

# Chronicling Angry Bishops: On the Use and Perceptions of Episcopal Anger in 13<sup>th</sup>-Century Scandinavian Narratives

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Recent interest in what Stephen D. White, in an influential article from 1998, called “the politics of anger” has resulted in many articles and books about the anger of kings and the lay aristocracy across Europe. However, very little research has been done on the anger of bishops. Idealized bishops are generally portrayed as mild and humble rather than hot tempered, but this article argues, on the basis of Danish and Norwegian narrative sources, that anger nevertheless was an important political signal used by bishops as well. Through an analysis of *Exordium Monasterii Carae Insulae* (*Øm Abbey Chronicle*), *Vita Gunneri episcopi Viborgensis* (*The Life of Bishop Gunner*), *Gesta Danorum* and *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* (*The Saga of Hákon Hákonsson*), the article also argues that it is possible to distinguish at least two different discourses of episcopal anger.

During the last two decades, the history of power in the Middle Ages has been increasingly entangled with the history of emotion as historians have found that emotional displays played an important part in medieval political culture.<sup>1</sup> In a period with limited institutionalized power, publicly broadcasted demonstrative behaviours – often extreme by our measures – seem to have been part of a political language and functioned as signs used to reveal rank and to transmit clear messages about power relationships. According to the German historian Gerd Althoff “[m]any of the mannerisms of medieval communication, which today appear to us as overemotionalized, were bound up with this demonstrative function – especially the demonstration of anger.” (Althoff 1998: 74)

In *Virtues and Vices* (a work particularly interesting for this article because a Norse translation is included in the *Old Norse Homily Book* from about 1200), Alcuin writes that if not bridled, anger will become rage, and cloud all reason and judgement. He

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Lars Hermanson, Auður Magnúsdóttir, Wojtek Jezierski, Barbara H. Rosenwein and Stephen D. White, who have shared their valuable insights at various stages of the work. The term “political culture” is here used in much the same way as Althoff uses “Spielregeln” in Althoff 2004.

sees anger as the root of more or less all evil, and places it among his eight main vices (GNH: 27). This was a typical view of anger expressed by medieval Christian thinkers, but influential theologians like Augustine and Gregory the Great made a clear distinction between viceful, destructive anger (similar to what Alcuin describes) on one hand, and righteous, good Christian anger on the other (Little 1998: 12). The latter was based on the anger displayed by God, who in the Old Testament eagerly punishes sinners in righteous anger. Legitimate anger could thus be used as an ideological instrument of power.<sup>2</sup>

Historians have usually seen legitimate anger as part of a specifically royal ideology, while episcopal anger usually has been neglected as a field of study. This contributes to an over-simplified picture of medieval chroniclers' interpretations of dispute processes, where the logic step is to reduce all mentions of episcopal anger to a violation of norms and ideals which promote mildness and humility in bishops. In this article I will utilize 13<sup>th</sup>-century Danish and Norwegian narrative sources, and examine how episcopal anger was portrayed and what function it held in the political culture conveyed in these narratives. I will try to determine how the anger of bishops was described by ecclesiastical and non-ecclesiastical writers (was it portrayed as a sin or as a legitimate "political tool or a stratagem for good lordship"? (McGrath 2010: 63)), and to determine how the chroniclers constructed their narratives using different available perceptions of episcopal anger. The sources used in this article are *Exordium Monasterii Carae Insulae* (*Øm Abbey Chronicle*), *Vita Gunneri episcopi Viborgensis* (*The Life of Bishop Gunner of Viborg*) (both written in the 1260's<sup>3</sup>), *Gesta Danorum* (finished in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century) and *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* (*The Saga of Hákon Hákonsson*) (dated 1265). These sources were produced in different contexts, in different communities and in different genres, and may therefore offer insights to a broad spectre of attitudes towards anger.

## A Historiography of Anger

Anger as a disputing strategy will be a departure point in this analysis. Historians have viewed anger as a symbol of power and as part of the ritual language of disputes, and they have tied its political significance specifically to royal power, and to a lesser extent to the power of the lay aristocracy. Notable scholars of anger in the middle

<sup>2</sup> The notion of good and bad anger is also present in normative sources from 13<sup>th</sup>-century Norway, such as the *Old Norse Homily Book* and *Konungs skuggsiá*. (Orning 2009: 35–39).

<sup>3</sup> Parts of *Exordium Monasterii Carae Insulae* are written earlier (1207), but my main concern is the part written probably in 1268 (McGuire 1976: 20).

ages, like J. E. A. Jolliffe, Gerd Althoff and Hans Jacob Orning all see legitimate anger strictly as the prerogative of God and the king.<sup>4</sup> Stephen D. White and Richard E. Barton on the other hand both write about “lordly anger” rather than specific royal anger, and Barton considers lordly anger to be an “*imitatio regis* on the part of all persons in positions of power and authority”.<sup>5</sup> This opens for a possibility of legitimate episcopal anger (though none of them really explore this), and the research on royal anger therefore gives an important background for this analysis.

In his book *Angevin Kingship* from 1955, J. E. A. Jolliffe was one of the first to view anger as a political instrument. He saw the proclamation of anger by the Angevin kings as a semi-legal state the kings could unleash on their subjects. The king’s anger “can put a man effectively, though not technically, outside the law . . .”, he wrote, “it may . . . set the victim in a kind of limbo or intermediate state between outlawry and the ordinary security of the subject in legal standing, closing the courts against him and bringing all his legal actions to a stop” (Jolliffe 1955: 97). Historians orientated towards historical anthropology and dispute studies in the 1990’s were inspired by Jolliffe’s research, but were more interested in the ritual aspects of anger. For Althoff, dealing with sources from the Holy Roman Empire in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, royal anger signalled the king’s right to lordship, because *just* anger, modelled on God’s anger in the Old Testament, was a prerogative that required recognized authority. The practical function of *ira regis* (royal anger) was, however, mainly that the kings had to be feared in order to rule effectively, and public displays of anger were used to scare anyone who witnessed them into submission and future loyalty (Althoff 1998). Stephen D. White writes similarly on the basis of 11<sup>th</sup>- and 12<sup>th</sup>-century French political narratives that public displays of anger in the sources “are almost always made by kings or other males whose noble status entitles them to express anger . . .”, and are used “to construe [an] action as an injury, as a wrongful act causing harm, damage, or loss, as an offence against a person’s honor” (White 1998: 139–140). When a person’s honour had been challenged, a public display of anger was the appropriate response, but when the disputants made peace and settlement, the anger and enmity was replaced by love and friendship. Anger was thus a meaningful component of conflicts which may be described as ritualized (White 1998: 133–144). Richard E. Barton thinks along the same lines. In studying 11<sup>th</sup>- and 12<sup>th</sup>-century

<sup>4</sup> Althoff 1998; Orning 2008. Jolliffe (1955: 98) writes that *ira et malevolentia* was “specifically royal”.

<sup>5</sup> Barton 1998: 159; White 1998. Kate McGrath also sees legitimate anger as an aristocratic rather than a specifically royal prerogative, and certainly does not consider it a marginal phenomenon: “How a noble expressed his feelings of anger at an insult was an important part of how he was perceived as either honorable or dishonorable by his peers” (McGrath 2010: 69).

French epic poems, he also concludes that justifiable anger required recognized authority, and that a lack of centralized government made it an important part of the disputing process (Barton 1998). In the disputing discourse of 11<sup>th</sup>- and 12<sup>th</sup>-century French nobles, publicly displayed anger was a signal “announcing to all that the current situation was unacceptable and that social relationships had to be restructured.” (Barton 1998: 155)

Historians have also touched upon the subject of anger in the medieval Scandinavia. Hans Jacob Orning’s conclusions about royal anger in 13<sup>th</sup>-century Norway echo those of Althoff, Barton and White. Basing his research on the king’s sagas and *Konungs skuggsía*, Orning concludes that anger ideologically was the king’s prerogative as a *rex iustus* and defender of law and order,<sup>6</sup> but in practice it was a way for him to deal with the fact that his power was far less institutionalized than it was ideologically portrayed, and far more closely connected to his personal honour. When the king was angry, it was not really a reaction to a breach of law – as it was ideologically packaged – it was a reaction to an offence against his personal honour. Though ideologically largely impersonal “[t]he king’s anger can be considered both a reaction to personal insults, and a means to restore his lost respect.”<sup>7</sup> He needed to be feared and he needed to have magnates publicly submit to him, and his anger signalled a demand for public submission. In this context it was a potent weapon, and at the same time part of the ritualized political “language”.

Lars Hermanson is less interested in the practical politics of anger. In his book on friendship, love, and fraternity, he wants instead to show how anger is related to the ideology of friendship in *Gesta Danorum*. According to him, friends in *Gesta Danorum* have, in accordance with the classical Greco-Roman friendship ideals, a duty to correct each other when their friend has behaved in a bad or unwise way. The correction is often accompanied by anger.<sup>8</sup> Unlike the other scholars named here, Lars Hermanson writes about what he calls *ira episcopi* (episcopal anger), which he on the one hand attributes to the friendship ideal in the chronicle, and on the other hand sees as a signal by the author that the king could not monopolize the strong feelings. Episcopal anger was thus a legitimization of the aristocracy, not least because

<sup>6</sup> Lars Hermanson has shown how Saxo also gives King Valdemar the role of protecting law and order, and that his anger is part of this (Hermanson 2013: 120–121).

