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## 95. The development of Latin script I: in Norway

1. The introduction of Latin script
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### 1. The introduction of Latin script

Norwegians encountered the Latin alphabet on Viking raids and on trading expeditions a long time before it was taken into use at home. Coins with Nordic names in the Latin alphabet (e.g. *Anlaf* = *Óláfr*, *Sihtric* = *Sigtryggr*) were issued in York before the middle of the 10th century and suggest that Scandinavian traders also knew how to employ the new al-

phabet. The fundamentals of an alphabetical script were, after all, well known, since the runes had by then been in use for many centuries in Norway and the other Scandinavian countries.

The introduction of Christianity brought the Latin alphabet to Norwegian shores, most likely as early as the 10th century. Several Norwegian bishops during the reign of King Óláfr Haraldsson (d. 1030) had learnt to write in England. One received the nick-name *inn bókvísi* 'the bookwise', and Bishop Grímkell or one of his companions is supposed to have written a mass for King Óláfr ca. 1050. Since the reign of King Óláfr inn kyrrri (1067–1093) we have every reason to assume that quite a few Norwegians knew how to write, not only in Latin but also in the vernacular. It is generally thought that the recording of provincial

laws started in the second part of the 11th century, but some scholars believe this took place as early as during the reign of King Óláfr (cf. article 92 by M. Rindal). The earliest extant manuscript in the vernacular, however, is AM 655 IX 4to, three leaves of an Old Norse translation of Latin legends, which are dated to the second half of the 12th century, possibly as early as ca. 1150. (Manuscript sigla and dates are given according to ONP *Registre* 1989.)

## 2. The corpus

A large number of Norwegian books and charters were written in Latin but, with a few exceptions, only fragments remain of the book manuscripts. The oldest fragments date back to ca. 1000, and were probably written in England and brought to Norway by English missionaries. Some manuscripts were later copied locally in Norway, but due to the highly fragmentary nature of the material, it is difficult to distinguish between foreign and local productions. Among the oldest extant manuscripts thought to be written in Norway are *Hieronimi Canones super Evangelia* (GKS 1347 4to; before 1200) and *Liber ritualis* (NKS 32 8vo). Also, many charters issued in Norway were written in Latin. The earliest extant ones are dated to the 1160s (cf. *Regesta Norvegica* vol. 1), and a fair number remain intact.

In a European context, the Nordic countries were late in introducing the Latin alphabet, but early in developing a vernacular literature. Norway has a considerable corpus of early vernacular manuscripts, larger than that of Sweden and Denmark, but smaller by far than that of Iceland. All but a few medieval Norwegian manuscripts date before ca. 1400, and the great majority of extant manuscripts were written in the comparatively short period ca. 1250–1350. There is a sharp decline in the production of book manuscripts around 1370. Seip has explained this, at least partly, as a result of the Black Death, which reached Norway in 1349–1350. Two decades later, a new generation had taken over from those who had survived the plague, and in political matters Norway was becoming increasingly dependent upon Sweden and Denmark. From a palaeographic point of view, there is no sharp division in the 1370s, but the almost complete lack of younger book manuscripts makes for a practical, corpus-based division around 1370.

There are 1108 Norwegian charters written in the vernacular up to 1350, of which about

80 date from the period up to 1300. Although there is a decline in the decades after 1350, by the end of the century the production of charters had resumed the level of the pre-plague years. From the period up to ca. 1350 there are more than 125 Norwegian book manuscripts, though many are fragmentary (the exact number depends on how the fragments are sorted and interpreted; cf. the list in ONP *Registre* and Seip 1955, 226ff.). The majority of these are law manuscripts, ranging from the early provincial laws (for Gulåping, Frostuþing etc.) to King Magnús's *Landslög* from 1274. In addition to the large group of law manuscripts there are about 20 Norwegian manuscripts, more or less complete, of other genres, such as historical works, courtly literature, religious works, legends etc. (cf. the list in Stefán Karlsson 1979, 4–6). A number of well-known works belong here, including The Old Norwegian *Book of homilies* (AM 619 4to, ca. 1200–1225), the legendary *Óláfs saga ins helga* (DG 8 II, ca. 1225–1250), *Strengleikar* (DG 4–7, ca. 1270), *Konungs skuggsjá* (AM 243 b a fol., ca. 1275), *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga* (Holm perg 6 fol, ca. 1275), *Þiðreks saga* (Holm perg 4 fol. ca. 1275–1300).

