This hefty 862-page volume is the fifth instalment of the new Italian edition of Snorri Sturlson's *Heimskringla*, the best-known among the old Norse kings' sagas and a true testament to Sangriso's dedication and scholarship.

This scientifically flawless volume contains the edition of the *Óláfs saga Helga,* a pivotal element in the structure of the *Heimskringla* and its longest section, focused on the life and deeds of Óláfr Haraldsson, later known as Saint Óláf and R*ex Perpetuus Norwegie.* Far from being a simple biography of an outstanding king, this saga also provides a deep insight into Nordic society, as well as captivating glimpse of its everyday life. Institutions, warfare, medicine, religious beliefs: several facets of Nordic life have been portrayed in Snorri's lines, in a fascinating pageant of lively details.

The importance of this section of the *Heimskringla,* however, goes well beyond its nature as mere "historical source", since the text includes a remarkable collection of 168 inserts of skaldic poetry. Many of these are primary sources *vis-à-vis* original authors such as Sigvatr Þórðarson and Ottar *svarti*, whose poetic production had been largely preserved in the text of the medieval saga.

As done in Sangriso's previous instalments of the *Haralds saga gráfeldar,* this volume too spans over three chapters, the first being basically a long foreword to the translation, in this fifth volume once more based on Bjarni Aðalbjanarson's 2002 edition. In the foreword Sangriso explores the roots of Olaf's sanctity and the development of his cult, fostered by the Church, which exploited the older mystique of the "holy king" as a way to strengthen its presence in a formerly pagan environment.

Nevertheless, Snorri's narration doesn't seem excessively biased and his take on the figure of the king is complex and multifaceted. What the reader is getting here lies far from a bombastic hagiography of "saint". It's rather the life of a man whose violent behaviour is not rhetorically concealed, though his bravery and devotion are frequently praised. In this larger scheme, therefore, Olaf's Christianity is just one step in his quest for royal power, rather than the outcome of some divine inspiration.

The second chapter is the pivotal element of the whole book, as occurred already in the *Haralds saga gráfeldar,* although the *Óláfs saga Helga* is way longer. A rich critical

apparatus of footnotes is again a testament to the curator's philological struggle and provides some very useful and welcome clues about the historical background of the saga. Once again, the fluency of the translation is praiseworthy, which makes this reading extremely pleasant, rewarding, and almost as intriguing as a well-written novel.

The third chapter is about poetry in the *Óláfs saga Helga.* Here the 168 poetic inserts are extracted from the text, dissected word by word, and sometimes preceded by a short foreword about their authors and their biographies. Lastly, this section is followed by an index of places; it is an extremely valuable asset for the full comprehension and appreciation of the saga itself. Unfortunately, the volume lacks the guidance of one or more maps for a visual location of the same places, and this is perhaps the weakest point of the whole edition. A few geographical plates, indeed, would have pleased all those readers who might feel a bit lost in Olaf's peregrinations.

Once more, in this book, Sangriso proves his high-level scholarship and when the reader gets into his long (and at times intimidating) footnotes, s/he feels confident that his hand has been guided by a vast and reliable knowledge of the subject. Unlike the third volume of the *Heimskringla,* which I previously reviewed for *Nordicum-Mediterraneum,* Snorri's text spans here over a large portion of the book, thus creating a good balance between eminently scholarly sections and pages that might appeal, instead, to any casual reader.

However, in this volume too, the analysis of the poetical inserts is clearly addressed to a small élite of specialists, who must be well-versed in Germanic philology. Other, more general readers, yet, can be equally pleased by the fluency of the translation and the captivating flavour of Old-Norse epic that, sometimes, gleams powerfully through Snorri's words. This Olaf's saga is actually highly recommended to any Medieval historian, insofar as it is a valuable primary source with regard to several aspects of 11th-century everyday life and a cherry-picking of marvels from that time and age.