

# Can we reconstruct the medieval liturgy of St Magnus?

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*NOTE. Since writing this article, I have established, through a metrical analysis of the respective Latin texts, that the rhymed Office of St Magnus (Nova mundo, as found in the Aberdeen, Roskilde and Lund Breviaries) was modelled on the Office of St Thomas of Canterbury (Studens livor). The modelling is so close that it is possible to sing almost the whole of the St Magnus Office using the music of the St Thomas Office. This has guided my work in preparing parts of the Office for performance by the Orkney Schola. Performances to date have taken place at St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall (14 April 2016); at the St Magnus Centre, Kirkwall (15 April 2016 and 28 July 2017); at St Magnus Church, Birsay (17 April 2017); and as part of the BBC Radio Orkney programme Tullimentan, broadcast on 25 October 2017.*

I don't think we should kid ourselves. We haven't *re-created* the past here. The past is gone. It can never be re-created. What we've done is *reconstruct* the past – or at least a version of the past.<sup>1</sup>

Magnus Erlendson, one of the Norse earls of Orkney, was killed on the island of Egilsay, by order of his cousin Håkon, on 16 April in or around 1117.<sup>2</sup> The principal surviving sources for the life of the earl claim to be based on the work of one Master Robert, including a sermon preached on the twentieth anniversary of Magnus' death.<sup>3</sup> This indicates that Magnus had come to be recognised as a saint by around 1137. At about the same time, the cathedral in Kirkwall (Orkney) was founded as his shrine; 16 April (the '*Natale*') was celebrated as his principal Feast, and there was a lesser Feast commemorating the Translation of his relics on 13 December. The Magnus liturgy – that is, the succession of church services sung in Latin on those Feast days – has, in the past, attracted antiquarian and literary

<sup>1</sup> Crichton 1991, p. 123.

<sup>2</sup> Pálsson and Edwards 1988, pp. 91–5. Attempts to determine the year in which the martyrdom took place have proved inconclusive. The evidence from saga literature can be found in Guðmundsson 1965, pp. 105–6, 111, 318, 361, 363, 369. These and other conflicting sources of evidence are laid out in detail in Anderson 1992, vol. 2, pp. 160–62. The most recent historian of Orkney states simply: 'The year is unknown since the saga does not provide us with good enough information to date Magnus's martyrdom'; Thomson 2008, p. 93. The most recent scholarly study of St Magnus' cult comes down – with some qualifications – in favour of 1117 (Antonsson 2007, pp. 77–8).

<sup>3</sup> Thompson 2008, p. 99.

investigation by two of Orkney's most notable writers: the antiquarian George Low (1747–95), and the poet George Mackay Brown (1921–96).

Low wrote a history of Orkney, which remained in manuscript until its publication by the late Olaf Cuthbert in 2001. For his knowledge of the medieval period, Low was heavily dependent on the seventeenth-century study, *Orcades*, by the Icelandic historian, Thormod Torffaeus. Low transcribed,<sup>4</sup> from the pages of Torffaeus,<sup>5</sup> a short extract from the Latin Office of Matins for the *Natale*, containing the three readings which comprise the *legenda* of St Magnus, and the following Collect: *Adesto domine supplicationibus nostris: & intercedente beato magno martyre tuo ab hostium nos defende propiciatus incursu* ('Attend, O Lord, to our pleadings: and by the intercession of your blessed martyr Magnus, graciously defend us from the assaults of the enemy').<sup>6</sup> Torffaeus had himself excerpted these texts from the *Breviarium Nidrosiense*, the Breviary of the Use of Nidaros, printed in 1519. Low did not attempt to reconstruct the Magnus liturgy; his secondary source transmitted only this short fragment, and without direct access to a primary source such as the Breviary, Low had to be content to leave it in this incomplete state.

George Mackay Brown, as a poet, was not constrained by the limitations of the historical sources available to him. In his poem 'St Magnus Day in the Island', Brown placed in the mouths of the Cathedral choristers three short fragments of psalmody.

Now the bell is a trembling silence. But the boys  
have begun their psalming.  
I do not know how many poor people came into the  
church. There were many humble ones, they  
kept well back, they wished to lose themselves  
in the shadows. The boy with the  
censer threw sweetness about them.  
*Open, everlasting gates, sang the choristers.*<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Low 2001, pp. 214–5.

<sup>5</sup> Torffaeus 1697, pp. 89–90.

<sup>6</sup> Breviarium 1519, fol. kk.vi r–v. The Breviary represents the Use of Nidaros (i.e. Trondheim), but was intended to be employed throughout Norway. The Collect *Adesto* is associated with St Magnus of Orkney only in the Nidaros Breviary and Missal; in other traditions it is used in what was presumably its original position, as the Collect for the Feast of St Magnus Tranensis – an early Italian martyr – on 19 August. See De Geer 1985, p. 121, 123–4. Pace Holmes 2011, p. 158, the martyr Magnus commemorated in the fifteenth-century Easter Foulis Breviary (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland (*GB-En*), MS 21247) on 19 August with the Collect *Adesto* is probably the Italian rather than the Orcadian saint; see Mackay 1900, p. 581. This is true also of the Magnus celebrated in the Arbuthnott Missal (held in Paisley Museum and Art Galleries (*GB-PA*) on the same date and with the same Collect (Forbes 1864, p. 365).

<sup>7</sup> Brown 2005, p. 232.

Then, a little later:

The master of choristers turns a page, voices flutter  
like flames, draught-flung. And resume,  
*Who is the Lord of Hosts?*<sup>8</sup>

And again, at the end of the poem:

The bishop comes in, with boys in white all about him.  
The bread and the wine are set on the altar.  
*Dominus pascit me*, sing the boys from the hill in the  
choir.<sup>9</sup>

These words italicised by Brown are Psalm verses: Psalm 24 (23), v. 7; Psalm 24 (23), v. 10 (paraphrased); and Psalm 23 (22), v. 1 ('The Lord is my shepherd'), respectively. Unlike Low, Brown could conceivably have had access to the *Breviarium Nidrosiense*, which had been published in facsimile in 1964.<sup>10</sup> If so, he would have found that Psalm 24 (23) might have been sung on the *Natale*, albeit at the early-morning service of Matins, probably long before the people came into the cathedral for Mass;<sup>11</sup> Psalm 23 (22) would not have formed part of the Magnus liturgy at all. There is no reason to think, though, that Brown was aiming for that sort of scholarly precision; for him, the poetic aptness of the texts would override any questions of correctness or authenticity.