In addition to the unintended loss of manuscripts through the passage of time, many Norwegian manuscripts were deliberately destroyed in the 16th and 17th centuries. After the publication of *Missale Nidrosiense* and *Breviarium Nidrosiense* in 1519, a large number of Latin liturgical manuscripts were cut up and used for binding books. The National Archive (Riksarkivet) in Oslo has a collection of no less than about 5,000 Latin fragments, most of which are liturgical; it has been estimated that these fragments are the remains of ca. 1,200 codices. Vernacular manuscripts fared better for a while, since law books were still being used throughout the 16th century. However, after a translation of the Old Norwegian *landslög* was published in 1604, *Den Norske Lov-Bog* (authorised by King Christian IV), a number of vernacular law manuscripts encountered the same sad fate as the Latin ones. The National Archive has about 500 such fragments, many very small and few larger than 1/2–1 leaf. It has been estimated that they once made up about 100 manuscripts, of which more than two thirds were law books.

In a palaeographic context, there is no reason to distinguish between documents written in Latin and in the vernacular. However, unlike Latin documents, those written in the ver-

naacular can safely be assumed to be of Nordic origin, though not necessarily Norwegian. There are a number of manuscripts which were written by Icelanders, many of whom were staying in Norway. Other manuscripts were written in Iceland for the purpose of export to Norway, right up to ca. 1400 (Stefán Karlsson 1979). There are also a fair number of charters which may be classified as Swedish, and to a lesser extent, Danish. Although it is now generally accepted that perhaps too much interest has been invested in discussing the national provenance of medieval documents, especially between Norway and Iceland, it is impossible to avoid this question when trying to describe the national development of literature and script. However, the total number of medieval Norwegian manuscripts and charters is so high that one may disregard disputed manuscripts and charters and still have an ample corpus for a palaeographic study.

### 3. Typology

The earliest Norwegian script is a minuscule with a mixture of Carolingian and Insular letter-forms, as seen in AM 655 IX 4to, cf. fig. 95.1. It is generally thought that this script was brought to Norway from England, where the Carolingian minuscule of the Continent came up against the local Insular script in the 11th century, resulting in several types of intermediate scripts. The early Norwegian script is basically a formal script in which each letter is drawn separately. Up to the latter half of the 13th century, there seems to have been no distinction between the script in book manuscripts (*libraria*) and charters (*documentaria*), cf. e.g. the script in fig. 95.3, a book manuscript, and fig. 95.4, a charter. In fact, in the first half of the 13th century, the script in some of the charters is more formal than in some of the contemporaneous books.

From ca. 1280, a cursive script appeared in Norwegian charters and soon became dominant, cf. fig. 95.7. The influence may once more be sought in England. During the late 12th and early 13th centuries, the semi-cursive documentary script in England was developed into a fully-fledged cursive script, *cursiva anglicana*. This cursive script is characterized by linked letters, loops, decorative strokes and skeletal forms of initials. Although a cursive script also developed on the Continent, it is most likely that the Norwegian cursive was shaped by English influence; the cultural contact across the sea was still close, and

English scribes worked in Norway (possibly Gabriel klerkr, who wrote several charters ca. 1290).

For a while, the formal script of the books, especially the many law manuscripts, coexisted with the cursive hands of the charters. From ca. 1300, both types of script fall under the wide term Gothic, the book script a formal *textualis* (fig. 95.6) and the cursive script in the charters a much simpler, more rounded and fluent type (fig. 95.7). In the 14th century, however, a new, semi-cursive script developed and appeared in several book manuscripts (fig. 95.8). The Gothic semi-cursive is often somewhat condescendingly referred to as *bastarda*, since it has dual parentage: the formal *textualis* and the fluent *cursiva*. From a functional point of view, the semi-cursive was rather practical. It was quicker to write than the formal *textualis*, and more legible than the cursive script.

