Pre-Viking Scandinavia is not well-served by written sources that would commonly be classed as historical in the modern sense. There is, however, a large body of legendary material which concerns—or purports to concern—persons and events of pre-Viking Scandinavia; that is, historical legend.1 Of particular note is the cycle of legends concerning the Skjoldungar, who according to medieval Scandinavian sources were a dynasty of early Danish kings taking their name from an ancestral founder: Skjldr.2 References in Anglo-Saxon sources such as Beowulf (where the Skjoldungar seem to be identified by the OE cognate Scyldingas) and Widsið, as well as in various Scandinavian skaldic poems, suggest that narratives from the Skjoldung cycle existed during the Viking Age.3 Most of the Skjoldung material, however, is known from written Scandinavian sources of the twelfth century and later. It is thought that Sæmund frôði Sigfûsson (1056-1133) may have drawn up a genealogical tally of the Skjoldungar,4 though perhaps the earliest substantial work concerning them was the now lost *Skjoldunga saga, which may have been composed by the end of the twelfth century;5 a sixteenth-century Latin epitome by Arngrimur Jônsson survives.6 Characters from the cycle also feature prominently in the late twelfth-century

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1The term legend is used here, in a manner often employed by folklorists, to denote popular narratives which their tellers (and audiences) generally believe to be true and to contain important factual information. This understanding of legend goes back to the work of B. Malinowski, Myth in Primitive Psychology (New York: Norton, 1926), pp. 20-30. Our modern Western understanding of the historical may often be at odds with the values of non- or semi-literate societies where ‘preservation of facts is not a consciously designed undertaking but rather a reflex of tradition itself’; John Miles Foley, Traditional Oral Epic: The Odyssey, Beowulf, and the Serbo-Croatian Return Song (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 10.

2The names of cognate figures in the legends have various forms: e.g. Hroþulf, Hroþulf, Hrólfr, Rolf, Roluo, etc. In this study where a precise source is being referred to, the spelling commonly used in that source is reproduced. Elsewhere, where the character is being referred to more generally, this study employs the name in a commonly recognizable form (i.e., Hroþulf, or Hrólfr, etc.).

3On dating Beowulf and Widsið, see §5.1.1.


5Snorri Sturluson mentioned it in Ynglinga saga; Heimskringla, 1, 57. Bjarni Guðnason controversially suggested Skjoldunga saga could have dated as early as 1180; Bjarni Guðnason, Um Skjoldungasögð (Reykjavik: Bókútgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1963), pp. 142-45.

6See discussion in Arngrimur Jônsson, Arngrimi Jonae opera latine conscripta, ed. by Jakob Benediktsson, Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana, 9-12, 4 vols (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1950-57); Danakonungu sogur, ed. by Bjarni Guðnason, Íslensk fornrit, 35 (Reykjavik: Hið íslenska fornritafálag, 1984); and the (contentious, but valuable) commentary in Bjarni Guðnason, Um Skjoldungasögð; and Axel Olrik, ‘Skjoldungasaga i Arngrim Jonssons utdøg’, Aarbøger for nordisk olkyndighed og historie (1894), 83-164.
Other works concerning the Skjoldungar include Sven Aggesen’s *Brevis historia*, Saxo Grammaticus’s *Gesta Danorum*, Snorri Sturluson’s *Edda* and *Ynglinga saga*, Hrólf’s *saga kraka*, and *Bjarkarímur*. Further references are found in numerous miscellaneous works. Each source effectively represents a different variant, although an overall relationship of some kind is not in great doubt.

Analysis and exploitation of this material in order to explain pre-Viking history has been continuous almost since its creation. During the past two centuries, scholarly opinions over these historical legends have varied considerably, regarding them as anything from the virtually unvarnished truth to complete fiction. The chief legacy of this material’s study to modern scholarship, however, has come from the works of National-Romanticist scholars in the nineteenth century. Whether or not individual works have stood the test of time, this school’s approaches still colour scholars’ views. The National-Romanticist approach essentially holds that the Skjöldung cycle reflects genuine events that took place in pre-Viking Scandinavia, or at least represents autochthonous Scandinavian traditions of considerable antiquity.

This view is little different from that presented in the earliest legendary chronicles and thence adopted in the late eighteenth century by P.F. Suhm. He worked from an impressive range of classical and medieval sources in an attempt to assemble a comprehensive picture of Danish ancient history. He accepted as authoritative the common identification in medieval documents of Lejre as the seat of the earliest Danish kings—an observation doubtless augmented by the presence of numerous prehistoric monuments in Lejre’s vicinity. While actual physical evidence for an early ideological

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8 *Brevis Historia*, 95-141. It dates from the late twelfth century. Hemmingsen proposed a date of c. 1198 instead of the usual c. 1190 date; Hemmingsen, pp. 176-79.


10 Snorri is *Heimskringla’s* assumed author, probably having composed it and his *Edda* sometime in the period c.1220-40; Diana Edwards Whaley, ‘Heimskringla’, in *MSE*, pp. 276-79 (p. 276); Diana Edwards Whaley, ‘Snorri Sturluson’, in *MSE*, pp. 602-03.


14 Hemmingsen, pp. 9, 23-25.


16 Suhm concluded Lejre had been founded by Skjold and held later by Roe, Helgo, and Hrolf kraki, Suhm, i, 4, 235; ii, 70, 249, 269-70, 282, 253-54; iii, 961.
centre at Lejre has appeared only recently. Suhrm’s conclusions were accepted and enthusiastically elaborated by subsequent scholars eager to recognise a powerful kingdom in pre-Viking southern Scandinavia.

The role played by N.F.S. Grundtvig’s identification of *Beowulf’s* Hygelac as the Ch(lochilaicus mentioned in Gregory of Tours’s *Libri historiarum X* (and in the *Liber Historiae Francorum*) in casting a mantle of historicity over the whole poem—and thereby over the Skjoldung cycle generally—can scarcely be underestimated (§3.1.4). Francis Magoun, who accepted *Beowulf’s* account as historical, attempted to trace the path of Hygelac’s raid, as did G. Storms who suggested that Hygelac’s raid was part of the struggle for supremacy between the Ostrogoths and the Franks; neither Magoun’s nor Storms’s analysis seems very realistic. The *Liber Historiae Francorum* (c. 727) locates the raid in the pagus Attoarius, though Walter Goffart argued that this information represents an unhistorical guess by the *Liber Historiae Francorum*’s author. The pagus Attoarius, Goffart claimed, was too far inland to be a suitable target for sixth-century Scandinavians, and the reflection of this area’s name in *Beowulf*’s Hetware, the raid’s victims, demonstrates that *Beowulf* must post-date the *Liber Historiae Francorum*. John Haywood, however, saw no reason why the pagus Attoarius should be too far inland for a raid. Whether the *Liber Historiae Francorum*’s information about the pagus Attoarius is accurate or not, Goffart’s suggestion that the *Liber Historiae Francorum* could have been a source for *Beowulf*’s author remains intriguing. There has also been much speculation over the relationship between the *Liber monstrorum* and *Beowulf*, but it seems fair to say that, if there is a relation, *Beowulf* is more likely to have been influenced by the *Liber monstrorum* than vice versa. Most scholars have concerned themselves with the relevance of its evidence for establishing *Beowulf*’s historicity, though more recently Andy Orchard

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17. In the form of the seventh- and tenth-century halls at Lejre; Tom Christensen, *Lejre Beyond Legend: The Archaeological Evidence*, trans. by Michael Anderson, *Journal of Danish Archaeology*, 10 (1990), 163-85. Most of the ‘monuments’ at Lejre, however, are either far earlier than the Iron Age, or natural features; see §3.4.1 & §5.2.4. A mound long considered King Frödi’s burial mound is no more than a sand-hill.

18. Grundtvig, ‘Bjovulfs’, pp. 284-87; *HF*, p. 99 (Book 3, Chapter 3); *LHF*, p. 274 (Chapter 19). Also of note is Gisli Brynjúlfsson’s article emphasising links between English and Scandinavian language and literature, particularly in relation to traditions of the Skjoldungar; Gisli Brynjúlfsson, ‘Oldengelsk og oldnordisk’, *Antikvarisk tidskrift* (1852-54), 85-143 (p. 130). Concerning Ch(lochilaicus, Suhrm had noted his existence, listing him as one of the Danish kings Saxo had neglected, and tentatively suggested several possible identifications but—lacking access to *Beowulf*—not Huglecus; Suhrm, *i*, 262, 379-80, 408, 508.


20. *LHF*, p. 274 (Chapter 19); Gerberding, p. i.


23. Goffart’s other argument suggesting that *Beowulf’s* Hugas derive from Frankish personal name Hugh, is rendered unlikely on philological grounds, as the vowel of the former is long and the latter’s short; Goffart, *Anachronisms*, pp. 88-100.

has suggested that there are structural similarities between the *Liber monstrorum* and *Beowulf*, and that Hygelac’s monstrousness in the *Liber monstrorum* may be related to a perception of his pride, and that this theme may explain Hygelac’s appearance in *Beowulf*.

