**Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*

Reconstructing the lost original of a saga from the Sturlunga compilation

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Abstract— Scholars of pre-Modern literature are becoming increasingly aware of the necessity to include the study of lost texts within literary histories (Matthews 2020, 230). The study of lost literary works (eclipsaphilology) can make use of techniques belonging to the field of textual criticism such as stemmatics, but is able to go beyond them in reconstructing the contents, and not necessarily form, when – for example – disentangling remnants of source texts from compilations. This mode of study has long been practiced in Bible Studies, for example by the proponents of the documentary hypothesis. In this article, I attempt to lay out the contents of the lost original of a component text of the fourteenth-century *Sturlunga saga*, namely: *Þórðar saga kakala* (**Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*). The approach taken to reconstructing the content of the lost original of *Þórðar saga kakala* in this article is an inversion of redaction criticism. It seeks after the contents of the source text, **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*, by taking the contents of *Þórðar saga kakala* in the extant manuscripts and reversing the compilational and editorial processes in play throughout its transmission history. This critique makes use of the categories of evidence used in textual criticism (external and internal evidence), but is not interested in the production of an edition of the lost original.

Keywords—Contemporary sagas, Icelandic sagas, *Sturlunga-öld*, *Sturlunga saga*, *Þórðar saga kakala*, *Þórður kakali*

I. INTRODUCTION

Scholars of pre-Modern literature are becoming increasingly aware of the necessity to include the study of lost texts within literary histories (Matthews 2020, 230). The study of lost literary works (eclipsaphilology) can make use of techniques belonging to the field of textual criticism such as stemmatics, but is able to go beyond them in reconstructing the contents, and not necessarily form, when – for example – disentangling remnants of source texts from compilations. This mode of study has long been practiced in Bible Studies, for example by the proponents of the documentary hypothesis.

In this article, I attempt to lay out the contents of the lost original of a component text of the fourteenth-century *Sturlunga saga*, namely: *Þórðar saga kakala* (**Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*). The approach taken to reconstructing the content of the lost original of *Þórðar saga kakala* in this article is an inversion of redaction criticism. It seeks after the contents of the source text, **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*, by taking the contents of *Þórðar saga kakala* in the extant manuscripts and reversing the compilational and editorial processes in play throughout its transmission history. This critique makes use of the categories of evidence used in

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Nearly all the earliest modern scholars were of the view that *Þórðar saga kakala* covers more-or-less the same timeline as **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*. Björn M. Ólsen expressed the view that **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* encompassed an account of the years 1242 to 1256, while Pétur Sigurðsson claimed it covered an even shorter period, suggesting the original saga encompassed the period 1242 to 1250 or possibly only 1247 (Björn M. Ólsen 1902, 348; Pétur Sigurðsson 1933-5, 91, 148 & 151).

However, their successors Kristian Kålund and Jón Jóhannesson took the opposite view and separately declared the opening of *Þórðar saga kakala* to be unnatural and unusual, conjecturing that it opened with Þórður's birth and upbringing as well as his sojourn in Norway between 1237 and 1242 (Kålund 1901, 296f; Jón Jóhannesson 1946, xli).

Úlfar Bragason has noted that most scholars today are in agreement with Kristian Kålund and Jón Jóhannesson that the narrative of **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* reported on a much longer period of history than *Þórðar saga kakala* (Úlfar Bragason 2010, 101). Be that as it may, it is considered that **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* need not necessarily have been much more lengthy than *Þórðar saga kakala* in terms of word-count.

The only researcher in recent times to express a belief that *Þórðar saga kakala* is essentially representative of the content of the original saga is Einar Már Jónsson, who thinks the narrative had been left unfinished by its author in 1249 (Einar Már Jónsson 2006, 51). I do not give much regard to Einar's resurrection of this traditional view, but it is nevertheless important for us to assess whether or not the now dominant modern view of **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*'s content is supported by the evidence.

III. ÞÓRÐAR SAGA KAKALA

A. Synopsis (from White 2020b, 12-4)

Þórðar saga kakala begins in *medias res*. Chapter 1 is a prologue of sorts, summarising events in Iceland following the seizure of two of Þórður's cousins, Órækja Snorrason and Sturla Þórðarson, at Hvítárbrú in the year 1242. The chapter reports that Órækja and Gissur Þorvaldsson travelled abroad and tells how Kolbeinn *ungi* subjugated the Western Quarter of Iceland to his leadership. Chapter 2 describes Þórður *kakali*'s arrival back in Iceland in September 1242. Chapters

2-5 provide an account of Þórður's attempt to gather support for his case against Kolbeinn and Gissur for the deaths of his father and brothers at Örylgstaðir in 1238.

