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GENEALOGY AS A METHOD TO LEGITIMISE RULERSHIP IN SOME BALKAN AND SCANDINAVIAN SOURCES

Written genealogies, family trees, kings' lists, and family crests – all of these show the need of remembrance of one's individual and collective story. Many fields of study have devoted different amounts of their attention as to why and when this need occurred, and a special field in Western sciences has devoted its full attention – memory studies. Memory studies will be the starting point of this research, since in all the sources that will be examined later it would be noted that they are oral traditions put in writing much later. The main argument that we will try to make is that the sources give light to traditions and organisational structures much older than the period of their writing, but which were relevant to the time of writing. One of the biggest problems this research faced was the scarcity of this type of historical source in one of the examined regions – namely the Balkan Peninsula. Moreover, memory studies and cultural memory is on first glance something very obvious. In actuality it deals with concepts taken from psychology and psychoanalysis and it proved difficult to apply to a linear field of study such as history, which bases its arguments on fixed points and events in time more often than on abstract concepts. This research, apart from using the comparative method of examining the sources, will implement the techniques of memory studies, and history to reveal some similarities in the formation of an identity and specifically how the image of the ruler stands in this identification. A good part of it will be dedicated to the lists of rulers and their genealogy and why they were important not only to the ruler himself but as a whole to the people he governed.

To begin, we must turn our focus on some terminology and definitions of orality, cultural memory and identity. The main ideas which are used and implemented stem from the field of memory studies, some of which representatives are Jan Assmann, Amos Funkenstein, Maurice Halbwachs, Patrick Hutton, Pierre Nora, Ann Rigney, and others. Oral tradition much preceded the written word; myths, legends, songs and other external media related tales of the past and origin stories that formed the foundation of a collective memory. Maurice Halbwachs called this media “lived memory”, he also stated that:

So long as a remembrance continues to exist, it is useless to set it down in writing or otherwise fix it in memory. Likewise, the need to write a history of a period, a society or even a person is only aroused when the subject is already too distant in the past to allow for the testimony of those who preserve some remembrance of it¹.

Meaning that either the participants in the event that formed the memory are alive to tell it, thus no need to put it in writing exists, or all of the participants are gone and the memory starts to become distorted, thus a need to write it down occurs. Oral cultures depended on memory (evidence for this are the many mnemonic techniques that have survived from Antiquity) keeping it in high regard,

such valorization has come to be seen as a hallmark of orality, as opposed to literacy. This has led to a further assumption that literacy and memory are per se incompatible, and that a “rise of literacy” will therefore bring with it a consequent devalorizing and disuse of memory².

However, literacy had not been available and other types of remembrance and oral traditions emerged – legends, songs, paintings, and other external demarcations. Of course, a simpler and linear take on the matter dictates that memories can be forgotten and if the people who participated in an original experience are no longer able to relate the event then the memory is gone. Ann Rigney describes memory as a leaky bucket³. Memory is frail, people get old and forgetful and

the communicative memory offers no fixed point which would bind it to the ever expanding past in the passing of time. Such fixity can only be achieved through a cultural formation and therefore lies outside of informal everyday memory⁴.

In other words, the only way for an event to remain factual and correct, and committed to memory is to be put down on paper (or another external media), thus becoming a fixed point – becoming history.

However, before it becomes history, as oral tradition they still serve a similar purpose as history, even if it is problematic for present day scholars. It is important that the meaning of cultural identity be clear from the beginning, because on it will be based the analysis of the following materials. The repetition and retelling of memories becomes part of the identity of a group. For example, children are taught in school the term ‘nation’ and the common factors that distinguish any given group of people from a nation. These are: common language, religion, territory, and history. On the basis of who falls in these categories and who does not a specific group is laid out. Through the opposition of sameness and otherness the

¹ M. HALBWACHS, *The Collective Memory*, New York 1980, p. 78–79.

² M. CARRUTHERS, *The Book of Memory. A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Cambridge 1990, p. 10.

³ A. RIGNEY, *Plenitude, Scarcity and the Circulation of Cultural Memory*, JEST 35.1, 2005, p. 12.

