Home thoughts of abroad: *Ohthere's Voyage* in its Anglo-Saxon context

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The Old English text known as Ohthere's Voyage *is regarded as a key source for Norwegian history. Consequently, the context of its composition and inclusion in the Old English* Orosius *has often been overlooked. This article demonstrates that the text cannot be separated from the processes that shaped it during its early transmission. Continental geographical traditions of the peoples of the north governed the preconceptions of Ohthere's audience. Furthermore, the individual who included the account in the* Orosius *edited the latter text to anticipate it and tailored the sailor's account to support the West Saxon ideological underpinnings of its new context.*

In the closing decades of the ninth century, a sailor named Ohthere stood before an audience of Anglo-Saxons and spoke of his Scandinavian homeland. More than a millennium later, a solitary record of the account, incorporated into the Old English translation of Paulus Orosius' *Historiarum adversum paganos libri septem* (Seven Books of Histories against the Pagans), has become the subject of intense study by historians, literary critics and linguists. The rarity of such an early and apparently authentic Scandinavian voice has frequently seen

Ohthere's Voyage stripped of its original context in academic discourse and labelled as a source for Norwegian and Danish history, often to the detriment of the Old English *Orosius* (OE *Or*) itself.[1] Yet *Ohthere's Voyage* cannot be considered in isolation. Both the original exchange between Ohthere and his Anglo-Saxon audience and its incorporation into OE *Or* record a mutual negotiation of identity between representatives of learned Anglo-Saxon and elite Norse world-views.[2] This article considers the ways in which Ohthere's account was shaped by the stages of its transmission in an Anglo-Saxon context, arguing that *Ohthere's Voyage* and OE *Or* are dependent upon and inseparable from one another. It offers new insights into the person responsible for bringing the two texts together and his or her ideological reasons for doing so.

The Old English *Orosius*

The *Historiae* were written in the fifth century by Paulus Orosius, a Chalcedonian priest and disciple of Augustine of Hippo. Didactic works, they refuted the suggestion (made following the Visigothic sack of Rome in 410) that the spread of Christianity had resulted in an increase of worldly calamities, by arguing that pre-Christian history had been similarly dreadful.[3] Over the course of seven books, they dealt with the history of pagan peoples both before and after the birth of Christ, culminating in the sack of Rome. Five centuries later in Anglo-Saxon England, the need to counter such pagan philosophical arguments had been rendered negligible, allowing the Old English adapter of the text free rein to indulge in other interpretations of history.[4] Increasingly, it has been argued that the translation was not made simply out of academic interest, but as an exploration of themes

[1]   F. Leneghan, '*Translatio imperii*: The Old English *Orosius* and the Rise of Wessex', *Anglia* 133 (2015), pp. 656–705, at p. 675. For a discussion of the use (and misuse) of *Ohthere's Voyage* by historians, see I. Valtonen, *The North in the Old English Orosius: A Geographical Narrative in Context* (Helsinki, 2008), pp. 13–17.

[2]   B. Allport, 'The Construction and Reconstruction of Regional Collective Identity in Viking Age Norway', *Quaestio Insularis* 18 (2017), pp. 78–119, at pp. 117–18.

[3]   J. Bately, 'The Classical Additions in the Old English *Orosius*', in P. Clemoes and K. Hughes (eds), *England Before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources Presented to Dorothy Whitelock* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 237–251, at p. 237; M. Godden, 'The Old English *Orosius* and its Context: Who Wrote it, for Whom, and Why?', *Quaestio Insularis* 12 (2011), pp. 1–30, at pp. 1–2; *The Old English History of the World: An Anglo-Saxon Rewriting of Orosius*, ed. M. Godden (Cambridge, MA, 2016), pp. vii–x.

[4]   Bately, 'Classical Additions', p. 237.

which echoed contemporary events and supported burgeoning Anglo-Saxon ideologies.[5]

The translation belongs to the same literary drive of the late ninth and early tenth centuries which saw the translation of various important early Christian treatises, such as Boethius' *De consolatione philosophae* and Gregory the Great's *Cura pastoralis*. This campaign has traditionally been attributed to the efforts of King Alfred the Great (d. 899), and several themes explored by OE *Or* can be connected to perspectives and ideologies associated with the evolution of West Saxon kingship during the reigns of Alfred and his immediate successors.[6] Francis Leneghan has recently argued that the translation and adaptation of Latin treatises on history and philosophy which characterized the West Saxon literary output of this period formed part of a conscious programme of *translatio imperii*, whereby King Alfred and his descendants established themselves as the political and cultural successors of the empire of Charlemagne, just as Charlemagne himself was anointed as Holy Roman Emperor.[7] This is indicated by the translations' frequent deviations to explore the role of rulership, among other things.[8]

The presence of *Ohthere's Voyage* in OE *Or* formed the basis of previous arguments that the latter was a product of Alfred's reign itself: Ohthere addresses himself to Alfred, whom he describes as his *hlaford* (lord).[9] More recently, scholars such as Malcolm Godden have cast doubt on this claim.[10] Firstly, there is nothing to suggest that Ohthere's meeting with the king and the translation took place in the same time frame. Secondly, we cannot be certain that Ohthere delivered his account to Alfred at all: Hildegard Tristram suggests that the address to the authority figure of Alfred forms part of a literary construction.[11] It is therefore unclear when exactly OE *Or* was

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[5] Leneghan, '*Translatio imperii*', pp. 660 and 691; D. Anlezark, 'The Anglo-Saxon World View', in M. Godden and M. Lapidge (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 66-81, at pp. 78–80; Valtonen, *A Geographical Narrative*, pp. 514–16; Godden, '*Orosius* and its Context', pp. 20–9.

[6] Leneghan, '*Translatio imperii*', pp. 660, 676–7 and 695; D. Pratt, *The Political Thought of Alfred the Great* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 132. The suggestion that Alfred himself carried out the translation, a claim first made by William of Malmesbury, has long been abandoned due to a lack of compelling evidence. See *The Old English Orosius* [= OE *Or*], EETS, s.s. 6, ed. J. Bately (London, 1980), pp. lxxxvi–xciii; Godden, '*Orosius* and its Context', p. 5.

[7] Leneghan, '*Translatio imperii*', p. 660.

[8] Pratt, *Political Thought*, p. 133.

[9] OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 13. Bately herself accepts this argument on p. lxxxix of the same edition.

[10] Godden, '*Orosius* and its Context', pp. 6–9; *Old English History of the World*, ed. Godden, pp. xi.

[11] H. Tristram, 'Ohthere, Wulfstan und der Aethicus Ister', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 111 (1982), pp. 153–68, at p. 167.

composed, with Godden proposing the broadest date range of *c*.870 to *c*.930.[12] The text survives in two manuscripts, the earliest of which, London, British Library, Add. MS 47967 (the Lauderdale manuscript), dates from no later than *c*.950.[13] The second manuscript, London, British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius B I, is a product of the first half of the eleventh century and shares an archetype with the Lauderdale manuscript, although textual variations indicate that it belongs to a separate manuscript tradition.[14]

Ohthere's Voyage is incorporated into the first book of OE *Or* which, following its exemplar, is taken up with a description of the geography of the known world. Orosius' geographical description, although influential in medieval literature, had been limited by its Gallaecian author's relative ignorance of northern Europe. The Old English translator extensively expanded and updated Orosius' descriptions of the north, inserting a detailed account of the peoples of *Germania*. In doing so, the translator drew upon a wide variety of geographical traditions beyond the exemplar.[15] *Ohthere's Voyage* is therefore just one of the additional sources of geographical information in the text, albeit only one of two that are acknowledged, the second being *Wulfstan's Voyage*, which immediately follows it and describes a journey eastward through the Baltic from southern Denmark. As a consequence of the accounts' apparent lack of integration and their stylistic departures from the description of *Germania*, the most recent editors of OE *Or* have concluded that neither of the voyages of Ohthere and Wulfstan belong to the original translation.[16] Even so, *Ohthere's Voyage* was added to the text at an early stage, as the first half of the account is preserved in the Lauderdale manuscript. However, the manuscript is missing a gathering corresponding to the remainder of the first book of OE *Or* and the presence of *Wulfstan's Voyage* in the text cannot be confirmed until the eleventh century.[17]

[12]   Godden, '*Orosius* and its Context', p. 9.
[13]   OE *Or*, ed Bately, p. xxiii, n. 2.
[14]   OE *Or*, ed Bately, p. xxxiii.
[15]   OE *Or*, ed. Bately, pp. lxiii–vi; Godden, '*Orosius* and its Context', p. 13; Anlezark, 'Anglo-Saxon World View', p. 72.
[16]   J. Bately, 'Ohthere and Wulfstan in the Old English *Orosius*', in J. Bately and A. Englert (eds), *Ohthere's Voyages: A Late 9th-Century Account of Voyages along the Coasts of Norway and Denmark and its Cultural Context* (Roskilde, 2007), pp. 18–29, at pp. 31–2 and 34; *idem*, 'The Old English *Orosius*', in N.G. Discenza and P.E. Szarmach (eds), *A Companion to Alfred the Great* (Leiden, 2015), pp. 313–43, at p. 316; *Old English History of the World*, ed. Godden, p. xii.
[17]   Bately, 'Ohthere and Wulfstan', p. 18.

Ohthere's *Geographia*

Ohthere's Voyage narrates two voyages undertaken along the northern and western coasts of Scandinavia by the eponymous sailor. Ohthere, who 'ealra Norðmonna norþmest bude' ('lived northernmost of all Northmen'), relates a journey north and east of his home, driven, we are told, by a spirit of discovery and a desire to procure valuable walrus hides.[18] As Ohthere sailed around the northern coast of Scandinavia, sprawling *westenne* (wastelands) occupied solely by the *Finnas* (as Ohthere called the ancestors of the Sámi) lay to his starboard.[19] Turning south, Ohthere encountered a population he calls the *Beormas*.[20] The second voyage he narrates departed south from his home district of *Halgoland* (ON *Hálogaland*) in northern Norway and travelled along the coast to the port of *Sciringes healh* (Kaupang in Skiringssal). From there, Ohthere headed south to the Danish port of *Hæðum* (Hedeby, near modern Schleswig).[21] In the surviving form of the account, these voyages function as a framing device for Ohthere's description of the peoples of the north and of their relative position, although they also provide us with the most compelling glimpses of the sailor's world. At each stage of the voyages, Ohthere names the lands and peoples that lie to his port and starboard; famously, he refers to the coastline between *Halgoland* and *Sciringes healh* as *Norðweg*, in what may be the earliest surviving allusion to the concept which would become 'Norway' (ON *Nóregr*) in a Germanic language.[22] The two voyages are interspersed with a description of the layout of *Norðmanna land* (the land of the Northmen) and its eastern neighbours *Sweoland* (the land of the Svear, from whom Sweden derives its name) and *Cwena land* (the land of the *Cwenas*).

