Magnus Erlendsson, Medieval Ruler Martyrs and Realization of Christian Ideals amid (Political) Violence[1]

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Summary: *The phenomenon of ruler martyrs was common between the tenth and twelfth centuries in the recently Christianized lands on the eastern and northern periphery of Europe—one of them were the Orkney Islands with jarl Magnus Erlendsson (died in 1115/1117). Like Christ, who gave his life for the peace and redemption of the world, Magnus gave his life for the peace and redemption of the people of the Orkneys. This also explains why the earliest texts produced on the peripheries of medieval Europe were all about local saints. Wherever God's presence was manifested through a saintly ruler, his people were, despite their late adoption of the new faith, integrated into the symbolic center of the Christian world. Consequently, the conduct of exceptional rulers to persevere in peace amid political violence was a manifestation of the creation of a new Christian community.*

Keywords: *Magnus Erlendsson, medieval Scandinavia, ruler martyrs, hagiographies, Christianization, (political) violence*

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Introduction

The aim of this article is to provide a multidisciplinary contextual approach to the martyrdom of Magnus Erlendsson (died between 1115 and 1117), the jarl (earl) of the Orkney

[1] This article is part of the postdoctoral basic research project in the field of theology »Z6-1883 Ruler Saints (Martyrs) on the Periphery of Medieval Europe: Kievan Rus', Norway, Dioclea« carried out at the Faculty of Law and Business Studies (Ljubljana) and financed by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS) from the state budget.

Isles, then part of the Norwegian kingdom. Magnus's life and death are presented against the theological, historical, and literary background of the time, particularly concerning the wider phenomenon of ruler martyrs on the northern and eastern periphery of medieval Europe[2] between the tenth and twelfth centuries. In these recently Christianized lands—such as Bohemia (with Saint Wenceslaus), Kievan Rus' (with Saints Boris and Gleb), Dioclea (present-day Montenegro, with Saint John (Jovan) Vladimir), Denmark (with Saint Canute IV Svensson), and Norway (with Saint Magnus Erlendsson)—emerged a special common type of veneration of the ruler martyrs. They were characterized by conscious non-resistance to violence, based on the example of Christ's self-sacrifice for others, and innocent death out of political self-interest caused by Christians themselves, not by members of other religions or ideologies because of opposition against the Christian faith as such. The example of ruler martyrs subsequently helped to build the self-esteem of the ecclesiastical and secular elites of the newly Christianized polities; through the emergence of the local saints, they regarded their homelands as equally included in the world of Christian culture.[3]

To better understand the phenomenon of medieval ruler martyrs, a semiotic culturological method is applied,[4] following the steps of the renowned Russian literary historians, such as Boris A. Uspenskiy (Uspenskij) and Alexander N. Uzhankov (Užankov). This method is based on a deep analysis of the narratives of the original sources and their spiritual and socio-cultural implications, enabling to grasp the self-understanding of the ecclesiastical and secular elites behind them. This phenomenon can be additionally explained using the theory of mimetic violence or »scapegoat mechanism« in the archaic cultures developed by the French anthropologist René Girard (1923-2015). (Girard; Petkovšek) According to him, Jesus Christ subverted this mechanism by voluntarily sacrificing himself for the salvation of every person »once and for all.« In this respect, the main quality of the Christian worldview lies in the non-instrumental love towards every person and the acknowledgment of the victim's innocence. In this context, ruler martyrs can

[2] In this context, the term »periphery« refers to the general cultural and geographical circumstances of the mentioned polities—particularly their relatively late official adoption of Christianity and their relative distance from the great political, ecclesiastical, and intellectual centers of Europe during the early and high Middle Ages, such as Constantinople, Rome, Aachen, Paris, etc.

[3] The subject of ruler martyrs on the peripheries of medieval Europe has thus far not been explored by many scholars in concise and comparative terms. The author of the present article (see the footnote below) and Norman W. Ingham (1934-2015), an American cultural and literary historian, should be mentioned here: Ingham, »The Sovereign«; Ingham, »The Martyred Prince«; Ingham, »The Martyrdom«.

