



# The Rood and the Torc: The Song of Kristinge, Son of Finn

*Matthew Dickerson*

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When Kristinge, a young monk at a monastery in southeastern France, discovers he is the son of a famous Frisian hero and king who died in battle six years earlier, he leaves the monastic life and sets out in search of his identity. Traveling with his old mentor Willimond, a monk originally of Lindisfarne, Kristinge's journey brings him first across France to Denmark to search of his mother, and eventually back to his native soil of Friesland. Along the way he meets the young, decadent, and half-crazy Frankish king Clovis who resides in Paris, and the holy Abbess Telchild of the nearby monastery of Jouarre—two of several historical figures woven through the novel. However, what begins as a quest to uncover his heritage and find whether his mother still lives becomes a sort of spiritual journey of discovery at many other levels. Kristinge wrestles with the question: who is he, and who should he become? Is he the monk he has spent the past six years training to be? Or the gifted bard that was trained as a youth to compose songs, sing, and play the harp? Or is he the future king that will unite Friesland and save it from the threat of the increasingly powerful Danes and Vikings on the one side and decaying but still threatening Frankish empire on the other. Compounding his confusion, Kristinge also rediscovers and falls in love with a young woman whom he had known many years earlier as a child: a woman who would be far above his station were he to remain a monk but not above his station were he to become king.

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