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# Role of the *Life of Archbishop Unni of Hamburg* in the *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*

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## 1. *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* and the *Life of Archbishop of Unni of Hamburg*

*Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* (later *Gesta*) is one of the most important German historical writings from the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> The *Gesta* is among the *Gesta episcoporum* ('deeds of bishops'), one of the typologies of historical sources that record a series of lives of bishops in a particular bishopric. It is supposed to have been written by Adam, a canon of the chapter of Bremen, around 1075.<sup>2</sup> The whole of the *Gesta* is divided into four books, the first three of which consist mostly of a series of biographies of 16 (arch)bishops, from the first bishop, Willehad of Bremen (–789), to Archbishop Adalbert of Hamburg (–1072).<sup>3</sup> The first 63 chapters, which form Book 1 of the *Gesta*, deal with the geography of Saxony, its evangelization by St Boniface, and nine lives of the (arch)bishops of Bremen and Hamburg, from Willehad to Unni (–936). While Book 2, comprising 82 chapters, relates six bishops' lives, from Adaldag (–988) to Bezelin (1035–43), 78 chapters of Book 3 are allocated solely to the life of Archbishop Adalbert of Hamburg (–1072), to whom the *Gesta* itself is dedicated. Book 4, the most impressive part of the *Gesta*, then describes the geography of the North (Scandinavia and the Baltic region) in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup>

For all of those who are interested in early Scandinavian history, the *Gesta* gives important information in two ways. First, in it we can find much information about Scandinavian history that is otherwise accessible to us only after the *Life of St Ansgar* was written by Rimbert in the latter

1 See the critical edition with German translation, "Magister Adam Bremensis, *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*", in: W. Trillmich & R. Buchner (eds.), *Quellen des 9. und 11. Jahrhunderts zur Geschichte der hamburgischen Kirche und des Reiches*, 7th edn. (AQdGA 11). Darmstadt 2000, pp. 135–503 (Later AB).

2 For basic studies of the *Gesta*, see B. Schmeidler, *Hamburg-Bremen und Nord-Ost Europa vom 9. bis 11. Jahrhundert. Kritische Untersuchungen zur Hamburgischen Kirchengeschichte des Adam von Bremen zu Hamburger Urkunden und zur nordischen und wendischen Geschichte*. Leipzig 1918; A. Trommer, "Komposition und Tendenz in der hamburgischen Kirchengeschichte Adam von Bremens", *Classica et Mediaevalia* 18 (1957), pp. 207–257.

3 The early history of the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen is complicated. In 831 the bishopric of Hamburg was begun under the reign of Louis the Pious, and in 832 Ansgar was made the first archbishop by receiving the *pallium* from the hand of Pope Gregory IV. As the archbishopric was devastated by the Danes in 847, Ansgar gained the then vacant bishopric of Bremen with its benefice. After this, the archbishopric of Hamburg and the bishopric of Bremen were amalgamated into the one archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen. See "Hamburg-Bremen" *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. 4. Köln 1989, col. 1885–1889.

4 M. Sot, *Gesta episcoporum, gesta abbatum* (Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental 37). Turnhout 1981; R. Kaiser, "Die *gesta episcoporum* als genus der Geschichtsschreibung", in: A. Scharer & G. Scheibelreiter (eds.), *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*. Wien 1994, pp. 459–480.

half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> The *Gesta* concentrates on the political situation of kingship, especially of Denmark and Sweden (partly of Norway) in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, a timeframe for which we have no primary sources except the *Gesta*.<sup>6</sup> Second, we can glean from it geographical and topographical information about the North. Before the *Gesta* appeared, the geography of the North was described only in the above-mentioned *Life of Ansgar* and in the Old English translation version of the *World History* by Orosius in c. 890.<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that the geographical data of the *Gesta* are more detailed than those of the former two sources.<sup>8</sup>

The *Life of Archbishop Unni of Hamburg* (later the *Life of Unni*) appears as the last section of Book 1 of the *Gesta*. It consists of 10 chapters (from chapters 54 to 63). According to the chronology that the *Gesta* gives us, Unni was an archbishop of Hamburg for 18 years, from October 1, 918 to September 17, 936.<sup>9</sup> Here I shall sketch an outline of the *Life of Unni*; the process of Unni's becoming archbishop (ch. 54), the process of Danish king Gorm(=Hadeknud) surrendering to King Henry I of Germany (ch. 55–58), the failure of Gorm's conversion and the success of King Harald's accepting the Christian faith in Denmark (ch. 59), Unni's arrival at Birka and his evangelization of Sweden (ch. 60–61), Unni's death (ch. 62), and the praising of Unni (ch. 63). Taking the whole story of the *Life of Unni* into consideration, we could conclude that the section of the *Life of Unni* is regarded as, to use Ian Wood's words, a brief, but very missionary life of Unni.<sup>10</sup>

The *Life of Unni* is different from the other nine lives contained in Book 1 in two ways. First, the largest number of chapters is assigned to the *Life of Unni* of all the lives of Book 1, except those of Ansgar and Rimbert, who were the founders of the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen. This is probably because the author, Adam, was particularly interested in the life of Unni (See appendix 1). Second, we can point to the fact that the *Life of Unni* is not only the record of the reign of an archbishop, but also a description of the evangelization of the North, i.e. missionary life. Unni was the first bishop of Hamburg to have evangelized Southern Scandinavia after St Ansgar, called the "Apostle of the North", accomplished the deed in the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Doubtlessly the *Life of St Ansgar*, written in the latter part of the 9<sup>th</sup> century by his follower Rimbert, influenced the historiographical style of the *Life of Unni*.<sup>11</sup> This is manifested in the phrase that appears in chapter 60: "following the footsteps of Ansgar".<sup>12</sup>

The *Life of Unni* has a special meaning in early Danish history because it gives us the only known written source of information on Gorm the Old, the supposed founder of the Jelling dynasty,

5 "Rimbert, Vita Anskarii", in: Trillmich & Buchner (eds.), *Quellen des 9. und 11. Jahrhunderts zur Geschichte der hamburgischen Kirche und des Reiches*, pp. 1–133.