⁴ J. ASSMANN, *Collective Memory and Cultural Identity*, NGC 65, 1995, p. 127.

dimensions of a nation are outlined. Much of the same factors that define a 'nation' are also applicable to the cultural identity, but through more abstract factors. The rites, monuments, orally transmitted history, or as Assmann calls them 'figures of memory', objectivise and organise the culture. For the cultural identity this means that a certain group of people now has a structure to follow. Moreover, he states that

a close connection to groups and their identity exists which is similar to that found in the case of everyday memory. ...a group bases its consciousness of unity and specificity upon this knowledge and derives formative and normative impulses from it, which allows the group to reproduce its identity⁵.

The term 'cultural identity' here will be considered as Hans Mol had defined it: *It connotes "sameness," "wholeness," "boundary," and "structure"*⁶. So, how does one group or individual define and distinguish themselves from another? Assmann suggests that memory in its purest form constitutes self-consciousness, because self-identity presumes memory⁷. There is a vast amount of studies in the field of psychoanalysis that has delved into this topic of defining oneself by opposing it to something else. To list only a few of the biggest names who have studied this – Sigmund Freud, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Carl Jung. The sameness is always in opposition to the otherness in self-identification. Halbwachs defined cultural memory as a memory of a group. One person can be a part of many groups, depending on the aspects of his life – work/school, family, hobbies, etc. These can be defined as micro groups; and on the scale of peoples and countries a cultural identity is the summative collection of the cultural memory of a much larger group, consistent of many micro groups. A simple example of this may be this: Other 1 is tall, the Self is not, thus the Self is short. An otherness is established. Other 2 is not tall, therefore he is short, like the Self. A likeness is established, and a group is formed. If the Self and many Others live in the same area this outlines one group. Some of the Others speak the same language as the Self – another group is formed. Applying the other factors that define a 'nation' and we have a macro group. The collection of the collective memories of the micro groups supported by the individual memories of each member make the cultural memory. In summary, the figures of memory help structure and define the identity of the group and the individual. For this specific research the figures of memory which will be examined will be the royal list of the Bulgarian khans and Ynglingatal, Heims-kringla and the Younger Edda. They are picked with the purpose of looking into the similarities of the formation of the identity of two very different groups of peoples

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 128.

⁶ H. MOL, *The Identity Model of Religion: How It Compares with Nine Other Theories of Religion and How It Might Apply to Japan*, JJRS 6.1/2, 1979, p. 11–38.

⁷ A. FUNKENSTEIN, *Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness*, HMe 1.1, 1989, p. 5–26.

and the representation of the ruling elite and the image of the rulers themselves in the cultural memory. Because the Balkan source is only one we shall begin with it, afterwards we shall continue with the Scandinavian ones.

The list of the Bulgarian khans, known as the Nominalia of Bulgarian khans was found by the Russian scholar Alexander Popov in 1861. Three Russian copies have been found. The earliest of them, the *Uvarov transcript*, dates from the 15th century and the other two, the *Pogodin* and *Moscow* transcripts, from the 16th century. The edition used for this research is that of Mikhail Tihomirov from 1946⁸. Tihomirov critically assessed all the copies and previous research done on the text and provided an analytically reconstructed version of it. All three are presumed to be copies of a lost original text from the ninth or tenth century. This speaks of its importance in the minds of the compilers and writers of the copies that survived and the cultural heritage the text carried through the generations. The Nominalia has been the topic of many scholarly disputes, despite its brevity. It has been a source of debates concerning the pre-Christian Bulgarian calendar, but more importantly it is the oldest known royal Bulgarian list and genealogy. It enumerates the Bulgarian rulers from the legendary king Avitohol to Oumor. After each ruler's name information is given about 1) how long he has ruled, 2) his family/genus and 3) the year of his ascendance to the throne. One of the major scholarly interests concerning the Nominalia is the first part of the text. It is concerned with the distant past, with legendary, mythologised and euhemerised heroes – Avitohol and Irnik⁹. V. Tamoshek was one of the first scholars who posed the question whether the Irnik from the Nominalia is the same as the Ernakh – son of Attila the Hun, with which the majority of scholars now agree¹⁰. This suggestion stems from the last sentence of the quoted text. After some scholarly investigations the sum of years of rule from Avitohol to Bezmer is 515, which seems to point at the years of Attila and more specifically – the year of his death. However, since the first two rulers have legendary lifespans (one 300, the other 150), the only certain thing that

⁸ М.Н. ТИХОМИРОВ, *Именник болгарских князей*, ВДИ 3, 1946, p. 81–90.

