

THE TRACES OF THE BATTLE OF THE FRIGID RIVER
IN VERALDAR SAGA, AMBRÓSIUS SAGA BISKUPS
AND ITS POTENTIAL ECHOES IN KIRIALAX SAGA*Alenka DIVJAK*

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes and discusses the traces which the Battle of the Frigid River and its protagonists left in two Old Icelandic texts: Veraldar saga from the early thirteenth century, and Ambrósius saga biskups from approximately the same period. The Viking Eugenius in the Icelandic romance Kirialax saga, most likely to have been written in the fourteenth century, might have been modelled on the same historical figure as the one referred to in Veraldar saga and Ambrósius saga. In Veraldar saga, the Emperor Theodosius I is described as being the most important figure of his age, a representative of imperial power and a staunch supporter of Christian orthodoxy, while Eugenius is assigned the minor role of usurper. In Ambrósius saga, the battle is described in detail, with the emphasis on hagiographical elements which evolved around the event during the Late Antiquity. In Kirialax saga, the Viking Eugenius, who might have been borrowed from Veraldar saga, is depicted – together with Attila and Theodoric the Ostrogoth – as one of the efficient and intimidating war leaders who were invading Italy during the Late Antiquity, which, by implication, increases the value of Kirialax's victory over such an enemy.

Key words: Battle of the Frigid River, Late Antiquity and medieval Latin sources, medieval Icelandic accounts, hagiography, historiography, medieval Icelandic romance

TRACCE DELLA BATTAGLIA DEL FIUME FRIGIDO NELLA SAGA ISLANDESE SULLA STORIA DEL MONDO, NELLA SAGA SUL VESCOVO AMBROGIO E SUOI EVENTUALI ECHI NELLA SAGA SU KIRIALAX

SINTESI

L'articolo analizza le tracce della battaglia del Frigido e dei guerrieri coinvolti lasciate in due saghe cavalleresche medioevali islandesi: nella cronaca della storia del mondo (Veraldar saga) e nella biografia del vescovo Ambrogio (Ambrosius saga biskups), fa però anche il punto su possibili riferimenti riscontrabili nella Saga di Kirialax (Kirialax saga). Nella saga sulla Storia del mondo il ruolo di protagonista spetta all'imperatore Teodosio I che da devoto regnante cristiano e valoroso difensore dell'integrità dell'Impero sconfigge il vichingo Eugenio, in cui si può riconoscere il rivale di Teodosio, l'imperatore Eugenio (392–294). Nella saga dedicata al vescovo Ambrogio la battaglia viene dettagliatamente descritta, è intrisa di elementi agiografici risalenti al periodo tardo classico e che la storiografia medievale ha successivamente fatto propri. Anche nella Saga di Kirialax appare la figura del vichingo Eugenio in veste di valoroso condottiero germanico, presentato come predecessore di Teoderico il Grande e Attila. In conformità con le leggende eroiche germaniche nella Saga di Kirialax, Attila e Teoderico risultano coevi, ma contrariamente alla tradizione germanica che li presenta in chiave positiva, nella storiografia medievale la loro coesistenza assume una connotazione marcatamente negativa. Lo si può evincere anche dalla Saga di Kirialax in cui appare un'annotazione sui delitti commessi dai due personaggi storici durante gli attacchi all'Impero Romano. Nella saga si enfatizza in questo modo la natura pericolosa delle popolazioni germaniche e di conseguenza la grandezza della vittoria di Kirialax su Eugenio che appartiene appunto al mondo germanico.

Parole chiave: battaglia del Frigido, fonti latine tardoantiche e medievali, scritti medievali islandesi, agiografia, romanza medievale, romanza islandese

THE BATTLE OF THE FRIGID RIVER

In 1994, an international symposium was held at the castle of Zemono (5.–8. 9. 1994), in order to commemorate the 1600th anniversary of the Battle of the Frigid River (waged at an unidentified location near the Vipava River in what is now western Slovenia) and to discuss the significance of this event in the broader context of

Late Antiquity and the development of early Christianity in western Illyricum and north-east Italy (Bratož, 1993; 1994b). The papers were published by the National Museum in Ljubljana in 1996 in the anthology entitled *Westillyricum und Nordostitalien in der spätrömischen Zeit. Zahodni Ilirik in severovzhodna Italija v pozni rimski dobi*, edited by Dr. Rajko Bratož. His research into Late Antiquity Greek and Latin sources, his discussion of the corresponding medieval Latin accounts as well as his analysis of the gradual development and emergence of the most important hagiographical elements associated with the battle (Bratož, 1994a) have provided a good starting point for further research into the Battle of the Frigid River whose spiritual and ideological significance had already been recognised in Late Antiquity and further acknowledged in the Medieval period.

In the Battle of the Frigid River, which took place on 5 and 6 September 394, Theodosius I, praised as an orthodox Christian, and his rival in the West, Eugenius, denoted as a pagan by Christian tradition, eventually resolved their tensions in an open military confrontation. As Eugenius was backed by the pagan aristocracy from Rome, the battle had been regarded from the very beginnings as a fight between Christianity and paganism. The battle itself, however, remains a rather mysterious event as, in spite of numerous accounts from Late Antiquity and the Medieval period, as well as several modern studies, it is still not clear where the battle actually took place or how it was waged. Even though the battle is not regarded as a groundbreaking event by military historians (Demandt, 1996, 43; Springer, 1996, 92), it was politically and ideologically so significant that in terms of political importance it was believed to be on a par with the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, which took place in 312.

The encounter between Theodosius and Eugenius has its roots in the year 392, when Emperor Valentinian II was found hanged in his palace in the Gaulish town of Vienna. Arbogast, who was Frank by origin and the main military leader in the West, was actually in charge of Valentinian's part of the empire. He was regarded as being primarily responsible for the Emperor's death, and soon after nominated Eugenius, the former teacher of rhetoric, as the new emperor. As Eugenius allowed himself to be nominated by the notorious Arbogast, his own reputation suffered accordingly. Historiography from the Late Antiquity and Medieval period commented on his close associations with the strong pagan opposition in Rome (Jones, 1963, 30–33), which quarrelled with Archbishop Ambrose of Milan, and demanded the restoration of the Altar of Victory to its former position in the Roman Curia, from where it had been removed by Emperor Gratian in 382 (Wallis, 2008, 17–18). Eugenius yielded to this group's request when he recognised the futility of his attempts to reach reconciliation with Theodosius I. In order to gain support from this influential social group, he allowed the restitution of the altar to its former location and the renewal of pagan cults. This brought down upon him the wrath of the Christian clergy, Ambrose in particu-

lar, and the accusation that he had rejected Christianity and embraced paganism, a reproach which is difficult to confirm as Eugenius' religious convictions are far from being clear. He is depicted as an undisputed pagan by some historians (Ferrill, 1986, 73), while others believe he was nominally a Christian even though his sympathies lay with paganism (Bloch, 1963, 199; O'Flynn, 1983, 11). Still others argue that the Church consciously and systematically exaggerated accusations levelled at Eugenius, as this line of argument corresponded rather well with its political and ideological ends (O'Donnell, 1978).

