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Earliest Guilds of Northmen
in England, Norway and Denmark



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The ^vearliest Guilds of Northmen in England, Norway and Denmark.

By Alexander Bugge.

The guilds have played such an important part in English as well as in Danish and Norwegian society that an attempt to explain the resemblance between Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian guilds may be justified. An scholar like Pappenheim contends that guilds have developed independently in England and in the Scandinavian countries. According to others, England is the birthplace from where this institution has been introduced into Norway, Denmark and Sweden. This is the opinion of Karl Hegel¹.

I have dealt with the same subject myself in «Studier over de norske Byers Selvstyre og Handel»². In this paper I contend that «the guilds first have come into existence in England among the Northmen under Anglo-Saxon influence, or among the Anglo-Saxons under Scandinavian influence». I have, however, in the course of my subsequent studies since that time altered my opinion and shall try here to state my views more clearly.

The guild-institution is generally supposed to have been introduced into Norway by king Olav Kyrre (1066—1099)³. The first Danish guild that we hear of was the so called «Hezlag»⁴ in Sleswic whose «Senior» was the duke Knut Lavard († 1134).

¹ Städte und Gilden der germanischen Völker im Mittelalter I p. 254.

² A. Bugge, Studier over de norske Byers Selvstyre og Handel for Huseaernes Tid, udgivet af den norske historiske Forening, Kristiania 1899.

³ Heimskringla, Saga Ólafs kyrra, ch. 2.

⁴ Hezlag, from *heit*, n. «solemn promise», i. e. societas coniurata. Nyrop, Danmarks Gilde- og Lavsskraer II p. XI (cf. I p. 44) has drawn attention to the fact that a guild of Malmö was also called «Hezlag».

The earliest English guilds whose statutes we know of date from the time of king Knut. The king was himself entered as member of the fraternity of Christchurch of Canterbury, and Knut seems more than any other English king to have encouraged the establishment of new guilds. The guild of Abbotsbury, perhaps the earliest whose statutes are preserved, was founded, or at any rate endowed, by one of Knut's men named Orey. This name, *Orey* or *Urki*, is not Anglo-Saxon, but Scandinavian, and was especially used in Denmark, where *Urchistorp* in old records occurs as a place name. Orey was no doubt a Dane who had come to England in the company of king Knut. The Abbotsbury guild was no Scandinavian, but a purely Anglo-Saxon religious fraternity, and has very little in common with the early Danish and Norwegian guilds¹. We may however from the place names infer that Norwegian and Danish settlers in England have founded guilds among themselves, guilds probably of another character, and like the Norwegian guilds spread all over the country².

In Norfolk a narrow «gill» or glen, about half a mile from the village of Warter, is called Millhouse Dale. The same valley was in the 13th century, according to Kirkby's Inquest, called *Gylldhusdal* (*Gildusdale*), and in the following century *Gildesdale*, *Gildhousdale*. According to Worsaae *-dale* (O. N. *dabr. Ag. S. dalr*) is only used in place-names of Scandinavian origin in England⁴; the whole compound also seems to prove that Gyldhusdale is a Norse name (= *gildihúsdalr*)⁵, especially as we have the same place-name (*Gildhus*) in Co. Buskerud, Norway. — A hundred in Nor-

¹ Cf. Hegel, Städte u. Gilden I pp. 29—30.

² There are also traces of a Danish merchant guild in London whose existence probably dates from the time of king Knut. The guildhall of the Cologne merchants is in a record from the beginning of the 13th century called *la saille des Dancis* «the Hall of the Danes» (Liber Albus I p. 229); we may from this infer that the guildhall had formerly belonged to the Danes, no doubt Danish merchants.

³ Surtees Society (1866), Kirkby's Inquest, 91. n. 1. 316.

⁴ Worsaae, Minder om de Danske og Nordmændene i England, Skotland og Irland, p. 97.

