

# Hákonar saga Ívarssonar Once Again

By Theodore M. Andersson

Sverre Bagge has recently restudied the relationships of the various versions of *Hákonar saga Ívarssonar* and arrived at strikingly new conclusions.<sup>1</sup> He favors the view that the account in *Morkinskinna* is the earliest version and is drawn from oral tradition (2014: 13). The author of *Heimskringla* (most likely Snorri) subsequently reworked this account on the basis of a conjecture that Hákon Ívarsson belonged to the lineage of the jarls of Hlaðir. The revision also involved a reordering of the chronology (2014: 9–10). The somewhat differing version of the story in *Hákonar saga Ívarssonar*, represented by four fragments of the fifteenth-century manuscript AM 570a, 4to, and a Latin “Compendium” found among the papers of Anders Sørensen Vedel, had previously been regarded as an early version from the beginning of the thirteenth century and hence as a source for *Heimskringla*.<sup>2</sup> But Bagge concludes that it is a late version based on *Heimskringla* (2014: 4–8). The present paper returns experimentally to the view that *Hákonar saga Ívarssonar* is the oldest version, probably in some relationship to \**Hlaðajarla saga*, that the version in *Morkinskinna* was recorded independently from oral tradition, and that the version in *Heimskringla* is based on *Hákonar saga* with possible additions from *Morkinskinna*. Before entering into the details of this discussion, I will try to facilitate the comparison of the texts with an overview in tabular form.

1. He very kindly sent me the page proof of his paper, which rekindled my interest in the problem and allowed me to think about it more carefully than I did in the “Introduction” to Kari Ellen Gade’s and my translation of *Morkinskinna: Morkinskinna* (2000), pp. 15–19; see also “Appendix B,” pp. 512–15.
2. See Gustav Storm 1873: 49; Edvard Bull 1927: 33; Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1937: 153; *Hákonar saga Ívarssonar*, ed. Jón Helgason and Jakob Benediktsson, pp. XVIII–XXV, XXXIX.

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Heimskringla

(39) Introduction of Ívarr and Hákon

(40) on Einarr Þambarskelfir

(41) Jarl Ormr Eilífsson in Upplönd

(42) King Haraldr becomes a tyrant.

(43) Einarr defends the Þrændir and frees a thief.

(44) King Haraldr kills Einarr and Eindriði.

(45) Finnr Árnason negotiates peace with the Þrændir and obtains a pardon for his brother Kálfr.

(46) Finnr promotes peace.

(47) Finnr and Ormr pacify Hákon, who stipulates marriage to Ragnhildr.

(48) Ragnhildr demurs on marriage and Haraldr demurs on a title. Hákon defects to King Sveinn.

(49) Hákon kills Ásmundr and alienates Sveinn.

(50) Hákon returns to Norway and marries Ragnhildr.

(51) Kálfr Árnason is repatriated.

(52) Kálfr is killed in Denmark.

Fagrskinna

Einarr frees a thief (p. 262).

King Haraldr kills Einarr and Eindriði (p. 263).

Finnr Árnason defects to King Sveinn (p. 264).

the Battle of Niz (pp. 264–68).

Hákon Ívarsson is a participant (p. 269).

King Haraldr teases Finnr Árnason (p. 269).

Sveinn takes refuge with an old woman (p. 270).

Morkinskinna

King Haraldr plans to harry in Denmark.

He anchors in Lófuþjóðr (snake episode as in Hkr. 58).

introduction of Ívarr hvíti

Sigvatr recites before him.

introduction of Hákon Ívarsson

Hákon harries with Finnr Árnason.

Hákon sides with King Haraldr, Finnr with King Sveinn.

Haraldr proposes to encounter King Sveinn.

Hákon volunteers his service and gives a favorable interpretation to Haraldr's ominous dream.

Haraldr's victory beacon – he proceeds against great odds.

The kings clash.

King Sveinn's ship is boarded and he flees to land.

Haraldr teases Finnr and keeps him in his company for a time.