6 Recently the number of the younger generation of scholars to analyze the *Gesta* is increasing. For example: V. Scior, *Das Eigene und das Fremde: Identität und Fremdheit in den Chroniken Adams von Bremen, Helmolds von Bosau und Arnolds von Lübeck*. Berlin 2002; D. Fraesdorff, *Die barbarische Norden. Vorstellung und Fremdeitskategorien bei Rimbert, Thietmar von Merseburg, Adam von Bremen, Helmold von Bosau*. Berlin 2005.

7 J. M. Bately (ed.), *The Old English Orosius* (Early English Text Society, Supplementary series). Oxford 1980; K. Malone, "King Alfred's North: a study in Medieval geography", *Speculum* 5 (1930), pp. 139–167.

8 A. A. Bjørnbo, "Adam af Bremens Nordensopfattelse", *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* (1909), pp. 120–244; W. Schlüter, "Adams von Bremen geographische Vorstellung vom Norden", *Hansische Geschichtsblätter* 16 (1910), pp. 555–570.

9 There is very little personal information about Unni. We can obtain prosopographical datum after Unni: see G. Glaeske, *Die Erzbischöfe von Hamburg-Bremen als Reichsfürsten (937–1258)*. Hildesheim 1962.

10 I. Wood, *The missionary life. Saints and evangelisation of Europe, 400–1050*. London 2001.

11 Recent historiography about the Life of Ansgar, see J. M. Palmer, "Rimbert's *Vita Anskarii* and Scandinavian mission in the ninth century", *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 55 (2004), pp. 235–256; J. M. Palmer, "Anskar's imagined communities", in: H. Antonsson & I. H. Garopzanov (eds.), *Saints and their lives on the periphery. Veneration of saints in Scandinavia and eastern Europe (c. 1000–1200)*. Turnhout 2010, pp. 171–188; E. Knibbs, *Ansgar, Rimbert and the forged foundations of Hamburg-Bremen*. Aldershot 2011.

12 AB, I–60: Deinde vectigali secutus sancti predicatoris Ansgarii.

which is the oldest known dynasty in the history of Denmark.<sup>13</sup> However, the written information about the Jelling kings in the *Life of Unni* is not always an accurate record of historical fact. The first problem is that Gnupa, not Gorm, was defeated by the German king, Henry I, and paid him tribute. Gnupa was a king of “Hedeby kingdom”, which was situated around the southern part of the Jutlandic peninsula, whose center was an emporium called Hedeby.<sup>14</sup> This story of this kingdom, though controversial, does not seem to be concerned with the above-mentioned Jelling dynasty. This is made clear by the testimony of Widukind of Corvey, who was in close connection with the Liudolfing family from which King Henry I stemmed, as set out in his *History of the Saxons* in the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup> The second problem pertains to the account that Unni could have evangelized Denmark under the rulership of King Harald Bluetooth (–987). According to the *Life of Luotgar*, written by Archbishop Bruno of Cologne and Widukind, Harald was only converted after 960.<sup>16</sup> This chronology does not accord with the year of the death of Unni (936).<sup>17</sup> Some historians have long claimed that Adam of Bremen’s history contains a large number of factual errors.<sup>18</sup> Did Adam’s carelessness or ignorance cause these “errors” in the *Life of Unni*?

## 2. Adam’s making history: problems concerning the sources of information

### (1) Sources of Adam’s historical writing

First of all I shall reveal what kinds of sources Adam of Bremen depended on when writing his *Life of Unni*. Archbishop Unni of Hamburg, who is a prominent figure in the *Life of Unni*, lived from the latter part of the 9<sup>th</sup> century to the early 10<sup>th</sup> century. That means that Unni lived over one century before Adam wrote his life in 1075. So, unlike Ansgar, whose life can be reconstructed on the basis of Rimbert’s biography, various kinds of sources would be needed to produce a putative biography of Unni.<sup>19</sup> Here we have to remember that there was great discrepancy between the account before and that after the *Life of Unni* regarding the remaining historical sources Adam depended on. Adam tells us in chapter 52 of Book 1 of the *Gesta*:

In the second year of the Lord Hoger, Louis the Child was buried, and Conrad, the duke of the Franconians, raised to the throne. With this [death of] Louis the ancient stock of Charles came

13 For general information on the Jelling dynasty, see Th. Ramskou, *Normannertiden 600–1060*. København 1962, p. 415–; A. E. Christensen, *Vikingetidens Danmark paa oldhistorisk baggrund*. København 1969, pp. 223–241; P. H. Sawyer, *Da Danmark blev Danmark. 700–1050*. København 1988; B. & P. H. Sawyer, *Die Welt der Wikinger* (Die Deutschen und das europäische Mittelalter). Berlin 2002, pp. 174–201; N. Hybel, *Danmark in Europe 750–1300*. København 2003. From an archaeological perspective, E. Roesdahl, “Denmark—a thousand years ago”, in: P. Urbanczyk (ed.), *Europe around the year 1000*. Warszawa 2001, pp. 351–366; Id., “The emergence of Denmark and the reign of Harald Bluetooth”, in: S. Brink (ed.), *The Viking world*. London 2008, pp. 652–664.

14 On the origin of the Hedeby kingdom, see L. Jacobsen, *Svenskeveldets Fald: Studier til Danmarks Oldhistorie i filologisk og runologisk Lys*. København 1929.

15 “Die Sachsengeschichte des Widukinds von Korvei”, in: A. Bauer, & R. Rau (eds.), *Quellen zur Geschichte der sächsischen Kaiserzeit* (AqdGM 8). Darmstadt 1971, 1–40, p. 57: Cum autem omnes incircuitu nationis subiecisset, Danos, qui navali latrocinio Fresones incersabant, cum exercitu adiit vicique, et tributaries faciens, regem eorum nomine Chnubam baptismum percipere fecit.

16 M. Gelting, “The kingdom of Denmark”, in: N. Berend ed. *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus’ c. 900–1200*. Cambridge 2007, pp. 73–120.