[4] The same methodology was applied by the author of this study in several of his previous works: Malmenvall, *Kultura*; Malmenvall, »Ruler Martyrs«; Malmenvall, »Jovan Vladimir«.

be regarded as innocent victims following the example of Jesus Christ by voluntarily sacrificing themselves to save the lives of others. In this way, they succeeded in (symbolically) breaking the previous cycle of violence and, consequently, rejecting the recent pagan past rooted in the notion of mimetic violence.

1. Sources and historical background

Written testimonies on Magnus Erlendsson are found in three main narrative sources belonging to the classical corpus of Old Norse sagas: *Orkneyinga Saga* (*The Saga of the Earls of Orkney*), *Magnús Saga Lengri* (*Longer Magnus Saga*), and *Magnús Saga Skemmri* (*Shorter Magnus Saga*).[5] These texts were written between the mid-twelfth and the late thirteenth century; in terms of content and literary motifs, they are interrelated and presumably had among their sources a lost Latin *Vita sancti Magni*. Thus, the account in the predominantly secular *Orkneyinga Saga*, a collection of warrior tales concerning the earls of Orkney, from the early thirteenth century can be supplemented by the two other sagas. The first is of greater length (*Magnus Saga Lengri*) and based on previous hagiographical material from the mid-twelfth century, while the other is of lesser length (*Magnus Saga Skemmri*) and comparable to the content found in the *Orkneyinga Saga*. (Beuermann 136–137) Additionally, the longer saga abounds with theological commentary and expressly draws on a Latin eulogy from the lost life of the saint composed by a certain »magister Robert,« probably of Anglo-Saxon origin. (Antonsson, *St. Magnús* 5–15; Tomany 131–132)

Jarl Magnus Erlendsson of Orkney (1106-1115/1117) was a ruler of the semi-independent polity of the Orkney Archipelago, north of present-day Scotland, at that time part of the Norwegian kingdom. Sources on the jarl's martyrdom agree that he was assassinated at Easter between 1115 and 1117, resembling the sacrifice of the »innocent lamb,« Jesus Christ. Magnus was murdered at the behest of his cousin, Haakon Palsson, who had rival claims to rule the Orkney Isles and was not willing to coexist by dividing the realm with Magnus. Haakon lured Magnus to a peace meeting on the island of Egilsay, where his men lay in ambush. When the broken oath of friendship had been revealed, the jarl decided against violent resistance to spare the lives of his men. He went to the church and, after the mass, voluntarily surrendered to the murderers; the cousin then ordered Magnus's cook to behead his master. Soon after Magnus's death, miracles supposedly began occurring. In

[5] Hagiographical material on Magnus used in this article follows the critical edition: Guðmundsson. The English translation with commentary of the same texts is available in: Vigfusson. The English text of these sources follows the translation made by the author of this article consulting both of the mentioned editions.

1135, the local residents demanded the disinterment of his relics but were opposed by both jarl Paul, Haakon's son, and bishop Vilhjalmr (William). Because of his disbelief, the bishop temporarily lost his sight and, under the strong impression of such a »divine sign,« he finally ordered Magnus's tomb to be opened. Magnus was canonized the same year and his relics were translated to the church in Birsay, the political center of the Orkneys of the time.[6] On this occasion, the bishop declared that April 16, which was Magnus's feast-day and the day of his martyrdom, and December 13, the day of his translation (Antonsson, *St. Magnús* 75–78), should be kept as holy days. In the Western Church, this day was already widely celebrated as the feast of Saint Lucy, the patron saint of good sight and healer of blindness (her name denoting »light«, *lux* in Latin); she was one of the most prominent women martyrs from the late Roman Empire. The »light« celebrated on Saint Lucy's feast was, consequently, joined by the reminiscence of Magnus's healing of the temporarily blind bishop Vilhjalmr. In 1137, jarl Rognvald Kali Kolsson, later called Rognvald the Crusader (1136–1158), Magnus's nephew known as Saint Rognvald after his canonization at the end of the twelfth century, laid the foundations for the cathedral dedicated to Saint Magnus in Kirkwall, the new political and ecclesiastical center of the Orkney Isles. (Guðmundsson 122–125; Antonsson, »St. Magnús of Orkney« 145; Antonsson, *St. Magnús* 69; Ingham, »The Sovereign« 7–9) Magnus's cult quickly spread through Scandinavia and found especially many followers in Iceland. (Beuermann 145–146) For example, until the mid-twelfth century, there were already five churches dedicated to Magnus in the Shetland Isles. (Antonsson, *St. Magnús* 79–80; Cant 47–50)