Relating *Beowulf* and its associated legends to history remains a more popular pursuit, however. The eighth- and tenth-century halls recently discovered at Lejre have only fuelled such interests (§3.4.1). Despite an air of cautious scepticism which has marked recent scholarship, one still encounters scholars who might (quite rightly) aggressively downplay the historical value of a literary source such as *Beowulf*, but paradoxically might also defend with equal vigour the aboriginal origins of its material, thereby implicitly connecting such materials with historical processes in Scandinavia.25

### 4.1 EARLY HISTORIOGRAPHY OF SCANDINAVIAN LEGEND

#### 4.1.1 THE PAN-GERMANIC & PAN-SCANDINAVIAN SCHOOLS

In the nineteenth century, study of Scandinavian historical legends was broadly divided into several strands. Among the most significant were pan-Germanic theories, exemplified in the works of scholars like Müllenhoff,26 which postulated that the legendary material of all the Germanic-speaking peoples stemmed from a common corpus formed in courts of Migration-Age Germanic leaders. This approach was favoured in the then-emerging German polity, and also in England where there was a strong German methodological influence in the wake of Grimm’s publications on philology and mythology. Such pan-Germanic theories fell out of favour following the World Wars of the early twentieth century, yet even in recent decades Klaus von See has concluded that the basic substance of ‘Germanic heroic legend’ represents stylised narratives of Migration-Age events.27 The robustness of the pan-Germanic theory surely results from the plain fact that many elements in the legends of the Germanic-speaking peoples almost certainly do share a common Migration-Age heritage. On the other hand, it is also just as certain that there are legends which are found only within certain Germanic-speaking groups and not within

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25Roberta Frank has shown how scholars’ eagerness to draw links between *Beowulf* and the archaeological finds at Sutton Hoo has strengthened a sense of the historicity of that poem, and thereby that of the other legendary sources; Roberta Frank, ‘*Beowulf* and Sutton Hoo: The Odd Couple’, in *Voyages to the Other World: The Legacy of Sutton Hoo*, ed. by Calvin B. Kendall and Peter S. Wells, Medieval Studies at Minnesota, 5 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), pp. 47-64. See further §4.1.4

26See, for example, K. von Müllenhoff, *Deutsche Altertumskunde*, 1st edn, 5 vols (Berlin: Weidmann, 1870-1900), and overview in Stanley, *Foreground*, pp. 16-20. In the early twentieth century, Andreas Heusler championed a rather different approach to historical legend. In contrast to the earlier perception that das Volk dichtet, Heusler emphasized the roles of individual poets as literary artists, but nevertheless he retained the view that germanische Heldensage were indeed based on historical events of the Migration Age; see, for example, Andreas Heusler, *Lied und Epos in germanischer Sagendichtung* (Dortmund: Ruhfus, 1905; repr. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1965); see also Stanley, *Foreground*, pp. 25-27.

other Germanic-speaking groups. To some extent, pan-Germanic theories require circular argumentation, excluding from the corpus of ‘proper’ Germanic legend any narratives which did not stem from the Migration Age.

In contrast, the nineteenth century saw prominent Danish scholars develop theories similar in conception to the pan-Germanic theories but informed by Danish, rather than German, nationalism. They believed the Scandinavian historical legends had autochthonic Danish (or sometimes, more generously, pan-Scandinavian), non-German origins. The facts that these theoretically Scandinavian historical legends were filled with obviously non-Scandinavian figures, like Attila the Hun, and were sometimes set in distinctly non-Scandinavian locales were conveniently overlooked. The Danish, or pan-Scandinavian, school’s approach surely stemmed not only from simple national pride but from a reaction to the quite real military and political threat posed by Germany. The emphasis then placed on asserting the legends’ indigenous qualities is strongly reminiscent of Saxo Grammaticus’s tendency to recast narratives in a pro-Danish, anti-German guise.

4.1.2 SOPHUS BUGGE & AXEL OLRIK

One of the first to challenge the pan-Scandinavian approach was Sophus Bugge, who accepted that the Scandinavian legendary material was derived from events of the Migration Age, but not that it had arrived in Scandinavia during the Migration Age as part of a pan-Germanic legendary corpus. Instead, Bugge argued, much of the Scandinavian mythological and legendary corpus was acquired during the Viking Age in the British Isles from both traditional oral narratives and classical literary sources (those having reached Britain from the continent). Bugge’s work was greeted, not surprisingly, with little warmth in either the pan-Germanic or pan-Scandinavian scholarly camps. After Bugge’s death, little more was heard on this theme, though in the 1950s Dietrich Hoffmann discussed the so-called ‘Helgi-lays’ and concluded there was still something to recommend

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28 The strange relationship between the pan-Germanic and the pan-Scandinavian schools, and their bizarre approach to Anglo-Saxon materials, is exemplified in their paradoxical attitudes towards Beowulf. Some Germans believed it to be a detached fragment of German literature, while its first editor, the Icelander Thorkelin, felt it had a Danish provenance—or even had been written originally in an archaic Danish dialect; see Stanley, Search, p. 6, and discussion in Robert E. Bjork and Anita Obermeier, ‘Date, Provenance, Author, Audiences’, in A Beowulf Handbook, ed. by Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), pp. 13-34.

29 Bugge’s theories were set forth in various articles and books. See particularly Sophus Bugge, Studier over de nordiske Gude- og Heltesagns Oprindelse, 2 vols (Christiania: Cammermeyer, 1888-89; Copenhagen: Gad, 1896); Sophus Bugge, The Home of the Eddic Poems: With Special Reference to the Helgi-Lays, trans. by William Henry Schofield (London: Nurt, 1899) [this is a revised translation of Bugge, Studier, ii: Helge-Digetene i den Ældre Edda: Deres Hjem og Forbindelser, and the English revision is therefore referred to in this study]; but also Sophus Bugge, Bidrag til den ældste skaldedigtnings historie (Christiania: Aschehoug, 1894); Sophus Bugge, ‘Nordiske runeindskrifter og billeder paa mindesmarker paa een Man’, Aarbøger for nordisk oldkyndighed og historie, 1899, pp. 229-62 (pp. 247-62). See further Anton Christian Bang, Völuspaa og de Sibyllinske orakler, Christiania videnskabskabets forhandlinger, 9 (Christiania: Dybwad, 1879).
certain elements of Bugge’s theories.\textsuperscript{30} In 1969, Wolfgang Butt essayed a complex argument suggesting that Völospá originated in eleventh-century England—specifically relating it to the sermons of Bishop Wulfstan of York. Butt raised some interesting points, but the effort to source Völospá so precisely was problematic, and his argument was not well received.\textsuperscript{31} More successfully, John McKinnell has argued that Völundarvíða displays English metrical features, and Rory McTurk has discussed English influence on the development of Ragnars saga lóðbrókar;\textsuperscript{32} there may be further scope for reassessing the role of Anglo-Saxon influences on Scandinavian material even in the period before the conversion to Christianity and introduction of literacy.

Bugge left the Skjöldung material largely alone except insofar as he felt it was relevant to the Helgi-lays. Discussion of the Skjöldung legends was taken up by Axel Olrik in his monumental Danmarks Heltedigtning.\textsuperscript{33} Renowned for his work on the Indo-European origins of Scandinavian myths and wonder-tales, Olrik was influenced by Bugge in many ways and was arguably the Danish scholar most open to diffusionist theories,\textsuperscript{34} yet in his work on Scandinavian historical legends Olrik never truly considered the possibility that they might be something other than the outgrowth of native oral traditions, admitting only obviously non-Scandinavian characters as external borrowings. Olrik conceded that development of the Skjöldung legends within Scandinavian settlements in the British Isles had an important influence on West Scandinavian variants of the cycle, but generally affirmed that the legends stemmed from Danish traditions concerning broadly historical events which had transpired in Migration-Age Denmark.

4.1.3 Wessén's 'Mixed Origins' Theory

What would become a new approach to the Skjöldung material was initiated, almost accidentally, by Elias Wessén. He developed a ‘name shift’ theory which suggested the Scyldingas-Headboeardan conflict of Beowulf reflected a historical Erulian-Danish conflict—in other words, according to Wessén, Beowulf’s Dene were not modelled on historical Danes at all, but rather Beowulf’s Headboeardan represented the historical

\textsuperscript{30}Dietrich Hoffmann, Nordisch-Englische Lehnbeziehungen der Wikingerzeit, Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana, 14 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1955), 114-45.

\textsuperscript{31}Wolfgang Butt, ‘Zur Herkunft der Völuspá’, Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur, 91 (1969), 82-103.


\textsuperscript{33}This, Olrik’s major work, is unfinished and now somewhat obsolete but remains a lasting influence. See also the earlier Axel Olrik, Kilderne til Sakses oldhistorie: en litteraturhistorisk undersøgelse, 2 vols, (Copenhagen: Wroblewski, 1892; Gad, 1894) [first volume republishes Axel Olrik, ‘Forsøg på en tvedeling af kilderne til Sakses oldhistorie’, Aarbøger for nordisk oldkyndighed og historie (1892), 1-154].

\textsuperscript{34}See, for example, Axel Olrik, ‘Om Ragnarok, anden afdeling: Ragnaroksforestillingernes udspring’, Danske studier, 10 (1914), 1-283.
He based this theory on his interpretation of information about the Danes and Eruli contained in the works of Jordanes and Procopius. Jordanes mentioned Suetidi and then Dani, who ‘ex ipsorum stirpe progressi, Herulos propriis sedibus expulerunt’.