<sup>7</sup> Orning 2008: 184. Sverre Bagge has also written about the anger of kings and lords, but he does not consider it as political semiotics in the way Orning does. Bagge (1997) stresses the importance of making an impression in the “face-to-face”-interactions of medieval politics. Some emotional “instability” would help a king to rule his magnates.

<sup>8</sup> Hermanson 2009: 88. See also Hermanson forthcoming.

Hermanson views the bishops not just as Church leaders but also as prominent figures in aristocratic networks.<sup>9</sup>

### **Writing a History of Emotions**

It is within the tradition of semiotic approaches to emotions, common to the scholars mentioned above, I place my own research, and I will treat publicly displayed emotions as signs with symbolic meaning in the political culture. Emotions have been viewed in a number of different ways, some more compatible with this kind of semiotic approach than others. In their recent research, scholars like Paul Hyams, Richard Kaeuper and Daniel Lord Smail see feud vengeance as a biological drive, rejecting other research that suggests that it has rational aspects and is determined by legal, political and economic considerations.<sup>10</sup> This research is based on the theoretical view that emotions are essentially the same in all cultures and historical periods, and that anger and vengeance therefore are not cultural signals but merely drives from inside; more or less automatic responses to an insult or a wrong. For Barbara H. Rosenwein the “hydraulic” view of emotion that is inherent in this kind of research is inadequate.<sup>11</sup> Her theoretical view is constructionist, and she insists that emotions themselves are never felt unmediated by the social and cultural context:

[Emotions] are never pure and unmediated drives or energies. They are always mediated because they are “upheavals of thoughts” . . . that involve judgements about whether something is good or bad for us. These assessments depend, in turn, upon our values, goals and presuppositions – products of our society, community, and individual experience, mediators all. (Rosenwein 2006: 191)

<sup>9</sup> Hermanson 2009: 96. For instance, Hermanson views Archbishop Absalon as the head of the elite group of magnates and supporters associated by the Hvide kin-group (Hermanson 2009: 91). This view is based on his research in Hermanson 2000.

<sup>10</sup> White 2013: 289. This approach to medieval emotion is thoroughly described and effectively criticized by Stephen D. White in this same article.

<sup>11</sup> The hydraulic view of emotion can be illustrated by a phrase like “He was bursting with anger”, says Rosenwein, “suggesting that anger is like a gas under pressure, ready to burst out” (Plamper 2010: 251). Rosenwein clarifies: “Such a theory . . . assumes that emotions are universal. Insofar as it recognizes a history, it encourages a ‘binary’ one in which emotions are either ‘on’ or ‘off’ depending on social, superego, or individually willed restraints. The hydraulic view lies behind the grand narrative [of a civilizing process], validating its search for a turning point based on restraint” (Rosenwein 2002: 836).

Rosenwein claims that emotions are constructed in “emotional communities”: These are “. . . precisely the same as social communities – families, neighborhoods, parliaments, guilds, monasteries, parish church memberships” – but she proposes that communities of this kind even have their own “systems of feeling” (Rosenwein 2002: 842). Emotions are, according to her, constructed in communities as “what Foucault called a common ‘discourse’: shared vocabularies and ways of thinking that have a controlling function and, a disciplining function”.<sup>12</sup>

The third view of emotions I will introduce here is represented by William Reddy, for whom emotional responses are neither universal nor culturally “constructed” as discursive practices, and they are thus neither merely referential nor performative. Instead he explains how emotions work through the notion of “emotives”, developed with insights from psychological, as well as historical and ethnographic studies. Emotives are emotional “speech acts” which are:

. . . effort[s] by the speaker to offer an interpretation of something that is observable to no other actor. Such an effort is essential to social life, an inescapable facet of one’s identity, one’s relationships, one’s prospects. As such, it has a direct impact on the feelings in question. If asked the question “Do you feel angry?” a person may genuinely feel *more* angry in answering yes, *less* angry in answering no. (Reddy 1997: 331)

The impossibility of an outer emotional signal accurately representing the inner feeling means “the failure of representation is recognized and brings an emotional response itself . . .” (Reddy 1997: 332). Thus, certain reactions to emotional impulses strengthen some emotions and suppress others. In this way, Reddy can explain cultural diversity, not by claiming that the emotions are discursively constructed, but by claiming that different cultures favour different emotives and through this method suppress and cultivate different feelings.

<sup>12</sup> Rosenwein 2006: 25. Emotional communities are, according to Rosenwein, also similar to Bourdieu’s notion of “habitus”: “internalized norms that determine how we think and act and that may be different in different groups” (Rosenwein 2006: 25). Unlike for example Smail, who see medieval texts as accurately conveying emotions that are likely to have been felt in different situations, she makes no such explicit claim and studies “the norms, codes, and modes of expression rather than feelings” (Rosenwein 2006: 193). Stephen Jaeger takes a third view, distinguishing between “emotions” and “sensibilities”, where “emotions” are basically unavailable to historians. For him “emotions” are private feeling, subjectively felt by the individual and in some ways unhistorical, whereas “sensibilities” are “agreed-on modes of feeling” that change all the time, and can be studied historically (Jaeger 2003: vii–viii).

The great merit of this theory is that it allows for historical and cultural change without denying that emotions have a biological background.<sup>13</sup> However, though Reddy certainly has valid points, his notion of emotives is probably better suited to explain other aspects of emotions than the publicly displayed, formulaic expressions that are my main concern in this article. The remorseful weeping of a magnate as he submits to a lord in a public supplication ritual, or the love and friendship among the medieval aristocracy, that made them publicly kiss and exchange gifts, should probably be viewed mainly as performative, with meanings that can be studied as discursive practices. Methodically I will therefore follow the view represented by Rosenwein closer in this article: I will look for different discourses of anger in the sources, and examine how anger is described performatively. Whether these emotions were felt or just “performed” seems impossible to say, and, in this particular article, beside the point.

### Anger at Øm Abbey

Turning to the sources it quickly becomes clear that of all the angry bishops in the sources from medieval Scandinavia, you will struggle to find anyone quite as choleric as Bishop Tyge in *Exordium Monasterii Carae Insulae* (*Øm Abbey Chronicle*). In this source, the monks at Øm Abbey tell the story of their abbey from its foundation, but a big part of the chronicle concerns the conflict with Bishop Tyge of Aarhus in the 1260’s. Øm Abbey was a Cistercian abbey located on Jutland, not far from the town of Aarhus, and Tyge held Aarhus bishopric from 1261–1272. The relationship between the monks and the bishop was strained and in the chronicle the bishop functions as the main antagonist. Their portrayal of Tyge seems to have left the historian Brian Patrick McGuire puzzled: From the letters the bishop wrote during his conflict with the abbey (they are included in the chronicle) it is clear that he “was not just a creature of whim and rage but could defend his case logically and eloquently”, and from what we know about him from elsewhere, writes McGuire, “there was considerably more to him than a bundle of emotions” (McGuire 1976: 79). However, in another section of his analysis of the conflict at Øm abbey, he writes that Tyge’s words “can only strengthen our impression of him as a passionate man whose anger swept him away and made him unable to listen to the other side” (McGuire 1976: 89).

<sup>13</sup> Rosenwein distinguishes between “strong” and “weak” social constructionism, where only the former denies that there are any basic emotions at all. For “weak” constructionists, which Rosenwein considers to be the majority, “societies bend, shape, encourage, and discourage the expression of various emotions. Emotions depend on language, cultural practices, expectations, and moral beliefs” (Rosenwein 2002: 837).

The strained relationship between Tyge and the monks began during his visit at the abbey in 1263. The bishop is said to have entered the main hall of the abbey before it was ready to receive him, and before the monks expected him too: “It was dark, and when he now entered and the only light that was lit was a grease lamp he was very angry (*indignatus est ualde*).”<sup>14</sup> Tyge’s anger had not yet been made into a public spectacle (though it was about to), but the connection found between honour and anger seems to have been a factor. The cause of Tyge’s anger was probably that his honour had been insulted. The monks saw this reaction as unfair.

The main dispute, however, started the next day when the bishop tried to perform a visitation, even though the Cistercian order only allowed abbot visitations (McGuire 1976: 80). He also demanded three weeks of lodging at the abbey, which the monks immediately refused.<sup>15</sup> The chronicle states at an earlier point the circumstances leading to the abbey’s exemption from such claims, given by former bishop Peder Ugotsen.<sup>16</sup> “Full of anger” (*iracundia*) (Olrik 1954: 40; Gertz 1922: 211), Tyge demanded his lodging, and said he would return. When he did, it was with a group of armed men. This second visit was a disaster, and provoked resentful remarks and a huge misunderstanding later.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, Bishop Tyge, Abbot Bo and a large group of friends from both sides found themselves in the Holy Clemens Church, for a settlement meeting. Here Tyge broadcasted his anger publicly, as he excommunicated the abbot and all his supporters. Seemingly unfazed Abbot Bo declared that he could just as easily absolve his supporters. Then some of the people intervened, took him aside and told him: “You cannot endure your bishop’s anger (*Tu no uales sustinere iram epis-*

<sup>14</sup> Olrik 1954: 39–40. Gertz 1922: 210: “Qui cum intraret stupam, et non fuerunt accensa luminaria preter adipum, indignatus est ualde [...]”. (My translations are based on a combination of the translated editions (in modern Scandinavian languages) and the original text, except in *Gesta Danorum*, where I use the English translations of Eric Christensen).