2. Theological aspects of Magnus's martyrdom

To deepen the understanding of the ruler martyr cult in the case of Magnus Erlendsson, one should look more carefully at his conduct prior to the dramatic events surrounding his assassination. According to the narrative in the *Magnus Saga Lengri* (Guðmundsson 335–383; Beuermann 140–141), after a morally ideal childhood, Magnus becomes a Viking through the bad company of his fellow young warriors. The Norwegian king, Magnus Olafsson (1093–1103), takes his cousins, jarl Haakon and jarl Magnus, with him on his campaign to Wales. First, the king takes control of Orkney and the Hebrides with Magnus's and his cousin's collaboration. However, when the king attacks Wales, Magnus shows that he has abandoned his previous interests in war and riches and thus »converted« to the only true Lord, to whom he owes undivided loyalty. In fact, Magnus refuses

[6] There is no significant difference between the *Magnús Saga Lengri*, *Magnús Saga Skemmri*, and *Orkneyinga Saga* concerning the events after Magnus's death resulting in the emergence of his cult. (Antonsson, *St. Magnús* 69–70)

to fight—he does not regard this land as hostile and refuses to wage an »unjust« war. What Magnus does next is an act both of bravery in a religious sense and of revolt according to political circumstances. Magnus chooses to sit right in the middle of the fighters, without cover, singing holy texts from the Book of Psalms by King David, the shining example of the righteous ruler. The battle concludes with a victory for the Norwegians, but one bought with severe losses. In this battle, the unprotected Magnus is miraculously saved by God and preserved »for a greater crown« in the future. Here, the key message lies in the words »the saint Jarl Magnus became Paul out of Saul« (*heilagi Magnús jarl Paulus af Saulo*). (Guðmundsson 349) These words refer to apostle Paul's vision of Christ and conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9: 1–19), and express, in this case, a sudden conversion from the life of warfare to one of Christian virtues and self-sacrifice.[7] Magnus's unselfish conduct and his readiness to imitate Christ in any circumstances reach its fulfillment in his readiness to die for the benefit of others. When he sees Haakon and his men approaching, he knows he has been betrayed but does not run. He participates in the holy mass, takes his last Communion before Haakon's men come to capture him, and he forbids his men to defend him. Through these changes to the narrative, Magnus becomes like Christ, and like the Son of God, who gave his life for the peace and redemption of the world, Magnus gives his life for the peace and redemption of the people of Orkney.

An effective way to present the violent death of the ruler in terms of martyrdom was to place his death within both a secular historical and religious salvific context—to portray it as the defining point in the history of the people over whom he had governed during his lifetime. (Antonsson, *St. Magnús* 31–38)[8] In this case, a part of the spiritual background of the relation between Haakon and Magnus is the Old Testament story about the Hebrew kings Saul and David. (1 Sam 28) Thus, Haakon's envy of Magnus echoes Saul's attitude towards the much more popular David; moreover, Haakon's meeting with a Swedish soothsayer before the decision to assassinate Magnus has a certain correspondence in Saul's visit to the witch of Endor; obviously, Saul and Haakon seek help from a demonic medium in order to have their political future foretold and, in doing so, both break their (nominal) faith in one God. (Antonsson, »Two Twelfth-Century Martyrs« 58–59) Furthermore,

[7] Additionally, the recitation of the psalms is a pious activity that contrasts with the battle taking place around the psalm singer. The sound of recited psalms would be juxtaposed with the cries and other sounds of the battle. A juxtaposition of oral versus written tradition also takes place—Magnus's use of a book emphasizes the literate tradition of Christianity as opposed to the oral epic tradition that his fellow warriors would typically employ in warships. (Waugh 168–169)

[8] On the earliest hagiographical narratives which created Christian historical myths for the newly converted lands of Europe: Mortensen.

the motif of the biblical tabernacle, or altar in a Christian sense, from the longer saga denotes Christianity, which Magnus, with his conduct during his life and the manner in which he dies, both completes and protects.