Wessén took these words to mean that the Danes were a small subgroup of Swedes who moved from the region of modern Sweden to the region of modern Denmark (specifically, he suggested, to South Jutland and Fyn by the year AD 500), achieving political dominance over the local Eruli, thought to be native to the area. He suggested that stories about the Danish conquest of the Eruli (as well as other Erulian defeats; see below) were recalled in the Heæobeardan’s assault on the Scyldingas in Beowulf.

This much of Wessén’s theory was vigorously attacked by R.W. Chambers in the second edition of his well-known introduction to Beowulf. Chambers felt there were no grounds for Wessén to dismiss the historicity of tribal identities on which the sources all agreed. Moreover, Chambers noted that according to Procopius the main body of the Ἑρολοί (Eruli) had only just ‘re-migrated’ to Scandinavia, the tribe’s ancient home, after 512, when they had suffered a major defeat along the Danube. These re-migrating Ἑρολοί passed peaceably by the Δάνοι (Danes), crossed to Θούλη (Thule, the Scandinavian peninsula), and settled near the Γαυροί (Gōtar).

This would leave, in Chambers’ opinion, little more than a decade for the Danes’ conquest of the Eruli to produce the situation, which Chambers considered historical, described in Beowulf. This is indeed a problem in Wessén’s theory, and not the only one— the benefit of seventy years’ further scholarship will reveal more to the modern reader. Nevertheless, it has been pointed out that the

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36Getica, p. 59-60 (Chapter 3). It is worth recalling Wrenn’s seldom-accepted but plausible emendation of the Beowulf manuscript’s eorl in l. 6 to Eorle, thus explaining Scyld Seacing as a Dene who meodo-setla oftæah (seized mead-benches’) and egode Eorle (‘terrified the Eruli’). Such a reading would be very close to Jordanes’s description of the Danes ‘unseating’ the Eruli; William A.P. Sewell, ‘A Reading in Beowulf’, Times Literary Supplement, 11 September 1924, p. 556; Beowulf with the Finnesburg Fragment, ed. by Charles Leslie Wrenn and W.F. Bolton, 5th edn, Exeter Medieval English Texts and Studies (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1996), p. 96 n. to l. 6; Beowulf, ed. and trans. by Michael Swanton, Manchester Medieval Classics (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978), pp. 34-35, 188 n. to l. 6. Most editions, including Klaeber’s highly influential one, follow Kemble’s emendation to eorlas; John M. Kemble, The Anglo-Saxon Poems of Beowulf, the Traveller’s Song and the Battle of Finnes-burh, 2 vols (London: Pickering, 1833-37), i. Against Wrenn’s interpretation, there is no clear example of the Eruli appearing elsewhere in Anglo-Scandinavian legend—yet Beowulf is a work hardly lacking in the unique. Moreover, the Anglo-Saxons certainly had access to sources discussing the Eruli, such as Historia Langobardorum; Helmut Gneuss, ‘A Preliminary List of Manuscripts Owned in England up to 1000’, Anglo-Saxon England, ii (1981), 1-60 (p. 32). Grimm suggested emending Widsi¶’s mid Eolum (p. 152, l. 87a) to mid Eorlum (‘with the Eruli’), which Chambers was inclined to accept; Jacob Grimm, Geschichte der deutschen Sprache, 3rd edn (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1868), pp. 415-16; Chambers, Widsith, p. 216 n. to l. 87. However, eorl and Erul- are not exact phonological matches; Marvin Taylor, ‘The Etymology of the Germanic Tri- nal Name Eruli,’ General Linguistics 30.2 (1990), 108-25 (p. 115). For an alternative view on Eolum see Kemp Malone, “Ic was mid Eolum”, Englische Studien, 67 (1932-33), 324-22.

37Jordanes’s statement need not mean that the Danes emigrated from Sweden. As Olrik pointed out, it could simply indicate that the Danes and Swedes were closely related tribes; Olrik, Legends, p. 34.


39Procopius, ii, 214-15, 28 (Book 6, Chapters 15.1-14 & 15.25-26).
methodological bases on which Chambers attacked Wessén’s theory are often equally applicable to Chamber’s own philological-historical approach. What is more, in his critique Chambers never addressed the question of why Wessén felt it necessary to postulate such a radical ‘name shift’ in the legends.

Procopius’s account of the Erulian ‘re-migration’ in fact formed a key part of Wessén’s thesis. Wessén had noticed certain arresting similarities between elements in medieval Scandinavian narratives concerning Hröðfr kraki and in the history of the Erulian king Rodulf (Greek Ροδούλεψ), as related by Paulus Diaconus and Procopius. The points of similarity Wessén noted were later supplemented and amplified by Lukman and Hemmingsen:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hröðfr (and Roluo)</th>
<th>Erulian king Rodulf</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Similarities in the Sequence of Events:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Erulian king Rodulf</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The war was caused by king Hröðfr/Roluo’s evil sister (Skuld/Sculda) who was married to Hjörvarðr/Hiorwarthus (’sword-guardian’).</td>
<td>The war was caused by the Langobardic king Tato’s evil sister (in Historia Langobardorum); Tato may have held the Byzantine rank spatharius (’sword-bearer’).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hröðfr/Roluo’s vassal Hjörvarðr/Hiorwarthus rebelled against Hröðfr/Roluo.</td>
<td>Until the war, the Langobards were dominated by the Eruli. It is unclear how the war began.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hröðfr/Roluo fell in a last, heroic fight among his men in his headquarters.</td>
<td>Rodulf fell in a last, heroic fight among his men in his headquarters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The battle was decided by magic: Skuld raised the dead. Hröðfr’s men, who could not see for the fire and smoke, were deceived by Öðinn.</td>
<td>The battle was decided by supernatural events: Rodulf’s army hallucinated (in Historia Langobardorum) or their enemies were hidden in a dark mist (in Procopius).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hröðfr/Roluo was avenged by Viggo/Vöggri (or, in Chronicon Lethrense, Aki).</td>
<td>Rodulf’s slayer was defeated and killed by Waccho.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vöggri led the army which retakes Denmark from Skuld; in Chronicon Lethrense, Aki became king of the Danes.</td>
<td>Waccho became king of both the Eruli and Langobards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(In Chronicon Lethrense) Aki’s successor married Rolf’s daughter.</td>
<td>Waccho married an Erulian princess (probably Rodulf’s daughter?).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Elements of Similarity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hröðfr was of slight stature (in Hröðfr saga).</td>
<td>Rodulf was of small stature (in Procopius); in Historia Langobardorum, Rodulf’s brother was of small stature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hröðfr’s men were berserks, i.e. they fought without armour.</td>
<td>Rodulf’s Eruli fought without armour (in Procopius).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They performed individual forays and were hired out.</td>
<td>They performed individual forays and were hired out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They behaved disrespectfully towards Hröðfr.</td>
<td>They demanded a war and accused their king of cowardice (in Procopius).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These parallels are not all equally strong—for example, Saxo described Roluo as large and powerful. Nevertheless, but for the long-ingrained prejudice against seeing external

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41 Nor did Chambers worry overmuch about the ‘name-shift’ between Beowulf’s Scyldingas and the Scandinavian Ynglingar which he took for granted in his own analysis.

42 Procopius, *ii*, 209-12 (Book 6, Chapter 14.8-22); *Historia Langobardorum*, p. 65-69 (Book 1, Chapter 20-21).

influences at work on narratives which are widely accepted as stemming from native Scandinavian oral traditions, these correspondences would probably be taken more seriously, and their relative values, more closely assessed. Wessén concluded there was some kind of relationship between the accounts of the Erulian Rodulf and the medieval Scandinavian Hrölf. In deference to the strength of the pan-Scandinavian school, however, he suggested that legends of the Erulian Rodulf had been combined with native Scandinavian traditions of Hrölf. Wessén needed a historical model which would provide an appropriate environment for such a process, and he found it in a synthesis of Jordanes’s and Procopius’s accounts: first the Danes arriving in South Jutland, Erulian refugees bringing Rodulf’s tale to southern Scandinavia, then the Eruli then being ‘unseated’ by the Danes, and finally legends of the Erulian decline being transformed into legends of the strife between the Scyldingas and the Headbeardan.

Chambers was right to question the plausibility of this complex chain of events, but in ignoring Wessén’s motivation he likewise neglected the strange correspondence between Rodulf’s and Hrölf kraki’s downfalls. No truly adequate explanation for this phenomenon has appeared, but to simply reject it as coincidence without further investigation is uncritically rash. It has been pointed out that if one removes from Hrölf’s saga kraka and the similar narrative in Gesta Danorum all the structural elements (in a Proppian sense) which are also found in the history of Rodulf, only the wonder-tale of Bjarki and the story of Hrölf’s visit to Aðils remain. Chambers asked, ‘If Beowulf be really as historically inaccurate as Wessén’s theory compels him to assume, then how can there be any purpose in trying to base upon it the kind of historical investigation which he is making?’

This is both a valid critique of Wessén’s theory and a question that might well be turned around and applied to Chamber’s own analysis.