The importance of *Ohthere's Voyage* to historians hinges on the interpretation of terms such as these. There is no doubt that the account contains material of a genuine Scandinavian provenance, as the number of unique words calqued from Old Norse reveals.[23] Consequently, the significance of the text's inclusion in OE *Or* has often been neglected in

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[18]   OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 13.
[19]   OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 14.
[20]   OE *Beormas*/ON *Bjarmar* corresponds to a population that appears from Old Norse literature to occupy the southern shore of the White Sea. J. Bately, 'Translation Notes', in Bately and Englert (eds), *Ohthere's Voyages*, pp. 51–8, at p. 52; Valtonen, *A Geographical Narrative*, p. 358.
[21]   On the identification of *Sciringes healh* with Skiringssal and *Hæðum* with Hedeby, see S. Brink, 'Geography, Toponymy and Political Organisation', in Bately and Englert (eds), *Ohthere's Voyages*, pp. 66–73, at pp. 67 and 72.
[22]   Brink, 'Political Organisation', p. 66; Valtonen, *A Geographical Narrative*, p. 331.
[23]   Bately, 'Ohthere and Wulfstan', pp. 35–6; M. Townend, *Language and History in Viking Age England* (Turnhout, 2002), pp. 95–7.

historical discourse, aided in part by the conclusion that it was added after the latter was completed.[24] Ohthere is typically referred to in such discourse by Nordic normalizations (ON Óttar/r, MNor Ottar), obscuring the Old English provenance of the text.[25] However, the language of the text – and its third-person register – should serve to remind us that the sailor's presentation of undoubtedly authentic local knowledge was influenced by at least two conceptual stages of transmission which occurred before it took the form in which it is known to us. The first stage was the initial reception and transcription of the report by an Anglo-Saxon audience, who shaped the account with their prior knowledge – or ignorance – of the areas Ohthere discussed and by their understanding of his words. The second stage was the reinterpretation of the text by whoever chose to add it to the Old English *Orosius*. This is likely to have involved some alteration of the material, tailoring Ohthere's words to fit the broader aims of OE *Or*.[26] The apparent modifications to *Ohthere's Voyage* that are discussed herein may belong to either stage, but certain changes are more likely to have occurred at one stage than the other. In either case, it will become clear that any reading of *Ohthere's Voyage* as an exclusively Norse voice is untenable. In order to understand how *Ohthere's Voyage* relates to Anglo-Saxon literary traditions, these two stages must be explored in greater depth.

While the account as we know it appears to be a monologue, it is more likely to derive – as Dorothy Whitelock suggested – from 'a set of replies to questions put to [Ohthere]'.[27] The recorder of this exchange omitted the Anglo-Saxon questions, but was unable to disguise the interests that lay behind them. If the audience were putting questions to Ohthere, they were able to exert some measure of control over the dialogue and could attempt to steer it in the directions that they chose, resulting in an account which reflected the interests of both parties. Furthermore, they were at liberty to choose which aspects of Ohthere's account were

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[24] See above, n. 1.

[25] This practice is ubiquitous, but for examples, see K. Helle, 'The History of the Early Viking Age in Norway', in H. Clarke, M. Ní Mhaonaigh and R. Ó Floinn (eds), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), pp. 239–58, at pp. 239 and 241; C. Krag, 'The Early Unification of Norway', in K. Helle (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia, Volume 1: Prehistory to 1520* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 184–201, at p. 188; P.S. Andersen, *Samlingen av Norge og kristningen av landet* (Bergen, 1977), p. 50; K. Lunden, 'Was there a Norwegian National Identity in the Middle Ages?', *Scandinavian Journal of History* 20 (1995), pp. 19–33, at p. 27; N. Lund, '"Denemearc", "Tanmarkar But" and "Tanmark Ala"', in I. Wood and N. Lund (eds), *People and Places in Northern Europe 500–600: Essays in Honour of Peter Hayes Sawyer* (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 161–9, at pp. 164–5.

[26] See below, n. 113.

[27] D. Whitelock, 'The Prose of Alfred's Reign', in E.G. Stanley (ed.), *Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature* (London, 1966), pp. 67–108, at p. 99.

recorded for posterity, injecting their own perspectives and preconceptions in the process. Thus, as Janet Bately notes, the incredulity of the Anglo-Saxon recorder is evident in the description of the relatively slim resources upon which Ohthere's chieftaincy was based:

> He wæs mid þæm fyrstum mannum on þæm lande; næfde he þeah ma ðonne twentig hryðera 7 twentig sceapa 7 twentig swyna, 7 þæt lytle þæt he erede he erede mid horsan

> He was among the foremost men in that land, yet he had no more than twenty cattle, twenty sheep and twenty pigs and the little that he ploughed he ploughed with horses.[28]

Other examples, such as an aside in the description of southern Scandinavia which notes that 'on þæm land eardodon Engle, ær hi hider on land coman' ('the Angles lived in that land before they came to this land'), may have entered the account at either stage of transmission, but serve to remind us that the Anglo-Saxons had their own traditions about the north and its inhabitants, beyond the information provided by Ohthere.[29]

Many of the Anglo-Saxons' preconceptions about the area derived from continental geographical traditions. That a contemporary interest in and awareness of such traditions existed is proven beyond doubt by the very context in which *Ohthere's Voyage* survives. The geographical descriptions in Orosius' *Historiae* were vastly expanded upon by the author of OE *Or* and the text was supplemented with information whose ultimate origins lay in late antique and early medieval Latin writings.[30] The influence of these writings may not have been direct, however; Bately's analysis of the provenance of this information reveals that it can be traced to an improbably large number of differing textual traditions, suggesting that much of it was in fact derived from commentaries or even (as Godden prefers) a heavily glossed manuscript of the *Historiae* themselves.[31] Although the association between OE *Or* and the Alfredian court is not conclusive, we can reasonably hypothesize that, in the consciously learned atmosphere cultivated by that court, there would have been a degree of familiarity with continental traditions pertaining to northern peoples. The following discussion produces strong evidence to support this hypothesis, as it is demonstrated that Ohthere's account was guided by Anglo-Saxon

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[28] OE *Or* I.I, ed. Bately, p. 15.
[29] OE *Or* I.I, ed. Bately, p. 16.
[30] See above, n. 15.
[31] Bately, 'Classical Additions', pp. 249 and 280; Godden, '*Orosius* and its Context', p. 14.

preconceptions that can only have originated from such traditions. Furthermore, the evidence presented below strongly supports Whitelock's interpretation that Ohthere's original interaction with the Anglo-Saxons took the form of questions and answers.

The Scridefinne

Of the topics about which Ohthere was able to proffer the most insight, his Anglo-Saxon audience are most likely to have had preconceived notions about the peoples he referred to as the *Finnas* and *Terfinnas*.[32] These notions arose from the audience's association of these peoples with a group whose stylized portrayal had become a staple of Latin geographical treatises in the medieval period and who were known to the Anglo-Saxons as the *Scridefinne* or *Scridefinnas*. Irmeli Valtonen argues that this term and its variants were widely understood to refer to the world's northernmost population, much as the name 'Thule' had become literary shorthand for the world's northernmost land.[33] Despite appearing to derive from an Old Norse form **skríða-finnar* ('sliding' Sámi – a presumed reference to skiing), there is no attestation of this term in Old Norse literature.[34] Conversely, it is attested in three Old English texts and at least seven Latin or Greek texts from the sixth century to the thirteenth.

It is highly likely that the term was introduced to Old English from a Latin source.[35] This is indicated by the earliest appearance of the term as *Scridefinne* immediately prior to *Ohthere's Voyage* in the Lauderdale manuscript of OE *Or*: the -e ending was regularly used to translate Latin second and first declension nominative plural endings (-i, and -ae) in Old English renderings of Latin nomenclature, as is frequently demonstrated throughout OE *Or* itself.[36] The Cotton *Orosius* provides the form *Scridefinnas*, a

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[32] The *Terfinnas* are named once in Ohthere's account; it seems likely that name refers to the Sámi who resided along the south-eastern coast of the Kola peninsula, known in modern Russian as *Terskij bereg* (the Ter coast); Valtonen, *A Geographical Narrative*, p. 384.

[33] Valtonen, *A Geographical Narrative*, p. 108. On the semantics of Thule, see D. Kedwards, 'Iceland, Thule, and the Tilensian Precedent in Medieval Historiography', Arkiv för nordisk filologi 130 (2015), pp. 57–78, at pp. 60–2.

[34] I. Whitaker, 'Ohthere's Account Reconsidered', *Arctic Anthropology* 18 (1981), pp. 1–11, at p. 3; Valtonen, *A Geographical Narrative*, p. 108. Valtonen (*A Geographical Narrative*, p. 108) mistakenly believes that the form *Skriðfinner* is attested in late Norse texts, but seems to be misreading Hansen and Olsen, who normalize Saxo's Latin term in this way. The formula *finnr skríðr* (the Sámi ski) is attested in the thirteenth century, but although this hints at a semantic association there is no demonstrable connection to the proposed form in use eight centuries earlier. See L.I. Hansen and B. Olsen, *Hunters in Transition: An Outline of Early Sámi History* (Leiden, 2013), p. 37.

[35] Valtonen, *A Geographical Narrative*, p. 248.