⁵ Similar place names found in Norway are Gilleskaal (*Gildisskåli*) in Nordland; *Gildisevøllr*, Ringebu; Gillebu (*Gildabú*), Øier; (Norske Gaardnavne IV. Kristians Amt, H. 1 p. 158). *Gildisvangr*, Nordre Trondhjems Amt (Norske Gaardnavne XV p. 358), *Gildi[s]stadir*, Jemtland (Dipl. Norv. III n. 910), *Gildalundr*, Stange (D. N. VII n. 316).

folk, where Scandinavian place names are so frequent, is called «*Gilhov hundred*». The latter part of this name *-hov* is the Norse *haugr* «a knoll, hillock, mound». I therefore conclude that *Gilhov* is the Old Norse *gildi(s)haugr* (i. e. a hillock where the members of a guild held their meetings; cf. the Norwegian place names *Gildisvøllr*, *Gildisvangr*). In the county of Norfolk there is still another hundred of whose name *gildi* (Ag. S. *gield*) forms the first part, namely *Gildecros* (Domesday Book, vol. II p. 120 a, and *passim*). If Falk and Torp (Etymologisk Ordbog over det danske og norske Sprog) are right in maintaining that engl. *cross* is of Norse origin, *Gildecros* is likewise a Norse place-name¹. We may from these place-names conclude: 1. that the place where the members of the guild met was not in ancient times always a house, and 2. that this place was the centre of the hundred. The same was the case in Norway, cf. Dipl. Norv. V nr. 12 (p. 458): *iæk var a Gildis vollenum retthum staefnastad j Ringebu* (cf. D. N. II 803).

If the explanation of the above place-names is right, we may infer, that there existed guilds among the Northmen in England long before the times of Olav Kyrre and Knut Lavard. Names of Hundreds can not have been formed in the 11th Century, when Norfolk and Yorkshire got no new settlers. The above mentioned place names must date from the end of the 9th or the beginning of the 10th century, when the Norse place-names in England were formed. But the 10th century seems to have been the time when the Anglo-Saxon guilds got that definite organisation, which we know from the times of Knut and Edward Confessor. It is therefore easy to understand that the Northmen who have put their stamp upon so many English institutions also have contributed to the development of the guilds.

First of all: The word «Guild» itself is probably a Scandinavian loan-word (= Old Norse *gildi*), and is not derived from Anglo-Saxon «*gield*», which in modern English would be *yield*. The Thaness' Guild of Cambridge from the first half of the eleventh century² bears especially the impression of being influenced by

¹ It seems to me that *Gilde* in *Gildecros* is more likely to be O. N. *gildi* than Ag. S. *gield*. According to Falk and Torp, the modern English *guild* is not derived from Anglo-Saxon *gield*, but a loan-word from Old Norse *gildi*, n.

² This date is given by Gross, The Gild Merchant I pp. 181—182.

Scandinavian institutions. Cambridge had once belonged to the Danelag and was at the time of the Domesday Book still governed by *Lagemanni* (i. e. O. N. *lögrettismenn*); it is therefore no wonder that we in the statutes of the Cambridge guild find Norse words and institutions¹. Every new member who entered the guild «should give oath on the holy relics to the others, before God and before the world, of true fidelity; and all the society should ever support him who had most right». The guild was, as Hegel says, (I p. 34) «eine geschworne Gilde». The guild-brothers had the same duty as the family to help and avenge the members of the guild. We find the same enactments in Danish as well as in Norwegian guilds², while they are unknown to other Anglo-Saxon guild statutes. The blood-compensation played, as is well known, a much greater part in ancient Danish and Norwegian than in Anglo-Saxon society. It is therefore most likely that we in the mention of this institution in the Thanes' guild of Cambridge have a sign of Scandinavian influence, especially as we see that the guild has adopted another certainly Scandinavian (probably Norwegian) institution, the funeral festival, that played an important part in the most ancient Norwegian guilds.

The statutes of the Thanes' guild say: «*Gif hwile gegilda forþfare, se gyldscipe hyrfe be healfre feorme þone forðferedan.*» Thorpe does not understand this passage. Kemble (*Saxons in England* I p. 513) renders it thus: «If any guild-brother dies, let the guildship inherit of the dead half a farm.» But this gives no meaning. *Feorm* signifies here as usually «food, provisions», but not «farm». *hyrfe* (instead of *yrfe*) does not signify «to inherit», but «to celebrate a funeral festival», the usual meaning of O. N. *erfa* (cf. Fritzner, *Ordbog over det gamle norske Sprog* I p. 348). If this is right, the passage must be rendered: «If any guildbrother dies, let the guildship by half the provisions celebrate the funeral feast after [i. e. to the honour of] the dead», i. e. the guild and the heir have together to defray the expences of the funeral festival³. In the oldest Norwegian guild statutes, that of Nidaros, the

¹ *Diplomatarium Anglicum ævi Saxonici*, ed. Thorpe pp. 610 ff.