Theodosius arrived in the West at the beginning of September in 394, after a thorough military preparation. In the second half of May he travelled from Constantinople via Thrace, where he joined forces with numerous barbarian troops consisting mostly of Goths, Alans and Huns, continuing his way through the Danube region, until he arrived at the Alpine passes where he had already encountered Eugenius' forces, as recorded by numerous writers of the Late Antiquity and Medieval period.¹ According to contemporary Late Antiquity and later Medieval sources, Theodosius initially fared rather badly but later he was believed to have won the battle with divine assistance in the shape of a strong wind, which blew into the faces of Eugenius and his soldiers with such force that their own spears and arrows aimed at Theodosius' side were turned against themselves (Kovač, 1996, 113). This was an event interpreted by contemporaries (especially Theodosius' supporters) as a sign of divine favour. By adhering to this vision of events, the Romans remained faithful to their own tradition, in which there was hardly a battle without intervening meteorological factors which, according to popular belief, were influenced by the gods (Demandt, 1996, 39). For that reason, it is currently difficult to determine to what degree the reference to this strong wind, which was supposed to have been a decisive factor in the outcome of the battle, was a *topos*, and to what degree it was an actual event. This meteorological disaster, regarded as a miracle from the very start, was expanded by other hagiographical elements as early as the period of Late Antiquity to include such elements as the apparition of the evangelist John and the apostle Phillip in Theodosius' dream, his prayer on a high cliff, the desertion of one part of Eugenius' army into Theodosius' camp, and the energetic military action of one of Theodosius' commanders, Bacurius, all of which are supposed to be the response to Theodosius' prayer. After the battle, Eugenius was captured and beheaded while Arbogast committed suicide (Bratož, 1994a, 7–22; Springer, 1996, 53–76). The rest of the army fared much better as Archbishop Ambrose easily persuaded Theodosius to grant a

¹ The most notable writers are as follows: Sanctus Ambrosius, 11.–13.; Claudius Claudianus, 15.; Turranus Rufinus, 22.; Paulus Orosius, 25.; Sanctus Aurelius Augustinus, 26.; Philostorgius, 27.; Socrates Scholasticus, 29.; Zosimus, 31.; Theodoretus, 33.; Sozomenus, 34.; Johannes Antiochenus, 40.; Georgios Monachos, 45.; Georgios Kedrenos, 47.; Nicephoros Callistus Xanthopulos, 48. (Šašel, 1971, 26–44).

general amnesty to the defeated soldiers and their family members, which marked a radical break with the late republican and early imperial practice of annihilating defeated opponents (Bratož, 1994a, 38).

As mentioned earlier, Late Antiquity and Medieval sources in Greek and Latin have been more or less thoroughly researched, while the issue of corresponding vernacular accounts still remains open. One of the purposes of this article is therefore to draw the scholars' attention to the fact that the Battle of the Frigid River is far from being an exhausted topic and that the accounts of the event written in various vernacular languages could stimulate further research into this important military confrontation. In order to stress the point, the article discusses two medieval Icelandic texts in which the battle is referred to, although with a different degree of attention and from different angles. These are the universal chronicle *Veraldar saga* and the saint's life *Ambrósíus saga biskups*, which both raise the issue of potential reminiscences of the battle in the Late Medieval *Kirialax saga*.

KIRIALAX SAGA

The idea that the traces of the Battle of the Frigid River might be found in medieval Icelandic literature emerged as a result of my extensive research into *Kirialax saga*, a Late Medieval prose text. It is classified by literary science as an Icelandic romance, a popular and flourishing literary genre (also designated as Icelandic *rid-dara sögur*), which emerged in medieval Iceland in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and which shared with medieval European romance the same narrative pattern: the hero's departure from home, adventures, success and marriage (van Nahl, 1981, 11, 28). In common with other Icelandic romances, *Kirialax saga* sees the hero likewise exchange his safe domestic environment for a spectacular journey around the world, which he successfully completes, marries and leaves behind descendants of equal distinction to himself. What makes *Kirialax saga* exceptional among other Icelandic romances is its impressive element of erudition, namely, an exceptional quantity of learning and pseudo-learning having its roots in the classical and medieval tradition which found its way into various medieval Icelandic and Old Norse translations and adaptations which are based on this tradition (Cook, 1982, 305–308; Kålund, 1917a, XVIII–XXVI; 1917b, 6–12). *Kirialax saga* abounds in 'learned' references to various well-known historical, legendary and pseudo-historical figures and events which are included in the text and which are set into such unreal and highly fictitious narrative situations that these learned references – in spite of their scientific status by medieval standards – nevertheless manage to sharpen the reader's awareness of the saga's fictitious character. The scope of this section, however, is limited to the discussion of only one of the saga's numerous pseudo-historical figures, namely the Viking Eugenius, whom, according to the saga, the eponymous hero confronts in

Sicily at the time of Eugenius' attack on the King of Sicily, Lodovicus, and his guest, Emperor Zeno:² »[...] and they sailed first to Sicily. At that time the emperor was dwelling there whose name was Zeno. He was fighting at that time in the east, but then there came the Viking from the northern hemisphere whose name was Eugenius and he nearly won the kingdom of Sicily from the king, but at this point the Emperor Zeno came there and fought against the Viking for several days. The Viking had an army of many men and they were very brave, and they had killed a great host of the Emperor, and now the Emperor settled in a certain town which is called Syracuse, and Eugenius was daily attacking the town.«³

Kirialax with his successful action saves the situation, while Eugenius flees over the mountains (the Alps), and in Swabia and Hollstein gathers new forces with which he later returns to Italy and captures Rome: »Eugenius [...] and then he headed northwards over the mountains and raised the army in Svafa and Hollzetuland and then harried in Italy and performed there brave deeds and captured Rome at last, according to the account in the *Gesta Romanorum*.«⁴

According to Kålund (Kålund, 1917a, XX), the designation of Eugenius as a Viking, which occurs in *Kirialax saga*, might be borrowed from *Veraldar saga*, which records Theodosius I's victory over Eugenius: »Siþan felldi Theodosius viking þann er Evgenius het ok ser hafði eignat Rumveriariki« (translation: »Then Theodosius cut down the Viking whose name was Eugenius and who had conquered the kingdom of the Romans«) (Benediktsson, 1944, 62). There is no doubt that here Eugenius (392–394) is considered to be the usurper from the late fourth century, since he is presented as a contemporary of Archbishop Ambrose of Milan (ca. 347–420) and St. Jerome (ca. 338–397), but otherwise *Veraldar saga* does not provide any further information about his activities (Benediktsson, 1944, 62–63).⁵

2 All the translations of the passages from Old Norse into English are the work of the writer of this article, and they endeavour to follow the original Old Norse texts as faithfully as possible, with the only exception being that the author did not account for every þá, síðan, eptir, nú and ok.

3 The original text: »[...] ok sigla fyrst til Siciliam. Þar sat þa keisaren, er Zeno het, þviat hann hafði þann tíma heriad i austr-veg, en þa var komen af norðr-halfu heimsens vikingr sa, er Eugenius het; hann hafði naliga unnið undan konginum Sikileyar ríki, ok kom þar keisaren Zeno i þan punkt ok hafði barizt vid vikingin marga daga. Vikingren hafði ogrynni hers, ok voru miog hardfeingir, ok hófdu þeir drepið micit lid af keisaranum, ok settizt hann nu i eina borg, er Siracusana heitir, en Eugenius berzt dagliga á borgina« (Kålund, 1917a, 57–58).

