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SWITHUN IN THE NORTH: A WINCHESTER SAINT IN NORWAY

Karl Christian Alvestad

This paper briefly examines the veneration of the ninth-century Winchester bishop St Swithun in Norway throughout the centuries. By taking a chronological and at times historiographical view this paper demonstrates that there is still some uncertainty surrounding the establishment of the cult of St Swithun in Norway. Among the competing origin points of the veneration is both an eleventh-century context where English bishops and missionaries were active in Norway, as well as the more traditional view of Bishop Reinald of Stavanger as the person who introduced the saint from Winchester. Beyond this, the paper has highlighted that St Swithun's mass 'Syftesok' on 2 July was an important date in the agricultural calendar throughout Norway from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century. The modern re-discovery of Swithun in the nineteenth century caused the saint became both a religious and civic symbol in Stavanger, demonstrating the longevity and change in Swithun's role in Norway.

INTRODUCTION

As the twentieth century dawned in Norway, the Norwegian state and church, as well as significant aspects of the Norwegian cultural landscape, continued its late nineteenth century trend of revisiting the medieval past to explore and shape the national self. Cultural reclamation of the historical past of a nation or territory was not an exclusively Norwegian trend in this period. Andrew Wawn and Patrick Geary among others have demonstrated how this was, and to some extent still is, part of the wider Western cultural tradition, and they have shown how this was a particularly popular trend in the nineteenth century. Part of this trend led the ecclesiastical and intellectual elite of Norway to interact with the pre-Reformation cults of saints, and especially those cults that had been popular in Norway in the Middle Ages. Among the consequences of this trend was the "re-discovery" and promotion of native Norwegian saints as historical individual and symbols of local Christian virtue that linked local churches to the conversion and Christianisation of Norway at the end of the Viking Age. A further result of this linking was the identification of patron saints for episcopal sees in Norway. For the majority of the bishoprics, the saints selected were native saints, such as Hallvard in

Oslo, Olav in Trondheim, and Sunniva in Bergen. Like Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim, the Bishopric of Stavanger also returned to its medieval dedication, namely the ninth-century bishop of Winchester, St Swithun.

The medieval link between Stavanger and Swithun has received some excellent attention from Michael Lapidge in his 2003 book, *The Cult of St Swithun*.[ii] In his extensive coverage and examination of the cult of St Swithun, Lapidge sheds light on the evidence for the cult of St Swithun in Norway, but recent scholarship in Norway has cast doubt on some of Lapidge's conclusions. Lapidge's book focuses on the surviving traces of the medieval cult and does not consider, perhaps justified, the post-medieval 'cult' and presence of Swithun. This is a general pattern in Lapidge's book, but in this instance it is a particularly important issue for this paper, as the discussions of Swithun in Norway cannot be complete on the basis of the surviving medieval materials, a point I will return to. Consequently, in this chapter I will attempt to illuminate both the ongoing state of scholarship regarding St Swithun in Norway in the medieval period alongside some evidence for the traces of the cult of St Swithun which are rarely considered when discussing his popularity and significance. I will also briefly consider why Swithun became popular in Norway and the problems surrounding seeking an answer for this question. The chapter will conclude by outlining the current cultural resonance of Swithun and Winchester in modern Norway.

This broad coverage stems from an overarching question: when did the cult of Swithun arrive in Norway, what role has Swithun played in Norway, and what role does he continue to play? The inspiration for these questions lies in the growing scholarship on the saints such as cult of St Olaf in Britain,[iii] and an acknowledgement that we have yet to see a similar scholarly development in Norway. It should be acknowledged that some developments are under way especially with regards to the studies of cults from a local history perspective, but broader scholarly surveys and detailed scholarship has yet to be produced. This does, in part stem, from the degree of survival in Norwegian sources, and the domination of political history in the Norwegian historical tradition, which is a theme to which I will return to in this chapter. The questions for this paper also stem from a wider consideration of the impact England had on religious life in Norway following its conversion and throughout its Christianisation.[iv] It should be stressed that I am not arguing that Christianity only arrived in Norway from England, but it is important to acknowledge and consider Swithun in the light of this narrative

and as an extension of the cultural impact of England, Wessex, and Winchester at various times in Norwegian history and culture.

As indicated above, the state of preservation of sources from or about medieval Norway, and especially about the religious life in Norway, is a crucial factor that impacts this study, and all other studies of religious life in medieval Norway. The truth of the matter is, that the document survival in Norway is very poor, fragmented and insufficient to do gain comparatively good overview of religious life in medieval Norway. Scholars are therefore reliant on fragmentary documents, as well as those few complete texts that do survive, such as letters, diplomas and documents collected in the *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* and *Regesta Norvegica*, as well as *Heimskringla* and other saga texts, the Gulathing and Frostating Laws, the national laws of Magnus Lagabøte, the *Old Norwegian Homily Book*, *Breviarium Nidrosiense* and *Missale Nidrosiense*, just to name a few. Of these, only the last three texts are explicitly religious in nature, and cast direct light on the religious life in medieval Norway. Among the surviving materials, there is a trend in that more recent ones survive to a greater extent than older ones, and documents concerned with legal or political matters are more likely to be preserved than those concerning religious matters. This degree of survival imposes significant limitations on what can and cannot be concluded about the religious life in medieval Norway. Thus, this paper and other research into this subject have some significant methodological challenges when it comes to examining early Christian history in Norway, especially as an interdisciplinary approach offers limited conclusions about the immaterial traditions and culture in this period.