² A. Bugge, *Studier over de norske Byers Selvstyre og Handel* (Norsk hist. Forening, 1899), p. 88 ff.

³ Cf. A. Bugge, *De norske Byers Selvstyre og Handel*, pp. 89 f.

guildship and the heir likewise defray half the expenses each¹. — I may further mention that the «wer-geld» is counted in «half-mark» [*healf-meare*] and «oras» (*ora*). Both «mark» and «ora» are of Scandinavian origin (= O. N. *mork* and *eyrir*) and only used within the «Danelag».

The statutes of the half religious Woodbury guild² (dating from the second half of the eleventh century) likewise contain several Norse words, such as *bonda* (= O. N. *bóndi*), as the married male members of the guild are called, *feniste* (= O. N. *fjónusta*) and *sawul-sceot* «soul-shot» (O. N. *sálskot*)³.

We find, however, traces of Norse influence, not only in Anglo-Saxon, but even in the Norman times. In Liber Winton, that interesting survey of Winchester from the beginning of the 12th century, a guildhall of Winchester is called «hantachensele» (*hantachensele, ubi probi homines Wintonie potabant gildam suam*). Gross remarks that this name «looks like a corruption of «hanse-sele» (German «hansa-saal»)⁴. This explanation is, however, impossible; a word «hansa-saal» never occurs, and could, if existing, never be corrupted into «hantachensele». The word «hantachensele» is of Scandinavian origin, and identic with O. N. *handtökusálr*. O. N. *handtaka* f. (= *handtak*, *handatak*, *handsal*. n.) signifies «shake of the hand». To shake hands formed in Norway an important part of the ceremonies when new members entered a guild. In the statutes of a guild of western Norway (Gulating) it is said (§ 14): *Þeir menn aller er ganga i gildet skolu ganga til handsals ok gildbræðralags*. The «*handtachsalse*» of Winchester has got its name, because new members when entering the guild, according to Danish or Norwegian fashion, shook hands. Winchester was, as is well known, the residence of King Knut.

Are we from this allowed to conclude that Knut or one of his men has instituted the guild of Winchester? The word hantachensele, being of Norse origin, at any rate proves that the guild dates from pre-Norman times.

¹ En gammel Gildeskraa fra Trondhjem, ed. Gustav Storm (Sproglig-historiske Studier, tilegnede C. R. Unger) p. 219 §§ 12—13.

² Thorpe pp. 608 ff.; cf. Hegel, Städte u. Gilden I; Gross, The Gild Merchant I p. 182.

³ A. Bugge, De norske Byers Handel og Selvstyre, p. 88.

⁴ Gross, The Gild-Merchant I p. 196.

It is even possible that Scandinavian institutions have extended their influence further than to England. Old records from the Netherlands and north-eastern France contain several words of Norse origin, f. i. *wara* «fur» (= Old Norse *vara*)¹, and *hunspeen* (= A. N. *húnspeinir* «pieces of wood, that were fastened to the mast»)². The whalefishers of Normandy were called by the Norse name *Walmanni* and had at an early time already united into *societates* or guilds³.

Du Cange has in his «Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis» a curious word, which only seems to have been in use in the north-eastern provinces of France, namely *tanqhanum*. In French the word is found in the forms: *caquehan*, *taquehan*, *tanquehan* etc.⁴. The most usual form seems to be *takehan*. According to Du Cange, the word signifies «coitio, conventus illicitus, turba». Godefroy translates it: «assemblée, et en particulier assemblée illicite, attroupement, coalition d'ouvriers, cabale, conspiration, émente, soulèvement populaire, tel qu'il existait souvent, aux XIII^e et XIV^e siècles, dans les villes industrielles du Nord, de la part des ouvriers contre leurs maîtres et l'autorité communale».