[36] OE *Or*, ed. Bately, p. cviii; A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford, 1959), pp. 204–5.

masculine a-stem noun corresponding to ON *Finnar* and matching Ohthere's usage; it is likely that this form was 'corrected' by the scribe with reference to *Ohthere's Voyage* and/or his or her own knowledge. The term also appears as the dative plural *Scridefinnum* in the Old English poem *Widsið*, the dating of which is controversial.[37] The poem is recorded in the eleventh-century Exeter Book (Exeter, Exeter Cathedral Library, MS. 3501) and it is therefore certain that the term was known by this point – and probably earlier. Finally, the term appears as *Scridefinnas* on the mid-eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon *mappa mundi*, which is preserved in London, British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius B V. The label is attached to a long, tapering island which also bears the name *Island* (Iceland) and lies along the northern edge of the map. Helen Appleton argues convincingly that this *mappa mundi* visually expresses the same concept of *translatio imperii* and the same fascination with north-western Europe that can be detected in OE *Or*. She therefore suggests that the exemplar of the *mappa mundi* belongs to the same early tenth-century milieu, although it cannot be conclusively proven that the mapmaker used OE *Or* as a source.[38] In Valtonen's view, the position of the *Scridefinnas* on this map confirms the scholarly perception of the group as the world's northernmost population.[39]

Five references to this group are found in Latin and Greek geographical and ethnographic descriptions from before the late ninth century.[40] The Ὑπὲρ τῶν Πολέμων Λόγοι (History of the Wars), penned by Procopius of Caesarea in the sixth century, makes reference to the Σκριθίφινοι (Skrithiphinoi) and Jordanes' *Getica* (History of the Goths), written in Latin in the same century, makes reference to the

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[37] *Widsith*, 79 in *The Exeter Book*, ed. G.P. Krapp and E.V.K. Dobbie, The Saxon Poetic Records 3 (New York, 1936), pp. 149–53, at p. 152. Leonard Neidorf's recent argument that aspects of the poem date to the seventh century or earlier has been efficiently problematized by Eric Weiskott: L. Neidorf 'The Dating of *Widsið* and the Study of German Antiquity', *Neophilologus* 97 (2013), pp. 165–83, at p. 179; E. Weiskott, 'The Meter of *Widsith* and the Distant Past', *Neophilologus* 99 (2015), pp. 143–50.

[38] H. Appleton, 'The Northern World of the Anglo-Saxon *Mappa Mundi*', *Anglo-Saxon England* 47 (forthcoming), pp. 275–305, at pp. 290–4 and 299–303.

[39] Valtonen, *A Geographical Narrative*, p. 247.

[40] Valtonen, *A Geographical Narrative*, pp. 105–6, 113, 117, 119 and 122; I. Whitaker, 'Late Classical and Early Medieval Accounts of the Lapps (Sami)', *Classica et Mediævalia* 34 (1983), pp. 293–303, at pp. 284–98. See also M. Tveit, 'Bearded Women and Sea Monster: European Representations of the Far North in the Early and High Middle Ages', in S. Figenschow and M. Tveit (eds), *Myth and Magic in the Medieval High North* (Turnhout, forthcoming). The various manuscript traditions of the following texts preserve innumerable spelling variations. For the sake of ease, spellings given here are taken from the editions of the text used.

Screrefennae.[41] In the early eighth century the anonymous author of the Ravenna *Cosmographia* made multiple references to the *Scerdefennos* and *Rerefennos*.[42] In the mid-780s, Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum* (History of the Lombards) refers to the *Scritobini*.[43] The term *Scridifinni* also appears in the late eighth-century Frankish poem *Versus de Asia et de universi mundi rota* (Verses on Asia and the Wheel of the Whole World), in which a variety of northern ethnic groups are listed with little additional information.[44] Of these texts, the most likely to have been known to the Alfredian court is the *Historia Langobardorum*, which Michael Lapidge suggests was known to Bishop Asser and which Bately tentatively includes among possible sources for information found in the Old English *Orosius*.[45] However, Bately also notes the possible influence of *Getica* and the Ravenna *Cosmographia* in OE *Or*, and the most likely source for knowledge of the *Scridefinne* may well be a lost commentary which combined material from all of these sources.[46] The term also occurs in two geographical descriptions written after the ninth century. It is rendered as *Scritefingi* in the late eleventh century, in Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* (Deeds of the Bishops of Hamburg), during a geographical description strongly modelled on Latin traditions.[47] Indeed, Adam even names Paul the Deacon as a source for the *Scritefingi* in *scholium* 129.[48] Finally, it appears as *Skritfinni* in Saxo Grammaticus'

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[41] Procopius, *History of the Wars* VI.15, ed. H.B. Dewing, 6 vols (London, 1919), vol. 3, p. 418; Iordanis, *De origine actibusque Getarum* [= *Getica*], c. 4, ed. F. Giunta and A. Grillone (Rome, 1991), p. 10; *idem*, *The Gothic History of Jordanes in English Version*, c. 4, trans. C.C. Mierow (Princeton, 1915), p. 56. On the composition on these texts, see Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Dewing, vol. 1, p. ix; Iordanis, *Gothic History*, ed. Mierow, pp. 13–18 and Whitaker, 'Lapps (Sami)', pp. 284–5 and 289–90.

[42] *Ravennatis anonymi cosmographia* IV.13, in *Ravennatis anonymi cosmographia et Guidonis geographica*, Itineraria Romana 2, ed. J. Schnetz (Stuttgart, 1990), pp. 11, 53, 83 and 103. For discussion of the date of the *Cosmographia* and translation of the most relevant passages, see Whitaker, 'Lapps (Sami)', p. 294.

[43] Paulus, *Historia Langobardorum*, *MGH* I.5, ed. G. Waitz (Hanover, 1878), p. 54; *idem*, *History of the Lombards* I.5 trans. W. Foulke (Philadelphia, 1907), p. 7. For the date of the text, see R. McKitterick, 'Paul the Deacon and the Franks', *EME* 8 (1999), pp. 319–39, at p. 334.

[44] *Versus de Asia et de universi mundi rota*, CCSL 175, ed. F. Glorie, p. 448. See Valtonen, *A Geographical Narrative*, p. 119.

[45] M. Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford, 2006), p. 237; 'Asser's Reading', in T. Reuter (ed.), *Alfred the Great: Papers from the Eleventh-Centenary Conferences* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 27–47, at pp. 39–40; Bately, 'Classical Additions', p. 249.

[46] OE *Or*, ed. Bately, pp. lxi and lxvi; Bately, 'Classical Additions', pp. 249–50; Godden, '*Orosius* and its Context', pp. 13–15.

[47] Adam Bremensis, *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* IV.21 and 24–5, ed. B. Schmeidler, *MGH* (Hanover, 1917), pp. 250 and 255–6; *idem*, *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen* IV.21 and 24–5, trans. F.J. Tschan (New York, 2002), pp. 202 and 205–6. On the dating of the text of the *Gesta* and Adam's *scholia*, see Adam, *History of the Archbishops*, ed. Tschan, pp. xxvii–xxviii.

[48] Adam, *Gesta Hammaburgensis* IV.21, ed. Schmeidler, p. 250.

thirteenth-century *Gesta Danorum*, the only known attestation by a
Scandinavian, albeit one steeped in Latin learning.[49] For the sake of
clarity, the Latin variants of this term are henceforth referred to
collectively as *Scridifinni*.

In all but the *Versus*, the appearance of the name in continental
geographies is accompanied by a stylized description of the lifestyle and
habits of the groups to which it refers. Yet, as Ian Whitaker has
proven, the interdependence of the pre-ninth-century accounts varies;
all but the Ravenna Cosmographer had independent sources and offer
different details, as did Adam and Saxo.[50] Procopius and Paul the
Deacon both claim to have heard first-hand accounts from
Scandinavians. Consequently (as with the ethnonym itself), aspects of
the various descriptions superficially approach reality, although few
details are wholly unique to the Scandinavian experience.[51]
Nevertheless, the texts are linked not by the precise details they
contain, but by the *types* of information that they provide, which are
united by an interest in the lifestyle and habits of this northernmost
population. *Ohthere's Voyage* contains no information that is owed
directly to these texts, but it is also apparent that the questioning he
received from his audience was informed by a familiarity with the same
motifs.

The descriptions of the *Scridifinni* in these texts address the same
common foci, which can be divided into three broad categories:

1. **The climate and terrain of the *Scridifinni* homeland**
   All but Procopius and Saxo pass comment on the coldness of the
   environment, and Paul the Deacon, the Ravenna Cosmographer and
   Adam of Bremen all do so in connection with the *Scridifinni*. Other
   than Paul the Deacon, each author also associates the group with a
   hostile and peripheral landscape: the Ravenna Cosmographer, Adam
   and Saxo all refer to mountains, whereas Procopius also alludes to
   forests. Jordanes mentions swamps. Furthermore, all except Adam
   and Saxo refer to the phenomenon of the midnight sun in their
   descriptions of the Thule/Scandza, but this is never explicitly linked
   to the experience of the *Scridifinni*. Paul the Deacon comes the
   closest, placing his explanation of the phenomenon directly after the
   description of the *Scritobini*. Jordanes associates the phenomenon

[49] Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum: Danmarkshistorien*, preface.2, ed. K. Friis-Jensen and P.
     Zeeberg, 2 vols (Copenhagen, 2005), vol. 1, p. 84; *idem*, *The History of the Danes: Book I–IX*,
     preface.2, trans. and ed. H.E. Davidson and P. Fisher, 2 vols (Woodbridge, 1979–80), vol. 1,
     p. 9.
[50] Whitaker, 'Lapps (Sami)', p. 297.
[51] The exceptions are the garbled references to reindeer and skiing in the *Historia Langobardorum*
     and Saxo Grammaticus; see below.

and the 'alternato maerore cum gaudio' ('alternation of sorrow and joy') it causes with the *Adogit*, rather than the *Screrefennae*.[52]

2. **The *Scridifinni*'s inability to cultivate the land, leading to the importance of hunting and the predominance of game in the group's diet**

This is the most consistently expressed theme. Procopius observes that the Σκριθίφινοι do not οὔτε τι ἐδώδιμον ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἔχουσιν ('derive anything edible from the earth') as they do not αὐτοὶ γῆν γεωργοῦσιν ('till the land themselves'), whereas Jordanes states that the *Screrefennae* 'frumentorum non quaeritant' ('do not seek grain') but live on birds' eggs and the abundant game inhabiting the swamps.[53] Procopius, Jordanes, Paul and Adam all make statements to the effect that the population 'crudis agrestium animantium carnibus vescuntur' ('feed only upon the raw flesh of wild animals').[54] While not commenting on their eating habits, both the Ravenna Cosmographer and Saxo observe that the group live by hunting. Most of the authors also enlarge upon the apparent peculiarities of this hunting society: Procopius and the Ravenna Cosmographer note that women join in the hunt, whereas Paul and Saxo appear to contain attempted descriptions of skiing. Adam may also hint at this with the suggestion that the *Scritefingi* 'cursu feras preterire' ('outstrip wild beasts at running').[55]

