

# A Lexicon of Medieval Nordic Law

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Love J., Larsson I., Djärv U., Peel C., and Simensen E. (eds.). *A Lexicon of Medieval Nordic Law*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0188>

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*A Lexicon of Medieval Nordic Law* is available online at <https://www.dhi.ac.uk/lmnl/>

Digital material and resources associated with this volume are available at <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0188#resources>

ISBN Paperback: 978-1-78374-815-0

ISBN Hardback: 978-1-78374-816-7

ISBN Digital (PDF): 978-1-78374-817-4

ISBN Digital ebook (epub): 978-1-78374-818-1

ISBN Digital ebook (mobi): 978-1-78374-819-8

ISBN Digital (XML): 978-1-78374-820-4

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0188

The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, the Magnus Bergvalls Stiftelse and the Stiftelsen Konung Gustaf VI Adolfs fond för svensk kultur have generously contributed to this publication.

Cover image: *Carta marina*, a wallmap of Scandinavia, by Olaus Magnus, 1539, Wikimedia, public domain, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carta\\_Marina.jpeg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carta_Marina.jpeg). Cover designer: Anna Gatti

# Appendix A:

## Administrative, Judicial and Fiscal Subdivisions

This appendix outlines the administrative, judicial and fiscal subdivisions, according to Danish laws, Swedish provincial laws, Guta law, Norwegian laws before the Norwegian law of the realm (1274) and Icelandic laws. This is an attempt to show the relevant hierarchies within each law as expressed in that particular law, and supplemented by old and recent research as noted in the encyclopedic articles.

This type of presentation might lead to the conclusion that the medieval borders as well as the administrative, judicial and fiscal divisions are well known and well researched.

However, the degree to which the medieval borders and the administrative, judicial and fiscal divisions are known and researched varies substantially, from established facts to mere assumptions on behalf of an individual researcher. It must also be remembered that any law may reflect different chronological layers of divisions, and that the divisions may have various origins and have been made for different purposes. You may, therefore, also find two different terms in the same ‘box’, thus indicating that their relationship is not fully investigated or that there were parallel systems. The ecclesiastical divisions are not included here as they do not appear in the translated versions of the laws used for the lexicon.

Headwords in the lexicon: **ar (1)**, **attunger**, **bol**, **broafiol**, **fiarpunger**, **folkland**, **fylki**, **hamna**, **har**, **hundari**, **hæraþ**, **land**, **lepunger**, **lepungslami**, **manngerð**, **roþin** (see **roþarætter** in the lexicon) **siettingr skipen**, **skiplagh**, **skipreiða**, **sysel**, **þriþiunger**.

### Danish laws

JyL. The Law of Jutland (*Jyske lov*).

VSjL. Valdemar’s Law for Zealand (*Valdemars sjællandske lov*).

ESjL. Erik’s Law for Zealand (*Eriks sjællandske lov*).

SkL. The Law of Scania (*Skånske Lov*, *Skånelagen*).

SkKL. The Church Law of Scania (*Skånske kirkelov*).

JyL	VSjL, ESjL	SkL
land	land	land
sysel	-	-
hæreth	hæreth	hæreth
fiarthing	-	-
bol / skipen	bol / atting	bol / atting
havne	havne	havne

*Fiarthing* used as an administrative unit is found only in JyL.

The use and meaning of the low-level divisions (*ating*, *bol*, *havne* and *skipen*) may vary depending on time and geographical area. By the 1250s the ecclesiastical divisions into *sokn* were gradually gaining importance and so was *landsby*. This, however, is not reflected in the translated versions of the laws, and therefore not shown here.