The following quotations will better show the meaning of the word: «*On fait le ban que nus ne soit si hardi en toute ceste ville, borgois, ne borgoises, ne serjans, ne baissulle, ki face takehan*» (1244, Ban des échevins de Douai); «*Cum in villa Atrebatensi quidam de plebe dicte ville contra scabinos ville et majores Atrebatenses conspirationem sur Tanqhanum fecissent*» (Arresta Parlamenti, Pentecostes 1285); «*Pour eschiver touz perils, conspirations et Taquehanz qui en porroient ensuir*» (Carta Philippi V 1320). The word is further sometimes used in the sense of agreement, composition⁵, f. i. in the following instance relating to the city of Abbeville, quoted by Du Cange: «*Uns maires et uns eskevins de*

¹ In the statutes of the guild of St. Omer (beginning of 12 century), Gross, The Guild Merchant I p. 290, cf. II p. 422 (sub voce *wara*).

² In the Cameraarsrekening van Deventer, anno 1359, we read that the city of Deventer bought «a piece of wood called «*Mast*» and two pieces of wood called *hunspeen*, fastened to the aforesaid mast».

³ Steenstrup, Normannerne, I p. 188.

⁴ Godefroy, Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue Française I p. 781 (sub voce *caquehan*).

⁵ Du Cange (sub voce *Tanqhanum*): «In bonam partem *Takehan* accipi videtur, videlicet pro pactum, conventio, in Lib. rub. fol. parvo domus publ. Abbavil. fol. 105, 1^o.»

la baniere des tisserands firent un accord que ils meteroient quatre deniers en une boiste et dura chis Takehans par l'espace de sis ans; et fu li alors tes que etc.». *Tanqhanum, takehan* or *takehans*, as the word is here rendered, thus seems to signify: 1. conspiracy, illegal meetings of workmen and townspeople, something similar to what is usually called «Commune»¹ and 2. agreement, composition. I submit that the word is of Norse origin. A. N. *taka hǫndum saman* or *handtaka* «to shake hands» also signifies «to promise something by *handtak* (i. e. «the shaking of hands»». Men who entered a guild or who made solemn covenants or compacts shook hands. Expressions like *handtaka, handsala* etc. therefore often occur in the ancient Norwegian laws. *Taka up hǫndum* signifies «to take one's oath». I suppose that *tanqhanum, takehan*, and the curious form *takehans* are corruptions of *taka hǫndum*². If this is right, we understand why the word signifies «conspiracy» as well as «agreement, pactum». The oath and the shaking of hands were essential parts of all medieval «coniurationes», as well as of guild ceremonies (cf. *hantachensele*); but ordinary agreements or contracts were likewise concluded by the shaking of hands.

Still more remarkable is the resemblance between the early Norwegian and Danish guilds, as a comparison between their statutes will show³. Even names and minor details are the same: The Norwegian guilds have besides *gildi*, also been called *hvirfingsdrykkja* and *hvirfingr*⁴. In Denmark *hvirring* (*horing*) was likewise used in the meaning of «guild»⁵. In Denmark minor officers of the guild, were called *giærthømen, gerdømen* (Dan.); in Norway they were called *giærdarmenn, gerdarmenn*⁶;

¹ «Un soulèvement beaucoup plus considérable eut lieu, vers la même époque (c: 127 a), à Arras: ce *takekan* souleva la commune contre les échevins et la bourgeoisie et occasionna de nombreux désordres.»

² The question may be asked whether *hans* in *takehans* used as a singularis form is the plural *han(ds)*.

³ Cf. A. Bugge, *Studier over de norske Byers Selvstyre og Handel*, pp. 78 f., where the statutes of the guild of Nidaros and the guild of St. Knut, Flensborg, are compared (Danmarks Gilde- og Lavsskraaer, ed. Nyrop, pp. 6—14).

⁴ The word *hvirfingr* signifying «guild» never occurs in the preserved texts, but *hvirfingsklukka* «bell of a guild» and *hvirfingsbróðir* «member of a guild» both occur.

⁵ Danmarks Gilde- og Lavsskraaer I pp. 83, 216.

⁶ A. Bugge, *Studier over de norske Byers Selvstyre og Handel*, pp. 81 f.: Danmarks Gilde- og Lavsskraaer I pp. 27, 62, 165, 166.

their duty was to conduct the entertainment at the festivals of the guild. The statutes of the Nidaros guild also mentions *giærdar konor* (§ 17)¹. In Danish guilds women seem likewise sometimes to have conducted the entertainment. Peder Syv († 1702) mentions the guild of St. Gertrud at Hellested, where he himself was parson, saying a. o.: «Her tales om *Tondesøstre*, som synes at have været de 2, som det aar *gjorde gærd*»².