My interest in the Magnus liturgy is neither antiquarian nor literary; it stems from my work as the director of a Gregorian chant choir – the Orkney Schola. I have been engaged for some years in reconstructing the medieval Magnus liturgy for performance. Recently, several distinctive liturgies originating in Scotland and Scandinavia have been edited, either for musicological study, or for performance, or both. These include liturgies in honour of St Andrew,<sup>12</sup> St Kentigern,<sup>13</sup> St Cuthbert,<sup>14</sup> St Olav,<sup>15</sup> St Knud Lavard,<sup>16</sup> and the Nidaros relic of the Blood of Christ.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Brown 2005, p. 233.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Breviaria 1964.

<sup>11</sup> The psalm *Domini est terra* is appointed for the third nocturn in the common of saints in Eastertide; Breviarium 1519, fol. kk.v v.

<sup>12</sup> Hair and Knott 2005, pp. 17–94.

<sup>13</sup> Hair and Knott 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Alan Henderson is preparing an edition of this Office from the Herdmanston Breviary (*GB-En*, Adv. 18.2.13A), as part of his doctoral research at the University of Edinburgh.

<sup>15</sup> Østrem 2001.

<sup>16</sup> Bergsagel 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Attinger and Haug 2004.

Recordings include CDs of the following liturgies: that of St Kentigern, sung by Cappella Nova;<sup>18</sup> of St Columba, by Cappella Nova,<sup>19</sup> by the monks of Pluscarden Abbey,<sup>20</sup> and most recently by Gonville and Caius College Choir with Barnaby Brown;<sup>21</sup> of St Olav, by the Schola Sanctae Sunnivaie;<sup>22</sup> of St Knud Lavard, by the Absalon Six;<sup>23</sup> of St Erik of Sweden, by the Schola Hungarica;<sup>24</sup> of St Henry of Uppsala, by Cetus noster and Köyhät ritarit;<sup>25</sup> of St Thorlak of Iceland, by Voces Thules;<sup>26</sup> and of the Nidaros Holy Blood relic, by the Schola Sanctae Sunnivaie.<sup>27</sup> In some cases, such as the Office of St Kentigern, the recording and the published edition have been related projects.

Among the editions of Scottish and Scandinavian liturgies listed above, two editorial approaches can be distinguished. The edition of the Nidaros Holy Blood Office, for example, is an edition of part of a manuscript, which is itself a fragment. No attempt has been made to fill in the gaps with material from other sources. It is, so to speak, a complete edition of an incomplete source, rather than a reconstruction of the Office as it would have been performed in the middle ages. The edition of the Kentigern Office, by contrast, while based principally on the late thirteenth-century Sprouston Breviary (*GB-En*, Adv. 18.2.13B), draws on other sources (including other Scottish Breviaries and English manuscripts) to supply gaps in the text and music. The result is a collage, but one that can be used to perform the complete Office in a way that the Sprouston Breviary's users would have recognised.

This is the approach I have taken with my reconstruction of the Magnus liturgy, not only to facilitate a particular kind of performance, but also because even scholarly understanding demands that we make an effort to realise the liturgy in its entirety. As the late Professor László Dobszay wrote: 'The test of understanding a manuscript would be to be able to pray or sing through the entire liturgy as it was performed at the church for which the codex was written'.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, as in any other musical performance, artistic considerations must not be overlooked. Nick Sandon observes that 'the more complete, accurate and faithful a reconstruction is, the more aesthetically rewarding and intellectually

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<sup>18</sup> Cappella Nova 1997.

<sup>19</sup> Capella Nova 1992.

<sup>20</sup> Monks of Pluscarden Abbey 1997.

<sup>21</sup> Choir of Gonville and Caius College 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Schola Sanctae Sunnivaie 2000.

<sup>23</sup> Absalon Six 2002.

<sup>24</sup> Schola Hungarica 1994.

<sup>25</sup> Cetus Noster and Köyhät Ritarit 1995.

<sup>26</sup> Voces Thules 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Schola Sanctae Sunnivaie 1997, Schola Sanctae Sunnivaie 2015.

<sup>28</sup> Dobszay 2000, p. 57.

illuminating it is likely to be'.<sup>29</sup> Sandon goes on to give concrete examples: the Psalm Antiphons require their Psalms, the Responsories their Lessons, and the chants of the Mass, ideally, their accompanying ritual gestures, in order to be fully appreciated and understood on their own terms.<sup>30</sup>

In fact, in any attempt at a reconstruction, the Orcadian liturgy of St Magnus throws up particular difficulties. In all of the above examples, there exists at least one manuscript containing a substantial part of the text and music of the liturgy in question, such as the Office of St Columba from the Inchcolm Antiphoner,<sup>31</sup> or that of St Olav from the fragment sometimes known as 'the Choir Antiphoner of Nidaros Cathedral'.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, the sources giving specific directions for the celebration of the Magnus liturgy are late, from outwith Orkney, and almost completely lacking in musical notation.

### Sources for reconstructing the Magnus liturgy

'In order to make a complete strand, were you ever required to include DNA fragments from other species?'

'Occasionally, yes', Wu said. 'It's the only way to accomplish the job'.<sup>33</sup>

Table 1 presents a chronological list of all the sources so far identified which pre-date the Protestant Reformation in Orkney (1560), and which include texts (or at least incipits) for the Feasts of St Magnus. These sources do not include musical notation except where specified.

Table 1 Chronological list of sources

Code	Source and Description
<i>Manuscripts</i>	
NH	Uppsala University Library ( <i>S-Uu</i> ), MS. C233 4°, ff. 19v-20r. Probably Scotland, second half of the thirteenth century. 'Hymn to St Magnus' beginning <i>Nobilis humilis</i> ('Noble one, humble one'), a two-part <i>conductus</i> . Probably extraliturgical. Music <sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Sandon 1990, p. 175.

<sup>30</sup> Sandon 1990, pp. 175–6.

