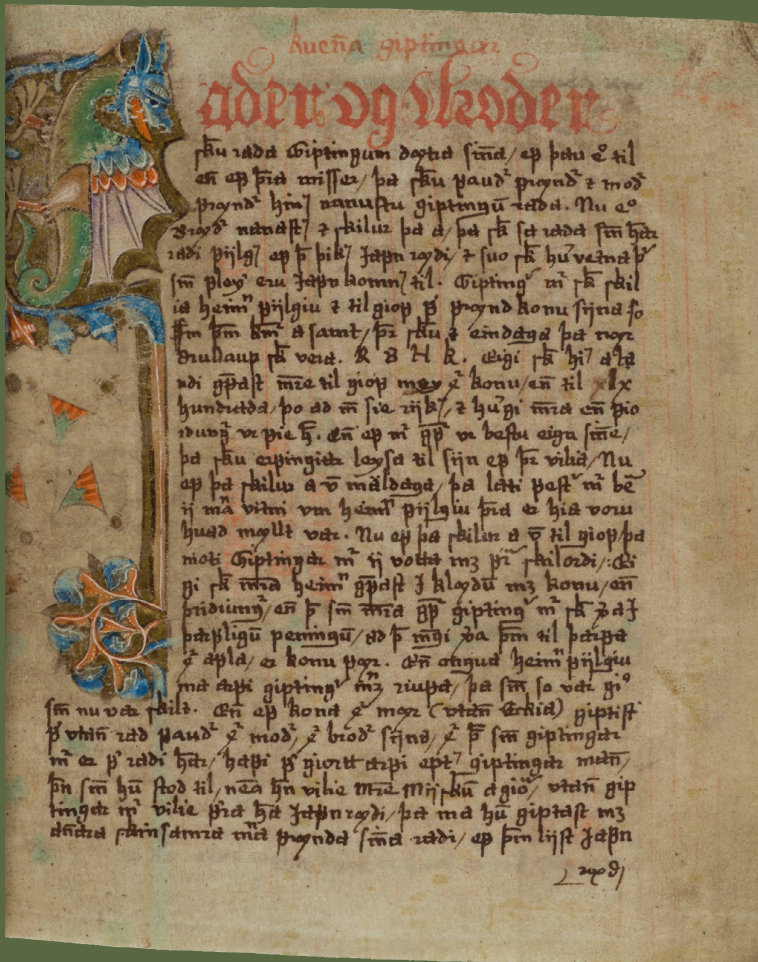


GRIPLA XXXV



Myndin á kápunni er tekin úr skinnhandritinu NKS 1931 4to sem skrifað var á Íslandi, nánar tiltekið á Mýri á Snæfjallaströnd af Bjarna Jónssyni, sennilega árið 1631, þótt á titilsíðu standi 1531. Ártalinu hefur verið breytt eins og Peter Springborg hefur bent á. Handritið er uppskafningur og hefur að geyma Jónsbók sem skrifuð er ofan í gamla latneska messubók. Um þetta handrit og uppskafninga almennt er fjallað í grein eftir Tom Lorenz hér í *Griplu*. Myndin sýnir upphafsstafinn F með drekahöfði sem er á bl. 26r í kafla um kvennagiftingar.

GRIPLA

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Gripla er ritrýnt tímarit sem kemur út einu sinni á ári. Það er alþjóðlegur vettvangur fyrir rannsóknir á sviði íslenskra og norrænna fræða, einkum handrita- og textafræða, bókmennta og þjóðfræða. Birtar eru útgáfur á stuttum textum, greinar og ritgerðir og stuttar fræðilegar athugasemdir. Greinar skulu að jafnaði skrifaðar á íslensku en einnig eru birtar greinar á öðrum norrænum málum, ensku, þýsku og frönsku. Leiðbeiningar um frágang handrita er að finna á heimasíðu Árnastofnunar: <https://www.arnastofnun.is/is/leidbeiningar-um-skil-og-fragang-greina>. Greinum og útgáfum (öðrum en stuttum athugasemdum o.þ.h.) skal fylgja útdráttur. Hverju bindi *Gripla* fylgir handritaskrá.

GRIPLA

RITSTJÓRAR

MARGRÉT EGGERTSDÓTTIR
OG
ÞÓRUNN SIGURÐARDÓTTIR

XXXV



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TOM LORENZ

RECYCLING AND RECONTEXTUALISATION IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN ICELANDIC PALIMPSESTS

1 Introduction

The term ‘palimpsest’ (from Ancient Greek *παλίμψηστος* ‘scraped again’) refers to a specific method of reuse of writing material, usually parchment, by which the original text of a manuscript is erased by scraping or washing it off and subsequently overwritten with a new text (Declercq 2007, 7; Bischoff 1990, 11; Lowe 1972, 480; Jakob Benediktsson 1968, 82). As a palimpsest is a manuscript which has been written on twice, it is often also called a *codex rescriptus* (Lowe 1972, 481; Jakob Benediktsson 1968, 82). This process results in a two-layered manuscript which consists of (1) the *scriptio inferior* or ‘undertext’, that is the text which has been removed and which usually cannot be read without the help of specific technical equipment, in the following referred to as ‘underlayer’, and (2) the *scriptio superior* or ‘overtext’, that is the text which has been substituted and which can easily be read, in the following referred to as ‘overlayer’ (see further Section 4.2).

In medieval and early modern Iceland, *palimpsestation* of books that had become damaged, obsolete or useless in any other way, was a common phenomenon: the Arnamagnæan Manuscript Collection alone, today divided between the Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen and the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies in Reykjavík, holds at least thirty Icelandic palimpsests (Jakob Benediktsson 1968, 84). Considering the Icelandic palimpsests preserved in other collections, however, the

actual number of palimpsests among Icelandic manuscripts is probably considerably higher.¹

Despite the prominence of palimpsests in the Icelandic manuscript material, most of these palimpsests have so far received little attention in Icelandic manuscript research, with the exception of several unusual palimpsest manuscripts, which have been the subject of case studies (Springborg 1969; Westergård-Nielsen 1977; Magnús Már Lárusson 1951). However, no comparative study exists of the different types of palimpsests present in the Icelandic manuscript material and the historical context of their production. Hence, it remains unclear what function palimpsestation fulfilled in Icelandic manuscript culture and whether there are differences between the medieval and early modern periods.

In this article, I propose to distinguish between two distinctive main functions of palimpsestation: *parchment recycling* and *manuscript recontextualisation*.

In most cases, palimpsestation constitutes a form of parchment recycling: an old manuscript is dismembered so that a new manuscript may be created from its material components, which would otherwise be considered waste (Renhart 2020, 26; Ryley 2017, 9). Although manuscripts were palimpsested in both medieval and early modern Iceland, most of the palimpsests preserved in the Icelandic material date from the period following the Icelandic Reformation, which had a considerable impact on both theology and liturgy, and made the majority of the liturgical books that had been used before obsolete (Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2017, 163). Instead, there was a strong demand for new religious books in the form of handwritten manuscripts or printed books. As the purchase of paper for the purpose of book production was expensive (Hufnagel 2020, 180–83; Arna Björk Stefánsdóttir 2013, 233–34), recycling the parchment of the now obsolete Latin Catholic books to create new codices, charters and even parchment prints provided an obvious alternative. Although printing on palimpsest parchment seems to have been a specific Icelandic phenomenon, the material and textual composition of the two surviving

1 To this date, there is no complete list of Icelandic palimpsests held by Icelandic and international collections. To my knowledge, palimpsests connected to Iceland exist in the Arnarnagnæan Manuscript Collection and at the Royal Danish Library in Copenhagen, the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies, the National Library of Iceland, the National Archives of Iceland and the National Museum of Iceland in Reykjavík, the Royal Library of Sweden in Stockholm and the John Rylands Research Institute and Library in Manchester.

Icelandic palimpsest parchment prints has until now never been investigated (see further Section 2.3).

In other cases, palimpsestation constitutes a form of manuscript recontextualisation: rather than removing the entire content of the original manuscript, only part of it is erased and substituted with new content, while selected elements of the original manuscript are intentionally retained and recombined with the new elements. The Icelandic manuscript material provides several examples of this type of palimpsests, among them several Latin Catholic codices that were recontextualised after the Reformation, to be used in a Protestant context. A few examples of such manuscripts are mentioned by Magnús Már Lárusson (1951), Christian Westergård-Nielsen (1977), Peter Springborg (1969) and Árni Heimir Ingólfsson (2019, 68). However, the role of manuscript recontextualisation in Icelandic manuscript culture has never been investigated systematically.

In this article, I compare several typical and noteworthy examples of Icelandic palimpsest manuscripts, charters and parchment prints to investigate the respective historical contexts of their production and to reveal their function in medieval and early modern Icelandic manuscript culture. Based on the discussion of the various Icelandic palimpsests, I demonstrate the functional differences between palimpsests that are the result of parchment recycling and palimpsests that are the result of manuscript recontextualisation. Finally, I argue for the need for a redefinition of the term 'palimpsest' and suggest a new terminology and typology for the description and interpretation of Icelandic palimpsests.

2 The Palimpsest as a Product of Parchment Recycling

2.1 Manuscript Codices and Fragments

Most palimpsest manuscripts constitute a form of recycling, in the sense of conversion of waste material or debris from an obsolete older book into reusable writing material (Renhart 2020, 26; Ryley 2017, 7). This type of palimpsestation is common and includes the clear majority of the existing palimpsest manuscripts in the Icelandic material.

On a general level, palimpsestation can be compared to other forms of recycling of used parchment for other books, such as for flyleaves, paste-downs, quire guards or book wrappers (Ryley 2017, 9). It is important to note, however, that palimpsests differ from other forms of parchment

recycling: while the recycling of parchment from older books for flyleaves or book wrappers is mainly preservative, as pieces of the dismantled codex are used to preserve another book, the reuse of scraped or washed parchment as writing material is actually creative in the sense that it allows for the production of a new manuscript. Furthermore, leaves reused as flyleaves or wrappers do not need to have their textual content removed. In contrast, for a leaf to be reused as writing material, it is necessary that its former textual content has been removed beforehand (Ryley 2017, 9–10). Yet the scraped- or washed-off text can in many cases still be recovered, either because it has not been removed completely and is thus still visible to the naked eye or with the help of certain technological applications, such as multispectral analysis. In a way, palimpsestation may lead to both the destruction of a text and its preservation as an underlayer.

An Icelandic palimpsest manuscript that preserves the only manuscript witness of a specific text is AM 147 4to, also known as *Heynesbók*. This composite manuscript combines several codicological units from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Kålund 1888–1894, 1:431).² One of these codicological units, ff. 93r–111v, contains an otherwise lost redaction of *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* as its underlayer. The text of the saga was written in the fifteenth century and removed in c. 1600. While the underlayer of AM 147 4to is unique, its overlayer is rather commonplace: the manuscript is a legal codex containing the law book *Jónsbók*. Icelandic manuscript collections contain several early modern manuscripts, as well as printed copies of *Jónsbók* made from palimpsested parchment from dismembered manuscripts, some of which are discussed below. This can easily be explained by the fact that *Jónsbók* was one of the most copied texts in medieval and early modern Iceland, with more than 200 parchment and paper manuscripts surviving today (Magnús Már Lárusson 1981, 613; Halldór Hermannsson 1966, 7).³

As far as the underlayer is concerned, however, most palimpsests belonging to this type in the Icelandic material contain fragments of

2 AM 147 4to on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/AM04-0147> (last accessed 29 February 2024).

3 Katelin Parsons has recently argued that there was a preference in early modern Iceland for *Jónsbók* to be written on palimpsest parchment, as it was a symbol of prestige for a family to own an old exemplar of *Jónsbók*. In contrast, the preferred medium of religious texts was paper, as these texts were more closely associated with European cultural developments and book culture.

liturgical books that have been scraped and reused as writing material (Jakob Benediktsson 1968, 84). This is not surprising, as a major share of manuscripts that existed in medieval Iceland were liturgical books. Several Icelandic church inventories preserved as *máldagar* (cartularies) mention old or unusable books as part of the church property. These might include books that had become obsolete or gone out of fashion due to changes in liturgical practices or that had been worn out by repeated use or the passage of time. Unusable liturgical books thus provided an important source of recycled manuscript parchment.

In Iceland, the key cultural and political development that made the majority of the liturgical books obsolete was the Reformation (Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2017, 163). The break with Rome had a considerable impact on both theology and liturgy. The differences between Catholic and Lutheran liturgical practices meant that most of the liturgical books that until then had been used during Office and Mass could not be used any longer and had to be replaced by new books (Loftur Guttormsson 2000, 63). Already in 1540, the New Testament was printed in Roskilde in an Icelandic translation by Oddur Gottskálfsson (c. 1495–1556), making it the oldest preserved book to be printed in Icelandic. In 1555, the second Lutheran bishop of Skálholt, Marteinn Einarsson (†1576), published an Icelandic manual, a handbook for priests containing various rites besides those for Office and Mass, as well as an Icelandic hymnal, a collection of hymns. In 1584, Guðbrandur Þorláksson (c. 1542–1627), second Lutheran bishop of Hólar, printed the whole Bible in Icelandic as well as an extensive Icelandic gradual, a collection of chants for Mass, in 1594. These books, among others, then became the cornerstone of the Icelandic Lutheran service (Loftur Guttormsson 2000, 63–77).

We do not know with certainty what happened to the Catholic liturgical books owned by the Icelandic monasteries and parish churches that were replaced by the new Lutheran service books after the Reformation. While some books may have been destroyed or thrown away, others may have simply been stored away and forgotten (Gottskálf Jensson 2021, 151; Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2017, 161). However, the surviving manuscript material shows that some Catholic liturgical books were modified to varying degrees and recontextualised for a Lutheran context (see further Section 3.1). Manuscripts that were neither destroyed nor still

used could be recycled: in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many manuscripts were dismembered, so that their parchment could be used as material for book bindings (Gottskálf Jensson 2021, 151; Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2017, 161). In other cases, the parchment of liturgical books was palimpsested and reused as writing material (Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2017, 163). According to Jakob Benediktsson (1968, 84), the majority of Icelandic palimpsest manuscripts that survive today were palimpsested in either the sixteenth or the seventeenth century.

One example of an Icelandic palimpsest that combines a pre-Reformation underlayer with a post-Reformation overlayer is Lbs fragm 29. This leaf was originally part of an antiphonary, written in c. 1100, possibly in France (Jakob Benediktsson 1959, 8).⁴ However, the manuscript was dismembered at some point in the late sixteenth century. The leaf was washed off, folded in the middle and possibly inserted into a booklet. In c. 1600, it was then reused as writing material for an Icelandic translation of Martin Luther's explanation of the Ten Commandments, which constitutes the first part of his Small Catechism (Jakob Benediktsson 1959, 8). The Small Catechism, also known in Iceland as *kver* ('booklet', 'quire'), was translated into Icelandic several times during the sixteenth century. It was first printed in 1562 in an Icelandic translation by Oddur Gottskálfsson (Árni Daníel Júlíusson 2023, 117; Halldór Hermannsson 1916, 15–16). The scribe of Lbs fragm 29 may have intended to copy the complete *kver* but seems to never have finished the work, as the leaf preserves the last part of the eighth commandment, the complete ninth commandment, but only the caption for the tenth commandment (f. 1v).

Besides Lbs fragm 29, there are further examples of post-Reformation Icelandic manuscripts that are written on palimpsested parchment from Catholic liturgical books. One such manuscript is Holm perg 5 4to (Gödel 1897, 39–40; Gjerløw 1980, 1:80–81; Kolsrud 1912, 15r). This codex, written completely on palimpsest parchment, is a composite manuscript which was compiled in the second half of the sixteenth century. The overlayer of the manuscript includes both religious and legal material, primarily an Icelandic translation of the deuterocanonical *Book of Sirach* (*Ecclesiasticus*), as well as several sections of *Jónsbók*. All of the manuscript is written on

4 Lbs fragm 29 on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/LbsFragm-0029> (last accessed: 29 February 2024).

palimpsested parchment from a dismembered liturgical book which has been identified by Lilli Gjøløw (1980, 1:80) as a twelfth-century breviary-lectionary, written by two scribes. Holm perg 13 4to also contains several palimpsested leaves from a dismembered liturgical book. This codex is an evangeliary, containing gospels, epistles and collects, written in Icelandic in the middle of the sixteenth century (Gödel 1897, 53–54; Kolsrud 1912, 16r). In contrast, AM 38 8vo is a copy of *Jónsbók* written in 1578 that is partly written on palimpsested parchment from two different manuscripts, the first an older copy of *Jónsbók*, and the second a liturgical book with musical notation (Kålund 1888–1894, 2:351).⁵ A considerably younger example is Holm perg 12 III fol. This fragment consists of a single palimpsested leaf from a dismembered liturgical book with musical notation, either a gradual or an antiphony. The palimpsested leaf was reused in the seventeenth or eighteenth century as writing material for a manuscript containing an Icelandic translation of the first Book of Samuel. At a later point, this Icelandic manuscript was likewise dismembered and the leaf reused as a cover for another codex (Gödel 1897, 32; Kolsrud 1912, 14r).

Besides religious and legal manuscripts, palimpsest parchment from dismembered liturgical books could also be used for narrative texts: one such example is AM 357 4to, written in Iceland in c. 1600 on recycled parchment and containing *Hrólf's saga Gautrekssonar* (Kålund 1888–1894, 1:585). On several leaves, the remains of major initials and staves which were drawn in red ink are clearly visible, suggesting that the palimpsested parchment stems from a dismembered gradual or an antiphony.

An example of a liturgical manuscript that was dismembered after the Reformation, partially palimpsested, but then recycled in a different way as binding material for other books, is the fragment Þjms 625.⁶ This fragment belongs to the same dismembered manuscript, a missal from the late twelfth century, as two other fragments preserved in Icelandic collections, Þjms 174 and Lbs fragm 17 (Attinger and Ommundsen 2013, 306–7).⁷

5 AM 38 8vo on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/AM08-0038> (last accessed 29 February 2024).

6 Þjms 625 on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/Þjms-0625> (last accessed 29 February 2024).

7 Þjms 174 on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/Þjms-0174> (last accessed 29 February 2024); Lbs fragm 17 on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/LbsFragm-0017> (last accessed 29 February 2024).

While all three surviving fragments of the dismembered missal were reused as material for bookbindings, the text on the verso of Pjms 625 has been removed, suggesting that it was originally meant to be reused as writing material. This was never done, however, possibly because the erased text remains highly visible and the parchment was therefore ill-suited as writing material. Nevertheless, Pjms 625 and its sibling fragments demonstrate that the leaves of the same dismembered codex could be intended for different forms of recycling.

While these examples of palimpsest-based recycling of liturgical manuscripts date to the post-Reformation period, the Icelandic palimpsest material does suggest that the Reformation was not the only reason for the recycling of liturgical manuscripts. Several Icelandic palimpsest manuscripts that reuse parts of liturgical manuscripts were produced long before the Reformation (Jakob Benediktsson 1968, 84). The legal codex Manchester, John Rylands Research Institute and Library, Icelandic Ms 5 is a palimpsest from the middle of the fifteenth century (Benedikz 1978, 297–98). The Icelandic law book *Jónsbók* constitutes the overlayer, while the underlayer belonged to a liturgical book. Benedikz (1978, 298) suggests that the book might have been a large psalter or benedictional, written in England in c. 1300. A second example of a liturgical book which was palimpsested in the medieval period is Holm perg 36 V 4to. This fragment consists of a palimpsested bifolium from a dismembered Latin ordinal, written in the second half of the thirteenth century, which was once used as a cover for another codex. On f. 1r, the original text was erased and replaced with the first part of the Icelandic Ordo for St Jón of Hólar, written in c. 1350 (Gödel 1897, 105–6; Kolsrud 1912, 19r).

Even the oldest surviving Icelandic manuscript is a palimpsest: AM 732 a VII 4to consists of a single leaf (Kålund 1888–1894, 2:159; Hreinn Benediktsson 1965, 13).⁸ While the underlayer has not been identified, the high quality of the parchment makes it likely that the original manuscript was imported from another place in Europe. The overlayer is an Easter table on the recto of the leaf, written in Iceland between 1121 and 1139 (Hreinn Benediktsson 1965, 13). The verso of the leaf has not been rewritten and remains blank.

8 AM 732 a VII 4to on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/AM04-0732a-VII> (last accessed 29 February 2024).

Another famous Icelandic palimpsest manuscript is the codex GKS 2868 4to. The codex contains *Brennu-Njáls saga*, the Icelandic national epos, and was written on recycled parchment in the second half of the fourteenth century. This manuscript bears the telling sobriquet *Skafinskinna* ('scraped parchment'). It is literally a palimpsest called 'palimpsest'.

2.2 Charters

The Icelandic charter material held by the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies and the National Archives of Iceland contains several cases of charters that are made from palimpsests of liturgical books. One palimpsest-based charter which preserves most of its original Latin text is AM Dipl. Isl. fasc. LXXIII 27 (DI XIII, 192).⁹ The charter consists of a bifolium of a dismembered lectionary that was only partly palimpsested: while the Latin text has been completely removed in f. 2r–v, it remains largely intact in f. 1r–v. The overlayer of the palimpsested leaf consists of three different short texts: the first text was written in Kálfafell í Fljótshverfi in 1557. The second text was written by Jón Hakason in 1584. Remains of the third text are visible at the top of f. 2v, but these are largely unintelligible. In addition, at the bottom of the same folio, there are two drawings of a lion, drawn in red ink by the same hand (DI XIII, 192).

The underlayer of the charter AM Dipl. Isl. fasc. XVIII 22 was previously unidentified (DI V, 433).¹⁰ However, four words of the underlayer remain clearly visible above the Icelandic text of the overlayer and can be read as “*corpora mentesque sanctificet per*” (AM Dipl. Isl. fasc. XVIII 22, 1v). These words belong to the Secret of the third Sunday after the Epiphany, suggesting that the palimpsested fragment once belonged to a missal.¹¹

In contrast, in the case of the charter ÞÍ K 20/15 1579, none of the original text remains visible to the naked eye. However, traces of a mi-

9 AM Dipl. Isl. fasc. LXXIII 27 on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/AMDI-F0073-0027> (last accessed 29 February 2024).

10 AM Dipl. Isl. fasc. XVIII 22 on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/AMDI-F0018-0022> (last accessed 29 February 2024).

11 In the *Missale Nidrosiense*, printed in 1519, the Secret of the Third Sunday after the Epiphany reads as follows: “*Secreta Hec hostia, domine, quesumus, emundet nostra delicta et ad sacrificium celebrandum subditorum tibi corpora mentesque sanctificet. Per dominum.*” (*Missale Nidrosiense*, 59)

nor initial in red and green, and of notation lines in red, as well as many scratches, clearly demonstrate that the charter is written on recycled parchment from a dismembered liturgical book with musical notation, probably either a gradual or an antiphonary, whose original content was scraped off.

A fourth charter written on palimpsest parchment from a liturgical book is ÞÍ K 21/3a 1590 (Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2017, 172).¹² The charter was written by the Icelander Hallur Erlendsson in 1590 on recycled parchment. While one side of the parchment was cleaned and prepared for reuse, the Latin text on the backside of the charter was not removed. However, the writing has been damaged and today is partly hidden by two pieces of some sort of plastic material that was added in the twentieth century to stabilise the charter, which makes it difficult to read the text. However, I was able to identify the lower half of the fragment as part of the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 15:1–3), suggesting that the dismembered manuscript may have been a lectionary.

2.3 *Parchment Prints*

While palimpsests can be found in codices, booklets or charters written in Iceland, Icelandic palimpsests are not limited to handwritten artefacts: they also occur in printed books. To my knowledge, there survive a total of three exemplars of sixteenth-century Icelandic printed books from the Hólar printing press that are printed on parchment, which today are in the National Library of Iceland in Reykjavík and the Royal Danish Library in Copenhagen. Of these parchment prints, at least two are printed on palimpsested parchment from dismembered Latin manuscripts. These palimpsests are artefacts that differ from other palimpsests in that they cross the medial boundaries between manuscript and print: while the underlayer consists of one or several dismembered manuscripts, the overlayer is a printed book. These mixed manuscript/print palimpsests thus constitute a specific type of written artefact.

Two of these prints are exemplars of *Lögbok Islendinga*, the first printed edition of the Icelandic law book *Jónsbók*. The first edition of *Lögbok Islendinga* was printed in Hólar in 1578. It was reprinted in 1580 and 1582. Several exemplars of these prints have survived, most of them printed on

12 ÞÍ K 21/3a 1590 on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/Thjskjs-FOO17-K21-3a> (last accessed 29 February 2024).

paper. However, two of the exemplars which were probably printed in 1580 are made of parchment (Jakob Benediktsson 1968, 84).

The first exemplar of the print is held by the National Library of Iceland (Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2017, 169; Munksgaard 1938, 112). As this exemplar has no individual shelfmark, it is henceforth referred to by its library barcode as *Lögbok Islendinga* (13630572). This exemplar is made from palimpsested parchment from recycled manuscripts written in Latin. The Latin text of the original manuscripts has not been erased completely and remains highly visible in the margins of many leaves (Munksgaard 1938, 113). In addition to the palimpsest parchment used for the print itself, there is the partly palimpsested fragment of an early-twelfth-century missal used as a flyleaf at the end of the book (Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2017, 169). A second flyleaf, which seems to have been in the front of the codex, is missing. As the remaining flyleaf has been partly palimpsested, it seems likely that the flyleaves were taken from the same dismembered codices that were recycled as writing material for the print.

The texts present in the underlayer of this *Lögbok Islendinga* (13630572) have never been studied. I was able to identify several liturgical, biblical, apocryphal and hagiographic texts, and to reconstruct some of the dismembered manuscripts. Most of the parchment leaves stem from only a small number of dismembered codices, which include different types of liturgical books, both with and without musical notation, as well as a manuscript which consisted of several books from the Old Testament and which may have been a complete Bible. The most notable text present in the underlayer, however, is the *Vita and Translatio Sancti Severini*, that is the Vita of St Severin (†403), the third Bishop of Cologne (Pangerl and Päßgen 2022). This text has not previously been attested for Iceland, either directly, in the form of a Latin manuscript, or indirectly, e.g. in the form of an Icelandic translation or a reference in historical documents. The majority of the texts identified in the underlayer seem to be written in Carolingian script (Derolez 2003, 47–55), suggesting that they may be among the oldest manuscripts preserved in Iceland.

The second parchment exemplar of *Lögbok Islendinga* is today kept in the Royal Danish Library in Copenhagen, where it has the shelfmark 9,-208 8° LN bis 35 (Halldór Hermannsson 1916, 23). This exemplar is also

made from palimpsest parchment taken from several older dismembered manuscripts. These manuscripts seem to have included different types of manuscripts, including liturgical books, as texts written in different hands, major initials and staves in red ink are visible in the underlayer of the printed book. However, the identification of the actual texts is difficult, as the exemplar is in very poor condition. The parchment leaves are darkened and, in some cases, damaged. Furthermore, many leaves include paper repairs that seem to be very old and are mostly in bad condition themselves. While the texts in the underlayer are highly visible on several leaves, only a few short words or partial words can be read with the naked eye, but most of the writing is unintelligible. Nevertheless, I was able to identify parts of the Book of Psalms in the underlayer of two leaves. Based on the layout of the underlayer, the leaves are unlikely to have been part of a liturgical psalter. Instead, they seem to have formed part of a bible, and probably the same bible as was used for the other palimpsest parchment print.

While the texts in the underlayer themselves remain for the most part unidentified, the discernible script, major initials and musical notation provide information about the dismembered manuscripts. For example, the major initials and notation lines visible on f. 245v (p. 490) and f. 246v (p. 492) suggest that these leaves belonged to an illuminated liturgical book containing music, most likely a gradual or antiphonary. Furthermore, the major 'H' initial on f. 245v (p. 490) is very similar in style and use of colour to the major initial 'E' in *Þjms 1799 1v*, a fragment of a dismembered psalter written in Iceland in the second half of the twelfth century. This psalter has been preserved in five fragments: AM 249 b fol., AM accessoria 7 Hs 108, Lbs fragm 54, Lbs fragm 56 and *Þjms 1799* (Selma Jónsdóttir 1976).¹³ Both initials consist of the main body of the letter in an unusual pale green, as well as twine and flower elements in blue, and are filled in brownish ink. While these fragments cannot belong to the same dismembered manu-

13 AM 249 b fol. on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/AM02-0249b> (last accessed 29 February 2024); AM Accessoria 7 Hs 108 on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/en/Acc-0007-d> (last accessed 29 February 2024); Lbs fragment 54 on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/LbsFragm-0054> (last accessed 29 February 2024); Lbs fragment 56 on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/LbsFragm-0056> (last accessed 29 February 2024); *Þjms 1799* on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/Þjms-1799> (last accessed 29 February 2024). This dismembered psalter may itself be written partly on palimpsested parchment: On f. 6v of AM 249 b fol., there are visible traces of text which may be the remnants of removed earlier writing.

script as they belong to different types of liturgical books with different layouts, the similarities in the initials are so striking that I believe they may have been made in the same workshop, possibly by the same book-painter.

In addition to these two exemplars of *Lögbok Islendinga*, there exists a third Icelandic parchment print. This is an exemplar of *Lifsins Vegur*, an Icelandic translation of the theological treatise *Livsens Vej* by the Danish Lutheran theologian Niels Hemmingsen, printed by Guðbrandur Þorláksson in Hólar in 1575. The parchment exemplar has the shelfmark Hielmst. 495 8to and is likewise held by the Royal Danish Library in Copenhagen (Halldór Hermannsson 1916, 17). While there are no visible traces of removed texts on the parchment leaves of this exemplar, the leaves are full of heavy scrape marks. These may potentially be the result of palimpsestation.

While only these three exemplars of parchment prints from Hólar survive, it is possible that there were originally more. The reprocessing of parchment from older manuscripts as palimpsest parchment for new manuscripts is often explained by a combination of high demand for new manuscripts, a lack or scarcity of new writing material, and the ample supply of used writing material that could potentially be recycled through palimpsestation (Lowe 1972, 481–82; Declercq 2007, 20–22). All three factors seem to be present in sixteenth-century Iceland. On the one hand, there must have been considerable demand for exemplars of the new printed edition of *Jónsbók*. On the other hand, this demand could not be met by relying solely on new writing material, either parchment or paper. Paper was first introduced in Iceland in the first half of the fifteenth century, became more common in the middle of the sixteenth century and finally supplanted parchment as the main writing material for both manuscripts and documents after 1580 (Arna Björk Stefánsdóttir 2013, 227–32; Hufnagel 2020, 177). In contrast, from the very beginning, printed books were mainly made out of paper (Arna Björk Stefánsdóttir 2013, 232–33). While parchment had been produced locally for centuries, papermaking constituted a new technology. The paper used for printing at Hólar was imported at high cost from the European continent (Arna Björk Stefánsdóttir 2013, 233–34; Hufnagel 2020, 180–83).

While the supply of new paper or parchment at Hólar was limited, there was a third source of writing material that the printers could tap into:

the library of Hólar Cathedral. According to an inventory preserved in a *máldagi* from 1525 (DI IX, 299), Hólar Cathedral owned a considerable number of Latin books in the sixteenth century, none of which has been preserved. It seems very likely that the manuscripts that were dismembered and palimpsested to gain material for the parchment prints were taken from the Cathedral library. Thus, the palimpsest fragments used for the Hólar parchment prints present important evidence for the reconstruction of the lost library.

Parchment prints were a common phenomenon during the earliest period of European printing in the fifteenth century, and some of the earliest European incunables were printed on parchment. Of the famous Gutenberg Bible, printed in Mainz in the 1450s, there survive both paper and parchment copies. However, fifteenth-century European parchment prints generally make use of new parchment. There is only one known parchment print outside Iceland that is printed on palimpsest parchment: Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Library, Rb 2° 34, an exemplar of Pope Clemens V. *Constitutiones*, printed in Venice in 1476 (Schmitz 2018, 87). Although further, as-yet-undiscovered, parchment prints containing palimpsest parchment may exist, printing on palimpsest parchment seems to have been the exception rather than the rule.

2.4 Summary

The different palimpsests from medieval and early modern Iceland, dating from the twelfth to the seventeenth century, suggest that palimpsestation was a common method of recycling old parchment and gaining new material for writing or printing in Iceland from the very beginning of Icelandic book culture, and it continued to be so in early modern times. Palimpsestation of parchment was one important way that obsolete manuscripts could be recycled in medieval and early modern Iceland. Palimpsestation was motivated by an acute need for new manuscripts, a lack or shortage of new parchment that could be used as writing material, as well as an ample supply of used parchment from obsolete manuscripts. Especially after the introduction of the Reformation, obsolete manuscripts were abundant in Iceland in the form of Catholic liturgical books no longer used, which could freely be dismembered and recycled to create new manuscripts.

Manuscripts made of recycled parchment could take many shapes and forms: palimpsested parchment was used to create whole codices, as well as smaller booklets, and was even used as writing material for charters. Furthermore, palimpsested parchment was also used in sixteenth-century Iceland to create printed books. On a European scale, books printed on palimpsested parchment seem to have been at the least very uncommon, if not effectively unknown, as paper was cheaper and widely available as printing material. Parchment prints, in contrast, constituted a more exclusive ‘deluxe’ product and made use of high-quality parchment (Needham 2015, 250–51). Palimpsest parchment, which was more expensive than paper, but of considerably lower quality than new parchment, was ill-suited for both mass production of cheap books and for printing high-quality books. The Icelandic parchment prints may thus constitute a specific Icelandic phenomenon.

3 The Palimpsest as a Product of Manuscript Recontextualisation

3.1 Recontextualisation of Liturgical Books after the Reformation

A second type of palimpsest is characterised by a more complex redaction of the original manuscript. In this case, only part of the content of the original manuscript is erased, intentionally leaving selected content intact. The overlayer thus consists of the whole of the newly added content, written in place of the erased content, and the retained content. This type of palimpsest constitutes a form of manuscript reworking or recontextualisation.

This less common second type of palimpsest has not received attention in previous research. One example is the codex Thott 154 fol. (Árni Heimir Ingólfsson 2019, 68; Kålund 1900, 306–7). The original manuscript, a liturgical book, was written in England in the last quarter of the fourteenth century. The Latin text was written in two columns and lavishly decorated with illuminated and historiated initials, and extensive decorations that framed the columns. The codex came to Iceland in c. 1600, when it was substantially reworked and recontextualised. The codex was dismembered, and each leaf was cut in half twice, to get four smaller leaves. The Latin text was removed, while the illuminated initials and other decorative elements were retained. New content, both textual and musical, was inserted

into the palimpsested areas. This content stems for the most part from the Icelandic gradual printed by Guðbrandur Þorláksson in 1594 (Árni Heimir Ingólfsson 2019, 68). Thott 154 fol. differs from the examples of parchment recycling discussed above in that it preserves parts of the artefactual features of the dismembered manuscript and incorporates them into the new manuscript. While many medieval liturgical books were discarded or recycled after the Reformation, Thott 154 fol. demonstrates that others could be recontextualised by palimpsesting them and substituting the obsolete Catholic texts with relevant Lutheran content, while preserving the beautifully illuminated initials and lavish decorations of the original manuscript.

However, Thott 154 fol. is not the only example of a liturgical book modified and recontextualised through palimpsestation. Two Icelandic law manuscripts, NKS 1931 4to and NKS 340 8vo, are made from parchment from the same dismembered and selectively palimpsested liturgical book (Springborg 1969; Kålund 1900, 273, 302).¹⁴ These two law codices contain *Jónsbók*, written by the sixteenth-century Icelandic scribe Bjarni Jónsson. Both manuscripts are copies of the first printed edition of *Jónsbók* (see Section 2.3) and must therefore have been written after 1578 (Springborg 1969, 312–13). As is the case for Thott 154 fol., the book painting in the dismembered liturgical book was incorporated into the new manuscripts: seven illuminated initials, as well as seven puzzle initials in red, blue and violet ink were retained and reused in the new manuscripts by modifying their form and incorporating them into the Icelandic text. The first leaf of NKS 1931 4to is actually a double palimpsest: originally, the scribe wrote the beginning of *Jónsbók* both on the recto and verso of the leaf. He removed the text he had just written, turning the leaf around. On the former verso, now recto, he added a title page for the codex and on the former recto, now verso, he started writing the actual text of *Jónsbók* (Springborg 1969, 306).

Kristian Kålund (1900, 273, 302) identified the underlayer in NKS 340 8vo as a Latin ritual and the underlayer in NKS 1931 4to as a Latin missal, without identifying them as belonging to the same manuscript. In his analysis of NKS 1931 4to, Halldór Hermannsson (1966, 15) suggests the

¹⁴ NKS 1931 4to on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/NKS04-1931> (last accessed 29 February 2024); NKS 340 8vo on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/NKS08-0340> (last accessed 29 February 2024).

origin of the liturgical manuscript was fourteenth-century England. In his study of NKS 340 8vo and NKS 1931 4to, Peter Springborg (1969, 306, 326) identifies the Latin fragments underlying both manuscripts as belonging to the same dismembered liturgical book, excluding the last seven leaves (ff. 157–163) of NKS 340 8vo, which he assumes belong to a different manuscript (Springborg 1969, 308, 325).¹⁵ Furthermore, he agrees with Halldór Hermannsson in tentatively attributing the palimpsested Latin manuscript to fourteenth-century England, noting the need for further research (Springborg 1969, 326).

Another example of a palimpsest-based manuscript recontextualisation is the multilingual psalter AM 618 4to, which joins textual elements in Latin, French and Icelandic in a complex and multi-layered manuscript (Kålund 1888–1894, 2:31–32).¹⁶ The original manuscript was a bilingual psalter, written in England in the second half of the twelfth century, displaying Latin and French versions of the psalter side by side. It is a typical example of a small group of six bilingual Latin-French parallel psalters from late-twelfth-century/early-thirteenth-century England (Agrigoroaei 2018, 31–32). However, the French text was scraped off in the sixteenth century, leaving only the major initials, some minor initials and single words. In the now blank parts of the leaves, the psalms' Icelandic translation by Oddur Gottskálksson, printed as part of *Guðbrandsbiblíja* in 1584, was added. The luxuriously illuminated initials and some of the minor initials at the beginning of each new verse were reused, either in their original or an adapted form. Some of the minor initials and one of the major initials were washed off and painted over with new initials, to fit the newly added Icelandic text. The intention behind the reworking of the manuscript may have been to change the beautiful but effectively useless artefact into a book that could be used by a late-sixteenth-century Icelander to read the Psalms either in Latin or Icelandic, or to use both text versions together to teach Latin.

Interestingly, a comparable recontextualisation to AM 618 4to seems to have been attempted regarding one of the manuscript's siblings: the

15 Peter Springborg does not explain why he believes these leaves belong to a different manuscript. Based on my own observations, however, the script and notation in the underlayer of ff. 157–63 differ from the script and notation in the underlayer of the remaining codex, suggesting that they do indeed stem from a different musical liturgical book.

16 AM 618 4to on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/da/AM04-0618> (last accessed 29 February 2024).

BnF Latin 768 is an analogous Latin-French parallel psalter, written in the last quarter of the twelfth century, possibly in Canterbury (Agrigoroaei 2018, 31).¹⁷ In the same way as for AM 618 4to, in the first part of the manuscript the French text on the right side was at one point carefully removed by an unknown owner (ff. 10r–58v), probably with the intention of adding the translation of the Psalms into another language in the now blank second column of the leaves. As for AM 618 4to, the illuminated initials of the French text were retained so that they could be reused and incorporated into a new text. However, the French text remains intact in the second half of the codex, and no new text has been added in the blank parts of the leaves in the first half. Instead, the illuminated initials were cut out from both the Latin text and the French text, probably so that they could be pasted into another book; either a manuscript or a printed book.¹⁸ This form of manuscript reuse was certainly a lot simpler and more versatile than palimpsesting and rewriting an entire codex. Nevertheless, the attempted modification of this manuscript corresponds to the realised reworking of AM 618 4to, showing that the two parallel psalters were approached in basically the same way. In two independent contexts, the owners of the manuscripts had similar ideas about how a codex could be recontextualised.

A fourth example of a palimpsest manuscript which retains one single major initial is AM 90 8vo, written in Iceland in c. 1600 (Kålund 1888–1894, 2:386–87).¹⁹ The entire manuscript is made from palimpsest parchment. The overlayer of the manuscript contains a calendar, as well as two Lutheran texts in Icelandic, while the underlayer consists of an unidentified Catholic liturgical book written in Latin. The retained major initial is a ‘D’ initial, which can be found in the top right corner of f. 31r. This initial is followed by an incipit written in capital letters. The retained ‘D’ initial was not incorporated into the newly added text, as the palimpsested leaf was turned 90 degrees before reusing it as writing material. The

17 BnF Latin 786 on <https://manuscripts-france-angleterre.org>: <https://manuscripts-france-angleterre.org/view3if/pl/ark:/12148/btv1b105395323> (last accessed 29 February 2024).

18 Cutting illuminated initials and miniatures out of parchment leaves has been a common practice in Europe and America since early modern times and remains so until this day (de Hamel 1996; Wieck 1996).

19 AM 90 8vo on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/en/AMo8-0090> (last accessed 29 February 2024).

initial therefore remains an arbitrary decoration without any function in the overlayer.

While the modifications of Thott 154 fol., NKS 340 8vo/NKS 1931 4to, AM 618 4to and AM 90 8vo are in many ways comparable, there are also some differences. In all four cases an obsolete text was removed and substituted with a relevant text in Icelandic. The liturgical books used to create Thott 154 fol., NKS 340 8vo, NKS 1931 4to and, presumably, AM 90 8vo were obsolete for confessional and linguistic reasons: as Catholic liturgical books written in Latin, they could not be used in a Lutheran service held in Icelandic. They were thus palimpsested to create new manuscripts belonging to different social spheres, as both religious manuscripts (Thott 154 fol. and AM 90 8vo), and law manuscripts (NKS 340 8vo and NKS 1931 4to). In contrast, the removed content of AM 618 4to was only linguistically obsolete, being written in French, while the actual content of the French text, the Psalms, was still relevant. Therefore, instead of adding an unrelated new text, exactly the same text was inserted into the manuscript, but just in another language. For this reason, AM 618 4to was not dismembered, and its original codicological structure could be preserved. The reworking of all four manuscripts can be dated to the second half of the sixteenth century. As there are no similar examples preserved in the Icelandic manuscript material dating to earlier or later time periods, this type of recontextualisation of Latin liturgical books may have been particular to the half century following the Reformation.²⁰

3.2 *Modification of Manuscripts Written in Icelandic*

Another example of an Icelandic palimpsest of the second type is the law codex AM 161 4to, which was written in Iceland in the middle of the sixteenth century, possibly by Grímur Skúlason of Hrúni (†1582), and contains both *Jónsbók* and other legal texts in Icelandic (Kálund 1888–1894,

20 While this type of manuscript recontextualisation seems to be uncommon, it is not confined to Iceland: Prof. Dr. Hanna Wimmer (Hamburg University) is currently investigating five German palimpsest manuscripts that retain major initials and, in some cases, incorporate these initials into the newly added text, in similar ways to the Icelandic examples discussed above. Three of these German manuscripts were previously discussed by Hermann Knaus (1972). All five manuscripts were palimpsested in monastic scribal workshops in fifteenth-century Germany and seem to represent an isolated local approach to recontextualising outdated manuscripts rather than a wider common phenomenon.

1:441–42; Halldór Hermannsson 1966, 17–18).²¹ A later ownership note identifies the Danish official Hendrik Kragh and his half-brother Poul Stigesen Hvide (Páll Stígsson) as owners of the manuscript: “Thenne Bog hører Migh Hennrick Kragh Tiill *med* Rette och tend erffued iegh epter minn gode Broder Pouell Stiifsenn aar 1566 tend gaff hand migh wdii fiin testament” (AM 161 4to, f. 1v).

The first section of the codex (ff. 1r–16r) contains a collection of minor law provisions. This section was heavily modified in two separate instances, resulting in several examples of palimpsestation:

The text of the first leaves of the manuscript (ff. 1r–6r) was removed and substituted with a table of contents in Danish for the Icelandic *Jónsbók* text (ff. 2r–6r). The scribe, who apparently knew both Icelandic and Danish, seems to have considered *Jónsbók* to be the most important part of the codex and the content of the first pages of lesser importance.

A further case of palimpsestation can be found on ff. 10r–10v. On f. 10r, the majority of the text was washed off and a new version of the same text was then added. On 10v, the original text was washed off, presumably by the same scribe, but no new text was added. The same scribe who wrote the new text on f. 10r, also added further law provisions to the collection in ff. 15r–16r.

A very different case is AM 556 a 4to (Kristian Kålund 1888–1894, 1:720).²² This codex mainly contains *Íslendingasögur* and *fornaldarsögur*. One of the texts it originally included is the satirical poem *Grettisfærsla* on ff. 52r–53r. However, this poem was later removed, initially without adding any new text in its place. Only later were the blank parts of the leaves used to write down minor textual additions by later owners of the manuscript. The reason for the removal of *Grettisfærsla* is probably the sexual content and obscene language of the poem (Heslop 2006, 69). Ironically, the remaining traces of the text were further damaged by an attempt to recover the text with the use of a detergent in the nineteenth century.²³

21 AM 161 4to on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/AM02-02491> (last accessed 29 February 2024).

22 AM 556 a 4to on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/AM04-0556a> (last accessed 29 February 2024).

23 AM 556 a 4to and *Grettisfærsla* are the object of an ongoing project by Kate Heslop and Beeke Stegmann which aims to restore the lost text of the poem with the help of spectral imaging, making it the first attempt of this kind for an Icelandic palimpsest. For information on the project, see <https://bit.ly/4gK89Ey> (last accessed 29 February 2024).

A comparable case is AM 586 4to, also known as *Arnarbælisbók* (Kristian Kålund 1888–1894, I 747–48).²⁴ This codex contains a collection of *Íslendingasögur*, *fornaldarsögur*, *riddarasögur* and *ævintýri*, among them the legendary saga *Bósa saga og Herraudís* on ff. 12v–19r. Like *Grettisfærsla*, *Bósa saga og Herraudís* contains some obscene sexual language regarding the encounter of the titular protagonist Bósi with several farmers' daughters. The most explicit sections on ff. 15r, 16v and 17v–18r were removed by a later owner of the manuscript, creating three lacunas in the text.

Although the changes made to these manuscripts vary in extent and nature, they all represent a similar manuscript reuse practice. In contrast to the various forms of parchment recycling whereby a manuscript is considered to be waste and is dismembered to reprocess its materials into clean writing material, the examples discussed partly and selectively preserve the artefactual and textual structure of the original manuscript, as far as they are deemed to be valuable or useful, and recombine them with newly added textual or non-textual elements. Thus, there is continuity between the original manuscript and the reworked manuscript, and, in certain cases, they are essentially the same artefact.

3.3 *Palimpsests in Forged Charters*

While all the examples of manuscript recontextualisation discussed above are codices or fragments of dismembered codices, manuscript recontextualisation could also be employed to create other kinds of documents. One important subgroup of such documents is forgeries of medieval charters in which (part of) the text of the original document is substituted with new text, but certain elements, such as the original seal, signature or parts of the text, are retained to suggest an authenticity and integrity of the newly created document (Hødnebo 1968, 82; Huitfeldt-Kaas 1896, 90–91). Rather than merely recycling old parchment from dismembered manuscripts (see Section 2.2), a forger used the palimpsest of an older charter to create a more convincing forgery.

Charter forgery is a common phenomenon. In his study of the Icelandic charters dated to before 1450, Stefán Karlsson (1963, xxvii–xxxvi) identifies ten charters that he considers to be forgeries written at a later

²⁴ AM 586 4to on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/AM04-0586> (last accessed 29 February 2024).

time. Four of these forgeries are palimpsests of older charters that retain the original seals but replace the writing. Two of them are forged by the same scribe: AM Dipl. Isl. fasc. IV 20 and AM Dipl. Isl. fasc. VI 8 (DI III, 375; DI III, 560; Stefán Karlsson 1963, 96–97 (no. 82), 151–52 (no. 120)). The forged charters are dated internally to 1390 and 1401, respectively. They concern the farm Alviðra in Dýrafjörður, which was the object of ownership disputes in the sixteenth century. In the course of these disputes, the forger seems to have created the forgeries to strengthen his legal position (Stefán Karlsson 1963, xxviii–xxix). To prove the authenticity of the forged charters, the forger retained the seals of the original charters: AM Dipl. Isl. fasc. IV 20 contained four seals, three of which have been preserved until today, whereas AM Dipl. Isl. fasc. VI 8 contained three seals, none of which has been preserved.

AM Dipl. Isl. fasc. VI 21 is also a palimpsest-based charter forgery (DI III, 590; Stefán Karlsson 1963, 164–65 (no. 131)).²⁵ The text of the original charter was removed in c. 1600 and substituted with a new text dated to 1406. The forged charter pretends to have been written by Jón Broddason, the episcopal official of the bishop of Hólar. It seems unlikely, however, that this Jón Broddason was even alive in 1406. In authentic charters, he is first mentioned in 1448, and in the function of *officialis* only in 1474 (Stefán Karlsson 1963, 165). Furthermore, this priest seems to be the same Jón Broddason who was abbot of Munkaþverá from 1489 to c. 1495 (Jón Guðnason 1976, 538). Of the three seals of the original charter, none has survived.

In a similar way, AM Dipl. Isl. fasc. VII 13 is a forged charter written on a palimpsested older charter (DI IV, 318; Stefán Karlsson 1963, xxxiii–xxxv, 207–208 (no. 161)). While the charter contains six holes for seals, none of these seals has been preserved. Although the charter is dated to 1417, it must actually have been written in the late sixteenth century, as the same scribe wrote another charter dated to 1590 (Stefán Karlsson 1963, xxxiv). This scribe is also responsible for AM Dipl. Isl. fasc. LII 18, a palimpsest-based forgery pretending to have been written in 1554 (DI XII, 471; Stefán Karlsson 1963, xxxiv). The Icelandic charter material dated to

25 AM Dipl. Isl. fasc. VI 21 on handrit.is: <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/AMDI-F0006-0021> (last accessed 29 February 2024).

after 1450 has not been systematically studied with regard to palimpsest-based forgeries (Jakob Benediktsson 1968, 84).

These examples may only be the tip of the iceberg: although several forged medieval charters survive, it is not difficult to imagine that there might have been considerably more such palimpsest-based charter forgeries in circulation in early modern Iceland. However, charters that can be recognised as forgeries are less likely to be preserved than authentic charters. Palimpsest-based charters might thus have been an even more common phenomenon than is evident from the surviving Icelandic charter material.

3.4 Summary

The different palimpsests from early modern Iceland, dating back to the sixteenth to eighteenth century, suggest that in the early modern period palimpsestation was a common method of recontextualising obsolete manuscripts and adapting them to changing social and cultural contexts. The Icelandic manuscript material contains several examples of palimpsest manuscripts in which selected textual, artistic or material elements of the original manuscript are intentionally retained and recombined with new textual, artistic or material elements. This form of palimpsestation needs to be differentiated from the recycling of waste parchment from dismembered manuscripts.

The Icelandic palimpsest manuscripts discussed above demonstrate various applications of palimpsestation for the purpose of manuscript recontextualisation. Among the Icelandic palimpsests which are the result of manuscript recontextualisation, there are several cases of Latin Catholic codices that were reworked after the Reformation to be used in a Protestant context by adding an Icelandic text (Springborg 1969; Westergård-Nielsen 1977; Magnús Már Lárusson 1951). These palimpsests are characterised by preserving initials from the original manuscript and either using them as decorations or reusing them as initials for the new Icelandic text. Besides substituting texts with new texts, certain Icelandic manuscripts could be palimpsested and recontextualised to censor objectionable content by removing the relevant passages without inserting new text in the now blank spaces. Another typical application of manuscript

recontextualisation is the creation of forgeries of medieval charters that preserve the plicas and seals of the original charter.

4 Towards a Comprehensive Definition

4.1 *The Definition*

While the traditional definition and terminology of palimpsest research are well-suited to describing most palimpsest manuscripts, several palimpsest in the Icelandic material challenge the traditional understanding of palimpsestation and therefore require a broader definition and more specific terminology.

The usual modern understanding of a typical palimpsest is a manuscript in which the original text, the *undertext* or *scriptio inferior*, has been erased and ‘overwritten’ with a new handwritten text, the *overtext* or *scriptio superior* (Lowe 1972, 481–83; Declercq 2007, 11–12).

However, while the clear majority of Icelandic palimpsests are pure manuscript codices or charters, the corpus of Icelandic early printed books contains two unique parchment prints, made from palimpsest parchment from dismembered liturgical codices, that combine handwritten undertexts and printed overtexts (see Section 2.3). While manuscripts and printed books are often studied by different subdisciplines, either manuscript studies or book history, the existence of these mixed manuscript-print palimpsests blurs the boundaries between these disciplines and requires a more flexible and open definition of the term ‘palimpsest’.

Rather than restricting the term to pure manuscripts, palimpsestation may best be understood as a method of reusing writing material (parchment, paper, papyrus or other) in which the original (textual) content is erased so that it may be substituted (by writing or printing) with new (textual) content. The result of this process is a complex, two-layered written artefact (manuscript codex, charter, printed codex or other): the actual palimpsest.

4.2 *The Terminology for the Description of Palimpsests*

Most descriptions of palimpsests are based on the basic dichotomy between the undertext and the overtext, i.e. the old text that has been erased and the new text written in its stead (Lowe 1972, 481–83; Declercq 2007,

11–12). For the description of many palimpsests, however, this dichotomy is insufficient.

On the one hand, it refers solely to the textual content of the manuscript but ignores the different non-textual elements that may be present in a manuscript and that need to be considered in a holistic, material-philological analysis of a palimpsest. This includes artistic, musical and other functional elements, such as minor and major initials, miniatures, different forms of musical notation and, on a more abstract level, the general layout and *mise-en-page* of the manuscript. In extreme cases, the *scriptio inferior* or *scriptio superior* may not include any text at all, but solely non-textual elements.

Rather than focusing on the various erased and substituted texts present in the palimpsest, I therefore suggest focusing on the different layers that make up the entirety of the written artefact. These two layers of the palimpsest may be referred to as the ‘underlayer’, encompassing the various textual, artistic and material elements that have been removed; and the ‘overlayer’, encompassing the various textual, artistic and material elements that have been substituted for them. The terms *scriptio inferior* and *scriptio superior* may then be used to refer exclusively to the textual elements contained in them.

On the other hand, many palimpsests include a third group of elements, namely those elements of the original manuscript that have not been erased, but intentionally retained. The elements may be artistic, textual or material. In Section 3.1, I discussed several examples of palimpsests which purposefully retain certain artistic elements, i.e. the initials, miniatures and other decorations, of liturgical books, while substituting the original liturgical texts with new texts. Furthermore, in Section 3.2, I discussed examples of manuscripts that retain part of their original text(s), while erasing other texts or text passages, or substituting them with new texts. Finally, in Section 3.3, I have provided examples of forged charters that purposefully retain certain material elements, i.e. the seals, of authentic charters.

These retained elements cannot simply be assigned to either the underlayer or the overlayer as they are essentially part of both. At a descriptive level, however, it is helpful to distinguish them from the underlayer and the overlayer and to consider them as a separate component of the palimpsest, which may be referred to as the *retained elements*. The retained elements connect the underlayer and overlayer of a palimpsest manuscript.

The presence or absence of retained elements is essential for the interpretation of a palimpsest as being the result of parchment recycling or manuscript recontextualisation (see Section 2.3).

4.3 A Typology of Palimpsests

Although there is wide variation in manuscripts that are or contain palimpsests, each of the Icelandic palimpsests discussed above seems to be the result of either parchment recycling or manuscript recontextualisation. I therefore argue that recycling and recontextualisation may be understood to represent two distinctive main types of palimpsests.

The first main type, which is what researchers usually mean by ‘palimpsest’, consists of the reuse of the material, usually parchment, to produce a new manuscript. In this case, there is generally no relation between the content of the old manuscript and of the new manuscript, and they constitute two separate artefacts. This corresponds to the classical idea of a palimpsest as the product of recycling (Renhart 2020, 26). A palimpsest created by recycling consists of underlayer and overlayer text but has no deliberately retained elements (see Section 2).

In the second main type, the manuscript is modified to a lesser or greater extent by removing some of the original elements and substituting them with new elements, while retaining other parts of the original manuscript. Usually, there is some textual, functional or thematic connection between the newly added elements and the intentionally retained elements of the original manuscript(s), which are now joined in the same manuscript. Rather than the mere recycling of material, this type of palimpsestation constitutes a form of recontextualisation, in which part of a codex is taken out of its original context and set into another context (see Section 3).

To distinguish between recycling and recontextualisation of palimpsest manuscripts, it is thus necessary to focus more closely on the interplay between the different elements: both the underlayer and the overlayer, as well as the retained elements.

4.4 Summary

While all known Icelandic palimpsests are made from parchment and the majority of them are manuscript codices or charters, a smaller number of Icelandic parchment prints that are palimpsests exist. To adequately

describe the potential varieties of palimpsests encountered in the Icelandic material, I therefore suggest the following extended general definition:

- (1) A palimpsest is a specific type of multi-layered written artefact in which the original textual and/or non-textual content is partly or completely removed so that new textual and/or non-textual content can be inserted. The two layers present in the palimpsest are the underlayer and the overlayer.
- (2) There are two main types of palimpsest. The first subtype constitutes the recycling of the material of an older written artefact to create a new written artefact. This type of palimpsest consists of an underlayer and an overlayer, with the overlayer consisting purely of newly added elements.
- (3) The second subtype of palimpsest constitutes the recontextualisation of an older written artefact. This type of palimpsest consists of an underlayer and an overlayer, with the overlayer consisting of both retained elements and newly added elements.
- (4) The whole of the removed textual and/or non-textual content constitutes the underlayer. The undertext (*scriptio inferior*) exclusively constitutes textual elements that are part of the underlayer.
- (5) The whole of the newly added textual and/or non-textual content and the preserved textual and/or non-textual content constitute the overlayer. The overtext (*scriptio superior*) exclusively constitutes textual elements that are part of the overlayer.
- (6) A palimpsest may contain retained elements, that is textual and/or non-textual elements of the original written artefact that have been retained intentionally and are incorporated into the new written artefact.

5 Conclusion

In medieval and early modern Iceland, palimpsestation fulfilled two major functions: parchment recycling and manuscript recontextualisation. While the former corresponds to the classical idea of palimpsests, consisting of an underlayer and an overlayer, the latter differs from this traditional understanding as it includes certain retained elements in addition to the underlayer and overlayer. While the functional difference between parchment

recycling and manuscript recontextualisation has largely been overlooked in previous scholarship, approaching palimpsest manuscripts as the result of either parchment recycling or manuscript recontextualisation might provide new insights into the understanding of single manuscripts, as well as a wider manuscript culture.

In Sections 2 and 3, I demonstrated how this is manifest in Icelandic palimpsests. The Icelandic manuscript material provides many examples of both parchment recycling and manuscript recontextualisation in the form of different palimpsest manuscripts, which include manuscript codices, charters and parchment prints. While several of the examples of parchment recycling date to the medieval period, including the presumably oldest manuscript, which is known for certain to have been written in Iceland, most of the Icelandic palimpsests that are the result of parchment recycling post-date the period following the Icelandic Reformation. Although palimpsestation seems to have been a common approach to recycling parchment from older manuscripts from the beginning of Icelandic manuscript culture, the Reformation brought a marked increase in palimpsestation for the purpose of parchment recycling. In contrast, the Icelandic manuscript material does not provide any examples of manuscript recontextualisation dating to the medieval period, suggesting that palimpsestation may not have been employed to recontextualise manuscripts before the Icelandic Reformation. Confronted with an immense need for new, Lutheran books, palimpsestation provided a way to either create a new book out of the waste material from an obsolete book or to actualise an obsolete book and make it useful again. In addition to a general increase in palimpsestation, the Reformation coincided with a change in how palimpsestation was employed in Icelandic manuscript culture.

Based on the Icelandic material, I have argued that the traditional definition of the term 'palimpsest' does not suffice to adequately describe the various types of medieval and early modern palimpsests. I therefore suggest a more comprehensive definition of the term as a multi-layered written artefact that encompasses manuscript codices, charters and prints. Furthermore, I have argued that the traditional terminology used for the description of palimpsests, focusing on the dichotomy between *scriptio inferior* or undertext and *scriptio superior* or overtext, is insufficient to describe both palimpsests that are the result of parchment recycling and

palimpsests that are the result of manuscript modification. To include not only text but also any form of written or artistic content, such as layout, initials, drawings and other illuminations, as well as musical annotation, I have introduced the terms ‘underlayer’ and ‘overlayer’. In addition, I have suggested adding the new term ‘retained elements’ for those elements of an original manuscript that are not removed but intentionally retained and incorporated into the new manuscript. This expanded terminology allows for the description of more complex written artefacts by taking into consideration the underlayer, overlayer and retained elements that may be present in a palimpsest manuscript. The interpretation of a palimpsest as a form of parchment recycling or manuscript recontextualisation depends on the interplay between these elements.

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SUMMARY

Recycling and Recontextualisation in Medieval and Early Modern Icelandic Palimpsests

Keywords: charters, manuscripts, palimpsestation, parchment prints, recontextualisation, recycling

In medieval and early modern Iceland, palimpsestation, that is the removal and substitution of the original writing through new writing, of books that had become damaged, obsolete or in any other way useless, was a common phenomenon.

In most cases, an obsolete manuscript was dismembered so that a new manuscript may be created from its material components which would otherwise be considered waste. While parchment recycling was common in Iceland both in the medieval and early modern period, it was most productive in the century following the introduction of the Icelandic Reformation when palimpsested parchment from Latin Catholic books was frequently used for religious and legal manuscripts as a cheaper and more readily available alternative to paper. In addition, the Icelandic material includes two parchment prints of *Jónsbók* which are printed on palimpsest parchment. While palimpsestation was common all over Europe in medieval and early modern times, printing on palimpsest parchment seems to have been an exclusively Icelandic phenomenon.

In other cases, an obsolete manuscript was recontextualised by substituting certain elements of the original manuscript while retaining other elements. After the Icelandic Reformation, Catholic liturgical manuscripts such as AM 618 4to, NKS 1931/NKS 340 8vo and AM 90 8vo were palimpsested to adapt them to a Protestant context. In an analogue way, manuscripts written in Icelandic could be modified by substituting old for new content (AM 161 4to) or by removing undesirable texts or text passages (AM 556 a 4to and AM 586 4to). Moreover, palimpsestation was used in several cases to create forgeries of medieval charters. As the Icelandic manuscript material does not provide any example of manuscript recontextualisation dating to the medieval period, this form of palimpsestation may have been an early modern phenomenon.

To better describe these different types of Icelandic palimpsests, I propose redefining the term 'palimpsest' as multi-layered written artefact consisting of an 'underlayer' of partly or completely removed original textual and non-textual content and an 'overlayer' of newly-added textual or non-textual content. Furthermore, I propose the term 'retained elements' for those elements of an original manuscript that are not removed but intentionally retained and incorporated into the new manuscript as a separate component of palimpsests

in addition to the ‘underlayer’ and the ‘overlayer’. Based on this definition, I propose to distinguish parchment recycling and manuscript recontextualisation as two main types of palimpsests.

ÁGRIP

Endurvinnsla og endurnýting í íslenskum uppskafningum frá miðöldum og á árnýöld

Efnisorð: fornbréf, handrit, uppskafningar, prentuð skinnhandrit, endurnýting, endurvinnsla

Á Íslandi á miðöldum og einnig á árnýöld voru uppskafningar algengt fyrirbæri, en svo nefnast handrit þar sem upphaflegt letur hefur verið fjarlægt, skafið upp, og nýtt letur sett í staðinn. Þetta eru handrit sem höfðu skemmst, verið eyðilögð eða á annan hátt orðið gagnslaus. Í flestum tilfellum var handrit sem talið var ónýtt tekið í sundur svo að hægt væri að búa til nýtt úr efni þess sem annars hefði verið litið á sem rusl eða úrgang. Endurnýting bókfells eða skinns var algeng á Íslandi bæði á miðöldum og síðari öldum en náði þó sögulegu hámarki á öldinni eftir siðbreytingu (siðaskipti) þegar uppskafin skinnhandrit sem áður höfðu geymt latneskar bækur úr kaþólsku voru notuð til að skrifa upp trúarlegt og lagalegt efni enda var það ódýrari og aðgengilegri kostur en pappír. Auk þess eru á Íslandi varðveitt tvö skinnhandrit sem hafa að geyma *Jónsbók* prentaða á uppskafning úr skinni. Alls staðar annars staðar í Evrópu var algengt að nota uppskafin handrit, bæði á miðöldum og á árnýöld, en prentun á uppskafninga virðist hins vegar vera séríslenskt fyrirbæri. Í öðrum tilfellum fékk ónýtt eða gagnslaust handrit nýtt hlutverk og nýtt samhengi þegar ákveðnum atriðum í upphaflega handritinu var skipt út með nýjum en öðrum haldið. Eftir siðaskiptin á Íslandi urðu kaþólskar messubækur, eins og AM 618 4to, NKS 1931/NKS 340 8vo og AM 90 8vo, að uppskafningum til þess að hægt væri að nýta þær og laga að nýjum sið. Á svipaðan hátt var hægt að nýta handrit skrifuð á íslensku með því að setja nýtt innihald í stað þess gamla (AM 161 4to) eða með því að fjarlægja óaskilega texta eða efnisgreinar (AM 556 a 4to og AM 586 4to). Þar að auki eru dæmi um að uppskafningar hafi verið búnir til í þeim tilgangi að falska forn skjöl. Þar sem engin íslensk handrit af því tagi frá miðöldum hafa varðveist, verður að gera ráð fyrir að sú tegund af uppskafningum hafi orðið til á árnýöld. Til að lýsa betur mismunandi gerðum af íslenskum uppskafningum legg ég til að hugtakið uppskafningur verði endurskilgreint sem marglaga ritaður gripur sem hefur bæði *neðra lag* þar sem áður var frumtexti sem annaðhvort hefur verið fjarlægður algjörlega, eða

innihald án texta, og *efra lag* með texta sem síðar var bætt við, eða innihald án texta. Enn fremur legg ég til að hugtakið „varðveittir þættir“ verði notað um þá þætti í upprunalegu handriti sem ekki voru fjarlægðir en viljandi haldið og felldir inn í nýja handritið sem sérstakur hluti af uppskafningum til viðbótar við áður nefnt neðra og efra lag. Með þessari skilgreiningu legg ég til að greint verði á milli endurvinnslu bókfells og endurnýtingar texta í handriti og þetta tvennt skilgreint sem tvær megingerðir uppskafninga.

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FINGRAFÖR STURLU Í ÞÓRÐAR SÖGU KAKALA

Stilmælingar á innbyrðis tengslum sagna í Sturlunga sögu

1. Inngangur

Á síðastliðnum árum hafa höfundarannsóknir á fornsögum verið að koma aftur fram hér á landi eftir fremur langt hlé á þessu fræðasviði (Hallberg 1962, 1963 og 1968, Mundt 1970 og West 1980). Ástæðan eru nýjar aðferðir innan stilmælinga (e. *stylometry*) sem hafa gert höfundarannsóknir mun aðgengilegri fyrir fræðimenn. Íslenskir fræðimenn hafa á síðustu árum beitt aðferð ástralska fræðimannsins John F. Burrows (2002: 267–87 og 2003: 5–32) við stilmælingar á fornsögum, en aðferð hans hefur skilað marktækum niðurstöðum við höfundarákvörðun texta og virðist því henta vel til höfundarannsóknna á fornsögum (Haukur Þorgeirsson 2018: 1–18).¹

Í þessari grein verður fjallað um höfundarspurningu *Þórðar sögu kakala* og hvort Sturla Þórðarson (1214–1284) geti verið höfundur hennar og þar með fleiri sagna en bara *Íslendinga sögu* í *Sturlunga sögu*. Sturla er þekktasti sagnaritari íslenskra miðalda, en það er heiður sem hann deilir með Snorra Sturlusyni (1178/79–1241) föðurbróður sínum. Samkvæmt heimildum frá miðöldum hefur hann samið bæði sagnarit og kveðskap: Hann ritaði tvær konungasögur í Noregi, þ.e. *Hákonar sögu Hákonarsonar* og *Magnús sögu*

1 Stilmælingar á skáldverkum þekktra höfunda með delta-aðferð Burrows hafa t.d. leitt í ljós mikil stíllæg líkindi með verkum þeirra sem staðfestir höfundskap þessara höfunda á verkum sínum (sjá Jannidis, Pielström, Schöch og Vitt 2015: 1–10, Haukur Þorgeirsson 2018: 2–10 og Sigurður Ingibergur Björnsson, Steingrímur Páll Kárasón og Jón Karl Helgason 2021: 108–114). Um delta-aðferð Burrows verður fjallað nánar í kafla um stilmælingar hér á eftir.

lagabætis, en sú síðarnefnda er einungis varðveitt í brotum.² Þá skrifaði Sturla *Íslendinga sögu* sem er meginþáttur í *Sturlunga sögu*, en hún er að mati flestra besta sagnarit hans. Sturla samdi einnig elstu varðveittu gerð *Landnámabókar* sem ber nafn hans *Sturlubók*. Þá eru til varðveitt kvæði, kvæðabrot og lausavísur eftir Sturlu, en þau er að finna í sagnaritum hans *Hákonar sögu* og *Íslendinga sögu*, og einnig *Þorgils sögu skarða*.

Fræðimenn hafa auk þess talið að Sturla hafi samið mun fleiri verk en heimildir frá miðöldum geta um, en þar er um að ræða verk sem tilheyra ýmsum greinum fornsagna, þ.e. samtímasögum, Íslendingasögum og annála- og lagaritun.³ Á síðustu árum hafa stílmælingar gefið vísbendingar um að Sturla hafi samið fleiri verk en fram kemur í miðaldaheimildum, þ.e. bæði fleiri samtímasögur og einnig Íslendingasögur (Jón Karl Helgason, Sigurður Ingibergur Björnsson og Steingrímur Páll Kárason 2017: 29–305).

Sigurður Ingibergur Björnsson og Steingrímur Páll Kárason hafa nýlega gert stílmælingu á *Íslendinga sögu* Sturlu (Elín Bára Magnúsdóttir 2022: 51–80). Hún er byggð á delta-aðferð Burrows þar sem svonefndur *kósínus delta* (kd.) fjarlægðarmælikvarði er notaður til að mæla stíllega fjarlægð á milli texta. Mælingin á *Íslendinga sögu* leiðir í ljós eftirfarandi fjarlægðartölur á milli sögunnar og þeirra verka sem mælast í nálægð við hana:

<i>Stílmæling á Íslendinga sögu Sturlu Þórðarsonar og yfirlit yfir þær sögur sem mælast í nálægð við hana:</i>	<i>Kd.-fjarlægðartölur miðað við Íslendinga sögu:</i>
Þórðar saga kakala	0,45 kd.
Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar	0,62 (0,615) kd.
Þorgils saga skarða	0,62 (0,622) kd.
Guðmundar saga dýra	0,63 kd.
Gull-Þóris saga (Þorskfirðinga saga)	0,69 kd.
Landnámabók, Sturlubók	0,70 (0,699) kd.
Eyrbyggja saga	0,70 (0,703) kd.
Sturlu saga	0,76 kd.

2 Um heimildir fyrir höfundskap Sturlu verður fjallað nánar í nmgr. 6 hér á eftir.

3 Um ævi og ritstörf Sturlu og þau verk sem hafa verið eignuð honum, sjá Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir (1988a: 9–36) og Sverrir Jakobsson (2013: xxvi–xxxiii). – Um kveðskap Sturlu, sjá Hermann Pálsson (1988: 61–85) og Þorleifur Hauksson (2013: xlvi–liii).

Niðurstöður leiða í ljós að *Þórðar saga kakala* mælist í mestri nálægð við *Íslendinga sögu* en á eftir henni raðast önnur verk Sturlu, þrjár aðrar samtímasögur og tvær Íslendingasögur. Af þeim stílmælingum sem gerðar hafa verið á fornsögum hér á landi sýnir mælingin á *Þórðar sögu* mest stílleg tengsl á milli sögu og höfundartexta (Jón Karl Helgason o.fl. 2017: 288–89). Þessi mæling gefur því tilefni til að fjalla nánar um höfundskap Sturlu í *Sturlunga sögu* því að hún leiðir í ljós ýmis stílleg líkindi með sögu hans og m.a. öðrum sögum í *Sturlungu*. Hér verður fyrst fjallað um höfundskap Sturlu á *Þórðar sögu* þar sem hún sýnir mest stílleg líkindi með sögu hans, en athuganir á öðrum sögum verða gerðar síðar.

Í þessari rannsókn verður bæði stílmælingum og bókmenntafræðilegum aðferðum beitt. Hér verður fyrst gerð nákvæmari stílmæling á innbyrðis tengslum sagna í *Sturlungu*, en það er aðferð sem nefnd er hlaupandi delta-mæling (án skörunar) (e. *running delta analysis (non overlapping)*). Með þessari aðferð er hægt að mæla hvort einn eða fleiri höfundar hafi skrifað tiltekinn texta (Eder 2013: 603–614, 2015: 167–82 og 2016: 457–69). Niðurstöður hlaupandi delta-mælingar geta einnig gefið vísbendingar um hvernig fornsögur hafi varðveist í handritum og því hentar hún mjög vel til höfundarannsóknna á fornsögum.⁴ Niðurstöður stílmælinga verða síðan metnar fyrir höfundarspurningu *Þórðar sögu* þar sem efni hennar, tengsl þess við *Íslendinga sögu* og varðveisla sögunnar verður skoðað í ljósi þeirra. Að lokum verður fjallað um höfundareinkenni í *Þórðar sögu* með hliðsjón af verkum Sturlu, en sú umfjöllun sýnir vel hvernig höfundareinkenni Sturlu koma fram í sögunni.⁵

4 Íslenskar fornsögur eru yfirleitt varðveittar í eftirritum og því er óljóst hversu mikið af upprunalegum stíl höfunda hafi varðveist í sögum og að sama skapi hver hlutur afritara eða skrifara hafi verið við endurritun handrita (Minnis og Scott 1988: 228–30).

5 Verkaskipting höfunda hefur verið á þá leið að Sigurður og Steingrímur hafa framkvæmt þær stílmælingar sem hér eru gerðar á *Sturlunga sögu* og enn fremur gert grein fyrir aðferðafræði þeirra og niðurstöðum. Þá hafa þeir byggt upp málheildina sem mælingarnar eru byggðar á. Elín Bára hefur fjallað um rannsóknarsögu *Sturlungu* með áherslu á *Þórðar sögu kakala* og höfundarspurningu hennar. Hún hefur einnig fjallað um höfundareinkenni í sögunni með hliðsjón af verkum Sturlu.

2. Kenningar fræðimanna um höfundskap Sturlu í *Sturlunga sögu*

Í *Sturlunga sögu* er að finna svonefndan *Sturlunguformála* þar sem m.a. kemur fram að Sturla Þórðarson hafi „sagt fyrir Íslendinga sögur“, en fræðimenn hafa litið á hann sem heimild fyrir því að Sturla hafi samið *Íslendinga sögu* (Björn M. Ólsen 1902: 198–205 og 385–89, Pétur Sigurðsson 1933–1935: 11–13 og Jón Jóhannesson 1946: xxxiv–xli).⁶ Í formálanum er hins vegar notað nokkuð óljóst orðalag um hvert framlag Sturlu hafi verið við ritun sagna þar, en þar segir um höfundskap hans: „Fleztar allar sögur, þær er hér hafa gerzt á Íslandi, áðr Brandr biskup Sæmundarson andaðist, váru ritaðar, en þær sögur, er síðan hafa gerzt, váru lítt ritaðar, áðr Sturla skáld Þórðarson sagði fyrir Íslendinga sögur ...“ (*Sturl. I*, 1946: 115, leturbr. höf.).⁷

Í formálanum kemur fram að Sturla hafi „sagt fyrir“ þær sögur í *Sturlungu* sem gerast eftir dauða biskups árið 1201, þ.e. sögur sem gerast á 13. öld. En spurningin er þá hvað átt sé við með því að Sturla hafi „sagt fyrir Íslendinga sögur“, þ.e. ekki eina sögu heldur fleiri. Guðbrandur Vigfússon (1878: xcix–cxi, cxviii–cxix og clxvii–clxviii) túlkaði þessi orð á þann hátt að Sturla hefði skrifað þær sögur sem gerast eftir dauða biskups 1201, en það eru *Íslendinga saga*, *Þórðar saga kakala* og *Þorgils saga skarða*. Umfjöllun hans miðast hér við Reykjarfjarðarbók sem er yngra aðalhandrit *Sturlungu*. Guðbrandur taldi einnig að aðrar sögur í *Sturlungu* hefðu verið til áður en Sturla ritaði þessar sögur. Hann setti í raun ekki fram kenningu um að Sturla hefði ritað *Þórðar sögu* og *Þorgils sögu* heldur gekk hann einfaldlega út frá því að hann hafi gert það (sbr. einnig Björn M. Ólsen 1902: 198–205). Guðbrandur taldi einnig að ritstjóri *Sturlungu* hefði aðeins samið formálann, *Geirmundar þátt heljarskinns* og lokakaflana (*Sturlu þátt*) (sjá Úlfar Bragason 2010: 20–28).⁸

6 *Íslendinga saga* er einnig eignuð Sturlu tvisvar í B-gerð sögu Guðmundar biskups Arasonar þar sem vísað er til sögunnar, sjá Stefán Karlsson (útg.), *Guðmundar sögur biskups* II (2018: 182–87). *Sturlu þáttur* í *Sturlungu* er heimild fyrir því að Sturla hafi ritað *Hákonar sögu* og *Magnús sögu lagabætis* fyrir Magnús konung Hákonarson í Noregi (*Sturl. II*, 1946: 234–35). Gerð er grein fyrir höfundskap Sturlu á Landnámugerð hans, *Sturlubók*, í *Hauksbók*, yngri gerð *Landnámu*, sem Haukur Erlendsson lögmaður ritaði (Jakob Benediktsson 1968: li).

7 Allar tilvísanir í *Sturlunga sögu* í þessari grein eru úr útgáfu Jóns Jóhannessonar, Magnúsar Finnbogasonar og Kristjáns Eldjárns, *Sturlunga saga* I–II, Reykjavík 1946.

8 Guðbrandur setti einnig fram þá tilgátu að Þórður Narfason (d. 1308), bóndi og lögmaður á Skarði á Skarðsströnd, sé líklegur höfundur eða ritstjóri *Sturlunga sögu*, en þessi tilgáta

Björn M. Ólsen (1902: 204–205 og 446–47) var ekki sammála kenningu Guðbrands um höfund *Þórðar sögu* eða *Þorgils sögu* (sjá einnig Pétur Sigurðsson 1933–1935: 13–14 og Jón Jóhannesson 1946: xxxv–xxxvi). Hann nefnir að þótt Sturla komi oft við sögu í *Þórðar sögu* beri hins vegar „hvergi á því ... að frásögnin sje miðuð við hann eða líkur sjeu til, að hann sje sögumaður, því síður höfundur“ (446). Björn taldi hins vegar líklegt að einn af frændum Þórðar, Dufgussynir, og þá helst Svarthöfði, gætu verið höfundur sögunnar þar sem sagan er oft sögð frá sjónarmiði þeirra bræðra. Björn bendir hér á höfund sem er óþekktur á 13. öld og því er ekki hægt að vinna meira með hugsanleg tengsl hans við söguna. Það er hins vegar líklegt að höfundar eða heimildarmenn samtímasagna hafi oft verið fylgdarmenn söguhetja og þannig orðið vitni að atburðum sem síðar voru skráðir á bókfell. Í ljósi stílmælinga hefur nú athyglin beinst að Sturlu sem líklegum höfundi *Þórðar sögu* en hann kemur einnig oft við atburði sögunnar.

Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir (2021: civ–cv) fjallar um höfundarspurningu *Þórðar sögu kakala* í formála að nýlegri útgáfu hennar á *Sturlunga sögu*. Hún tekur þar mið af fyrstu stílmælingunni sem gerð var á *Íslendinga sögu* Sturlu og telur að niðurstöður hennar segi til um að Sturla sé höfundur *Þórðar sögu* (Jón Karl Helgason o.fl. 2017: 300–302). Hún bendir enn fremur á frásagnir undir lok sögunnar sem geti sagt til um hvers konar heimildir Sturla hafi haft aðgang að við gerð sögunnar (*Sturl.* II, 1946: 82 og 84; sjá einnig nmgr. 14). Guðrún Ása (bls. cxlii–cxliii) telur að hlutverk Sturlu í gerð *Þórðar sögu* hafi verið að „segja fyrir“ söguna en þar vísar hún til *Sturlunguformálans* sem vitnað var til hér í upphafi kaflans. Guðrún Ása túlkar formálann á þann hátt að Sturla hafi sagt fyrir þær sögur í *Sturlungu* sem þar eru nefndar, „Íslendinga sögur“. Í framhaldi telur hún (bls. cxlii–clv) að Sturla hafi átt mun meiri hlut í gerð *Sturlungu* en fræðimenn hafa talið. En um framlag hans segir hún:

[Það er hins vegar] óvíst að Sturla hafi samið sjálfur allar þær sögur sem hann hafði fyrirsögn á og féllu inn í *Íslendinga sögur*.

Gera verður ráð fyrir einhvers konar samvinnu sagnamanna og

hans hefur verið lífseig meðal fræðimanna. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir (2021: cxxxviii–cxlii) hefur nýlega endurskotið tilgátu Guðbrands og telur að hún hvíli á veikum grunni þar sem engar fornar heimildir styðji hana og vitnisburður handrita tæpast heldur. Hún (cxlii–clv) telur hins vegar að Sturla Þórðarson hafi átt mun meiri hlut í gerð *Sturlungu* en haldið hefur verið fram áður, sbr. umfjöllun í lok þessa kafla.

klerklærðra skrifara á ritstofu sem Sturla réði fyrir; að þangað hafi safnast saman og orðið til undirstöður meginhluta efnisins í Sturlungusafnritinu sem eru sögur af Íslendingum samtíða Sturlu Þórðarsyni. (cxliii)

Í næsta kafla verður gerð nákvæmari stílmæling á innbyrðis tengslum sagna í *Sturlungu*, en hún leiðir í ljós að fingraför Sturlu koma víða fram í sögum í *Sturlungu*. Stílmælingar gefa því sterkar vísbendingar um að Sturla hafi átt stærri hlut í gerð *Sturlungu* en áður hefur verið talið.

3. Stílmælingar á *Íslendinga sögu* og innbyrðis tengslum sagna í *Sturlunga sögu*

Á síðustu áratugum hafa fræðimenn beitt stærðfræðilegum aðferðum á texta á stafrænu formi í þeirri viðleitni að bera kennsl á stíleinkenni rithöfunda. John F. Burrows (2002: 267–87 og 2003: 5–32) þróaði öflugt mælitæki í þessu skyni sem nefnt hefur verið *delta-mæling*. Þetta er mæling sem gengur út á að finna fyrst algengustu orðin í þeirri málheild sem verið er að rannsaka. Síðan er reiknað hvernig hlutfallsleg tíðni þessara algengustu orða í einstökum textum í málheildinni vísar frá tíðni þeirra yfir alla málheildina, sem er mæld í fjölda staðalfrávika hvers orðs frá meðaltíðni í málheildinni (z-skor). Þá er fjarlægð milli tveggja texta fundin með því að taka mismun z-skora hvers orðs saman í eina tölu með mælikvarða sem er hentugur til þess. Ef tveir eða fleiri textar í málheildinni sýna mjög lík frávik bendir það til að þeir séu ritaðir af sama höfundi. Frekari þróun og rannsóknir á aðferðinni hafa leitt í ljós að svokölluð *kósínus-fjarlægð* hentar einna best af þeim sem hafa verið reyndar (sjá Jannidis o.fl. 2015 og Evert o.fl. 2017: ii4–ii16). Rannsóknir hafa einnig sýnt að hægt sé að bæta gæði og greinigetu mælinga með því að skipta orðum upp í orðhluta og greina samsetningu texta með því að skipta textum upp í búta og mæla þá sem sjálfstæða texta (Eder 2013: 603–614, 2015: 167–82 og 2016: 457–69).

Á síðastliðnum árum hafa íslenskir fræðimenn beitt afbrigðum af aðferð Burrows á málheild sem inniheldur íslensk fornrit (Sigurður Ingibergur Björnsson, Steingrímur Páll Káráson og Jón Karl Helgason 2021: 97–122).⁹ Fyrstu niðurstöður úr þessum stílmælingum benda til að

9 Fornritin sem mynda málheildina eru úr rafrænum textagrunni sem er að finna á vefsiðunni: <https://repository.clarin.is/repository/xmlui/handle/20.500.12537/32>. Mál-

Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar og sumar konungasagna í *Heimskringlu*, þó sérstaklega *Ólafs saga helga* og *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar*, hafi svo lík stíleinkenni að það bendi til að höfundurinn sé sá sami. Aðrar stílmælingar sem gerðar hafa verið á *Egils sögu* benda til svipaðra niðurstaðna (Haukur Þorgeirsson 2018: 1–18). Í þessum mælingum komu einnig fram stílleikindi með nokkrum sögum í *Sturlunga sögu*, sér í lagi *Íslendinga sögu* Sturlu Þórðarsonar og *Þórðar sögu kakala*. Í framhaldinu var gerð rannsókn þar sem textar málheildarinnar voru hlutaðir niður í búta, þar sem hver þeirra innihélt 5000 orð og voru þeir síðan allir bornir saman innbyrðis. Þetta var gert til að athuga hvort einstakar sögur væru ritaðar í heild sinni af einum höfundi eða hvort greina mætti stíleinkenni fleiri höfunda í textanum.

Fyrstu stílmælingarnar í þessari rannsókn voru gerðar á fjarlægðum milli 86 íslenskra miðaldertexta og af 3655 mögulegum sagnapörum reyndust tvær sögur úr *Sturlungu*, *Íslendinga saga* Sturlu og *Þórðar saga kakala*, hafa mest stílleikindi af öllum, þ.e. í þeim skilningi að þær höfðu minnstu kósínus-delta-fjarlægðina á milli sín (Sigurður Ingibergur Björnsson o.fl. 2021: 97–122). *Þorgils saga skarða* mældist auk þess til-
tölulega nálægt þessum sögum (sjá Mynd 1). Í ljósi þessa var gerð frekari greining á sögum í *Sturlungu* með því að mæla svokallað *hlaupandi delta án skörunar*,¹⁰ sem er frábrugðið því sem gert var áður að því leyti að hér var það framkvæmt án skörunar. Hlaupandi delta-mæling án skörunar gefur vissulega færri mælipunkta en hlaupandi delta-mæling með skörun. En þessi mæliupplausn, þ.e. 5000 orð, var að mati höfunda hæfileg fyrir þá greiningu sem gerð var og fer hér á eftir hvað sem svo frekari rannsóknir kunna að útheimta síðar.

heildin inniheldur Íslendingasögur, *Sturlunga sögu*, *Heimskringlu* og *Sturlubók Landnámu*. Textarnir byggja á útgáfu Svarts á hvítu og Máls og menningar en þar hafa þeir nútímalegri stafsetningu. *Sturlubók* er byggð á útgáfu *Íslenskra fornrita* en hefur hér nútímalegri stafsetningu (sjá *A. Útgáfur* í heimildaskrá). Þá hefur ýmsum öðrum textum verið bætt við málheildina, m.a. fleiri konungasögum (sjá Sigurður Ingiberg Björnsson o.fl. 2021: 112).

- 10 Í hlaupandi delta mælingu án skörunar er sögunum í málheildinni skipt upp í jafnlanga búta (og afgang ef til er að dreifa), þ.e. 5000 orð í þessu tilvik og kósínus-delta mælingu beitt á þennan aukna textafjölda. Kósínus-delta mælingunni var síðan beitt á z-skor 1000 algengustu fjórstaða (orðum er skipt upp í fjögurra stafa orðbúta), eftir að nafnorð höfðu verið fjarlægð. Eitt þúsund algengustu fjórstaðurnar voru að auki auknar með 150 z-skor mælingu á algengustu orðmyndum (e. *POS tags*) og þar voru nafnorðaoorðmyndir teknar með.

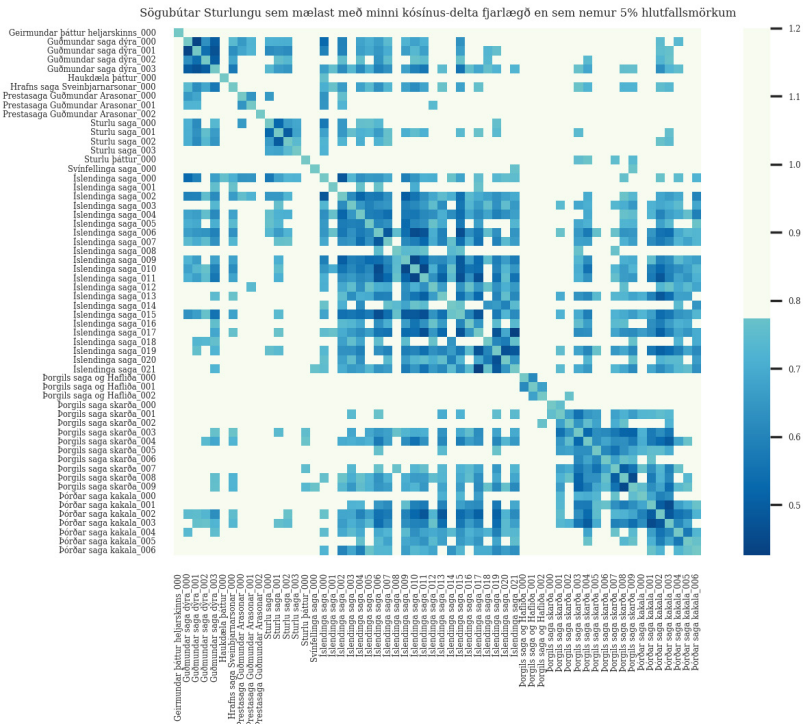
Val 10 sagna með stystu kósínus-delta fjarlægðirnar

0.00	0.28	0.73	0.46	0.68	0.49	1.21	1.31	0.78	0.91	Íslendinga saga
0.28	0.00	0.64	0.51	0.68	0.45	1.07	1.21	0.81	0.85	Bóðar saga kakala
0.73	0.64	0.00	0.44	0.46	0.85	1.08	1.18	0.75	0.63	Sverris saga
0.46	0.51	0.44	0.00	0.51	0.73	1.18	1.29	0.73	0.63	Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar
0.68	0.68	0.46	0.51	0.00	0.86	1.14	1.22	0.72	0.60	Magnúss saga Erlingssonar
0.49	0.45	0.85	0.73	0.86	0.00	1.01	1.15	0.92	0.87	Borgils saga skarða
1.21	1.07	1.08	1.18	1.14	1.01	0.00	0.50	1.18	1.13	Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða
1.31	1.21	1.18	1.29	1.22	1.15	0.50	0.00	1.24	1.25	Fjötúsdæla saga
0.78	0.81	0.75	0.73	0.72	0.92	1.18	1.24	0.00	0.50	Egils saga Skallagrímssonar
0.91	0.85	0.63	0.63	0.60	0.87	1.13	1.25	0.50	0.00	Ólafs saga helga

Mynd 1: Kósínus-delta fjarlægðir með litakóða sem sýna þau tíu sagnapör úr málheildinni sem mældust með minnstu fjarlægð sín á milli (endurgerð úr Sigurði Ingíberg Björnssyni o.fl. 2021: 115).

