

# NORWEGIAN KINGS AND VIKINGS

## DO THEY BELONG IN YOUR FAMILY TREE?

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Former Norwegian Prime Minister Kåre Willoch writes in his memories about his roots: "Some years ago the genealogist Simeon M. Ekornnes kindly sent me his book 'Ei Hjørundætt' together with a letter where he told me that we through my grandfather in fact descended from Harald Fairhair and his queen Svanhild. Yes, why should we be an exception? Snorre writes that `King Harald had many wives and many children'. Mathematics makes it evident that almost every native Norwegian must descend from both the Unitor and all his wives, but the descendants can be divided into two groups: those who know their relationship and those who are not aware of it."

Mr. Willoch is probably right in his assumption, but to use mathematics as a proof in genealogy is very dangerous. You will easily find that if you go back 19 generations your possible number of ancestors exceeded the total Norwegian population. The others could of course be foreigners, but if you go back 29 generations and find that the possible number of ancestors exceeded the total population on earth – where did then the others come from? and through which sources will you look for them?

Let me use the present Norwegian King Harald V, as an example of how the number of ancestors are limited. Like everyone else he had two parents. He even had the theoretical maximum of four grandparents. But, since his parents, Olav and Märtha, were 1st cousins, he had only six great-grandparents. Thus, already in the fourth generation he has lost 25% of his ancestors. King Olav's parents, Haakon and Maud, were also 1st cousins, which gives King Harald ten instead of sixteen great-great-grandparents. Since both King Haakon's mother and Märtha's father belonged to the house of Bernadotte, another couple multiply in the next generation, thus in only a handful of generations the King has lost one half of his potential number of ancestors.

I can use myself as another example. I can trace no less than thirteen different lines back to the same farmer in Trysil at the end of the 17th century.

Mathematics, thus does not prove that anyone is a descendant of Harald Fairhair. The aim of my speech is on the contrary to discuss whether or not anybody at all can prove their relationship to this king or from anyone

else from the Viking Age in Norway.

Allow me before I go into the details of the Norwegian Genealogy to give those of you who are not familiar with the Norwegian History a brief introduction to the different royal dynasties. According to the Norse Sagas, Norway was united by Harald Fairhair in 872. His descendants, the Fairhair clan or Hårfagreætten, ruled Norway with minor interceptions until the death of King Håkon V in 1319. The kingdom then was inherited by the son of his daughter, who agnatically belonged to the Royal Swedish Folkung clan. This dynasty only lasted to the death of the young King Olav Håkonson in 1387, a mere child who also inherited the Kingdom of Denmark from his maternal grandfather. The kingdoms were now united under the same kings until 1814, at first as two independent monarchies. However, Denmark soon became dominant and Norway was in fact in 1536 reduced to a province of Denmark. The kings until 1448 were related to Olav Håkonson both on the paternal and the maternal side, and after that the House of Oldenburg ruled Denmark–Norway until the separation in 1814. Norway then was traded over to Sweden, and we had 4 years under the last king of the House of Wasa before the House of Bernadotte came into power. They ruled Norway until we got our independence in 1905, after which the people of Norway elected a younger son of the Danish king as the new king of Norway. The ruling dynasty in Denmark was still the House of Oldenburg, but now another line, known as the Holsten–Glücksborg.

The descendants of the Norwegian kings of the Holsten–Glücksborg line are limited to the issue of King Harald V and his two sisters. Those are also, to my knowledge, the only descendants of the Bernadotte kings living in Norway. The House of Oldenburg had some illegitimate sons who got the family name Gyldenløve, and of whom some made a career in Norway, and a family tradition says that the Konradi family is the result of a brief visit by King Frederick V. With these few exceptions, all those who claim to be descendants of the old Norwegian kings trace their ancestors to some of the kings of the Fairhair or Folkung clan.

Even the royal line of the Fairhair clan had some dubious members. The Civil War that started 1130 brought up quite a number of pretenders to the throne. To be a pretender one had to be of the royal family, but it did not

matter whether the connection was legitimate or illegitimate, as long as it was agnatic. Two such pretenders from an obscure origin even succeeded in being kings and part founders of the royal dynasty. Those were Harald Gille, who was Irish born and pretended to be the son of King Magnus Barefoot. He established his assertion by carrying red-hot iron without being burned. An impressive proof, but hardly as convincing as the analysis of blood tests that one uses today.