4.1.4 Fossilisation Of Research On Historicity

The first edition of Chambers’s influential analysis of Beowulf was published in 1921, the second edition in 1932. The first of Klaeber’s Beowulf editions was published in 1922. Olrik’s Danmarks Heltedigtning, its second volume published in 1910, remains probably the most

44Hemmingsen, p. 41-42; Niels Clausen Lukman, Skjoldunge und Skilfinge: Hunnen- und Herulerkönige in Ostnordischer Überlieferung, Classica et Mediaevalia: Dissertationes, 3 (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1943), pp. 68-70. Wonder-tales, such as that of Bjarki, are of similar international pattern and move easily from one culture to another, making it difficult to identify Bjarki’s wonder tale as specifically Scandinavian. Hemmingsen and Lukman saw Hrölf’s visit to Aðils as a tale originally connected with Attila the Hun, similar to one found in the ninth- or tenth-century Waltharius, pp. 1-85; Ursula and Peter Dronke, ‘Waltharius-Gaiferos’, in Ursula and Peter Dronke, Barbara et antiquissima carmina, Publicaciones del Seminario de Literatura Medieval y Humanística (Barcelona: Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, 1977), pp. 29-79 (pp. 66-79) [repr. in Peter Dronke, Latin and Vernacular Poets of the Middle Ages, Variorum Collected Studies Series, CS352 (Aldershot: Variorum, 1991)]. But several traditional folktales motifs are relevant to the narrative of Hrölf’s escape from Aðils: Aarne-Thompson, ii, 77-78 (D672 Obstacle Flight); v, 200 (R231 Obstacle Flight—Alatanta Type).

thorough analysis of the Scylding-Skjöldung legends, despite its age and unfinished status.\footnote{Though disagreeing on certain points, Chambers was strongly influenced by Olrik.} Although Olrik evinced some scepticism concerning overly elaborate historical reconstructions based on the legends, he nevertheless considered them broadly historical. Similarly, Chambers and Klaeber both noted that the legends’ historicity cannot be confirmed, but went on to treat them—\textit{Beowulf} particularly—essentially as historical documents. These studies are very much the products of the historical-philological research traditions which had developed under the influence of National-Romanticism during the nineteenth century. They also remain enormously influential and scarcely have been superseded.

A much needed change of attitude was provided by J.R.R. Tolkien’s 1936 lecture ‘\textit{Beowulf}: The Monsters and the Critics’.\footnote{J.R.R. Tolkien, ‘\textit{Beowulf}: The Monsters and the Critics’, \textit{Proceedings of the British Academy} (1936), 245-95. See also Stanley, \textit{Foreground}, pp. 37-38.} Tolkien was most concerned to defend the integrity of \textit{Beowulf}’s narrative against critical assaults, arguing that naive attempts to use \textit{Beowulf} as a source for Scandinavian (or Germanic) prehistory and culture had distracted scholars from studying the poem as a poem. In one sense, Tolkien succeeded most admirably, as his essay—probably the most influential single work on \textit{Beowulf}, perhaps even on Anglo-Scandinavian historical legend in general—largely reoriented the direction of scholarship on the poem towards literary criticism. Debate on links between Anglo-Saxon and medieval Scandinavian literature has continued, and most recently Magnús Fjalldal has criticised attempts to demonstrate a ‘genetic relationship’ between certain episodes in \textit{Grettis saga} and \textit{Beowulf}.\footnote{Magnus Fjalldal, \textit{The Long Arm of Coincidence: The Frustrated Connection between Beowulf and Grettis saga} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).} He instead offered an explanation of the episodes of \textit{Grettis saga} in question as having been constructed from elements of various other sagas, and he argued that their apparent resemblance to portions of \textit{Beowulf} are simply coincidence.\footnote{Magnus Fjalldal, pp. 130-34.} Plausible though the references in \textit{Grettis saga} to other sagas are, Magnús Fjalldal probably cast insufficient doubt on the possibility that \textit{Grettis saga} and \textit{Beowulf} represent independent literary adaptations of a common folktale type (though different scholars may have taken this supposition to more or less reasonable extremes). Nevertheless, Magnús Fjalldal provided an admirable survey of scholarship on the subject and raised many interesting points concerning the willingness of scholars to overlook problems in order to find patterns of similarity where they already expect such (i.e. within Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian ‘Germanic’ literature). It also might be said that scholars can be equally quick to focus on problems in order to dismiss patterns of similarity where they are not already expected.

On the other hand, discussion and debate over the legends’ relative historicity stopped almost dead in Tolkien’s wake. Given that the Romantically-informed historico-philological approach had been effectively exhausted, this may have been a good thing. Yet
the cessation of such debate also effectively fossilised scholarly views on the legendary corpus’s historicity—a less beneficial situation. Frank has pointed out how the finds associated with the seventh-century Sutton Hoo ship burial—discovered in 1939, three years after Tolkien’s lecture—were eagerly seized upon by scholars in order to illuminate *Beowulf*, perhaps largely on the strength of comparisons between Scyld’s and Beowulf’s funerals in *Beowulf*, as well as similarities between some of Sutton Hoo’s artefacts with objects from contemporaneous Swedish burials.\(^5\) The physical stamp of authenticity that Sutton Hoo seemed to place on *Beowulf* has probably helped confirm the still prevailing opinion that the issue of the Scylding-Skjöldung cycle’s origins is a closed book. Yet given the considerable advances and refinements which have been made concerning other aspects of the legends since the early twentieth century, it is unfortunate that scholars remain equipped with what are essentially nineteenth-century views of the legends’ historicity. The few more recent works published on this issue have attracted little interest.

### 4.2 Lukman’s ‘External Origins’ Theories

Although the origin of Scandinavian historical legend seems to have been viewed increasingly as an obsolete topic in the years following Tolkien’s lecture, Wessén’s ideas about the Erulian Rodulf and Hröulf/Hrölfjr were nevertheless taken up by Lukman. His theories, published in 1943, were very much at odds with the autochthonist pan-Scandinavian school. Essentially, Lukman resolved the conflicts which had beset Wessén by arguing that the Scylding-Skjöldung legends did not reflect events in pre-Viking Scandinavia but instead were largely the outgrowth of events transpiring among the Migration-Age Goths, Huns, Langobards, and Eruli along the lower Danube. While radical, this re-analysis did allow Lukman to account for parallels between events in southern Europe—as recorded by writers like Jordanes, Procopius, and Paulus Diaconus—and in the Skjöldung legends without doing violence to the historical record or resorting to Wessén’s ethnic and chronological gymnastics.

The timing of Lukman’s publication, however, could scarcely have been worse, as his theories successfully alienated everyone in Nazi-occupied Denmark. Anti-Nazi Danes were unhappy to see the heroes of a glorious Danish past branded as foreigners, and the Nazis themselves (both Germans and Danish sympathisers) were angered to see heroes of a glorious pan-Germanic past branded in many cases as non-Germanic, Hunnish foreigners. Lukman’s work was almost branded as treasonous in some quarters.\(^5\) Gudmund Schütte carefully distanced himself from Lukman even before the thesis had been published, though he expressed the hope it would provoke renewed interest in Danish heroic

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\(^5\)Frank, *Beowulf* and Sutton Hoo*, pp. 48-52, 56-57. See §3.1.5.

\(^5\)Hemmingsen, p. 36.
In the event, this was not to be, as Lukman’s ideas received little attention in Scandinavia or Germany during the war and were largely passed over by post-war international scholarship. This is unfortunate, as some intriguing ideas are buried in Lukman’s work, and more critical scholarly attention might have revealed and refined them.

### 4.2.1 Skjöldungar & Skilfingar

Essentially, Lukman argued that the Skjöldungar and Ynglingar-Scylfingas of Anglo-Scandinavian legend had been based on a series of mostly Hunnish (but also Gothic, Erulian and Langobardic) rulers from the Migration Age. Lukman’s theories go into considerable detail, but some of the more relevant main points are summarised here in tabular form. Below are simplified genealogies modelled on Lukman’s hypotheses; each name which has cognates in another genealogy is shown in bold-face:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scyldingas-Skjöldungar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beowulf’s Scyldingas</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healfdene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heorogar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heoroweard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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53] Actual academic criticism of Lukman’s thesis, such as there was, was mixed. Cautious agreement with some elements of Lukman’s thesis was expressed by Walter A. Berendsohn (review of Lukman, Skjoldunge), Arkiv för nordisk filologi, 57 (1944), 251-55. A sharp rejection was made by Inger M. Boberg, ‘Er Skjoldungerne Hunnerkonger?’, Acta Philologica Skandinavica: Tidskrift for Nordisk Sprogforskning, 18 (1945-48), 257-67, which elicited a curt reply in Niels Clausen Lukman, ‘Replik angaaende Skjoldunger’, Acta Philologica Skandinavica: Tidskrift for Nordisk Sprogforskning, 19 (1950), 141-42.

54] Modification of charts in Hemmingsen, pp. 36-37.

55] This chart relies on the version of the story in Book II of Gesta Danorum. Saxo largely repeated the story in Book VII, with somewhat different names.