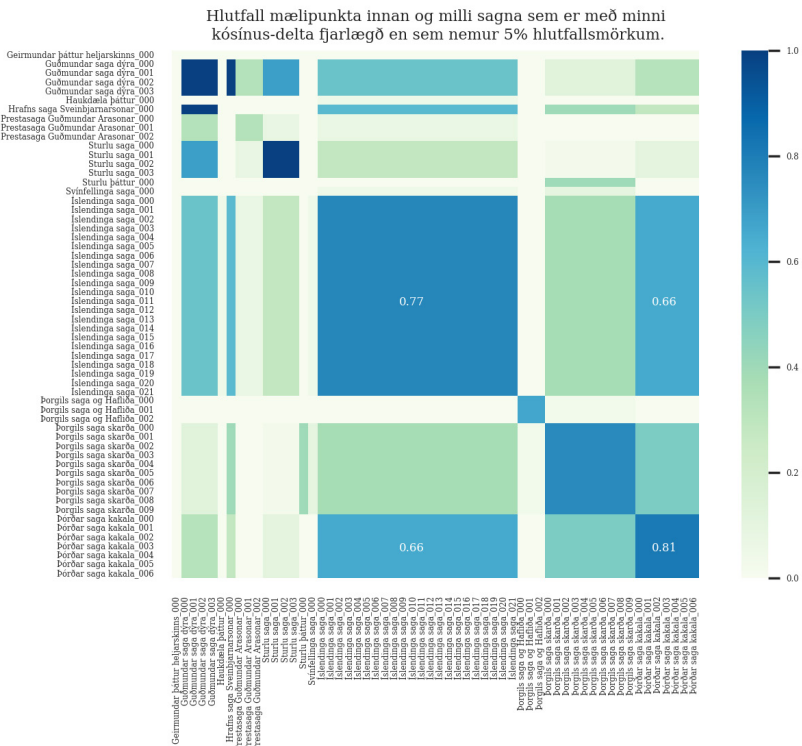
Á mynd 2 er leitast við að sýna hvaða sögur og hvar innan sagnanna tengsl eru við aðra sögubúta og í hvaða mæli (dekkri litur samsvarar nánari tengslum) og hvar í sögunum er að finna tengsl við aðra sögubúta og hvað þau eru umfangsmikil (fjöldi reita sem er litaður). Þegar hlaupandi kósínus-delta mælingu er beitt á *Sturlungu* með þessum hætti fást 1653 sjálfstæðir mælipunktur eftir að tekið hefur verið tillit til samhverfu. Án þess að nota hlaupandi delta yrðu mælipunktarnir 66 en þessi aukning mælipunkta gerir kleift að skoða innbyrðis tengsl lengri sagna auk þess sem hægt er að greina sagnahluta sem mælast stíllega nálægt hluta annarra

sagna (litaðir reitir þar sem merkingin á lárétta ásnum er úr annarri sögu en merkingin á þeim lóðrétta). Í tilviki *Íslendinga sögu* verður fjöldi mælipunkta innbyrðis 231 að teknu tilliti til samhverfu og 154 gagnvart *Þórðar sögu kakala* sem nær 21 mælipunkti innbyrðis. Á mynd 2 eru einungis þeir reitir litaðir sem svara til fjarlægðarmælinga sem eru styttri en sem nemur 5% hlutfallsmörkum allra mælipunkta í málheildinni (0.7794), en með því er leitast við að beina athyglinni að sögubútapörum sem mælast marktækt nálægt í þeim skilningi. Mynd 2 má þannig túlka á þann hátt að *Guðmundar saga dýra*, *Hrafns saga Sveinbjarnarsonar*, *Prestssaga Guðmundar Arasonar* og *Sturlu saga* tengjast hver annarri og tengjast líka allar fyrri hluta *Íslendinga sögu*. Aftari og lengri sögurnar tengjast flestar töluvert hver annarri fyrir utan *Þorgils sögu* og *Haflíða* sem stendur sér.



Mynd 2: Kósínus-delta fjarlægðir með litakóðun, þ.e. þær fjarlægðir sem eru yfir 5% hlutfallsmörkum. Þær kósínus-delta fjarlægðir sem eru meiri en 0.7794 eru ljóslitaðar.

Til að meta og sýna myndrænt hvað mælipunktarnir segja um stílleg líkindi heilla sagna innbyrðis og við aðrar sögur í heild var brugðið á það ráð að reikna hlutfall mælipunkta innan hversrar sögu sem mældust nær en sem nemur 5% hlutfallsmörkunum, m.ö.o. hlutfall litaðra punkta innan hversrar sögu. Á mynd 3 má sjá þetta hlutfall litakóðað, en þar má sjá að af lengri sögunum skera *Íslendinga saga* og *Þórðar saga* sig úr þar sem meirihluti mælipunkta mælist nær en 5% hlutfallsmörk.

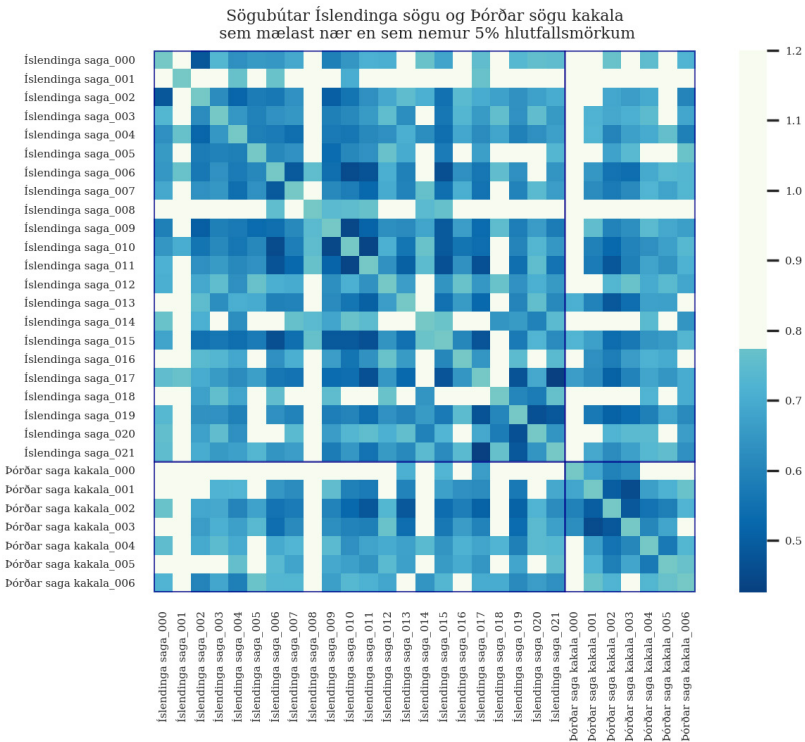


Mynd 3: Hlutfall mælipunkta innan hversrar sögu og á milli sagna sem mælist með minni fjarlægð en sem nemur 5% hlutfallsmörkun.

Til nánari glöggvunar voru mælipunktar sem tilheyra *Íslendinga sögu* og *Þórðar sögu kakala* afmarkaðir og teiknaðir upp á mynd 4. Hún sýnir eingöngu þessar tvær sögur með innbyrðis kósínus-delta fjarlægð litakóðaða í hverjum mælipunkti. Hér má sjá að annar og áttundi bútur

Íslendinga sögu (merktir 001 og 008) mælast síður nálægt bæði öðrum sögubútum *Íslendinga sögu* og öllum bútum *Þórðar sögu*. Þessir sögubútar samsvara köflum 158–168 og 228–235 í *Sturlungu* (Svart á hvítu, 1988). Í kafla 158 er fjallað um Guðmund biskup og upphaf deilna hans við Kolbein Tumason (1203–1205), en kafla 168 lýkur á andláti Guðmundar dýra (1212). Í kafla 228 segir m.a. af vígi Jóns murts (1231) en kafli 235 fjallar um víg Vatnsfirðinganna, Þórðar og Snorra (1232).

Fyrsti sögubútur í *Þórðar sögu* (merktur 000) mælist einnig síður nálægt bútum *Íslendinga sögu* en aðrir bútar *Þórðar sögu*. Þessi bútur samsvarar köflum 309–314 í *Sturlungu* (Svart á hvítu, 1988), en *Þórðar saga* hefst veturinn eftir víg Snorra Sturlusonar (1241) og lýsir ferðum Þórðar



Mynd 4: Innbyrðis mælipunktur fyrir Íslendinga sögu og Þórðar sögu kakala, en þeir sýna að sögurnar hafa að jafnaði tiltölulega mikil stílleg líkindi innbyrðis fyrir utan búta úr Íslendinga sögu, merkta 001 og 008, og fyrsta búa Þórðar sögu, merktur 000.

eftir útkomu hans það ár (1242). Rannsókn á því hvort þessar mismunandi fjarlægðamælingar komi fram í innihaldi textans verður að bíða betri tíma. Hvernig sem á það er litið er ljóst að stílmælingar með kósínus-delta mælingum sýna fram á að *Íslendinga saga* og *Þórðar saga* séu mjög líkar stíllega séð og líklegt er að þær eigi nánari sameiginlegan uppruna í einhverjum skilningi en aðrar sögur í *Sturlungu*.

4. Efni og varðveisla *Þórðar sögu kakala* og tengsl hennar við *Íslendinga sögu*

Niðurstaða úr hlaupandi delta-mælingu leiðir í ljós að það séu mest stílleg líkindi með *Íslendinga sögu* Sturlu Þórðarsonar og *Þórðar sögu kakala* og að *Þorgils saga skarða* er stíllega líkust þeim af öðrum sögum í *Sturlunga sögu* (sbr. Mynd 2). Mælingin sýnir einnig að fleiri sögur séu stíllega líkar innbyrðis og tengist fyrri hluta *Íslendinga sögu*, en þar eru tengslin mest við *Gudmundar sögu dýra*. Þessar niðurstöður sýna því að fingraför Sturlu koma víða fram í *Sturlungu* en þær kalla enn fremur á frekari rannsóknir á hlutverki hans við gerð einstakra sagna í *Sturlungu*.

Hér verður unnið áfram með niðurstöðu mælingar fyrir *Þórðar sögu kakala*; fyrst verður fjallað um efni sögunnar og tengsl þess við *Íslendinga sögu* Sturlu og síðan um varðveislu sögunnar og hversu mikið af upprunalegri gerð hennar hafi varðveist í handritum *Sturlungu*.

Þórður kakali (1210–1256) var sonur Sighvats Sturlusonar (1170–1238), en bræður hans voru Þórður (1165–1237) og Snorri (1178/79–1241) eins og þekkt er. Sturla var sonur Þórðar en Sturla og Þórður kakali voru því bræðrasynir sem tóku á sama tíma þátt í valdabaráttu Sturlunga um miðbik 13. aldar. Sturlungar urðu fyrir miklum harmleik í því stríði þegar Sighvatur og fjórir synir hans voru vegnir í bardaganum á Örlygsstöðum árið 1238. Saga Þórðar fjallar um hefnd hans eftir föður- og bræðramissinn og segir frá deilum og valdabaráttu hans á tímabilinu 1242–1250 hér á landi. Markmið Þórðar var að taka yfir og endurheimta eigur föður síns í Eyjafirði. Helstu andstæðingar hans voru Kolbeinn ungi Arnórsson og eftir dauða hans Brandur Kolbeinsson frændi hans. Þeir voru af ætt Ásbirninga í Skagafirði sem höfðu tekið yfir eigur og völd Sighvats eftir dauða hans. Þórður deildi síðar við Gissur Þorvaldsson af ætt Haukdæla, sem studdi Ásbirninga, en þetta voru þær ættir sem stóðu helst í valdabaráttu á Sturlungaöld.

Sturla fjallar á ítarlegan hátt um Örlygsstaðabardaga í *Íslendinga sögu*, en hann myndar hápunkt sögunnar. Það má því líta á *Þórðar sögu* sem framhald á *Íslendinga sögu* þar sem hún fjallar um atburði sem gerðust eftir bardagann. Þá fjalla sögurnar um sömu persónur að nokkru leyti og segja frá deilum sömu ætta (sjá Úlfar Bragason 2010: 102).

Þórðar saga kakala er einungis til varðveitt sem hluti af *Sturlunga sögu* en þar er hún felld inn í *Íslendinga sögu*. Hún var upphaflega varðveitt í báðum skinnbókum *Sturlungu*, Króksfjarðarbók, frá 1350–1370, og Reykjarfjarðarbók, frá 1375–1400 en er nú varðveitt heil í pappírshandritum frá 17. öld.¹¹ *Þorgils saga skarða* hefur ekki verið upphaflega í Króksfjarðarbók en hún er varðveitt í Reykjarfjarðarbók þar sem hún er samofin *Íslendinga sögu* Sturlu.¹²

Óljóst er hvort þessar sögur hafi verið skrifaðar á undan eða eftir *Íslendinga sögu*: *Þórðar saga* er talin rituð eftir lát Þórðar 1256 og þá ef til vill eftir 1271 en *Þorgils saga* er rituð síðar og þá ef til vill um 1275–1280. Sturla er talinn hafa skrifað *Íslendinga sögu* seint á ævinni, en hann lést 1284 (Björn M. Ólsen, 1902: 386–435, 466–67 og 492 og Jón Jóhannesson, 1946: xxxviii–xxxix, xliii og xlvii).

Ekki er augljóst hversu mikill hluti *Þórðar sögu kakala* hafi verið tekinn upp í *Sturlungu*. Fræðimenn hafa t.d. talið að það vanti bæði upphafið og lokin á upprunalegu sögunni. Í upphafi er t.d. ekki sagt frá ætt Þórðar, uppvexti eða Noregsdöl hans (1237–1242) og er hann fyrst nefndur í 1. kafla þegar sagt er frá heimkomu hans frá Noregi (Jón Jóhannesson 1946: xli). Þá er heldur ekki greint frá síðustu árum eða andláti Þórðar í lok sögunnar. Sturla segir hins vegar frá dauða hans í Noregi undir lok *Íslendinga sögu* (*Sturl.* I, 1946: 523–24). Þetta gæti bent til að ritstjóri *Sturlungu* hafi sleppt því að segja frá atvöldum í lífi Þórðar sem koma fram í *Íslendinga sögu* til að forðast að endurtaka sig (sjá Úlfar Bragason 2010: 101–103).

Hlaupandi delta-mæling á stíllegu sambandi *Íslendinga sögu* og *Þórðar sögu* hér að framan (sbr. Myndir 2 og 4) styður þá hugmynd að upprunalegt upphaf sögunnar vanti í *Sturlungu*. Mælingin sýnir að fyrsti sögu-

- 11 Úr Króksfjarðarbók hafa týnst blöð og því eru þar þrjár eyður í *Þórðar sögu* sem nemur um það bil þriðjungi sögunnar. Í Reykjarfjarðarbók er lítið annað eftir af sögunni en rytjur af máðu blaði. *Þórðar saga* er varðveitt í pappírshandritum sem gerð voru eftir skinnbókunum heilum á 17. öld (Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir 2021: ciii).
- 12 Um innihald í skinnbókum *Sturlungu*, samfléttun sagna í þeim og þann mun sem er á innihaldi þeirra, sjá Guðrínu Nordal (2010: 175–90) og Úlfar Bragason (2010: 20–28).

bútur *Þórðar sögu* (merktur 000) sé ekki stíllega líkur *Íslendinga sögu*. Það bendir til að ritstjóri eða skrifari *Sturlungu* hafi skrifað fyrsta bítinn í sögunni (samtals 5000 orð) og ef til vill stytta eða sleppt upprunalegu upphafi hennar. Lok *Þórðar sögu* eru hins vegar í mun meiri stíllegri nálægð við *Íslendinga sögu* og getur ritstjórinn hafa sleppt upprunalegum lokum hennar, og kemur þar af leiðandi ekki fram í mælingunni. *Þórðar saga* inniheldur samtals sjö sögubúta en í sex af sjö bítum má greina stílleg líkindi með *Íslendinga sögu* Sturlu. Undantekningin eru fjórir bútar í *Íslendinga sögu* sem sýna ýmist engin (merktir 001 og 008) eða minni (014 og 018) tengsl við *Þórðar sögu*. Mælingin á *Þórðar sögu* gefur því sterkega til kynna að Sturla sé upphaflegur höfundur sögunnar og að hún sé frekar vel varðveitt í *Sturlungu*.

5. Höfundareinkenni í *Þórðar sögu kakala* og verkum Sturlu

Í þessum kafla verður fjallað um höfundareinkenni í *Þórðar sögu kakala*. Niðurstaða úr hlaupandi delta-mælingu á sögunni leiðir í ljós að hún sé fremur vel varðveitt í *Sturlunga sögu* en það þýðir að mikið af upprunalegum stíl höfundarins hafi varðveist í sögunni. Samkvæmt mælingunni eru það fingraför Sturlu sem koma fram í *Þórðar sögu* og hér er því ætlunin að athuga hvort áberandi höfundareinkenni í sögunni komi fram í sagnaritum hans, þ.e. *Íslendinga sögu* og *Hákonar sögu*. Þau atriði sem hér verða athuguð tengjast bæði vinnubrögðum höfundarins og frásagnarhætti hans og stíl og þau verða einnig metin í samanburði við Íslendingasögur og sögur í *Sturlungu*.¹³

Það höfundareinkenni sem er ef til vill mest áberandi í *Þórðar sögu* er notkun frásagnarformúla. Þær eru helst notaðar í upphafi kafla og þegar sagt er frá atburðum sem gerast samtímis eða þegar tvennum sögum fer fram' eins og segir í sumum sögum. Höfundur *Þórðar sögu* segir frá deiluaðilum með því að skipta sífellt um sjónarhorn á milli þeirra í þeim tilgangi að gera grein fyrir hvað þeir hafast að á sama tíma. Í slíkum tilvikum notar hann mest frásagnarformúluna *Nú er at segja frá X* og

13 Um samsetningu, frásagnarhátt og stíl í *Þórðar sögu*, sjá Úlfar Bragason (1994: 815–22 og 2010: 99–104) og D. M. White (2022: 227–37). – Um bókmenntaleg einkenni í sögum í *Sturlungu*, sjá Úlfar Bragason (2010: 67–91, 141–59 og tilv. rit).

stundum bætir hann við *þar sem frá var horfit* eða *sem fyrr er ritat*. Þetta einkenni á frásagnarhætti og stíl sögunnar er einnig algengt í sagnaritum Sturlu, *Íslendinga sögu* og *Hákonar sögu*, og í þessum verkum er einnig sama orðaval notað þegar skipt er um sjónarhorn á milli deiluaðila. Frásagnarformúlur eru algengar í fornsögum, t.d. Íslendingasögum (sbr. Carol Clover 1982: 61 o.áfr.). Þetta atriði getur því ekki eitt og sér rökstutt að það séu höfundareinkenni Sturlu sem hér komi fram í *Þórðar sögu*.

Þórðar saga kakala greinir frá tveimur mannskæðustu bardögum á Íslandi, þ.e. Flóa- og Haugsnessbardaga, en í frásögnum af þeim koma fram ýmis sameiginleg höfundareinkenni hjá höfundi sögunnar og Sturlu. Þórður kakali bardíst við Kolbein unga í Flóabardaga 1244. Kolbeinn lést ári síðar og þá tók Brandur Kolbeinsson við völdum eftir Kolbein, frænda sinn. Þeir Þórður háðu bardaga við Haugsnes 1246 en þar var Brandur veginn. Hákon konungur lét Þórð síðan fá öll völd í landinu og hann hélt þeim um tíma. Konungur tók það loforð af Þórði að hann ynni að því að hann fengi einn völd á Íslandi en Þórður stóð aldrei við það.¹⁴

Í Flóabardaga koma fram höfundarinnskot þar sem höfundur *Þórðar sögu* gerir hlé á frásögninni í þeim tilgangi að gera áheyrendum/lesendum grein fyrir aðstæðum sem koma upp í bardaganum.¹⁵ Í upphafi innskota notar höfundurinn orðið *hlutr*, hér í merkingunni ‚atburður‘, sem hann vill skýra nánar fyrir lesendum sínum. Hann gerir það einnig á röklegan hátt með því að nota *fyrsta, annat* o.s.frv. Sturla notar sams konar höfundarinnskot í *Hákonar sögu*. Þá gerir höfundur *Þórðar sögu* einnig hlé á frásögn sinni til að segja frá atburðum í bardaga sem ‚eru frásagnar verðir‘. Þetta orðfæri notar Sturla einnig í sagnaritum sínum þegar hann segir frá áhuga-verðu efni en engin dæmi um það koma fram í öðrum sögum í *Sturlungu* eða *Íslendingasögum* (corpus.arnastofnun.is).

Hér eru dæmin úr *Þórðar sögu* og sagnaritum Sturlu birt:

- 14 Sturla fjallar um samskipti Þórðar og konungs í tengslum við þessi mál í *Hákonar sögu* (ÍF 32). Um aðferðir Þórðar kakala í valdabaráttu, sjá Hans Jacob Orning (1997: 469–86) og D. M. White (2022: 237–47).
- 15 Þegar höfundar verða sýnilegir í verkum er það nefnt *höfundarinnskot* (e. *writer intrusion*). Í fornsögum koma þeir t.d. fram með því að gera athugasemdir við efni sagna sinna (sjá Schach 1970; 128–56 og Manhire 1974–1977: 170–90).

[Kolbeinn] hafði sik lengstum lítt við orrustuna um daginn. **Báru til þess tveir hlutir, sá annarr**, at hann þóttist hafa liðskost gnógan, **en sá annarr**, at hann var heill lítt, ok þótti honum sér varla hent at ganga í stórerfiði (*Þórðar saga kakala*, *Sturl.* II: 57).

Hallaðist þá bardaginn á Norðlendinga. **Kom þat mest tveggja hluta vegna:** at Kolbeins menn höfðu grjót eigi meira en lítit á tveim skipum, en Þórðar menn höfðu hlaðit hvert skip af grjóti, – **hinn annarr**, at á skipum Kolbeins váru fáir einir menn, þeir er nökkut kunnu at gera á skipum, þat er þeim væri gagn at, en á Þórðar skipum var hverr maðr öðrum kærni (*Þórðar saga kakala*, *Sturl.* II: 56).

Ok hér urðu nú margir hlutir jafnsnemma, þeir er mikillar frásagnar eru verðir, en nú verðr þó um einhverja fyrst að tala (*Þórðar saga kakala*, *Sturl.* II: 58).

Ok er [Skúli hertugi] kom [til Niðaróss] þóttisk hann finna ok vinir hans at mjök var snúit skaplyndi Þrænda til hans. **Báru þar til margir hlutir; þat fyrst** at þeir þóttusk fengit hafa mannlát mikit í Ósló, **hitt annat** at þá stund er Hákon konungr hafði setit í Þrándheimi höfðu þeir heyrt margar tölur gagnstaðligar þeim er hertugamenn höfðu haft á Eyraþingi um haustit, ok virðusk þeim þessar sannligri. **Þat var enn til** at Þrændir þóttusk enga uppreist sjá hertuga móti Hákonu konungi, ok vildu þeir af því engan ófrið halda með hertuga í mót konungi (*Hákonar saga* II: 110–11).¹⁶

Biskup [var] um vetrinn [...] á Breiðabólstað í Steingrímsfirði með Bergþóri Jónssyni, ok **urðu þar margir hlutir þeir, er frásagnar væri verðir ok jartegnum þótti gegna, þótt þat sé eigi ritat í þessa bók**, bæði þat, er biskup átti við flagð þat, er þeir kölluðu Selkollu, ok margt annat (*Íslendinga saga*, *Sturl.* I: 254–55).

Síðan stóð upp Skúli, er þá kallaðisk konungr, ok talaði nökkur orð. [...] **Ok þó at hér sé fáir hlutir sagðir þá urðu þó margir þeir er frásagnar væri verðir** (*Hákonar saga* II: 49).

Eitt einkenni á bardagalýsingum og öðrum átökum í *Íslendinga sögu* er hversu nákvæmlega Sturla lýsir líkamsmeiðingum og sárum sem menn fá í vopnaviðskiptum. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir (1988b: 184–203) telur að Sturla hafi byggt umfjöllun um málarekstur á minnisgreinum sem hann hafi sett saman um deilur á þjóðveldistímanum. Sturla var lögmaður en tilgangur hans hefur verið að nota minnisgreinar sem hjálpar í málarekstri

16 Allar tilvísanir í *Hákonar sögu Hákonarsonar* I–II í þessum kafla eru úr útgáfu *Íslenskra fornrita* 31–32, útg. Þorleifur Hauksson, Sverrir Jakobsson og Tor Ulset, Reykjavík 2013.

milli deiluaðila.¹⁷ Guðrún Ása telur því líklegt að tilgangur Sturlu með ritun *Íslendinga sögu* hafi m.a. verið „að halda til haga vitneskju um af hverju deilur spruttu og hvernig mál voru sótt og til lykta leidd á fyrri hluta 13. aldar, áður en konungi var játað þegngildi ...“ (199).

Í *Þórðar sögu kakala* koma einnig fyrir nákvæmar lýsingar á líkamsmeiðingum og sárum, einkum í Haugsnessbardaga en einnig í aðförum að óvinum. Eins og í *Íslendinga sögu* er hér yfirleitt um að ræða lýsingar á því hvernig menn eru drepnir eða þegar sagt er frá meiðslum aðalpersóna í átökum. Lausleg athugun á slíkum lýsingum í *Sturlungu* bendir til að þær komi aðallega fyrir í *Íslendinga sögu* Sturlu og *Þórðar sögu*, en fá dæmi er að finna í öðrum sögum í *Sturlungu* (corpus.arnastofnun.is). Í *Hákonar sögu* Sturlu koma hins vegar ekki fram nákvæmar lýsingar á meiðslum og sárum í bardögum. Guðrún Ása (1988b: 192) segir að lýsingar af þessu tagi komi einnig fyrir í fornsögum en að *Íslendinga saga* hafi mun nákvæmari lýsingar en t.d. Íslendingasögur en þó sé það helst *Njáls saga* sem standi næst *Íslendinga sögu* að þessu leyti, en hún fjallar einnig mikið um lög í tengslum við deilur.

Hér verða birt dæmi um lýsingar á líkamsmeiðingum í Flóa- og Haugsnessbardaga og einnig í aðförum að óvinum í *Þórðar sögu*. Til samanburðar eru birtar svipaðar lýsingar í *Íslendinga sögu*:

17 Einnig eru dæmi um að deiluaðilar hafi sjálfir skráð niður deilur sínar og átök og er *Þórðar saga* eitt dæmi um það, sbr. Guðrínu Ásu Grímsdóttur (1988b: 199–200). Hákon konungur gerði um mál Þórðar og Gissurar eftir Haugsnessbardaga 1246, en um það segir sagan að „Þórðr [lét] lesa upp rollu langa, er hann hafði látit rita um skipti þeira Haukdæla ok Sturlunga. Birtist þar margr skaði, er Þórðr hafði fengit í mannalátum“ (*Sturl.* II, 1946: 82). Hér kemur fram að Þórður hafi undirbúið málareksturinn vel með því að skrá niður þá hluti sem hann taldi sig eiga að fá bættu eftir deiluna.

Flýðu menn þá svá gersamliga af því skipi, at Kolbeinn stóð einn eftir. Tóku þá menn hans ok drógu hann öfgan milli skipanna til sín, ok í því fekk hann fjögur sár, þrjú í lærit, ok váru tvau í gegnum lærit, en eitt í ilina neðan, ok skar út í klaufina við þumaltána, ok varð þat sár mikit (*Þórðar saga kakala, Sturl. II: 60*).

Sigurðr hjó til Brands með öxi, en Brandr skaut yfir sik buklara. Kolbeinn snaraði af honum buklarann. Þá hjó Sigurðr um þvert höfuðit Brandi ok klauf höfuðit ofan at eyrum. Lét Brandr þar líf sitt (*Þórðar saga kakala, Sturl. II: 79*).

Björn hjó til hans í annat sinn, ok kom höggit fyrir ofan eyra á hálsinn, ok varð þat mikit sár ok banvænt. Eftir það tók Björn í fætr honum ok sneri honum í loft upp og lagði sverði til hans, ok varð þat lítit sár. [...] Ásbjörn gekk þá at honum ok hjó af honum höfuðit (*Þórðar saga kakala, Sturl. II: 42*).

Greip Ingólfr þá meðalkaflann á sverðinu, því er Tósti var gyrdur með, ok hjó þá undan Tósta fótinn, þar er kálfi var digrastr, en annan í ristarliðnum í einu högginu (*Þórðar saga kakala, Sturl. II: 32*).

En [Ásbjörn] brá sverðinu ok segir, at hann skyldi láta höndina, ok hjó síðan, ok kom á handlegginn uppi við öxl. En sverðit renndi með beininu ok skar ór allan vöðvann allt ofan í ölnbogabót. Var þat allmikil sár (*Þórðar saga kakala, Sturl. II: 42*).

Vann Snorri á Óláfi ok lagði hann með sverði því, er Hákon jarl galinn hafði sent Snorra Sturlusyni, í óstinn Óláfi ok rauf á barkanum. Hann hjó í andlit ok ór stálhúfubarðinu ok ór augat ok í sundr kinnarkjálkann. Hann hjó ok mikið sár á fótinn, en Birningr annat. Þorvaldr rennari hjó á hálsinn, svá at sá mænuna (*Íslendinga saga, Sturl. I: 316*).

Markús Marðarson lagði spjóti í kvið Sturlu hægra megin upp frá nafla. Þrjú sár hafði hann á bringunni vinstra megin. Naddr hét maður er hjó á barka Sturlu. Engi sár blæddu, þau er hann fekk, síðan er Gizurr vann á honum (*Íslendinga saga, Sturl. I: 436*).

Kallar þá engi meir en Eiríkr birkibeinn ok hleypr fyrir framan kirkjugarðinn. Þá flýgr steinn ór kirkjugarðinum ok kemr við eyra honum, svá at þegar kastaði fótunum fram yfir höfuðit, ok var lokit hans kalli at sinni (*Íslendinga saga, Sturl. I: 464*).

Ásbjörn Illugason hjó til Þormóðar með sverðinu Níðingi ok hjó af honum fótinn í ristarliðnum við fjörugrjóttinu, en skoraði mjök annan. Þormóðr féll þá (*Íslendinga saga, Sturl. I: 504*).

Sóttu þeir fjórir Brand. [...] Þá hljóp Rögnvaldr at ok hjó á handlegginn við hreifann, svá at engu helt nema sinunum, þeim er gengu af þumalfingri (*Íslendinga saga, Sturl. I: 324*).

Í *Þórðar sögu kakala* kemur einnig fyrir höfundarinnskot í formi „annálaritunar“, en það bendir til að höfundurinn hafi notað annála sem heimildir við ritun sögunnar. Um það má finna eitt dæmi í sögunni, en þar bætir höfundur annálstexta við frásögn sína. Eftir Haugsnessbardaga segir frá því að Staðar-Kolbeinn, faðir Brands, hafi látist af sorg eftir fall sonarins í bardaganum. Höfundur greinir síðan frá aldri hans þegar hann lést og dánardegi sonar hans (19. apríl 1246), Kolbeins unga og þeirra er létust í bardaganum. Eftir það er greint frá tímatali markverðra atburða bæði heima og erlendis sem tengjast frásögn hans:

Þá var liðit frá falli ins heilaga Óláfs konungs sex vetr ins tíunda tigar ok hundrað tólfrætt, en frá brenninni í Hítardal, er mest tíðindi höfðu þá önnur orðit hér á landi, tveim vetrum fátt í tíu tigu vetra. Þá er Brandr fell, var Innocentíus páfi í Róma, Friðrekr var keisari, Eiríkr Eiríksson konungr í Svíþjóð, Eiríkr ok Abel í Danmörk. Hákon konungr í Nóregi, Heinrekr konungr í Englandi (*Sturl.* II, 1946: 300).

Í textaskýringum Sturlunguútgáfunnar segir um þennan texta: „Það, sem eftir er kaflans [lok 46. kafla], mun vera viðbót safnanda, hann staldrar hér við og glöggvar sig á tímatalinu“ (*Sturl.* II, 1946: 300). Þetta er ekki rökstutt nánar en þessi texti gæti einnig verið viðbót höfundar og saminn af Sturlu. Sagnarit Sturlu eru talin einkennast af blöndun greina, þ.e. sagnfræði, epík og annálaritun (Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir 1988a: 24–25 og tilv. rit). Sturla er einnig talinn vera höfundur *Resensannáls* (Stefán Karlsson 1988: 47–58 og tilv. rit; einnig Sverrir Jakobsson 2017: 212–22). Í sagnaritum sínum gerir Sturla stundum hlé á frásögninni til að segja frá efni úr annálum (Elín Bára Magnúsdóttir 2017: 128–29 og 2022: 117–20). Hér verða aðeins birt tvö dæmi úr sögum hans sem sýna hvernig hann miðlar upplýsingum úr annálum sem gerast á sama tíma og frásagnir hans:

Magnús biskup andaðist þat sumar it næsta eftir, degi fyrir Máriumessu fyrri. Þorvaldr Gizurarson kanoki hafði andazt tveim vetrum fyrr en þeir Magnús biskup, bróðir hans, ok Þórðr Sturluson, ok er ártíð hans Egídiusmessu. Á því ári, er Þorvaldr andaðist, dó Flosi munkr Bjarnason ok Sigurðr Ormsson ok Digr-Helgi (*Íslendinga saga*, *Sturl.* I: 401–2).

Hákon konungr fór um sumarit norðr aftr til Björgynjar ok dvalðisk þar nökkura hrið um haustit. Á þessu sama ári andaðisk Gregorius páfi í Róma, ok kom eftir hann Innocentius. Þetta haust hit sama tók Gizurr Þorvaldsson af lífi Snorra Sturluson í Reykjaholti á Íslandi. Hákon konungr fór um haustit norðr til Þrándheims ok sat þar um vetrinn. Þessi var hinn fimmti vetr ok tuttugandi ríkis hans (*Hákonar saga* II: 118–19).

Annálaskrif af þessu tagi koma einnig fyrir í öðrum sögum í *Sturlungu*, m.a. í *Prestssögu Guðmundar góða* (*Sturl.* I, 1946: 124) og *Haukdæla þætti* (*Sturl.* I, 1946: 59). Lausleg athugun á Íslendingasögum bendir til að þar komi ekki fyrir annálaskrif. Þar má hins vegar finna dæmi um að þegar greint er frá andláti sögupersóna sé tímatalið miðað við fall Ólafs helga eins og gert er í tilvitnun í sögu Þórðar að ofan, og er það t.d. gert í *Eyrbyggja sögu* (*ÍF* IV: 183) og *Laxdæla sögu* (*ÍF* V: 223).

Höfundur *Þórðar sögu* segir einnig frá halastjörnu í formi innskots en ekki er vitað hvort hún hafi sést á þeim tíma sem sagan segir: „Oft sást stjarnan kómeta um vetrinn“ (*Sturl.* II, 1946: 70 og 299). Sturla fjallar líka um kómetu í verkum sínum: Í *Íslendinga sögu* er sagt frá henni í upphafi kafla þar sem segir frá andláti Sæmundar í Odda (*Sturl.* I, 1946: 298), en í *Hákonar sögu* verður hún hluti af frásögn þar sem hún er túlkuð sem fyrirboði um stórtíðindi (I: 66). Frá þessari stjörnu er ekki sagt í öðrum sögum í *Sturlungu* eða Íslendingasögum (corpus.arnastofnun.is).

6. Niðurstöður

Í þessari grein er gerð höfundarannsókn á *Þórðar sögu kakala*, en tilefnið er nýleg stilmæling sem gerð hefur verið á *Íslendinga sögu* Sturlu Þórðarsonar. Niðurstaðan leiðir í ljós að þau verk sem mælast í stíllegri nálægð við söguna eru m.a. fjórar samtímasögur og önnur verk Sturlu, þ.e. *Hákonar saga* og *Sturlubók Landnámu*. *Þórðar saga* mælist í mestri stíllegri nálægð við *Íslendinga sögu* af samtímasögum, en engin saga hefur mælst eins nálægt

höfundartexta og *Þórðar saga* í þeim mælingum sem gerðar hafa verið hér á landi.

Niðurstaða þessarar stílmælingar kallar á frekari rannsóknir á höfundskap Sturlu í *Sturlunga sögu*. Hér er fyrst unnið áfram með höfundarspurningu *Þórðar sögu kakala* þar sem mælingin sýnir mest stílleik líkindi með henni og sögu Sturlu. Fyrst er gerð nákvæmari stílmæling á innbyrðis tengslum sagna í *Sturlungu*, þ.e. hlaupandi delta-mæling (án skörunar). Þessi aðferð hefur verið þróuð til að mæla saman sögubúta (hér 5000 orð) í textum en á þann hátt er hægt að greina hvort einn eða fleiri höfundar hafi skrifað texta. Aðferðin hentar enn fremur vel til mælinga á fornsögum, sem eru yfirleitt varðveittar í eftirritum, því getur hún sýnt fram á hversu mikið hefur varðveist af upprunalegum stíl höfunda og um leið hvert hafi verið framlag ritstjóra eða skrifara við endurritun handrita.

Niðurstaða hlaupandi delta-mælingar fyrir *Þórðar sögu* leiðir í ljós að hún innihaldi samtals sjö sögubúta og að stílleik líkindi við *Íslendinga sögu* Sturlu komi fram í tæplega sex af sjö bútum. Undantekningin eru fjórir bútar í *Íslendinga sögu* (merktir 001, 008, 014 og 018) þar sem ýmist koma fram engin eða minni stílleik tengsl við sögu Sturlu. Þessir bútar eru heldur ekki stíllega líkir öðrum bútum í *Íslendinga sögu* Sturlu. Niðurstaða mælingar gefur því sterkar vísbendingar um að Sturla sé höfundur *Þórðar sögu* og að sagan sé frekar vel varðveitt í *Sturlungu*.

Að lokum er gerð athugun á áberandi höfundareinkennum í *Þórðar sögu kakala* sem setja svip á vinnubrögð höfundarins og frásagnarhátt hans og stíl. Niðurstöður leiða í ljós að þau atriði sem fjallað er um koma öll fram í sagnaritum Sturlu, *Íslendinga sögu* og *Hákonar sögu*, en þau koma jafnframt lítið fyrir í öðrum samanburðartextum. Þá eru þau yfirleitt notuð í sama frásagnarsamhenginu í *Þórðar sögu* og verkum Sturlu. Þessi athugun styður því niðurstöður stílmælinga sem gefa sterklega til kynna að Sturla Þórðarson sé höfundur *Þórðar sögu kakala*.

Þessi grein var unnin með styrk frá verkefninu *Ritmenning íslenskra miðalda* (RÍM) sem eftirtaldir aðilar styrkja: Íslensk stjórnvöld, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum og Snorrastofa, menningar- og miðaldasetur í Reykholti. Greinarhöfundar þakka kærlega fyrir styrk úr verkefninu.

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ÍF: Íslenzk fornrit.

Sturl. I–II: *Sturlunga saga* I–II (1946).

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ÁGRIP

Fingraför Sturlu í *Þórðar sögu kakala*. Stílmælingar á innbyrðis tengslum sagna í *Sturlunga sögu*

Efnisorð: höfundarannsókn, stílmæling, hlaupandi delta-mæling (án skörunar), Sturla Þórðarson, *Íslendinga saga*, *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, *Sturlunga saga*, *Þórðar saga kakala*, *Þorgils saga skarða*

Höfundarannsóknir hafa verið að koma fram að nýju hér á landi eftir fremur langt hlé á þessu fræðasviði. Nútíma tölvutækni hefur opnað fyrir nýjar aðferðir í þess konar rannsóknum og gert þær aðgengilegar fyrir fræðimenn. Nýleg stílmæling á *Íslendinga sögu* Sturlu Þórðarsonar leiðir m.a. í ljós að það séu stíllæg líkindi með henni og öðrum sögum í *Sturlunga sögu*. Þessi niðurstaða gefur tilefni til að rannsaka nánar höfundskap Sturlu í *Sturlungu*. Hér er fyrst gerð höfundarannsókn á *Þórðar sögu kakala*, en hún mælist í mestri stíllægri nálægð við *Íslendinga sögu* af sögum í *Sturlungu*. Í þessari rannsókn er beitt bæði stílmælingum og bókmenntafræðilegum aðferðum. Fyrst er gerð nákvæmari stílmæling á innbyrðis tengslum sagna í *Sturlungu*, þ.e. hlaupandi delta-mæling (án skörunar), þar sem 5000 orða sögubútar eru bornir saman sem sjálfstæðir textar. Þessi aðferð getur m.a. greint hvort einn eða fleiri höfundar hafi skrifað tiltekna sögu. Niðurstaðan leiðir í ljós að fingraför Sturlu komi vel fram í *Þórðar sögu* og að hún sé jafnframt frekar vel varðveitt í *Sturlungu*. Þá er gerð athugun á höfundareinkennum í *Þórðar sögu* þar sem vinnubrögð höfundar, frásagnarháttur og stíll hans er kannaður í ljósi sagnarita Sturlu og annarra samanburðartexta. Niðurstöður þessara athugana benda sterklega til að Sturla Þórðarson sé höfundur *Þórðar sögu kakala*.

SUMMARY

Sturla's fingerprints in *Þórðar saga kakala*. Stylometric measurements of the interrelationships of sagas in *Sturlunga saga*

Keywords: author attribution research, stylometric measurement, running delta analysis (non overlapping), Sturla Þórðarson, *Íslendinga saga*, *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, *Sturlunga saga*, *Þórðar saga kakala*, *Þorgils saga skarða*

During the past few years, author attribution research has been gaining ground again in Iceland. The reason for this renewed interest is modern computer technology that has opened up new methods in such research and made them accessible to scholars. A recent stylometric measurement of Sturla Þórðarson's *Íslendinga saga* reveals that there are stylistic similarities between it and other sagas in *Sturlunga saga*. This result also gives reason to investigate the authorship of Sturla in *Sturlunga*. In this case the authorship of *Þórðar saga kakala* is first conducted, since it shows the strongest stylistic connection with *Íslendinga saga* among other sagas in *Sturlunga*. This study uses both stylometric and literary methods. First, a more precise stylometric measurement of the interrelationships of sagas in *Sturlunga* is made, that is running delta analysis (non overlapping), where 5000 word pieces are compared as independent texts. This method can identify whether one or more authors wrote a particular text. The result reveals that Sturla's fingerprints are prominent in *Þórðar saga* and that it is a rather well-preserved saga in the *Sturlunga*-compilation. There is also an examination of the author's characteristics feature in *Þórðar saga*, where the author's working methods and narrative style are examined in the light of Sturla's literary works and other comparative texts. The results of these observations support the results of the stylometric measurements which strongly suggest that Sturla is the author of *Þórðar saga kakala*.

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TARRIN WILLS

ABBREVIATION IN OLD NORSE MANUSCRIPTS

– *a quantitative study*

Introduction

Abbreviation in Icelandic and Norwegian Manuscripts

Old Norse manuscripts from Iceland and Norway employ extensive abbreviation¹ in representing text. The accepted picture of abbreviation in early Norse manuscripts is expressed by Hreinn Benediktsson in *Early Icelandic Script* and can be paraphrased as follows: a complex system of abbreviation of Latin emerged on the Continent in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, around the time that Icelandic script was developing. This system was not used much in other vernacular writing systems, but it was applied extensively in writing Norwegian and Icelandic, adapted and integrated into those scripts, and then developed further. Both Icelandic and Norwegian use a great deal of abbreviation, but in Icelandic script it is particularly distinctive, and increases in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries.² This picture had already been established by Kålund³ and discussed in further detail by Seip.⁴

Hreinn notes that this development runs in parallel with the use of non-phonemic ligatures and is driven by ‘graphic expediency and econo-

- 1 This paper uses ‘abbreviation’ in both the abstract (as here) and concrete (often in the plural) sense of an abbreviation mark, the former being the original usage in English according to the OED.
- 2 Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script as Illustrated in Vernacular Texts from the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, Íslenzk Handrit/Icelandic Manuscript Series in Folio II (Reykjavík: The Manuscript Institute of Iceland, 1965), 86–7.
- 3 Kristian Kålund, *Paleografisk atlas: Ny serie. Oldnorsk-islandske skriftprøver c. 1300-1700*. (København and Kristiania: Gyldendal, 1907), vii–viii.
- 4 Didrik Arup Seip, *Paleografi. B: Norge og Island*, Nordisk Kultur 28:B (Stockholm: Albert Bonnier, 1954), 30–1, 59.

my', pointing to the First Grammatical Treatise. That treatise is systematic in its phonemic analysis but applies principles of economy in various ways, such as the representation of geminates as a single letter and a particular discussion of abbreviation marks.

Hreinn makes a number of observations that can be presented as hypotheses:

1. Icelandic and Norwegian medieval manuscript writing uses abbreviation more extensively than other vernaculars.
2. Icelandic manuscript writing uses more abbreviation than Norwegian.
3. The amount of abbreviation increases in the first centuries of manuscript writing in Iceland.
4. Abbreviation is driven by economy, that is, saving physical space on the manuscript page.

Points 1–3 in particular are broadly consistent with the earlier scholarship of Kålund and Seip as well as later studies by Haugen⁵ and Stefán Karlsson, for example.⁶ The first three points are observations of measurable phenomena but are not supported by explicit quantitative analysis. It is the aim of the present study to test and refine these observations on digital corpora and by doing so give some insight into the fourth hypothesis.

Testing the first of these hypotheses requires a body of non-Norse digital transcriptions which can be compared with Norse ones, that is, digital texts which mark up abbreviations in a similar way to the standards in Norse digital editing. As the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) has become the *de facto* standard for digital editing in the humanities in recent decades, this should be possible, and some studies have been made of Latin and vernacular corpora to compare abbreviation usage. Honkapohja provides a

5 Odd Einar Haugen, "The Development of Latin Script I: in Norway," in *The Nordic Languages. An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages* 1, ed. Oskar Bandle et al. (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 830.

6 Stefán Karlsson, "The Development of Latin Script 2: in Iceland," in *The Nordic Languages. An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages* 1, ed. Oskar Bandle et al. (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 835.

very useful review of these studies,⁷ and I draw upon it heavily in the following part of the literature review.

Existing studies measure the phenomenon by the ratio of the number of words that are abbreviated to the total word count. For Latin, this is sometimes more than 50 per cent of words, for English up to 30 per cent⁸ and a similar figure for French.⁹ The amount of abbreviation in these languages decreased from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, and is almost absent in the earliest printed works.¹⁰ The aforementioned studies focus on specific genres that vary greatly in prestige and consequently the resources used for writing. The status of scribes and patrons, as well as the manuscripts themselves (e.g. as measured by size and margins) seems to have had an impact on abbreviation rates in Latin and vernacular manuscripts.¹¹ Higher-status manuscripts tend to use less abbreviation, and more utilitarian ones much more. Other studies have noted the inverse relationship between manuscript size and the amount of abbreviation:¹² smaller manuscripts abbreviate more, perhaps because they are generally economising on the use of the page surface.

For Old Norse, the amount of abbreviation has been only a matter of speculation in the published literature, expressed for example as a maximum of one third of words abbreviated,¹³ or more than medieval Latin,¹⁴

- 7 Alpo Honkapohja, “Digital Approaches to Manuscript Abbreviations: Where Are We at the Beginning of the 2020s?,” *Digital Medievalist* 14 (2021) DOI: <http://doi.org/10.16995/dm.88>.
- 8 Alpo Honkapohja and Aino Liira, “Abbreviations and Standardisation in the Polychronicon: Latin to English, and Manuscript to Print,” in *The Multilingual Origins of Standard English (MOSTE)*, ed. Laura Wright (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 269–316. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.1515/9783110687545-010>, p. 281.
- 9 Emilie Cottureau-Gabillet, “Revealing Some Structures and Rules of Book Production (France, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries),” in *Ruling the Script in the Middle Ages. Formal Aspects of Written Communication (Books, Charters, and Inscriptions)*, ed. Sébastien Barret, Dominique Stutzmann, and Georg Vogeler, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 35 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 129–63.
- 10 Honkapohja and Liira, “Abbreviations and Standardisation,” 279, 282–3.
- 11 E.g. Cottureau-Gabillet, “Revealing Some Structures.”
- 12 Alpo Honkapohja, “Latin in Recipes? A Corpus Approach to Scribal Abbreviations in 15th-Century Medical Manuscripts,” in *Multilingual Practices in Language History: English and beyond*, ed. Päivi Pahta, Janne Skaffari and Laura Wright (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 249.
- 13 Haraldur Bernharðsson and Odd Einar Haugen, “Chapter 6. Abbreviations” in *Menota Handbook*, ed. Odd Einar Haugen, 3rd ed. (Bergen: Medieval Nordic Text Archive, 2019).
- 14 Matthew James Driscoll, “Marking up Abbreviations in Old Norse-Icelandic

by inference, more than half of words abbreviated. The observations about the relationship between abbreviation in Icelandic, Norwegian and Continental vernacular manuscripts imply that Iceland's cultural relationship with Europe and Norway diverged in the course of the Middle Ages. That is, a part of the important cultural practice of book production was already distinctive when it started in Iceland (at least in relation to other vernaculars), and rather than converging over time with European vernacular practices as Iceland came more into contact with them, it in fact became even more distinct. Even without a direct comparison, one can assume that an increase in abbreviation within the corpus suggests a divergence from European tradition, in which abbreviation decreased over the same period.

The second and third hypotheses will be tested in this study to establish a quantitative foundation for them. While Hreinn's study is, by definition, restricted to early Icelandic script, the body of data now available allows us to extend the diachronic observation of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to the entire period of Icelandic manuscript production in order to understand how abbreviation practice changed over a longer period of time. This then provides a possible observation about the potential divergence from and convergence with European vernacular practice over time.

The fourth hypothesis, that abbreviation is driven by economy, implies motivation, which is a very difficult thing to establish when only the results of a human activity are available. However, parchment was expensive, relying on slaughtering livestock which may have had other uses, for example, wool and milk production.¹⁵ Parchment and manuscript production were also labour-intensive, and both diverted resources from economic and subsistence needs (leather production and farm work, for example). It can be inferred that there would be a motivation to economise on both materials and labour in manuscript production by reducing the amount of material and time used to write texts.¹⁶ Conversely, manuscripts, precisely because of their expense, were likely also status symbols when expansive and richly decorated. In either case, the amount of parchment used is re-

Manuscripts," in *Medieval Texts – Contemporary Media: The Art and Science of Editing in the Digital Age*, ed. Maria Grazia Saibene and Marina Buzzoni (Pavia: Ibis, 2009), 13–34.

15 It should be noted that excess male calves are a normal by-product of dairy farming, and vellum in particular can be understood thus as a by-product of milk production, albeit requiring additional labour and materials. Calf skins, however, presumably had potential uses other than as vellum for manuscripts.

16 Anthony G. Petti, *English Literary Hands from Chaucer to Dryden* (London: Arnold, 1977), 22.

lated to wealth and economy. I take economy of parchment usage therefore as an assumption in this study, which allows us to use it as a measure of abbreviation: how much physical space was saved by abbreviating text gives us an important measure of the extent of abbreviation.

The present study focuses in particular on the use of abbreviation in writing poetry and prose in manuscripts. In order to undertake this study in context, it needs to be established whether there was a difference in the practice of abbreviation between poetry and prose. It can be inferred that poetry was more difficult to understand than prose and required a slightly different process in copying.¹⁷ There has been no published study comparing the use of abbreviation in poetry and prose in Icelandic manuscripts, although Kjeldsen in personal communications has noted that he has observed a marked difference between poetry and prose in the amount of abbreviation in *Morkinskinna* (GKS 1009 fol.). The middle part of this study therefore attempts to compare the extent of poetic and prose abbreviation in manuscripts where both occur, before proceeding to the analysis of the abbreviation of skaldic poetry over time.

Representation of Abbreviation and Expansion

The practices involved in editing manuscript texts have been driven over the centuries by sometimes conflicting needs and constraints: technological constraints in particular limit the ability to represent the uniqueness of each handwritten document, and other needs have put differing emphasis on standardising a text to make it comparable to other texts or accessible to readers who are familiar with the language in its reconstructed form but not the manuscript orthography. Normalisation is important to making early texts accessible and is often essential to linguistic, stemmatological, stylometric and other types of analysis.

Normalisation and expansion of abbreviation removes the possibility of digitally examining abbreviation,¹⁸ albeit only when expansion is silent. While expansion and further normalisation is used for various practical and research purposes, many of the works that are critical of this practice assume that abbreviation is removed because it is considered accidental

17 E.g. Alex Speed Kjeldsen, *Filologiske studier i kongesagahåndskriftet Morkinskinna*, Bibliotheca Arnamagnaeana. Supplementum 8 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum, 2011), 777–8, 883.

18 Honkapohja, “Digital Approaches to Manuscript Abbreviations.”

(although all language is in a sense accidental) or trivial. However, where abbreviation is marked in the form of expansion, it provides both a means of identifying abbreviated words and, to a certain extent, an understanding of the amount of apparent text that has been abbreviated. Further, in his review Honkapohja does not discuss the various techniques that preserve abbreviated, expanded and linguistically normalised versions of the same text. A further review of editing technologies is therefore required to determine whether different types of editions, rather than only those that record abbreviated forms, can be used to analyse abbreviation use.

Printed and Simple Diplomatic Editions

Early printed editions of Old Norse expanded abbreviations silently and often normalised the text to a certain extent.¹⁹ This was partly no doubt due to typographic constraints, together with a focus on making the texts accessible rather than on fidelity to the manuscripts. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, printed diplomatic editions began to present the text with expansions of abbreviations marked using italics.²⁰ This was probably driven to a certain extent by the series published by Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur (STUAGNL), the Norse counterpart to the Early English Text Society, itself a body founded to prepare editions for the future Oxford English Dictionary. STUAGNL began this practice in most of the editions in its first year of publishing (1880), and it quickly became standard. This practice in Old Norse diplomatic editing is now ubiquitous: abbreviations are almost always expanded using italics unless the text is normalised.

One of STUAGNL's early editions (Dahlerup's 1880 edition of *Ágrip* – volume 3 in the series²¹) attempted, however, to reproduce the abbreviations in their unexpanded forms and even included a facsimile of one of

19 Cf. Gottskålk Jensson, "Udgivelse af norrøn litteratur indtil 1772," in *Dansk Editionshistorie 2: Udgivelse af norrøn og gammeldansk litteratur*, ed. Britta Olrik Frederiksen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum, 2021), 48.

20 E.g. Eugen Kölbing, ed., *Elis saga ok Rosamundu* (Heilbronn: Henninger, 1881); Carl af Petersens, ed., *Jómsvíkinga saga efter Arnamagnæanska handskriften N:o 291. 4:to*, STUAGNL 7 (Copenhagen: S. L. Møller, 1882). Compare Carl af Petersens, ed., *Jómsvíkinga saga (efter Cod. AM. 510, 4:to) samt Jómsvíkinga drápa*, (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1879), where expansion is silent.

21 Verner Dahlerup, *Ágrip af Noregs konunga sögum*, STUAGNL 3 (Copenhagen: S. L. Møller, 1880).

the manuscript's leaves. The typeset lines are widely spaced in order to accommodate the interlinear marks typical of abbreviation. This practice was employed sparingly in print, however, no doubt due to typographic challenges and the extra space required on the page.

Some of the digital corpora used below, including the Skaldic Project's transcription corpus and some Menota XML files, have used the technique of marking abbreviation expansions, rather than abbreviations themselves, extensively. The practice of representing expansions using italics gives some information about abbreviation: which words are abbreviated, and in addition, the extent to which words are abbreviated. Analysing this data relies on the ability to extract this information unambiguously in a digital form.

TEI XML

The first major release of the Text Encoding Initiative's (TEI) guidelines, TEI P3 (1994–1999),²² included a means of digitally representing both abbreviations and expansions in a simple data structure (either abbreviation with an expansion attribute, or vice-versa), and these methods were adopted unchanged in the first XML version of TEI (P4, 2002). Wills, for example, used this method to produce digital and printed versions of Old Norse manuscripts which could be read in either their abbreviated or expanded form.²³

The next and current version of TEI (P5, 2007-)²⁴ generally removed unstructured character data from attributes, resulting in a slightly more complicated encoding but more possibilities for adding additional information about abbreviations and expansions. The first decade of this century produced a number of different proposals for methods of encoding abbreviations and their corresponding expansions, focusing on particular problems of the sometimes complex relationship between abbreviation

22 C. M. Sperberg-McQueen and Lou Burnard, eds., *Guidelines for Electronic Text Encoding and Interchange* (Chicago and Oxford: TEI P3 Text Encoding Initiative, 1994).

23 Tarrin Wills, *The Foundation of Grammar: An Edition of the First Section of Óláfr Þórðarson's Grammatical Treatise*, PhD Thesis (University of Sydney, 2001).

24 TEI Consortium, eds. *TEI P5: Guidelines for Electronic Text Encoding and Interchange*, Version 4.7.0. (TEI Consortium, 16 November 2023): <http://www.tei-c.org/Guidelines/P5/> (accessed 23 March 2024).

marks and what they represent. Honkapohja gives a detailed review of digital manuscript abbreviations using strict TEI P5 and recommends a markup system of this type:²⁵

```
<w>
<choice>
<abbr>magn<am>&#42863;</am></abbr>
<expan>magn<ex>us</ex></expan>
</choice>
</w>
```

The main variation in this method is whether the whole word is treated in an abbreviated and expanded form, or the abbreviations only; and whether the abbreviation mark (here encoded as the Unicode LATIN SMALL LETTER CON) itself is marked up with the <am> tag, which assists in identifying marks used for abbreviations. This type of markup is the basis for various studies and facilitates the digital counting of abbreviated words, identifiable by the presence of the <abbr> element. The presence of any of the four element types used here (<abbr>, <expan>, <am>, <ex>) in a word would indicate an abbreviated word.

The method of treating the process of abbreviation at the word level (logographic) rather than the abbreviation marks themselves solves an issue where the abbreviation marks do not correspond closely to the putative expansion (e.g. ‘.e.’ > ‘eða’, where the first dot is an abbreviation mark but does not have a clear relationship to the expanded text).

This type of encoding has formed the basis of many studies of abbreviations in Latin and vernacular manuscripts which we will use for comparison. No possibility is presented in the papers referenced in this article for adding a normalised version in pure TEI, making it difficult to compare abbreviation of particular words across manuscript versions.

Menotic TEI

The *de facto* standard which has emerged in Old Norse textual editing is that described in the Menota Handbook.²⁶ Menota uses a modified

25 Honkapohja, “Digital Approaches to Manuscript Abbreviations.”

26 Odd Einar Haugen (ed.), *The Menota Handbook: Guidelines for the Electronic Encoding*

version of TEI P5 with a separate namespace ('me:') in order to encode a slightly different structure for abbreviations, expansions and normalisations. Menota has become the primary method used in the digital editing of Old Norse manuscripts, and its archive at the time of writing contains some ninety documents with over two million words.

Menota's method is to separate the abbreviated and expanded forms of words (tokens) into two 'levels': 'facsimile' and 'diplomatic' respectively. The facsimile level represents the characters, including abbreviations, as they appear on the page, and the diplomatic level corresponds in terms of abbreviation to the traditional print diplomatic editions. These are semantically similar to the markup advocated by Honkapohja and others, but allow for other non-linguistic features to be separated into transcription 'levels'. Menotic abbreviation markup can be converted without information loss to standard TEI where abbreviations are encoded at the word level.

The example abbreviated word above can be represented as follows:

```
<w>
  <choice>
    <me:fac>magn<am>&#42863;</am></me:fac>
    <me:dipl>magn<ex>us</ex></me:dipl>
    <me:norm>Magnús</me:norm>
  </choice>
</w>
```

The manuscript variation itself is encoded, along with a putative expansion of the abbreviations, in addition to a normalised rendering of the language of the manuscript, which can be compared with other texts and versions of it. Although Honkapohja mentions Menota, the project's particular method of marking up abbreviation and expansion is not mentioned in the review of encoding techniques. This gives the mistaken impression, when taken in conjunction with the discussion of the problems of normalisation,²⁷ that normalisation must be abandoned in order to allow for the digital investigation of abbreviation. The Menota model in fact

of Medieval Nordic Primary Sources, Version 3.0 (Bergen: Medieval Nordic Text Archive, 2019).

27 Honkapohja, "Digital Approaches to Manuscript Abbreviations," §§4-5.

avoids the trade-offs of normalisation as described by Honkapohja. It does, however, produce additional code, as all words are encoded with multiple transcription levels or choices, not only those that contain abbreviations.

In Menota editions abbreviations can be identified by the <am> element if it is used to mark abbreviations at the ‘facsimile’ level, and they can always be identified by the presence of the <ex> element at the ‘diplomatic’ level. In practice, no Icelandic manuscripts and only one Norwegian manuscript in the Menota archive lack the diplomatic level. The <ex> element can therefore be used to identify abbreviations in almost all cases.

In an ideal situation, no information is discarded, but all three types of information are recorded: the letters, abbreviations, spacing and other features of the physical manuscript page; the putative expansions based on the editor’s understanding of the scribe’s normal orthography and use of abbreviation marks; and the normalisation, which represents the editor’s understanding of the well-established reconstructed language of the time and place of the manuscript, and which allows comparisons with other manuscripts that use the same language but differing orthography. In practice, however, recording and in particular checking such detailed structures is very time-consuming, although newer tools such as MenotaBlitz and MenotaG (menotag.ku.dk) promise to make this process easier.

Until we have a large body of comparable material marking both abbreviations and expansions, the simpler approach of marking expansions (the ‘diplomatic’ level) provides a potentially larger and more diverse corpus for investigating abbreviation quantitatively. I therefore make use of expanded diplomatic texts where the expansion is marked up. This requires a method to measure abbreviation and an examination of the assumptions that lie behind that method.

Types of Abbreviation

Examining the types of abbreviation in the available corpora gives an overview of how abbreviations are expanded and therefore the relationship between the script and the text. The typology of abbreviation in Old Norse manuscripts was established by Kålund,²⁸ and is used with some

28 Kålund, *Palæografisk Atlas*, viii–x.

variation by Seip²⁹ and Hreinn Benediktsson.³⁰ It is summarised more recently in the Menota *Handbook*. Although there are small differences in how different abbreviation practices are categorised by earlier scholarship, they follow largely the categories outlined in the Menota *Handbook*, as summarised here:³¹

1. Suspension: the word is abbreviated by removing letters from the end and replacing them with a punctuation-like mark.
2. Contraction: the word is abbreviated by removing letters from the middle of the word and often indicated by an interlinear mark such as a horizontal bar.
3. Interlinear marking: the word is abbreviated by removing letters from the baseline and replacing it with an interlinear abbreviation mark, usually a letter implying a combination of that letter with r, v or a.
4. Baseline brevigraphs: Special marks on the baseline that do not consist of ordinary letters but represent letter combinations, in particular the Tironian notae.

Examples of each are shown in Table 1.

Abbreviated word	Type of abbreviation	Expansion of word
f.	Suspension	sonr
ff.	Suspension	synir
k̄gr	Contraction	konungr
lð	Contraction	land
è	Interlinear mark	er
þ̄	Interlinear mark	þat
þ̄	Interlinear mark	þar
7	Brevigraph	ok
Ψ	Brevigraph	maðr

Table 1: Abbreviation examples.

²⁹ Seip, *Palæografi B*, 61–2.

³⁰ Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script*, 85.

³¹ Haraldur Bernharðsson and Haugen, “Abbreviations.”

In the context of our present study, all of these methods involve fewer strokes of the pen on the page than writing out the corresponding unabbreviated text, and all involve a reduction in the number of baseline letters written on the manuscript page. The horizontal space used to write the text can therefore accommodate more text, while the amount of vertical space remains the same.

The marked-up letters (italics corresponding to expansion tagging) are inferred from the abbreviation and sometimes context. The abbreviation may include a letter indicated in the expansion, such as the superscript <r> in <ϕ>, but the general principle is that if a letter is written interlineally or not written at all, it is marked up in the expansion, for example with italics in print. In all cases except the brevigraphs, the non-marked-up (visually or in code) letters correspond to the letters or letter-like characters that occupy the baseline of the text. The amount of economy of the abbreviation can therefore be measured in most cases as the relationship between the number of letters that have not been marked up as expansions and the total number of letters including the marked-up expansions.

The exceptions here are the ‘ff.’-type and the brevigraphs. In the ‘ff.’ case only one of the letters written on the baseline is included in the part of the text not marked as an expansion. These instances are relatively rare, however, and the difference in the resulting ratio between abbreviated and expanded width is in any case not great. Brevigraphs are also expanded with the full word marked as the expansion, even though the manuscript contains a baseline character. All but the Tironian notae (Z), however, are relatively rare. The notae are uniformly expanded as *ok* (occasionally *og*) in the corpora used here, and therefore can be easily identified in the digital text as marked up <ex>ok</ex>, <ex>oc</ex> or <ex>og</ex>, with a high degree of confidence that this expansion corresponds to a single letter-like mark on the manuscript baseline.

Measures of Abbreviation

Proportion of Abbreviated Words

Where words are marked up (tokenised) and there is markup which identifies words with abbreviations, abbreviation can be measured by the proportion of words that are abbreviated in a manuscript. This measure is

the most commonly used in previous scholarship.³² These studies normally examine corpora with TEI or similar markup. Where the text is marked up so that all words are identifiable and contain abbreviation markup for the whole word where abbreviated, one can simply count the number of these two tags to get a percentage of words abbreviated. This ignores instances where a word has two abbreviations such as e.g. ‘m̄lr’ for ‘mælr’.

This measure has been applied very sparingly to Old Norse manuscript corpora but is implied by the *Menota Handbook* chapter 6: ‘In some Icelandic manuscripts, as many as a third of the words may be abbreviated’,³³ although this is not based on systematic measurement. A variation on this measure for Old Norse is Kjeldsen, who examines a shift within the *Morkinskinna* scribe A’s use of abbreviations for common words.³⁴ Here the measurement is in the form of the number of abbreviations observed per hundred words in the text, in which case a word may be counted twice if it includes more than one abbreviation.

As *Menota*-style TEI files have both words and abbreviations marked up (either or both as abbreviation marks and expansions), this measure can be applied to the *Menota* corpus. It is, however, less easy to apply this measure to corpora that are not tokenised and cannot be reliably tokenised.

A Measure of Abbreviation as Economy of Text

In a corpus where expansions only are marked up and there is no tokenisation, a different measure of abbreviation is needed. I also aim here specifically to measure economy, that is the reduction in page surface usage realised by abbreviation. This measure should then reflect the amount of page surface saved by the scribe in abbreviating the text.

To illustrate how the marked-up expansions can be used to measure abbreviation economy, I use a line from AM 748 I b 4to as an example, chosen because of its many abbreviations (Figure 1).

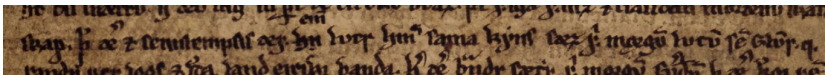


Figure 1: AM 748 I b 4to 12r/25.

32 E.g. Cottureau-Gabillet, “Revealing Some Structures”; Honkapohja, “Latin in Recipes?,” etc.

33 Haraldur Bernharðsson and Odd Einar Haugen, “Chapter 6. Abbreviations” in *Menota Handbook*, ed. Odd Einar Haugen, 3rd ed. (Bergen: Medieval Nordic Text Archive, 2019).

34 Kjeldsen, *Morkinskinna*, 780–2.

The line of text in Figure 1 is transcribed by the present author:

þat ær *ok* semilempsis æf einn lvtr hins sama kyns sæz fyrir mǫrgvm
lvtvm sem Glvmr quað.

The marked-up expansions can be encoded thus (ignoring the corrected word):

þ<ex>at</ex> æ<ex>r</ex> <ex>ok</ex> semilempsis æf
ein<ex>n</ex> lvtr hin<ex>s</ex> sama kyns sæz f<ex>yrir</
ex> mǫrgv<ex>m</ex> lvtv<ex>m</ex> se<ex>m</ex>
Glv<ex>m</ex> r q<ex>vað</ex>.

The word ‘hins’ does not contain an abbreviation in the strict sense: all letters are written in full, although the final one is written over the last letter. In this measure, however, which seeks to measure page surface usage, it is treated as abbreviation, as it abbreviates the horizontal length of the line.

As spaces do not affect abbreviation economy, these are removed, along with any other non-abbreviation-related tags. Expanded *ok* is converted so that it only has one letter expanded (bold), reflecting the fact that it occupies in its abbreviated form one character on the baseline:

þ<ex>at</ex>æ<ex>r</ex>**o<ex>k</ex>**semilempsisæfein
<ex>n</ex>lvtrhin<ex>s</ex>samakynssæzf<ex>yrir</
ex>mǫrgv<ex>m</ex>lvtv<ex>m</ex>se<ex>m</
ex>Glv<ex>m</ex>r q<ex>vað</ex>.

This string of text is used to calculate the relative economy of abbreviation. The first value in the calculation is the character length of the string with the expansions removed, that is, characters corresponding to letters appearing on the baseline of the manuscript line, i.e. 55 characters:

þæosemilempsisæfeinlvtrhinsamakynssæzfmǫrgvltvseGlvrq.

This is compared with the length of the string with only the expansion tagging removed, i.e. the reconstructed expanded text totalling 72 characters:

þatæroksemilempsisæfeinnlvtrhinssamakynssæzfyrimørgvml-
vtvmsemGlvmrqvað.

The measure used is the number of letters in the expansions relative to the total number of letters including expansions. Here there are 17 letters in the expansions (72–55), i.e. $17/72 = 0.236$, that is, the scribe on this line has economised by 23.6% baseline letters from the putative expanded form. For comparison, 11 of the 17 words are abbreviated (65%).

This measure requires a reconstruction on the part of the editor which, it could be argued, cannot be determined as confidently as the presence or absence of abbreviation marks, as is used in previous studies. Here, for example, I have expanded f with superscript i as *fyrir*, but *fyr* might also be possible. Other examples include *þeira/þeirra* or *konungr/kongr*. In practice, however, there are few such ambiguities, and I assume here that any differences largely cancel each other out or do not affect the overall results.

This technique has the advantage that it opens up the possibility of examining corpora that only have expansions marked up. This includes a large number of manuscript editions in the Menota archive that have a diplomatic level but no facsimile level, and the large corpus from the Skaldic Project, where expansions are marked up. Future studies could potentially draw on printed editions with italic expansions. In addition, it measures better abbreviation according to the fourth hypothesis deriving from Hreinn Benediktsson in the introduction, as it counts more directly the amount of horizontal space, measured in characters, saved by the process of abbreviation.

Where both measures (abbreviated word percentage and abbreviation economy) can be applied, the measures can be compared to determine the relationship between the two.

Comparing the Two Measures

The Menota archive contains a large body of manuscript transcriptions to which both measures of abbreviation can be applied. In Figure 2, these manuscripts are analysed to identify the percentage of abbreviated word tokens (horizontal axis), which is plotted against the abbreviation economy percentage value (vertical axis) for each manuscript (dot).

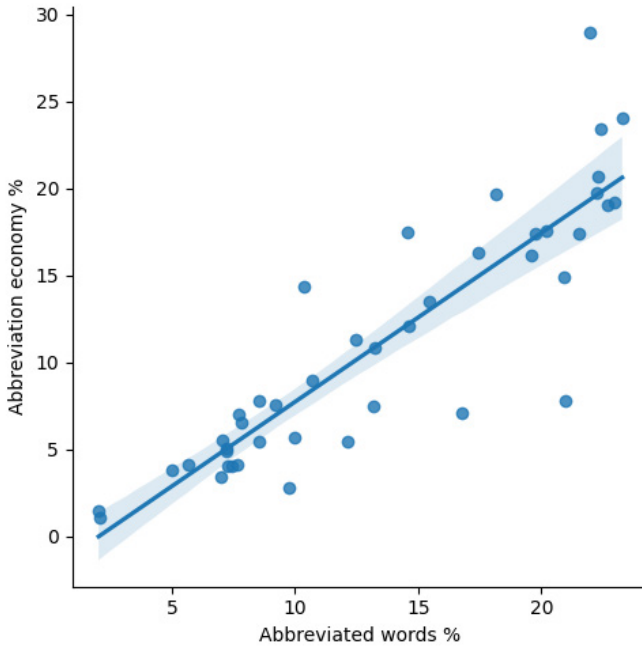


Figure 2: *Menota* manuscripts by abbreviation percentage and economy.

The small confidence interval here around the trendline indicates that the relationship is almost linear. This can also be expressed using the Pearson's correlation coefficient (ρ^{35}). The correlation is expressed as a value between 1 (complete positive correlation) and -1 (complete negative correlation), with a value of 0 representing no correlation. Here Pearson's ρ is 0.89, indicating a very strong linear correlation between the two measures: that is, the two are closely correlated. The outliers in the diagram (dots further from the line of best fit) are small fragments. Removing the fragments with fewer than 3000 words gives us an even closer correlation ($r = 0.95$) between the two abbreviation measures. The average relationship between the two measures (m) is 1.26, or 1.18 for Icelandic manuscripts.

35 Karl Pearson, "Notes on Regression and Inheritance in the Case of Two Parents," *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London* 58 (1895), 240–2.

That is, for an Icelandic manuscript which has 20% of words abbreviated, the expected abbreviation economy would be 17% ($20/1.18$).

This measure of abbreviation economy is therefore closely related to the established measure of percentage of abbreviated words, allowing us to accurately compare corpora where only expansions are used with studies based on the percentage of abbreviated words. The present study will therefore use the abbreviation percentage measure where available to directly compare corpora that have used the established measure (proportion of abbreviated words), but use the abbreviation economy measure for corpora where only expansions are provided.

Abbreviation Marks by Frequency

The main method outlined above makes observations about the frequency of abbreviation types in order to justify its assumptions. As the main corpus (the Skaldic Project's transcription database³⁶) to be used as the data for this study does not mark up abbreviations, only expansions, it is necessary to test whether this approach will produce a reasonably accurate overview of the amount of abbreviation in manuscripts. This in turn requires surveying a corpus where abbreviations are marked up to determine whether the inference here is valid.

Table 2 shows the twenty most common abbreviation marks found in <am> elements in Icelandic and Norwegian manuscripts in the Menota archive, where the element is used. Numerical entity references and unicode characters are resolved as Menota/MUFI entity names for consistency.³⁷

³⁶ Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages: <https://skaldic.org>.

³⁷ Medieval Unicode Font Initiative: <https://mufi.info>.

Entity reference for abbreviation mark	Unicode name (or MUFI in italics)	Number of marks found in <am>
&bar;	COMBINING OVERLINE	51250
&er;	COMBINING ZIGZAG ABOVE	31759
&tetslash;	<i>LATIN ABBREVIATION SIGN SMALL ET WITH STROKE</i>	10017
&apomod;	MODIFIER LETTER APOSTROPHE	7727
&rsup;	COMBINING LATIN SMALL LETTER R	6137
&ovlmed;	<i>COMBINING MEDIUM-HIGH OVERLINE WITH FIXED HEIGHT (FULL-WIDTH)</i>	4963
&isup;	COMBINING LATIN SMALL LETTER I	4658
&et;	TIRONIAN SIGN ET	3170
.	FULL STOP	3157
&inodotsup;	COMBINING LATIN SMALL LETTER DOTLESS I	2949
&combmacr;	COMBINING MACRON	2612
&combcomma;	COMBINING COMMA ABOVE RIGHT	1902
&tsemi;	SEMICOLON	1830
·	MIDDLE DOT	1514
&ra;	COMBINING LATIN SMALL LETTER FLATTENED OPEN A ABOVE	1344
&asup;	COMBINING LATIN SMALL LETTER A	1108
&sem;	<i>LATIN ABBREVIATION SIGN SEMICOLON</i>	922
&osup;	COMBINING LATIN SMALL LETTER O	915
&rbar;	<i>COMBINING ABBREVIATION MARK SUPERSCRIPT RA OPEN A FORM WITH BAR ABOVE</i>	671
&combdot;	COMBINING DOT ABOVE	354

Table 2: The twenty most common abbreviation marks in Menota Norwegian and Icelandic manuscripts.

These twenty abbreviation marks account for the overwhelming majority of abbreviations found in the corpus (138959 instances/142822 abbreviation marks in total = 97.3%).

There are a number of abbreviation marks that are essentially allo-graphs or script variants. These include &er; and &combcomma; for the

tittle, and &et; and &etslash; for the Tironian nota, but this kind of variation is not relevant to the present study. The majority of the abbreviations are written above another character which is not included in the expansion or are punctuation marks occupying minimal horizontal space. The ‘ff.’ (for *synir*)-type abbreviation is not indicated by this method, but I assume in any case that this type of abbreviation is unusual enough not to significantly alter the results below.

Excursus: Space Usage of Punctuation and Letters

The assumption of the abbreviation economy method is that punctuation marks in abbreviations do not make a significant difference to the amount of horizontal space used by the scribe, as these are silently removed when the text is expanded. Punctuation is normally small, and physically measuring a very large number of punctuation marks and their spacing relative to letters would be laborious. However, we have at our disposal another dataset which can be used to measure these phenomena. The MenotaG framework³⁸ is a Menota-based model for editing and processing texts from manuscript images. It incorporates handwritten text recognition (HTR) tools for segmenting the images into lines. Words and punctuation tokens can be marked by editors on the manuscript images by vertically dividing the line outlines. These are stored as polygons using OpenGIS data structures and can be analysed with spatial tools.

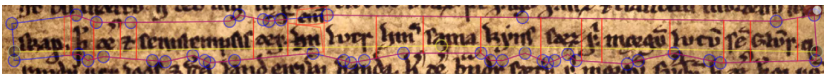


Figure 3: AM 748 I b 4to 121/25 with MenotaG-generated outlines.

The HTR-generated line outline (blue dots) and baseline (yellow line) is shown along with the user-inputted token divisions (red outlines), which are also transcribed in both their abbreviated and expanded forms. HTR-generated token outlines tend to be an inaccurate reflection of the token width, and therefore user-inputted token divisions are used here. At this stage the system is being tested with three manuscripts of the Old

³⁸ Cf. description in Tarrin Wills, “Asynchronous Linked Editing of Texts in Physical Objects,” Digital Humanities in the Nordic and Baltic Countries, Reykjavik 27–31 May 2024 (DHNb 2024, forthcoming).

Icelandic *Third Grammatical Treatise*, with over 16,000 tokens marked in the three main manuscripts (AM 242 fol., AM 748 I b 4to and AM 757 a 4to), along with a few other manuscripts very partially segmented for testing purposes but which provide a point of comparison.

In order to physically measure the relative size of punctuation characters and word characters (including punctuation), a SQL query performs a number of look-ups and transformations. The query retrieves data from all images where word and punctuation tokens have been marked on the image as above. Combining characters (as defined by the MUF1 project) and tags are removed from the token text, and spacing after the token is added where appropriate. The width of the rectangular bounds of the token polygon (in pixels) is compared with the number of characters of text (horizontal pixels per character). (HTR-generated token outlines tend to be an inaccurate reflection of the token width.) The ratio of pixels per punctuation token character to pixels per word token character is calculated. The average (weighted by the number of tokens on each image) of these from all images for a manuscript is then aggregated. The relative size is then calculated independently of the resolution of the images in pixels, which may vary even within manuscripts.

Ms siglum	Relative punctuation width	Tokens
AM 242 fol.	0.287	7456
AM 748 I b 4°	0.286	5881
AM 757 a 4°	0.328	3188
GKS 1009 fol.	0.396	270
AM 45 fol.	0.365	259
...		
Total	0.305	17826

Table 3: *Relative width of letters and punctuation in MenotaG.*

We see that, with a heavy focus on three manuscripts, punctuation characters on average occupy less than one third of the horizontal space of word characters. Using the data from the first three manuscripts in particular, we can conclude that the amount of horizontal space occupied by punctuation marks is therefore likely to be less than a third of that occupied

by letters. It is therefore reasonable to assume that punctuation does not contribute substantially to the use of the page surface. When a scribe uses a horizontally spacing punctuation mark in abbreviation, they are therefore adding the equivalent of one third of a character while saving on the unwritten, abbreviated characters.

Abbreviation in Icelandic and Norwegian Manuscripts in the Menota Archive

The measures established above are now applied to the available corpora of Old Norse manuscripts starting with abbreviation measured as the proportion of abbreviated words.

Using the Python programming language, I have written a script which scans the current Menota archive (as at 12 March 2024) and analyses the texts which are primarily Icelandic and Norwegian and have accessible XML files. Where a manuscript's text is found in multiple files, these are aggregated. XML files for a total of forty-four manuscripts have been examined. Menota's XML files are CC BY-SA-licensed and the editors for the files used are named as (in descending order of the number of tokens used in this study): Anna C. Horn, Karl Gunnar Johansson, Robert K. Paulsen, Fabian Schwabe, Nina Stensaker, Matteo Tarsi, The Bergen group (2), Beeke Stegmann, The Codex Regius project and Katarzyna Kapitan.

Using the XML data processed from Menota's archive, the extent of abbreviation was examined using the measures of number of abbreviations per word and proportion of words abbreviated. The total number of word tokens found in manuscripts that could yield results for the above process was 618,190. Of these, 138,893 were abbreviated in some way (22.5%), and the number of abbreviations in total was 143,336 (23.2 abbreviations per 100 words). The designation of either 'Norwegian' or 'Icelandic' is based on the designation in the archive catalogue and in some cases is misleading (e.g. Holm perg 4 fol., which has a mixture of apparently Icelandic and Norwegian hands³⁹), but this affects very few data points in the following study.

39 Cf. e.g. Språksamlingane's introduction to the Menota edition at <https://clarino.uib.no/menota/text/menota/HolmPerg-4-fol> (accessed 17 August 2024).

There was a very significant difference between the proportion of abbreviated words in Norwegian and Icelandic manuscripts, with Icelandic manuscripts having about 36% abbreviated words (56302/157415 words) compared with 18% for Norwegian (82591/460775 words). The proportion of abbreviated words in the Icelandic manuscripts in the Menota archive is therefore around double that of the Norwegian manuscripts. The latter in Menota are often legal documents, fragments and charters, which may distort these results to an extent. This nevertheless confirms Hreinn's observation about the difference in the amount of abbreviation in Icelandic and Norwegian manuscripts (hypothesis 2 above), which, if anything, is understated by him.

I will therefore treat Icelandic and Norwegian manuscripts separately, where possible, in the following analyses. Figure 4 plots the abbreviation percentages against the date (as the midpoint of a date range given in the Menota catalogue). There are very few manuscripts dated to after c. 1400 in the archive, making it difficult to examine diachronic changes after that point. These outliers in dating are therefore removed.

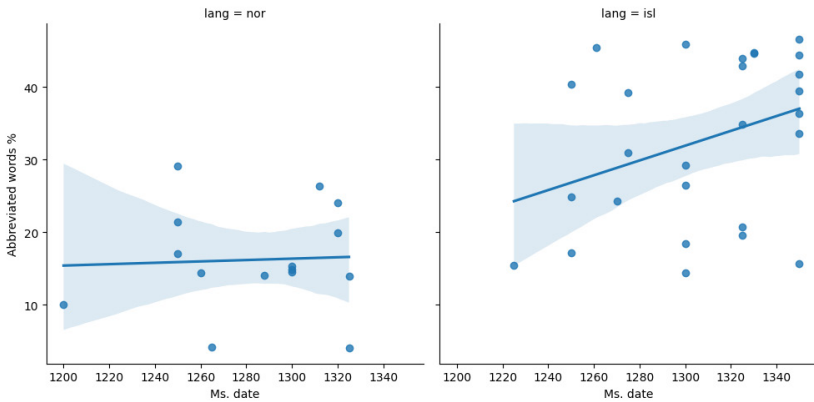


Figure 4: Abbreviated words in Menota Norwegian and Icelandic manuscripts before c. 1400.

In the Icelandic manuscripts there is a weak correlation (Pearson's $\rho = 0.35$) between the date and abbreviation rate of the available manuscripts before c. 1400. In the Norwegian manuscripts there is almost no correla-

tion ($\rho = 0.05$) between the date and abbreviation rate. Both diagrams in Figure 4 show that throughout the period before c. 1400, manuscripts are highly variable in their use of abbreviations, with both very low-abbreviating and very high-abbreviating manuscripts represented in all periods.

With respect to Hreinn's first observation in the introduction, the amount of abbreviation at the start of the period represented by the Menota archive (c. 1200) is similar to other vernaculars and less than for Latin manuscripts. Icelandic abbreviation never comes close to the extent of Latin abbreviation in its more extreme form, despite Hreinn's and others' claims. However, at the end of the period shown in the diagrams, there is much more significant divergence from the French and English vernacular manuscripts in both languages, with substantially more abbreviated words found in Icelandic and, to a lesser extent, Norwegian manuscripts than in other vernaculars, where abbreviation was slowly abandoned.

This data also confirms the second observation here by Hreinn, namely that Icelandic and Norwegian practice diverged and that abbreviation is more common in Icelandic manuscripts, but it does not fully support the observation that abbreviation increases over the period observed here, at least as applied to this corpus. Further data analysed below, however, strengthens this claim.

Extent of Abbreviation in Poetry and Prose

A few of the manuscripts in this category contain both poetry and prose, which allows us to compare the amount of abbreviation in the two categories. For the data shown in Table 4, words contained within <lg> elements (TEI line groups, used for poetry) are compared with all word tokens outside these elements. Certain manuscripts contain a very small amount of poetry and therefore insufficient data for this study. The manuscripts examined here therefore contain at least 1,000 poetic characters and both prose and poetry.

Ms	Date	Prose tokens	Prose economy %	Poetry Tokens	Poetry economy %
<i>Digital editions from the Menota Archive</i>					
AM 35 fol.	c. 1700	68560	18.8	5205	7.5
AM 63 fol.	c. 1700	94393	21.2	7763	8.1
AM 132 fol.	c. 1330–1370	114168	21.1	5672	8.0
AM 242 fol.	c. 1350	67339	8.2	13378	3.6
NRA norr fragm 52	c. 1225	3275	7.3	260	2.1
WolfAug 9 10 4to	c. 1330–1370	42453	20.4	2033	7.0
<i>Digital edition from MenotaB / EAE</i>					
GKS 1009 fol.	c. 1275	376562	22.8	30716	7.7

Table 4: Abbreviation economy of prose and poetry in Menota manuscripts containing both.

Supplementing the Menota XML is an additional manuscript, *Morkinskinna* (GKS 1009 fol.), whose data are taken from the MenotaB-based digital edition by Kjeldsen and imported into the *Editiones Arnarnagnaanae Electronicae* (MenotaG-based) framework.⁴⁰ Kjeldsen's edition uses the same underlying data model as Menota and can therefore be confidently compared with the Menota data.

In these manuscripts the prose text is abbreviated between 2.3 times (AM 242 fol.) and 3 times (GKS 1009 fol., excluding NRA 52, which has very few tokens) more than the poetry, and this independent of the broad chronological spread of the manuscripts. AM 242 fol. is likely the manuscript in this list that uses the most space for the writing in it. As it is also the least abbreviated of the manuscripts here (apart from the early and fragmentary NRA 52, again an outlier), this further supports the notion that abbreviation is employed with the goal of economy of use of the writing surface. The corollary is seen in GKS 1009 fol. (*Morkinskinna*), which is probably the manuscript with the smallest writing.

⁴⁰ Cf. <https://eae.ku.dk> and Wills, "Asynchronous Linked Editing."

Abbreviation of Poetic Text in Manuscripts

Skaldic stanzas are written in manuscripts often with a text that includes extrametrical pronouns and non-enclitic particles, which are unlikely to have been pronounced as syllables in the original metre. To take these features into consideration is difficult, however, because it would require a close alignment of the manuscript text with the reconstructed poetic text. While the Skaldic Project has digital versions of both, it would require a great deal of additional work (tokenising and aligning) to accomplish this. The Skaldic Project also has digital variants linked in some detail to the text, but it does not always record where the manuscript text has these additional metrical expansions – it only does so where there are additional variants, otherwise the removal of extrametrical pronouns and particles is not recorded as variants.

The Skaldic Project includes (at the time of writing) some 14,066 transcriptions of exactly 5,000 individual stanzas in 315 manuscripts (the overwhelming majority of which are Icelandic in provenance), around 2 million characters (excluding spaces and tagging) in total. All periods and types of manuscript are used, giving a very broad sample of the manuscript corpus as represented by manuscripts containing skaldic verse.

The main purpose of the transcriptions has been to aid editors in preparing their editions and reviewers in checking readings. While the transcriptions have not been reviewed and corrected to the same extent as the published editions, they have frequently been corrected by editors in the process of producing the editions. Where a particular transcriber's work has been deemed sufficiently inaccurate to mislead or confuse editors or the public, their transcriptions have been removed from the database and are not therefore included in this study.

The transcriptions are based on the traditions of diplomatic editing in Old Norse, where the abbreviations are expanded and represented in italics. For this we use the `<i>` element, which is used specifically and unambiguously in the project as the semantic equivalent of the `<ex>` element in TEI. This has the advantage that most HTML user agents (browsers) render idiomatic text as italic, consistent with the Old Norse diplomatic tradition.

The transcription guidelines for the Skaldic Project were distributed to editors and transcribers as part of the *Editors' Handbook*.⁴¹ The transcribers who contributed this information include a range of editors and assistants, with the ten most prolific ones (in order of stanza transcriptions contributed and used here) being Valgerður Erna Þorvaldsdóttir, R. D. Fulk, Tarrin Wills, Emily Baynham, Katharina Seidel, Soffía Guðný Guðmundsdóttir, Hannah Burrows, Helen Appleton, Kate Heslop and Diana Whaley.