The other, and politically much more important pretender, was King Sverre. He grew up at the Faroe Islands as the son of Unas Kambrare or comb-maker, the brother of bishop Roe. He studied theology and was ordained minister before 1175. According to his own saga, which he himself dictated the beginning of, his mother got regrets in her older days and went to Rome to see the Pope and receive absolution for her great sin: Hiding the secret that her son Sverre actually was the son of King Sigurd Munn. The Pope gave her absolution and told her to go back and tell her son the truth. That changed the history of Norway.

The Norwegian Professor of history Kåre Lunden gives several reasons why this story can not be true. According to the canon law one had to be 30 years old to be ordained. If Sverre was that age when he was ordained, then King Sigurd could not have been more than 12 years old when he became a father. Another thing is that the Pope did not reside in Rome in those years when Gunhild, Sverre's mother, supposedly made her journey. And even if she had had a meeting with the Pope or his representatives, the support of another bastard throne pretender would have been totally against the Vatican's policy in the Nordic area.

Kåre Lunden says: "More of these preposterous traits of Sverre's own story shall not be mentioned. That will not be necessary. The main thing is that there is no reason whatsoever to believe that Sverre should be the son of Sigurd Munn. Neither does Sverre's own claim give such a reason. Nor is there any reason to believe that Sverre himself in any other way could have come to believe that Sverre himself in any other way could have come to believe he was the son of a king, like some (people) have argued. And there is not at all any reason to think that a deliberate falsification on Sverre's side should be remarkable or throw invidious light on Sverre's moral, at least not if one measures Sverre after the only reasonable standard, the common habit among respectable people of that time."

Norwegian historians do not any longer discuss whether or not Sverre was the son of a king, they discuss whether or not he believed it himself. Could he base his entire mission in life on a deliberate lie or did he get some of his remarkable personal power from a personal conviction that his case was just? The answer does not mean much to the genealogy. Queen Margareth, the queen of Håkon Håkonson, was a great-great-granddaughter of King Sigurd the Crusader, thus the Fairhair clan connection is valid. However, Sverre and his successors, who were all the Norwegian kings between 1177 and 1319, are today regarded as their own dynasty, the Sverre clan. Since this is a view in opposition to the story of the sagas, it ought to remind us of how careful one has to be in using the sagas as a source in genealogy.

One of the most critical users of the sagas is the Norwegian historian Claus Krag. In an recent article in *Historisk Tidsskrift* he attacks the position of the most sacred of all Norwegian kings, the Unitor, Harald Fairhair or hárfagri himself.

"Most historians, following their medieval saga-writing predecessors, have claimed that the Norwegian kings Olaf Trygvason, Olaf Haraldsson, Haraldr hardrádi and their successors, were all the descendants of Haraldr hárfagri. This claim has been combined with another one, both in the sagas and nowadays, namely that Haraldr hárfagri did not only unify the kingdom, but that he also, although the unification was ephemeral at first, rooted the idea of a Norwegian kingdom, commonly thought of afterwards as a hereditary possession (6dal) belonging to Harald's male descendants.

The most important single figure in establishing this long dynastical line – and in disestablishing it – is Haraldr hardrádi; the subsequent kings all descended from him. There is really no evidence that he claimed the throne as a descendant of the first Haraldr. The contemporary sources, both Byzantine and Norse skaldic material, indicate that his ascendancy was solely based on the fact that he was the half brother of Saint Olaf, on whose side he had fought in the battle of Stiklastadir. Only in later sources does he appear as a member of the hárfagri family. This can be seen both as an effort by the medieval writers to create unity and coherence in Norwegian history, and as a tribute to the Norwegian kings, especially Sverrir and his descendants. They had a very strong interest in looking upon the Norwegian kingdom as hereditary, and the dynasty as very old.

The view outlined above is not entirely new. It was held with some persistency by Nielsen, Bugge and Bull, but subsequently lost support, mostly because of Koht's firm belief in the traditional view.