SWITHUN, WINCHESTER AND STAVANGER: SETTING THE BACKGROUND

In *The Cult of St Swithun*, Michael Lapidge presented the results of 30 years working on the Swithun's cult and hagiography, arguing that Swithun was 'one of the best-known and widely culted Anglo-Saxon saints, both in England and on the Continent.'[v] Following on from this, he acknowledges that little is known about Swithun's earthly life. Lapidge, Yorke and others have argued that Swithun was Bishop of Winchester between 852/3-863,[vi] and that his cult began with the bishop's translation in 971.[vii] Lapidge gives a detailed reconstruction of the spread of Swithun's cult in the centuries after the translation. Among the areas he catalogues is the cult in Scandinavia, its chronological and geographic origin, and spread on the basis of surviving sources. Yet in his review of

the cult in Scandinavia, Lapidge contextualises the cult with the religious and cultural links between England and Scandinavia, especially Norway, and presenting this as one of the plausible causes for the cult's spread to Norway. He does this through highlighting the number of Anglo-Saxon missionaries and bishops who, according to both Scandinavian and English sources, were active in Norway and Iceland during the late tenth and the eleventh century.

One of the many questions Lapidge raises in his assessment is whether any of these missionaries or bishops were from Winchester and if the cult could have arrived directly to Norway at this point.[viii] This question reflects the number of Norwegian manuscript fragments that have been associated with Winchester. However, one of the challenges to the early introduction hypothesis is the uncertainties surrounding the identification of most of the Anglo-Saxon missionaries and bishops, and the lack of clear links to Winchester or other religious sites in England. For most of these men, the surviving sources are not detailed enough nor do they correspond with information in other sources, thus it is at times difficult to identify these individuals and their networks. Lapidge highlights what he sees as a more plausible route of introduction, arguing that the cult of St Swithun most likely came to Norway directly from Winchester with the first bishop of Stavanger – Rainald (c. 1125/8–35). Lapidge also argues that a subsequent bishop of Stavanger, Jon Birgisson, who was elected the first archbishop of Nidaros, brought the cult of Swithun into the liturgical calendars of the metropolitan see, facilitating the cult's spread in the North Atlantic.[ix] Lagidge's conclusions and their implications for the understanding of the cult, and indirectly for the city of Stavanger and its religious institutions, have in recent years been somewhat challenged by Eldbjørg Haug, whose work on early Stavanger advocates the possibility that the cult and the relic of St Swithun in Stavanger might pre-date Bishop Rainald by up to a century. Haug's argument has consequently been challenged by Knut Helle. As Haug and Helle's arguments forms the basis for the current state of scholarship on the cult of St Swithun in Norway, I will give what I hope is a balanced account of the two scholars' arguments in the subsequent paragraphs starting with Haug.

THE QUESTION OF DATING STAVANGER'S LINK WITH SWITHUN

The discussion between Helle and Haug focuses on several questions, but for this paper, there are two key points of contention we need to consider: firstly, the dating of the St

Swithun relic in Stavanger, and secondly, the evidence for the dating of the dedication of the cathedral in Stavanger to St Swithun. These two points of contention are related, so give the fairest possible analysis of this debate I will first examine Eldbjørg Haug's arguments and perspectives, before moving on to Knut Helle's response, with special attention to Haug's defence against Helle. Except for Haug's original texts, all the texts in the debate were published in the Norwegian journal *Historisk Tidsskrift* between 2008 and 2010.

Haug

Haug's 2008, 2009 and 2010 publications about Stavanger and its affiliated religious history came on the back of a series of earlier local history publications where she discussed the history of the area more broadly. Within these later publications Haug consolidates her arguments and interpretations, particularly concerning the religious history of Stavanger, and importantly for this paper, the cult of St Swithun in light of this. Her core argument is that the cult of Swithun was introduced to Stavanger and Norway earlier than previously believed. Haug bases her argument on several points, but three are important for this paper. Firstly, Haug acknowledges Hohler's 1964 argument that there are no documented openings of the reliquary of Swithun around the arrival of Reinald in Stavanger in the 1120s. Based on Hohler's analysis Haug argues that it is likely that the Stavanger relic might have arrived either as part of the 1093 opening of the shrine, or a translation before 1066 or after 1150. This leads us to the second important point for Haug, namely the statute in the *Canones Nidarosiensis* that dictates that every church should have a relic. Haug sees this in the light of the suggestion that Erling Skjalgsson had a church and priest at Stavanger in the 1020s. Haug therefore argues that this earlier Stavanger church also must have had a relic at this point, and that it is plausible that this relic might have been of St Swithun. There is sadly no evidence to enlighten us as to who this early church was dedicated to or who it held a relic of, but Haug proposes, based on Hohler's conclusions, that this might have been the Swithun relic said by the Lansdowne Redaction of the *Miracula S. Swithuni* to have been sent to 'Dacia' by Cnut, the king of Norway between 1028 and 1035.[x] Haug argues that there were no known Swithun liturgies in Denmark, or at the medieval Danish archbishopric of Lund, claiming that one could understand 'Dacia' as referring to all parts of Cnut's Scandinavian realm.[xi] Haug thus argues that King Cnut's 'Dacia' relic

might, in fact, have been the relic in Stavanger,[xii] used to consecrate Erling Skjalgsson's church in Stavanger. If so, the act of sending this relic must have been part of Cnut's wider pattern of gift-giving targeted at Norwegian chieftains.[xiii]