Chapters 6-7 explain the course of events when, after gathering an army, Þórður immediately invades the Southern Quarter. This campaign comes off as a success in chapter 7, and chapters 8-10 describe the escape of Þórður and his men from Kolbeinn, who has been made aware of the incursion by Hjalti biskupsson, the interim leader of Árnesþing.

Chapters 11-22 tell of a series of escalating skirmishes between Þórður's and Kolbeinn's sides, and the raising of navies by each. Following a devastating attack on Vatnsdalur by Þórður, Kolbeinn avenges himself by pillaging Dalir and the region around Reykhólar, before hunting down Þórður's brother, Tumi *yngr*i, and killing him, in chapters 23-6. This outrage, and the harsh measures imposed on the Eyfirðingar set the stage for chapters 27-35, which describe the course of the naval engagement called the Battle of Húnaflói and the amphibious manoeuvres which followed.

Though the Battle of Húnaflói proves undecisive, a partial resolution between the two sides is reached in chapters 36-8 by Kolbeinn returning Þórður's patrimony to him and promptly dying shortly after. Þórður establishes himself as the leader of Eyjafjörður while Brandur Kolbeinsson takes the helm in Skagafjörður. Chapters 39-41 describe escalating tensions between Þórður and Brandur, culminating in a second confrontation at the Battle of Haugsnes in chapters 42-4.

Having summarily executed Brandur following a catastrophic defeat of the Skagfirðingar, Þórður and Gissur agree to resolve their own dispute through the mediation of the Norwegian king in chapter 45. The two travel to Norway and submit their case to the Norwegian king's judgment in chapter 46. Chapter 47 tells what happened next in Iceland and dates the death of Brandur. Returning to Norway in chapter 48, it is stated that Cardinal William of Sabina decided the dispute in Þórður's favour, and that he was to be sent by the Norwegian king to promote the royal cause with the assistance of the new bishop elect of Hólar, Henrik.

Chapter 49 summarises Þórður's time in Iceland during the period 1247-50. Most of the narrative is taken up with the matter of how he established leadership over the whole country and notes some key events during his ascendancy. Þórður and Bishop Henrik, however, fall out, for the latter believes the former to have laboured more on his own behalf than the king's. The consequence is that Bishop Henrik goes to Norway and makes the case against Þórður before King Hákon in 1249. Chapter 49 ends abruptly in the winter of 1249-50 by telling how few support Þórður's case in Norway.

Chapter 50 – the last – picks up the story four years after the end of chapter 49, with Gissur's arrival in Norway in 1254 after the Flugumýri Arson on 22 October 1253. After a confrontation with Þórður at the court, we hear about Þórður's activity in Norway as a sheriff, his popularity, and then an account of his death.

B. Transmission history

Þórðar saga kakala is preserved in *Sturlunga saga*, a compilation of texts mostly centred on the feuds of the Icelandic political élite during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The *Sturlunga saga* canon comprises the following texts: *Geirmundar þáttur heljarskinns*, *Þorgils saga og Hafliða*, *Ættartölur*, *Sturlu saga*, *Íslendinga saga*, *Prestssaga Guðmundar góða Arasonar*, *Guðmundar saga dýra*, *Haukdæla þáttur*, *Hrafns saga Sveinbjarnarsonar*, *Þórðar saga kakala*, *Þorgils saga skarða*, *Svinfellinga saga* and *Sturlu þáttur*. It is worth noting that *Sturlunga saga* is not comprised of a selection of self-contained narratives. This is because many of its component texts have been interlaced to place events in a mostly chronological order, thus forming a single narrative.

Sturlunga saga is extant in forty-nine manuscripts, only two of which are medieval vellums. Given *Þórðar saga kakala*'s inclusion in the two medieval manuscripts, it is self-evident that it was introduced during the compilation of the original *Sturlunga saga* (**Sturlunga saga*).

The identity of the compiler of **Sturlunga saga* is obscure, though it is widely held to have been either Þórður Narfason or Þorsteinn Snorrason who compiled it at some point during the early- to mid-fourteenth century (Helgi Þorláksson 2012, 273). Þórður Narfason (d. 1308), one of the Skarðverjar, was lawman twice: the first time before and the second at the turn of the fourteenth century. Importantly, it is known that Þórður studied law at the lawman Sturla Þórðarson's knee during the winter of 1271-2 (Sigurður Sigurmundsson 1963, 33). Þorsteinn böllóttur Snorrason (d. 1351), one of the Melamenn, was abbot of Helgafell from 1344 (though consecrated in 1345) until his death (Helgi Þorláksson 2012, 56).