56] The text in Beowulf discussing the person who is presumably Healfdene’s daughter (p. 3, l. 62) is corrupt. Many editors have supplied her with the name Yrsa through analogy with Scandinavian sources. Such analogies are highly speculative, however, and it would be better here to leave the issue aside. Not all scholars have accepted the Yrsa-emendation. Two alternate views are Kemp Malone, ‘The Daughter of Healfdene’, in SIHLaCS, pp. 124-41 (pp. 139-41), and Heinrich Christoph Matthes, ‘Beowulfstudien’, Anglia, 71 (1952-53), 148-90 (pp. 165-80).
Several points in these genealogies bear special explanation, intended as they are to outline Lukman’s ideas. Lukman assumed that Hálfdan originally had stood at the head of both the Skjöldung and Scylding-Yngling dynasties. This equation is made explicitly in Hyndlolið (v. 14-16), where Hálfdan is described as the founder of the Skjöldung, Skilfing, and Yngling dynasties, as well as of the Qōlingar. Hyndlolið is, however, most likely a antiquarian creation of the twelfth or thirteenth century (recorded only in the fourteenth-century Flateyjarbók), and although it may incorporate much older material its placement of Hálfdan cannot be relied upon as an old tradition.

Not listed in the charts are further apparently corresponding figures from the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian sources. For example, OE Onela has a close match in ON Áli, but Onela is a Scylding while Áli, though appearing in Ynglingatal, is not a member of the Yngling dynasty. Other names from the OE dynasties likewise appear to have matches in the Scandinavian legends, although outside the Scandinavian dynasties: Ongenbeow with Angantyr, Heorowead with Hjórvarðr, Hröðmund with Hrómundr. OE Heremod finds a match in ON Hermødr, while OE Froda and Ingeld seem linked with ON Fróði and Ingjaldr. This last example highlights the fact that the Scandinavian genealogies themselves differ on various points. For example, Langfeðgatal lists Hróarr and Ingjaldr as brothers, Fróði’s sons. A figure called Hraerekr sometimes replaces Hrókr, and has somewhat different relationships to the other characters.

Moreover, Lukman silently makes many assumptions along with other scholars. The equivalence between Beowulf’s Scyldingas and the Scandinavian Ynglingar is

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57 On Lukman’s conception of the Ynglingar, see further in the main text. There seem to be two main variant traditions concerning the Yngling dynasty in medieval Scandinavian sources; one is found in Ynglingatal, the other in Ari Porgilsson’s Yngling genealogy and the Historia Norvegiae; Skjaldedigning, B.1, 7-14; Heimskringla, 1, 12-83; Islendingabók, pp. 27-28; Historia Norvegiae, in Monumenta Historica Norvegiae: Latinske kildeskrifter til Norges historie i middelalderen, ed. by Gustav Storm, (Kristiania: Brøgger, 1880; repr. Oslo: Aas & Wahl, 1973), pp, 69-124 (pp. 97-102).

58 Lukman, Skjoldunge, pp. 72-87.


61 On the relationship—or lack thereof—between the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian sources, see §5.1.3.

62 Langfeðgatal, p. 59.

63 Olrik, Legends, pp. 145, 293-303.
commonly assumed on the basis of a very few similar names in each group, and even Chambers was not unduly bothered by this strange ‘name shift’. Also following common practice, Lukman uses medieval Scandinavian sources to ‘fill in’ information missing from Beowulf. As shown in the charts, he viewed Hroðulf as the son of Halga even though Beowulf says nothing more specific than that Hroþulf was Hroðgar’s nephew. Such assumptions could be justified, but they underline the readiness with which scholars are still willing to use materials from different centuries and cultures to explain and ‘correct’ each other. Medieval authors and poets were surely scarcely less ready to do likewise, and indeed such practices may stand behind the evident cross-fertilisation from various traditions within the surviving sources.

Lukman identified correspondences between the legendary Anglo-Scandinavian dynasties and fifth-century rulers of the Danubian Huns. Names of rulers are marked with dates in parentheses, and Hunnish names which Lukman believed influenced the names in the Scylding-Skjöldung genealogies are shown in bold-face in the following table.¹⁴⁴

**Danubian Hunnish Leaders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Huldin (d. c. 415)</th>
<th>Mundzucus</th>
<th>Roas (c.415-36)</th>
<th>Octar (co-ruler)</th>
<th>Oebarsius</th>
<th>Attila (436-53)</th>
<th>Bleda (co-ruler)</th>
<th>Dintzic</th>
<th>Ellac</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The identifications Lukman wished to make with the Anglo-Scandinavian genealogies are fairly obvious. According to Lukman:

1) Huldin, a Hunnish ruler, was the model for Healfdene/Hálfdan.⁶⁶ Thus Lukman’s interest in accepting Hyndlolióð’s view of Hálfdan (see above).
2) Roas, a later Hunnish ruler, was the model for Hroðgar/Hróarr.⁶⁷
3) Octar, Roas’s brother, was the model for Ohthere/Ottarr.
4) Attila, Roas’s nephew, was the model for Eadgils/Aðils.⁶⁸

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⁶⁵The dotted line from Huldin to Roas and his brothers represents the fact that Huldin shortly preceded Roas and Octar as a Danubian Hunnish leader but that the sources are silent on whether there was any family relationship. Lukman considered Huldin to have been perceived as the father of Roas in legend or by later authors.

⁶⁶Lukman, *Skjoldunge*, pp. 72-82, 84.

⁶⁷Lukman, *Skjoldunge*, pp. 144-18. On Hroðgar/Hróarr, see §5.2.3.

⁶⁸Lukman, *Skjoldunge*, pp. 38-72, 82-84. On Attila and Eadgils/Aðils, see §4.2.3.
Lukman also suggested Ellac, son of Attila, as the model for Helgi. This suggestion is especially unconvincing, however, and even Lukman hesitated over it.\(^6\) In addition to the Hunnish material, Lukman proposed that Rodulf, the Erulian king, was the model for the Hroðulf/Hrólf fr figure (§4.1.3) and that Radagaisus, a Gothic leader against whom Huldin fought, was reflected in Saxo’s Roe I, killed by his brother Haldanus.\(^7\) Thus, the correspondences Lukman saw in the catalogue of rulers on the Danube and from Anglo-Scandinavian traditions, upon which the remainder of his arguments are built, can be summarised as follows (figures whom Lukman saw as equivalent—barring Ellac and Helgi—are lined up horizontally):\(^7\)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beowulf’s Scyldingas</th>
<th>Scandinavian Skjöldungar</th>
<th>Gesta Danorum Ynglingar</th>
<th>Norse Skjöldingar</th>
<th>Beowulf’s Scyldingas Leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healfdene Hroðar</td>
<td>Hálfdan Helgi</td>
<td>Haldan Hólf Helge</td>
<td>Hálfdan [Ongenþeow]</td>
<td>Huldin Hroðulf Hólf Rodulf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Octar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aðils Eadgils</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Attila Ellac</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even considering the perhaps irregular placement of Hálfdan at the head of the Ynglingar and unconvincing Ellac-Helgi equation, the remaining parallels are striking. Although there are considerable problems with Lukman’s work (see §4.2.3), it might be unduly rash to dismiss all his proposed identifications as coincidence without further investigation.

### 4.2.2 Fróði, Frotho, & Fravitta

Lukman separately argued that the Scandinavian Fróðar depended on traditions of Fravitta, a Romanized Goth in charge of defence along the lower Danube in the late fourth century (§3.2.3).\(^7\) Fravitta was active in the region prior to Huldin, and Lukman saw Fravitta reflected in Saxo’s depiction of Frotho I as the Haldanus’s father. Lukman, however, understood Fravitta’s exploits as standing behind the deeds of Saxo’s Frotho III, and the correspondences noted by Lukman (and Hemmingsen) may be summarised as follows:\(^7\)

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\(^7\) Lukman, Skjoldunge, pp. 89-90, 110-11, 125-45.  
\(^7\) Modification of chart in Hemmingsen, p. 38. These charts reflect Lukman’s view that Hálfdan belonged at the head of the Scandinavian Skjöldungar and Skilfingar/Ynglingar alike. Ongenþeow is listed at the head of Beowulf’s Scyldingas for completeness, though Lukman did not equate Ongenþeow with Healfdene. The Erulian Rodulf is listed with the Danubian Huns.  
\(^7\) Lukman, Frode, pp. 13-15.  
\(^7\) Adapted from table in Hemmingsen, pp. 49-50. Based on Gesta Danorum, iii-12, 129-34 (Book 5); Philostorgius, Ex ecclesiasticis historiis Philostorgii, Epitome, Confecta a Photio Patriarcha, in S.P.N.
1) Frotho defended Denmark against an army of Huns who intended to invade Denmark.  
2) The Huns were starving.  
3) The Huns regrouped for a second attack.  
4) The Huns were defeated on land and sea, with the water afterwards so choked with bodies that the ships could not move.  
5) After his victory, Frotho took the surviving Huns and their kings into his service and provided special laws for them.  
6) Frotho’s army, aiding the Gothorum rex, defeated Gunthiovus, son of the Swedish king Alricus.  
7) Alrik went to war for revenge.  
8) Once, Frotho’s lieutenant Ericus had defeated an invasion fleet by holing their ships, drowning the men before they could fight.  
9) Frotho was succeeded as king in Denmark by Hiarnus.