Haug bases this interpretation of Dacia, as meaning all of Scandinavia, on both Russell's edited volume from 2005 and her own 2008 work on papal penitentiaries in thirteenth- through to fifteenth-century Scandinavia.[xiv] Haug's proposal that the Stavanger relic might have been part of Cnut's gifts in the attempt to undermine Olaf II Haraldsson's reign in Norway (1016-28) is something she problematizes herself through her third point, namely the inclusion of Swithun among the saints whose mass was to be celebrated according to the oldest versions of the Gulathing Law code.[xv] This law code claims to have been the product of Olaf II Haraldsson's 1024 legal revision of the Gulathing Law, suggesting that the veneration of Swithun in western Norway pre-dated Cnut's gift of a relic. Haug explains the inclusion of Swithun in the 1024 lawcode by pointing out that many of the missionary bishops active in Norway during the reign of Olaf I Tryggvason and Olaf II Haraldsson had roots in or links to the religious and political milieu in Winchester, making it possible that these bishops brought the veneration of Swithun with them to western Norway. Because of this evidence and these interpretations, Haug draws a number of conclusions in her work about the religious history of Stavanger and its related institutions. Crucially for this chapter, she concludes that it is plausible, maybe even likely, that the veneration and knowledge about St Swithun in Norway might have predated Bishop Reinald's arrival in the 1120s by about a century. Moreover, this plausibility implies that the cult spread because of the efforts of several Anglo-Saxon missionary bishops active in the late tenth- and eleventh-century Norway. If this latter is true, this might help to explain the geographic spread of the late medieval and early modern references to St Swithun in Norway, which I will return to below.

Furthermore, in her 2009 article, Haug draws attention the dating of the Stavanger *Privilegium*, a document from the reign of Haakon Haakonson of Norway (r. 1217-1263), in which Haakon confirms a now lost grant by king Magnus Erlingson (r. 1161-84) to God and St Swithun as represented by the cathedral in Stavanger. Haug claims the *Privilegium* is based on an even older grant, dated to the reign of Magnus Bærrføtt (1093-1103), on the basis of the shifting linguistic styles from *pluralis majestatis* in parts of the document to the first-person singular in other parts which she

claims was likely the result of the later letter by Haakon Haakonsson quoting an earlier letter; to Haug's understanding it is unlikely that Magnus Erlingsson referred to himself as '…such a chieftain as king Magnus was, my kinsman…'.[xvi] Instead, she believes 'Magnus […], my kinsman' is Magnus Erlingsson referring to his maternal great-grandfather Magnus Bærrføtt, thus dating the initial gift to St Swithun before 1103.

The use of the lawcode evidence is one of the points of divergence that Haug addresses in her 2010 article directed at Helle. In this 2010 article she argues that the dating of the manuscript to the third quarter of the twelfth century as presented by Gjerløw in her 1963, does not exclude the possibility that the cult might have been known earlier.[xvii] In doing so, Haug points to an earlier statement in the same article: 'we can rarely say that a phenomenon did not exist just because of the silence of the sources'.[xviii] In addition to re-opening the possibility of the cult pre-dating the third quarter of the twelfth century, Haug addresses Helle's argument that the Stavanger Privilegium does not refer to Magnus Bærrføtt (1093-1103) by highlighting the use of written documents in eleventh-century Norway, arguing that it is not implausible that Magnus Bærrføtt drew up such a document since other contemporary individuals actively used writing to further their economic, political and religious interests.[xix]

Helle

Knut Helle (1930-2015) published an article in 2008 that he framed as a historiographical analysis of the research being conducted into the early religious and urban history of the Stavanger area, in reply to what he argued was 'radical reassessments' by Eldbjørg Haug.[xx] Part of the 'radical reassessments' Helle argues Haug has produced relates to the understanding of the word *bæen* in the so-called Stavanger Privilegium from the reign of Haakon Haakonson of Norway (king 1217-1263), where Haakon confirms a now lost grant by king Magnus Erlingson (king 1161-84) to God and St Swithun as represented by the cathedral in Stavanger. Haug's radical act is according to Helle to translate *bæen* to mean farm or hamlet rather than the commonly accepted translation of town or city,[xxi] implying that the grant pre-dated the development of the urban settlement making a relatively early Swithun connection more plausible in Stavanger. Furthermore, Helle disagrees with Haug's interpretation of the Privilegium's double reference to king Magnus, arguing it was Haakon Haakonsson referring Magnus Erlingsson.[xxii] The consequences of Helle's argument suggestion are of interest for this

paper, in that this suggestion would date the first contemporary attestation of the Swithun dedication in Stavanger to the third quarter of the twelfth century, rather than the end of the eleventh and beginning of the twelfth century. Helle's interpretation dovetails nicely with the long research tradition where the dedication is linked to the establishment of the episcopal seat in Stavanger to between 1123 and 1135, based on references to Bishop Reinald in *Heimskringla*, and on a description of Sigurd the Crusader's (king 1103-1130) last seven years as king in Orderic Vitalis.[xxiii]