In addition to *Þórðar saga kakala*, **Sturlunga saga* is thought to have included the following texts: *Geirmundar þáttur heljarskinns*, *Þorgils saga og Hafliða*, *Ættartölur*, *Sturlu saga*, *Íslendinga saga*, *Prestssaga Guðmundar góða Arasonar*, *Guðmundar saga dýra*, *Haukdæla þáttur*, *Hrafns saga Sveinbjarnarsonar* and *Svinfellinga saga*. Guðrún Nordal highlights that *Þorgils saga skarða* and *Sturlu þáttur* were introduced into *Sturlunga saga* during the late fourteenth century and that these two texts were not part of **Sturlunga saga* (Guðrún Nordal 2006, 308 & 311). Peter Hallberg has argued that *Þorgils saga skarða* and *Sturlu þáttur* were written by the same author. Guðni Jónsson notes that it is believed Þórður Hítunesingur was the author of *Þorgils saga skarða* and *Sturlu þáttur*, and that he wrote during the period 1275-80 (Guðni Jónsson 1954, xi).

Íslendinga saga is the largest component text of *Sturlunga saga*, and it is certain that a version of it formed the larger part of **Sturlunga saga*. This is because its text constitutes a substantial portion of all extant versions of *Sturlunga saga*: no doubt this is why the traditional name for the compilation is *Íslendinga saga hin mikla*. For example, it is used as the title for the seventeenth-century manuscript of *Sturlunga saga* AM 116 fol. Occasionally, the title used was simply *Íslendinga saga* (e.g. AM 115 fol., 1r.)

Íslendinga saga describes political events in Iceland during the eighty-year period from the death of Hvamm-Sturla Þórðarson in the early 1180s until the end of the Commonwealth period in the early 1260s. The original (**Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka*) was composed by Sturla Þórðarson (Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir 2017, 8). As it is known that Sturla died in 1284, we have a clear *terminus ante quem* for **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka* (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson et al. 2017, 6). There has been debate over how much of **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka* Sturla wrote before his demise.

Björn M. Ólsen and Pétur Sigurðsson both believed that **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka* did not go beyond 1255 (Björn M. Ólsen 1902, 385ff; Pétur Sigurðsson 1933-5, 10ff). Björn thought the post-1255 material in *Sturlunga saga* which editors have long classified as part of **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka* had originally belonged to a lost **Gissurar saga og Skagfirðinga*. Pétur believed that **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka* was finished off after Sturla's death by the compiler due to the patchy quality which characterises the narrative of *Íslendinga saga* from the mid-1250s onwards. Jón Jóhannesson disagreed with Björn and Pétur, arguing that Sturla did write all of **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka*, and, moreover that it reflects in its surviving form (i.e., *Íslendinga saga*) the fact that Sturla deliberately left gaps, due to an assumption on his part that readers might find accounts of this history already written in other sagas (Jón Jóhannesson 1946, xxxiv-xli); however, this is unlikely to be correct, for we know that *Íslendinga saga* is not identical to **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka*. More recently, R. George Thomas has upheld Pétur's view that Sturla did not live to write **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka* beyond 1255 and that it was finished off by Þórður Narfason after Sturla's death to the best of his ability (Thomas 1970, 23). Regardless of whether or not Þórður was the person responsible for compiling **Sturlunga saga*, I think it likely – given his pupillage under Sturla – that he would have been the one who attempted to finalise **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka* if his teacher truly died before completion. Perhaps Þórður was the one who endeavoured to finish **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka* by piecing together notes left behind by his former teacher and appending them to what Sturla had already drafted, while Þorsteinn Snorrason was the compiler of **Sturlunga saga*?

The other texts in *Sturlunga saga* are inserted at the front and posterior of *Íslendinga saga* or have been woven into it; they also interlace with each other at times. Wherever content in **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* or other independent versions of sagas in the *Sturlunga saga* canon was mirrored somewhere in **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka*, it was almost always redacted from one or the other by the compiler during the creation of **Sturlunga saga*, leaving a single component text to provide the information (Jónas Kristjánsson et al. 2007, 188). The same applied when any of the texts which were compiled into **Sturlunga saga* contained the same content as each other in independent form. Nonetheless, the compiler did not do this in every case.