> Each one bringeth such things as he hath means to bring into the tabernacle of God, as a help to mercy for himself. One gold, others silver, some gem-stones, some goat's hair and red buckskin; and such offerings are not to be contemptuously esteemed, for of such is made the covering over the tabernacle of God, to shield it and keep it from wet and sun-heat. (. . .) Gold denotes wit and wisdom; silver chastity; gem-stones the miracles of holy men; goatshair the repentance of sins; red buckskin martyrdom. (Guðmundsson 336)

The tabernacle signifies the final victory of Christianity in the region. In a re-enactment of Christ's crucifixion and his triumph over the Devil, Magnus's willingness to suffer martyrdom heralds the completion of one step in God's plan—the spread of the religion even to a remote land »on the edge of the world« like the Orkneys. (Guðmundsson 335) Magnus, however, does not convert his people to Christianity, for they are already Christians in name, but still his martyrdom represents a symbolic inclusion of the earldom into the family of Christian peoples. Magnus's innocent blood has washed away the violent pagan past, heralding a new era of the Orkney Isles. In this sense, the martyrdom of Magnus Erlendsson is interpreted as a battle between God and the Devil.

> Now, for that no man can be Abel, save he who tolerates and proves the spite and envy of Cain; and as the holy Ezekiel (Ezek 3-33) dwelt with the venomous men, and the righteous Lot (Gen 11-14; Gen 19) was hard pressed of wrongful men; so the foe of the whole human race waked up temptation, and the heat of persecution on all sides against this knight of God, sowing discord and hatred between brothers and kinsfolk and dear friends, all that he might hinder him, and make those wonders of none effect, which then began to grow with him. (Guðmundsson 354)

According to the passage above, the battle between God and his adversary within a specific local re-realization of salvation history is fought in the form of two historical figures, Haakon and Magnus, in an obscure location near the edge of the known world. With Magnus's death the Devil is defeated, and the people of the Orkney Isles are »baptized« with Magnus's innocent blood. On this basis, the spiritual reasoning behind comparing Magnus to innocent Abel and Haakon to murderous Cain is almost identical with the Abel and Cain motif concerning other ruler martyr cults of the time—Wenceslaus of Bohemia and Boris and Gleb of Kievan Rus'. (Antonsson, *St. Magnús* 38–40; Kantor 146–147)

From a similar moral and spiritual perspective, the story of Magnus Erlendsson is presented in the *Orkneyinga Saga*.[9] Here, Magnus's martyrdom seems to be satirical and subversive in relation to the generally accepted warrior values in the Scandinavian sagas. According to the *Orkneyinga Saga*, criticism of »earthly glory« occurs when an openly Christian character, Magnus, breaks the established cycle of competition for renown between an individual and the authoritative oral (pagan) past. (Waugh 163-165)[10] In this respect, the writer of the saga depicts Magnus as

> a man of extraordinary distinction, tall, with a fine, intelligent look about him. He was a man of strict virtue, successful in war, wise, eloquent, generous and magnanimous, open-handed with money, sound with advice, and altogether the most popular of men. (. . .) His judgements were never biased, for he believed divine justice to be more important than social distinctions. While he was the most generous of men to chieftains and others in powerful positions, he always gave the greatest comfort to the poor. (Guðmundsson 103–104)

One could apply almost all these attributes to a skillful political leader, and many traditional saga characters share them.[11] Further on, as a second clause representing a double set of values, the writer starts to include more typically Christian virtues and to explain these in more detail: the saint is »gentle and agreeable,« chaste, charitable, and a follower of God's commandments. (Guðmundsson 103–104) The clearest indication of the new mode of fame at work within a traditional saga context occurs when Magnus says to the man who has been ordered to kill him, Haakon's cook named Lifolf, the following words: »This [act] is nothing to weep over. (. . .) A deed like this can only bring fame to the man who carries it out.« (Guðmundsson 103–104) This interpretation of the executioner's task as a kind of battle deed is a sharply ironic comment by the saint because the performer is about as unheroic as he can be. Previously the writer of the saga claims: »Haakon ordered his cook Lifolf to kill Magnus. Lifolf started to weep out loud.« (Guðmundsson 110) Yet the cook does not stand up to his master and disobey the order; instead, he executes it with obvious emotional discomfort. The more complex irony of the martyrdom is that the saint's renown, despite his unusual death for a conventional saga hero, will far outstrip that of the man who kills him. (Guðmundsson 122–129) If Lifolf achieves fame as Magnus says he will, it will be merely a kind of reflected

[9] For the text of the *Orkneyinga Saga* and its critical edition, see: Guðmundsson 94–129.