3. **The *Scridifinni*'s use of animal skins for clothing, trade and other purposes**

Procopius notes that the Σκριθίφινοι wear no ἰμάτια (garments of cloth), instead clothing themselves in animal skins.[56] This is repeated by Paul the Deacon, who later describes a *Scritobini* fur coat made from a creature 'cervo non satis absimile' ('not very unlike a stag'), and by Adam.[57] Saxo states that the *Skritfinni* 'mercium loco quorundam animalium pellibus uti' ('use certain animal skins instead of money').[58] Jordanes is somewhat vague on this topic, simply stating that the game of the swamps is abundant enough 'satietatem ad copiam genti' ('to satisfy the needs of the people'). However, he then notes that unnamed others who dwell in *Scandza* send skins to Rome and are richly clothed in 'pellium decorum nigredine' ('darkly beautiful furs'), despite their poverty.[59]

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52 Iordanis, *Getica*, c. 4, ed. Giunta and Grillone, p. 9.
53 Procopius, *Wars* VI.15, ed. Dewing, vol. 3, pp. 418–19; Iordanis, *Getica*, c. 4, ed. Giunta and Grillone, p. 10.
54 Paulus, *Historia Langobardorum* I.5, ed. Waitz, p. 54; *idem*, *History of the Lombards* I.5, trans. Foulke, p. 7.
55 Adam Bremensis, *Gesta Hammaburgensis* IV.24, ed. Schmeidler, p. 255; *idem*, *History of the Archbishops* IV.24, trans. Tschan, p. 206.
56 Procopius, *Wars* VI.15, ed. Dewing, vol. 3, pp. 418–19.
57 Paulus, *Historia Langobardorum* I.5, ed. Waitz, p. 55. Waitz (p. 55, n. 1) suggests that this refers to a reindeer.
58 Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, preface.2, ed. Friis-Jensen, vol. 1, p. 84; *idem*, *History of the Danes*, preface.2, trans. Davidson and Fisher, vol. 1, p. 9.
59 Iordanis, *Getica*, c. 4, ed. Giunta and Grillone, p. 10.

The Ravenna Cosmographer is the only text which makes no reference to the garments of the *Scridifinni* or their neighbours. Uniquely, Procopius also observes that the babies of the Σκριθίφινοι are wrapped in skins and hung from trees for safety.

These core preoccupations can be discerned in ethnographical treatments of the denizens of the north stretching back to AD 98.[60] Tacitus' *Germania*, completed by that year, includes an account of the *Fenni*, who lived adjacent to 'silvarum ac montium' (forests and mountains), existed in 'mira feritas, foeda paupertas' ('incredible ferocity and squalid poverty'), lacked weaponry, horses and houses, and ate herbs.[61] They wore clothing made of skins and used arrows tipped with bone. Women joined men in hunting, while their children were left unprotected from wolves and storms in shelters of twisted branches.

In the accounts currently under analysis, the authors' interest in such living conditions and practices is rarely explored in any detail beyond the *Scridifinni* themselves. The main exception is Jordanes' *Getica*, in which the motifs described above are shared between those who are said to occupy the same region (*Scandza*), including the *Adogit*. In the *Historia Langobardorum*, the lifestyle of the *Scritobini* is related amid a geographical description which is otherwise more concerned with natural phenomena interspersed with references to mythology. In Procopius, the description of Θούλη (Thule) and its denizens takes the form of a digression in the midst of the history of the Ἔρουλοι (Eruli) tribe. The specific premise of these passages was to explore the lifestyle of the world's most northerly population, for whom the term *Scridifinni* had become a literary shorthand, despite its apparent Norse origins.[62] From the work of Tacitus, this portrayal was heavily influenced by classical perceptions of marginal, uncivilized people.[63] This is demonstrated by the assertion, made first by Tacitus but repeated by Procopius and Paul the Deacon, that the *Fenni*/*Scridifinni* θηριώδη τινὰ βιοτὴν ἔχουσιν ('lived a kind of life akin to that of the beasts').[64] Procopius explicitly contrasted this primitive lifestyle with other residents of Scandinavia, observing that the latter οὐδέν τι μέγα διαλλάσσουσι τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων ('do not differ very much from the rest of men').[65] Although the precise motivations for describing the group undoubtedly varied from author to author, it

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[60] Tacitus, *Germany: Germania*, ed. H.W. Benario (Warminster, 1999), p. 3.
[61] Tacitus, *Germany: Germania*, c. 46, ed. Benario, pp. 58–61.
[62] See above, n. 33.
[63] Valtonen, *A Geographical Narrative*, p. 75.
[64] Procopius, *Wars* VI.15, ed. Dewing, vol. 3, pp. 418–19.
[65] Procopius, *Wars* VI.15, ed. Dewing, vol. 3, pp. 420–1.

is clear that for each, the extreme location of this northernmost population demanded that their experiences (stylized though they may have been) be given particular attention.

Armed with this knowledge, we may now turn to Ohthere's account of the peoples of the north. A considerable amount of the report is preoccupied with the information about the lifestyle and living conditions of the *Finnas* and of Ohthere himself, who, although not Sámi, established his credentials to be questioned in line with this tradition with the disclosure that he 'ealra Norðmonna norþmest bude' ('lived northernmost of the Northmen') and that the land to his north was 'eal weste' ('all uncultivated land').[66] No other group is described in terms of their habits, beyond the observation that the Northmen and the *Cwenas* occasionally raided one another. At times the absence of such information suggests that it was simply not noted down, indicating that it did not hold the interest of the recorder. This is particularly apparent when the text notes that

> fela spella him sædon þa Beormas ægþer ge of hiera agnum lande ge of þæm landum þe ymb hie utan wæron, ac he nyste hwæt þæs soþes wæs, for þæm he hit self ne geseah

> the *Beormas* told him many stories of their own land and the lands that were around them, but [Ohthere] did not know what was true, because he didn't see it himself.[67]

Such phrasing is not out of place among the conventions of contemporary narrative literature. However, within the context of an oral report – particularly one which is likely to have been interrogative in nature – it is improbable that Ohthere would mention that he had been told such stories and not attempt to relate them, whatever his qualms about their verisimilitude; either he was discouraged from doing so, or the recorder of the account left them out. The audience appears uninterested in the *Beormas* – a people entirely unknown to the Anglo-Saxons – suggesting that they were preoccupied with another topic: the *Beormas* could only hold their attention inasmuch as they could be related to the *Finnas*. This is categorically confirmed by the sentences that precede and follow the one quoted above:

[66] OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, pp. 13–14.
[67] OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 14.

Þa Beormas hæfdon swiþe wel gebud hira land, ac hie ne dorston cuman; ac þara Terfinna land wæs eal weste, buton ðær huntan gewicodon, oþþe fisceras, oþþe fugeleras . . . Þa Finnas, him þuhte, 7 þa Beormas spræcon neah an geþeode

The *Beormas* had settled their land very well, but [Ohthere and company] dared not come in there. But the land of the *Terfinnas* was all wasteland, except where hunters, fishermen or fowlers camped . . . The *Finnas* and the *Beormas*, it seemed to him, spoke nearly the same language.[68]

Repeated references to the *Finnas* are scattered throughout the account. The *Finnas* are named on six occasions and the *Terfinnas* once over the course of six distinct passages; this compares to five references to the Northmen over three passages, and three each to the *Beormas* and *Cwenas* in their own respective passages. A number of these allusions to the *Finnas* appear to be interjections that disrupt the flow of the report. Besides the incongruous description of *Terfinna land* quoted above, we might note Ohthere's description of his journey around the northern coast of Scandinavia:

ac him wæs ealne weg weste land on þæt steorbord, butan fiscerum 7 fugelerum 7 huntum, 7 *þæt wæron eall Finnas*, 7 him wæs a widsæ on þæt bæcbord

but there was uncultivated land to his starboard the whole way, apart from fishers, fowlers and hunters, *and they were all Finnas*, and the open sea was on his port side.[69]

Similarly, in his description of *Norðmanna land*, Ohthere observes that

licgað wilde moras wið eastan 7 wið uppon, emnlange þæm bynum lande. *On þæm morum eardiað Finnas*. 7 þæt byne land is easteweard bradost

[68]   OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 14.
[69]   OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 14. My emphasis.

above and to the east wild uplands lie parallel to the cultivated land. *In these uplands the Finnas live*. And the cultivated land is broadest towards the east.[70]

In these instances, we get a sense that Ohthere had repeatedly been asked for clarification as to how the *Finnas* fitted into his account.

The type of information that is related about the *Finnas* and Ohthere's lifestyle corresponds to the major themes of the *Scridifinni* tradition. This is made clear in the language used to refer to the *Finnas* and their habitat; it is emphasized twice that the *Finnas* are 'huntan . . . oþþe fisceras oþþe fugeleras' ('hunters and fishers and fowlers') and that they occupy *weste land* (wasteland/uncultivated land), which is explicitly contrasted with the *byne land* (settled/cultivated land) in which Ohthere and the *Beormas* respectively reside.[71] As Valtonen points out, this hints at traditional medieval perceptions of the division of landscapes into the ordered lands settled and cultivated by humans and the wilderness that lay beyond their control.[72] *Finnas* are also said to occupy the *wilde moras* (wild uplands), which are likewise immediately contrasted with the *byne land*.[73] Furthermore, Ohthere's description of his reindeer herds – specifically his *stælhranas* (decoy reindeer) – quickly shifts to note that 'ða beoð swyðe dyre mid Finnum' ('they are very valuable to the *Finnas*').[74] It is consistently made clear that the *Finnas* inhabit an unforgiving landscape which they do not cultivate, that their primary occupation is the exploitation of wild animal populations in general and that reindeer are particularly important to them. Finally, the group's use of animal furs and hides is emphasized in Ohthere's description of the *gafol* (tribute) that the *Finnas* pay to him: 'þæt gafol bið on deora fellum 7 on fugela feðerum 7 hwales bane 7 on þæm sciprapum þe beoð of hwæles hyde geworht 7 of seoles' ('that tribute consists of the hides of wild animals, bird feathers, whalebone and of the ships' ropes that are made of whale- and seal-hide').[75]

