliation based on larger-than-life reputations.

Unlike *goðar*, kings are not expected to bestow advice on their subordinates. Initially, it may seem that examining how kings, mostly from Norway, give and receive advice in the *Íslendingasögur* is unproductive to the study of Icelanders in the *Íslendingasögur*. However, this provides an opportunity to discover what behaviours saga authors considered 'foreign' or a product of a more vertical hierarchy. Exploring the advice giving surrounding kings in the sagas helps develop a picture of an Icelandic culture of advice giving, defined against a backdrop of wider European leadership advice-giving practices. Kings receive advice almost as many times as they give it, which is unexpected when compared to Icelandic authority figures such as *goðar*, who give advice much more frequently than they receive it. This suggests that Icelandic authors would prefer kings to be open to advice, perhaps from travelling Icelanders. Unlike *goðar*, kings are also portrayed as having vast knowledge unrelated to leadership matters, perhaps as a metaphor for having contacts and resources. As the existence of advisors in the court can be corroborated elsewhere,[7] one must consider the religious and political context to the portrayal of kings. The Christian context of saga authors is likely responsible for why missionary kings are portrayed giving paternal advice, acting as spiritual fathers to wayward Icelanders. Saga authors cognisant of their international literary careers were also probably unwilling to upset current monarchs with insulting portrayals of former kings, although this is not true for all kings and saga authors. *Egils saga*, for example,

[6] See Jesse Byock, 'Viking Age Iceland', pp. 119–132. See Ross Samson, *Social Approaches to Viking Studies* (Glasgow: Cruithne, 1991), p. 166. See Miller, *Bloodtaking and* Peacemaking, p. 22.
[7] Costel Coroban, 'Shaping Medieval Political Ideology in High Medieval Norway: King Hakon Hakonarson as Patron of Letters and Knight-Erudite,' *Annals of the Ovidius University of Constanta - Political Science Series*, 5 (2016), 139–156 (p. 144).

portrays Norwegian kings giving and receiving advice in an unflattering manner, which, if Snorri Sturluson were assumed the author, is perhaps added to make Icelandic chieftaincy seem preferrable due to his own position.

This allows certain patterns of advice giving in the *Íslendingasögur* to be isolated as evidence of literary or even political influence. The political and religious situation surrounding saga authors might explain pressures to portray advice given by kings or priests much more favourably than otherwise. However, it can be useful to examine possible socio-historical influences on the depiction of advice-giving relationships. For example, mother-son advice-giving relationships feature some of the most paranormal-focused advice in the corpus, implying the innocence of younger men, and presenting the older female influence as one that conspires to use magical manipulation. Nicolas Meylan suggests that law texts indicate that it was disgraceful and unlawful to practice magic, whether it be in the ecclesiastical or in the more 'secular' spheres.[8] However, this does not make it less plausible that mothers may exhibit other advice-giving behaviours. For example, mothers unable to offer concrete support may send their sons to consult with others, particularly her network of male relatives and friends.

The unusual occurence of enemies giving advice is one example of how a category of advice giver gives rise to a specific literary trope. Enemies at times use language similar to that of family members and friends and seem to advocate for the safety of the advice receiver when in actuality they are goading or threatening. Threats in the sagas are usually more straightforward than this veneer of amicability. The lack of further evidence of this advice-like goading suggests that it is not based on a common social practice. It is difficult to prove any direct literary borrowing between sagas, and it is possible that threats could be framed this way historically. Nevertheless, this is an interesting way for saga authors to express intimidation between rivals, entertaining the reader and implying the wit of the character.