The data available for skaldic transcriptions should be comparable to the poetic data in Table 4: both contain poetic texts that have expansions of abbreviations marked up. Using the measure of abbreviation economy on the Skaldic Project transcription corpus allows us to compare this dataset with that of the Menota manuscripts above. The Skaldic Project's corpus may not include all the poetry that is recorded for a manuscript in the Menota corpus, however, but this should not affect our results greatly. The results of this comparison are shown in Table 5.

Siglum	Dating	Stanzas transcribed	Total chars	Unex	Econ. %	Menota poetry %
AM 35 fol	c.1675–1700	173	22751	20677	9.1	7.5
AM 63 fol	c. 1675–1700	109	15928	14244	10.6	8.1
AM 132 fol	c. 1330–1370	232	32023	29098	9.1	8.0
AM 242 fol	c. 1350	517	56762	55652	2.0	3.6
GKS 1009 fol	c. 1275	21	1982	1785	9.9	7.7
WolfAug 9 10 4°	c. 1330–1370	79	10793	9871	8.5	7.0

Table 5: Skaldic manuscripts compared with Menota manuscripts' poetry (see Table 4 above).

There is a small difference in the abbreviation economy of the poetry in the two datasets. The relative difference here is likely insignificant ($p = 0.1$ using a paired t -test) and in all but one case slightly lower in the Menota corpus than in the Skaldic Project corpus. This points to a slightly different expansion practice in the two corpora, which may be related to other differences such as tokenisation. In any case the relative amount of abbreviation in both corpora is highly consistent, with the ranking of each

⁴¹ Wills, *Editors' Manual*, 33–6.

manuscript by abbreviation economy being the same. We can therefore with confidence examine broader trends in abbreviation.

Figure 5 is a scatterplot of all manuscripts in the Skaldic Project's transcription data. Only manuscripts with at least thirty stanzas transcribed (128 in total) are included. Not all manuscripts in the database are marked as Norwegian/Icelandic, but of those that are represented here, only four are Norwegian. The horizontal axis represents the midpoint of the dating of the manuscript in the Skaldic Project's database and the vertical axis is the abbreviation economy as a percentage. The trendline in the graph is the locally weighted regression (LOWESS⁴²), representing a smoothed overall trend.

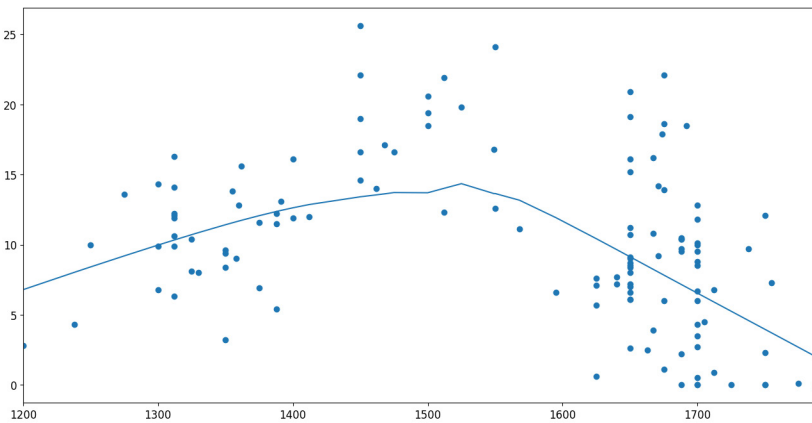


Figure 5: Abbreviation of skaldic stanzas in manuscripts from c. 1200–1800.

With this larger collection of manuscripts, clearer trends are observed than those in the Menota corpus, even though the corpus size itself is smaller. The relationship between manuscript date and abbreviation economy is more complex over this longer time period, increasing in the first centuries and then decreasing after the Middle Ages.

42 William S. Cleveland, "Robust Locally Weighted Regression and Smoothing Scatterplots," *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 74, no. 368 (1979), 829–36; as implemented in the Python statsmodels module.

Period	Dates	Mss	Average economy %	Standard deviation	Min. econ. %	Max. econ. %
1	1200–1412	35	10.4	3.42	2.8	16.3
2	1450–1568	18	17.9	3.97	11.1	25.6
3	1595–1788	72	7.9	5.47	0.0	22.1

Table 6: Three periods of skaldic manuscript production.

Figure 5 suggests that abbreviation in a diachronic perspective falls into three periods, which can be described as follows (see Table 6):

1. Early manuscripts (prior to c. 1450): abbreviation rates increase over time with some variation, up to a maximum of c. 16%. In this period there is a clearer correlation between the manuscript date and increasing abbreviation usage (Pearson's $\rho = 0.6$, compared with $\rho = 0.35$ in the Menota Icelandic corpus).
2. Late medieval/Reformation manuscripts (between c. 1450 and the end of the sixteenth century): abbreviation is very consistently extensive, between 11 and 26%.
3. Post-Reformation manuscripts (from the end of the sixteenth century): abbreviation is overall lower than in the previous periods and decreases over time (Pearson's $\rho = -0.32$), but is highly varied (the standard deviation, a statistical measure of variance, here is 5.5, considerably higher than in the other two periods (3.4 and 4)).

The extensive variation of the third group may be due to a variety of reasons. It is possibly because of the divergence of purpose into two major types of manuscript writing after the Reformation: scholarly manuscripts that aimed to record accurately the palaeography and orthography of medieval manuscripts (and which we now often rely on where the original is lost) and 'lay' manuscripts which were copied for private and domestic purposes. The former could be expected to mirror medieval scribal practice, whereas the latter might reflect contemporary practices, even as they are written at the same time. The overwhelming majority of the manuscripts used by the Skaldic Project would fall into the first category, however, because the focus is on transcribing independent witnesses in that project. Another factor in this final period is the emergence of writing poetry in

lines rather than as inline prose. As skaldic metres generally consist of relatively short lines, there would be no advantage in saving page space by abbreviating poetry written in lines, as the space used remains the same. However, the Kringla manuscripts (AM 35 & 63 fol.) in Table 3, for example, lineate the poetry but show no significant difference in abbreviating prose relative to poetry compared with the other manuscripts there. A further investigation of lineation in skaldic manuscripts is required to understand this phenomenon.

The abbreviation economy for poetry is in general higher than that observed in the Menota corpus for poetry, but as we have shown before, when compared with the same manuscripts in the two corpora there is no significant difference. Given the correlation between abbreviation economy in prose and poetry, the above data would suggest that with a sufficiently large digital corpus of prose or prosimetric text marked up with expansions, we would observe a similar diachronic spread in the use of abbreviation.

Discussion

Returning to the four observations of Hreinn Benediktsson in the opening, we can largely confirm the observations he makes but with some refinements as regards Norwegian manuscripts, poetic and prose texts, and some further observations for the longer period of manuscript production in the Skaldic Project's transcriptions.

Regarding the first observation, that Icelandic and Norwegian medieval manuscript writing uses abbreviation more extensively than other vernaculars, this is true of Icelandic manuscripts, but less so of Norwegian ones. From the Menota data, abbreviation in Norwegian manuscripts (16%) appears in the early period to be consistent with that in Middle English manuscripts (around 10–20%⁴³) and substantially lower than that observed in Latin manuscripts (up to 55%⁴⁴). Icelandic manuscripts lie between the Latin manuscripts and other vernaculars, including Norwegian. Icelandic manuscripts diverge from both Norwegian and other vernaculars in that they increase their use of abbreviation towards the end of the Middle Ages,

43 Honkapohja and Liira, "Abbreviations and Standardisation," 282.

44 *Ibid.*, 281.

whereas other traditions slowly abandon abbreviation during the same period. This suggests divergence from European practices, and reconvergence only occurs very slowly and late, long after the Reformation.

To this we can add the observation that there was a marked difference in the extent of abbreviation of poetry and prose, with poetry abbreviated much less than prose in the same manuscripts. There are only five or six manuscripts where poetry and prose can be reliably compared in the datasets used here, but these are so consistent that more data seems unlikely to alter this picture.

Icelandic manuscript writing uses more abbreviation than Norwegian: this is very much the case, starting with the very earliest period and increasingly diverging as the Middle Ages progressed, with a very significant difference in the period investigated here (c. 1200–1350) common to both traditions.

The observation that the amount of abbreviation increases in the first centuries of manuscript writing in Iceland is consistent with observations particularly of skaldic poetry transcriptions, but less so of the Menota corpus. To this we can add that at the end of the Middle Ages and into the early post-Reformation period, abbreviation remained very extensive in Icelandic manuscripts. After this period it began to be used much more sparingly, but with still considerable variation observed in this late period.

We cannot from these data determine the motivations behind abbreviation (i.e. whether it is driven by economy of page use), but it should be noted that the changes in abbreviation correlate with other developments in Iceland during the period studied. For example, the change in abbreviation economy in the first period identified above and observed in both the Menota and Skaldic Project transcription corpora correlates with the transition from the so-called Medieval Warm Period (to c. 1250) to the Little Ice Age (from c. 1450), where decreasing productivity of land may have put pressure on livestock production, in turn leading to a scarcity in parchment. The Black Death reached Iceland in 1402–4 and coincides also with the transition to the second phase of abbreviation practice identified here.⁴⁵ Conversely, the marked decrease in abbreviation economy

45 This observation was suggested by one of the anonymous reviewers of this paper. This event may also explain the gap after the start of the fifteenth century in relevant data from the Skaldic transcription corpus in Figure 5.

(Pearson's $\rho = -0.57$) from c. 1500 to c. 1800 coincides with the introduction of a cheaper material for manuscript writing, namely paper. The introduction of paper does not seem to coincide with a very sudden decrease in abbreviation, but scribal practices are likely to have taken time to adjust to the new technology.

The correlation between page material scarcity and cost on the one hand, and the economising of script by abbreviation, points to the hypothesis that abbreviation was driven by economic concerns in addition to orthographic trends. This in turn could suggest that poetry was of higher status, because it used more writing surface space than the same amount of text in prose. Either way, more resources were used relatively in writing poetry than prose, regardless of whether it is because it was seen as more valuable and therefore deserving of more resources, or more simply because it was necessary in order to record poetry more clearly. Another potential reason for why poetry is abbreviated less may be that it was considered more difficult for a potential reader to understand. The scribe may have therefore included more information about the text physically on the page, that is, removed less information by abbreviation. This would be consistent with the inclusion of extrametrical features often found in manuscript versions of poetry, which add extra information to aid in understanding the poetry.

Correlation does not, however, imply causation, and the changes in abbreviation usage coincided with a number of other shifts in writing practice. These phenomena could be investigated further, particularly: the economics of writing surfaces and a more absolute measure of writing surface use. The economics of producing writing surfaces requires a closer examination of livestock and parchment production as well as paper availability. Measuring writing surface usage would require actual measurement of the absolute physical space used by text rather than the relative measures shown here. Handwritten text recognition technologies and other spatial analysis systems such as MenotaG promise to make such studies possible in the near future.

The increase in abbreviation economy also raises a question about the materiality of text in Iceland in the course of the Middle Ages: in a sense, abbreviation represents the removal of increasing amounts of text from its material manifestation, and thus a kind of dematerialisation of text over

that period. In the earlier period, as is well documented in the Menota corpus, abbreviations are fairly standardised and can be understood by the reader because they have a limited number of potential expansions independent of context. In the central period, as represented by the Skaldic transcription corpus, abbreviation appears to be less determined, relying increasingly on the immaterial contexts of language and literature for the reader. This period is completely absent from the current Menota corpus of Icelandic and Norwegian manuscripts, and the Skaldic corpus does not provide unexpanded forms. With better data for this period, we could begin to understand the potential dematerialisation of text in Iceland.

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SUMMARY

Abbreviation in Old Norse manuscripts — *a quantitative study*

Keywords: Old Norse, vernacular manuscripts, abbreviation practices, diachronic analysis, manuscript studies

Previous scholarship on the amount and distribution of abbreviation in manuscripts has noted that Icelandic manuscripts use more abbreviation than other vernaculars and that this increases in the medieval period. This study investigates these and related observations *quantitatively*, using the editions and transcriptions of the Menota and Skaldic projects, and refines them with respect to poetry and prose, and compares them with new studies on abbreviation in Latin and vernacular manuscripts. It is observed that the extent of abbreviation in Icelandic and Norwegian manuscripts relative to other traditions may have been overstated, but that Icelandic manuscripts in particular diverge from other traditions increasingly over time. A substantial difference is further observed in the abbreviation of poetry and prose in manuscripts that combine them, with the prose normally abbreviated around three times as much as poetry.

This paper also develops a new measure of abbreviation based on marked-up expansions, showing the amount of writing surface area saved (abbreviation economy). This measure is closely comparable to the main existing measure in scholarship (proportion of abbreviated words) but can be applied to un-tokenised digital texts which only have expansions marked up. This measure is then applied to the Skaldic Project's transcription database. The results give a long-term diachronic perspective on abbreviation, showing that abbreviation economy can be divided into three distinct periods, rising in the course of the Middle Ages, remaining extensive through the Reformation and then gradually declining up to the start of the nineteenth century.

ÁGRIP

Styttingar og bönd í norrænum handritum — megindegleg rannsókn

Efnisorð: norræn fræði, handrit á móðurmáli, styttingar og bönd, söguleg greining, handritafræði

Fyrri rannsóknir á fjölda og dreifingu á notkun styttinga og banda í handritum hafa bent til þess að í íslenskum handritum séu skammstafanir meira notaðar en í öðrum löndum og notkun þeirra fari vaxandi á miðöldum. Í þessari rannsókn er sjónum beint að fyrri athugunum og notaðar megindeglegar aðferðir þar sem litið er á útgáfur og uppskriftir handrita úr Menota-textasafninu og dróttkvæðaverkefninu (Skaldic project). Sérstaklega er horft til munar á bundnu og óbundnu máli, sem og nýrra rannsókna á styttingum í handritum rituðum bæði á latínu og á öðrum málum. Athuganirnar leiða í ljós að umfang styttinga og banda í íslenskum og norskum handritum samanborið við aðrar hefðir gæti hafa verið ofmetið en að með tímanum hafi íslensk handrit skorið sig úr frá því sem tíðkaðist annars staðar. Verulegur munur sést einnig á styttingum bundins máls og óbundins í handritum sem hafa hvort tveggja þar sem lausamálstexti er yfirleitt stytur um það bil þrisvar sinnum meira en texti í bundnu máli.

Í þessari grein er einnig gerð grein fyrir þróun á nýrri mæliaðferð fyrir notkun á skammstöfunum sem byggist á gögnum úr mörkuðum textaútgáfum og leitt hefur í ljós hversu mikið pláss sparast með notkun þeirra (styttingarhagkvæmni). Þessi mæliaðferð er sambærileg við helstu núverandi mælingar sem tíðkast í fræðunum (hlutfall skammstafaðra orða) en þó er hægt að beita henni á ómarkaðan stafrænan texta þar sem eingöngu er gefið til kynna að leyst hafi verið upp úr böndum og styttingum. Þessari mæliaðferð er síðan beitt á gagnagrunn dróttkvæðaverkefnisins. Niðurstöðurnar gefa skýrar vísbendingar um notkun skammstafana yfir lengri tíma og sýna að henni megi skipta í þrjú ólík tímabil: hún fer vaxandi á miðöldum, heldur áfram að vera umfangsmikil fram yfir síðaskiptin og fer síðan smám saman minnkandi fram á byrjun níjtjándu aldar.

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GOTTSKÁLK JENSSON

A NOTE ON UNGER'S EDITORIAL HEADING "TVEGGJA POSTOLA SAGA"¹

IT IS WIDELY acknowledged that the prolific Norwegian linguist and editor Carl Richard Unger (1817–1897) broke new ground in editing manuscript-based Icelandic texts with his publication of *Postola sögur* in Christiania (Oslo) in 1874. Many of the same sagas had admittedly been printed earlier by the Icelandic bookseller Þorsteinn Jónsson (1807–1859) in a volume titled *Hér hefjast Tíu Sögur af þeim enum heilögu Guðs Postulum og þínslar vottum*, printed by Viðeyjarprentsmiðja in 1836. But despite the considerable elegance and easy legibility of the Viðey edition, it came to be regarded as inadequate. This was primarily because of its reliance on manuscripts that were *recentiores* and therefore *deteriores* in the scientific parlance of the day. It could not have been otherwise, because the best witnesses to these texts were all in Copenhagen and unavailable to the Icelandic editor.²

- 1 The impetus for this study came from Tiffany Nicole White (personal correspondence, November 30, 2023), who, while translating Unger's texts, observed that there appeared to be little manuscript evidence for Unger's *Tveggja postola saga Philippus ok Jacobs*. She noted, however, that this was difficult to ascertain, as the relevant manuscripts, apart from SÁM 1, were in Copenhagen – with no images online. Tiffany then speculated that “the idea of a tveggja postola saga might have been an editorial choice by Unger.” Having tested and confirmed her suspicion, she encouraged me to publish my findings, which I have now done – thanks to her.
- 2 Þórður Jónsson states in his “Formáli” that the edition is based on an old paper copy of a parchment book. He deduces this from a Latin note (p. 76) in his exemplar, which refers to *membrana Scardensis* (Skarðsbók). There is also a reference to a copy in the collection of Gunnar Pálsson (1714–1791; “in Gunn. P. coll.”). Two manuscripts I know of, ÍB 165 4to (written in Iceland 1778 and sent to Copenhagen 1861) and Acc. 56 (donated to the Arnamagnæan Collection in Copenhagen as late as 2007), have the Latin note and identical headings to those in the edition. Unger, in *Postola sögur*, p. vi, did not know these manuscripts, and he derives the text of the Viðey edition from copies of AM 630 4to, but the order of the sagas may be that of its exemplar, AM 652 4to. More research could explicate the precise relationship between these witnesses.

Since its founding in the late fifteenth century, the University of Copenhagen had been the only academy in the composite monarchy of Denmark–Norway–Iceland and, along with the Royal Library, served as repository for medieval manuscripts and documents from all three countries.³

Viðeyjarprentsmiðja was a relatively new type of printing press in Iceland – secular and enlightened, with a license to publish anything. For over two centuries, the Church’s control of printing and censorship from Copenhagen had made it virtually impossible to print historical manuscript-based texts in Iceland. When this finally became feasible, editors such as Þorsteinn Jónsson were forced to work with paper copies of parchment manuscripts – copies made before the manuscripts were exported – or, more likely, copies of those copies. As a result, the new methods in editorial philology that were being introduced at the University of Copenhagen in the 1830s were of little practical use to Þorsteinn Jónsson. Other Icelanders of his generation, such as Konráð Gíslason (1808–1891) and Jón Sigurðsson (1811–1879), who had the privilege of studying in Copenhagen and working there at the end of their studies, would, over the following decades, use the new paradigms from France and Germany to establish Icelandic editorial philology as an academic field in its own right. Early examples of text-critical editions published by these Icelanders are *Hrafnkels saga* (1839 and 1847), *Snorra Edda I–II* (1848–1852), and *Biskupa sögur I* (1858).

Konráð Gíslason became the first professor of Icelandic philology at the University of Copenhagen, while Jón Sigurðsson worked mainly within the newly established scientific societies that had taken on the task of publishing the vast corpus of unedited Icelandic medieval literature. As a scholar based at the relatively new Kongelige Frederiks Universitet in Christiania, founded in 1811, Carl Richard Unger was not ideally positioned to make full use of the Copenhagen collections. However, when he was awarded a special scholarship to transcribe Icelandic manuscripts, he was able to travel to Denmark and stay in Copenhagen from 1841 to 1843. During the course of his long career, he made many trips to Copenhagen; as far as I am aware, he was the first scholar to learn how to photograph

3 The Danish equestrian university, Sorø Akademi, was closed between 1665 and 1747, a period when absolutism curtailed the influence of noble families. This was also the time when most of the Icelandic manuscripts were exported to Copenhagen by Icelandic scholars who were based there.

manuscripts he needed to consult repeatedly. In preparing his edition of *Postola sögur*, Unger made a special trip to Copenhagen during the winter of 1870/71, this time meticulously sifting through the many relevant manuscripts in the collection of the late Icelandic scholar Árni Magnússon (1663–1730). During Unger's first visit, this great manuscript collection, which the owner had bequeathed to the university, was first housed in the attic space of the Trinity Church, but by 1861, it had moved to the new University Library near the main building.

In Unger's life time, Konráð Gíslason and Jón Sigurðsson were the leading experts on the Arnamagnæan Collection, as it was referred to, and they became the key members of the Arnamagnæan Commission, the board responsible for overseeing the manuscripts. If you were a visiting scholar from Germany, Norway, Sweden, Britain, or elsewhere looking to consult the Icelandic manuscript collections in Copenhagen, they were the scholars you would turn to for guidance and advice. Later in his life, Unger's primary contact within the Icelandic philological community, however, would become the slightly younger scholar Guðbrandur Vigfússon (1827–1889), who began his career as a protégé of Jón Sigurðsson but left Copenhagen in the 1860s to teach Icelandic literature at Oxford.

In Copenhagen, Unger was guided by these men, in the absence of a comprehensive catalogue, to locate and consult the manuscript witnesses to the Icelandic *postola sögur* texts. Notably, *Skarðsbók postulasagna* (now SÁM 1) was not part of the Arnamagnæan Collection and was believed lost at the time, which nevertheless did not prevent Unger from consulting this important manuscript for the transmission of *postola sögur*, as he was able to use a carefully executed copy preserved in three manuscripts (AM 631 4to, AM 636 4to, and AM 628 4to), which Árni Magnússon had commissioned for his collection in the early eighteenth century when the original was still at Skarð Church in Iceland.⁴

Unger's *Postola sögur* of 1874

Prepared under ideal working conditions and informed by the latest philological practice, Unger's edition of *Postola sögur* from 1874 became the standard for this class of Icelandic saga – a status it disappointingly

4 On the exceptional history of *Skarðsbók postulasagna* or *Codex Scardensis*, as it is called in Latin, see Jóhannes Nordal, "Ferill Skarðsbókar," *Gripla XVI* (2005): 51–74.

retains to this day for all but two of them, *Mattheus saga* and *Tómas saga*, owing to the lack of competing new editions.⁵ Its full title is *Postola sögur. Legendariske fortællinger om apostlernes liv, deres kamp for kristendommens udbredelse, samt deres martyrdød. Efter gamle haandskrifter udgivne*. In addition to the twelfth-century Icelandic translations of the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, called *postola* or *postula sögur*, which are our primary focus here, the edition includes fragments and separate *passiones*, along with three full sagas of holy persons who were not apostles themselves but whose sagas are closely related to those of the apostles: *Clemens saga*, *Saga af Pilatus*, and *Jons saga baptista*. Characteristic of Unger's approach is his respect for textual variance and his willingness to print more than one version of each saga. Excluding the confusing numerical and alphabetical markings of diverse *postola sögur* printed by Unger, the following titles appear first in the headings and discussion in the introduction and then above the saga texts themselves: *Petrus saga postola*, *Pals saga postola*, *Tveggia postola saga Petrus ok Pals*, *Andreas saga postola*, *Jons saga postola*, *Jacobs saga postola*, *Tveggia postola saga Jons ok Jacobs*, *Thomas saga postola*, *Tveggia postola saga Philippus ok Jacobs*,⁶ *Bartholomeus saga postola*, *Mathias saga postola*, *Tveggia postola saga Simonis ok Jude*, and *Matheus saga postola*.

All in all, Unger presents thirteen sagas of thirteen apostles, roughly in the order in which they appear in *Skarðsbók postulasagna* (p. iii). As is evident from this list, Unger pairs the majority of the apostles (eight out of thirteen) together in four double sagas, each bearing a title in the format TVEGGIA POSTOLA SAGA X OK Y, where X and Y stand for the names of the respective apostles in the genitive case. Judging by these headings, it would seem that there were two basic types of *postola sögur*, the single apostle-saga and the combined apostle-saga, but pick any manuscript containing a collection of *postula sögur*, and you will immediately run into difficulties trying to reconcile Unger's organization of the sagas in his edition with the reality of the texts in authentic medieval manuscripts.

- 5 Ólafur Halldórsson, ed., *Mattheus saga postula* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1994) and Jón Ma. Ásgeirsson and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson, eds. *Frá Sýrlandi til Íslands: Arfur Tómasar postula* (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 2007).
- 6 On p. xxvii of the introduction, the editorial heading TVEGGIA POSTOLA SAGA JONS OK JACOBS is mistakenly repeated instead of the correct heading TVEGGIA POSTOLA SAGA PHILIPPUS OG JACOBS.

Aware of the potential for misunderstanding, Unger clarifies the status of his editorial headings in the introduction: “Foreløbig bemærkes, at alle Overskrifter i nærværende Udgave med store Bogstaver ere tilsatte af Udgiveren, de med liggende Skrift findes i Haandskrifterne” (p. xvi). A careful reader who examines every instance of Unger’s use of titles of the type TVEGGIA POSTOLA SAGA X OK Y will notice that they are always printed in capital letters and never in italics, which would indicate their attestation in medieval manuscripts. Occasionally, in the introduction, Unger refers to a “Sammenstøbning” (e.g., p. xxiv) or amalgamation of two apostle-sagas, but he consistently marks his new term, TVEGGIA POSTOLA SAGA, in capital letters as his own editorial creation. With the note, Unger clearly meant to caution his readers against interpreting the term as authentic, though he never elaborates on the implications of his editorial decision. Nor does he, anywhere in his edition, attempt to justify this heading or explain its origin or why he chose to use it. Since the term has been applied by scholars without reservation from then on and we have grown accustomed to viewing it as an authentic medieval term, it is understandable that we might want to verify whether any TVEGGIA POSTOLA SAGA titles are nevertheless attested in our sources.

Starting with the online *ONP: Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* in Copenhagen (onp.ku.dk), we find no examples of the term in their excerpts from medieval texts, even though the dictionary uses these titles as such to identify the four implied sagas designated by Unger’s headings. Similarly, Emil Olmer, in his *Boksamlingar på Island 1179–1490* (Gothenburg 1902), which is based on book holdings listed in Icelandic *máldagar* (medieval inventories of churches, monasteries, and cathedrals) within the specified period, does not record any such titles.⁷ The same is true, as far as I have been able to ascertain, of the great *máldagar* collections published in the sixteen volumes of the *Diplomatarium Islandicum* (Copenhagen & Reykjavík, 1857–1972).

If we examine each of the sagas in question as edited by Unger in his

7 For the record, it may be added here that Ludvig Larsson (1860–1933) – who in 1885 published the first part of AM 645 4to (c. 1220), a major source of texts for the *Postola sögur*, although familiar with and using Unger’s edition – never discusses his term TVEGGIA POSTOLA SAGA. See Ludvig Larsson, *Isländska handskriften No 645 4o i Den Arnarnagnæanske Samlingen* (Lund: Gleerupska Universitets Bokhandeln, 1885).

Postola sögur, beginning with TVEGGIA POSTOLA SAGA PHILIPPUS OG JACOBS (pp. 735–740), we immediately note that, due to its brevity, this text hardly qualifies as a saga. Moreover, it provides separate accounts of the two apostles, each with its own heading: “Sagan fra Philippo postola” (p. 735) and “Saga Jacobs postola” (p. 737). The common feast day of both apostles, May 1, is mentioned in the short prologue of the first saga (“I dag hölldum ver dyrliga hatið postolum Philippo ok Jacobo”), but we also learn that this day is dedicated to other apostles as well, and not much is said about the two titular apostles in their brief texts.

Unger sourced these texts from AM 630 4to and the *Skarðsbók* postulasagna copy made for Árni Magnússon. He used the former to represent the defective late thirteenth-century manuscript AM 652 4to (only fourteen leaves remain), of which it is a copy, while collating the *Skarðsbók* text with the fragment AM 238 XI fol. for variants. The text redaction of *Philippus saga* and *Jacobs saga* in the AM 238 XI fol. is the same as in *Skarðsbók postulasagna*, where the sagas indeed are clearly separate, each with its own rubric. AM 238 XI fol. consists of two leaves containing the end of *Philippus saga*, all of the very short *Jacobs saga*, and the beginning of an *Inventio Crucis* text.⁸ Where *Jacobs saga* begins in AM 238 XI fol., there is an initial and a barely legible rubric with the title of the saga, “De sancto Jakobo [*sic*] apostolo,” as transcribed by Kålund (Vol. 1, p. 202). A further indication of *Jacobs saga*’s autonomy as a work is that its rubric title closely resembles that of the following *Inventio Crucis* text. In fact, nothing apart from the prologue of *Philippus saga* seems to provide Unger with a reason for inventing his editorial heading.

Secondly, Unger based his text of TVEGGIA POSTOLA SAGA PETERS OK PÁLS (pp. 283–318) on AM 656 I 4to, fols. 20v–39v. This manuscript treats the saga largely as two separate narratives (*Petrus saga* on fols. 20v–26r and *Páls saga* on fols. 26r–39v). Although several other apostles appear in *Petrus saga* – which begins on fol. 20v with a large ornamental initial P –

8 In Kristian Kålund’s *Katalog over den Arnemagneanske håndskriftsamling*, Vol. 2, 44, the description of the contents of AM 630 4to mistakenly omits “Sagan fra philippo postola” (62r–63r), “Saga Jacobs postola” (63r–64v), and “Saga <Mathias> postola” (64r–68r), subsuming them under a single entry: “Bl. 57v–68r. Sagann af Mattheum postula.” Kålund likely made this error in haste, merging *Mattheus saga* and *Mathias saga* into one text, possibly due to the manuscript heading on fol. 64v, which erroneously identifies the latter as *Mattheus saga*. This mistake has since been carried over into the online catalogue of handrit.is, which was initially based on Kålund’s printed catalogue.

Paul does not appear until twelve pages later (fol. 26v), where his narrative begins with a rubric heading. In *Páls saga*, however, Peter plays an important role, and after Paul's death, we encounter a *passio Petri*, marked with the rubric "Pijning Petrus" (fols. 37v–38v), which jumps back in time to before Paul's execution. This is followed by a final chapter on Paul appearing to Nero to scare him and detailing what happened to the remains of the two apostles (fols. 38v–39v). Thus, there is an attempt in this manuscript to weave Peter into Paul's saga, particularly in their dealings with Nero, though for the most part, the stories of each apostle are narrated separately with distinct chapter headings. As expected, Unger's editorial heading, TVEGGIA POSTOLA SAGA X OK Y, is not found in this manuscript either.

Interestingly, in the separate *Páls saga postola I* and *Páls saga postola II*, printed by Unger on pp. 216–236, based mainly on AM 645 4to, and pp. 236–239, based on AM 234 fol., respectively, the intertwining of Paul's and Peter's fates is also evident. This manner of telling their stories is indeed hard to avoid, given that their legends depict them suffering martyrdom together in Rome. It is therefore unclear why Unger chose to use his editorial heading only for the version in AM 656 I 4to and not for the others.

Thirdly, the edition of Unger's TVEGGIA POSTOLA SAGA JONS OK JACOBS (pp. 536–711) is based on *Skarðsbók postulasagna*, or rather its copy, AM 636 4to, for the reasons explained above. In this manuscript, the text is introduced after the prologue with the heading "Her hefr upp sögu .ij. postola ok blezaðra bræðra Johannis ok Jacobi" (40v) with a large initial and rubric. Here, at last, we have a medieval attestation of something resembling Unger's editorial headings, although the word order is in reverse, "Saga tveggia postola," and there immediately follows something else of equal importance, "ok blessaðra bræðra" that should not be ignored. All things considered, I find it unlikely that it was this prologue alone that gave Unger grounds for coining these editorial headings. There is certainly a tendency in this very long saga compilation to emphasize the duality of John and James, who were brothers, as seen in the heading "Af brøðrum tveim" (Unger, p. 639; based on AM 651 I 4to, 64v) and in phrases such as "Þessa bæn tveggia bræðra Jacobi ok Johannis skal hann veita" (Unger, p. 553) or "Er hier nu upp maalad ok yfer farid lof og lijferni þessa tveggia bædra guds apostola og hans nainna ættmanna, sem ad voru systrungar

ad skyldsemi vors lausnara, Johannis ewangelista og Jacob hans brodurs, hver ad kallazt Jacob en meiri” (Unger, p. 672; only in AM 236 fol., 42v). However, in every case the numeral *tveggia* qualifies the substantive ‘brothers’ at least as much or more than ‘apostles,’ although indeed they are both. This is significant given that Unger’s term as such is never found in any manuscript sources, as he freely admits. Moreover, the integration of the two sagas only goes so far. In *Skarðsbók postulasagna*, as duly noted in the copy used by Unger, where the narrative of the second bother begins, this is marked by a large initial and rubric, “Her hefz upp Jacobi saga” (Unger, p. 570; AM 636 4to, p. 73).

Finally, Unger’s TVEGGIA POSTOLA SAGA SIMONIS OK JUDE (pp. 779–789) is edited on the basis of the same manuscripts, AM 630 4to, with reference to a fragment of its original, AM 652 4to, and *Skarðsbók postulasagna*. There are supposedly two redactions of this saga, the other being represented by AM 655 XII–XIII 4to. Here for once we have a saga that by design seems to be a combined saga and is therefore justifiably designated by Unger with a single title, although it is not clear why Unger was not happy to refer to it simply with its authentic title as *Saga Simonis ok Jude apostola*. Why did he feel the need to make up an editorial heading that explicitly pointed out that these apostles were ‘two’ in number? Anyone who saw their names in the title could surely count how many they were. In *Skarðsbók postulasagna*, we find the heading “Her byriaz saga Simonis ok Jude” (89rb; AM 628 4to, 55r), one saga about both apostles, who indeed seem to do everything in tandem, while the second recension, in AM 655 XII–XIII 4to begins “Ver holldum idag hatid hinum helgum postolom Simone oc Juda” (Unger, p. 791; AM 655 XII–XIII, 5v), referring to October 28, which is then immediately compared to the aforementioned feast day of Jacobus, whose brothers they were, and Philippus in the spring (May 1).

In conclusion, neither the saga texts edited by Unger nor the manuscripts on which his edition is based provide a convincing explanation for why Unger invented his editorial headings and imposed them on the *postola sögur* with such insistence and uniformity. As we have seen, Unger found these texts in the primary sources as sagas of individual apostles, yet he systematically paired them together, assigning each double saga an editorial heading that differs from any rubric attested in the manuscripts. Furthermore, the

sources offer no rationale for why Unger's editorial headings, besides naming the apostles, emphasize their number, two, which seems both self-evident and without meaning, simply reflecting the editor's own arrangement.

The Infelicity of Unger's Editorial Headings

Icelandic saga titles featuring the names of two heroes are quite common, as seen even among sagas of the apostles, such as *Saga Simonis ok Jude*. However, titles like those invented by Unger – *TVEGGIA POSTOLA SAGA X OK Y*, which both count and name the titular characters – are a complete anomaly among historical titles assigned to Icelandic works. This conclusion is based on surveying titles found in manuscripts and listed alphabetically on the site *handrit.is*. Titles that specify the number of the main characters or heroes of sagas do not also name those characters.

I have found three revealing exceptions, two of which present the characters' names in an explanatory relative clause: *Söguþáttur af þremur bræðrum, er svo hétu Illur, Verri og Vestur* and *Sagan af tveimur öndum Adis og Dahy, sem voru bræður*. The third exception is a humorous title playing on the fact that the three characters, who are father and sons, all share the same very common Icelandic name, *Jón*: *Ævisaga feðganna þriggja síra Jóna í Grundarþingum* and *Sagan af Jónunum þremur*. These titles are late and concern us only indirectly, as examples of what is hardly possible within the convention of assigning titles to Icelandic works. What is relevant here is the structure they share, which may be connected both to the attested titles of *postula sögur* and to Unger's editorial headings.

As in the exceptional titles above, which include both a number and the names of the characters, closely related individuals are more likely to be given a number in Icelandic titles. For instance, Icelandic manuscripts attest to titles with numerals but without names, such as *Fimmbraðrasaga*, *Tveggja elskanda strengleikr*, *Tveggja bræðra elska og tryggð við sitt föðurland*, *Tveggja elskanda ljóð*, *Tveggja feðga ávintýri*, and *Ólínþía og tíu bræður hennar*. Many more examples exist, but these suffice to illustrate the emphasis on familial or romantic bonds, which recalls the brothers and apostles John and James, whose sagas were discussed earlier in relation to Unger's edition. Their being brothers is probably the primary reason for their being referred to as 'two' in medieval sources. This makes sense if we compare

the use of ‘two brothers’ to calling them ‘two fishermen’ – a description that, while also true, is much less significant. If we follow Unger’s example and invent our own titles, *Saga af bræðrum tveim* makes sense, whereas *Saga af tveim(ur) fiskimönnum* – not to mention the unidiomatic *Tveggja fiskimanna saga* – begs the question of “Why two?”

Besides counting characters who are close, the numerals in titles of stories about known collectives often seem integral to the group’s identity, as in *Sjö sofanda saga* (based on Jacobus de Voragine’s *Legenda Aurea*, 3rd century), *Sjö meistara saga* (from *Dolopathos sive De septem sapientibus*, c. 1200), *Heilagra þriggja konunga saga* (translated from Low German, Holm perg 3 fol.), and *Testamenti patriarkanna tólf* (an early modern translation from Latin of *Testamenta patrum*). If this principle applied to the apostles, their number should be twelve, as confirmed in the title of the medieval poem *Tólf postula kvæði* (AM 713 4to, c. 1550), where their names are not included.

So how did Unger arrive at the editorial heading *TVEGGJA POSTOLA SAGA X OK Y*? I suspect that it relates to the naming of apostolic feast days in medieval Iceland and Norway, particularly the well-attested term *Tveggja postola messa* (á vori/um vorið), which referred specifically to May 1, the Feast of Philip and James. This was the most common usage, though occasionally the names of the two apostles were added for clarification, almost as a gloss for those unfamiliar with the term (DI II, 129; the earliest instance I have found is in *Árnastatúta* from 1275). The term “*Tveggja postola messa Simonis ok Jude*” for October 28 appears late, from the end of the fifteenth century, and only in laymen’s letters. For the Feast of Peter and Paul on June 29, the proper term was “*Pétrsmessa ok Páls*,” though rare instances of the hybrid and catachrestic “*Tveggja postola messa Pétrs ok Páls*” exist, always late and in laymen’s letters. “*Tveggja postola messa*” for John and James is never found, as these apostles did not share a feast day.

Thus, Icelanders knew only one “*Tveggja postola messa*,” May 1, as shown by the fact that this feast name was properly used without specifying the apostles involved. This shorthand only made sense because no other feast could properly be referred to in this way. While this was the ideal, idiosyncratic terms may have begun confusing laymen in the late Middle Ages, as they used them to date charters in the absence of a fully developed system for denoting days of the year. Laymen often struggled to master this complex system.

Ultimately, the seemingly arbitrary specification of 'two' apostles in "*Tveggja postola messa*" is probably best understood as a shorthand for the full name, which people were expected to know: "*Philippus messa ok Jacobs postola*." Indeed, if the names Philip and James were given, there was no need to call it feast "*Tveggja postola messa*," nor would it make sense to use the term about other apostles' feasts. For the shorthand to work, it had to refer to one specific feast day.⁹ Nevertheless, the proper usage was not always respected; by the late 1400s a second "*Tveggja postola messa*" is occasionally found, this one for Simon and Jude, on October 28, but this required the addition of a tag, "á haust" or some such.

There is no comparable term to "*Tveggja postola messa*" in Ecclesiastical Latin, nor do any Latin hagiographical titles translate into Icelandic as "*Tveggja postola saga*." It is important to note this because the feast days in question were celebrated by the whole Church of Rome, and the texts of the Icelandic *postola sögur* are almost without exception direct translations from identifiable Medieval Latin hagiographical sources. While Latin accounts of Saints Peter and Paul, usually focusing on their martyrdom, were sometimes combined into a single narrative (as were those of Saints Simon and Jude), such combined texts would typically be

9 The numeral in "*Tveggja postola messa*" may prompt readers to wonder if it carries any specific liturgical significance, perhaps indicating a variation in the structure or complexity of the liturgical office. For example, it could conceivably suggest a more elaborate service compared to "*Eins postola messa*" – though such a term is not attested. In Bishop Auðunn of Hólar's 1318 collection of *máldagar*, particularly in the *máldagi* of "Tiarnar kyrckia," we find the stipulation: "þar skal prestur vera og syngia huorn dag helgan til Grundar. oc fylgia madur til tueggja postula messu. xij. messur j holltt" (DI II, 457). As in other Icelandic sources, the number of apostolic feast days is twelve, and only one of these could properly be described as "*tueggja postula messa*." Therefore, I propose that "*tueggja*" in "*tueggja postula messa*" here is either corrupt or an excentric way of rendering *duplex festum apostoli*, as all twelve apostolic feast days could probably be celebrated as *duplex* feasts. The terminology of *simplex*, *semiduplex*, and *duplex* in medieval Roman liturgy pertains to the structure of both the Divine Office (daily prayers) and the Mass. It aligns with the terms *Missa cum sex lectionibus* (Ice. *Sex lesa messa*) and *Missa cum duodecim lectionibus* (Ice. *Tólf lesa messa*), which refer to the number of scriptural readings, interspersed with responsories and hymns, during the Mass. The simpler *Six Lessons Mass* was typically reserved for minor feast days or weekday observances. By contrast, the more elaborate *Twelve Lessons Mass* was celebrated on major feast days, honoring important saints such as the Apostles, the Virgin Mary, or key moments in the liturgical calendar such as Christmas or Easter. Within this established framework, the apostolic feast days had a designated place, making it difficult to attribute any liturgical significance to a specifically Icelandic term such as "*Tveggja postola messa*."

referred to as *Acta Sanctorum Petri et Pauli* (BHL 6657–6659) or *Passio Sanctorum Simonis et Judæ* (BHL 7749–7751). There would be no reason to state that they were two.

So why transfer the shorthand name for the Feast of Philip and James to the saga of the same apostles? The situation with *postola sögur* titles is categorically different from that of the feast days. The short form for feast days served a practical purpose, structuring the Christian year and offering clear and memorable designations for over one hundred feasts, including twelve for the apostles. Saint Peter and Saint Paul shared three feast days (June 29, February 22, and November 18); Saint Philip and Saint James the Less had their *Tveggja postola messa* (May 1); and Saint Simon and Saint Jude shared theirs on October 28.

Firstly, in a medieval context, a title like “Tveggja postola saga,” were it attested, which it is not, could only be an alternative title for *Jacobs saga ok Philippi*. However, there was no need for such a title, and it is nowhere attested. What is attested, albeit in early modern manuscripts – specifically the same late copy that was bookseller Þorsteinn Jónsson’s source for his 1936 edition of *postola sögur* – is the title *Saga þeirra tveggja postola, Jacobs ens minna og Philippi*. This title clearly references *Tveggja postola messa*, since the saga concerns the same apostles, ‘of those apostles’ (*þeirra tveggja postola*), namely ‘of James the Lesser and Philippus.’ This title makes sense, and its formation is fundamentally different from Unger’s *Tveggja postola saga Jacobs (ens minna) ok Philippi*, which as we have seen breaks the conventions of Icelandic titles and does not make sense.

Finally, we have a possible explanation for why Unger decided upon his editorial headings. Unger may have believed that he was following Icelandic (and probably Norwegian) tradition, even if such a tradition is nowhere attested, that there was not just one “Tveggja postola messa” but many, and that for each of these feast days there must have been a corresponding saga. In the nineteenth century, scholars had a tendency to assign great value to folkloric and late traditions, which were thought to represent medieval or even older customs. The problem with his respect for Icelandic traditions is that Unger misunderstood the semantics of Þorsteinn Jónsson’s title *Saga þeirra tveggja postola, Jacobs ens minna og Philippi* and then compounded his error by generalizing it to create four combined sagas based on his flawed model.

It is almost certain that Unger, when transcribing the *postola sögur* manuscripts in the Copenhagen collections, or possibly from his own photographic representations back in Oslo, relied on collating his manuscripts – especially the fundamental copy in AM 630 4to – with the printed text of the Viðey edition as an aid to reading the text. Using older printed texts for comparison was and still is common practice in preparing philological editions. Nevertheless, the late copy to which Þórður Jónsson had access when preparing the Viðey edition was probably derived from a copy of an existing manuscript, AM 630 4to, and therefore did not have independent value for constituting the text.

Unger's misunderstanding of the 1836 edition influenced his *Postola sögur* edition far beyond the editorial headings. The concept of the four combined sagas of apostles serves as a major organizational principle in his edition, yet this structure makes no sense from the standpoint of modern textual criticism. Þórður Jónsson, with his keen awareness of the language, grasped the semantic implications of the title *Saga þeirra tveggja postola, Jacobs ens minna og Philippi*, which was not his but came from the manuscript he was using as source for the text. Thus, he cannot be held responsible for Unger's error. Unger, lacking Þórður's feeling for the language, even if he was extremely competent in Icelandic for a non-native user, is not really to blame either, except for his overconfidence in understanding Icelandic. The edition was printed in Oslo, and it is unlikely that Unger consulted the Icelandic experts in Copenhagen before publication.

The Reception of Unger's Editorial Headings

Despite Unger's disclosure to his readers that all the capitalized headings in his edition, and by implication those of *Postola sögur* too, are not attested titles in medieval manuscripts, Old Norse scholars appear from the start to have accepted them as authentic, as evidenced by their immediate and widespread use. This state of affairs can primarily be blamed on Kristian Kålund (1844–1919) and his two-volume *Katalog over den Arnemagnæanske håndskriftsamling*, published in Copenhagen from 1889 to 1894.

Unger's term *Tveggja postola saga X ok Y* is of course not found in the handwritten catalogues of Árni Magnússon, his amanuensis Jón Ólafsson (1705–1779), or the aforementioned Jón Sigurðsson, on which Kålund's

catalogue is based. And it does not occur in Volume 1 of Kålund's catalogue. However, in Volume 2, published five years later, we find among the listed contents of AM 628 4to, AM 652 4to, AM 655 XII–XIII 4to, and AM 656 I–II 4to a *Tveggja postula saga Simonis ok Jude*. Similarly, in the contents of AM 632 4to, AM 636 4to, AM 650 a 4to, AM 651 I 4to, and AM 653 a 4to, there is listed a *Tveggja postula saga Jóns ok Jakobs*. Lastly, among the contents of AM 656 I–II 4to, a *Tveggja postula saga Pétrs ok Páls* is found.

Additionally, at the end of Volume 2, page 769, a correction is added regarding the entries for AM 628 4to and AM 667 V 4to that establishes a general rule for *postola sögur* across the catalogue, including Volume 1: *Philippus saga postola* should be read as *Philippus saga ok Jakobs postola tveggja*, a collective title that, on the model of *Postola sögur*, Kålund regrets that he did not use consistently for the two separate titles of *Philippus saga postola* and *Jakobs saga postola* (*Alfei f.*). Clearly, Kålund adopted these four combined titles from Unger's *Postola sögur*, without realizing that they were meant only as editorial headings. Unlike Unger, Kålund applies them without reservation to the contents of all manuscripts preserving *postola sögur*, thus making them seem medieval and fully authentic.

Kålund's approach was subsequently adopted by the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* in Copenhagen (now online at onp.ku.dk), on which work began in 1939, and later by the online manuscript catalogue handrit.is, which was initially based on Kålund's catalogue, and eventually by others. The *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*, a key reference tool for normalized saga titles and manuscript contents, incorporated Unger's four instances of *Tveggja postula saga X ok Y*, likely drawn directly from *Postola sögur*, with the added validation of Kålund's acceptance. Unger's editorial headings were normalized according to the dictionary's standardized medieval spelling, rendering them as *Tveggja postula saga Pétrs ok Páls*, *Tveggja postula saga Jóns ok Jakobs (hins eldra)*, *Tveggja postula saga Filippuss ok Jakobs (hins yngra)*, and *Tveggja postula saga Símons ok Júðass*. Even if presented with medieval spelling, Unger's headings have neither sense nor authenticity.

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SUMMARY

A Note on Unger’s Editorial Heading “Tveggja Postola Saga”

Keywords: Medieval Icelandic translations of *Virtutes Apostolorum*, manuscript rubrics, editorial headings, feast days of saints

In his edition of *Postola sögur* (Christiania 1874), the prolific Norwegian editor of Icelandic sagas Carl Richard Unger (1817–1897) created four similar editorial headings to combine as many pairs of Old Icelandic translations from Latin of the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*: TVEGGIA POSTOLA SAGA PETERS OK PALS, TVEGGIA POSTOLA SAGA JONS OK JACOBS, TVEGGIA POSTOLA SAGA PHILIPPUS OG JACOBS, and TVEGGIA POSTOLA SAGA SIMONIS OK JUDE. In his introduction, Unger notes that all headings printed in capital letters are his own inventions, while italicized headings are attested in the manuscripts on which the edition is based. The four headings mentioned above are consistently printed in capital letters. The author of this article examines the status of these titles in more detail, confirming that, as Unger indicated, these editorial headings are never attested in manuscripts but were invented specifically for this edition, likely based on the analogy of the feast-day name ‘Tveggja postola messa,’ which refers to May 1, honoring the apostles Philippus and Jacobus. The article further argues that the widespread adoption of these titles by modern scholars is likely due to Kristian Kålund, the author of the manuscript catalogue of the Arnamagnæan Collection, who incorporated Unger’s editorial headings without explanation and used them as titles when listing the contents of manuscripts.

ÁGRIP

Athugasemd við fyrirsögnina “Tveggja Postola Saga” í *Postola sögum* Ungers

Efnisorð: postula sögur, Tveggja postola saga, Carl Richard Unger, titlar helgisagna, útgáfusaga, íslensk handrit í Kaupmannahöfn

Í útgáfu sinni á *Postola sögum* (Christiania 1874) setti hinn afkastamikli útgefandi íslenskra fornsagna, Norðmaðurinn Carl Richard Unger (1817–1897), fjórar sams konar fyrirsagnir yfir jafnmörg pör forníslenskra þýðinga úr latínu af *Apókryfum postulasögum*: TVEGGIA POSTOLA SAGA PETERS OK PALS, TVEGGIA POSTOLA SAGA JONS OK JACOBS, TVEGGIA POSTOLA SAGA PHILIPPUS OG JACOBS og TVEGGIA POSTOLA SAGA SIMONIS OK JUDE. Í inngangi sínum segir Unger að allar fyrirsagnir í útgáfunni sem prentaðar séu með hástöfum séu hans eigin tilbúningur en skáletraðar fyrirsagnir og titlar komi úr handritunum sem textar útgáfunnar séu grundvallaðir á. Ofangreindar fyrirsagnir eru allar prentaðar með hástöfum í útgáfunni. Höfundur greinarinnar athugar nánar stöðu slíkra fyrirsagna í útgáfunni og staðfestir að þær koma hvergi fyrir í handritum, eins og Unger bendir á, heldur eru búnar til gagnert fyrir þessa útgáfu og þá líklega með heiti messudagsins „Tveggja postola messa,“ hinn 1. maí, í huga en dagurinn var helgaður Pilippusi og Jacobi postulum. Enn fremur er almenn notkun þessara tilbúnu yfirskrifta Ungers meðal síðari fræðimanna rakin til Kristians Kålund (1844–1919), höfundar handritaskrárinnar *Katalog over den Arnemagnæanske håndskriftsamling*, sem án athugasemda tók upp fyrirsagnir Ungers og notaði þær í lýsingum sínum á innihaldi handrita.

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BEN ALLPORT

THE SOURCES, DATING, AND COMPOSITION OF *ÍSLENDINGABÓK*

1 Introduction

Íslendingabók is the oldest known work of Icelandic vernacular history.¹ Its author, Ari fróði Þorgilsson (1067–1148), traced the first 250 years of Icelandic history from the Norse settlement in the late ninth century, documenting significant societal milestones and demonstrating the maturity of the island polity at the height of its autonomy. Ari wove the history of Iceland and its people into the skein of Christian history by dating Icelandic events with reference to those occurring overseas. Icelandic oral authorities were conscientiously interspersed with information from learned written sources that reveal Iceland’s integration into Europe-wide intellectual networks. This article brings an analysis and contextualization of Ari’s sources to the discussion of *Íslendingabók*’s dating and composition.

Ari’s prologue to the surviving text of *Íslendingabók* suggests that an initial version (henceforth *Ísl1*) had been produced and shown to the two Icelandic bishops, Þorlákr Runólfsson of Skálholt (r. 1118–1133) and Ketill Þorsteinsson of Hólar (r. 1122–1145), as well as to the scholar Sæmundr fróði Sigfússon (d. 1133). With their feedback, Ari produced a second version (henceforth *Ísl2*) “ok jókk því es mér varð síðan kunnara ok nú es gerr sagt á þessi en á þeiri” (and I added that which afterwards became better known to me and is now more fully told in this [version] than in the other; *Íslendingabók*; *Landnámabók* 1968, 3). The wording of this prologue has provoked debate about both the dating and composition stages of *Íslendingabók*. The overlapping tenures of the two bishops provide the most widely accepted dating of 1122–1133, but a reference to the twelve-

1 I am indebted to Dr Synnøve Midtbø Myking and Dr Tom Grant for their support and feedback and to my anonymous peer reviewers for their thoughtful comments and suggestions. All translations are my own.

year tenure of lawspeaker Goðmundr Þorgeirsson (1123–1134) suggests a date of c. 1134 for the text’s completion. Arguments for and against these datings have often hinged on the later history of the text, which is nevertheless obscured by the text’s preservation in only post-medieval manuscripts.

This article instead asks which information could have “become better known” to Ari between the two stages of composition. Ari’s oral and written sources from within and beyond Iceland are divided into sources that were definitely available to Ari before he wrote *Ísli*, sources that probably were, and those that either probably or definitely were not. In cases of uncertainty, it is considered how and to what extent the relevant data support Ari’s fundamental aim of integrating Icelandic events into universal history.

The following analysis suggests that there is little information that could not have been available to Ari before he wrote his first version. The clearest contenders for information that became “better known” to Ari are a list of deaths sourced from Fulcher of Chartres’s *Historia Hierosolymitana* and the aforementioned reference to Goðmundr Þorgeirsson. Based on these identifications, the article proposes that *Íslendingabók* as we have it could not have been finished before 1125 but was more likely completed at some point between the summer Alþing meetings of 1134 and 1135. Given *Íslendingabók*’s status as Iceland’s oldest surviving history, even this modest re-dating has the potential to transform our understanding of the context in which Icelandic vernacular historiography arose. This analysis also illuminates the composition of *Íslendingabók* as a dynamic process and attests to Iceland’s integration into European intellectual networks of the early twelfth century.

2 The Background of *Íslendingabók*

Íslendingabók is a short history of Iceland from its settlement by the Norse in 870 (according to Ari) up until 1118. The text is an “anthropological” myth of origins (Lindow 1997, 454) that narrates key landmarks marking the development of Icelandic society, including the foundation of the Alþing before 930 and the election of its first Icelandic *lögsögumaðr* (lawspeaker) in that year; the conversion in 1000; the careers of the first

native Icelandic bishops, Ísleifr Gizurarson and Gizurr Ísleifsson; and the codification of the Icelandic laws in the winter of 1117–1118. Genealogies of the earliest Icelandic bishops and of Ari himself are appended to the text as we have it.

The text is the only confirmed surviving work in Ari's oeuvre, although a variety of extant texts have been attributed to him by researchers, including a list of high-born Icelandic priests (Stefán Karlsson 2000, 103; Grønlie 2006, xiii), a world history (Stefán Karlsson 2000, 113–17; Sverrir Jakobsson 2017, 82–83), a life of the prominent Icelander Snorri *goði* (d. 1031), and the earliest version of *Landnámabók*, a catalogue of settler narratives and genealogies (Grønlie 2006, xiii). It has also been hypothesized that Ari wrote a history of Norwegian kings (Ellehøj 1965, 34–35; Grønlie 2006, xiii) and a set of annals (Barði Guðmundsson 1936; Sverrir Jakobsson 2017, 93). Ari's reputation as a scholar was already established by the mid-1100s, as the contemporary author of the *First Grammatical Treatise* commented upon his "skynsamligu viti" (sagacious wit; *The First Grammatical Treatise* 1972, 208–9). A century later, he was recognized as the father of Icelandic vernacular history by the saga author Snorri Sturluson (*Heimskringla* 1941, 6). He was widely cited or employed as a source in medieval Icelandic works spanning the genres of local, ecclesiastical, and Norwegian history.

Íslendingabók survives in two manuscripts from the mid-seventeenth century – Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 113 a fol. and Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 113 b fol. – both of which were based on a lost exemplar from around 1200. The title of the work as a whole is given as "Schedæ Ara prests fröda" (leaves of Ari *fróði* the priest), implying that the manuscript may have consisted of loose pages (Grønlie 2006, xiv). If so, it is difficult to say whether the appended genealogies were always part of *Íslz* or were attached at a later point in the manuscript's transmission (Hagnell 1938, 86; Jakob Benediktsson 1968, xvi). Furthermore, other possible appendices, such as the enigmatic *konunga ævi* (biographies of kings) to which Ari alludes in his prologue, may have become detached from the tradition during its transmission – if they were ever included in this version at all (see "Composition Phases" below).

2.1 *Local and Universal History*

Ari's history is regarded as part of a broader twelfth-century effort to assert Icelandic identity and establish Iceland's place within the broader Christian community (Hastrup 1990, 87–88; Lindow 1997, 456, 460, and 462; Hermann 2007, 29; Sverrir Jakobsson 2017, 85). At this time, Iceland was an autonomous island polity that lacked a centralized government, instead being governed by the consensus of a collection of *goðar* (chieftains). The island maintained close cultural and economic ties to the kingdom of Norway and its rulers, a fact reflected in the text's frequent allusions to Norwegian regnal chronology and by the appended genealogies, in which Ari integrates his own family history into the legendary ancestry of the Norwegian kings. Generally speaking, Ari seems happy to acknowledge the influence of Norwegian rulers in Icelandic social development (Sverrir Jakobsson 2017, 95). Nevertheless, the decisive role is usually given to Icelanders, and the chronologies of the lawspeakers and bishops both begin with their first native-born officeholders (Allport, forthcoming). The text therefore maintains a strong sense of Icelandic self-determinism.

The scope of Ari's history ranges from the local and personal to the universal. On the one hand, Ari placed a strong emphasis on the authority of his oral Icelandic informants, many of whom were connected to him personally (Sverrir Jakobsson 2017, 91–94; Grønlie 2006, xiv–xv). These personal connections, along with the information Ari provides about his own life and upbringing, allow us to establish his authorship beyond reasonable doubt.² On the other hand, Ari displays an awareness of contemporary events on the world stage, including references to popes and the

- 2 For a provocative take on Ari's authorship of *Íslendingabók*, see Lukas Rösli (2021, 55, 64–66, and 68–71). Rösli argues convincingly that Ari was constructed as a “catalyst-like ... figure of cultural memory” indelibly linked to Icelandic “scriptogenesis” in medieval and early modern tradition, a fact that modern researchers must bear in mind when considering the extent of Ari's oeuvre. He further argues that an “artefact-related, new philological argumentation about *Íslendingabók* can ... be based only on the [mid-seventeenth-century] manuscripts”; however, this approach and its conclusions seem overly dismissive of the intertextual support for placing the text in a twelfth-century context, which includes not only the clear and detailed description of the text in *Heimskringla* (see “Composition Phases” below), but also stylistic borrowings, derived information, and even large passages cited verbatim in separate traditions with widely varying dates of preservation; see Allport (forthcoming) and “Gerr sagt” below).

deaths of King Baldwin I of Jerusalem and the Byzantine emperor Alexios Komnenos, which appear in a list of death notices (obits) connected to the death of Bishop Gizurr in 1118 (*Íslendingabók*; *Landnámabók* 1968, 25; see “Ari’s Obit List” below).

Such references reveal how Ari benefitted from twelfth-century Iceland’s dynamic intellectual ties to centres of learning in England, France, and Germany, where (as *Íslendingabók* itself tells us) some of Iceland’s most prominent early churchmen were educated. These links are reflected in Ari’s sources, style, and themes (Sveinbjörn Rafnsson 2001, 157), although there is no evidence that Ari himself was educated abroad. Rather, *Íslendingabók* is a testament to the well-rounded clerical education an Icelander of his generation could receive.

The prose of *Íslendingabók* adopts aspects of Latin vocabulary and structure and is stylistically closer to Latin chronicles than the sprawling thirteenth-century sagas for which medieval Iceland is best known (*Íslendingabók*; *Landnámabók* 1968, xxvi; Sverrir Tómasson 1975, 263; Mundal 1994; Stefán Karlsson, 2000, 116). In particular, Ari’s narrative of the early Icelandic bishops recalls the genre of Latin ecclesiastical chronicles known as the *Gesta episcoporum* (Mundal 1994, 64; Gustafsson 2011, 30; Allport, forthcoming), and it is possible that Ari had access to the genre’s most famous representative, Adam of Bremen’s *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae Pontificum* (Mundal 1994; see “Incarnation Dates” below). He may also have been familiar with the works of Bede (Jakob Benediktsson 1968, xxii–xxiv, with references; Stefán Karlsson 2000; see “Incarnation Dates” below).

Ari used the chronological structure of his text to integrate the fledgling Icelandic community into the flow of universal history. His approach employed chronological information drawn from both home and abroad to serve different structural purposes (Allport, forthcoming; Ólafía Einarsdóttir 1964, 13–90). Meticulously credited oral sources flesh out the narrative of Icelandic events, whereas key social developments are anchored to the progression of universal history with Incarnation dates – the *anno domini* (AD) dates that ostensibly mark the passage of years from the birth of Christ – sourced from non-Icelandic literary traditions. The last of Ari’s dates is 1120, two years after the narrative of Icelandic events ends. These anchor points are the core of Ari’s chronological structure,

but in places he also supplemented these Incarnation dates with references to other non-Icelandic events, creating absolute dating clusters of varying sizes.

In addition, Ari incorporated an “ævi allra lögsögumanna” (*Íslendingabók*; *Landnámabók* 1968, 22) – a running tally of the Icelandic lawspeakers. It was the responsibility of the lawspeaker to recite one third of the laws each summer at the annual summer meeting of the Alþing. *Íslendingabók* notes the name of each lawspeaker from Hrafn Hængsson’s appointment in 930 and records the number of summers they spoke the law. This provides an abstracted chronological framework within which Icelandic events unfold, although it is rarely used to date events to a specific year (Allport, forthcoming). Furthermore, the succession extends beyond the final chronological cluster in 1120. Consequently, Ari’s history of Iceland has three endpoints: the conclusion of Icelandic events with the death of Bishop Gizurr in 1118; the chronological conclusion in 1120, and the end of the lawspeaker succession.

The lawspeaker chronology is only explicitly anchored to Ari’s absolute dating framework at its start, “sex tegum vetra” (sixty years; *Íslendingabók*; *Landnámabók* 1968, 9) after the settlement in 870. In a testament to Ari’s mastery of chronological data, the text’s reference to the death of King Haraldr harðráði “þat sumar, es [Kolbeinn Flosasonr] tók lögsögu” (the summer when [Kolbeinn Flosason] took the lawspeak-ership; *Íslendingabók*; *Landnámabók* 1968, 20) is correctly dated to 1066 when the tally of lawspeakers is calculated from its beginning, although the Incarnation date itself is not mentioned anywhere in the text.

3 Dating and Composition

Thanks in large part to the late manuscript tradition, the dating and composition phases of *Íslendingabók* have been debated intermittently for the past three centuries (for an overview up to her own time, see Hagnell 1938, 5–26). In many regards the discussion remains inconclusive. Nevertheless, the dating of 1122–1133 is cited almost ubiquitously in historical and philological research that does not deal directly with the issue. This date range is based on information found in the text’s opening, which runs as follows:

Íslendingabók gørða ek fyrst byskupum órum, Þorláki og Katli, ok sýndak bæði þeim ok Sæmundi presti. En með því at þeim líkaði svá at hafa eða þar viðr auka, þá skrifaða ek þessa of et sama far, fyr útan áttartölu ok konunga ævi, ok jókk því es mér varð síðan kunnara ok nú es gerr sagt á þessi en á þeiri. En hvatki es missagt es í frœðum þessum, þá es skylt at hafa þat heldr, es sannara reynisk. (*Íslendingabók; Landnámabók* 1968, 3)

I first made *Íslendingabók* for our bishops, Þorlákr and Ketill, and I showed it both to them and Sæmundr the Priest. And such as it pleased them to keep or expand upon it, I then wrote this along the same lines, without/alongside genealogies and biographies of kings, and I added that which afterwards became better known to me and is now more fully told in this [version] than in the other. And whatever is misstated in these records, one is obliged to hold to that which is reckoned to be more accurate.

From other sources, such as *Hungrvaka* (a collection of episcopal biographies from c. 1200) and the Icelandic annals (*Islandske Annaler* 1888, 112–13; *Hungrvaka* 1948, 17 and 19), we can gather that Ketill Þorsteinsson was consecrated bishop of Hólar in 1122, and Bishop Þorlákr Runólfsson of Skálholt died in 1133. This provides a straightforward time frame for the interaction named in the passage, and for most researchers this has been sufficient grounds to support the standard dating.

Jakob Benediktsson (1968, xvii; see also Grønlie 2006, xiv) argues further that *Ísl1* was drawn up shortly after 1120, due to its silence on Icelandic events after 1118, such as the death of Bishop Ketill's predecessor Jón Ögmundarson in 1121. This argument overlooks the possibility that Ari had ideological or chronological reasons for stopping the narrative where he did. Given that Ari had ample opportunity to add a reference to Jón's death either before or after he showed *Ísl1* to Jón's successor, we can assume he had no desire to do so.

Ari's prologue admits only that *Ísl1* was shown to the bishops within the 1122–1133 period. He does not claim to have shown *Ísl2* to the bishops nor even that Þorlákr was alive to see it. Björn Sigfússon's suggestion that

the phrase “byskupum órum” (our bishops) implies that both bishops were alive when Ari wrote his prologue is neither decisive nor particularly convincing (Björn Sigfússon 1944, 38; see “Gerr sagt” below). This semantic argument is counterbalanced by Sverrir Tómasson’s observation that the prologue is not addressed directly to its patrons as is typical of contemporary texts, perhaps indicating that one of them was no longer alive (Sverrir Tómasson 1975, 262).

Conversely, the genealogies that accompany *Íslendingabók* do imply that Þorlákr was alive and in office when they were compiled due to their statement that Þorlákr “nú es byskup í Skálaholti” (is currently bishop in Skálholt; *Íslendingabók*; *Landnámabók* 1968, 26). As Ketill is also said to be in office, we can be certain that these genealogies, at least, were composed between 1122 and 1133. However, as Svend Ellehøj (1965, 35) observed, the relationship between the genealogies and *Ísl2* is unclear. If they originally belonged to *Ísl1*, they could easily have been mechanically copied across to *Ísl2* without being updated at some point after 1133. Alternatively, they may never have been part of *Ísl2*, only being attached to the text later in its transmission history (Hagnell 1938, 86; Jakob Benediktsson 1968, xvi).

In opposition to the 1122–1133 dating hypothesis, a handful of researchers – including Björn M. Ólsen (1885, 349), Konrad Maurer (1891, 65), Eva Hagnell (1938, 58–62), Einar Arnórsson (1942, 29–30), Svend Ellehøj (1965, 35; if lukewarmly), Sveinbjörn Rafnsson (2001, 158–59), and most recently Sverrir Jakobsson (2017, 77) – have preferred a dating of 1134 or later. This is based on the fact that Ari’s list of lawspeakers concludes with the twelve-year tenure of Goðmundr Þorgeirsson, who spoke the law for the last time in 1134 according to Ari’s own chronology and subsequent Icelandic annals (Storm 1888, 113). This would therefore establish the summer meeting of the Alþing in 1134 as the *terminus post quem* for the completion of *Íslendingabók* and would furthermore rob the text of its proposed *terminus ante quem* of 1133.

Defenders of the 1122–1133 dating, including Gustav Storm (1873, 13 n. 1), Finnur Jónsson (1923, 366), Björn Sigfússon (1944, 39), Halldór Hermannsson (1948, 17), Jakob Benediktsson (1968, xviii), and Siân Grønlie (2006, xiv), have argued that the reference to Goðmundr must be a later interpolation, perhaps a marginal comment that was incorporated

into the main text during its transmission. The relevant passage runs as follows:

Úlfheðinn Gunnarssonr ens spaka tók lögsoðu eptir Markús ok hafði níu sumur, þá hafði Bergþórr Hrafnssonr sex, en þá hafði Goðmundr Þorgeirssonr tolf sumur. Et fyrsta sumar, er Bergþórr sagði lög upp, vas nýmæli þat gørt, at lög ór skyldi skrifa á bók. (*Íslendingabók; Landnámabók* 1968, 23)

Úlfheðinn son of Gunnar the wise took the lawspeakership after Markús and had it nine years, then Bergþórr Hrafnsson for six, and then Goðmundr Þorgeirsson had it twelve years. The first year Bergþórr spoke the law, a new decree was made that our laws should be written in a book.

Jakob Benediktsson (1968, xviii) argues that Goðmundr's appearance in the passage is incongruous, as the reference to events during Bergþórr's tenure in the following sentence would more smoothly follow on from his appearance in the list. This slight incongruity is hardly enough on its own to conclude that this was a later addition – particularly as Ari is guilty of similar inconsistencies elsewhere in *Íslendingabók* (Einar Arnórsson 1942, 30). Yet some support for the interpolation hypothesis is offered by the absence of Goðmundr from passages in the thirteenth-century texts *Kristni saga* and *Haukdæla þátr* that copy closely from this part of *Íslendingabók* (see “Gerr sagt” below). Nevertheless, Sverrir Jakobsson (2017, 77 n. 2) points out that Goðmundr makes little sense as a later interpolation, given that he was the only lawspeaker added.

We will return to Goðmundr, but it must be reiterated that even without him the wording of the prologue does not offer a *terminus ante quem* for the text as we have it, despite Þorlákkr's death in 1133 regularly being employed as one in academic discourse. From the prologue alone, we can only deduce the timeframe of an interaction that occurred in the middle of the composition process. Due to their use of the present-tense, the genealogies – with all the attendant uncertainties about their relationship to the main text – are the only part of *Íslendingabók* as we have it that can concretely be dated to

1122–1133. They have consequently played a central role in the discussion of *Íslendingabók's* composition phases, to which we now turn.

3.1 Composition Phases

Ari's prologue makes it clear that he worked on *Íslendingabók* in two phases. *Ísl1* was shown to the bishops and Sæmundr and thereafter updated to form *Ísl2*. But did both of these versions circulate after Ari's time, or was *Ísl1* simply a draft that was discarded, having served its purpose? Johan Schreiner (1927, 64) fervently espoused the latter view: "min opfatning ndvendigvis m bli at det aldri har foreligget to 'Íslendingabekr' av Are Frode" (my view must necessarily be that there have never been two "*Íslendingaboks*" by Ari fri). Sverrir Tmasson (1975, 262–68) echoes these sentiments and suggests that Ari's statements must be interpreted within the context of medieval learned conventions of modesty.

Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that neither Schreiner nor Sverrir Tmasson doubt that *Ísl1* did exist in some form, if only as a draft that was later discarded. The observance of literary conventions does not imply that Ari's meeting with the bishops never took place, and doubting him on this matter would throw the veracity of his entire account into question, potentially invalidating *Íslendingabok* as an historical source.

The primary argument that *Ísl1* did circulate is that Snorri Sturluson's prologue to the kings' saga compilation *Heimskringla*, written around a century later, describes a version of *Íslendingabok* that differs slightly from our surviving copy. Could this prologue preserve a trace of *Ísl1*? Snorri states that Ari:

ritai ... mest í upphafi sinnar bokar fr Íslands bygg ok laga-setning, san fr lgsgumnnum, hversu lengi hverr hafi sagt, ok hafi þat aratal fyrst til þess, er kristni kom á Ísland, en san allt til sinna daga. Hann tk þar ok vi mrg nnur demi, bi konunga ævi í Nregi ok Danmrku ok sv á Englandi ea enn strtendi, er grzk hfu hér á landi. ... Hann ritai, sem hann sjlfr segir, ævi Nregskonunga eptir sgu Odds Kolssonar, Hallssonar af Su, en Oddr nam at Þorgeiri afrskoll, þeim manni, er vitr var ok sv gamall, at hann bj þ á Niarnesi, er Hkon jarl inn rki var drepinn. (*Heimskringla* 1941, 5–6)

Wrote mostly in the beginning of his book about Iceland's settlement and the establishment of the laws, then about the lawspeakers – how long each had spoken [the laws] – and related the count of years first up to when Christianity came to Iceland and afterwards all the way up to his own days. He also included many other matters, both biographies of kings in Norway and Denmark and also in England and the great events which had happened here in this land. ... He wrote, as he himself says, biographies of the Norwegian kings based on the account of Oddr, son of Kolr Hallsson of Síða, and which Oddr got from Þorgeirr *afráðskollr*, a man who was wise and so old that he lived in Niðarnes when Jarl Hákon *inn ríki* was killed.

Most of this description clearly aligns with *Íslendingabók* as we have it. However, the references to Oddr Kolsson and Þorgeirr *afráðskollr*'s accounts of the Norwegian kings are lacking from the version we have. Despite this, the citation is strongly reminiscent of Ari's treatment of his oral sources in *Íslendingabók*, on top of which Oddr was Ari's cousin, fitting his tendency to cite family members and acquaintances (Sverrir Jakobsson 2017, 92–94). This and some other references that expand upon information in Ari's text may indicate that Snorri was working from the older version of *Íslendingabók* (Turville-Petre, 1953, 93–94; Jakob Benediktsson 1968, x).

Central to the discussion of the older *Íslendingabók*'s contents is Ari's ambiguous statement that he wrote *Íslz* “fyr útan áttartölu ok konunga ævi” (without/alongside genealogies and the biographies of kings (*Íslendingabók*; *Landnámabók* 1968, 3); Although Johan Schreiner (1927, 65) and Else Mundal (1984), among others, have argued that Ari appended the genealogies and regnal chronology to *Íslz* or else regarded them as independent texts, most researchers interpret “fyr útan” to mean that Ari removed these items from his history following his meeting with the bishops. According to this reading, the genealogies now present in the manuscript must have become re-attached to *Íslz* at a later stage if these indeed are the “áttartölu” Ari described (Hagnell 1938, 86).

If “fyr útan” is read as “without”, Snorri's references to “konunga ævi í Nóregi ok Danmörku ok svá á Englandi” (the biographies of kings in Norway and Denmark and also in England) would seem to indicate

knowledge of *ÍslI*. His wording – “Hann tók þar ... við” ([Ari] included) – implies that the royal biographies were attached in some way to Ari’s book, either as a separate text or as part of the narrative. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the details in Snorri’s prologue that are absent from *Íslendingabók* are largely connected to the Norwegian kings. These include a reference to the relationship between King Óláfr and Hallr Þórarinnsson, who raised Ari from the age of seven (*Heimskringla* 1941, 7). It is at the very least a significant coincidence that Snorri displays knowledge of the same subject matter that Ari singles out in his prologue and that is now absent from *Íslendingabók*, however “fyr útan” is understood. Nevertheless, without further manuscript witnesses to Ari’s work, we cannot say for certain that some or all the additional details found in Snorri’s work were not introduced by intermediate traditions and/or taken from other texts within Ari’s oeuvre.

Although it is probable that *Íslendingabók* had at least two composition phases, it is ultimately impossible to draw concrete conclusions about whether *ÍslI* was circulated independently or was substantially different to the surviving work. The quantity of information somewhat wistfully attributed to *ÍslI* by researchers such as Konrad Maurer (1891) would make it both far longer and wholly different in character (Turville-Petre 1953, 100; Jakob Benediktsson 1968, xii), which is not the sense one gains from Snorri’s synopsis (assuming he was using *ÍslI*). Ari himself does not claim to have cut anything besides (debatably) the “áttartölu ok konunga ævi”. Research that seeks to clarify these matters has often drawn discussion away from the tangible version of *Íslendingabók* that we have and into the realm of speculation. Rather than trying to reconstruct the different versions from later citations of Ari’s work, I take my starting point in the text we have available to us.

4 “Því es mér varð síðan kunnara”

Besides his comments about the bishops and the enigmatic reference to “áttartölu ok konunga ævi”, Ari also writes in his prologue that “jókk því es mér varð síðan kunnara ok nú es gerr sagt á þessi en á þeiri” (I added that which afterwards became better known to me and is now more fully told in this [version] than in the other; *Íslendingabók*; *Landnámabók* 1968,

3). We must therefore turn to Ari's sources and the dates at which they could have become available to him. If clear candidates for information that "became better known" to Ari can be identified, we may reach a firmer conclusion about the date of the text as we have it and gain an insight into the process of composition.

Suggestions for these expansions have been made before. Halldór Hermannsson (1930, 40) felt that the chapter on the conversion might have been expanded, although Jakob Benediktsson (1968, xvii) pointed out that this information is unlikely to have become known to Ari at a later stage, given that his main sources for this section of the text were long dead. Jakob Benediktsson's view has until now been the final word on the topic:

Ekki verður sagt með nokkurri vissu hvað það var sem Ari jók við í yngri gerð Íslendingabókar, og ágizkanir um það efni eru haldlitlar. ... Satt að segja verður við það að kannast að um þetta efni verður aldrei neitt sannað, og ein getgátan er naumast annarri betri. (Jakob Benediktsson 1968, xvii)

It cannot be said with any certainty what it was that Ari added to the younger version of *Íslendingabók*, and the guesswork on that topic is poorly supported. ... In truth, we have to recognize that on this subject nothing will ever be proven, and one guess is hardly better than another.

The analysis offered in this article accepts this challenge, albeit aided in part by a source identified since Jakob Benediktsson produced his edition of *Íslendingabók*: Fulcher of Chartres's *Historia Hierosolymitana*.

For the purposes of analysis, it is practical to break Ari's sources down into two distinct categories: external written sources and local knowledge, the latter primarily comprising oral sources and Ari's own memories – his recollections begin in 1074, when he was seven (*Íslendingabók*; *Landnámabók* 1968, 20). Ari himself introduces us to these two strands of authority in the opening chapter of *Íslendingabók* (Allport 2021, 61; Rösli 2021, 67), in which he employs both to produce the date of Iceland's settlement in 870:

Ísland byggðisk fyrst ýr Norvegi á dögum Haralds ens hárfagra, Hálfðanarsonar ens svarta, í þann tíð – *at ætlun ok tölun þeira Teits fósttra míns, þess manns es ek kunna spakastan, sonar Ísleifs byskups, ok Þorkels fjoðurbróður míns Gellissonar, es langt mundi fram, ok Þóriðar Snorradóttur goða, es bæði vas margspök ok óljúgfróð*, – es Ívarr Ragnarssonr loðbrókar lét drepa Eadmund enn helga Englakonung; en þat vas sjau tegum ens níunda hundraðs eptir burð Krists, *at því es ritit es í sögu hans*. (*Íslendingabók; Landnámabók* 1968, 4)

Iceland was first settled from Norway in the days of Haraldr Fairhair, son of Hálfðan the Black, at that time – *according to the estimate and count of Teitr, son of Bishop Ísleifr, my foster father, the man I know to be wisest; and of Þorkell Gellisson, my paternal uncle, who remembered a long way back; and of Þóriðr, daughter of Snorri goði, who was both very wise and well-informed* – when Ívarr, son of Ragnarr loðbrók, had St Edmund, king of the English, killed; and that was 870 winters after the birth of Christ, *according to what is written in his saga*. (emphasis mine)

As this passage indicates, Ari was diligent in establishing the authority of his oral sources, giving character references and tracing chains of informants back to the periods in question. Nevertheless, Ari did not identify all his local sources, as some passages dealing with Icelandic events have no attribution. In particular, Ari includes a great deal of genealogical material without commenting on his sources. As Ari is credited with authorship of the earliest version of *Landnámabók* (Grønlie 2006, xiii), it is possible that he had compiled these genealogies personally from family traditions too numerous to mention.

Íslendingabók repeatedly demonstrates knowledge of the regnal chronology of Norwegian kings. Ari's reference to *konunga ævi* (biographies of kings) implies that he himself had compiled a comprehensive account of the Norwegian royal succession, although the level of biographical detail this text offered is heavily debated (Hagnell 1938, 130–36; Ellehøj 1965, 48–53; Mundal 1984). This information is also likely to derive from oral sources, such as the account of Oddr Kolsson to which Snorri Sturluson alludes in his prologue.

Ari does not acknowledge any written sources beyond the “saga” of St Edmund mentioned in the paragraph above, although he had clearly obtained Incarnation (*anno domini*) dates, information about reigning popes, and a series of Christendom-wide death notices (obits) from written traditions. The identification of his non-local sources is therefore more speculative. However, as the following overview shows, the written sources that have most often been proposed were, with one notable exception, composed decades before *Íslendingabók* and in theory had ample time to make their way across the North Atlantic to become available to the Icelandic scholar.

Strong intellectual ties to European centres of learning were rapidly developed after Iceland’s conversion at the beginning of the eleventh century. A succession of foreign (mostly English, Norman, and German) bishops, whom Ari lists perfunctorily in *Íslendingabók* (*Íslendingabók; Landnámabók* 1968, 18), were followed by native churchmen who travelled overseas for education and consecration. There were thus many opportunities for books to be transported to Iceland, and the import of books is likely to have played a key role in the development of Iceland’s Christian establishment. Although certainty is impossible, we can weigh the balance of probabilities and locate Ari’s literary sources within this learned context. We must also consider their literary and structural functions within *Íslendingabók* itself to gain a sense of their importance to the narrative.

4.1 Incarnation Dates

Íslendingabók names four Incarnation dates. Each is associated with a specific piece of non-Icelandic information that becomes an intermediary between the Incarnation date and an Icelandic event (see Allport, forthcoming). In order of appearance, they are 870, the death of St Edmund of East Anglia; 1000, the death of Óláfr Tryggvason; 604, the death of Pope Gregory the Great (in the second year of Emperor Phocas’s reign); and 1120, which is noted to be “aldamót” (the confluence of two ages – i.e. lunar cycles). The nineteen-year lunar cycle was of key importance for determining the date of Easter (a complex mathematical process known as *computus*) in Roman Catholic tradition. Together, these dates comprise Ari’s absolute chronological framework, his primary means of connecting Icelandic events into the progression of world history. The settlement of

Iceland is dated to the year of St Edmund's martyrdom and the conversion to the year that Óláfr fell in battle, whereas 604 and 1120 appear in the chronological conclusion of the text.

The martyrdom of St Edmund of East Anglia in 870 is the only piece of information in *Íslendingabók* for which Ari cites a written source – a mysterious “saga”.³ As I have previously argued in *Gripla* (Allport 2021; see also Skårup 1979, 19 and Grønlie 2006, 16 n. 12), the tradition referred to was most likely a composite of Abbo of Fleury's *Passio Sancti Eadmundi* and Hermannus the Archdeacon's *De miraculis Sancti Eadmundi*, the latter of which was known to Icelandic saga authors in the thirteenth-century. These texts are found bound together in a manuscript of c. 1100 (London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B. ii) – only a few years after Hermannus completed his work – and it is likely that the pairing reflects Hermannus's intent in composing *De miraculis* (Allport 2021, 66). There is therefore a generous timeframe of over twenty years for the knowledge of the tradition to have made its way to Iceland in order to be in *Ísl1*.

Ari derived the knowledge that Iceland was settled in the year of Edmund's martyrdom from his foster father Teitr Ísleifsson, who died in 1110 (*Íslandske Annaler* 1888, 111) – long before *Ísl1* was completed. We can therefore be confident that the martyrdom itself – date or no date – was already mentioned in *Ísl1*. What is more, the date of the martyrdom is altogether too integral to Ari's framing of Icelandic history as we have it to be a late addition. Snorri observes that Ari “hafði þat áratál fyrst til þess, er kristni kom á Ísland, en síðan allt til sinna daga” (related the count of years first up to when Christianity came to Iceland and afterwards all the way up to his own days; *Heimskringla* 1941, 5). Sure enough, Ari calculates the number of years since Edmund's death (*Íslendingabók*; *Landnámabók* 1968, 18 and 25) at both the conversion in 1000 and the conclusion of the text in 1120. If Snorri used *Ísl1*, then this would seem to confirm that the date of the martyrdom was always present. Regardless of whether Snorri used *Ísl1* or *Ísl2*, both the start of the lawspeaker succession in 930 and the chronological conclusion in the text we have – respectively 60 and 250 years after Edmund's death – seem dependent upon this dating being present from the start. Without it, *Íslendingabók*'s chronological structure unravels.

3 By modern reckoning, Edmund died in November 869. Medieval English and Icelandic sources placed the New Year in September (Ólafía Einarsdóttir 1964, 107–26).

Ari's date of 1000 for the fall of Óláfr Tryggvason has most often been attributed to Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, which was completed by 1076 (Schmeidler 1917, lxvi; Ólafía Einarsdóttir 1964, 22–23; Ellehøj 1965, 78; Mundal 1994). This is based on Adam's statement that “interea millesimus ab incarnatione Domini annus feliciter impletus est” (meanwhile, the thousandth year since the Lord's Incarnation was happily concluded; Adam Bremensis 1917, 101) some lines after a reference to Óláfr's death.

Jakob Benediktsson points out (1968, xxiii–xxv) that it is not clear that Adam used this passage to date Óláfr's death, although Ari might still have interpreted it in this way. Nevertheless, Jakob Benediktsson's claim that Ari attributed the date to Sæmundr fróði is incorrect. Ari only credits Sæmundr for the knowledge that Óláfr died in the year that Iceland was converted, just as he credits Teitr Ísleifsson for saying that Iceland was settled in the year St Edmund died but attributes the date 870 to the saint's “saga”.

Despite Jakob Benediktsson's objections, it is likely that Adam's work formed a stylistic model for *Íslendingabók*. Else Mundal (1994, 66–69) draws attention to repeated thematic parallels between the two. *Íslendingabók* has a strong affinity with the *gesta episcoporum* (deeds of the bishops), the genre of ecclesiastical history to which the *Gesta Hammaburgensis* belongs (Mundal 1994, 64; Allport, forthcoming).⁴ Both the *Gesta* and *Íslendingabók* consistently provide a cluster of information at the death of each bishop, such as the length of their tenure, their age at consecration and death, and their place of burial.

There is no concrete evidence that the *Gesta Hammaburgensis* was known in Iceland before the fourteenth century, but Iceland was part of the church province of the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen up until 1103, when it was incorporated into the newly formed archbishopric of Lund (Grønlie 2006, xxii). Adam of Bremen himself notes that Ísleifr Gizurarson, the first Icelandic bishop, was consecrated by Archbishop Adalbert of Hamburg-Bremen. Although Ari remains silent on the matter, *Hungrvaka* confirms Adam's narrative. It is reasonable to speculate, as Mundal (1994, 66) does, that the *Gesta* would have made its way to Iceland

4 Jonas Wellendorf (2011, 125–27) has also suggested that *Hungrvaka*, which more clearly conforms to the genre of *gesta episcoporum*, was influenced by the *Gesta Hammaburgensis*.

when the latter was still part of the church province of Hamburg-Bremen – in other words, between 1076 and 1103.

The narrative role played by Óláfr's death in 1000 is comparable to that of Edmund in 870. The death, along with Iceland's conversion to Christianity, represents the structural and chronological centrepiece of Ari's historical narrative, taking on typological significance as Iceland's "coming of Christ" moment (Hermann 2007, 22–28; 2010, 149–51). The absence of an Incarnation date at this point in *Ísl1*, where it would make most sense to ground Icelandic events in the absolute progression of universal history, is difficult to reconcile with the interest in chronology Ari demonstrates in the final version of *Íslendingabók*.

It is even possible that the narrative of conversion was constructed around this date. Harald Gustafsson (2011, 25–33) notes that *Íslendingabók* is the earliest source to place the conversion at the turn of the millennium and argues that Ari's account must be regarded critically due to its late date. Adam of Bremen's reference to Ísleifr's consecration is the earliest near-contemporary corroboration of the Icelanders' conversion (Gustafsson 2011, 29). If we accept Gustafsson's argumentation and allow the possibility that Ari and his contemporaries were responsible for crafting an idealized narrative that placed Iceland's conversion moment in 1000, then we can suppose that the date must have been of central importance from the outset.

The date of Gregory the Great's death in 604 most likely derives from the writings of the Venerable Bede (d. 735), with Ellehøj considering the reference to Phocas to be particularly diagnostic (Ellehøj 1965, 76–77; Stefán Karlsson 2000; but see Louis-Jensen 1976 for an alternative view). The influence (direct or indirect) of Bede's approach to chronology is evident in Ari's use of *anno domini* dates, a system pioneered by Dionysus Exiguus (d. c. 544) but popularized by Bede and not yet ubiquitous by Ari's time (Jakob Benediktsson 1968, xxix). The Icelander also shared Bede's interest in time reckoning (as seen in *De temporum ratione*, Bede's treatise on *computus*), devoting the fourth chapter of *Íslendingabók* to the Icelandic reckoning of the year's length. Bede's influence on *Íslendingabók* is so fundamental that it is likely Ari had access to his works when he wrote *Ísl1*.

Ari cites his final Incarnation date, 1120, as the confluence of two lunar

cycles (the boundary falling between 1120 and 1121), although the date is presented as Ari's own calculation based on the intervals from each of the preceding Incarnation dates. The year was most likely derived from an Easter table, a commonplace liturgical aid that stated the date of Easter in each year based on the nineteen-year lunar cycle. Easter tables are likely to have been transported to Iceland by any number of early churchmen. It is therefore uncontroversial to suggest that Ari's familiarity with lunar cycles was derived from an Easter table at some point prior to his completion of *ÍslI*. An Icelandic Easter table is preserved in Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 732 a VII 4to, and begins with the new cycle in 1121, consequently being dated to some point during that cycle (1121–1139). This makes it possible that this very table was Ari's source (Stefán Karlsson 2000, 103).

Sveinbjörn Rafnsson (2001, 148–60) argues that 1120 was not the original conclusion to *ÍslI*, but that Ari excised material relating to the years 1119–1121 (including the death of Jón Ögmundarson) in response to changing political circumstances. He posits that the shared presence of material relating to these years in *Hungrvaka* and *Kristni saga* reveals their use of *ÍslI*, although an expanded version of *Ísl2* or some other intermediary is equally possible.