[10] Despite the omnipresent concentration on fame, deriving mostly from military and material success, sagas provide their readers or listeners with a sense of proportion and moderation. They are written to warn against excessive passion, ambition, and arbitrariness. (Andersson 577, 588)

[11] More on idealized depictions of physical appearance, political skills and moral qualities in the Old Norse sagas: Sigurðsson.

glory that comes only through association with the saga's saintly hero—the cook appears suddenly and only in this passage as Magnus's executioner. The saga hints at a hagiography's typical relationship with the passion of Christ when the circumstances of Magnus's bestowal of renown upon his executioner recall Christ's announcement that a woman who anoints his head with expensive perfumed oil will be remembered for her act. In other words, the gospel story (Matt 26; Mark 14; John 12) seems to pronounce the woman famous, but it almost immediately withdraws her fame. The anonymous woman, like Lifolf, is merely a momentary hero within an insurmountably famous life of Christ. Therefore, if Christian salvation replaces pagan »false« immortality through fame in the societies depicted in the sagas, then the saint's references to »true« renown in the martyrdom scenes become an even more cutting criticism of the fame ideals. These ironic strategies in the martyrdom narrative had a major impact on the subsequent general pattern in *Orkneyinga Saga* describing the fame ideal and then, after Magnus's martyrdom, recording its decline as the narrative of various events and personalities proceeds—that means less promotion of traditional fame values and more parody of them. (Waugh 176) The praise directly expressed by the saga's writer(s) shifts towards an appreciation of Christian attributes, such as miracles and faith in God.

3. European dimension of the ruler martyrs

Although new lives of »classical« martyrs, murdered out of hatred towards their faith by non-Christians, were no longer being produced in contemporary Byzantium or Latin (South) Europe, this type of sainthood proved to be a fruitful model in the peripheral territories of medieval Europe, such as Rus', Scandinavia and Dioclea.[12] (Malmenvall, »Jovan Vladimir« 259; White 105; Hafner 16–17) Ruler martyrs were regarded by their contemporaries within a framework of confrontation between »exemplary« and »false« Christians, actually still pagans, opposing them. Writers of medieval European peripheries elevate a particular type of sacrifice, defined by following the example of Christ and breaking the cycle of violence, which results in the victim gaining entry into the »Kingdom of Heaven.« (Paramonova 288–289, 302–304; Antonsson, »The Early Cult« 18; Miljutenko 9, 14–15, 27–28, 31, 33–35; Hollingsworth XIV-XV; Ingham, »The Martyred Prince« 33, 36–37) The phenomenon of saintly ruler martyrs can be briefly explained in two fundamental ways: not only did it enable newly Christianized ruling

[12] Dioclea and its coastal urban settlements were situated on the east-west route linking the Balkans with the Adriatic Sea and Italy. Due to its transitory position, Dioclea was influenced both by Byzantine and Latin culture, starting to gradually adopt Christianity somewhat earlier than in the case of other mentioned lands, namely in the ninth and tenth centuries. (Andrijašević 157; Pirivatrić 110; Hafner 42–43)

dynasties and their homelands to position themselves in the Christian salvation history, but it also positioned them in the symbolic center of the European culture of the time. This created a changed perspective in which the periphery becomes the center—its centrality was ensured through hagiographical narratives of saints, relics, and miracles. This also explains why the first written records produced in the eastern and northern periphery of medieval Europe were all about local saints. Therefore, not only did the earlier periphery become the center, but the division between the center and periphery lost its relevance. Wherever God's presence was manifested through a saintly ruler, his people were in the center of the Christian world. (Malmenvall, »Jovan Vladimir« 263; Trajković-Filipović 9–10; Klaniczay 327) Because those saints »followed Christ,« their sacrifice is presented as a »new covenant« between God and their homeland. In this context, sacrifice is the key notion of martyrdom—in the Old Testament animal sacrifice was a way of making a covenant, through animal sacrifice God made a covenant with Abraham, while in the later Christian tradition, Christ was compared to a lamb that was to be sacrificed by a divine plan for the sins of mankind. (Malmenvall, »Jovan Vladimir« 263; Trajković-Filipović 14–15; Sciacca 254–257)