Sveinn takes refuge with an old woman.

the adventure of Prince Magnús and Þórólfr mostarskegg

## HÁKONAR SAGA ÍVARSSONAR ONCE AGAIN

Hákonar saga	Vedel's compedium
(1) Hákon is comparable only to Einarr and Eindriði. He harries with Finn Arnason.	Hákon goes to Denmark and England, where he is attached to Edward the Confessor.
King Haraldr becomes tyrannical. Einarr defends the Þrændir.	Einarr frees a thief. Einarr and Eindriði are killed.
Haraldr pronounces a threatening stanza as he observes Einarr from a window.	King Haraldr's resentment of Einarr Haraldr is reconciled with the farmers with the aid of Finn Arnason.
	On the advice of Ormr Eilífsson Hákon is betrothed to Ragnhildr.
	Ormr marries Finn's daughter Sigríðr.
	Haraldr marries Finn's granddaughter Þóra, daughter of Þorbergr.
(2) Finn Arnason negotiates peace between the Þrændir and Haraldr.	Einarr and Eindriði are buried in St. Óláfr's Church.
Haraldr invites Ragnhildr to court and she is pressured to come. Hákon arrives too and seems a natural match for Ragnhildr. This seems to be the plan, but Haraldr is evasive.	Haraldr pays double compensation for Einarr and Eindriði. Hákon proposes to Ragnhildr, but she demurs.
Haraldr defers to Ragnhildr, and Hákon approaches her. She talks at length about her station.	Haraldr declines to make Hákon a jarl.
Hákon appeals to Haraldr for the title of jarl, but he refuses.	

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(53) King Haraldr is suspected of complicity. Finn defects to King Sveinn.

(54) digression on Guthormr Ketilsson

(55) continued

(56) an Olavian miracle

(57) a second Olavian miracle

(58) snake episode in the Limfjord

(59) King Haraldr plans a parley with King Sveinn.

(60) continued

(61) King Sveinn stays away. Haraldr sails south to a naval encounter.

(62) The fleets form up.

(63) The battle is fought.

(64) Hákon saves King Sveinn and brings him to the farmer Karl.

(65) King Haraldr learns that Sveinn has escaped to Zealand.

(66) King Haraldr spares Finn Arnason, then releases him.

(67) King Sveinn rewards Karl but excludes his wife.

(68) King Haraldr becomes envious of Hákon.

Hákon is much praised and King Haraldr feels that it is to his detriment.

King Haraldr invites Hákon to a feast and thanks him.

King Haraldr discourages Hákon's viking plans and suggests marriage. He proposes a match with Ragnhildr.

The king approaches Ragnhildr, but she demurs. Haraldr promises to make Hákon a jarl. Ragnhildr is suspicious, but they marry.

Hákon reminds Haraldr of the promise, but is rebuffed.

There are therefore strains between Hákon and Ragnhildr.

Hákon kills the king's steward and departs with Ragnhildr. King Haraldr takes revenge and Hákon counters.

Ragnhildr proposes that Hákon take refuge with King Sveinn.

King Sveinn gives Hákon three options.

Hákon kills Ásmundr. King Sveinn is displeased, but makes Hákon a jarl in Halland. Hákon and Ragnhildr are reconciled.

## HÁKONAR SAGA ÍVARSSONAR ONCE AGAIN

Hákon goes to Denmark and is welcomed by King Sveinn, who is in difficulties with his nephew Ásmundr.

Hákon is received by King Sveinn.

Ásmundr's villainies – Hákon kills and beheads him.

Sveinn dismisses Hákon.

Hákon returns to Norway and becomes a jarl in Ormr's stead.

He marries Ragnhildr.

Kálfr is taken back into Haraldr's good graces.

Haraldr attacks Denmark and Kálfr is sent ahead. He is killed.

Haraldr is suspected of complicity.

Finnr defects to Sveinn and is made a jarl in Halland.

Hákon rallies Haraldr's forces in the Battle of Niz (Lófufjörðr).

Hákon helps Sveinn escape under the guise of Vandráðr. He takes refuge with a farmer in Halland.

Sveinn puts the farmer in charge of Zealand, but his wife must remain at home.

Hákon's complicity in Sveinn's escape is revealed by drunken soldiers.

Hákon escapes to Sweden.

(3) King Haraldr gathers troops for an attack on the Danes.