Given the fundamental role the Incarnation date places in the chronological structure of the text, it is unlikely that *ÍslI*'s narrative of Icelandic events extended beyond 1120. The advantages of using round numbers when making calculations in Roman numerals (Ólafía Einarsdóttir 1964, 44–50), the aesthetically pleasing intervals since the deaths of St Edmund and Óláfr (250 and 120 years, respectively), and the convenient end of the lunar cycle all make the case for this being the original chronological conclusion to Ari's text. The narrative conclusion in 1118 with the codification of the Icelandic laws and the death of Gizurr, who was the first bishop of the new diocese of Skálholt and had introduced tithing, are in keeping with Ari's focus on societal landmarks and make a fitting end to his history.

Furthermore, 1121 was a somewhat tense year in which the escalating feud of two chieftains, Hafliði Másson and Þorgils Oddason, resulted in a confrontation of over two thousand men at the Alþing before a settlement was ultimately reached (*Kristni saga* 2003, 46). Ellehøj (1965, 82) speculated that this event directly inspired the writing of *Íslendingabók* (see also

Lindow 1997, 460; Hjalti Hugason 2000, 107; and Sveinbjörn Rafnsson 2001, 156–57). Although this interpretation finds no support in the text itself, Ellehøj is certainly right that it suited Ari's vision of Iceland as a mature and unified polity to end his history before these events took place.

None of the proposed sources for Ari's Incarnation dates can be proven to have been in Iceland before he wrote *ÍslI*. Yet despite their diverse origins, these dates support one another within the structure of the history, making the absence of any one of them hard to reconcile. Taken together, they represent the thematic opening, midpoint, and culmination of the history, distilling a broader Christian typology that is typical of medieval "national" histories (Hermann 2007, 22–28; 2010, 149–51). If *ÍslI* did not include these dates, then it must have been an altogether different work. If they were absent, we must also account for the improbable coincidence that Ari would stumble upon a set of dates for events already in his text that so perfectly complemented his existing framework for Icelandic history.

4.2 Ari's Obit List and Fulcher of Chartres

Íslendingabók's announcement of Bishop Gizurr Ísleifsson's death in 1118 is accompanied by a list of notable deaths (obits) from throughout Christendom:

Á því ári enu sama obiit Pascalus secundus páfi fyrr enn Gizurr byskup ok Baldvini Jórsalakonungr ok Arnaldus patriarcha í Hierúsalem ok Philippus Sviakonungr, en síðarr et sama sumar Alexíus Grikkjakonungr; þá hafði hann átta vetr ens fjórða tegar setit at stóli í Miklagarði. (*Íslendingabók; Landnámabók* 1968, 25)

In that same year Pope Paschal II died before Bishop Gizurr, as did Baldwin, king of Jerusalem, and Arnaldus, Patriarch of Jerusalem, and Philip, king of the Swedes, and later the same summer Alexios, king of the Greeks; he had then sat on the throne in Miklagarðr for thirty-eight years.

Poul Skårup (1979, 21) suggested that Ari's source for these strikingly eastern-centric deaths was the *Historia Hierosolymitana*, also known as

the *Gesta Francorum Iherusalem peregrinantium*, an account of the First Crusade written in the Holy Land by the Frankish priest Fulcher of Chartres in the early decades of the twelfth century. Four of these names appear in the same order in a passage in the *Historia*, in which the observation of a mysterious celestial phenomenon in December of 1117 is interpreted as a harbinger of death:

Subsequenter enim mortui sunt: Paschalis papa mense Ianuario, Balduinus, rex Hierosolymorum, mense Aprili, necnon uxor eius in Sicilia, quam dereliquerat. Hierosolymis etiam patriarcha Arnulfus, imperator quoque Constantinopolitanus Alexis et alii quamplures proceres in mundo. (Fulcheri Carnotensis 1913, 608)

For subsequently these died: Pope Paschal in January; Baldwin, king of the people of Jerusalem, in April; and also his wife in Sicily, whom he had forsaken. Also in Jerusalem, the patriarch Arnulf; also the emperor of Constantinople, Alexios, and several other nobles throughout the world.

The date of 1118 follows shortly afterwards. If this was Ari's source, he would thus have known that this was the same year that Gizurr died, although he chose not to incorporate the Incarnation date itself.

Fulcher of Chartres began his history of the First Crusade in around 1101 and updated it intermittently until 1127 (Fulcher of Chartres 1973, 19–24). Like his contemporary Ari, Fulcher became well known as an historian within his own lifetime, with references to the scholar appearing in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum Anglorum* and the *Historia ecclesiastica* of Orderic Vitalis, among other texts (Fulcher of Chartres 1973, 5–6) – although none of these sources reproduced the list of obits for 1118.

Indeed, a thorough search of contemporary European chronicles has failed to reveal any other tradition that names each of Paschal, Baldwin, Arnulf, and Alexios together. Europe-centric chronicles such as Orderic's *Historia* (*The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis* 1978, 132–33 and 184–89), usually mention Paschal but combine his obit with others about which Ari is silent, such as Queen Matilda of England, Count William of Evreux, and Count Robert of Meulan. References to the deaths of

Baldwin and Alexios can sometimes be found elsewhere in these texts but without the Incarnation date. Crusader chronicles, such as Albert of Aachen's *Historia Hierosolymitanae expeditionis* (Albert of Aachen 2007, 868–75), note Baldwin and Arnulf's deaths (often without an Incarnation date) but do not mention Paschal or Alexios.

Nevertheless, there are several incongruences between *Íslendingabók* and the *Historia*. Ari introduces the obscure figure of “Philippus Svíakonungr” (Philip, king of the Swedes), for example. Nothing besides his inclusion in this passage supports Ólafía Einarsdóttir and Poul Skårup's suggestion that he died in the Holy Land (Ólafía Einarsdóttir 1964, 35; Skårup 1979, 20). The next sources to refer to Philip are Swedish king-lists from the thirteenth century (Skårup 1979, 20). It is possible his appearance reflects an interpolation in Ari's exemplar, but it is perhaps more likely – given the Icelandic interest in Scandinavian regnal chronologies – that Ari learned of his death from an oral report. Philip, at least, might already have been connected to Gizurr's death in *Ísl.*

Ari correctly notes that Arnulf died before Gizurr's death on 28 May, whereas Alexios died “siðar et sama sumar” (later the same summer; Jakob Benediktsson 1968, 25), but there is nothing in the *Historia*'s text to indicate when either of these individuals died, nor the length of Alexios's reign. Additionally, Ari uses the Latin word “obiit” (died) in his passage, whereas Fulcher says “mortui sunt” (are dead). Given Ari's use of Latinisms elsewhere, this could simply reflect his use of a verb more appropriate to his passage, rather than deriving from his source. Considering the otherwise unparalleled correspondence between the passages in Ari and Fulcher's texts, these additional details most likely indicate that Ari had access to an annotated version of the *Historia* or an expanded and/or reformatted intermediary that has not survived.

Neither Skårup nor those who have cited his arguments have fully explored the implications his identification has for the dating of *Íslendingabók*: namely, that Ari could not possibly have had access to this source, or any derivative of it, before 1125 at the absolute earliest. Surviving manuscript witnesses indicate that the earliest circulated recension of the *Historia* to contain the 1118 obits concluded with the capture of Tyre in 1124 by Venetian crusaders, an event which Fulcher dates to 7 July (Fulcher of Chartres 1973, 23 and 47; Skårup 1979, 21). In other words, no version

of the *Historia* containing the 1118 obits is known to have circulated prior to the summer of 1124.

We must then allow time for this information to make its way to Iceland. To pinpoint the most generous *terminus post quem* for Ari's use of this material, we must consider the (highly unlikely) scenario that Fulcher's text was transported directly to Iceland following its completion shortly after the fall of Tyre. The best indication of the length of the journey from Jerusalem to Iceland is given by the text *Leiðarvísir*. Composed in the thirteenth century in the form we know it, this itinerary purports to narrate the pilgrimage of a twelfth-century Icelandic abbot called Nikulás (Marani 2012, 42–47). By *Leiðarvísir*'s reckoning, a journey beginning in Jerusalem in mid-July could not have reached the shores of the North Atlantic before, at the earliest, the end of October (*Alfræði íslenzk* 1908, 12–13 and 23).⁵ By this point, the autumn seas would be too rough for the voyage to Iceland to be made. As the thirteenth-century Norwegian treatise *Konungs skuggsjá* puts it: “varla se siðarR til hættende yfir hof at fara en íþænn tima er inn gengr andværðr octobæR” (one should not venture to cross the seas any later than the start of the season beginning in October; *Konungs skuggsjá* 1983, 36). According to the same text, the seas would not be sufficiently calm for ocean voyages before the beginning of April (*Konungs skuggsjá* 1983, 37).

We must therefore regard April 1125 as the earliest date by which Ari could have had access to the list of obits. In all likelihood, it would have come to Iceland much later, allowing time for the additional information in *Íslendingabók* to have been incorporated into the tradition. It is also possible that Ari's information derived ultimately from Fulcher's final recension from the summer of 1127 (Fulcher of Chartres 1973, 18 and 24). In that case, it is unlikely that he would have had access to it before 1128, if not later.

5 Abbot Nikulás's journey from the banks of the Jordan to Aalborg in Jutland took exactly fifteen weeks. His outward journey indicates that the voyage would continue on to western Norway before crossing to Iceland. This is consistent with the voyage to Iceland described in *Landnámabók* (*Íslendingabók*; *Landnámabók* 1968, 32–33). Scholium 155 in Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis* (Adam Bremensis 1917, 272) also notes that it takes thirty days to sail to Iceland from Aalborg, which if accurate would mean that a journey from Jerusalem to Iceland would, at the best of times, take approximately four-and-a-half months.

Could this, then, be information that “varð síðan kunnara” (became better known afterwards) to Ari? Of all Ari’s written sources, it seems the best candidate. Unlike the deaths of St Edmund and Óláfr Tryggvason, these obits are less integral to the structure of the history. Nevertheless, they suited Ari’s approach to chronology as they allowed him to link the death of Gizurr to those of secular and spiritual leaders from throughout Christendom, as well as linking Icelandic history to the medieval Christian world’s spiritual centres, Rome and the Holy Land (Allport, forthcoming). It is therefore unsurprising that he would choose to incorporate these notices if he encountered them at some point after the completion of *Ísl1*. If it is thought more likely that the information was already present in *Ísl1*, we must acknowledge 1125 as a generous *terminus post quem* for the completion of Ari’s first version, accepting that a later date is more likely.

Whether or not 1125 should be regarded as the *terminus post quem* for the surviving version of *Íslendingabók* hinges on whether the presence of Goðmundr Þorgeirsson in Ari’s list of lawspeakers is viewed as an interpolation. We must therefore turn to Ari’s sources of local knowledge.

4.3 Ari’s Local Knowledge

Whereas the arrival of external written sources is the subject of speculation, when it comes to Ari’s local sources, we are on firmer ground. Ari names ten direct oral authorities throughout his history: Teitr Ísleifsson (d. 1110), Þorkell Gellisson (fl. late eleventh century), Þóriðr Snorradóttir (d. 1113), Hallr Órækjason (fl. unknown), Úlfheðinn Gunnarsson (d. 1116×1118), Sæmundr *fróði* Sigfússon (d. 1133), Hallr Þórarinsson from Haukadalsr (d. 1089), Gizurr Ísleifsson (d. 1118), and Markús Skeggjason (d. 1107).⁶ In addition, Snorri Sturluson credits Oddr Kolsson (fl. late eleventh century) as Ari’s source for the Norwegian regnal chronology. All but two of these individuals are known or likely to have been dead by the end of 1118, the exceptions being Sæmundr *fróði*, who died in 1133, and Hallr Órækjason, about whom little is known. This suggests that Ari had begun the process of assembling material for a history of Iceland long before the work was shown to the bishops.

6 The death dates of Þóriðr, Sæmundr, and Hallr are sourced from the various Icelandic annals (*Íslandske Annaler* 1888, 19–20 and 110). *Hungrvaka* tells us that Úlfheðinn Gunnarson died before Bishop Gizurr (*Hungrvaka* 1948, 15), and the death of Markús Skeggjason is noted in *Kristni saga* (2006, 53).

Most of the knowledge these sources imparted related to events of the distant past, and in particular the ninth and tenth centuries: the settlement; the foundation of the Alþing; the conversion; and so forth. Sæmundr *fróði* told Ari that Óláfr Tryggvason fell in the same year that Christianity was accepted at the Alþing. As Ari lists Sæmundr as one of the people to whom he showed *ÍslI* (along with the bishops), Schreiner (1927, 65) suggested that Sæmundr informed him of the connection at that point. Ellehøj (1965, 33) disputes this, however, as there is no reason to suppose that Sæmundr could not have imparted this knowledge to Ari earlier.

Hallr Órækjason told Ari about the history of the land chosen for the site of the Alþing before 930 – a key detail, as the confiscation of the land from its murderous owner Þórir *kroppinskeggi* made it a neutral site suited for the purpose of a general assembly. Although it is not inconceivable that Ari only spoke to Hallr after *ÍslI* was complete, his account is integral to the story of how the Alþing came to be located at Þingvellir and is therefore likely to have been present from the start.

The amount of information attributed to oral sources diminishes as the narrative approaches its conclusion and Ari's own recollections take over. Consequently, the only local information that certainly could not have been known to Ari beforehand relates to events that had not yet come to pass when he wrote *ÍslI*. Only one piece of information meets this criterion, and that is the lawspeaker tenure of Goðmundr Þorgeirsson from 1123–1134. In fact, given the uncertainties that surround Ari's written sources, this is the only piece of information in the text, Icelandic or otherwise, that we definitively know could not have been in *ÍslI*. We must therefore consider the role played by Goðmundr's presence in the text and interrogate the suggestion that it is a later interpolation.

4.4 “Gerr sagt á þessi en á þeirri”

As Einar Arnórsson (1942, 30) noted, even without Goðmundr the lawspeaker chronology extends beyond Ari's narrative of Icelandic events, ending with Bergþórr Rafnsson in 1122. As this tenure ended the same summer that Bishop Ketill assumed office, i.e. at the *terminus post quem* for Ari's completion of *ÍslI*, we can be confident that Bergþórr was already mentioned in *ÍslI*, and indeed he is present in the subsequent reuses of this passage in *Kristni saga* and *Haukdæla þáttr* where Goðmundr is absent. By

the same token, we must acknowledge that Goðmundr was most likely in office when Ari presented *Ísl1* to the bishops, unless this happened before the summer of 1123, when he spoke the law for the first time.

The lawspeaker succession was an integral part of Ari's approach to chronology, as Snorri notes in his prologue: "hann ritaði ... frá lögsgu-mönnum, hversu lengi hverr hafði sagt" (he wrote...about the lawspeakers, how long each had spoken [the laws]; *Heimskringla* 1941, 5–6). The succession provides a linear timescale that acts as the chronological background for Icelandic events. I argue elsewhere that this chronology was largely abstracted from the events themselves, instead creating a framework, an Icelandic "time zone" in which they could unfold (Allport, forthcoming). It is for this reason that Bergþórr Hrafnsson's tenure could extend beyond Ari's framework of narrative events and his carefully calculated chronological conclusion. It would therefore be entirely in keeping with Ari's chronological structure to update the succession with new information if it had become available. In doing so, the chronology would become "gerr sagt á þessi en á þeirri" (more fully told in this [version] than the other; *Íslendingabók*; *Landnámabók* 1968, 3).

Extending the same logic, Ari might even have mentioned Goðmundr in *Ísl1*, albeit without yet being able to include his full tenure. Furthermore, the fact that no reference is made to the following lawspeaker, Hrafn Úlfheðinsson – who first spoke the law in 1135, according to the Icelandic *Konungsannáll* (1888, 113) – suggests that *Ísl2* was completed before he had first performed his duties. There are therefore reasonable grounds to argue for the summer meeting of the Alþing in 1135 as the *terminus ante quem* for *Íslendingabók* as we have it.

Alternatively, as Eva Hagnell (1938, 62) believed, Ari may have preferred only to refer to completed tenures. In that case, Goðmundr would only have appeared in *Ísl2*, and the *terminus ante quem* would be the Alþing meeting of 1138, when Hrafn Úlfheðinsson last spoke the law. This is pure speculation, however; Ari's silence on Bishop Jón Ögmundarson's death in 1121 suggests that he had no issue with leaving tenures open-ended when it suited his chronological principles.

If Goðmundr were not added by Ari, we must wonder, as Sverrir Jakobsson does, why he was apparently the only lawspeaker to be inserted by a later scribe. Two lawspeakers after Goðmundr (Hrafn Úlfheðinsson,

1135–1138, and Finnur Hallsson, 1139–1145) had completed terms of office by the time Ari died in 1148 (*Íslandske Annaler* 1888, 113–14). By the time the manuscript from which our version of *Íslendingabók* derives was completed in c. 1200, a further four lawspeakers had held office (Gunnar Úlfheðinsson, 1146–1155; Snorri Húnbogason, 1156–1170; Styrkár Oddason, 1171–1180; and Gizurr Hallsson, 1181–1200 (*Íslandske Annaler* 1888, 114–15, 117–118, and 121)). The most obvious reason for only one lawspeaker to be added to *Íslendingabók* is that only one lawspeaker had held office since the work had been shown to the bishops. The person most likely to have added this lawspeaker so soon after that meeting is Ari himself. If we do not think Ari was responsible for the addition, then it must have been inserted in one of the earliest copies of his text, while he was still very much alive.

Yet how are we to explain the absence of Goðmundr from dependent passages in *Kristni saga* and *Haukdæla þáttur*? If one subscribes to the belief that *Ísl1* circulated independently, the answer is straightforward. Sveinbjörn Rafnsson (2001, 153–54) is among those who argue that both *Kristni saga* and *Haukdæla þáttur* used this older version (although see “Conclusions” below).

Yet even if these sagas follow *Ísl2*, Goðmundr’s absence in the dependent passages is not as decisive as it might first appear (Hagnell 1938, 59–61). Their authors did not share Ari’s aim of creating a history of Icelandic social development up to their own time nor did they use the lawspeaker succession as a chronological backbone, as Ari did. In both cases, the primary motivation for borrowing the passage in question is to use the first year of Bergþórr Hrafnsson’s tenure to date events beginning in 1117. Consequently, the inclusion of Goðmundr’s tenure, beginning in 1123, was extraneous to their purposes.

Kristni saga paraphrases the entire section and even omits any reference to the length of Bergþórr Hrafnsson’s tenure, as this was irrelevant to the purpose of dating the codification of the laws:

Þá er Gizurr byskup hafði tuttugu ok fim vetr verit byskup, þá tók Úlfheðinn Gunnarsson lögsoðu, en Markús var þá andaðr. <Þá tók lögsoðu Bergþórr Hrafnsson.> Ok it fyrsta sumar er hann sagði lög opp var nýmæli þat gjört at um vetrinn eptir skyldi rita lögín. (*Kristni saga* 2003, 41–42)

Then when Bishop Gizurr had been bishop for twenty-five years, Úlfheðinn Gunnarsson took the lawspeakership, and Markús was then dead. Then Bergþórr Hrafnsson took the lawspeakership. And the first summer he spoke the law, a new decree was made that in the following winter the laws should be written.

This passage displays none of Ari's careful chronological instincts and is essentially redundant as an absolute means of dating the events described. We are not told how long Úlfheðinn Gunnarsson spoke the law and are thus given no way of relating Bergþórr's accession, and therefore the writing of the laws, to the year of Gizurr's tenure (although this can be deduced from subsequent passages).

Although *Haukdæla þáttur* more closely follows the passage in *Íslendingabók*, it omits not only Goðmundr but also the entirety of the following passage on the recording of the laws. It instead skips ahead in Ari's narrative, using the first year of Bergþórr's tenure to date Bishop Gizurr's final illness:

Úlfheðinn Gunnarsson tók lögsögu eftir Markús ok hafði níu sumur. Þá hafði Bergþórr Hrafnsson sex sumur. It fyrsta sumar, er Bergþórr sagði lög upp, var Gizurr byskup eigi þingfærr. (*Haukdæla þáttur* 1953, 93–94)

Úlfheðinn Gunnarsson took the lawspeakership after Markús and had it nine summers. Then Bergþórr Hrafnsson had it six summers. The first summer when Bergþórr spoke the law, Bishop Gizurr was not able to go to the þing.

As an entire continuous section of the text has been excised, it is impossible to know whether *Haukdæla þáttur's* exemplar included a reference to Goðmundr or not.

The changes in *Kristni saga* and *Haukdæla þáttur* make it clear that their authors were engaging creatively with their source material, not copying blindly (Sveinbjörn Rafnsson 2001, 150). These authors took the same approach to Ari's chronological conclusion, discarding the date of 1120,

which was irrelevant beyond Ari's framing of his own history. *Kristni saga* also omits Ari's references to the deaths of St Edmund and Óláfr Tryggvason and adds the Incarnation date 1118, whereas *Haukdæla þáttr* removes St Edmund as the intermediary between the Incarnation date and the settlement of Iceland. It is also possible that Goðmundr was excised from an intermediate exemplar for similar reasons. In sum, Goðmundr's absence from *Kristni saga* and *Haukdæla þáttr* does not prove that he was a later interpolation in *Íslz*.

With these texts removed from the equation, the suggestion that Goðmundr was added at a later date is difficult to sustain. The only factor that actively argues against his presence in Ari's *Íslz* is the comment that Þorlákr "nú es byskup í Skálaholti" (is currently bishop in Skálholt) in the genealogies. Even assuming that these genealogies were always attached to the text, there is a scenario in which their continued use of the present tense after 1133 is justifiable, if not completely accurate. As with the *Historia Hierosolymitana*, the rough seas of the North Atlantic may hold a clue.

Hungrvaka tells us that Þorlákr died in February of 1133 and that Magnús Einarsson, Ari's second cousin (*Íslendingabók*; *Landnámabók* 1968, 318; Sveinbjörn Rafnsson 2001, 158), was nominated as his successor that summer. However, Magnús's journey to Norway for consecration was delayed by bad weather until the summer of 1134. He was consecrated by Archbishop Özurr of Lund on the Feast of St Simon (28 October) in 1134 and returned to take up office in the summer of 1135 (*Hungrvaka* 1948, 21).

Thus, although Þorlákr had passed away during this period, he had yet to be officially replaced. In this situation, Ari might be forgiven for not updating the genealogies to reflect Þorlákr's death. Until news of Magnús's consecration, or else Magnús himself, had arrived in Iceland in the summer of 1135, it would not be known for certain whether his term had officially begun. Therefore, the genealogies were not "incorrect" inasmuch as no one else could yet claim to be bishop of Skálholt. While not a fully satisfactory explanation, this is at least a possibility. Moreover, the same argument can counter Björn Sigfússon's point about the phrase "byskupum órum" (our bishops) in Ari's prologue. Before 1135, there were no other bishops to whom Ari could refer.

5 Conclusions

The traditional dating of *Íslendingabók* to 1122–1133 is built on a flawed reading of the history’s prologue, the use of the present tense in genealogies whose presence in the original text cannot be proven, and an unconvincing dismissal of countervailing information within the text itself as a later interpolation. Nevertheless, this dating has largely been accepted by researchers without its proponents ever having effectively “won” the argument. I have here argued that clues to the dating and composition of *Íslendingabók* are best gleaned from an analysis of its sources. In light of Ari’s claim to have expanded the text he showed to the bishops and Sæmundr Sigfússon between 1122 and 1133, we can attempt to categorize his sources based on when they might have become available to him. My analysis supports a dating of 1134–1135 for the completion of the text as we have it.

All but two of Ari’s acknowledged oral informants were definitely known to Ari by 1122, as they had passed away beforehand. To this, we can add sources that were probably known to Ari before he wrote *ÍslI*, where nothing convincingly argues the contrary: Hallr Órækjuson; Sæmundr fróði; Oddr Kolsson; genealogies; Easter tables; Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica* and *De temporum ratione*; Adam of Bremen’s *Gesta Hammaburgensis*; and the “saga” of St Edmund. Each of these sources offered information which either related to events long past or was integral to Ari’s aims in structuring Icelandic history and connecting it to the progression of universal history.

We are left with the obits deriving ultimately from Fulcher of Chartres’s *Historia Hierosolymitana* and the appearance of Goðmundr Þorgeirsson’s full term on the list of lawspeakers as the only pieces of information whose availability to Ari before he wrote *ÍslI* is in doubt or impossible. The former could not have been known to Ari before 1125 at the absolute earliest, and the latter was not completed before the summer of 1134.

Although we cannot be certain that the obits were not present in *ÍslI*, they must be regarded as compelling candidates for information that “varð ... kunnara” (became better known) to Ari. Their function within Ari’s chronological structure is not so important that they must have been present from the beginning, unlike Ari’s Incarnation dates. Nevertheless, if

they are considered to belong to *Ísl1*, we must revise the traditional *terminus post quem* of Ari's meeting with the bishops up from 1122 to 1125. Similarly, if Goðmundr's appearance on the list of lawspeakers is regarded as a later interpolation, we must regard 1125 as the *terminus post quem* for *Ísl2*.

The debate over Goðmundr's appearance in *Íslendingabók* raises questions about the importance we as modern researchers attach to Ari *fróði*'s authorship. Regardless of whether Ari himself added Goðmundr to the list, this was the latest datable piece of information to be added to "our" version of *Íslendingabók*, and 1134 can thus be included in the time frame for the text's final composition phase. The summer of 1135 becomes a possible *terminus ante quem* given the absence of Goðmundr's successor Hrafn Úlfheðinsson, which is difficult to explain (either as Ari's work or a later addition) unless the latter had not yet taken office. Alternatively, Hrafn's final summer as lawspeaker, 1138, must be considered the ultimate *terminus ante quem* if only full terms were considered worthy of inclusion.

Having said that, there is no good reason to think that Ari could *not* have added this information, making the lawspeaker list "gerr sagt" (more fully told) than in *Ísl1*. Nothing in the prologue suggests that Bishop Þorlákr lived to see *Ísl2*, and the genealogies' observation that he "is now bishop of Skálholt" can be justified in at least three ways that do not conflict with the text's dating to 1134–1135: the genealogies were only attached to our version of *Íslendingabók* at a later stage; they were copied blindly from an earlier version of *Íslendingabók*; or it was not felt necessary to update the genealogy as Þorlákr's replacement was not yet in office. Similarly, if Ari simply wished to appeal to the bishops as the highest spiritual authorities in Iceland in observance of contemporary literary conventions, he might be prepared to look beyond the fact that one of them had recently passed away if his replacement was not yet installed. Finally, Goðmundr's absence in subsequent traditions simply reflects those traditions' active engagement with their source material.

This article's final word on the dating of *Íslendingabók* is therefore that the surviving version of the text could not have been completed before 1125 at the earliest but was most probably completed between the summer Alþing meetings of 1134 and 1135, and at any rate before the Alþing meeting of 1138 (Figure 1). On the composition of *Íslendingabók*, this article has endorsed the concept that the surviving version was shaped over the course

of two distinct phases. Most of the material in the second version was carried over from the first. Beyond that, this analysis has little concrete to say about what material may have been cut or whether the first version was ever circulated. Nevertheless, there is room for some speculation in this regard.

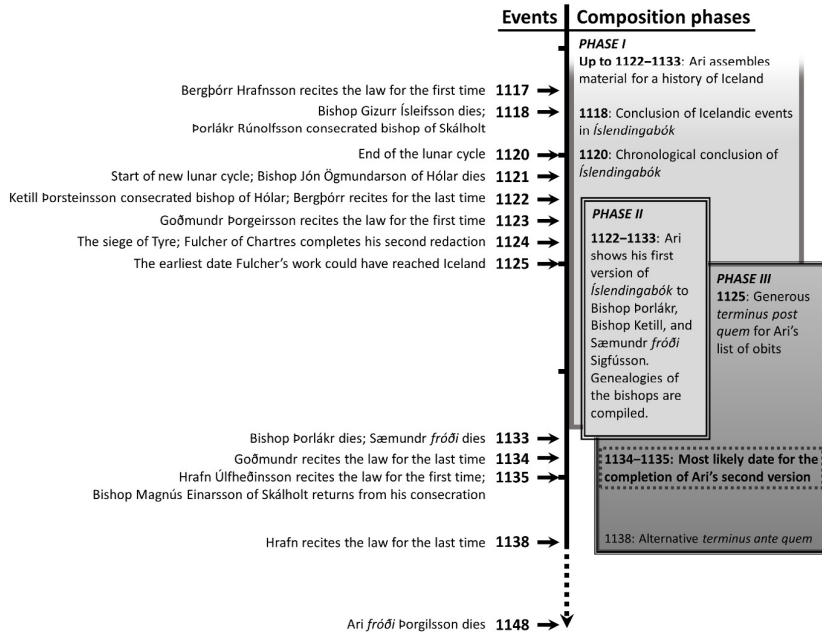


Figure 1: Timeline of events and proposed production phases of *Íslendingabók*.

For example, whereas previous researchers have used the subsequent history of *Íslendingabók* to speculate about its composition, we can now apply the conclusions of this article to speculate about the versions that later authors had available to them. *Kristni saga*, *Hungrvaka*, and *Haukdæla þáttr* all had access to a version of *Íslendingabók* that contained the list of obits from 1118. The arguments presented here would therefore suggest that they used *Ísl2*, as did the Icelandic annals, which frequently include these deaths at the appropriate date. Deviations and expansions in these sources may indicate the use of an intermediate tradition or the use of other texts from Ari's oeuvre. *Heimskringla*, on the other hand, refers to none of the information here assigned to *Ísl2*. It remains conceivable, if unprovable, that Snorri had access to an older version of *Íslendingabók*.

Íslendingabók is a significant literary monument: the oldest surviving (and, according to Snorri, the first) vernacular history of Iceland. Its legacy loomed large in medieval Icelandic scholarship to an extent disproportional to its length. The dating and composition of this text are key factors to consider in understanding the context that may have shaped it, and a re-dating of even a few years can considerably alter our perception. Sveinbjörn Rafnsson, a more recent advocate of the 1134 dating, points to tumultuous political events in Scandinavia and northern Europe during this period as a possible motivation for the completion of *Íslz* (Sveinbjörn Rafnsson 2001, 158–60). This possibility, combined with Ari's willingness to incorporate new sources from an impressively broad learned network, highlights the dynamism of this short but compelling text.

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ÁGRIP

Heimildir, aldursgreining og samsetning *Íslendingabókar*

Efnisorð: Íslendingabók, Ari fróði, aldursgreining, heimildir, Fulcher of Chartres

Í formála að *Íslendingabók* segist Ari fróði Þorgilsson hafa sýnt biskupunum Þorláki Runólfssyni í Skálholti (biskup 1122–1145) og Katli Þorsteinssyni á Hólum (biskup 1118–1133) eldri gerð textans. Að því búnu endursamdi hann textann með hliðsjón af „því es mér varð síðan kunnara ok nú es gerr sagt á þessi en á þeiri.“

Tilvísunin til biskupanna hefur verið notuð til að tímasetja textann til árabilsins 1122–1133, enda þótt tilvísun til Guðmundar Þorgeirssonar (lögsögumaður 1123–1134) í skrá yfir lögsögumenn í textanum hafi verið notuð til að tímasetja hann til 1134 eða síðar. Fræðimenn hafa ekki verið á einu máli um muninn á gerðunum tveimur, hvort báðar hafi gengið í handritum eða hvort eldri gerðin hafi yfirleitt nokkurn tíma verið til. Umræðan um aldursgreiningu *Íslendingabókar* og ritun hennar hefur fyrst og fremst beinst að því hvernig texti hennar var notaður af íslenskum fræðimönnum á miðöldum.

Í þessari grein beini ég aftur á móti sjónum að heimildum Ara. Hvað gæti hann hafa fengið vitneskju um á milli fyrstu og annarrar gerðar *Íslendingabókar*? Tvö lykilatriði koma til greina: Skrá yfir látna úr *Historia Hierosolymitana* eftir Fulcher frá Chartres og tilvísunin til Guðmundar Þorgeirssonar. Á þessum grundvelli færi ég rök að því að varðveitt gerð *Íslendingabókar* geti ekki hafa verið samin fyrir 1125 og að tímasetningin 1134–1135 sé mun líklegri.

SUMMARY

The Sources, Dating, and Composition of *Íslendingabók*

Keywords: *Íslendingabók*, Ari fróði, dating, sources, Fulcher of Chartres

In the prologue to *Íslendingabók*, Ari fróði Þorgilsson informs us that he showed an early version of the text to Bishop Þorlákr Runólfsson of Skálholt (r. 1118–1133) and Bishop Ketill Þorsteinsson of Hólar (r. 1122–1145). He then updated his text with “því es mér varð síðan kunnara ok nú es gerr sagt á þessi en á þeiri” (that which afterwards became better known to me and is now more fully told in this [version] than in the other).

The reference to the bishops has been used to date the text to 1122–1133, although a reference to Goðmundr Þorgeirsson (r. 1123–1134) in the text’s list of lawspeakers has also been used to date the text to 1134 or later. The differences between the two versions, whether they both circulated, or whether the oldest version existed at all have been the subject of debate. These discussions about *Íslendingabók*’s dating and composition have primarily focused on the text’s use by subsequent medieval Icelandic scholars.

In this article, I instead consider Ari’s sources of information. What could have “become better known” to him between his first and second versions? Two key clusters of information suggest themselves: a list of obits derived from Fulcher of Chartres’s *Historia Hierosolymitana* and the reference to Goðmundr Þorgeirsson. On this basis, I argue that the surviving version of *Íslendingabók* could not have been completed before 1125 at the earliest, and that a date of 1134–1135 is more likely.

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PSEUDO-EGILL, THE *VÍKINGR*-POET

More on the authenticity of the verse in Egils saga

Eyvindr skreyja in Prose and Poetry

In chapter 49 of *Egils saga*,¹ we are introduced to the characters of Eyvindr skreyja ('the weakling') and Álfr askmaðr ('the seafarer').² One of the saga's many pairs of brothers, these two are sons of Qzurr tóti and siblings of no less a personage than Queen Gunnhildr. In fact, their role in the saga plot is substantially that of the villain's henchmen: as soon as they appear, they are appointed by Gunnhildr to kill at least one of the sons of Skalla-

- 1 *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, *Íslenzk fornrit 2* (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1933), 123–127.
- 2 The exact meaning of the nickname *skreyja* is disputed. See Margaret Clunies Ross *et al.* eds., *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007–), 1:218. Finnur Jónsson refers to the lemma *skrøya* meaning 'wretch, sickly, weak person' (Finnur Jónsson, "Tilnavne i den islandske oldlitteratur," *Aarbøger for nordisk oldkyndighed og historie* (1907): 349). See also Hans Ross, *Norsk Ordbog. Tillæg til Norsk Ordbog af Ivar Aasen* (Universitetsforlaget, Oslo: Grøndahl & Søn, 1971), 691. Similarly, Eric Henrik Lind, *Norsk-isländska personbinamn från medeltiden: samlade ock utgivna med förklaringar* (Uppsala: Lundequist, 1920–1921), 333; *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, 123–124, footnote 4; Jan de Vries, *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 2nd corrected edition (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 503. The etymology proposed by Torp, from **skrøya* 'coughing, clear one's throat' (*scil.* ON **skreyða*) is not phonetically straightforward; Alf Torp, *Nynorsk etymologisk ordbok* (Kristiania: Aschehoug & Co, 1919), 628. In any event, given the characterization of Eyvindr skreyja as a man of extraordinary stature and strength in *Ágrip*, the nickname could tentatively be interpreted as ironic (Finnur Jónsson, "Tilnavne i den islandske oldlitteratur," 364). Norwegian *skrøya* has also the meaning 'coward,' possibly the product of a semantic shift 'weakling, good-for-nothing, faint-hearted' (Ross, *Norsk Ordbog*, 691). This meaning seems supported by the occurrence of the term *skreyja* in a *lausavísa* attributed to Björn Hítðælakappi (*lv* 10, *Skaldic Poetry* vol. 5, 71–72). The nickname *skreyja* is sometimes alternatively interpreted as 'bragger,' possibly by assonance to *skreyta* and because of the character's personality in the kings' sagas, but this interpretation is linguistically unwarranted.

Grímr – and preferably both.³ Eyvindr and Álfr turn out to be rather lousy minions, however. Not only do they fail in their mission, but Eyvindr violates the sanctity of a sacred place by slaying one of Þórir hersir's men during a festivity and is therefore banned from Norway. He is sent to Denmark, where Haraldr Gormsson puts him in charge of the defense of the Danish coasts from piracy. The sons of Skalla-Grímr refuse to accept monetary compensation for the killing of their companion. The following spring, however, Egill intercepts Eyvindr skreyja off the shore of Jutland and attacks his longship as it lies at anchor. Taken by surprise, Eyvindr loses the ship, many men, and saves his life only by diving overboard and swimming to land. As customary, Egill comments on the outcome of the ambush in a stanza:

Egils saga, lausavísa 15

Gerðum hólzti harða
 hríð fyr Jótlands síðu;
 barðisk vel, sás varði
 víkingr, Dana ríki,
 áðr á sund fyr sandi
 snarfengr með lið drengja
 austr af unnar hesti
 Eyvindr of hljóp skreyja.

We made a very harsh battle off the coast of Jutland; the *víkingr* who guarded the Danish kingdom fought well, until the swift-acting one, Eyvindr skreyja, with a band of warriors, jumped from the wave-horse [SHIP] in the east, swimming by the shore.⁴

- 3 “Þat vil ek, at þit hagið svá til í fjölmenni þessu, at þit fáið drepit annanhvárn þeira sona Skalla-Gríms, ok bazt, at báðir væri” (*Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, 124).
- 4 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 190–191. See also *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, 2 vols, A: *Tekst efter håndskrifterne*, B: *Rettet tekst* (København – Kristiania: Gyldendalske Boghandel / Nordisk Forlag, 1912–1915), vol. A 1, 50; vol. B 1, 44; *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, 127. Translations from Old Norse are mine, unless otherwise stated.

The stanza has plain syntax and only one, very simple kenning (*unnar hestr* ‘horse of the wave’), while its content adds little to the events told in the preceding prose. Curiously enough, although Eyvindr skreyja was appointed by the king to defend the coasts from *vikingar* (*scil.* pirates), he is himself defined as a *víkingr* in Egill’s stanza.⁵ After this episode, Eyvindr skreya exits the scene, and the naval showdown with the queen’s brother is mentioned only once again in the saga, by Egill’s friend Arinbjörn.⁶ Álfr askmaðr Qzurarson will appear on another occasion, in chapter 56, where, at the instigation of Gunnhildr, he once again violates the sanctity of an assembly, this time disrupting the session at the Gulapíng concerning the inheritance of Egill’s wife.⁷

Álfr askmaðr is clearly a minor figure. Outside of *Egils saga*, he is named only in *Heimskringla*, where he is exclusively mentioned in connection to his brother.⁸ The case is different with Eyvindr skreyja. Unlike his brother, a character with the name Eyvindr skreyja appears also in earlier works, namely *Ágrip* and *Fagrskinna*, where he is the protagonist of a duel against king Hákon góði during his last battle at Fitjar (on the island of Stord) in 961. In these sources, however, he has no brother and is no relation of Queen Gunnhildr. In *Ágrip*, the description of Eyvindr skreyja seems to conform to the motif of the formidable champion who, overly confident in his strength, issues a challenge to single combat but is eventually humiliated by the virtuous hero, in this case Hákon góði. In *Ágrip*’s description, Eyvindr skreyja indeed gives the impression of a Goliath-like figure.

Þar var með þeim í því liði sá maðr, er hét Eyvindr skreyja. Hann var kappi mikill, meiri en aðrir menn ok bitu varla járn. Hann gekk svá umb daginn at ekki vétta helt við hönnum, því at engi hafði fong á í móti hönnum. Hann fór svá grenjandi ok emjandi⁹ ok ruddi svá at

5 “Síðan setti konungr Eyvind þar til landvarnar fyrir víkingum” (*Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, 126).

6 *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, 150.

7 *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, 157.

8 *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, 123–125, 157; *Heimskringla*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, vol. 1, *Íslenzk fornrit* 26 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1941), 185, 189–190.

9 The choice of the verbs *grenja* and *emja* that occur in the description of the *berserkir* and

hann hjó á báðar hendr ok spurði, hvar hann Norðmanna konungr væri, “hví leynisk hann nú?”¹⁰

In that army with them [the Eiríkssynir], there was a man called Eyvindr skreyja. He was a great champion, bigger than other men and [one that] weapons hardly affected. He fought in such a way that day, that nothing could stop him, since no one was able to stand against him. He went around howling and shrieking, as he cleared his way by hewing on both sides, and asking where the king of the Norwegians was, “Why is he hiding now?”

Against his followers’ advice, Hákon accepts the challenge. Whereas Eyvindr skreyja is described as heavily armored, Hákon faces the champion wearing only a silk-shirt, an apparent disadvantage which will prove decisive for the duel’s outcome. The detailed description of the duel is a rhetorical climax in *Ágrip*’s otherwise laconic style.

Síðan gekk konungrinn undan merkjunum fram í mót hónum kappanum, í silkiskyrtu ok hjálm á hofði, skjöld fyr sér, en sverð í hendi er Kvernbiti hét, ok sýndisk maðrinn svá búinn öllum haukligr. Þá óð kappinn at fram hjálmaðr ok brynjaðr í mót ok tvíhendi øxina ok hjó til konungs, en konungrinn hvak undan lítt þat, ok missti kappinn hans ok hjó í jörðina niðr ok steypðisk eptir nokkvut svá. En konungrinn hjó hann með sverðinu í miðju í sundr í brynjunni, svát sinn veg fell hvárr hlutrinn.¹¹

Then, under the standards, the king advanced towards the champion, in a silken shirt and with the helm on his head, the shield before him, and in his hand the sword called Kvernbiti [‘Millstone-biter’]; the man, so equipped, seemed to everyone to be hawk-like.¹²

the *ulfbæðnar* in *Haraldskvæði* st. 8 (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 102) suggests that the *Ágrip* author implied a similar connotation for Eyvindr skreyja.

10 *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum – Fagrskinna – Nóregskonunga tal*, ed. Bjarni Einarsson, *Íslensk fornrit* 29 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1935), 9–10.

11 *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum – Fagrskinna – Nóregskonunga tal*, ed. Bjarni Einarsson, 10.

12 The adjective *haukligr* ‘hawk-like,’ rare in prose, seems to mean ‘bold, resolute.’ See: *haukligr, hauklyndr, hauksnarr, hauksnjallr* in *Lexicon poeticum antiquæ linguae septentrionalis: Ordbog over det norsk-islandske skjaldesprog oprindeligt forfattet af Sveinbjörn Egilsson*, ed.

The champion advanced towards him, with helm and mail-coat, and wielded the axe with both hands; he aimed a blow at the king but the king drew back a little, so that the champion missed him and hew down in the soil, somewhat losing his balance in doing so. Then the king struck him with his sword, right down the middle and through the mail-coat, so that each of the two parts fell to either side.

And this is the end of Eyvindr skreyja in *Ágrip*. Since Hákon is himself doomed to die in the aftermath of the battle, the duel against the arrogant champion remains one of the king's last exploits. Although the literary details might raise doubts regarding the historicity of the episode, the presence of a leader named Eyvindr skreyja at Fitjar seems to be confirmed by poetic sources contemporary to the events. In telling the same episode, *Fagrskinna* does not add much to *Ágrip*'s story, but it does include many poetic quotations.¹³ Three *lausavísur*, all attributed to Hákon góði's Norwegian skald Eyvindr skáldaspillir, concern the king's encounter with Eyvindr skreyja. In the first half-stanza (*lv* 3) Skreyja is referred to as the leader of the enemy army.

Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnsson, *lausavísa* 3

Lýtr fyr lǫngum spjótum
landsfolk; bifask randir;
kveðr oddviti oddum
Eyvindar lið skreyju.¹⁴

The land-army sinks before the long spears; shield-rims tremble; the leader [HÁKON] greets the following of Eyvindr skreyja ['Wretch'] with spear-points.

Finnur Jónsson, 2nd ed. (Copenhagen: Møller, 1931). It is also possible that the comparison with the hawk implies a noble or heroic appearance; in *Þiðriks saga af Bern*, king Gunnarr is described as *kurteiss, sterkr ok allgóðr riddari ok haukligr, er han sat á sinum hesti* 'courteous, strong, an excellent knight, and hawk-like, when he sat on his horse'; *Þiðriks saga af Bern*, ed. Henrik Bertelsen (Copenhagen: S. L. Møllersbogtrykkeri, 1905), 342.

13 *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum – Fagrskinna – Nóregskonunga tal*, ed. Bjarni Einarsson, 84, 87, 89–90, 93.

14 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 218 (Poole, ed. and trans.). See also Russell Poole, "The Cooperative Principle in Medieval Interpretations of Skaldic Verse: Snorri Sturluson, Þjóðólfr Arnórsson, and Eyvindr Skáldaspillir," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 87 (1988), 175.

The other two full stanzas are quoted as poetic sources for the duel scene itself. In the first (*lv 4*) Hákon góði, called out by Eyvindr skreyja, reveals his presence and accepts the challenge:

Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnsson, *lausavísa 4*

Baðat valgrindar vinda
veðrheyjandi Skreyju
gumnum holtr né gulli
Gefnar sinni stefnu:
'Ef sökkspegni svinnan,
sigrminnigr, vilt finna,
framm halt, njótr, at nýtum
Norðmanna gram, hranna.'

The enacter of the storm of the Gefn [Freyja] of the slaughter-gate [(lit. 'storm-enacter of the Gefn of the slaughter-gate') SHIELD > VALKYRIE > BATTLE > WARRIOR = HÁKON], loyal to men, not to gold, did not bid [Eyvindr] Skreyja ['Wretch'] to alter his course: 'If, mindful of victory, you wish to meet a wise treasure-grasper [RULER], keep straight ahead to the capable king of the Norwegians [= HÁKON], user of the waves [SWIMMER = EYVINDR SKREYJA].¹⁵

In the second one (*lv 5*), Hákon is described as he splits his opponent's skull, a gruesome detail that is used to confirm the image, described in both *Ágrip* and *Fagrskinna*, of Hákon literally cutting Eyvindr into two halves with his sword.

Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnsson, *lausavísa 5*

Veitk, at beit inn bitri
byggving meðaldyggran
bulka skíðs ór bóðum
benvöndr konungs höndum.

15 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 219–220 (Poole, ed. and trans.). The kennings in the stanza are complex and much discussed. I shall return in particular to the kenning *branna njótr* ('user of waves') later in this article.

Ófælinn klauf Ála
 éldraugr skarar hauga
 gollhjǫltuðum galtar
 grandaðr Dana brandi.

I know that the biting wound-wand [SWORD] bit the middling-valiant inhabiter of the ski of cargo [SHIP > SEAWARRIOR] from both the king's hands. The log of the storm of the boar of Áli [HELMET > BATTLE > WARRIOR = HÁKON], injurer of the Danes, cleft, unflinching, the burial-mounds of hair [HEADS] with his gold-hilted sword.¹⁶

Eyvindr's *lausavísur* are transmitted both in *Fagrskinna* and in *Heimskringla* and clearly served as poetic sources for both chronicles, as well as for *Ágrip*, although this work makes limited use of explicit poetic quotations. The stanzas are complex in both syntax and kenning style and their interpretation has raised much discussion.¹⁷ Interestingly, they substantially confirm the main elements of the story as it is told in the prose accounts, namely: Eyvindr skreyja's challenge to the king (*lv* 4), Hákon's response rendered in direct speech (*lv* 4) and, roughly, the dynamics of Eyvindr skreyja's killing (*lv* 5). Admittedly, the warrior in *lv* 5 is not mentioned by name and some of the motifs of this stanza are common to the general description of Hákon góði at Fitjar found elsewhere in Eyvindr skáldaspillir's poetry:

Eyvindr skáldaspillir, *Hákonarmál* st. 5:

Svá beit þá sverð	ór siklings hendi
váðir Váfaðar,	sem í vatn brygði.
Brøkuðu broddar,	brotnuðu skildir,
glumruðu gylfringar	í gotna hausum.

16 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 221 (Poole ed. and trans.). The kenning *Ála galtar éldraugr* ('the log of the storm of the boar of Áli') contains a reference to the mythical helmet Hildisvín owned by king Áli and inherited by king Aðils (Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, 2 vols., ed. Anthony Faulkes (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1998), 1:58). More references to the Hrólfr kraki story are found in Eyvindr skáldaspillir's *lv* 8, quoted in *Skáldskaparmál*.

17 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 218–223.

Then the sword in the sovereign's hand bit the garments of Váfuðr [ARMOUR], as if it were cutting through water. Points clanged, shields burst, swords clattered in men's skulls.¹⁸

One element is of special interest with regard to our discussion of Egill's *lv* 15. In the direct speech of *lv* 4, Hákon góði apparently addresses Eyvindr skreyja with the kenning *branna njótr* ('user/enjoyer of waves'). The kenning is curious and unparalleled, and in the most recent edition it has been explained as a reference to the very episode of Eyvindr skreyja's encounter with Egill, as told in *Egils saga*.

[7, 8] *njótr branna* "user of the waves [SWIMMER = EYVINDR SKREYJA]": Another kenning that has caused difficulty. In this edition it is interpreted literally, since the poet may be alluding to the event described in Egill *Lv* 10V (Eg 15), where Eyvindr skreyja, worsted in battle, leaps from his ship to swim to safety.¹⁹

The expression is thus taken as a sort of *sannkenning* ('truthful description'), designating the referent by his actual properties.²⁰ This interpretation raises a fundamental question: for the kenning *branna njótr* to be based on Egill's *lausavísa*, the authenticity of the latter as well as the historical plausibility of an encounter between Eyvindr skreyja and Egill must be taken at face value. Poole observes that "given the likelihood that Hákon had conducted a previous naval campaign in Danish waters [...] some familiarity with Eyvindr skreyja on the part of the king's Norwegian supporters would not be surprising."²¹ As noted by Clunies Ross, however, according to the saga chronology, the naval battle described by Egill would antedate the duel at Fitjar by circa 25 years, a circumstance that already makes the case rather difficult.²² Moreover, the tradition connecting Eyvindr skreyja to Queen Gunnhildr clearly sets *Heimskringla* and *Egils saga* apart from previous historiographies and is generally regarded as

18 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 179.

19 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 219–220 (Poole ed. and trans.); Poole, "The Cooperative Principle," 176–177.

20 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, lxxiii–lxxv.

21 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 219–220.

22 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 191.

suspect, casting more than a little doubt on the truthfulness of the episode described in *Egils saga* 49 in its entirety.²³ By contrast, the duel between Eyvindr skreyja and Hákon góði is common to *Ágrip*, *Fagrskinna*, and *Heimskringla* and seems to rely on verse attributed to Eyvindr skáldaspillir.

A viable method to evaluate the relationship between these two diverging traditions could be to assess the authenticity of the poetic sources in question. By ‘authentic,’ I here mean poetry datable to the time of the events narrated and that can plausibly be regarded as composed by the poet to whom it is traditionally attributed. By contrast, I call ‘inauthentic’ or ‘pseudonymous’ poetry attributed to the saga characters but likely forged by the saga-author. Thus, in order to answer the question, “Can the stanza of *Egils saga* have provided the basis for the kenning *hranna njótr* contained in Eyvindr’s *lv* 4?”, we must first evaluate the authenticity of both Egill’s and Eyvindr’s *lausavísur*.

The Authenticity of Eyvindr skáldaspillir’s *lausavísur* 3–5

Eyvindr’s *lv* 3–5 belong to a group of stanzas about Fitjar, all transmitted in historiographical sources: *Fagrskinna*, *Heimskringla* and *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar hin mesta* (ÓTM).²⁴ Since *Fagrskinna* was very likely a source to the first part of *Heimskringla*, which, in turn, was among the sources of the author of ÓTM, *Fagrskinna* is the earliest extant text containing Eyvindr’s *lausavísur*.²⁵ According to Gustav Indrebø, *Fagrskinna* relied on a variety of written sources, several of which are now lost, including a **Hákonar saga góða*, as well as on poetic material and possibly, but to a

23 *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, 124; *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 218.

24 Poole hypothesized that *lv* 4–5 belonged to a longer narrative poem about the battle of Fitjar, creatively re-worked into a dramatic prosimetry by the *Fagrskinna* author or by a previous source (Poole, “The Cooperative Principle,” 174–175).

25 Various scholars agree on the fact that Snorri used *Fagrskinna* as a source: Gustav Storm, *Snorre Sturlassøns Historiekrivning, en kritisk Undersøgelse* (Copenhagen, 1873), 44–48; Gustav Indrebø, *Fagrskinna*, *Avhandlingar fra Universitetets historiske seminar 4* (Kristiania: Grøndahl & Søns Boktrykkeri, 1917); Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Om de norske kongers sagaer* (Oslo: Det norske videnskaps-akademi, 1937); Klaus Johan Myrvoll, “Skule jarl, Snorre og den historiske bakgrunnen åt Fagrskinna,” *Maal og Minne* (2023), 83, 124. Other scholars have also considered the hypothesis that both texts used one or several common sources: *Ágrip af Noregskonunga sögum – Fagrskinna – Noregs konunga tal*, ed. Bjarni Einarsson, cxxv–cxxvi; *Fagrskinna: A Catalogue of the Kings of Norway. A Translation with Introduction and Notes*, ed. Alison Finlay (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 17–20.

limited extent, on Norwegian local traditions.²⁶ Kari E. Gade observed that

a peculiarity of *Fagrskinna* is that its compiler seems to have known many more stanzas than he chose to cite from some poems (e.g. Glúmr Geirason's *Gráfeldardápa*, Eyjólfur dáðaskáld's *Bandadrápa*). The focus on salient events favors the citation of encomiastic poetry over *lausavísur*, but *Fagrskinna* also preserves some more informal stanzas including several *lausavísur* by Eyvindur skáldaspillir.²⁷

This is precisely the case of the stanzas concerning the battle of Fitjar and the duel between Hákon góði and Eyvindur skreyja. Both *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla* are generally regarded as trustworthy sources for what concerns the authenticity of their poetry. In very broad strokes, kings' sagas tend to quote skaldic stanzas for authenticating rather than situational purposes, and the occurrence of spurious verse in this genre is significantly rarer than in the family sagas.²⁸ There are of course exceptions to this rule of thumb: most notably, the now lost saga of St. Óláfr by Styrmir Kárason seems to have contained several inauthentic stanzas, which have been incorporated in the *Flateyjarbók* recension.²⁹ The extant *Morkinskinna* redaction, rich in *þættir* about the role of Icelandic skalds and other anecdotic content, is also generally regarded as a source of inauthentic poetic material.³⁰ Isolated cases of late, archaizing stanzas, for instance about Haraldr hárfagri, have entered the *Fagrskinna* tradition as well, but are only found in the A redaction, which contains clearly interpolated material.³¹ This is not the case for the stanzas in question, however, since they are attested in both branches of the *Fagrskinna* tradition. Formally, *lv* 3–5 present no decisive evidence of an early nor of a late date. The most conspicuous trait is a tendency towards extra ornamental use of rhyme, with *aðalhending* instead of *skothending* in odd lines (e.g. *lv* 3.3: *kveðr oddviti oddum*). The

26 Indrebø, *Fagrskinna*, 109–115, and *passim*.

27 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, clxi.

28 Mikael Males, *The Poetic Genesis of Old Icelandic Literature* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 213–218.

29 Males, *The Poetic Genesis*, 72–75.

30 Males, *The Poetic Genesis*, 255–263.

31 Gustav Storm, “Om Indskuddene i *Fagrskinna*,” in *Forhandlinger i Videnskabs-Selskabet i Christiania Aar 1875* (Christiania: I Commission hos Jac. Dybwad, 1876), 81–108.

first *helmingr* of *lv* 4, for instance, has only *aðalhendingar* throughout (here and below, rhymes are rendered in italics):

Baðat valgrindar vinda
veðrheyjandi Skreyju
gumnum hollr né golli
Gefnar sinni stefnu.

This makes the occurrence of a rhyme $\varrho : a$ in an odd line (*lv* 5.7: *gollhjoltuðum galtar*) substantially moot as a dating criterion.³² *Lv* 5 is extreme in its over-ornamental use of *hendingar*, with several examples of extra rhyming syllables (cf. l. 1: *eit : eit : it*) and one interlinear rhyme pattern with *adhesive rhyme* (ll. 5–6: *æl : ál : él – aug : aug*).³³

Veitk, at beit inn bitri
byggving meðaldyggran
bulka skíðs ór bóðum
benvöndr konungs höndum.
Ófælinn klauf Ála
éldraugr skarar hauga
gollhjoltuðum galtar
grandaðr Dana brandi.

Such rhyme patterns are typical of late-ninth- and tenth-century poems and become rare after the turn of the millennium.³⁴ The use of extra rhyming elements, as well as that of complex kennings rich in specific references to mythical narratives is common to all the *lausavísur* by Eyvindr skáldaspillir.³⁵ Consider, for instance the first *helmingr* of *lv* 6 in which every couplet has retained rhymes.³⁶

32 For the use of *aðalhending* in $a : \varrho$ as a dating criterion, see Myrvoll (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, c–ci).

33 ‘Adhesive rhyme’ is when an extra-rhyming syllable extends the *skothending* to the first position of the even line, in addition to regular *aðalhending*. For a definition and for the use of interlinear rhyme patterns as a dating criterion, see Klaus Johan Myrvoll, ‘The Authenticity of Gíslí’s Verse,’ *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 119 (2020), 231 and *passim*.

34 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, cv.

35 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 213–234.

36 ‘Retained rhyme’ is when both the *skothendingar* and the *aðalhendingar* in a couplet share the same post-vocalic environment.

Fyrr rauð Fenris varra
 flugvarr konungr sparra
 — malmhríðar svall meiddum
 móðr — í Gamla blóði.

Earlier the flight-reluctant king [HÁKON] reddened the prop of the lips of Fenrir [SWORD] in Gamli's blood; courage swelled in the trees of the metal-storm [BATTLE > WARRIORS].³⁷

This *helmingr*, containing the rare kenning pattern *Fenris varra sparri* ('the prop of the lips of Fenrir') is target of imitation by Einarr Skúlason in *Geisli* (c. 1153).³⁸ Thus, if formal criteria might not appear decisive, the poetic reception of Eyvindr's *lausavísur* instills confidence in their authenticity. In fact, several of them are either quoted or referred to in other sources, such as *Skáldskaparmál*, the *Third Grammatical Treatise*, and *Landnámabók*,³⁹ and some were imitated and alluded to by eleventh- and twelfth-century skalds, such as Þjóðólfr Arnórsson and Einarr Skúlason.⁴⁰ In sum, in lack of formal evidence to the contrary, and in light of their formal characteristics, reception, textual transmission, and quotation praxis within the *Fagrskinna* tradition, the case for authenticity seems strong. The rest of the article will concern, instead, the authenticity of Egill's *lv 15*.

Pseudonymous Stanzas in *Egils saga*

For the poetry in *Egils saga*, the situation is different. The debate about the authenticity of Egill's poetry goes as far back as to Finnur Jónsson's doctoral dissertation;⁴¹ it has engaged several scholars and featured supporters

37 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1 (Poole ed. and trans.), 223.

38 Males, *The Poetic Genesis*, 85.

39 Besides being transmitted in the kings' sagas, *lv 2* is quoted in *Landnámabók* (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 216); the first couplet of *lv 8* is quoted in *Skáldskaparmál* and (only the first couplet) in the *Third Grammatical Treatise* (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 226); the second half of *lv 9* is quoted in *Skáldskaparmál* and in *Laufás-Edda* (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 228).

40 Bianca Patria, "Skalds against 'the System'. The Kennings of Þjóðólfr Arnórsson's Harvest Metaphor," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 137 (2022), 37–74.

41 Finnur Jónsson, *Kritiske studier over en del af de ældste norske og islandske skjaldekvad* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1884).

of all kinds of opinions, from fairly confident believers in Egill's authorship of most of the stanzas attributed to him (e.g. Finnur Jónsson),⁴² to strong sceptics (e.g. Jón Helgason),⁴³ via the "largely agnostic position" of the most recent edition.⁴⁴ In recent years, the most decisive contributions to the question of dating the poetry in the Icelandic family sagas were those of Kari Ellen Gade, Klaus Johan Myrvoll, and Mikael Males and the following discussion is methodologically based and draws extensively on the works of these scholars.⁴⁵ For what concerns *Egils saga* in particular, Males' analysis of the "poetic stratigraphy" of this text was a major breakthrough.⁴⁶ By correlating the distribution of internal rhymes to a variety of other criteria (e.g. archaic *vs* later linguistic forms, textual complexity in terms of syntax and kennings, the saga author's quotation praxis, and the circumstances of attestation), Males was able to employ rhyme patterns as a diagnostic criterion for isolating a number of pseudonymous stanzas in *Egils saga*. Males distinguishes three different patterns in the use of internal rhymes in the *lausavísur* of *Egils saga*:

- (a) a regular style (*skothendingar* in odd, *aðalhendingar* in even lines);
- (b) a style with interlinear rhyme patterns ('compensatory' and 'retained rhyme');⁴⁷

- 42 Finnur Jónsson, "Sagaernes lausavísur," *Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* (1912), 1–57.
- 43 Jón Helgason, "Höfuðlausnarhjal," in *Einarsbók: Afmælisveðja til Einars Ól. Sveinssonar 12. desember 1969*, ed. Bjarni Guðnason, Halldór Halldórsson, and Jónas Kristjánsson (Reykjavík: Nokkrir vinir, 1969), 156–176.
- 44 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 159. Overviews of the debate and references can be found in Sigurður Nordal's introduction to the saga (*Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, v–xvi) and in Males, *The Poetic Genesis*, 219–220.
- 45 Kari Ellen Gade, "The Dating and Attributions of Verses in the Skald Sagas," in *Skaldsagas. Text, Vocation, and Desire in the Icelandic Sagas of Poets*, ed. Russell Poole (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001), 50–74; Klaus Johan Myrvoll, *Samstöfur seinar eða skjótar. Ein etterrøknad av trykk- og kvantitetstilhøve i skaldeversemålet dróttkvætt* (master's thesis, Universitetet i Oslo, 2009); Klaus Johan Myrvoll, *Kronologi i skaldevæde. Distribusjon av metriske og språklege drag i høve til tradisjonell datering og attribuering* (PhD diss., Universitetet i Oslo, 2014); Myrvoll, "The Authenticity of Gisli's Verse"; Mikael Males, "Egill och Kormákr – trädning och nydiktning," *Maal og Minne* (2011), 115–146.
- 46 Males, *The Poetic Genesis*, 220–232.
- 47 'Compensatory rhyme' is when the odd line lacks regular *skothendingar* but contains a stressed syllable that has the same post-vocalic environment of one or more stressed syllables in the following verse: e.g. Egill *Skjalddr* 1.1–2: *Mál es lofs at ljýsa | ljósgarð, es þák, barða* (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, cv).

- (c) a style with an extremely irregular use of rhymes (total lack of rhyme, sparse resort to *skothendingar* in even lines).

From Males' analysis it emerges that, of these three poetic styles, the second and (very often) the first one appear to be products of historical Egill, whereas the third one – exhibiting very irregular rhymes – usually correlates with several other signs of late composition. Males thus argues that the saga author composed with very irregular *hendingar* and that he probably perceived this as an archaic trait. This finds a parallel in the odd rhyme patterns found in *Egils háttr* ('the style of Egill') as well as in the other *fornskálda hettir* reproduced by Snorri in *Háttatal*.⁴⁸

Males' conclusions constitute the point of departure for my own analysis of *lausavísa* 15. Notice, however, that this stanza does not exhibit the main diagnostic sign of late composition indicated by Males, namely the highly irregular rhyme scheme. Nonetheless, several other features speak against its authenticity. At this point, it is in order to specify that, while style (b), with interlinear rhyme patterns, is very likely to date to the tenth century, and style (c), with highly irregular rhyme patterns, is very likely to date to the thirteenth century, stanzas composed in style (a), with the regular alternation of *skot-* and *aðalhendingar*, do not always show a clear correlation with tenth-century features. This means that, in theory, stanzas in style (a) could be a product of both Egill and Pseudo-Egill, or, in other words, that Pseudo-Egill might have composed not only with highly irregular *hendingar* but also following the usual rules of *dróttkvætt*. This hypothesis, which is compatible with the linguistic evidence of the stanzas, can be tested against several parameters, as the following discussion will show.

For the sake of clarity, I will first provide a contrastive analysis of two stanzas quoted in the same chapter of *Egils saga* that clearly illustrate the differences between what Males has isolated as the style typical of the historical Egill, on the one hand, and that of Pseudo-Egill (or the saga author), on the other. The stanzas are quoted in rapid succession in the episode of Bárðr's feast, when Egill and his companion Ólvir are nearly poisoned by the host Bárðr. Egill manages to neutralize the poisonous drink by inscrib-

48 Snorri Sturluson, *Háttatal*, ed. Anthony Faulkes (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2007), 25.

ing runes on the drinking horn (*lv 9*). He then comments on the bad condition of his friend *Ǫlvir*, who is severely drunk (*lv 10*), before killing *Bárðr* and escaping. *Lv 10* is here taken as an example of the traits regarded as typical of historical Egill, while *lv 9* shows features typical of Pseudo-Egill.

Egils saga, lv 9 (Pseudo-Egill)

Rístum rún á horni,
rjóðum spjöll í dreyra,
þau velk orð til eyrna
óðs dýrs viðar róta.
Drekkum veig sem viljum,
vel glýjaðra þýja;
vita, hvé oss of eiri
ǫl þats Bárðr of signði.

We carve a rune on the horn;
we redden words in blood;
those words I choose for the tree of
the roots of ears of the furious animal
[AUROCH'S HEAD > HORN].
We drink as we please the strong drink
of the very cheerful servant maidens,
to find out how the ale that *Bárðr* con-
secrated agrees with us.

Egils saga, lv 10 (Egill)

Ǫlvar mik, því at Ǫlvi
ǫl gervir nú fǫlvan;
atgeira lætk úra
ýring of grǫn skýra.
Ǫllungis kant illa,
oddskýs, fyr þér nýsa,
(rigna getr at regni)
regnbjóðr (Hǫars þegna).

Ale affects me, since ale is now making
Ǫlvir pale; I make the drizzle of the spear
of the aurochs [HORNS > ALE] shower
over my moustache.
You really cannot look out for yourself,
offerer of the rain of weapon-point's
clouds [SHIELD > BATTLE > WARRIOR];
it begins to rain with the rain of the
retainers of *Hǫarr* [ÓÐINN > POETS >
MEAD OF POETRY = POETRY].⁴⁹

The two stanzas exhibit a number of traits that are diagnostic of different times of composition and versification practices. I will first illustrate the ones already indicated by Males.

(a) Rhyme patterns

Internal rhymes are rendered in italics in the two stanzas above. *Lv 9* has nearly no *hendingar* throughout, the only exceptions being a *skothending* with uneven vowel length in l. 4 (*óðs* : *viðar*) and the regular vocalic *aðal-*

49 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 181.

hending in l. 6 (*glýjaðra : þýja*). By contrast, *lv* 10 has regular, although over-ornamental, use of rhymes. In particular, one can notice the frequent resort to retained rhymes in ll. 1–2 (the rhyming syllable being the very word *ól* ‘ale’), ll. 3–4 (*eir : úr : ýr : ýr*), and ll. 7–8 (*ign : egn : egn : egn*). This has a peculiar stylistic effect, highlighting the ‘drizzling’ and ‘raining’ of ale.⁵⁰

(b) Early vs. late linguistic forms

In *lv* 10, the hiatus form of the Óðinn name *Hóarr*, obliterated in textual transmission, needs to be restored to produce a metrical *dróttkvætt* line. This points unambiguously towards a date of composition prior to c. 1150.⁵¹ By contrast, *lv* 9 shows the later, monosyllabic form of the name *Bárðr*, as opposed to the etymological disyllabic form *Bárþóðr* attested in *lv* 8.⁵² Observe that Finnur Jónsson’s conjecture *ól þats Bárþóðr signdi* is not supported by the manuscripts and produces a heavy dip in position 4.⁵³

(c) Textual complexity

Lv 10 has a relatively high degree of textual complexity, with interlaced syntax and elaborated kennings construed in hyperbaton, such as *oddskýs regnbjóðr* (‘the one who offers the rain of the battle-cloud’) and *Hóars þegna regn* (‘the rain of Hóarr’s retainers’). The latter is a pointed reference to the mead of poetry myth, which is harmonized with the running metaphor on rain imagery that characterizes the stanza (cf. the kenning *úra atgeira ýring* ‘the drizzle of the spear of the aurochs’). This is further emphasized through the over-ornamental rhymes on the words participating in these kennings, see above. By contrast, *lv* 9 displays a plain syntax and only one kenning: *eyrna róta viðr* (‘tree of the roots of the ears’), a kenning for the drinking horn.

50 For stylistic analyses of this stanza, see Guðrún Nordal, “*Ars metrica* and the Composition of Egil’s Saga,” in *Egil, the Viking Poet: New Approaches to Egil’s Saga*, ed. Laurence de Looze et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 46–47; Bianca Patria, “Nýgerving and Skaldic Innovation. Towards an Intertextual Understanding of Skaldic Stylistics,” *Saga-Book* 46 (2022), 140–142.

51 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, xcvi.

52 Males, *The Poetic Genesis*, 224–225; *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 177.

53 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 181. Heavy dips (*schwere Senkungen*) are not unattested, but strongly avoided in early *dróttkvætt*; their use gains ground first in the poetry of Sighvatr Þórðarson, is generalized after the mid-eleventh century and increases in the later skaldic production (Myrvoll, *Kronologi i skaldekvæde*, 239–266; Myrvoll, *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, ci).

To these formal features, Males added more circumstantial evidence, such as the fascination with runes, especially when employed for magic purposes, which seems typical of the saga-author as well as of several stanzas composed in Pseudo-Egill's style.⁵⁴ I will now add some further features found in Pseudo-Egill's stanzas that will turn out useful for the following discussion.

(d) Signs of active archaization

As observed above, Finnur Jónsson's emendation of the segment *Bárðr of signði* to *Bárðr signði* has no manuscript support and is generally considered an overzealous conjecture, due to the fact that Finnur considered this stanza authentic. However speculative, Finnur's conjecture is not an idle one. In fact, not only would the form *Bárðr* have been the one used by the historical Egill, but the presence of the Germanic preverb *of* in front of the verb *signa* (a Latin loanword in Old Norse) appears etymologically unlikely. Finnur probably attributed its origin to scribal intervention. In *lv* 9 the preverbs are in fact two, occurring in contiguous lines:

vita, hvé oss *of* eiri
 ǫl þats Bárðr *of* signði

As shown by Hans Kuhn, in very early poems the proclitic *of/um* occurs in etymologically plausible contexts, namely where comparative reconstruction indicates that the presence of a Germanic prefix such as **ga-* or **bi-* is semantically and morphologically plausible.⁵⁵ "Thus, both the frequency of the particle and its 'correctness' compared to the use of prefixes in other old Germanic languages may be applied as dating criteria."⁵⁶ The particle *of/um* does indeed occur in several poems by Egill, before both verbs and nouns. In this stanza, it occurs twice but, as observed above, the second occurrence in front of the Latin loanword *signa* is etymologically implausible. The first occurrence, in front of the verb *eira* 'to agree, to suit', is less

54 Males, *The Poetic Genesis*, 225.

55 Hans Kuhn, *Das Füllwort of-um im Altwestnordischen: Eine Untersuchung zur Geschichte des germanischen Präfixe: Ein Beitrag zur altgermanischen Metrik*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1929 (Ergänzungshefte zur Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung auf dem Gebiet der indogermanischen Sprachen, 8), 9–44.

56 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, xcix.

straightforward.⁵⁷ This verb has indeed West Germanic cognates with a transitivizing pre-verb *ge-* (OE *ge-ārian*; OHG *ge-ēren*), but in those cases it generally has the specific meaning ‘to honour, to show respect’, and this is obviously not the required meaning here. Rather than actual archaic prefixes, these two occurrences seem to be attempts at active archaization on the part of a later poet, who would have managed to reproduce the occurrence of the particle in preverbal position but would have lost the ability to use it in its ‘correct’ context. I shall return to Pseudo-Egill’s capacity to use the metrical filler *of/um* as an archaizing device later in this article.

(e) Echoes of other poems

As observed above, *lv* 9 has highly irregular *hendingar* almost throughout. The only line with a regular rhyme pattern is line 6: *velglýjaðra þýja* (‘of the much-cheerful servant maidens’). This line is very similar to a line found in a stanza by Eyvindr skáldaspillir (*lv* 8.6): *fáglýjaðra þýja* (‘of the little-cheerful servant maidens’), here referring to the giantesses Fenja and Menja grinding gold for Fróði.⁵⁸ This appears to have been a well-known stanza in the thirteenth century, being quoted not only in *Fagrskinna* and in *Heimskringla*, but also in *Skáldskaparmál* and, partly, in the *Third Grammatical Treatise*. As we shall see below, echoes of tenth- and eleventh-century poems are another typical trait of Pseudo-Egill’s style.

The Word *víkingr* in Egill’s *lausavísur*

So far, we have observed that some features tend to cluster in a subgroup of probably pseudonymous stanzas in *Egils saga*, namely: (a) strong irregularity in the *hendingar*; (c) relatively simple syntax and few and simple kennings. Alongside these, other diagnostic features might occur, such as: (b) late linguistic or metrical forms; (d) signs of active archaization; (e) echoes of other poems. I will focus now on two stanzas in *Egils saga* that exhibit these traits, namely *lv* 7, attributed to the seven-year-old Egill, and *lv* 14, about a raid in Värmland, composed by Egill as a reply to Jarl Arnfiðr’s daughter who questioned his valor.⁵⁹

57 OE *ārian* “to spare”; OFr *ēria* “id.”; OS/OHG *ēren/ēron* “to be graceful” (de Vries, *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 97).

58 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 226.

59 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 175, 189.

Egils saga, lausavísa 7

Þat mælti mín móðir,
 at mér skyldi kaupa
 fley ok fagrar árar,
 fara á braut með víkingum,⁶⁰
 standa upp í stafni,
 stýra dýrum knerri,
 halda svá til hafnar
 hoggva mann ok annan.

My mother said that people should buy
 me a ship and fine oars,
 to travel abroad with Vikings,
 stand up in the prow, steer the costly
 cargo ship, and so make for the
 harbour, cut down a man and another.⁶¹

Egils saga, lausavísa 14

Farit hefk blóðgum brandi,
 svát mér benþiðurr fylgði,
 ok gjallanda geiri,
 gangr vas harðr af víkingum.
 Gerðum reiðir róstu;
 rann eldr of sjöt manna;
 létum blóðga búka
 í borggliðum sæfask.

I have gone with bloody blade and with
 screaming spear, so that the wound-
 capercaillie [RAVEN/EAGLE] followed
 me; the attack from the vikings was
 tough. Angry, we caused tumult; fire ran
 through men's houses; we made bloody
 bodies fall dead in town-gates.⁶²

Both stanzas lack *hendingar* (in italics) in most lines, have a straightforward syntax and no or few and simple kennings. Moreover, *lv* 7.1 contains a heavy dip since position 4 is occupied by a trimoraic possessive pronoun (*mín*) with secondary stress. *Lv* 14, on the other hand, contains two lines that have close parallels in the skaldic corpus. Line 2: *mér benþiðurr fylgði* is similar to *fekk benþiðurr blakkan* | [*bjór*], in Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld's

60 The reference edition (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 175–176) chooses the metrically regular reading *fara braut* shared by *Wolfenbüttelbuch* (Herzog August Bibliothek, WolfAug 9 10 4to, 37r) and by the ζ Fragment (Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, AM 162 A ζ fol, 2r), two witnesses belonging to the so-called B-redaction (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 154). The metrically irregular *fara á braut*, however, is attested in all three branches of the *Egils saga* tradition: *Möðruvallabók* (A-redaction), Fragment AM 162 δ (B-redaction) and the two *Ketilsbækur* (C-redaction). Since, as the discussion below will illustrate, the metrical irregularity seems to be a characteristic of this line (cf. the anomalous closing in *víkingum* in positions 4–6; *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 176) and is thus not at odds with the stemmatic evidence, I have retained the reading of the majority of the mss.

61 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 175.

62 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 189.

lv 22.7–8.⁶³ Line 6: *rann eldr of sjöt manna* is plainly borrowed from the identical fire description in Arnórr jarlaskáld Þórðarson's *Haraldsdrápa* 1.2.⁶⁴ The clustering of these features strengthens the hypothesis, already advanced by Males, that the stanzas were composed by the saga-author.⁶⁵ Finally, there is one more odd thing about this pair of stanzas: in both, the word *vikingr* is used as a self-descriptive term by Egill, and it occurs as an odd three-syllabic clausula in lines that appear hypermetrical:

lv 7.4: fara á braut með **vikingum** *lv* 14.4: gangr vas harðr af **vikingum**

In order to produce six metrical positions, the segments *fara á braut* and *gangr vas harðr* need to occupy two metrical positions. This can tentatively be achieved by positing a combination of resolution and elision, a solution that, as pointed out by Clunies Ross, “is possible but uncommon.”⁶⁶ Interestingly, the closest parallels to such metrical patterns are found in *Háttatal* st. 8, where Snorri stretches the capacity of *dróttkvætt* lines by “placing short syllables close to one another” and experimenting with extreme cases of resolution, neutralization, and elision.⁶⁷ In fact, the two cases in question take this ‘technique’ to even more extreme consequences than the *Háttatal* stanza, especially in the case of *lv* 14.4, where the segment *-ngr v’s b-* produces an exacting consonantal cluster.

The word *vikingr* is thus common to *lv* 7 and 14 by Pseudo-Egill as well as to our *lv* 15, where it describes Eyvindr skreyja as *vikingr, sás varði Dana ríki* (‘the *vikingr* who guarded the Danish kingdom’). Regarding the stanza where young Egill daydreams about his viking activities, Judith Jesch observed that the use of the word *vikingr* as a self-descriptive term looks suspicious for an early tenth-century poem and suggested that the stanza was probably composed for the saga.⁶⁸ The first secure occurrences of the noun *vikingr* in skaldic poetry date to the last decades of the tenth century

63 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 837.

64 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 2, 261–262.

65 Males, *The Poetic Genesis*, 224.

66 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 176.

67 Snorri Sturluson, *Háttatal*, 7–8; *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 3, 1112.

68 Judith Jesch, “Skaldic Verse in Scandinavian England,” in *Vikings and the Danelaw. Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress*, ed. James Graham-Campbell et al. (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2001), 313–325.

and show an increase after the year 1000.⁶⁹ The term generally designates an external and foreign enemy, often engaging in piracy.

Table 1: Occurrence of the word vikingr in skaldic poetry (c. 980–1050)

Date	Source	Occurrence	Referring to	Ed.
c. 984	Þmáhl <i>Máv</i> 13.6	frön víkinga mána	Ambiguous	<i>SkP</i> 5, 435
c. 985	ÞHjalt <i>lv</i> 2.4	sveimr víkinga heiman	Swedes	<i>SkP</i> 1, 273
c. 986	Þskúm <i>lv</i> 1	vö víkinga vörn Hólkunar	Jómsvíkingar	<i>SkP</i> 1, 360
c. 987	Tindr <i>Hákr</i> 5.8	meiðr víkinga skeiðar	Jómsvíkingar	<i>SkP</i> 3, 347
c. 1000	Eil <i>Þdr</i> 9.3	setrs víkingar snotrir	Þórr and Þjálfi	<i>SkP</i> 3, 95
c. 1010	Edað <i>Bandr</i> 5.6	svorð víkinga hvarðu	Vinðland pirates	<i>SkP</i> 1, 463
c. 1015	Sigv <i>Vikv</i> 3.6	leið víkinga skeiðar	Finns (?)	<i>SkP</i> 1, 537
c. 1015	Sigv <i>Vikv</i> 6.6	víkingar þar díki	Óláfr's enemies	<i>SkP</i> 1, 541
c. 1040	Sigv <i>ErfÓl</i> 6.4	víkingum skor, ríkis	Óláfr's enemies	<i>SkP</i> 1, 672

The most notable exception here is the use of the term *víkingar* to describe Þórr and Þjálfi in Eilífr Guðrúnarson's *Þórsdrápa*. The poem, however, is experimental in its tendency to use non-mythological base-words for the description of mythological entities. Composed within the circle of Hákon jarl Sigurðarson, *Þórsdrápa* has been understood by a number of scholars as the product of a peculiar operation, combining mythological narrative and political praise.⁷⁰ As first suggested by Edith Marold, a parallel between Þórr's victorious expedition and Hákon jarl's military success is implied by the abundance of giant-kennings involving names of peoples subjected or defeated by Hákon.⁷¹ Similarly, Þórr and Þjálfi are described as warriors engaging in raids and ambushes to the halls of foreign enemies, and the choice of the kenning *eiðsvara víkingar setrs Gauta* ('oath-bound *víkingar* of the seat of Gauti [Óðinn]'), seems motivated by this characterization. In the course of the eleventh century, some other ambiguous instances of the word *víkingr*

69 *Lexicon poeticum*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, 625. An overview is provided by the online edition, which is, however, not complete: <https://lexiconpoeticum.org/m.php?p=lemma&i=94043>.

70 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 3, 73–75.

71 Edith Marold, "Skaldendichtung und Mythologie," in *Atti del 12' Congresso Internazionale di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, Spoleto 4-10 Settembre*, ed. Teresa Pároli (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1990), 107–130.

are found, although in most cases it continues to be used as a dismissive term for the ruler's enemies, often pirates or criminals of some sort.⁷²

Table 2: Occurrence of the word *vikingr* in skaldic poetry (c. 1050–1200)

Date	Source	Occurrence	Referring to	Ed.
c. 1060	Valg <i>Har</i> 3.2	brutu víkingar fíkjum	Ambiguous	<i>SkP</i> 2, 302
c. 1070	Steinn <i>Óldr</i> 3.4	blóð víkingar óðu	Norwegians	<i>SkP</i> 2, 370
c. 1100	Bkrepp <i>Magnr</i> 4.1	vikinga lætr vengis	Magnús' enemies	<i>SkP</i> 2, 399
c. 1165	Þskakk <i>Erlr</i> 3.2	Erlingr at víkingum	Pirates	<i>SkP</i> 2, 635
c. 1180	HSt <i>Rst</i> 8.8	víkingum hlut slíkan	Óláfr's enemies	<i>SkP</i> 1, 905
c. 1184	Hskv <i>Útdr</i> 1.4	víkingar gram ríkjum	Moors	<i>SkP</i> 2, 484

As observed by Gade, the term probably designates Norwegian troops in Steinn Herdísarson's *Óláfsdrápa* st. 3, but it is probably relevant that the term is used in the context of the battle of Fulford in Northumbria (1066), where the label 'viking' could possibly be claimed as an identifier against English enemies.⁷³ The first time the word occurs with a certainly positive connotation is in the mid-twelfth century (c. 1140), in Ívarr Ingimundarson's *Sigurðarbálkr* st. 42, where it refers to the poem's protagonist, Sigurðr slembidjárn Magnússon:

Varð á vatni víkingr tekinn
sás manna vas mestr fullhugi.

The viking, who was the most high-mettled of men, was captured in the water.⁷⁴

It thus seems that the connotation of the term *vikingr* was gradually changing during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but its occurrence is extremely rare before the late tenth century. In fact, if we exclude the three stanzas of *Egils saga*, the word *vikingr* is found only once in a stanza

72 See Kari E. Gade's note to Halldórr skvaldri's *Útfarardrápa* 1 (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 2, 484–485) and Judith Jesch's about Sighvatr Þórðarson's *Víkingarvísur* 3.6 (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 537). According to Gade, the word *vikingr* is used in a positive connotation in Valg *Har* 3 (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 2, 302–303), but I find the occurrence rather ambiguous.

73 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 2, 370, 484–485.

74 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 2, 225–226.

attributed to the late-ninth-century poet Þjóðólfr ór Hvini, about the battle of Hafrsfjord (c. 890):

Leiddisk þá fyr Lúfu	lengr at haldask
hersa drótt	ok hofðingjum.
Flýði hverr,	sem fara mátti,
hraustra víkinga	ór Hafrsfirði.

The host of *hersar* and the chieftains grew tired then of holding out longer against *Lúfa* ('Shaggy-locks'); each of the valiant vikings who could go fled from Hafrsfjord.⁷⁵

As in Pseudo-Egill's stanzas, the word *víkingr* receives here a positive connotation and designates the noble chieftains abandoning Norway for Iceland after their defeat in Hafrsfjord. There are several reasons to assume that the poem is a late construction, however – Finnur Jónsson's editorial title is telling: *Et digt om Haraldr hárfagre, næppe egte*.⁷⁶ Stanzas 1–4 are transmitted only in *Flateyjarbók*, sts. 1–3 in the *Haralds þátrr hárfagra*. St. 5 is transmitted in the A-branch of the *Fagrskinna* tradition,⁷⁷ and contains the story of Haraldr's change of nickname from *lúfa* to *hárfagri*, famously a late construction.⁷⁸ Furthermore, the first line of this poem is identical to, and probably modeled on, Þorbjörn hornklofi's *Haraldskvæði* 10.1, an authentic source from the period in question attesting only the nickname *lúfa*:

Þorbjörn hornklofi, *Haraldskvæði* 10

Leiddisk þá fyr Lúfu	landi at halda
hilmi inum halsdigra;	holm lét sér at skjaldi.
Slógusk und sessþiljur,	es sárir vóru;
létu upp stjölu stúpa;	stungu í kjöl hofðum.

75 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 62.

76 *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning. A*, vol. I, ed. Finnur Jónsson, 20.

77 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 60.

78 Bjarne Fidjestøl, "Skaldekvad og Harald Hårfagre," *Rikssamlingen og Harald Hårfagre. Historisk seminar på Karmøy 10. og 11. Juni 1993*, ed. Bjørn Myhre (Karmøy kommune, 1993), 15–16; Judith Jesch, "Norse Historical Traditions and the *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan*: Magnús Berfœttr and Haraldr Hårfagri," in *Gruffud ap Cynan. A Collaborative Biography*, ed. K. L. Maund (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1996), 143–144.

The fat-necked prince [KJǪTVI] grew tired then of holding the land against *Lúfa* ('Shaggy-locks') [HARALDR]; he let an islet be a shield to himself. They threw themselves under the bench-planks, those who were wounded; they let their rumps stick up; they plunged their heads into the bilge.⁷⁹

In the poem attributed to Þjóðólfr, the very motive of the unyielding chieftains fleeing after the battle of Hafrsfjord betrays an Icelandic perspective on the episode.⁸⁰ In fact, the entire stanza 4 appears to be a re-elaboration of the ludicrous description of the fleeing chieftains found in *Haraldskvæði* 10–12.⁸¹ In sum, when compared to the earliest occurrences of the term in skaldic verse, the use of 'vikingr' as self-descriptive seems implausible for an early tenth-century poet, the positive connotation attributed to the word reflecting rather thirteenth-century perceptions. This suggests that, like *lv* 7 and 14, *lv* 15 too should be regarded as a creation of Pseudo-Egill.

Lausavísa 15: A New Technique

With this new awareness, let us take a fresh look at the stanza. Internal rhymes are rendered in italics.

Egils saga, lausavísa 15
 Gerðum hólzti *harða*
 hríð fyr Jótlands síðu,
 barðisk vel, sá's *varði*
 vikingr, Dana *ríki*,
 áðr á *sund* fyr *sandi*
 snarfengr með lið *drengja*
austr af unnar *hesti*
 Eyvindr of hljóp *skreyja*.

79 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 105.

80 Theodore M. Andersson, *The Sagas of Norwegian Kings (1130–1265). An Introduction*, *Islandica* LIX (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 67.

81 St. 12.5–8: *Æstusk austkylfur | ok of Jaðar hljópu | heim ór Hafrsfirði | ok hugðu á mjöðdrykkju* 'The east-cudgels were stirred up and ran across Jæren, homewards from Hafrsfjorden, and concentrated on mead-drinking' (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1 (Fulk, ed. and trans.), 106).

We made a very harsh battle off the coast of Jutland; the *vikingr* who guarded the Danish kingdom fought well, until the swift-acting one, Eyvindr skreyja, with a band of warriors, jumped from the wave-horse [SHIP] in the east and took to swimming by the shore.

The stanza conforms to Pseudo-Egill's simple diction and style; the only kenning, *unnar hestr* ('the wave's horse' for SHIP) is as simple as it gets in skaldic poetry. The meter is relatively regular, with the notable occurrence of a heavy dip in l. 2: *Jótlands*. As observed above, this stanza lacks Pseudo-Egill's main trademark: irregular rhymes (the occurrence of an *aðalhending* in the odd l. 3 is not, strictly speaking, irregular). When it comes to another recurring feature of Pseudo-Egill's stanzas, however, namely echoes from other poems, the situation is quite remarkable.

Egill, <i>lausavísa</i> 15	Model-line	Poem
Gerðum hólzti harða	Gerðisk heldr við harðan	Hskv <i>Útfdr</i> 2.5 (<i>SkP</i> 2, 485)
hríð fyr Jótlands síðu	hríð við markar síðu	Tindr <i>Hákdr</i> 7.8 (<i>SkP</i> 3, 350)
barðisk vel, sá's varði	sú gerðisk vel varði	Hfr <i>ErfÓl</i> 14.7 (<i>SkP</i> 1, 420)
víkingr, Dana ríki,	víkingum skǫr, ríkis	Sigv <i>ErfÓl</i> 6.4 (<i>SkP</i> 1, 672)
áðr á sund fyr sandi	þars í sundr á sandi	Tindr <i>Hákdr</i> 3.5 (<i>SkP</i> 3, 343)
snarfengr með lið drengja	snarfengr með lið drengja	Þorm <i>Þorgdr</i> 10.2 (<i>SkP</i> 5, 505)
austr af unnar hesti	austr fyr unnar hesti	Gunnl <i>lv</i> 9.7 (<i>SkP</i> 5, 838)
Eyvindr of hljóp skreyja.	Eyvindar lið skreyju	Eyv <i>lv</i> 3.4 (<i>SkP</i> 1, 218)

In fact, every line of the stanza finds a relatively close match in the skaldic canon. Considering that Pseudo-Egill generally retains the rhyming words of the model lines, this explains why *lv* 15 has no irregular *hendingar*. The only exception to a regular alternation *skothending*–*aðalhending* in *lv* 15 is in v. 3, where the verb *gerðisk* in the pattern verse has been changed to *barðisk*, for semantic reasons, with the effect that the verse has *aðalhending* instead of the original *skothending*. I will now take a closer look at the line re-workings.

[1. 1] *Gerðum hølzti harða*

The closest match to this line is *Gerðisk heldr við harðan* from Halldórr skvaldri's *Útfarardrápa* for Sigurðr Jórsalafari. As in Pseudo-Egill's stanza, the verb is fronted at the opening of a *helmingr*. This stanza is quoted by both *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla*.