Only Nielson doubted also that Olaf Trygvason and Olaf Haraldsson (Saint Olaf) descended from Harald. But there is good reason to reexamine the facts. There is no actual evidence that 10th and early 11th century Norway was really at that time regarded as an ódal in the hárfagri family – on the contrary, Danish kings were also kings of Norway most of the time. Nor do we see such a large number of claimants to the throne as would have been expected if there really had existed, as constitutional fact, national bonds on kingship, with the hárfagri descendants as a privileged group. Another disturbing fact is that the two Olaf's were from Østlandet, where their forefathers seem to have been vassals under the Danish king, and where Harald hárfagri never really gained supremacy.

The evidence used by modern historians to support the descendancy of Olaf Haraldsson from Harald, crumbles when reexamined. Some skalds (Ottarr, Sigvatr) call him nidjungr Haralds and arfvordr Haralds, but it is rather obvious from skaldic usage generally, that this Harald is not Harald fárfagri, but Harald grenski, Olaf's father. When it comes to Olaf Trygvason and contemporary sources, there really exists no so-called evidence at all. Neither do skaldic expressions such as Haralds áttleifd, Haralds haukey, and so on, denoting "Norway", point at other than Harald's role as the legendary first ruler of the whole country. Similarly, England is called Ellu ættleifd and later kings Ellu konr, without the skald implying that Ella founded a dynasty or that England belonged to his descendants."

What Krag really says is that Snorre most likely had a political motive for creating a family connection between Harald Fairhair and his successors to the throne. One must remember that Snorre was more of a politician than a historian. He played a major role in Icelandic history, and he was an active participant towards the end of the Norwegian Civil War, a role for which he was executed in 1241.

Snorre's Heimskringla is a fantastic source of knowledge of how the Norwegian society functioned in the late 12th and early to mid-13th century. It is also the best source we have for understanding the Viking Age, but the Viking Age is described in 13th century standards. This means that main events in the Viking Age are described

according to the 13th century laws, traditions and ethics, which as in the above given example of Sverre's origin, meant that history could be changed, rewritten or even invented to explain or give legality to political positions.

This does not mean that the sagas are useless. It shows just how careful one has to be when dealing with them. The Norwegian humorist Odd Børretzen says in his parody on Norwegian history:

*"Whenever science can control the text of the sagas, it shows over and over again that the sagas express inaccuracies, misrepresentations or sheer nonsense. But whenever science can not control the words of the sagas, then they accept every word until the last man who died on both sides, and they write it down, without even raising their eyebrows, into "The Native country and the World. History for junior high school".*

*But this is not worthy, this can not go on, one has to start taking this serious.*

*When one for instance has read the entire Norwegian version of the Heimskringla of Snorre Sturlasson and is supposed to extract from the reading the 100% reliable information, what is the net result of knowledge?*

*The knowledge you have gained is that the book is printed by the Central Printing Company, Oslo, and that any reprint of the illustrations is illegal."*

I do not say that you must be that critical, but he has a good point.

I have so far given some reasons why the Fairhair clan perhaps is not descendants of Harald Fairhair. I will now discuss the likelihood of tracing ancestors back to the Fairhair clan at all. In doing so I will first give you a brief introduction to the sources available for Norwegian genealogists.

The census of 1801 tells us that at that point more than 90% of the Norwegian people were farmers or connected to farmer families. Thus most Norwegian amateur genealogists only deal with farmer families. Since the rural population in Norway pretty much stayed in the same area their entire lives, and the church registers, at least since the standard of 1812, are well kept and informative, most native Norwegians can easily trace most of their ancestors back to the end of the 18th century. Most parishes have consecutive church registers and/or juridical registers like probate registers going back

to the beginning of the 18th century, some places even back to the 17th century, thus most Norwegians can trace at least some lines this far back.

Even the amount of juridical sources diminishes towards the beginning of the 17th century, and besides the male censuses of 1664 and 1666 the fiscal registers are the main sources available for genealogical investigations of this period. The fiscal registers, of course, are not invented for genealogical purposes. However, through the combination of lists of names that includes patronymics and the hereditary ownership to parts of one or several farms one may be able to prove ancestry back to the end of the 16th century, in some areas even back to the beginning of the 16th century.