The dating offered by Helle in his article, based on the *Heimskringla* and Orderic, contrasts the materiality and dating of the church in Stavanger, which both Haug and Helle agree predates the episcopal see. Helle argues that, although the building was begun before the establishment of the bishopric and the arrival of Reinald, the cathedral's dedication to St Swithun and its relic, attested in 1205 and 1507,[xxiv] is unlikely to have arrived before Reinald's elevation to bishop in Stavanger. In his 2009 article, Helle draws on Lapidge's 2003 critique of Hohler and concludes that Haug's conclusions about an eleventh-century date on the arrival of the Swithun relic and the interpretation of Dacia as Norway are unlikely.[xxv] He instead endorses the 1150s as a more likely date for the arrival of the relic in Stavanger, as this corresponds to one of the times Swithun's Winchester shrine was opened, and argues that the veneration develops in Norway around this point.[xxvi] Helle also leans on Gjerløw's dating of the Gulathing Law Code to the third quarter of the twelfth century in order to corroborate his own [xxvii] Helle's argument is here based on a reading of this aspect of the law code is contemporary to the manuscript examined, and does not reflect a longer continuously evolving religious tradition. In doing so Helle relies on a more conservative, but still plausible, understanding of the text which infers less about the past than what Haug does.

Extrapolating from this debate between Haug and Helle, it is evident that the preservation or lack thereof of documents from Norway in the eleventh and early twelfth century significantly affects what can be concluded about the dating of the cult of St Swithun in Norway. It is furthermore evident that some evidence, such as the liturgical fragments and the presence of Anglo-Saxon clergy in Norway in the eleventh century, point to a set of religious links that might have introduced Swithun earlier than the accepted dating of the cult at the establishment of the episcopal seat in Stavanger. Other evidence such as the first datable references to Swithun in Stavanger in the

Privilegium, the attestation of the relic in Stavanger, and the manuscript date of the Gulathing Law manuscript points to a different verifiable date for the veneration of St Swithun. Yet, these verifiable dates raise the questions about the circumstantial evidence for a possible earlier introduction.

THE CONTEXT OF A PLAUSIBLE EARLIER INTRODUCTION

As Haug correctly points out, the earlier contact between Western Norway and England and through Winchester's religious and political milieu significantly influenced the early centuries of Christianity in Norway. The role of Anglo-Saxon bishops in the conversion and Christianisation of Norway has been widely discussed, by among other Lesley Abrams. In her 1995 article on the topic, Abrams concludes that the English involvement in the conversion of Scandinavia is unarguable, but also that the details on especially the early process are unclear.[xxviii] One of the many points that Abrams considers unclear is the identity of the individual involved, which as I have mentioned above then makes it difficult to pinpoint their relationships, networks, and cultural contexts. Abrams also points out that among the exports English missionaries brought to Scandinavia were the cult of saints, and among the saints they might have introduced are St Birinus and St Swithun.[xxix] In this Abrams sees the introduction of these two West Saxon saints to Norway as part of the wider cultural transmission of the conversion period, opening up the possibility that familiarity with Swithun in Western Norway might pre-date bishop Reinald's arrival in Stavanger from Winchester.

Like other scholars,[xxx] Abrams and, more recently, Stefan Brink point to a number of possibly contacts between England and Norway: bishops, such as an unnamed bishop who came to Norway alongside Haakon I 'Athalsteinfostre' Haraldsson; a number of monks and Bishop John who accompanied Olaf I Tryggvason; and Bishop Grimkell, who attended Olaf II "St Olaf" Haraldsson's court.[xxxi] Abrams also highlights the possibility of continued and strengthened ecclesiastical interaction between these two regions during King Cnut's reign in Norway (1028-35).[xxxii] Cnut's role in the Christianisation of Norway has so far been underappreciated, plausibly due to the unfavourable treatment Cnut and his regime in Norway gets in the *Heimskringla* and Norwegian historiography. Although *Heimskringla* and other sagas are silent on the Christianisation efforts under Ælfgifu and Svein beyond the continued activities of Olaf II's court Bishop Grimkel[xxxiii] and translation of Olaf II into a saint, the saga narratives does not suggest any deliberate acts

to slow these efforts either. In fact, Ælfgifu's attendance at the elevation of Olaf to sainthood actually points in the opposite direction: that the Danish regime supported the church, although Ælfgifu's involvement in the event is mostly remembered for her attempt to oppose the elevation. Looking beyond the sagas, the previously-mentioned relic donation to Dacia, as well as a widely cited reference to 'an English source' [xxxiv] (most likely Matthew Paris) claiming Cnut founding a monastery on Nidarholm in 1028, also points to Cnut taking an active role in the integration of Norway and Denmark into a wider Christian world. The claims of 'the English source' about Cnut's foundation at Nidarholm have so far not been corroborated by archaeology, and are thus not widely acknowledged as the origins of Nidarholm or Munkholmen monastery near Trondheim. Without spending too much time considering the quality of this claim and its ramifications for the Christianisation of Norway, it can be agreed that Christianisation efforts did not stop in the seven years between 1028 and 1035.