In fact, the use of animal products for everyday items is a theme explored throughout the central section of *Ohthere's Voyage*. After his depiction of *Beorma land*, Ohthere launches into a detailed description of walruses, whales and the resources gained from hunting them. This segues onto a discussion of Ohthere's wealth and means, before turning back to the resources of the *Finnas*. This entire section, comprising

[70] OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 15. My emphasis.
[71] OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 14; Valtonen, *A Geographical Narrative*, p. 291.
[72] Valtonen, *A Geographical Narrative*, p. 504.
[73] OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 15.
[74] OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 15.
[75] OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 15.

around a quarter of the text, can be interpreted in the light of the scholarly interest outlined above. In particular, Ohthere notes the use of walrus- and seal-hide to make ships' ropes, stating that the aim of his voyage north was to secure the materials for this purpose. At the end of the passage, he more clearly associates the creation of these ropes with the *Finnas*, adding them to the list of commodities which *se byrdesta* (the highest born/richest) *Finnas* are required to pay in tribute.[76]

Although fuller in their detail, these contributions show a preoccupation with the same ethnographic paradigms that are found in the work of the continental authors discussed above and can therefore be broadly regarded as part of the same tradition; we must not be led to overlook this by virtue of the apparently authentic information they contain. Although we should be cautious when speculating about information that a text *does not* include, recent analyses of contemporary Sámi life have revealed the limitations of Ohthere's information. Besides hunting, fishing and trapping, some groups of Sámi extracted blubber oil for European markets while others may have been involved in farming, as agricultural terms were loaned into Sámi from Proto Norse as early as the fifth century.[77] Nor was Sámi settlement solely restricted to lands beyond the areas of Norse habitation: Roger Jørgensen argues that many Sámi lived permanently in Norse settlements in *Hálogaland*, where they were employed in metalworking and craft production.[78] Furthermore, Ohthere's account notably lacks details and motifs that we have come to expect of Old Norse accounts of the Sámi. Key among these is the ubiquitous portrayal of members of the group as inherently magical.[79] Current consensus suggests that Sámi figures were firmly embedded in Old Norse mythology by at least the tenth century, when they appear in skaldic poetry.[80]

Ohthere's Voyage contributes to the geographical tradition discussed above by adding an unprecedented level of detail to the description of

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[76] OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 15.
[77] Hansen and Olsen, *Hunters in Transition*, pp. 57–61; I. Storli, 'Ohthere and his World – A Contemporary Perspective', in Bately and Englert (eds), *Ohthere's Voyages*, pp. 76–99, at p. 97 (although see Hansen and Olsen, *Hunters in Transition*, p. 80, for an alternative explanation).
[78] R. Jørgensen, 'The Social and Material Context of the Iron Age Blacksmith in North Norway', *Acta Borealia* 29 (2012), pp. 1–34, at p. 6.
[79] C. Tolley, *Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic* (Helsinki, 2009), pp. 61–4.
[80] See, for example, G. Steinsland, 'Origin Myths and Rulership. From the Viking Age Ruler to the Ruler of Medieval Historiography: Continuity, Transformations and Innovations', in G. Steinsland, J.V. Sigurðsson, J.E. Rekdal and I.B. Beuermann (eds), *Ideology and Power in the Viking and Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2011), pp. 13–67, at p. 20. The magical powers of the Sámi are explicitly alluded to in the 1030s in a verse attributed to Sigvatr Þorðarson; see Tolley, *Shamanism*, p. 64.

the resources of the Far North and the lifestyle of its inhabitants. Not only does Ohthere apparently confirm and expand upon the audience's existing preconceptions, but he also consciously contrasts his own experience with that of the *Finnas* by making it clear that he *does* cultivate his own land and possesses wealth in domesticated livestock. This appears to depart slightly from the tradition but ultimately serves it. The recorder's incredulity at the modesty of Ohthere's means makes it clear that the passage is aligned with the same fundamental intent which can be observed from the contributions of Tacitus onwards: to contrast the lifestyle familiar to the audience with the more limited existence of the inhabitants of extreme, alien landscapes.[81] In the case of the *Finnas*, as with the *Scridifinni*, this included those who lived beyond the perceived human realm of habitation.

Furthermore, this fixation on the *Finnas* fits well with the West Saxon imperialist ideology which Francis Leneghan sees as fundamental to the production of OE *Or* and the inclusion of *Ohthere's Voyage*, extending the symbolic authority of West Saxon rulers to the furthest reaches of the human population.[82] When viewed against the backdrop of the West Saxon programme of *translatio imperii* proposed by Leneghan, it is significant that the largest innovation *Ohthere's Voyage* brings to the geographical tradition of the *Scridifinni* is the establishment of a hierarchy.[83] The *Finnas*, the northernmost residents of the known world and the most primitive in their lifestyle, pay tribute to Ohthere, a member of the northernmost people (appropriately called Northmen) who, from Ohthere's own description, could be recognized by the Anglo-Saxons as 'civilized'. In the account, Ohthere himself acknowledges that King Alfred is his *hlaford*, confirming symbolic West Saxon overlordship of the furthest extent of humanity's spread. Consequently, the most significant expansions of the geographical tradition are owed as much to ninth- or early tenth-century Anglo-Saxon ideology as they are to Ohthere's local Norse knowledge.

This line of reasoning leads us towards two conclusions. Firstly, it is clear that Ohthere's Anglo-Saxon audience, belonging to an environment which was conscious of its imperial legacy, would have had their own preconceptions of the world's northernmost population, gleaned from continental geographical traditions. They could therefore have guided Ohthere's account to address these preconceptions.[84] The examples that have been discussed, such as the frequent interjections to

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[81] See above, n. 62.
[82] Leneghan, '*Translatio imperii*', pp. 676–7.
[83] See above, n. 7.
[84] Leneghan, '*Translatio imperii*', p. 695.

relate more information regarding the *Finnas*, make it likely that this influence took place during the first of the two stages of transmission outlined at the outset of this analysis. Secondly, we might also posit that the same geographical traditions were known to the individual who completed the second stage of transmission – the incorporation of the account in OE *Or* – as the focus on the *Finnas* and their symbolic subjection to Alfred were preserved. This interpretation requires that an editorial process took place at this second stage which engaged intellectually with both *Ohthere's Voyage* and the 'base text' of OE *Or* (i.e. the same text but without the voyages of Ohthere and Wulfstan), given Leneghan's argument that the former supports the ideology of the latter.[85] The remainder of the present article explores the relationship between the two texts and the evidence that they were brought into compliance with one another.

Textual interdependence

Janet Bately and Malcolm Godden agree that *Ohthere's Voyage* and *Wulfstan's Voyage* are likely to have been interpolated into the Old English *Orosius* at some point after the translation had been completed, as they are the only two sources of information that are cited by name and at such length.[86] Furthermore, Bately has argued forcefully that the accounts were added 'after [OE *OR*'s] completion, very clumsily and by someone who lacked the author's demonstrable ability to weave new material seamlessly into his translation'.[87] She suggests that the interpolation was triggered simply by a passing reference to the Northmen in the base text and that no attempt was made to alter the account to fit its new context.[88] That *Ohthere's Voyage* was added after the description of *Germania* was completed seems likely, but this does not necessarily mean that it was inserted after the entire translation was finished. The transition from *Wulfstan's Voyage* to 'nu wille we secgan be suðan Donua þære ea ymbe Creca land [hu hit] lið' ('now we will speak about the land of the Greeks, which lies to the south of the river Danube') would be no less abrupt if it had followed either *Ohthere's Voyage* or the description of *Germania* directly.[89] Although the precise

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[85]   Leneghan, '*Translatio imperii*', p. 695.

[86]   See above, n. 16.

[87]   Bately, 'Old English *Orosius*', p. 316. See also Bately, 'Ohthere and Wulfstan', pp. 31–2; *idem*, 'Wulfstan's Voyage and his Description of *Estland*: The Text and the Language', in A. Englert and A. Trakadas (eds), *Wulfstan's Voyage: The Baltic Sea Region in the Early Viking Age as Seen from Shipboard* (Roskilde, 2009), pp. 14–28, at p. 20.

[88]   Indeed, Bately ('Ohthere and Wulfstan', p. 32) argues that there is 'no verbal link of any kind' between *Ohthere's Voyage* and OE *Or*.

[89]   OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 18.

point at which each account was added is beyond our present ability to discern, we do have the means to establish that whoever added *Ohthere's Voyage* to OE *Or* adapted each text to fit the other and was intimately familiar with the style and themes of the geographical description in OE *Or*.

There are good reasons to suspect that the text of OE *Or* anticipates the insertion of *Ohthere's Voyage*, contrary to Bately's assertions. As I argue below, the description of the *Sweon* (Svear) and their neighbours which immediately precedes the account contains information that can only have been gleaned from it. This has significant implications: if this anticipation was part of the original translation, it would imply that *Ohthere's Voyage* was inserted when the translation was first carried out. Alternatively, if the text was an interpolation, then it cannot have been copied in blindly, but was consciously incorporated. Beyond the description of the *Sweon* and their neighbours, there is no perfect correlation between the geographical description found in *OE Or* and the information provided by Ohthere. Indeed, there are some clear inconsistencies, such as OE *Or*'s distinction between North and South Danes and its references to the *Ostsæ* (the *Ost* sea), the *Osti* people and the *Burgendan*, none of which are found in Ohthere's account. There are also differences in terminology between the two texts: Ohthere introduces the term *Denemearc*, for example, on top of which the account uses differing constructions, such as *for þæm* for 'because', instead of OE *Or*'s *for þon* (*þe*).[90] However, these differences may have resulted from the initial recording of Ohthere's account, and do not definitively prove that the text was added by a different scribe. Nevertheless, as there is no conclusive evidence that knowledge of *Ohthere's Voyage* influenced the translator of OE *Or* prior to the passage in question, it is here assumed that the text *was* interpolated after the description of *Germania* was completed, albeit by someone who was intellectually engaged with the intent of both texts, as the following discussion proves.