There are many possible explanations for why the compiler kept two or more accounts of certain events, the most probable being: hasty composition; oversight due to human error because of the scale of the compilation; an aspiration to include as detailed accounts as possible; an awareness by the compiler of the proper due diligence required of him within medieval Icelandic historiographical practice to note contradictory reports, so that his audience might know, and decide between, alternative perspectives on what happened; and a desire to preserve narrative flow or other stylistic qualities which may have been destroyed by editing that was too heavy-handed.

Beyond redacting duplicate content, the compiler further edited the texts he included in **Sturlunga saga*. Among the texts in **Sturlunga saga*, only *Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar* has survived to the present day in two complete recensions independent of the *Sturlunga saga* manuscript tradition, one of which is an abridgement, but which are both known to

scholars by the title *Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar hin sérstaka*. Comparison of *Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar* with *Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar hin sérstaka* is valuable for working out the working method of the compiler of **Sturlunga saga* (Jónas Kristjánsson et al. 2007, 193). Additionally, there are several *Guðmundar sögur* – hagiographic accounts of Bishop Guðmundur Arason's life – apart from the *Sturlunga saga* canon's *Prestssaga Guðmundar góða Arasonar* in existence (Stefán Karlsson 1983; Skórzewska 2011). *Guðmundar sögur* evidently derive most of their content from some recension of *Sturlunga saga* (as well as other extant and lost texts), though it is not altogether clear whether or not the extra materials they contain come from an independent version of *Prestssaga Guðmundar góða Arasonar* or elsewhere (Sigurdson 2016, 40). Interestingly, *Guðmundar saga A* may be more representative of **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka* than *Íslendinga saga*, giving further insights into the compiler's working method (Zimmerling 2005, 560-1). Still further, *Þorgils saga skarða* is preserved in an independent fragment (NRA 56, of which only two leaves survive, dated to c. 1300), but that saga was not part of **Sturlunga saga* (Jónas Kristjánsson et al. 2007, 193). The comparison of the surviving leaves of NRA 56 with the version of *Þorgils saga skarða* in the *Sturlunga saga* manuscript tradition does, however, underscore the method of the editor of *Reykjafjarðarbók*, whom first introduced it into the compilation.

Returning to *Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar* and *Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar hin sérstaka*: comparisons between the independent and compiled versions of the saga carried out by Úlfar Bragason, Guðrún Nordal, Ásdís Egilsdóttir, and Torfi H. Tulinius have found the former far less religious in character than the latter (Úlfar Bragason 1988; Guðrún Nordal 2000, 221f; Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2004; Torfi H. Tulinius 2016, 94). Margaret Cormack has also noted that the compiler's decision to incorporate a version of the saga of Bishop Guðmundur *sans* the miracles in its independent versions, but neither of the sagas of the other saintly bishops of Iceland Þorlákur and Jón, may indicate that a distinction was being made 'between the *religious* and the *historical*' in selecting content for inclusion (Margaret Cormack 2005, 27).

These scholars appear to have hit on a valid conclusion given the secularity (and brevity) of *Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar* when compared with *Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar hin sérstaka*:

TABLE I. COMPARISON OF *HRAFN SAGA SVEINBJARNARSONAR HIN SÉRSTAKA* WITH *HRAFN SAGA SVEINBJARNARSONAR*

<i>Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar hin sérstaka</i> ^a	<i>Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar</i>
1: Preface to the saga with distinct religious overtones.	Content not included.
2: Enumerates the ancestors and family of Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson at length.	Content not included.
3: Describes Hrafn's pursuits and pours praise on his positive personal qualities and acclaims by foreign dignitaries.	Content not included.
4: Describes Hrafn's time spent abroad as a young man,	Content not included.