⁹ М.Н. ТИХОМИРОВ, *Именник...*, p. 87:

Авитохолъ жытъ лѣтъ 300, родъ емоу Дуло, а лѣтъ еи(у) диломъ твиремъ. Ирникъ житъ лѣтъ 100 и 8 лѣтъ, родъ еиу Дуло, а лѣтъ еиу диломъ твиремъ. Гостунъ налѣстникъ сынъ 2 лѣт(а), родъ еиу Ерми, а лѣтъ еиу дохъ твиремъ. Курт 60 лѣтъ, дръжа, родъ еиу Дуло, а лѣтъ еиу шегоръ вечемъ. Безмеръ 3 лѣт(а), а родъ еиу Дуло, а лѣтъ еиу шегоръ вѣчемъ. Они 5 князь дръжаше княжене овуиу страну Дуная лѣтъ 500 и 15 остриженани главами.

Trans.: Avitohol lived 300 years. His clan was Dulo and his year dilom tvirem (the snake, month nine). Irnik lived 150 years. His clan Dulo and his year dilom tverim. Gostun, the regent, 2 years. His clan Ermi and his year dokhs tvirem (boar month nine). Kurt ruled 60 years. His clan Dulo and his year shegor vechem (ox month three). Bezmer 3 years and his clan Dulo and his year shegor vechem. These five princes ruled the kingdom over the other side of the Danube for 515 years with shaven heads and after that came to this side of the Danube.

¹⁰ А. БУРМОВ, *Въпроси из историята на прабългарите*, ГСУИФФ 2, 1948, p. 36–37.

could be discerned is that the Bulgars were well aware of the life and death of Attila and his son Ernakh. J. Markwart later suggested that both Avitohol and Irnik are the same as Attila and his son Ernakh¹¹. V. Zlatarski firmly denied this theory¹². Although it is still debated, because there are no other concrete historiographical parallels with the name Avitohol, there is a very real possibility that the first two names in the Nominalia are the same as the legendary hero and his son. In any case the moment the word legendary appears in an explanation of any kind of subject, we need to refer to cultural identity and collective memory. Myths and legends serve a very complex purpose. Assmann explained that these narratives transcend the common dichotomy between fiction and history. They are both invented and real, and serve a “higher order”¹³. Myths, legends and the characters in them are figures of memory; they are used as mnemonic techniques for remembering a historical past. They underline the image that a group or a society had of itself when it internalized its *devenir historique*¹⁴ or historical ‘becoming’. The same could be said of most of the theories concerning this specific part of the Nominalia. For example, Moskov’s explanation that

...through the names of the rulers Avitohol and Irnik legendary periods are outlined with vague tales from the tribal memory or real historical periods have been outlined from the history of the Huns and through them of the proto Bulgarians¹⁵

could also be one possibility of a founding narrative, of a society internalizing its beginnings, attempting to answer for itself the question “where did we come from?” – much like we are trying to do now. Again, the suggestion that the names are a euhemerization of the actual people Avitohol/Attila and Irnik/Ernah, is also an attempt to analyse a myth. Many other hypotheses exist and the discourse is still open. Even if the first ruler in the Nominalia is not the famous Attila, Irnik is enough of an evidence of the continuity that existed in the mind of contemporaries of the author. Moreover, the person who commissioned the text – the ruler himself – had the confidence of a successor of Attila’s steppe empire. Throughout the early history of Bulgaria the country has led multiple wars with the Khazars, Avars and Huns. Apart from other political reasons, mayhaps another ideological reason existed for these military conflicts – because they were not the chosen and rightful successors to Attila’s empire.

¹¹ J. MARQUART, *Die Chronologie der alttürkischen Inschriften*, Leipzig 1898, p. 72–78.

¹² В. ЗЛАТАРСКИ, *История на българската държава през средните векове*, vol. I.1, София 1970, p. 80.

¹³ J. ASSMANN, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization. Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, Cambridge 2011, p. 59–60.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 61.