<sup>31</sup> 'Inchcolm Antiphoner', *GB-Eu*, MS. 211/IV. See Preece 2000, pp. 61–70, 73–4.

<sup>32</sup> 'Choir Antiphoner of Nidaros Cathedral', Copenhagen, Det kongelige Bibliotek (*DK-Kk*), MS. Add. 47. See Gjerløw 1979, plates 34–54.

<sup>33</sup> Crichton 1991, p. 169.

<sup>34</sup> De Geer 1988, p. 242.

Code	Source and Description
ON1	Reykjavik, Árni Magnússon Institute ( <i>IS-Ram</i> ), MS. AM 679 4°, f. 49r. Marginal addition to Nidaros Ordinal. Iceland, 'probably a long time before the 1460s'. <i>Natale</i> (16 April). Mass and Divine Office. <sup>35</sup>
ON2	Copenhagen University Library ( <i>DK-Kar</i> ), MS. AM 680a 4°, f. 73r. Marginal addition to Nidaros Ordinal. Iceland, 'probably a long time before the 1460s'. <i>Natale</i> (16 April). Mass and Divine Office. <sup>36</sup>
GG	<i>DK-Kar</i> , MS. AM 1da, leaf removed from binding. Fragment of <i>Graduale Gufudalense</i> . Gufudal, Iceland, c. 1450-70. Translation (13 December). Mass. Music for Sequence <i>Comitis generosi</i> ('Of the well-born earl'). <sup>37</sup>
MS1	<i>DK-Kar</i> , MS. AM Acc. 7aa, ff. 28r-29v. Fragment of <i>Missale Scardense</i> . Scard, Iceland, c. 1450-78. Translation (13 December). Mass (ends part way through Sequence <i>Comitis generosi</i> ). Music. <sup>38</sup>
MS2	<i>DK-Kar</i> , MS. AM 670f 4°, ff. 9r-12r. Transcription by Árni Magnússon (1663-1730) from the above <i>Missale Scardense</i> . Translation (13 December). Mass (complete). <sup>39</sup>
ON3	<i>DK-Kar</i> , MS. AM 680a 4°, f. 54v. Marginal addition to Nidaros Ordinal. Iceland, 'in or after the 1480s'. Translation (13 December). Mass and Divine Office. <sup>40</sup>
IM	<i>DK-Kar</i> , MS. AM 98 II 8°. Supplement to earlier Icelandic Missal, late fifteenth century. Translation (13 December). Mass (beginning at the Sequence <i>Comitis generosi</i> ). <sup>41</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Published in Gjerløw 1969, p. 331. Dating: Gjerløw 1969, p. 79.

<sup>36</sup> Published in Gjerløw 1969, p. 331 (Plate 7). Dating: Gjerløw 1969, p. 79.

<sup>37</sup> Facsimile in De Geer 1988, pp. 256-7.

<sup>38</sup> De Geer 1985, p. 254.

<sup>39</sup> De Geer 1985, pp. 124-5; De Geer 1988, pp. 253-4.

<sup>40</sup> Published in Gjerløw 1969, p. 300. Dating: Gjerløw 1969, p. 77.

<sup>41</sup> De Geer 1985, p. 125; De Geer 1988, p. 254.

Code	Source and Description
IB1	<i>DK-Kar</i> , MS. AM 670f 4°, ff. 3r-7r. Transcription by Árni Magnússon from an Icelandic Breviary (unknown date). <i>Natale</i> (16 April). Divine Office. <sup>42</sup>
IB2	<i>DK-Kar</i> , MS. AM 241b IX fol., f. 7r. Transcription by Árni Magnússon from an Icelandic Breviary (unknown date). <i>Natale</i> (16 April). Divine Office. <sup>43</sup>
<i>Printed Books</i>	
BA	<i>Breviarium Aberdonensis</i> , 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1510), vol. 1 ( <i>pars hyemalis</i> ), ff. xvii.v, xix.r, lxxxvii.r-lxxxix.v. Translation (13 December) and <i>Natale</i> (16 April). Divine Office.
BR	<i>Breviarium Roskildense</i> (Paris, 1517). <i>Natale</i> (19 August). Divine Office. <sup>44</sup>
BL	<i>Breviarium Lundense</i> (Paris, 1517), Appendix. <i>Natale</i> (26 August). Divine Office. <sup>45</sup>
BÅ	<i>Breviarium Arusiense</i> (Århus, 1519). <i>Natale</i> (26 August). Divine Office. <sup>46</sup>
BN	<i>Breviarium Nidrosiense</i> (Paris, 1519), ff. ff.ii.v, ff.iii.r, kk.vi.r-v. Translation (13 December) and <i>Natale</i> (16 April). Divine Office.
MN	<i>Missale Nidrosiense</i> (Paris, 1519), ff. h.xxi.r, i.vii.r-v. Translation (13 December) and <i>Natale</i> (16 April). Mass.

The odd man out in this list is the *conductus* NH, since there is no evidence that this song ever formed part of an official liturgy, but the text, at least, has been plausibly attributed to Orcadian authorship, and its local popularity ensures that any performance or recording of the Magnus liturgy will be expected to incorporate this work in some way.<sup>47</sup>

Ingrid de Geer established that the other sources for the Magnus liturgy fall into two groups: a Norway/Iceland corpus, represented by GG, MS, ON, IM, IB1, IB2, BN and MN; and a Scotland/Denmark corpus, found in printed Breviaries of

<sup>42</sup> De Geer 1985, p. 124.

<sup>43</sup> De Geer 1985, pp. 125–6.

<sup>44</sup> De Geer 1985, p. 130.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> De Geer 1985, p. 131.

<sup>47</sup> De Geer 1988, pp. 242–53.

the early sixteenth century (BA, BR, BL, BÅ).<sup>48</sup> The Norwegian and Icelandic material, for both the Divine Office and Mass, is drawn almost entirely from the *Commune sanctorum*, with only Orations and Sequences providing elements that are Proper to St Magnus. The Danish and Scottish Breviaries, by contrast, furnish St Magnus with a completely Proper rhymed Office: BA, BR and BL sharing the same material, with slight variations; and BÅ containing a unique rhymed Office, almost certainly newly composed for its 1519 publication. There survives no Proper Mass formulary corresponding to these Proper Offices.