[1. 2] *hríð fyr Jótlands síðu*

The line has multiple possible models, as the collocation *hríð : síðu* is attested in at least three other poems: Tindr Hallkelsson's *Hákonardrápa* st. 7.8 is probably echoed in Halldórr ókristni's *Eiríksflokkur* 3.8.⁸² The collocation occurs again in st. 5 of *Liðsmannaflokkur*, with a place-name occupying positions 3–4, as in Pseudo-Egill's line. Despite incongruencies in its attribution, *Liðsmannaflokkur* is attested in both the *Legendary Saga of Saint Óláfr* and Styrmir Kárason's *Lífssaga*, hence it is assumed to have been contained in the so-called *Oldest Saga of Saint Óláfr*, from the late twelfth century.⁸³ This poem seems thus to have belonged to the earliest kernel of skaldic sources associated to Óláfr Haraldsson.

Tindr *Hákr* 7.8⁸⁴

hríð við markar síðu

Hókr *Eirfl* 3.8⁸⁵

hríð – við Fáfnis síðu

Ólhelg *Liðs* 5.8⁸⁶

hríð á Tempsar síðu

Unlike the model lines, Pseudo-Egill's line has a heavy dip in position 4: *lands*. This is not in violation of Craigie's law, since position 4 carries only secondary stress, but, as noted above, the frequency of heavy dips increases in the later skaldic production. Again, a necessary change in wording (from *Tempsar síðu* to *Jótlands síðu*) is responsible for the unexpected metrical form, cf. the similar case of *aðalhending* for *skothending* in l. 3 mentioned above.

[1. 3] *barðisk vel sás varði*

The closest match to this line is found in Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld's *erfi-*

82 On *Eiríksflokkur*'s tendency to contain frequent echoes of previous poems, see *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 470.

83 Bjarne Fidjestøl, *Det norrøne fyrstediktet*, Universitet i Bergen Nordisk institutts skriftserie 11 (Øvre Ervik: Alvheim & Eide, 1982), 21–22.

84 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 350.

85 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 475.

86 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 1022.

drápa for Óláfr Tryggvason, in the line *sú gerðisk vel — varði*.⁸⁷ The presence of the adverb *vel* alliterating with *varði* (metrically, an X-type) is also paralleled in Sighvatr's *Víkingarvísur* st. 4.3: *dýrð frákk, þeim vel varðisk*.⁸⁸

[l. 4] *víkingr Dana ríki*

The word *víkingr* does not occur often in positions 1–2 in *dróttkvætt* lines (cf. Tables 1 and 2 above). The first skald to use it in the opening of lines is Sighvatr Þórðarson, and his two lines are obvious candidates for possible models for l. 4 in Pseudo-Egill's stanza, especially the one from the *erfidrápa* for Saint Óláfr, with the collocation *víkingr — ríki*. All previous occurrences of the line, however, are D₄/E-type lines, whereas Pseudo-Egill creates an A_{2k}.

víkingr, Dana ríki,	víkingum skor, ríkis	Sigv <i>ErfÓl</i> 6.4 (<i>SkP</i> 1, 672)
	víkingar þar diki	Sigv <i>Vikv</i> 6.6 (<i>SkP</i> 1, 541)
	víkingar þar ríki	Óttarr, <i>Knútdr</i> 5.4 (<i>SkP</i> 1, 772)
	víkingum hlut slíkan	HSt <i>Rst</i> 8.8 (<i>SkP</i> 1, 905)

For what concerns the two central positions of the line, containing the ethnonym *Dana* (gen. pl.), the possible models are many, since this word, in a collocation with *skeiðar* ('warships'), occurs in several A_{2k} lines from tenth-century poems about rulers with strong 'anti-Danish' agendas.

Gsind <i>Hákd</i> 2.6	Tindr <i>Hákd</i> 9.4	Edað <i>Bandr</i> 7.6	ÞKolb <i>Eindr</i> 1.8
þás ellifu allar	þar vas lind fyr landi	Hrauð fúrgjafall fjórar	vangs á vatn of þrungit
allreiðr Dana skeiðar	leiðangr Dana skeiðar	folkmeiðr Dana skeiðar	viggmeiðr Dana skeiðum

Considering the evidence from ll. 2 and 5 (see below), Tindr's *Hákonardrápa* seems to have a strong case, but all these poems might have served as a model for Pseudo-Egill. Given the content of *lv* 15, also the similarity between another line from Tindr's *Hákonardrápa* and Eyvindr skáldaspil-lir's *lausavísa* 5, allegedly about Hákon góði and Eyvindr skreyja, is worthy of mention:

87 St. 14, l. 7, *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 420.

88 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 539.

Eyv *lv* 5.8
 gollhjöltuðum galtar
 grandaðr Dana brandi.

Tindr *Hákd* 6.4
 auði grimms at eyðask
 qll lqnd Dana brandi.

In sum, given the frequency of the ethnonym *Danir* in several late-tenth-century *drápur* about Hákon góði and the Hlaðajarlar, the occurrence of this name in positions 3–4 had acquired popularity in a section of the poetic corpus that appears to have been well-known to Pseudo-Egill.

[1. 5] *áðr á sund fyr sandi*

This line finds a close match once again in Tindr Hallkelsson's *Hákonardrápa*, this time in st. 3.5: *þars í sundr á sandi*, a stanza quoted in *Heimskringla*.⁸⁹ Like Halldórr ókristni's *Eiríksflokk*, Tindr's poem seems to have been the target of multiple echoes by Pseudo-Egill. This circumstance could be of text-critical interest, since, while parts of *Hákonardrápa* are quoted piecemeal in *Skáldskaparmál* and in *Heimskringla*, some stanzas (among which sts. 6, 7 and 9 mentioned above) are only transmitted in *Jómsvíkinga saga*, and their authenticity as historical sources has been sometimes questioned.⁹⁰

[1. 6] *snarfengr með lið drengja*

This line appears to be a plain loan from Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld's *Þorgeirsdrápa* st. 10, l. 2, quoted in *Fóstbræðra saga*.⁹¹

Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld's *Þorgeirsdrápa* st. 10.1–4

Gaut veitk at son Sleitu
 snarfengr með lið drengja
 hqlðr við harðar deilðir
 hjordjarfan nam fjörvi.

89 A similar line occurs also in Einarr Skúlason's *Geisli*, st. 59, l. 1: *lustu sundr á sandi* (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 7, 55).

90 On *Egils saga*'s dependence on *Jómsvíkinga saga*, see Bjarni Einarsson, *Litterære forudsætninger for Egils saga* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1975), 105–155.

91 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 505. The line has a variant reading *snarfengr meðal drengja* in the paper manuscript of skaldic poems redacted by Árni Magnússon (AM 761 b 4to), which is, however, unattested elsewhere. The line *snarfengr með lið drengja* occurs in a *lausavísa* spoken by Björn Hitdælakppi in the eponymous saga (*lv* 36, l. 8 in *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 116).

I know that the man [Þorgeirr], swift-acting, with a band of warriors, in hard conflicts, took the life of the sword-bold Gautr Sleituson.

Þorgeirsdrápa differs from the sources so far examined for being transmitted in the corpus of the Icelandic family sagas rather than in that of the kings' sagas and for being composed not about a ruler but as a memorial poem for Þormóðr's sworn brother Þorgeirr Hávarsson. Nonetheless, Þormóðr was a professional skald, and his *lausavísur* about Óláfr Haraldsson were already quoted within the earliest sagas about Saint Óláfr, three of them occurring in the fragments of the *Oldest Saga*.⁹² Furthermore, *Þorgeirsdrápa* is quoted in an authenticating rather than situational fashion in *Fóstbræðra saga*, and a number of formal features (hiatus forms, archaic forms, *aðalhending* in a : ρ), spread evenly throughout the poem, instill confidence in its traditional dating to the late tenth or beginning of the eleventh century.⁹³ *Fóstbræðra saga* has been argued to be among the earliest *Íslendingasögur*, it might have been a source for the oldest saga about Saint Óláfr, and it appears to have served as a 'lateral' source for Snorri's *Heimskringla*.⁹⁴

[l. 7] *austr af unnar best*

An almost identical line is attested in a *lausavísa* attributed to Gunnlaugr ormstunga, in the eponymous saga. The ambiguous nature of the poetry contained in this saga calls for a careful analysis.

Gunnlaugr ormstunga Illugason, *lausavísa* 9

Segið ér frá jarli
 oddfeimu staf* þeima,
 hann hefr litnar *hóvar*
 (hárr karl es sá) *bórrur*.
 Sigurreynir hefr sénar

92 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 823–825; Theodore M. Andersson, *The Growth of the Medieval Icelandic Sagas (1180–1280)* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 70.

93 Mikael Males, "Fóstbræðra saga: A Missing Link?", *Gripla* 31 (2020), 93–94; Fulk, *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 482.

94 The early dating of *Fóstbræðra saga* was challenged by Jónas Kristjánsson in his thesis: *Um 'Fóstbræðrasögu'* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1972). See, however, Theodore M. Andersson, "Redating *Fóstbræðra saga*," in *Dating the Sagas: Reviews and Revisions*, ed. Else Mundal (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2013), 66–72.

sjalfr í miklu gjalfri
 austr fyr unnar hesti
 Eirekr bláar fleiri.

Tell the stave of the point-maiden [VALKYRIE > WARRIOR = GUNNLAUGR] of that jarl; he has seen towering waves; that is a grey-haired old man. The victory-rowan [WARRIOR], Eirekr, has himself seen more blue ones east in the great ocean-surge in front of his horse of the waves.⁹⁵

The similarity between the two lines was noted by Kari E. Gade, who regarded it, together with several other echoes occurring in the poetry of *Gunnlaugs saga*, as a sign of late composition.⁹⁶ Gade's general argument about the use of echoes in the composition of pseudonymous poetry is quite convincing and is strengthened by the findings presented in this article. Unlike *Fóstbræðra saga*, *Gunnlaugs saga* does not belong among the earliest *skáldasögur*, it shows influence especially from *Hallfreðar saga*, and is indeed rich in late, pseudonymous stanzas.⁹⁷ Not all the poetry attributed to the protagonist was composed for the saga, however. Although Gunnlaugr's poetic production is almost entirely transmitted in the saga, he is listed among professional poets in both versions of *Skáldatal*, and his *runhent* poem for the king of Dublin Sigtryggr silkiskegg, *Sigtryggsdrápa*, contains at least one clear archaic feature (prenominal particle: *of skil*, st. 1.1).⁹⁸ Furthermore, the first half of *lv 12* is quoted also in *Skáldskaparmál* and shares the theme of love rivalry with other stanzas in the saga.⁹⁹ This is a more reassuring situation than that, for instance, of Gísli Súrsson, a skald almost ignored by sources other than *Gísla saga*. And yet, a large portion of the poetry attributed to Gísli is compatible with a tenth-century dating.¹⁰⁰ It is thus reasonable to think that *Gunnlaugs saga* contains a mixture of authentic and inauthentic stanzas, although the portion of the

95 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5 (Diana Whaley, ed. and trans), 838–839.

96 Gade, "The Dating and Attributions of Verses," 73.

97 Russell Poole, *Skaldsagas: Text, Vocation, and Desire in the Icelandic Sagas of Poets* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001), 125–171; *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 819.

98 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 836.

99 Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, vol 1, p. 63; *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 856–858; Poole, *Skaldsagas*, 162.

100 Myrvoll, "The Authenticity of Gísli's Verse."

latter is higher than in other texts belonging to this genre. The linguistic evidence for dating *lv* 9 is not decisive, since the *aðalhending* in *ár : ór* in l. 4 would have been valid also after the merger of the two phonemes. The hiatus form *bláar* in l. 8 (positions 3–4) instills some confidence in an early date, although this is admittedly the kind of form that was analogically restored after *c.* 1250 and that could be reproduced by imitation.¹⁰¹ In general, the stanza presents several textual problems. As it stands, line 1 is hypometrical (*segið* would normally be subject to resolution) and seems to lack *skothendingar* (the irregular rhyme *ér : arl* assumed by the editor seems unwarranted).¹⁰² The last word of line 3 is omitted in both witnesses and has been inserted by conjecture. Formal features of the verse are thus of limited help. The situation is ambiguous: on the one hand, several stanzas in *Gunnlaugs saga* seem to contain echoes from lines in other *skáldasögur*, and this has been interpreted as a sign of pseudonymous composition.¹⁰³ On the other hand, however, the cumulative evidence of Pseudo-Egill's praxis in *lausavísa* 15 makes a strong case for the opposite scenario, as it seems uneconomical to postulate that uniquely line 7 in the stanza is not based on a model but became, in turn, target of imitation. Thus, given the seemingly archaic (albeit non-decisive) features in Gunnlaugr's stanza, and in light of the evidence from all other lines in Pseudo-Egill's stanza, I will limit myself to claim that it is not unreasonable to assume that, in this case, the loan might have gone from Gunnlaugr's verse to *Egils saga*.

[l. 8] *Eyvindr of hljóp skreyja*

This line is in all likelihood modeled on the only other poetic occurrence of the name Eyvindr skreyja in the same metrical positions, namely Eyvindr skáldaspillir's line: *Eyvindar lið skreyju*. Notice the occurrence of the particle *of/um* in position 3. As in the case of the verbs *eira* and *signa* in the *Bárðr* stanza above (*lv* 9), the occurrence of such a preverb in front of the preterit of *hlaupa*, an intransitive verb of motion, seems etymologically implausible (cf. Gothic *hlaupan*; OE *hleapan*, pret. *hleop*; OS *hlōpan*; OHG *hlaufan*). Thus, evidence from spurious stanzas suggests that pseudo-Egill did actively archaize, using the particle *of/um* as a metrical filler. It is quite possible that he used occurrences of the particle in genuine stanzas as a

101 Myrvoll, *Kronologi i skaldekvæde*, 312–313; Snorri Sturluson, *Háttatal*, 7.

102 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 838.

103 Gade "The Dating and Attribution of Verses," 72–73; *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 822.

model. For instance, the *lausavísa* following the one about Eyvindr skreyja in *Egils saga* contains a plausibly etymological occurrence of the particle *of/um* in the same metrical position:

Egils saga, lausavísa 15.7–8

austr af unnar hesti
Eyvindr of hljóp skreyja.

...to the east, off the wave's horse,
Eyvindr skreyja leapt.

Egils saga, lausavísa 16.1–2

Áleifr of kom jöfri
– ótt vas víg – á bak flótta [...]

Áleifr had the prince turn his back
and flee – the battle raged [...]

The *of* in the sentence *Áleifr of kom jöfri á bak flótta* is etymologically justified, as it marks the causative use of the verb *koma* in the meaning 'bring to, cause to go'.¹⁰⁴ Due to the loss of the preverb in classical Old Norse, however, the causative construction of the verb *koma* no longer had a morphological marker on the verb, the causative value relying only on the construction with the direct object in the dative. Thus, Pseudo-Egill might have analyzed *of* as a preverbal particle simply occurring before a verb in the preterite and might have perceived *lv* 15.8 and *lv* 16.1 as perfectly parallel lines. Moreover, the occurrence of the expletive particle in front of finite verbs is well attested in this line-type ever since the ninth century. The preverbal particle *of/um* in position 3 is especially common in type E4 odd, in sentence introductory lines.

104 Kuhn, *Das Füllwort*, 41. Cf. similar causative constructions in *Haustlǫng* (late ninth century), st. 9.5–6: *Brunmakrs of kom bekkjar | Brísings goða dísi* [...] (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 3, 444) and in *Þórsdrápa* (late tenth century) st. 19.1–2 *Bifðisk hǫll, þás hǫfði | Heiðreks of kom breiðu* [...] (*Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 3, 117).

Table 3: Type E4 Odd¹⁰⁵

Ninth century	Þjóð <i>Haustl</i> 3.5	margspakr of nam mæla
	Þjóð <i>Haustl</i> 9.5	brunnakrs of kom bekkjar
Tenth century	Egill <i>Aðdr</i> 1.5	Aðalsteinn of vann annat
	Egill <i>lv</i> 16.1	Áleifr of kom jöfri
	Glúmr <i>Gráf</i> 8.5	viðlendr of bað vinda
	Glúmr <i>lv</i> 1.5	folkrakkr, of vannt, fylkir,
	Esk <i>Vell</i> 10.3	þrimlundr of jók Þundi
	Hallfr <i>lv</i> 8.7	skölkving of þák skjalga
	<i>Skj A1</i> , 175	Barððr of rist báru
Eleventh century	Ótt <i>Hfl</i> 15.3	allvaldr of getr aldar
	Gizsv <i>Frag</i> 1.3	Áleifr of vinnr élum
Twelfth century	Bjþp <i>Jóms</i> 15.5 [<i>stef</i>]	góð ætt of kómgr grimmu
	Bjþp <i>Jóms</i> 34.5	Þorleifr of vann þjokkva
	StjOdd <i>Geirdr</i> 1.1	Geirviðr of nam greiða
	StjOdd <i>Geirdr</i> 7.5	Geirviðr of vá geiri
	Jór <i>Send</i> 4.7	upp angr of hófsk yngva ¹⁰⁶

According to Gade's taxonomy, *Eyvindr of hljóp skreyja* is an E4 Even line. Apart from alliteration and rhymes, this is the exact same line-type of E4 Odd. Expletive *of* in position 3 is much more common in the odd variant, however, because of restrictions on verb placement in even lines. In E4 Even, it is found in only a handful of occurrences before the year 1000, but makes an unexpected comeback in the twelfth century, in two poems with archaizing pretensions.

105 The table is based on Kari Ellen Gade, *The Structure of Old Norse dróttkvætt Poetry*, *Islandica XLIX* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 90–91; Gade, "The Dating and Attributions," 57.

106 Gade included Jörunn skáldmærs *Sendibitr* among tenth-century sources. This poem, however, probably fits better among the actively archaizing *sogekvæde* of the twelfth century; cf. Fidjestøl, *Det norrøne fyrstediktet*, 181; Bjarne Fidjestøl, "Sogekvæde," in *Deutsch-nordische Begegnungen*, ed. K. Braunmüller and M. Brøndsted (Odense: Odense University Press, 1991), 57–76.

Table 4: Type E4 Even¹⁰⁷

Ninth century	Þjóð <i>Haustl</i> 1.6	trygglaust of far þriggja (prenominal)
	Gsind <i>Hákr</i> 5.6	iðvandr of kom skíðum
Tenth century	Eyv <i>lv</i> 6.6	Eiríks of rak geira
	Eil <i>Þdr</i> 19.2	Heiðreks of kom breiðu
Eleventh century	Sigv <i>Erlfl</i> 5.8	Óleif of tók mólum
Twelfth century	HSt <i>Rst</i> 6.6	skjald†fryðr† of nam ryðja
	HSt <i>Rst</i> 8.6	Óláfr of galt dála
	Anon <i>Óldr</i> 6.8	vígmóðr of kom glóðum
	Anon <i>Óldr</i> 13.6	rjóðendr of vann góðar

As suggested by Kari E. Gade:

The four lines from the twelfth century belong to two poems commemorating Óláfr Tryggvason, namely Hallar-Steinn's *Rekstefja* and the anonymous *Óláfsdrápa Tryggvasonar*, while Sighvatr's line relates to Óláfr helgi. Possibly the later occurrences represent conscious attempts to create a link with older poetry commemorating leaders with the name "Óláfr" [cf. Table 3 above, Egill *lv* 16.1 *Áleifr of kom jofri* and Gizsv *Frag* 1.3 *Áleifr of vinnr élum*]. The stereotyped group of verbs in position 4, *koma*, *nema* and *vinna*, would seem to support that suggestion.¹⁰⁸

In any event, Pseudo-Egill would have had several examples of this line-type to draw upon.

In sum, the nature of the sources used by Pseudo-Egill includes skalds later than Egill himself; most of them are active between the last decades of the tenth and the early eleventh century: Eyvindr skáldaspillir and Tindr Hallkelsson composed for Hákon jarl, Halldórr ókristni and Gunnlaugr ormstunga for his son Eiríkr jarl, and Sighvatr and Þormóðr were among the skalds of Óláfr Haraldsson. The latest poem to be used appears to be Halldórr skvaldri's *Útfaradrápa* composed for Sigurðr Jórsalafari. All of these are professional skalds, listed in *Skáldatal*, and most of the source

¹⁰⁷ Based on Gade, *The Structure of Old Norse Dróttkvætt Poetry*, 58.

¹⁰⁸ Gade, "The Dating and Attributions," 58.

texts are extensively quoted in the kings' sagas, with the exception of Þormóðr's and Gunnlaugr's verse, the latter being the most problematic.

What about the Kenning *hranna njótr*?

If *lv 15* is a product of Pseudo-Egill, so must be also the story of the sea-battle between Egill and Eyvindr skreyja. As a consequence, the reading *hranna njótr* in Eyvindr skáldaspillir's *lausavísa* can hardly be interpreted as a kenning for 'swimmer' alluding to Skreyja's past humiliations. An alternative interpretation or an alternative reading to the kenning is thus in order. The expression occurs in the *helmingr* that contains Hákon góði's answer in direct speech, and, as noticed above, its kennings appear to have caused much trouble to both copyists and editors. This is the reading adopted in the latest edition, by Russell Poole.¹⁰⁹

Ef sǫkkspenni svinnan,
sigrminnigr, vilt finna,
framm halt, njótr, at nýtum
Norðmanna gram, hranna.

If, mindful of victory, you want to find the wise treasure-grasper [RULER], keep straight ahead to the capable king of the Norwegians, user of the waves [SWIMMER = EYVINDR SKREYJA].

The *helmingr* is transmitted in both branches of the *Fagrskinna* tradition and in the *Kringla*-branch of the *Heimskringla* tradition,¹¹⁰ in only two witnesses, namely Ásgeir Jónsson's copy of *Kringla* (AM 35 fol = *K^x*) and *Fríssbók* (AM 45 fol).

Fsk A^x (AM 303 4to, p. 53–54, *Fagrskinna A*, paper, c. 1675–1700):
eḟ ƒol rýri ƒara | ƒigr minúgr þíllt ƒinna | ƒram hallt þū niotr at nýtum |
noðm:āna gram **ranna**

¹⁰⁹ *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 219–220.

¹¹⁰ *Heimskringla*, vol. I, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, xciv.

Fsk B^x (OsloUB 371 fol 11r, paper, c. 1700):

eḟ fol sḟenner funnan | ḟigr minnigr þillt ḟinna | ḟram̄ halltu niotr at nýtum
| nozð^á gḟam ranna

Frísbók (AM 45 fol, 18r b ll. 6–7, *Heimskringla*, parchment, c. 1300)

eḟ fuipkeni fuinan | ḟigr minnigr uillt ḟina | ḟm̄ hallto niotr at nýtō | nozð m̄
ḟm þanig

Kringla^x (AM 35 fol, 103 v, *Heimskringla*, paper, c. 1675)

eḟ faeckspeni* fuinan | ḟigr minnigr uillt ḟina | fram̄ haltu niotr at nytō |
norð^á g^rm hrana*

(*fuipkeni)

(*þanig)

The most complex text-critical situation is found at the beginning of the *helmingr*, especially in l. 1.¹¹¹ For what concerns the last part of the

111 Although the semantics of l. 1 are not directly relevant to the discussion of the kenning *hranna njótr*, a closer look at the manuscript variants of this line is not without interest. While, on the one hand, the nature of the readings seems to suggest a common written source shared by *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*, on the other, oral variants seem to have intervened within the *Fagrskinna* tradition. Let us look at the four text-critically relevant readings of the line:

Fsk A^x: eḟ fol rýri fara ‘ef sólrýri sára’ (‘if, a sun-diminisher of wounds’)

Fsk B^x: eḟ fol sḟenner funnan ‘ef sólspeñnir sunnan’ (‘if, the sun-grasper from the south’)

Frísbók: eḟ fuipkeni fuinan ‘ef svipkenni svinnan’ (‘if, a wise clang-knower’)

Kringla: eḟ faeckspeni fuinan ‘ef sǫkkspenni svinnan’ (‘if, a wise treasure-grasper’)

All mss share the conjunction *ef* at the opening of the *helmingr*, although this is pretty much the only thing they all agree upon. Although remarkably different, the four readings are not completely independent from one another, however. The reading *sunnan* of *Fsk B* is relatable to the reading *svinnan* common to the *Hkr* manuscripts, the difference probably being due to minim confusion. Both *sunnan* and *svinnr* are common skaldic words, often occurring in positions 5–6 of *dróttkvætt* lines. Furthermore, the reading *spennir* is shared by *Fsk B^x* and *K^x*. This might in fact suggest either a direct dependence between the two texts, or dependence on a common written source. Thus, the *Fsk B* and the *Hkr* manuscripts share a considerable segment of text, but all diverge in one point (highlighted in bold):

Fsk B^x: eḟ fol sḟenner funnan

Frísbók: eḟ **fuipkeni** fuinan

Kringla: eḟ **faeckspeni** fuinan

The vowel following the first *stuðill* and the consonantal cluster following it are rendered in different ways by the three witnesses, and this might indicate that this passage of the exemplar was damaged and only partially readable. It seems that the copyists tried to make sense of the passage in different ways. In *Fsk B*, *sólspeñnir* is in the nominative, so that the ‘sun-grasper from the south,’ whatever its meaning, must refer to Eyvindr skreyja. It is somewhat interesting that the variant *sól* appears together with *sunnan*, a collocation known

stanza, and the kenning *branna njótr* in particular, the situation is relatively straightforward: both branches of the *Fagrskinna* tradition present the reading *ranna*; *Fríssbók* has *þannig*, whereas *K^x* has *branna*. The reading *þannig* in *Fríssbók* seems to be a *lectio facilior* that would leave the base-word *njótr* pending and can be safely dismissed. Considering that the reading *ranna* is found in the Norwegian *Fsk* manuscripts and *branna* in the Icelandic *Heimskringla* ones, previous editors have apparently interpreted *ranna* as a norwegianism for *branna*.¹¹² It is, however, possible to explain the kenning taking the *Fsk* reading for good. *Njótr ranna* ‘enjoyer of houses’ or ‘of halls’ could be taken as an injurious address, based on the topos, recurring in skaldic poetry, of cowards enjoying the comfort of the house, while the brave ones prefer to be outside, fighting. This theme is attested already in *Haraldskvæði* st. 6:

Úti vill jól drekka,	ef skal einn ráða,
fylkir inn framlyndi,	ok Freys leik heyja.
Ungr leiddisk eldvelli	ok inni at sitja,
varma dyngju	eða vottu dúns fulla.

The courageous leader wants to toast the Yuletide out at sea, if he alone has his way, and practise the sport of Freyr [BATTLE]. [When] young he grew tired of cooking by the fire and sitting indoors, of a warm women’s chamber and of mittens filled with down.¹¹³

from eddic poetry (*Völuspá* 5.1: *sól varþ sunnan*). The variants *svipkennir* and *sökkspennir* of the *Hkr* tradition are difficult to reconcile, unless they are, as suggested, attempts at emending a lacuna in the exemplar, retaining a compounded kenning with a *nomen agentis* as the base-word. The *Fsk A* reading by contrast, has no points of contact with the other witnesses, except for the word *sól*, that it shares with *Fsk B*. It reads *efsólryri sára* (‘if the sun-diminisher of wounds’), that is, *scil.*, ‘the diminisher of the sun of wounds’ [SWORD (?) > WARRIOR]. This is a relatively straightforward kenning and, whoever was responsible for this variant, made sure to vary the rhyme scheme accordingly. Unlike the differences between *Fsk B* and the *Hkr* mss, those between the readings of *Fsk B* and *Fsk A* can hardly be attributed to scribal activity and are more easily explained as oral variants.

112 On norwegianisms, see Stefán Karlsson, “Om norvågismer i islandske håndskrifter,” *Maal og Minne* (1978), 87–101; Jon Gunnar Jørgensen, “Islandske målmerker i Sth. 4 fol. hand 3,” *Maal og Minne* (1985), 202–222; Magnus Rindal, “Norsk eller islandsk: Ei drøfting av språkforma i norske og islandske mellomalderhandskrifter,” *Íslensk málsgaga og textafræði*, ed. Úlfar Bragason, Rit Stofnunar Sigurðar Nordals 3 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Sigurðar Nordals, 1997), 113–120.

113 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 1, 99.

The kenning *ranna njótr* ‘enjoyer of houses’ or ‘someone who is used to the hall’ meaning ‘coward,’ would then be in line with the semantics of Eyvindr’s nickname *skreyja*, making this interpretation contextually plausible. A comparable kenning is found in *Lokasenna* 15.3, where Bragi is referred to as a *bekkskrautuðr* ‘ornament of the bench,’ vigorous at feasting but slow to battle.¹¹⁴ Rather than the loss of h- in the Norwegian manuscripts, it is possible that the form *hranna* in *K^x*, a purely Icelandic cultural product, originated as an Icelandic hypercorrection, on the part of scribes used to intervene to restore lost initial h- in forms such as *lutr* (Icel. *blutr*), *ross* (Icel. *bross*), *neiga* (Icel. *hneiga*), when copying from Norwegian exemplars.¹¹⁵

Who is Pseudo-Egill?

The present analysis has shown that *lausavísa* 15 in *Egils saga* presents several signs of pseudonymous composition, namely: (a) simple kenning style and syntax; (b) a heavy dip in l. 2; (c) an actively archaizing but not etymological use of the preverb *of* in l. 8 and, in all likelihood, in l. 7; (d) the use of the word *vikingr* as a neutral (possibly positive) term; (e) the heavy use of verbal echoes from tenth- and eleventh-century poets. Analyses of this kind, such as those already undertaken by Males, enable us to get a glimpse at the saga-authors’ tool set in the composition of pseudonymous poetry. In turn, an analysis of the techniques employed might tell us something about the author in question.

Indeed, the last question left to address is, Who is Pseudo-Egill? The hypothesis taken into consideration here is that the author of the pseudonymous stanzas and the author of the prosimetrical work that contains them are one and the same person. Several scholars have considered Snorri Sturluson as the most probable candidate for the authorship of *Egils saga*,

114 For similar insulting kennings building on conventional models, see Rudolf Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden* (Bonn: Schroeder, 1921), 365–367.

115 Norman R. Spencer, “Norwegianisms and Hyper-Norwegianisms in AM 325 IIIa 4to/598 Iþ 4to,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 93 (1994), 374–383; Rune Kyrkjebø, “Norsk eller islandsk skriver i mellomalderhandskrift: Ei kritisk vurdering av bruken av språklege kriterium ved heimfesting,” *Nordica Bergensia* 29 (2003), 15–35; Haraldur Bernharðsson, “Kirkja, klaustur og norskublandið ritmálsviðmið á Íslandi á miðöldum,” *Íslensk klausturmenning á miðöldum*, ed. Haraldur Bernharðsson (Reykjavík: Miðaldastofa Háskóla Íslands og Háskólaútgáfan, 2016), 149–171.

for various reasons: content, perspective, and socio-political agenda;¹¹⁶ authorial style and praxis;¹¹⁷ language use and stylistic affinity to other Snorronian texts;¹¹⁸ and the archaizing technique employed in the composition of the stanzas.¹¹⁹ Indeed, I believe that the poetical praxis of ‘Pseudo-Egill’ illustrated in this article concurs to support this widespread hypothesis and that, in particular, the comparison between Pseudo-Egill’s technique and Snorri’s prescriptions in *Háttatal* strengthens the evidence in favor of Snorri’s authorship of *Egils saga*. The evidence I will draw upon for assessing the identification of Pseudo-Egill with Snorri are of three kinds: (a) formal features of Pseudo-Egill’s poetry; (b) the nature of Pseudo-Egill’s poetic sources; (c) the similar treatment of Eyvindr skreyja in *Egils saga* and *Heimskringla* as opposed to the *Ágrip-Fagrskinna* tradition.

(a) Formal features of the verse

Several traits in Pseudo-Egill’s versificatory techniques find a counterpart in the praxis prescribed and established in the poetry and in the commentary of *Háttatal*.¹²⁰ Most notably, as already pointed out by Males,¹²¹ Pseudo-Egill uses irregularity in the rhyme scheme to give the impression of an archaic poetic style, as Snorri does in *Háttatal* with the *fornskálda*

116 Björn Magnússon Ólsen, “Landnáma og *Egils saga*,” *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* 19 (1904), 167–247; Björn Magnússon Ólsen, “Er Snorri Sturluson höfundur *Egils sögu*?” *Skírnir*, 79 (1905), 363–368; Torfi H. Tulinius, *The Enigma of Egill. The Saga, the Viking Poet, and Snorri Sturluson*, *Islandica LVII* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 24–26; Torfi H. Tulinius, “The Social Conditions for Literary Practice in Snorri’s Lifetime,” in *Snorri Sturluson and Reykholt. The Author and Magnate, His Life, Works and Environment at Reykholt in Iceland*, ed. Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir and Helgi Þorláksson (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2018), 389–405.

117 *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, xciv.

118 Peter Hallberg, *Snorri Sturluson och Egils saga Skallagrímssonar. Ett försök till språklig författarbestämning*, *Studia Islandica* 20 (Reykjavík: Heimskedeild Háskóla Íslands og Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1962); Haukur Þorgeirsson, “Snorri versus the Copyist. An Investigation of a Stylistic Trait in the Manuscript Traditions of *Egils Saga*, *Heimskringla* and the *Prose Edda*,” *Saga-Book* 38 (2014), 61–74; Haukur Þorgeirsson, “How Similar Are *Heimskringla* and *Egils saga*? An Application of Burrow’s Delta to Icelandic Texts,” *European Journal of Scandinavian Studies*, 48 (2018), 1–18.

119 Males, *The Poetic Genesis*, 219–232.

120 For Snorri’s authorship of the commentary to his own verse in *Háttatal*, see Finnur Jónsson, “Snorri Sturlusons *Háttatal*,” *Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi* 45 (1929), 229–269.

121 Mikael Males, “Applied Grammatica: Conjuring up the Native Poetae,” in *Intellectual Culture in Medieval Scandinavia*, ed. Stefka Georgieva Eriksen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 286–289.

hættir.¹²² Moreover, as observed above, in *lv* 7 and 14 Pseudo-Egill resorts to extreme cases of resolution and elision, a metrical technique otherwise only employed by Snorri in *Háttatal* st. 8 to fit up to nine syllables in a six-position line.

The most conspicuous characteristic of Pseudo-Egill's *lv* 15 is that the entire stanza is modeled on lines lifted from other poems. In *Háttatal*, Snorri allows 'loans' from previous verse, as long as they are limited to 'one line of verse, or less': *Átta [leifi] er þat at nýta þótt samkvætt verði við þat er áðr er ort vísuorð eða skemra*.¹²³ This is precisely the technique we observe in stanza 15, where the echoes never exceed the length of one *vísuorð* and are often limited to 'less than a line', meaning that some of the syllables of the model-line are modified.

Moreover, Pseudo-Egill mostly retains the rhyme patterns of the model-lines, so that the stanza, unlike other pseudonymous stanzas in the saga, has regular *hendingar*. There is, however, one exception. Line 3 has *aðalhendingar* instead of the expected *skothendingar*. This is a poetic license allowed, again, in the commentary of *Háttatal*: *Þriðja leyfi er þat at hafa aðalhendingar í fyrsta eða þriðja vísuorði*.¹²⁴ Thus, the only irregularity in this stanza's rhyme pattern still conforms to Snorri's prescriptions.

Finally, I have showed that Pseudo-Egill reproduces the *of/um* particle in an unetymological context, probably also as part of a conscious archaizing strategy. This is not something unique to Pseudo-Egill or to Snorri, as the use of *of/um* as a metrical filler keeps being productive after the eleventh century, although less frequent and restricted to certain conventionalized patterns, and was used as conscious archaization by several poets from the late twelfth century onwards.¹²⁵ There is, however, one noteworthy correlation between Snorri, Egill's poetry and the expletive *of*. Kari E. Gade shows that the common line-type A3³ displays a very high frequency of expletive *of* in tenth-century poetry.¹²⁶ Despite remaining an extremely frequent line-type, A3³ displays a dramatic decrease in the use of expletive

122 Snorri Sturluson, *Háttatal*, 24–26.

123 Snorri Sturluson, *Háttatal*, 8.

124 Snorri Sturluson, *Háttatal*, 8.

125 Consciously archaizing use of the expletive article has been argued for *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, stanzas from *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, and the anonymous *Óláfsdrápa Tryggvasonar* (Gade, "The Dating and Attributions," 65, 71) as well as for stanzas attributed to Ragnarr loðbrók in his saga (Males, *The Poetic Genesis*, 247–248).

126 Gade, "The Dating and Attributions," 60.

of after the eleventh century, with only two exceptional occurrences, both from thirteenth-century poems. One occurs in an anonymous stanza in *Njáls saga* and one in Snorri's *Egils háttr* in *Háttatal*.¹²⁷ Thus, it appears that Snorri revived a common tenth-century line-type with expletive *of* when trying to compose 'in the manner of Egill.'

On a more general note, several passages in *Háttatal* reveal that Snorri engaged in a conscious and systematic study of 'anomalous' metrical features of ancient poetry and in their reproduction (e.g. hiatus forms), although he might have not always been fully conscious of the diachronic aspect to them.¹²⁸ As further observed by Myrvoll, we can often individuate the exact forms he targeted as models for his exercise.¹²⁹ A similar praxis is revealed by Pseudo-Egill's meticulous imitation of his models.

(b) Nature of the poetic sources

The echoes employed in *lv* 15 are informative about the poetic canon available to the author of this stanza. Most belong to verse attested in *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*, or in *Skáldskaparmál*. Pseudo-Egill also uses a line from *Þorgeirsdrápa* as well as one from a *lausavísa* by Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld, both transmitted in *Fóstbrœðra saga*, a text that appears to have been used by Snorri as a source for *Heimskringla*.¹³⁰ As observed above, the most problematic case concerns a possible echo from a stanza attested in *Gunnlaugs saga*. Although Gunnlaugr's poetry is hardly found outside of this text, one *helmingr* is attributed to him in *Skáldskaparmál* (*Gunnlaugs saga*, *lv* 12.1–4).¹³¹ Indirectly, these echoes are also possibly informative about the authenticity of some poems of uncertain status, such as the ones transmitted outside the more 'trustworthy' corpus of king-sagas and grammatical treatises.

(c) Strange and unparalleled genealogy in *Egils saga-Heimskringla* vs *Ágrip-Fagrskinna*

The most obvious indication of Snorri's involvement in the Eyvindr skreyja story as portrayed in *Egils saga* is the fact that, although

127 Gade, "The Dating and Attributions," 61.

128 Gade, "The Dating and Attributions," 52.

129 Myrvoll, *Samstofur seinar eða skjótar*, 24–25.

130 Andersson, "Redating *Fóstbrœðra saga*," 70–74.

131 *Skaldic Poetry*, vol. 5, 856–858.

Heimskringla follows *Ágrip* and *Fagrskinna* closely when telling the story of the duel between Hákon góði and Eyvindr skreyja, it deviates from them and rather converges with *Egils saga* in attributing to Eyvindr skreyja the improbable kinship with Álfr and Gunnhildr. The relative chronology between *Egils saga* and *Heimskringla* is a disputed matter, although the prevailing opinion among scholars is that *Egils saga* was composed before *Heimskringla*, and that the latter makes use of the first.¹³² I agree with Bjarni Einarsson in attributing the very existence of Álfr askmaðr to the *Egils saga* author's taste for brothers that come in pairs, a recurring trope in this text.¹³³ The impression of pure fictionality of Álfr askmaðr's character is reinforced by the transparent and vague nickname, meaning simply 'sea-farer,' as opposed to the somewhat obscure *skreyja*. The only reason for Álfr's presence in *Heimskringla* appears to be the author's desire not to contradict *Egils saga*'s account. This strengthens the various arguments already advanced for the common attribution of the two texts.¹³⁴ It is almost humorous to see how Snorri is 'forced' to insert the figure of Álfr askmaðr alongside that of his brother at Fitjar, but hastens to kill him as soon as Eyvindr skreyja exits the scene:

Eyvindr skreyja kallaði þá hátt: "Leynisk Norðmanna konungr nú, eða hefir hann flýit, eða hvar er nú gullhjálmrinn?" Gekk Eyvindr þá fram ok Álfr, bróðir hans með honum ok hjoggu til beggja handa ok létu sem óðir eða galnir væri. Hákon konungr mælti hátt til Eyvindar: "Haltu svá fram stefnunni, ef þú vill finna Norðmanna konung". Svá segir Eyvindr skáldaspillir: [here follows the quotation of Eyvindr's *lausavísa* 4].

Var þá ok skammt at bíða, at Eyvindr kom þar, reiddi upp sverðit ok hjó til konungs. Þórálfr skaut við honum skildinum, ok stakraði Eyvindr við, en konungr tók sverðit Kvernbít tveim höndum ok hjó til Eyvindar ofan í hjálminn ok höfuðit allt í herðar niðr. Þá drap Þórálfr Álfaskmann.¹³⁵

132 Bjarni Einarsson, *Litterære forudsætninger*, 29. For a different opinion, see Jónas Kristjánsson, "Var Snorri upphafsmaður Íslendingasagna?" *Andvari* 115 (1990), 102–104.

133 Bjarni Einarsson, *Litterære forudsætninger*, 101–102, 114–116.

134 On Snorri's authorship of *Heimskringla*, see Ólafur Halldórsson, "Sagnaritun Snorra Sturlusonar," in *Snorri: Átta alda minning* (Reykjavík: Sögufélag, 1979), 113–138.

135 *Heimskringla*, vol. I, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, 189–190 (emphasis added).

Eyvindr skreyja then shouted out: “Is the king of the Norwegians hiding now? Or has he fled? And where is the golden helmet now?” Then Eyvindr advanced, *and his brother Álfr with him*, and they struck on both sides and went on as if they were mad or possessed. King Hákon shouted to Eyvindr: “Keep on in the same direction if you want to meet the king of the Norwegians.” So says Eyvindr skáldaspillir: [here follows the quotation of Eyvindr’s *lausavísa* 4].

There was also not long to wait before Eyvindr came up, swung [190] up his sword and struck at the king. Þórálfr pushed his shield against him and it made Eyvindr stagger, while the king took his sword Kvernbitr in both hands and struck at Eyvindr down on his helmet, splitting the helmet and his head right down to his shoulders. *Then Þórálfr slew Álfr askmaðr.*¹³⁶

Snorri harmonizes the previous historiographical accounts about Eyvindr skreyja with the one found in *Egils saga* and, with the killing of Álfr askmaðr at Fitjar, he makes sure to leave no loose threads: a perfect murder.

Conclusions

The aim of this article was to demonstrate that the thorny problem of the authenticity of the poetry in the *Íslendingasögur* can be tackled by combining several criteria. This method was first explored by Males, who crossed the most secure metric–linguistic dating criteria employed by Gade and Myrvoll with as much circumstantial evidence as possible, in order to create a set of diagnostic features for inauthentic stanzas in *Egils saga*. As this article has shown, Males’ approach is promising and can be further refined.

The importance of distinguishing between ‘authentic’ and ‘inauthentic’ poetry in the family sagas can hardly be exaggerated. Distinguishing the reality of Viking Age skalds from the techniques of medieval saga authors has profound consequences for the study of this textual corpus, allowing us to acknowledge the different authorial agencies at work and to conduct literary analysis on a more solid historical footing. For instance, some top-

¹³⁶ Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, Volume I. The beginnings to Óláfr Tryggvason, transl. by Alison Finlay and Anthony Faulkes, 112–113.

ics that to the present day constitute elements of fascination in common perceptions of the Viking Age find scant support in tenth-century sources, but are already central in thirteenth-century portrayals of this historical period. For instance, the magic employment of runes and the use of the word *vikingr* as an identity marker are not confirmed by the saga's oldest textual layer, Egill's poetry, actually dating to the so-called *Viking Age*. They are, rather, fundamental ingredients of the saga author's depiction of tenth-century Norse society, some of which, like the fascination with runic writing, reflect widespread interests in the intellectual circles of thirteenth-century Scandinavia.¹³⁷ Not everything, however, is a later construction. For instance, Egill's well-known preference for Odinic themes,¹³⁸ and for the mead of poetry myth in particular, finds support both in the long poems and in those *lausavísur* in the saga that are compatible with a tenth-century dating. Similarly, stylistic experimentation with over-ornamental rhymes and extended metaphors is almost non-existent in Pseudo-Egill's stanzas but abounds in the 'authentic' *lausavísur* of *Egils saga*. This fits the trends observable in the diction of safely datable late-tenth-century verse, where these stylistic features play a major role, as borne out, for instance, by the court poetry of Eyvindr skáldaspillir and Einarr skálaglam.

As it emerges from these observations, isolating the different layers of the saga's stratigraphy allows us to assign the right weight and value to our textual sources, from both a literary and a historical perspective. Indeed, much work remains to be done on the poetic corpus of the Icelandic family sagas, but the method outlined for *Egils saga* seems to be yielding promising results. Hopefully, this article has shown that the several dating criteria so far developed, formal and otherwise, can be used critically and tested against each other, enabling us to disentangle the different authorial voices resonating within these multifold texts.

137 Tarrin Jon Wills, "The Thirteenth-Century Runic Revival in Denmark and Iceland," *NOWELE* 69 (2016), 114–129.

138 Sigurður Nordal, "Átrúnaður Egils Skalla-Grímssonar," *Skírnir*, 97 (1924), 145–165; Gabriel E. O. Turville-Petre, "Um Óðinsdyrkun á Íslandi," *Studia Islandica. Íslenzk fræði* 17 (1958), 5–25; Joseph Harris, "Sacrifice and Guilt in *Sonatorrek*," *Studien zum Altgermanischen. Festschrift für Heinrich Beck*, ed. Heiko Uecker (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1994), 173–196; Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson, "Religious Ideas in *Sonatorrek*," *Saga-Book* 25 (1998–2001), 159–178.

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ÁGRIP

Gervi-Egill og vísur hans í *Egils sögu*

Lykilorð: *Egils saga*, Íslendingasögur, konungasögur, dróttkvæði, óekta kvæði, Snorri Sturluson

Þessi grein fjallar um eina *lausavísu* í 49. kafla *Egils sögu*. Egill kveður vísuna um sjóorrustu þar sem hann tekst á við þrjótinn Eyvind skreyju. Vísan sýnir nokkur merki þess að hafa verið kveðin af söguhöfundi frekar en af Agli sjálfum. Fyrst er vísan borin saman við aðrar heimildir um hinn dularfulla Eyvind skreyju, þar á meðal lausavísur eftir Eyvind skáldaspilli sem eru varðveittar í *Fagurskinnu*. Síðan er gerð grein fyrir tungumáli vísunnar, bragarhætti og stíl og borið saman við aðrar vísur í sögunni sem ætla má að séu ekki eftir Egil sjálfan heldur annað skáld sem kalla mætti Gervi-Egil. Í rannsókninni er bent á eiginleika sem eru dæmigerðir fyrir Gervi-Egil, til dæmis dálæti á orðinu 'víkingur' og endursköpun visuorða úr öðrum kvæðum. Nærtækast er að Gervi-Egill sé höfundur sögunnar og í greininni er grennslast fyrir um vinnubrögð hans, þar á meðal heimildir hans og getu til að líkja eftir fornum kveðskap. Að lokum eru þessir eiginleikar metnir í ljósi þeirrar útbreiddu fræðitilgátu að höfundur *Egils sögu* og vísanna hafi verið Snorri Sturluson.

SUMMARY

Pseudo-Egill, the *Vikingr*-Poet. More on the Authenticity of the Verse in *Egils Saga*

Key words: *Egils saga*, Sagas of Icelanders, Kings' sagas, Skaldic poetry, linguistic dating of poetry, pseudonymous poetry, Snorri Sturluson

This article focuses on a *lausavísa* found in chapter 49 of *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, concerning a sea-battle between Egill and a villain named Eyvindr skreyja. The *lausavísa* contains several indications of being a product of the saga author, rather than of the historical Egill, to whom it is attributed. The stanza is first compared to other sources about the elusive figure of Eyvindr skreyja, including poetic ones, namely *lausavísur* 3–5 by Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnsson, first attested in *Fagurskinna*. It follows a formal and metrical analysis of the stanza,

which contrasts its features with those observed in other pseudonymous stanzas in *Egils saga*. The analysis reveals traits that are typical of this pseudonymous poet (here called Pseudo-Egill), including a fondness for the word *víkingr* and a creative use of echoes from earlier poems. The article thus sheds light on several aspects of the saga-author's *modus operandi* when composing poetry for the saga, including his capacity for reproducing archaic metric-linguistic features and the nature of his poetic sources. Finally, these traits are evaluated in light of the wide-spread scholarly assumption that the author of *Egils saga* and of the pseudonymous poetry contained in it was Snorri Sturluson.

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PETER SIGURDSON LUNGA

“INN HEILAGI ÓLÁFR KONUNGR OK INN HÁLEITI HALLVARÐR, FRÆNDI HANS”

*Óláfr helgi and genealogies of saints in
Norway, Iceland, and Orkney*

Introduction

Medieval sagas and historical writing from the Norse world are deeply concerned with family relationships. Genealogies often introduce a saga, situating its characters in the wider environment of local and regional families and dynasties.¹ But genealogies also tend to structure the text, particularly of longer sagas, in that one generation is shown to follow another in a linear fashion, framing the narrative structure of the text.² This also seems to be the case for European medieval historical writing, where genealogy is seen as a “perceptual grid” and a narrative frame for organising historical material.³

Ben Guy has recently argued that this understanding of genealogy has tended to become rather too loosely applied as a “modern metaphor for the linear passing of generations” in any context, even if these generations have nothing to do with family relationships.⁴ It may be necessary, therefore, to emphasise that the saintly genealogies considered in the present article are characterised as such because they concern themselves

- 1 Theodore M. Andersson, *The Icelandic Family Saga: An Analytic Reading* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 6–11, 26–29; Kathryn Hume, “Beginnings and Endings in the Icelandic Family Sagas,” *Modern Language Review* 68 (1973): 593–606.
- 2 Margaret Clunies Ross, “The Development of Old Norse Textual Worlds: Genealogical Structure as a Principle of Literary Organisation in Early Iceland,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 92 (1993): 372–85.
- 3 Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 47.
- 4 Ben Guy, “Origin Legends and Genealogy,” *Origin Legends in Early Medieval Western Europe*, eds. Lindy Brady and Patrick Walden (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 365.

with family relationships. This does not mean that the texts in which they are contained cannot also be organised within a genealogical narrative framework, but my concern is not primarily such narrative organisation but rather the significance and purpose of the information provided about family relationships specifically, whether they are spread out across a text or condensed into lists of consecutive generations.

It should also be noted that the significance of genealogies is not restricted to such expositional and organisational purposes. Úlfar Bragason has argued that genealogies should rather be seen as “linked to the works’ origin and nature.”⁵ In a similar vein, Gro Steinsland has argued that genealogy can reveal ideology “the more artificially construed it is.”⁶ While this argument raises an important point, Steinsland nonetheless overlooks the fact that all genealogies are, in one way or another, artificially construed, not just as the written representation of families in narratives or lists but also in the sense that such representations can never contain an entirely exhaustive account of ancestors and relatives; that was rarely the purpose of medieval genealogy. Instead, scope and selection of generations in lineages are limited and framed by the authors’ genealogical knowledge, textual intentions, and historical contexts. This may enable us to use genealogies as identifying fingerprints for the texts in which they are contained: their unique structures and composition can help us better understand the origin and meaning of the text. Inclusions or elisions of ancestors, relatives, and descendants may reveal the text’s intended audience and the scope of its author’s historical knowledge and imagination, as well as with whom a family or dynasty sought to identify.

Saintly genealogies abound in medieval sources from the Norse world but have received comparatively little attention from modern scholars. “Pagan genealogies,” on the other hand, have been thoroughly studied. It seems to be the scholarly consensus that pagan genealogical motifs, whether they were pagan survivals or later constructions, were an influ-

5 Úlfar Bragason, “The Politics of Genealogies in Sturlunga Saga,” *Scandinavia and Europe 800–1350: Contact, Conflict and Coexistence*, eds. Jonathan Adams and Katherine Holman (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 310.

6 Gro Steinsland, “Origin Myths and Rulership. From the Viking Age Ruler to the Ruler of Medieval Historiography: Continuity, Transformations, and Innovation,” *Ideology and Power in the Viking and Middle Ages: Scandinavia, Iceland, Ireland, Orkney and the Faeroes*, eds. Gro Steinsland, Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, Jan Erik Rekdal, and Ian Beuermann (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 10.

ential component of Scandinavian historical texts and secular prestige and legitimacy in the Middle Ages.⁷ A recent scholarly trend has emphasised the *interpretatio Christiana* in medieval representations of pagan genealogical material, demonstrating how it was sometimes imbued with profound moral significance; in particular, it is negative if not demonological motifs that have attracted scholarly attention.⁸ This invites a closer look at those lineages that are charged with the inverse moral value: the genealogies being defined by the presence of one or more Christian saints.

It is important to distinguish between two trends in the development of saintly genealogies. One trend established a genealogical relationship, directly or indirectly, between saints, on the one hand, and magnates, pretenders, or family groups, on the other.⁹ In Sweden, Denmark, and Orkney, kinship with dynastic saints Knútr (r. 1080–86), Eiríkr (r. 1150–60) and Magnús Erlendsson (d. 1116/17) was used to support the political

- 7 A selection of studies on the function of pagan myths and genealogies includes Margaret Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes: Old Norse Myths in Medieval Northern Society*, 2 vols. (Odense: Odense University Press, 1994–98); Anthony Faulkes, “Descent from the Gods,” *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 11 (1978–79): 92–125; Heinz Klingenberg, “Odin und die Seinen. Altisländischer Gelehrter Urgeschichte anderer Teil,” *alvismál* 2 (1993): 31–80; Claus Krag, *Ynglingatal og Ynglingesaga: en studie i historiske kilder* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1991); John McKinnell, “Why Did Christians Continue to Find Pagan Myths Useful,” *Reflections on Old Norse Myths*, eds. Pernille Hermann, Jens Peter Schjødt, and Rasmus Tranum Kristenesen (Turnhout: Brepols 2007) 33–52; Else Mundal, “Kva funksjon har forteljninga om den mytiske fortida hjå Saxo og Snorre?” *Saxo & Snorre*, eds. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen, Karsten Friis-Jensen and Else Mundal (København: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 2010); Gro Steinsland, *Det hellige bryllup og norrøn kongeideologi: en analyse av hierogamimyten i Skírnismál, Ynglingatal, Háleygjatal og Hyndluljóð* (Oslo: Solum Forlag, 1991); Kevin Wanner, *Snorri Sturluson and the Edda: The Conversion of Cultural Capital in Medieval Scandinavia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).
- 8 Takahiro Narikawa, “Marriage between Harald Fairhair and Snæfriðr, and Their Offspring: Mythological Foundation of the Norwegian Medieval Dynasty?” *Balto-Scandia: Reports of Balto-Scandinavian Studies in Japan, Extra Edition* (2011): 111–36; Peter Sigurdson Lunga, *The Context Purpose and Dissemination of Legendary Genealogies in Northern England and Iceland c. 1120 – c. 1251*, PhD thesis (University of Cambridge, 2018), 211–16; Annette Lassen, *Odin’s Ways: A Guide to the Pagan God in the Medieval Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 101, 158–61.
- 9 Gábor Klaniczay, “From Sacral Kingship to Self-Representation: Hungarian and European Royal Saints,” *The Uses of Supernatural Power: The Transformation of Popular Religion in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, trans. Susan Singermann, ed. Karen Margolis (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), 86; Caitlin Ellis, “The Development of the Cult of Magnús: The Interplay between Saints, Bishops and Earls in Orkney,” *The Cult of Saints in Nidaros Archbishopric: Manuscripts, Miracles, Objects*, eds. Ragnhild M. Bø and Jón Viðar Sigurðsson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2022), 115.

ambitions of specific branches of the local royal or comital dynasty to the exclusion of others.¹⁰ In Norway, on the other hand, King Óláfr Haraldsson (r. 1015–28) was rather used to extinguish the traditional Danish claims to the kingdom of Norway or to parts thereof, legitimising the claims of both his son, King Magnús góði (r. 1035–47), who was installed as king in opposition to the deeply unpopular Danish ruler of Norway, Sveinn Knúttsson (r. 1030–35), and his English mother, Alfifa.¹¹ Óláfr helgi was also seemingly a component in the legitimisation of the power of his half-brother Haraldr harðráði (r. 1046–66), who patronised his brother's cult and even made use of the relationship during his service in the Byzantine empire.¹² Traditions are also extant that append a variety of saints to the genealogies of Icelandic families. The indigenous Icelandic bishop saints Jón Ögmundsson (d. 1121) and Þorlákr Þórhallsson (d. 1193) appear most frequently as relatives of powerful Icelandic families in *Landnámabók* and the *Íslendingasögur*, but non-Icelandic saints are also occasionally included in genealogies.¹³ Elite families in Iceland also on occasion gave their children “ecclesiastical” names of both foreign and local saints.¹⁴

Another trend, which cannot be entirely disconnected from the first, is the establishment of relationships between individual saints, seemingly without the intention to legitimise any of the related royal or magnate families. Often saints with limited local or regional significance are connected

10 Ian Beuermann, “No Soil for Saints: Why Was There No Native Royal Martyr in Man and the Isles?” *Celtic-Norse Relationships in the Irish Sea in the Middle Ages 800–1200*, eds. Jón Viðar Sigurðsson and Timothy Bolton (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 86.

11 Erich Hoffmann, *Die heiligen Könige bei den Angelsachsen und den skandinavischen Volkern. Königsheiliger und Königshaus* (Neumünster: Wachholtz, 1975) 210–11; Halvdan Koht, “Noreg eit len av St Olav,” (*Norsk Historisk Tidsskrift* 30 (1934–36), 104–105.

12 Ellis, “The Development of the Cult of Magnús,” 116; Gustav Storm, “Haarald Haardraade og væringene i de græske keiseres tjeneste,” (*Norsk Historisk Tidsskrift* (1884): 359–61 (354–86); Kekaumenos, *Strategicon*, ed. Maria Dora Spadaro, *Raccomandazioni e consigli di un galantuomo: Strategikon, Cecaumeno* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso, 1998), 7; Steffen Hope, “Byzantine History in the Legend of Saint Olaf of Norway, c. 1150–c. 1230,” *Byzantine and Medieval History as Represented in Hagiography*, ed. Anna Lampadaridi, Vincent Déroche, and Christian Høgel (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2022), 34–35.

13 For genealogies of St Þorlákr, see *Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, *Íslenzk fornrit I* (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1986), 214–16, 322–23, 333, 340–42 and 364. St Jón is mentioned in *Landnámabók*, 51–52, 316–18, 340–42 and 367.

14 Einar Ól. Sveinsson, “Nafngiftir Oddaverja,” *Bidrag til nordisk filologi tillagnade Emil Olson den 9 juni 1936* (Lund: Gleerup, 1936), 192.

to the far more significant royal martyr, king Óláfr helgi. The purpose is likely to have been similar to genealogies of the first trend: to increase the prestige and legitimacy of a claim, whether it was to sainthood or secular power, by letting the kinship with Óláfr helgi illuminate the family and person in question.

This article will consider the function of Óláfr helgi in the genealogies of Nordic saints more closely. His presence, genealogical position, or indeed absence in these texts may be revealing of strategies for promoting new saints locally and tell us something about how Óláfr was perceived by the ecclesiastical communities in Norway, Orkney, and Iceland. The liturgical and hagiographical nature of some of these texts demonstrates how the interest in royal genealogies even permeated the ecclesiastical sphere. In the following I will consider genealogies that connect Óláfr genealogically to St Hallvarðr Vébjarnarson (d. c. 1043) and the Orcadian jarl, St Magnús Erlendsson.

King Óláfr’s Kinsman: Hallvarðr Vébjarnarson

Hallvarðr Vébjarnarson (d. 1043) was a locally venerated saint from eastern Norway whose background as a layman and merchant stands out as relatively humble compared to other saints in the eastern and northern periphery of Christian Europe.¹⁵ The relics of St Hallvarðr must have been translated from Lier to the shrine at St Hallvarðr’s church in Oslo at some point before 1137, although construction of the church itself began around 1100/20.¹⁶ Yet, it has been claimed that the Norwegian royal dynasty promoted his cult at an even earlier stage. A hypothesis frequently presented as fact is that King Haraldr harðráði translated Hallvarðr’s relics from Lier to the Church of St Mary in Oslo around 1053.¹⁷ But there is little evidence that supports such claims, which seem to build, at least

15 Haki Antonsson, “The Canonization Accounts of St Stephen of Hungary, St Thorlak of Skálholt, and St Cnut of Odense: A Comparative Reading,” *The Cult of Saints and Legitimization of Elite Power in East Central and Northern Europe up to 1300*, eds. Grzegorz Pac, Steffen Hope, and Jón Viðar Sigurðsson (Turnhout: Brepols 2024), 292.

16 Áslaug Ommundsen, “The Cult of Saints in Norway before 1200,” *Saints and their Lives on the Periphery: Venerations of Saints in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe*, eds. Haki Antonsson and Ildar H. Garipzanov (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 82.

17 Ole Rikard Høisæther, *Sankt Hallvard: Helgen og Symbol* (Oslo: Orfeus Publishing, 2020), 135.

partly, on an assumption accepted by most modern scholars that Hallvarðr was a kinsman of Óláfr helgi and the Norwegian royal dynasty.¹⁸ In the following, I will analyse the textual tradition of St Hallvarðr with special attention to genealogical information and the evidence for royal involvement in the promotion of his cult.

The cult of St Hallvarðr is first mentioned in Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesie Pontificum* (c. 1075/76), word of which may have reached Adam from one of his informants, King Sveinn Ástríðarson of Denmark (r. 1047–1076).¹⁹ Hagiographic material for St Hallvarðr is relatively fragmented and includes versions of a Latin *Legenda* (the so-called *Acta Sancti Halvardi* from around 1150x1200),²⁰ and approximately twenty-five lines of an Old Norse, fourteenth-century *Hallvarðs saga*. Both the Latin and Old Norse tradition provide Hallvarðr with a genealogy that connect him to Óláfr helgi in fairly similar ways. A third tradition, attested in *Óláfs saga hins helga* (the so-called the *Legendary Saga* from c. 1225–1250) also connects Hallvarðr to the two saints genealogically.²¹

- 18 Ommundsen, "The Cult of Saints in Norway before 1200," 89; Olav Tveito, "St. Hallvard – helgenen fra Husby: Noen synspunkter på legendens proveniens og kultens særpreg," (*Norsk*) *Historisk Tidsskrift* 85 (2006): 19; Haki Antonsson, "The Canonization Accounts," 292.
- 19 Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, ed. Bernhard Schmeidler, MGH SS rer. Germ. 2 (Hannover and Leipzig: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1917), 199.
- 20 Áslaug Ommundsen, "A Text in Flux: St. Hallvard's Legend and Its Redactions," *Along the Oral-Written Continuum*, ed. Slavica Rekovic (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), 273; Arned Nedkvitne and Per G. Norseng, *Middelalderbyen ved Bjørvika: Oslo 1000–1536* (Oslo: Cappelen, 2000), 50.
- 21 *Legendarisk Olavssaga etter Uppsala universitetsbiblioteks Delagardieska samlingen nr. 8 II*, ed. Anne Holtsmark (Oslo: Selskapet til utgivelse av gamle norske håndskrifter, 1956), 8–9; Sverre Bagge, "Warrior, King, and Saint: The Medieval Histories about St. Óláfr Haraldsson," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 109, no. 3 (2010): 285.

<p><i>Acta Sancti Halvardi</i> (possibly 1150/1200)²²</p>	<p><i>The Legendary Saga of King Óláfr</i> (c. 1225–1250), possibly based on the <i>Oldest Saga</i> (c. 1200)²³</p>	<p><i>Hallvarðs saga</i> (fourteenth century)²⁴</p>
<p>Sanctus Haluardus ex nobilioribus natalibus claruit, cuius pater Vebiorn, mater vero Thorni dicebatur. Cuius uidelicet Thorni mater, ut fertur, fuit filia Guthbrandi comitis. Qui Guthbrandus genuit etiam Ostam, sancti Olauī matrem.</p>	<p>Son Harallz hins harfagra var Biorn kaupmaðr, faðer Guðroðar faður Harallz hins grænka, faður Olaff hins hælga. Moðer Olafs hins hælga var Asta dotter Guðbranz kulu. Systir hæn- nar var Ulvilldr moðer hins hælga Hallvarðz.</p>	<p>Madr er nefndr Vebiorn, hann bio i Hlidum a Vestfold i Vik austr a bæ þeim, er heitir Husabær. Hann atti konu þa er Þorný het. Seiga sumir menn hana verit hafa dottur, enn sumir dotturdottur Guðbrandz kulu hersis a Upplondum. Hann var fadir Astu modur ens helga Olafs konungs ok Haralldz konungs Sigurdarsonar. Þau Vebiorn attu tvo sono, het annar Hallvardr, enn annar Ormr.</p>
<p>Saint Hallvarðr was famous for his noble birth. It is said that his father was called Vébjörn and his mother Þorný. The mother of this Þorný was as is related, daughter of Guðbrandr hersir. This Guðbrandr begot Ásta, mother of St Óláfr.</p>	<p>Son of Haraldr hárfagri was Björn kaupmaðr, father of Guðrøðr, father of Haraldr grenski, father of St Óláfr. Mother of St Óláfr was Ásta, daughter of Guðbrandr kúla. Her sister was Úlfhildr, mother of St Hallvarðr.</p>	<p>A man was called Vébjörn, who lived in Vestfold in Vik on that farm east in Lier which is called Husaby. He had a wife who was called Þorný. Some men say that she was the daughter, and some say the grandchild of Guðbrandr kúla, hersir in Uppland. He was the father of Ásta, mother of King Óláfr helgi, and of King Haraldr Sigurdarson. They, Vébjörn [and Þorný] had two sons. One was called Hallvarðr and the other Ormr.</p>

22 Translations are mine unless otherwise noted. *Latinske tekster i Norge mellom 1152 og 1230 – En tekstkritisk samling med Norske Paralleloversettelse*, ed. and trans. Egil Kraggerud, 2 vols. (Oslo: Novus Forlag, 2023), 1: 110.

23 *Olafs saga hins helga – Efter pergamenthaandskrift i Uppsala Universitetsbibliotek, Delagardieske samling nr. 8 II*, ed. Oscar Albert Johnsen (Kristiania [Oslo]: Den Norske Historiske Kildeskriiftkommission, 1922), 1.

24 *Heilagra Manna Sögur Fortællinger og legender om hellige mænd og kvinder efter gamle Haandskrifter*, ed. C. R. Unger, 2 vols. (Christiania [Oslo]: B. M. Bentzen, 1877), 1: 396.

Both *Acta* and *Hallvarðs saga* mention Hallvarðr's father Vébjörn and mother Þorny, who in turn is either daughter or granddaughter of the east-Norwegian magnate Guðbrandr kúla, who died in the late 900s. Unlike the *Legenda*, however, the saga fragment recognises the fact that there are seemingly diverging genealogical traditions that mention Þorny, Hallvarðr's mother, as either the daughter or the granddaughter of Guðbrandr. In *The Legendary Saga of King Óláfr*, Hallvarðr's mother is called Úlfhildr rather than Þorny.

It is of course possible that Óláfr and Hallvarðr were related, but such genealogical variation is good reason to be critical of the claim.²⁵ That their earliest common ancestor, Guðbrandr kúla is supposed to have died around 200 years before the genealogies were first recorded in writing provides further grounds for scepticism. It should be noted, however, that divergences such as those in the genealogies of Hallvarðr, which largely agree on substance (a matrilineal relationship between the two saints) but disagree on the details (the names and number of generations between Hallvarðr and Guðbrandr kúla), suggest the existence of an oral culture in which precisely such details are likely to alter during various stages of transmission.²⁶ That the tradition was circulating orally, however, does not necessarily confirm its veracity, but it does suggest that the claim must have come into existence at a time sufficiently distant from the moment of committing the genealogy to writing for it to undergo alteration and lapses of memory. An absolute *terminus ante quem* for the divergence in the oral versions of the claim can perhaps be determined to around 1200, when two mutually incompatible versions of the genealogy are likely to have existed in the *Oldest Saga of Óláfr* (c. 1200), which was the source of the *Legendary Saga*, and in Hallvarðr's Latin *Acta*. Therefore, the claim itself most likely dates before 1200. But how old was it?

Among the modern historians who have accepted the claim that Hallvarðr was related to Óláfr some have conjectured that the relationship was already known in the mid-eleventh century and encouraged royal involvement in the promotion of the cult and in the translation of Hallvarðr's relics to Oslo. Kraggerud has assumed that it was Óláfr helgi's son Magnús

25 Fredrik Paasche, "St. Hallvard," *St. Hallvard* 2 (1916): 82.

26 Gisli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition: A Discourse on Method*, trans. Nicholas Jones (Cambridge, MA: Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature, 2004), 30.

góði who initiated the translation of his kinsman Hallvarðr’s relics from Lier soon after the king’s campaign against the Wends in 1043.²⁷ P. A. Munch, on the other hand, has suggested that the conjectured translation from Lier to St Mary’s Church in Oslo took place under Haraldr harðráði, who was traditionally considered the founder of Oslo.²⁸ But Haraldr’s “founding” may in fact have amounted only to the construction of churches and a royal estate, as the settlement has been shown to be approximately fifty years older than Munch assumed.²⁹ Tveito has theorised that Grímkell (d. 1047), Óláfr helgi’s court bishop [*hirðbiskup*], who was instrumental in canonising Óláfr, also promoted Hallvarðr’s cult in eastern Norway to consolidate the Christian conversion by presenting Hallvarðr as a royal kinsman and a sort of eastern “mini-Óláfr”.³⁰

While the cult is likely to have gained popular traction at an early stage, it is difficult to reconcile the hypothesis of an early claim to kinship with Óláfr with the earliest description of the cult from Adam of Bremen’s *Gesta*. In his brief account, he makes no reference to the alleged family relationship between the two saints. And even if absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, I believe it is reasonable to expect Adam to have mentioned the alleged relationship, since Adam held Óláfr helgi in very high regard.³¹ It is telling that by the 1070s, Hallvarðr’s cult was famous enough for a German cleric such as Adam to make note of it, but that it still had no connection to Óláfr helgi. It may perhaps be argued that Adam’s most likely informant on this topic, King Sveinn Ástríðarson of Denmark – who had been involved in an enduring conflict with Óláfr helgi’s successors, the kings Magnús góði and Haraldr harðráði – would have left out a potentially anti-Danish legitimising element in his account of the cult: the kinship between Hallvarðr and the Norwegian royal dynasty. But if the cult was set up by King Haraldr harðráði as a counterweight to the traditional Danish claims to the Vík (the area around the Oslo Fjord) as suggested by P. A. Munch, why then would King Sveinn have made mention

27 *Latinske tekster*, 2:114; Haki Antonsson, *St. Magnús of Orkney: A Scandinavian Martyr-Cult in Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 123–24.

28 P. A. Munch, *Det Norske Folks historie*, anden del (Christiania [Oslo]: Chr. Tønsbergs forlag, 1855), 200.

29 Nedkvitne and Norseng, *Middelalderbyen ved Bjørvika*, 43.

30 Tveito, “St. Hallvard,” 18–20.

31 Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis*, 120–21.

of this new saint in his conversations with Adam³² If King Sveinn was indeed Adam's source, it is more likely that the cult of St Hallvarðr was devoid of any anti-Danish prejudice at this moment, and that the claimed relationship between Hallvarðr and Óláfr helgi (and thus the Norwegian royal dynasty) was either absent at this early stage in the cult's development or not yet an important component of the saint's legitimacy.

I do agree with earlier scholars, however, that the claimed relationship between Hallvarðr and King Óláfr should be seen in the context of royal patronage or promotion. But the suggestion that such patronage was achieved as early as the eleventh century is guesswork at best. There is greater evidence of such royal patronage in the early twelfth century, with the construction of St Hallvarðr's church, which also became the seat of the bishops of Oslo. Archaeological evidence points to construction beginning around 1100/20, and in 1130 it had progressed far enough to allow the burial of King Sigurðr Jóralfari (r. 1103–30) in the south wall.³³

Traditionally, King Sigurðr is considered to have initiated the construction of St Hallvarðr's Church.³⁴ Vibe-Müller has argued that the king's interment in St Hallvarðr's Church indicates his involvement in its construction, since kings in the century prior to 1130 was almost exclusively interred in Christ's Church in Niðaróss.³⁵ And while Sigurðr for most of his reign shared the title of king with his brothers Óláfr (r. 1103–15) and Eysteinn (r. 1103–23), only Sigurðr was based in eastern Norway and Vík.³⁶ This local position may have encouraged the king into an alliance with the local Church since their interests is likely to have converged in the promotion of the cult of St Hallvarðr. By embracing and patronising an east-Norwegian saint, the king strengthened his local position in the competition for legitimacy with his brothers. By collaborating with the

32 Ludvig Daae, *Norges Helgener* (Christiania [Oslo]: Alb. Cammermeyer, 1879), 166–67.

33 Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, 3 vols. Íslenzk fornrit XXVI–XXVIII (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1941–51), 3:276; Nedkvitne and Norseng, *Middelalderbyen*, 50.

34 Høisæther, *Sankt Hallvard*, 137.

35 The exceptions are Haraldr harðráði, who was first buried in Mary's Church and then Elgeseter Priory (both in Niðaróss) and Magnús berfættar (r. 1093–1103), who died on campaign in Ireland and was buried in Downpatrick. Inger Helene Vibe-Müller, "Gamle Aker Kirke," *Gamle Aker Kirke – Festskrift ved kirkens 900-års jubileum*, ed. Sverre Skjelsbæk (Øvre Ervik: Alvheim & Eide akademisk forlag, 1980), 45.

36 Claus Krag, "Sigurd 1. Magnusson Jorsalfare," *Norsk Biografisk Leksikon*, accessed 18 March 2024, https://nbl.snl.no/Sigurd_1._Magnusson_Jorsalfare.

king, the Church would be politically supported and financially secured during a critical stage of consolidating its organisation in eastern Norway, with its permanent episcopal seat in Oslo being gained only around 1100.³⁷

A condition for this collaboration, however, seems to have been the elevation of Hallvarðr's status from local merchant to a royal relative by the construction of a genealogy to Guðbrandr kúla and Óláfr helgi. On its own terms, the cult of St Hallvarðr could not outshine the splendour and national significance of Óláfr helgi in Niðaróss. But as a relative of Óláfr, Hallvarðr could borrow some of that splendour. His new status was thus used to attract and justify the patronage of king Sigurðr, and the added dynastic component made St Hallvarðr's cult in Oslo and Vík at least regionally complementary to that of Óláfr helgi in Niðaróss and Þrøndalög.

Such is the context within which the claim of kinship between Hallvarðr and Óláfr is most convincingly placed: in the confluence of royal and ecclesiastical interests and their collaboration in church building and institutionalisation of the early 1100s. It may very well be the case that the Church had claimed kinship between Hallvarðr and Óláfr at a somewhat earlier stage than 1100/20. But there is no evidence that it produced any tangible results before the early 1100s when Guðbrandr kúla had long since passed out of living memory. That limits the confidence we can put in the claim.

After Sigurðr's interment in St Hallvarðr's Cathedral in 1130, the relationship between the saint and the royal dynasty endured. It finds expression in the reiteration of Hallvarðr's kinship with Óláfr in the aforementioned written sources between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries and in subsequent royal interments in St Hallvarðr's Cathedral of Magnús blindi (r. 1130–35 and 37–39), Ingi krókhryggr (r. 1136–61), and Hákon ungi (r. 1240–57).

Presence and Absence: Óláfr helgi in the Genealogies of Magnús Erlendsson

Magnús Erlendsson (d. 1116/17) had been jarl of Orkney until he was murdered by his co-jarl and cousin Hákon Pálsson (d. 1123). His cult was later promoted by his sister's son, jarl Røgnvaldr kali (d. 1154/9), who had the St Magnus Cathedral built in Kirkwall and was himself

37 Nedkvitne and Norseng, *Middelalderbyen*, 47–48.

canonised in 1192. Magnús was a popular saint, with church dedications in Orkney, Shetland, and Iceland, but none in Norway.³⁸ Several medieval sources document the life and miracles of Magnús, and genealogy plays an important part in most of them. But each genealogy of the saint is represented differently in the various sources, with new selections of relatives that represent differing views on Magnús and the Norse community of saints. The sources include the rather extensive *Orkneyinga saga*, dating to the early decades of the thirteenth century, and the two Icelandic saints' sagas, *Magnúss saga skemmri* (*The shorter saga of Magnús*) from the second half of the thirteenth century, and *Magnúss saga lengri* (*The longer saga of Magnús*), from the first half of the fourteenth century. A Latin *Legenda* is also preserved, but it contains no significant genealogical information about Magnús.

Orkneyinga saga contains the most comprehensive account, its scope extending to the entire history of the Orcadian jarls, including their mythological origins. Its genealogies contain hundreds of individuals, although only a few of them are placed within that part of *Orkneyinga saga* that is concerned with St Magnús. In the following, I will concentrate on precisely those lineages that introduce the sections about St Magnús and his family. These sections begin with an exposition that outlines the descendants of Þorfinnr jarl (d. c. 1065) in several collateral branches from his two sons Páll (d. 1098) and Erlendr (d. 1098).³⁹ Many of Þorfinnr's descendants play minor roles later in *Orkneyinga saga*, as the saga author also comments: "ok koma þessir menn allir við söguna síðarr" (and all these men will come into our story later).⁴⁰ The rivalling earls, Hákon Pálsson and Magnús Erlendsson, are also included in these genealogies and will be the topic for the following discussion.

The saga author accentuates the matrilineal ancestors of the two cousins, representing them as components in the competition between the jarls. Hákon Pálsson is shown to be a descendant of the Norwegian royal dynasty, on his mother's side, indicating perhaps the legitimising function of such descent:

38 Haki Antonsson, *St. Magnús of Orkney*, 20, 72–73; Ellis, "The development of the cult of Magnús," 128–29.

39 *Orkneyinga saga*, ed. Finnboði Guðmundsson, Íslenzk fornrit XXXIV (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1965), 84–87.

40 *Orkneyinga saga*, 85.

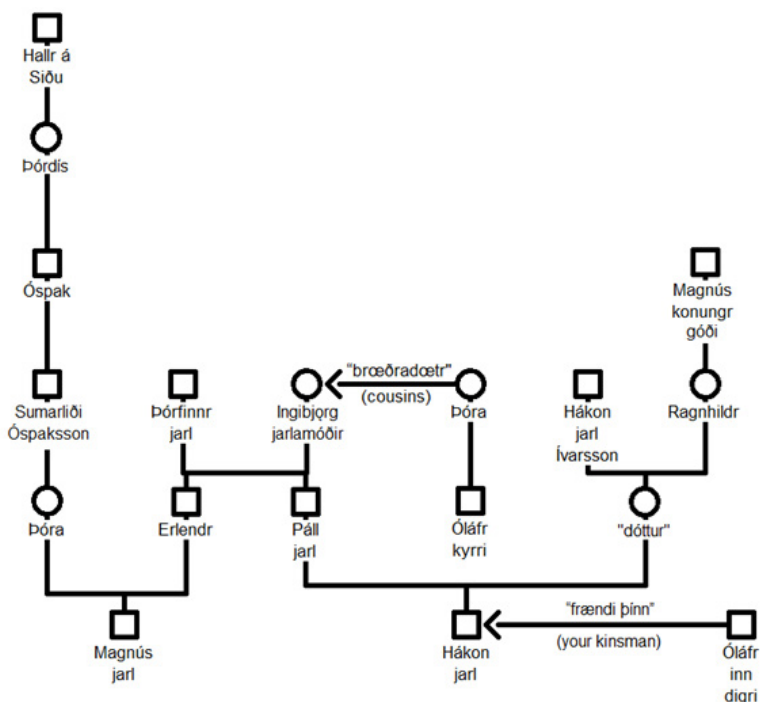


Figure 1: Magnús's genealogy from Orkneyinga saga (c. 1206–1235); selected generations.

En er synir þeira tóku at megnask, þá gerðusk þeir ofstopamenn miklir, Hákon ok Erlingr. Magnús var þeira kyrrlátastr. Allir váru þeir miklir ok sterkir ok vel menntir um alla hluti. Hákon Pálsson vildi vera fyrirmaðr þeira bræðra; þóttisk hann vera meiri burðum en synir Erlends, því at hann var dóttursonr Hákonar jarls Ívarssonar ok Ragnhildar, dóttur Magnúss konungs góða.⁴¹

But when their sons [i.e. the sons of Páll Þorfinnsson and Erlendr Þorfinnsson] grew older, Hákon and Erlingr became very reckless. Magnús was the gentlest of them. All were big, strong, and very skilled in all things. Hákon Pálsson wanted to be the leading man among the brothers, and thought he was more high-born than

41 Orkneyinga saga, 87.

the sons of Erlend, since he was the daughter's son of Hákon jarl Ívarsson and Ragnhildr, daughter of Magnús góði.

The branch of the Norwegian royal dynasty with which jarl Hákon Pálsson is related is curiously that which descends from Óláfr helgi. But the genealogy revealingly stops with Magnús góði, one generation short of the saint. How should we understand such a glaring omission?

One possible intention may have been to distance Óláfr genealogically from the enemy and murderer of St Magnús. But it is unlikely that contemporary readers would be convinced by such an omission, since they would not have to look further than earlier in *Orkneyinga saga* to find it stated that Magnús góði was the son of Óláfr helgi.⁴² We must assume that this information was known to the readers. A more likely explanation, therefore, is that the connection, the way it is represented, contributes to the development of Hákon Pálsson's character. The saga author does not relate the information on Hákon's matrilineal descent impartially but imputes to Hákon both the knowledge of his royal ancestors and a certain pride in descending from King Magnús góði. Jarl Hákon seemingly cares little for his descent from King Magnús' saintly father and otherwise displays little spiritual affinity with the martyred king. This point is strengthened in another episode from the saga, where Hákon seeks the counsel of a Swedish fortune-teller:

En er hann fann þenna mann, þá frétti hann eptir, hversu honum myndi gangask til ríkis eða annarrar hamingju. Vísendamaðr spurði, hvat manna hann væri. Hann sagði nafn sitt ok ætt sína, at hann var dóttursonr Hákonar Ívarssonar. Þá sagði vísendamaðr: "Hví muntu vilja taka af mér vísendi eða sagnir? Veiztu eigi þat, at inir fyrri frændr þínir hafa lítinn hug haft á þess háttar mǫnnum sem ek em? Ok má þér þǫrf vinna, at þú leitir eptir at vita forlǫg þín af Óláfi inum digra, frænda þínum, er þér hafid allan trúnað á. En grunr myndi mér á vera, at hann myndi eigi lítillæti til hafa at segja þér þat, er þik forvitnar, eða vera eigi svá máttugr ella sem þér kallid hann." Þá svarar Hákon: "Ekki vil ek honum ámæla; ætla ek þat meirr, at ek mun eigi verðleika til hafa at taka af honum vísendi, en

42 *Orkneyinga saga*, 54–55.

hitt, at eigi myni hann vera svá völdugr, at ek mætta taka fyrir þat af honum vísendi. En því hefi ek á þinn fund farit, at mér hefir þat í hug komit, at hér mun hvárrgi þurfa at ofunda annan fyrir mann-kosta sakar eða trúbragða.” Sá maðr svarar: “Vel líkar mér þat, at ek finn þat á, at þú þykkisk þar eiga allt traust, er ek em, ok framarr en trúa sú, er þér hafið með farit ok aðrir frændr þínir.”⁴³

When he met the man, he asked him if he would come to power or have another fortune. The fortune-teller asked what man he was. Hákon said his name and lineage, and that he was the daughter’s son of Hákon Ívarsson. Then the fortune-teller said: “Why are you seeking knowledge from me? Do you not know that your ancestors had little regard for men of my kind? And it may be better for you to learn your destiny from your kinsman Óláfr the Stout, in whom you have placed all faith. But I suspect that he is not humble enough to tell you what you are interested to know, or perhaps he is not as powerful as you think.” Then Hákon answered: “I do not want to speak ill of him. Rather than thinking that he is not mighty enough to give me knowledge, I believe that I am not worthy of receiving knowledge from him. But I have come to meet with you because I did not think either of us would resent the other for reasons of skills or beliefs.” The man answers: “I like it well that you seem to have more faith in me than in that belief which you and your other relatives have held.”

This episode emphatically distances Hákon from Óláfr helgi. The jarl seems uncomfortable to be reminded of his descent from the saint, especially since it is the pagan fortune-teller who brings up the topic of his family. It is also the fortune-teller who teasingly reminds the deviating jarl of the boundaries of the Christian behaviour adhered to by his other relatives. Haki Antonsson has interpreted this episode in context of the many revelatory visions granted to Norwegian kings by Óláfr helgi in the kings’ sagas.⁴⁴ But that Hákon considers himself unworthy of receiving similar foreknowledge is perhaps something other than merely authorial commen-

43 *Orkneyinga saga*, 90–91.

44 Haki Antonsson, “The Kings of Norway and the Earls of Orkney: The Case of *Orkneyinga saga*, §36.” *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 15 (2005): 91–92.

tary on the earl's non-royal status. For the fortune-teller, it is a matter of faith, and mockingly points out that Hákon's actions indicate that he has more faith in practices that are forbidden to Christians than in his saintly forbear. The episode thus demonstrates some of the complexities in the genealogical function of saints in saga literature. The author of *Orkneyinga saga* recognises the kinship between Hákon and Óláfr helgi, but instead of using it to elevate the status of the Hákon or the comital family, Óláfr is posited as a moral contrast to the dissolute Hákon. He may be high-born, but his own behaviour disgraces him in the eyes of the medieval reader.

By contrast, Magnús is not shown to be related to Óláfr in the *Orkneyinga saga* genealogies. The saga author instead constructs a genealogy in five generations from Magnús' mother, Þóra, to highlight his descent from the Icelandic chieftain Síðu-Hallr (d. 1012/14).⁴⁵ It may seem like an odd contrast to Hákon Pálsson's descent from the Norwegian royal dynasty. But to the Icelandic Oddaverja-dynasty, for whom the earliest redaction of the *Orkneyinga saga* (c. 1200) is likely to have been composed and who was in frequent contract with the earls of Orkney at the end of the 1100s,⁴⁶ such a connection would certainly attract interest as Síðu-Hallr was one of their ancestors. If this genealogy was indeed included in this now lost redaction, it may have been an attempt to increase the prestige of the Oddaverjar and to promote the cult of Magnús to his purported Icelandic relatives.

Later texts elaborated on and changed the genealogical information from *Orkneyinga saga*, showing a development in thinking about Magnús and his genealogical relationship to Óláfr helgi and other saints. The narrative of the mid-to-late thirteenth-century saint's saga *Magnúss saga skemmiri* follows *Orkneyinga saga* so closely that it has been largely ignored by modern scholars.⁴⁷ Its genealogy, however, has not only condensed genealogical information from the more comprehensive scope of *Orkneyinga saga*, but it also adds entirely new generations to the genealogy of Magnús. The particular selection of generations from *Orkneyinga saga*, together with the addition of new generations may suggest attitudes and values of an author

45 *Orkneyinga saga*, 85–86.

46 Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Sagnaritun Oddaverja. Nokkrar athuganir* (Reykjavík: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja hf., 1937), 16–39; Haki Antonsson, "The Kings of Norway and the Earls of Orkney," 81.

47 Haki Antonsson, *St. Magnús of Orkney*, 10.

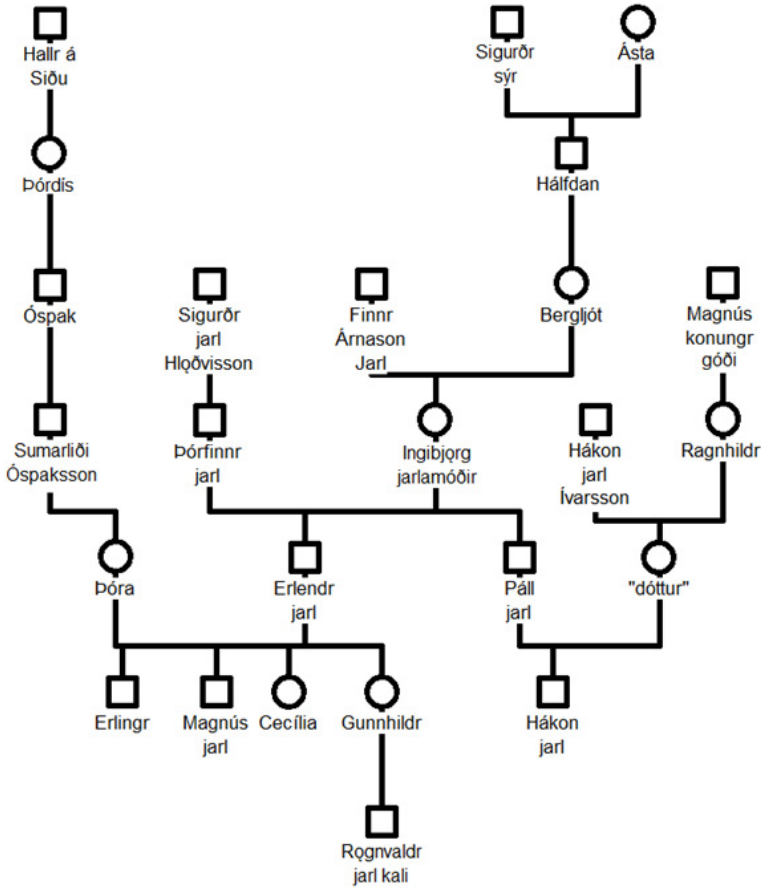


Figure 2: Magnús's genealogy from Magnúss saga skemmri (second half of the 1200s).

we so far know very little about, even if the narrative contributions to the hagiographical tradition of Magnús are fairly modest.

The genealogy of Magnús is placed at the very beginning of the saga, following the descendants of Þórfinnr jarl to Magnús, his cousin Hákon, and his nephew Rognvaldr kali, who played such an important role in promoting the cult of his uncle.⁴⁸ Bilateral lines to King Magnús góði, on

48 *Magnúss saga skemmri*, ed. Finnboði Guðmundsson, Íslenzk fornrit XXXIV (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1965), 311.