The preparations are described with special attention to the ships.

Haraldr harries in Lófufjörðr.

Hákon is conspicuous in the Battle of Niz.

(4) Haraldr thanks the troops and Hákon but is envious of the latter's success.

King Sveinn rewards the farmer who sheltered him but does not allow his wife to accompany him.

Back in Norway the men continue to praise Hákon and provoke Haraldr. It emerges that Hákon saved King Sveinn's life. King

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(69) King Haraldr gets wind of Hákon's rescue of King Sveinn and sets out for revenge.

(70) The Upplanders withhold taxes from Haraldr and pay Hákon.

(71) The Norwegians and Danes make peace.

(72) King Haraldr routs Hákon in Sweden, but Hákon recaptures King Magnús's standard.

Haraldr and Sveinn make peace (p. 273).

Haraldr and Hákon fight in Sweden. Hákon is married to King Magnús's daughter. Úlfhildr (p. 271).

Haraldr and Sveinn make peace.

Haraldr raids in Sweden and Sveinn gives King Steinkell the service of Hákon. Hákon agrees.

Ragnhildr gives Hákon King Magnús's standard.

King Haraldr proceeds up the Götaälv to Lake Vänern.

three weather reports

the cowardly lawspeaker Þorfinnr

Hákon attacks and is routed. He loses his standard but recaptures it.

Hákon disguises himself as a beggar and lures some of Haraldr's men into an ambush.

King Haraldr frees his fleet from the ice.

Jarl Hákon's descendants.

## HÁKONAR SAGA ÍVARSSONAR ONCE AGAIN

Haraldr mounts an expedition in revenge.

He supports three of Haraldr's chieftains in Upplönd and they withhold tribute from Haraldr.

Sveinn and Haraldr make peace.

Haraldr brings his ships up to Lake Vänern.

Hákon marches with King Magnús's precious banner given him by Ragnhildr.

Hákon is warned not to return without it.

the cowardice of Þorviðr the Stout

Hákon's loss and retrieval of the banner

Hákon is taken into favor by Óláfr kyrri after Haraldr's death.

He is survived by two daughters.

The first married Hákon the Norwegian and bore Erik the Wise (or Lamb).

The other married Jarl Páll of Orkney and bore Hákon.

The closest match is between *Heimskringla* and the “Compendium,” supplemented by the fragments. The common narrative elements are as follows:

1. Einarr Þambarskelfir frees a thief.
2. King Haraldr kills Einarr and his son Eindriði.
3. Finnur Árnason brokers peace with the Þreendir.
4. Ragnhildr demurs on marriage to Hákon.
5. King Haraldr demurs on granting Hákon a title.
6. King Sveinn receives Hákon in Denmark.
7. Hákon kills King Sveinn’s nephew Ásmundr.
8. Hákon returns to Norway.
9. Hákon becomes a jarl and marries Ragnhildr.
10. Kálfr Árnason is restored to favor.
11. Kálfr dies on a military mission in Denmark.
12. King Haraldr is suspected of complicity.
13. Haraldr and Sveinn fight a naval battle at the river Niz.
14. Hákon helps King Sveinn escape from the battle.
15. Sveinn assumes the name of Vandráðr.
16. Sveinn takes refuge with a farmer named Karl.
17. Sveinn escapes to Zealand or gives Karl the command of Zealand.
18. Karl’s wife is not allowed to join him.
19. Hákon’s aid to King Sveinn is revealed to King Haraldr.
20. The Upplanders withhold taxes from King Haraldr.
21. The Danes and Norwegians make peace.
22. Hákon and King Haraldr meet in battle in Sweden.
23. Hákon loses and then retrieves King Magnús’s standard.