King Canute IV Svensson of Denmark offers another Scandinavian case similar to jarl Magnus, as he was assassinated by his brothers in 1086. He was recognized as a martyr by the pope in 1100. (Ingham, »The Sovereign« 6) The king faced a plot and was forced to take refuge with a small band of men in the church of Saint Mary and Alban in Odense. Canute chose not to resist, took Holy Communion, and committed himself and his men to God. The mob outside threw stones and spears through the windows until a lance pierced the king through and, with his arms spread in the form of a cross, he was pinned to the altar of Saint Alban by the spear in his side. His blood was thus spilled like a sacrifice on the altar of Christ. (Ingham, »The Sovereign« 6–7; Acts 7)[13] Furthermore, the saga material on Magnus's martyrdom provides some typological parallels with the texts of the Boris and Gleb[14] cycle written at the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Magnus, like Boris

[13] Critical edition of the earliest hagiographic texts on Canute: Gertz.

[14] Boris and Gleb were sons of the Kievan prince, Vladimir Sviatoslavich (980–1015), who adopted Christianity from the Byzantine Empire as the state religion of Rus' in 988 or 989. (Malmenvall, »Kijevska Rusija« 184–185) In 1015, Vladimir died and his eldest son, Sviatopolk, had taken the Kievan throne and had his younger brothers Boris and Gleb killed. Although Sviatopolk might at first glance be perceived as a rightful successor, he treacherously killed off his non-resistant half-brothers to ensure his position. (Malmenvall, »Kijevska Rusija« 191–192) Among the local Rus' saints, the cult of Boris and Gleb was the oldest and most widespread. The first phase of the canonization of the princely brothers was concluded by the confirmation of Georgi, the Kievan metropolitan, in 1072. In 1115, their relics were translated to the church, dedicated to the princely brothers, in the town of Vyshgorod, north of Kiev. (Malmenvall, »Boris and Gleb« 48)

and Gleb, decided against armed resistance to save the lives of his people; Magnus, like Gleb, was murdered by his own cook. The motif of the execution of a prince carried out by his servant probably had its origin in the shameful connotations associated with being killed by a social inferior, which additionally accentuated the image of Haakon as an evil murderer and Magnus as a victim. (Price 108–109; Cubitt 79) In addition, bishop Vilhjalmr, like the Kiev metropolitan Georgi, initially questioned the sanctity of the murdered prince. In fact, the Boris and Gleb cycle could have exerted at least some literary influence on the authors of the sagas and biographies about jarl Magnus Erlendsson because the ties between Scandinavia, Sweden and Norway, and Kievan Rus' were very vibrant and diverse between the tenth and thirteenth centuries; at the highest political level, dynastic marriages are especially worth mentioning. Therefore, familiarity with Rus' literary works can be reasonably assumed. (Conti 194–195; Miljutenko 22–23; Ingham, »The Sovereign« 7–8; Tomany 128) On the territory of Rus', the veneration of royal or princely Scandinavian saints, such as Magnus Erlendsson and Canute, was clearly present. Veneration of the Scandinavian ruler saints in Rus' presents a curious instance of Christian interaction at a time when Eastern and Western Christianity, at least in general terms, were supposed to have drifted apart after the schism in 1054.[15] In this context, one can mention a particular Rus' liturgical source from the mid-twelfth century (Lind, »The Martyria« 16–17; Jackson 166–167), conventionally called *Prayer to the Holy Trinity* (Rus. *Молитва Святой Троице*). This text is attributed to the hieromonk, renowned orator, and later bishop, Kiril of Turov (1130-1182), and contains a litany of both Eastern and Western Christian saints from various historical periods, from the first decades of Christianity to the twelfth century. (Arhangelskij 12–14) Among the Western saints, there are names from the late antiquity, such as Martin and Victor, and early Roman pontiffs, such as Linus, Anacletus, Clement, and Leo; additionally, the prayer lists Western ruler saints from a relatively recent past, such as Wenceslaus, Magnus, and Olaf—those names are listed alongside Rus' ruler martyrs, Boris and Gleb. (Lind, »The Martyria« 8–9) Consequently, the author or compiler of the mentioned prayer did not only include a particular Western saint, along with many other saints from the Christian West, into an Eastern ecclesiastical context, but also connected the native martyred princes Boris and Gleb with their Western counterparts, such as Wenceslaus and Magnus. By doing this he indirectly acknowledged ruler martyrs on the periphery of Europe of the time as a special (sub)category of common Christian saints.