4 The original texts: »Eugenius [...] ok hellt hann sidan norðr um fiall ok elfdizt at lidi i Svafa ok Hollzetu landi ok heriad sidan á Italia ok vann þar stor verk, ok um sidir vann hann Romaborg, eptir því sem *Gesta Rómánorum segir*« (Kålund, 1917a, 62).

5 The editions of medieval historiographical texts referred to in this paper: Droysen, 1879, 352–353; Mommsen, 1894b, 470; Muratorius, 1855, 893–894; Waitz, 1881, 759–760; Pertz, 1881, 56–57; Hofmeister, 1912, 206.

In *Veraldar saga*, there is no mention of Eugenius' links with Rome and its pagan traditions, the emphasis of the account being on his military efficiency, and subsequent conquest of the kingdom of the Romans, which Theodosius I, the legitimate emperor residing in Constantinople, finds so alarming that he takes relentless military action against him. *Kirialax saga*, by contrast, associates Eugenius closely not just with the kingdom of the Romans but with the very heart of it, Rome, depicting him as a war leader who captures the city. The fact that he is seen as a conqueror of the city and not of the empire, as in *Veraldar saga*, stresses the prestige of Rome rather than the Roman Empire as a whole. In spite of the Icelandic term 'víkingr' in *Veraldar saga*, Eugenius is firmly set in the context of the Roman world. *Kirialax saga*, by contrast, transforms him into a Germanic hero by elaborating the account of his activities not found in *Veraldar saga*. According to *Kirialax saga*, Eugenius crosses the Alps after his defeat in Sicily, returns to Swabia and Hollstein where he gathers new troops and with their assistance he invades Italy and conquers Rome. The 'Germanic' nature of the episode is further strengthened by the account of Theodoric the Ostrogoth and Attila, the two notorious heroes of medieval historiography and central figures of Germanic heroic legend, whose evil deeds in the saga – like those of Eugenius – are felt by both Italy and the western empire in general: »*At that time a powerful chieftain ruled over Rome who was called the patricius; then King Theodericus made an attack on Rome and plundered a great deal and conquered all these peoples who lived east and south of the mountains and were formerly called Gotar, Vandali and Lumbardi, and all these kingdoms which were nearby. The patricius sent his men to meet Attila, king of the Huns, and asked him to come with his army and fight in alliance with the Romans, because the Huns were winning great victories throughout the northern hemisphere and grew very famous on account of their warfare. But Attila did not want that. And eventually Theodericus himself captured the city of Rome and killed the patricius and in this way he became the lord of Rome. This very Theodericus is called in the Danish language Þidrekr. After that he committed many a crime in the city of Rome, because at this time the heresy of Arius was spreading rapidly throughout the world and this Þidrekr followed it eagerly, and therefore he caused the holy Pope Johannes to die of starvation in prison and killed two excellent nobles, Simacus and Boecius, as is related in many books, Gesta Romanorum and Imágo Mundi and Dialogi Gregorii. King Attila ravaged at that time in Saxland and Frankland. At this time the messengers of King Dionicus came from England with many ships and they had with them the daughter of King Dionicus whose name was Ursula, and with her eleven thousand maidens, and they were given as a token of reconciliation to the King of the Franks, but King Attila attacked him with all his army and obtained great booty. He killed there every living soul on these ships, but he chose for himself Ursula, the King's daughter, and all her maidens, but since they did not want to fornicate with heathen men, King Attila gave orders to his*

men to behead them all in one single day. Later on they were enshrined there, and since then they have been called the maidens of Cologne, and the mass-day in their memory is celebrated seven nights before the feast-day of the two apostles, Simon and Jude. After this crime Attila returned home to Hunaland.»⁶

Even though Theodoric with the assistance of well-educated Roman writers successfully developed propaganda about his peaceful, just and prosperous reign (Moorhead, 1982, 592–593), he acquired a status of notoriety in medieval historiography whose views of Theodoric were to a significant degree shaped by ecclesiastics of Late Antiquity.⁷ It was not, however, the ruthlessness with which he eliminated his rivals but his adherence to Arianism and his share of responsibility for the deaths of the senators Boethius and Symmachus, and Pope John (Löwe, 1953, 83), which gave him such bad press throughout medieval historiography. However, if the suffering of these three notables was seen in medieval texts as a result of his religious fanaticism (Droysen, 1879, 218–219; Muratorius, 1855, 904–905; Waitz, 1881, 753–754, 781; Pertz, 1881, 93; Hofmeister, 1912, 229, 232), the pairing of Theodoric and Attila as

6 The original text: »Þá var settr yfir Roma ríki haufðingi sá, er patricius het; þá striddi Theodericus kongr upp á Roma ok giordi micit hervirki ok vann allar þær þíodir, sem voru fyrri austan ok sunnan fjall ok voru forðum Gotar kallader, Vandali ok Lumbardi ok aull þau ríki, er nærri voru. Patricius sendi menn á fund Attila Huna kongs ok bat hann koma med sinn styrk ok beriazt med þeim Romverium, því at Hunir unnu þá micin sigr vida um norðr-alfuna ok urdu frægir miog af sinum hernadi. En Attila villdi þat eigi. Ok um sidir vann þessi sami Theodericus Roma borg ok felldi patricium ok eignadizt med því Romam. þessi sami Theodericus kallazt a danska tungu Þidrekr; hann giordi sidan maurg illvirki i Roma borg, þvíat i þan tíma geck miog fram villa Arius um heimen, ok fylgdi þess þidrekr henne fast, ok þar fyrri svellte hann Johannem helgan pafa i hel ok drap tvo ágieta hofðingia Simacum ok Boethium, sem segir i morgum bokum, Gesta Romanorum ok Imago Mundi, Dialogi Gregorii. Attila kongr heriadi þenna tíma um S[ax]land ok Frakland. I þan tíma kvomu sendimenn Dionici kongs af Einglandi med morgum skipum ok haufdu medr ser dottur Dionici kongs, er het Ursula, ok med henne XI þúsundir tígina meya, ok voru þær presentadar i sættar gerd Frakka kongi, en Attila kongr lagdi at honum med allan sinn her ok tok þar micit herfang ok drap þar hvert mannz barn af þeim skipum, en tok til sin Ursulam kongs dottr ok allar henar meyar, en med því at þær villdu eigi samþyckia vid heidna menn, let Attila kongr sina menn hálshöggva þær allar á einum degi, ok voru þær sidan skrinlagdar þar, ok eru þær s[ídan] kalladar Kolnis meyar, ok þeira messu dagr hallden siau nottum fyrri tveggja postola messu Simonis et Jude. Eptir þetta illvirki hvarf Attila kongr heim i Hunaland [...]« (Kålund, 1917a, 62–64).