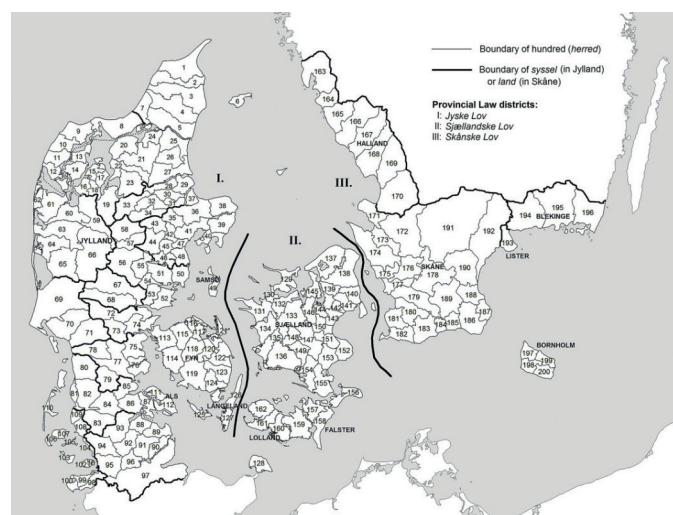


Figure 1. *Sysel- hæreth- and land-* borders. Map drawn for this publication by Johnny G. G. Jakobsen.



Figure 2. Division into *hundari* (grey) and *hærab* in Sweden and Denmark in the Middle Ages. Map from Thorsten Andersson 1982a: p. 53. By permission from the author.

### Swedish legislative regions

#### Svea Laws

**Hälsingland:** The Law of the Hälsingar (HL). Finland was then part of Sweden and Hälsingelagen was their law too.

**Uppland:** (including Tiundaland, Attundaland, and Fjädrundaland): The Law of Uppland (UL).

**Västmanland and Dala:** The (Younger) Law of Västmanland (VmL) and The Law of Dalarna or The (Older) law of Västmanland (DL).

**Södermanland:** The Law of the Södermän (SdmL).

**Närke:** The Law of Närke (now lost) (NL).

**Värmland:** The Law of Värmland (now lost) (VrmL).

#### Göta Laws

**Västergötland:** The Older Law of the Västgötar (ÄVgL) and The Younger Law of the Västgötar (YVgL).

**Östergötland:** The Law of Östergötland (ÖgL).

**Tiohäräd (Småland):** The Law of Tiohäräd or The Law of Småland (only the book concerning Church law) (SmL).



Figure 3. Swedish legislative regions. Map drawn by Inger Larsson.

## Göta laws

ÄVgL. The Older Law of the Västgötar (*Äldre Västgötalagen*).

YVgL. The Younger Law of the Västgötar (*Yngre Västgötalagen*).

ÖgL. The Law of the Östgötar (*Östgötalagen*).

SmL. The Law of Småland (*Smålandslagen* or *Tiohäradslagen*).

SmL	ÄVgL, YVgL	ÖgL
land	land	land
hæraþ	hæraþ	hæraþ
-	fiarþunger	fiarþunger
-	-	hamna*
-	-	attunger, har*

The military naval defence organization, *lepunger*, is mentioned in Danish, Norwegian and Swedish laws. Originally, men, equipment and ships were to be provided, but already at the time when the Swedish laws were written down in the form we know them today these obligations had been transformed into yearly taxes in times of peace.

Whether *hamna*\* and *har*\* existed in Östergötland has been debated (Ericsson 2007, 113 and passim). Ericsson suggests that a *hamna* might have consisted of eight *attungar*, but its very existence in Östergötland has also been questioned (Söderlind 1989, 16–17).

**bo** (OSw) n.

In ÖgL a *bo* could denote a farm with an administrative function under the control of a king, bishop or *jarl*, or their *bryti*. In the Swedish province of Västergötland, albeit not mentioned in the versions of the law translated into English but present in a recent edition of the law (Wiktorsson 2011:II, 160–65), a *bo* was an administrative district of an unknown function comprising one or several *hæraþ*, that was probably named after, and associated with, the local royal estates of *upsala öþer*.

## Svea laws

DL. The Law of Dalarna (*Dalalagen*).

HL. The Law of the Hälsingar (*Hälsingelagen*).

SdmL. The Law of the Södermän (*Södermannalagen*).

UL. The Law of Uppland (*Upplandslagen*).

VmL. The Law of Västmanland (*Västmannalagen*).

The Law of Närke and the Law of Värmland are mentioned in other sources, but no manuscripts of these laws have been found.