<i>Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar hin sérstaka^a</i>	<i>Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar</i>
including his pilgrimage to Rome.	
5: Markús of Rauðasundur is introduced into the saga.	Content not included.
6: Describes the dispute between Markús and Ingi Magnússon.	Content not included.
7: Describes the slaying of Markús and its aftermath.	Content not included.
8: The Vatnsfirðingar are introduced into the saga, importantly Þorvaldur Snorrason.	Content not included.
9: Þorvaldur Snorrason attempts to attack Magnús the priest but he gets away so he just loots the farm. Þorvaldur slays Ljótur. Þorvaldur goes to meet Hrafn who is very generous to him.	Content not included.
10: Ragnheiður's prophecy recounted (telling Hrafn than Þorvaldur is not to be trusted) and Þórður of Vatnsfjörður dies. Þorvaldur goes abroad after the death of Þórður and when he gets back he takes over the farm of Vatnsfjörður and his brother's former chieftaincy.	Content not included.
11: Hrafn goes abroad with Bishop-elect Guðmundur. The saga makes much of telling the reader about how Hrafn and Guðmundur were the best of friends. When Hrafn arrives home he and Þorvaldur visit each other and their friendship appears to be very strong.	This content is very abbreviated (for all intents and purposes omitted) in <i>Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar</i> and is combined with that of chapter 12 of <i>Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar hin sérstaka</i> .
12: Conflict over a whale carcass and other disputes in the Vestfirðir which Hrafn and Þorvaldur are involved in.	<i>Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar</i> mirrors this content.
13: Discord erupts between Hrafn and Þorvaldur due to the latter's villainy.	<i>Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar</i> mirrors this content.
14: Reports that only Hrafn and Þórður Sturluson did not take part in the attack orchestrated by Þorvaldur Gissurarson and Sighvatur Sturluson against Bishop Guðmundur; however, it is related that Þorvaldur Snorrason took part in that attack. Omens are reported.	<i>Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar</i> mirrors report of the omens but completely omits the content relating to the attack on Bishop Guðmundur.
15: Þorvaldur attempts to attack Hrafn.	Content abbreviated.
16: Þorvaldur is outlawed over the whale dispute.	Content abbreviated.
17: Þorvaldur attempts to attack Hrafn again.	Content abbreviated.

<i>Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar hin sérstaka^a</i>	<i>Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar</i>
18: Omens prior to the death of Hrafn are related.	Content abbreviated.
19: Þorvaldur slays Hrafn.	Content abbreviated.
20: Enumerates the descendants of Hrafn at length.	Content not included.

^a Chapter numbers from Guðni Jónsson 1945.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that secularisation was not the aim of the compiler, but a consequence of the compiler's process, which was extracting feud narratives from those of his chosen texts which contained them for inclusion in the compilation (Úlfar Bragason 2010, 186). In selecting which component text to provide an account of feud where it existed in more than one, the compiler appears to have chosen the one which had provided the most detailed report of events in independent form. For example, the compiler did not include **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka*'s account of Þórður kakali's career in Iceland during the years 1242-50, choosing instead to incorporate **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*'s narrative, which likely provided more detail than the former.

Úlfar Bragason emphasises that the feuds the compiler was interested in were between Icelanders, and that he therefore substantially abridged or redacted content discussing foreign travel except when they were explicitly relevant to his focus on Icelandic disputes, though these may nevertheless have also been shortened (Úlfar Bragason 2010, 186). Whilst Helgi Þorláksson has recently put forward a different view on the purpose of **Sturlunga saga* whilst proposing Þorsteinn Snorrason as its compiler, most scholars have concluded that the collection of feud narratives were intended by the compiler of **Sturlunga saga* to illustrate the social disorder caused by feud and to explore methods for re-establishing peace and order (Tranter 1987, 218-21; Guðrún Nordal 2000, 226; Ármann Jakobsson 2003, 337f; Úlfar Bragason 2010, 266f). It is worth noting, however, that this "consensus" view of the purpose of **Sturlunga saga* does not necessarily require Þórður Narfason to have been the compiler.

If we accept that **Sturlunga saga*'s compiler was primarily using feud narratives to explore themes of social disorder and peace strategies, then we need to account for why the compilation included texts which lack feud narratives (i.e., *Geirmundar þáttur heljarskinns*, *Ættartölur*, *Haukdæla þáttur*, and *Prestssaga Guðmundar Arasonar*). The explanation is simple and rather mundane: when putting together **Sturlunga saga*, the compiler also incorporated and wrote additional texts without feud narratives in them to provide both background information for the accounts of conflict in **Sturlunga saga*. Additionally, it is conceivable that these texts helped reinforce his moral and ideological message; for example, the opening scenes of *Geirmundar þáttur heljarskinns* heavily suggest a hereditary determinist outlook, which concords with the monarchic solution to endemic conflict (i.e., the king's peace).