Which of these bodies of material – if either – represents the liturgical practice of St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall? De Geer makes a bold assertion: 'The main Scottish source [BA], to some extent complemented by Icelandic sources [GG, MS1/2, IM, IB1, IB2], presumably reflects an older St Magnus liturgy or liturgies, as they were in use already in the 12th century, foremost in the Cathedral of Kirkwall'.<sup>49</sup> This is based on the assumptions that a complete Proper liturgy of St Magnus was composed in the early decades of his cult, that it was used at Kirkwall, and that it has in part survived. It is also possible, however, that there was a process of 'gradual "properisation"', in which the *Commune sanctorum* was progressively enriched with Proper items;<sup>50</sup> and that a small Cathedral serving an island community lacked the musical resources to advance this process very quickly or very far. The fact that the Scotland/Denmark rhymed Offices do not appear prior to 1510 makes it hazardous to assume that they embody an early form of the Magnus liturgy. As regards the reconstruction of the Magnus liturgy for singing, the rhymed Offices have the further disadvantage that they survive only in text, so that any performance of them would entail the setting of the words to arbitrarily selected (or even newly composed) melodies.<sup>51</sup>

Can we therefore be justified in using the Norway/Iceland material as the basis for a reconstruction? During the lifetime of St Magnus, and during the period in which his cult was established, the affiliation of the diocese of Orkney was contested between the archdioceses of York and Hamburg-Bremen.<sup>52</sup> The putative claims of the archdiocese of Lund in Denmark do not appear to have been pressed.<sup>53</sup> Orkney then became subject to the archdiocese of Nidaros (or Trondheim) in Norway when the Nidaros province was erected in 1152–3.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> This paragraph depends on the detailed discussion of these sources in De Geer 1985, pp. 120–39.

<sup>49</sup> De Geer 1985, p. 141.

<sup>50</sup> The phrase is used by Hair in Hair and Knott 2011, p. 31.

<sup>51</sup> Since writing this article, I have discovered that the rhymed Office found in BA, BR and BL is also present in the *Diurnale Roschildense* (Paris, 1511).

<sup>52</sup> Crawford 1996, pp. 3–6.

<sup>53</sup> Crawford 1996, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> Crawford 1996, p. 5.



Sources ON1-3 – that is, handwritten marginalia added to the codex which gives instructions as to what chants are to be sung within the province of Nidaros – provide us with our first overview of the whole Magnus liturgy.<sup>55</sup> The Feasts of St Magnus were not included in the main body of the text as it originally stood in the thirteenth century. The fifteenth-century marginal notes give directions for both the Divine Office and the Mass, but as in the main text, only incipits are given, rather than full texts, and there is no musical notation. These marginalia, appearing somewhat earlier than the printed Breviaries from Scotland/Denmark, may represent the Magnus liturgy as it was celebrated in Orkney in the fifteenth century. The political status of Orkney as, effectively, a Norwegian colony from the time of St Magnus until 1468, reinforces the likelihood that this was the case. It remains only a hypothesis, though, and a caveat is in order. Although the ideal of liturgical uniformity across an ecclesiastical province is one that has a long pedigree – Christopher Page presents examples of it from the fifth century<sup>56</sup> – evidence from neighbouring Sweden suggests that Scandinavian archbishops and provincial councils in the late Middle Ages did not exercise, and seldom sought, control over liturgical practices within their suffragan dioceses.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, for the purposes of the current article, the reconstruction of the Magnus liturgy is to be based largely on the *Commune sanctorum* of the Use of Nidaros. [This was the case at the time of writing, but see note on p. 138, above.]

Taking, therefore, ON1-3 as the starting point for reconstruction, it is necessary to flesh out the bare bones of the incipits by consulting later sources, such as BN and MN (both printed in 1519). These books generally cleave to the traditions embodied in the *Ordo Nidrosiensis*. The textual content of the Iceland/Norway Magnus liturgy can, therefore, be reconstructed relatively easily.

The music is another matter; Gisela Attinger, in her study of the music of the Use of Nidaros, comments that ‘the musical practice was not necessarily the same in different parts of the archbishopric’.<sup>58</sup> It is quite probable that liturgical music in Orkney differed in some ways from what was heard in, say, Norway or Iceland, so even music whose provenance is Norwegian, or from the wider Nidaros Province, cannot be claimed as *precisely* the music that was sung at St Magnus’ shrine. In that respect, de Geer’s elegiac observations on the music of medieval Orkney hold good:

We shall never be able to *hear* the Orkney earldom of the twelfth century; its sounds are irrevocably lost. The harp of Rognvald is forever silenced, the voices

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<sup>55</sup> Gjerløw 1969, pp. 300, 331 (Plate 7).

<sup>56</sup> Page 2010, p. 193.

<sup>57</sup> Helander 2001, p. 148.

<sup>58</sup> Attinger 1998, p. 318.

of the skalds left no record, Bjarni wrote down his 'songs', but – 'without music'. No one can recall the market place flutist, or the choristers in the Cathedral.<sup>59</sup>

De Geer goes on: 'Only faint echoes of the music once ... sung will ever reach us'.<sup>60</sup> What extant music is likely to give the most faithful echo of the liturgical song once heard in Orkney? Or, to use a different metaphor, where might the chants intoned at St Magnus Cathedral have been *pre-intoned*? Having chosen the initial hypothesis that the canons of Kirkwall followed the liturgical customs embedded in the *Ordo* of Nidaros, it seems appropriate to privilege musical sources associated with the Nidaros province.

The Introit for the Translation is specified in ON3 as *Letabitur iustus*.<sup>61</sup> The full text can be restored by reference to the Common Mass of martyrs in the *Missale Nidrosiense: Letabitur iustus in domino et sperabit in eo et laudabuntur omnes recti corde* ('The just man shall rejoice in the Lord, and hope in him, and everyone of upright heart shall praise him'), with a Psalm verse beginning *Exaudi deus* ('Hear, O God').<sup>62</sup> By great good fortune, a tiny fragment from a twelfth-century choir-book known to have been in Norway prior to the Reformation, and containing this very Introit, has been published online as part of the *Inventory of Medieval Manuscript Fragments in Norway* hosted by the University of Bergen (Figures 1 and 2).<sup>63</sup> This is one example of a chant from the Magnus liturgy that can be sung according to a source associated with Norway, from around the time that St Magnus' cult first emerged. It is as strong an echo as we are ever likely to hear of 'the choristers in the Cathedral'.