17 I. Ott (ed.), *Ruotgers Lebensbeschreibung des Erzbischofs Bruno von Köln* (MGH SS n.s. 10). Köln-Graz 1958, ch. 40: Imminet regno illi, quod reticendum non est, seva clades, Nordannorum gens, quibus in piratico latrocinio non sunt alii exercitiores. His ex magna iam parte preda erat populus dissensione et civili pernitie assuetus. Quod illis super fuerat, inter se domestica seditione consumperant. Egit autem provida dispensatio rectoris nostri, qui, quoniam hominem se esse intellexit, humani nihil alienum a se putavit, egit, inquam, ut ad se quasi ad tutissimum portum confugerent omnes, qui quietem et pacem amarent. Ipsorum etiam barbarorum immanitatem et intolerandam dudum ferociam mitigavit. Siquidem eodem tempore et rex eorum Haroldus com magna sue multitudine gentis regi regum Christo colla subittens vanitatem respuit idolorum.

18 B. Sawyer, & P. H. Sawyer, “Adam and Eve of Scandinavian history”, in: P. Magdalino (ed.), *The perception of the past in twelfth-century Europe*. London 1992, pp. 37–51.

19 As a general introduction to what Adam depended on as sources of his historical writing, see Trillmich & Buchner (eds.), *Quellen des 9. und 11. Jahrhunderts zur Geschichte der hamburgischen Kirche und des Reiches*, pp. 147–150.

to an end. To this point also extends the *History of the Franks*. What we shall henceforth relate we have found in various books which are by no means untrustworthy.<sup>20</sup>

This section reveals us that Adam relied upon the *History of Franks*, i.e. the *Annales of Fulda*, to extract some information for constructing his historiography.<sup>21</sup> However, the record of the *Annales*, which served as a court history of the eastern Frankish kingdom, extended only until the year 897. Considering this, what kinds of sources did Adam depend on in writing the events that happened after that year? According to the information confirmed in the *Life of Unni* in the *Gesta*, the missionary life referred to: a. written sources including “various books which are by no means untrustworthy”; b. memory of “the brethren”; and c. “a certain Danish bishop”. In the following I shall discuss some problems with Adam’s sources in more detail.

#### a. Written sources

Adam confessed that to write the events that happened after that year, 897, he depended on “various books which are by no means untrustworthy”.<sup>22</sup> What then were these “various books which are by no means untrustworthy”, found in chapter 52? We can find one clue in the phrase: “I knew his [Unni’s] years and the time of his death from the above-mentioned”, found in chapter 54.<sup>23</sup> What did “the above-mentioned” here mean? We can suppose that it refers to “a certain *computus* which was brought from Corvey” found in chapter 35.<sup>24</sup> This *computus* itself, which Adam could rely on in his writing the *Life of Unni*, remains lost at present, but it seems that it recorded each year of the reigns of a series of bishops of Bremen and Hamburg, including Unni. Moreover, judging from the phrase “as *privilegium* said”, seen in the same chapter 54, we can suppose that Adam had access to the privileged charters which were concerned with the early history of the archbishopric of Hamburg.<sup>25</sup> A copy of this charter is extant: It is dated June 1, 911, confirming that Pope John X delivered a *pallium* to Unni.<sup>26</sup>

#### b. Memory of the brethren

According to chapter 54, the process of the election of Unni to archbishop of Hamburg was reconstructed through “memory of the brethren”.<sup>27</sup> According to Adam, Unni was *cappellanus* of Reidrad and *praepositus* of the chapter of the bishopric of Bremen, before his election as archbishop. Although the chapter and its members elected Reidrad as archbishop at first, instead, King Conrad I of Germany appointed, not Reidrad, but Unni archbishop, because of the latter’s good appearance.

20 AB, I–52: Anno domini Hogeri secundo Ludvicus Puer depositus, et Conradus Francorum [dux] in regem levatus est. In isto Ludvico vetus Karoli finitur prosapia. Hactenus etiam Francorum tendit Historia. Quae deinceps dicturi sumus, in aliis et aliis repperimus non mendacibus libris. English translation adopted in this paper is : F. J. Tschan (tr.), *Adam of Bremen, History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, with a new introduction and selected bibliography by T. Reuter. New York 2003, p. 47.

21 “Jahrbücher von Fulda”, in: R. Rau (ed.), *Quellen zur karolingischen Reichsgeschichte*, Teil 3. (AQdGM 7). Berlin 1960, pp. 19–177.

22 AB, I–54: Quae deinceps dicturi sumus, in aliis et aliis repperimus non mendacibus libris.

23 AB, I–54: Annos eius obitumque ut supra cognovi.

24 AB, I–35: Annos eius et obitum decessoris sui repperimus in quodam compoto a Corbeia delato.

25 AB, I–54: Cui etiam papa Iohannes decimus, ut privilegium indicat, palleum dedit; In addition to chapter 54, see AB, I–51: Et huius annos repperimus in libro superiori, et quod per contentionem ordinatus est a Coloniensi archiepiscopo.

26 J. M. Lappenberg (ed.), *Hamburgisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 1. Hamburg 1842, no. 29, p. 39; Schmeidler, *Hamburg-Bremen*, pp. 132–133: Johannes episcopus, seruus scrurorum Dei, dilecto confratri Wenni, uenerabili archiepiscopo Hainmenburgensis ccclesię, tibi luisque successoribus in perpetuum. IĲ Conuenit apostólicó moderamini pia religione pollentibus beniuola compassione succurrere, & poscentium animis alacri deuotione impertiri assensum: Ex hoc enini lucri potissimum premium apud Deum proeul dubio proineremur, dum uenerabilia loca oportune ordinata ad ineliorem fucri per nos II statu in perdueta. Igitur quia postulasti a nobis, quatenus arehiepisopatam Hainmaburgensem totum in integrum tibi tuisque successoribus confirmaremos, sicut a beato Gregorio, Nicholao & aliis predecessoribus nostris decretum est, inclinati preeibus tuis, pallium tibi ex more transmittimus, & quecunq; ab eis ccclesię tue. & antecessoribus tuis data sunt & priuilegiis confirmate, nos apostólica auetoritate tibi concedimii & nostro priuilegio confirmamus, scilicet omnia, que generaliter atque specialiter ad eundein prefatum archiepiscopatum pertinent, queque tui antecessores ... Jhesu Christo. Data Uli. kalendas Nouembris per inanus Leonis, sanctę Romane sedis cancellarii. Anno domini Johannis pape primo, indictione VHII.