Beginning with a single, multi-purpose script in the 12th century, the introduction of the cursive in the 13th century and the semi-cursive in the 14th century thus led to three main types of script coexisting in the 14th century: the formal *textualis*, used in book manuscripts up to ca. 1370; the semi-cursive, increasingly used in books and from ca. 1370 generally replacing the *textualis*; and the cursive, used in charters throughout the period.

### 4. Periodisation

Following the division by Seip (1954) and the period names by Svensson (1974), Norwegian palaeography falls into a Carolingian-Insular period up to ca. 1300 and a Gothic period thereafter; the Carolingian-Insular period may be subdivided into an earlier period up to ca. 1225 and a younger period ca. 1225–1300. In the latter period, a gradual change began: the lines grew closer, the ascenders and descenders shorter and the letters closer. This process was brought to an end with the formal Gothic script of the 14th century.

#### 4.1. Insular influence

Sweden and Denmark received their script from the Continent, and through the metropolitan sees in Hamburg, later Lund (1103/04) and finally Nidaros (present-day Trondheim, 1152/53) there must have been a Continental, Carolingian influence on the Norwegian script as well. However, the Insular character of

dausa. En þer allen er skilia megoð þetta  
 alþauur þ æuglia minni gull þetta. 7 silfr yðat. 7 geseð mynstene  
 guði með þvi þe. De komes oþr þangat till. at hæryna oþð guðs

dauda. En þer allen er skilia megoð þetta  
 skýntemi. Ða takeð | abnaut þra augliti minu  
 gull þetta oc silfr yðat. eða geseð mynstene  
 | guði með þvi þe. Oc komeð oþr þangat till.  
 At hæryna oþð guðs

Fig. 95.1: AM 655 IX 4to, 3r, *Matheuss saga postola*, ca. 1150–1200.

Af Gloþapøyki. Skettingr.  
 Af Ongulþpic .iii. manaparmater |  
 Af Dumbaftæmi .xiii. manaparmater |  
 Af Spinalætre. halfr annar manaparmater |  
 Af Diuppic .v. manaparmater  
 Af Tiiftáme .xi. manaparmater

Af Gloþapøyki. Skettingr.  
 Af Ongulþpic .iii. manaparmater |  
 Af Dumbaftæmi .xiii. manaparmater |  
 Af Spinalætre. halfr annar manaparmater |  
 Af Diuppic .v. manaparmater  
 Af Tiiftáme .xi. manaparmater

Fig. 95.2: GKS 1347 4to, 62v, property list from *Munkalifi* in Bergen, ca. 1175.

frænda sin. bað þa fultingr oc hialpa. hét oc þvi til þeim  
 hælga manne | ef ham léde hænum lifs oc unndan qvamo  
 at lata gera ór silfri dyrlega ro- | ðo til þef hælga hus er  
 ham hþilir í. Siðan seipar ham liði sinu 7 fylgti

frænda sin. bað þa fultingr oc hialpa. hét oc þvi til þeim  
 hælga manne | ef ham léde hænum lifs oc unndan qvamo  
 at lata gera ór silfri dyrlega ro- | ðo til þef hælga hus er  
 ham hþilir í. Siðan seipar ham liði sinu oc fylgti

Fig. 95.3: AM 619 4to, 56v, Old Norwegian *Book of Homilies*, ca. 1200–1225.

Ollum lipandum 7 þiðr komandum guðs þinum 7 sinum þæm sem þetta bregi þe eða hørja  
 sendir. 7-af. þisþup 7 kælbrotir i oslo quedim guðs 7 fma. Ver þilium yðr kunnict geta um efgn

Ollum lipandum oc þiðr komandum guðs þinum oc sinum þæm sem þetta bregi þe eða hørja |  
 sendir *Nikolas* þisþup oc koslbrotir í oslo quediu guðs oc fina. Ver þilium yðr kunnict gera um efgn

Fig. 95.4: NRA dipl no perg 1, a letter from the bishop, Oslo 1224/25 (85 per cent of full size).