The continuity of Christianisation efforts throughout the eleventh century, including the reign of Cnut in Norway, must be part of the explanation for the amount of English liturgical manuscript fragments from this period found in Norway. Abrams noted that a closer examination of these fragments might demonstrate their point of origin,[xxxv] as well as which monastic communities in England provided missionaries to Norway.[xxxvi] Lapidge drew on some of the same fragments when arguing for a Norwegian familiarity with a St Swithun liturgy in the eleventh century.[xxxvii] All this points to a cultural milieu where it is plausible that the veneration of Swithun might have been introduced prior to the Reinald's arrival in Stavanger.

The cause of Swithun's introduction to and veneration in Stavanger and Norway is unclear. This is arguably due to the difficulty of precisely dating the arrival of the saint, and the state of survival of documentary evidence from the first centuries of Christianity in Norway. However, the scholarly hypotheses about the date of introduction of the cult and the relic presented by Haug and Helle can help us to see some possibilities, as the historical context of the introduction is likely to have influenced individuals involved in the introduction. If the introduction came with the first wave of organised Christianisation efforts in Norway at the beginning of the eleventh century as suggested by Haug,[xxxviii] the motivation is likely to have been different than if it came at the beginning of the twelfth century as Helle proposes.[xxxix]

If the introduction happened in the eleventh century, it is possible that the cult and the relic was a statement of cultural affinity and/or socio-political ties across between the region and England. A similar hypothesis has been presented by Bruce Dickins and, more recently, by Robert Higham as a contributing cause of the spread of the cult of St Olaf in England in the eleventh century;[xl] thus it is not impossible that this cultural exchange was two-ways. Yet, as there is no conclusive evidence for the dating of the cult and the relic in Norway, it could be just as likely that the cult and the relic arrived at different dates – and the first bishop of Stavanger Reinald, who traditionally has been identified with a monk from Hyde Abbey in Winchester by the same name,[xli] brought the relic to Stavanger as part of his and his new episcopal church's elevation. Yet why Reinald would bring this exact relic with him, or why this saint would be the one promoted in Stavanger in unclear, and it is likely that it will remain unclear forever.

Following the introduction of the veneration of Swithun to Norway, the cult seems to have been known in the metropolitan province of Nidaros, as attested by Swithun's inclusion in the Nidaros Breviary from 1519.[xlii] Lapidge argues that the veneration of Swithun was in the retreat by the time of the printing of the Breviary as the 'feast of St Swithun's deposition ha[d] been omitted (having been replaced by the new feast of the Visitation of St Mary)'.[xliii] Beyond this, there is very little evidence for the veneration of Swithun in the Norwegian corpus of medieval materials. Yet, by broadening the scope of sources to also include other sources we might see a broader picture of the veneration.

MOVING BEYOND THE STRICTLY TEXTUAL: THE *PRIMSTAV* AND THEIR EVIDENCE

In 2011 Audun Dybdahl published his study of the Norwegian perpetual calendars known as *primstav* from around Norway.[xliv] A *primstav* is a traditional wooden calendar marked on both sides with marks for each day, and symbols for each important date in the agricultural or religious calendar. Most of these calendars are ruler or sword-shaped and run from 14 April–13 October on one side, and 14 October–13 April on the other.[xlv] Such calendars seem to have been common in farming communities to help them keep track of time and agricultural tasks.[xlvi] Although only 40 per cent of the 319 calendars which Dybdahl surveyed could be dated, the vast majority of these are dated to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with the oldest example dated to 1457.[xlvii] The geographic distribution of the sample Dybdahl examined covers the whole of late

medieval and early modern Norway. When comparing the religious and agricultural dates marked on the whole corpus of 319 *Primstav*, Dybdahl found a correlation between the religious feasts included and their religious classification in the early Norwegian law codes. According to Dybdahl, the religious feasts, which according to the Frostating Law were considered to be of the highest liturgical importance, could be found on all the *Primstav*. The feast of St Swithun (*Syftesok*) on 2 July is among these dates.[xlviii] Moreover, Dybdahl demonstrates how Swithun is not included among the saints included in the prescribed list of feasts found in the laws of Eidsivating and Borgarting,[xlix] suggesting a regional difference in the saints venerated in Norway according to the lawcodes. Regardless of these regional differences, Dybdahl found Swithun's feast day marked on *Primstav* throughout Norway. Even though the feast of St Swithun came under pressure following the introduction of the Visitation of Mary in the second half of the fifteenth century, Dybdahl found that the symbol for Swithun's feast, a crosier, was three times as popular as the symbol for Mary's feast.[l]