The depiction of *Germania* in the Old English *Orosius* is almost entirely comprised of material that the translator had introduced to the text from sources other than the exemplar.[91] It follows a simple pattern of proceeding through a series of 'pivotal' peoples, naming each of the other groups that abut them and describing their relative position according to cardinal and intercardinal directions. The account then proceeds to the next pivotal point, which is chosen from among the

[90] For a more detailed discussion, see Bately, 'Wulfstan's Voyage', pp. 21–2.
[91] See above, n. 15.

surrounding peoples just noted.[92] The description of Scandinavia proceeds through the pivotal points of the *Suþdene* (South Danes), *Norðdene* (North Danes), *Osti* and *Burgendan* (Bornholmians) before reaching the *Sweon* (Svear):

> Sweon habbað be suþan him þone sæs earm Osti 7 be eastan him Sermende, 7 be norþan him ofer þa westenne is Cwenland, 7 be westannorþan him sindon Scridefinne 7 be westan Norþmenn

> The *Sweon* have the arm of the *Ost* sea to their south and to their east the Sarmatians, and to the north of them over/throughout the wastelands is the land of the *Cwenas*, and to the north-west of them are the *Scridefinne* and to the west the Northmen.[93]

Of this passage, the relative position of both the *Sermende* and *Ostsæ* can be deduced from their previous appearances in the text. The *Scridefinne*, *Cwenas*, and Northmen, on the other hand, are named only in relation to the *Sweon* and comprise three of the four groups that *Ohthere's Voyage* describes in any detail (the fourth being the *Beormas*). None of the traditions that discuss the *Scridifinni* provide information that would place them *be westannorðan* (to the north-west of) the *Sweon*. Only Jordanes refers to the *Suehans/Suetidi* (the ancestors of the Svear) and does not give their position within *Scandza*. Two centuries later, Adam of Bremen would place them *a borea* (to the north) and, by implication (due to their association with the Riphaean Mountains in *scholium* 137), *ab oriente* (to the east) of the *Sueones* (Svear).[94] It is not impossible that some unknown tradition preserved the information that the *Scridifinni* lay to the north-west, although the reputation they enjoyed as the world's northernmost people suggests otherwise. Nevertheless, it is unnecessary to postulate an unknown source for this information when it is provided by the source that follows immediately afterwards. Ohthere's account make it clear that 'þæt land sie swiþe lang norþ þonan, ac hit is eal weste, buton on feawum stowum styccemælum wiciað Finnas' ('that land stretches far north from there, but it is all

wasteland, except in a few places where the *Finnas* camp').[95] Ohthere had *Finnas* to his starboard as he sailed around the northernmost coast of Europe and he brings them into the description of his lifestyle as the northernmost of all Northmen. Although he does refer in passing to *Finnas* occupying the uplands to the east of *Norðmanna land* and later states that 'on oðre healfe þæs moras [is] Sweoland' ('on the other side of the uplands is the land of the *Sweon*'), there is little doubt that his audience would have understood that the *Finnas* dwelt to the north of *Norðmanna land* and thus north-west of the *Sweon*, as the passage in OE *Or* makes clear.[96] The use of the term *Scridefinne* in this passage, rather than one of the terms used by Ohthere, may have been a conscious decision intended to explicitly link the terminology and traditions familiar to the Anglo-Saxon audience with the information provided by Ohthere. It also confirms that the author of this passage was familiar with the geographical traditions discussed above, thus making it clear why the account's extensive description of the *Finnas* was retained, as it was recognized as a staple of continental geographical traditions and, in keeping with the aim of OE *Or*, could be used to update Orosius' original work.

The reference to *Cwenland* in this passage is also likely to be owed to Ohthere's account. The *Cwenas* (ON *Kve(i)nir*) are entirely unknown from continental geographical traditions, unless a reference to the *Uinouiloth* in Jordanes' *Getica* is read as a corruption of proposed forms such as *cainothioth or *quinovilos (which Valtonen finds unlikely).[97] There is, however, a reference to *Cwensæ* (the *Cwen* sea) as the northernmost boundary of *Germania*, which matches the form *Cwenland* in this passage (in contrast to Ohthere's *Cwena land*). Some unknown tradition may have been responsible for the suggestion that *Germania* ended at *Cwensæ*; this cannot be derived from *Ohthere's Voyage*, which makes no mention of the sea in connection with the *Cwenas*. Whether or not the original author of OE *Or* believed that *Cwensæ* derived its name from a resident population is unclear; it is possible that the appearance of the form *Cwenland* in the passage was driven by analogy with *Cwensæ* and a desire, once again, to connect a pre-existing Anglo-Saxon concept with the new information provided by Ohthere. How the concept of *Cwensæ* had entered OE *Or* in the first place, as well as its precise meaning to Anglo-Saxons, remains a mystery. It may have rendered a Latin term found in the sources of

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[95] OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 14.
[96] Bately (OE *Or*, p. lxvii) argues that such deductions are typical of the description of *Germania*, quoting the type 'x is north of y and has z on its west; therefore z must be north-west of y'.
[97] Valtonen, *A Geographical Narrative*, p. 107.

one of the translators. Bately, for one, argues that it translated the concept of the *oceanus septentionalis* in Orosius' text or may otherwise have been invented by the translator of OE *Or*.[98] It may also result from a confusion of *Cwenas* with OE *cwen* (woman), assisted by depictions of all-female or female-led Scandinavian societies dating back to Tacitus (and also found in Adam's *Gesta*), although this would require that the *Cwenas* were known about, albeit in some corrupted or half-remembered form, before the description of *Germania* was written.[99] Whether or not the Anglo-Saxons had a prior understanding of the term *Cwenland*, it is clear that their position in relation to the *Sweon* could easily be deduced from *Ohthere's Voyage*, which states that 'ðonne is toemnes þæm land suðeweardum . . . Sweoland, oþ þæt land norðeweard; 7 toemnes þæm lande norðeweardum Cwena land' ('then *Sweoland* is alongside the southern part of the land up to the northern part; and alongside that land in the north is *Cwena land*').[100]

Finally, the suggestion that the Northmen lived to the west of the *Sweon* was almost certainly informed by Ohthere's account. Ohthere's references to *Norðmenn* and *Norðmanna land* have attracted a great deal of attention, viewed by many as particularly early attestations of the concepts of 'Norwegians' and 'Norway'.[101] Although we cannot be sure of Ohthere's understanding of the term *Norðmenn*, there is no doubt that the concept he describes differs from the connotations attached to the term in the literature of ninth-century western Europe – and consequently from the preconceptions of his audience. Ohthere's *Norðmanna land* is 'swyþe lang 7 swyðe smæl' ('very long and very narrow'), comprising a strip of cultivated land bounded by the coast to the west and 'wilde moras' ('wild uplands') to the east.[102] More significantly, it is clearly distinct from *Sweoland*, which lies 'on oðre healfe þæs mores' ('on the other side of the upland'), and *Denemearce*, which was to port as Ohthere sailed south from *Sciringes healh*.[103] From its appearance in Latin continental texts in the eighth century, there is little indication that the term *Nordomanni* (Northmen) referred to a group that was distinct from the *Dani* (Danes). As Paul Gazzoli and Ildar Garipzanov have both noted, the use of *Nordomanni* in the *Royal*

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[98] Bately, 'Ohthere and Wulfstan', p. 34.
[99] The idea of a genuine etymological link between ON *Kvenir* and some form deriving from PGmc *kvēniz* (woman, wife) has long been dismissed, but this does not mean that the two could not be confused by subsequent Germanic speakers. Valtonen, *A Geographical Narrative*, pp. 76–7.
[100] OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 15.
[101] See, for example, Krag, 'Early Unification', p. 188; Anderson, *Samlingen av Norge*, p. 50; Lunden, 'Norwegian National Identity', p. 27; Helle, 'Early Viking Age', pp. 239–41.
[102] OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 15.
[103] OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 15.

Frankish Annals had generic connotations, referring to Scandinavians as a whole, of which the *Dani* and *Sueones* were simply sub-groups.[104] A sense of this can even be found in the Ravenna *Cosmographia*, which notes that 'Dania modo Nordomannorum dicitur patria' ('the land of the *Nordomanni* is now called *Dania*').[105]

Similarly, in contemporary Old English texts such as the common stock of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, *Norðmenn* is used interchangeably with the term *Dene* (Danes) and other generic designations, such as *wicingas* (pirates), to refer to the Vikings: raiders of mostly Scandinavian descent who operated in an Insular context.[106] This is apparent from the first appearance of the terms in the common stock: the entry for 787 states that 'on his dagum coman ærest.iii. scipu Norðmanna; . . . þæt wæron þe ærestan scipu deniscra manna þe Angelcynnes land gesohtan' ('in these days came for the first time three ships of Northmen; . . . those were the first ships of Danish men who sought the land of the English people').[107] Clare Downham suggests that the terms remained interchangeable in the various continuations of the *Chronicle* until at least the late tenth century, although the evidence for this is more ambiguous. The earliest that *Norðmenn* and *Dene* appear to come into conflict is in a *Chronicle* entry for 942, but Downham argues that this is due to a misreading of the A, C and D versions of the text, whereas the B version reveals that, once again, the terms were interchangeable.[108] The closest the *Chronicle* comes to stating a distinction between Danes and Northmen before this is in the A-version entry for 920, which refers to 'ealle þa þe on Norþhymbrum

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[104] P. Gazzoli, '*Denemearc, Tanmaurk ala*, and *confinia Nordmannorum*: The *Annales regni Francorum* and the Origins of Denmark', *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 7 (2011), pp. 29–43, at p. 36; I.H. Garipzanov, 'Frontier Identities: The Carolingian Frontier and the *Gens Danorum*', in I.H. Garipzanov, P.J. Geary and P. Urbańczyk (eds), *Franks, Northmen, and Slavs: Identities and State Formation in Early Medieval Europe* (Turnhout, 2008), pp. 113–44, at pp. 124–5.

[105] *Cosmographia* IV.13, ed. Schnetz, p. 53.

[106] For a broader discussion of these instances, see C. Downham, '"Hiberno Norwegians" and "Anglo-Danes": Anachronistic Ethnicities and Viking Age England', *Medieval Scandinavia* 19 (2009), pp. 139–69, at pp. 141–3. For consideration of the controversial term 'Viking', see *idem*, *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland: The Dynasty of Ívarr to A.D. 1014* (Edinburgh, 2008), p. xv.

[107] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* 787 B: *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS B*, The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition 4, ed. S. Taylor (Cambridge, 1993), p. 23. The A version omits the reference to the *Norðmenn*.