Figure 1 N-Ora, MS. Lat. fragm. 314 1-2, 1.

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<sup>59</sup> De Geer 1988, p. 260.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Gjerløw 1969, p. 300.

<sup>62</sup> *Missale* 1519, fol. A iii v. The introit and the verse are both taken from Psalm 64 (63), verses 10 and 11 respectively.

<sup>63</sup> 'Commune Sanctorum'; Oslo Riksarkivet (*N-Ora*), MS. Lat. fragm. 314 1-2, 1. The likely use of the fragment in Norway before the Reformation: see Ommundsen 2014.

*Introit. Mode VIII.*


**L** Etá- bi- tur iu- stus \* in dó-mi- no  
 et spe-rá- bit in e- o et lauda-  
 bún- tur om- nes rec- ti corde.

Figure 2 Transcription of the introit *Letabitur* from *N-Ora*, MS. Lat. fragm. 314 1–2, 1 by the author. Because of damage to the manuscript, the neums above the word *domino* are partly illegible. I have completed the passage with reference to *Graduale sacrosanctae Romanae ecclesiae* [*Graduale Romanum*] (Solesmes: Ab-baye Saint-Pierre, 1974), p. 473.

There are many other chants in the liturgy that are not found in sources from Norway or the wider Nidaros Province. Where possible, I have tried to find sources from elsewhere in Scandinavia, especially from Denmark, since Norway was subject to the Archbishops of Lund from c.1104 until 1152–3, and Gjerløw has affirmed that '[t]he compiler of the O[rdo] N[idrosiensis] is likely to have worked on the Lund gradual'.<sup>64</sup> For example, the first Alleluia at Mass on the *Natale* is – according to ON1/2 – *Alleluia. Egregie martyr christi*.<sup>65</sup> Again, the *Commune sanctorum* in the *Missale* of 1519 furnishes the full text: *Alleluia. Egregie martir christi N. pro nobis implora ad dominum iesum christum* ('Alleluia. Outstanding martyr of Christ, N., pray for us to the Lord Jesus Christ').<sup>66</sup>

The ultimate source for this chant is an Alleluia found, in some early Germanic sources, as part of the common of virgin saints. There, the verse runs *Egregia sponsa christi implora pro nobis ad dominum iesum christum* ('Outstanding bride of Christ', etc.).<sup>67</sup> The first-mode melody employed for this chant is a widely

<sup>64</sup> Gjerløw 1969, p. 120.

<sup>65</sup> Gjerløw 1969, p. 331.

<sup>66</sup> *Missale* 1519, fol. A vi r.

<sup>67</sup> For example, the early tenth-century *Cantatorium of St Gall*, Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen (*CH-SGs*) 359, p. 158.

used Alleluia tone.<sup>68</sup> We find a notated version, but with *egregia sponsa* now altered to *egregie martyr*, and the saint's name inserted, in the Danish liturgy of St Knud Lavard (Figure 3): *Egregie martyr christi kanute implora*, etc.<sup>69</sup> St Knud was a Danish nobleman who was killed just a few years after St Magnus, in 1131; the narrative of his death bears striking parallels with that of St Magnus.<sup>70</sup> St Knud's liturgy appears to have been composed around 1170 in Denmark. The verse *Egregie martyr* in the Knud liturgy is virtually identical to the text in the Nidaros Missal; with very little adjustment, the Norwegian version of the words can be fitted to the Danish version of the tune (Figure 4). The 'echo' of what was sung in medieval Kirkwall is only a little fainter than in the preceding example.

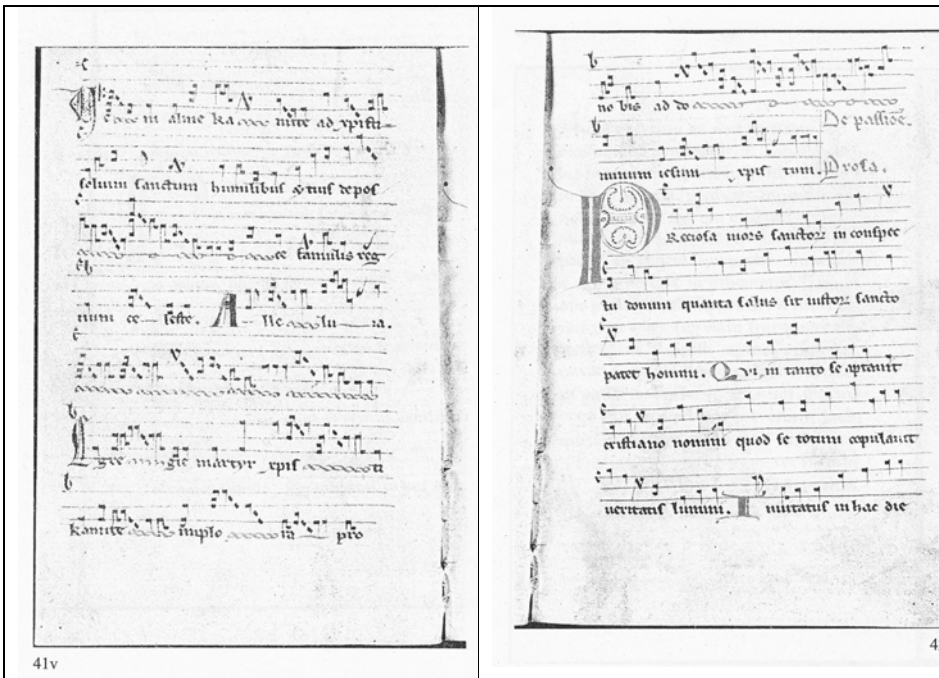


Figure 3 Alleluia. *Egregie martyr* from Kiel University Library (*D-Klu*), MS S.H. 8 A.8°, foll. 41v–42, from *The Offices and Masses of St. Knud Lavard (†1131)* (Kiel, Univ. Lib. MS S.H. 8 A.8°), ed. by John Bergsagel, 2 vols (Copenhagen: Royal Library; Ottawa: Institute of Mediaeval Music, 2010), 1.41v–42. Reproduced by kind permission of the Institute of Mediaeval Music.