The only conclusion one might draw from Dybdahl's discoveries is that the feast of St Swithun was familiar and, to some extent, popular even outside the medieval dioceses of Stavanger. The question, however, is if this popularity was due to the extent of the saint's veneration or if it was due to the use of the day as an indicator for the summer weather until St Olaf's day (29 July).[li] In the post-reformation period, it is probably more likely that the weather was the prime cause of *Syftesok*'s popularity than it being remembered for its religious importance. There is no direct indication in the contemporary post-medieval sources that this meteorological importance was due to Swithun's weather miracle, yet this does not exclude the possibility of this importance having its roots in a folklore tradition based on this miracle. The cultural and religious changes in Norway following the Lutheran Reformation ended the cult of saints; thus the religious importance of *Syftesok* is likely to have declined over the following centuries. The impact of the reformation might also explain the disconnection between *Syftesok* as a weather marker and *Syftesok* as a saint's day. In three Norwegian-Danish almanacs from 1644–1773 the date of the feast of St Swithun on 2 July is marked as the date of the Visitation of Mary, with a note that the 'old people' call the day *Syftesok* implying that Swithun had fallen out of fashion for the authors.[lii] None of these almanacs attribute any particular meteorological importance to the date, but that does not mean that there were no traditional forecasting practices tied to the day, just that these did not manifest

in these three texts. However, as noted in the opening of this paper, St Swithun was in time rediscovered. Therefore, the following section serves to briefly outline elements of the re-discovery of the Winchester saint in Norway.

POST-MEDIEVAL 'EVIDENCE' OR LINGERING MEMORY?

As was noted at the start of this chapter, Norwegian culture rediscovered its medieval past in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. This rediscovery of the medieval past, and in some cases its use in religious revivals, was part of a wider trend attested across the Western World. Examples of such medievalisms can be found in Winchester, with its ties to Alfred the Great manifested in the 1901 anniversary and statue, and in New York with its Cloisters.[liii] Among the ways this materialised was the promotion of the Viking Age kingdom of Norway as the origin of the Norwegian state, as well as the promotion of associated historical heroes and symbols who represented this past. I have elsewhere discussed how this medievalism can be seen through a national lens, as the broader patterns of inspiration for Norwegian medievalism has been connected to the national past.[liv] However, this national emphasis does not apply to all medievalism and 're-discovery' of the medieval in Norway in the post-medieval period. For as I will demonstrate, the post-medieval life of St Swithun in Stavanger is not a matter of national but local concern based on the cathedral and city's medieval relationship with the saint.

As an indicative measure of printed communication in Norway, a search in the Norwegian National Library's catalogue indicates that the word 'Swithun' first appears in print in Norway in 1828, before re-appearing in the 1850s onwards. The Norwegian version of the saint's name, 'Svithun', demonstrates a similar pattern, with a few references to in the 1830s before becoming more common in the 1850s and 60s. These search results are not wholly comprehensive, as they must be contextualised with a general but significant increase in publications in Norway in the second half of the nineteenth century as well as the selection of materials in the Library. Yet what is noteworthy is that the majority of the references to Swithun or Svithun in the 1850s refer to a Stavanger-registered cargo ship named St Svithun.[lv] By 1879 there were two ships named Svithun, both from areas in the medieval bishopric of Stavanger.[lvi] This naming pattern might point to increased familiarity with Swithun in this region. Further, in 1881, the Stavanger-based shipping company Holdt & Isachsen commissioned a new cargo ship from Flensburg, and publicly announced they intended to name her

Svithun[lvii] *Bergens Tidende* and *Morgenbladet* reporting on Holdt and Isachsen's familiarity with Swithun and his link to Stavanger, the modern relationship between the saint and the city starts to take shape. reporting on Holdt and Isachsen's familiarity with Swithun and his link to Stavanger, the modern relationship between the saint and the city starts to take shape.

It is worth noting that the medieval bishopric centred on Stavanger was moved to the more strategic city of Kristiansand in 1682, so by the time Holdt & Isachsen named their ship Swithun, the medieval cathedral in Stavanger was no longer functioning as a cathedral, but rather as one of the city's many churches. Yet, by the time Holdt & Isachsen commissioned the Svithun, the Norwegian press had already run two anonymous articles reminding their readers about the church's dedication to Swithun.[lviii] These two articles, from 1869 and 1877, both re-tell the history of the church and seems to follow the interpretations set out by P.A. Munch and Rudolf Keyser on the role of bishop Reinald in the cathedral's dedication to Swithun.[lix] As such, these articles might be understood as part of the broader historical culture at the time. Although these articles and ships suggest an awareness of Swithun in Stavanger at the end of the nineteenth century, the revival of Stavanger as the city and cathedral of Swithun did not really happen until the twentieth century.