Barlaam svaraðe þaræðe þuuglega þu  
 ec þat þu at ec raðomzt  
 eigi þenna dauða. at þu at  
 þu ec verðr teknu a þeim þegh

Barlaam svaraðe. þuuglega þu | ec þat. þu at ec  
 raðomzi | eigi þenna dauða. at þu at | ec ec  
 þerðr tekinnz a þeim þegh

Fig. 95.5: Holm perg 6 fol., 39ra, *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga*, ca. 1275.

Ollum monum þeim sem þetta brep sía æð. höftra fendir officialis j stapwange Queðiu guds ok | sína. kunnicht gerande at sira þoxollpur j  
 hitrum kom þittir off j doom j vmbode bergh- | fueins amundar tonar a feliu manna eptan j ftopurni sem kosþröðunner æta j daghligha

Ollum monum þeim sem þetta brep sía æð: höftra fendir officialis j stapwange Queðiu guds ok | sína. kunnicht gerande at sira þoxollpur j  
 hitrum kom þittir off j doom j vmbode bergh- | fueins amundar tonar a feliu manna eptan j ftopurni sem kosþröðunner æta j daghligha

Fig. 95.7: AM dipl norv fasc XXXIV 18, a letter from the Official, Stavanger 1348.

Kristinn man huarn skal j kirkiu garðe || gropt oc likþó:flo |  
 vígðum iarða en æighi j kirkiu nema erchibyskups oflop se till. |  
 Ok til kirkiu hapua þót innan .v. nattæ nauðfynia lauft. En

Fig. 95.8: Holm perg 35 4to, 5r, *Kristinnéttr Jóns erkibiskups*, ca. 1350.

Eighi skulu ver hono læið  
 angð sýnia eða vðoða ep þ  
 býði vtt msliku skullorðe  
 sem her þylghir. Konongr a

Eighi skulu ver honom læið | angrs fýnia eða  
 vtboða ef ham | býð: vtt með fliku ikilloðe |  
 sem her fýlghir. Konongr a

Fig. 95.6: AM 305 fol., 10vb, King Magnús' *Landslog*, ca. 1300.

the oldest manuscripts strongly points to the British Isles.

Insular script supplemented the Latin alphabet with two new letters, ⟨þ⟩ (*thorn*, adopted from the Anglo-Saxon runes) and ⟨ð⟩. Although *þ* was also known from the Scandinavian runes, its use in Latin script is in all likelihood a result of English influence. Otherwise, the most characteristic Insular letter-forms are ⟨ǰ⟩, ⟨ŋ⟩, ⟨p⟩ and ⟨f⟩ (for *g*, *r*, *v* and *f* respectively). There are no traces of the Insular ⟨ǰ⟩ in Norwegian manuscripts at all, but ⟨ŋ⟩, ⟨p⟩ and ⟨f⟩ are known from the earliest extant manuscript, AM 655 IX 4to. The Insular ⟨ŋ⟩ is only found in NRA 73 in addition to AM 655 IX 4to, but ⟨p⟩ was widely used up to ca. 1300, and ⟨f⟩ to ca. 1420.

#### 4.2. Older Carolingian-Insular script (up to ca. 1225)

From the earliest period, we have eight extant manuscripts, four written in Nidaros and four in Bergen. They are all fragments, except the Old Norwegian *Book of Homilies*, AM 619 4to, which was written in the Bergen area. The Nidaros manuscripts have a slightly stronger Insular flavour than those written in Bergen. From this period there are also three charters from Oslo and one from Nidaros; the oldest charter is the one issued ca. 1210 by Phillipus bōglungakonungr. The script in these charters does not differ from the contemporaneous book manuscripts. The individual letter-forms in this period show influence from both Carolingian and Insular script. Thus the Carolingian open-necked *a* is used consistently, not the Insular single-storey type, and the Insular ⟨ŋ⟩ was soon replaced by Carolingian ⟨r⟩. On the other hand, both Carolingian straight ⟨d⟩ and Insular ⟨ð⟩ are used, and Insular ⟨f⟩, and ⟨p⟩ were dominant. There is also great variation in the forms of ⟨r⟩ and ⟨y⟩.

