



To the left: 11<sup>th</sup>-century Runestone from Sweden commemorating the death of Oleifr in “Langbarðalandi” (Southern Italy), possibly while serving under Harald Hardrada against the Normans. To the right: the Byzantine invasion of Sicily 1038, to which Harald took part, from the 12<sup>th</sup>-century Skylitzes Matritensis.

## Call for Papers

### **A Viking in the Sun:**

### **Harald Hardrada, the Mediterranean, and the Nordic World, between the late Viking Age and the Eve of the Crusades**

#### **Event 1: Textual and Material Sources and their Performativity**

Snorrastofa (Reykholt, Iceland), 29-31 May 2023

#### **The Project:**

The Centre for Late Antique, Byzantine, and Islamic Studies of the University of Edinburgh and the Snorrastofa, Cultural and Medieval Centre in Iceland, are pleased to announce the first interdisciplinary conference of the project **A Viking in the Sun: Harald Hardrada, The Mediterranean, and the Nordic World, between the Late Viking Age and the Eve of the**

**Crusades. The event will take place May 29-31 2023 at Snorrastofa and it will focus on primary textual and material sources and their performativity. This will be the first of a series of itinerant symposia of the project.**

This international and interdisciplinary project focuses on the status of the Norwegian Harald Hardrada Sigurdsson as probably the best-documented frontiers-crosser extraordinaire of the early eleventh century. It uses his experiences and encounters, as well as their legacies, as a case study to explore the Mediterranean and its links to the Nordic World in the intensively liminal period between the late Viking Age and the eve of the crusades.

Thematically, the project sits at the crossroads of diverse academic fields such History, including Environmental History, Archaeology, and Literature, and between Nordic Studies and Mediterranean studies, including the Byzantine, Islamic, and Western European worlds.

Moreover, the project includes a strong performative and creative element, which will serve to interrogate the subject matter imaginatively, but also for public engagement and impact purposes, and for experimenting in ways to integrate academic research and the creative industries.

## **Harald Hardrada:**

In the English-speaking world, Harald Hardrada is mainly known for his death at the Battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066, which was a prelude to the Norman conquest of England. He was king of Norway at that time, but he also cast his influence into the Northern Atlantic as far as Iceland.

However, Harald spent his formative years in the Mediterranean, which is a portion of his life that is usually overshadowed, both within academia and among the general public, by his later achievements in northern Europe. Harald left Norway when he was 15, after the death of his half-brother, King Olaf II Haraldsson (who was soon canonized and became the patron saint of Norway), at the Battle of Stiklestad in 1030. After a brief stay in Kievan Rus, Harald joined the Varangian guard in Byzantium, whose members were Norsemen like him, to become its most famous member.

While in Byzantine service, Harald took part in missions and campaigns in several theatres, which included the following regions:

- **Eastern Anatolia and Upper Mesopotamia**, where Harald fought in border wars.
- **The Aegean Sea**, where Harald fought against pirates.
- **Fatimid Palestine**, where Harald took part to a pilgrimage/diplomatic mission, fought against banditry, and was probably involved in the reconstruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher as part of a Byzantine/Fatimid rapprochement.
- **Sicily**, where Harald took part in a Byzantine attempt to recover the Island.
- **Apulia**, where Harald fought against the earliest stages of the Norman conquest of Southern Italy.
- **The Balkans**, where Harald fought a Bulgarian uprising.

In the early 1040s Harald was then involved in the turmoil that followed the death of Emperor Michael IV, after which he returned to Scandinavia to claim the crown of Norway.

## **Topics of Event 1 and Format of the Proposals:**

We welcome the following typologies of proposals for 20 minutes-long papers:

- Academic papers from scholars and postgraduate students discussing scholarship as well as textual and material primary sources which refer to Harald directly or relate to the events of his Mediterranean journeys or their legacy. That, for example, can include historical sources produced in the Western Islamic Mediterranean world that cover the period of the Byzantine invasion of Sicily, in which forces from Al-Andalus took part. Papers on how the sources were performed and their audience are also encouraged.
- Discussion of proposals for research-based or research-informed creative outputs connected to the creative economy, such as music, performing and visual arts, publishing, the heritage sector, design, craft, games, among others (the list is not exhaustive).

- We also welcome the submission of research-based or research-informed creative outputs proposals inspired by the symposium after the end of the symposium.

### **Confirmed Speakers:**

- Prof. David Abulafia, Professor of Mediterranean History, University of Cambridge
- Prof. Sverrir Jakobsson, Professor in Medieval History, University of Iceland
- Oskar Gudmundsson, Researcher at Snorrastofa
- Dr. Gianluca Raccagni, Senior Lecturer in Medieval History, University of Edinburgh
- Dr. Yannis Stouraitis, Senior Lecturer in Byzantine History, University of Edinburgh
- Dr. Glaire Anderson, Senior Lecturer in Islamic Art, University of Edinburgh
- Supriya Nagarajan, Chief Executive at performing arts, multimedia and public engagement organisation Manasamitra
- Dr. James Cave, Lecturer in Culture and Organisation, University of York

### **The Location:**

Snorrastofa is a cultural and medieval research centre located in Reykholt, in Western Iceland. It is an especially suitable location to start the project because it is built on the site of Snorri Sturluson's main residence and is especially dedicated to the study of his works. Snorri Sturluson (d. 1241) was Iceland's greatest medieval writer, poet, scholar, statesman, and the author of the most significant medieval account of Harald Hardrada's Mediterranean encounters. Snorri had ancestors from both his maternal and paternal side who accompanied Harald in the Mediterranean. Snorri also integrated in his work relevant poetry that is attributed to Harald's court and even to Harald himself.

For more information on Snorrastofa: <https://www.snorrastofa.is/en>

### **Submission of Proposals:**

The working language of the conference is English.

Please submit a proposed title and an abstract of no more than 400 words to:

[gianluca.raccagni@ed.ac.uk](mailto:gianluca.raccagni@ed.ac.uk)

The deadline for submission of proposals is 31 December 2022.

All proposals will be examined by an international advisory panel, and results of the selection will be announced by the end of January 2023.

There will be a conference fee of 250\$ that will cover meals and refreshments and an excursion to the waterfall Hraunfossar and the National Park Thingvellir, which is the site of the Icelandic parliament from 930 to 1798, including its museum.



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH  
School of History, Classics  
and Archaeology