[108] Downham, 'Anachronistic Ethnicities', pp. 142–4. This depends on how a particular line of poetry in the *Chronicle* is parsed. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* 942 D: *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS D*, The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition 6, ed. G.P. Cubbin (Cambridge, 1996), p. 43 has 'Dæne wæron æror under Norðmannum nyde gebæded' (the *Dene* were previously oppressed in need under the *Norðmenn*), whereas the editor of *ASC* 942 B: *Chronicle MS B*, ed. Taylor, p. 53 favours 'Deoraby – Denum wæron æror, under Norðmannum, nede gebæded' (Derby, which was previously oppressed in need under the *Dene*, under the *Norðmenn*), a typical form of poetic repetition.

bugeaþ, ægþer ge Englisce ge Denisce ge Norþmen ge oþre' ('all those who live in Northumbria, both English and Danish and Northmen and others').[109] This may simply be a rhetorical device related as much to the 'rule of three' as to a perceived ethnic distinction. Yet it is worth noting that the A version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is contained in the Winchester manuscript (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 173), which was updated for the period 892–924 by the same scribe who produced the Lauderdale manuscript of OE *Or*; it is tempting to think that this scribe was aware of Ohthere's distinction between *Dene* and *Norðmenn* and incorporated this knowledge into the annal entry.[110] However, even this entry does not refer to the Northmen in terms that could place them in the same part of Scandinavia as Ohthere does. Prior to 1028, when the *Chronicle* begins to link individuals to *Nor[ð] wegon*, the Northmen are only described in terms of their ultimate origins on one occasion other than in *Ohthere's Voyage* and the passage that precedes it – and *Norðmanna land* is not mentioned.[111] In all other instances there was no need to be more specific, as the term *Norðmenn* itself provided all the information that was necessary for the rhetoric of Anglo-Saxon writers in the ninth and tenth centuries; to them, the Vikings were simply a faceless race of 'others' who came from the distant north.

The only notable omission from this passage in OE *Or* is any reference to the *Beormas*, another group named by Ohthere of which his audience apparently had no prior knowledge – but this absence is easily explained. This passage is centred on the pivotal point of the *Sweon*, but nothing in Ohthere's account could be used to relate the *Beormas* to them. Firstly, Ohthere pleads ignorance of any knowledge of layout of the land of the *Beormas* beyond the estuary where he encountered them and (as observed above) may have been discouraged from relating what he had gleaned from the *Beormas* themselves. Secondly, it would have been hard enough to relate the location of Ohthere's encounter with the *Beormas* to *Norðmanna land* itself, let alone *Sweoland*. We are told only that Ohthere reached the *Beormas* by sailing north from his homeland

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[109] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* 920 A: *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS A*, The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition 3, ed. J. Bately (Cambridge 1986), p. 69.

[110] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS A*, ed. Bately, p. xxxii.

[111] For examples of *Nor[ð]wegon*, see *ASC* 1028, 1030, 1048–9, 1058 and 1066 D: *Chronicle MS D*, ed. Cubbin, pp. 64, 67–8, 76 and 80; isolated instances are also found in the C and E versions. The point of origin referred to is found in the 'northern' recension of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (versions D, E and F), which for 787 refers to *Hæreðaland* (probably ON *Hǫrðaland*); *ASC* 787 D: *Chronicle MS D*, ed. Cubbin, p. 16. This addition may date to *c.*1000 and refers to a petty kingdom in western Norway, not to *Norðmanna land* as a whole – nothing indicates that the chronicler knew where *Hæreðaland* was within Scandinavia. Downham, 'Anachronistic Ethnicities', p. 151.

in northern *Norðmanna land* for six days, then east for *feower dagum* (four days), then south for *fif dagum* (five days).[112] No detail connects the *Beormas* to *Sweoland*; at the very least, the author of the passage would be likely to conclude that the *Cwenas* lay between *Sweoland* and the *Beormas*, thus rendering the latter unworthy of comment in a description of the neighbours of the *Sweon*.

Ohthere and Germania

If OE *Or* was shaped to fit *Ohthere's Voyage* by incorporating information from the account itself, we must also consider the possibility that whoever added the account was willing to alter both texts to bring them into some form of compliance. The suggestion that Ohthere's account may have been trimmed or otherwise edited is not unusual, although such proposals rarely address the stage of transmission when such editing is likely to have occurred.[113] Valtonen, for example, has argued that the voyage south of *Sciringes healh* shows signs of being 'highly edited'.[114] Besides the aforementioned interjection regarding the origins of the *Engle*, Bately suggests that the place name *Gotland* (northern Jutland) has been altered from the form used by Ohthere. Stephen Harris argues that this alteration was intended to comply with Orosius' assertion that *Dacia*, which was often conflated with the land of the Danes in medieval geographies, is *et Gothia* (also *Gothia*).[115] This change could have occurred either at the point of recording or interpolating, although it is significant that it requires a knowledge of Orosius. Other changes can more confidently be laid at the door of the interpolator. Whitaker observes that Ohthere's description of his encounter with the *Beormas* does not flow well and may be missing sentences.[116] Having described the voyage, Ohthere relates that he turned into a large river, beyond which 'þæt land was eall gebun' ('the land was widely cultivated'), in contrast to the wastelands of the *Finnas* that he had passed up until that point.[117] The account then notes that 'þa Beormas hæfdon swiþe wel gebud hira land' ('the *Beormas* had cultivated their land very well').[118] The *Beormas* appear abruptly and it

[112] OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 14.
[113] Bately, 'Wulfstan's Voyage', p. 21; Valtonen, *A Geographical Narrative*, p. 484; Whitaker, 'Ohthere's Account Reconsidered', p. 4.
[114] Valtonen, *A Geographical Narrative*, p. 345.
[115] Orose, *Histoire (Contre les Païens)* I.2, ed. M.P. Arnaud-Lindet, 3 vols (Paris, 1990), vol. 1, p. 25; OE *Or*, ed. Bately, p. 195; S. Harris, *Race and Ethnicity in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (New York, 2003), p. 85.
[116] Whitaker, 'Ohthere's Account Reconsidered', p. 4.
[117] OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 14.
[118] OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 14.

is never explicitly stated that the *gebun* land that Ohthere had encountered across the river was their home, although it can be inferred. Furthermore, Ohthere later reports an exchange with members of the group, but any explanation of how or when this happened – especially as Ohthere and his crew 'ne dorston þæron cuman' ('did not dare venture [into *Beorma land*]') – is absent.[119]

Such passages hint at material left out of the final version of the account, although not all edits are so obvious. Nevertheless, an analysis of the type of information contained in *Ohthere's Voyage* suggests that the account was edited to be brought into agreement with the rest of the geographical description in OE *Or*, while at the same time care was taken to preserve the native Scandinavian perspective that gave the account its authenticity. This becomes clear when we consider the account alongside the passage that prefaces it. As noted, this passage extends the style of the description of *Germania* in OE *Or* by treating the *Sweon* as a pivotal point. As Valtonen has observed, *Norðmanna land* also acts as a pivotal point.[120] It is established at the very outset of the text that Ohthere is a Northman and all subsequent peoples or lands are referred to in relation to either him or *Norðmanna land* specifically. We are also told at the outset that the *Finnas* live to the north of him; we later find out that the *Beormas* live fifteen days sail to the north, east and west, on the far side of the *weste land*; *Sweoland* is the beyond the *moras* to the east of *Norðmanna land*, 'suðeweardum . . . oþ þæt land norðeweard' ('from the south of that land up to the north'); and the *Cwenas* live over the eastern *moras* from northern *Norðmanna land*.[121] The northern limit of *Norðmanna land* is *Halgoland*, the southern is *Sciringes healh*. To the south lies *Denemearc* and an arm of the ocean, over which lie *Gotland* and *Sillende* and a variety of different peoples.

The two voyages Ohthere describes are the largest stylistic departures from the base text and are perhaps the clearest window onto Ohthere's interests as a sailor. They grant us an invaluable glimpse of Norse geographical perceptions of the North Sea world centuries before the latter would once again find expression in texts such as *Historia Norwegie*.[122] Nevertheless, their appearance in the text as we know it fulfils the task of orienting the lands Ohthere passed in relation to *Norðmanna land*. Furthermore, they are explicitly aligned with the aims

[119] OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 14.
[120] Valtonen, *A Geographical Narrative*, p. 482.
[121] OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 15.
[122] *Historia Norwegie*, ed. I. Ekrem and L.B. Mortensen and trans. P. Fisher (Copenhagen, 2003), pp. 52–75.

of this part of OE *Or*: namely to list the rough geography and, most importantly, the peoples of the known world and relate them to one another. Thus, a nautical travelogue is pressed into a primarily ethnographic mould. Ohthere's initial motivation for sailing north was to 'fandian hu longe þæt land norþryhte læge, oþþe hwæðer ænig mon be norðan þæm westenne bude' ('test how long that land stretched northwards and whether any people lived north of the wastelands').[123] This prompts a geographical description of the northern coast of Scandinavia and its inhabitants. That this expression of intent may have been introduced by an editor is indicated by Ohthere's subsequent change in motivation (twenty-five lines later in Bately's edition), where it is claimed that 'swiþost he for ðider . . . for þæm horshwælum' ('he travelled there mainly for the walruses' – i.e. for their hides and tusks).[124] This statement heralds a switch in the narrative from an interest in geography to a description of the fauna of the extreme north and the lifestyle of its inhabitants; it therefore also seems to preface the information that follows it. Ohthere's primary motivation for sailing north is unclear, although the observation that he presented his audience with a walrus tusk may hint at the true reason. In either case, it is clear that the editor of the text embraced the voyages as a way to frame the narrative in terms that brought it in line with geographical traditions.

If the description of the voyages is included, information relating to the shape of Scandinavia and the position of its inhabitants relative to *Norðmanna land* occupies close to two-thirds of the account. Information that is related to the lifestyle of Ohthere and the *Finnas* takes up a further third, leaving only sparse details (such as the tit-for-tat raiding of the *Cwenas* and Northmen) that belong to neither category. If Ohthere's account ever contained more information that was secondary to the predominant interests of the interpolator, it is likely that it was discarded as superfluous.

Assuming that *Ohthere's Voyage* was inserted after the description of *Germania* was completed, the interpolator's anticipatory addition to OE *Or* bridges the gap between the Scandinavian pivotal points of the base text and the pivotal point of *Norðmanna land*. The *Sweon* were the only group mentioned in relation to the previous pivotal point (the *Burgendan*) who also appeared in *Ohthere's Voyage*. Furthermore, although Ohthere refers to *Denemearc*, he makes no reference to the division OE *Or* makes between *Suþdene* and *Norðdene*, and his account makes it clear that other people lie between the Northmen and the

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[123] *Historia Norwegie*, ed. and trans. Ekrem, Mortensen and Fisher, p. 14.
[124] *Historia Norwegie*, ed. and trans. Ekrem, Mortensen and Fisher, p. 14.