<sup>15</sup> The chronicle dramatically states that the monks all agreed that they would rather die than give Tyge the right to three weeks lodging at their abbey.

<sup>16</sup> Julie Potter places the writing of monastic chronicles that include details about gifts, land ownership and privileges given to the abbey, in the context of the process M.T. Clanchy calls “from memory to written record”: “In the eleventh century the memory of witnesses had operated as the primary safeguard for claims over land and rights. By the thirteenth century, such arguments were beginning to be resolved primarily on the basis of written authorities. The efforts of the monks of Bec to commit important events in the memory of the community to [narrative] writing reflects their struggle, which was shared by numerous other religious houses, to safeguard their liberties in a world where the rules of the game were changing.” (Potter 1999: 84) This breed of chronicles was, according to Potter, usually written in response to specific threats by rival secular or ecclesiastical power (Potter 1999: 74).

<sup>17</sup> Tyge misinterpreted a bell that was signalling mealtime, and thought it was a declaration of war. Then he fled, and his relationship to the abbey became even worse.



*copi tui*), and it is not fitting for you or anybody else to stand against your bishop. Go to him and offer him compensation (*satisfactionem*) and you will become good friends (*boni amici*)”.<sup>18</sup>

Here the bishop’s anger has a function consistent with the conflict patterns described by Stephen D. White, Richard E. Barton, and Hans Jacob Orning. It is a way of signalling the need to restructure relationships and restore honour. Orning has identified the three phases of conflicts between Norwegian kings and magnates, which seem to apply to the conflict between the bishop and abbot as well: In the first phase, the king (or bishop in our case) sets forth a claim that the magnate (here Abbot Bo) has been disloyal. Often the magnates protest because it was seldom clear exactly what a magnate had to do for the king in order to be considered loyal. In the second phase the king addresses the disloyalty, and the offence against his honour it entails, with a threatening display of anger, signalling that he feels dishonoured or disrespected, as well as signalling a demand for public submission by the magnate. The third phase is the reconciliation where the two parties agree on a settlement, and the king’s honour is restored as the subordinate publicly submits to him. Though it is ideologically portrayed as the king mercifully granting forgiveness, the settlements were not necessarily that one-sided. The king could not afford to lose the support of powerful magnates, and the conditions of the settlements were therefore often mild. The crucial next step is that enmity then turns into friendship, strengthening the bond of alliance (Orning 2008: 209–227). The distance between anger and friendship was short, except in some cases where the king had to make an example of the disloyal magnate.

Even though Abbot Bo refused to submit to the bishop, and the conflict escalated rather than was being resolved, public satisfaction and a fairly uncomplicated turning of enmity and anger into friendship is exactly what is indicated as a possibility in the dispute between Bo and Tyge. There is also an interesting parallel to the way Jolliffe views royal anger, as a limbo state between outlawry and the normal legal state. Episcopal anger was clearly a state where the victim lost the bishop’s favour and protection, and, as the case was in this episode and in many others, episcopal anger was often combined with excommunication, or seen as a threat of future excommunication. Patrick Geary puts into clear language that: “[Excommunications (and monastic curses)] . . . were intended not to destroy the enemies of the Church but to bring about negotiations” (Geary 1994: 150, see also Boye 2012). Like anger then, excom-

<sup>18</sup> Olrik 1954: 47. Gertz 1922: 220: “Tu non uales sustinere iram episcopi tui; nec tibi nec alijs conuenit resistere episcopo suo. Accede ad eum et exhibe ei satisfactionem, et eritis boni amici”.

munication was a way of pressing forth negotiations about the social and political relationships, though excommunications were clearly a much more drastic method, and involved dishonouring the opponent in a more spectacular manner. The bishop's anger can thus be viewed as a limbo state where the victim was not (necessarily) quite excommunicated, but certainly not under the bishop's protection.

This all suggests that anger could have a similar function for bishops within the Church organisation as it did for kings. Admittedly, all this took place during a period when the archbishop, who according to the chronicle ordinarily would be the judge in disputes like this, had been driven to exile by the king. The conflict pattern is nevertheless similar to the one Sharon Farmer has found in the dispute between Marmoutier Abbey and the archbishops of Tours in the late 11<sup>th</sup>- and early 12<sup>th</sup>-century: It is characterized by a "transitional nature of hierarchical authority" with "fluid relations with friends who could become enemies and then become friends once again" on one hand, while the dispute at the same time has a core of "distinct institutional boundaries, carefully protecting the office of abbot and the internal working of the abbey from outside interference." In both disputes the monks used the centralized hierarchy of the Church (appealing, amongst others, to the pope and his legate), and in both cases this did not automatically settle the dispute.<sup>49</sup>

However, familiar as it may seem, Tyge's anger does not seem to be portrayed as the just anger often attributed to kings. When Bo is said to have been told that he could not endure his bishop's anger, the anger is not explicitly judged negatively; we are told that it was seen as unfitting for Bo to be in a conflict with Tyge, not that Tyge's anger was itself unfitting. However Tyge's anger at the settlement meeting is portrayed as part of a more or less perpetual state of anger that lasted from when he entered the badly lit main hall at Øm Abbey, all the way to the end of the chronicle. It is more than likely that the author describes Tyge like this in order to cast him even more clearly as the villain. Tyge's anger brings to mind the anger described by Alcuin in his work on the virtues and vices; it certainly clouded his judgement; it was uncontrollable and it plays an important part in the chronicle narrative in establishing the bishop as unreasonable and unfit for his office. It was largely due to his uncontrollable anger that the conflict was able to escalate in the first place.

Since the abbot refused to give the bishop satisfaction, the following conflict was long, bitter and complicated, and the narrative further includes a claim that the bishop threatened the monks by saying that he would be letting his "rage (*furore*) roam free"

<sup>49</sup> Rosenwein et al. 1991: 792. Tyge is ultimately successful in curbing the monks, not by appealing to the pope or other Church authorities, but by appealing to the Danish king.

as soon as the pope's legate had left Denmark.<sup>20</sup> It also includes other accounts of his "insane raging (*furere et insanire*)".<sup>21</sup> At one point Tyge is even portrayed as having felt the need to hide his anger during the settlement meeting.<sup>22</sup>

The terminology used to describe Tyge's anger include the most common words for anger in Latin: *indignatio*, *ira*, *iracundia* and *furor*. The terms *indignatio* and *ira* do not seem to demand negative judgement. Based on the sources I have read it might describe vice-like anger, but they are also the terms used when the anger described is justified. *Ira* and *indignatio* are the terms used to describe just royal anger, as in King Magnus Lagabøte's letter of privilege to the German merchants in Norway, in which he threatened anyone disregarding it with "*nostram indignacionem*" (our anger/indignation).<sup>23</sup> *Furor*, on the other hand, has another level of negativity associated with it. The term might be translated with "fury" or "rage", and in Medieval Latin texts (both narrative texts and theoretical texts by Christian thinkers), it generally "carried the implication of extremely violent, raging madness, even to the extent of bestiality or insanity" (Barton 2005: 383). Tyge's anger progresses from strong *indignatio*, when he is lead in to the badly lit main hall, to strong *iracundia* when he is denied the rights to visitation and lodging at the abbey, to *ira* at the settlement meeting and finally to *furor* in the aftermath of the meeting. The differences between the first three terms are difficult to pin down, but by the end of the chronicle, Tyge's anger has escalated from *indignatio* to "*furere et insanire*"; if he had any grip, he certainly lost it.

Ultimately, the monks could not, as the chronicle "prophetically" states, "endure [their] bishop's anger". The chronicle may be viewed as a kind of ironic tragedy that ends in quiet resignation, when the king gets involved on Tyge's side. Tragic because "the good guys" (the monks) are forced into submission and a life of financial diffi-

<sup>20</sup> Olrik 1954: n277. Gertz 1922: 251: "Item idem episcopus minatur abbati et conuentui, quod post recessum domini lagati toto, quo potest, furore debeat debachari."

<sup>21</sup> Olrik 1954: 63: "When the bishop heard this he was mad with rage, and if he had not been furious before, he now came, sighing and grinding his teeth, to the king, and complained [...].". Gertz 1922: 254: "Hijis perceptis, episcopus cepit furere et insanire, ac si prius non insaniisset; fremens ac dentibus stridens uenit ad regem querelans [...].".

<sup>22</sup> When he falsely accused the monks of chasing him from the abbey and harbouring an enemy of the king, Bo denied the charges by swearing an oath, and saying that he excommunicated the one that had made up this lie, or himself if he was the one who was lying: "Do you not hear that he excommunicates me in my own church?", the bishop asked the gathering of people, and when they answered that the abbot had not excommunicated *him*, but the one who had made up the lie, the bishop "hid his anger (*dissimulauit iram*)" (Olrik 1954: 46; Gertz 1922: 219).