It might from the afore said seem likely that Northmen have introduced the guilds into England. This is, however, impossible; guilds were known in the Empire of the Franks, at the time of Charlemagne, and in England in the 9th century, and perhaps at a still earlier date³. The Frankish and the Anglo-Saxon guilds bear such a close resemblance to each other⁴ as well as to the Danish and Norwegian guilds that it seems unlikely that this institution has originated separately in different European countries; besides, we only know Christian, but no heathen guilds. The cradle of the guilds has stood in a Christian country. It has also been supposed that words in the statutes of Norwegian as well as of Danish guilds are of English origin. A member of a guild was in Norway called *gildi*, m. which is supposed to be a loan-word from Anglo-Saxon *gilda*, *gegilda*, (Med.-lat. *gildo*)⁵. In Denmark the presidents of the guild were called «aldermen» (*aldermen*, *aldermanni*, *seniores* etc.); the same was usually the case in England from where this title has been supposed to have been imported.

The guilds dedicated to St. Knut, to which the governing body of the Danish towns generally belonged are in the municipal laws of Slesvig, Flensborg and other Danish towns called

¹ Sproglig-historiske Studier, tilegnede C. R. Unger, p. 219 (§ 17).

² Danmarks Gilde- og Lavsskraaer I p. 170.

³ Hegel, Städte u. Gilden I p. 1 ff., 19 ff. In 860 *eniaghla gegildan* are mentioned at Canterbury (Cartularium Saxonicum II p. 128).

⁴ Between English and Dutch guilds there is also a great resemblance, even in titles of the officers. F. i. the officers of the A.-S. guild of Abbotsbury were called *feormeras*, while the alderman of the guild of Middelburg (Zeeland) were called *formatores* (Gross I p. 296).

⁵ Cf. Hertzberg, Glossar til Norges gamle Love, p. 237. It is possible that the oldest remaining statutes of a Norwegian guild, that of Nidaros, contain another foreign loan-word, *stræno*, dec. of lat. *strenu* «a gift» [*En ef wigi gerer, sra giællde stræn(o) hrær þæira*], G. Storm in «Sproglig-historiske Studier tilegnet C. R. Unger», pp. 219—224.

summun convivium, majus convivium. At Reval there was a «Great Guild» (grosse Gilde) and a «Guild of the black Heads» (Gilde der Schwarzenhäupter)¹. This implies that in the Danish towns there were usually several guilds among which those dedicated to St. Knut were the principal². In Nidaros we meet with the same contrast between higher and minor guilds³. The sagas tell us that «*Ólafur konungr lét settja miklagildi í Nidarósi ok mörg annur í kaupstöðum*»⁴. The same guild is mentioned in Ágrip (col. 71) where it is said to be dedicated to St. Olav. The «Guild of St. Olav» (*Olafs gildi*) and other guilds at Nidaros are mentioned in a record from about the year 1293. Storm as well as Lange have supposed that the *miklagildi* is the same as the *Krossgildi* mentioned by other sources⁵. Lange has already supposed, that «Udtrykket «det store» Gildehus viser, at der og har været i det mindste eet mindre [Gilde]». Storm has denied this, saying that we know of no other guild at Nidaros; he forgets, however, the document that mentions *Olafs gildi ok annur gildi* at Nidaros. To me it seems evident that the guild dedicated to St. Olav was called «the great Guild» (*miklagildi*) in contradistinction to other, minor guilds and fraternities in the same town. The Olav's guild of Nidaros has in other words occupied the same position as the Danish guilds dedicated to St. Knut, and it is impossible not to compare the name *miklagildi* to the expressions *summun convivium, majus convivium* used by Danish municipal laws. If this is right, the common origin of the Danish and Norwegian guilds becomes still more probable.

I have above as well as in my paper «De norske Byers Selvstyre og Handel» suggested as the most likely solution that England is the birthplace of the Norwegian and Danish guilds. I have, however, in the course of my studies become more and more doubtful whether this supposition is right. The resemblance between Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian guilds is manifested most closely in the Thanes' guild of Cambridge, where traces of Norse

¹ Hegel, Städte u. Gilden I pp. 163, 169.

² Hegel I p. 244.

³ That there were several guilds at Nidaros we know from Diplomatarium Norvegium III n. 35 (*sva um Olafs gildi ok annur gildi*).

⁴ Fornmannasögur VI p. 440.