[15] On the Rus'-Scandinavian (cultural) relations in the twelfth century: Lind, »The Martyria«; Lind, »Varangian Christianity«.

Conclusion

Although the existence of ruler martyrs was unknown in both the Byzantine and South European territories, this phenomenon cannot be considered a peculiarity of a particular medieval polity. Despite local differences, the phenomenon of princely or royal martyrs was common between the tenth and twelfth centuries in the lands on the eastern and northern periphery of Europe that had recently adopted Christianity—one of them were the Orkney Islands with Magnus Erlendsson. Magnus's martyrdom seems to be subversive in relation to the generally accepted warrior values in the Scandinavian sagas. The saint's life and death represent an example where the ideal of fame is dealt with in a Christian fashion, giving precedence to self-sacrifice for others and eternal »heavenly glory« over the instant military and political success. Like Christ, who gave his life for the peace and redemption of the world, Magnus gives his life for the peace and redemption of the people of the Orkneys—thus symbolically integrating them into »salvation history« shared by all other Christian polities.

Martyred rulers from that period together formed a new tradition of ruler's martyrdom where a member of the ruling dynasty could become a martyr because he was a good, righteous ruler who died an innocent death, showing no resistance, only his willingness to be a martyr for a greater good. Thus, he also became a local saint who could legitimize the existence of newly Christianized peoples and position them at the same time in the symbolic center of the Christian world by forging a covenant between them and the Lord. This also explains why the first written records produced in the eastern and northern periphery of medieval Europe were all about local saints. Wherever God's presence was manifested through a saintly ruler, his people were, despite their relative geographical remoteness and late adoption of the new faith, in the center of the Christian world. On this basis, the decision of the morally exceptional rulers to persevere in peace amid political violence »until the end« was a manifestation of the creation of a new Christian community. (Malmenvall, »Jovan Vladimir« 265; Klaniczay 99, 398)

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MAGNUS ERLENDSSON, SREDNJOVJEKOVNI VLADARI MUČENICI I REALIZACIJA KRŠĆANSKIH IDEALA USRED (POLITIČKOGA) NASILJA

Simon MALMENVALL*

Sažetak: *Fenomen vladara mučenika bio je raširen između 10. i 12. stoljeća u nedavno kristijaniziranim zemljama na istočnoj i sjevernoj periferiji Europe – među njima bili su i Orkneyski otoci s jarlom (grofom) Magnusom Erlendssonom (poginuo 1115./1117. godine). Kao Krist, podarivši svoj život za mir i spasenje svijeta, tako i Magnus daje svoj život za mir i spasenje naroda Orkneyskih otoka. To i objašnjava zašto najraniji tekstovi s periferija srednjevjekovne Europe govore upravo o lokalnim svetcima. Kad se god Božja prisutnost odražavala preko svetoga vladara, njegov narod bio je, unatoč kasnom primanju nove vjere, uključen u simbolički centar kršćanskoga svijeta. Posljedično, postupanje izvanrednih vladara, ustrajući u miru usred političkoga nasilja, bilo je izraz oblikovanja nove kršćanske zajednice.*

Ključne riječi: *Magnus Erlendsson, srednjovjekovna Skandinavija, vladari mučenici, hagijografije, kristijanizacija, (političko) nasilje.*

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