Frotho’s laws (see #5 in column above) stated:

- Women could refuse to marry the new allies; a woman who married a thrall became a thrall herself.
- Oaths were not valid evidence in court.
- The kings became Frotho’s vassals.
- These vassals paid their soldiers according to a fixed tariff and gave them a pension.
- Some laws corresponded to common Germanic custom.

Frotho’s treaty of 382 stipulated that:

- The Goths could not marry Roman women unless the latter gave up their Roman citizenship.
- The Goths became foederati, supplying troops under their own leaders.
- These troops were paid and pensioned according to the Roman regulations.
- Otherwise, the Goths lived under their own laws.

Lukman also drew complicated links between Grottaşŋgr, Fravitta’s activities (particularly around the Hellespont), and several associated proper names—he compared names for regions known as Maeonia and Mysia with the characters Menja and Mysingr in Grottaşŋgr, and the name of Byzantine Emperor Theodosius with that of the giant-maidens’ forefather Pjazi (another of their ancestors, Hrungr, dwelt at Grjótnagar, a name Lukman connected with that of the Gothic Greutungi). Lukman’s various correspondences between Frðði and Fravitta are interesting, but it is difficult to say whether (if genuine) they do not simply point to Saxo himself having borrowed details from classical sources concerning Fravitta, as opposed to ancient traditions of Fravitta.
preserved in a Scandinavian context. After all, the correspondences Lukman (and Hemmingsen) noted pertain specifically to Saxo’s Frotho III, and not other Scandinavian Fróðar. Certainly, Saxo made use of extensive classical allusions. Relevant here is Saxo’s description of how Hiarnus was given the Danish kingship in return for eulogising Frotho, where he wrote: ‘Sed ne Africanus quidem in rependendis operum suorum monumentis munificentia Danos aequavit’. This statement echoes phrases in the writings of Cicero and Valerius Maximus.\(^{75}\)

Viking-Age evidence suggests that a Fróði-figure was already well-established in Scandinavian contexts. The Rus name Фудри (most likely an error for Фруди), appearing in the Russian Primary Chronicle for the year 944, probably represents Scandinavian Fróði.\(^{76}\)

The implication is that Fróði was already a relatively familiar Scandinavian personal name. Several tenth-century poets seem to have made reference to information concerning the Fróði known also from Grottašongr. Egill Skallagrímsson said: gláðar flotná fjól víd Fróða mjó!,\(^{77}\) Fróði’s fríðr is referenced in Einarr skálaglamm Helgason’s tenth-century poem Vellekla and, intriguingly, in the Helgi-lays.\(^{78}\) Eyvindr skáldaspillir calls gold Fróða fágljúdra þýja meldr; a reference to the story known from Grottašongr.\(^{79}\) Thus it seems likely that stories of a Fróði and his fríðr were well-established among tenth-century Scandinavians. How these Viking-Age Fróði-figures were related to those in the medieval Scandinavian sources seems less clear, however, and the relationship between the Scandinavian Fróðar and Anglo-Saxon Froda is likewise difficult to determine.\(^{80}\) Of course, by the mid-tenth century Anglo-Saxon traditions like those found in Beowulf already may have become familiar to Scandinavians—and vice versa.

### 4.2.3 Critique of Lukman’s Methodology

Lukman’s reconstructions sometimes probably stretch the evidence farther than is reliable, and some of his parallels may owe as much coincidence as anything else. This is true not only for Skjoldunge und Skilfinge and Frode Fredegod, but also for much of his other work. Christopher Tolkien, criticising Lukman’s analysis of Hlóðsquíða wrote:

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\(^{75}\) For references to the classical parallels, see Gesta Danorum, p. 143 (Book 6); Davidson-Fisher, i, 162, ii, 95 n. 4.

\(^{76}\) Повесть временных лет, ed. by Д.С. Лихачева and В.П. Адриановой-Перети, 2nd edn, Литературные памятники (Saint Petersburg: Наука, 1996), pp. 23, 160. The spelling with Cyrillic -u (- Latin alphabet -i) makes it unlikely that the name is a West Germanic Froda/Frudo; Struminski, p. 175. The name Fróði also seems to appear on several runestones; for example, SR, ii: Östergötlands runinskrifter, ed. by Erik Brate (Stockholm: Norstedt, 191I-18), 144-45 (OG 153).

\(^{77}\) Skjaldedigtning, b.1, 33. See also Meissner, p. 228.

\(^{78}\) Skjaldedigtning, b.1, 120; HHbs, p. 132 (v. 13). Perhaps significantly, Einarr seems to have been some kind of protégé of Egill’s, and Einarr’s poetry shows influence from Egill’s, perhaps including the use of references to Fróði legends; Edith Marold, ‘Einarr Helgason skálaglamm’, in Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia, pp. 158-59.

\(^{79}\) Skjaldedigtning, b.1, 64.

\(^{80}\) See §3.2.3 & §5.1.3.
I do not think it should need to be said, that to pick about in old histories, looking for names that begin with the same letter or contain one or two of the same consonants as those in one's text, will attain nothing. If heroic legend really evolved in this way, with the most chance and casual accretions and distortions ... then, with our fragmentary materials, the chances against hitting upon the right combinations are so monumental that we may as well give up the game at once; or, at least, admit that it is only a game.81

This is a strong, though not necessarily unjustified, condemnation of Lukman's technique—and in the case of Hløðsqviða, at least, Lukman's reconstructions seem so ingenious that, while possible, they are difficult to accept.82 Yet many elements of his arguments concerning the reflection of Migration-Age events along the Danube in later Anglo-Scandinavian legend are surprisingly cogent—a fact which, given the environment in which they were first published, may have contributed significantly to their acrimonious rejection—and they probably deserve more serious critical attention. A full reassessment of the Scylding-Skjöldung cycle would require an analysis both more rigorous and more open-minded than has yet appeared.

There are some clear problems with Lukman's identifications, perhaps the most serious being philological.83 For example, the form Aþils cannot descend regularly from a borrowing of Attila into fifth-century Scandinavian, which would have produced Atli. This form appears in the Völsung cycle, where Atli is a very clear reflection of Attila the Hun. It is, however, uncertain whether the form Atli is an old Scandinavian development or a late borrowing from West Germanic; it is moreover unclear when the Völsung material became known to Scandinavians.84 On the other hand, Æadgils (from *Auþagisilaz) may be a poor match for Aþils (which most scholars derive from a form like *Aþagisilaz).85 Likewise, Hrödgar ought to be paralleled by Hröðgeirr (a relatively common ON name, from *Hröðagaziz), not Hröarr (probably from *Hröðavarjaz or *Hröðaharjaz, which should have produced an Old English **Hroð(h)ere).86 Furthermore, it is unclear why

83Lukman's failure to address philological problems adequately was the chief criticism of a very fair review by Valter Jónsson (review of Lukman, Skjöldunge), Lychnos, (1944-45), 359-61.
84See §2.5.4, §3.4.6, §5.2.1 & §5.3.4.
85NIDN, i, col. 45–(s.v. 'Aþill'), 'Aþils'), 97-98, 1277; ii, col. 125 (s.v. 'Auþgisilaz'); ANEW, pp. 2 (s.v. 'Aþils'), 258 (s.v. 'auþ-'); Sveriges Medelhåda Personnamn: Ordbo, ed. by Roland Otterbjörk with Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademiens Personnamnsmitt (Uppsala Almqvist & Wiksell, 1967), i: Fornamn A-E (1967), col. 16. (s.v. 'Aþils').
86Scholars sometimes attempt to derive Hröarr and Hröðgeirr from a common ancestor, but the interpretation seems forced and over-dependent on the belief in a direct connection between the Skjöldung Hröarr and Beowulf's Hroðgar; NIDN, i, col. 580-82 (s.v. 'Hröarr'), col. 583-84 (s.v. 'Hröðgeirr'); ii, col. 469-71 (s.v. 'Hröarr'), col. 472 (s.v. 'Hröðgeirr'); ANEW, pp. 258-59. It is sometimes said that names in Hroð- were largely unknown to the Anglo-Saxons, but a number of examples (including legendary ones) are cited in William George Searle, Onomasticon Anglo-Saxonum: A List of Anglo-Saxon Proper Names from the Time of Beda to that of King John (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
Beowulf’s Ongenþeow, whose name would be expected to appear as Angantýr in Scandinavian sources (probably an alteration of *Anganþær, from *Anganþewaz), stands in the place of Ynglingatal’s Þegill. Such problems are comparable to those in Lukman’s identifications and yet seldom cause much concern.

The names of the Hunnish rulers themselves represent an insoluble philological problem. What kind of language the Huns spoke is unknown, though it was probably Turkic. It is commonly understood that Attila represents Gothic atta plus the diminutive suffix -ila/-ilá (thus Attila = ‘Little Father’). While it is possible that the Hunnish leader bore such a Germanic nickname as his birth name, it seems more likely that the form Attila derives from a Gothic accommodation of some Hunnish personal name (or represents a quasi-title). Most Hunnish names have clearly been distorted in various ways:

For every scholar who claims such and such a Hun’s name as Germanic, there is at least one other scholar who claims it as Turkish or the like. The names are so numerous, and this variation of opinion so regular, that one is forced to the conclusion that the evidence is simply inadequate to allow us to reach any certainty ... In fact, most Hun names must have reached our Greco-Roman authorities from oral Gothic sources, and so will have undergone a double alteration: they will have been approximated first to Germanic sounds and then to Greek or Roman ones.