There is clearly a close relationship between these accounts, and the only question is which came first and was then copied by the other. Bagge could find no certain indications either way (2014: 5–6). Perhaps the best evidence that *Heimskringla* is based on *Hákonar saga*, rather than vice versa, is that the author of *Heimskringla* knew *Morkinskinna* very well but elected not to follow it.<sup>3</sup> *Morkinskinna* would have been the obvious choice as a model since the text of *Heimskringla* is regularly dependent on *Morkinskinna*, but instead the author of *Heimskringla* chose an alternate source. Because *Morkinskinna* was so ready to hand as a written source, it seems unlikely that the author of *Heimskringla* would at this point have reverted to an oral source. He must therefore have had an alternate written source more to his liking. That alternative is most likely

3. Storm 1873: 31; Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, ed., *Heimskringla* III, ÍF 28, p. VIII.

to have been *Hákonar saga Ívarssonar* and the probability of this choice is confirmed by the close match between *Heimskringla* and the summary of *Hákonar saga* contained in the “Compendium.”

Much more difficult is the relationship between *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla*. The most palpable difference is that the author of *Heimskringla* locates the marriage of Hákon and Ragnhildr before the Battle of Niz, while the author of *Morkinskinna* places it after the battle—Sverre Bagge is able to show that the chronology in *Morkinskinna* is more likely to be correct (2014: 9–10). There are, however, other differences that stand in the way of Bagge’s thesis that the *Heimskringla* version is a remake of the *Morkinskinna* version. Some of the more important differences are the following:

1. In *Hkr.* the snake episode is located in the Limfjord rather than the Lófufjörðr, for no apparent reason.
2. In *Msk.* Sigvatr recites a poem before Ívarr hvíti. There is no sign of that episode in *Hkr.*
3. In *Msk.* Hákon harries with Finnr Árnason, but not in *Hkr.*
4. In *Msk.*, though not in *Hkr.*, Hákon chooses to side with King Haraldr while Finnr chooses to side with King Sveinn.
5. In *Msk.*, but not in *Hkr.*, King Haraldr has a premonitory dream before the Battle of Niz.
6. Before the battle in *Msk.* King Haraldr brandishes his sword and calls the act (or the sword?) a “sigrbákn”. This peculiarity is not found in *Hkr.*
7. After the battle in *Msk.* King Sveinn simply flees to land and is not aided by Hákon as in *Hkr.*
8. In *Hkr.* King Haraldr does not discourage Hákon’s viking plans as in *Msk.*
9. The separate adventure of Prince Magnús and Þórólfr mostrarskegg is found only in *Msk.* and not in *Hkr.*
10. The relationship between Hákon and Ragnhildr is much more fully developed in *Msk.*
11. Hákon retaliates against King Haraldr’s steward only in *Msk.*
12. King Sveinn gives the refugee Hákon three options only in *Msk.*
13. King Sveinn appoints Hákon as his jarl only in *Msk.*
14. King Sveinn lends King Steinkell the service of Hákon only in *Msk.*
15. Before the battle in Sweden there are successive weather reports only in *Msk.*
16. The anecdote about the cowardly Swedish lawman is found only in *Msk.*

17. After the battle Hákon reinforces his vengeance by disguising himself as a beggar and luring a Norwegian contingent into an ambush only in *Msk*.
18. King Haraldr's ships are trapped in the ice only in *Msk*.
19. There is an account of Hákon's descendants only in *Msk*.

A further crucial difference between the two accounts is that in *Heimskringla* Hákon is shown to be a descendant of the jarls of Hlaðir, whereas in *Morkinskinna* there is no mention of this relationship. Much of Bagge's analysis flows from this difference. According to *Morkinskinna* Hákon's father Ívarr is identified only as a former "lendr maðr" in the service of King Óláfr Haraldsson (ÍF 23: 211). By contrast *Heimskringla* (ÍF 28: 121) specifies that he is the son of Hákon jarl Sigurðarson's daughter and therefore in the direct line of the jarls in Þrændalög. Hákon Ívarsson is thus the great-grandson of Hákon jarl. Since the connection is not explicitly stated in *Morkinskinna*, Bagge views it as a conjecture in *Heimskringla*. It is, however, possible that the failure to mention Hákon Ívarsson's genealogy was simply an omission on the part of the author of *Morkinskinna*.