7 The hatred of contemporary clergy which is reflected in the *Liber Pontificalis*, the *Anonymus Valesianus* and Gregory's *Dialogi* continued to occur throughout the medieval period, being reflected also in medieval Icelandic texts. For the image of Theodoric as a pope's murderer, see *Heilagra manna sögur* (Unger, 1877, 245) and *Veraldar saga* (Benediktsson, 1944, 64). Theodoric had no peace from their hatred even after his death. In addition to the well-known image of Theodoric, who is thrown into a volcano after his death, which had originated in the *Dialogi* and reappeared later in many medieval historiographies, for example, in *Pauli Landolfique additamentis* (Droysen, 1879, 219), *Ekkehardi Uraugiensis Chronica* (Waitz, 1881, 753), there is another image of this notorious king, existing in *Otonis Episcopi Frisingensis Chronica* (Hofmeister, 1912, 232) and being borrowed from folk literature that Theodoric was carried alive into hell on horseback: »Hinc puto fabulam illam tractatam qua vulgo dicitur Theodericus vivus equo sedens ad inferos descendisse« (Hofmeister, 1912, 232).

contemporaries – even though in reality Attila died in 453 and Theodoric was not born until the 450s – is a distinguishing feature of Germanic heroic legend, which made contemporaries of many prominent historical figures who, in reality, lived in different historical periods. The co-existence of Theodoric and Attila is found, for example, in *Piðreks saga*, *Guðrúnarkviða in þriðja* in the Poetic Edda, and in a number of medieval German poems such as *Das Hildebrandslied*, *Das Niebelungenlied*, *Alpharts Tod*, *Rabenschlacht* and *Dietrichs Flucht*. In these texts Theodoric is depicted as being an exile at Attila's court, dependent on the generosity of Attila, King of the Huns, who supports Theodoric's unsuccessful attempts to regain his inheritance, the kingdom of Italy, taken away from him by his treacherous uncle Eormanric (Guest, 1998). According to these poems, Attila is a generous host and Theodoric (526!) emerges as a man of great nobility who sacrifices his great victories against Eormanric (375!) in order to save the lives of his men who were captured by Eormanric, while fighting for Theodoric's return to Italy.

However, the only element of Germanic heroic legend in *Kirialax saga*, the co-existence of Attila and Theodoric, which is marked by a number of positive connotations in Germanic heroic legend, is used in the saga to demonise the characters of both Attila and Theodoric. Attila's determination not to assist the *patricius* is an introduction to his other negative deeds, namely, the invasion of the West and the slaughter of St. Ursula and her companions (Divjak, 2009, 175), and apart from that, his passivity enables Theodoric to conquer Italy and indulge in religious persecution. In *Kirialax saga*, Attila and Theodoric are regarded as intruders from the North whose actions are as damaging as those of Eugenius and his inarticulate soldiers. The deeds of the Viking Eugenius must therefore be viewed from the broader perspective of the dangerous Germanic world which threatens Italy, whose military vulnerability changes the country into an ideal target for adventurers from the Germanic North. In *Kirialax saga*, the Viking Eugenius is an undisputed Germanic adventurer, which contrasts sharply with the image of Eugenius in *Veraldar saga*, where this figure – in spite of the use of the Icelandic word 'víkingr' – remains firmly rooted in the context of the world of Rome during the Late Antiquity. In other words, Eugenius in *Kirialax saga* moves in the sphere of fiction, while his namesake in *Veraldar saga* is firmly rooted in the world of medieval historiography.

VERALDAR SAGA

As mentioned earlier, *Veraldar saga*, the world chronicle or universal history, refers to the confrontation between Theodosius and Eugenius. But before analysing the weight and significance of this event in the chronicle, it is necessary to mention the most notable features of this genre. The history in the universal chronicle is presented as a coherent unit (Vanderputten, 2001, 147–148), being in its Late Antiquity and

Medieval versions divided into the following six ages: the first age extending from the creation of the world to Noah, the second from Noah to Abraham, the third from Abraham to David, the fourth from David to the Babylonian Captivity, the fifth from the Jews' return from the Babylonian Captivity to the advent of Christ, and the sixth from the arrival of Christ, onwards to the writers' own times; the most notable universal chroniclers in Late Antiquity and the Medieval period being: Eusebius of Caesarea, Augustine, Orosius, Bede the Venerable, Isidore of Seville, Jans der Enikel, Otto von Freising, Sigebert of Gembloux, Vincent de Beauvais and others. In the first four ages, universal chronicles dedicate most of their energy and space (with the notable exception of the Trojans, referred to in the third age) to the history of the Jews from the Old Testament (Gropper, 2009) and it is in the fifth age that other nationalities – such as Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks and Romans – receive attention and the proper recognition of their significance in world history. The fifth age is characterised in particular by two momentous turning points: the emergence of the Roman Empire and the birth of Christ, both events having taken place under the Emperor Augustus. The fact that Christ's birth actually coincided with the beginning of the Roman or the so-called fourth empire (the previous ones being the Assyrian, Persian and Macedonian empires), which was considered never to pass, acquired a symbolic dimension among early Byzantine writers in particular (Averincev, 2005, 81–82).

The co-existence of the Roman Empire and Christianity is the leading motif which dominates the entire sixth age, and the attitude towards Christianity is an important criterion by which *Veraldar saga* assesses almost each emperor. The sixth age begins conventionally with the account of Christ's birth and death and continues in *Veraldar saga* up to its writer's own period, the reign of the German Emperor Friedrich I. Barbarossa (†1190), which means that *Veraldar saga* must have been written at the end of the twelfth century, while its oldest surviving fragment dates from ca. 1200. The saga in the sixth age painstakingly traces the transfer of imperial power from the Romans and the emperors in Constantinople to the emperors in Germany, which, according to *Veraldar saga*, is now ruled by Friedrich I (Benediktsson, 1944, 71). The purpose of this chapter is to examine the role of the Battle of the Frigid River as well as its significance in all this flood of information and details concerning the greatness and eternity of the imperial power extending from Augustus to Friedrich I. In other words, according to what criteria did the battle and its protagonists gain access into the sixth age, deeply preoccupied with the issue of the Roman Empire whose existence had a deeper spiritual and eschatological meaning, on the assumption that the Roman Empire, unlike those before it – the Babylonian, Persian and Greek empires – would thrive for ever, until the end of time (Goetz, 2000, 4–5). The broader context of the battle in *Veraldar saga* is as follows: »*Gratian and Valentinian [Valentinian II] had power for six years. Gratian gave authority to Theodosius. He had many battles with heathen peoples and was highly successful. At*

this time Martin was a bishop in Tours, the most distinguished among people, because of his sanctity and the miracles he had performed. Maximus [Magnus Maximus] was called the king in Britain. With his army he marched to France and treacherously pursued Gratian, so that he was killed in the town which was called Lvgdvnvm [Lyon]. Then Maximus expelled Valentinian and his mother Justina from Italy. She was seduced into the religion of the priest Arius and she did much damage to her people and her son. Theodosius the Great was the ruler in the eastern empire with Gratian for six years, and later, after his death, he was emperor for eleven years. In his hands Valentinian sought protection. And Theodosius led him into the true faith and strengthened him so much that he avenged his brother [Gratian], and he killed Maximus in the town called Aquilegia [Aquilea]. At this time Queen Justina died. Then Theodosius cut down the Viking who was called Eugenius and who had conquered the kingdom of the Romans. At this time, Ambrose was bishop in Milan, very famous and distinguished. And then Jerome was a priest, generally famous for his erudition.»⁸

The passage is completely silent about the battle as such, its exact location and the exact date of its course, the only significant fact being Theodosius' elimination of Eugenius. The analysis of the passage reveals that the main hero is Theodosius I, while Eugenius is depicted as being one of his numerous rivals for the imperial position in the West. In the religious sphere, Theodosius is lauded as a fighter against pagan peoples and as an orthodox Christian, who 'saves' the young Emperor Valentinian from Arian heresy and leads him to the true faith against the wishes of Valentinian's mother Justina. The pious emperor reaps rewards in the political field as well, destroying two usurpers in the West, first the notorious Magnus Maximus and then Eugenius. The importance of the political sphere is further confirmed by Eugenius' conquest of the 'kingdom of the Romans', which forces Theodosius to conduct a relentless military campaign against him. In other words, it is the political implications of Eugenius' act, not his religious transgressions, which alarm Theodosius to such a degree that he eventually decides to annihilate him in an open battle once and for all.

