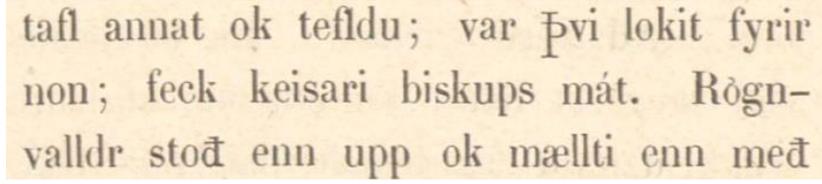
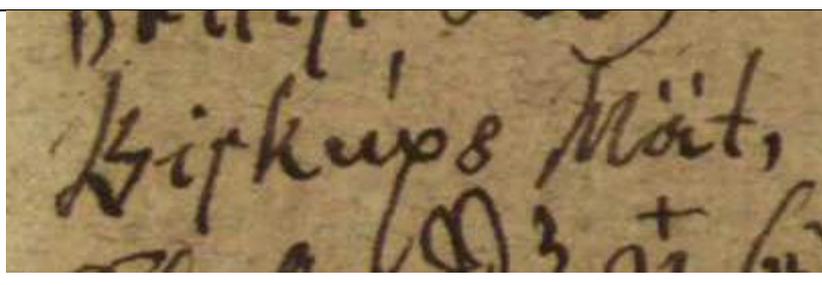
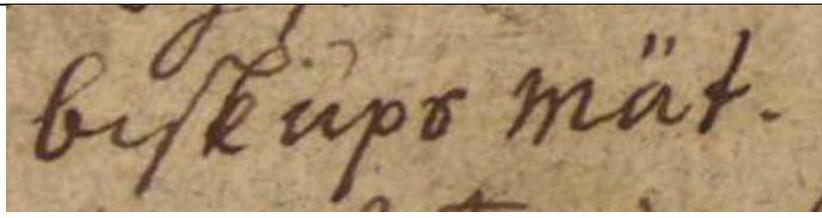


## THE LEWIS CHESSMEN – A FINAL REMARK

Under the title “*Morten Lillören's misdemeanor*” Einar S. Einarsson has made a reply in the question about the origin of the Lewis chessmen. This debate started because Thorarinsson and Einarsson launched a campaign, in an attempt to link the Lewis chessmen to Iceland. The problem is that their argumentation is filled with errors – i.e. not in accordance with well-established historical knowledge. This has been the cause of (my) criticism. In response I have been met with moralisations. Such arguments bring us no closer to the facts around the Lewis chessmen. The important subject is the known, recorded historical and archaeological facts. To focus I have made some brief comments on what Thorarinsson/Einarsson write is “the main issue”, that the bishop chess figure was called bishop in Iceland first, and at the time the Lewis chessmen were made:

There are no old Icelandic/Norse “*manuscripts*” (as Thorarinsson/Einarsson writes) in plural mentioning the chess bishop, only one - the “*Màgus Saga Jarls*”.

The “*Màgus Saga Jarls*” dates to 1300-1325. The Lewis chessmen date to the period 1150-1200. This chronological gap of 100-175 years renders the “*Màgus Saga Jarls*” quite irrelevant to our discussion.

Regarding Thorarinsson’s and Einarsson’s claim that the word “bishopmate” were written in one word:	Such a compound word should supposedly indicate that both the basic words were much older.
	From Cederskiöld’s publication of <i>Màgus Saga Jarls</i> , the manuscript dated 1300-1325
	From a handwritten manuscript written much later.
	From another handwritten manuscript written much later
All three sources clearly shows that this is an incorrect claim	In all available ancient Icelandic sources it was written in two words.

There are two earlier Latin texts (from 1200-1250) that call the chess piece bishop (episcopus). One of these texts (an allegorical morality which happens to be of British origin) was mentioned by Twiss already in 1781. Douce mentioned the other one – “*De Vetula*” - in his article from 1793. Both texts were discussed by Madden (1832), van der Linde (1874), von der Lasa (1897) and Murray (1913). This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but it means that chess historians have known these texts for more than 200 years, and they have been discussed in almost every major chess history book. Still Einarsson and Thorarinsson have the denial of these texts as a part of their *major* argument.



1. A chess bishop carved of walrus ivory. The ivory itself has been radiocarbon dated within the usual 95% probability to 770-990 CE.
2. Also, note that the bishop’s miter is worn facing sideways, to borrow Robinson’s description, rather than frontally. This miter orientation predates the frontally worn type, which is found among the Lewis chessmen.
3. Changing focus, and viewing the canopy/piece as a whole, the old Arabic abstract shape of the alfil piece (with horns) is visible, too.

The bishop that predates the Lewis chessmen

From the private collection of Jean-Jaques Marquet, curator of the Louvre.

There are several archaeological chess bishops found at different places that predate the saga and at least one of them predates the Lewis chessmen (see image above and my two former articles). This is also met with denial.

Do we know that there exist chess bishops that are older than the first Icelandic mentioning of it? Yes, we do.

Are there older texts that mention the bishop earlier than Icelandic text? Yes there are.

“Do we know of any other nation using (the) bishop as a chess piece at that time?” Yes we do.

The core of their argument is therefore way off the target. There are numerous other mistakes, but the errors above are more than enough. This puts the “Icelandic theory” to rest.

Morten Lilleøren