⁵ Studier tilegnede C. R. Unger, p. 225; Lange, De norske Klostres Historie (2 ed.) p. 197.

influence are most distinct. The Scandinavian countries know of nothing similar to the numerous Anglo-Saxon «Cnihten Guilds». And the half religious guilds and fraternities which in the 11th century were so common in England seem in Norway and Denmark to date from a much later time. It is also a strange fact that the influence of Scandinavian customs upon Anglo-Saxon guilds is much greater than vice versa. Even such a word as O. N. *gildi* m. «guild-brother» may as well be derived from the continental *gildo* as from A. S. *gilda*, *gegilda*. The Northmen who were able to influence Anglo-Saxon guilds, as we see at the Woodbury and Cambridge guilds, must themselves have had guilds different from the Anglo-Saxon ones, guilds where the brethren were bound together by closer ties, and where the funeral festival was an important factor. The antiquity of English place names of Scandinavian origin of which *gildi* forms a part likewise seems to show that the Northmen knew the institution before they settled in England.

Gross in his «Guild Merchant» (p. 175) like Wilda ascribes a prominent part in the origination of guilds to Christianity. He strongly denies that the mediæval guilds are «derived from the Romans or Scandinavian Teutons». He points to the fact that the earliest mention of this institution is to be found in the Carolingian Capitulary of the year 779¹, and he seems to be of opinion that the Empire of the Franks is the birthplace of the guilds. Unfortunately no statutes of a Carolingian guild have been preserved. But still, we can see that there has been a very close resemblance between the Frankish and the early Norwegian and Danish guilds. The oath and shaking of hands as well as the festivals played a prominent part in both². The members of the Carolingian *gildonia* have no doubt been called *fratres coniurati* and have had the duty to avenge their guild-brethren. We know of Frankish «guilds» *de incendio aut de naufragio*³. In Danish as well as in Norwegian guilds it was the duty of the members to help a brother, if his house was burned or if his ship foundered⁴. It is also very probably that at the festi-

¹ Pertz, Monumenta, Leges I p. 37: De sacramentis per gildonia invicem coniurantibus (=: coniurantium), ut nemo facere præsumat.

² The Capitulary of Diefenhofen (805) mentions «Verschwörungen (conspirations) mit Eid oder blossen Gelöbniss durch Handschlag» (Hegel I p. 3); cf. the foregoing quotation.

³ Pertz, Monum., Leges I p. 37.

⁴ A. Bugge, De norske Byers Selvstyre og Handel, pp. 79—80.

vals of the Frankish guilds as well as in the Danish and Norwegian ones commemorative toasts (= O. N. *mimmi*) were drunk to the honour of the saints to whom the guild was dedicated. The Frankish guilds had like the Norwegian guilds their home as well in the country as in the towns. It is therefore not unlikely that the guild institution has been introduced into the Scandinavian countries from the Empire of the Franks already at the beginning of the Viking Ages. The chief objection is that we know of no Norwegian or Danish guilds from an earlier date than the end of the 11th century. There are, however, facts that seem to indicate that the Scandinavian peoples have known this institution at a still earlier time.

Joos. Mikkola has proved that the merchant-settlement of the Gotlanders at Nowgorod, in later times called the «Gotenhof», existed in the year 1015, when it was called *Farmannagardr* and tenanted by Scandinavian (Warjag) merchants in common¹. If we may venture to look upon this *Farmannagardr* as the predecessor of the *Guta gardr* (Gotenhof), we may perhaps also infer that both institutions as to their interior organisation resembled each another. The members of the Gotenhof, in the 13th century, formed a guild. Their house, in a document from the year 1268 is called «Guild hall» (*curia gilde*)². There are even indications which go to show that Scandinavian or Warjag merchants in Russia had founded associations at a still earlier date than 1015.

The grand-duke of Russia, Igor, in the year 945 sent ambassadors to Constantinople. The result was a commercial treaty, the text of which is preserved in Nestor's Chronicle. Besides the ambassadors, the grand-duke sent 25 or 26 «guests» to Constantinople. With perhaps one or two exceptions, all of them

¹ Arkiv för nordisk Filologi, vol. XXIII p. 281. The ancient Russian Chronicle says for the year 6523 (1015): Вставше Новгородци, избѣша Варягы во Дворѣ Поромони. This is in the French translation rendered: «Et les Novgorodiens se souleverent, et tuèrent les Varegues dans la maison de Poromon». Mikkola says that this so called «Yard of Poromon» was situated at the «Street of the Warjags», where the «Gotenhof» in later times was situated. The name *Poromoni dvoru*, according to his opinion, renders the Old Norse *farmannagardr*. We may from this conclude that the *Farmannagardr* of Nowgorod was the predecessor of the *Guta gardr* (Gotenhof).