27 AB, I–54: Memoriae traditum est a fratribus, cum Reginwardus transisset, Leidradum Bremensis chori prepositum a clerio et populo electum. Qui hoc Unni pro capellano utens ad curiam venit. Rex autem Conradus divino, ut creditur, spiritu afflatus, contempta Leidradi specie parvulo Unni, quem retro stare conspexerat, vorgia, patoralem optulit.

Here “brethren” seem to mean the members of the chapter of the bishopric of Bremen.

c. A certain Danish bishop

According to Adam, “a certain Danish bishop” told him of the event that Gorm the Old surrendered to King Henry I of Germany, set out in chapters 55 to 57.<sup>28</sup> Who was “a certain Danish bishop” at this point? As I have confirmed, the Danish king who surrendered to Henry I was not Gorm, the supposed founder of the Jelling dynasty, but Gnupa, a king of the Hedeby kingdom. Widukind of Corvey supposes that this occurrence took place in 934, according to a more reliable chronology. Therefore, if we suppose that “a certain Danish bishop” was a real person, we can assume that the nominee of the anonymous bishop was someone who served as bishop somewhere in Denmark from the years 934 to 1075.<sup>29</sup>

## (2) The memory of Swein Estridsen

We have to note that, in addition to the above-mentioned three sources, a fourth containing historical information about Unni can be supposed: oral communication with the Danish king Swein Estridsen. A son born as the result of the marriage between Ulf, a Danish chieftain, and Estrid, a sister of Cnut the Great, Swein reigned over Denmark from 1047 to 1074.<sup>30</sup> For Adam, the historical information gained directly from this king was important. Most of the information about Scandinavia in Books 2 and 3 was based on oral communication with the Danish king.<sup>31</sup> In chapter 61 of Book 1, Adam tells us the names of ancient kings of Sweden on the basis of Swein’s information. How much Adam relied on Swein Estridsen’s memory is presented in chapter 54 of Book 3. After sketching the king’s short biography the author relates:

In the last days of the archbishop [Adalbert], when I came to Bremen and heard of this king’s [Swein Estridsen] wisdom, I at once resolved to go to him. And he also received me most graciously, as he did all, and from his lips I gathered much of the material for this little book.<sup>32</sup>

This section proves that Adam depended on oral information derived from the memory of Swein, indicating that he visited the Danish court where the king stayed. In fact he did not use historical sources about early Scandinavia after the year 864, when the *Life of St Ansgar* was completed, and about German-Scandinavian relations after the year 897, when the *Annales of Fulda* ended its historiography. Therefore we can assume that this canon-historian of Bremen could not help learning a good deal of information from Swein on the history of Scandinavia after 897.<sup>33</sup>

What we should pay attention to here is the phrase “at our request he(Swein) named over his forefathers”, found in chapter 48 of Book 1.<sup>34</sup> By this phrase we can understand that Swein Estridsen conveyed to Adam the history of Denmark as he believed it. How far the Danish history told by Swein went back is unknown to us, but the oldest Danish information on the basis of Swein’s memory is recorded in chapter 48 of Book 1. In this chapter Swein relates to Adam the story of the

28 AB, I-57: Haec omnia referente quodam episcopo Danorum, prudenti viro, nos veraciter ut accepimus, sic fideliter ecclesiae nostrae tradimus.

29 F. J. Tschan, English translator of the *Gesta*, supposes that “a certain Danish bishop” was Latulf, bishop of Slesvig. It is certainly an option. F. J. Tschan (ed.), *Adam of Bremen, History of the archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, p. 50 n. 168.

30 E. Arup, “Kong Svend 2. s. Biografi”, *Scandia* 4 (1931), pp. 55–101; E. Hoffmann, E. “Dänmark und England zur Zeit König Sven Estridsens”, in: *Aus Reichsgeschichte und Nordischer Geschichte: Festschrift für Karl Jordan*. Kiel 1972, pp. 92–112.

31 AB, I-61: Accepimus a sepe dicto rege Danorum Suein tunc apud Sueones imperitasse quendam Ring cum filiis Herich et Emund, ipsumque Ring ante se habuisse Anund, Bern, Olaph, de quibus in Gestis sancti Ansgarii legitur, et alios, quorum non occurrit vocabulum.

32 AB, III-54: Novissimis archiepiscopi temporibus, cum ego Bremam venerim, audita eiusdem regis sapientia, mox ad eum venire disposui. A quo etiam clementissime susceptus, ut omnes, magnam huius libelli materiam ex eius ore collegi.

33 V. La Cour, “Adam af Bremens Meddelelser om Svend Estridsøn”, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, 10 række 2 (1932–34), pp. 484–539.

34 AB, I-48: Audivi autem ex ore veracissimi regis Danorum Suein, eum nobis stipulantibus numeraret atavos suos.

above-mentioned “Hedeby kingdom”, which controlled southern Jutland in the early 10<sup>th</sup> century, before the Jelling dynasty, to which Gorm and Harald belonged, emerged. Therefore we can assume that King Swein informed Adam about Danish history that took place after the institution of the “Hedeby kingdom” in the first stages of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. This means that the earliest history of the Jelling dynasty, which was succeeded by the Hedeby kingdom chronologically, was also told to Adam.

Here we have to consider a problem that has never been discussed: On what kind of sources did Swein rely in writing the Danish history that he explained to Adam of Bremen? It is widely accepted that the first known Danish historiography was the *Chronicle of Roskilde*, which was written in Latin in 1140.<sup>35</sup> Of course, there is a possibility that other Danish historical writings were produced in the period before this chronicle was written. However, judging from the social context of the introduction of Latin Christian culture into Denmark, the outside limit of the date of written sources would go back only to the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>36</sup> Was there not, then, any historical culture to record the history of Denmark before the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century? Were the Danes a nation without a written history?<sup>37</sup> Hardly. Before the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Scandinavia, including Denmark, practiced historical commemoration in that differed from the style of western Christendom during the same period: Rune stones and skaldic poetry.