Hákon Pálsson's side, and Síðu-Hallr on Magnús Erlendsson's side are also included, but a new addition is the bilateral line back to Sigurðr sýr and Ásta through Ingibjörg jarlamóðir (d. 1068–69), mother of Erlendr and Páll. *Orkneyinga saga* includes no such line in the sections about St Magnús, or elsewhere, making it an innovation of the author of *Magnúss saga skemmri*. The inclusion of shared royal ancestors can perhaps be seen as a response to Hákon Pálsson's claim from *Orkneyinga saga* of being higher-born than the brothers Magnús and Erlingr, which is also preserved in *Magnúss saga skemmri*.⁴⁹ But since they were all descended from kings, there would be no reason to consider Magnús as lower-born than his rival.

Another change is the omission of Óláfr helgi and the episode where Hákon awkwardly meets the Swedish fortune-teller. Even though readers with even modest historical knowledge will know that Óláfr was the father of Magnús góði and son of Ásta, the exclusion of Óláfr seems intended to concentrate the narrative more intently on Magnús' achievements and miracles. They speak for themselves, without borrowing legitimacy from a connection to Óláfr helgi.

Beuermann has argued that we may see the contours of competition between the two saints, Magnús and Óláfr, in *Magnúss saga skemmri*. Óláfr helgi had been employed to support the political ambitions of the Norwegian church and kingdom to consolidate Norwegian power over the North Atlantic islands.⁵⁰ Part of this process was the formal incorporation of Iceland and Orkney into the Norwegian kingdom after the treaties of 1262 and 1266 respectively.⁵¹ Because of this, Icelandic authors, perhaps even more than before, were prompted to examine and define their own individual characteristics within, but separate and individual from, the Norwegian kingdom. This may have encouraged the search for a wider North Atlantic solidarity where apprehension over Norwegian cultural and political encroachment is expressed through adoption of St Magnús as, in Beuermann's words, an "anti-Norwegian saint".⁵² Óláfr helgi, may

49 *Magnúss saga skemmri*, 312.

50 Ian Beuermann, "Jarla Sögur Orkneyja. Status and Power of the Earls of Orkney According to Their Sagas," *Ideology and Power in the Viking and Middle Ages: Scandinavia, Iceland, Ireland, Orkney and the Faeroes*, eds. Gro Steinsland, Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, Jan Erik Rekdal, and Ian Beuermann (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 146–47.

51 Steinar Imsen, *Kongemakt og skattland: Den norske Kongens rike utenfor Norge i middelalderen* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2018), 36–37, 45–49.

52 Beuermann, "Jarla Sögur Orkneyja," 147.

have been excluded from the genealogy if he was seen as a symbol of Norwegian expansionism.

I do not believe that Beuermann’s somewhat polemical formulations are entirely substantiated by the sources. As mentioned, the saga author takes care to graft another branch onto the tree, making St Magnús into a descendant of the Norwegian royal dynasty too. This strongly indicates that such descent was considered prestigious, even in the second half of the thirteenth century, and that there is no absolute disjunction between the prestige of the Norwegian centre and the North Atlantic periphery.

But this does not exclude the possibility of competition between the saints. Óláfr helgi is glaringly absent from the genealogy in *Magnúss saga skemmri*, perhaps suggesting that the saga author was less concerned about Norwegian politics and more concerned that Óláfr would outshine Magnús. This concern may lie behind a curious episode from the miracle collection in *Magnúss saga skemmri*, where Magnús seems to stand in for Óláfr. In this account, the ailing Icelandic farmer Eldjárn Varðason prays to be cured of an illness, making vows to both Óláfr and Magnús.⁵³ Finally, Magnús appears to Eldjárn, promising him recovery from the illness. The saint further explains that he has been sent as St Óláfr was busy answering another prayer in the west.⁵⁴ Beuermann argues that this posits Magnús as a “counterweight” to the rapidly spreading cult of St Óláfr,⁵⁵ a claim that is substantiated by the manifest exclusion of Óláfr in the genealogy. Similar intentions may lay behind the retention in *Magnúss saga skemmri* of the lineage on Magnús’ mother’s side to Síðu-Hallr which we also find in *Orkneyinga saga*. Hallr was the ancestor of several powerful families and individuals in the thirteenth century, such as the Icelandic jarl Gizurr Þorvaldsson (d. 1268). But while the cult of St Magnús may have achieved local appeal in Iceland as early as the mid-thirteenth century, it would take another couple of decades until the cult was formally adopted by the Icelandic Alþing in 1326.⁵⁶

In *Magnúss saga lengri*, from the early fourteenth century, we find an altogether different attitude to the relationship between Óláfr and other Nordic saints. The saga has adapted material from *Orkneyinga saga*, as well

53 *Magnúss saga skemmri*, 330.

54 *Magnúss saga skemmri*, 331.

55 Beuermann, “Jarla Sögur Orkneyja,” 146.

56 Haki Antonsson, *St. Magnús of Orkney*, 20.

as from a now lost Latin *Vita* of St Magnús composed by a certain master Robert in the late 1100s. It may be somewhat challenging, therefore, to properly contextualise the relevant passages, as the earlier and later material cannot be entirely distinguished. Due to a lack of other sources, however, the text will primarily be evaluated as a historical synthesis of previous sources representing values and attitudes of its fourteenth-century context.

The genealogical material in the saga differs from both *Orkneyinga saga* and *Magnúss saga skemmri*, and it is likely that the author of *Magnúss saga lengri* himself interpolated new generations into the introduction of the saga. Rather than rivalry, we are presented with a harmonised vision of a pan-Nordic community of related saints from Norway, Iceland, and Orkney:

Lof, dýrð ok heiðr ok æra sé almáttigum guði, lausnara várum ok skapara, fyrir sína margföldu mildi ok miskunnsemi, er hann veitir oss, er byggjum á utanverðum jaðri heimsins, ok eptir meistaranna orðtæki, er svá setja í sínar bækr, at þeim sýnist sem vér sém komnir út ór heiminum. Ok allt eins, þó at svá sé, virðist guð at sýna oss sína mildi, einkanliga í því, er hann hefir oss látit koma til kynningar síns blessaða nafns, þar með gefit oss styrka stólpa, ina helgustu forgöngumenn heilagrar kristni, af hverra heilagleik öll Norðrhálfan skinn ok ljómar nær ok fjarri. Þessir eru: inn heilagi Óláfr konungr ok inn háleiti Hallvarðr, frændi hans, er prýða Nóreg með sínum helgum dómum; inn mæti Magnús Eyjajarl, er birtir Orkneyjar með sínum heilagleik, hverjum til sæmdar eptirfarandi saga er saman sett. Hér með eru blessaðir biskupar, Johannes ok Thorlacus, hverir Ísland hafa geislat með háleitu skini sinna bjartra verðleika. Því má sjá, at vér erum eigi fjarlægir guðs miskunn, þó at vér sém fjarlægir öðrum þjóðum at heims vistum; ok þar fyrir eigum vér honum þakkir at gera, sæmd ok æru alla tíma várs lífs.⁵⁷

Praise, glory and splendour and honour be to Almighty God, our redeemer and maker, for his manifold mercy and grace, which he bestows on us who dwell on the uttermost edge of the world; so that after the sayings of the masters who so set it in their books,

57 *Magnúss saga lengri*, ed. Finnboði Guðmundsson, Íslenzk fornrit XXXIV (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1965), 335. The translation is altered and somewhat expanded from Haki Antonsson, *St. Magnús of Orkney*, 31–32.

it seems to them as though we were come out of this world. And even if it is like this, God has shown us his mercy, especially in that he has let come to us knowledge of his blessed name, and thereby given us strong pillars, the most holy advocates of holy Christianity, from whose holiness all the northern half of the world shines and gleams, near and far. These are King Óláfr the saint and the exalted Hallvarðr his kinsman, who adorn Norway with their holy relics; the illustrious Magnús, the Isle-earl, who brightens the Orkneys with his holiness, to whose honour the aftercoming Saga is put together. Herewith are the blessed Bishops Jón and Þorlákr, who have enlightened Iceland with the exalted shining of their bright worthiness. By this it may be seen that we are not far off from God’s mercy, though we be far off from other peoples in our abode in the world; and therefore, we are bound to pay Him thanks, honour, and reverence all the time of our life.

With this vision, the Nordic saints appear as collectively complementing, rather than as individually competing. Each saint brightens their specific region of the Norse world: Óláfr and Hallvarðr in Norway, Magnús in the Orkneys, and Jón (d. 1121) and Þorlákr (d. 1139) in Iceland, but together they “shine and gleam” over the entire northern half of the world. Thus, the saintly parochialism, contours of which can be identified in *Magnúss saga skemmri*, is extinguished with the introduction of *Magnúss saga lengri*. Together with the geographical position, the saintly college constructs a greater Nordic identity defining the inhabitants of Norway, Iceland, and the Western Isles as members of the same group. But in this argument, we may also see a refutation of a common medieval trope, ultimately derived from the Old Testament, of the north as a “particularly vicious and evil location”.⁵⁸ The saints confirm God’s presence, even at the utmost edge of the world, against what the author vaguely alludes to as “meistaranna orðtæki, er svá setja í sínar bækr” (the sayings of the masters who so set it in their books). Such books seem to contain precisely such negative attitudes to the north.

58 Lasse Sonne, “The Northification of the Pagan Past in Old Norse Literature,” *The Northification of the Pagan Past in Old Norse Literature. The Scandinavian Connection*, eds. Mia Münster-Swendsen, Thomas K. Heebøll-Holm, Sigbjørn Olsen Sønnesyn (Durham: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2017), 89–90.

The lineages in *Magnúss saga lengri* support the vision of a related saintly community through the juxtaposition of five saints in one genealogy.⁵⁹ The two Orcadian saints Magnús and his nephew Rognvaldr kali, who is called “sannheilagr maðr” (truly holy man), are placed in the intersection between dynasties from Orkney, Iceland, and Norway. But the selection of generations diverge from that of *Orkneyinga saga*, and even *Magnúss saga skemmri*. The text prioritises the kinship between saints, rather than secular legitimacy conferred by descent from royalty. The branch connecting St Magnús to Sigurðr sýr and Ásta is therefore omitted, as there is seemingly no need to connect Magnús directly to the Norwegian royal dynasty. The author instead shows how the kin of Óláfr kyrri and the Orkney jarls are descended from the same Norwegian ancestors of the Arnæmæðlinga family, although this seems intended to explain the close relationship between the families during the events of 1066.⁶⁰ On the maternal side of Hákon Pálsson, Óláfr helgi is finally inserted as the father of Hákon’s ancestor, Magnús góði, but the inclusion of the episode of Hákon and the Swedish fortune-teller from *Orkneyinga saga* nonetheless distances the saint-killing Hákon from his holy ancestor.⁶¹ But by including Óláfr in the genealogy, the saga author shows how the dynasties of Magnús and Óláfr are related, even if this is somewhat more indirectly. St Hallvarðr also belongs to this family of saints, even if he is not explicitly mentioned in the genealogical section of the saga. His place can be inferred from the sobriquet of King Óláfr helgi’s “frændi” (kinsman) that appears in the introduction. Finally, *Magnúss saga lengri* retains the Icelandic branch on the maternal side of St Magnús but expands it with a collateral line from Hallr to incorporate yet another saint, “inn heilagi Jón Hólabiskup” (i.e. Jón Ögmundsson, Bishop of the Icelandic diocese of Hólar from 1106–1121).⁶²

Magnús Már Lárusson has argued that the genealogy to Jón ties St Magnús and *Magnúss saga lengri* to the diocese of Hólar, perhaps in an attempt to increase the prestige of St Jón who was held in higher regard in Hólar than Saint Þorlákr of Skálholt.⁶³ But Haki Antonsson duly points out that there is little to support such “factional attitude [...] towards the

59 *Magnúss saga lengri*, 337–38.

60 *Magnúss saga lengri*, 339.

61 *Magnúss saga lengri*, 341–42.

62 *Magnúss saga lengri*, 337.

63 Magnús Már Lárusson, “Sct. Magnus Orcadensis Comes,” *Saga* 3 (1960–1963): 487.

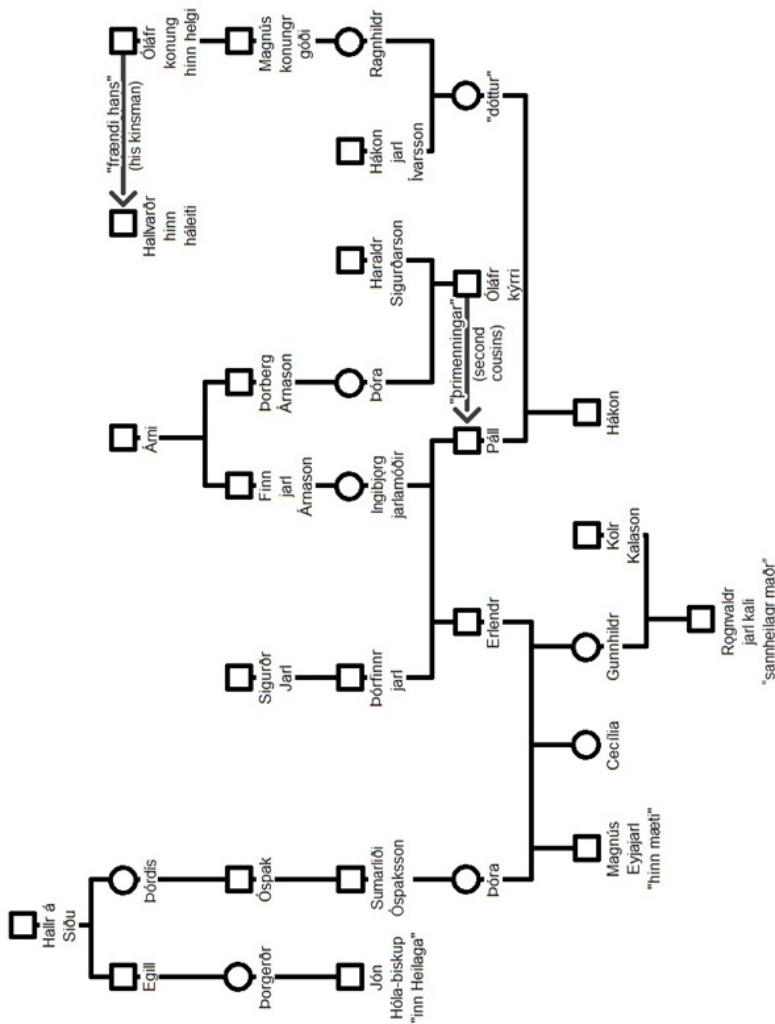


Figure 3: Magnús's genealogy from Magnúss saga lengri (early 1300s).

cult of the native saints”⁶⁴ and that *Magnúss saga lengri* is more likely to have been composed in Skálholt, in the years leading up to the offi-

64 Haki Antonsson, “The End of *Árna saga biskups* and the Cult of St Magnús of Orkney: Hagiography and Ecclesiastical Politics in Early Fourteenth-Century Iceland,” *Gripla* 34 (2023): 159.

cial adoption of St Magnús feast day by the Icelandic *Alþingi* in 1326.⁶⁵ The text was most probably composed sometime that year, even though Magnús had been locally venerated since at least the second half of the thirteenth century.⁶⁶ Another important date that shows the growing interest in Magnús is 1298, when Icelandic annals mention the translation of a relic of St Magnús to Skálholt Cathedral.⁶⁷ From these circumstances, it seems clear that the cult of St Magnús had already built up a certain momentum by the time *Magnúss saga lengri* was composed. And while the secular prestige of his genealogical credentials had been thoroughly explicated in sources such as *Orkneyinga saga* and *Magnúss saga skemmri*, through his descent from Síðu-Hallr there remained perhaps a question of how Magnús would fit into the Icelandic religious context.

The purpose of connecting Magnús to Jón and Óláfr, therefore, was apparently to situate the increasingly popular Magnús within a community of saints through a method with which the Icelanders were highly familiar: genealogy. Simultaneously, Jón Ögmundsson was tied into the Norse spiritual dynasty of saints through his connection with Magnús Erlendsson and, more indirectly, with Óláfr helgi and Hallvarðr Vébjarnarson. By representing the Orcadian jarl as partly Icelandic in extraction, and indeed a kinsman of the renowned Bishop Jón, whom several powerful Icelandic families considered a kinsman,⁶⁸ the proposal for formal recognition of his cult would perhaps be more appealing to the *Alþingi* of 1326.

Concluding Remarks

Genealogy understood as “family relationships” was ultimately a secular method of establishing legitimacy in the medieval world, since the Church with its strict, though not universally enforced regulations on celibacy was able to prevent the development of dynasties in the ecclesiastical aristocracy. But the density of royal martyrs in Scandinavia effortlessly enabled the

65 Haki Antonsson, *St. Magnús of Orkney*, 18; Haki Antonsson, “The End of *Árna saga biskups*,” 160.

66 Margaret Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland: Their Veneration from the Conversion to 1400* (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1994), 20.

67 *Íslandske annaler indtil 1578*, ed. Gustav Storm (Christiania [Oslo]: Grøndahl & Søns Bogtrykkeri, 1888), 145, 198, 386.

68 *Landnámabók*, 51–51, 318, 340–41, 367.

adaptation of genealogy as a tool in promoting and legitimising saints: it echoed the mechanism of legitimising power in the secular hierarchy. Thus, a genealogical connection to Óláfr helgi could be used to promote the cults of both St Hallvarðr in Norway and St Magnús in Iceland because the audience for these genealogies was familiar with how genealogical legitimacy worked.

At or around the establishment of a permanent seat for the Bishop of Oslo in the early 1100s, an oral tradition communicating the real or imagined kinship between Óláfr helgi and St Hallvarðr is likely to have been used to attract or perhaps justify the patronage of King Sigurðr Jórsalafari. By supporting the cult and its church-building efforts, Sigurðr strengthened his position in the eastern part of Norway. Óláfr helgi was the genealogical anchor that both justified and encouraged collaboration between king and church. Texts of the twelfth to thirteenth century continued recording this kinship both in the Latin liturgical *Acta* and the vernacular saint's sagas of Óláfr, Hallvarðr, and even in *Magnúss saga lengri*. By the fourteenth century, the belief in kinship between Hallvarðr and Óláfr was so entrenched that the author of *Magnúss saga lengri* simply appended the former saint to the genealogical material of the first few chapters, without having to explicate any of Hallvarðr's own lineage.

Inversely, the cult of Magnús Erlendsson seems at first to distance itself somewhat from Óláfr helgi in *Orkneyinga saga*, using the martyred king instead as a moral contrast to Magnús' murderer and Óláfr helgi's descendant, jarl Hákon Pálsson. The conjectured rivalling between dynastic saints during a period when the kingdom of Norway expanded its reach, in the latter half of the thirteenth century, probably accounts for the absence of Óláfr from the earliest genealogies of Magnús in *Orkneyinga saga* and *Magnúss saga skemmri*. But this absence does not eclipse the reliance on a genealogical connection to the Norwegian royal dynasty to confer prestige to the Orcadian comital family and Magnús in particular. Even if Magnús in *Magnúss saga skemmri* is shown to be a descendant of Ásta, who was well-known as Óláfr helgi's mother, the hagiographer takes care to allow Magnús' achievements and miracles to shine independently of the Norwegian saint.

A more important concern in these genealogies is the relationship between Orkney and Iceland, underpinned by the ubiquitous maternal lineage from Magnús to the Icelandic chieftain Síðu-Hallr. This appears to have been part of a strategy to introduce Magnús to Iceland by connecting

the saint to the ancestor of some of Iceland's most powerful families. It may also constitute a step in the process that led to the "collegiate" vision of saints that is so emphatically expressed in *Magnúss saga lengri*. This text introduces Óláfr helgi unambiguously to the genealogical tradition of Magnús, uniting the saints genealogically as well as politically, as members of a glorious community of holy men from Iceland, Norway, and Orkney.

Visions of saintly communities are not limited to *Magnúss saga lengri*. Sturla Þórðarson's *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, from the 1260s, recounts a vision supposedly experienced by the Scottish king Alexander II (r. 1214–49) of the saints Óláfr, Magnús, and Columba, who warned him against incursions into the Norwegian Hebrides.⁶⁹ Similarly, *Guðmundar saga biskups*, from the first decades of the fourteenth century, contains an account of a miracle from the time of Bishop Guðmundr Arason of Hólar (r. 1203–37). A certain Icelandic woman, Rannveig, calls upon the saints Óláfr, Magnús, and Hallvarðr who all appear before her.⁷⁰ If we are to believe the hagiographer's comment on Rannveig's prayer, that "menn heto þa mioc a þa her a landi" (back then, many here in the country called upon those men), the gradual genealogical integration of saints into a culturally specific collective for the "northern half of the world" (i.e. Norway, Orkney, and Iceland) in texts such as *Magnúss saga lengri* only reaffirmed long-established popular traditions of praying to groups of saints.

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- 69 Sturla Þórðarson, *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, eds. Sverrir Jakobsson, Þorleifur Hauksson, and Tor Ulset, 2 vols. (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2013), 2: 271.
- 70 *Guðmundar saga A: Ævi Guðmundar biskups*, ed. Stefán Karlsson, Editiones Arnarnagnæanæ, Ser. B, vol. 6 (Kaupmannahöfn [Copenhagen]: C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 1983), 95.

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SUMMARY

“Inn heilagi Óláfr konungr ok inn háleiti Hallvarðr, frændi hans”: *Óláfr helgi and Genealogies of Saints in Norway, Iceland, and Orkney*

Keywords: genealogy, hagiography, saints’ sagas, Óláfr helgi, St Hallvarðr Vébjarnarson, St Magnús of Orkney

This article examines the function of St Óláfr Haraldsson (d. 1030) in the genealogies of saints from the Norse world. Studies of Norwegian kingship have shown how Óláfr retained a pivotal role in legitimising claims to power from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries. But Óláfr was also used to legitimise later saints. This study considers two such saints: St Hallvarðr Vébjarnarson (d. c. 1043) from eastern Norway and St. Magnús Erlendsson of Orkney (d. 1116/17). The article illustrates the ways in which genealogies of these later saints interacted with and used the legacy of Óláfr helgi, demonstrating the enduring significance of Óláfr in the genealogical narratives of subsequent saints.

Hallvarðr’s genealogies are carefully explored through fragmented textual sources including the Latin *Acta Sancti Halvardi* and the almost completely lost Old Norse *Hallvarðs saga*. The sources consistently report of a matrilineal relationship between Hallvarðr and Óláfr helgi but are inconsistent about the details. It is contended that the idea of this relationship circulated orally before the genealogies were committed to writing. It is, however, good reason to be critical of the proposed kinship. Both Hallvarðr and Óláfr are mentioned in Adam of Bremen’s *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesie Pontificum* (c. 1075/76) but are not shown to be related. It is likely, therefore, that the claimed relationship emerged only around the 1100s, when King Sigurðr Jórsalafari (r. 1103–30) was involved in the construction of St Hallvarðr’s Church for the bishops of Oslo. The relationship between Óláfr and Hallvarðr could have underpinned this collaboration, consolidating the power and prestige of King Sigurðr in competition with his co-kings Eysteinn and Óláfr.

The second part of the article turns to St Magnús Erlendsson. His genealogies from *Orkneyinga saga*, *Magnúss saga skemmri*, and *Magnúss saga lengri* offer new perspectives on the promotion of Magnús’ cult in the centuries after his death. *Orkneyinga saga* emphasises the Icelanders among Magnús’ matrilineal ancestors whereas his cousin and rival, Hákon, is shown to descend from King Magnús góði (r. 1035–47), notably stopping one generation short of King Óláfr helgi. *Magnúss saga skemmri*, from the second half of the thirteenth century, is considered to offer little of value outside the narrative of the *Orkneyinga saga*, but it both condenses and expands the genealogy of its source. The text increases the prestige of St Magnús by connecting him by a new branch to the Norwegian royal family although Óláfr helgi is completely omitted from the narrative. This omission highlights the individual merits of Magnús’ achievements and miracles, possibly reflecting competition between the Óláfr and Magnús in late thirteenth-century Iceland. Finally, the

genealogies in *Magnúss saga lengri* are seen to establish Magnús' status as a saint within a broader Nordic context. It reintroduces Óláfr helgi to Magnús' genealogy aligning him genealogically with even more saints from the Norse world. In this text, rivalry and local concerns are thus displaced by a harmonised vision of a pan-Nordic community of related saints from Norway, Iceland, and Orkney.

ÁGRIP

„Inn heilagi Óláfr konungur ok inn háleiti Hallvarðr, frændi hans”: *Ólafur helgi ok ættfræði dýrlinga í Noregi, á Íslandi og Orkneyjum*

Lykilorð: ættfræði, helgisagnir, dýrlingasögur, Ólafur helgi, Hallvarður helgi Vébjörnsson, Magnús helgi Orkneyjajarl

Í þessari grein er fjallað um hlutverk Ólafs helga Haraldssonar (d. 1030) í ættfræði norræna dýrlinga. Við rannsóknir á norskri konungstign hefur komið fram hvernig Ólafur gegndi lykilhlutverki við að tryggja lögmæti krafna um völd allt frá elleftu öld til þrettánda aldar. En Ólafur var einnig nýttur til að réttlæta staðfestingu á heilagleika dýrlinga síðar meir. Þessi rannsókn snýst um tvo dýrlinga af því tagi: Hallvarð helga Vébjörnsson (d. um 1043) frá austurhluta Noregs og Magnús helga Orkneyjajarl (d. 1116/17). Gerð er grein fyrir hvernig ættfræði þessara síðari dýrlinga tengdist og nýtti sér arfleifð Ólafs helga en það undirstrikar hvað Ólafur var lengi mikilvægur í ættfræðilegri umfjöllun þeirra dýrlinga sem á eftir komu.

Farið er vandlega yfir ættfræðilegar upplýsingar um Hallvarð í textabrotum sem varðveist hafa, þar með talin *Acta Sancti Halvardi* á latínu og fornsagan *Hallvarðs saga* sem nú er nær algjörlega glötuð. Heimildir greina ávallt frá ættartengslum Hallvarðs og Ólafs í kvenlegg en eru ekki sammála um hvernig þeim er háttað. Fullyrða má að hugmyndin um þessi tengsl hafi verið í munnlegri geymd áður en farið var að skrá þau niður. Hins vegar er full ástæða til að draga í efa þennan ætlaða skyldleika. Hallvarðar og Ólafs er beggja getið í bók Adams frá Brimum, *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesie Pontificum* (um 1075/76) en ekki kemur þar fram neitt um skyldleika þeirra. Því er líklegt að ekki hafi verið farið að ætla þá skylda fyrr en í upphafi tólftu aldar þegar Sigurður Jórsalafari (konungur frá 1103–1130) kom að byggingu kirkju Hallvarðs helga fyrir Óslóarbiskupana. Ættartengsl Ólafs og Hallvarðs gætu hafa rennt stoðum undir þetta samstarf og styrkt völd og orðstír Sigurðar konungs í samkeppninni við hina konungana tvo, Eysteín og Ólaf.

Seinni hluti greinarinnar fjallar um Magnús helga Erlendsson. Ættarsaga hans í *Orkneyinga sögu*, *Magnúss sögu skemmri* og *Magnúss sögu lengri* draga fram ný sjónarmið varðandi dýrkunina á Magnúsi næstu aldir eftir andlát hans. Í *Orkneyinga sögu* er lögd áhersla á Íslendingana í móðurætt Magnúsar og greint frá því að frændi hans og keppinautur Hákon sé kominn af Magnúsi góða

(konungur frá 1035–1047), en þó þannig að hætt er að rekja ættina einni kynslóð áður en að Ólafi helga kemur. Svo er litið á að *Magnúss saga skemmri*, frá seinni hluta þrettánda aldar, sé um fátt merkileg nema hvað frásögnina af *Orkneyinga sögu* varðar en þar er ættfræðiheimildum bæði þjappað saman og þær útvíkkaðar. Textinn eykur orðstír Magnúsar helga með því að tengja hann nýrri grein norsku konungsfjölskyldunnar, jafnvel þótt Ólafi helga sé alfarið sleppt í frásögninni. Þannig eru dregin fram afrek og kraftaverk Magnúsar sjálfs sem gæti bent til þess að samkeppni hafi ríkt á milli Ólafs og Magnúsar á Íslandi síðla á þrettánda öld. Ættfræðiupplýsingarnar í *Magnúss sögu lengri* eru auk þess taldar vera til þess að undirstrika stöðu hans sem norræns dýrlings í víðara samhengi. Þar er Ólafi helga á ný bætt við ættartöflu hans og þannig er hann ættfræðilega tengdur enn fleiri dýrlingum í norrænu samhengi. Í stað metings og staðbundinna deiluefna birtist sameiginleg sýn á samfélag dýrlinga frá Noregi, Íslandi og Orkneyjum, sem tengjast hver öðrum ættarböndum.

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TOWARDS AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF DESTINY

*The Dynamics of Fate in Old Norse Literature as Illustrated by Vǫlsunga Saga*¹

IN RECENT YEARS, the social dynamics of destiny have received growing interest from anthropologists looking to establish ethnographic comparisons to shed light on the different attributes of the human condition. If destiny evokes “conceptions of human lives and futures that are, at least partly, fixed – be it by high political powers, cosmic forces, or transcendental entities,”² then it also allows us the opportunity to understand the possibilities of the individuals in an already conditioned world. However, the unavoidability of fate does not necessarily produce a sense of disconnection from one’s outcome, as it can motivate people to orchestrate their own future.³

The present study seeks to enrich the ongoing scholarly discourse by conducting an in-depth analysis of the Old Norse conceptualizations of destiny as articulated in *Vǫlsunga saga*. This investigation places particular emphasis on the moral repercussions associated with kinship structure and the ancestral influence within the narrative. Our research posits that these social forces are morally punished and portrayed in a manner akin to the inexorable nature of fate. Apart from being determined by cosmic forces

- 1 I would like to thank the reviewers for their helpful suggestions and the editors for their dedicated work. This research was supported by the Spanish Ministry of Universities with Next Generation EU funds, through the Margarita Salas postdoctoral fellowship at the Complutense University of Madrid.
- 2 Alice Elliot and Laura Menin, “For an Anthropology of Destiny,” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 8 (2018): 293.
- 3 Max Weber’s classical conceptions are still useful for the understanding of the relationship between predestination and action (*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London and New York: Routledge, 2005)). However, his position has been nuanced by different authors: Alice Elliot, “The Makeup of Destiny: Predestination and the Labor of Hope in a Moroccan Emigrant Town,” *American Ethnologist* 43 (2016): 488–499.

or supernatural beings, destiny is also shaped by specific social norms and hierarchical structures.

I also seek to expand the academic discourse on fate within Medieval Studies. In recent decades, destiny has not received academic attention commensurate with its centrality in Old Norse literature.⁴ However, there are enriching works that have also paved the way for the elaboration of this article. Karen Bek-Pedersen has provided valuable analyses and argues that honor is often represented in the same terms as destiny. The actions taken by characters can be represented as something fixed by the *normir*,⁵ as there are situations “in which men and women feel that they are not acting according to their own wishes but nonetheless feel that they must do what they do, as though they were obeying some kind of law.”⁶

While some authors have conceived destiny in a more deterministic way,⁷ other explanations leave aside the structural or external dimensions and put more emphasis on the individual. William Ian Miller and Nicolas Meylan have pointed out that fate and prophetic dreams are in the service of individuals who seek to acquire political gain⁸ or those who seek to abdicate responsibility for their transgressions.⁹ However, while fate may mitigate the condemnation of certain decisions, to assume such a feature is the purpose of fate is to confuse the effect with the cause. We will see in this article that prophetic dreams and destiny are not the result of an individual strategy but of the relationships between different social groups,

- 4 See Stefanie Gropper, “Fate,” in *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*, eds. Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 198. It is not my intention to give an overview of the foregoing scholarship; I will focus briefly on those studies that were most helpful in the development of this article. The most exhaustive analysis of previous research on this topic can certainly be found in Gropper’s work.
- 5 In *Gylfaginning*, these supernatural beings establish people’s destiny and are represented as a triad. They are often thought of in relation to the Greek *Moirai* or the Roman *Parcae*, three female figures who determine the fate of humanity. However, the textile work that characterizes the former is not clearly found among the *normir*.
- 6 Karen Bek-Pedersen, *The Norns in Old Norse Mythology* (Edinburgh: Dunedin, 2011), 26.
- 7 E.g., Régis Boyer, “Fate as a Deus Otiosus in the Íslendingasögur: A Romantic View?,” in *Sagnaskemmtun. Studies in Honour of Hermann Pálsson on his 65th Birthday*, ed. Rudolf Simek and Jónas Kristjánsson (Vienna: Böhlau, 1986), 61–77.
- 8 William Ian Miller, “Dreams, Prophecy and Sorcery: Blaming the Secret Offender in Medieval Iceland,” *Scandinavian Studies* 58 (1986): 101–123.
- 9 Nicolas Meylan, “Fate is a Hero’s Best Friend: Towards a Socio-Political Definition of Fate in Medieval Icelandic Literature,” *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 10 (2014): 155–172.

of a hierarchical structure that determines social actions, and of antisocial desires that jeopardize the stability of the community and drag individuals on to a unidirectional path.

The source chosen for this study is one in which destiny plays a more prominent role than in other Old Norse narratives. *Vǫlsunga saga* is thought to have been composed in Iceland during the 1250s or 1260s.¹⁰ It is preserved in a medieval manuscript (Nykgl. saml. 1824 b, 4to) together with *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, and belongs to the genre of the *fornaldarsögur*, containing influences from romances and courtly literature.¹¹ *Vǫlsunga saga* is also known for its close relationship to earlier sources, such as the *Skáldskaparmál* and a variety of eddic poems. However, the saga author was able to integrate all these sources and produce a unified narrative with a “considerable consistency.”¹² For the analysis of the saga, I have consulted the editions of Kaaren Grimstad and Ronald Finch, but the latter is the one referred to in this article.¹³

- 10 Some scholars, such as M. Olsen, have suggested that *Vǫlsunga saga* might have originated in Norway, though this theory lacks broad acceptance (see Ronald Finch, ed., *Vǫlsunga Saga* (London: Nelson, 1965), xxxviii). These proposals often rely on speculative arguments. For example, Sue Margeson observes that, unlike in *Fáfnismál* and *Skáldskaparmál*, Sigurðr is depicted with two swords (Gramr and Riðill) only in *Vǫlsunga saga* (chapter XIX). She draws a parallel to thirteenth-century Norwegian stave churches in Lardal and Mæri, where Sigurðr is similarly depicted with two swords. Consequently, Margeson argues that this iconography indicates a more Norwegian than Icelandic context for the saga’s composition (see Sue Margeson, “Sigurd with Two Swords,” *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 12 (1988): 194–200). Despite these observations, the evidence remains inconclusive, and the prevailing scholarly consensus maintains that the saga was most likely composed in Iceland.
- 11 The episode in which Sinfjötli is healed from his wounds by following the example of a couple of weasels resembles the event in *Eliduc* in which the maiden is also recovered thanks to the intervention of these same animals. In addition, the courtly description of Sigurðr *Fáfnisbani* is taken from *Þiðreks saga af Bern*. On this topic, see Carol Clover, “*Vǫlsunga saga* and the Missing Lai of Marie de France,” in *Sagnaskemmtun. Studies in Honour of Hermann Pálsson on his 65th birthday*, ed. Rudolf Simek and Jónas Kristjánsson (Vienna: Böhlau, 1986), 79–84; Marianne Kalinke, “Arthurian Echoes in Indigenous Icelandic Sagas,” in *The Arthur of the North. The Arthurian Legend in the Norse and Rus’ Realms*, ed. Marianne Kalinke (Cardiff: The University of Wales Press, 2011), 145–167; Carolyne Larrington, “*Vǫlsunga saga*, Ragnars saga and Romance in Old Norse: Revisiting Relationships,” in *The Legendary Sagas. Origins and Development*, ed. Annette Lassen, Agneta Ney, et al., 251–270 (Reykjavik: University of Iceland Press, 2012).
- 12 Ronald Finch, “The Treatment of Poetic Sources by the Compiler of *Vǫlsunga saga*,” *Saga-Book* 16 (1962–1965): 353.
- 13 Kaaren Grimstad, ed., *Vǫlsunga saga. The Saga of the Volsungs* (Saarbrücken: AQ-Verlag, 2000). Ronald Finch, ed., *Vǫlsunga Saga* (London: Nelson, 1965).

The remainder of this article runs as follows: In the next two sections, I will attend to the dynamics of fate in *Völsunga saga* and their links to greedy attitudes and oath-breaking, a collaboration that establishes inescapable destruction. Sections III and IV analyze the ways in which kinship ideologies can grant the individuals an identity that will bind them to their family and favor the fulfillment of duties presented with the same inexorability and devastation as fate itself. Finally, the conclusions will highlight the main argument of the article and provide some references to the context of production that will help us understand the function of fate in Old Norse narratives and its capacity to dramatize social tensions and offer a moral message.

I. Fate, Doom, and Greed

In Old Norse sources, destiny can be discerned through different manifestations, such as omens and dreams. In *Völsunga saga*, the capacity to foretell the future rests on the dying or female figures, excluding the case of Grípr (cf. Grimstad 2000, 26).¹⁴ Thus, those who are dying embody a liminal condition that merges certain aspects of the living world and the realm of the dead and makes possible the acquisition of specific knowledge: that which remains hidden for most of the living becomes visible to those who experience death.

In *Völsunga saga*, most of the prophecies and concepts of fate emerge when Andvari's cursed treasure is on the scene. Significantly, once the treasure and its deleterious effects disappear, the concepts of fate cease to have such a significant presence in the saga. A curse is uttered by Andvari

14 The relationship between death and clairvoyancy is further elaborated in Old Norse mythology, where the god Óðinn raises the dead and uses heads to acquire hidden knowledge (on the topic of necromancy, see Stephen Mitchell, "Óðinn, Charms, and Necromancy. Hávamál 157 in Its Nordic and European Contexts," in *Old Norse Mythology-Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Pernille Hermann and Stephen Mitchell (Cambridge: Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature, 2017), 289–321). Significantly, the magic used to raise the dead (*Valgaldr*) could also force the seeress to speak (Karen Bek-Pedersen, "What Does Frigg Say to Loki – and Why?", in *Res, Artes et Religio. Essays in Honour of Rudolf Simek*, ed. Sabine Heide Walther, Regina Jucknies, et al. (Leeds: Kismet Press, 2021), 45–46). These patterns are also related to the practice of "sitting out" to wake up trolls and raise the dead in order to receive counsel, information, and protection (John McKinnell, *Meeting the Other in Norse Myth and Legend* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2005), 200).

once Loki, Óðinn, and Hoenir have stolen his gold in order to compensate Hreiðmarr's family for the killing of his son Otr: "[...] at hverjum skyldi at bana verða er þann gullhring ætti ok svá allt gullit" (... and said that to possess the ring, or any of the gold, meant death).¹⁵ Andrew McGillivray suggests that this sentence can be interpreted not as a curse but as a simple warning.¹⁶ But this conflicts with the economy of the gift and obviates the inalienable relation that links the object to its original possessor.¹⁷ Indeed, the ring of Andvari is called *Andvaranautr*, which alludes precisely to the presence of the first possessor within the object that derives from him.¹⁸ Andvari's permanence in the treasure was established by the curse and agency he transferred to it, from which he will never be separated.

Through this curse-desire, Andvari determines the fate of all those who come into contact with the treasure as it has the capacity to attract the greed of individuals willing to break other social norms to get their hands on it. These dynamics are evident when the gods cover Otr's body with the treasure. Dissatisfied with the quantity, Hreiðmarr sees that a single whisker is sticking out and forces the gods to cover it, something that already emphasizes the family's greed. This prompts Loki to give them the *Andvaranautr* ring, whereupon Loki reproduces the dwarf's curse: "Gull er þér nú reitt/ en þú gjöld hefir/ mikil míns höfuðs./ Syni þínum verðrat/ sæla sköpuð/ þat er ykkarr beggja bani" (Gold is now rendered / recompense for you, / much for my head. / 'Tis not luck will be / the lot of your son: / Death to you both it brings).¹⁹

The excessive greed and the compensation for the otter's death are understood here as the origin of a specific and violent destiny.²⁰ This attitude

15 *Völsunga saga*, 26.

16 Andrew McGillivray, "The Best Kept Secret: Ransom, Wealth and Power in *Völsunga saga*," *Scandinavian Studies* 87 (2015): 365–382.

17 Marcel Mauss "Essai sur le don: Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques," *L'Année Sociologique* 1 (1925): 30–179. Chris Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities* (London: Academic Press, 1982). Annette Weiner, "Inalienable Wealth," *American Ethnologist* 12 (1985): 210–227 and *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). Maurice Godelier, *The Enigma of the Gift* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). A discussion on inalienable possessions is further elaborated in Section III.

18 The Old Norse concept of *nautr* refers to an individual's object that has been given away, stolen, looted, or acquired by another person after the death of its possessor.

19 *Völsunga saga*, 26.

20 Hreiðmarr's greed appears even more clearly in *Reginsmál*, where this character refuses to

towards gold is also shared within the family. Fáfnir ends up killing his father to keep all the treasure for himself. But his greed, as will be shown below, manifests itself in Fáfnir's body: "Hann [Fáfnir] gerðist svá illr, at hann lagðist út ok unni engum at njóta fjárins nema sér ok varð síðan at inum versta ormi ok liggr nú á því fé" (He [Fáfnir] grew so malevolent that he went off to live in the wilds and allowed none but himself to have any pleasure in the riches, and later on he turned into a terrible dragon and now he lies on the treasure).²¹

This transformation is linked to his transgressive behaviour. As Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown has pointed out, societies articulate ritual prohibitions and rules of conduct through which the ritual status of the person (or the collective) who transgresses certain norms is affected, and this can be followed by some kind of misfortune.²² In a similar vein, Robin Ridington shows that the transgressions of taboos and cultural norms among the Dunne-za bring about the transformation of the human body into the Wechuge, animals that in past times hunted humans but now enter into communication with them through vision quests. Once the taboo is broken, the transgressor begins to adopt the behaviors of the animal and devours its own lips, making communication with society impossible and turning his neighbors into potential victims,²³ cementing the idea that the body is the existential locus of culture,²⁴ and the skin the point of contact that links people to the social forces that surround them.²⁵ In the case of Fáfnir, his inhuman desire for gold (triggered by Andvari's curse), prevents the distribution of wealth and produces chaos in society.²⁶ Certainly, fear

give part of the payment to his other two sons, Fáfnir and Reginn. See Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason, eds., *Eddukvæði II. Hetjukvæði* (Reykjavík: Hið islenzka fornritafélag, 2014), 296–302.

21 *Völsunga saga*, 26.

22 Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (New York: Free Press, 1969), 155.

23 Robin Ridington, "Wechuge and Windigo: A Comparison of Cannibal Belief among Boreal Forest Athapaskans and Algonkians," *Anthropologica* 18 (1976): 107–129.

24 Thomas Csordas, "Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology," *Ethos* 18 (1990): 5. Cf. David Le Breton, *Anthropologie du corps et de la modernité* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2013).

25 Andrew Strathern, "Why is Shame on the Skin?," *Ethnology* 14 (1975): 347–356.

26 This relationship between the dragon and the treasure has received great academic interest since the nineteenth century in the works of Grimm and has further been explored by numerous scholars (see Jonathan Evans, "Old Norse Dragons, Beowulf, and the Deutsche

can also exercise a crucial role.²⁷ But Fáfñir is first and foremost a symbol. What provokes fear is that which he represents: a greedy attitude triggered by the curse of Andvari. It is precisely the desire to keep the wealth for his own benefit that is at the origin of his transformation and moral condemnation. As we can see, Andvari's curse imposes its reality upon the characters' bodies.

Moreover, fate is reactivated through Fáfñir's words during his confrontation with Sigurðr, when he tells him that the gold will bring his death. However, the hero accepts his fate saying, "Hverr vill fé hafa allt til ins eina dags, en eitt sinn skal hverr deyja" (Everyone wants to keep hold on wealth until that day come, but everyone must die some time).²⁸ The danger of the treasure is again reaffirmed by Fáfñir, who even seems to advise Sigurðr not to get hold of the treasure. Immediately afterwards, the logical course of the dialogue seems to be interrupted by the introduction of an apparently unrelated topic. Sigurðr asks Fáfñir about the nature of the *normir* and for the name of the island (*hólmr*) on which Surtr and the Æsir will shed their blood in Ragnarøk, that is, Óskaptr. This narrative break should not be understood as a mere discordance. Regardless of how aesthetically discordant it may sound to the modern reader, this "inter-

Mythologie," in *The Shadow-Walkers. Jacob Grimm's Mythology of the Monstrous*, ed. Tom Shippey (Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005), 207–269; Victoria Symons, "Wreopenhilt ond wyrmfah. Confronting Serpents in Beowulf and Beyond," in *Representing Beasts in Early Medieval England and Scandinavia*, ed. Michael Bintley and Thomas Williams (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015), 73–93. Significantly, in another version of the story of Fáfñir and Sigurðr presented in *Þiðreks saga af Bern*, the dragon that the hero confronts does not keep any wealth or behave greedily. This is also seen in other dragons within this same saga, which shows a closer proximity to Christian thought, where this creature becomes the representation of the Devil and evil. The Christian influence in this work is clearly seen in the fight between Þiðrekr and another dragon, where the struggle between the Devil and God is particularly ostensible. Confronting the beast, Þiðrekr turns to God for help in his task. See Henrik Bertelsen, ed., *Þiðreks saga af Bern* (Copenhagen: Møllers Bogtrykkeri, 1905), 362. This influence of Christianity can also be seen in the way in which the monster attacks, for it uses its tail to immobilize and squeeze the hero. This reflects the influence of the texts of Isidoro de Sevilla, who maintains in his *Etymologies* that the most dangerous part of the dragon resides in its tail (Jacques André, ed., *Isidore de Séville. Etymologies. Livre XII. Des animaux* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1986), 135–137).

27 Ármann Jakobsson, "Enter the Dragon. Legendary Saga Courage and the Birth of the Hero," in *Making History. Essays on the Fornaldarsögur*, ed. Martin Arnold and Alison Finlay (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2010), 33–52.

28 *Völsunga saga*, 31.

ruption” of the dialogue adds two clear elements that support the background of the dialogue. The allusion to the *normir* and to the ill-fated place (Óskaptr) in which Ragnarøk will unfold follows Fáfnir’s words about the cursed gold, highlighting the capacity of the treasure to construct an inexorable and destructive fate. Just as the gods fall in the face of chaotic forces in a *hólmr*, Sigurðr will also deliver his personal *hólmganga*²⁹ to meet the death that has been preordained.³⁰

II. Oaths and Greedy Attitudes as Tools of Fate

The encounter between Sigurðr and Fáfnir not only sets the destiny of the Volsung hero but also the future of the families with whom he comes into contact. As Judy Quinn argues, the Andvaranautr ring harms the lives of those who stay in contact with it and snuffs out their family lines.³¹ But this curse cannot be understood without the greedy attitudes that it generates. Andvari’s agency is constituted as the ultimate fate of individuals as well as generating the necessary desires to produce that fixed future. Once Sigurðr had taken possession of the treasure, destiny began to manifest itself in the present. Not only did Fáfnir die, as Andvari had wished in his curse, but Reginn was also killed by the hero when some birds told him that his foster father (*fóstri*) intended to betray him and keep the gold for himself.

However, the effectiveness of the curse also depends on another series of obligations and social ties, including oath-taking. The act of taking vows guarantees the preservation of the pledged commitment, a principle further underscored by the peril associated with their violation. Breaking oaths, as Brynhildr warns in her advice, heralds great disasters: “Ok sver

29 This practice was a regulated duel that confronted two individuals to settle various disputes, such as disagreement with the results of the General Assembly, disputes over inheritance, women, property, etc. Cf. Jesse Byock, “Hólmganga,” in *Medieval Scandinavia. An Encyclopedia*, ed. Phillip Pulsiano and Kirsten Wolf (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 289–290.

30 See also Joyce Tally Lionarons, *The Medieval Dragon. The Nature of the Beast in Germanic Literature* (Enfield Lock: Hisarlik Press, 1998), 66–67.

31 Judy Quinn, “Trust in Words: Verse Quotation and Dialogue in Völsunga saga,” in *Fornaldarsagornas struktur och ideologi, handlingar från ett symposium i Uppsala 31.8–2.9 2001*, ed. Ármann Jakobsson, Annette Lassen, et al. (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2003), 89–100.

eigi rangan eið, því at grimm hefnd fylgir griðrofi” (And don’t swear a crooked oath, for dire vengeance follows on breach of truce).³² This is in line with one of the responsibilities of the goddess Vár, as described in the *Snorra Edda*, whose task is to take revenge on those who break the oaths (*várar*) they had made to each other.³³ Despite these negative consequences, Sigurðr and Brynhildr swore to enter into marriage. And it is precisely the curse of the treasure and its ability to attract greed which provokes the breaking of vows and produces the fate that treason portends. Once Brynhildr and Sigurðr had established their vows, the hero’s treasure attracted the greed of the Gjukungr. Grímhildr thought of Sigurðr as a good ally not only because of his greatness, but also because he “hafði ofr fjár, miklu meira en menn vissi dæmi til” (having immense wealth, far greater than any heard of before).³⁴ Consequently, the hero is fooled by Grímhildr into taking a potion that makes him forget the oaths he made with Brynhildr, and he marries Guðrún.

After this, Gunnarr shows his interest in marrying Brynhildr and, by means of magic, exchanges his appearance with his brother-in-law Sigurðr, who visits Brynhildr and obtains her betrothal. During this episode, Brynhildr fails to discover the trick while it is in progress but later confesses to Sigurðr that she recognized his eyes but that her good fortune was obscured by a certain power: “Ek undruðumk þann mann er kom í minn sal, ok þóttumk ek kenna yður augu, ok fekk ek þó eigi víst skilit fyrir þeiri hulðu er á lá á minni hamingju” (I was puzzled by the man who came into my hall, and I thought I recognised your eyes, but I wasn’t able to see things clearly because of the veil which shrouded my good fortune).³⁵ In addition, Sigurðr took the ring he had previously given her and gave it to Guðrún. This unexplained action is arguably the result of the curse, for it is Brynhildr’s discovery that the Andvaranautr ring is in Guðrún’s hands that triggers a series of actions that will shape the fate of various characters and their families. This produces a series of prophecies that portend a fateful destiny. Sigurðr knows beforehand that a sword will

32 *Völsunga saga*, 40. This sentence closely follows the strophe 23 of *Sigrdrífumál* (*Eddukvæði II. Hetjukvæði*, 318).

33 Anthony Faulkes, ed., *Snorra Edda. Prologue and Gylfaginning* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2005), 29.

34 *Völsunga saga*, 47.

35 *Ibid.*, 55.

pierce his heart and that Brynhildr will not survive the conflict,³⁶ which in the end comes to pass.³⁷

Predictions and prophetic dreams continued to be shaped around this grim fate. Shortly before dying, Brynhildr prophesies that Guðrún will marry Atli against her will, which will end up in disaster for both families. Indeed, after this marriage takes place, Atli dreams of his children's death as well as of his own. Once again, this future is made possible by the pernicious effects of the greed that the treasure itself produces, as it is Atli who decides to invite the Gjukungs to his territories in order to betray them and keep the gold for himself. A drunken Gunnarr accepts Atli's offer, because he cannot resist his destiny ("mátti ok eigi við sköpum vinna"),³⁸ a decision which is also followed by his brother Högni, even though they were alerted by Guðrún, and their wives told them about their prophetic dreams foretelling their death. The influence of destiny on their decision is made clear by Guðrún, who regrets seeing her brothers in Atli's land and says, "Ek þóttumk ráð hafa við sett at eigi kæmi þér, en engi má við skopum vinna" (I thought I had advised against your coming, but no one can fight against his fate).³⁹ This destiny is no doubt produced by Atli's interest in gold, something that he makes explicit to the Gjukungs themselves once

36 Ibid., 55.

37 As we will note in Section V, Brynhildr commits suicide. Significantly, she was burnt together with Sigurðr. This might indicate that their union was desirable: Death is able to join together that which life separated. The desire to keep in memory such a union by this specific representation closely follows *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* but contrasts radically with *Helreið Brynhildar*, where it is made explicit that two separate pyres were made for Sigurðr and Brynhildr. The position of the author of *Völsunga saga* is also in line with numerous romances that were translated into Old Norse under the supervision of King Hákon Hákonsson during the thirteenth century. In *Tveggja elskanda strengleikar*, the lovers die together in a snowstorm and are buried in the same stone grave (Robert Cook and Mattias Tveitane, eds., *Strengleikar. An Old Norse Translation of Twenty-One Old French Lais. Edited from the Manuscript Uppsala De la Gardie 4-7- AM 666 b, 4^o* (Oslo: Norsk Historisk Kjeldeskrift-Institut, 1979), 276). Likewise, in *Tristrams saga* this tendency is also seen, although it is specified that Ísodd prevented Ísönd and Tristram from being buried together. Be that as it may, these impediments further emphasized the greatness of the lovers, as an oak tree grew so high from each grave that its branches came to intertwine over the gable of the church: "Ok má thví sjá, hversu mikil ást þeira á milli verit hefir" (And for this reason one can see how great was the love that was between them) (Marianne Kalinke, ed., *Norse Romance I. The Tristan Legend* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1999), 222).

38 *Völsunga saga*, 66.

39 Ibid., 69.

they arrive in his territory: “Verið velkomnir með oss [...], ok fáid mér gull þat it mikla er vér erum til komnir, þat fé er Sigurðr átti, en nú á Guðrún” (Welcome among us [...] and give up all the gold to which I am entitled, the treasure that was Sigurd’s and is now Gudrun’s).⁴⁰

Atli’s wishes will put an end to the lives of the Gjukungs, but the secret that concealed the place where the treasure was located also dies with them. However, the consequences are also dire for the king. The dreams that troubled him had already foretold of this: Guðrún killed the children she had with Atli and served them to him as food. Moreover, she made cups from the skulls of their sons, from which Atli drank the blood of his offspring mixed with wine. After informing him of her trickery, Guðrún pierced her husband with a sword and set fire to the hall.⁴¹ As we can see, the destruction of the Volsungs, Budlungs, and Gjukungs had been predicted by the dreams and prophecies of different characters. But these omens were structured by the curse of Andvari, whose agency required and triggered human desires and social transgressions such as oath-breaking.

III. On The Definition of the Self and Ancestral Influences

Meyer Fortes has argued that in “societies with a social organization based on kinship and descent,” ideas on destiny can emerge as extrapolations of experiences that are produced within systems of relationships.⁴² Among the Tallensi of West Africa, the ancestral spirits are closely related to destiny and exercise a continuous influence on human affairs, deciding

⁴⁰ Ibid., 69.

⁴¹ There are other cases within Old Norse narratives in which revenge is undertaken in a similar way. In *Völundarkviða*, the blacksmith Völundr is captured by a greedy king who forces him to produce wealth after cutting off his legs. But Völundr kills the king’s sons and makes cups from their heads, from which their parents drink (Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason, eds., *Eddukvæði I. Goðakvæði* (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2014), 428–437). We can also find more parallels in Greek tragedies. Sophocles tells how Tereus obtains the hand of Procne against her will; Procne longs for her homeland and wishes to live with her sister Philomela, so Tereus tries to take Philomela with them. However, during this journey, Tereus rapes her and cuts out her tongue to keep it a secret. But his doings are discovered. Procne, showing solidarity with her sister, kills the son she had with Tereus and serves him as food (Stefan Radt, ed., *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta*. Vol. 4, *Sophocles* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999).

⁴² Meyer Fortes, *Oedipus and Job in West African Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 412.

over people's lives, health, and deeds. When manifested, these ancestors usually "make some demand or elicit submission," requiring service and obedience.⁴³ This model of organization produces the social dynamics represented especially in the first part of *Völsunga saga*, where the ancestors and family duties have the capacity to shape the characters' fate.

The inexorability of certain family obligations (see next section) is partially the result of the dependency of the self's identity on the family. When the definition of the self derives specially from kinship structure, an individual's outcome is more easily determined by family precepts. As Joan Bestard argues, kinship ideologies tend to attribute shared characteristics to family members and naturalize social and personal abilities: The more dependency there is on the family for the self's identity, the more structured their actions are.⁴⁴ Consequently, social expectations and family duties will be more easily accepted and presented as inescapable. These ideologies can certainly be expressed in narrative.

One of these qualities refers to the courage or temperament (*hugr*). Its association with the Volsungs appears when Borghildr incites Sinfjötli to take a drink of poison "ef hann hefði hug Völsunga" (if he had the courage of the Volsungs).⁴⁵ In a similar vein, Reginn also incites Sigurðr to kill Fáfnir by appealing to the courage he should have as a Volsung: "Ok þótt Völsunga ætt sé at þér, þá mun þú eigi hafa þeira skaplyndi" (but even though you are of the Volsung line, you'll scarcely have the Volsung temperament).⁴⁶ Although these characters' courage is being called into question, they are expected to act as they naturally should and are encouraged to follow the example of their ancestors by adopting behaviors that characterize their family condition. This is also evident during Sinfjötli's trial, during which he had his clothes sewn onto his own body. Unlike his Geatish half-brothers, Sinfjötli endured the pain. The deed establishes and naturalizes a hierarchy between Geats and Volsungs, as Sinfjötli descends from two members of the same family (the Volsungs Signý and Sigmundr) and is free of external "contamination." Moreover, he showed no fear when confronting a poisonous snake (*eitromr*), something that coincides

43 Ibid., 400.

44 Joan Bestard Comas, "La relación entre familia y nación en las sociedades modernas," *Historia contemporánea* 31 (2005): 543.

45 *Völsunga saga*, 18.

46 *Völsunga saga*, 24.

with the encounter between his kin Sigurðr and the serpent (*ormr*) Fáfnir. None of the Volsungs showed horror towards snakes, even if the animals' capacity to infuse fear is emphasized. This highlights a family distinction that separates the Volsungs from the rest of society.⁴⁷

Prophetic gifts⁴⁸ can also be understood as inherited qualities, as Signý refers to her clairvoyancy as a *kynfylgja*.⁴⁹ Although the concept of *fylgja* (pl. *fylgjur*) has been commonly related to female supernatural characters or animals associated with an individual or his family, Zuzana Stankovitsová has shown that these concepts generally refer to something more elusive and abstract. Regarding the word *kynfylgja*, it can be more accurately translated as a family trait.⁵⁰ In the case under analysis, “that which follows the family” (*kynfylgja*) is by no means a supernatural entity but rather an inherited faculty that defines family members.⁵¹

Other abilities, such as an immunity to poison, are also inherited by some of the Volsungs. However, not only is the conformation of a family identity expressed through these strategies, but it can also be (re)produced by the inheritance of what anthropologists denominate “inalienable posses-

47 The emphasis on natural courage takes on greater importance in comparison with the sources of *Völsunga saga*. The development of the trials to which Sinfjötli is subjected does not appear in the poetic sources, while Reginn does not reproach Sigurðr for his lack of courage in *Reginnsmál*. Similarly, Borghildr does not appeal to the courage of the Volsungs in *Frá dauða Sinfjötla*. She simply uses words of disapproval – “ámælisörð” (*Eddukvæði II. Hetjukvæði*, 284). It is clear that the saga author highlights this common nature of the members of a family in order to emphasize the importance of kinship in the definition of the individual. Significantly, the capacity to induce fear is also ascribed to this family. Apart from highlighting their noble and outstanding origin, the sharp eyes of Sigurðr and his daughter Svanhildr are described with the capacity to instill fear, something that both characters prove shortly before dying.

48 The concept of prophecy (*spá*) abounds in the saga and can be part of certain proverbs. When emphasizing Sigmundr's clairvoyant gifts, Brynhildr said: “ok var þar spá spaks geta” (*Völsunga saga*, 45). This is linked to a proverb that appears in other literary sources: “spá er spaks geta” (A wise man's guess is a prophecy). These words were for example uttered by Barði in *Grettis saga* when he received advice from his foster father Þórarinn the Wise (Guðni Jónsson, ed., *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, VII (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1936), 104).

49 *Völsunga saga*, 5.

50 Zuzana Stankovitsová, “Following up on Female fylgjur: A Re-examination of the Concept of Female fylgjur in Old Icelandic Literature,” *Paranormal Encounters in Iceland 1150–1400*, ed. Miriam Mayburd and Ármann Jakobsson (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020): 245–262.

51 See Gabriel Turville-Petre, “Liggja fylgjur þínar til Íslands,” *Saga Book 12 (1937–1945)*: 119–126.

sions.” These possessions are objects that retain the connection with their original possessor and function as pillars of identity. As Annette Weiner puts it, “the object acts as a vehicle for bringing past time to the present, so that the histories of ancestors, titles, or mythological events become an intimate part of a person’s present identity. To lose this claim to the past is to lose part of who one is in the present.”⁵² These objects are inherited as sacred gifts that shape power relationships and justify the oppression of those who do not have access to them, as these objects are generally removed from economic circulation: “No society, no identity can survive over time (...) if there are no fixed points, realities that are exempted (...) from the exchange of gifts or from trade.”⁵³

In *Völsunga saga*, the Gramr sword fits these characteristics and retains an inalienable relationship to Óðinn. During the first part of the narrative, the god himself gives the Volsungs and Geats the opportunity to earn this sword. However, only Sigmundr – one of his descendants – manages to acquire it. When the Geatish king Siggeirr asks Sigmundr to give him the sword, the latter refuses his offer and keeps it, excluding Siggeirr from the privileged system of relationships the Volsungs had with their ancestor Óðinn. This leads to a war, in which most of the Volsungs die, and propitiates the rite of passage of Sigmundr and Sinfjötli.⁵⁴ During this process, the sword plays a prominent role in the formation of the identity of Sigmundr and Sinfjötli, as it is the element that allows them to escape from a burial mound and avenge their family by killing Siggeirr. This resurgence highlights the importance of the connection between the Volsungs and Óðinn in the configuration of their identity. By killing Siggeirr after claiming their connection to the god, they are also legitimating their status and strengthening the differences between social groups.⁵⁵

52 Weiner, *Inalienable Wealth*, 210.

53 Godelier, *The Enigma of the Gift*, 8.

54 An analysis of this ritual can be seen in Mario Martín Páez, “Liminaridad y licantropía: sobre los ritos de paso y la ascendencia en *Völsunga saga*,” *Memoria y civilización* 24 (2021): 319–340. General information and theories on rites of passage have been prolifically provided by Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner: Arnold Van Gennep, *Les rites de passage. Etude systématique des rites* (Paris: Editions A&J Picard, 2011); Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).

55 This is also highlighted by the name of the sword, as Gramr is a common *beiti* to refer to the king. This is related to another aspect of the swords, as they are generally associated with heroes and kings (Hilda Ellis Davidson, “Sword,” *Medieval Folklore. A Guide to Myths*,

Significantly, the maintenance and transmission of the sword to male descendants is presented as a female responsibility through the actions of Signý and Hjördis.⁵⁶ These women can adopt the role of the “kin-keepers,” as they take care of, protect, and reproduce the family identity acting “as linking points in the kinship structure.”⁵⁷ By guarding inalienable objects and favoring their inheritance, they reestablish the links and the memory that bind the family and the sword bearer to their ancestors.⁵⁸ But apart from the Gramr sword, Óðinn also gives counsel to his descendants and allows their subsistence by giving fertility apples when they are incapable of continuing the family line. However, as we will see in the next section, these gifts must be reciprocated by his descendants by showing obedience and serving him, accepting his demands as impositions of fate.

IV. Family Honor and Kinship Obligations as Inescapable Duties

Kinship obligations can be understood as “a collection of attitudes and behaviors related to the provision of support, assistance, and respect to family members” and may entail personal sacrifices for the family good and authorities.⁵⁹ Katherine Ratfille notes that societies with a collectivist perspective often have strict rules and role models for fulfilling family obligations: Such responsibilities are not considered optional and produce ongoing bonds of support for family members.⁶⁰ These obligations can

Legends, Tales, Beliefs, and Customs, ed. Carl Lindahl, John McNamara, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 400). As we can see, these facets can also be linked to kinship, something also evident in the case of the famous sword Tyrfingr in *Hervarar saga*: It represents not only power, but a heritage understood in a broader sense, including both land and treasure, as well as identity and family ancestry (cf. Carol Clover, “Maiden Warriors and Other Sons,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 85 (1986), 38).

56 The name of Hjördis, meaning “sword-maiden,” emphasizes her link to this weapon.

57 Raymond Firth et al., eds., *Families and Their Relatives. Kinship in a Middle-Class Sector of London* (London: Routledge, 2006), 108.

58 As happens with courage and the capacity to infuse fear, the role of the sword within a kinship ideology is more notorious in the saga than in its sources. The Gramr sword lacks this historical framework in the eddic poems.

59 Andrew Fuligni and Wenxin Zhang, “Attitudes toward Family Obligation among Adolescents in Contemporary Urban and Rural China,” *Child Development* 74 (2004): 180.

60 Katherine Ratfille, “Family Obligations in Micronesian Cultures: Implications for Educators,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 23 (2010): 671–690.

be imposed not only through the possession of inalienable objects and the naturalization of the individuals' characteristics but can also be presented as inescapable through honor.⁶¹ This reputation is related to the cultural validation of individuals' social position and triggers behaviors that coincide with social norms and expectations.⁶² Honor can function as a collective responsibility, in belonging to a family and being affected by the kin's actions.⁶³ In *Völsunga saga*, the power of this social value to impose behaviors and protect the value of the family can be seen in the reactions of Völsungr when his daughter Signý tries to convince him not to attack Siggeirr:

“[...] ok strengða ek þess heit at ek skylda hvárki flýja eld né járn fyrir hræzlu sakir, ok svá hefi ek enn gert hér til, ok hví munda ek eigi efna þat á gamals aldri? Ok eigi skulu meyjar því bregða sonum mínum í leikum at þeir hræðisk bana sinn, því at eitt sinn skal hverr deyja, en má engi undan komask at deyja um sinn.”

([...] and swore an oath that fear would make me run from neither fire nor iron. Up to this moment I have acted accordingly, and why should I not keep to it in old age? And when the games are on there'll be no young women pointing a finger at my sons for fearing to meet death, for everybody must die sometime – there's no escape from dying the once !)⁶⁴

Family honor is an effective way of controlling and legitimizing both the family structure and the values and obligations that individuals are expected to abide by.⁶⁵ Among these obligations we can find the inexora-

61 Focusing on medieval Iceland, William Ian Miller defines honor as a commodity (*Bloodtaking and Peacemaking. Feud, Law and Society in Saga Iceland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990)). However, there is generally no dissociation between honor and those who possess it, which makes its conception as a commodity questionable.

62 Julian Pitt-Rivers, “Honor and Social Status,” *Honor and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. John Peristiany (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 19–77 and *The Fate of Shechem or the Politics of Sex. Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 47.

63 Carlos Maiza Ozcoidi, “La definición del concepto de honor. Su identidad como objeto de investigación histórica,” *Espacio, tiempo y forma. Serie IV, Historia moderna* 8 (1995): 194.

64 *Völsunga saga*, 6.

65 Peter Dodd, “Family Honor and the Forces of Change in Arab Society,” *Middle East Studies* 4 (1973): 40–54.

bility of taking revenge. The power of kinship structure and blood is so strong that it can sometimes exercise influence even when the subject is not aware of his real ancestry. Even if Sinfjötli thought his real father was Siggeirr, he took the main role in the revenge and goaded Sigmundr into acting against Siggeirr. But as we observed in the case of Fáfñir, the body is a stage on which socialization processes converge.⁶⁶ These instances of revenge can be correlated with the wolf-like traits that both Sigmundr and Sinfjötli adopt. While they were preparing themselves to take revenge on their relatives, the Volsungs donned wolf skins with a strange power (*nát-túra*) and adopted the animal's voracious behavior, howling and acquiring great powers. In this period, in which they were able to kill enemies more numerous than themselves, Sigmundr knocks down Sinfjötli after boasting of his power, biting his throat, and causing wounds that would have caused his death if his ancestor Óðinn had not helped them.⁶⁷ Likewise, avengers or those who are expected to commit revenge in the future can be related to wolves, even if they are children. In *Völsunga saga*, this can be seen in Brynhildr's counsels, as she recommends that Sigurðr not trust the victim's kin, even if they are young, as "opt er úlfr í ungum syni" (there is often a wolf in a young son).⁶⁸ That is the reason Gunnarr was recommended to kill Sigurðr's child: "Al eigi upp úlfhvelpinn" (Do not let the wolf whelp rise up).⁶⁹ Thus, in the same way that Andvari's curse transformed Fáfñir's body, kinship structure can also change human bodies through the imposition of certain obligations and the requirement of fulfilling specific social roles. These cases of shapeshifting illustrate how society's morals can be introjected into one's body. As Maurice Godelier argues, social relationships are not simply reproduced between individuals; they are also at work within them.⁷⁰

In contrast to the case of Fáfñir, the transformation of Sigmundr and

66 Terence Turner, "The Social Skin," in *Not Work Alone. A Cross-Cultural View of Activities Superfluous to Survival*, ed. Jeremy Cherfas and Roger Lewin (New York: Sage Publications, 1980), 112.

67 We can also find characters adopting the form and behavior of wolves during a process of revenge in *Hrólfs saga kraka* and in *Gesta Danorum*. Gerard Breen, "The Wolf is at the Door. Outlaws, Assassins, and Avengers Who Cry 'Wolf!,'" *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 114 (1999): 33.

68 *Völsunga saga*, 40.

69 *Ibid.*, 57.

70 Maurice Godelier, *The Metamorphoses of Kinship* (London: Verso, 2011).

Sinfjötli is not related to the transgression of social norms but rather to their fulfillment. Paradoxically, accepting social norms leads to the destruction of society itself. This points out that the social structure itself is corrupt, thus criticizing the origin of conflict and defending the need for other social practices and models that deal with conflicts in a less aggressive and destructive way.

Concerning the power of kinship on the characters' destiny, showing obedience to an ancestor in *Völsunga saga* can even be prioritized over one's own survival. When Sigmundr was fighting and grasping the victory in a battle aided by his luck and spádísir (female entities associated with prophecies), his ancestor Óðinn appeared and broke his sword, changing the balance of the battle and ultimately provoking the defeat of Sigmundr's army. Just as Brynhildr's hamingja was overcome by the greater power of destiny, Sigmundr's luck was voided by his ancestor Óðinn. Moreover, at the end of the battle, his wife Hjördís tries to heal him. However, the strength of the subordination to an ancestor is such that the hero refuses the offer of help made to him: "Margr lifnar ór litlum vánum, en horfin eru mér heill, svá at ek vil eigi láta græða mik. Vill Óðinn ekki at vér bregðum sverði, síðan er nú brotnaði. Hefi ek haft orrostur, meðan honum líkaði;" ('Many have recovered when there was little hope,' he answered, 'but my good luck has turned and so I do not wish to be made well. Odin does not want me to draw sword, for now it lies broken. I have fought battles while it was his pleasure').⁷¹

Luck and good fortune were thought to be an important quality of kings and chieftains.⁷² When the king's luck falters, the victory of his army in battle can turn out to be unattainable.⁷³ Even though Sigmundr was

71 *Völsunga saga*, 21.

72 Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Chieftains and Power in the Icelandic Commonwealth* (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 1999), 187, and "The Appearance and Personal Abilities of Goðar, Jarlar, and Konungar: Iceland, Orkney and Norway," in *West over Sea. Studies in Scandinavian Sea-Borne Expansion and Settlement before 1300*, ed. Beverley Smith, Simon Taylor, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 101–102.

73 See Aaron Gurevich, *Historical Anthropology of the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 105. Peter Hallberg has suggested that concepts of luck and good fortune such as *gæfa* and *hamingja* have a long tradition within the Norse context which predates the arrival of Christianity ("The Concept of Gipta-Gæfa-Hamingja in Old Norse Literature," in *Proceedings of the First International Saga Conference, University of Edinburgh, 1971*, ed. Peter Foote, Hermann Pálsson, et al. (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1973), 143–183).

protected by his luck and *spáðísir*, he was overwhelmed by a superior force that shaped his destiny. The present is thus traversed by an ineludible past where the ancestors retain the power to construct relationships and influence both what their descendants are and what they ought to be, pushing them into a conditioned future with the same strength as fate itself. This obligation of accepting the will of an ancestor in spite of the terrible consequences is also seen at Sinfjötli's death, as he knew that the beverage that his father Sigmundr was commanding him to drink was poisoned, yet he obeyed and died as a result. The same logic is also to be found in the conformation of certain marriages. There are three cases that follow the same pattern: the marriages of Signý with Siggeirr, Brynhildr with Gunnarr, and Guðrún with Atli. Certainly, these cases present differences, particularities, and deep dynamics that would require an extensive analysis in order to provide a holistic explanation.⁷⁴ However, for the argument of this article, it is sufficient to note how vertical impositions are established and what kind of consequences they have. There are indeed common elements that need to be specified here. The parents force their daughters to marry a man for political reasons and with the intention of establishing alliances that could increase the power of their families.

Even if these women uttered their unwillingness to marry their future husbands, the vertical power imposed within the kinship system is such that they finally abide by the will of their parents. In the same way that Sinfjötli obeyed his father despite knowing that the result of that decision would be his death, Signý, Guðrún, and Brynhildr obeyed their parents even though they were aware of the disastrous consequences of doing so. As Guðrún states: “Þetta mun verða fram at ganga ok þó at mínum óvilja, ok mun þat lítt til ynðis, heldr til harma” (“Then so it must be’, said Gudrun, though against my will, and there’ll be little cause for rejoicing, but rather for grief.”)⁷⁵ Indeed, Atli betrays Guðrún's family and kills her brothers. In response to that, Guðrún kills the children she had with Atli and ends up killing her own husband as well. This pattern is also

74 This has already been undertaken elsewhere: Mario Martín Páez, “The Social Dynamics of Lovesickness and The Ecclesiastical Project's Expansion in Medieval Northern Europe,” *Mediaevalia. An Interdisciplinary Journal of Medieval Studies Worldwide* 44 (2023): 29–58 and *Destino, familia y honor en el Medievo Nórdico. Un análisis antropológico de la Völsunga saga y su contexto social* (Murcia: Editum, 2023).

75 *Völsunga saga*, 64.

to be found in Signý's marriage. Her husband Siggeirr kills most of the Volsungs, and Signý avenges her family by actively participating in the death of her husband and children. Moreover, she takes her own life and is burnt once the revenge is fulfilled. In the same vein, Guðrún tries to kill herself, although she survives the attempt.

In the case of Brynhildr, the Gjukungs ask Buðli for his daughter's hand and threaten to plunder his land if they do not get what they desire. Brynhildr's will is to fight them, but her father threatens her with disinheritance if she does not marry Gunnarr.⁷⁶ In Brynhildr's words, "[Buðli] kvað þó sína vináttu mér mundu betr gegna en reiði" / ([Buðli] said his favour would serve me better than his anger).⁷⁷ After her marriage, Brynhildr participates in the killing of her real love (Sigurðr) and starts to experience the turmoil that will also put an end to the lives of the Gjukungs and the Budlungs. As in the cases described above, Brynhildr dies by her own hand.

Judy Quinn understood this suicide as the result of Brynhildr's own interest, while Kirsi Kanerva considered this character to be an empowered woman who decides when her own life ends, thus establishing an emphasis on the individual.⁷⁸ However, individual agency cannot be understood without its relationship to social structure: They are two sides of the same coin.⁷⁹ When compared to the cases of Signý and Guðrún, we

76 Significantly, in *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* (st. 35–38) it is her brother Atli who threatens and forces Brynhildr to marry Gunnarr despite her unwillingness (*Eddukvæði II. Hetjukvæði*, 341–342). This serves to mark the verticality within the consanguine kinship and to establish a clearer comparison with the cases of Signý and Guðrún.

77 *Völsunga saga*, 53. Jón Viðar Sigurðsson argues that kinship ties were not always enough for the establishment of an alliance, as friendship was more predominant in Iceland during the Middle Ages. This would explain the existence of this bond within a family context (*Viking Friendship. The Social Bond in Iceland and Norway, c. 900–1300* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017).

78 Judy Quinn, "Scenes of Vindication: Three Icelandic Heroic Poems in Relation to the Continental Traditions of *Þiðreks saga af Bern* and the *Nibelungenlied*," in *Medieval Nordic Literature in the European Context*, ed. Else Mundal (Oslo: Dreyers forlag, 2015), 90–99; Kirsi Kanerva, "Female Suicide in Thirteenth-Century Iceland: The Case of Brynhildr in *Völsunga Saga*," *Viator* 49 (2018), 129–154.

79 Sherry Ortner, "Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26 (1984): 126–166 and *Anthropology and Social Theory. Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory. Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1979).

detect the same pattern in which agency constantly interacts with the social constraints that ultimately shape the character's fate. These events correspond to the Émile Durkheimian typology of fatalistic suicides, which derives "from excessive regulation, that of persons with futures pitilessly blocked and passions violently choked by oppressive discipline."⁸⁰ Apart from the family impositions, lack of consent or love is fundamental in the production of conflict. Using the same expression, the saga author states that none of these female characters' *hugr* smiled upon their husbands.⁸¹ This clearly contrasts with other marriages in which there is consent and the paternal influence is absent. Helgi and Sigrún are married because of their own decision and establish a neolocal post-matrimonial residence, highlighting their distance from their original families. Moreover, their tragic outcome represented in eddic poems is absent in *Völsunga saga* and substituted by a peaceful ending, stating that they will live a long life. It seems clear that when vertical orders and the family and paternal precepts are inflexibly imposed, the path that the individuals follow leads to a fixed destruction that reminds us of other external and inescapable forces, such as the fate produced by Andvari's curse.

The pernicious effects of Andvari's curse is certainly mixed in with the effects of greed, oath-breaking, and blind obedience to family precepts. The destruction that the obedience to an ancestor and other family duties entails is the same as, or can even merge with, the effects of fate and greed. Apart from this destructive power, both fate and family obligations are imposed with the same inexorability. This is especially evident if we compare the discourses of Völsungr and his grandson Sigurðr explained above. Both characters pronounce the same words, which do not appear anywhere else

80 Émile Durkheim, *Suicide. A Study in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 2005), 239. I would like to thank the sociologist of suicide Andy Eric Castillo Patton for bringing up this reference in a discussion.

81 Thus, Signý states that her *hugr* does not make her smile with Siggeirr ("ok eigi gerir hugr minn hlæja við honum," (*Völsunga saga*, 5). Brynhildr also employs the same expression: "Eigi sá ek svá Gunnar, at minn hugr gerði hlæja við honum" ('I've not looked at Gunnar so that my heart smiled upon him') (Ibid., 55), while the narrator says about Guðrún that "her heart [*hugr*] never smiled upon him [Atli]" ("En aldri gerði hugr hennar við honum hlæja" (Ibid., 64). The concept *hugr* has several meanings, and its richness is difficult to replace with a single word in English. As we have previously seen, it can refer to courage or temperament, but it can also be used in the sense of mind, feeling, affection, and desire. It is not only affection, then, that does not smile on the husbands, but also a set of broader individual dispositions.

in *Völsunga saga*: “eitt sinn skal hverr deyja” (everyone must die sometime). Völsungr reacts to family honor in the same way that Sigurðr confronts fate. The facticity of these external forces is such that the individuals merely accept them. It seems that the comparison between fate and kinship structure calls into question the individual’s ability to act in a prestructured world. The reactions of Völsungr and Sigurðr are also similar to Gunnarr’s response to his wife’s prophetic dreams. However, they are opposed to other sagas in which the character tries to avoid his future, such as *Qrvar-Odds saga*, a narrative that is entirely conditioned by the prophecy that Oddr receives at the beginning of the story.⁸² This character was reluctant to let the seeress reveal his future. In spite of his threats, the sorceress⁸³ reveals an ill future for him: He shall live for three hundred winters and will finally die from the venomous bite of a snake that will come out of the skull of his horse Faxi.⁸⁴ Trying to avoid his future, Oddr kills his horse and buries it. However, his adventures come to an end when he returns to Berurjóðr, where he sees the skull of his horse Faxi, from which a snake emerges and inflicts a fatal wound upon him.⁸⁵

Nonetheless, both in the case of *Völsunga saga* and *Qrvar-Odds saga*, regardless of whether destiny is accepted or avoided, in the end fate im-

82 Torfi H. Tulinius, *The Matter of the North. The Rise of Literary Fiction in Thirteenth Century Iceland* (Odense: Odense University Press, 2002), 159.

83 In Old Norse sources, the seeresses are generally welcomed, as confirmed by *Eiríks saga rauða* and *Nornagests þátr*. Significantly, in *Qrvar-Odds saga* the sorceress reveals a promising future to those that treat her well but gives a dark fate to Oddr. One may wonder whether prophetic acts go beyond a mere revelatory function and might have a certain performativity and produce reality. A clear intention can be seen in *Grimmismál*. In this eddic poem, Grímnir is not well received by King Geirrjóðr, who imprisons him. However, the former reveals that he is Óðinn himself and says that a sword will kill the king, something that happens instantly (*Eddukvæði I. Goðakvæði*, 378–379). Anthropological works might illustrate this casuistic: Walter Ong and Bronislaw Malinowski have certified a close relationship between intention and discourse, although they focus on societies without written language. See Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy. The Technologizing of the World* (London: Routledge, 1982); Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic Science and Religion and Other Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1948).

84 Richard Boer, ed., *Qrvar-Odds saga* (Leiden, 1888), 15–17.

85 This story might have been influenced by *The Russian Primary Chronicle* (s. XII), in which King Oleg of Kiev received the same forecasts as Oddr by his diviners. Even if Oleg was skeptical about the prophecy, he died from the bite of a snake that emerged from his horse’s skull. See Samuel Hazzard Cross and Olgerd Sherbowitz-Wetzor, eds., *The Russian Primary Chronicle. Laurentian Text* (Cambridge: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953), 69.

poses its reason and certifies that there are forces that exist beyond an individual's doings and decisions. As Samuli Schielke puts it, "destiny teaches us that free choice and individual autonomy are fictions – useful, inspirational fictions perhaps, but fictions all the same."⁸⁶

V. Conclusion

Social transgressions and the excesses demanded by kinship structure are presented as destructive forces with the same strength as fate itself. The effect of a curse and family duties have the same capacity to structure people's outcome. Fate is imposed and realized through the transgression of basic social norms that favor the normal course of the context of production of the saga. We have seen that the greed generated by Andvari's curse is severely punished, as it produces chaos and can also transform humans into monsters. This is in line with the Icelandic social structure during the Middle Ages. The laws of *Grágás* state that he who buries wealth for his own benefit will lose all his property and be condemned to exile for three years.⁸⁷ Likewise, those who use trade not to increase their social status but to enrich themselves are defined in negative terms and morally condemned.⁸⁸ Indeed, one of the most valued and necessary virtues of Icelandic chiefs and Norwegian kings was that of their generosity, which had to be reciprocated with service.⁸⁹ The circulation of wealth was a necessary condition for the maintenance of the system of relations. Without it, the relationship between peasants and chiefs or between kings and subordinates would fall, and along with it, the whole social and political system, as reciprocity was "the primary structuring mechanism of society."⁹⁰ The necessity of exchange shows the dependence of society on

86 Samuli Schielke, "Destiny as a Relationship," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 8 (2018): 345.

87 William Ian Miller and Helle Vogt, "Finding, Sharing and Risk of Loss: Of Whales, Bees and Other Valuable Finds in Iceland, Denmark and Norway," *Comparative Legal History* 3 (2015): 42.

88 Helgi Þorláksson, "Social Ideals and the Concept of Profit in Thirteenth-Century Iceland," in *From Sagas to Society. Comparative Approaches to Early Iceland*, ed. Gisli Pálsson (Middlesex: Hisarlik Press, 1992), 231–245.

89 Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Chieftains and Power in the Icelandic Commonwealth and Viking Friendship*.

90 Jesse Byock, "Governmental Order in Early Medieval Iceland," *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 17 (1986): 26.

the production of these social relations and the maintenance of a system of alliances. Cross-culturally, personal relationships based on reciprocal exchanges or redistribution are usually accompanied by messages and ideologies that condemn accumulation and can concur with the Uyanga's lama's saying: "Greediness is one of the principal paths to misery."⁹¹ If wealth is not distributed through gifts or feasts, the behavior becomes socially disruptive. This destructiveness is emphasized in the saga by linking hoarding to the unstoppable decay of society.

On the other hand, the fulfillment of honor ceases to be positive when the structure imposes excessive obligations. Accepting social norms that derive from a corrupt structure is tantamount to transgressing the social norms necessary for the proper development of society, such as the distribution of wealth. Heroism was an element represented in the past that no longer had a place in medieval Iceland, where values such as moderation prevailed above all.⁹² It is not surprising that strict vertical obligations produced within the natal family, including revenge, are punished. Torfi H. Tulinius points out that the symbolic dynamics of *Völsunga saga* reflect the concerns of thirteenth-century Iceland, it being the intention of the author to show "the absurdity of excessive vengeance and the importance of keeping commitments."⁹³ This is in line with attitudes that existed around the time the saga was written. Guðrún Nordal notes that Sturla Þórðarson also condemns the errors of his contemporaries, "the killings and the pride among his own kinsmen."⁹⁴ Significantly, with the gradual insertion of a state, practices of revenge tend to be condemned. Although Iceland did

91 Mette High, *Fear and Fortune. Spirit Worlds and Emerging Economies in the Mongolian Gold Rush* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 71.

92 David Clark, *Gender, Violence, and the Past in Edda and Saga* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 20–21. Vilhjálmur Árnason, "An Ethos in Transformation: Conflicting Values in the Sagas," *Gripla* 20 (2009): 217–240. Theodore Andersson pointed out how *Gisla saga* uses heroic contents to call them into question: These are actions that no longer have a place, being relegated exclusively to the past ("Some Ambiguities in *Gisla saga*: A Balance Sheet," *Bibliography of Old Norse-Icelandic Studies*, ed. Hans Bekker-Nielsen (Copenhagen: Royal Library, 1968), 7–42). Nevertheless, we see that in the heroic narratives there is already a judgment on these kinds of actions. The fact that they are narrated does not imply that they are defended, for it is precisely their destructive outcome that indicates that other practices might be more appropriate for the maintenance of society.

93 Torfi H. Tulinius, *The Matter of the North*, 158.

94 Guðrún Nordal, *Ethics and Action in Thirteenth-Century Iceland* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1998), 25.

not agree to pay tribute to the Norwegian king until 1262/1264, the royal ideology was present in the Icelandic context. Revenge was increasingly criticized in royal spheres: It was the king who should dispense justice.

In addition to defending family honor, showing excessive obedience to an ancestor is another family duty that was morally punishable. In this phenomenon, surrendering to parents when they decide on marriages becomes important. The prophecies that follow the regularization of these marriages reinforce their destructiveness and fateful quality. When love is truncated by social obligations, individuals become powerless in the face of external forces greater than themselves.⁹⁵ The condemnation of the violation of marital vows and excessive political control of marriages express the tensions that characterize societies in which arranged marriages are the norm. Ethnographic comparisons demonstrate that when love and personal choice encounter societal struggles to cope with the dominance of arranged marriages, personal wishes can take part in non-ordinary discourses such as poetry⁹⁶ and offer, as Charles Lindholm suggests, “a way of imagining a different and more fulfilling life” that confronts and resists vertical impositions.⁹⁷ At the time of the composition of *Völsunga saga*, the idea of consent was already known in Norway and Iceland, as suggested by letters sent in 1189 by the archbishop Eiríkr Ívarsson to the Icelandic bishops of Skálholt and Hólar. In these letters, any marriage in which the couple had consented before witnesses was valid.⁹⁸ However, this idea did not take shape in legal documents until the New Christian Law of 1275⁹⁹ and was later preserved in *Jónsbók*, a legal code brought to Iceland by the Norwegian King Magnus Hákonsson and accepted in 1281. Whether or

95 Similarly, Samuli Schielke has shown in his studies in Egypt that when marriage decisions are made by others and imposed vertically, notions such as fate (*nasib*) emerge as an expression of these social obligations that act as an external force beyond the control and desires of individuals: Samuli Schielke, *Egypt in the Future Tense. Hope, Frustration, and Ambivalence before and after 2011* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2015).

96 On this topic, see Lila Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments. Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* (California: University of California Press, 1986) and “Shifting Politics in Bedouin Love Poetry,” in *Language and the Politics of Emotion*, ed. Catherine Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 24–45.

97 Charles Lindholm, “Romantic Love and Anthropology,” *Etnofoor* 19 (2006): 16.

98 Jón Sigurðsson, ed., *Diplomatarium Islandicum. Íslenskt fornbréfasafn, sem hefir inni að halda bréf og gjörninga, dóma og máldaga og aðrar skrár, er snerta Ísland eða íslenska menn*, I (Kaupmannahöfn: Hið íslenska bókmenntafjelag, 1857–1876), 287–288.

99 Ebbe Hertzberg, ed., *Norges gamle Love indtil 1387* (Christiania: Malling, 1985), 36.

not these ideas influenced the composition of *Völsunga saga*, it is clear that literature conveyed and advocated messages that ran parallel to them. Reacting against the hierarchical impositions that often characterized arranged marriages in the context of production, the consensual relationships in *Völsunga saga* are validated through the depiction of the disasters involved in their dissolution.

All these social dynamics can be shaped by or compared to destiny. Both the guilty and the innocent suffer the pressure of structure, desires, and fate upon their lives and bodies. The definition of harmful behaviors acquires more fatalism when their effects are presented as unstoppable. Fulfilling this role, destiny emerges as an expression of social tensions and obligations, establishing moral boundaries which shape human behaviors.

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ÁGRIP

Í átt að mannfræði örlaganna: Örlagadýnamik í fornnorrænum bókmenntum eins og hún birtist í *Völsunga sögu*

Efnisorð: örlög, heiður, félagsleg mannfræði, fornnorrænar bókmenntir, *Völsunga saga*

Markmið þessarar greinar er að kanna flóknar og margslungnar tengingar milli örlaga og félagslegs siðferðis í fornnorrænum bókmenntum, með sérstakri áherslu á *Völsunga sögu*. Færð eru rök fyrir því að örlög séu ekki eingöngu ákvörðuð af máttarvöldum eða yfirnáttúrulegum verum, heldur mótist þau einnig af ástríðum,

félagslegum tengslum og samfélagslegri valdreifingu. Í greininni er rannsakað hvernig örlög, græðgi og eiðrof leiða sameiginlega til óhjákvæmilegra og óumflýjanlegra endaloka. Einnig er skoðað hvernig skyldurækni einstaklinga við fjölskylduna felur í sér óumflýjanleg eyðingaröfl eins og örlögin sjálf. Ágirnd sem bæði er tengd örlögum og skyldurækni við fjölskylduna hlýtur sams konar siðferðislega refsingu. Hvort tveggja er eyðileggjandi afl sem getur sett sýnilegt mark á einstaklinga og undirstrikað þannig brot þeirra. Með því að víkka út fræðilega umræðu um örlög innan miðaldarannsókna er greininni ætlað að vera framlag til þeirrar umræðu sem nú fer fram um örlög í félagslegri mannfræði og tengdum fræðigreinum.