AM 655 IX 4to, which contains only three disparate leaves, though probably by the same scribe, is the manuscript with the strongest Insular influence. As can be seen in fig. 95.1 it has consistent use of the Insular letter-forms ⟨f⟩, ⟨ŋ⟩ and ⟨p⟩ (for *f*, *r* and *v* respectively), and also the capital ⟨Ð⟩, another adaptation from English script. The dental fricative is denoted with *þ* in initial position and *ð* in medial and final position, in accordance with the English practice of the time. GKS 1347 4to (fig. 95.2) has the Insular letter-forms ⟨f⟩ and ⟨p⟩, but not ⟨ŋ⟩. The long-stemmed form of *r*, ⟨r̄⟩,

however, is known from Continental scripts and should not be regarded as an Insular form. Also of note here is the use of thorn, *þ*, in all positions, which was the norm in early Icelandic script, but rarely seen in Norwegian manuscripts. In AM 619 4to, fig. 95.3, the Insular influence is less pronounced; straight minuscule *r* is used, and the minuscule form of *f*, ⟨f⟩. A round form of *r*, ⟨r̄⟩, is found after the letter *o*, alternating with the straight *r*.

#### 4.3. Younger Carolingian-Insular script (ca. 1225–1300)

The Insular influence was still present after ca. 1200, but decreased towards the end of the century. Icelandic script, which until the beginning of the 13th century was predominantly Carolingian, imported some Insular traits from Norway in this period, e.g. the distinction between *þ* and *ð*. The influence from Norwegian script can also be seen in early Swedish manuscripts, e.g. in a fragment of *Västgötalagen* (SKB B 193), which has several Insular characters. Towards the end of the period, the script of Norwegian manuscripts became increasingly Gothic. It is difficult to point to any definitive change; there was rather a general drift towards more compressed and angular letter-forms.

Around 1250 a closed, two-storeyed *a* appears for the first time, but Carolingian open-necked *a* was still used for several decades. Also, round *r* expanded its use, being found after curved letters other than *o*, such as *b* and *d*. The round *r* sometimes extends below the base line, so that it resembles the figure 3. Otherwise, the arms of the Insular *f* are reduced to two dots in some manuscripts (cf. fig. 95.5) or the upper arm becomes a bow (cf. fig. 95.6). The tall form of *s*, ⟨f⟩, is dominant, and seldom extends below the base line, while the low form, ⟨s⟩, in some manuscripts is terminated below the base line. The letter *ð* is widely used, but towards the end of the period it was replaced by ⟨ð⟩ in many manuscripts, especially charters. As mentioned above, the Insular *v*, ⟨p⟩, was used fairly regularly until ca. 1300.

Holm perg 6 fol. (ca. 1275), fig. 95.5, still employs the Carolingian open-necked *a*, and round *r*, ⟨r̄⟩, is used sparingly. The Insular *f* has an open form, and the Insular *v* is used exclusively. The letter *d* also has the Insular shape, ⟨ð⟩. The capital ⟨Ð⟩, however, has been replaced by ⟨P⟩. The script in this manuscript is basically the same as the one found

in AM 619 4to (fig. 95.3), although written more unevenly and with a broader pen.

#### 4.4. Gothic textual and cursive script (from ca. 1300)

From ca. 1300, the script generally became Gothic in character: the letters are more compressed vertically, the ascenders and descenders shorter, the strokes more angular and the organisation of the script more regular. This is the script of the many law manuscripts of the 14th century; easily readable, stately and distinctly written. It is often referred to as textual script, *textualis*. The base line emerges clearly, and in some manuscripts the frame and rulings were drawn in ink (GKS 1154 fol., AM 309 fol.). The vertical strokes in letters such as *m*, *i*, *n* and *u* (the so-called *minims*) tend to look like single strokes, so that accents over the *i*'s are introduced as a distinctive mark. The two-storey *a* is now most common, though co-existing with older *a*-types. The Insular *v*, ⟨*p*⟩, is rarely seen, but the Insular *f* is still widely used, possibly due to the fact that it easily accommodates superscript abbreviation signs. The low *s* looks like the figure 8. The letter *w* is introduced, and long vowels are often noted as ligatures, e.g. ⟨*ā*⟩. In addition to the formal *textualis*, cursive script was used in charters, and with the introduction of the semi-cursive, also in books. In general, the cursive scripts have simplified letter forms, looped ascenders, and, in the true cursive, letters were joined.