Rune stones were a form of commemoration for the dead inscribed with a formulaic phrase: “X raised this stone in memory of Y”, in runic script.<sup>38</sup> These stones, which were particularly raised around 1000, do not give us as much information as other written sources, but notwithstanding this, some stones reveal historical events that occurred in contemporary Scandinavia.<sup>39</sup> In fact, in addition to the *Gesta*, we can find some information about the above-mentioned “Hedeby kingdom” in the runic inscriptions of both DR2 (DR is an abbreviation of *Danmarks Runeindskrifter*, the national edition of Danish rune stones) and DR4.<sup>40</sup> Swein Estridsen, who was one of Adam’s sources, would have known the meaning inscribed on these stones, which were raised one century before Swein became Danish king. In addition to these two stones we can find other rune stones which tell us about a Danish dynasty which is different from that in the *Gesta*: DR41 (King Gorm in memory of his wife Thyra),<sup>41</sup> DR42 (King Harald Bluetooth in memory of his parents Gorm and Thyra),<sup>42</sup>

35 “Chronicon Roskildense”, in: M. Cl. Gertz (ed.), *Scriptores minores historiae Danicae medii aevi*, 2 vols. København 1917–22, vol. 1, pp. 1–33.

36 M. Ozawa, “Scandinavian way of communication with the Carolingians and the Ottoneans”, in: S. Sato (ed.), *Hermeneutique du texte d’histoire: orientation, interpretation et questions nouvelles. Proceedings of the sixth international conference: Hermeneutic Study and Education of Textual Configuration* (Global COE Program International Conference Series, No. 6). Nagoya 2009, pp. 65–75.

37 For the Norwegian case, see T. Narikawa, “Marriage between King Harald Fairhair and Snæfríðr, and their offspring: Mythological foundation of the Norwegian medieval dynasty?” *Balto-Scandia* (2011), pp. 111–136.

38 L. Jacobsen & E. Moltke (eds.), *Danmarks Runeindskrifter*, 2 vols. København 1941–1942. For a historical approach to rune stones, see B. Sawyer, *The Viking-Age rune-stones. Custom and commemoration in early medieval Scandinavia*. Oxford 2000; L. Klos, *Runensteine in Schweden. Studien zu Aufstellungsort und Funktion* (Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 64). Berlin – New York 2009; M. Bianchi, *Runor som resurs: Vikingatida skrifkultur i Uppland och Södermanland* (Runrön 20). Uppsala 2010.

39 M. Ozawa, “Rune stones create a political landscape: Towards a methodology for the application of runology to Scandinavian political history in the late Viking Age (1) (2)”, *HERSETEC: Journal of Hermeneutic Study and Education of Textual Configuration* 1–1 (2007), pp. 43–62, & 2–1 (2008), pp. 65–85.

40 DR4: Side A: **asfriþr karþi kubl þausi tutiR upinkaurs aft siktriuk k** Top: **unu** Side B: **k sun sin auk knubu** Side C: **kurmR raist run(aR)** Translation: Asfriðr, Odinkar’s daughter, made this monument in memory of King Sigtryg, her and Gnuþa’s son. Gorm carved the runes.

41 DR41: Side A: **kurmR : kunukR : ? : k(ar)þi : kubl : þusi : a(ft) : þurui : kunu** Side B: **sina tanmarkaR but** Tr.: King Gorm made this monument in memory of his wife Thyra, Denmark’s adornment.

42 DR42: Side A: **haraltr : kunukR : þaþ : kaurua kubl : þausi : aft : kurmfapursin aukaft : þaurui : muþur : sina sa haraltr (:) ias : saR uan tanmaurk** Side B: **ala auk nuruiak** Side C: **auk tani (karþi) kristna** Translation: King Harald ordered this monument made in memory of his father Gorm and his mother Thyra; that Harald who won for himself all of Denmark and Norway and made the Danes Christian.

DR55 (Queen Tove in memory of his mother),<sup>43</sup> and DR3 (King Swein Forkbeard in memory of one of his retainers).<sup>44</sup> Above all, DR42, which was raised by King Harald Bluetooth, functioned as “a kind of medium of historiography” by showing the onlooker a historical inscription (e.g. Harald united Denmark, reigned over Norway and made the Danes Christian), each of which was decisive in the history of Denmark.<sup>45</sup> And apart from the above-mentioned king’s rune stones, we can find historical rune stones raised by powerful chieftains (DR1 and DR217).<sup>46</sup>

Skaldic poetry, on the other hand, was a group of poetry recited by Icelandic poets called skalds.<sup>47</sup> The aim of the poetry was to celebrate kings and chieftains in their courts. The character of the poetry was to record historical deeds accomplished by the kings and chieftains, especially their battles against internal and external rivals.<sup>48</sup> Therefore we can regard skaldic poetry, which was memorized and recited in the courts, as a kind of alternative medium of written sources. The poem dedicated to Swein Estridsen does not remain, but his step-brother Cnut the Great, and his rival Harald Hardruler, the king of Norway, had a corpus of skaldic poetry made to honor them.<sup>49</sup> This fact would make us suppose that the form of commemoration provided by skaldic poetry functioned in their contemporary king Swein Estridsen’s court.

There must have been many more rune stones and skaldic poetry in the 11<sup>th</sup> century than those we can find in the present records. Take DR3 as an example. This is the only stone that was raised by King Swein Forkbeard of Denmark that we know of; DR3 was raised in memory of one of the retainers of Swein. Of course, Swein, who with this stone commemorated a humble retainer, would have almost certainly raised many more rune stones in memory of his closer kin (parents and siblings or such). We can expect that there would have been rune stones raised in Scandinavia.<sup>50</sup> However, no examples of such stones that Swein would have raised now remain. This is also true