<sup>68</sup> For example, see *Alleluia. Ego vos elegi* (*Graduale Romanum* 1974, pp. 429–30); *Alleluia. Iusti epulentur* (*Graduale Romanum* 1974, p. 461).

<sup>69</sup> Bergsagel 2010, vol. 1, fols 41v–42; Bergsagel 2010, vol. 2, fols 42–43.

<sup>70</sup> Antonsson 2007, pp. 25–6. It has been suggested that the *vitae* of the two saints may share an author: one Robert of Ely (Bergsagel 1987, p. 52).

*Alleluya. Mode I.*

**A** lle- lú- ya.

✠ Egré- gi- e martir chri- sti

Magne pro no- bis impló- ra

ad do-

minum iesum chri- stum.

Figure 4 Adaptation by the author of *Alleluia. Egregie martyr* from *D-Klu*, MS S.H. 8 A.8°, fols 41v–42 to fit the text from *Missale Nidrosiense*, fol. A vi r, for the feast of St Magnus

Where the Scandinavian records have failed to provide a melody for one of the St Magnus texts, I have turned to the mainland Scottish and the more plentiful English sources, and in particular the books of the Use of Salisbury (or Sarum).<sup>71</sup> This might be regarded as a controversial decision. In discussing the music of the Scottish Church, Isobel Woods Preece warned specifically against

<sup>71</sup> An example of a Scottish source that has proved useful is the book sometimes known as the 'Aberdeen Cathedral Breviary' (*GB-Eu*, 27), which furnishes common tones, such as those for the opening Versicles of each Office, that are often omitted from choir-books. See Hair and Knott 2011, p. 67.

the danger of extrapolating too uncritically from English comparanda. She wrote: 'some scholars ... have found it easier to take refuge in the convenient but often erroneous assumption that English material can be used to illuminate a Scottish situation'.<sup>72</sup>

As demonstrated by Gisela Attinger, the music of the Use of Nidaros is eclectic, and was not modelled on one single pre-existing Use.<sup>73</sup> However, many elements of the Nidaros Use can be traced to English sources, to the extent that Gjerløw could posit an English source as forming 'the hard core of the Nidaros liturgy'.<sup>74</sup> This should hardly be surprising, given what we know of Anglo-Scandinavian relations in the period when the Use of Nidaros was in formation. The Danish Church experienced considerable English influence, especially during the eleventh century. Lund, which early in the twelfth century became the archbishopric for the whole of Scandinavia, had by that time had three English bishops.<sup>75</sup> The Church in Norway had even stronger links with England, from the conversion period onwards, and the archdiocese of Nidaros itself was erected by an Englishman, Cardinal Breakspear.<sup>76</sup>

Moreover, in the specific case of Orkney, one must take into account two broad trends that were ongoing during the late Middle Ages. The first of these trends was the gradually increasing dominance of Scottish – rather than Norwegian – clergy and bishops in the Orcadian diocese, which was observable in the early fourteenth century, but which remained incomplete even after the accession of the diocese to the new province of St Andrews in 1472.<sup>77</sup> The second trend was the ever more faithful adherence of the Scottish sees to the liturgical Use of Sarum, a process that was under way by the twelfth century and which continued up until the eve of the Reformation. Preece noted scraps of evidence for the maintenance of non-Sarum practices (for example, those of York and other English sees, France, Flanders, Rome, and the Columban monastic tradition, as well as possible survivals of older indigenous custom) in late medieval Scotland; but she concluded that 'there is extensive evidence of a firmly embedded Salisbury tradition in sixteenth-century Scotland, with some local adaptation and some French influence'.<sup>78</sup> Indirect evidence for the influence of Sarum devotions in Orkney is found in the material culture: a sixteenth-century wooden panel from St Magnus Cathedral is carved with the emblem of Christ's five wounds.<sup>79</sup> Although this cannot be taken as hard evidence of liturgical practice

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<sup>72</sup> Preece 2000, p. 21.

<sup>73</sup> Attinger 1998, p. 318.

<sup>74</sup> Gjerløw 1969, p. 128.

<sup>75</sup> Spejlborg 2014, pp. 81, 83, 85.

<sup>76</sup> Sayers 2004.

<sup>77</sup> Thomson 2008, pp. 155, 220–1.

<sup>78</sup> Preece 2000, p. 81 (concluding an extensive discussion in pp. 55–81).

<sup>79</sup> The panel is illustrated in Callaghan and Wilson 2001, p. 22.

in the cathedral, it is suggestive: the five wounds iconography, like the votive Mass of the Five Wounds, enjoyed immense popularity wherever the Sarum Use was in force, but the Mass does not appear in the *Missale Nidrosiense*. In short, the liturgical use in possession in Orkney would have been marked by English influence even at the height of Norse dominance; and the more direct influence of the Sarum Use would probably have made itself felt with increasing force from the fourteenth century onwards.

For these reasons, whenever a text is not represented in the Scandinavian musical record, I have not scrupled to use Sarum sources. These survive in relative profusion, and are very easily accessible. Particular mention must go to the rolling online publication of the music of the Sarum Rite by William Renwick of McMaster University in Canada.<sup>80</sup> An example would be the Psalm Antiphon *Sancti et iusti in domino gaudete alleluia: vos elegit deus in hereditatem sibi alleluia* ('Holy and righteous ones, rejoice in the Lord, alleluia: God has chosen you for his heritage, alleluia'), assigned to Lauds of the *Natale* in ON1/2 (Figure 5).<sup>81</sup>

ASpl. J.; 1519:235v; 1531:135r.

Ant. VIII.  
VIII.  
Anc-ti et just-i \* in Dó-mi-no gaudé-te al-le-lú-ya : vos e-lé-git De-us in he-re-di-tá-tem si-bi al-le-lú-ya.