AM 305 fol. (ca. 1300), fig. 95.6, written by Þorgeirr Hákonarson, is a good example of an early Gothic textual script. The letter *a* has two storeys, *s* has the typical 8-shape, the Insular *v* has been replaced by minuscule *v*, and there are accents over the *i*'s. There is also a tendency towards the fusion of bows, e.g. between adjacent *o* and *c*, *b* and *c*, etc. The script is clearly duolinear, i.e. there is a marked difference between heavy and light strokes.

The script in AM dipl norv fasc XXXIV 18 (1348), fig. 95.7, is cursive, typical of the charters from the beginning of this century. Here, lines are closely spaced, and most letters are joined by connecting strokes. Ascenders and descenders may be looped, such as in *b*, *þ*, *h* and *k*. Notably, the ascender of the letter *d* has acquired a loop which goes all the way down to the base line. The letter *a* has two storeys, but was later replaced by a simple form, which could easily be mistaken for *o*. The tall *s*, ⟨*f*⟩, extends below the base line,

and both arms of the Insular *f* are drawn as bows, ⟨*p*⟩. The letter *j*, originally a capital ⟨*I*⟩ from English cursive script, is introduced for the preposition *i* and in word-initial position. In general, accents and decorative strokes are semicircular. The script gives the impression of haste, fluency and elegance.

The script in Holm perg 35 4to, *Kristinréttr Jóns erkibiskups* (ca. 1350), fig. 95.8, is a typical example of early Gothic half-cursive. Unlike the full cursive script, few letters are actually joined, but many have looped ascenders, e.g. *b*, *l*, *h* and *k*. The *a* still has two storeys, but soon developed a simple, single-storeyed form. The tall *s* extends below the base line, ⟨*f*⟩, and the same applies to the finished strokes of *h* and sometimes *m*. The ascenders of the letters *d* and *ð* are drawn diagonally, and are often accentuated with a heavy stroke. Otherwise, the difference between heavy and light strokes is not strong in the Gothic half-cursive; it is rather as if the letters were written with a too broad pen.

#### 5. Abbreviations

The system of abbreviation in Old Norwegian manuscripts was, like the script, imported from England. Abbreviations were used liberally, though much more sparingly than in many Icelandic manuscripts. The most common abbreviation sign is the horizontal bar, used primarily for the nasal consonants *m* and *n* (therefore often referred to as the nasal stroke), e.g. ⟨*honō*⟩ = 'honom'; at a later stage it could also be used to abbreviate a longer sequence, e.g. ⟨*mōm*⟩ = 'monnom' (expanded abbreviations are shown by italics). Two types of superscript abbreviations were frequently used: the zigzag-sign for front vowel + *r*, and any superscript vowel for *r* or *v* + the vowel; the letter *a* was usually written with an open, *u*-like letter-form. Baseline abbreviations include the usual tironian *notae* for *oc*, *us*, *per*, *pro* and *rum*. Also quite common was the semi-colon for *eð*. Frequently occurring names or words in the text were sometimes abbreviated with a dot, either contractions such as ⟨*kgr.*⟩ = 'konongr' or suspensions such as ⟨*O.*⟩ = 'Olaftr'. The rune *m*, *Y*, was sometimes used for *maðr*.

