

(c) Norway: How language conflict can lead to manslaughter

(Line 6) Tok jek proff vm aftak arne tolleifson som liduord aslakson varth at skadæ vforsynio Tok jek fyrst ii viglysingæ vitnæ skilrik er a bok sworo medh fullum eidstaff som sa heitha øysten awalson och olaff hysingson at liduord kom til theim sanddøgres och lyste fore theim hwat som arne tolleifson haffuer aff faat thet haffuer jek giort oc ingen annen Ther nest tok ii vphaffs vitnæ som sæ [sic] heithæ torgiuls oluerrson och toffue tostenson er a bok sworo medh fullum eidstaff at liduord som skadan giorde kom gangandes til bөө Och arne som fell var ther til bodes i garden fore honum liduord som skaden giorde gek i stogonæ oc möttæ bonden i dønnen Och spurdæ maa jek gangæ i stogonæ swaradæ bonden hwj mat thu ey gangæ sa vel vil jek unnæ tek i skaal som odrom vilt thu vel flygiæ tek/ settes tha liduordh til bordz och fek i skaall och draak arne til som fell och arne tok vid skalen oc takkadæ honum fore En liduord sagdæ got synth jw. swarade arne som fell jek kan jkke vid thet skraffuet Sagde helge som atuistæ saken er geffuen/en liothæ myt skraffuæ nokot swarade arne laath oss tala vorth fader moll och moder moll myth verdæ ey framare en thav haffuæ varet myth kwnnæ ikkæ vid thet malet myth kabbretta keptænæ skraffuum ikke sa ath myth skraffuum ikke fra oss halsbeinet En liduord sturdæ vidher och swaradæ ingo Sagdæ en arnæ badæ æræ orden til och badæ skylu myth tenkæ ath karlen kan haffuæ eith saarth hierthæ hwer mynnes

I took testimony about the slaying of Arne Tolleifson whom Lidvord Aslakson injured without intention. I first took two trustworthy witnesses to the manslaughter report, who swore on the Book with a valid oath, [and] who are so named: Øysten Avalson and Olaf Hysingson, that Lidvord came to them the same day and reported to them [that] what Arne Tolleifson has suffered, 'that I have done and no one else'. Thereupon I took two firsthand witnesses, who are so named: Torgiuls Olversson and Tove Tostenson, [and] who swore on the Book with a valid oath, that Lidvord (who committed the injury) came walking to Bø. And Arne (who died) was there as a guest at the farm before him. Lidvord (who committed the injury) went to the house and met the master of the house at the door and asked, 'May I go into your house?' The farmer answered, 'Why shouldn't you go in? I'll as gladly offer you a bowl as the others, if you will behave well.' Lidvord then sat down at table and got a bowl, and he drank to Arne (who died), and Arne accepted the toast and thanked him for it. But Lidvord said, 'Got synth jw.' [LG: God bless you] Arne (who died) answered, 'I don't like that gabble.' Helge (who is charged as an accomplice) said, 'But we have to gabble about something.' Arne answered, 'Let us speak our father's and mother's tongue—we won't be any greater than they have been. We don't like that language with whey cheese in the mouth.

sith Och stod sa liduord vp och tok sin skothynnæ och taladæ til torgeir laat oss gangæ til orostunnæ och j thet samæ stak liduord til arnæ ij styngæ och arne fek ther ingen skadæ aff/ stod tha arne vp och rugthæ sin kniff hwar theiræ och stungo hwer til odrom och gjorde hwer annen saren En liduord stak arne ii stynga i hoffuud och thet tridia i josten och ther doo han aff samstwndes gud hans siell nadæ En helge adernempder var haffder ath dønnen och helge vilde i stogonæ igen och hogge j dønnen j hog en helge var halden aff bonden j garden sagda bonden til swen hog ikke mannen mædan jek holder honum En liduord kom vt och løp sin veg nidher at skogen en helge gek vp i offræ garden Uar thetta vig vonnet a bøø i sudalandom a telamarken krossmessæ aptan vm varet vttan alle gridastadæ

Let's not gabble until we gabble our neckbones off.' But Lidvord looked gloomy and answered nothing. Arne went on, 'There have been words enough, and we should remember that a man can be sore of heart. Each one has something to remember.' Then Lidvord stood up and took his halberd and spoke to Torgeir, 'Let us go into battle.' And at that moment Lidvord made two thrusts at Arne, but Arne was not harmed thereby. Then Arne stood up and each of them drew their knives and thrust at each other, and each one wounded the other. But Lidvord made two thrusts at Arne's head and the third at his groin, and of this he died at once. God be merciful to his soul! And the aforementioned Helge was put out of the door, but he wanted to enter the house again and struck a blow at the door. But Helge was held by the farmer, who said to Swen, 'Don't strike the man while I am holding him.' But Lidvord got out and ran away down to the woods, while Helge went up to the Upper Farm. This slaying was committed at Bø in Sauland in Telemark on the eve of Holy Rood Day outside all holy places.

(MNw: Official report to the king by Tjostolf Sveinsson, sheriff's deputy, on a case of manslaughter in the Telemark district on 3 May 1489. The parchment original is in the Norwegian National Archives in Oslo; it is dated on Wednesday after Cross Mass (Exaltatio Crucis), i.e. 16 September, at Skien. It was first printed in DN 1. 961, but is now available in a more exact reading in F. Hødnebo, *Utvvalg av norske diplomer 1350-1550*, Oslo 1966, pp. 93-4. Only lines 6-28 are transcribed here.)