Figure 5 Antiphon *Sancti et iusti* from *The Sarum Rite: Breviarium Sarisburiense cum nota*, ed. by William Renwick, 4 vols (Hamilton, Ontario: Gregorian Institute of Canada, 2006–), tome B (2010).1345. *Reproduced by kind permission of Prof. William Renwick.*

### Filling in the gaps

How could he explain to Hammond about the reality of DNA dropouts, the patches, the gaps in the sequence that Wu had been obliged to fill in, making the best guesses he could, but still, making guesses.<sup>82</sup>

Even after one has exhausted the available sources of Norwegian, wider Scandinavian, and English material, there remains a very small portion of the Magnus

<sup>80</sup> 'The Sarum Rite' (date unknown).

<sup>81</sup> Gjerløw 1969, p. 331; Breviarium 1519, fol. kk.v.v; Renwick 2006, p. 329.

<sup>82</sup> Crichton 1991, p. 124.

liturgy that eludes identification. The two lost items in need of recovery are a Sequence and a *Magnificat* Antiphon.

A Proper Sequence for the Translation is listed in ON3 by its first word: *Jocundemur* ('Let us be of good cheer').<sup>83</sup> No text or music for this Sequence has ever been found.<sup>84</sup> However, Sequences were always among the more fluid and variable elements of a Mass formulary. It would be legitimate simply to omit the Sequence, since no Sequence is specified for either Feast day of St Magnus in MN.<sup>85</sup> Alternatively, one could substitute a Sequence for which words and music can be traced, such as one of the following: the Common Sequence for one martyr in the Nidaros Missal, *Adest nobis dies alma* ('Here is a day propitious for us');<sup>86</sup> the Sequence *Mundi etate octava* ('The eighth age of the world') assigned to the *Natale* in ON1/2;<sup>87</sup> or the Icelandic Proper Sequence for the Translation, *Comitis generosi* (found in GG, MS1/2 and IM).<sup>88</sup> A more creative response might be to commission a new Latin Sequence beginning *Jocundemur*. Recent precedent for the composition of new liturgical Latin verse can be found in a fine Hymn in honour of Blessed John Henry Newman – *Salve fundator* ('Hail, founder') – written in 2013 by Fr John Hunwicke.<sup>89</sup>

The lost *Magnificat* Antiphon, assigned to second Vespers of both Feasts, is given in ON1-3 by its incipit: *O martyr*.<sup>90</sup> The full text can be found in the Common of Martyrs in the Nidaros Breviary of 1519. It reads: *O martyr N. preces tuorum attende: et de tua gloria iam securus/ pro nostra et omnium interveni salute* ('O martyr N., hear the prayers of your people: and, assured now of your own glory, pray for our salvation and that of all people').<sup>91</sup> No musical setting survives. There is a certain verbal similarity to an English Responsory, *O felix N.*, one version of which begins: *O felix benedicta iam de tua gloria secure nostris miseris curam impende* ('O blessed Benedict, now assured of your own glory, afford us care for our woes'). This version is found in the Processional of the Nuns of Chester, a fifteenth-century manuscript now in the Huntington Library (*US-SM*) in California (Figure 6).<sup>92</sup> There are difficulties with using this chant as a basis for setting the text of our

<sup>83</sup> Gjerløw 1969, p. 300.

<sup>84</sup> Kruckenberg 2006, pp. 18–9.

<sup>85</sup> Missale 1519, h.xxi.r, i.vii.v.

<sup>86</sup> Missale 1519, C.iii.v.

<sup>87</sup> Gjerløw 1969, p. 331. It is also assigned in the *Ordo* to Saints Mark, Hallvard and Erik (pp. 333, 343, 343n).

<sup>88</sup> De Geer 1988, pp. 253–60.

<sup>89</sup> Hunwicke 2013.

<sup>90</sup> Gjerløw 1969, pp. 300, 331.

<sup>91</sup> Breviarium 1519, fol. aa.vii v.

<sup>92</sup> 'Processional of the Nuns of Chester', *US-SM* EL 34 B 7, fols 22r–22v. I am grateful to Dr Vanessa Wilkie, Curator of Medieval and British Historical Manuscripts at the Huntington Library for providing me with a photograph of this chant. The text only is printed in Legg 1899, pp. 4–5.



Antiphon: despite the verbal similarity, the wording is not close enough to allow a simple substitution of one text for another; and the Responsory exhibits the characteristic complexity of a Matins Responsory (as opposed to the relative simplicity typical of a *Magnificat* Antiphon) with its range of over an octave, some difficult intervallic jumps, and a melismatic flourish on *secure*. From a practical point of view, this complexity means that a choir capable of singing the rest of the Vespers of St Magnus may stumble over an Antiphon based on *O felix*.



Figure 6 Responsory *O felix benedictus* from *US-SM*, EL 34 B 7, fols 22r–22v. Image kindly provided by the Huntington Library.

Instead of making a *contrafactum* on *O felix*, therefore, I have turned once again to the Danish liturgy of St Knud Lavard. Two *Magnificat* Antiphons from this office – *Dulcis martyr* ('Sweet martyr') and *O Kanute pacifice* ('O peacemaker Knud') – have provided motifs from which I have been able to construct a centonised setting for *O martyr Magne* (Figures 7 and 8).<sup>93</sup> Although any historical connection between these Danish Antiphons and the music of the Magnus Office is, of course, purely speculative, at least my new Antiphon is based on models of the appropriate liturgical genre, connected with a saint similar to Magnus, from twelfth-century Scandinavia.

Again, though, it might be more creative to address this lacuna by commissioning a new setting of the text by a contemporary composer. Such a work would be an addition to an existing corpus of choral music inspired by St Magnus, which already includes *The Last Bright Rinsing* by Gemma McGregor,<sup>94</sup> *Missa Comitum generosi* by Tryggvi M. Baldvinsson,<sup>95</sup> and new settings of *Nobilis humilis* by Michael McGlynn,<sup>96</sup> Bill Strang,<sup>97</sup> and David Pearson,<sup>98</sup> besides Peter Maxwell Davies' chamber opera *The Martyrdom of St Magnus*.<sup>99</sup> Since Bishop Robert Reid of Orkney decreed in the 1540s that St Magnus Cathedral should have on its staff a succentor '*bene instructus ... in vtroque cantu*' ('well learned in both kinds of song', i.e. plainsong and polyphony), the commissioning of new choral music would be true to the musical aspirations of the Church in pre-Reformation Orkney.<sup>100</sup>

A reconstructed liturgy of St Magnus will, therefore, be something of a patchwork, with elements from Norway, Iceland, Denmark, mainland Scotland and England, along with some new material. It may not have the integrity and authenticity of liturgies edited from a single manuscript. But if we take seriously Dobszay's contention that 'the test of understanding ... would be to ... sing through the entire liturgy', then we must take whatever steps are necessary to make that possible: it is the only way to accomplish the job. Scholarship and creativity will then combine to bring the echoes of the Magnus liturgy – faint though they be – to the ears of a new generation of listeners, nine centuries after the events of that April morning on Egilsay.