The main rule, however, is that before the end of the 16th century is darkness. The darkness is not complete, but the few glimpses of light can seldom give proof of relationship. You may find documents naming the tenant or the owner of the farm of which you are tracing the ancestry, you may even find two or three generations listed in the same document, and we have examples from court disputes on ownership to farmland in the mid 17th century that lists the ancestry of the claimants 5, 6 or even 7 generations back. These sources are of course valuable, and in some areas of Gudbrandsdalen and on Sunnmøre some families of the upper rural society, one may call it landed nobility, can be traced back to the 14th century. Parts of the same social strata may in quite a lot of different places be traced back to the 15th century.

We have perhaps 100 different lines going through these rural farmer families back to the old Norwegian kings and vikings. 80 of these lines are based on a dangerous combination of fraudulence and wishful thinking, 15 may be possible, but impossible to substantiate, thus only about 5 out of 100 lines are interesting in a genealogical point of view.

To give you an idea of the difficulties the genealogist has to overcome to be able to tie connections to the Fairhair clan, let me give you some details of the political history of this period.

Some people tend to believe that the unification of Norway was a long battle between Harald Fairhair on one side and the old aristocracy on the other. Harald won and the old chieftains were either killed or had to flee the country, most of them to Iceland. New people dependant on Harald, moved into their places and became progenitors for new families.

Genealogical investigations of the saga texts give us another picture of what took place. The Norwegian historian Halvadan Koht found that the Norwegian unification was not at all such a revolution. The unification under one king was prepared through a strengthening of the Norwegian aristocracy through intermarriage between chieftain clans in opposite ends of the country, proving that the top nobility was not any longer local, it had become national.

Both the Bjodaskalle clan and the Horda–Kåre descendants can be found in both Hordaland and on Jæren. Top Sogn aristocrats like Kjetil Flatnev married a chieftain's daughter of Ringerike. The mother of the powerful Kveldulv in Fjordane came from Namdølafylke, and another woman of his mother's clan was married to a man from Hålogaland. The Icelandic settler Ingemund the old came from Romsdalen, but he had ancestors in Hålogaland, Øksna–Thore at Agder had relatives on Jæren and a grandson, Olav the white, who was Chieftain in Lofoten.

These intermarriages prove that the Norwegian aristocracy already constituted a national power base even before the nation was formally united, and there is every reason to believe that the same chieftain clans were the foundation of the kingdom in the first centuries of Norway as a nation.

Neither is it true that all the Norwegian chieftains had to flee the country to escape the anger of King Harald. The genealogy of the sagas tells us that only two men of the Horda–Kåre clan, two sons of his daughter, left for Iceland while all his sons remained in Norway and became high ranking officials under the king as administrators of respectively Voss, Sunnhordland and Jæren. The Jæren branch of the clan remained in power for at least 200 years.

The other chieftain clan from Hordaland, the Bjodaskalle clan, was divided into two branches. One fled to Iceland while the other remained. Erik Bjodaskalle in fact was to become an ancestor to King Olav Tryggvason.

The Kjetil Flatnev clan of Sogn emigrated, but another chieftain clan of Sogn, the one at Aurland remained. Members of this clan served the kings for several generations, and one of the kings, Olav the quiet, married a girl of this clan.

We could continue in the same way all around the country. Some fled, but most of the aristocracy remained. Thus the conclusion is that Harald Fairhair got assistance

and service from many of the best clans in the country, clans of whom several remained in powerful positions for a couple of centuries. The pattern is the same on the west coast, in Northern Norway and in the eastern parts of the country. The unification of Norway did not only give us a king, it created a hierarchy in which the former chieftain clans were able to secure their own wealth and influence.

Some historians have argued that the prime mover throughout the entire period of the Fairhair dynasty was a conflict between the king and the aristocracy. This can only be true to a certain degree. At least for the first 250 years, until Sverre entered the stage, the kings ruled the country by the aristocracy. The relationship was symbiotic more than hostile.