UL	VmL	DL	SdmL	HL
folkland (3) / roþin (1)***	land	land	land	land
hundari (25) / skiplagh	hundari (8)	þriþiunger	hundari (12)	þriþiunger
—	broaþiol	broaþiol-	skiplagh	skiplagh
fiarþunger / ar*	fiarþunger / skiplagh		fiarþunger	fiarþunger
hamna / attunger**	hamna		hamna / attunger	har

Key to the table:

Numbers in brackets indicate the number of districts known of the particular kind. / between two terms indicate parallel systems in different areas.

In UL a division into þriþiunger was limited to very few districts (Hafström 1949a, 142–43, Lundberg 1972, 92) and might not have existed in VmL, as Schlyter indicates that the manuscript might have been corrupt in the actual passage (Schlyter s.v. þriþiunger).

\* Whether an administrative division into *ar* did exist or not is debated. Andersson 2014, 15; Hjærne 1980, I: 96–102; Schlyter s.v. *ar*; SL UL 61 not 52.

\*\* *Hamna* and *attunger* seem to be parallel systems in UL never occurring in the same areas (Lindkvist 1995, 20–21). According to Lundberg (1972, 76–77) *hamna* was an administrative unit connected to *lepunger*, taxation and *bupkaþli* but not necessarily a subdivision of the *hundari*.

\*\*\* The coastal area along the Baltic was called *Roden* and it was divided into *skiplagh*. The size of *Roden* has been debated. Refs: Hafström 1949, 19–20; KLNLM s.v. *roden*; Lundberg 1972, 82–83.

The relationships between *fiarþunger* and *skiplagh* (VmL), *hamna* and *attunger* (SdmL) or *fiarþunger* and *har* (HL) have not been fully investigated.

Guta lag and Guta saga

GL. The Law of the Gotlanders (*Guta lag*)

GS. *Guta saga*.

GL
Gotland, land
þriþiunger
síettungr
hundari / þing

The relationship between *hundari* and *thing* has not been fully investigated.

Norwegian laws

BorgL. The Borgarting Law (*Borgartingsloven*).

EidsL. The Eidsivathing Law (*Eidsivatingsloven*).

GuL. The Gulathing Law (*Gulatingsloven*).

FrL. The Frostathing Law (*Frostatingsloven*).

BorgL	EidsL	GuL	FrL
fylki	fylki	fylki, sýsla	fylki, sýsla <sup>1</sup>
–	þriðjungr	fjórðungr	þriðjungr <sup>2</sup> / fjórðungr
herað	herað	áttungr	séttungr / áttungr
skipreiða		skipreiða	
		manngerð	

Key to the table: The relationship between *fylki* and *sýsla* has not been fully investigated.

/ between two terms indicates parallel systems.

1) presupposed by the term *sýslumaðr*. 2) presupposed by the term *þriðjungsmaðr*.



Figure 4. Norwegian legislative regions. Map from Mykland 1989, map 28. © Cappelen Damm, with permission from the publisher.

## Icelandic laws

The Laws of Iceland during the Free State period:

Grg. *Grágás*.

Jó. *Jónsbók* (1281).

Js. *Járnsíða*.

Icelandic laws	
Island, land	
fjórðungur	
herað	
hreppur	

*Sýsla*: Following Icelandic submission to Norway in 1262/4, Norwegian authorities sent sheriffs (*sýslumenn*) to govern regions of Iceland. Their jurisdiction was called a *sýsla*. During the Middle Ages a *sýsla* had no fixed geographic boundaries, and their number and size changed over time.

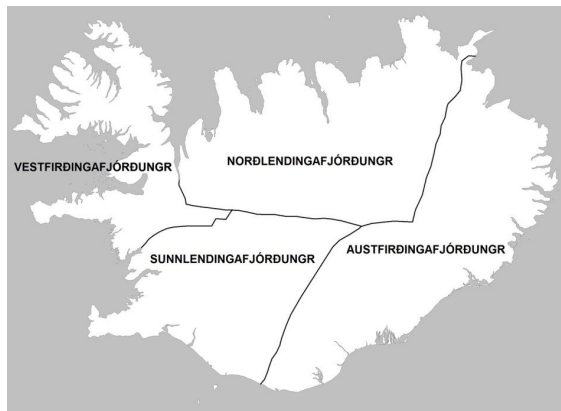


Figure 5. Map of division into fjórðungur drawn for this publication by Johnny G. G. Jakobsen.