A resolution of the matter depends on whether we believe that *Hákonar saga* is earlier or later than *Heimskringla*. If it is earlier, as is argued here, the author of *Heimskringla* had no latitude for conjecture because Ívarr's relationship to the jarls of Hlaðir is plainly stated at the outset of the first fragment of *Hákonar saga*: "Hann [Ívarr] var son Sigriðar dóttur Hákonar Hlaðajarls."<sup>4</sup> The author of *Heimskringla* seems largely to copy that sentence (ÍF 28: 121). It is therefore tempting to believe that Hákon's lineage is an omission in *Morkinskinna* rather than a conjecture in *Heimskringla*. Furthermore, there is an indication at the end of Hákon's story in *Morkinskinna* (ÍF 33: 269) that the author was well aware of Hákon's distinguished ancestry: "En Hákon jarl þótti vera inn mesti rausnarmaðr, ok hét dóttir hans Sunnefa, en sonr hét Hákon er átti dóttur Sveins konungs Úlfssonar, ok var þeira son Eiríkr lamb Danakonungr." That Hákon Ívarsson was the father-in-law of a Danish king is sufficient warrant of his exalted ancestry, and there is no compelling reason to look for a genealogy other than the one documented in *Hákonar saga* and *Heimskringla*. The author of *Morkinskinna* simply failed to men-

4. *Hákonar saga Ívarssonar*, ed. Jón Helgason and Jakob Benediktsson, p. 3.

tion it or thought that it was common knowledge and not in need of specification.

Sverre Bagge views the differences between *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla* in the light of scribal revisions, but we must bear in mind that there is a vivid contrast between the close alignment of *Hákonar saga* and *Heimskringla* on the one hand and the quite loose correspondence between *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla* on the other hand. The former alignment makes a textual connection virtually certain, but the same cannot be said of *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla*. Here the evidence of textual connection is less decisive; the similarities will have greater weight for some readers, but for others the differences will outweigh the similarities. In our translation of *Morkinskinna* Kari Ellen Gade and I chose the latter option and decided that the loose similarity between *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla* was explicable from a common oral tradition rather than a textual connection.<sup>5</sup> This is a problematical solution because the invocation of oral tradition always involves an unknown quantity. Explanation from an oral source is necessarily speculative and hypothetical. Several scholars have nonetheless thought that an oral story is the best explanation of the partial correspondence between *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla* (footnote 2). If that is the case, the common oral story may have included the following elements:

1. raiding in Denmark in some form
2. the snake episode in some form
3. the introduction of Ívarr and his son Hákon
4. the Battle of Niz
5. the flight or escape of King Sveinn
6. King Haraldr's sparing of Finnur Árnason
7. the sheltering of King Sveinn with a farmer or an old woman
8. King Haraldr's resentment of the praise accorded Hákon
9. a proposed marriage of Ragnhildr to Hákon
10. Ragnhildr's demurrals because of the discrepancy in rank
11. King Haraldr's renegeing on the title of jarl
12. Hákon's defection to King Sveinn
13. Hákon's killing of King Sveinn's nephew Ásmundr
14. the marriage or reconciliation of Hákon with Ragnhildr
15. King Haraldr's envy of Hákon's success at Niz
16. the campaigning of King Haraldr and Hákon in Sweden

5. *Morkinskinna*, trans. Andersson and Gade, pp. 15–19.

17. the damaging effect of the cold on Hákon's forces
18. Hákon's rout
19. Hákon's loss and retrieval of King Magnús's standard

One difficulty in speculating on an oral story is that the story would have been told differently each time, with differing episodes and differing sequences. What is listed here purports to show only those episodes that seem to have been known to both authors. There would have been others as well, depending on the teller. If we believe that the author of *Heimskringla* made direct use of *Morkinskinna*, then we must conclude that he took some episodes from this written source and others from oral tradition. We cannot do without some reliance on oral tradition either way. The argument here, however, is that *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla* are fundamentally independent and that, since the sequence of episodes in *Heimskringla* matches what we find in the "Compendium" of *Hákonar saga Ívarssonar*, the content of the episodes is likely to have been taken over from the same source.