Conflict is at the heart of much advice giving, creating a backdrop for combat-related, law-related, ambush or peace-keeping advice. Previous conclusions about advice-giving relationships still apply. For example, younger men receive the majority of the advice in conflict, just as in general. However, it is worth examining advice giving situationally as new patterns are uncovered. The goal of most advice given in conflict is to ensure the protection of one individual or a whole community. Combat-related advice is the most common

[8] Nicolas Meylan, *Magic and Kingship in Medieval Iceland: The Construction of a Discourse of Political Resistance*, Studies in Viking and Medieval Scandinavia, 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), p. 57.

category of advice incident because the stakes are often life or death and therefore it is entertaining and dramatic to include decision-making processes in the narrative. Much of this advice is nonviolent, however, and are strategies for mitigating consequences or staying safe.

One context-dependent finding of this study is that advice occurs where orders do not. This means that advice is more common in close relationships and circumstances where one party is unlikely to order the other to do something. In a relationship with direct command and codified hierarchy, it is very unlikely that an individual would advise their subordinate instead of ordering them, as advising gives the advice receiver at least the illusion of choice. Advice giving implies a different social hierarchy than the more obvious societal hierarchy underpinning Saga Age Iceland. The ability to give advice sometimes suggests authority and respect, but not control over the advice receiver or situation. Giving advice acknowledges that the receiver has agency in the situation.

Most advice pertaining to conflict in the *Íslendingasögur* is intended to preserve the recipient's safety, life or reputation. Peace-keeping advice also benefits the entire community, using social pressure and social conciliation to end destructive enmity. Wise or influential men may make themselves available to resolve conflicts, especially intrafamilial conflict, demonstrating the importance of advice in regulating a society with no formal legal enforcement. These advice-giving structures are influenced by familial and close emotional ties. Even though sagas describe certain characters with legal expertise apparently advising others on legal matters in a habitual manner, these characters are shown to foremost, and sometimes only, advise their family and friends in the narrative itself.

To determine why advice incidents are included in narratives, the circumstances of advice giving must be evaluated in tandem with the participants. Much combat advice is plot-driven and impractical, especially when given during battle. Advice concerning a fight can be ascribed to authorial reasons such as demonstrating the alternative decisions a character may have taken before a certain course became inevitable. Ambush advice is a major example of where a literary conceit can be clearly identified.

Ambush advice, or advice warning someone not to travel to a certain place or by a certain route, is offered unsolicited and always ignored. By ignoring this advice, the advice receiver encounters danger or death. Readers most likely know that advice received in this vein foreshadows the following conflict and will be ignored by characters. Any character receiving ambush advice dismisses it without much or any explanation. The way the advice givers know about ambushes is likewise without any justification unless paranormal foresight

is implied. These factors remain even with more realistic depictions of ambushes in the late sagas.

Some aspects of ambush advice may align with readers' expectations of saga society. Primarily, it is the role of women, who are overrepresented in these encounters when compared to how often they typically advise, that suggests a unique literary conceit that is related to how advice giving is usually portrayed in this context. Women give advice in just over half of all ambush advice incidents. There is no clear place for women within the advice-giving hierarchy and women's advice is not generally sought. Greater verisimilitude is achieved by this over-representation of women's advice in these largely doomed advice incidents.

This thesis demonstrates that advice incidents can be used by authors for five main literary effects: characterisation, developing the depiction of a relationship, building suspense, foreshadowing and signalling the alternatives to any action. Remaining cognisant of the literary reasons an author had in mind when constructing a scene is beneficial to understanding why certain behaviours are depicted in the narrative. Comparing episodes with similar events can then be done to see if there are sustained patterns of behaviour and whether similar scenes are likely part of a larger literary trope, or else if the literary motivations, hinted at by the development of plot and characterisation.