#### 6. Scribes

With a few exceptions the scribes of the earliest manuscripts are anonymous. An early example of a known scribe is Eiríkr Þróndarson,

who wrote part of a law book (Holm perg 34 4to, hand f) in the last quarter of the 13th century. From ca. 1300 we know of several scribes, especially of law manuscripts, e.g. Þorgeirr Hákonarson who wrote several state-ly manuscripts in a Gothic hand (AM 302 fol., AM 305 fol., AM 56 4to and 78 4to), cf. fig. 95.6 here. Also noteworthy is Páll Styrkársson who, in addition to 22 charters, probably wrote the manuscript AM 114 a 4to, which contains king Sverrir's *A speech against the bishops*. The Icelander Haukr Erlendsson (d. 1334), who mostly stayed in Norway from ca. 1300, wrote the manuscript now called *Hauksbók* (AM 371, 544 and 675 4to), a private collection of historical, mathematical and philosophical works; he has also left behind a few charters in his own hand. All told, around 120 scribes of law manuscripts can be identified in the 14th century, but only a minority are known by name.

The scribes of the charters are less anonymous, especially those writing on behalf of the king. In the period ca. 1280–1345, the scribes in these charters usually identified themselves with words such as “N.N. klerkr/notarius ritaði”. In his indispensable though controversial study, *Norske skrifvarar i millomalderen* (1989), Eivind Vågslid has tried to collect and identify each and every hand in Norwegian charters up to 1400, and sporadically up to 1580. Many scribes are anonymous (“serskild hand” in Vågslid's terminology), while others can be pinpointed to a specific milieu, or their identity can be derived from the names contained in the letter. In addition to the many anonymous scribes, Vågslid has identified well over 800 named scribes in the period up to 1400. Due to the sheer quantity of the corpus – 3,650 charters – it seems probable that Vågslid allocated charters to too many hands (cf. Bakken 1997, 4).

## 7. Reference books and study aids

Kålund's *Palaeografisk Atlas* (1905–07) is still very helpful; the quality of the facsimiles is admirably high and there are useful transcriptions. Each facsimile is of a single page from the chosen manuscripts, so that the Atlas gives a condensed overview of the development of Old Icelandic and Old Norwegian palaeography. Although the majority of facsimiles are of Icelandic provenance, the Atlas contains a surprisingly wide and representative selection of Norwegian manuscripts and charters (17

examples up to ca. 1300 and 11 ca. 1300–1500). The Atlas will for some time remain the most convenient – though not easily accessible – introduction to the study of Norwegian palaeography. For a fuller study of each manuscript, however, one has to turn to the separate facsimile editions. There is so far no Norwegian parallel to Hreinn Benediktsson's *Early Icelandic Script* (1965).

In 1947, Holm-Olsen and Seip published a facsimile of the Norwegian manuscripts of *Konungs skuggsjá*, which was presented as a gift to King Haakon VII on his 75th birthday. Since 1950 nearly a dozen facsimiles of complete Old Norwegian manuscripts have been published in the series *Corpus codicum Norvegicorum medii aevi* (CCN), such as the Old Norwegian *Book of homilies*, the legendary *Óláfs saga ins helga*, *Elis saga* and *Strengleikar*, *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga*, King Magnús Hákonsson's *Laws of Norway* and the oldest *Law of Gulathing* (the latter two in full colour); there are also editions of fragments and charters up to 1300. Several volumes are being planned, e.g. of *Piðreks saga*, *Thomas saga erkibiskups* and a number of provincial law manuscripts. These editions contain introductions which are important sources for codicology and palaeography.

As a general introduction to Old Norwegian palaeography, Seip (1954) is indispensable and still unsurpassed. His *Språkhistorie* (1955) also contains much palaeographical and codicological information. Otherwise, Svensson (1974) is a practical introduction to the whole field of Nordic palaeography up to modern times. Hreinn Benediktsson (1965) is a valuable supplement to Seip's palaeography, since Old Icelandic and Old Norwegian scripts are closely connected, especially in the 13th and 14th centuries.

Hødnebo (1960) is an excellent introduction to the earliest charters (up to 1300); there are good facsimiles of each charter, a transcription and a translation into Norwegian. Photographic facsimiles of younger charters are located at The National Archive in Oslo and The University of Bergen (Nordisk institutt).