¹⁵ М. МОСКОВ, *Именник на българските ханове. Ново тълкуване*, София 1988, p. 153.

Some other interesting suggestions are made for the first part of the text, which will, in brevity, be examined. Several of them try to link the first ruler with the Holy Scripture. This gives the genealogy a biblical beginning tracing it back to Noah. In support of this theory is the length of the rule of the two khans – 300 years and 150 years, suggesting that these are biblical years. A quick point to be made here is that despite being produced in an already Christian society, the *Nominalia* is void of any clearly dogmatic or Christian references. According to J. Mikkola, however, the first part of the name ‘Avit’ is a Bulgarian transliteration of the name Japheth from the book of Genesis¹⁶. Another reference made to the Holy Scriptures is of B. von Arnim¹⁷, who suggested that the name Avitohol is actually an anagram of the name Ahitofel from the books of kings in the Old Testament. Indeed, it is possible that the author of the *Nominalia* was intentionally trying to make a connection to the Christian writings. However, why would the scribe retain the structure of the text, and not follow the scripture’s literary style? Why keep the very brief and systematic style of the text, which is common and frequently found on stone inscriptions? If this is true and the name Avitohol is an anagram of Ahitofel, then the text’s purpose changes drastically – from a retelling of the past of an empire and a continuity to Christianising the narrative and total invention of the text. The latter statement could be supported by the fact that the copies are from the 15th and 16th centuries – the Ottoman rule. This, however, has little to none support; even if it were true it still points to a cultural tradition, older than the Attilian one.

It is difficult for historians to point to the specific origin myth if any existed, because medieval chroniclers in general were not in agreement concerning the origin of Bulgars. Looking at other local and foreign sources concerned with origin stories of peoples such as Bulgarian apocryphal chronicle; Constantine of Preslav’s ‘Histories’, Jordanes, Theophanes the Confessor, Herodotus, Ibn Fadlan, and the Russian chronicle *Повесть временных лет*, etc; propositions of the Bulgar origin myth vary from Turkish, Hunish/Scythian, and even Gothic and Nordic origin. St. Chureshki¹⁸ has recently done extensive research concerned with the different possibilities of origin, which is cross referenced with domestic and foreign sources concerning Bulgaria. The strongest evidence suggests a Hunish origin which is supported by the *Nominalia* with the explicit remark of the “shaved heads” of the first five rulers. The shaving of the heads of the steppe tribes is a symbol of nobility. Liutprand had observed this tradition during one of the councils, where the Bulgarian representative was “with shaved head as the Hungarians”¹⁹. The shaving expressed a continuity in a tradition from Antiquity into the Middle Ages. Much

¹⁶ J. MIKKOLA, *Die chronologie der türkischen Donaublicharen*, SUSA 30, 1914, p. 23–24.

¹⁷ B. VON ARNIM, “Wer war Avitohol? (Zur Fürstenliste)”, [in:] *Сборникъ въ честь на проф. Л. Милетичъ за седемдесетгодишнината отъ рождението му (1863–1933)*, София 1933, p. 573–575.

¹⁸ С. ЧУРЕШКИ, *Именник на българските князе*, София 2012.

¹⁹ *FLHB*, vol. II, София 1960, p. 326.

like where in Christian society the insignia consists of clothes in porphyria, a sceptre, a crown, etc. for the Scythian society this was the shaved head and the horse whip. In any case, it could be suggested concerning the first part of the Nominalia that there existed a legend or a myth that the progenitor of the Bulgars was of noble Hun descent and Attilan to that matter.

Another interesting hypothesis is that of Markwart, who suggests that the years given in the Nominalia are actually slogans of the different rulers²⁰. Despite giving the wrong date on the rule of Avitohol, researchers like Markwart make interesting hypotheses about the ‘*dilom tvirem*’ of the Nominalia of the Bulgarian khans and tsars. According to him, ‘*dilom tvirem*’ is the ruler’s motto (because it is repeated in Irnik). In any case, it can be said with certainty that the Nominalia, in addition to giving information about the calendar, chronology and language of the proto-Bulgarians, also shows (and probably the purpose of its creation was to establish) continuity with the legendary Hun military leader and ruler. The very fact that the Bulgarian people had felt the need to create such a “document” reveals a lot about their thinking. The legitimization of power is carried out in two ways – a kinship with a legendary/semi-deified ruler and a kind of dynastic connection, by emphasizing the clans.