<sup>23</sup> "Privilegiebrev fra Magnus Håkonsson for tysktalende kjøpmenn i Norge" (DN V 10); NMD: 157.

culty; ironic because no one is any wiser at the end. The tragedy does not seem to have been given any meaning; it is rather a slow resignation: life goes on, only it is worse. In this way, the chronicle fades out and ends.

### The Anger of Bishop Gunner

In the same manuscript as *Exordium Monasterii Carae Insulae* a monk at the abbey has written a short account of the former Øm-abbot Gunner's life, between the time he was appointed bishop of Viborg and the time of his death (1222–1251). In *Vita Gunneri episcopi Viborgensis* (*The Life of Bishop Gunner of Viborg*, also written in the 1260's) it is explicitly stated that Gunner should be considered an example for the brethren of the order to follow, and that following his example would help them to achieve both progress in life and salvation of the soul.<sup>24</sup> Gunner is meticulously portrayed as a distinctly non-secular bishop, true to his Cistercian roots, and his anger is portrayed remarkably different from that of Bishop Tyge.

An account of Gunner's relationship to the archbishop shows ideals of humility and love, trumping anger and the competition for personal honour:

The archbishop, Uffe, held [Gunner] so dear, that he, to the extent that it was possible, ranked him even higher than himself. I have thus seen them standing outside the door of the main hall, bickering about which one of them should enter first, not out of anger (*non tamen ex ira*), but to overbid each other in love and awe, in accordance with the words of the Apostle: Serve the Lord! Outdo each other in honouring.<sup>25</sup>

The order in which to enter a main hall could obviously be a sensitive question. In situations like this, where the hierarchy of honour could be articulated visually, any disagreement could turn into anger, violence, and a duel for honour. Gunner and Archbishop Uffe, however, were not angry. They were humble, and wanted to honour *each other* rather than themselves. This shows an ideal of a mild and composed

<sup>24</sup> Olrik 1892: 7. Gertz 1922: 265: “. . . quia, si aliqui de ordine nostro exemplum vite sue et formam fortasse sequi voluerint, illis potest fieri ad salutem anime et ad vite profectum et honorem.”

<sup>25</sup> Olrik 1892: 22. Gertz 1922: 274: “Ipse itaque dompnus Vffo archiepiscopus ita eum dilectum habuit atque carum, vt, quantumcunque potuit, eum super se ipsum honorauit. Nam vidi ad ostium stupe vnus contententes, quis eorum prior intraret, non tamen ex ira, sed ex magna caritate et honore, quo vellent se inuicem preuenire secundum illud apostoli: ‘Domino seruientes, honore inuicem preuenientes’.”

bishop, not too obsessed by personal honour: in other words the complete opposite of how Tyge is portrayed. Together the two sources from *Øm* paint a picture of the good bishop and the bad, and it seems reacting with anger in order to defend one's personal honour was regarded by these Cistercian monks as unfitting for good bishops.

Gunner did however occasionally express anger as well. At one point in the story it is said that he did not tolerate quarrelling among his housemates. If this happened he was:

. . . very displeased, and said that he would not find it fitting for his position as a cleric or Cistercian, that he should tolerate the ones behind such quarrelling. In situations like this he gave the troublemaker a correction of this kind or sent him away, so that no one in the future should dare to do anything similar, while he used the words of Paul: How could anyone incapable of running their own household care for God's Congregation?<sup>26</sup>

The chronicler does not directly use any words for anger, but the correction seems to have been a display of anger made in front of everyone. Gunner's anger was not directly a reaction against his personal honour – that is at least not how the author framed it. The frightening aspect of anger is important here as well, but Gunner is certainly not portrayed as having lost his temper and judgement, or as having committed a deadly sin. His anger is not “alcuinian” – on the contrary, it is rational; he makes an example of the quarrelling housemates, but the author also ties this anger to his position as a cleric and Cistercian, by giving him the word of Paul. The anger is connected to his office, and is necessary for him to function properly as bishop. It is similar to the virtuous anger described by Augustine and Gregory the Great. Anger has a strangely strong presence in the sources from *Øm*, and if *Vita Gunneri episcopi Viborgensis* is supposed to be an example of how you should live your life and be a good bishop and Cistercian, it also gives examples on *how* you should be angry.

However *Vita Gunneri episcopi Viborgensis* is not always easy to interpret. In the beginning of the story there is another mention of anger, when we are told how Gunner was elected to the episcopal office. The election was brought forth by the visit of a cardinal, who was also a friend of Gunner from his studying days in Paris. He man-

<sup>26</sup> Olrik 1892: 17. Gertz 1922: 271: “Si autem alio tempore aliquid sinistrum inter suos audisset, illud satis grauiter accepit dicens se illud non habere ex ordine clericali vel ex ordine Cisterciensi, taliter iurgia vel rixas facientes secum tollerare debere. Et ita vnum corripuit vel a se emisit, vt alter similia facere de cetero non presumeret, dicens illud sancti Pauli: ‘Qui familiam suam regere nescit, ecclesie dei diligentiam quomodo habebit?’”

aged to talk the canons in Viborg into electing Abbot Gunner of Øm as their bishop, and sent a messenger to get him. The Cardinal's messenger was supposed to keep the election secret until they arrived at Viborg, but "since nothing is so hidden that it shall not be revealed, the messenger revealed the true nature of the mission to the Abbot's servant, Thorsten."<sup>27</sup> When they all rode out together the next morning, the messenger gave the servant a black hat, symbolizing the episcopal office, to place on his master's head. But when he did so, "the abbot got very angry (*maxima indignacione*), tore it off, and said that he did not usually wear a hat when he was riding."<sup>28</sup>

This is an enigmatic episode in the story of Gunner, and the reason for its inclusion in the narrative and the meaning of this outburst are somewhat unclear. We cannot entirely rule out that it is a question of personal honour. The quasi-ceremonial act of placing the hat on Gunner's head, informal as it may be, might have been perceived by the abbot as an insult, to him personally or to the episcopal office. It was done by a servant, who was hardly an appropriate agent, and perhaps Gunner took offence to this "mock ritual".<sup>29</sup> It might also be a question of humility, signalling that the abbot did not take anything for granted, or that he did not find himself worthy of the new title. Bishop Absalon is famously said in *Gesta Danorum* to have been physically forced to accept the title of Archbishop (GD 14.55.12–15), echoing a topos of humility that is far from unique in medieval chronicles. Though the combination of anger and humility may seem strange today, it is not a given that it was in the 13<sup>th</sup>-century. Another possibility is that Gunner respected the Cardinal's wish to keep the election secret, and had to discipline the messenger and the servant for their disobedience.

In any case, Gunner's anger is completely different from that of Tyge. I am reminded of Philippe Buc, who has shown how chroniclers could describe structurally identical rituals either as good, noble and sacred or bad, unrighteous and sinful (Buc 2001: 50). This duality can be attributed to anger as well. Admittedly, Gunner's and Tyge's displays of anger are not structurally *identical*, because anger is not really given to Gunner in order to show how he was disputing (there are other examples of this

<sup>27</sup> Olrik 1892: 9–10. "Nothing is so hidden that it shall not be revealed" ("Cum vero nichil ita occultum sit, quod reuelabitur" (Gertz 1922: 266)), is a reference to the Bible, and may refer to Matthew 10, 26; Mark 4, 22; Luke 8, 17 or Luke 12, 2 (Olrik 1892: 9, note 3). There is, however, nothing in these passages that gives us any obvious clue about how we should interpret this episode.

<sup>28</sup> Olrik 1892: 9–10. Gertz 1922: 266–267: "Quem a se abbas cum maxima indignacione proiecit, dicens se solitum non esse cum pilleo equitare."

<sup>29</sup> The real ritual was performed in Viborg. We are told that he was met by the people of Viborg and by the canons in procession with ringing church bells (Olrik 1892: 10).

in other sources). However, this is not necessarily a decisive factor. What seems to be important is that anger (for the monks at Øm) was a bad thing when it concerned personal honour, and just when it concerned duties of the episcopal office. While it would be possible to portray Tyge's anger as an important part of his official duties (that he had to curb the monks in order to be a good Church leader), the monks framed it in a different way.<sup>30</sup>

### Episcopal anger in *Gesta Danorum*

*Gesta Danorum* is a history of Denmark written by Saxo Grammaticus. Saxo was probably a secular clerk in the service of Archbishop Absalon of Lund, and he finished the great history, commissioned by his master, in the early 13<sup>th</sup>-century. It consists of 16 books, of which books 10–16 concern “historical time” and will be utilized in this article.

Anger is generally not portrayed as a good thing by Saxo. He wrote about King Valdemar, whom he generally favoured,<sup>31</sup> that when dealing with a revolt in Scania, he was:

Unmoved by anger or rage (*irae aut furoris*), but with a notable determination to curb the insubordination of the citizens, and to inspire the rest with fear of a similar boldness, he thus decided to assume a harshness that was most hateful

<sup>30</sup> In the same way honour and glory is mainly portrayed by the monks as a good thing for a bishop only as a means of serving his office. Gunner is said to have brought his silver goblets with him on journeys, “not out of pride or a vain concern with splendour, but because he owed it to his high office; it was a customary practice among the country’s magnates and chieftains” (Olrik 1892: 19).