- 43 DR55: **tufa IEt kaurua kubl mistiuis tutiR uft muþur sina harats hins kuþa kurms kuna sunaR** Translation: Tove, Mistivoj’s daughter, wife of Harald the good, Gorm’s son, had the monument made in memory of her mother.
- 44 DR3: Side A: **: suin : kunukR : sati : stin : uftiR : skarþa sin : himþiga : ias : uas : farin : uestr : ian : nu :** Side B: **: uarþ : tauþr : at : hiþa : bu** Translation: King Swein placed the stone in memory of his retainer Skarde, who travelled to the west and then died at Hedeby. For a survey of Danish stones raised by kings and their kin, see M. Ozawa, “King’s rune stones. Catalogue with some remarks”, *HERSETEC: Journal of Hermeneutic Study and Education of Textual Configuration* 4–1 (2010), pp. 29–42.
- 45 K. J. Krough, “The royal Viking-Age monuments at Jelling in the light of recent archaeological excavations”, *Acta Archaeologica* 53 (1982), pp. 183–216; E. Wamers, “... ok Dani gærði kristna ... : Der große Jellingstein im Spiegel ottonischer Kunst”, *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 34 (2000), pp. 132–158; J. Staecker, “Jelling — Mythen und Realität”, in: D. Kattinger et alii (eds.), *Der Ostseeraum und Kontinentaleuropa 1100–1600. Einflußnahme — Rezeption — Wandel*. Schwerin 2004, pp. 77–102; K. Randsborg, “King’s Jelling: Gorm and Thyra’s place — Harald’s monument — Svend’s cathedral”, *Acta Archaeologica* 79 (2008), pp. 1–23; M. Ozawa, “In the shadow of the son. Contextualising the Jelling rune stones”, preprint on the webpage of the 7th international symposium on runes and runic inscription (“Runes in context”). Oslo 2010 (<http://www.khm.uio.no/forskning/publikasjoner/runenews/7th-symp/preprint/ozawa.pdf>).
- 46 DR1: Side A: **þurlf risþi stin þansi himþigi suins eftiR erik filaga sin ias uarþ** Side B: **tauþr þa trekiaR satu um haiþa bu ian : han : uas : sturi : matr : tregR harþa : kuþr** Translation: Thorulf raised this stone, Swein’s retainer, in memory of Eric, his companion, who died when valiant men besieged Hedeby; and he was a captain, a very good valiant man; DR217: Side A: **þurui : kat : kauruan (:) stain : þansi : xxx (kruk)** Side B: **uiar [:] sin : ian [:] han (:) uas xxalra triuux...** Side C: **sutrsuia [:] au(k) [:] suþrtana kuauil : at [:] ha [x] afnur minumsam** Side D: **baistr : hanuas ... sutrsuia [:] [x] uk** Translation: Thyra had this stone made ... her husband Krog, and he was the most powerful of all the Sær-Swedes and South Danes....
- 47 D. Whaley (ed.), *Poetry from the Kings’ Saga 1: From mythical times to c. 1035*. Turnhout in press; K. E. Gade (ed.), *Poetry from the Kings’ Saga 2: from c. 1035 to c. 1300*. Turnhout 2009.
- 48 R. Frank, “Skaldic poetry”, in: C. J. Clover & J. Lindow (eds.), *Old Norse-Icelandic literature. A critical guide*. Ithaca & London 1985, pp. 157–196; K. von See, “Die Skaldendichtung im europäischen Kontext”, *Europa und der Norden im Mittelalter*. Heidelberg 1999, pp. 193–274 & 429–436; M. Clunies Ross, *A history of old Norse poetry and poetics*. London 2005.
- 49 For example, R. Frank, “King Cnut in the verse of his skalds”, in: A. Rumble (ed.), *The Reign of Cnut : King of England, Denmark and Norway*. London 1994, pp. 106–124; M. Townsend, “Contextualizing the *Knútsdrápur*: Skaldic praise-poetry at the court of Cnut”, *Anglo-Saxon England* 30 (2001), pp. 145–179; E. O. G. Turville-Petre, *Haraldr the Hard-ruler and his poets*. London 1968.
- 50 In fact Swein Forkbeard expelled his father Harald Bluetooth from Denmark to “a Slavonic place” in 987. Therefore it is difficult to decide whether Swein raised a memorial stone for his father. A. Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae Reginae* (Camden Classical Reprints 4), with a supplementary introduction by S. Keynes. Cambridge 1998, I–1 (p. 8); Tantam deinde illi gratiam diuina concessit uirtus, ut etiam puerulus intimo affectu diligeretur ab omnibus, tantum patri proprio inuisus, nulla hoc promerente pueruli culpa, sed sola turbante inuidia. Qui factus iuuenis in amore cotidie crescebat populi; unde magis magisque inuidia augebatur patri, adeo ut eum a patria non iam clanculum sed palam uellet expellere, iurando asserens eum post se regnaturum non esse. Unde dolens exercitus relicto patre herebat filio, et eum defensabat sedulo. Huius rei gratia congregiuntur in praelio; in quo uulneratus fugatusque pater ad Sclavos fugit, et non multo post ibi obiit, et Suein eius solium quiete tenuit.

of skaldic poems. What volume of stones and poems has been lost since the 11<sup>th</sup> century? Here we must remember that the disappearance of these Old Scandinavian texts inevitably accompanied that of historical information with which contemporary Scandinavians should have shared.

During this transitional period, these two forms of historical commemoration were being replaced by new kinds of written source, i.e. charters and chronicles in Denmark. But the age of the reign of Swein Estridsen was the last stage of the period when rune stones and skaldic verses actually functioned in Scandinavian society. Therefore we should note that Swein reconstructed the “Danish history of his forefathers” through runic inscription and skaldic verse, the ways of commemoration proper to early medieval Scandinavia.

### 3. Role of the *Life of Unni*

Through the above-discussed argument, we can assume that Swein Estridsen would have learned the “right” history of the Jelling dynasty to some extent on the basis of rune stones and skaldic poems. Disappointingly, we cannot reconstruct a complete description of the Danish history that Swein Estridsen related to Adam. Nonetheless, it is probable that we would not find in his account that Gorm surrendered to King Henry I of Germany, nor that Harald Bluetooth gave permission to accept Christian faith under the governance of the archbishopric of Unni. However, Adam wrote the early history of the Jelling dynasty in the *Gesta*, which was not based on the information provided by Swein Estridsen. Moreover, the historical writing made by the canon-historian depended to a great degree on such an “authoritative” informant as “the brethren” or “a certain Danish bishop” who cannot be identified by readers of the *Gesta*. Adam seems to have interpolated into the *Life of Unni* that distorted Danish history which is not based on Swein’s information. Why did Adam decide to write such another history?