⁸ The original texts: »Gracianvs ok V(alentinianvs) hofdv riki .vi. ar. G(racianvs) gaf riki Theodosio. Hann hadi margar orrostvr við heiðnar þjóðir ok var allsigrsæll. A þeim tíþvm var Martinvs Tyrnsborgar byskup agætr manna af hæilagleic sinvm ok tacnvm þeim er hann gerþi. Maximvs het konvngv a Bretlandi. hann for með her sin a Fracland ok beitti velvm Gracianvm sva at hann var vegin i borg þeirri er i Lvgdvnvm heitir. Siþan rak Maximvs V(alentinianvm) ok Jvstino modvr hans a brot af Italia. hon var villt i trv Arrii p(restr) ok spillti miog fyrir bvanda sinvm ok sva syni. Þeodosivs in mikli var .vi. vetr konvngv i Avstrriki með Graciano en eptir hans daga var hann kei(sari) .xi. ar. honvm til handa flydi Va(entinianvs) in yngri. En Theodosius fterdi hann a retta trv ok efldi hann til þes at hann hefndi brodvr sins ok drap Maximvm við borg þa er Aqvilegia heitir. J þan tid do Ivstina drotni<n>g. Siþan felldi Theodosivs viking þann er Evgenivs het ok ser hafði eignat Rumveriariki. A þeim tíþvm var Ambrosivs byskvp i Meilansborg harda tídr ok agætr. Þa var ok Jeronimvs p(restr) alagetr af frodleic sinvm« (Benediktsson, 1944, 64).

AMBRÓSIUS SAGA BISKUPS

If the encounter between Theodosius and Eugenius can be viewed from a clear political and secular perspective, the religious dimension of their confrontation in *Ambrósius saga* is much better emphasised – which, according to the saga's designation as a saint's life – does not come as any surprise. Hagiography of the Late Antiquity and Medieval period tended to divide saints' lives into two main groups: *passiones* and *vitae*. The *passio* focuses on the saints' suffering and martyr's death, this aspect being particularly emphasised in the period of massive religious persecutions before Constantine I, while the *vita* asserted its position later, in the age of Constantine and his successors, when the focus of sanctity shifted from the saints' martyr's death to their renunciation of the world, their fight against evil forces, temptation of all kinds and even their own bodies. The best known examples of this kind of sanctity were provided in the fourth century by *Vita sancti Antonii eremitaie* and *Vita sancti Martini* (Wallis, 2008, 89). Ambrose, the most marked ecclesiastical personality of the fourth century, notable for his opposition to Arianism, his confrontation with the notorious Arian supporter, the Empress Justina, and his famous quarrels with Theodosius in matters of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, was provided with his biography *Vita Sancti Ambrosii Mediolanensis Episcopi*, written by his secretary and notarius Paulinus from Milan, as early as in the first decades of the fifth century.

In medieval Iceland, the translation of his biography must have been made at the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, being attributed to the notable Benedictine monk Gunnlaug Leifsson (†1218, 1219) from the monastery of Þingeyrar in the north of Iceland. A quick glance at *Ambrósius saga* reveals the presence of the elements which do not occur in Paulinus' biography. It suffices to mention only three of them: first, the birth of the future Empress Justina in dramatic and extraordinary circumstances foretelling her future imperial position (*Ambrósius saga biskups*, 1. Ambr28–29); second, St. Ursula's martyrdom in the saga is set in the late fourth century, which corresponds roughly with the chronology in *Historia Regum Britanniae* by Geoffrey of Monmouth (*Ambrósius saga biskups*, 8. Ambr35), which in Gunnlaug's lifetime represented a considerable break with the then firmly established tradition of St. Ursula and her eleven thousand virgins who were, according to tradition, slaughtered by Attila during the fifth century (Divjak, 2009, 180–181); and finally the account of Eugenius and the Battle of the Frigid River (*Ambrósius saga biskups*, 15. Ambr41–42, 16. Ambr42–44), which also confirms that Paulinus' account in *Ambrósius saga* is vitally expanded with various, well known hagiographic elements. Paulinus' account of the trio Eugenius, Theodosius and Ambrose is fairly short. Eugenius incurs Ambrose's displeasure by his decision to have the Altar of Victory reinstated at its former location in the Roman Curia. In order to avoid any contact with Eugenius, the archbishop even leaves Milan for Florence and hurls reproaches at the new emperor from a safe dis-

tance (Vita Sancti Ambrosii, Ch. 27). When Eugenius marches off with his army, Ambrose returns to Milan awaiting Theodosius' victory (Vita Sancti Ambrosii, Ch. 31). When the victory is won and Eugenius and his closest associates are eliminated, Ambrose intercedes on behalf of the defeated enemies who sought shelter in churches, and first sends to the emperor the deacon with the letters and then appears in person in Aquilea where he meets Theodosius and achieves a general amnesty (Vita Sancti Ambrosii, Ch. 31). This sight at the relevant passages in *Ambrósíus saga* reveals that Paulinus' text underwent certain expansions in the medieval Icelandic version: »15. After Valentinian, Eugenius acceded to the government. And soon after that Simachus demanded the same thing which had been requested earlier from Valentinian in the posted letter [the restoration of the altar of Victory to its former location], and now the prefect Flavianus and Count Arbogast demanded that from King Eugenius. And he now abandoned his God and his religion. Ambrose learned that and was wroth and on learning that the king went to Milan, he himself first went to the city called Bononien-sis [Bologna], and then to Favencia [Favencia] and then from there to Tuscia [Toscana] and he avoided more the meeting and contact with the impious Eugenius rather than his vices. Now the bishop sent him the letter, and only little is it possible to say about many a thing which was written there: 'Even though the imperial position is a great honour, nevertheless, it is God who is higher and stronger, he sees into the hearts of all men and knows everything before it happens and what anyone intends to do. You do not suffer to be deceived, and yet you want to deceive God. Now, if you persist in your error, I am not allowed nor is it decent for me to do anything but to seek a good counsel for myself if I could not do likewise for you.' Some time later the bishop returned to Milan and then Eugenius went to face Theodosius in battle, and in the meantime the bishop was waiting in Milan for the arrival of the truly Christian emperor, and he had no fear that God would have allowed the pagan men to defeat his own. And before Eugenius and his army left Milan, Count Arbogast and the prefect Flavianus swore an oath that they would, if they returned victorious, convert Ambrose's church into a stable and kill its priests, the cause of this was that they refused to accept the king's gift and conduct divine service in his presence.