There was an ascetic ideal associated with saints and saint-like individuals. Katherine Harvey writes that: “Medieval saints are typically depicted as yearning for the simple life, contemptuous of worldly luxuries. For a bishop, this could be problematic; unlike a monk, he was obliged to live in surroundings appropriate to the dignity of his office, to dress in costly robes and to attend lavish banquets” (Harvey 2014: 595). This is a tension Gunner confronts in his *vita*. On the one hand he hosts and attends lavish feasts for the Danish elite and brings his silver goblets on journeys, but on the other hand he drinks very little and wears very simple robes.

<sup>31</sup> To what extent he favoured Valdemar is debatable. Saxo was clearly ambivalent, as argued by Birgit Sawyer. She claims that even Absalon is implicitly criticized several places in *Gesta Danorum* (Sawyer 1985).

to him, and laying aside his mercifulness for the time being, he forced his gentle nature to make a shew of severity.<sup>32</sup>

Valdemar hated anger and violence, but he had to “fake it”, in order to deal with the revolt. He had to strike fear in the public. Claiming that Valdemar’s anger was not real was probably a way of glorifying him, and of legitimizing his brutal behaviour. At another point in the narrative it is said that Valdemar was “seldom angered (*ire parcissimus*)” (GD 14.14.4), but in fact he is aggravated on more than a couple of occasions in *Gesta Danorum*. Sometimes it is portrayed as a justified *ira regis*, other times as a childish uncontrollable anger.<sup>33</sup> Episcopal anger *Gesta Danorum* also has this function of idealizing or condemning the bishops.

Anger is an important factor in the famous episode in *Gesta Danorum*, where Bishop Wilhelm of Roskilde, according to Saxo, excommunicated King Svend Estridsen. Danish historians agree that this episode is completely made up – constructed by Saxo and modelled on Cassiodorus’ story of Ambrosius and Theodosius (Esmark 2012: 173). This does not make the episode less interesting, because it must have been constructed in a way that was meaningful to the reader.<sup>34</sup>

After having been disrespected by some men during the celebration of the Holy Eve of the Circumcision, the Danish king Svend Estridsen (1047–1076), according to Saxo, became “so angry (*irae*)” that he sent men to slay them the next morning as they were praying in the church of the Holy Trinity (GD 11.7.11). Svend’s friend, Bishop Wilhelm of Roskilde, did not like this at all, and we are told that he “was grieved by the desecration of the church . . . but at first he accepted it with hidden feelings, and did not reveal his indignation (*indignationem*) to his dependants in any way, until the proper moment came to exact his retribution.”<sup>35</sup> He was angry, but the

<sup>32</sup> GD 15.4.26: “Igitur non irae aut furoris impetu concitatus, sed conspicua animi industria ad corrigendam civium insolentiam metumque consimilis audaciae ceteris iniciendum, aliquid ab invisissima sibi feritate mutuandum ratus, mansuetudinem ingenii sui, deposita ad tempus clementia, crudelitatis actus imitari coegit.”

<sup>33</sup> Lars Hermanson notes that Valdemar is blamed by Saxo for military failures, because he is following his emotional impulses, rather than Absalon’s exquisite advice. See Hermanson forthcoming.

<sup>34</sup> Of course we simply cannot know whether *Gesta Danorum* can say anything about the political culture of the aristocracy in the late 12<sup>th</sup> and early 13<sup>th</sup>-centuries, or if it merely conveys Christian and Classical ideals that were not decisive in practical politics (Hermanson 2013: 110–111). It does, however seem reasonable to assume that it must have portrayed a world which was recognizable.

<sup>35</sup> GD 11.7.12: “Quam rem antistes, templi (ut par erat) violatione permotus, in primis dissimulanter excepit neque indignationem suam ulla ex parte stipatoribus patefecit, opportuno vindictam tempore praebiturus.”



proper moment for retribution was at Mass, where the bishop demanded penance, and in a public spectacle denied the king access to the church by blocking the door with his staff. Furthermore:

. . . although it was enough to have administered this rebuff, he added curses as well, not hesitant to pronounce an immediate condemnation. Thus, his amazing audacity left it in doubt whether he smote him harder with his hand or with his voice, for, having spurned him with the utmost ignominy, he punished him first with his tongue, then with his right arm, and smote the vice within that breast that once had harboured virtue.<sup>36</sup>

Saxo lets us know that the reaction everyone would have expected from the king who had been humiliated in public, was that he would himself become angry (*iracundia*), but instead, showing his “steady self-control (*certissimum moderationis*)” (GD 11.7.11):

The king ordered [Wilhelm] not to be killed, for he had realized that he was impelled to shew severity not by a pointless hatred but by belief in public censure; plagued by guilty scruples, and blushing more grievously for his crime than at his repulse, he retired at once to the palace and displayed a tranquil mien after his humiliating correction, for he had not been unwilling to hear those words of generous indignation (*generosae indignationis*).<sup>37</sup>

The king’s emotional response to the reprimand of the bishop was obviously impeccable, and he followed it up by performing a humiliating ritual, where he substituted his royal robe for a penitential robe, and walked barefoot to the cathedral porch and kissed the ground.<sup>38</sup> After this, all was well; the king was forgiven as the bishop embraced him, wiped away his tears and ordered him to reassume his former robe. The king’s “private grief (*privatum maerorem*)” was removed by “public rejoicing (*publicis interesse tripudiis*)”, we are told (GD 11.7.17). He stayed silent for two days, and on

<sup>36</sup> GD 11.7.13: “Cumque abunde foret repulsam egisse, etiam exsecrationem adiecit nec dubitavit in praesentem damnationis quoque proferre sententiam. Itaque mirifica audacia dubium reliquit, fortius illum manum an voce pulsaverit, quem gravibus admodum contumeliis proculcatum prius linguae, deinde dextrae repulsa multavit inque pectore, quo virtutem ante coluerat, vitium contudit.”

<sup>37</sup> GD 11.7.14: “Cuius rex inhibita nece, cum eum non temeraria offensa, sed publicae severitatis fiducia concitatum animadverteret, conscientiae rubore perfusus scelerisque quam repulsa pudore aegrior, continuo regiam repetit quietamque frontem contumeliose correptus exhibuit nec ipsa quidem generosae indignationis verba invitus audivit.”

<sup>38</sup> This ritual is similar to the ritual Henry IV had to perform in Canossa.

the third he addressed the people during Mass: he confessed to all, praised the indulgence of the bishop, and gave half of Støfns *herred* to the Church. An “unbreakable concord between *regnum* and *sacerdotium*” was thus established, and the ties of friendship between the king and the bishop were re-established, and stronger than ever.<sup>39</sup>

This dispute is framed as an institutional drama between *regnum* and *sacerdotium*, but has within it a lot of signs of personal relationships as well, with their friendship as an essential factor.<sup>40</sup> The offence that starts the dispute is against the Church, and more indirectly against the bishop. The public spectacle of the dispute – including publicly displayed anger by the bishop, and tears of the king – have equivalents in other rituals of submission in the middle ages. Supplications were performed in meekness, often accompanied by tears, in a similar way in Carolingian France, according to Geoffrey Koziol (1991: 60). In many ways, this episode is quite similar to the conflict phases described by Orning: There is anger, public submission and lastly a strengthened friendship, this time consolidated by the gift of Støfns *herred*. The anger of the bishop was a signal that the current situation was unacceptable, because King Svend had disrespected the Church. It signalled to the king that he had to perform a humiliating ritual of penance to restore order and friendship.

However, this episode is also packed with moral judgement. Saxo contrasts the vengeful anger of the king on the one side, with the just anger of the bishop on the other. The king’s anger was personal, uncontrolled and made him do terrible things (it was, in all significant ways, “alcuinian”), whereas the bishop’s anger was rational and explicitly not a sign of “private resentment (*privata ira*)”, but rather was the necessary answer to an “insult to public faith (*publicae religionis iniuria*)”.<sup>41</sup> The bishop’s anger, then, seems to be an episcopal equivalent of the Cristian-inspired notion of the *ira regis*, described by Gerd Althoff. According to Althoff, the kings adopted the righteous anger, that was usually attributed to God, from the 12<sup>th</sup>-century on (Althoff 1998: 70). It seems that a similar Christian inspired anger was given to Wilhelm by Saxo: for while the king’s anger resulted in him killing the men who disrespected him in the most inappropriate place (the church), the bishop punished the king like a loving father would, because “he followed up his reprimand with kindness, and would neither embrace the monarch before he repented, nor spurn him once he had

<sup>39</sup> GD 11.7.20: “Ea res inextricabilem regni sacerdotique concordiam operata est.”

<sup>40</sup> The aspect of friendships in this episode is elaborated by Lars Hermanson (2009: 88–91).

<sup>41</sup> GD 11.7.20. Bruce C. Brasington (2007) finds both “official” and private anger in the sources produced by Bishop Ivo of Chartres (c. 1040–1115). He notes that Ivo wrote angry letters and referred to himself – *ego* – rather than to his official position.

submitted.”<sup>42</sup> Furthermore his anger was not uncontrolled – he was able to hide his feelings and hold back his retribution until the proper time to act<sup>43</sup> – and it was not personal. Wilhelm was angry on behalf of the *Church*; “he put the honour of the public faith before private companionship, and was not unaware that the duties of a bishop are one thing, and the obligations of friendship another, and that sin is to be visited on slaves and masters alike, on noblemen no less than commoners.”<sup>44</sup> Lastly the bishop’s anger was not really directed at the king but at his vice, and was not based on hate but on love. When he struck him, Wilhelm smote “the vice within that breast that once had harboured virtue”. Bishop Wilhelm’s anger was, like Tyge’s, used in a ritualized conflict pattern, but this time the episcopal anger was construed as just, and a part of the duties of his office.