Before I continue it is important to introduce the Norse genealogy in this juncture of the examination. The oldest Norse genealogy is Ynglingatal²¹. It is written in verse and is supposed to have been composed by Thjodolfr of Hvinir at the end of the ninth century. The text is conserved partially in Snorri Sturluson’s Ynglinga saga – the first part of Heimskringla²². The verses trace the genealogy of the kings of Norway and Sweden from the pagan gods Odin and especially Frey in a very convoluted and foggy way. The poem starts with Fjölfnir and continues with Frey, and his son Sveigðir, through Yngve and Alf, and ends with Ragnvald Heidumhære, who was a cousin of Harald Fair Hair. It is interesting why Yngvi, who is Frey, here, is a grandson of Fjölfnir, whereas in all the other sources Frey is the father of Fjölfnir²³. It should be noted here that the name of the Ynglings comes from the god Yngvi-Frey²⁴ – it has different spellings – Yngi, Yngve, and Yngvi. Moreover, this

²⁰ Й. МАРКВАРТ, *Старобългарските изрази в надписа от Чаталар (Крумово) и в старобългарския списък на князете*, Мин 7, 1912, p. 227–258.

²¹ F. JONSSON, *Den Norsk-Islandske Skjaldedigtning*, vol. I–II, København 1912–1915; SNORRI STURLUSON, *Heimskringla*, vol. I–III, ed. B. AÐALBJARNARSON, Reykjavík 2002 [= Ifo, 26–28] (cetera: SNORRI STURLUSON).

²² SNORRI STURLUSON, vol. I. Trans.: SNORRI STURLUSON, *Heimskringla*, trans. A. FINLAY, A. FAULKES, London 2011.

²³ SNORRI STURLUSON, vol. I, p. 23–24: *Freyr tók þá ríki eptir Njörð [...]. Gerðr Gýmis dóttir hét kona hans; sonr þeirra hét Fjölfnir*. Trans.: *Then Freyr took power after Njörðr; His wife was called Gerðr Gymisdóttir. Their son was called Fjölfnir*.

²⁴ SNORRI STURLUSON, vol. I, p. 16. *Hann gaf bústaði hofgoðunum: Njörðr bjó í Nóatúnunum, en Freyr at Uppsölum, Heimdallr at Himinbjörgum, Þórr á Þrúðvangi, Baldr á Breiðabliki; öllum fékk hann þeim góða bólstaði*. Trans.: *He gave dwelling places to the temple priests. Njörðr lived at Nóatún, Freyr*

Yngvi is connected to Tacitus' Ingvaiones²⁵. The connection to the famous dynasty of the Ynglings is through metaphors, which in skaldic poetry are called kennings²⁶.

However, Snorri as the first Icelandic historiographer clears the confusions by giving us in the first chapter of Ynglinga saga a description of the world and an origin to Óðinn. This text portrays the origin of the Aesir – the high gods – and the Nordic peoples from Asia, or somewhere around the North-East side of the Black Sea. It presents them as mythologised heroes, not gods. However, the Younger Edda²⁷, whose author is considered to be Snorri Sturluson, portrays them as gods. This is why a scholarly debate is still going on about the authorship of the Younger Edda. These regnal lists have the sequence Odin, Njord, Yngvi-Frey, Fjölfnir. Both Ynglinga saga and the Younger Edda end with the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish royal families. The author of the prologue to Younger Edda has gone back even further and has traced the origins of the Norse kings to Troy, through Troan the daughter of Priam of Troy²⁸.

at Uppsalar, Heimdalr at Himinbjörg, Þórr at Þrúðvangr, Baldr at Breiðablik. Another name for Freyr was Yngvi. The name Yngvi was used in his family long after as an honorific title, and his descendants were called Ynglingar.

²⁵ TACITUS, *Agricola; Germania*, trans. et praef. H.B. MATTINGLY, J.B. RIVES, London 2009 [= Pcl], p. 2, n. 6.