This phenomenon is underlined by the multiple forms of Hunnish names in the sources; for example, Roas appears also as Próvás, Ruga, Próvgas, Próvilas, Rugila, and Provílas. Such problems complicate the philological comparison of Hunnish names with the Anglo-Scandinavian legendary name-forms effectively to the point of impossibility. Lukman referred primarily to the Hunnish name-forms used by Jordanes, whose Getica was apparently known in Carolingian Francia; in the eleventh-century, Dudo of St.-Quentin referred primarily to the Hunnish name-forms used by Jordanes, whose Getica was apparently known in Carolingian Francia; naturally, that a text was known in Carolingian Francia does not mean it was known in Anglo-Saxon England. There is, however, only fragmentary evidence for which texts actually may have been known in Anglo-Saxon England. The possibility that information derived from written works could be transmitted orally before being re-committed to writing additionally complicates
and William of Jumièges both used material drawn ultimately from Jordanes.\textsuperscript{92} It is Jordanes’s name-forms which, coincidentally or not, correspond most readily to the names found in the Anglo-Scandinavian genealogies. If the Danubian rulers were, as Lukman suggested, adapted into Anglo-Scandinavian legend, it would not be so surprising if the adapter had provided them with similar-sounding but more familiar names.

Such processes are not uncommon in oral transmission, as folklorists have long recognised. An orally transmitted narrative will commonly display considerable stability at the structural level, while other details may vary relatively freely. In the early twentieth century, Antti Aarne emphasised that in order to classify folktales successfully (as a precondition to their comparison and study) only the most stable features of a folktale should be considered. He issued a list, later revised by Stith Thompson, of the kinds of features most likely to change. This list, based as it is on a considerable body of data, remains an important touchstone for folklorists.\textsuperscript{93} In the process of a narrative’s oral transmission, it is not uncommon for a narrator to replace unfamiliar entities or objects—including names—with more familiar ones.\textsuperscript{94} A change of Erulian Rodulf to Old English Hroðulf would be scarcely any change at all.

Yet this tendency to change names complicates the evaluation of Lukman’s models as much as it explains them. Recognising that names can be altered so readily also implies the converse: a similarity between two names needs not be more than coincidence. Onomastic similarities such as those Lukman proposed should not be entertained without further correlating evidence from narrative sources. For example, narrative similarities between accounts of Erulian Rodulf and Hrólfr kraki suggest that the parallel perhaps should not be too quickly dismissed, while the lack of agreement between accounts of

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\textsuperscript{94}There are numerous medieval examples of re-analyzation, mis-analyzation, or complete replacement of names crossing from one speech-community to another; one can see this in Slavic interpretations of Scandinavian names, and conversely in Scandinavian interpretations of Slavic names. Paul Bibire has noted that Scandinavian names were commonly mangled in the ninth century by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle authors (while Frankish names, in contrast, are handled more gracefully), and Gillian Fellows-Jensen has shown English familiarity with Scandinavian names had improved by the eleventh century; Paul Bibire, ‘North Sea Language Contacts in the Early Middle Ages: English and Norse’, forthcoming; Gillian Fellows-Jensen, \textit{The Vikings and their Victims: the Verdict of the Names}, Dorothea Coke Memorial Lecture in Northern Studies (London: University College London, 1995), p. 17.
Ellac and Helgi indicates their identification may be discarded more readily. Lukman (and Hemmingsen) suggested comparisons between various accounts of Áöils's and Attila's deaths. Even were one to accept these (and the similarity between the roles of Áöils in Hrólfs saga kraka and of Attila in Waltharius, as noted above, §4.1.3), some very durable elements of the legend have no obvious Danubian models: i.e. the battle between Áöils and Áli on the ice of lake Værnir, which is echoed in Eadgils's and Onela's conflict in Beowulf. Such elements most likely represent native Scandinavian traditions.

Lukman was somewhat vague on how he believed the names of Danubian rulers entered Anglo-Scandinavian legend (and how they were then reorganised into two dynasties), but his conceptions were expressed with slightly more clarity in a monograph tracing influence on Gesta Danorum from Jordanes's Getica. Here Lukman primarily discussed traditions of the Gothic king Ermanaric (Saxo's Jarmericus), but the part of his argument concerning the medieval confusion between Denmark (or Dania) and Dacia was equally relevant to his ideas about Danubian influence on the Skjöldung cycle. That the name Dacia, which properly belonged to a region roughly equivalent to modern Romania and Transylvania, was often applied to Denmark in Latin documents in the medieval period is well-known. Lukman considered this a means by which medieval authors could misassign (from a modern perspective) information about events which took place in Dacia proper to 'Danish Dacia', i.e. Denmark. The Dacia-Dania problem also was addressed later, though independently, by Jane Acomb Leake. Her study on Beowulf's Geatas is problematic in many ways, but the point remains important that the modern historical-philological understanding of Beowulf's Geatas as Götar (or Jutes) need not have been the understanding of medieval writers. One develops the uncomfortable sense that both medieval and modern understandings are often founded on unsubstantiated (often unsubstantiatable) assumptions and identifications which are then taken for granted and repeated.

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95 Lukman, Skjoldunge, pp. 42-44, 101-02; Hemmingsen, p. 46. For their sources see Getica, p. 123-24 (Chapter 49); Gesta Danorum, p. 67 (Book 3); Heimskringla, i, 59.

96 Lukman, Skjoldunge, pp. 149-60.


99 See further §4.4.1, and §5.3.4.


101 Leake, pp. 13-83, 129-133, 139.
4.3 Hemmingsen’s ‘Late External Origins’ Theory

Within Scandinavia by the 1960s some acceptance of Lukman’s work had been found amongst scholars of the post-war generation. Inge Skovgaard-Petersen referred to Lukman’s works as having shown that ‘much [in Gesta Danorum] can be proved to be based on misconceptions—such as a confusion of mid-European Dacia with Denmark’.

Similarly, Bjarni Guðnason wrote: ‘It may well be that Hrólfkr kraki and King Ælils of Uppsala were originally kings of the Heruli and of the Huns in the fourth and fifth centuries ... as N. Lukman maintained’. These scholars were not studying the origins of the Skjöldung cycle so much as its later literary history, and their willingness to accept Lukman’s theories with little further comment was, perhaps, quite generous. Yet for the most part—among English-speaking scholars, at least—it is simply assumed without comment that the Skjöldung cycle stems from broadly historical events in sixth-century Scandinavia. Suggestions to the contrary, however moderate, have been not so much refuted as ignored. It seems likely that many contemporary scholars of early Scandinavia—especially in the English-speaking world—are simply unaware that such ideas have been put forward. Continuing concentration on literary aspects of the legends also plays a role.

4.3.1 Oral & Literate Interplay in Twelfth-Century Denmark

Lukman, as noted, did not much discuss the methods by which the material he believed to be of non-Scandinavian origin arrived in Scandinavia. This issue was tackled recently by Lars Hemmingsen, who broadly accepted Lukman’s identifications but sought to analyse...
them from a folkloristic point of view. Hemmingsen’s interest focused on the _Chronicon Lethrense_, the earliest identifiable Scandinavian source handling the historical-legendary material at any length—perhaps along with Sven Aggesen’s _Brevis historia_, though Aggesen’s work may be slightly younger. Hemmingsen suggested that:

The _Chronicon Lethrense_ was made up from a large number of components: its backbone was a list of assumed Dacian/Danish kings, but there is also a story of Rodulf which ultimately stemmed from Paulus Diaconus and Procopius, some stray information of Leo and Zeno which, like the list of ‘Dacian’ rulers, must have been picked up in Byzantium; there is some knowledge of Russian chronicling and of English traditions of Danes, there are traces of West Nordic historical legend, and there is a lot of popular tales, motifs and riddles.

Hemmingsen suggested that this list of Dacian leaders could have been acquired from Byzantine sources by Danish crusaders who were in Byzantium and Jerusalem c. 1190-92, or from Byzantine officials reportedly in Norway 1194-95. If twelfth-century Danes interpreted such a list of Dacian leaders as a genealogical document—much as Snorri interpreted _Ynglingatal_—that would side-step the problems of explaining how figures as disparate as Fravitta, Rodulf, and Attila could have been linked. Implicit in such an analysis is an understanding of the medieval confusion between Dacia and Denmark.