SUMMARY

Towards an Anthropology of Destiny: The Dynamics of Fate in Old Norse Literature as Illustrated by *Völsunga saga*

Keywords: Fate, Honor, Social Anthropology, Old Norse Literature, *Völsunga saga*

The aim of this article is to explore the complex and intricate relationships between fate and social ethics in Old Norse literature, with a specific focus on *Völsunga saga*. It will be argued that destiny is not solely determined by cosmic forces or transcendental entities but is also shaped by desires, social dynamics, and hierarchical structures. The article explores how fate, greedy attitudes, and oath-breaking work together to bring about a fixed and inescapable downfall. It further examines how kinship obligations are presented with the same inexorability and destructivity as fate itself. Both the covetous attitudes linked to destiny and kinship duties receive the same moral punishment, having the transformative capacity to impose a visible mark on individuals that highlights their transgression. By expanding the academic discourse on fate within Medieval Studies, this article seeks to contribute to the ongoing debate on destiny in Social Anthropology and related disciplines.

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ENDEAVOURING TO GRASP THE ELUSIVE

A New Study of Finnboga saga ramma

FINNBOGA SAGA RAMMA, ‘The Saga of Finnboði the Mighty,’ is a fourteenth-century *Íslendingasaga* that tracks the restless life of Finnboði Ásbjarnarson, an Icelandic chieftain’s son, as it unfolds in tenth-century Iceland, Norway, and Byzantium. The narrative is compelling for several reasons, including how it challenges the commonly acknowledged taxonomy of saga genres, clearly combining elements that pertain to the repertoires of different saga genres. Moreover, the two main codices preserving the text, *Möðruvallabók* (AM 132 fol., 14th century) and *Tómasarbók* (AM 510 4to, mid-16th century), present it in two very different textual contexts, making its study from the perspective of genre even more significant.

This contribution analyses *Finnboga saga ramma* from the genre perspective, while considering the dynamics that characterize both the text itself and the two main codicological contexts in which it has been preserved and handed down to us. The aim is to shed light on the generic features of the text and to demonstrate how ‘late’ *Íslendingasögur* generally should not be considered texts of poor quality or eccentric, as has often been the case; rather, these are well-constructed narratives that deserve to be better studied and accounted for. As a corollary, it demonstrates how the analysis of such texts within their manuscript contexts is crucial for understanding and appreciating them better.¹

1 The research for this contribution forms part of the project *ConTexts – Manuscript Transmission and Generic Hybridity in the ‘Late’ Íslendingasögur*, funded by the European Union (NextGenerationEU) under Italy’s National Recovery and Resilience Plan (Mission 4, ‘Education and Research’).

Genre as a Problematic yet Useful Critical Tool for Studying Saga Texts

The texts of the saga corpus that have come down to us are highly varied. Still, these texts display recurrent patterns and models of subject matter, setting, and style, which have induced scholars to gather them into distinct groups and to consider such patterns and models as markers of genre. These efforts, which scholars have performed since the late 1820s, have yielded the following, customary taxonomy: *konungasögur* (Kings' sagas), *Íslendingasögur* (Sagas of Icelanders), *samtíðarsögur* (Contemporary sagas), *fornaldarsögur* (Legendary sagas), *riddarasögur* (Chivalric sagas, both translated and indigenous), and *heilagra manna sögur* (Sagas of Saints). This taxonomy has proven to have a heuristic value, and it has become integrated into our way of thinking about sagas. But it remains a convention, as no individual saga fits strictly into the genre it has been ascribed to, all the more so considering the heterogeneity that characterizes the saga as a literary form overall.

Criticism of saga taxonomy has been strong since the 1950s and has grown in intensity over the last forty years. Critics consider the taxonomy obsolete and biased, as it results from modern reconstructive efforts, especially of nineteenth-century editors of the texts, which were informed by nationalistic views about culture. Moreover, little correspondence can be found between the customary labels and medieval terminology.² Criticism is levelled at the functionality of the taxonomy as well: it has been deemed unsatisfactory as an aid to understanding the sagas, inadequately accounting for the variety within the saga as a literary form, itself characterized by a mix of generic markers that renders it difficult to attribute a text to one taxon only. Indeed, scholars do not even agree on generic markers or on which markers should be adopted to identify and distinguish saga genres and subgenres; neither do they agree on the notion of genre itself, which is often taken for granted and left implied.³ Finally, there is criticism that

2 Margaret Clunies Ross, *The Cambridge Introduction to the Old Norse-Icelandic Saga* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 28. Cf. Terje Spurkland, "Lygisögur, skróksögur and stjúpmaðrasögur," in *The Legendary Sagas. Origins and Development*, ed. Annette Lassen, Agneta Ney, and Ármann Jakobsson (Reykjavík: University of Iceland Press, 2012); Lukas Röslí, "Paratextual References to the Genre Term *Íslendinga sögur* in Old Norse-Icelandic Manuscripts," *Opuscula* 17 (2019).

3 For a discussion of these aspects see, for example, Massimiliano Bampi, "Genre," in *The*

too little attention has been given to the material aspects of sagas, namely to the ways in which they are preserved in the manuscripts, although such a line of thought is becoming more popular.⁴ Criticism also concerns the fact that the importance and usefulness of studying manuscripts and text collections themselves from the perspective of genre have been largely overlooked by saga scholars.

Recent studies on the materiality of manuscript evidence from the European Middle Ages, including Icelandic manuscripts, have demonstrated that genre is a useful critical tool for approaching and investigating manuscripts and text collections, as it allows for a better understanding of them.⁵ Consideration of the generic features of manuscripts and the dynamics of genre that can be identified within text collections can contribute to a more comprehensive view of them, as can consideration of how preserved material was selected and organized (in other words how compilers received the texts themselves or how they interpreted and appreciated them in the first place).⁶

While acknowledging the status of collections as evidence of reception, scholars have nevertheless found it difficult to guess, let alone determine, what the impulses were behind a given selection and arrangement of texts.⁷ On the one hand, the choice of works might depend on criteria such as subject matter, form, or local interest; on the other hand, it could be simply dictated or influenced by practical circumstances, such as the pressure of time or the limited availability of exemplars. Likely, it was the result

Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas, ed. Sverrir Jakobsson and Ármann Jakobsson (London: Routledge, 2017); Massimiliano Bampi "Genre," in *A Critical Companion to Old Norse Literary Genre*, ed. Massimiliano Bampi, Carolyne Larrington, and Sif Ríkhardsdóttir (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2020).

- 4 E.g., Emily Lethbridge, "Authors and Anonymity, Texts and Their Contexts: The Case of Eggertsbók," in *Modes of Authorship*, ed. Slavica Ranković et al. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2012); Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Emily Lethbridge, "Whose *Njála*? *Njáls saga* Editions and Textual Variance in the Oldest Manuscripts," in *New Studies in the Manuscript Tradition of *Njáls saga*: The historia mutula of *Njála**, ed. Emily Lethbridge and Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2018).
- 5 E.g., Karen Pratt et al. eds, *The Dynamics of the Medieval Manuscript. Text Collections from a European Perspective* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2017); Bart Besamusca, "The Value of Genre for the Study of Multi-Text Codices," in *Medieval Romances Across European Borders*, ed. Miriam Edlich-Muth (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018).
- 6 Besamusca, "The Value of Genre for the Study of Multi-Text Codices," 29.
- 7 Pratt et al., *The Dynamics of the Medieval Manuscript*, 25.

of a combination of choice and chance.⁸ Perceptions of genre might also guide the selection of texts within a collection. Although genre is a modern critical tool, medieval compilers must have had an awareness of the existence of formal and thematic similarities between groups of texts.⁹ Thus, a perceived generic similarity of texts, or a dissimilarity, might dictate the selection.

Genre might guide not only the selection of texts but also their organization within a codex, engendering meaningful interactions. For instance, there might be an intended progression in the collection, such as from recreation to instruction,¹⁰ or a juxtaposition of texts might generate specific meaning. Neighbouring texts might highlight and reinforce particular messages present in otherwise ambiguous and polyvalent texts, or they might offer contrasting views on a subject.¹¹ Material contexts force dynamic intertextual reading and generate connections, which have a direct influence on how the texts are further received, or how they are ultimately interpreted and appreciated by their intended audiences, notably from the genre perspective.¹² At times, direct evidence of such an appreciation is present in the manuscripts themselves, in the form of paratexts. Comments and notes sometimes indicate how a text's genre was perceived externally by the scribes or compilers and by the readers of a text at a certain time.¹³

These perspectives are considered in this analysis of genre in *Finnboga saga ramma*, namely the dynamics that characterize both the saga narrative itself and the two main, differing manuscript contexts in which it has been preserved. Before delving into this, a brief analysis of the subgenre to which the saga has been ascribed, the 'late' *Íslendingasaga*, is merited.

8 Besamusca, "The Value of Genre for the Study of Multi-Text Codices," 28; Pratt et al., *The Dynamics of the Medieval Manuscript*, 25.

9 Simon Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 4.

10 Besamusca, "The Value of Genre for the Study of Multi-Text Codices," 28.

11 Pratt et al., *The Dynamics of the Medieval Manuscript*, 30.

12 Emily Lethbridge, "Hvorki glansar gull á mér / né glæstir stafir í línun. Some Observations on *Íslendingasögur* Manuscripts and the Case of *Njáls saga*," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 129 (2014): 76; Pratt et al., *The Dynamics of the Medieval Manuscript*, 30.

13 Lukas Rösli, "Terminology," in *A Critical Companion to Old Norse Literary Genre*, ed. Massimiliano Bampi, Carolyne Larrington, and Sif Ríkhardsdóttir (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2020), 58.

The Subgenre of the ‘Late’ *Íslendingasögur*

The term *Íslendingasögur*, ‘Sagas of Icelanders’, customarily designates a group of around forty medieval Icelandic prose narratives that centre on the lives of the first settlers of Iceland and their close descendants. They are set primarily in Iceland from the period of the Settlement (c. 870–930) up to the first decades of the eleventh century. At the core of these texts are battles and conflicts, mainly over property, social influence, and relations. These confrontations most often develop into full-fledged feuds that affect the characters’ honour and status in society, and thus the course of the narratives as well. The majority of these sagas are district- and family-feud sagas, and the central characters are often Icelandic chieftains. Other sagas in the group focus more specifically on remarkable individuals, such as poets and outlaws; these tend to be more biographical in their nature.

Despite sharing common generic traits, such as setting and subject matter, these texts vary considerably in plot, theme, characterization, and style. That is to say, the texts within the group referred to as *Íslendingasögur* are quite varied. A subgroup of roughly eleven to sixteen sagas has been given the label ‘post-classical’, ‘late/r’, or ‘young/er’ *Íslendingasögur*, as they were produced mainly in the later period of saga-writing, during the fourteenth century, and they are attested primarily in manuscripts from the fifteenth. Despite affiliating with the *Íslendingasögur*, notably in terms of setting and subject matter, these sagas play with literary (and social) conventions and defy the customary taxonomy, which makes them particularly appealing to study. Yet scholars have so far largely neglected them for the same reasons, disregarding them because they are extravagant, ‘contaminated’ by romance,¹⁴ lack the ‘true’ heroic spirit of the ‘classical’ *Íslendingasögur*, and not least because they are difficult to describe from the point of view of genre. Such neglect and criticism should be contextualized within the Icelandic Romanticist thinking and nationalist aims of the nineteenth cen-

14 E.g. Sigurður Nordal, *Um íslenzkar fornsögur*, trans. Árni Björnsson (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1968 [1952]), 110): *T. d. hefur aldrei ríkt teljandi ágreiningur um það, hvaða sögur skuli telja til hnignunartímabilsins á 14. öld vegna þeirra áhrifa, sem þær urðu fyrir af fornaldar- og riddarasögum, og sakir smekks og áhugamála höfundanna yfirleitt* (‘There has, for example, never been any serious disagreement as to which sagas ought to be assigned to the period of decline in the fourteenth century because of the effect of the *fornaldar-* and *riddarasögur* on them, and because of the authors’ taste and interests generally’, trans. Martin Arnold, *The Post-Classical Icelandic Family Saga* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003), 143).

ture – when these evaluative distinctions of sagas were first made – the effects of which tended to linger throughout the twentieth century.

During the nineteenth century, the medieval Icelandic Commonwealth (930 to 1262–64) was idealized as a ‘golden age’ for Iceland’s national character because of the freedom and the outstanding cultural production that characterized it.¹⁵ The sagas became a particular source of national pride, and historical veracity became the main criterion by which they were judged. As a consequence, certain sagas came to be considered more valuable than others, which were in turn disregarded as inferior in quality. The *Íslendingasögur* that describe and glorify Icelandic origins were praised, as they clearly satisfied nationalist criteria, while other sagas, such as *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur* were dismissed as “among the dreariest things ever made by human fancy”,¹⁶ and as “the lowest and most miserable productions of Icelandic pens”.¹⁷ Hence the ‘late’ *Íslendingasögur*, which are especially heterogeneous from the genre perspective and often include elements from romance literature, also came to be regarded not only as having been ‘contaminated’ by that genre but also as evidence of a decline in cultural standards,¹⁸ even as the product of a collective nervous breakdown.¹⁹

Thus, scholars started to make distinctions among the *Íslendingasögur*, and the first attempts were particularly biased. Guðbrandur Vigfússon, a leading scholar in the field of saga studies during the nineteenth century, subdivided these sagas into ‘greater’, ‘minor’, and ‘spurious’, on the basis of their plot, style, and composition.²⁰ He believed the ‘greater’ sagas to have a depth beyond all others, as they were “the production of literary men, working up existing scattered material into an artistic story”.²¹ The ‘minor’ sagas were authentic and embodied “more or less completely the original oral tradition as it was first committed to writing”, although they lacked

15 Martin Arnold, *The Post-Classical Icelandic Family Saga*, 239.

16 William P. Ker, *Epic and Romance. Essays on Medieval Literature* (New York: Dover, 1908), 282.

17 Guðbrandur Vigfússon, “Prolegomena,” in *Sturlunga saga Including the Íslendinga saga of Lawman Sturla Thordsson and Other Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1878), cxcvi.

18 Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Dating the Icelandic Sagas. An Essay in Method* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1958), 125–26.

19 Peter Hallberg, *The Icelandic Saga* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), 145.

20 Guðbrandur Vigfússon, “Prolegomena,” xxiv–xxvii.

21 Guðbrandur Vigfússon, “Prolegomena,” xli.

the artistry of the greater sagas and, by contrast, tended to “sway loosely, following the fortunes of their hero”.²² At any rate, major and minor sagas made up the ‘pure’ Icelandic genre, the ‘classical’ texts, yet to be affected by the alleged fall of taste that characterized the literature which was produced after the thirteenth century. Indeed, Guðbrandur considered the younger sagas of the group, which he labelled ‘spurious’, to be partly spontaneous creations based on “hints in *Landnáma* and other sagas” and partly pure inventions “when the very dregs of tradition had been used up”.²³ These were, in fact, the ‘late’ *Íslendingasögur*, although Guðbrandur included other sagas of the sort in the ‘minor’ group as well.²⁴

Sigurður Nordal, another influential scholar in the field writing in the early 1950s, systematized the development of the *Íslendingasögur* by dividing them into five sub-groups, mostly according to their supposed time of writing (*aldur*) and development stage (*þróunarstig*).²⁵ The fourth group (*þjórði flokkur*) included sagas which he considered to be rewritings of older sagas (*endursamning eldri sagna*); most of these were, in fact, ‘late’ *Íslendingasögur*, while other sagas of the sort made up the fifth group of *Íslendingasögur* (*fimmti flokkur*), featuring the last written sagas – from the fourteenth century on – which also expressed a decline in the standards.²⁶ Thus, he still viewed them somewhat negatively, despite having labelled them in more neutral terms.

In the late 1950s, Stefán Einarsson also systematized the *Íslendingasögur* into five sub-groups, according to their supposed time of writing and to the narrative skills displayed by the authors.²⁷ He labelled the groups ‘oldest’ sagas, ‘early-classical’, ‘spread of saga-writing’, ‘late-classical’ sagas, and ‘post-classical’. In the ‘late-classical’ group he included some of the “very greatest sagas”, in terms of composition, which were, however, characterized by changes that distinguished them blatantly from the earlier texts of the genre: they displayed an “increasing stress on chivalrous romance”, a “Christian tinge”, and a “vulgarization of taste contrasting with the dignity

22 Guðbrandur Vigfússon, “Prolegomena,” xli.

23 Guðbrandur Vigfússon, “Prolegomena,” lxii–lxiii.

24 Guðbrandur Vigfússon, “Prolegomena,” xlii–lxiii.

25 Sigurður Nordal, *Um íslenskar fornsögur*, 110–11.

26 Sigurður Nordal, *Um íslenskar fornsögur*, 110, 156–63, 167–69.

27 Stefán Einarsson, “The Family Sagas,” in *A History of Icelandic Literature* (New York: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1957), 136–51.

of the earlier sagas".²⁸ Among them, was *Grettis saga* – a ‘late’ saga of the genre, according to some scholars. In the last, ‘post-classical’ group, Stefán included those *Íslendingasögur* which were written mostly between 1300 and 1350, thus the ‘late’ sagas of the genre, maintaining, though, that their authors had flung open the door to influence and borrowing from romance literature,²⁹ rather than talking about ‘contamination’ from the same, especially when rewriting older sagas. Thus, on the one hand, he still viewed the ‘late’ sagas in a biased way, as growing out of a decline in standards, while also naming them ‘post-classical’; on the other hand, he considered them as the products of innovations that had taken place in saga writing, while proposing, in a subsequent study, to label them more neutrally as ‘late-composed’ sagas (*síðbornar sögur*).³⁰

In the early 1990s, Vésteinn Ólason divided the *Íslendingasögur* into six sub-groups:³¹ ‘Sagas about Greenland and the Faroe Islands’ (*sögur frá Grænlandi og Føreyjum*), ‘Sagas of poets’ (*skáldasögur*), ‘Ancient sagas of disputes/family disputes’ (*fornlegar deilusögur/attadeilusögur*), ‘Classical sagas of disputes’ (*sígildar deilusögur*), ‘Tragedies’ (*harmsögur*), and ‘Sagas of champions and wonders’ (*sögur af köppum og kynjum*) or ‘Young sagas of Icelanders’ (*ungar Íslendingasögur*). In the latter group he included the youngest sagas of the genre, which he believed to relate their heroes’ achievements with much exaggeration and improbability, while they also described paranormal phenomena with greater frequency than the previous sagas.³² These were, in fact, the ‘late’ *Íslendingasögur*, which Vésteinn otherwise termed ‘post-classical’, still regarding them as being ‘more fantastic’ than the ‘classical’ sagas.³³ Thus, he still viewed them in a biased way, despite having identified the neutral label of ‘young’ sagas of the genre.

More recently, Martin Arnold has dedicated a monograph to these late sagas, studying them from a literary and a historical perspective, believing

28 Stefán Einarsson, “The Family Sagas,” 145, 150.

29 Stefán Einarsson, “The Family Sagas,” 150.

30 Stefán Einarsson, *Íslensk bókmenntasaga 874–1960* (Reykjavík: Snæbjörn Jónsson, 1961), 186–87.

31 Vésteinn Ólason, “Einstakar Íslendingasögur,” in *Íslensk bókmenntasaga 2*, ed. Böðvar Guðmundsson et al. (Reykjavík: Mál og Menning, 1993); Vésteinn Ólason, “Íslendingasögur,” in *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Philip Pulsiano and Kirsten Wolf (New York: Garland, 1993).

32 Vésteinn Ólason, “Einstakar Íslendingasögur,” 82, 143–60.

33 Vésteinn Ólason, “Íslendingasögur,” 334.

that they should be assessed in light of the crucial change in the cultural and political experience of the Icelanders, or as the products of “a different consciousness from that of earlier generations”.³⁴ However, he has still designated them ‘post-classical’, maintaining that there is a lack of generic labels that can be attached to them. Rebecca Merkelbach, then, has also reassessed the fictionality of these sagas,³⁵ and some attempts have been made to study them from other perspectives, notably the perspective of genre.³⁶ However, such contributions have been few, and the study of these sagas from within their material contexts has yet to be undertaken.

This is an attempt to bridge these gaps by analysing one particular ‘late’ *Íslendingasaga* from the genre perspective and considering the dynamics that characterize both the text itself and the two main codicological contexts in which it has been preserved.

Finnboga saga ramma

Finnboga saga ramma is an *Íslendingasaga* from the first quarter of the fourteenth century.³⁷ It has been labelled a ‘late’ or ‘post-classical’ *Íslendingasaga* both because of its late composition and because it shares part of the setting and part of its style with the sagas of the same genre that have been considered ‘classical’, while it also emancipates itself from them by widening their horizon. It does so both literally, as the protagonist reaches faraway places such as Byzantium – which nevertheless occasionally feature in ‘classical’ *Íslendingasögur* as well, such as *Laxdala saga* – and figuratively, in that the author plays with conventions, such as by combining elements that pertain to different generic repertoires. Its primary manu-

34 Martin Arnold, *The Post-Classical Icelandic Family Saga*, 145.

35 E.g., Rebecca Merkelbach, “The Coarsest and the Worst of the *Íslendinga Sagas*: Approaching the Alterity of the ‘Post-classical’ Sagas of Icelanders,” in *Margins, Monsters, Deviants: Alterities in Old Norse Literature and Culture*, ed. Rebecca Merkelbach and Gwendolyne Knight (Turhout: Brepols, 2020).

36 E.g., Phil Cardew, “The Question of Genre in the Late *Íslendingasögur*: A Case Study of *Þorsfirðinga saga*,” in *Sagas, Saints and Settlements*, ed. Gareth Williams and Paul Bibire (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Massimiliano Bampi “Le saghe norrene e la questione dei generi,” in *Intorno alle saghe norrene*, ed. Carla Falluomini (Alessandria, Italy: Edizioni dell’Orso, 2014).

37 Margrét Eggertsdóttir, “Finnboga saga ramma,” in *Medieval Scandinavia. An Encyclopedia*, ed. Philip Pulsiano and Kirsten Wolf (London: Routledge, 1993), 194.

scripts are *Möðruvallabók* (AM 132 fol.), from the fourteenth century, and *Tómasarbók* (AM 510 4to), from the middle of the sixteenth. The codices differ not only in terms of dating but also of content, which makes the study of the saga from the genre perspective even more significant.³⁸

The story begins with an unfortunate event, the exposure of a baby. Ásbjörn Gunnbjarnarson, a tenth-century Icelandic chieftain, rejects his baby boy and orders the baby's mother, his wife Þorgerðr, to expose him to the elements. The baby boy is found by a poor, old couple – Þorgerðr's childhood tutors – who name him *Urðarköttr* ('scree-cat', because he was found in a scree). They decide to keep him and raise him, pretending that he is the fruit of their own love. The obvious impossibility of this forces them to confess the truth, and *Urðarköttr* eventually gains his biological father's favour through his own valour, strength, and wit. The boy rescues a sailor in peril who rewards him with precious gifts and by giving him his own name, *Finnbogi*. The boy then decides to travel abroad where the true adventure begins. On his way to Norway, intending to meet Earl Hákon Sigurðarson, he defeats a ferocious bear, which makes him instantly famous. He then kills a treacherous man, *Álfr aptrkamba* ('with swept-back hair'), and kidnaps his daughter, *Ragnhildr*, but treats her fairly. The lady is related to Earl Hákon, and the two head together to his quarters. While there, *Finnbogi* meets the Earl, who is known to be sceptical of Icelanders. Indeed, the Earl repeatedly tests *Finnbogi* with feats of strength and challenges that escalate in difficulty, fighting against bears and a *blámaðr* (a sort of troll). *Finnbogi* succeeds in all the endeavours and gains the Earl's favour. The Earl then entrusts him with a task, namely, to collect money in Byzantium on his behalf. Once there, *Finnbogi* meets the Byzantine emperor and accomplishes feats of strength for him as well (such as lifting up the emperor and his throne together) and eventually converts to Christianity. On his return to Norway, he meets with the Earl again and expresses his desire to go back to Iceland. The Earl grants him permission, so *Finnbogi* fetches *Ragnhildr* and they set sail together. The scenes are then set in *Víðidalr*, *Vatnsdalr*, and *Strandir* (North and Northwest

38 A small part of the saga is preserved on another, single vellum leaf, AM 162c fol. (15th century). It is more similar to the corresponding text of *Tómasarbók* than to that of *Möðruvallabók* (Jóhannes Halldórsson, *Finnboga saga* (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1959), lxix). Being fragmentary and close to the text of *Tómasarbók*, it has not been considered in the present study.

Iceland), where a feud ensues between Finnbogi and an envious rival, Jökull Ingimundarson, escalating until they reconcile. Finnbogi then lives to an old age.

According to Margrét Eggertsdóttir, the saga “is not one of the better-crafted *Íslendingasögur*. Characterization is flat, and the plot little more than a repetitious series of episodes designed to present the hero in a favorable light.”³⁹ It is true that some episodes or formulas are repeated throughout the narrative, usually three times, as when Finnbogi is recognized as having killed a mighty bear (chs. 12, 14, 15), when he tests three outlaws that pay him a visit (chs. 39, 40, 41), and when his rivals ambush him (chs. 27, 31, 35). However, such repetitions might serve the function of encouraging comparisons between similar episodes at different points of the narrative, which is not infrequent in the sagas,⁴⁰ while building up expectations, or failing to meet them, thus also playing with the same. Such repetitions might also function as a mnemonic device from when the saga was recited orally to an audience. It most probably circulated orally before it was written down, as is also suggested by its style, characterized by alliteration and “its use of unusual words that seem to belong to colloquial rather than to literary language”.⁴¹ It may even have been performed, I believe, as many of its scenes are vivid and dramatic, such as when Finnbogi encounters the mighty bear, who comically ignores him at first (ch. 11); when he helps Ragnhildr into a boat, taking her in his arms before she begins to cry (ch. 14); when Hrafn *inn litli* (‘the Short’) precedes Finnbogi and his riding-fellows by running in front of the horses (ch. 30); or when Finnbogi pretends to sleep and snores loudly to test the honesty of his unexpected guests (chs. 39, 40).⁴² As soon as the protagonist returns to

39 Margrét Eggertsdóttir, “Finnboga saga ramma,” 194.

40 Cf., for instance, *Laxdæla saga*, where the behaviour of characters belonging to different generations, in similar situations, is often paralleled or contrasted, implicitly as well.

41 Paul Schach, “Finnboga saga,” in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Joseph R. Strayer (New York: Scribner, 1985), 5:64–65; Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition. A Discourse on Method* (Cambridge, MA: The Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature, 2004), 35–48.

42 Cf. Glynne Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 4; he points out that “song, dance, wrestling, sword play, contests between animals, disguise, spectacle, jokes, disputation and ritual all figure, separately or compounded, in the drama of the Middle Ages”. Cf. also Terry Gunnell, “‘The Rights of the Player’: Evidence of *Mimi* and *Histriones* in Early Medieval Scandinavia,” *Comparative Drama* 30 (1996): 2.

Iceland, though, the style becomes less colloquial, more elaborate, and the tone tends to be more serious and formal, probably due to the matter being treated, namely the feud between Finnbogi and his rival Jökull.

In any case, the characterization of the story and the characters is far from ‘flat’, and the narrative cannot be said to be poorly crafted. The saga is, on the whole, well written and compelling, often funny (as the episodes listed above testify), and somewhat provocative, as there are often exaggerations (especially of Finnbogi’s strength), absurdities (as when the old couple pretend to have conceived the baby, or when a second bear is said to understand human speech (ch. 17)), and grotesque details that particularly recur in late medieval sagas (especially in connection with skirmishes or conflicts, such as throat-biting (chs. 29, 40), brains spurting out (ch. 29), or a man being split in two by means of a sword (ch. 35)). These narrative elements stand out even more by being woven into a ‘traditional’ *Íslendingasaga* setting. The author plays with conventions and innovates by drawing from repertoires that characterize other saga genres, notably *for-naldarsögur* and *riddarasögur*. The saga in fact presents three distinct blocks or sections, each of which can be ascribed to a specific saga genre. It begins as an *Íslendingasaga*, of a ‘post-classical’/‘late’ type, as outlined below; once Finnbogi travels to Norway, it takes on the characteristics of a *for-naldarsaga*, followed by those of a *riddarasaga* when he travels to Byzantium. Finally, it takes on the qualities of a more typical *Íslendingasaga* when he returns to Iceland. Let us examine the sections in more detail:

- The initial section (chs. 1–9), which recounts Finnbogi’s youth in Flateyjarðalr, can be described as a ‘post-classical’/‘late’ *Íslendingasaga* for its inclusion of absurdities (the old couple pretending to have conceived the baby), exaggerations (in connection with Finnbogi’s strength (esp. chs. 5, 7)), genre-specific topoi (the child who is not loved by the father (ch. 6)) and topos-inversion (the baby who is exposed by a rich family and taken into a poor one, instead of the contrary⁴³), as well as its description of the

43 *Gumlaugs saga ormstungu* (ch. 3) and *Reykðæla saga* (ch. 7), for instance, relate that child exposure was practised in heathen times for economic reasons, when the available resources were scarce – such as during famine or in individual cases of poverty. However, other reasons for infant abandonment are also given in the sagas, notably social or personal, such as the illegitimacy of the child (e.g. *Vatnsdæla saga*, ch. 37) or gender preference (*Harðar saga*

- protagonist, which paints him not only in a positive light (he is witty (ch. 6) and mature (ch. 8)) but also as heroically questionable (he plays pranks on servant-women (ch. 4)).
- The central section (chs. 10–21), which describes Finnbogi’s trip to Norway to meet Earl Hákon, can be better described as a *fornaldarsaga*, for instance because it includes fantastic feats of strength (with bears (chs. 11, 17) and a *blámaðr* (ch. 16)). It can also be described as a *riddarasaga*, as in its description of the protagonist (e.g., ch. 20, where the loanword *kurteisi* (‘courtesy, chivalry’) is also used), especially once Finnbogi reaches Byzantium, where the emperor asks him to become Christian (chs. 19, 20).
 - The final section (chs. 22–end), which recounts the protagonist’s trip back to Norway and Iceland, can be described as a typical *Íslendingasaga* for its serious tone, the battles outlined in detail, and the typology of the paranormal creatures and episodes that appear (a shape-changing troll (chs. 29, 40), weather magic, and a scorn pole ritual (ch. 34)).

The juxtaposition of these different sections, in turn, triggers a ‘cross-fertilization’⁴⁴ between them, or it causes them to interplay, thus enhancing the hybridity of the text. More precisely, some influence of *fornaldarsögur* is found in the initial section, testified by the presence of the topos of the child who is not loved by his father (ch. 6) and in the final section, where another topos, that of the *kolbitr* (lit. ‘coalbiter’, a layabout), appears (ch. 30). Some influence of *riddarasögur* is notably present at the beginning, as no detailed genealogy is presented, and in the final section, where the protagonist is described as being courteous (the adjective *kurteis* being used in chs. 36, 43). Here too, the love that blossoms between Finnbogi and his wife is emphasized (ch. 29), as is the acceptance of Christianity in both Norway (ch. 36) and Iceland (chs. 38, 43, 41). The final section includes grotesque details typical of ‘post-classical’ *Íslendingasögur* (chs. 29, 40, 35, 41), along with exaggerations of Finnbogi’s strength (ch. 34) and funny details (those about Hrafn the Short (ch. 30) and Finnbogi snoring (chs. 39, 40) mentioned above).

ok Hólmverja, ch. 8). Cf. Carol Clover, “The Politics of Scarcity. Notes on the Sex Ratio in Early Scandinavia,” *Scandinavian Studies* 60 (1988): 152–59.

44 Bampi, “Le saghe norrene e la questione dei generi,” 100; Bampi, “Genre,” (2017), 10.

The author thus constructed his work by drawing from different generic repertoires, depending on the narrative development he had in mind, which resulted in a series of sections that differ in genre. This in turn triggered generic hybridism or cross-fertilization between the sections. The use of these strategies shows that there was a logic behind the construction of the text and therefore that it cannot be considered incoherent or simplistic, as has sometimes been the case.⁴⁵ At the same time, it implies that the author was aware of narrative conventions of genre, or of their characteristic repertoires, anyway, an awareness he allegedly exploited to innovate and to imbue his narrative with deeper meaning. This can be appreciated, for instance, in regard to the representation of the past and its relation to the present,⁴⁶ such as by comparing the description of some events in the saga with the treatment of the same events in another *Íslendingasaga*, *Vatnsdæla saga*. The events in question concern the feud between Finnbogi and Jökull Ingimundarson, along with his family. In both narratives, the events are largely the same, but the differences among them are greater in number and in nature than their similarities, regarding both their artistic approach and the handling of the material. Allegedly, the narrative of *Vatnsdæla* is more ‘polished’, as it suppresses everything that does not serve the unwinding of the episodes, whereas *Finnboga saga* accommodates “various extraneous pieces of information” to enhance the treatment of the same episodes, notably the events that trigger the feud, the winter wedding in Vatnsdalur, and the end of the affair.⁴⁷ Thus, the two sagas represent different and independent treatments of a common, core material,⁴⁸ but they might also represent oral variants of the same story, each recounted from the point of view of the respective descendants, putting either Finnbogi or Jökull to the fore but without altering the general course of the events.⁴⁹

The analysis of the saga from the genre perspective will now be deepened by considering the two main manuscript contexts in which the text has been preserved, *Möðruvallabók* (AM 132 fol., 14th century) and

45 Cf. Margrét Eggertsdóttir, “Finnboga saga ramma,” 194.

46 Cf. Bampi, “Genre,” (2020), 24, 29.

47 Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition*, 314–19.

48 Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition*, 314.

49 Margrét Eggertsdóttir, “Finnboga saga ramma,” 194; Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition*, 320. A historical Finnbogi is mentioned in both *Landnámabók* and *Íslendingadrápa*. Sigurður Nordal, *Um íslenskar fornsögur*, 167–68.

Tómasarbók (AM 510 4to, mid-16th century).

Finnboga saga ramma in Möðruvallabók

Möðruvallabók (AM 132 fol.), the ‘Book of Möðruvellir’, is a fourteenth-century manuscript collection that was produced in the north of Iceland, most likely at the priory of Möðruvellir in Hörgárdalur, not far from the Benedictine monastery of Munkaþverá. Its first known owner was the lawman Magnús Björnsson from Munkaþverá (c. 1595–1662), who inscribed his name on it while at Möðruvellir in 1628, whence its own name.⁵⁰ It is a prestigious elite codex, as evidenced by its large size (folio), the disposition of the text on the page (in two columns), and the lack of marginalia. By the fourteenth century, when it was compiled, such type of codices usually included major texts such as homilies or laws; instead, Möðruvallabók contains eleven *Íslendingasögur*, including sagas or parts of sagas that are not found elsewhere (e.g., *Kormáks saga* and *Droplaugarsona saga*). That its contents were unusual for the time suggests that the production of *Íslendingasögur* as luxury artefacts was an innovation of the fourteenth century.⁵¹ But there are reasons to believe that the extant codex does not fully represent the intentions of those who produced it.⁵² One primary scribe was responsible for its production,⁵³ while a different scribe wrote the verses in *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, and a distinct rubricator added the red headings and possibly the initials.⁵⁴ The three scribes appear

50 Stefán Karlsson, “Möðruvallabók,” in *Medieval Scandinavia. An Encyclopedia*, ed. Philip Pulsiano and Kirsten Wolf (London: Routledge, 1993), 426; Jónas Kristjánsson, *Eddas and Sagas. Iceland’s Medieval Literature* (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 2007), 208.

51 Michael Chesnutt, “On the Structure, Format, and Preservation of Möðruvallabók,” *Gripla* 21 (2010): 156–57.

52 Chesnutt, “On the Structure, Format, and Preservation of Möðruvallabók,” 148; cf. Lethbridge, “*Hvorki glansar gull á mér.*”

53 His hand is also known from other manuscripts, mostly preserving religious texts, such as AM 229 II fol. (*Sjórn*) and AM 220 I fol. (*Priest’s saga of Guðmundr Arason*). Cf. Sverrir Tómasson, “The History of Old Nordic Manuscripts I: Old Icelandic,” in *The Nordic Languages. An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*, ed. Oskar Bandle et al. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 798.

54 Beeke Stegmann, “Collaborative Manuscript Production and the Case of Reykjabók: Paleographical and Multispectral Analysis,” in *New Studies in the Manuscript Tradition of Njáls saga: The historia mutila of Njála*, ed. Emily Lethbridge and Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2018), 45–46.

to have collaborated closely,⁵⁵ but the leaves were not bound together at the time. This is likely because the scribes, who were professionals, intended to dispose of the texts for profit, binding them only in that circumstance.⁵⁶ Allegedly, the manuscripts remained loose up until the seventeenth century, when they were brought together and taken to Denmark by Björn Magnússon, son of Magnús Björnsson, the first known owner of the codex, to be given as a gift to Thomas Bartholin.⁵⁷

An examination of the extant material has led scholars to assume that the codex we now have comprises the remains of two or three parchment codices. According to Chesnutt, the first two sagas, *Brennu-Njáls saga* and *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, which occupy several quires, were not originally meant to belong with each other or with the remaining quires.⁵⁸ *Njáls saga* ought to have been followed by its proposed, yet missing, sequel, **Gauks saga*, suggesting that the scribe envisaged a separate codex containing the two texts; and *Egils saga* is preserved within blank flyleaves front and back to protect the text inside, suggesting the careful arrangement of an independent codicological entity.⁵⁹ The remaining nine sagas seem to constitute a unit, in that they are copied continuously and are arranged in geographical order clockwise around Iceland – reminiscent of the original recension of *Landnámabók*.⁶⁰ This is true, at least, of the first five sagas in the group, while the last four break the order. In any case, the first saga of this third unit is *Finnboga saga*. It is not preceded by a blank flyleaf, and the ink of both the first leaf (100r) and of the penultimate leaf (113v, the saga ending on the following recto) is faded, suggesting that the manuscript was exposed to dirt and damp when it was lifted out of the pile of loose quires to be read.⁶¹ The fact that the text begins on the very first leaf of its first quire has induced scholars to suppose that it was not originally meant to be the first of the unit or, in that case, it would have been preced-

55 Stegmann, "Collaborative Manuscript Production and the Case of Reykjabók," 45.

56 Chesnutt, "On the Structure, Format, and Preservation of *Möðruvallabók*," 154.

57 Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, "The Care of the Manuscripts in the Árni Magnússon Institute in Iceland," *Care and Conservation of Manuscripts* 1, ed. Gillian Fellow-Jensen and Peter Springborg (Copenhagen: The Royal Library, 1995), 63.

58 Chesnutt, "On the Structure, Format, and Preservation of *Möðruvallabók*," 152–55; cf. Lethbridge, "*Hvorki glansar gull á mér*," 61–63.

59 Chesnutt, "On the Structure, Format, and Preservation of *Möðruvallabók*," 152, 155.

60 Chesnutt, "On the Structure, Format, and Preservation of *Möðruvallabók*," 153.

61 Chesnutt, "On the Structure, Format, and Preservation of *Möðruvallabók*," 152.

ed by a blank flyleaf, as is *Egils saga*. Thus, an additional saga manuscript may have originally preceded *Finnboga saga*, which would have been anticipated by a blank flyleaf. Considering the geographical sequence around Iceland in which the sagas of this part of the codex are ordered, Chesnutt speculates that the missing saga is *Gull-Þóris saga*.⁶² This is an interesting hypothesis, as *Gull-Þóris saga* is, like *Finnboga saga*, a ‘post-classical’ or ‘late’ *Íslendingasaga*. It is highly speculative, however, and it is possible that no text ever preceded *Finnboga saga* in the codex. Rather, *Finnboga saga* itself might begin the third book or book section, as is suggested by the fact that it begins with an initial seven lines high, equal to that opening the first two sagas of the collection, *Njáls saga* and *Egils saga*, and much bigger than those appearing in the remaining sagas of the section.⁶³

At any rate, *Finnboga saga* begins on quire 13, at the top left-hand corner of the first leaf (100r), and is disposed in two columns. It is not provided with an incipit or a rubric, although rubrics are otherwise numerous throughout the text of the saga (e.g., *Finnbogi braut hrygg í birninum* (103r; ‘Finnbogi broke the spine of the bear’, my trans.), or *Aflraun Finnboga* (105v; ‘On Finnbogi’s tests of strength’, my trans.)). Nevertheless, as mentioned, the saga begins with an initial seven lines high, while the following chapter initials are usually three lines high. The only exception appears at the start of the chapter describing the protagonist’s trip away to Norway, where the initial (<P>) is instead four lines high. This might visually signal the important change in the narrative, a change of setting, and thus of genre as well; notably, though, the beginning of the section describing the protagonist’s return to Iceland is not equally highlighted. Marginalia are lacking, as one would expect of a prestigious codex.

As mentioned, one main scribe copied the texts of the codex. This suggests that he curated a selection of texts, regardless of the fact that the quires remained loose for some time after. It is therefore worth investigating, from the perspective of genre, what criteria may have guided his selection, possibly unveiling in turn how the scribe had received the texts himself. Among these criteria might be topography, although only two-thirds of the codex as we now have it is consistently ordered in this sense, as mentioned. The texts also share several topics or themes. Among them are friendship and enmity, pride and envy, personal ambition and social sta-

62 Chesnutt, “On the Structure, Format, and Preservation of *Möðruvallabók*,” 153.

63 Sigurjón P. Ísaksson, “Magnús Björnsson og *Möðruvallabók*,” *Saga* 32 (1994): 108.

tus, the relationship of Icelanders to kings, the acceptance of Christianity, and the feud – often the keystone of such sagas. There also seems to be a *fil rouge* connecting the texts that has to do with their possible moral or ideological message. On the whole, the texts address how an individual acts and reacts in society, and thus how he establishes himself or fails to do so, depending on both fate and human responsibility. As to the latter, the sagas of *Möðruvallabók* show that an excess of ambition and pride leads to failure, as do envy and corruption. This could also be read as social criticism relative to the time in which the texts were produced or to that in which the scribe himself operated. Some characters notably experience a turn of fortune after the conversion to Christianity is introduced, which seems to bring with it a message of hope. Finally, the texts might be selected because of their typology, as most of them are biographical, largely recounting the lives of poets, at times containing significant sections of poetry. In this regard, it is also important to stress that, although the texts are now classified as *Íslendingasögur*, they show the influence of *konungasögur* (*Egils saga*, *Víga Glúms saga*, *Hallfreðar saga*), *fornaldarsögur* (as *Finnboga saga* itself, *Kormáks saga*, *Fóstbræðra saga*), *riddarasögur* (notably *Laxdæla saga*), and of folktales (*Droplaugarsona saga*, *Hallfreðar saga*). This is not surprising, but some of the sagas, including *Finnboga saga*, are particularly heterogeneous.

Beyond their selection, the criterion for ordering the texts might again be geographical, at least for the first part of the codex as we now have it, even though the quires were assembled later on, and it is possible that other sagas were originally included in the collection.⁶⁴ Considering the extant codex and recalling that a single scribe copied the texts – continuously in the third section – it is possible and profitable to consider the texts as an organic whole that generated connections and forced dynamic intertextual reading.⁶⁵ Approaching text-collections holistically allows light to be shed on how material contexts impact the reception of texts, especially from the perspective of themes and genre.⁶⁶ Immediate textual contexts in particular generate significance and therefore carry implications for how the texts are interpreted.⁶⁷

64 Cf. Chesnutt, “On the Structure, Format, and Preservation of *Möðruvallabók*,” 153; Lethbridge, “*Hvorki glansar gull á mér*,” 63.

65 Cf. Lethbridge, “*Hvorki glansar gull á mér*,” 76.

66 Lethbridge, “*Hvorki glansar gull á mér*,” 76.

67 Hans J. Orning, “Legendary Sagas as Historical Sources,” *Tabularia “Études”* 15 (2015): 61.

Finnboga saga, within the codex as we now have it, appears after *Egils saga*, with which it shares typological and thematic elements: a biographical nature, the presence of an *utanferð* section (narrating the protagonist's trip abroad), the treatment of Icelanders' relationships to kings, and feud, as well as the inclusion of grotesque details, especially in connection with skirmishes or clashes. If *Gull-Þóris saga* ever appeared in between them, as Chesnutt speculates, it would have fitted in quite well, as it too includes an *utanferð* section, also juxtaposing narrative sections that can be ascribed to different genres, in the manner of *Finnboga saga*. Both sagas display influence of *fornaldarsögur*, and they have both been considered 'post-classical' or 'late' *Íslendingasögur*. *Gull-Þóris saga* goes as far as to include paranormal beings such as flying dragons, however, which would have made it an awkward follower of *Egils saga* – presuming *Egils saga* itself was meant to be part of the collection – although *Egils saga* also displays some influence of *fornaldarsögur*, but in a more subtle way.⁶⁸ *Finnboga saga* is followed by *Bandamanna saga*, 'The Saga of the Confederates', with which it shares thematic elements, most notably that of the poor child elevated to a higher rank in society. But while in *Finnboga saga* the poor child, Finnbogi, succeeds in life thanks to his own abilities, in *Bandamanna saga* the poor child (also the protagonist) succeeds through corruption, a juxtaposition that makes the latter narrative read like a satire of the lust for power and greed of the chieftain class of the time, despite its happy ending.

By reading *Finnboga saga* as part of *Möðruvallabók*, especially in its immediate context, one can better appreciate how it communicates certain momentous moral or ideological messages and is not pure diversion, although reading it alongside the more serious narratives highlights its entertainment value, or what might be considered its frivolity.⁶⁹ This, in turn, reveals the utility of the heterogeneity of the text from the genre perspective as the sections of the saga that pertain more to the *fornaldarsaga* and *riddarasaga* genres become more vivid.

68 Cf. Torfi Tulinius, *The Matter of the North. The Rise of Literary Fiction in Thirteenth-Century Iceland* (Odense: Odense University Press, 2002).

69 Cf. Lethbridge, "Authors and Anonymity."

Finnboga saga ramma in Tómasarbók

Finnboga saga is preserved in another parchment codex, AM 510 4to, from the mid-sixteenth century.⁷⁰ The codex has been named Tómasarbók, or ‘Book of Tómas’, because it is partly written in the same hand as AM 604 4to, the compiler of which named himself Tómas.⁷¹ This scribe was a professional, as were his brother and father, and the three worked together on AM 510 4to, as is stated at the end of the first saga, *Víglundar saga* (f. 8r): “þrír fegðar [sic] hafa skrifat bok þessa og bidit til guds fyrir þeim ollum. Amen.”⁷² The father’s hand has been identified only in parts of the codex,⁷³ while the main scribes (the two brothers) are also responsible for the several marginalia that appear and give important insights into the reception and use of the texts.

The text of *Finnboga saga* that is preserved in this codex is not derived from Möðruvallabók. It occasionally even appears to be older (*uppruna-legrí*), thus allegedly being closer to a previously extant redaction of the text (*frumrit*) which pre-existed Möðruvallabók as well.⁷⁴ But the text of Tómasarbók is otherwise clearly and widely corrupted, such that the Möðruvallabók version is the one upon which most editions of the text are based. The *Íslenzk fornrit* edition of the saga is based entirely on Möðruvallabók, though it includes, in the footnotes, the most noteworthy variants found in Tómasarbók.⁷⁵ These variants consist either in further information (e.g., ch. 16: *af þessu* (in M.) vs *af þessu ok af mörgum drengskap ǫðrum* (in T.); ch. 16: *fagnaði henni vel* (in M.) vs *með bliðu ok spurði hana, hvárt Finnbogi hefði gert vel til hennar* (in T.)); more precise information (e.g., ch. 7: *með nautum* (in M.) vs *með nautum á Eyri* (in T.)); ch. 27: *synir Brettings ok synir Inga* (in M.) vs *synir Brettings þrír ok synir Inga tveir* (in T.)); differing information (e.g. ch. 23: *hann átti dóttur* (in M.) vs *systurdóttur* (in T.)); ch. 23: *fimm saman* (in M.) vs *tíu saman í flokki* (in T.)); differing information and wording (e.g. ch. 10: *Þaðan er mér úlfs ván, er*

70 Jóhannes Halldórsson, *Finnboga saga*, lxix.

71 Jóhannes Halldórsson, *Finnboga saga*, lxix.

72 Þórdís E. Jóhannesdóttir, “Marginalia in AM 510 4to,” *Opuscula* 17 (2019): 209–10, 212. ‘A father and his two sons have written this book and prayed to God to intercede for them all. Amen’ (my trans.).

73 Þórdís E. Jóhannesdóttir, “Marginalia in AM 510 4to,” 210.

74 Jóhannes Halldórsson, *Finnboga saga*, lxxviii–lxxix.

75 Jóhannes Halldórsson, *Finnboga saga*.

ek eyrun sék (in M.) vs *Þat er satt, sem mált er, at þaðan er úlfs ván, er alinn er* (in T.); ch. 11: *sumir skeptu exar, en sumir spjót* (in M.) vs *bjuggu orvar, sumir skeptu spjót eðr sverð eðr sviður* (in T.)). All in all, these variants show that the text of *Tómasarbók* is fuller than that of *Möðruvallabók*, possibly reinforcing the hypothesis of its closer proximity to a former, original redaction of the text, while the differing information is significant when speculating about the audiences of the two manuscripts, attempted below.

Not only the text of *Finnboga saga* is different in the two manuscripts; so is its disposition on the page. While *Möðruvallabók* displays the text in two columns, *Tómasarbók* gives it in one column, the division into chapters also differing significantly between the two manuscripts. The chapters are much longer in *Tómasarbók* than in *Möðruvallabók*, at times dividing the text at the same points, while at others not doing so. As a consequence, the decorated initials also sometimes differ, in addition to being less high in *Tómasarbók* than in *Möðruvallabók*, usually two lines high as opposed to three. However, *Tómasarbók* also presents inconsistent cases where the initial is one, two, or three lines high. The height of their poles also varies frequently throughout the text, although they are almost always decorated. These differences are also significant in speculating about the audiences of the two manuscripts, as attempted below.

The main scribes of *Tómasarbók* also endowed the codex with several marginalia. These consist of comments, random phrases, verse-fragments, personal names, and religious invocations.⁷⁶ Interestingly, many of them appear with the text of *Finnboga saga* itself, mainly consisting of religious invocations and usually positioned at the top of the page as the custom had it: “*sancta fenenna ora pro nobis*” (71r, 74v),⁷⁷ “*jesus*” (73r), “*gud komi til min*” (75r), “*maria gracia plena*” (80r, 84r).⁷⁸ There are also many decorations, some of which are quite noteworthy and seemingly rather personal, such as a drawing of a bearded man’s face (76r). The relationship of these marginalia to the main text has yet to be investigated, though it should be kept in mind that the majority of marginalia that appear in Icelandic manuscripts are unrelated to the text they accompany.⁷⁹ In any case, just as the

76 Þórdís E. Jóhannesdóttir, “Marginalia in AM 510 4to,” 212–13.

77 No saint by the name *Fenenna* is known. For a discussion of the relevant speculation, see Þórdís E. Jóhannesdóttir, “Marginalia in AM 510 4to,” 218.

78 Þórdís E. Jóhannesdóttir, “Marginalia in AM 510 4to,” 214–15.

79 Matthew Driscoll, “Postcards from the Edge: An Overview of Marginalia in Icelandic

drawing of the bearded man's face testifies, from the fifteenth century on, marginalia became more personal than in earlier books, where they consisted mostly of corrections or additions to the main text.⁸⁰ This is consistent with the fact that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Icelandic manuscripts were primarily intended for household reading and were thus also less impressive in quality.⁸¹ This is true of *Tómasarbók*, evident in its smaller size – a quarto, compared to *Möðruvallabók*'s folio; in its many leaves that are very irregular in shape (e.g., 70r, 78r); and in the presence of the marginalia themselves.

The context of *Finnboga saga* in *Tómasarbók* consists of texts that can be ascribed to different genres of the current taxonomy: *Íslendingasögur* (*Víglundar saga*), *fornaldarsögur* (*Bósa saga*, *Þorsteins þátr þajarmagns*, *Friðþjófs saga*), indigenous *riddarasögur* (*Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns*, *Drauma-Jóns saga*), and a *konungasaga* (*Jómsvíkinga saga*⁸²). Most of these texts are particularly heterogeneous, blending different generic repertoires that include, beyond those already mentioned, the folktale and the fairy tale. The texts share several topics and themes, notably the bridal quest, the relationships between foster-brothers and between Icelanders and kings, self-fulfilment, and descriptions of dreams and omens. On the whole, though, it is difficult to trace a clear *fil rouge* uniting the texts of the collection as the moral or ideological message seems to do in *Möðruvallabók*. That said, some of the sagas do show structural or modal similarity, as evidenced by the inclusion of notable poetic sections (esp. *Friðþjófs saga* and *Jómsvíkinga saga* – although verses in the latter are additions to earlier versions of the saga⁸³). Some of them have also been considered to be sources for others that also appear in the codex (such as *Friðþjófs saga* for *Víglundar saga*, or *Bósa saga* for *Þorsteins þátr*), although such connections remain speculative.

Manuscripts,” in *Reading Notes*, ed. Dirk Van Hulle and Wim van Mierlo (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 36.

80 Þórdís E. Jóhannesdóttir, “Marginalia in AM 510 4to,” 211.

81 Jóhanna K. Friðriksdóttir, “*Konungs skuggsjá* [The King's Mirror] and Women Patrons and Readers in Late Medieval and Early Modern Iceland,” *Viator* 49, no. 2 (2018): 282–83.

82 The saga, however, has been much discussed from the genre perspective. Cf. Alison Finlay, “*Jómsvíkinga saga* and Genre,” *Scripta Islandica* 65 (2014).

83 Cf. Judith Jesch, “*Jómsvíkinga Sögur* and *Jómsvíkinga Drápur*: Texts, Contexts and Intertexts,” *Scripta Islandica* 65 (2014).

The texts of *Tómasarþók* seem to be organized to give the impression of a progression from recreation to instruction, at least thematically. The codex opens with sagas in which the bridal quest of the protagonists, as well as their adventures, plays an important role. This is true of *Víglundar saga* (*Íslendingasaga*), *Bósa saga* (*fornaldarsaga*), and *Jarlmanns saga* (indigenous *riddarasaga*). The collection then includes, in order of appearance, *Jómsvíkinga saga* (*konungasaga* – cf. note 82), which focuses on serious themes such as the relationship of the protagonists to kings and personal success, and *Finnboga saga*, which shares those themes, as exemplified by Finnbogi's interactions with Earl Hákon and the emperor of Byzantium, and the ways in which he gains their favour and succeeds. *Finnboga saga* is then followed by *Drauma-Jóns saga*, an indigenous *riddarasaga* that functions as an *exemplum* of good conduct. *Friðþjófs saga*, a *fornaldarsaga* in which the protagonist succeeds in his life by raising his low status, closes the collection.

If we read *Finnboga saga* in this other material context, especially its immediate context in the final part of the codex, its satirical character and the seriousness coming from the satire stand out when it is read after *Jómsvíkinga saga*, while the proximity of *Drauma-Jóns saga* brings the moral undertone of the saga to the fore. At the same time, the heterogeneous generic nature of the saga also stands out, as these sagas – like most sagas in the collection – display a blend of different narrative repertoires.

Concluding Remarks

An analysis of *Finnboga saga* from the genre perspective shows that the text is far from being flat and simplistic as has often been maintained but is rather compelling and well crafted. This better understanding of the text is enhanced by studying it within the two main codices where it appears. The two codices preserve the same version but with significant differences in wording, contents, and structure. The presentation of the text on the page also differs in the two codices, as does the division into chapters, which in turn affects the decorated initials. *Möðruvallabók* does not contain many marginalia along with the text, while the conspicuous presence of religious invocations and decorations in *Tómasarþók* mean that it does. This corresponds well with the fact that the latter codex is of less impressive quality,

being smaller (4to vs. folio) and including some quite irregular leaves. The contexts in which the text is inserted also differ: in *Möðruvallabók* the saga is preserved with other *Íslendingasögur*, though they display elements of other saga genres, whereas in *Tómasarbók* the saga is accompanied by texts that are very different from one another in genre, in addition to being internally heterogeneous, or that tend to juxtapose or blend elements pertaining to different generic repertoires in a more evident manner.

These aspects considered, it is very likely that the different scribes perceived the text differently, from the genre perspective, before including it in the respective collections. The scribe of *Möðruvallabók* seems to have viewed it as part of a prestigious legacy of texts, hence including it in his collection of major sagas, allowing its more serious and moral tone to stand out, though without losing its entertainment value. The scribes of *Tómasarbók* also seem to have wanted to highlight the moral undertone and satirical character of the saga, as well as its amusing nature, but they also seem to have wanted to stress how it communicates a more nuanced view of the past, best highlighted by the particularly heterogeneous overall nature of the texts in the collection.

The intended audience itself clearly had an impact on the selection and ordering of the texts in the codices. In *Möðruvallabók*, it most likely consisted of powerful people commissioning the specific collection, probably the same people whom the collection was meant to be sold to, or at least with similar recipients in mind. This may be supported by the fact that the main scribe of the codex also took care of the redaction of other five or six manuscripts and manuscript fragments, which mostly deal with legal and Christian matters.⁸⁴ *Tómasarbók* instead suggests a humbler public and was probably destined for household reading or for private use, given its codicological characteristics. Revealing in this regard may be the fact that one of its main scribes compiled a large collection of *rímur* as well (AM 604 4to), which also includes a significant amount of marginalia.⁸⁵ The text of *Finnboga saga*, therefore, functioned somewhat differently in the different communities in which and for which it was copied, with both the text itself and its presentation adapted to the different communicative situations and milieux.

84 Chesnutt, "On the Structure, Format, and Preservation of *Möðruvallabók*," 155–56.

85 Cf. Þórdís E. Jóhannesdóttir, "Marginalia in AM 510 4to," 209–10; Jónas Kristjánsson, *Eddas and Sagas*, 380.

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ÁGRIP

Að reyna að fanga það sem ekki er hægt að festa hendur á: ný rannsókn á *Finnboga sögu ramma*

Efnisorð: *Finnboga saga ramma*, ‘ungar’ Íslendingasögur, bókmenntagrein, handritasamhengi, handritafræði

Finnboga saga ramma er Íslendingasaga frá fjórtánda öld sem segir frá flökkukenndu lífi íslenska höfðingjasonarins Finnboga Ásbjarnarsonar. Sagan berst frá Íslandi til Noregs og Grikklands. Frásögnin er áhugaverð af ýmsum ástæðum. Meðal annars er erfitt að fella söguna inn í hið almennt viðurkennda flokkunarkerfi fornsagna vegna þess að í henni eru atriði sem bera einkenni ólíkra sagnahópa. Við þetta má bæta að elstu og merkilegustu handritin sem varðveita textann, Möðruvallabók (AM 132 fol. frá 14. öld) og Tómasarbók (AM 510 4to frá miðri 16. öld), setja hann í mjög ólíkt samhengi sem gerir rannsókn á sögunni í ljósi rannsókna á bókmenntagreinum enn áhugaverðari.

Í þessari grein verður *Finnboga saga ramma* greind með hliðsjón af kenningum um bókmenntagreinar. Hugað verður jafnt að byggingu textans sjálfs og að því handritasamhengi sem hann birtist í. Markmiðið er að varpa ljósi bæði á almenn einkenni textans og mikilvægi þess að rannsaka ‘ungar’ Íslendingasögur – og miðaldasögur almennt – í samhengi íslenskrar handritamenningar.

SUMMARY

Endeavouring to Grasp the Elusive: A New Study of *Finnboga saga ramma*

Keywords: *Finnboga saga ramma*, ‘late’ *Íslendingasögur*, genre, manuscript contexts, codicology

Finnboga saga ramma, ‘The Saga of Finnbogi the Mighty’, is a fourteenth-century *Íslendingasaga* that tracks the restless life of Finnbogi Ásbjarnarson, an Icelandic chieftain’s son, as it unfolds in tenth-century Iceland, Norway, and Byzantium. The narrative is compelling for several reasons, including how it challenges the commonly acknowledged taxonomy of saga genres, clearly combining elements that pertain to the repertoires of different saga genres. Moreover, the two main

codices preserving the text, Möðruvallabók (AM 132 fol., 14th century) and Tómasarbók (AM 510 4to, mid-16th century), present it in two very different contexts, making its study from the perspective of genre even more significant.

This contribution investigates *Finnboga saga ramma* from the genre perspective by giving equal consideration to the architecture of the text itself and the two main manuscript contexts in which it appears, in order to shed light on both the generic characteristics of the text and on the significance of studying 'late' *Íslendingasögur* – and medieval sagas generally – from within their material contexts.

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GUÐRÚN BRJÁNSDÓTTIR

„RÁÐ HEF ÉG KENND Í KVÆÐI“

Málsháttakvæði Jóns Bjarnasonar í AM 427 12mo

1. Inngangur

Frá fornu fari hafa siðalærdómar verið settir fram í málsháttum eða spakmælum sem ætlað er að kenna fólki að breyta rétt. Málsháttakvæði og spakmælasöfn mynda því ákveðna bókmenntagrein sem á rætur að rekja aftur til fornaldar (Larrington 1993, 1). Textar sem greininni tilheyrja hafa gjarnan reynst langlífir og verið lesnir á ólíkum tímum. Í íslenskri bókmenntasögu eru *Hávamál* sennilega allra þekktustu og vinsælustu málsháttakvæði sem varðveist hafa en þau eru meðal annars geymd í Konungsbók eddukvæða. Annað dæmi um lífseigt málsháttasafn í hinum vestræna heimi eru latnesku kvæðin *Disticha Catonis* sem hafa varðveist allt frá 3. öld eftir Krist. Kvæðin voru notuð við latínukennslu á miðöldum en þóttu einnig fyrirtaks siðalærdómur, enda leiðbeina þau lesendum um æskilega hegðun við ákveðin tækifæri, t.a.m. hvenær eigi að tala og hvenær ekki, hvernig eigi að haga viðskiptamálum og rækta vináttu (Perraud 1988, 83). Sumir málshættir lifa lengur með fólki en aðrir og skiptir þar vafalaust mestu hvort viðhorfin sem í þeim eru fólgin samræmist viðmiðum hvers tíma eða verði úrelt.

Sökum þess að uppruni einstakra málsháttasafna er oftast en ekki óljós geta orðskýringar og túlkanir flækst fyrir lesendum eða þá að textann skortir samhengi í nýju umhverfi (Larrington 1993, 2). Annað einkenni málshátta er að þeim er oft safnað saman úr ólíkum áttum; skrifarar/útgefendur hafa þannig tekið saman málshætti sem fjalla um ólík viðfangsefni á einn stað og því er oft erfitt að átta sig á uppruna málsháttasafna. Ef orðaforði málsháttar eða málsháttasafns varð of torveldur, og jafnvel óskiljanlegur lesendum, gátu menn einfaldlega losað sig við þau erindi sem þeim hugnaðist (Larrington 1993, 3), enda koma málshættir að

litlu gagni ef ekki er hægt að skilja inntak þeirra og boðskap. Eitt helsta einkenni bókmenntagreinarnnar er því hve flæðandi hún er í eðli sínu; skrásetjarar og útgefendur geta safnað saman málsháttum að vild og tekið út þá sem henta þeim ekki lengur. Við rannsóknir á málsháttum mætti því jafnvel líta á uppruna þeirra sem aukaatriði, þar sem oft reynist erfitt að geta sér til um hann, en hins vegar er stöðug endurnýjun þeirra og aðlögun að nýjum samfélögum oft áhugaverðara og jafnframt mikilvægara viðfangsefni.

Af þessum sökum skiptir íslensk þýðing Jóns Bjarnasonar (um 1560–1633) á málsháttasafninu *Disticha Catonis*, sem og dreifing hennar um íslenskt samfélag, talsverðu máli fyrir íslenska bókmenntasögu, einkum vegna þess hve oft kvæðin voru endurtúlkuð á síðari öldum. Alls hafa fjórar ólíkar þýðingar á *Disticha Catonis* varðveist á Íslandi, fyrst undir titlinum *Hugsvinnsmál* á 13. öld (sjá t.d. Frans 2023) en kvæðin voru aftur þýdd á 17. öld af Jóni Bjarnasyni í tveimur ólíkum gerðum (Halldór Hermannsson 1958, xxix) og litlu síðar sneri Bjarni Gissurarson (um 1621–1712) þeim í bundið mál á íslensku. Hægt er að velta fyrir sér hvaða markmið vakti fyrir þýðendunum tveimur; framtak þeirra ber vitni um að málshættir hafi verið lifandi bókmenntagrein og að lærðir menn íslensks samfélags hafi þess vegna talið þörf á að endurnýja tungumál sem þá var orðið torskilið lesendum 17. aldar. Miðlun þýðinganna, svo sem uppskrift einnar þeirra í handritinu AM 427 12mo, gefur enn fremur til kynna að málshættir hafi verið sérstök bókmenntagrein í íslensku samfélagi á 17. öld. Með því að gefa þýðingu Jóns í handritinu og umhverfi hennar gaum er því hægt að fá skýrari mynd af málsháttum sem bókmenntagrein á Íslandi.

Í þessari grein verður fjallað um pappírshandritið AM 427 12mo, sögu þess og notkun með stuðningi af kenningum Kwakkels um framleiðslu- og notkunareiningar. Gerð er grein fyrir þýddum og frumsömdum málsháttakvæðum Jóns Bjarnasonar í handritinu og fjallað um tengsl þess við prentuðu bókina *Hólar Cato* frá um 1620, þar sem þýðing hans á latnesku kvæðunum *Disticha Catonis* er talin hafa birst fyrst á prenti. Jafnframt er latneski frumtextinn til umfjöllunar og tæpt er á kenningum um samband hans við íslensku málsháttasöfnin *Hugsvinnsmál* og *Hávamál*. Með greininni er leitast við að kanna stöðu málsháttasafna í íslensku samfélagi, einkum hlutverk þeirra í handritamenningu síðari alda og við gerð kennsluefnis á 17. öld. Framleiðsla pappírshandrita bauð upp á annars konar tæki-

færi en prentmiðlun og handrit voru því sérstæðari gripir en prentbækur. Birtingarmyndir málsháttakvæðanna í AM 427 12mo veita innsýn í bókmenntagreinina sem slíka og með því að rýna í byggingu handritsins má öðlast nýtt sjónarhorn á textana og viðtökur þeirra.

2. Framleiðslu- og notkunareiningar AM 427 12mo

Pappírshandritið AM 427 12mo, sem ritað var á 17. öld og er nú varðveitt á Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum í Reykjavík, inniheldur annars vegar íslenska þýðingu á miðaldakvæðunum *Disticha Catonis* og hins vegar frumorta sálma og kvæði. Forvitnileg spássiuteikning af því sem túlkað hefur verið sem fljúgandi furðudiskur leiddi síðar til þess að handritið hlaut viðurnefnið „UFO-handritið“ (*Morgunblaðið* 1967). Eins hafa nöfn verið rituð á auðar síður handritsins sem gefa vísbendingar um eigenda- og notkunarsögu þess, eins og síðar verður vikið að. Handritið er í góðu ástandi og nokkuð auðlæsilegt, að undanskildum einstaka blöðum sem hafa skemmt að hluta.

AM 427 12mo er gert úr 118 pappírslöðum og skiptist í sjö hluta sem áður voru bundnir saman í eina bók en hafa í nýlegri viðgerðum verið skildir að og endurbundnir í sjö hlutum. Auk þeirra hafa tveir áttblöðungar varðveist með handritinu. Skýra má samsetningu handritsins í ljósi kenninga Kwakkels um framleiðslu- og notkunareiningar (e. *production and usage units*) (2002, 12–19). Hugtökin setti hann fram til að lýsa betur flóknum uppruna miðhollenskra handrita frá Rookloster sem safnað var á tímabilinu 1450–1500. Mörg þessara handrita eru samtíningur, gerður úr nokkrum hlutum sem eru ólíkir innbyrðis að því leyti að sumir þeirra eru stakar arkir (e. *individual booklets*) en aðrir eru nokkurs konar arkaklasar (e. *small groups of booklets*) sem geta verið úr að hámarki fimm örkum; með öðrum orðum eru þessir klasar þess vegna „bækur inni í bókum“ (Kwakkel 2002, 13). Grundvallarmunur er á stakri örk og arkaklasa og Kwakkel þótti vöntun á hugtaki sem næði utan um slíka klasa. Því lagði hann til hugtakið *framleiðslueiningu* (e. *production unit*) sem vísar til klasa af örkum sem mynda efnislega heild við framleiðslu.

Greina má framleiðslueiningar að með því að skoða breytileika þeirra á milli, svo sem stærð, skrift og blek. Kwakkel bendir jafnframt á að hægt sé að skoða merki um skiptingu framleiðslueininga með því að skoða

hvar griporð sé að finna í handritinu en ef þau eru notuð í einingunni sést greinilega hvar hverri einingu lýkur þar sem griporð er ekki notað á síðustu blaðsíðu hverrar einingar. Aðrar vísbendingar um það sem mætti kalla skil (e. *caesurae*) tveggja framleiðslueininga geta til dæmis verið nýjar rithendur, breytingar á lit bleksins eða línubili (Kwakkel 2002, 13) en slík atriði eru þó ekki nauðsynleg forsenda þess að um skil sé að ræða. Lykilatriðið er að framleiðslueining sé búin til í *einni beit* því að fleiri en einn skrifari gat komið að gerð einnar framleiðslueiningar. Þegar um skil er að ræða er vanalega hægt að greina nokkur ólík atriði samtímis sem styðja við þá greiningu.

Framleiðslueining er áþreifanlegt fyrirbæri en hugtakið notkunareining (e. *usage unit*) er aftur á móti huglægt fyrirbæri, nýtt til að skýra á hvaða hátt framleiðslueining var notuð, ýmist stök eða með öðrum framleiðslueiningum (Kwakkel 2002, 14). Ef nokkrar framleiðslueiningar voru notaðar saman mynduðu þær því eina notkunareiningu. Hins vegar gátu notkunareiningarnar breyst í tímans rás; framleiðslueiningar sem notaðar voru í sameiningu voru þá e.t.v. skildar að og notaðar hver í sínu lagi eða þá að framleiðslueiningar voru sameinaðar. Í þessu samhengi talar Kwakkel um ólík notkunarskeið (e. *usage phases*) hverrar framleiðslueiningar: einu skeiði lýkur og nýtt hefst í hvert sinn sem breyting verður á notkun framleiðslueininganna.

Ef þessum kenningum er beitt við greiningu á AM 427 12mo liggur beinast við að skipta handritinu í framleiðslueiningar út frá stærð þar sem munur á tölflöðungahlutunum sjö er greinanlegur; þó að hann sé aðeins smávægilegur sést þó greinilega að hlutarnir hafa verið skornir hver fyrir sig. Áttblöðungarnir tveir eru hins vegar frábrugðnir hinum hlutum handrítisins í broti. Blöðin í þeirri einingu eru jafnframt talin sérstaklega, þ.e. blöð hinna eininganna eru tölusett 1–118 en áttblöðungarnir tveir eru merktir með númerunum 1 og 2. Í handritinu má finna griporð sem styðja enn fremur við þá kenningu að tölflöðungunum megi skipta í sjö framleiðslueiningar þar sem griporð er aldrei að finna á öftustu síðum hverrar einingar. Það eru því að minnsta kosti tvö atriði sem styðja við þá kenningu að um skil sé að ræða hverju sinni og að skipta megi handritinu upp í átta framleiðslueiningar: annars vegar stærð blaðanna og hins vegar notkun griporða.

Fyrsta framleiðslueining handrítisins AM 427 12mo inniheldur þýðingu á málsháttakvæðunum *Disticha Catonis* en hinar sjö innihalda að mestu

leyti sálma og trúarlegan kveðskap. Það má því hugsa sér að hver framleiðslueining um sig hafi í upphafi átt sér sérstæða sögu sem tengdist notagildi hennar. Þannig hafi fremsta einingin í handritinu, sem inniheldur þýðingu á *Disticha Catonis*, ef til vill verið ætluð til kennslu en hinar einingarnar til söngs. Framleiðslueiningar handritsins eru þá alls átta talsins, sjö þeirra úr tólflöðungum og eitt úr áttblöðungum, en notkunareiningar eru hugsanlega tvær, annars vegar fyrsta framleiðslueiningin sem inniheldur *Disticha Catonis* og hins vegar hinar sjö framleiðslueiningarnar sem innihalda sálma og kvæði.

Tafla 1. Framleiðslu- og notkunareiningar AM 427 12mo

Framleiðslueining	Notkunareining	Blöð
1	A	1r–17v
2	B	18r–77v
3	B	78r–83v
4	B	84r–85v
5	B	86r–113v
6	B	114r–115v
7	B	116r–118v
8	B	1r–2v

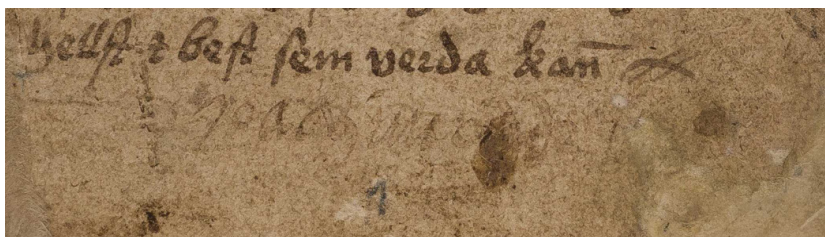
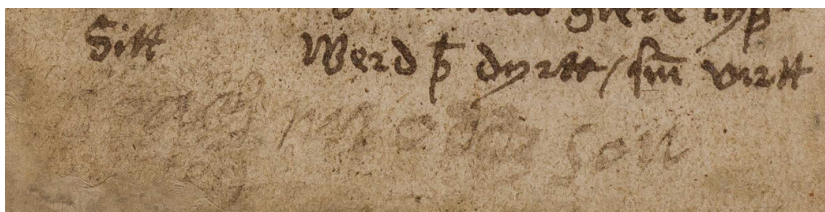
Þessi greining á handritinu er gagnleg til þess að átta sig á sögu og eðli AM 427 12mo, einkum vegna þess að hægt er að skilgreina handritið sem samtíning, þ.e. samansafn efnis sem kann að vera fengið úr ólíkum áttum og er ekki alltaf auðvelt að tengja saman. Í handritafræðum gætir víða þess viðhorfs að samtíningur sé sundurlaust og jafnvel handahófskennt safn texta, eða eins og Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir orðar það: „Þegar orðið er notað um handrit er ekki laust við að það sé neikvætt, enda má af handritaskránum ráða að ekki liggi heildstæð hugsun að baki efnisskipaninni og að tilgangurinn með skrifunum sé óljós“ (Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir 2011, 23). Athyglisvert er að þó að *Disticha Catonis* sé nokkurn veginn sér á báti í handritinu hefur frumsaminn kvæðaflokkur Jóns Bjarnasonar, *Flokkavísur eða heilræðavísur*, verið skrifaður upp í framleiðslueiningu 2 (39v–61r) innan um sálma. Því er ekki hægt að útiloka að framleiðslueiningarnar hafi verið sameinaðar af þessum sökum og að notkunareiningarnar hafi tekið

breytingum vegna efnislegra tengsla kvæðaflokkanna *Disticha Catonis* og *Flokkavísna eða heilræðavísna*; báðir flokkar heyra til málshátta auk þess sem Jón Bjarnason er þýðandi og höfundur þeirra beggja.

Kenningar Kwakkels um framleiðslu- og notkunareiningar hjálpa til við að lýsa samsettu handriti á borð við AM 427 12mo á skipulegan hátt; þær gera ekki ráð fyrir að samsetning slíks handrits sé tilviljunarkennd heldur miklu fremur flókin og marglaga. Þess vegna er lykilatriði að beina sjónum að hinu „smáa“, svo sem griporðum, blaðsíðutali, skrift og línubili sem og að skoða hve margar notkunareiningar eru í handritinu með það að leiðarljósi að teikna upp skýrari heildarmynd af sögu þess og tilurð.

3. Ferill AM 427 12mo

Þó að erfitt sé að tímasetja einstaka hluta handritsins liggur beinast við að marka upphaf sögu þess við ártalið 1638 sem ritað er fremst í fyrsta hluta neðan við titil þýðingarinnar á *Disticha Catonis* og ártalið getur því talist neðri tímamörk AM 427 12mo. Með handritinu hefur varðveist seðill sem á stendur „Landskrifarans Sigurðar Sigurdssonar“. Í *Katalog* Kristians Kálunds frá 1889 (476), sem er skrásetning á handritasafni Árnasafns í Kaupmannahöfn, segir að seðillinn hafi verið ætlaður Árna Magnússyni, þá væntanlega honum til upplýsingar. Hér er að öllum líkindum átt við Sigurð Sigurdsson (1679–1745) sem starfaði sem sýslumaður í Kjósar- og Kjalarneshreppi og gegndi embætti Alþingisskrifara á tímabilinu 1700–1727. Erfiðara er að tímasetja áttblöðungana og hvenær þeir urðu hluti af handritinu. Vel kann að vera að Sigurður hafi afhent þá samhliða tólfblöðungunum án þess að þeir hafi átt neitt sérstakt sameiginlegt fyrir utan að vera geymdir á sama stað.



Blöð 1r (efri mynd) og 4v (neðri mynd) í AM 427 12mo. Á báðum myndum má greina nafnið „Jóakim Oddsson“ neðan við meginmálið, ritað með annarri hendi og annars konar bleki. Ljósmyndari: Sigurður Stefán Jónsson.

Á blöðum 1r og 4v má greina nafnið „Jóakim Oddsson“, sem í báðum tilfellum er ritað neðst á síðuna undir meginmálum. Í Íslendingabók er aðeins einn Jóakim Oddsson skráður en sá var fæddur 1625 og er dánardagur hans óþekktur. Móður Jóakims er ekki getið í Íslendingabók en faðir hans, Oddur Helgason (f. um 1600), var langyngsta barn föður síns, Helga Torfasonar (1550–1639), sem var bóndi í Höfn í Melasveit, Borgarfirði. Í *Borgfirzkum æviskrám* er sagt um Odd að hann „átti skilgetin börn, er þó 1642 á framfæri Teits hálfbróður síns“ (Aðalsteinn Halldórsson o.fl., 1975, 385). Ekki er ólíklegt að þessir borgfirsku bræður, Teitur og Oddur, hafi búið áfram í Höfn í Melasveit og Jóakim Oddsson, sem ritaði nafn sitt í handritið, hefur því að öllum líkindum fæðst og alist upp á sama stað.

Þó að svo gott sem ekkert sé vitað um ævi og störf Jóakims og föður hans, Odds, voru þeir náskyldir séra Jóni Þorsteinssyni píslarvætti (1570–1627). Hann var veginn í Tyrkjaráninu svokallaða árið 1627, þá búsettur í Vestmannaeyjum. Jón var hálfbróðir Helga (f. um 1550), föður Odds, og voru þeir sammæðra. Faðir Jóns, Þorsteinn Sighvatsson (f. um 1530) var bóndi í Höfn í Melasveit og seinni eiginmaður Ástríðar Eiríksdóttur (f. um 1530). Torfi Brandsson (f. um 1520), faðir Helga og fyrri eiginmaður Ástríðar, var einnig bóndi í Höfn í Melasveit. Því má ætla að hálfbræðurnir

Helgi Torfason og Jón Þorsteinsson hafi báðir alist upp í Höfn í Melasveit en Helgi var um tuttugu árum eldri en Jón. Helgi bjó áfram í Höfn þegar hann komst til ára sinna og gerðist síðan bóndi þar. Því er ekki fráleitt að ímynda sér að þessir hálfbræður hafi þekkt vel og að Jón hafi alist upp í námunda við eldri bróður sinn, Helga.

Jón Þorsteinsson píslarvottur var því afabróðir Jóakims Oddssonar, þess sem ritaði nafn sitt á tveimur stöðum í AM 427 12mo. Tengingin er sérstaklega athyglisverð í ljósi þess að allmargir sálmar í handritinu eru ortir af Jóni og raunar eru flestir sálmarnir sem hafa nafngreindan höfund eignaðir honum. Því er þegar komin ástæða til þess að ætla að sálmaval þess sem setti saman handritið sé ekki með öllu handahófskennt. Jóakim ritaði reyndar nafn sitt á fyrstu síður fyrstu framleiðslueiningar handritsins, sem geymir *Disticha Catonis* í þýðingu Jóns Bjarnasonar, og enn fremur má benda á að tengslin við Jón Þorsteinsson tengir framleiðslueiningarnar efnislegum böndum; annars vegar hefur sonarsonur bróður hans ritað nafn sitt í fyrstu framleiðslueininguna, og hins vegar hafa sálmar eftir hann verið skrifaðir upp í hinar framleiðslueiningarnar.

Þó að varasamt sé að leggja mikið upp úr einstökum áletrunum og teikningum í handriti er mikilvægt að líta ekki fram hjá slíkum smáatriðum enda geta þau sannarlega haft áhrif á verðmæti og afdrif handritsins. Blað 46r er sérlega mikilvægt þegar kemur að sögu AM 427 12mo og almennum áhuga á því en það geymir teikningu sem leiddi til blaðaumfjöllunar um handritið í Danmörku og á Íslandi á 20. öld. Þann 25. janúar 1967 birtist frétt í *Morgunblaðinu* með fyrirsögninni „Fljúgandi diskur á miðöldum.“ Með henni var birt ljósmynd af bl. 46r í AM 427 12mo og fréttin boðaði stórtíðindi:

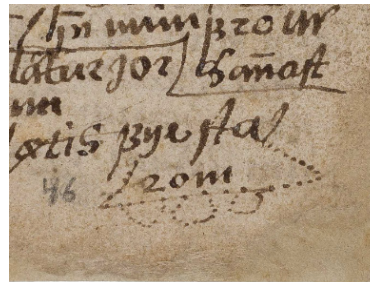
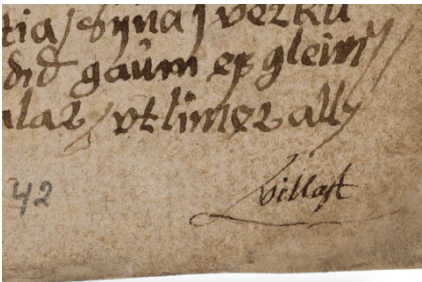
Það má til tíðinda telja í handritamálinu, að á handriti nr. 2507 AM 427, 12 mo frá 1638, hafa nokkrir fróðleiksfúsir Danir fundið fábrotna teikningu, sem þeir telja að sé af fljúgandi disk.

(Fljúgandi diskur á miðöldum 1967)

Bent er á að þar sem handritið innihaldi sálma og kvæði að meginhluta stingi þessi sérkennilega teikning í stúf við umfjöllunarefnið og geti varla átt við það. Í fréttinni er síðan útskýrt að teikningin minni á „Adamski-diskinn“ sem vísar til hins pólsk-bandaríska George Adamski (1891–1965)

en hann birti ýmislegt myndefni sem átti að sýna fljúgandi furðudiska. Ein frægasta mynd hans af fljúgandi diskum reyndist fölsuð (Moseley og Pflöck 2002, 69) en þrátt fyrir það var diskurinn áfram vinsælt umfjöllunarefni á meðal áhugamanna um fljúgandi furðuhluti; höfundur ofangreindrar fréttar *Morgunblaðsins* virðist til dæmis ekki hafa sett neinn sérstakan fyrirvara á trúverðugleika Adamski.

Áletrunin sem fréttin vísar í ætti þó alls ekki að vera ráðgáta — en ef sú er raunin skal gátan hér með leyst. Á blöðum 39v–61r hafa *Flokkavísur eða heilræðavísur* Jóns Bjarnasonar verið skrifaðar upp. Áletrunin neðst á síðu 46r er fjórða orð annars erindis annars flokks, „róm“, en fyrstu tvær línurnar hljóða svo: „Raust réttlætis fyrsta / róm þann hefur í dómi“ (*Vísnaþók Guðbrands*, 425). Orðið er hins vegar ritað undir leturfleti en ástæða þess er sú að því hefur verið ætlað að vera griporð og þess vegna er það einnig ritað í fyrstu línu á næstu síðu. Svo virðist sem þríhyrningur hafi verið dreginn utan um orðið en það er aðferð sem skrifarinn notar á flestum síðum þar sem griporð eru á annað borð notuð.



Blað 42r (til vinstri) og 46r (til hægri) í AM 427 12mo. Á 42r er griporðið „villast“ rammað inn af þríhyrningslögudu formi. Á 46r er hinn meinti furðudiskur og griporðið „róm“. Ljósmyndari: Sigurður Stefán Jónsson.

Það sem greinir teikninguna á bl. 46r frá öðrum sambærilegum teikningum í handritinu er að línurnar eru ekki samfelldar heldur gerðar úr punktum. Eins eru kúlurnar þrjár neðan við formið sjálft enn óútskýrðar. Mögulegt er að skrifarinn hafi hér látið listrænt frelsi ráða för og brugðið á það ráð að skreyta rammann um flettiórðið með litlum hringjum. Hvað nákvæmlega vakti fyrir skrifaranum skal þó ósagt látið og í þessari grein verður ekki lögð nein sérstök áhersla á að rengja kenningar danskra FFH-rannsóknarmanna frá ofanverðri 20. öld.

4. *Disticha Catonis* í íslenskum bókmenntum

Latnesku kvæðin *Disticha Catonis* voru ein vinsælustu spakmæli miðalda á Vesturlöndum og vitað er að þau voru notuð í kennslu víða um Evrópu. Talið er að kvæðin hafi verið rituð á 3. öld e.Kr. en fyrstu þekktu heimildina um tilvist þeirra má finna í bréfi frá Vindicianusi til Valentinianusar keisara við lok 4. aldar (Tuvestrand 1977, 7). Höfundur kvæðanna er óþekktur; þó að titill þeirra geti útlagst sem „Heilræði Catós“ eru þau aðeins kennd við Cato í einu af þeim fjölmörgu handritum sem varðveita textann og í seinni tíð voru þau stundum bendluð við Rómverjann M. Porcius Cato Censorius (Cato gamli eða eldri, 234–149 f.Kr.) án þess að nokkur augljós tengsl við hann væru til staðar (Tuvestrand 1977, 7). Sá mikli fjöldi handrita sem kvæðin hafa varðveist í, ásamt því hve mörg tungumál þau voru þýdd á, vitnar um ótvíræðar vinsældir og útbreiðslu þeirra og ljóst er að þau hafa þótt eiga erindi við almenning. Þó að þau hafi einkum verið notuð við latínukennslu virðist mönnum hafa þótt brýnt að þýða þau yfir á þjóðtungur til þess að boðskapurinn kæmist hvað best til skila. Kvæðin eru kölluð *disticha* vegna þess að þau eru tvílinungar, þ.e. hvert erindi er tvær línur sem ortar eru undir hexameturskætti.

Fyrsta íslenska þýðing kvæðanna sem varðveist hefur, *Hugsvinnsmál*, hefur að öllum líkindum verið samin á 13. öld og er ort undir ljóðahætti (Tuvestrand 1977, 7, sjá einnig Frans 2023). Þýðingin lifði sjálfstæðu lífi og er talin sýna ýmis einkenni sem minna á annan forníslenskan kveðskap, svo sem *Hávamál*.¹ Alls hafa fjórar ólíkar þýðingar á *Disticha Catonis* varðveist á Íslandi en eins og fram hefur komið voru kvæðin þýdd að nýju á 17. öld, fyrst af Jóni Bjarnasyni (um 1560–1633) og síðar af Bjarna Gissurarsyni (um 1621–1712) (Halldór Hermannsson 1958, xxix). Jón Bjarnason orti tvær ólíkar þýðingar á kvæðunum og voru þær prentaðar á Hólum árið 1620 í ritinu *Hólar Cato* sem inniheldur einnig latnesku frumútgáfuna. Síðari þýðing Jóns hefur varðveist í nokkrum handritum en að AM 427 12mo undanskildu eru þau að meginhluta frá 18. öld. Halldór Hermannsson (1878–1958), sem var íslenskur fræðimaður og bókavörður á Fiskesafninu í Cornell-háskóla í Bandaríkjunum, bjó *Hólar Cato* til útgáfu í ritröðinni *Islandica* og var hún gefin út af háskólabókasafni Cornell árið

1 Til eru ýmsar kenningar um tengsl málsháttakvæðanna tveggja. Klaus von See (1981, 27–44) hefur t.a.m. haldið því fram að *Hávamál* séu ort undir áhrifum frá *Hugsvinnsmálum*.

1958. Halldór birti auk þess þýðingu Bjarna Gissurarsonar sem viðauka við *Hólar Cato*.

Eins og gefur að skilja urðu til fjölmargar útgáfur og afbrigði af *Disticha Catonis* allt frá því að útbreiðsla þeirra hófst á 3. öld e.Kr. Færð hafa verið rök fyrir því að *Hugsvinnsmál* byggi á útgáfu sem kölluð er *Vulgata* en fjölmörg erindi íslensku þýðingarinnar virðast samsvara þeirri gerð (Alexander 1931, 112; sbr. Tuvestrand 1977, 8). *Vulgata* varð á endanum útbreiddasta gerð kvæðanna (Wills og Gropper 2007). Í *Hugsvinnsmálum* má finna setningar sem ekki er hægt að tengja með beinum hætti við *Disticha Catonis* og hefur Hermann Pálsson lagt til þá skýringu að þessar setningar kunni að hafa verið þýddar upp úr viðbótarskýringum sem stóðu þá væntanlega með latneska kvæðinu (Hermann Pálsson 1985, 16). Bragarhátturinn veitir vísbendingar um tímasetningu *Hugsvinnsmála*, sem hafa að öllum líkindum ekki verið ort fyrr en á 12. öld og ekki síðar en á 13. öld, og eins eru uppi kenningar um skyldleika þeirra við *Hávamál* og *Sólarljóð* sem einnig eru spekikvæði ort undir ljóðahætti (Hermann Pálsson 1985, 21). Sumir hafa jafnvel velt fyrir sér hvort einn og sami höfundurinn væri að einhverjum þessara kvæða og Björn M. Ólsen taldi afar líklegt að sami maður hefði þýtt *Hugsvinnsmál* og ort *Sólarljóð* (Björn M. Ólsen 1915, 67, sbr. umfjöllun Hermanns Pálssonar 1985, 21).