²⁶ F. JONSSON, *Den Norsk-islandske...*, stanzas 11, 17, 18, 21, 22, 27:

11. *Fell Alrekr, þars Eiríki bróður vópn at bana urðu, ok hnakkmars með höfuðfetlum Dags friendr of drepask kvóðu; fráat maðr áðr eykja greiði Freys afspring í folk hafa.* 17. *Ok lofsæll ór landi fló Týs óttungur Tunna ríki, en flæming farra trjónu jótuns eykr á Agli rauð.* 18. *Sás of austmörk áðan hafði brúna horg of borinn lengi. En skíðlaus Skilfinga nið hæfis hjórr til hjarta stóð.* 21. *Þat frákn enn, at Aðils fjörvi vitta vétt of víða skyldi ok dáðgjarn af drasils bógum Freys óttungur falla skyldi.* 22. *Ok við aur ægir hjarna bragning's burs of blandinn varð. Ok dáðsæll deyja skyldi Ála dolgr at Uppsolum.* 27. *Ok Ingjald ifjörvan trað reyks rósuðr á Ræningi, þás húspjófr hyrjar leistum goðkynning í gognum sté.*

Trans.: 11. *Alrekr fell where the weapons of his brother became the slayer of Eiríkr. And [people] said that the kinsmen of Dagr [kenning for Swedish kings] killed one another with the bridle of the saddle-horse. No one has heard before of an offspring of Freyr [kenning for Swedish king] using riding gear in battle; 17–18. And the famous descendant of Týr [Swedish king] fled the country before the power of Tunni. And the roamer, the draught-animal of the giant [BULL], which before had long borne the cairn of the brows [HEAD] about the eastern forest, reddened its weapon of the bull [HORN] upon Egill. And the sheathless sword of the bull [HORN] stuck in the heart of the descendant of the Skilfingar [Swedish king]. 21–22. I have learned, further, that the creature of charms [SORCERESS] had to destroy the life of Aðils. And the deed-eager descendant of Freyr [Swedish king] had to fall off the back of the steed. And the sea [fluid] of the brains of the son of the ruler [RULER] was blended with mud. And the deed-fortunate enemy of Áli had to die at Uppsala. 27. And the gusher of smoke [FIRE] overcame Ingjaldr alive in Ræningr when the house-thief [FIRE] strode with soles of fire through the descendant of gods.*

²⁷ A. FAULKES, *Edda, Prologue and Gylfaginning*, 2005 (2nd ed.), <http://www.vsnrweb-publications.org.uk/Edda-1.pdf>.

²⁸ A. FAULKES, *Edda...*, p. 6:

Þar þótti Óðni fagrir vellir ok landskostir góðir ok kaus sér þar borgstað, er nú heita Sigtún. Skipaði hann þar höfðingjum ok í þá líking, sem verit hafði í Trója, setti tólf höfuðmenn í staðinum at dæma

The oldest prose genealogy is found in *Íslendingabok* from the beginning of the 12th century, which begins with Yngvi, Njord, Frey, and Fjöltnir²⁹. There is no accompanying narrative but evidently the author – Ari, had in mind some idea of a migration of euhemerised gods from the Black Sea to Scandinavia. This idea might have come from the scattered references in classical and later authors to the origins of the Germanic nations particularly the Goths. In the version of the Younger Edda in the Codex Wormianus the line extends even further back to Saturn. By the end of the 12th century an unknown genealogist added some more apocryphal pseudo-classical names from an unknown source that was also

landslög, ok svá skipaði hann réttum öllum sem fyrr hafði verit í Trója ok Tyrkir váru vanir. Eftir þat fór hann norðr, þar til er sjár tók við honum, sá er þeir hugðu, at lægi um öll lönd, ok setti þar son sinn til þess ríkis, er nú heitir Nóregr. Sá er Sæmingr kallaðr, ok telja þar Nóregskonungar sínar ættir til hans ok svá jarlar ok aðrir rikismenn, svá sem segir í Háleygjatali. En Óðinn hafði með sér þann son sinn, er Yngvi er nefndr, er konungr var í Svíþjóðu eftir hann, ok eru frá honum komnar þær ættir, er Ynglingar eru kallaðir.