Hemmingsen brought modern methods of comparative folklore to bear on the _Chronicon Lethrense_ (and other early Scandinavian chronicles), performing an exhaustive Proppian structural analysis of the relevant narratives. These narratives, he determined, contain information which seems related to written sources, but also betray tell-tale evidence of oral transmission. He suggested that knowledge ultimately drawn from written sources ‘most often seems to have reached Denmark only through the unreliable medium of human memory and have been made known in Denmark only by word of mouth.’ Hemmingsen pointed to evidence indicating that oral performances in various narrative genres were popular amongst the learned and aristocratic élites in twelfth-century Denmark—some of whom probably had a marked interest in the Danish past—and that such events provided an ideal environment for tales to move easily between written and oral traditions. Thus, variants of originally written materials could have been easily produced through oral reproduction, thereby coming to incorporate traditional folktale

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106 Hemmingsen, pp. 176-79.
107 Hemmingsen, p. 463.
108 Hemmingsen, pp. 393, 463-68.
109 Hemmingsen, pp. 322-89. Hemmingsen devoted a large section of his study to this issue and joined other scholars in criticizing various points of Leake’s work, but arrived at broadly similar conclusions concerning the conflation of Danes, Dacians, Getae, and Goths by early medieval authors.
110 Hemmingsen considered it likely that the works of certain authors were available in written form: Adam of Bremen, Henry of Huntingdon, Dudo, William of Jumièges, Paulus Diaconus, Jordanes, and Procopius and Malchus; Hemmingsen, pp. 57-59. There is, however, little direct evidence for the availability of many of these texts in twelfth-century Denmark.
111 Hemmingsen, p. 463.
narratives and motifs. These oral variants could then have been themselves incorporated into new written works. Essentially, Hemmingsen concluded ‘that Danish legendary history was made up in the 12th and early 13th centuries from a mixture of oral traditions and written sources in order to satisfy a demand among Danish nobles’.

4.3.2 Critique of Hemmingsen’s Theory

The stylistic influence of classical authors on *Gesta Danorum* has been much discussed in recent decades, and to this issue Hemmingsen added cogent arguments for the informational influence of classical and early medieval authors on the Skjoldung legends as preserved in various medieval Scandinavian sources. At the very least he provided sounder methodological underpinnings for Lukman’s hypotheses than had previously existed. Hemmingsen’s arguments were directed towards overturning the common perception that these sources were created simply by transcribing the oral tales of Danish peasants—a theory popularised by Romantically-influenced scholars—and his study focused on the environment which produced the earliest substantial Scandinavian texts known to deal with the Skjoldungar. Much of the study of folklore is concerned, almost by definition, with studying processes of oral transmission for which there is little written evidence. Yet there has been virtually no folkloristic investigation of Scandinavian legendary history since Axel Olrik, and scholars accustomed to textually-oriented studies may be unsatisfied with an explanation which postulates various sources, such as Dacian king-lists of Byzantine provenance, for which there is not merely a lack of physical evidence but, Hemmingsen suggested, might never have been carried to Scandinavia in written form. It seems very likely that historical legends were told orally among the twelfth-century Danish élite much as Hemmingsen described, but the possible impact of a ‘residual orality’

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112 Hemmingsen, p. 57.


114 For the non-folklorist, Hemmingsen provided a summary of the relevant methodology in his ‘Part II’; Hemmingsen, pp. 56-73. Essentially, this approach is based on techniques developed by Vladimir Propp for analysing the structure of wonder-tales. Propp’s methods were adapted by Alan Dundes in order to be applied to traditional narratives in general, and thence by Donald Buchan for traditional ballads (forms similar to historical legend); Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. by Laurence Scott with Svatava Pirkova-Jakobson, 2 edn, rev. by Louis A. Wagner with Alan Dundes (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1968); Alan Dundes, *The Morphology of North American Indian Folktales*, FF Comunications, 195 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiekeakemia, 1964), pp. 32-76, 97-109; Donald Buchan, *The Ballad and the Folk*, 2nd edn (East Linton: Tuckwell, 1997), pp. 51-61, 87-144, 166-73.
in these early written sources, much as has been suggested for Anglo-Saxon contexts, is something which should also be considered. Moreover it is clear that some twelfth-century Scandinavian authors, like Theodoricus monachus, had access to information from *Historia Langobardorum* and *Getica* and could employ this information without associating it with Scandinavian legend (though this does not guarantee that such confusions might not have been made, especially by authors with poorer access to these works).

Another problem which Hemmingsen did not much discuss is the appearance of characters connected with the Skjöldung cycle in pre-twelfth-century sources, like Viking-Age skaldic poetry or *Beowulf* and *Widsid*. Nor did Hemmingsen discuss the appearance of names from the Skjöldung cycle in pre-twelfth-century historical sources or in runic inscriptions. For example, the first dateable record of the name Hálfdan is as *Halptani* in the Royal Frankish Annals for the year 782. The name is probably represented by the Rus name Алдань in the *Russian Primary Chronicle* for the year 944. A historical figure presumably stands behind the late-ninth-century *Healfdene*, described in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, even if his exploits as a Ragnarsson may be legendary. Persons named Hálfdan are mentioned on a variety of Viking-Age and medieval runic inscriptions. Perhaps medieval authors could conflate Hunnish Huldin with Scandinavia Hálfdanir, but as a name Hálfdan was clearly well-established in Scandinavia before the twelfth century. It seems likely to have originated as a name for some ‘half-Danish’ person or group. Lukman counted the Anglo-Saxon materials among the sources of the *Chronicon Lethrense*, though he merely suggested that few scholars have realised the chronicle’s ‘vigtigste Forudsætninger er dels filnod [an English priest at Odense c. 1000], dels ÒBeowulfÓ, dels Kongeopregningen i Håttalykills Vers 14-18 og 20-21’.

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115 It has been suggested that Anglo-Saxon scribes before the late tenth century were still very familiar with the processes of oral composition and could have used such techniques to produce variations when copying written texts; Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).


117 As is the case with Fróði; see §3.2.3 and §4.2.2.

118 (R)RFA, pp. 62-65 (*sa* 782).

119 *Повести*, pp. 23, 160.

120 ASC-Thorpe, pp. 136-47; ASC-Plummer, i, 70-75.

121 Jakob Benediktsson noted the significance of names from the Skjöldung cycle appearing amongst the Oddaverjar, i.e. the thirteenth-century Hálfðán Sæmundarson; Jakob Benediktsson, ‘Traditions’, pp. 64-65; Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, ‘Nafngiftir Oddaverjar’ in *Bidrag till nordisk filologi tillägnade Emil Olson den 9 juni 1936* (Lund: Gleerup, 1936), pp. 190-96. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson thought the declining fortunes of the Oddaverjar in the later twelfth and the thirteenth centuries encouraged in them a Romantic predilection for names drawn from the legendary past; Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Sagnaritun*, p. 43-45.

122 N. Lukman, ‘Ælnod: Et Bindeled mellem engelsk od dansk Historiekrivning i 12. Aarhundrede’, *Dansk Historisk Tidsskrift*, ii.2 (1947-49), 493-505 (pp. 504-05). Lukman seems to have been using the term ‘Beowulf’ as a cipher for ‘English traditions of the Scyldings and Scyldingas’. There seems little reason to believe that the poem we know as *Beowulf* was widely known, although some of the material contained in it may have been.
Hemmingsen concluded that English influences came from a mix of oral and literary traditions brought to Denmark by English clerics in the twelfth century. Indeed, the first work of history concerning Denmark to be written in Denmark was the *Passio Sancti Kanuti regis et martyriris*, c. 1095, concerning Knútr inn helgi. This work was followed c. 1122 by Ælnoth’s *Gesta Swenomagni regis et filiorum eius et passio gloriosissimi Canuti regis et martyriris* which seems to have been intended as a continuation of the *Encomium Emmae reginae*. Nevertheless, Hemmingsen concluded that the *Chronicon Lethrense* betrayed scant influence from English traditions specifically concerned with the Scyldingas and pointed to differences between the orders of rulers described in *Beowulf* and the *Chronicon Lethrense* as indicating that the chronicle must have had a different source. Hemmingsen was, however, impressed that although the *Chronicon Lethrense* and *Beowulf* place Ingyald/Ingeld at different points chronologically, both identify his father as Froda/Frothi; this father-son connection, he conceded, may have come to Denmark from England.

Such an analysis begs an important question, however: whence come the English traditions of the Scyldingas and Scylfingas? According to Hemmingsen, ‘except for Scyld and Beow *Beowulf*’s Danish kings were modelled on some of the Dacian rulers’. Yet even if the Anglo-Saxon traditions were wholly of non-Scandinavian origin, such traditions can hardly have been unknown to Scandinavians if they had any currency in Viking-Age England. Presumably, Hemmingsen saw *Beowulf*’s Scyldingas, Scylfingas, and Heáöbeardan as the result of a process in Viking-Age England analogous to that which he argued produced the *Chronicon Lethrense* in twelfth-century Denmark. Moreover, the Icelandic *Skjöldunga saga* might well have been independent of the Danish sources—it was written around the same period, or earlier if Bjarni Guðnason were right in dating it to c. 1180—especially if it was built on a tally of Skjöldung rulers drawn up by Sómundr Sigfússon in the early twelfth century.

On these grounds alone, it is difficult to accept the Scylding-Skjöldung cycle as entirely a learned, post-Viking Danish creation—a more complex reassessment may be called for. Of course, any reassessment of the Scylding-Skjöldung cycle’s origins is unnecessary if one believes—as probably most scholars do—that the legends of the Skjöldungar recorded in Anglo-Saxon England and medieval Scandinavia are simply the reflections of historical events which took place in sixth-century Scandinavia. Yet the arguments raised against this understanding suggest that it may be unwise to accept this simple solution as the article of faith which it long has been. Reduced to their components, these arguments can seem little more than collections of coincidences, some more

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124 Hemmingsen, pp. 392-93, 455-59

125 Hemmingsen, p. 392.
remarkable than others. The sheer number of these coincidences, however, suggest that where there is smoke, it may be worth considering whether it has been produced by at least a small fire.