It is possible that St. Olav tried to replace the aristocracy by allowing newcomers into government positions. Of his 9 top ranking officials 6 belonged to the old chieftain clans, while 3 did not. Neither these 3 nor another dozen of newcomer officials created (progenited) lasting noble families. With two exceptions, one may say that St. Olaf's efforts to create a new aristocracy failed. This may be due to the fact that the old aristocracy that he neglected, succeeded in their rebellion against him and thus probably literally eliminated the newcomers.

This power balance was changed throughout the 12th century. The many battles between the different throne pretenders during the Civil War led more and more newcomers into positions until King Sverre, who aimed to overthrow the old aristocracy, put an end to the old regime. We hear that during the 7 years of war between King Sverre and King Magnus Erlingsson no less than 31 members of the old aristocracy were killed. Some of the clans joined forces with Sverre, but only 6 to 8 of the old clans survived this period. Professor Koht estimates that more than 75% of the old aristocracy were replaced in this period. Replaced partly by climbing families of the landed nobility, but also by officials of a weaker origin.

The post war part of the era of the Fairhair dynasty, also called the Sverre dynasty, was the climax of the old Norwegian society. The prosperity of the nation kept both the kings and their aristocracy in power, thus social climbing became rather difficult. The aristocracy protested their interests by isolating themselves from the lower classes. Intermarriage became a threatening danger for extinction and it became increasingly difficult to find suitable partners for marriage in Norway. The only possibilities left were Swedish or Danish aristocrats.

Koht has shown that from the 1280's on an all-Scandinavian nobility developed, a political union between the nobility in all 3 of the Nordic nations to face the struggle from the kings to increase the power of the kingdom. Intermarriage between the nations became a natural consequence of this political Scandinavianism.

Royal marriages have always been a political issue. Giving his own blood in marriage to his own aristocracy could secure the internal power of the king if necessary. Giving it to a member of a foreign royal family could help strengthen international relations both in commerce and tactically in times of war. Thus a Norwegian prince or princess was never married without a special purpose for political benefits.

The sagas tell us how the first kings knit contacts and sought support from the aristocracy by marrying their female relatives into the leading clans. The kings themselves could either seek international recognition by marrying into foreign royal families or satisfy the aristocracy by taking one of their candidates depending on the internal and external political strength of the king. Royal blood, thus, hardly ever reached the lower strata of the nobility.

Since the genealogies of the landed nobility can not be traced further back than at best to the 14th century, it seems obvious that any ancestry to the Norwegian kings and vikings must be found through the high nobility or younger members of the Sverre dynasty. In discussing these options, I will start with the Sverre dynasty.

Sverre was king of Norway for 25 years and he had to fight opponents and throne pretenders through his entire reign. This was partly due to the fact that anyone who claimed to be the son of a king had a right to challenge the king, and that his powerful enemies deliberately looked for new pretenders. Of course, most of these pretenders were fortune hunters, like Sverre himself. To avoid any speculations about possible illegitimate sons, Sverre's last decree was an announcement that Sverre knew of no other living sons of his than Håkon.

Håkon Sverreson died only 2 years after his father. The rumor said he was poisoned to death. He only left an illegitimate son, the infant Håkon who was carried over the mountains by military skiers to safeguard him and thus made the tradition that today is kept alive by the skiing competition call "the Birkebeiner renn" using the kings track between Lillehammer and Rena.

The young Håkon who was elected king in 1217, who

ended the civil war in 1240, who was crowned in 1247 and who even put Iceland and Greenland under his jurisdiction had no less than 4 sons. However, only one of them, Magnus law-mender, survived his father. Magnus had himself 2 sons, Eirik and Håkon, who both became kings. Neither of them left sons, thus there are no male sidelines of the Sverre dynasty.

The daughters of the Royal family were all parts of the political game that took place. Sverre's daughter Kristin was given to the leader of the opposition party, King Philippus, in 1208 to settle the dispute between the Baglers and the Birkebeiners. She left no issue.

Håkon the great had only one daughter, whose name was the same as his aunt's. This Kristin or Kristina was used to strengthen foreign relations, she was given to the Spanish Prince Don Filipus of Castilla.