<sup>93</sup> Bergsagel 2010, vol. 1, fols 29v–30v; Bergsagel 2010, vol. 2, pp. 31–2.

<sup>94</sup> McGregor 2013. In a paper, 'Music for Saint Magnus', presented at the Creative Orkney Conference in Kirkwall on 26 September 2014, Gemma McGregor discussed works by herself, Peter Maxwell Davies, Ivan Drever and Allie Windwick, which draw inspiration from the legend of St Magnus, *Nobilis humilis*, or the bells of St Magnus Cathedral.

<sup>95</sup> Baldvinsson 1999.

<sup>96</sup> McGlynn 1996.

<sup>97</sup> Strang 2000.

<sup>98</sup> Pearson 2012.

<sup>99</sup> Davies 1977.

<sup>100</sup> Reid 1820, p. 21.

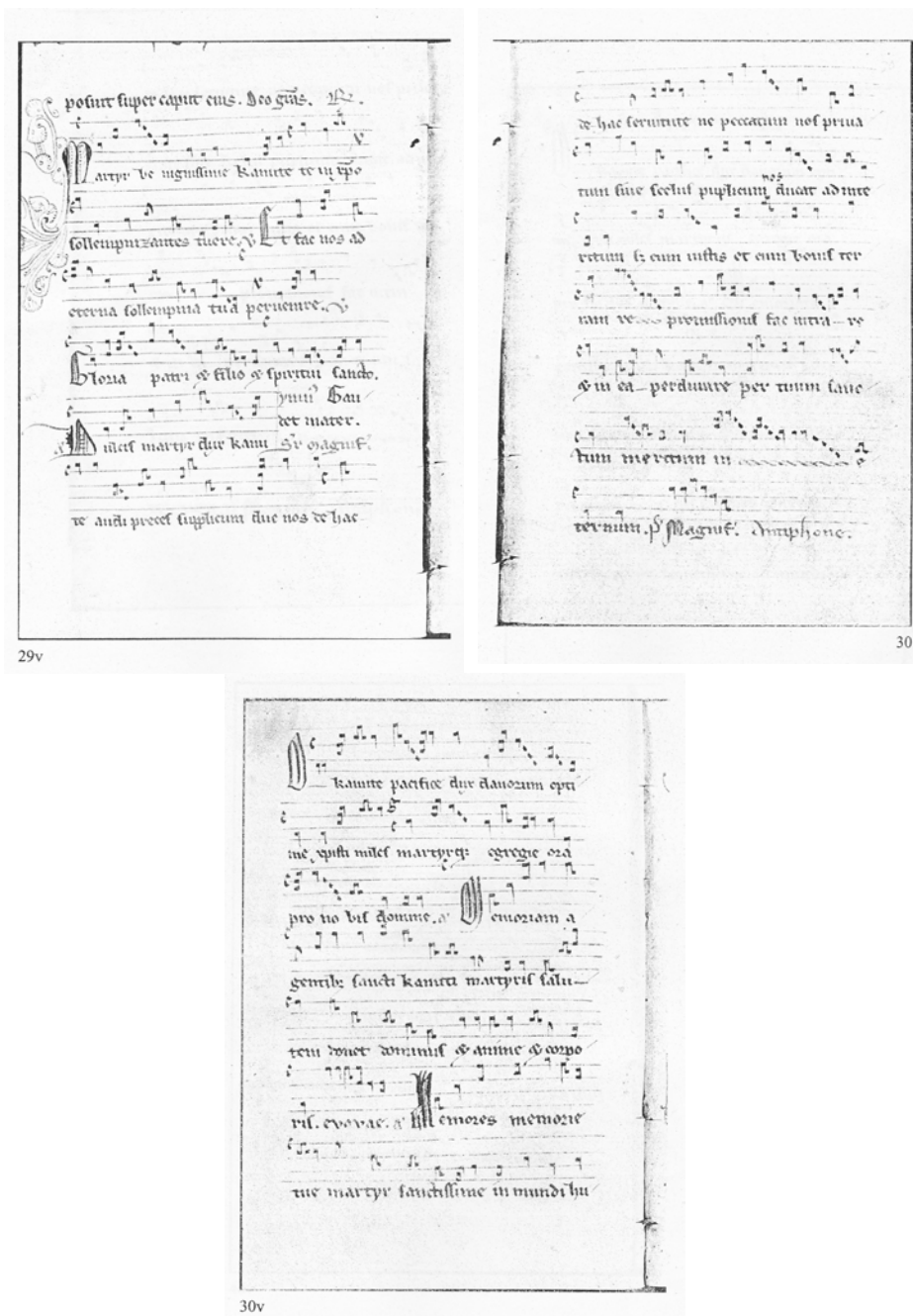


Figure 7 Antiphons *Dulcis martyr* and *O Kanute pacifice*, from D-Klu, 8 A.8°, fols 29v–30v from *Offices and Masses of St. Knud Lavard*, ed. by Bergsagel, 1.29v–30v. Reproduced by kind permission of the Institute of Mediaeval Music.

*Antiphon. Mode VII.*


O  
Martyr Magne, \* preces tu-ó-rum  
at-ténde: et de tu- a gló-ri- a iam se-cú-  
rus, pro nostra et ómni-um intervé-ne  
sa- lú-te.

Figure 8 Centonised setting of the antiphon *O martyr* from *Missale Nidrosiense*, fol. aa vii v, for the feasts of St Magnus

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