The crucial moments in the twentieth century that linked Stavanger and Swithun in the modern age, and promoted greater awareness of the saint, took place in 1918, 1925 and 1927. In 1918, St Swithun School in Stavanger opened;[lx] this secondary school was the first Lutheran institution in the city that referenced the saint. Previously, in 1894, the Catholic community in the city had established St Swithun's Catholic Church in Stavanger.[lxi] There are no indicators in local newspapers of anti-Catholic sentiments around this use of Swithun in Stavanger at the time. In time for Stavanger City's 800th anniversary in 1925, the Lutheran bishopric of Stavanger was re-established. In the royal declaration that re-established the bishopric, the king and his government declared that 'Stavanger Cathedral, St Swithun's Church, shall be the bishopric's new Cathedral'.[lxii] With this, the Norwegian Lutheran Church reclaimed its historic link to and possession of Swithun in Stavanger. However, Stavanger's embracing of Swithun did not stop there, for, in 1927, the city council named two of the city's streets after the saint, creating *St Svithuns gate* [street] and *St Svithuns plass* [place].[lxiii] Since the 1920s Stavanger has seen several other references to Swithun in form of a hotel, two statues

and more, all adding up to a broader landscape of traces acknowledging Swithun and his role as the patron saint of Stavanger, much like Southwark in London remembers its historic parish of St Olaf and its relationship with the saint.[lxiv] Stavanger's relationship with Swithun differs from that of Southwark's with Olaf. In Southwark, the community sought to preserve a continuous memory of the parish and saint, while Stavanger had to rediscover and revitalise its relationship with Swithun in the nineteenth and twentieth century. The process in Stavanger manifests itself chiefly in two ways: firstly the revived and continuous ties between the cathedral in Stavanger and Winchester Cathedral (discussed below), and secondly in how Ernst Baaland in 2003 framed Swithun into his contemporary understanding of the religious life of Rogaland, the county in which Stavanger lies. Baaland claimed that Swithun's compassion and Christian charity was a great inspiration for local believers,[lxv] making Swithun not just a civic identity marker in the post-medieval world, but also a religious one. These observations only scratch the surface of St Swithun's role in modern Norway and have not considered if or how he is remembered or venerated outside Stavanger. What does appear to be clear on the basis of the modern evidence is that aspects of the contemporary religious movements in the area around Stavanger as represented by Baaland have found Swithun worthy of reverence due to his compassion and charity.[lxvi] In stressing these qualities of Swithun, Baaland made the saint more 'Lutheran,' thus Swithun was suitable to be a Lutheran role model. A similar translation of happened to St Olaf in the lead up to the 900-year-anniversary of his martyrdom in 1930.

Being a Christian role model does not seem to be the only reason Swithun remains relevant for Stavanger, A 2019 opinion piece in *Stavanger Aftenblad* by Tore Edland presents Swithun as both a civic and religious identity marker for the city, similar to Baaland in 2003.[lxvii] Edland uses this to argue for the construction of a statue or depiction of Swithun within Stavanger Cathedral as part of the Cathedral's upcoming anniversary as a manifestation of Swithun's importance for the town's historic development.

Looking beyond just the direct references to Swithun in Stavanger, one can find some references to and depictions of the city of Winchester and its cathedral in contemporary newspapers and periodicals. When Norwegian periodicals and newspapers describe Winchester most articles are unillustrated, but those that are illustrated depicts Winchester Cathedral. The subject of the articles are rarely current

events, but rather travel accounts by individuals or groups. There are among these a couple of trends. In the Stavanger region Winchester is first and foremost connected to Swithun, and through that the articles emphasises the historic ties between Stavanger and Winchester.[lxviii] However, beyond Stavanger, Winchester is presented as the ancient capital of England,[lxix] a source of inspiration for the medieval cathedrals in Norway,[lxx] a lovely city with clean air and fair weather,[lxxi] the home of the hospital of St Cross,[lxxii] and above all the home of Winchester Cathedral, a site which all of the articles mention as worth visiting. What might appear surprising to someone who is familiar with Winchester and its heritage is that neither Jane Austen nor Alfred the Great are mentioned despite these historic figures being cornerstones of current tourism marketing of the city. I suspect this absence is not a reliable representation of all references to Winchester in Norwegian media after 1850. But it is notable that Winchester's religious history as represented by Swithun and the Cathedral dominates the image of the city in the modern Norwegian mind.

These modern depictions and references to Winchester, its cathedral, and its religious history are not reflected in the surviving medieval sources from Norway. What does exist within the medieval corpus is a short description of the miracles of St Swithun in the early sixteenth-century printed *Breviarium Nidrosiense;* among this we find a direct reference to Winchester. This reference does not give us a description of the city or its structures, including the Cathedral. Nevertheless, it does highlight Swithun's veneration as the text lists a number of his miracles, thus implicitly referencing the cathedral and shrine.[lxxiii]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Although the origins of St Swithun's veneration in Norway is likely to remain unclear as scholars continue to discuss the surviving sources and circumstantial evidence from Stavanger and Norway in the Middle Ages, it remains apparent that his veneration in Norway was, by the end of the medieval period, focused on Stavanger and its relic. When this relic arrived in Stavanger is uncertain, but its longer historical impact goes beyond the religious. As I have shown, the cult of St Swithun in medieval Stavanger became a civic and religious identity marker for the local community in the post-medieval and modern period. More work needs to be undertaken to fully grasp the cultural significance of Swithun in modern Stavanger or Norway as a whole. However, I suspect

that such work will return to the re-occurring theme of seeing Swithun in Norway as part of a broader cultural relationship and kinship between Norway and England in the past and present for it is within this narrative that Swithun's cult and the arrival of bishop Reinald, as well as the other plausible points of transmission, are framed. As such, the traces remaining of the veneration of St Swithun, and the modern re-claiming of the saint by the community, can represent the wider impact, real or imagined, of England, Wessex, and Winchester on Norway and Norwegian culture through the centuries. The veneration of St Swithun in the north might thus help remind us that the impact of Winchester might be far greater than we first assume, and we should not forget to consider its echoes through the centuries.