This study evaluates continued literary traditions and influences from the author's period of writing by using the *samtíðarsögur* as a comparison point. This bears fruit, particularly when exploring advice giving by religious figures. The *Íslendingasögur* mention very little religious advice. This can be explained by considering that Christian saga authors are reflecting on a pre-Christian or newly Christian past. Authors would have to choose how to portray that past. As perceived promotion of pagan belief could be interpreted as blasphemous, it is reasonable to assume that authors might omit much of the religious life in the Saga Age. Alternatively, perhaps religion is not associated strongly with advice giving. Even when religious conversion occurs in the sagas, it is not accompanied by advice, implying that action or instruction are more important to conversion episodes than counsel. By contrast, in *Sturlunga saga*, most advice is given by clergy, not family members. However, the advice given is rarely religious in content. The lack of religious advice in *Sturlunga saga* means that perhaps the similar absence in the *Íslendingasögur* could be because religious practice is not entertaining enough or too sacred to include in saga-form storytelling regardless of the religious context. Furthermore, the use of priests as advice givers implies that advice giving is still based on structures of social authority rather than a

tool of religion even in this later period. The change in advice giver shows contextual awareness from saga authors of priests growing in influence after the Saga Age and assuming an advice-giving role usually reserved for family members.

A comparison of advice given in the *Íslendingasögur* with *Sturlunga saga* more broadly finds that, although advice giving is similar, there are a few distinct differences. This is clear when when enemies give ironic advice-like threats in the *samtíðarsögur*, the phenomenon belonging to the same literary trope. Similarly, in both the *Íslendingasögur* and *Sturlunga saga*, advice for limiting violence is often delivered publicly, by groups of community-focused wise men. It is possible that much of the advice given in the *Íslendingasögur* is given by an author imagining events through the lens of their own period. However, not all advice practices are identical across the two saga corpora, particularly in terms of combat.

It could be argued that *Sturlunga saga* is more brutal than the *Íslendingasögur*. There are many ambushes, but only one ambush advice incident. Combat strategies are generally much more detailed. Ambush advice incidents lack realistic details such as how a character gained foreknowledge of an ambush, implying more verisimilitude in the way that *Sturlunga saga* depicts violence, as perhaps contemporary violence was something authors could observe directly. One other difference is that proportionally more of the combat-related advice in the *Sturlunga saga* is in favour of moderation, legal or social. It is possible that saga authors attempted to portray an earlier, more heroic time when crafting the *Íslendingasögur*, which is where differences in advice giving depictions stem from, while being influenced by literary traditions and their own time periods, which is where some similarities come from. The contrasting advice regarding peace and violence, from unrealistic and undetailed in the *Íslendingasögur* to specific and more keenly peace-aspiring in *Sturlunga saga*, implies a level of nostalgia and romanticisation for the Saga Age past.

In conclusion, the study of advice giving is the study of relationships, roles and society in the *Íslendingasögur*. Advice not only structures relationships, but also is a form of social support and implies layers of social authority and obligation hitherto unexplored in scholarship. Because advice giving has distinct conventions, expectations can be utilised or subverted by saga characters and authors. Clear patterns emerge for how a variety of factors, such as situations, age and gender, can affect how and why advice is given. Advice giving operates within hierarchies not strictly adhering to status and is integral to community cohesion, safety and peace. Although, on the surface, advice is given to benefit what is often

a single recipient, above all, this study illuminates how advice giving mirrors the structures of society in the *Íslendingasögur* and even molds them.

Appendix

Table 2: All 172 advice incidents in the *Íslendingasögur* wherein the advice giver is a family member of the recipient. This excludes family members through secondary marital or fosterage connections (e.g. a mother's foster-mother or a son's brother-in-law).