Íslenskar 17. aldar þýðingar á *Disticha Catonis* eiga að öllum líkindum rætur að rekja til útgáfu Erasmusar frá 1515 (Halldór Hermannsson 1958, xxvii). Louis Perraud hefur bent á að athyglisvert sé, og komi jafnvel á óvart, að fræðimaðurinn og húanistinn Erasmus hafi sýnt *Disticha Catonis* áhuga og talið kvæðin henta til latínukennslu; hann var annars þekktur fyrir að gagnrýna miðaldatekta sem notaðir höfðu verið í kennslu á öldum áður og taldi þá gjarnan úrelta (Perraud 1988, 84). Útgáfa hans frá 1515 var gagnrýnd fyrir verkið sem valið var, en kvæðin þóttu gamaldags og ekki í samræmi við strauma og stefnur húanismans. Erasmus mót-mælti þessu staðfastlega og hélt því fram að kvæðin hentuðu einkar vel til kennslu, annars vegar vegna þess að þau væru samin á ágættri latínu og hins vegar vegna þess að þau væru fyrirtaks síðalærdómur.

Áhugavert er að bera dálæti Erasmusar á *Disticha Catonis* saman við þýðingar- og útgáfusögu kvæðanna á 17. öld á Íslandi. Sá (eða þeir) sem kom að efnisvali handritsins AM 427 12mo og lét rita þýðingu Jóns Bjarnasonar í fremstu eininguna, annaðhvort upp eftir eftirritum

bókarinnar *Hólar Cato* eða eftir minni, hefur líklega haft svipað dálæti á kvæðunum og Erasmus sjálfur. Áhuginn hefur væntanlega beinst að innihaldi kvæðanna, fyrst og fremst, frekar en tengslum þeirra við latínu-menntun; í *Hólar Cato* er textinn prentaður á frummálinu, latínu, samhliða íslensku þýðingunni en í AM 427 12mo er eingöngu að finna íslensku þýðinguna. Því má álykta að kvæðin tali til fólks af ólíku þjóðerni á ólíkum tímum og standist tímans tönn að því leyti, allt frá 3. öld fyrir Krist fram til útgáfu Erasmusar á 16. öld og því næst íslenskum þýðingum og eftiritunum á 17. og 18. öld.

5. Þýðing Jóns Bjarnasonar

Latnesku tvílinungarnir *Disticha Catonis* eru ortir undir hexametrislum bragarhætti. Selena Connolly (2012) hefur velt upp þeim möguleika að kvæðin séu ort undir bragfræðilegum áhrifum frá *Eneasarkviðu* Virgils. Þó bendi stílbrögð textans, eða réttara sagt skortur á þeim, til þess að tvílinungarnir hafi öðru fremur verið ætlaðir ungu fólki — lítið sem ekkert sé um úrfellingar (e. *elision*) milli lína eða þá það stílbragð að setningu ljúki ekki í enda fyrstu línu tvílinungs heldur haldi áfram í þeirri næstu (e. *enjambement*) (Connolly 2012, 326). Af þessum sökum telur Connolly kvæðin hafa verið ort til kennslu og utanbókarlærdóms.

Jón Bjarnason orti tvær útgáfur af hverju erindi *Disticha Catonis* og eins og áður sagði er hvert erindi prentað í alls þremur útgáfum í *Hólar Cato*: fyrst á latínu og síðan í tveimur íslenskum útgáfum Jóns. Fyrri íslenska útgáfa hvers erindis er órímuð:

Guð er andi helgur og klár
því er hið hæsta allra ráða
hann að rækja af hreinum huga
og yfir allt fram að elska og dýrka.

(*Disticha moralia Catonis*, 8)²

Seinni útgáfan er hins vegar undir rímnaháttum, í fyrsta bindi (*liber primus*) undir stafhendum hætti (stuðlalagi) og þar eru braglinur stýfðar:

2 Stafsetning er samræmd til nútímahorfs hér og annars staðar þar sem vitnað er í frumheimildir.

Guð er andi einka hreinn
er því skylt að hver og einn
af klárum göfgi huganum hann
helst og best sem verða kann.

(*Distica moralia Catonis*, 8)

Í annarri bók (*liber secundus*) notast þýðandinn við braghendan hátt:

Vert þá ör er áttu helst og efnin hefur.
Nægir þeim er nokkuð gefur
nær sem þörf og tíminn krefur.

(*Distica moralia Catonis*, 17)

Í þeirri þriðju notast hann við ferskeyttan hátt þar sem fyrsta og þriðja lína eru órímaðar en önnur og fjórða lína ríma saman í kvenrími:

Stöðugur statt og gjör þér glatt
geðrauna á milli.
Hugur getur borið betur
ból þó gleðinni spilli.

(*Distica moralia Catonis*, 24)

Í fjórðu bók eru erindin undir ferhendum hætti og þar er samrím í hverju erindi:

Undrast mundir að orðin ber
inni finnur í vísunum hér.
Stutt því flutti ég fram fyrir þér
frægum hægra að minnast er.

(*Distica moralia Catonis*, 38)

Þýðandinn og skáldið Jón Bjarnason yfirfærir því hexametrískan hátt (sexliðahátt) frumtextans á algenga, íslenska rímnahætti síns tíma, svo sem staf- og braghendu.³ Fyrri útgáfa hvers erindis virðist nokkurs konar

3 Sjá t.d. umfjöllun um stafhendu og braghendu á óðfræðivefnum Braga (Bragi, óðfræðivefur, e.d.).

órimað uppkast að endanlegri útgáfu þess (Kristján Árnason 1999) en rímaða útgáfan hefur ef til vill þótt betur fallin til kennslu og utanbókarlærdóms á sambærilegan hátt og frumtextinn, sbr. umfjöllun Connelly. Halldór Hermannsson hefur þó bent á þann möguleika að rímaða útgáfan, sú sem birtist einnig í AM 427 12mo, hafi ekki þótt nægilega trú frumtextanum og því hafi Jón verið beðinn um að semja aðra útgáfu sem hæfði betur til kennslu kvæðanna (Halldór Hermannsson 1958, xxvii).

Jón Bjarnason var lengst af prestur í Presthólum í Öxarfirði (Jón Torfason o.fl. 2000, xxxvi). Hann var virkt skáld og þýðandi en athygli vekur hve stór hluti kveðskapar hans var ortur í heilræðastíl. Fyrir utan þýðingu hans á *Disticha Catonis* orti hann *Flokkavisur eða heilræðavisur*, sem ritaðar eru í AM 427 12mo og síðar verður vikið að, og þess utan birtust eftir hann *Sírastrímur* í *Vísnaþók* Guðbrands árið 1612. Í *Sírastrímum* snýr Jón heilræðum úr forna spekiritinu *Sírastrímur*, einni af apókrýfum bókum Gamla testamentisins, í rímur. Katelin Parsons hefur fært rök fyrir því að Jón Bjarnason hafi fyrst og fremst hugsað *Sírastrímur* til kennslu: „A single maxim can be confined to a memorable short 3-line or 4-line stanza, making it easier for a very young listener to comprehend, memorize and repeat individual teachings“ (Katelin Parsons 2020, 135). Þegar litið er yfir feril Jóns Bjarnasonar má því geta sér þess til að hann hafi haft áhuga og jafnvel dálæti á heilræðakvæðum (Jón Torfason o.fl. 2000, xxxvi) og enn fremur áhuga á að miðla þeim.

Útgáfa *Disticha Catonis* sem skrifuð er upp í AM 427 12mo, og á rætur að rekja til útgáfu Erasmusar frá 1515, er vanalega látin standa með formála sem inniheldur stuttan, óbundinn texta og 56 kjarnyrt spakmæli (lat. *breves sententiae*) (Wills og Gropper 2007). Formálinn er prentaður í *Hólar Cato* en í AM 427 12mo er hann hvergi að finna. Óbundni textinn í formálanum sem birtist í *Hólar Cato* segir frá föður sem hyggst kenna syni sínum góð ráð og lífsreglur. Formið er því nokkurs konar *ávarp* eða *bréf* (lat. *epistula*) (Wills og Gropper 2007). Þessi formáli birtist einnig í *Hugsvinnsmálum* en þar er erfiðara að greina hann frá meginmálinu þar sem hann er ortur undir ljóðahætti rétt eins og hinir hlutar verksins. Tengsl AM 427 12mo við *Hólar Cato* koma skýrt í ljós strax í upphafi handrísins; þó að formálinn sé ekki hafður með hefur skrifarinn ritað séríslenskan titil:

Cato hugsvinnsmál eða heilræði snúin í vísur ófróðum ungdómi og líka þeim eldri til nytsemdar sem hyggindin hafa kær og góðum síðum gegna vilja. Ort af séra Jóni Bjarnarsyni

ANNO 1638 (AM 427 12mo, 1r).

Titillinn sem ritaður er í handritinu á væntanlega rætur sínar að rekja til titilsins sem birtist í *Hólar Cato* árið 1620 en þó er ljóst að nokkur minni háttar tilbrigði eru á milli textanna:

CATO VEL. DISTICA MORALIA Catonis. Það er Hugsvinnsmál eða heilræði snúin í ljóðalag og vísna ófróðum ungdómi og líka þeim eldri til nytsemdar sem hyggindi hafa kær og góðum síðum gegna vilja. Af séra Jóni Bjarnarsyni. (*Distica moralia Catonis*, 3)

Markmiðið með ritun kvæðanna virðist ljóst frá fyrstu blaðsíðu: þau eru ætluð „ófróðum ungdómi“ en „líka þeim eldri“. Enn fremur er tekið fram að kvæðin búi yfir „hyggindum“ og „góðum síðum“. Sú ákvörðun að hafa þennan stutta inngang fremst í handritinu, í stað þess að byrja strax á fyrsta bindi kvæðanna sjálfra, rennir enn frekari stoðum undir þá kenningu að handritið sé ætlað til náms eða kennslu. Textinn ber þess merki að *Disticha Catonis* hafi þótt verðmæt kvæði og að þau gætu verið lesendum „til nytsemdar,“ fyrst og fremst þeim ungu og óreyndu sem skorti lífsreynslu.

Þórunn Sigurðardóttir (2017, 346) hefur bent á að vinsældir spekiljóða jukust eftir siðaskiptin og að með tilkomu prentsmiðjunnar á Hólum voru spekirit prentuð sem kennslubækur á fyrri hluta 17. aldar. *Hólar Cato* er ágætt dæmi um þessa þróun á sviði prentmenningar en áhugann má einnig greina í íslenskum handritum 17. aldar. Þórunn fjallar í þessu samhengi um persónulegt handrit, JS 204 8vo, sem gert var á Hólum árið 1676 handa Önnu Jónsdóttur (1650–1722). Í því eru sálmar og kvæði, m.a. eftir föður og systkin Önnu, auk bæna og bænaflokka (Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 2017, 347). Þórunn getur sér þess til að sumir textanna í handritinu hafi átt að styðja eigandann við uppeldi og kennslu barna sinna og sé jafnframt vitnisburður um að „konum hafi verið ætlað að sinna kennslu barna í heimahúsum (2017, 348). Athyglisvert er að þýðingu Jóns Bjarnasonar á *Disticha Catonis* er að finna í handritinu, beint í kjölfar bæna og sálma, en þar er hvert erindi skrifað tvisvar í tveimur ólíkum útgáfum Jóns á sama hátt og

þær eru prentaðar í *Hólar Cato*. Aðeins önnur af þessum tveimur útgáfum er hins vegar skrifuð í AM 427 12mo.

Almennt er talið að *Disticha Catonis* hafi ekki verið ort undir kristnum áhrifum en samkvæmt Hermann Pálssyni hafa latnesku spakmælin í seinni tíð þótt líkjast *Orðskviðum Gamla testamentisins* og *Sítraksbók* (Hermann Pálsson 1985, 12, sbr. Hazelton 1957). Í umfjöllun sinni um málshætti miðalda, með áherslu á *Disticha Catonis*, bendir Barry Taylor á eftirfarandi:

The distinctions in our texts between religious and secular and between popular and learned are frequently blurred, but always in the same direction: that is, the secular is often made religious and the popular made learned, but never vice-versa. (Taylor 1992, 31)

Að mati Taylors geta því veraldleg spakmæli og málshættir (e. *proverbs*) fengið á sig trúarlegan blæ en ekki öfugt. Sú aðferð að „kristnivæða“ veraldlegar bókmenntir er líklega best heppnuð ef kristin áhrif má sjá strax í upphafi verksins. Sú er til dæmis raunin í Eddu Snorra, þar sem hann ritar fyrirvara um trú sína á norræna goðafræði strax í upphafi verksins, og einnig í *Vulgötu*-útgáfu *Disticha Catonis* en bera má saman erindi sem birtist í *Hugsvinnsmálum* annars vegar og fyrsta erindi fyrstu bókar í þýðingu Jóns Bjarnasonar sem birtist í AM 427 12mo hins vegar:

Allra ráða tel ek þat bezt vera
at göfga æztan guð.
Með hreinu hjarta þú skalt á hann trúa
ok elska af öllum hug.

(*Hugsvinnsmál*, 80)

Guð er andi einka hreinn
er því skylt að hver og einn
af klárum göfgi huganum hann
helst og best sem verða kann.

(*Disticha moralia Catonis*, 5)

Viðhorf kvæðanna til dauðans er eftirtektarvert og stingur stundum óneitanlega í stúf við kristna heimsmynd. Lögð er áhersla á að ekki stoði að velta dauðanum fyrir sér eða að hræðast hann heldur sé betra að hugsa um lífið og allt það sem hægt er að njóta á meðan maður dregur andann. Fyrirbærið dauði er einnig notað í myndmáli og í formála þriðju bókar er því haldið fram að hraustur maður sem skorti menntun, eða er fáfróður, minni helst á dauðann sjálfan:

Af fróðleik mest sem fræðir best
 fyll þú brjóstið snauða,
 mannlíf hraust en menntalaust
 mynd er líkust dauða.

(*Distica moralia Catonis*, 23)

Í þessu erindi koma jafnframt fram viðhorf um þekkingarleit og hve mikilvægt er að mennta sig, eða „fylla brjóstið af fróðleik“. Dregin er upp mynd af mannlíkamanum sem nokkurs konar geymi sem hægt er að fylla og þó að líkaminn geti verið heilbrigður er hann líkastur dauða, eða líflaus, ef hann skortir fróðleik. Hér er líkaminn ekki fylltur andagift með hjálp trúarbragða eða guðrækni heldur með þekkingunni sjálfri. Þessi skilaboð ríma vel við strauma og stefnur á lærdómsöld, og síðar upplýsingaröld, þar sem áhugi á fræðaiðkun og þekkingarleit fór sífellt vaxandi.

Í kirkjuskípan Kristjáns III. Danakonungs frá 1537 er mælt með *Disticha Catonis* til kennslu og þar sem Ísland var hluti af danska konungsríkinu gætu þessi tilmæli hafa átt við héraendis einnig (Halldór Hermannsson 1957, xxvii). Við gerð kirkjuskípanarinnar var Kristján í beinum samskiptum við Erasmus (Chamsaz 2017) og í því ljósi verður að teljast athyglisvert að tilmæli um að nýta *Disticha Catonis* sem kennsluefni í skólum hafi ratað inn í meginmálið, eins umdeild og útgáfa Erasmusar á kvæðunum reyndist vera um tuttugu árum áður. Prentaða útgáfan *Hólar Cato* kann því að hafa komið fram á sjónarsviðið löngu eftir að uppskriftir af kvæðunum komust í almenna umferð á Íslandi og sú tilgáta veitir athyglisverða innsýn í samspil íslenskrar prent- og handritamenningar á 17. öld.

Carolyne Larrington telur að málsháttur þurfi að búa yfir vissum eiginleikum til þess að hann njóti vinsælda:

The paradox of the wisdom poem is that, while the Idea — the principle which can be extrapolated from experience — must be central, its expression must be firmly rooted in the actual. The demonstration of that Idea must be drawn from everyday life if it is to persuade us of the essential truth of the wisdom which it presents. (Larrington 1993, 222)

Samkvæmt henni tekst *Hávamálum* að flétta viskuna sem þau boða saman við aðstæður hversdagslegs lífs og af þeim sökum hafi þau almenna skírskotun. Að hennar mati vantar hins vegar samhengi í *Hugsvinnsmál* 13. aldar — samhengi sem er nauðsynlegt vilji höfundur ná til almennings (Larrington 1993, 222).

Larrington hefur einnig bent á að málshættir þurfi að búa yfir einhvers konar frásögn þrátt fyrir að þeir flokkist ekki sem frásagnarverk í hefðbundnum skilningi (Larrington 2019, 55). Sú kenning er í anda strúktúralisma og frásagnarfræða og byggir á þeirri hugmynd að frásagnir séu mönnum edlislægar og að lesendur sækist alltaf ómeðvitað eftir einhvers konar frásögn úr textum. Þetta kann að vera annað atriði sem þýðingu Jóns Bjarnasonar skortir en er til dæmis að finna í *Hávamálum* þar sem frásögnum af Óðni er skeytt saman við spakmælin og dregnar eru upp svipmyndir af hegðun manns í gestaboði. Íslenskar þýðingar *Disticha Catonis* á 17. öld virðast hafa haft það meginmarkmið að *fræða* og *kenna* fremur en nokkuð annað og eru því ef til vill úreltar — og ekki lesnar í nútímanum — einmitt af þeim sökum.

6. Flokkavísur eða heilræðavísur

Eins og fram hefur komið á Jón Bjarnason ekki einungis þýðingu í handritinu AM 427 12mo heldur hafa *Flokkavísur eða heilræðavísur* hans einnig verið skrifaðar upp í framleiðslueiningu 2, mitt á milli annarra sálma. Vísurnar eru alls 122 erindi í fjórum flokkum og því hefur ekki verið neitt smáræðisverk að skrifa þær upp; til að mynda má benda á að þýðing Jóns á *Disticha Catonis* spannar alls 17 blöð í handritinu (1r–17v) en *Flokkavísur* hans alls 22 blöð (39v–61r). Þessir tveir kvæðaflokkar eiga ýmislegt sameiginlegt þegar kemur að þeim og umfjöllunarefni en *Flokkavísur eða*

heilræðavísur birtust fyrst í *Vísnaþók* Guðbrands Þorlákssonar árið 1612 (sjá t.d. útgáfu Jóns Torfasonar o.fl. 2000).

Eins og titillinn gefur til kynna eru vísurnar safn ýmissa heilræða sem skáldið setur skipulega fram í fjórum flokkum og snýst hver flokkur um einn mannkost eða dyggð: vísu (*prudentia*), réttvísi (*iustitia*), hughreysti (*fortitudo*) og hófsemi (*temperantia*). Hér spreytir skáldið sig á dróttkvæðum hætti þar sem eru átta braglínur, skothendingar (hálfím) í frumlínunum og aðalhendingar (alrím) í síðlínunum:

Fjórar frægar stýra
frómleik, veg og sóma
allra manna í milli,
marghæfar til gæfu.
Fríðum fylgir systurum
fjöldi af dyggðum völdum.
Þær prýða dýrum dáðum
dreng þann eftir gengur.

(*Flokkavísur eða heilræðavísur í Vísnaþók Guðbrands*, 422)

Þó að *Disticha Catonis*, *Hugsvinnsmál*, *Flokkavísur eða heilræðavísur* og *Hávamál* fjalli um margar og fjölbreyttar hliðar mannglegrar tilveru þá snúast að minnsta kosti nokkur erindi í hverjum kvæðaflokki um hvernig best sé að haga orðum sínum, sem og hvenær skynsamlegt sé að tala og hvenær ekki. Til að sýna fram á þetta er hér birt eitt erindi úr hverjum vísnaþók þar sem umfjöllunarefnið er illindi sem geta skapast af orðaskiptum:

73.
Tveir eru eins herjar:
Tunga er höfuðs bani.
Er mér í héðin hvern
handar væni.

(*Hávamál*, 123)

139.

Heiptar orða
gersktu eigi hefnisamr,
heldr skaltu væginn vera.
Af þeiri gæzku
máttu þér gera er halda má;
vísa fjáendr at vinum.

(*Hugsvinnsmál*, 147)

11.

Við kompan þinn þú þrasa ei
með þykkju sárri,
reisist opt af ræðu smárri
rimman stór með deilu hárrí.

(*Distica moralia Catonis*, 18)

7.

Hörð undirtekt orða
uppvekur heift freka,
gjalda glæðist eldur
geyst af slíkum neista.
Mjúk svör og máls speki
mæðir og stillir bræði,
vinnur mest með munni
maðurinn gagn og skaða.

(*Flokkavísur eða heilræðavísur í Vísnaþók Guðbrands*, 434)

Hávamálum lýkur á svokölluðum „ljóðalokum“ þar sem lesandinn er ávarpaður: „Heill sá er kvað! / Heill sá er kann! / Njóti sá er nam! / Heilir þeir er hlýddu!“ (*Hávamál*, 145). Hér er gagnsemi kvæðanna ítrekuð og tilgangur þeirra tekinn fram: þeim er ætlað að vera „numin“ eða lærð og það er einmitt þannig sem þeirra er best notið. *Flokkavísur* Jóns Bjarnasonar fylgja svipaðri byggingu en þær enda á tveimur erindum þar sem ljóðmælandi tekur saman verk sitt og útskýrir að kvæðin séu aðferð til kennslu og að ráðin sem gefin eru í kvæðunum séu beinlínis kennd: „Ráð hef eg kennd í kvæði, / kort með orðum snortið. / Meina eg mörgum sýnist / mæt þeim vel að gæta“ (*Vísnaþók Guðbrands*, 437).

7. Niðurstöður

Hér hafa málsáttakvæði Jóns Bjarnasonar í AM 427 12mo verið skoðuð og borin saman við *Hugsvinnsmál* 13. aldar sem og *Hávamál*. Þýðing Jóns á *Disticha Catonis* birtist fyrst á prenti í *Hólar Cato* árið 1620 en þá var hún prentuð samhliða latneska frumtextanum og margt bendir til þess að um kennslubók hafi verið að ræða. Tengsl þýðingarinnar við texta sem talið er að hafi verið ætlaðir til kennslu, svo sem latneska frumtextann *Disticha Catonis* og *Síraksrímur* Jóns Bjarnasonar, eru vísbendingar um að handritið AM 427 12mo hafi gegnt menntunarhlutverki. Enn fremur eru kenningar Kwakkels um framleiðslu- og notkunareiningar gagnlegar til að rannsaka hvernig ólíkir hlutar handritsins voru notaðir og þannig er hægt að fá skýrari mynd af notagildi handritsins í heild sinni. Málsáttasöfnin *Disticha Catonis* og *Flokkavísur eða heilræðavísur* eru í tveimur ólíkum framleiðslueiningum sem síðar virðast hafa verið notaðar saman og myndað eina notkunareiningu.

Á ritunartíma AM 427 12mo var pappír orðinn aðgengilegrí öllum stigum samfélagsins og þegar komið var fram á miðja 17. öld var nær eingöngu notast við pappír við handritagerð (sjá Arna Björk Stefánsdóttir 2013). Ljóst er að gerð handrita var annars eðlis en prentrita á 17. öld og til að mynda voru handrit þess tíma gjarnan samansafn efnis sem valið var út frá persónulegum smekk og sett saman fyrir tilefni á borð við gjafir eða til annars konar persónulegra nota (sjá t.d. Parsons 2020, 189). Handritið JS 204 8vo, sem ritað var á Hólum handa Önnu Jónsdóttur, er gott dæmi um slíka gjöf en innan um bænir og sálma má þar finna þýðingu Jóns Bjarnasonar á *Disticha Catonis*. Ef til vill gegndi þýðingin menntunarhlutverki í bæði JS 204 8vo og AM 427 12mo en sú menntun hefur verið óformlegri og persónulegrí í samanburði við prentritið *Hólar Cato*. Þannig endurspeglast ólík notagildi prent- og handrita sem geyma sömu texta.

Í AM 427 12mo eru kvæðin eingöngu á íslensku og þó að þau hafi gjarnan verið notuð við latínukennslu í Evrópu á miðöldum virðist merking þeirra og boðskapur hafa skipt mestu máli við gerð handritsins enda er latnesku útgáfuna hvergi að finna. Í handritinu eru ýmis tilbrigði frá texta bókarinnar *Hólar Cato* og það kann að benda til þess að útgáfan í AM 427 12mo sé ekki beintengd prentuðu útgáfunni; mögulegt er að hún sé afurð handritamenningar og texta sem kunna að hafa verið í umferð áður en *Hólar Cato* var prentuð. Tilbrigðin frá texta *Hólar Cato* gætu því verið vísbending um að kvæðin hafi notið vinsælda og dreifst víða.

Íslenskir þýðendur *Disticha Catonis* á 13. og 17. öld leituðust við að koma hugsuninni sjálfri til skila á því formi sem þeir töldu líklegt að næði til almennings, miklu fremur en að beinþýða latneska frumtextann orð fyrir orð. Í báðum tilfellum setja þeir textann í bundið mál, 13. aldar þýðandinn undir ljóðahætti en 17. aldar þýðendurnir, Jón Bjarnason og Bjarni Gissurarson, undir algengum rímnaháttum síns tíma.⁴ Jón Bjarnason var eitt af höfuðskáldum *Vísnaþókar* Guðbrands og þekkt er að Guðbrandur Þorláksson lagði áherslu á að fræðsluefni skyldi lagt fram í vísnaformi.⁵ Annað höfuðskáld bókarinnar, Einar Sigurðsson í Eyðölum, yrkir svo í formála til lesandans: „Kvæðin hafa þann kost með sér / þau kennast betur og lærast gjör“ (*Vísnaþók Guðbrands* 2000, xiv). Enn fremur yrkir Einar eftirfarandi línur í mansöng fyrstu rímu af *Bókinni Júdíti*: „Skáldin hafa það skrifað í letur / skal því allvel trúa, / að lesnar sögurnar lærist betur / ef í ljóð þeim mætti snúa“ (*Vísnaþók Guðbrands* 2000, xv, sbr. umfjöllun í inngangi Jóns Torfasonar o.fl. 2000, xiv–xv). Formgerðin ljær hugsuninni ramma sem getur auðveldað lesendum að ná merkingunni, auk þess sem auðveldara er að muna texta með ákveðnum formeinkennum á borð við rím og stuðla.

Í þessu samhengi má aftur benda á *Síraksrímur* Jóns Bjarnasonar sem hann orti upp úr *Síraksþók* (Parsons 2020, 135). Rímur voru vinsælar á þessum tíma, ekki síst í flutningi, og ef til vill hefur Jón valið sér rímniformið í von um að ná til fleiri lesenda, áheyrenda og jafnvel nemenda. Hvort sem ætlunarverk hans tókst eður ei veita verk hans og uppskriftir þeirra í handritum dýrmætar upplýsingar um stöðu málsháttakvæða í íslensku samfélagi fyrri alda.

- 4 Kristján Árnason (1999) hefur fjallað um ferskeytluformið sem Bjarni yrkir þýðingu sína á og telur þýðingu hans „beittari og skýrari“ en þýðingu Jóns, einkum vegna bragarháttarins sem Bjarni notar.
- 5 Í formála að *Sálmabók* sinni frá 1589 segir Guðbrandur t.a.m. að vísur og kvæði „fái menn fljótara lært og numið“ en óbundið mál (Jón Torfason o.fl. 2000, xiv).

HEIMILDIR

HANDRIT

Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, Reykjavík
AM 427 12mo

Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, Reykjavík
JS 204 8vo

FRUMHEIMILDIR

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ÁGRIP

„Ráð hef ég kennd í kvæði“: Málsháttakvæði Jóns Bjarnasonar í AM 427 12mo

Efnisorð: spekikvæði, málshættir, *Disticha Catonis*, Jón Bjarnason, AM 427 12mo

Þessi grein fjallar um 17. aldar pappírshandritið AM 427 12mo og málsháttakvæði sem í því hafa varðveist. Ferill handritsins er rakinn og því skipt í framleiðslu- og notkunareiningar út frá kenningum Kwakkels með það að markmiði að skoða viðtökur málsháttakvæða og stöðu þeirra í íslensku samfélagi síðari alda. Rýnt er í þýðingu Jóns Bjarnasonar (um 1560–1633) á málsháttakvæðunum *Disticha Catonis*, sem birtist í handritinu, og hún borin saman við þrjá aðra málsháttaflokkka: *Hugsvinnsmál*, 13. aldar þýðingu á *Disticha Catonis*, *Flokkavísur eða heilræðavísur* Jóns Bjarnasonar, sem einnig eru skrifuð upp í AM 427 12mo, og *Hávamál*. Fjallað er um tengsl handritsins við prentuðu kennslubókina *Hólar Cato* frá 1620 og notagildi málsháttasafna í hand- og prentritum 17. aldar. Þannig er leitast við að veita innsýn í þróun á viðtökum málsháttakvæða í íslensku samfélagi og tengslum þeirra við handritamenningu síðari alda.

SUMMARY

“Ráð hef ég kennd í kvæði”: Jón Bjarnason's Gnostic Poetry in AM 427 12mo

Keywords: gnostic poetry, proverbs, *Disticha Catonis*, Jón Bjarnason, AM 427 12mo

This article discusses the seventeenth-century paper manuscript AM 427 12mo and the gnostic poetry it contains. The provenance of the manuscript is examined, and the manuscript's structure is analysed using Kwakkel's concept of production and usage units, with the objective of examining the reception of gnostic poetry and its status in post-Reformation Icelandic society. Jón Bjarnason's (1560–1633) translation of the gnostic poetry collection *Disticha Catonis*, which is preserved in

the manuscript, is compared to three other proverbial collections: *Hugsvinnsmál*, a thirteenth-century translation of *Disticha Catonis*; Jón Bjarnason's *Flokkavísur eða heilræðavísur*, which is also copied in AM 427 12mo; and *Hávamál*. The relationship between the manuscript and the printed textbook *Hólar Cato* from 1620 is addressed, as well as the use of proverbial collections in Icelandic seventeenth-century manuscripts and printed books. Thus, the aim is to provide insight into the development of the reception of gnomic poetry in Icelandic society and its relationship with the manuscript culture of later centuries.

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SUBVERSIVE INSCRIPTIONS

The Narrative Power of the Paratext in Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar

THE ICELANDIC PROSE tradition is characterized by prolonged continuity when it comes to its medial transmission in the long-lasting manuscript tradition of Iceland, its self-designations as sagas, and in terms of narrative traditions. From the middle of the thirteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth century, a wide range of prose texts were designated as sagas and also identified themselves as saga. Some of these prose texts exhibit a long-lived transmission from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century, with ever new copies (within the framework of an open textual culture that allowed for *mouvance* and ever new recompilations of texts in each manuscript), while others appear at a certain point during this period. These new texts take up and continue the existing narrative traditions, but at the same time, these new sagas frequently introduce new narrative trends and amalgamate them with the saga traditions. These amalgamations have already been discussed, most notably regarding the importation of the Continental romance tradition in the thirteenth century and the German chapbook tradition in the early modern period.

Another period that sees significant changes to saga traditions is the end of the eighteenth century, during the Age of Enlightenment. Scholarship has pointed out that some of the saga-productions of this period move beyond the parameters of saga traditions and ought to be qualified as proto-novels, but comprehensive studies of the literary production of this period are still needed.¹ Studies of individual texts of this time so

1 The following considerations arise from the research project *Novelizations: Scandinavian Prose Literature in the Late Premodern Period* at the University of Zürich (<https://www.ds.uzh.ch/de/projekte/romanhaftwerden.html>), which was preoccupied with developments of prose traditions in the Nordic countries in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The project was funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (2020–23). I would like to thank Klaus Müller-Wille, Madita Knöpfle, Patrizia Huber, and Timon von Mentlen for

far have mainly concentrated on the adaptation of motifs and narrative settings from contemporaneous early novels from the Continent and thus referred to elements of the *histoire* to characterize these texts as narratives that go beyond saga traditions.

Two sagas under discussion in this context are *Ólandssaga* and *Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar*, which are both attributed to Eiríkur Laxdal (1743–1816). His sagas have previously been characterized as texts that depart from the saga tradition, as “þjóðsagnaefni [...] fellt inn í skáldsögulega framvindu” (‘matter of the folktale embedded in a novel-like course’; Matthías V. Sæmundsson 1996a, 187),² as proto-novels which “while retaining the outward form of the *lygisaga*, seem in retrospect to strive to be more” (Driscoll 1997, 239), and Margrét Eggertsdóttir (2006, 249) stated that it is “clear that *Ólafssaga* deserves recognition as the first Icelandic novel.” However, to date, there are no extensive studies of the two sagas discussing the narrative constituents of these two texts and taking up the question of what it actually is that makes them novels rather than sagas. The few existing studies focus their discussion of the innovative status of the two narratives on their use of literary motifs from both within and outside saga traditions. It has been repeatedly noted that Laxdal’s sagas display intertextual relations to *1001 Nights* and Ludvig Holberg’s *Iter subterraneanum*, and that they borrow both from the *lygisaga* and the Icelandic folktale tradition.³

many fruitful discussions that have left their traces in this article. I also owe thanks to the anonymous reviewers for their meticulous and constructive criticism of earlier versions of this article. All remaining errors and shortcomings are mine.

2 All translations in this article are mine [LR].

3 The only monograph dedicated to Eiríkur Laxdal’s work is by María Anna Þorsteinsdóttir (1996), a thorough discussion of folktale motifs in *Ólafs saga Þórhallasonar*. Short discussions of the two sagas are presented in Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1940, 102–10; Matthías V. Sæmundsson 1996a, 179–88, and in the introductions to the editions of his two sagas by Þorsteinn Antonsson and María Anna Þorsteinsdóttir (see Eiríkur Laxdal 1987 and 2006). It was also the use of folktale motifs which made the texts interesting for the nineteenth-century Icelandic folktale collector Jón Árnason who, however, noted – after having read the manuscript of *Ólandssaga* – that the saga was useless as a source for Icelandic folktales, “því fyrst hefir Eiríkur Laxdal heitinn, sem talinn er höfundur hennar af öllum, logið ótallega inn í munnmælasögurnar í henni, spunnið út úr þeim og ranghermt” (‘because firstly Eiríkur Laxdal, who is said to be the author, has lied countless times in the oral stories contained in the [saga], padded them out and tampered with them’; Letter to Jón Borgfirðingur 10 November 1859, in *Úr fórum Jóns Árnasonar* 1950, 162).

Taking a different approach, this article will focus on the material textuality of Laxdal's sagas and argue that the two sagas inscribe themselves not only thematically but also paratextually into the saga as well as more recent literary traditions and at the same time subvert these traditions. The following analysis will reason that the paratexts form a centerpiece of the literary character of these sagas and allow for insights into the complex diachronic transtextuality of these narratives. It will become obvious that the paratexts are not merely a passive framework but an integral part of the narratives, and that the boundaries between paratext and text are blurred.

Paratexts and Transtextuality

According to Gérard Genette, paratexts are "productions that surround the text and extend it" (Genette 1997, 1). Genette further expands that these productions make the text "present, to ensure the text's presence in the world" (Genette 1997, 1). Regarding the status of these productions as part of the text, Genette remains vague to begin with: "we do not always know whether these productions are to be regarded as belonging to the text" (Genette 1997, 1). But in his following considerations, it becomes obvious that the paratext is not part of the text but rather situated between a text and the world, or the 'off-text':

It is an "undefined zone" between the inside and the outside, a zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (turned toward the text) or the outward side (turned toward the world's discourse about the text) [...] Indeed, this fringe, always the conveyor of a commentary that is authorial or more or less legitimated by the author, constitutes a zone between a text and an off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of transaction: a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that – whether well or poorly understood and achieved – is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it (more pertinent, of course, in the eyes of the author and his allies. (Genette 1997, 2)

The French title *Seuils* (1987), as well as the subtitle “Thresholds of Interpretation” of the English translation (1997) of Genette’s main monograph on paratexts, employs a thoroughly spatial metaphor to describe the function of paratexts in general. The paratext in Genette’s understanding is an auxiliary text that steers the perception of the main text, “a ‘vestibule’ that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back” (Genette 1997, 2).

Genette’s thoughts on the paratext are part of a comprehensive approach to different types of transtextuality, as most pronouncedly articulated in his monographs *Introduction à l’architexte* (1979, translated to English in 1992) and *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré* (1982), several years before the original publication of *Seuils*, his monograph solely dedicated to the paratext. In *Palimpsestes*, in a reformulation of previous work on intertextuality, Genette distinguishes five interrelated types of what he decides to denote as transtextuality, that is “everything that brings [a text] in relation (manifest or hidden) with other texts” (Genette 1992, 81). Apart from clearly demarcated intertextual relationships and metatextual comments on a text, Genette identifies the hypertext as a transformation of an existing hypotext such as pastiches or parodies in which the hypotext shines through, and finally architextuality as the relationship of a text to genre and narrative conventions. The different aspects of textuality are closely intertwined: architextuality is based on hypertextuality; hypertextual and architextual qualities of a text often rely on and manifest themselves in the paratext; and the potentiality of paratexts as such draws in turn on generic, architextual conventions, as will become obvious in the following analysis (see Genette 1982, 14–15).

Laxdal’s Sagas in the Icelandic Intellectual Context of the Late Eighteenth Century

Eiríkur Laxdal was born in 1743 as son of Eiríkur Jónsson, the pastor of Hvammur in Laxárdalur.⁴ He attended the cathedral school at Hólar, where he learned Latin and Danish. The rector at the school of Hólar during Eiríkur’s education was Hálfðan Einarsson (1732–1785), later the

4 For a general introduction to Eiríkur Laxdal’s life and *œuvre* with a focus on his prose works, see Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1940, 102–10; Þorsteinn Antonsson and María Anna Þorsteinsdóttir 1987, 375–425; Matthías V. Sæmundsson 1996a, 178–88.

author of *Sciagraphia Historiae Literariae Islandicae autorum et scriptorum tum ineditorum indicem exhibens* (1777), one of the first Icelandic literary histories. Eiríkur went to Copenhagen to study at the university in 1769. It seems that he never completed a degree, and it is uncertain what he actually studied. During his time in Copenhagen, he became a member of *Secta*, a society of young Icelandic intellectuals, but was soon expelled due to inappropriate behavior. The members of *Secta* were preoccupied with the conservation of Icelandic language and literature, and the society was formed by the Icelandic intellectual elite of the time and was also a gateway for the introduction of Enlightenment in Iceland.⁵ Two leading and competing figures in the society were Eggert Ólafsson (1726–1767) and Hannes Finnsson (1739–1796); the latter resided in Copenhagen in the same period as Eiríkur Laxdal, until he was ordained bishop of Skálholt in 1777.

After his return to Iceland in the 1770s, Eiríkur began producing and reproducing texts of different kinds. He is known as author of several *rímur* and poems (*kvæði*), including praise poems on prominent members of the Icelandic elite (see Þorsteinn Antonsson and María Anna Þorsteinsdóttir (1987, 392 and 394–6)). Several of his poems have been handed down in a number of manuscripts containing collections of poems dating from the nineteenth century. There are some autographs in his hand of both his *rímur* and *kvæði* (JS 52 4to, JS 585 4to, Lbs 540 8vo), as well as *rímur* and poems attributed to other men, among them Eggert Ólafsson, written in his hand (Lbs 246 IV 8vo, Lbs 247 8vo). Thus, Eiríkur was actively participating in the intellectual and textual culture of his time and both produced and reproduced texts.

He also wrote two prose narratives, *Ólandssaga* and *Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar*. Laxdal's two sagas are handed down in only a few manuscripts, *Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar* in an autograph (Lbs 152 fol.) and a nineteenth century copy (Lbs 151 fol.), and *Ólandssaga* in a copy from around 1820 (Lbs 554 4to). *Ólandssaga* is traditionally dated to 1777, while *Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar*, based on the paper used for his autograph, is dated to after 1788.⁶ The dating of the latter will be revisited and scrutinized below.

5 The first known statute of the society dates from 1760; see Sigríður Kristín Þorgrímsdóttir 1987, 30; Matthías V. Sæmundsson 1996b, 74–9.

6 A stamp on f. 2r and 3r is dated to 1788, see Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1940, 107.

As only *Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar* is transmitted in an autograph, the following analysis will focus on this saga but also briefly touch upon *Ólandssaga* in the contextualizing considerations.

Svo byrjar saga þessi – Textual-Material Saga Framings

Ólafs saga Þórhallasonar is temporally vaguely placed in late-premodern Iceland. The main character of the saga is Ólafur Þórhallason, a sentimentalist and dreamer, and the saga tells his life story in traditional saga style with a heterodiegetic narrator, although with a clear internal focalization that allows for extensive insights into Ólafur's inner thoughts and feelings.⁷ Ólafur is a hopeless case of a son to start with, one of the many *kolbítar* – which can be translated roughly as an idle youth – we know of from Icelandic literature. Jolted by the life-story of his father, he pulls himself together and goes out looking for a number of his father's lost sheep. He ends up in a subterranean cave of enormous dimensions in which he meets a woman called Þórhildur, who introduces herself as underground dweller (*jarðbúi*). Ólafur's first encounter with a subterranean woman leads to many others, and in the course of these encounters he gets deeply entangled, through a number of more or less libidinous relationships, with several subterranean women. Ólafur travels between the world of subterranean and terranean men for the coming years, participates in both worlds, and is instructed in (terranean) theological knowledge, as well as in (subterranean) natural sciences.⁸ In the world of the terraneans, he becomes assistant to the greedy, corrupt, and ignorant bishop Guðandus and has to follow him on his travels through Iceland. The main villain of the major part of the saga is, however, a subterranean woman called Álfgerður, whose malice is presented to Ólafur and the reader at an early stage – a preconception that is, however, deconstructed towards the end of the saga. As pointed out by previous scholarship, the descriptions of the elves and their subterranean world recur in folktale traditions that talk about the elv-

7 The notions of focalization, different types of narrative voices, and diegetic levels used in this article are based on Gérard Genette's narratological vocabulary as developed in his two major narratological monographs *Discours du récit* (1972, English translation *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method* (1980)) and *Nouveau Discours du récit* (1983, English translation *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (1988)).

8 For an in-depth study of the reconciliation of these two worlds in the saga, see María Anna Þorsteinsdóttir (1996).

ish society as a noble and progressive counterpart to human society, while at the same time also heavily drawing on Ludvig Holberg's *Iter subterraneanum* or *Klims Reise under Jordan* (published in 1741 and 1743, respectively).⁹

The autograph of *Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar* in Lbs 152 fol. is preserved in a poor state. The paper is worn, the corners and margins as well as the first and last pages are eroded so that a comprehensive material–textual analysis will inevitably experience some limitations due to the ravages of time. The materiality of both the autograph and the copy allows nonetheless several relevant findings that reveal multiple inscriptions into different literary traditions. In the copy of the saga in Lbs 151 fol., the narrative begins with the following opening, written in clear and bold letters in Fraktur, whereas the following text is written in a more cursive script (see Figure 1): “Sva byrjar saga þessi að maður er nefndur Þórhalli er bjó á bæ þeim” (‘Thus begins this saga that a man is called Þórhalli who lived on that farm’; Lbs 151 fol., f. 1r) These first words are followed by a detailed description of the location of the farm in the remainder of the sentence.

This introductory sentence employs the typical opening formula of a saga, followed by an exposition of the characters by means of mentioning their dwelling place. Similar openings can be found in many sagas of different types.¹⁰ Eiríkur's other prose work *Ólandssaga* begins in the very same manner and with the same wording, and furthermore expands the introduction to the ubiquitous reference to the genealogical lines of the character introduced.¹¹ Even without the preceding paratextual declaration and self-designation as saga, this opening clause architextually places the following narrative firmly into the saga tradition.¹²

9 Ludvig Holberg's *Nicolai Klimii iter subterraneanum* or *Niels Klims Reise under Jordan* was translated into Icelandic in 1745 by Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík, four years after the Latin edition and the German translation and two years after the Danish edition of the work. The translation is handed down in an autograph from 1750 in Lbs 728 4to; see Jón Helgason 1948, x–xvi; Margrét Eggertsdóttir 2006, 222; Huber, Knöpfle, and von Mentlen 2022.

10 The opening formula “Svá byrjar þessi saga” is in the medieval tradition to be found in, for example, *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* (e.g., AM 152 I fol., f. 98r) and *Parcevals saga* (e.g., Holm perg 6 4to, f. 39r).

11 “Svö birar sögu þessa að maður er nefndur Raudur, hann var Hergryms son, Hunbogasonar, Arnar sonar, Álfs sonar, Ginnungs, er bjó á Hálogalandi á bæ þeim er á Torgum heitir” (‘Thus begins this saga that a man is called Raudur, he was the son of Hergrimur, the son of Húnbogi, the son of Örn, the son of Álfur, the juggler who lived in Hálogaland on the farm called Torg’; Lbs 554 4to, f. 2r).

12 On generic self-designations in the Old Norse-Icelandic tradition, see Rösli 2020.

Fu. Lat. Boen. 25/6 1889.

Saga Olafs Þórhallasonar.

Skögn. Skögn. Skögn.

Skap. 1

Svabjörnarsaga þessi
 Ad maður er nafndur Þórhalle, er búi á bæ þeim
 a Skaga, er liggur út frá Ölfvelli, sem er almennt Síða-
 stal kallað, og hefur bær þessi áð Svabjörnum. Ekki var
 þórhalle ríkur maður, en búþegn góður, vel stíllur, heyrindaga
 eitt og góðlátur við hvorn mann. Fundlami sínu var hún
 hinn áttusamiur talmi og fori í broddum, en engar stúgur
 dengu þó at, að hann hefði gjest nokkrum manni þeim með
 gómskju, er nokkrir þó áttu kaulluð. Lithu marger til
 hanna, sem í vandredum voru, og fóngu þess fleinsti bálur á
 nauðum sínum, var hann þó elskdour af þjóð, og góður
 þeim manni. Þórhalle var maður við aldur, er saga þessi gjörð
 um hann kvæntur, og hét þetta hanna Þórhallur, ekki er gæla
 um lífi hanna þess ulan þá, að hún var til þórhalla að þá
 spekt, og veru þess áttu þeirra gætar. Ved henni, hafa hún veru
 allum, er Stjafur hét, hann var lítill eprilegur i umgæmni
 sinni, lagesi hann i eldaskóla, og eignaði mikla ummunnshu,
 var hann þó elskdour, haldur, og helldi hann allur vera þess
 eitt, en haldur þó þess um, vana vendlu við þessu hanna,
 euda þó þórhalle henni nokkra þar um vana gættum og mæg
 þess að vísu. Þess var Steinnur Þórhalla, að vera til eprer
 þessur, er lengur á Staagvædi, og hét til Drakgei. Epi þessur
 er vna haldur, að dori þessu millum Dalkes og Þrósmegul,
 vinnast þessu þessu hanna mest af veggi þess, er þessu þess
 er haldur, að þessu út um þessu vinnu i þessu þess, er epi
 þessu umgerðar. Þessu þess er að stald, sem Kraka, og er hún
 hanna þessu þessur. Allu þessu er kallað Langvina, og er hún
 staldur að stald, þessu þessu, og er hún þessu þessu
 nesi vestrú að til og vestrú þessu, en hún þó staldur hanna til
 á þessu þessu, og andur vestrú þessu, þess annað þessu er epi
 til og misminnar þessu, að þessu er vestrú þessu, þessu þessu
 staldur en daldur, og hún staldur, þessu þessu er að þessu, en þessu
 að staldur, og þessu þessu. Allu þessu þessu er að staldur
 þessu

Figure 1: Title and beginning of Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar. Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, Lbs 151 fol., f. 1r.

Vil ég því segja þér þáttinn –
Enhancements of the Amplified Saga

This inscription is consolidated by further paratextual designations of several chapters within the saga as *þættir* (see Figure 2). The vast majority of the 243 chapters in the saga are introduced by chapter headings stating only the number of the chapter, as visible on f. 19v. Ten chapters do, however, have a second heading that identifies what follows as a *þáttur* (see Table 1). These chapters are introduced with initials in Fraktur that are considerably larger and more decorated than the other chapter initials, and most of the time the headings are also written in a larger Fraktur script.

Table 1: Þættir in Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar

Folio in Lbs 152 fol.	Part/Chapter	Heading ¹³	Narrator
Lbs 151 fol. f. 2r ¹⁴	I, 3	Þórhalla þáttur	Þórhalli
9r	I, 14	Þorhilldar þáttur	Þórhilldur
18v	I, 28	Alvgerþar þátt	Álfhildur
23v	I, 37	Ingivarar þátt sem Filgir	Ingivör
40r	II, 6	Alvbiargar þátt	Álfbjörg
50v	II, 26	þáttinn af Kiartane og Guþrune Bónða dottur	Góðhjálp
62r	II, 49	þáttinn af Olafe Hrolfssyne og Dvalinn syne hans	Sólrún
67v	II, 59	Hromundar þætte	Hrómundur
100r	IV, 5	Kolku þætte	Kólka
114v	IV, 37	Alfgerdar þátt þann sidare	Álfgerður

The designations of chapters as *þættir* link to textual and material conventions in the medieval narrative tradition. Some of the major compilations of *konungasögur* in particular, notably *Morkinskinna* (GKS 1009 fol., c. 1270) and *Flateyjarbók* (GKS 1005 fol., 1387–1394) are characterized by the interlaced insertion of a multitude of short narrative units, by what Ármann Jakobsson, with reference to Carol Clover, has called digressive

¹³ The headings are presented as they appear in the manuscript.

¹⁴ Lbs 152 fol. is defective at the beginning.

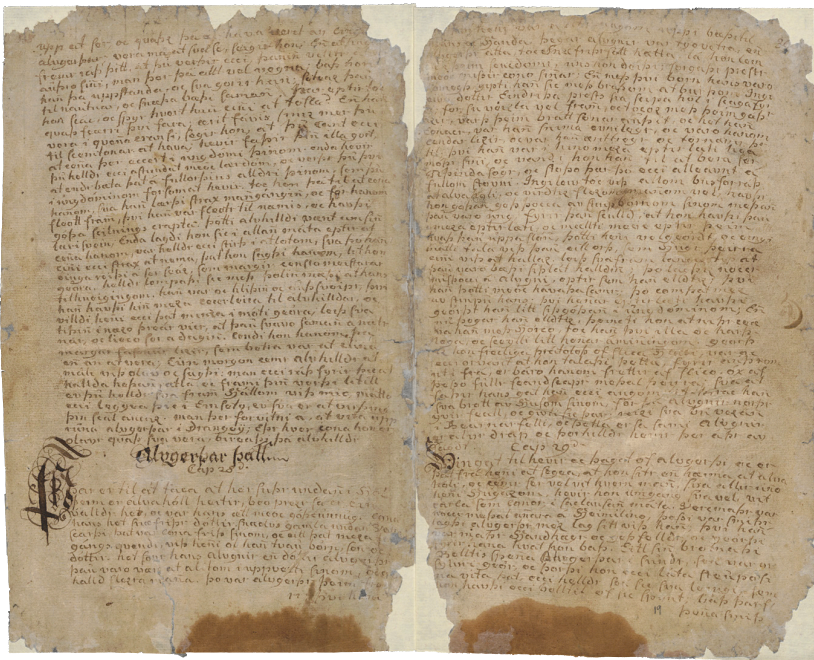


Figure 2: Beginning of Álfgerðar þáttur with decorated initial. Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, Lbs 152 fol., f. 18v/19r.

amplifications (see Clover 1982; Ármann Jakobsson 2001). These narrative digressions introduce new characters and add strands to the main narrative. The beginnings of these inserted narratives in both *Morkinskinna* and *Flateyjarbók* are demarcated with medium-sized initials that are larger than the other chapter rubrics but considerably smaller than the initials introducing new sagas in these compilations (see Figure 3; Ashman Rowe 2005, 359–60). Many of these insertions are labelled as *þáttur* in the rubrics.¹⁵

While the beginning of a *þáttur* is thus paratextually marked in the medieval compilations, the end of an interlacement usually remains unmarked,

15 The designation of a chapter as *þáttur* and the use of medium-sized initials in *Morkinskinna* and *Flateyjarbók* often, but not always, coincide; see Ármann Jakobsson and Þórunn Ingi Guðjónsson 2011, xl. For a brief consideration of the *þáttur* from a genre-theoretical, terminological perspective, see most recently Röslí 2020, 53–4. For a detailed discussion of the semantic history of *þáttur*, see Lindow 1978. For comprehensive introductions to *þáttir* in the Old Norse literary tradition, see Würth 1991, Ashman Rowe 2005, and Ashman Rowe and Harris 2005.



Figure 3: pattr Rognvalldz capitulum in Flateyjarbók (1387–1394). Reykjavík, Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies, GKS 1005 fol., f. 38r.

textually, as well as materially. In her comprehensive study of the insertion of *þættir* in Flateyjarbók, Stefanie Gropper (formerly Würth) has convincingly explained this finding with recourse to a statement in *Þorvalds þáttur tasalda* in Flateyjarbók: the *þættir* are added and interlaced into the main narrative and subsequently merge with it completely and become part of the main strand (Würth 1991, 47). The *þættir* in *Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar* are materially integrated in the saga in the very same manner, with a clearly demarcated beginning and an ending that in most cases remains unmarked; the material demarcation of the beginning shows close resemblance to the *mise en page* of seventeenth-century copies of Flateyjarbók, such as AM 57 fol. in the hand of Jón Erlendsson úr Villingaholti (Figure 4).

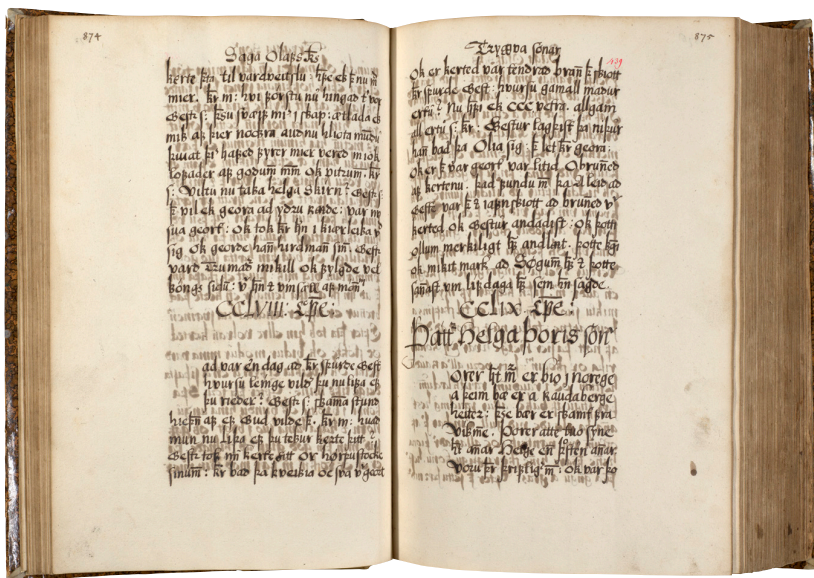


Figure 4: Beginning of *Þættur Helga Þóris sonar* in a copy of Flateyjarbók in the hand of Jón Erlendsson úr Villingaholti (c. 1650). Copenhagen, Arnarnagnæan Collection, AM 57 fol., f. 438v/439r.

Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar thus follows the medieval tradition of narrative stranding and interlacing, but does not leave it at that.¹⁶ In the

16 The interlacing narrative technique has already been pointed out in opposition to and as a deviation from the traditional *þjóðsögur* by Matthías V. Sæmundsson (1996a, 187) and María Anna Þorsteinsdóttir (1996, 241).

compilations of *konungasögur*, the *þættir* are embedded on the same diegetic level as the main narrative with the same reticent heterodiegetic narrative voice. In contrast, the embedded *þættir* in *Ólafssaga* are metadiegetic insertions of a marked homodiegetic and sometimes even autodiegetic metadiegetic narrator. This is to say that while in traditional saga narratives the narrators of both the main narrative strand and the inserted *þættir* are impersonal narrative voices that are external to the narrative (i.e. heterodiegetic), in *Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar*, the embedded narratives are narrated by characters in the main narrative that appear in the embedded narratives (i.e. homodiegetic) and sometimes even by the main characters of the stories themselves (i.e. autodiegetic). The *þættir* in traditional sagas are digressive interpolations of the narrative on the same narrative level, whereas the *þættir* in Laxdal's saga are stories told within stories, or metadiegeses. The *þættir* thus introduce new diegetic levels and narrative voices into the narrative.¹⁷ In a further twist of the medieval tradition, these new voices are in most cases female voices whose narrative focuses on female characters.¹⁸ The *þættir* in *Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar* are thus gateways to a female perspective, in contrast to the medieval tradition, where the *þættir* exhibit a distinctly male focus (see Harris 1991).

In all but one case, the metadiegetic (female) narrators recount their own genealogy and biography (*ævi*),¹⁹ but it repeatedly only becomes clear at the end of the *þáttur* that this is the case. The *þættir* all stretch over several chapters. For some of them, the end of the *þáttur* coincides with the end of a chapter, and in these instances, the end of the metadiegetic narrative is also indicated with a concluding sentence.²⁰ More often, however,

17 *Ólandssaga* is characterized by a similar narrative structure with insertions of *þættir* into the main narrative but in an even more complex manner, in that additional *þættir* are introduced within a *þáttur*, so that the narrative is a multilayered metadiegetic narrative based on the principle of Chinese boxes.

18 The prominence of female perspectives has also been highlighted by María Anna Þorsteinsdóttir (1996, 123–34) and Lena Rohrbach (2022).

19 In *Ólandssaga*, the longest first-order metadiegetic *þáttur* is even called *Langfeðgaþáttur*, which again architecturally draws on the medieval tradition of genealogies that repeatedly are referred to as *Langfeðgatal* throughout the medieval transmission (see Lbs 554 4to, f. 33r).

20 This is the case for *Álfgerðar þáttur* (“Og þan minn endaði alvhilldr ræþo sina.”) (‘And in this way Álfhildur ended her account’; Lbs 152 fol., f. 20v) and *Þáttur af Kjartani og Guðrínu bóndadóttur* (“og hætte nu Godhialp ræðu sinne, og bar ecke fleyra til Tidinda þenna dag.”) (‘and Góðhjálpr ended her account now and nothing more happened on this day’; Lbs 152 fol., f. 56r).

the metadiegetic passages end in the middle of a chapter. The metadiegetic narrator exits the metadiegesis between one sentence to another and changes back into a character within the main narrative, which is taken up in a fluent transition and without notice.²¹ Due to these often unmarked endings of the *þattir*, the saga leaves some uncertainty as to the current diegetic status of the narration. The transition from one diegetic sphere to another is often hardly indicated, either materially or in the narrative, which produces a high degree of indeterminacy.

This indeterminacy is also constituted by a blurring of lines between text and paratext. Repeatedly, the chapter heading indicating the beginning of a *þáttur* is at the same time part of the narrative voice, such as at the beginning of *Ingivarar þáttur*:

hon qvaþ sva vera scilldi, oc greindi honom siþann all[an]
Ingivarar þatt sem Filgir (Lbs 152 fol., f. 23v, see fig. 5)

(She said that this is how it should be and told him subsequently
 the complete **Ingivarar þáttur that follows**)

Finally, in yet another expansion of medieval narrative traditions, *Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar* makes use of the technique of multiple focalization, this is to say renderings of the same event from multiple perspectives and with diverging knowledge, which is otherwise hardly known from medieval and premodern sagas.²² This technique in fact forms a key element of the whole narrative and is again closely connected to the integration of *þattir* into the saga: the malice of the alleged villain Álfgerður is introduced to her then-lover Ólafur and the reader at an early stage at the beginning of the saga in the metadiegetic account of *Álfgerðar þáttur*, told by Álfhildur, who subsequently becomes Ólafur's subterranean wife. This *þáttur* at the outset of the saga is the only one of the metadiegetic insertions in which the narrator remains heterodiegetic and tells us about the life of somebody else. Álfhildur's narrative remains

21 This is, for instance, the case in *Þórhildar þáttur*, which ends in the middle of chapter I, 19 (see Lbs 152 fol., f. 12v).

22 One rare example for a case of multiple focalization is to be found in *Sálus saga ok Nikanórs*, handed down in a multitude of manuscripts from the fifteenth century onwards.

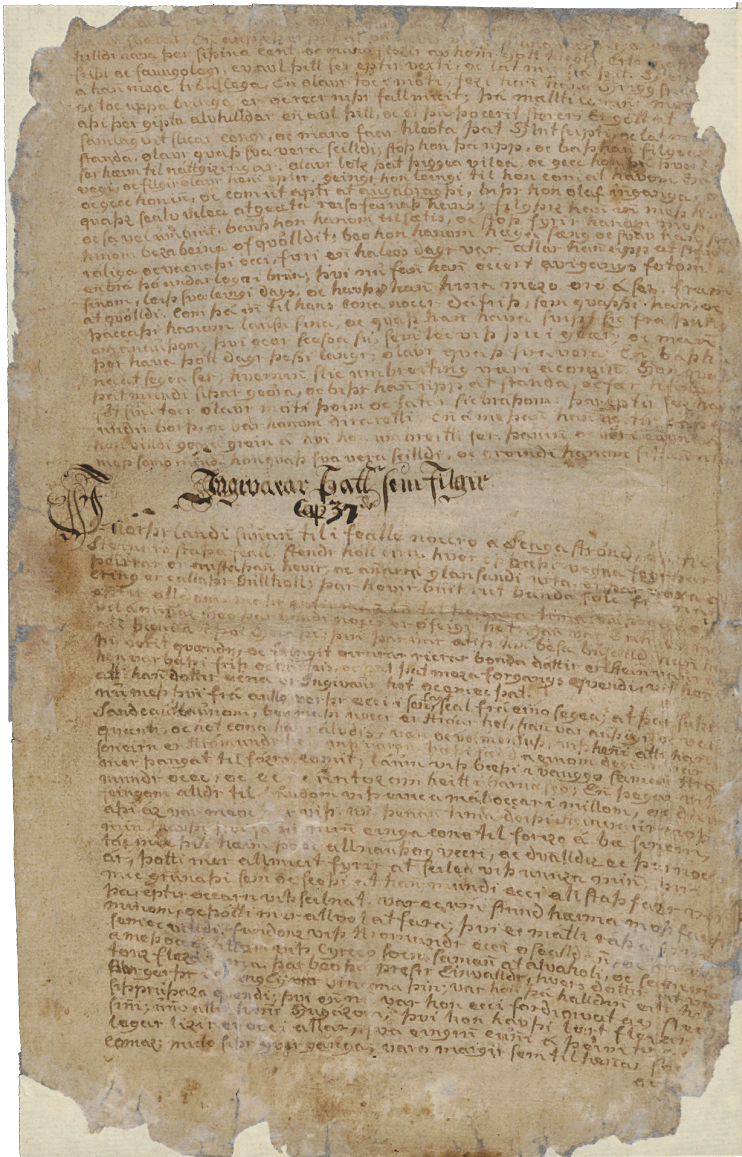


Figure 5: Beginning of Ingvarar þáttur with fluent transition between textual diegesis and paratextual heading. Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, Lbs 152 fol., f. 23v.

uncontested throughout the whole saga. In the last inserted *þáttur*, towards the end of the saga, this preconception is, however, turned upside down, when Álfgerður is allowed to tell that very same story from her own perspective; she relativizes and corrects Álfhildur's portrayal and Ólafur's perceptions in a second *Álfgerðar þáttur* (see Figure 6). This latter *Álfgerðar þáttur*, approximately 200 pages after the first *Álfgerðar þáttur*, leads to a fundamental reevaluation of the whole narrative. When Ólafur complains about this deception, Álfgerður answers with a reply that can also be read as a commentary to the narratee as to the effects of the textual-narrative strategies at work:

Vid það mattu búa sagde Alfgierdur, og er þetta eingum ad k[enna] utan Talhlidne þinne og lauslinde. Þviad þó aller útmáludu mig illa, visser þú sjálfur af eigin Reind, hver og hvilik eg var og var þvi illa gjórdt ad svikia siálfann þig fyrer annara munnmæle. (Lbs 152 fol., f. 117v)

(You have to live with that, Álfgerður said, and nobody is to blame but your credulity towards gossip and your instability; because although they all depicted me as evil, you knew from your own experience who and of what kind I was, and it was badly done to betray yourself for the talk of other people.)

The textual embedding of *þættir* in *Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar* firmly situates the narrative in the medieval tradition of saga literature, but at the same time it is precisely this that forms the material backbone of the subversion of this generic tradition: the medieval male *þáttur* is turned into a medium for female voices, which, furthermore, by means of multiple focalizations, illustrates the unreliability of narration. And this subversive narrative enterprise is supported and also evoked by means of the blurred material demarcation lines between different diegetic levels as well as text and paratext.

Kvöldvökulestur – Calling Out Oral Architexts and Written Hypotexts

Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar is furthermore paratextually divided up into four major parts. The beginning of the first part is only handed down in the copy in Lbs 151 fol. and there denoted as “fyrsti hluti” (‘first part’) in the heading on f. 1r (see Figure 1),²³ while the following three parts are paratextually introduced as “Annar Qvølld vau[cu] lestr” (‘Second Evening-Wake reading’; see Figure 7; cf. Lbs 151 fol., f. 45v), “Þridie kvølld vauco lestur” (‘Third Evening-Wake reading’; Lbs 152 fol., f. 70v, cf. Lbs 151 fol., f. 97v), and “Fjorde vauku lestur” (‘Fourth Wake reading’; Figure 8, cf. Lbs 151 fol., f. 130r) in the autograph as well as the copy. The chapters within these four parts are numbered independently and always begin anew.

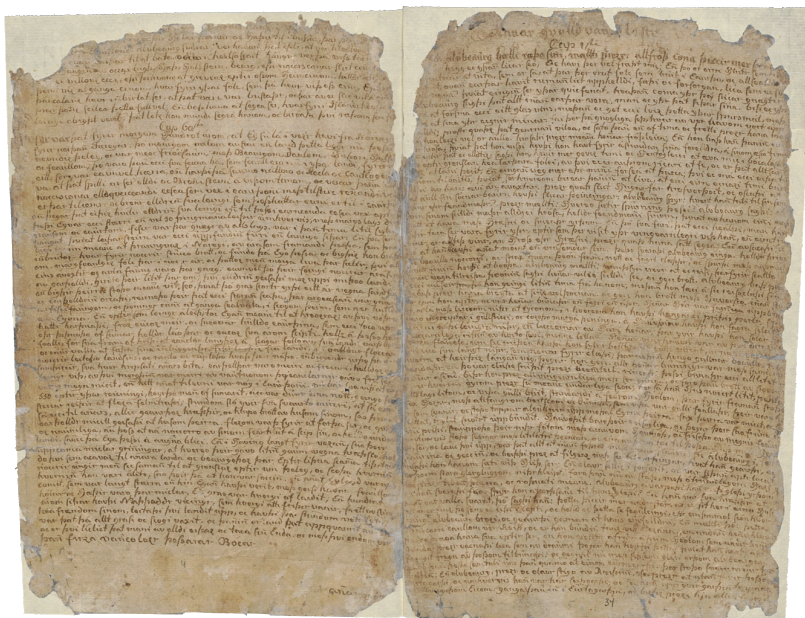


Figure 7: Annar Qvølld vau[cu] lestr. Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, Lbs 152 fol., f. 33r/34r.

- 23 The end of the first part in Lbs 152 fol., however, refers to the preceding text as *fyrsti vökulestur*: “oc með því endum ver þann firza vaucolez þessarar Bócar” (‘and herewith we end the first wake-reading of this book’; Lbs 152 fol., f. 33v).

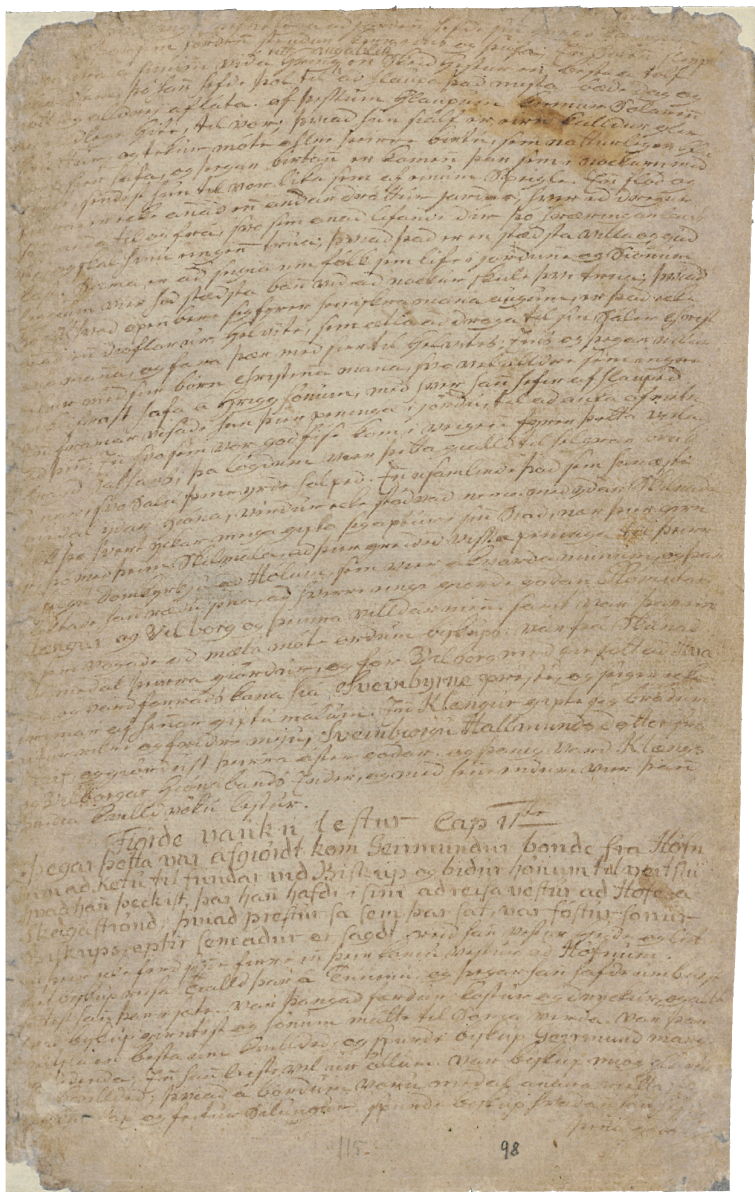


Figure 8: Fjórde vauku lestur. Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, Lbs 152 fol., f. 98r.

The denotation of the major parts of the saga as wake readings and evening-wake readings refers to the premodern Icelandic tradition of recitals and readings of literature during the long evening hours in wintertime as it was first described in Eggert Ólafsson's travelogue *Vice-Lavmand Eggert Olafsens og Land-Physici Biarne Povelsens Reise igiennem Island*, a work in the spirit of the Enlightenment that was published in Sorø in 1772.²⁴ The section titles thus paratextually inscribe the written saga into the architext of the semi-oral literary tradition. But there seems to be a more concrete hypotext at work as well. In his travelogue, Eggert Ólafsson does not explicitly denote the oral tradition as *kvöldvaka* or *kvöldvökulestur* (see Figure 9).²⁵ The oldest evidence of this compound in the Icelandic written transmission in the context of literary performance can be traced back to yet another previous member of *Secta* and advocate of the Enlightenment, Eiríkur's Copenhagen acquaintance Hannes Finnsson. After having been installed as bishop of Skálholt in 1777, Hannes became actively involved in the making of texts of different kinds. He produced a new translation of the Bible and authored theological writings and hymns as well as natural-historical works and descriptions of Iceland.²⁶

In 1796 and 1797, two volumes of a reading book for the common people compiled by Hannes Finnsson went into print under the commission of Magnús Stephensen (1762–1833) at Leirárgarðar, where the former printing press of Hrappsey had been moved to in 1795, only to be moved again after a mere twenty years to Beitistaðir (see Jón Helgason 1928, 23; Einar Sigurðsson 1968, 29–31). Magnús Stephensen, a former student and brother-in-law of Hannes Finnsson, was another of the protagonists of the Enlightenment in Iceland and one of the founders of the *Landsuppfræðingarfélag* (Society for National Education), founded in 1794, who Hannes Finnsson also mentions in his foreword to the reading book. Magnús Stephensen not only bought the former printing press of Hrappsey but subsequently also bought and moved the printing press from Hólar to Leirárgarðar in 1799.

24 For a detailed discussion of the premodern tradition of the *kvöldvaka* and the description in Eggert Ólafsson's travelogue, see Driscoll 1997, 38–46. See also Loftur Guttormsson 2003, 198–204.

25 The tradition is described in § 68 of the travelogue under the heading “Saugu-Lestur” (‘Saga Reading’; Eggert Ólafsson 1772, 47–8).

26 On Hannes Finnsson's life and work, see Jón Helgason 1936.

§. 68.

Den allerfornuftigste og nyttigste Tidsfordriv bliver vel uden ^{Saugu-Lestur} Modsigelse, den i Island, fra de første Tider, vedtagne Maade, at læse offentlig de gamle Sagar, eller de i det Islandiske Sprog forfattede Historier. Forend Islanderne begyndte for Alvor at skrive, (hvilken Tid kan regnes at tage sin Begyndelse 200 Aar efter Landets første Beboelse), bleve saadanne Historier udi alle Samkvem mundtlig fortaalte af dem, der vare meest kyndige, vels talende og ovede i Kunsten, saasom der gierne vare nogle tilstede, især af Skaldene og de Fornemste, der med Flid lagde sig efter sigt. Var nogen i Selskabet, som vidste at fortælle den eller den Tidraagelse rigtigere eller med flere Omstændigheder, da blev det bifaldet og behødet i Hofmessen, til hvilken Ende saadanne Hændelser ogsaa bleve udfaarne og malede paa Dørre, Sengesteder og Panelværket i Stuen. Forst i det 13de Hundrede-Aar begyndte Islanderne ret for Alvor at forfatte skriftligen saavel de indlandiske som andre nordiske Historier, og dog var endda den Sæf brugelig, at fortælle Historier mundtligen, hvilket kan sees af *Sturlunga-Saga* og *Kong Saagen den Gamles Historie*. Ja end i Dag fortælles de mundtligen i Island, især i Lutsmørket; men naar Lyset er tændt, beskaffes gierne en Dreng, som godt kan læse, eller en anden af Gæsterne, dertil; og hvis Huusbonden er en Elsker af Historier, laaner han hos Naboerne eller andre gode Venner, saa mange Sagar, som han kan være forsynet med for heele Vinteren; og herved bliver den Arbeidende munter og vaagen. For at gjøre denne Tidsfordriv endnu behageligere, have Poeterne fra det 14de Hundrede-Aars Begyndelse, gjort dem Umage for at oversætte Sagar paa Vers, hvilke almindeligen kaldes

Figure 9: § 68 on Saugu-Lestur (Saga Reading) in Vice-Lavmand Eggert Olafsens og Land-Physici Bjarne Povelsens Reise igiennem Island. Sorø 1772, 47.

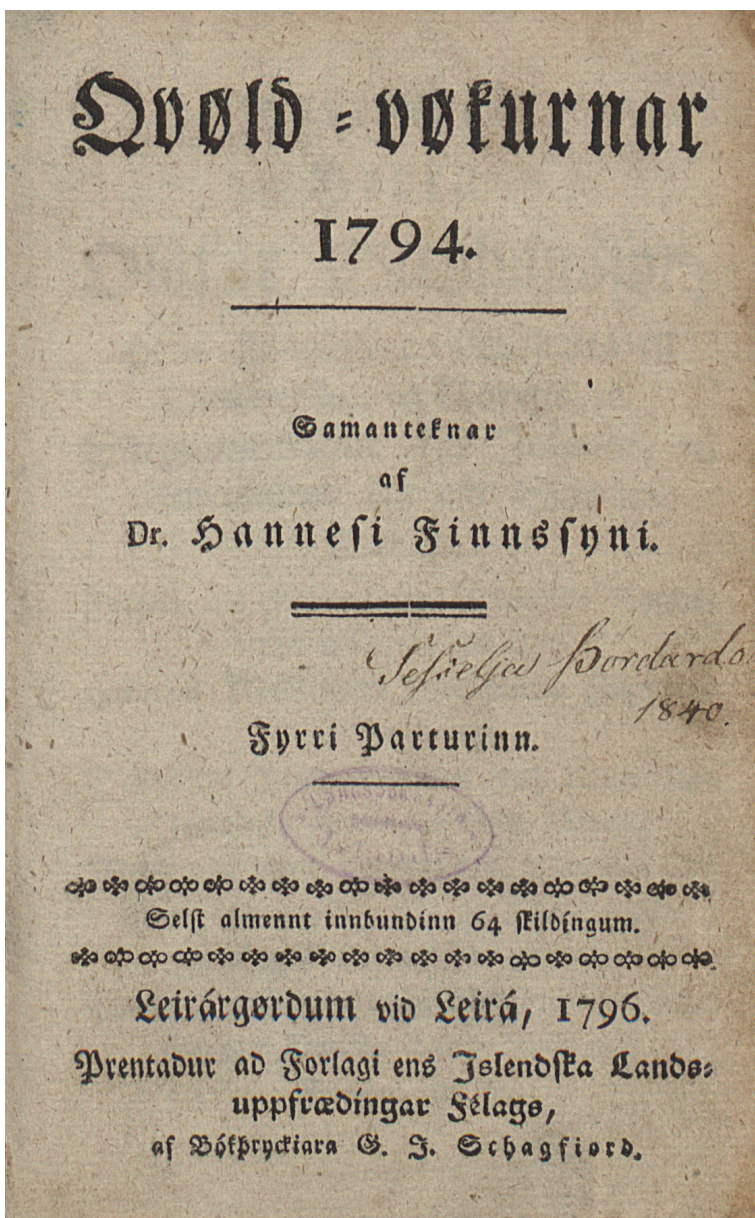


Figure 10: Title page of Hannes Finnsson's *Qvøld = vøfurnar 1794*, vol. 1. *Leirárgarðar á Leirá 1796*.

The title of the two volumes was *Qvöld-vøkurnar 1794* ('The Evening Wakes 1794'; see Figure 10), and the prologue in the first volume refers to this title repeatedly. The reading book contains excerpts from the Bible, riddles, drama for children, fables, and parables, as well as parts on the natural sciences, for example, a didactic dialogue about the climate in Iceland between a pastor and a man called Sigurður (see Figure 11). It was the first book of its kind in Iceland and was well received by the population.²⁷

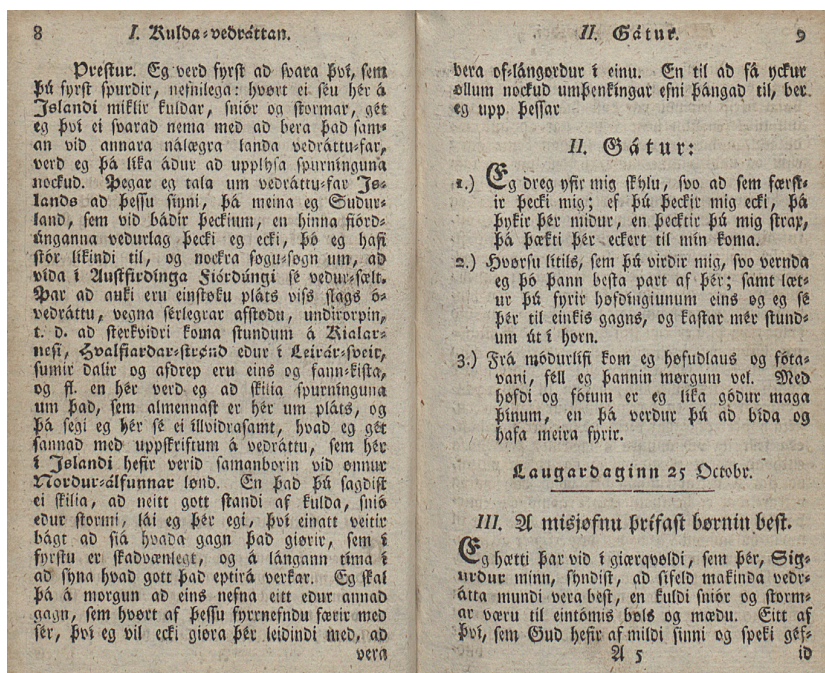


Figure 11: Didactic dialogue and riddles in Hannes Finnsson's *Qvöld-vøkurnar 1794*, vol. 1. *Leirárgarðar á Leirá* 1796, 8–9.

27 Jón Helgason even states that it was the most-read book of its time in Iceland: “Sérstaklega þótti hún velfallin til að selja hana stálpuðum unglingum í hendur, en fullorðna fólkíð var ekki síður sólgíð í *Kvöldvøkurnar*, og er vafasamt, hvort önnur bók hefir öllu meira verið lesin hér á landi á fyrri hluta 19. aldar” (‘It seemed particularly apt for adolescents, but adults were also absorbed by the *Kvöldvøkurnar*, and it is questionable whether another book was more read in this country in the first half of the nineteenth century’; Jón Helgason 1936, 219–20). See also Matthías V. Sæmundsson 1996b, 106–7 and Ingi Sigurðsson 2003, 130.

The disposition of *Qvöld-vökurnar* is firmly rooted in Lutheran doctrine, while at the same time also exhibiting inclinations towards the paradigms of the Enlightenment. Hannes Finnsson expounds that the composition of a reading book needs to take into account the state of erudition and enlightenment in a population:

heldur þarf sá, sem tekur sér það fyrir höndur, að vita hvað langt upplýsingin í því landi er komin, hvað lesendum hans sé mest umhugad um, hvada rángar innbirlingar þeir hafi, [...] svo uppfræðarinn eptir þessu viti í hvada horf á að stefna. Allt þetta játa eg satt að vera, og þecki þess vegna þá kostgæfni, varúd, stillingu og greind, sem slíkur uppfræðari þarf að brúka, en mínar Qvöldvökur ætla ei að taka sér nærri svo mikid í fang, þær láta sér nægia (svo eg brúki áður téda samlíkingu), að bráka eitt eða annad ógresi, og hreyta út aptur einstaka göðu fræ-korni. (Hannes Finnsson 1796, xv–xvi)

(rather, where an enterprise like this is taken up, one has to know how far the Enlightenment has progressed in that country, what one's readers are most occupied with, what wrong conceits they hold, [...] so that the instructor may know what needs to be taken up. I consent that all of this is true, and acknowledge the conscientiousness, wariness, sobriety, and intelligence that such an instructor needs to use, but my Evening Wakes do not intend to achieve so much; rather they are content with (to use again this comparison) dragging out one or the other weed, and casting out again a single good seed.)

Hannes Finnsson further particularizes that the wrong perceptions in the population derive from the reading of “*Trøllasögur og Æfintýri full af ósidum og hiátrú*” (‘troll sagas and folktales, full of bad customs and superstition’; Hannes Finnsson 1796, xxi). However, he does not intend to lead the population, and in particular the children, away from these wrong beliefs by forcing them to read the Bible or theological writings, but rather takes a different approach:

þá er mitt ráð, að kenna börnum ei hinn fyrsta bóklestur á Gudfrædisbækur, heldur smásögur, auðskilin heilræði og þvítíkt t.d. Sumar-gjöf handa börnum, sem er yfrid góð og þægileg bók til barna uppfræðingar. Þegar börn eru búin með hana, þá kynnu sumar frásagnir og dæmisögur úr *Qvöldvökum* þessum vera betri til æfingar í lestri, enn ein og önnur ósidsamleg æfintíri, riddara- og trølla-sögur, um hnútukøst og knífil-yrdi jøtna, með ødrum sómalitlum eda aldeilis ótrúlegum athøfnum þeirra. (Hannes Finnsson 1796, xxiii)

(It is my advice to teach the children to read not with theological writing, but rather with short stories, easily understandable advice, and similar, such as *Sumar-gjöf handa börnum* [A Summergift for Children],²⁸ which is a particularly good and pleasant book for the instruction of children. When children are done reading that, some stories and parables in these *Qvöldvökur* are better suited for reading exercises than some immoral folktale, *riddarasögur*, or troll sagas, about wrangling and quarrels of giants, with their dishonorable or completely improbable events.)

Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar reads like a parodic and at the same time supportive hypertext to Hannes Finnsson's enterprise, and this reading is strongly confirmed by the paratextual macrostructure of the saga as a series of (*kvöld*)*vökur*. Eiríkur Laxdal's (evening) wake readings in *Ólafssaga* present narrative negotiations of immoral as well as improbable events, interspersed with instructions in theological and scientific knowledge. The story is set in the story world of the folktale, but within this setting, the deconstruction of *ráugar innbirlingar* (wrong conceits) is the issue at stake. If one follows these considerations and assumes *Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar* to be a reaction to Hannes Finnsson's request, the *terminus post quem* for *Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar* would need to be slightly adjusted and dated to after 1796. At any rate, the saga comes into being in an idea-historical and discursive context in close proximity to the educational writings of the bishop, but with a more playful and literary shape.

28 *Sumar-gjöf handa börnum* is a translation of the German *Zeitvertreib und Unterricht für Kinder* by Guðmundur Jónsson and the first book that was printed in Leirárgarðar, in the year 1795 (Einar Sigurðsson 1968, 29; Matthías V. Sæmundsson 1996, 109).

Paratexts, Blurred Boundaries, and Novelizations of Saga Traditions

A paratextual study of *Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar* reveals intricate inscriptions both into the long-lasting textual tradition of saga literature and into recent textual novelties. The paratexts in the saga are hypertextual and architextual gateways – or thresholds – to the Icelandic literary tradition, but they are at the same time also much more than that, as they are actively employed in the construction of the core concern of the narrative. The paratextual reference to the literary tradition is subverted by the way both *þættir* and *kvöldvökur* are set into contexts that deviate considerably from their original textual settings, with new narrative voices, levels, and modes at work. Finally, the saga challenges not only the evoked architexts and hypotexts, but also the demarcations between text and paratext as well as the inside and outside of the narrative. The paratexts merge with the text and become integral parts of the narrative, and these blurred boundaries form yet another central element of the narrative enterprise.

The reconfigurations of narrative traditions at work in *Ólafssaga* correspond with Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of novelization as he explicates it in his essay "Epic and the Novel":

The novelization of literature does not imply attaching to already completed genres a generic canon that is alien to them, not theirs. The novel, after all, has no canon of its own. It is, by its very nature, not canonic. It is plasticity itself. It is a genre that is ever questing, ever examining itself and subjecting its established forms to review. Therefore, the novelization of other genres does not imply their subjection to an alien generic canon; on the contrary, novelization implies their liberation from all that serves as a brake on their unique development[.] (Bakhtin 1981, 39)

Ólafssaga is a perfect example of the continuous process of novelization: it is deeply rooted in the literary tradition, liberates itself from it, and develops something utterly new, with the paratext at the heart of this endeavor.²⁹

29 An application of Bakhtin's processual notion of the novel to eighteenth-century saga literature has already been suggested by Matthías V. Sæmundsson, but again with regard to matter and discursive characteristics, rather than based on narratological and textual considerations; see Matthías V. Sæmundsson 1996a, 145.

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SUMMARY

Subversive Inscriptions. The Narrative Power of the Paratext in *Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar*

Keywords: Enlightenment, genre traditions, *kvöldvaka*, narrative techniques, paratexts, *þættir*

Eiríkur Laxdal's *Ólafs saga Þórhallasonar* has repeatedly been addressed as an early proto-novel or novel in the Icelandic tradition. The argumentation in previous research has mainly been based on elements of the *histoire*. This article takes a different approach and focusses on the material textuality of Laxdal's saga. It argues that the saga inscribes itself not only thematically, but also in terms of its material and narrative features into both saga and contemporaneous literary traditions, while at the same time subverting these traditions. With a departure point in Gérard Genette's approach to different types of transtextuality, the article discusses the central role of paratexts, namely headings of different kind, in this inscription into and subversion of genre traditions. By designating individual chapters as *þáttur* and the four main parts of the saga as (*kvöld*-)*vökulestur*, the saga evokes medieval and premodern narrative traditions, but at the same time, these traditions are subverted by advanced narrative techniques that lead to narrative uncertainty and unreliability, such as multiple focalizations, embedded narratives with changing (female) narrators, several diegetic levels, and blurred lines between text and paratext. These techniques are used to deconstruct false perceptions of readers as well as characters in the narrative. This deconstructive effort is at the heart of *Ólafs saga Þórhallasonar*. It can be read as a literary take in line with contemporary requests of main agents of the Enlightenment, and the article argues that it might even be understood as a direct, literary response to bishop Hannes Finnsson's reading book *Qvöld-vøkurnar* that were printed in 1796/97.

ÁGRIP

Innskráning og afbygging. Frásagnarkraftur í hliðartextum í *Sögu Ólafs Þórhallasonar*

Efnisorð: upplýsing, hefðir bókmenntagreina, kvöldvaka, hliðartextar, frásagnarlist, þættir

Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar eftir Eirík Laxdal hefur ítrekað verið kölluð frumskáldsaga eða skáldsaga í íslenski bókmenntahefð. Rökstuðningur fyrri rannsókna hefur aðallega byggst á *histoire* eða efni sögunnar. Þessi grein er annars konar nálgun og fjallar um efnislega textagerð sögu Laxdals. Hér er því haldið fram að sagan falli ekki aðeins þematískt inn í bæði fornsagnahefðina og samtímabókmenntahefðina heldur einnig hvað varðar efnislega eiginleika og frásagnareinkenni, en sýni um leið sérstöðu gagnvart þessum þáttum. Með því að nota greiningu Gérard Genettes á mismunandi gerðum af *transtextuality*, eða transtextagerð, fjallar greinin um meginhlutverk *paratexta*, eða hliðartexta, einkum fyrirsgagna af ólíkum toga þar sem sagan bæði sver sig í ætt við og brýtur niður hinar hefðbundnu bókmenntagreinar. Með því að kalla einstaka kafla *þætti* og fjóra meginhluta sögunnar (*kvöld*)*vökulestur* kallar sagan fram miðalda- og síðari alda frásagnarhefð en um leið er grafið undan þessum hefðum með háþróaðri frásagnartækni sem leiðir til frásagnaróvissu og óáreiðanleika, svo sem með því að nota fjölda sjónarhorna, frásagnir með breytilegum (kvenkyns) sögumönnum sem felldar eru inn í söguna, fleiri gerðir frásagna og óskýr skil milli texta og hliðartexta. Þessar aðferðir eru notaðar til að afbyggja ranga skynjun lesenda, sem og persóna í frásögninni. Þessi afbygging er kjarninn í *Ólafs sögu Þórhallasonar*. Hægt er að lesa hana sem bókmenntalegt framlag í samræmi við kröfur helstu umboðsmanna upplýsingarinnar og í greininni er því haldið fram að jafnvel megi skilja hana sem bein bókmenntaleg viðbrögð við lestrarbókinni *Qvöld-vökurnar* eftir Hannes Finnsson biskup sem prentuð var árið 1796/97.

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