Since the 1940s, a number of MA theses (“hovedfagsoppgaver”) have been written in Norway on the palaeography of individual manuscripts. The great majority are unpublished, but are accessible from the university libraries, though usually not on loan. Many are included in the bibliography in *ONP Registre* (1989). This volume can also be checked for the latest datings of Norwegian



manuscripts. Some of them have received new dates since the publication of Seip (1954), e. g. GKS 1347 4to, which was dated ca. 1200 by Seip (1954), but now ca. 1175.

Finally, Holm-Olsen (1990) should be mentioned. This is a general introduction to the field of Norwegian literary culture in medieval times, popular in approach, but well documented and richly illustrated.

## 8. Literature (a selection)

Bakken, Kristin (1997), Gunnleik Ormsson – en skriver og hans norm. In: *MM* 1997, 1–36.

Benediktsson Hreinn (1965), *Early Icelandic script*. Reykjavík.

*Corpus codicum Norvegicorum medii aevi* (CCN). Folio and Quarto series. Oslo 1950–.

Hødnebo, Finn (1960), *Norske diplomer til og med år 1300* (CCN, fol. ser. 2). Oslo.

Holm-Olsen, Ludvig (1990), *Med fjærpenn og pergament. Vår skriftkultur i middelalderen*. Oslo.

Kålund, Kristian (1905–07), *Palæografisk atlas. Oldnorsk-islandsk afdeling 1–2* (2nd vol. entitled *Ny serie. Oldnorsk-islandske skriftprøver c. 1300–1700*). København.

Karlsson Stefán (1979), Islandske bogeksport til Norge i middelalderen. In: *MM* 1979, 1–17.

ONP = *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog. Register*. København 1989.

*Regesta Norvegica*, 1–. Oslo 1978–.

Seip, Didrik Arup (1954), *Palæografi. B. Norge og Island* (Nordisk kultur 28 B). Oslo.

Seip, Didrik Arup (1955), *Norsk språkhistorie til omkring 1370*. 2nd ed. Oslo.

Svensson, Lars (1974), *Nordisk paleografi* (Lundastudier i nordisk språkvitenskap A 28). Lund.

Vågslid, Eivind (1989), *Norske skrivarar i millom-alderen*. Oslo.

*Odd Einar Haugen, Bergen (Norway)*

## 96. The development of Latin script II: in Iceland

1. The introduction of Latin script
2. The corpus
3. The earliest Icelandic script
4. The development of the script
5. The shape and use of individual letters
6. Literature (a selection)

### 1. The introduction of Latin script

According to the Icelandic *Book of Settlements* (*Landnámabók*), a considerable part of the Norse population which settled in Iceland in the decades around the year 900 came from the British Isles; some of these settlers, at least, were Christians and may have brought with them books in Latin. Christian missionaries travelling to Iceland during the last decades of the 10th century must have relied on Latin texts, and such books no doubt existed in Iceland after Christianity was adopted in the year 1000 and in the 11th century with the organization of the Icelandic church.

The General Assembly (*Alþingi*) resolved in the summer of 1117 to put Icelandic civil laws into writing; this work was begun in the following winter, but the resolution would

hardly have been passed unless Icelanders already at that time had some experience in writing the vernacular in the Latin script.

### 2. The corpus

Remains of Latin medieval manuscripts in Iceland are for the most part confined to single leaves used in the binding of younger books, and it cannot be determined conclusively whether the oldest ones were written in Iceland or abroad. On such fragments, see especially Eggen 1968 and Gjerløw 1980. Only in very few cases has the same scribe been shown to have written in both Latin and Icelandic; see e. g. Louis-Jensen 1977, 19–20, and Stefán Karlsson 1982, 1986.

Relatively few Icelandic manuscripts from the Middle Ages have been preserved intact; in many cases we are left with only a few leaves, sometimes no more than a single leaf or a part of a single leaf. The earliest preserved manuscripts (and fragments of manuscripts) containing vernacular texts have been dated to the middle of or second half of the 12th century, and manuscripts from before 1300

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