King Eirik was married twice, and he had one daughter in each marriage. His first wife was the only daughter of the Scottish King Alexander III. When the last of her 2 brothers died in 1284, she became the heir to the Scottish throne, and when she herself died later on the same year, their baby daughter Margaret became the heir. In fact, she inherited the Scottish throne when 3 years old in 1286. To prevent civil war in Scotland, she was to be brought under the custody of the English King Edward I, and, later on, to be married to his son. Alas, the young Queen died during the journey to Scotland. The King's second daughter, Ingebjørg, was also used for political purposes. She was, after her father's death given to the Swedish Prince Valdemar, who was challenging his brother, King Birger, and was eventually killed. Thus, none of Eirik's daughters left any issue in Norway.

King Håkon haleggr also had 2 daughters. Ingeborg was married to the Swedish Prince Erik, the brother of Prince Valdemar whose destiny he also joined. She had 2 children to whom I will return later on. The elder of the daughters, Agnes, was born out of wedlock, and was thus useless for international relations. She was instead as an infant married to a high nobility Norwegian, and became the progenitor of the most important Norwegian high nobility clan in the Medieval Ages.

Before we trace King Håkon's descendants, let us pay a brief visit to the few of the viking clans that survived the Norwegian Civil War. The 6-8 clans that professor Koht accepted were the Bjarkøy clan and perhaps the clan from Torgar, both from Hålogaland, the Reins clan and the Austrått clan from Trøndelag, the Giske clan and the

Blindheim clan at Møre, the Aurland clan in Sogn and, possibly the Manvik clan in Vestfold. Thus anyone that will claim his ancestry back to the old Norwegian kings and vikings ought to have either King Håkon V or one of these clans on the family tree.

However, those clans were not long lived after the Civil war. The Giske clan went out in 1264, the one from Torger in 1334, the Bjarkøy clan in 1355 and so on. In fact, none of these clans survived the 15th century. Some of them could of course have married into some of the socially climbing clans like Darre, Galle, Bolt, Stumpe, Holk, Kane and Rømer, but, reminding of the isolationistic marriage policy of the top Nordic nobility, one has to give very firm proofs for such relationships. Such proof is very hard to find among the few glimpses of light of the 15th century genealogy. These connections are among those that I mentioned earlier as possible, but impossible to substantiate.

When Norwegian genealogy still seems to know so many lines going back to the old Norwegian kings and vikings, the cause is not the historic sources, but the genealogists. Earlier Norwegian historians like Jens Chr. Berg, P.A. Munch, Gerhard Munthe, Gustav Storm, J. E. Sars, Ludvig Daae and others up to Halvdan Koht used genealogy as an important aid to history. After World War II genealogy has been regarded as a scientific outcast among Norwegian historians, and the field has been left open for amateurs. They have even occupied the Norwegian Genealogical Society, and the main part of the articles in their Chronicle the last 15-20 years have been either genealogically uninteresting or literally rubbish.

No wonder, then, that many genealogists both here in the U.S.A. and in Norway gladly copy those articles, add on some more or less qualified guesswork, a dash of wishful thinking and a good part of free fantasy and have it reprinted. Other genealogists copy the new articles and add on some more, and this has been allowed to go on and on. Such indiscriminate copying is by far the worst sin of Norwegian genealogy, and is the reason why we have so many of these viking are lines around.

A very interesting discussion took place in Norwegian newspapers, mainly in the Dagbladet, from November 1989 to January 1990. More than 40 articles were published, and the topic of the discussion was whether or not it is possible to trace one's ancestors back to the kings and vikings. Even though there were different opinions, the conclusion seemed to be that with a couple of

exceptions this was not possible, at least not scientifically provable.

I have earlier said that out of 100 lines claiming royal ancestry only about 5 are genealogically interesting. The first one is, of course, the Royal line. Ingeborg Håkonsdatter was the mother of King Magnus Eriksson, who had 2 sons, Håkon and Erik. Only Håkon had issue, King Olav Håkonsson; who died at the age of 17 in 1387.