16. Now the kings went towards one another and Theodosius had a far smaller army because his trust did not lie in either a sword or shield or a number of soldiers but in God and holy men. And when he came to the region of the mountains called the Alps, he became aware of Eugenius' spies lying in ambush. The following night Theodosius remained awake in prayer, begging God for victory and intercession and the help of the saints. During prayer he fell asleep and in his sleep two distinguished men appeared in front of him and said: 'We are the apostles John and Phillip, sent to you from God, and it must be related that the Bishop Ambrose is praying for you day and night to God to grant you victory. Now at the Lord's command we have come to you and we are going into battle with you against your enemies and even though we

are not seen in battle, you must believe for certain that we will be there and grant you assistance.' Then the king woke up and thanked God for the concern and wisdom given to him. And the next day Theodosius and Eugenius met and then a fierce battle began and the attack was so forceful that the Greeks retreated. Now Theodosius saw that his men were retreating and he went forward up to a cliff, fell on his knees and said: 'Take pity on me, the most sinful man, Lord, and behold, we are fighting for the true cause.' That was seen and heard by one of his counts, the commander of the army and the greatest hero, now he relied on divine assistance and the king's prayer, now he encouraged other counts and dukes to attack. Now they all rose for a second time and so fearless in their minds that they all would either perish or win. Then the fiercest battle began for a second time, consisting of blows and shots, and then such a strong wind turned towards Eugenius and his men that he, Arbogast, the greatest hero, and Flavianus and the other army could not go into attack. Some other mighty chieftain and hero in Theodosius' army, called Bavarius, attacked their army for the first time with a battle ram, and even though [Eugenius' men] were shooting towards them with spears and arrows, the wind brought [missiles] for a second time against them and caused a severe loss of men, and damaged the opponents for a second time. Now they could not keep their position any longer and retreated as the wind brought them defeat and death, and to the other side success and glory. Now Eugenius saw he was defeated and met Theodosius and fell on his knees in front of him and begged for his life and for mercy, and as Theodosius' friends knew he was very merciful and they little trusted Eugenius, they did not wait for the king's reply but beheaded him before his feet. Now the battle ended and King Theodosius sent a letter to Bishop Ambrose telling him the news and thanked God and him for the victory. The bishop did not feel more obliged in any other matter than to intercede on behalf of those who had deserted the battlefield, and he sent his deacon with letters bearing this message to the meeting with the king. A little later he himself travelled to Aquilea, with the same purpose of interceding for the others, and he easily achieved that through the king. The king fell to his knees when they met and said that Ambrose's prayers had brought him victory. Some time later the king fell ill and died, but the bishop still lived three years after that. The bishop mourned his death deeply, he wrote about him a long letter or epistle. In this letter the bishop deeply bemoaned the king's death and praised him above all other emperors, saying that such an emperor like him would never be born in the world, as he was.«⁹

9 The original texts: »15. Rikit tekr eptir Valentinianum Eugenius. En bradliga eptir þetta þa beidiz enn ens sama, sem fyrr var af Valentiniano konungi i ordsendingu (ed. corr.) Simacus, ok beida nu þess Flavianus greifi ok Arbogastes iarl Eugenium konung. En hann gefr nu upp ok sva gud ok tru sina. Þetta fregn Ambrosius ok verdr vid reidr, ok er hann fra, at konungr for til Melansborgar, þa ferr hann fyst til þeirar borgar, er Bononiensis heitir, þadan til Favencio borgar ok sva ut i Thusciam, ok fordadz fund ok samneyti ens gudrækia Eugenij meir en meingerdir hans. Nu sendir byskup bref til hans, ok mun her fatt sagt af því mürgu, er i brefunum stod. Þetta var þar mellit: 'Po at keisaradomr

Unlike *Veraldar saga*, *Ambrósíus saga* deals in detail with the religious aspects of the events, being more detailed in every respect. Eugenius rises to power after Valentinian's death, incurs Ambrose's wrath by his obliging behaviour towards the pagan faction, and the saga declares him to be an apostate with whom Ambrose re-

se mikil tign, þa er þo gud meiri ok ædri, hann ser hiirtu allra manna, litr hann ok hugrenningar manna, ok alla hluti veit hann fyrr en verdi, ok sva hvat hverium gengr til hverskis. Er þolit eigi, at er sed blecktir, en er vilit þo bleckia gud. Nu ef þu ert rangs bedinn bædi vid gud ok menn, nu er mer eigi lofat annat ok eigi byriar mer annat at rada mer sialfum heillt, ef ek ma eigi þer.' Nockveriu sidar ferr byskup aptr til Melansborgar, en þa er Eugenius brott farinn moti Theodosio til bardaga, en byskup bidr medan i Melansborg tilqvomu ens rettcristna keisara Theodosij, ok var ohryggr i, at gud mundi eigi lata vonda menn ganga yfir sina menn. En adr Eugenius ok hans lid færri or borginni, þa hüfdu þeir Arbogastes iarl ok Flavianus greifi het (strengt) þess, ef þeir kæmi aptr med sigri, at þeir mundi gera stall i kirkiu Ambrosij ok hafa hana fyrir hrossahus en drepa klerka hans, en sia var sok til þessa, at þeir vildu eigi þiggia ofron konungs ok eigi tidir syngia, sva at hann væri vid.