Winedum 7 Seaxum (Wends and Saxons), the only other groups to appear in both Ohthere's account and OE *Or*.[125] The interpolator of *Ohthere's Voyage* clearly seized upon the convenient reference to the *Sweon* in the base text to provide the link to the new material. The *Sweon* became a new pivotal point: references to the 'þone sæs earm Osti' and the *Sermende* were drawn from the information already provided, whereas the allusions to *Cwenland*, the *Scridefinne* and the Northmen were gleaned from Ohthere's account.[126] The description of *Germania* then progresses to the next pivotal point: Ohthere's Northmen. It is difficult to imagine that the sailor himself would have delivered an account that so conveniently fit the text into which it was ultimately incorporated; an editorial process is the most likely possibility.

Yet if the interpolator was prepared to shape and trim superfluous material, we must conclude that most or all of what remains was considered integral to the interpolation of the account in the first place. Why, then, was it important to preserve the text of *Ohthere's Voyage* as a record of an oral report, rather than integrating it seamlessly? The simplest reason was to convey authenticity by attributing new information to a named authority, a practice commonplace enough in contemporary literature. We need look no further than OE *Or* for examples; the phrase *Orosius sæde/cwæð* (Orosius said) is repeated frequently throughout the text, and Bately suggests that the account's *Ohthere sæde* and the *Wulfstan sæde* of the following passage were consciously modelled on this formula from the base text.[127] Within Ohthere's account itself, information about the *Beormas* was omitted by the recorder for the ostensible reason that 'he nyste hwæt þæs soþes wæs, for þæm he hit self ne geseah' ('[Ohthere] didn't know what was true, because he didn't see it himself').[128] Besides allowing the editor to align Ohthere's motivations with those of OE *Or*, the convenient framing of the voyages added a level of detail and perspective that only enhanced this sense of authenticity. Consequently, we not only find an emphasis on sailing times and conditions, but also on Ohthere's personal observations, such as his interjection that the 'swyðe mycel sæ' ('very large sea') south of *Sciringes healh* 'is bradre þonne ænig man ofer seon mæge' ('is broader than any person can see across').[129] Details such as the *Cwenas* raiding the Northmen contribute yet more colour to the ensemble.

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[125] OE *Or* I.i, ed. Bately, pp. 13 and 16.
[126] OE *Or* I.i, ed. Bately, p.13.
[127] Bately, 'Ohthere and Wulfstan', p. 26.
[128] OE *Or* I.i, ed. Bately, p. 14.
[129] OE *Or* I.i, ed. Bately, p. 16.

The success of the voyage as a device for conveying authenticity is indicated by its subsequent appearance in *Wulfstan's Voyage*. As Judith Jesch and Przemysław Urbańczyk both observe, *Wulfstan's Voyage* appears much more to be a composite of information from different sources – some apparently based on local knowledge, others drawn from centuries-old geographical traditions.[130] The beginning of the account is framed as a voyage from *Hæþum* 'oð Wislemuðan' ('to the mouth of the Vistula'), although it lacks the observations that make *Ohthere's Voyage* so compelling.[131] The information it presents about the lands lying to the port and starboard are drawn from a broader knowledge than the voyage described alone could have provided.[132] It therefore seems likely that the device of the voyage was inserted to unify information gained from a variety of sources with a veneer of the same authenticity which *Ohthere's Voyage* effortlessly conveys. The device is quickly abandoned in favour of a more traditional ethnographic description of the *Estan*. It is likely that the inspiration for framing the account as a voyage came from *Ohthere's Voyage* itself, particularly given that Wulfstan's account begins where Ohthere's ends, in *Hæþum*. Given that the inclusion of *Wulfstan's Voyage* in OE *Or* is not attested in the Lauderdale manuscript, *Ohthere's Voyage* might already have been added to the Orosius before itself becoming the model for *Wulfstan's Voyages*.

Additionally, the report of Ohthere's exchange could be moulded to ideologies present in ninth-century Wessex in general and OE *Or* in particular. As Leneghan has argued, there may have been ideological value in leaving the structure of *Ohthere's Voyage* intact. For example, the voyage 'foregrounds the mercantile ambitions of Wessex', placing Alfred at the centre of a trade network and emphasizing his role as a friend to wealthy foreign traders.[133] The nautical vantage point of the account recalls the maritime Insular perspective which, as Helen Appleton points out, is uniquely evident on the Anglo-Saxon *mappa mundi*.[134] Besides this, we have the aforementioned symbolic extension of West Saxon authority over both Ohthere and the lands he describes. The geographical description in OE *Or* makes no claims about the political status of the peoples it names – no information is given about rulers or the territories they control. This undoubtedly facilitated the

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[130] J. Jesch, 'Who was Wulfstan?', in Englert and Trakadas (eds), *Wulfstan's Voyage*, pp. 29–36, at p. 32; P. Urbańczyk, 'On the Reliability of Wulfstan's Report', in Englert and Trakadas (eds), *Wulfstan's Voyage*, pp. 43–7, at p. 45.

[131] OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 16.

[132] Jesch, 'Who was Wulfstan?', p. 31.

[133] Leneghan, '*Translatio imperii*', pp. 676–7.

[134] Appleton, 'The Anglo-Saxon *Mappa Mundi*', pp. 283–4.

perception of symbolic West Saxon overlordship of those peoples, as any inconvenient kings who might detract from it are not even mentioned. *Ohthere's Voyage* continues this trend, with two exceptions: the *Finnas* are said to pay tribute to Ohthere, and Ohthere is described as 'mid þæm fyrstum mannum on þæm lande' ('among the foremost men in the land').[135] As noted above, these instances enhance, rather than deny, West Saxon overlordship, as we are explicitly told that Alfred is Ohthere's lord.

In this regard the interests of modern historians are frustrated by those of the account's earliest redactors. We might wish that *Ohthere's Voyage* provided us with some evidence for contemporary Scandinavian politics – confirmation of the elusive (or illusive) Haraldr *hárfagri* (Fairhair), for example.[136] Yet even if Ohthere's report originally contained political details of this nature (which cannot be determined one way or the other), those details may have clashed with the imperial ideology outlined above. *Wulfstan's Voyage*, on the other hand, shows no compliance with this model. Both the *Burgendan* and the *Estan* are said to have their own kings, and the lands to port are explicitly referred to as territories that *hyrað to* (are controlled by) *Denemearc* or the *Sweon*.[137] *Ohthere's Voyage* can therefore be easily connected to the broader intent of the geographical description in OE *Or*; *Wulfstan's Voyage*, on the other hand, is somewhat more incongruous, perhaps revealing it to be a later addition.

Conclusions

The analysis presented in this article reveals the extent to which *Ohthere's Voyage* was shaped by its ninth-century Anglo-Saxon context, whatever genuine Scandinavian knowledge it may have contained. To modern historians, *Ohthere's Voyage* is a puzzle piece to be fitted into our broader understanding of Viking Age Scandinavia – a datapoint whose relevance is dictated by the knowledge we have garnered from other sources. It was no different to the Anglo-Saxons. At both of the stages of transmission discussed above, the information Ohthere provided was shaped to slot into the preconceptions and ideologies of its audience. Their awareness of a wild northern population known as the *Scridefinne* coloured their understanding of Ohthere's *Finnas* and led

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[135] OE *Or* I.1, ed. Bately, p. 15.

[136] Valtonen, *A Geographical Narrative*, pp. 407, 478 and 509 is particularly bemused by the absence of any reference to Haraldr, concluding that the information must once have been present, but was discarded. See also Lund, 'Denemearc', p. 167.

[137] OE *Or* I.1, p. 16. For a discussion of the term, see Bately, 'Wulfstan's Voyage', p. 24.

them to interrogate the sailor about the topics that had preoccupied the continental writers from whom they had gained their knowledge. When the account was edited to prepare it for insertion into OE *Or*, this information was preserved as a new witness to the tradition and in keeping with the translator's aim to update Orosius's geographical description with new information. For reasons such as this, *Ohthere's Voyage* cannot be separated from OE *Or*. The two texts were altered to be brought broadly into accord with one another. Ohthere's account was not blindly copied in but added to enhance the ideological purposes of the base text, primary among which was the symbolic extension of West Saxon authority over the known world, forming part of a perceived *translatio imperii* from the successors of Charlemagne to Alfred and his offspring.

Finally, this analysis allows us to draw a number of conclusions about the individual who included *Ohthere's Voyage* in OE *Or*. This individual was acquainted with continental geographical traditions, as he or she made reference to the *Scridefinne* and preserved the level of detail regarding the *Finnas* that had made it into the initial report of Ohthere's account. The interpolator may have been familiar with Orosius' original Latin text, if he or she was responsible for substituting 'Gotland' for the form that Ohthere is more likely to have spoken. He or she was certainly intimately familiar with the traditions, motivations and ideologies that informed the translation of OE *Or*. Janet Bately argues that *Ohthere's Voyage* was blindly copied into the text after it had been completed because she can detect no attempt to integrate it into OE *Or*.[138] The arguments offered above reveal that, on the contrary, the information found prior to *Ohthere's Voyage* can only have come from it. She argues that of the many sources the translator of OE *Or* drew upon for the description of *Germania*, only *Ohthere's Voyage* and *Wulfstan's Voyage* were preserved in full; yet it is clear that *Ohthere's Voyage* was shaped to bring it in line with this section of the base text.[139] This far from proves that the interpolator of *Ohthere's Voyage* and the translator of OE *Or* were one and the same. However, the unavoidable conclusion of the present analysis is that the interpolator, whoever he or she may have been, belonged to the same cultural and intellectual milieu as both the audience that had witnessed Ohthere's report and the translator of OE *Or*. This suggests that *Ohthere's Voyage* was a part of OE *Or* from a very early stage in the text's history. Besides providing a bridge between the Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse worlds, *Ohthere's Voyage* offers a tangible vision of the geographical

[138] Bately, 'Ohthere and Wulfstan', p. 31.
[139] Bately, 'Ohthere and Wulfstan', p. 31.

understanding of the Anglo-Saxon literary elite of the ninth and tenth centuries and their intimate familiarity with Latin traditions.

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