However, Ingeborg Håkonsdatter also had a daughter, Eufemia. Being the young widow of Prince Erik and the guardian of her infant son, King Magnus, Ingeborg was one of the cruelest political actors in Norwegian history. She sold her own daughter to the Duke of Mecklenburg for 200 armed horsemen and economic support for an attack on Skåne, which at that time was a part of Denmark. This bought marriage gave results, and, with the exception of a minor intermezzo in 1449, all Norwegian kings 1387 and 1814 descended from her. Through her even the present Norwegian Royal family are descendants of the old Norwegian kings.

A second line that never has been challenged is the one coming from Agnes, the illegitimate daughter of King Håkon V. She was married to Havtore Jonsson, the son of Baron Jon Ivarsson the red. The last agnatic member of the family in Norway died in 1407, but through these all-Scandinavian marriages two branches of the family settled in Sweden. Because of their coat of arms, a rose, whose branches were named respectively Roos of Ervalla and Roos of Hjelmsäter. The one went out in the 18th century, the other survived until after World War II, but I believe that this branch also went out in the 1970's. However, both branches have innumerable cognatic descendants among the Swedish nobility.

There were also cognatic descendants of Agnes and Havtore in Norway, but we do not have a complete survey of these. The foremost expert on Norwegian genealogy in this period, Tore H. Vigerust, says that the famous Dame Ingerd Ottesdatter, who lived at Austrått in the beginning of the 16th century most likely was a descendant of Agnes and Havtore, though no one yet has proven it scientifically. She was perhaps the only surviving descendant of King Håkon V in Norway after the execution of Knut Alfsson in 1502.

Dame Ingerd had no less than 5 daughters, of whom all married Danish noblemen who settled in and made careers in Norway. Their descendants are well known, and comprise noble families like Huitfeldt, Ugerup and

Bildt to mention a few. Those who have ancestry among the Norwegian high nobility in the early 17th century may thus have a royal connection through Dame Ingerd. However, her descendants were socially far from common farmers, and there are no short cuts available to her.

Another interesting line includes the cognatic descendants of Agnes and Havtore at O, Vang in Hedmark. We know that the family resided on the farm until the end of the 15th century. We can not prove any link to the family that owned the same farm in the 16th century, but one of their members had a gallery of coat of arms that usually shows your own heraldic ancestry and that includes the Rose coat of arms of Agnes clan. There have also been made efforts to tie the Bratt family of Gudbrandsdalen to the same cognatic descendants. The theory seems interesting, but is so far not proven.

One royal line left Norway already in the 11th century, when Ulfhild, the daughter of St. Olav, was married to a duke of Saxony. According to German genealogists, she had descendants and has a large posterity among German aristocracy.

This is not meant to be a complete survey of the possible royal of viking connections. To do so is not possible today, since there is no register or database covering the Norwegian nobility. No one has sufficient knowledge to take on such a task, and there does not seem to be any willingness among Norwegian historians to start preparing for a work like this. However, I have shown that it is possible to trace ancestry back to the old Norwegian kings and vikings, even though most of those that can do so will have to go through Sweden, Denmark or Germany. I have given reasons why it is so difficult to find Norwegian lines, and I have warned you against the multitude of incorrect ancestral lines that pretend to tie royal connections.

In the above mentioned newspaper debate Tore Vigerust said as a general advice to genealogists to use correcting fluid as their most important tools and to erase everything they had before 1600. Then you could start all over and rebuild the ancestry step by step while checking that every connection is provable. Let me also remind you of the words of the Norwegian scholar Lars Hamre, who once said that among all problems an historian could face medieval genealogy was the most difficult.

Allow me now to share with you some examples of how not to do a genealogy. There is absolutely no limit for the

fantasy and imagination that some genealogists have. I have from my own home area, which was among the poorest parts of the country and thus with no trace of any local nobility, seen genealogists listing the ancestry back to King Håkon V step by step, giving full names and years for each generation where I positively know that at least 10 of the generations listed are never mentioned in any original source. This is construction, not genealogy. The list is easy to copy, and it has surely given social satisfaction to many people, but what kind of relief does it give to the one that originally put the nonsense together?