16. Nu faraz þeir i moti konungarnir, ok hafdi Theodosius miklu minna lid, þviat hans traust var eigi undir sverdi edr skildi ne mannfúlda helldr undir gudi ok helgum monnum. En þa er hann kom i nand fiollum þeim, er Alpheis heita, þa verdr hann þar varr vid niosnir Eugenij, þviat þeir leynduz þar i fyrirsatum. Nott ena næstu eptir vakit Theodosius konungr ok er a bænum ok bidr gud ser sigs ok tenadar ok helga menn arnadarordz ok fulltings. Af bæneni sofnar hann ok i svefninum vitraz honum .ii. dyrligir menn ok segia honum sva: 'Vid erum postolar drottins Johannes ok Phillipus sendir til þin af gudi ok þat þer at segia, at Ambrosius biskup bidr fyrir þer bædi nætr ok daga til guds, at hann gefi þer sigr. Nu veitir gud þat hans bænum, at vid komum til þin ok munum vid ganga i bardaga med þer i gegn ovinum þinum, ok þottu siair ockr eigi i orrostunni, þa skalltu þvi ifanlaust trua, at vid skulum þar vera ok þer fullting veita.' Eptir þetta vaknar konungr ok þackar gudi huggan þessa ok vitron, er honum var veitt. Enn næsta dag eptir finnaz þeir Theodosius ok Eugenius, ok tekz aküf orrosta med þeim þegar ok sva hürd hrid, at Grickir opodu a hæl. Nu sier Theodosius sina menn hlida, þa geingr hann fra ok a hamar einn ok fellr a kne til bænar ok segir sva: 'Minntu min, drottinn, syngdugs mannz, ok se at ek beriumz fyrir retta sük.' Þetta ser ok heyrir iarl hans einn, hüfþingi hersins ok enn mesti kappi, treystiz nu guds fulltingi ok bæn konung, eggjar nu sidan a adra iarla ok hertuga til framgongu. Risa þa vid allir i annat sinn ok sva üruggir i hug, at annathvort skulu þa allir falla edr fa sigr ella. Þa tekz en hardazta orrosta i odru sinni bði af hüggum ok skotum, ok þa lustr a oda vedri i moti þeim Eugenio, sva at þeir Arbogastes enn mesti kappi ok Flavianus ok annat lid þeira mattu eigi i gegn vega. Einn mikill höfþingi ok hetia i lidi Theodosij, er het Bavarius, ryfr fyst fylking þeira Eugenius med akafa vedrsins; ok þo at þeir skyti i moti spiotum edr steinum, þa bar vedrit þat allt aptr a þa, ok gerdi þeim þat mikinn mannskada, en i odru lagi vopnagangr sinna ovina. Nu megu þeir eigi vid halldaz ok snua undan, þviat vedrit veitti üdrum agang ok bana en odrum framgang ok frama. Nu ser Eugenius sik sigradan ok snarar a fund Theodosio ok fellr til fota honum ok bidr ser liknar ok lifs, en vinir Theodoij vissu hann vera liknsaman en trudu illa Eugenio (corr.), þa bðu þeir eigi svara konungs ok hüggu hann þegar fyrir fotum honum. Nu slitr bardaganum, ok sendir Theodosius konungr bref Ambrosio, segir honum tíþindin ok þackar gudi ok honum sigrinn. Byskup lætr ser ecki annat iafnskyllt en frida fyrir þeim, er undan hüfdu komiz or bardaganum, ok sendir diakn sinn med brefum med þessum eyrindum a fund konungs. Nockuru sidar ferr hann sialfr til Aqvilegia borgar, ok finnr hann þar konung, ok ens sama eyrindis enn fyrir monnum at frida, en þat geingr honum audvelliga vid konung. Konungr fellr þegar til fota honum, er þeir funduz, ok qvad hans bæmir ok verdleik ser sigr hafa veitt. Fam stundum sidar tekr konungr sott ok andaz, en byskup lifdi .iii. vetr sidan. Frafall hans harnar byskup miog; um hann gerir hann langan pistil edr sendibref. I þeim pistli grætr byskup miog ok lofar konung umframm um alla adra keisara, qvedr eingan fædaz munu i verolldina þvilikan keisara sem hann var« (Ambrósíus saga biskups).

fuses to have any dealings at all (*Ambrósius saga biskups*, 15. Ambr41–42). The religious aspect of Ambrose's conflict with the emperor is further emphasised by Flavianus and Arbogast's threat to convert Ambrose's church after the victory into a stable and kill its priests (*Ambrósius saga biskups*, 15. Ambr41–42). On this point *Ambrósius saga* differs materially from Paulinus' account which, instead of the promise to kill the priests of Ambrose's church, provides the threat of military conscription for the clergy (*Vita Sancti Ambrosii*, Ch. 31). Unlike Paulinus' *Vita*, which focuses exclusively first on the pre-war events leading to the battle and then on to its aftermath, *Ambrósius saga* pays great attention to the battle itself, relying heavily in its battle account on the wider hagiographical and historical tradition which contains well-known hagiographical elements: the apparition of the apostle Phillip and the evangelist John in Theodosius' dream, the emperor's prayer on a high cliff, the strong wind, all of which are easily recognisable signs of divine favour (Bratož, 1994a, 9–15). Apart from the hagiographical elements mentioned above and borrowed from some other sources, the saga, among other things, refers to the Alps, identifying them as the site of the battle. The mountains and alpine passes are not mentioned in Paulinus' *Vita*, even though the Alps figure prominently in many other late antiquity accounts of the battle, which corresponded well with the military importance of the Alps, this fact being mentioned by many ancient writers (Šašel, 1971, 20–45). Arbogast deliberately allowed Theodosius to enter the alpine region but he was determined to make the emperor's departure from this area as difficult as possible, in other words, the Alps were expected to serve as a trap in which to confine Theodosius' army (Bratož, 1994a, 36; Šašel, 1971, 34). In *Ambrósius saga*, the emperor could see Eugenius' spies hidden in the mountains, which concurred with the historical accounts relating that one part of Eugenius' army was commissioned to encircle Theodosius. In *Ambrósius saga*, however, Eugenius' spies function as a blind motif, as the saga does not complete its account of Eugenius' spies with the detail – found in many other sources – that the usurper's soldiers, commanded to attack Theodosius, eventually changed sides and ruined Arbogast's plan by going over to the emperor.

The Battle of the Frigid River is discussed in detail in *Ambrósius saga*, but what is its function in the saga as a whole? If *Veraldar saga* cast most of its light on Theodosius, who together with Augustus and Constantine is given the greatest amount of attention among the Roman emperors, in *Ambrósius saga*, this role is convincingly adopted by Ambrose. The successful outcome of the battle depicted as the result of Ambrose's prayers is regarded only as an additional proof of his sanctity which makes him invincible in his fight for the true faith. Just as he had relentlessly fought for orthodoxy within Christianity, which is best reflected in his dislike of Arianism, so too the Battle of the Frigid River serves as an example of his relentless fight against paganism. Thus he removes himself from Eugenius' sight with disgust, reprimands him in letters, and prays for the orthodox Emperor Theodosius, who is led to

the victory by Ambrose's prayers, as acknowledged by the emperor himself. At the end of the battle, Ambrose resurges once again, and the account of the events taking place in the aftermath (*Ambrósíus saga biskups*, 16. Ambr42–44) resembles a relevant passage in Paulinus' *Vita* which factually records the following events. Ambrose, on being informed of the victory, first sent his deacon with letters to the emperor, asking him to grant amnesty to the defeated soldiers, and later met him personally in Aquilea (*Vita Sancti Ambrosii*, Ch. 31). His wish was willingly granted, and the emperor – being aware of Ambrose's contribution to the successful outcome of the battle – fell on his knees in the archbishop's presence, thus acknowledging Ambrose's spiritual superiority.

CONCLUSION

The article analyzes the traces the Battle of the Frigid River left in two medieval Icelandic texts, the universal chronicle *Veraldar saga* and the saint's life *Ambrósíus saga biskups*. Apart from that, the references to Eugenius, probably via *Veraldar saga*, even though in a highly fictionalised form, might occur in *Kirialax saga* as well. Various literary genres and their peculiarities in terms of contents and style definitely affected the treatment of this topic in respective medieval Icelandic texts. *Veraldar saga*, with its emphasis on the eternity, prestige and power of the imperial authority from Augustus to its own age at the end of the twelfth century, dedicates considerably more attention to the Christian emperor Theodosius, legitimate ruler and defender of the empire against both pagans and usurpers, rather than his rival Eugenius, who is depicted in the saga as only one of Theodosius' numerous defeated enemies. Their confrontation is encapsulated in one single sentence: »Then Theodosius cut down the Viking whose name was Eugenius and who had conquered the kingdom of the Romans.« As the saga provides a list of the most notable personalities of that time, such as St. Martin of Tours, St. Jerome, the unfortunate Emperor Valentinian II and his notorious mother Justina, it is easy to recognise the usurper Eugenius hidden behind the Viking Eugenius.