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[i] Wawn 2000; Geary 2002.
[ii] Lapidge 2003.
[iii] Alvestad 2020; Higham 2020.
[iv] Abrams 1995.
[v] Lapidge 2003, 3.
[vi] *Ibid.* 4; Attwater 1970, 316, Yorke 2004 (revised 2007). Lapidge dates Swithun’s tenure to 852-862/3 due to his interpretations of the sources. While, Barbara Yorke in her 2004 (revised 2007) ODNB biography of Swithun dates Swithun’s tenure as bishop of Winchester to 852/3-63. This discrepancy between Lapidge and Yorke’s interpretation are due to the surviving sources. Lapidge has used the earlies possible date for Swithun as his ordination to bishop of Winchester, while Yorke chooses to acknowledge in her text that there are some uncertainty surrounding the date of Swithun’s ordination. At the same time, Yorke’s date of Swithun’s death in 863 is based on charter evidence, whereas Lapidge’s date range points to the divergence of dates associated with the end of Swithun’s tenure. I have therefore chosen to use the dates 852/3-63 as they seem most consistent with the surviving records.
[vii] Lapidge 2003, 8.
[viii] *Ibid.* 56.
[ix] *Ibid.* 57.
[x] Lapidge 2003, 700-703.
[xi] Haug 2009, 464.
[xii] *Ibid.*
[xiii] Lawson 2011, 97; Lavelle 2017, 60.
[xiv] Russell 2005 and Haug 2008, cited in Haug 2009, 465.
[xv] Haug 2009, 464.
[xvi] Translated based on excerpt from Haug 2009, 474.
[xvii] Haug 2010, 270-71,
[xviii] *Ibid.* 266.
[xix] Haug 2010, 271.
[xx] Helle 2008, 577.
[xxi] *Ibid.* 580.
[xxii] *Ibid.* 587,
[xxiii] *Ibid.* 591.
[xxiv] *Ibid.* 591.
[xxv] Helle 2009, 691.
[xxvi] *Ibid.* 690-2.
[xxvii] Gjerløw 1963, 94-106, discussed in Helle, 2009, 691.

[xxviii] Abrams 1995, 244.
[xxix] *Ibid.* 248.
[xxx] Bagge and Nordeide 2007, 136-39; Winroth 2012, 119; Nordeide 2012, 7.
[xxxi] Abrams 1995, 219, 221, 224; Brink 2008, 623, 626-7.
[xxxii] Abrams 1995, 224.
[xxxiii] *Ibid.* 223; Higham 2020, 491-95.
[xxxiv] Bratberg 1996, 244, 368.
[xxxv] Abrams 1995, 246.
[xxxvi] *Ibid.*
[xxxvii] Lapidge 2003, 56, 128-34.
[xxxviii] Haug 2009, 464.
[xxxix] Helle 2009, 692.
[xl] Dickins 1937–45, 52–80; Higham, 2020, 467-513.
[xli] Lapidge 2003, 56-7.
[xlii] *Ibid.* 57.
[xliii] *Ibid.*
[xliv] Dybdahl 2011.
[xlv] Dybdahl 2011, 279.
[xlvi] *Ibid.* 284.
[xlvii] *Ibid.* 261.
[xlviii] Sandnes 1994, 27.
[xlix] Dybdahl 2011, 48.
[l] *Ibid.* 171.
[li] *Ibid.* 172.
[lii] Nielszøn 1944, 350; Hammer 1773, 261; Brunsmand 1688, 120.
[liii] Parker 2007, 1-32; Radnoti 2015, 307-15.
[liv] Alvestad 2016; Alvestad 2019.
[lv] Christiania-Posten 1851, 3.
[lvi] Dagbladet 1879, 3.
[lvii] Bergens Tidende 1881, 2; Morgenbladet 1881, 2.
[lviii] Fædrelandsvennen 1877, 1; Morgenbladet 1869, 2.
[lix] Munch 1855, 610; Keyser 1866, 559.
[lx] Olden 1949, 3-4.
[lxi] Baasland 2003, 255.
[lxii] *Ibid.* 288.
[lxiii] Berntsen 1939, 96.
[lxiv] Alvestad 2020, 610-12.
[lxv] Baasland 2003, 107.
[lxvi] Baasland 2003, 107.
[lxvii] Edland 2019.
[lxviii]Aadnøy 1979, 28-30..
[lxix] Thun 1939, 1.
[lxx] Grieg 1968, 7-8.
[lxxi] Svanøe 1969, 4.
[lxxii] Offenberg 1910, 1-2.
[lxxiii] These can be found, transcribed and translated in Lapidge 2003, 128-34.