Advice giver	No. of Advice Incidents	Saga	Page number(s)
Aunt	1	*Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*	157
Brother	28	*Eyrbyggja saga*	64
		Fljótsdœla saga	222, 245, 278
		Gísla saga Súrssonar	64
		Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings	339
		Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða	106–7, 115
		Ljósvetninga saga	9, 20, 38, 53
		Brennu-Njáls saga	48, 182
		Ǫlkofra þáttr	90
		Svarfdœla saga	130
		Valla-Ljóts saga	254
		Vatnsdœla saga	60, 63, 74, 83, 90, 93
		Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu	215
		Víglundar saga	100, 106, 109, 114
Brother-in-law	3	*Harðar saga*	30
		Hœnsna-Þóris saga	31
		Brennu-Njáls saga	151
Cousin	2	*Gísla saga Súrssonar*	81
		Ljósvetninga saga	7
Daughter	1	*Víglundar saga*	100
Father	26	*Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*	150
		Bandamanna saga	320, 328
		Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar	45–6
		Fljótsdœla saga	87
		Fóstbrœðra saga	176
		Gull-Þóris saga	207
		Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls	345, 348, 377, 377–8
		Laxdœla saga	62, 142
		Ljósvetninga saga	131
		Brennu-Njáls saga	24–25, 226, 326
		Svarfdœla saga	182
		Þorsteins saga hvíta	5–6
		Vatnsdœla saga	11, 12, 20, 99
		Víga-Glúms saga	62, 63

		Víglundar saga	97
Father-in-law	3	*Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*	146
		Eiríks saga rauða	422
		Brennu-Njáls saga	353
Foster-brother	3	*Harðar saga*	34, 60, 84–5
Foster-father	6	*Heiðarvíga saga*	255–6, 280
		Ljósvetninga saga	62
		Svarfdæla saga	194
		Þorsteins saga hvíta	16
		Vatnsdæla saga	18–19
Foster-mother	2	*Eyrbyggja saga*	171
		Harðar saga	13
Foster-son	2	*Þórðar saga hreðu*	179, 192
Grandmother	1	*Laxdæla saga*	11
Grandson	1	*Laxdæla saga*	59
Husband	5	*Gísla saga Súrssonar*	33, 33–4
		Kormáks saga	293
		Króka-Refs saga	121
		Víglundar saga	86
Mother	13	*Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*	155
		Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa	138
		Eyrbyggja saga	41
		Fóstbrœðra saga	132
		Kjalnesinga saga	10, 18
		Kormáks saga	234, 235, 282
		Laxdæla saga	201
		Brennu-Njáls saga	187
		Vatnsdæla saga	64
		Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu	223
Mother-in-law	1	*Laxdæla saga*	142
Non-Immediate Family Member	38	*Bandamanna saga*	313
		Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa	181
		Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar	64, 150, 150, 182
		Eyrbyggja saga	69–70, 119, 124
		Finnboga saga	306
		Fljótsdœla saga	233
		Flóamanna saga	249
		Grettis saga	97
		Gull-Þóris saga	186
		Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings	292
		Heiðarvíga saga	227–8, 237

		Kormáks saga	264
		Laxdœla saga	4, 14, 100, 101–2, 111–2, 163, 177, 178, 195, 209
		Ljósvetninga saga	8, 75, 86
		Brennu-Njáls saga	58, 106, 167
		Valla-Ljóts saga	249
		Víga-Glúms saga	29
		Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu	163, 228
Sister	5	*Flóamanna saga*	269–70
		Harðar saga	10
		Heiðarvíga saga	234
		Laxdœla saga	137, 143–4
Sister-in-law	1	*Gísla saga Súrssonar*	61
Son	6	*Fljótsdœla saga*	243
		Grettis saga	38
		Harðar saga	9
		Heiðarvíga saga	320–1
		Brennu-Njáls saga	221
		Víga-Glúms saga	4
Uncle	9	*Gull-Þóris saga*	138
		Hallfreðar saga	137
		Þórðar saga hreðu	177
		Kjalnesinga saga	24
		Laxdœla saga	128
		Svarfdœla saga	157
		Vatnsdœla saga	51
		Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu	156–7
		Víglundar saga	114
Wife	14	*Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*	136, 183
		Fljótsdœla saga	235
		Flóamanna saga	248, 276
		Grœnlendinga saga	258
		Gull-Þóris saga	222
		Kormáks saga	247
		Laxdœla saga	48, 155
		Ljósvetninga saga	50
		Ǫlkofra þáttr	304
		Vápnfirðinga saga	64
		Vatnsdœla saga	110

Table 3: All 102 solicited advice incidents in the *Íslendingasögur*.