The king recognized the justness of the bishop’s anger, and responded emotionally appropriately, both in public and when he was on his own in the palace. The ritualized emotions displayed by the king were presented by Saxo as virtuous by stressing that they were real and deeply felt. He was grieved, shameful, and repulsed by his action, and when he cried as part of a public ritual, Saxo made sure to make clear that it was not just a performance – it was real. Publicly displayed emotions were an important part of a ritual language, but for Saxo considered virtuous because the feelings were true. Similarly, the politically potent phenomenon of gift giving was only virtuous in *Gesta Danorum* if the gifts were given out of genuine love and generosity and not as part of cynical speculation (Kjær 2012: 202), and the political friendships were only a good thing if they were portrayed as the deep and sincere, spiritual connections of the Greco-Roman friendship discourse.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> GD 11.7.18: “Qua in re paterni affectus habitum plenissime repraesentavit, quod parentis more correptionem blanditiis subsecutus est neque aut elatum amplecti aut demissum aspernari sustinuit.”

<sup>43</sup> Granted, Tyge also hides his anger at one point, but he is pressured into it.

<sup>44</sup> GD 11.7.13: “Enimvero privatae societati publicae religionis verecundiam praetulit, non ignarus alia esse familiaritatis officia, alia sacerdotii iura, quibus servorum aequae ac dominorum neque ingenuorum parcius quam ignobilium flagitia vindicari par est.”

<sup>45</sup> Hermanson 2009: 88–96. Similarly, extensive, pious weeping was, according to Katherine Harvey, a characteristic of saintly bishops in medieval England, but “[d]espite their admiration of religious weeping, medieval Christians did not simply take those who wept at face value; there was a great deal of concern about hypocrisy, and corresponding willingness to challenge those who were believed to be feigning pious emotions.” “Ideally, then,” Harvey writes, “a bishop’s private tears needed to be shed in a quasi-domestic environment such as his chapel or bedchamber, to which the general public were denied access but where his activities might be observed by his closest associates” (Harvey 2014: 608).

Absalon's anger is not described in quite as grand terms as Wilhelm's, but there are signs that we should view it in the same way. Wilhelm is compared to an angry but loving father, and Bishop Absalon's anger is also described using a parental metaphor, in another episode. At this point he acts more like a military leader than a bishop, though that was his title. In this episode the Rugians are said to have wanted to make peace with the Danes, and to have elected a man called Domabor to act as their *diplomati*. In order to avoid Absalon's anger he submitted unconditionally and proclaimed:

Nothing has been done that you should repel us, as unworthy of your protection, from participating in that clemency which has never been denied to any suppliant. And though spurned, we throw ourselves again and again at your feet, imitating the persistence of boys who however fiercely they have been thrashed by their angry mother (*iratae matris*), attempt all more eagerly to fly to her lap. Because if you think we have not been punished enough, you may safely satisfy your anger (*iram*) as much as you please. You may lay waste our fields, burn down our settlements, destroy our cities, massacre our people, but we approach you with prayers, not arms, to seek a remission of warfare.<sup>46</sup>

It is not exactly clear how we should interpret the maternal metaphor. One should think that Absalon would prefer being compared to a father, like Wilhelm. Nevertheless, this is a classic supplication ritual in which Absalon was given the opportunity to as a lord to present himself in a way similar to God when He is asked for forgiveness and mercy (Koziol 1991; Orning 2009). Domabor's speech was effective, underlining that Absalon was not in an enraged state and that he was not hateful. He was rather mild and forgiving and did not get carried away by his anger. The episode shows the Rugians' supplication to Absalon, for which they expected not only to rid themselves of his anger and enmity, but also to be placed under *his* protection, even though the final decision was made by the king.

Archbishop Eskil (1136–1177) of Lund had a troubled relationship with both King Valdemar and Bishop Absalon, and this is clearly reflected in *Gesta Danorum*. How-

<sup>46</sup> GD 14.25.24. "Nil factum est", inquit, "quod homines patrocini tui indignos ab illius clementiae sinu repellas, quam nemo supplicum umquam difficilem habuit. Etenim repulsi identidem tuis genibus advolvemur, puerorum perseverantiam imitaturi, qui, quo atrocius iratae matris verberibus lacerantur, hoc avidius eius gremiis allabi nituntur. Quod si parum supplicii de nobis sumptum creditis, iram vestram, quoad libet, cladibus nostris impune exsartare poteritis. Vastentur licet agri, exurantur vici, evertantur urbes, trucidentur populi, precibus vobiscum, non armis agemus, pro bello veniam quaesituri."

ever, when Occo, supported by King Valdemar, was appointed as bishop of Schleswig by Frederick Barbarossa's counter-pope Victor IV both Eskil, Absalon and Saxo agreed that it was "unholy (*sacrilegio*)". "Sedulous in the interest of the Catholic party, Eskillus cursed this trafficking in spiritual affairs, and all who countenanced it, and greatly exacerbated the king."<sup>47</sup> As the dispute between the king and the bishop gradually turned into "hatred and hostility (*invidiam*)", Eskil summoned Absalon and complained both about Valdemar's support of Occo, and about being spurned and laughed at by the king. He even accused the king of stealing money from him, though Saxo denies that Valdemar could have had anything to do with the theft. Eskil now let Absalon know that he wanted to declare war against King Valdemar, and that he wanted Absalon's help "not so much for mediation, as for war". "Absalon", we are told, "feared to reproach so great a man openly for his opinion, and restraining him mildly, he pointed out the error of his impatience [...]"<sup>48</sup> He also refused to attack his friend, saying that "[t]he claim of my engagement to you does not make me so compliant that I will ignore the obligations of love and attack a lord who is so dear to me, and to whom I am bound both in fidelity, and by the dues of friendship."<sup>49</sup> Eskil's response to Absalon's reply was that he was "[d]riven wild with anger (*ad summum irae*)" (GD 14.26.7), once again in a context where hierarchical bonds were challenged.

At this point Absalon was, reluctantly, sent to Valdemar with a message from Eskil. "[T]he King was exceptionally angry", and answered so threateningly that Eskil's "impatience turned to fear, and he was as panic-stricken as he had previously been angry (*furoris*)."<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> GD 14.26.4: "Quem Eskillus catholicae partis aemulatione inter rei divinae actionem cum suis fautoribus exsecratus, magnopere regem permovit."

<sup>48</sup> GD 14.26.5: "Veritus Absalon palam tanti viri sententiam obiurgare, temperato reprehensoris officio, impatientiae eius errore modesto genere castigationis exceptit, regis integritatem deformi notatu perquam indignam iudicando, eiusque conscientiam, collatis innocentiae rationibus, ab omni suspicionis turpitudine alienissimam comprobando."

<sup>49</sup> GD 14.26.6: "Sed neque cervicem meam eo usque sponsionis titulus obnoxiam facit, ut amatissimum mihi herum, cui tum fidei, tum etiam amicitiae stipendiis obligor, neglectis caritatis officiis, attentare sustineam." It is interesting that Saxo celebrated Bishop Wilhelm for putting "the honour of the public faith before private companionship, and was not unaware that the duties of a bishop are one thing, and the obligations of friendship another [...]", while Absalon is said to have disregarded his dues to Archbishop Eskil because his bonds of fidelity and friendship to King Valdemar.

<sup>50</sup> GD 14.26.8: "Quibus Eskillus ex Gerardo cognitis, impatientiam metu mutavit, tantumque ei pavoris surrepsit, quantum prius furoris incesserat."

The king then besieged a castle held by Eskil's men, and a hostage, Eskil's grandson, was given by the keepers of the castle (described as "weak in spirit") as a guarantee that they would surrender it. When Eskil received reports of this, he made it clear in his reply that he was more concerned with his castle than with his grandchildren, and ordered them not to give it up. At this point a letter with a false seal surfaced. Claiming that it was from Eskil, the letter stated that the archbishop "loved his nephew [?] better than his castle . . . and therefore he ordered them to surrender quickly before he were killed." The former letter, it said, was "the result not of reflection but of anger (*irae non deliberationis*)."<sup>51</sup> The castle was then given up. It was not clear who was behind this trickery, but Valdemar was suspected. Eskil, who "never bore anything so ill in all his life" (GD 14.26.13) was forced to regain the friendship of the king.

So, what function does anger serve in this episode? The account starts by giving Eskil a just cause: the king's support of the schismatic Bishop Occo *was* unacceptable. Soon, however, emotions took over, and the dispute turned to "hatred and hostility". In this way the anger of both the king and the archbishop was everything that Bishop Wilhelm's anger was not: it was hateful, hostile and out of control. Presumably the inclusion Eskil's wild accusation of Valdemar stealing from him was a way of depriving Eskil's anger of justness, since he started out with a just cause. Eskil is also portrayed as "wild with anger" when Bishop Absalon frankly advised him not to attack Valdemar, and this echoes several episodes in *Gesta Danorum*, where kings are angry with their advisors for being honest rather than flattering in their well-meant advice.