² Hansisches Urkundenbuch I Nr. 663: *Item curiam gilde, quam iidem Gotenses vendiderunt.*

bear Scandinavian names, and have consequently been Warjags. They are in the Russian chronicle colled *gostj* (the same word as O. N. *gestr*), which signifies «guest, foreign merchant». They as well as the ambassadors are connected with the court of the grand-duke, but have at the same time also been merchants who came from Kijew and other Russian cities¹. There can be no doubt that they went to Constanstinople in order to buy silk and other articles which the grand-duke wanted. They were in other words merchants who stood under the special protection of the grand-duke, like the merchants of Charlemagne and his son Lewis the pious. That these Russian merchants formed some sort of association appears, as it seems, from the words of the treaty as given by the chronicle, where it is said that the ambassadors had seals of gold, and the «Guests» seals of silver. The number of the ambassadors is 27, the number of the merchants 25. It cannot have been possible to hang more than fifty seals of metal under a one single document. We may therefore venture to infer that the ambassadors as well as the merchants have used one seal in common.

It is in fact nowhere in the Sagas mentioned that Olav Kyrre introduced the first guilds into Norway, but only that he instituted guilds in the Norwegian towns. On the contrary, the Sagas seem to presuppose that guilds existed at a still earlier date, f. i. in the younger saga of St. Olav, where Olver á Eggju answers king Olav, *sagði at bændr hefði engur veiztur haft þat haust, nema gildi sín ok hvirjings drykkjur*², or where the holy bishop Martin in a dream says to Olav Trygvesson: «*þat hefir verit háttr manna her í landi sem víða annarstadar, þar sem heidit fólk er, at Þór ok Óðni er ól gæfit, þar sem samdrykkjur eðr gildi ero haldin*»³. I believe, like Hegel (I p. 412) and Munch⁴, that Olav Kyrre, in imitation of Western European fashion erected guild-halls in the Norwegian towns. But I also believe that the guilds themselves existed at a still earlier time and that they

¹ C. W. Smith in his translation (Nestors russiske Kronike, oversat og forklaret af C. W. Smith, Kjøbenhavn 1869), renders *gostj* by «kjøbmand» (merchant).

² Formannasögur IV c. 102.

³ Formannasögur I c. 141.

⁴ Munch, Det norske Folks Historie II pp. 442—443.

were connected with the heathen sacrificial banquets (*blót-veiztur*)¹. It is in this connection interesting to know that the Swedish medieval guilds had preserved several ancient customs originally belonging to the heathen cult and the heathen sacrificial banquets².

If I am right in this supposition we understand why hundreds in the Norse settlements in England have got names like Gilhov and Gildecross, why *Gildisvøllr* in Ringebu has become *réttr stefnustadr*, why another Norwegian parish has got the name of *Gildisskáli* («Guildhall»), and why the inhabitants of Sondhordland as their official seal used the seal of the Olav's Guild of Onarheim (S[igillum]: CONVIVARVM: BE[A]TI: OLAVI: DE: HONAREI[M])³; we understand why the Norwegian and Danish guilds resemble more the Frankish than the Anglo-Saxon guilds; we understand how already at the time of Knut the great Norse institutions have been able to put their impress on the statutes of the Thanes' guild of Cambridge, and how it is possible in the survey of the Domesday book to find Scandinavian place-names of which the word *gildi* forms a part. I regard the Empire of the Franks as the birthplace of the guilds, the country from which this the most typical institution of the middle ages has spread to all parts of Western and Northern Europe.

¹ I should not wonder, if the guilds in the diocese of Trondhjem that were abolished in 1552 (Norske Rigsregistranter I p. 151) were a direct continuation of the above mentioned *gildi ok hvirfjngs drykkjur* at the time of St. Olav.

² H. Schüek, *Studier i Ynglingatal*, p. 61.

³ *Norges gamle Love*, IV p. 374.

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