### The Testimony of the Stanzas

One of the key factors in considering both oral tradition and textual interrelationship is skaldic verse. It is often assumed that stanzas were plucked from oral tradition, but there is no reason not to entertain the possibility that they could also have set down in writing, with or without commentary, so as to make them more readily accessible.<sup>6</sup> However they were transmitted, there are eight stanzas and two half stanzas in the fragments of *Hákonar saga Ívarssonar*, and we have seen that this may be the earliest version of the story. The stanzas are cited here by page number from the edition of Kari Ellen Gade and are identified by the first line:<sup>7</sup>

1. Gegn skyli herr, sem hugnar (p. 123)  
(Þjóðólfr Arnórsson)
2. Hér sék upp inn orva (p. 47)  
(Haraldr Sigurðarson)

6. See Bjarne Fidjestøl, *Det norrøne fyrstediktet*, pp. 45–60.

7. Cited from *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 2: From c. 1035 to c. 1300*, Part 1, ed. Kari Ellen Gade (2009).

3. Rjóðandi mun ráða (p. 48)  
(Haraldr Sigurðarson)
4. Skeið sák framm at flœði (p. 150)  
(Þjóðólfr Arnórsson)
5. Slyngr laugardag lǫngu (p. 151)  
(Þjóðólfr Arnórsson)
6. Rétt kann ræði slíta (p. 152)  
(Þjóðólfr Arnórsson)
7. Sorgar veit, áðr slíti (p. 154)  
(Þjóðólfr Arnórsson)
8. Sagði hitt, es hugði, (p. 360)  
(Steinn Herdísarson)
9. Lét vingjafa veitir (p. 125)  
(Þjóðólfr Arnórsson)
10. Hét á oss, þás úti, (p. 366)  
(Steinn Herdísarson)

There is a remarkably close correspondence between these stanzas and the ones found in *Heimskringla* (ÍF 28: stanzas 114, 115, 116, 120, 121, 122, 123, 127, 128, and 130). Where the prose of the two texts can be matched, there are exactly the same stanzas in exactly the same order. The borrowing could be in either direction, but *Heimskringla* has a particularly extensive collection of verse, and it may be easier to believe that *Heimskringla* made additions than that *Hákonar saga* made subtractions, specifically of stanzas 124–26 in *Heimskringla*. In any event the agreement between the two texts is strikingly close and may reinforce the idea of a textual relationship.

On the other hand, the collection of stanzas in *Morkinskinna* is markedly different from the sequences in *Hákonar saga* and *Heimskringla*. The first two stanzas in *Morkinskinna* match two of the first three stanzas in *Hákonar saga*, but they are in reverse order. Here the resemblance ceases. Of the remaining seven stanzas in *Hákonar saga*, *Morkinskinna* has only two (ÍF 33: 244–45 [stanzas 106 and 108]). There is, as we would expect, a close match among *Morkinskinna*, *Fagrskinna*, and *Heimskringla*, with each copying the preceding text, but the perfect correspondence between the fragments of *Hákonar saga* and *Heimskringla* over against the imperfect correspondence between *Hákonar saga* and *Morkinskinna* is telling. The comparison may lead us to believe that *Hákonar saga* and *Heimskringla* are closely related texts, whereas *Morkinskinna* (and its derivatives) are more remotely connected.

The evidence of the stanzas shows in effect that there are two branches in the tradition, with *Hákonar saga* and *Heimskringla* in one branch and *Morkinskinna* in the other branch and rubbing off on *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*. The branches intertwine to the extent that *Heimskringla* participates in both, but the contrast between *Hákonar saga* and *Morkinskinna* shows that the branches are also separable and that the authors of *Hákonar saga* and *Morkinskinna* drew from the skaldic repertory independently from each other. This harnessing of the skaldic tradition must have occurred early; if *Hákonar saga* were a late text, it is hard to see how the author would have escaped the dominant skaldic branch in *Morkinskinna*, *Fagrskinna*, and *Heimskringla*.

## Conclusion

Sverre Bagge proposes a late date for *Hákonar saga Ívarssonar*, but *Heimskringla*'s apparent reliance both on the narrative sequence and the stanza sequence of *Hákonar saga* persuades me that the text must be early. Exactly how early is the question. *Hákonar saga* is not the model for either *Morkinskinna* or *Fagrskinna*. It could therefore be as late as ca. 1230, but it could also be earlier. Finnur Jónsson suggested that it might be a sequel (“etslags fortsættelse”) to *\*Hlaðajarla saga*, and Jón Helgason and Jakob Benediktsson were in agreement.<sup>8</sup> The connection is attractive because the tale is so clearly centered on a jarl and the jarl's relationship to kings. We could also imagine that *Hákonar saga* is not so much a sequel as a conclusion of *\*Hlaðajarla saga*. The drawback in Finnur Jónsson's suggestion of a sequel is that saga writers seem not to have been in the habit of providing sequels, unless we wish to invoke “Bolla þátrr” as a sequel to *Laxdæla saga*. On the other hand the analogies in focus and theme between *Hákonar saga* and *\*Hlaðajarla saga* are quite compelling.