Trans.: *The fields and the choice lands in that place seemed fair to Odin, and he chose for himself the site of a city which is now called Sigtún. There he established chieftains in the fashion which had prevailed in Troy; he set up also twelve head-men to be doomsmen over the people and to judge the laws of the land; and he ordained also all laws as, there had been before, in Troy, and according to the customs of the Turks. After that he went into the north, until he was stopped by the sea, which men thought lay around all the lands of the earth; and there he set his son over this kingdom, which is now called Norway. This king was Sæmingr; the kings of Norway trace their lineage from him, and so do also the jarls and the other mighty men, as is said in the Háleygjatal. Odin had with him one of his sons called Yngvi, who was king in Sweden after him; and those houses come from him that are named Ynglings.*

²⁹ *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. J. BENEDIKTSSON, Reykjavík 1968 [= Ifo, 1], p. 1:

Tillæg II. 1. Þesi ero nofn lanfjéga Yngliða oc Breiþfirþiða. 2. [Y]ngvi Tyrkia conuþr. ii. Niþrþr Svía conuþr. iii. Freyr. iiiii. Fiþlner 3. sá er dó at Friþfróþa. v. Svegþer. vi. Vanlandi. vii. Visbur. viii. Dómaldr. 4. IX. Dómar. x. Dygve. xi. Dagr. xii. Alrekr. xiii. Agne. xiiii. Yngvi. xv. 5. Iorundr. xvi. Aun enn gamli. xvii. Egill vendilcráca. xviii. Óttarr. xix. Aþísl 6. at Uppsólom. xx. Eysteinn. xxi. Yngvar. xxii. Brautönundr. xxiii. Ingialldr 7. enn illráþi. xxiiii. Óláfr tretelgia. xxv. Hálfðan hvitbein Upplendinga conuþr. 8. xxvi. Gopþrþr. xxvii. Ólafr. xxviii. Helgi. xxix. Injialldr dóttorsonr Sigurþar 9. Ragnars sonar loþbrócar. xxx. Óleifr en hviti. xxxi. Þorstein enn rauþi. 10. xxxii. Óleifr feilan es fyrstr bygþi þeira á Íslandi. xxxiii. Þórþr geller. 11. xxxiiii. Eyiolfþr es skírþr vas i eni sinu þá es cristni com á Ísland. xxxv. 12. Þorkell. xxxvi. Geller faþer þeira Þorkels foþor Branz oc þorgils foþor 13. mins. en ec heitec Are.

Trans.: *These are the names of the male ancestors of the Ynglings and the People of Breiðarfjörðr I. Yngvi king of the Turks. II. Njörðr king of the Swedes. III Freyr. IIII. Fjöltnir, who died at Frið-Fróðr's. V. Svegðir. VI. Vanlandi. VII. Visbur. VIII. Dómaldr. IX. Dómarr. X. Dyggvi. XI. Dagr. XII. Alrekr. XIII. Agni. XIIIII. Yngvi. XV. Jörundr. XVI. Aun the Old. XVII. Egill Crow of Vendill. XVIII. Óttarr. XIX. Aðils at Uppsala. XX. Eysteinn. XXI. Yngvarr. XXII. Braut-Önundr. XXIII. Ingjaldr the Evil. XXIIII. Óláfr Treefeller. XXV. Hálfðan Whiteleg, king of the Upplanders. XXVI. Goðröðr. XXVII. Óláfr. XXVIII Helgi. XXIX. Ingjaldr, son of the daughter of Sigurðr, son of Ragnarr loðbrók. XXX. Óleifr the White. XXXI. Þorstein the Red. XXXII. Óleifr feilan, who was the first of them to settle in Iceland. XXXIII. Þórðr gellir. XXXIIII Eyjólfþr, who was baptised in his old age, when Christianity came to Iceland. XXXV. Þorkell. XXXVI. Gellir, father of Þorkell – father of Brandr – and of Þorgils, my father; and I am called Ari.*

known to Welsh writers, linking Saturn's father Celus/Celius to the descendants of Japheth in Genesis, thus taking the line right back to Adam.