Saga	Page number(s)
Bandamanna saga	328, 351
Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss	146
Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa	116, 120, 136
Brennu-Njáls saga	24–25, 28, 50, 58, 58, 125, 130–1, 139, 160–1, 167, 210, 226, 319, 353, 377
Droplaugarsona saga	148, 159
Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar	8–9, 130–1, 150, 182, 221
Eiríks saga rauða	433
Eyrbyggja saga	7, 63, 64, 71, 81, 150, 151
Finnboga saga	327
Fljótsdœla saga	261, 289–90
Flóamanna saga	276, 307
Gísla saga Súrssonar	33–4, 64, 81, 86, 92, 97
Grettis saga	31–2
Grœnlendinga saga	258, 259
Gull-Þóris saga	207, 220
Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls	348, 377–8
Hallfreðar saga	144, 188
Heiðarvíga saga	227–8, 255–6, 320–1
Hœnsna-Þóris saga	12, 27, 31
Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða	106–7, 113, 119
Kjalnesinga saga	29
Kormáks saga	262
Króka-Refs saga	143, 144
Laxdœla saga	4, 12, 34, 94, 96, 100, 128, 177, 178, 195
Ljósvetninga saga	62, 66–7, 86, 111, 111, 118
Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu	156–7, 163, 191–1, 209, 228, 240
Svarfdœla saga	157
Vatnsdœla saga	90, 95, 99, 99, 120–1, 130
Víga-Glúms saga	29
Víglundar saga	97, 100
Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar	304

Table 4: All 73 advice incidents in the *Íslendingasögur* wherein the advice giver is a woman. Page numbers in **bold** indicate that the advice is ignored, representing 25 advice incidents.

Saga	Page number(s)
Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss	155
Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa	**136**, **138**, **157**, **177**, 183
Brennu-Njáls saga	50, 58, 107, **187**, **320**, **425**
Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar	224–5
Eyrbyggja saga	41, 78, **141**, **142**, **171**
Finnboga saga	**321**
Fljótsdœla saga	**235**
Flóamanna saga	**248**, 269–70, **276**
Fóstbrœðra saga	122, 132, **163**, 251
Gísla saga Súrssonar	31, 61, 70
Grettis saga	54
Grœnlendinga saga	258
Gull-Þóris saga	220, **222**
Harðar saga	10, 13, 97
Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings	304–5
Heiðarvíga saga	**234**
Kjalnesinga saga	**10**, **18**, 25, 31, **34**
Kormáks saga	**235**, 247, 282
Laxdœla saga	11, 12, 48, 96, 133, 137, 142, 143–4, 149, 155, 163, 201
Ljósvetninga saga	**50**
Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu	191–2, 223
Vápnfirðinga saga	64
Vatnsdœla saga	**110**, 118, 120–1, 123
Víglundar saga	**90**, 100, 111
Þórðar saga hreðu	**201**
Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar	304, 316

Table 5: All 47 advice incidents in the *Íslendingasögur* wherein the advice is bad.

Advice giver is family	No. of Advice Incidents	Saga	Page number(s)
No	28	*Brennu-Njáls saga*	28, 50, 377
		Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar	8–9, 32, 135, 233, 285
		Eiríks saga rauða	433
		Eyrbyggja saga	66
		Finnboga saga	303, 308
		Flóamanna saga	237, 263
		Grœnlendinga saga	256
		Gull-Þóris saga	218
		Harðar saga	69
		Króka-Refs saga	144
		Laxdœla saga	96
		Ǫlkofra þáttr	88
		Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu	182, 191–2, 209, 217, 218
		Vatnsdœla saga	78, 95
		Víglundar saga	93
Unclear	6	*Gísla saga Súrssonar*	22, 92
		Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings	311
		Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu	189
		Vápnfirðinga saga	31–2
		Víga-Glúms saga	82
Yes	13	*Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*	155
		Brennu-Njáls saga	326
		Fljótsdœla saga	278
		Heiðarvíga saga	227–8
		Kormáks saga	247
		Laxdœla saga	142, 155
		Ljósvetninga saga	38
		Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu	156–7, 228
		Vatnsdœla saga	11
		Þórðar saga hreðu	192
		Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar	16