In *Ambrósíus saga*, the event is given considerably more space, attention and emphasis, this time being viewed from an unmistakably hagiographical perspective. The Battle of the Frigid River, together with forebodings, campaign preparations and the aftermath of the battle, serves as further evidence of Ambrose's sanctity, the successful outcome of the battle being presented as a result of his prayer, while the Emperor Theodosius is cast in the role of an obedient son of the Church, who faithfully follows Ambrose's teaching and for which he earns his reward as early as in this temporal world. The analysis of the text reveals that, even though Paulinus' *Vita* did serve as a model for *Ambrósíus saga*, the saga is, to a considerable degree, supplemented with additional hagiographical elements not found in Paulinus' *Vita*.

The universal chronicle *Veraldar saga* and the hagiographic text *Ambrósius saga biskups* rely more or less faithfully on historical facts, by medieval standards, while the sense of historical reality is completely lost in the fictitious environment of the Icelandic romance *Kirialax saga*. Even though *Veraldar saga* does not mention the battle itself, the Viking Eugenius, due to the historical context, in which he is mentioned together with St. Martin of Tours, St. Jerome and St. Ambrose, is a clearly recognisable historical figure. This factual detail is absent in *Kirialax saga* where Eugenius is a fictitious Germanic war-leader who, due to Kirialax's efficient military action, fails in his attack on Sicily. The account of Eugenius' further conquest of Italy is followed by a brief pseudo-historical narrative of Attila and Theodoric the Ostrogoth, who, like Eugenius, are set in the context of the aggressive Germanic world which attacks Rome and the western part of the empire. The report about Theodoric's conquests and Arian fanaticism on one hand and the account of Attila's crime against St. Ursula and her companions on the other, serves as an effective means of highlighting the danger represented by Eugenius, whose position and weight are increased by the fact that he is by no means an isolated northern bully, but rather a precursor of the two most notable figures of Germanic heroic legend.

In all three texts, the treatment of the battle and its protagonists is in service of a higher idea. In *Veraldar saga*, the execution of the Viking Eugenius additionally confirms Theodosius' ability to protect the imperial authority. This is in line with the ideological orientation of *Veraldar saga*, namely, its preoccupation with the permanency and indestructibility of the empire, whose prestige had been greatly enhanced by Theodosius' fight against various pagan and Christian usurpers. In *Ambrósius saga* the battle also has a special purpose, namely, to stress Ambrose's spiritual power with which he manages to change the course of a battle in such a way as to benefit the Christian side, which further confirms Ambrose's sanctity. In the fictitious context of *Kirialax saga*, Kirialax's victory over Eugenius, the representative of the dangerous Germanic North, is again only a link in a long chain of Kirialax's spectacular achievements. However, even though the Battle of the Frigid River is in both *Ambrósius saga* and *Veraldar saga*, it is only one among many of the heroes' achievements, referred to with varying degrees of accuracy and examined from various angles. The event itself must have been, in the eyes of the writers of both texts, significant enough as to undergo a detailed hagiographic treatment in *Ambrósius saga*. The number of facts and the full detail of its treatment considerably exceeds the account in Paulinus' *Vita*, while the liquidation of Eugenius earned a short, but significant note in the wider context of Theodosius' reign in *Veraldar saga*. If it is indeed the case that the Viking Eugenius in *Kirialax saga* might have been borrowed from *Veraldar saga*, it would mean that the battle found its distant and materially altered echo even in the distinctively fictitious romance *Kirialax saga*.

SLEDI BITKE PRI VIPAVI V STAROISLANDSKI ZGODOVINI SVETA,
SAGI O ŠKOFU AMBROZIJU IN NJENI MOREBITNI ODMEVI V SAGI
O KIRIALAXU

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POVZETEK

Namen članka je proučiti namige in podatke, ki se nanašajo na bitko pri Vipavi in njene udeležence v dveh srednjeveških islandskih besedilih: univerzalni kroniki Zgodovina sveta in življenju svetnika Saga o škofu Ambroziju, in istočasno prepoznati in proučiti morebitne odmeve na bitko v islandski romanci Saga o Kirialaxu. Podatki o spopadu so v Zgodovini sveta zajeti v enem samem stavku: »Nato je Teodozij ubil vikinga, ki se je imenoval Evgenij in je osvojil kraljestvo Rimljanov.« Ker Zgodovina sveta istočasno podaja podroben seznam Teodozijevih in Evgenijevih sodobnikov, kot so bili sv. Hieronim, sv. Martin iz Toursa in nadškof Ambrozij iz Milana, lahko bralec prepozna v Evgeniju uzurpatorja Evgenija (392–394), ki je neuspešno ogrožal oblast cesarja Teodozija I. v bitki pri Vipavi l. 394. Zgodovina sveta popolnoma prezre verske razsežnosti bitke in se namesto tega osredotoči na Teodozijevo fizično uničenje uzurpatorja, ki je ogrozil cesarstvo. V Sagi o škofu Ambroziju je sami bitki posvečena bistveno večja stopnja pozornosti. Razen dejstev, ki se nahajajo v Pavlinovi Vita Sancti Ambrosii Mediolanensis Episcopi, ki je služila kot model za Sago o škofu Ambroziju, se je morala saga naslanjati na širšo zgodovinsko in hagiografsko tradicijo, iz katere bi utegnila prevzeti hagiografske elemente, ki se ne pojavijo v Pavlinovi Vita. Če Zgodovina sveta in Saga o škofu Ambroziju dokaj zvesto podajata zgodovinsko resničnost, po srednjeveških merilih, Saga o Kirialaxu ustvari popolnoma fikcijski zapis, kjer ni Evgenij niti Teodozijev nasprotnik niti njegov tekmeč za nadzor nad zahodnim delom cesarstva, temveč germanski vojskovodja, enakovreden s Teoderikom Velikim in Atilo. Vsa tri besedila tudi razkrivajo, da so reference o Evgeniju vedno v službi višje ideje. V Zgodovini sveta podatki o Evgeniju služijo kot priložnost za slavljenje cesarja Teodozija in poudarjanje njegove uspešne obrambe rimskega cesarstva, v Sagi o škofu Ambroziju relevantni zapis dodatno potrди Ambrozijevo sposobnost posredovanja pri Bogu in moč njegove molitve, medtem ko je v Sagi o Kirialaxu zmaga eponimnega junaka nad Evgenijem samo člen v dolgi verigi Kirialaxovih dosežkov, ki povečajo njegov ugled. Za zaključek, kljub dokaj obrobnemu položaju bitke v Zgodovini sveta in Sagi o škofu Ambroziju, se zdi, da je imel ta zgodovinski dogodek vendarle tako evokatívno moč, da je bil vključen v univerzalno kroniko in življenje svetnika, dve »stvarni« besedilni zvrsti po srednjeveških merilih, čeprav z različno stopnjo natančnosti in iz različnih pripoved-

nih perspektiv, in bi utegnil biti zajet, čeprav spremenjen do nerazpoznavnosti, celo v popolnoma fikcijskem kontekstu islandske romance.

Ključne besede: bitka pri Vipavi, latinski poznoantični in srednjeveški viri, srednjeveški islandski zapisi, hagiografija, historiografija, srednjeveška romanca, islandske romance

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