There are several very curious points that arose just through this brief overview of the sources. First – both the Bulgarian Nominalia and the Icelandic texts were constructed after the introduction of Christianity in their respective countries. Second – the texts tried linking the origin of the rulers to a territory on the North-Eastern shores of the Black Sea, although with the Icelandic genealogies it is more of a fiction than fact. Third – with the exception of the Younger Edda, the texts trace back the origin of the peoples from a legendary hero who was later euhemerised. Through the name of Avitohol, there is a linking to the old biblical traditions. The same goes for the Norse texts – through Japheth, the son of Noah. Moreover, some scholars have proposed that Noah's three sons represent the three classes of medieval society – the priests, the warriors, and the slaves. Interestingly, the texts make reference to Japheth the originator of the warrior class. Fourth – they were used as political propaganda because of who their commissioners were, and the times they were ordered. Some scholars have called this literature “crisis literature”³⁰. And the most important similarity – all of them are texts used for identity formation; they served as points of reference to confirm a sense of belonging. They were storehouses, it was not relevant if they were correct or not, but rather that they were correct for the cultural time. Moreover, we can see the evolution of memory from “presence of the past” to a “present representation of the past”³¹. The purpose of this representation and of the texts was of founding narratives – narratives about the past that offer orientation in people's lives and have normative and formative power. According to Jan Assmann *the binding character of the knowledge preserved in cultural memory has two aspects: the formative one in its educative, civilizing, and humanizing functions and the normative one in its function of providing rules of conduct*³². Pernille Hermann says that *the dichotomy of history (fact) and fiction (invention) does not do full justice to the sagas, being both a complex and ambiguous kind of literature, shaped from the interplay of orally transmitted memories of the Viking age and the written culture of the Middle Ages*³³. Well, the same could and should be said of the Nominalia – it represents an oral tradition put into writing, intertwining in itself the cultural memory and historical fact, making it as much an invention as historiography.

³⁰ T. FECHNER-SMARSLY, *Krisenliteratur. Zur Rhetorizität und Ambivalenz in der isländischen Sagaliteratur*, Frankfurt am Main 1996.

³¹ P.H. HUTTON, *The Art of Memory Reconceived: From Rhetoric to Psychoanalysis*, JHI 48.3, 1987, p. 371–392.

³² J. ASSMANN, *Collective Memory...*, p. 132.

³³ P. HERMANN, *Founding Narratives and the Representation of Memory in the Saga Literature*, Arv 66, 2010, p. 69–87.

Taking into consideration all that had been said until now, we still have to dive into the image of the ruler. The question of the importance of providing a lineage still remains. Personal qualities, physique, intelligence, military knowledge and other capabilities may make a great leader, but apparently for the common folk connection to a higher, important person was more important, or at least needed. We considered these texts as founding narratives, as narratives that constructed the cultural memory and identity, thus these texts, and the stories they retold were directed toward the subordinates, not only and exclusively toward the ruling class. Moreover, while verbalizing the stories and putting them down on paper, they become devices for an organizational structure, in a micro and macro scale, thus becoming a sort of cultural heritage. Assmann said that *through its cultural heritage a society becomes visible to itself and to others*³⁴. The stories no longer want to internalize the identity of a group, but also to externalize it on an even larger scale. This connects to the defending of rights for a ruler and his legitimisation not only to domestic contenders but to foreign desires. All the texts are products of their time and of the cultural memory – that is to say the interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts; the engagement with the past in the present (the present of the authors of the texts), and not as the past as such. The writers and their patrons kept looking back towards a great pagan past, as well as Christian, where the twilight figure of the progenitor gained growing heroic dimensions.

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³⁴ J. ASSMANN, *Collective Memory...*, p. 133.

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Abstract. This paper will focus on several sources from Scandinavia and the Balkans, and compare the types of genealogies portrayed in them – descent from gods, descent from another kind of supernatural being, descent from a legendary hero. The paper will examine the types of genealogies and the purpose they serve; how and why they were commissioned? Is there a difference in the establishment of the image of the ruler if the latter has descended from gods, legendary heroes, or a specific clan or dynasty? Does Christianity change the tradition of writing genealogies and the stories they retell? Are personal qualities enough to provide legitimate claims?

Keywords: Icelandic sagas, the Nominalia, kings lists, genealogies, origin stories, legitimization, cultural memory, cultural identity, founding narratives, crisis literature

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