Table 6: All 172 advice incidents in the *Íslendingasögur* wherein the advice giver is not a family member of the recipient.

Saga	Page number(s)
Bandamanna saga	351, 324
Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss	113, 162
Bjarnar saga Hítdælakappa	118, 133, 155–6, 163, 177
Brennu-Njáls saga	28, 50, 58, 107, 124, 129, 130–1, 132, 139, 160–1, 319, 377, 425
Droplaugarsona saga	148, 159
Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar	8–9, 91, 130–1, 134, 221, 234, 285
Eiríks saga rauða	419
Eyrbyggja saga	7, 19, 62, 63, 66, 71, 78, 81, 141, 151, 159, 178
Finnboga saga	272, 277, 296, 303, 308, 312, 321, 322, 327, 335
Fljótsdæla saga	289–90
Flóamanna saga	237, 263, 285
Fóstbræðra saga	122, 137, 163, 193, 237, 251
Gísla saga Súrssonar	70, 86, 111
Grettis saga	31–2, 52, 54
Grænlendinga saga	256, 259
Gull-Þóris saga	218, 220
Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls	365
Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu	73
Hallfreðar saga	143, 144, 145, 169, 188, 192
Harðar saga	14, 37
Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings	304–5, 311, 340
Hænsna-Þóris saga	27
Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða	97, 113, 119, 123, 132
Kjalnesinga saga	25, 29, 31, 34
Kormáks saga	225, 235
Króka-Refs saga	143, 144
Laxdæla saga	52, 53, 78, 88, 94, 96, 133, 149, 174, 200, 203, 216, 222
Ljósvetninga saga	6, 10, 13, 64, 66–7, 71–2, 94, 111, 111, 118, 246
Ǫlkofra þáttr	88
Reykdæla saga ok Víga-Skútu	169, 169–70, 130, 182, 191–2, 201–2, 209, 217, 218, 240
Svarfdæla saga	198, 203
Valla-Ljóts saga	136, 252
Vápnfirðinga saga	34, 39–40, 45, 51
Vatnsdæla saga	8, 9, 27, 53, 58, 78, 95, 107, 120–1, 130, 130, 131
Víga-Glúms saga	6, 9, 84
Víglundar saga	83, 91, 93, 72, 90, 111
Þórðar saga hreðu	165, 171, 187, 201
Þorsteins saga hvíta	18
Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar	313–4, 316

Table 7: All 171 combat-related advice incidents in the *Íslendingasögur*.