I can also give you an example from a family history written and printed here in Minnesota. I will protect the author by not mentioning her name, even though some of you might know her when I say that the book is called "Ancestry of the Viken–Holian Family".

As you may see on the front cover, it has a very ambitious subtitle that says "300 B.C. – 1988 A.D.". It is of course impossible to trace your ancestors 2300 years back on Norwegian soil, and the main part of this ancestral line resided in other European countries. The author traces her ancestors among Valdres farmers for 370 years with one line back to the noble family at Semeleng, Vestre Slidre. She takes this line through Norwegian high–nobility families like Smjor and Reinsætt back to Skule Kongsfostre, the son of the British earl Tostig Godwindson who revolted against his own brother, the British king Harold, and was killed together with the Norwegian king Harald Hardråde at the battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066. Through Tostigs wife the author goes right to the French nobility, French kings and even some British kings all the way back to Arviragus, king of the Britons, who supposedly was married to a sister of emperor Nero in Rome, a great grand–niece of emperor Augustus who again was the grand–nephew of the great Caesar. This ancestry sounds like a fairy tale, and is in fact much more related to fairy tales than to genealogy.

The Roman genealogy is documentable, but the connection is dubious. The British Albany Herald of Arms, Sir Iain Montcreiffe of that Ilk, deems the French genealogy covering "the Dark Ages" as obscure and omits such lines from his books, an example that this author ought to have followed. By doing so she would have taken away at least 850 years of the family history, but that is less than 50% of what a good genealogist would have cut out.

Genealogists still disagree who this Judith, the wife of earl Tostig was, thus no one can prove her ancestry. However, her relation to the French kings and emperors is probably much more likely than the Viken families connection to her. The ancestry is going through an unidentified daughter of Olav på Stein, supposed to be married to Baron Henning von Romer. The problem is that Henning von Romer was a German nobleman who most likely never put his foot on Norwegian soil and much less likely married a Norwegian girl. There is at least no evidence of such a marriage in Norwegian sources.

Another error is made when the author claims that Svale Ølverson was a member of the Rømer family. His only connection to the Rømers was that he became the father–in–law of Otte Rømer, the same relationship that he had to Jon Jalvardson Smjor. We know at present nothing about the ancestry of Svale Ølverson, so his name will in any case be a dead end in the family tree.

The connection to the Smjor family is even less plausible. The author claims the well known nobleman Gaute Ivarsson to be a great–grandson of Jon Halvardson Smjor in direct male line. The last male member of the Smjor (or Smør) family most likely died in 1484, and the handling of the estate of Magdalena Olufsdtr from 1547 to 1557 proves that the only living descendants of Jon Halvardson Smjor at that time was a cognatic line represented by Trond Benchestoch and an illegitimate line by Christin, the wife of Erich Ormsøn. Gaute Ivarsson and his many children are never mentioned in this connection. In fact, the only thing we know about the ancestors of Gaute Ivarsson is that his mothers name was Herborg Torbjørnsdtr. His father is unknown, and, whoever he was, he could not possibly have been a grandchild of Jon Halvardson Smjor.

Approximately 1800 years of the period this family history claims to cover can not be authentically substantiated, thus it should never have been included. Why, then do so many genealogists do such things that the author of the Viken–Holian has done? One main problem is that Norway never has had professional genealogists like the Swedes with their Riddarhus and as most other European nations. This has allowed anyone to present hypotheses which, as long as no one has been obligated to correct them, sooner or later have been accepted without reservations. This is also the reason why the advise given by Tore Vigerust to use correcting fluid as the most important genealogical tool is a good



advice. This period of Norwegian genealogy must be thoroughly reexamined, and the only advice to you before this is done is to be extremely careful with anything that looks like a royal line in your family tree.

I may have disappointed some of you tonight, and you must of source feel free to believe in your own family history instead of listening to me. To those of you who still will claim royal ancestry, let me just remind you of the words of one of the ancestors of Norwegian genealogy, Cornelius Schilbred. He once said that he felt pity in those who had royal ancestors. Think how frustrating it must be to be reminded everytime you look at your family tree of the social decline that has taken place in your family!