Here we shall return to the composition of the *Life of Unni* again. To my understanding, the *Life* emphasizes three points among its whole story: 1. King Henry of Germany defeated King Gorm, then instituted a new *Markgraf* there (whether this took place in fact is controversial) and made the latter tributary. 2. Unni succeeded in making the Danes Christian by the authority of King Harald Bluetooth. 3. Unni evangelized Denmark and Sweden through the same route as St Ansgar, the first bishop of Hamburg. The story described in these three particular details seems to mean: 1. The king of Germany incorporated Denmark into German-influenced space politically and institutionally 2. An archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen Christianized Denmark. 3. The archbishop himself renovated and widened the extent of evangelization to Sweden. Here we can easily read a story that Germany and the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen reigned over Denmark in Unni’s time.

Here we shall return to the composition of the *Gesta* itself. Adam adapted the literary form of the successive lives of 16 archbishops from the first bishop, Willehad of Bremen, to Archbishop Adalbert of Hamburg, to whom the *Gesta* was dedicated. In fact, it is not impossible to read each of the 16 lives separately. However, we have to take into consideration the fact that, as has been known for some time, Adalbert attempted to place the metropolitan jurisdiction over Scandinavia in his hands for his archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen, and, as part of a comprehensive approach to elevation to higher status, the archbishop seems to have ordered Adam to write the *Gesta*.<sup>51</sup> In this historical context it should be noted that the composition and emphatic points of the *Gesta* concentrate on the connections between the archbishopric and the North (Scandinavia and the

51 H. Fuhrmann, “*Provincia constat duodecim episcopatus: Zum Patriarchatsplan Erzbischof Adalberts von Hamburg-Bremen*”, *Studia Gratiana* 11 (1967), pp. 389–404; E. Johnson, “Adalbert of Bremen: A politician of the eleventh century”, *Speculum* 9 (1934), pp. 147–179.

Baltic region). If we accept such a textual strategy, here we can easily assume that the compilation of information in the *Gesta* itself served as legitimizing argument for the benefit of Adalbert's claim to reign over the North as a metropolitan archbishop.

For a deeper possible meaning, let us step back to Book 1. The storyline of the whole of Book 1 is descriptive: From the geography of Saxony, starting bastion of Christianization of the North, through to its evangelization by the first bishop, Willehad of Bremen, and then to the re-evangelization of the North by Unni. In other words, Book 1 proclaims the process of efforts to ensure the gradual evangelization of the North by the archbishopric of Hamburg from the 9<sup>th</sup> century to the first part of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Couldn't we suppose that the distorted history in the *Life of Unni* was designed to prove that the institution of *Markgraf* in Denmark, the Christianization of the Danes and the process of evangelization that extended up to Sweden were accomplished under the rulership of Unni as a landmark of a long period of evangelization by the archbishopric? Such a presentation would have been needed as the prelude for Adam to write the relationship between the archbishopric and the North more particularly in Books 2 and 3. That is one possible reason why Adam intentionally created a new history of the *Life of Unni*.

#### Appendix 1: Bishop list of Hamburg-Bremen until Adalbert

Episcopal period	Names	Chapter number of the <i>Gesta</i>
787–789.11.8	Willehad	I.11–13 (3 chapters)
–838.5.4	Willeric	I.14–15 (2)
–845.8.24	Leuderic	I.19 (1)
831–865.2.3	Ansgar	I.15–34 (20)
–888.6.11	Rimbert	I.35–44 (12)
–909.5.9	Adalgar	I.45–50 (6)
–916 or 917.12.20	Hoger	I.51–52 (2)
–918.10.1	Reginward	I.53 (1)
–936.9.17	Unni	I.54–63 (10)
–988.4.28 or 29	Adaldag	II.1–28 (28)
–1013.1.4	Libentius I	II.29–46 (18)
–1029.1.27	Unwan	II.47–62 (16)
–1032.8.24 or 25	Libentius II	II.63–67 (5)
–1035.9.18	Herman	II.68 (1)
–1043.4.15	Recelinus (Bezelin)	II.69–82 (14)
–1072.3.16	Adalbert	III.1–78 (78)

#### Appendix 2: Latin text of the *Life of Unni* found in Book 1

“Magister Adam Bremensis, Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum”, in: W. Trillmich & R. Buchner (eds.), *Quellen des 9. und 11. Jahrhunderts zur Geschichte der hamburgischen Kirche und des Reiches*, 7th edn. (AQdGA 11). Darmstadt 2000, pp. 226–232.

54

Unni archiepiscopus sedit annos XVIII. Annos eius obitumque ut supra cognovi. Memoriae traditum est a fratribus, cum Reginwardus transisset, Leidradum Bremensis chori prepositum a clerico et populo electum. Qui hoc Unni pro capellano utens ad curiam venit. Rex autem Conradus divino, ut creditur, spiritu afflatus, contempta Leidradi specie parvulo Unni, quem retro stare conspexerat, vorgia, patoralem optulit. Cui etiam papa Iohannes decimus, ut privilegium indicat, palleum deit. Erat autem vir, sicut in electione ac transitu eius videri potest, sanctissimus. Pro qua sanctitate Conrado et Heinrico regibus familiaris et reverendus permansit. Unde et ita versu depingitur : ‘Principibus notus Unni fuit, ordine nonus’.

55

In diebus suis Ungri non solum nostram Saxoniam aliasque cis Rhenum provincias, verum etiam trans Rhenum Lotharingiam et Franciam demoliti sunt. Dani quoque Sclavos auxilio habentes primo Transalbianos Saxones, deinde cis Albim vastantes magno Saxoniam terrore quassabant. Apud Danos eo tempore Hardecnuth Vurm regnavit, crudelissimus, inquam, vermibus et christianorum populis non mediocriter infestus. Ille christianitatem, quam in Dania fuit, prorsus delere

molitus sacerdotes Dei a finibus suis depulit, plurimos quoque ille per tormenta necavit.