In both the case of Eskil and Valdemar, anger seems to have been used to give the conflict a negative spin. The justness of Eskil's cause is washed away by his emotions, and by his unjustified accusations. Valdemar is also portrayed as deceitful, and his anger can hardly be characterized as just either. It in no way resembles Bishop Wilhelm's anger, and when Eskil regains the friendship of Valdemar, it is through gifts, not through feeling and displaying the appropriate emotions.

In *Gesta Danorum*, then, as in the sources from Øm Abbey, anger is a potent moral question that could be used to construct narratives of heroes and villains. The ambivalent discourse of anger meant that chroniclers could decide how the anger of the characters was to be interpreted, and anger could also be constructed in order to get a point across.

<sup>51</sup> GD 14.26.11. "Harum series habebat maiore Eskillum nepotis quam urbis caritate teneri parumque sibi milites placituros, si rei ignobilis curam pertinacius gerendo nobilissimi adolescentis salutem periclitari paterentur; quamobrem iubere se exitium eius maturata deditioe praecurri. Quod vero superiore mandato tutelam urbis incolumitati nepotis praeferendam decreverit, irae, non deliberationis fuisse praeceptum."

### Anger in *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*

*Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* (*The Saga of Hákon Hákonsson*) (dated 1265) was written by the Icelandic magnate and historian Sturla Þórðarson, and unlike the other sources it was not written in a clerical environment. Commissioned by the Norwegian king Magnus Lagabøte (Magnus the Lawmender) just after Hákon Hákonsson's death, it is the latest of the king's sagas,<sup>52</sup> and it is the one in which the notion of a *rex iustus* is most apparent.<sup>53</sup> Despite the author's background as an Icelandic magnate, Marlen Ferrer considers *Hákonar saga* to convey the "emotional regime" of the Norwegian court. Contrary to many other Icelandic sagas, which convey an "emotional heroism" that venerates more or less free expression of aggressive emotions (especially as part of the feuding process), she claims that *Hákonar saga* promotes emotional self-control. According to Ferrer: "Sturla depicts Hákon as trying to delimit aggressive emotions to the field of war" (Ferrer 2008: 426), and she attributes this to a socially distinguishing emotional regime with which the ever stronger royal power pacified the Norwegian nobility (Ferrer 2008: 431).

One should, however, not exaggerate this aspect. In my own reading of the saga it appears difficult to conclude on a consistent moral judgement of anger, much more so than in the other three sources. Both Ferrer and Orning stress the Christian idea of the *rex iustus* in the saga, and that the king, unlike everybody else, could get away with anger without negative connotations. They both consider *Hákonar saga* to convey the same ideal of royal anger that Althoff describes, but they both, it seems, find the grounds for emphasising this aspect as much in *Konungs skuggsiá*, as in *Hákonar saga* itself.<sup>54</sup> The emphasis on the distinctly royal *rex iustus*-aspect of acceptable anger can be adjusted by looking at *episcopal* anger in the saga.

The function of anger revealed in *Hákonar saga* is to induce fear in order to make sure people were loyal or acted in a specific way. People are repeatedly reported to have avoided spiting men of authority in fear of their anger. Anger has a similar function in letters of privileges and letters of protection (common in both medieval Scandinavia and Europe) where the king often threatened anyone disregarding the letter with his own or, even more commonly, God's or some of the saints' anger. The vernacular Norse term for anger most commonly used in the saga and in these kinds of letters is *reiði* (*styggr* is a much rarer term, and *bræði* is a term for rage, not associated with legitimate anger). When Hákon Hákonsson gave the town of Stavanger to Stavanger Cathedral he (probably in cooperation with the bishop of Stavanger) threat-

<sup>52</sup> Only fragments are preserved of Magnus' own saga.

<sup>53</sup> For more on this see Bagge 1996.

<sup>54</sup> Orning 2008; Orning 2009; Ferrer 2008, especially pp. 147–148.

ened anyone who did not respect this gift with “*heilagrar kirkiu hende banne oc Guðs-reiði*” (the excommunication of the Holy Church and the anger of God),<sup>55</sup> in the same way that the pope via letters threatened with “*iram Dei*” (the anger of God) (DN XVII 2).

In this context we can interpret a saga episode where King Håkon’s men did not want to fight the group called “Ribbungene”, who were revolting,<sup>56</sup> because Earl Skule (later Duke) and Archbishop Peter demanded that the parties sat down and tried to reach a settlement first. Håkon’s men, we are told, “would have easily won had they sailed in [to face “Ribbungene” in Oslo], but they did not want to risk the excommunication of the archbishop and the anger of the earl (*banni erkibyskups ok reiði jarls*)”.<sup>57</sup>

Another episode in the saga shows the same aspect, though the forecasted anger was ultimately less effective: In 1217, Håkon was yet to be recognized as the one true and undisputed king of Norway. Archbishop Guttorm did not favour him, and the canons in Nidaros refused to release the shrine of St. Olaf for use in the ceremony that should settle the matter. While Håkon was in Bergen, the following happened:

At daybreak the next morning Dagfinn bonde came to them from the town and said that a letter had arrived from the canons [in Nidaros] to the bishop elect [Håvard] and the canons in Bergen, saying that they should not show King Håkon any honour. Dagfinn said that he thought he and his men were caught in a difficult situation, because they feared the anger of the archbishop and the canons (*reiði erkibyskups ok kórsbræðra*) . . .<sup>58</sup>

Dagfinn bonde was one of the men closest to Håkon, and decided to stay loyal to him. With the king present in Bergen, the local canons also said that they “would gladly show the king all due honour, and that they did not want to buy the friendship of the archbishop and the canons [in Nidaros] and thus lose the friendship of the

<sup>55</sup> “Kong Håkon Håkonssons stadfesting av gavebrev på byen av Stavanger til Stavanger domkirke” (DN I 51) in NMD: 82.

<sup>56</sup> This was the late Civil War Period.

<sup>57</sup> Holtsmark 2008: 149. HHs ch. CLI: “Hefði Birkibeinar unnit hinn fegrsta sigr ef þeir hefði inn siglt, en þeir kváðusk eigi vildu verða fyrir banni erkibyskups ok reiði jarls.” Once again, anger and excommunication follow each other.

<sup>58</sup> Holtsmark 2008: 40. HHs ch. XXI: “Um morgininn í dagan kom til þeira Dagfinnr bóndi ór bænum ok sagði at bréf hafði komit norðan frá kórsbræðrum til byskupsefnis ok kórsbræðra í Björgyn, at þeir skyldi enga tign veita Hákonni konungi. Sagði Dagfinnr at þeir þóttusk við vanda um komnir, því at þeir óttuðusk reiði erkibyskups ok kórsbræðr . . .”.



king.”<sup>59</sup> The letter, that must have been styled quite threateningly, indicates that Bishop Elect Håvard and the canons in Bergen had a much better relationship to King Håkon than their “colleagues” in Nidaros did.

We do not get to know anything about what happened between the Church leaders in Bergen and Nidaros, other than that the relationship was not strained for long. According to the saga, Dagfinn and his men did not get into trouble either. The threatening anger – that was probably rather an implicit logical and predictable implication of disregarding the letter – nevertheless seems to be signalling a potential breach of loyalty. What kind of loyalty Dagfinn and his men owed the archbishop, we do not know, but it seems they also had reasons to think twice before acting against his will. We get the sense that even within the Church organization unconditional loyalty to the archbishop (loyalty unaffected by other social and political bonds and the presence or absence of the archbishop) was not a given, and that anger in these cases was a potent political weapon.<sup>60</sup>

One might claim that these episodes express a negative judgement of episcopal anger, after all the anger does not work in Håkon’s favour. However, I think it is noted as quite neutral, pragmatic and demonstrative. It seems reasonable to assume that the fear of anger is not referring to a fear that in Nidaros an archbishop and multiple canons were individually in an enraged state that made them unable to think straight. It is probably rather a fear that the anger signalled long term enmity, and the anger should thus be interpreted more as a semi-legal state of lost favour, similar to the royal anger described by Jolliffe. At the other end of the scale there is certainly nothing sacred about the anger, as with Bishop Wilhelm’s anger in *Gesta Danorum*.

Another episode in the saga illustrates that episcopal anger is noted quite neutrally and pragmatically: King Håkon Håkonsson was challenged by the Duke Skule Bårds-son, who in 1239 took advantage of the absence of Håkon and Archbishop Sigurd, and arranged a ceremony to receive the title of king at the important Øreting in Trondheim. The episode forced the archbishop – a keen supporter of Håkon – to face the disloyalty of church representatives who were present:

That autumn, when the duke [Skule] had let himself receive the title of king, Archbishop Sigurd had become angry [(*reiðr*)] with Abbot Bjørn at Munkhol-

<sup>59</sup> Holtsmark 2008: 39, 41. HHs ch. 22: “Kórsbræðr svara svá at þeir vildi gjarna gera konungi alla sæmð, kváðusk eigi svá skyldu kaupa vingan erkibyskups eða kórsbræðra í Þrándheimi at týna þar í mót konungs vingan.”