Saga	Page number(s)
Bandamanna saga	328
Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss	150, 155
Bjarnar saga Hítdælakappa	120
Brennu-Njáls saga	28, 48, 50, 107, 107, 130–1, 139, 151, 167, 187, 221, 226, 319, 320, 326, 353, 354–5, 425
Droplaugarsona saga	159
Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar	8–9, 45–6, 64, 130–1, 134, 135, 233, 234
Eyrbyggja saga	41, 66, 69–70, 71, 78, 116, 119, 124, 142, 150, 159, 178
Finnboga saga	296, 308, 312, 321, 322, 327, 335
Fljótsdæla saga	73, 95, 278
Flóamanna saga	237, 263, 269–70, 307, 312
Fóstbræðra saga	132, 137, 163, 237, 251
Gísla saga Súrssonar	64, 70, 81, 86, 97, 111
Grettis saga	52, 57, 85, 97
Grænlendinga saga	256
Gull-Þóris saga	186, 207, 212, 217, 218, 220, 222
Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls	345, 348, 365
Harðar saga	40, 60, 67, 69, 97
Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings	304–5, 329, 331, 340, 350
Heiðarvíga saga	227–8, 237, 255–6, 280, 301, 317
Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða	119, 132
Kjalnesinga saga	10, 18, 24, 25
Kormáks saga	234, 235–6, 253, 262, 282
Króka-Refs saga	143, 144
Laxdæla saga	4, 34, 48, 59, 142, 143–4, 149, 155, 163, 174, 177, 178, 195, 203, 209
Ljósvetninga saga	9, 38, 40–41, 50, 75, 86
Reykdæla saga ok Víga-Skútu	182, 215, 217, 218, 223, 228, 240
Svarfdæla saga	157, 194
Valla-Ljóts saga	249, 252, 254
Vápnfirðinga saga	31–2, 46
Vatnsdæla saga	60, 74, 78, 83, 93, 107, 118
Víga-Glúms saga	62, 63, 69, 93
Víglundar saga	90, 91, 93, 100, 106, 109
Þórðar saga hreðu	201
Þorsteins saga hvíta	14, 16
Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar	304, 316

Table 8: All 102 law-related advice incidents in the *Íslendingasögur*.
Page numbers in bold indicate that the advice giver or receiver is a group, representing 25 advice incidents.

Advice giver is family	No. of Advice Incidents	No. of Advice Incidents Without Groups	Saga	Page number(s)
No	43	30	*Bandamanna saga*	**324**, 351
			Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa	**155–6**
			Brennu-Njáls saga	28, 50, 58, 124, 129, 130–1, 132, 139, 160–1, 377
			Droplaugarsona saga	148
			Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar	285
			Eyrbyggja saga	**151**
			Fóstbrœðra saga	237
			Grettis saga	**31–2**
			Hallfreðar saga	143, 188
			Harðar saga	**69–70, 76**
			Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings	311
			Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða	113, **132**
			Kormáks saga	256
			Laxdœla saga	94, 96
			Ljósvetninga saga	10, **13**, 66–7, 90
			Ǫlkofra þáttr	88
			Reykdœla saga ok Víga-Skútu	**169**, **201–2,** 209
			Valla-Ljóts saga	242
			Vápnfirðinga saga	34, 39–40
			Vatnsdœla saga	**120–1**, 130
			Víga-Glúms saga	**84**
			Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar	**313–4**
Unclear	19	12	*Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*	208–9
			Brennu-Njáls saga	57, 125, **241–2**, 298, **307**, 354–5
			Droplaugarsona saga	148
			Fljótsdœla saga	**95**
			Gísla saga Súrssonar	92
			Grettis saga	**92**
			Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings	311
			Heiðarvíga saga	**317**
			Hœnsna-Þóris saga	20

			Ljósvetninga saga	**12**, 40–41
			Svarfdæla saga	163
			Víga-Glúms saga	**22**, 82
Yes	40	35	*Bandamanna saga*	313, 320, 328
			Brennu-Njáls saga	24–25, 58, 167, 182, **226**, 353
			Eyrbyggja saga	41, 69–70, 124
			Gísla saga Súrssonar	64
			Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls	377–8
			Harðar saga	13, 60, 84–5
			Heiðarvíga saga	**227**–**8**, **237**, 255–6
			Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða	106–7, 115
			Laxdæla saga	48, **209**
			Ljósvetninga saga	7, **8**, 20, 53, 62, 86
			Ǫlkofra þáttr	90
			Reykdæla saga ok Víga-Skútu	156–7, 163
			Valla-Ljóts saga	254
			Vatnsdæla saga	93, 99
			Víga-Glúms saga	29
			Víglundar saga	114, 114
			Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar	304

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