56

At vero Heinricus rex iam tunc a puero timens Deum et in eius misericordia totam suam habens fiduciam, Ungros quidem multis gravibusque preliis triumphavit. Itemque Behemos et Sorabos ab aliis regibus domitos et ceteros Sclavorum populus uno grandi prelio ita percussit, ut residui, qui fere pauci remanserant, et regi tributum et Deo christianitatem ultro promitterent.

57

Deinde cum exercitu ingressus Daniam, Vurm regem primo impetu adeo perterruit, ut imperata se facere mandaret et pacem supplex deposceret. Sic Heinricus victor apud Sliaswich, quae nunc Heidiba dicitur, regni terminos ponens ibi et marchionem statuit et Saxonum coloniam habitare precepit. Haec omnia referente quodam episcopo Danorum, prudenti viro, nos veraciter ut accepimus, sic fideliter ecclesiae nostrae tradimus.

58

Tunc beatissimus archiepiscopus noster Unni videns ostium fidei gentibus apertum esse, gratias Deo egit de salute paganorum, precipue vero quoniam legatio Hammaburgensis ecclesiae, pro temporis importunitate diu neglecta, preveniente misericordia Dei et virtute regis Heinrici locum et tempus operandi accepit. Igitur nihil asperum et grave arbitrans sibi posse pro Christo latitudinem suae diocesis per se ipsum elegit circuire.

Secutus est eum grex universus, ut aiunt, Bremensis ecclesiae, boni pastoris absentia maesti secumque et in carcerem et in mortem ire parati.

59

Postquam vero confessor Dei pervenit ad Danos, ubi tunc crudelissimum Worm diximus regnasse, illum quidem pro ingenita flectere nequivit saevitia; filium autem regis Haroldum sua dicitur predicatione lucratus. Quem ita fidelem Christo perfecit, ut christianitatem, quam pater eius semper odio habuit, ipse haberi publice permetteret, quamvis nondum baptismi sacramentum percepit. Ordinatis itaque in regno Danorum per singulas ecclesias sacerdotibus sanctus Dei multitudinem credentium commendasse fertur Haroldo. Cuius etiam fultus adiutorio et legato omnes Danorum insulas penetravit, euangelizans verbum Dei gentilibus et fideles, quos invenit illuc captivos, in Christo confortans.

60

Deinde vestigia secutus magni predicatoris Ansgarii, mare Balticum remigans non sine labore pervenit ad Bircam. Quo iam post obitum sancti Ansgarii annis LXX nemo doctorum ausus est pertingere preter solum, ut legimus, Rimburtum; ita persecutio nostros retinuit. Birca est oppidum Gothorum in medio Suevoniae positum, non longe ab eo templo, quod celeberrimum Sueones habent in cultu deorum, Ubsola dicto. In quo loco sinus quidam eius freti, quod Balticum vel Barbarum dicitur, ad boream vergens portum facit barbaris gentibus, quae hoc mare diffusi habitant, optabilem, sed valde periculosum incautis et ignaris eiusmodi locorum. Bircani enim piratarum excursionibus, quorum ibi est magna copia, sepius impugnati, cum vi et armis nequeunt resistere, callida hostes aggrediuntur arte decipere. Qui sinum maris impacati per centum et amplius stadia latentium molibus saxorum obstruentes periculosum aequae suis ac predonibus iter meandi fecerunt. Ad quam stationem, quia tutissima est in maritimis Suevoniae regionibus, solent omnes Danorum vel Nortmannorum itemque Sclavorum ac Semborum naves alique Scithiae populi pro diversis commerciorum necessitatibus sollempniter convenire.

61

In eo portu confessor Domini ingressus insolita populos appellare cepit legatione. Quippe Sueones et Gothi vel, si ita melius dicuntur, Nortmanni propter barbaricae excursionis tempora, qua paucis annis multi reges cruento imperio dominati sunt, christianae religionis penitus obliti, haut facile poterant ad fidem persuaderi. Accepimus a sepe dicto rege Danorum Sueini tunc apud Sueones imperitasse quendam Ring cum filiis Herich et Emund, ipsumque Ring ante se habuisse Anund, Bern, Olaph, de quibus in Gestis sancti Ansgarii legitur, et alios, quorum non occurrit vocabulum. Et credibile est athletam Dei Unnim eosdem reges, quamvis non crediderint, adisse eorumque licentia verbum Dei per Sueoniam predicasse. Meo autem arbitrato, sicut inutile videtur eorum acta scrutari, qui non crediderunt, ita impium est preterire salutem eorum, qui primum crediderunt, et per quos dederunt. Sueones igitur et Gothi a sancto Ansgario primum, in fide plantati iterumque ad paganismum relapsi a sancto patre Unni sunt revocati.

Siffuicit hoc scire, ne, si plura dicimus, mentiri velle dicamur. ‘Melius enim est’, ut ait beatus Ieronimus, ‘vera dicere rustice, quam falsa diserte proferre.’

62

Perfacto autem legationis suae ministerio, cum tandem redire disponeret euangelista Dei, apud Bircam aegritudine correptus, ibidem fessi corporis tabernaculum deposuit.

Anima vero cum multo animarum triumpho stipata celestis patriae capitulum semper laetatura conscendit. Tunc discipuli pontificis exequias eius cum fletu et gaudio procurantes cetera quidem membra sepelierunt in eodem oppido Birca, solum caput deportantes Bremen, quod decenti honore condiderunt in ecclesia sancti Petri coram altari. Obiit autem peracto boni certaminis cursu in Scitia, ut scribitur, anno dominicae incarnationis DCCCCXXXVI, indictione IX, circa medium

Septembrem. Hic est annus Ottonis Magni primus, a transitu sancti Willehadi primi Bremensis episcopi CXLVIII.

63

Eia vos episcopi, qui domi sedentes gloriae, lucri, ventris et somni breves delicias in primo episcopalis officii loco ponitis! Respicite, inquam, istum pauperem seculi et modicum, immo laudabilem manumque sacerdotem Christi. Qui nuper tam nobili fine coronatus exemplum dedit posteris, nulla temporum vel locorum asperitate vestram pigriciam excusari posse, cum per tanta pericula maris et terrae feroces aquilonis populos ipse pertransiens ministerium legationis suae tanto impleret studio, ut in ultimis terrae finibus expirans animam suam peneret pro Christo.