<sup>60</sup> This is exactly the dimension of anger in Orning’s *Unpredictability and Presence* (2008). Orning sees the bonds of loyalty as contextual rather than absolute, and this was a problem for which anger was helpful.

men [a Benedictine monastery], both because of things he had done, and because he had participated in Skules plans. For all this the archbishop excommunicated the abbot. The abbot did not like this at all, and appealed to the pope.<sup>61</sup>

What obligations Björn had towards the archbishop was obviously disputable, and the archbishop's authority, at least the *reach* of the authority, was disputed. Instead of settling with the archbishop, Björn appealed to the pope. The saga does not reveal whether a settlement was offered before this, but looking at the sources it seems very likely, since the goal of the excommunication was often (maybe always) to reintegrate the excommunicated into Christian society and to the favour of the bishop in question.<sup>62</sup> Much is unknown about the aftermath of this particular conflict,<sup>63</sup> but the archbishop was on Håkon's side, and no clear moral connotations are attached to the anger.

When Archbishop Einar Smjorbak in 1260 elected a bishop for Hamar bishopric, against the king's will; we are told the new bishop Loden was "no friend of the king". The king was thus angry with Einar ("því gerði hann styggð á til erkibyskups"), and appealed against him to the pope, and this in turn made the archbishop angry ("varð erkibyskups við þat hinn styggvasti") (HHs ch. CCCLXII). Their anger was removed when Håkon's son Magnus arranged a settlement meeting between the two where they agreed on a new candidate. The anger of both is portrayed in exactly the same "sterile" way, and even though Archbishop Einar was not a friend of Håkon's, he is not portrayed as a "bad guy". We know from the saga that he was a good friend of Håkon's sons, including the patron of the saga, Magnus Lagabøte. This episode thus illustrates the limits of the Christian *rex iustus*-anger in *Hákonar saga*.

<sup>61</sup> Holtsmark 2008: 230. HHs ch. CCXLII: "Sigurðr erkibyskups varð reiðr Birni ábóta í Hólmi um haustit þá er hertugi hafði látit gefa sér konungsnafn, ok bæði fyrir þær sakir er hann hafði sjálfir gert ok svá fyrir þat er hann var í ráði með hertuga um hans tiltæki. Ok fyrir þetta allt saman bannsetti erkibyskup ábóta. Honum líkaði þetta stórilla, ok fyrir því appellaði hann erkibyskup til páfa".

<sup>62</sup> See Geary 1994 and Boye 2012. It is also unclear – if it indeed was the case that Björn was offered a settlement – whether he refused because the terms were too one-sided, or if he simply did not recognize the accusations against him.

<sup>63</sup> The fate of Björn's relationship to the archbishop is also clouded by the fact that Håkon, the main character in the saga, was betrayed by him as well. The only thing we get to know is that Björn is granted settlement (*grið*) by the *king*, nothing more about him and the archbishop.

## Conclusions

In medieval chronicles tears of joy, grief or regret flow heavily, and anger, hate, and love is portrayed with great intensity, governing the characters in ways that sometimes make them seem irrational. Norbert Elias claimed that this was because people in the Middle Ages had not yet been “civilized” in a way that made them act according to rational thought rather than emotional impulses. Elias’ theory became hugely influential, but it has also been accused of reducing people in the middle ages to irrational, childlike minds. Historians influenced by historical anthropology have tried to rationalize the strong emotions in medieval sources by seeing them as social and political semiotics. Public displays of anger could thus be seen as a demonstration of legitimate power, flowing tears as a way of submitting to a lord, and strong love between aristocratic men as a way of cementing a political alliance. Some scholars take the view that this rationalisation of emotion has gone too far. The reducing of anger to social and political semiotics has been criticized by Geoffrey Koziol, who is himself interested in the ritual language of power in the Middle Ages. “Such analyses”, he writes:

... cannot explain a situation in which honour counts so much to an individual who believes he has suffered an affront that he is willing to violate all the rules, risk everything, lay hands on the Lord’s anointed, make a scene in a public gathering, assassinate a court favourite. For Althoff and many others, these have become nothing but signs. But where all emotion has become nothing but a sign that one wishes to renegotiate an ongoing, dyadic relationship, what has happened to the emotions that people felt, to the ideals they valued, the values that gave them their identity. If honour and rank were so important to men and women of the tenth century, are we to believe that they really didn’t get angry when they suffered affronts to their honour and rank? (Koziol 2002: 382)

This critical quotation illustrates the fact that anger is not *one* phenomenon with *one* set meaning. Chroniclers do, however, often seem to describe a dispute pattern where displays of anger play a more or less predictable part in the public spectacle of resolving a conflict. Anger was publicly transformed into friendship. The use of anger seems to have had an incredibly stable function in the disputing discourse, visible in all the sources used in this article, and with parallels across medieval Europe. In this article, it is argued that *bishops* in 13<sup>th</sup>-century Denmark and Norway could use anger in a similar manner; none of the sources seem to claim that legitimate anger was nec-

essarily restricted to the king, as it has usually been assumed.<sup>64</sup> To have evoked the bishop's anger was to be in a state in which you had lost his favour, and had to compensate and submit to him, often publicly, to regain it. While Marlen Ferrer perceives the emotions in *Hákonar saga* as signalling the end of feuding society, my analysis of episcopal anger (in all the sources) indicates societies where politics still had some feud-like aspects to it.<sup>65</sup>

Despite its stable functions the sources also reveal shifting meanings of episcopal anger, which were used by the chroniclers to portray bishops as good or bad, depending on the political aim of their narrative. This corresponds to Phillippe Buc's theory of the plasticity of the meaning of rituals. The ambiguous view of anger in the Danish ecclesiastical sources made it a perfect phenomenon around which to construct interpretations of an event. Saxo and the monks at Øm abbey used an anger discourse based on a line of theological thinkers – from Augustine, to Gregory the Great, to Alcuin – in order to construct moral narratives with heroes and villains. Anger is, according to their view, either driven by hate, hostility and unreason, or by love, reason, duty and justice, and the chronicler decides how we should interpret it.

In *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* we are faced with different view of anger. The Icelandic magnate Sturla Þórðarson does not present anger as either genuine or false, hateful or based on love, uncontrolled or explicitly rational. The dichotomy of just and unjust anger is far less important, and he does not try to contrast a just royal anger with unjust episcopal anger.<sup>66</sup> There *are* admittedly traces of a distinctly Christian discourse of anger in *Hákonar saga*, comparable to the ones in the Danish ecclesiastical sources. Legitimate anger is always expressed by authority figures, suggesting that it was limited to them, and maybe it was, as Barton suggest, an “*imitatio regis*”.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>64</sup> It is, however, peculiar that kings occasionally mention their anger in letters and official documents, whereas episcopal anger is, as far as I can tell, confined to the narrative sources. The concept of lordly anger also occurs three times in the skaldic poems quoted in the saga (HHs chs. 78, 125, 164), twice as King Hákon's anger, and once it is Earl Skule's.

<sup>65</sup> Orning also sees the ideology as different from the historical practice. He takes the view that the discrepancy between ideology and political practice is due to the fact that royal anger was flexible and could be exploited in a political reality quite different from the one portrayed in *Konungs skuggsiá*.

<sup>66</sup> In *Sturlunga saga* Sturla does write about episcopal anger outside the norms of the acceptable. The saga tells us that Bishop Heinrek: “. . . was now very angry and directed many abusive words to Þorgils, words not proper to write down here” (translation from Ferrer 2008: 239). Ferrer points out that Sturla's censorship indicates that the bishop moved outside the behavioural norms.

<sup>67</sup> Barton 1998: 159. A hierarchical view of anger is suggested in the Icelandic *Árna saga biskups*, from about 1300: In Iceland, in the spring of 1287, the magnate and representative of

However, Sturla is far more pragmatic than idealistic in his portrayal of episcopal anger. Lars Hermanson has claimed that political friendships in *Gesta Danorum* are legitimized by being ideologically packaged and portrayed as the deep and sincere, spiritual connections of the classical Greco-Roman friendship discourse (Hermanson 2009: 88–96). In *Hákonar saga* political friendships are not described as deep or genuinely sentimental; they are seemingly unashamedly pragmatic, and this kind of pragmatism seems to affect the portrayal of anger as well. At least, the mind-clouding anger from Saxo has no prominent position, and though authority figures may be angry, they are rarely enraged or explicitly hateful.

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the Norwegian king, Ravn Oddsson, demanded that members of the Icelandic lay aristocracy should force the *staðr* (land attached to the churches) from the priests Bishop Árni Þorláksson had set to care for them. *Árna saga biskups* then interestingly states that: “[m]any were unwilling, because they knew with certainty that they would feel the bishop’s anger (*reiði*) and excommunication if they acted against his will” (Ásb ch. 120). Later the bishop excommunicates the ones acting against his will, all but Ravn and the men closest to him, and the saga states that the reason was that he did not want them to accuse him of “inflicting shame and injury to the Holy Christendom on account of his rage (*bræði*)” (Ásb ch. 123). This indicates that Arne’s excommunications were usually seen as legitimate anger, but when directed against the top of the social hierarchy it could be construed as rage.

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