It may seem odd that, just once, an Icelandic writer produced a separate saga on a Norwegian jarl.<sup>9</sup> It might help to relieve that anomaly if we consider the saga as an appendage to *\*Hlaðajarla saga*, which was manifestly focused on Norwegian jarls. It would also explain why

8. Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie* (1923), pp. 633, 637; *Hákonar saga Ívarssonar*, ed. Jón Helgason and Jakob Benediktsson, pp. XXVI–XXVIII.

9. Jón Helgason and Jakob Benediktsson, p. V; Sverre Bagge, 2014: 15.

Hákon's story is so closely tied to the life of Einarr Þambarskelfir. I argued a few years ago that \**Hlaðajarla saga* concluded with the death of Einarr and his son Eindriði.<sup>10</sup> That saga is lost, but my hypothetical reconstruction of the plot suggests that it must have been about the dissension between kings and jarls. *Hákonar saga* belongs in that context and is well designed to reinforce the theme of dissension.

This context might also facilitate the dating problem. I argued for a date between 1209 and 1220 for \**Hlaðajarla saga*. If *Hákonar saga* was written toward the end of that period, we might understand better why *Hákonar saga* and *Morkinskinna* tell the same story so differently. They could have been written at the same time without reference to each other. Nonetheless, they have a similar separatist outlook that may have been characteristic of the time in which they were written. The first focuses on the regional assertiveness of jarls, especially in Þrændalög, while the second focuses on a growing sense of Icelandic self-consciousness.

A byproduct of my conclusion is that the accounts in *Hákonar saga Ívarssonar* and *Morkinskinna* are oral variants. If this is the case, a comparison of the two texts may provide instructive clues about the problem of Icelandic storytelling. In the first place, it shows that oral storytelling could be quite extended. In the case of Hákon Ívarsson it could account for most of a man's life, from the age of 18 down to Hákon's ultimate acceptance at Óláfr kyrri's court after Haraldr Sigurðarson's death in 1066. It could provide a detailed account of his adventures and battle experiences, but it could also incorporate domestic scenes and personal interactions, both positive and negative. The episodes could include dialogue and entertaining exchanges, as in King Sveinn's stay with the Halland farmer Karl (or an old woman) or King Haraldr's rallying of the outraged Finnur Árnason or the discountenancing of the cowardly Swedish lawman Þorfinnr. The story could also raise moral issues, straight dealing exemplified by Hákon, and arrant trickery exemplified by King Haraldr. There was latitude for serious social issues as well, for example the balancing of Ragnhildr's fondness for Hákon with her preoccupation with her own social station. The story could trace failure and vindication in a man's personal career or, on the international stage, a sequence of war and peace between kings. It could be dramatic, as in the lead-up to the battle in Sweden, or thoughtful in the domestic portraits

10. See "The First Written Sagas of Kings and Chieftains," pp. 65–82.

of Hákon and Ragnhildr. There was latitude not only for the recounting of events but also for rumination about their implications.

Oral tradition seems therefore to have accommodated all the moods and narrative resources that we associate with literary storytelling. The extrapolation of an oral outline underlying *Hákonar saga* and *Morkinskinna* is perhaps the fullest illustration of how a detailed oral tradition could be converted into a written saga. Figures such as Edvard Bull, Jón Helgason, and Jakob Benediktsson belonged to generations that were too reserved about the concept of oral narrative to consider its shape, but in this century we are perhaps more open to the possibility that there was relatively stable storytelling in medieval Iceland.

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Theodore M. Andersson  
850 Webster Street #823  
Palo Alto, California 94301  
tma@stanford.edu