Two copies of **Sturlunga saga* from the fourteenth century are extant. The vellums are known as *Króksfjarðarbók* (AM 122 a fol.) and *Reykjarfjarðarbók* (AM 122 b fol.), or simply I and II. *Króksfjarðarbók* was written during the 1350s or 1360s in western Iceland (Úlfar Bragason 1986, 11). Stefán

Karlsson has stated that the hand that wrote AM 399 4to (*Guðmundar saga hin elzta*; dated to 1330-50) is the same one that wrote AM 122 a fol. (Stefán Karlsson, 1983, xli). *Króksfjarðarbók* originally comprised 141 leaves, but we only have 110 of these (Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir 2017, 16). Consequently, there are several large lacunae in *Króksfjarðarbók*. Luckily, there are many surviving paper copies descended from *Króksfjarðarbók*, collectively known as the Ip class, which allow us to fill the lacunae with a degree of certainty. The earliest of the Ip manuscripts is AM 114 fol., written c. 1630 by Jón Gissurarson (Úlfar Bragason 1986, 12). AM 114 fol. is the archetype for the rest of that class, though it is worth noting that AM 114 fol. is a bad copy (Viljoen 1995, xxxiii).

Reykjarfjarðarbók was written c. 1375 at Akur in Skagafjörður and originally comprised 180 or more leaves (Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir 2017, 16). *Reykjarfjarðarbók* barely made it through to the present day; indeed, most of it did not: Már Jónsson tells how it 'was torn to pieces in 1676-1679 as it was damaged by moisture. The owner, a well-to-do farmer, gave leaves to his friends for use as book covers' (Már Jónsson 2010, 307). Because of this, only thirty badly damaged leaves of *Reykjarfjarðarbók* survive today, due to Árni Magnússon's diligent collection of them at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Several paper copies descended from *Reykjarfjarðarbók* were made during the seventeenth century and later, known as the IIp class of manuscripts. In c. 1635, Björn of Skarðsá made a copy of *Reykjarfjarðarbók*, the now lost **Skarðsárþók*, which was the archetype of the IIp recensions of *Sturlunga saga* (not to be confused with *Skarðsárþók*, also written by Björn, which is a version of *Landnámabók*). Björn drew mostly on *Reykjarfjarðarbók*, but also interpolated from *Króksfjarðarbók*, noting what material came from which manuscript (Guðrún P. Helgadóttir 1993, 58; Viljoen 1995, xxxiv). Björn also wrote a summary of **Skarðsárþók* in c. 1646 which still exists today and is called AM 439 4to (Guðrún P. Helgadóttir 1993, 60). A handful of manuscripts descended from **Skarðsárþók* are now extant, two of which are considered to be of particular importance. The first is Holm. Papp. 8 4to, composed by Halldór Guðmundsson in Eyjafjörður in c. 1650, which is highly likely to be a copy of **Skarðsárþók* (Guðrún P. Helgadóttir 1993, 59). The second is BL Add. 11,127, put together at Oddi in c. 1696, which is a direct copy of **Skarðsárþók* (Viljoen 1995, xxxiv). The IIp manuscripts give a fair idea of what *Reykjarfjarðarbók* was like in its complete form.

There are a few considerable differences between I/Ip and II/IIp recensions of *Sturlunga saga*. It is worth briefly noting and challenging Ólafía Einarisdóttir's view, based on evidence from four of the five earliest Icelandic annals (*Resensannáll*, *Høyersannáll*, *Skálholtsannáll* and *Konungsannáll*), that these variations were the consequence of the editors of *Króksfjarðarbók* and *Reykjarfjarðarbók* each copying selectively from **Sturlunga saga* (Ólafía Einarisdóttir 1968, 62-3). A major issue with Ólafía's conjecture is her assumption that **Sturlunga saga*'s *terminus post quem* of c. 1300 is representative of its actual date of writing, and, therefore, that the compilation precedes the production of the earliest Icelandic annals (Ólafía Einarisdóttir 1968, 47). It is important to note, though, that **Sturlunga saga* probably does precede *Skálholtsannáll* which is the fifth earliest Icelandic annal.

Recent research has undermined the older consensus about who compiled **Sturlunga saga*, indicating that the text could have been written at almost any point during the first half of the fourteenth century (Helgi Þorláksson 2012). Multiple candidates for compiler have been known about since at least the nineteenth century (cf. Guðbrandur Vigfússon 1878, ciii-cv) but for the most part Þórður Narfason had been considered likeliest to have been compiler up until recently.

Another issue is the fact that, even if some of the early annalists did rely upon **Sturlunga saga* as a source, there is no evidence to suggest that their content was solely derived from that text. Indeed the notion of one source here seems improbable. Thus, there is no good reason to suppose that the sources for *Króksfjarðarbók* and *Reykjarfjarðarbók* (other than **Sturlunga saga*) would not also have been available to the annalists.

Even though *Króksfjarðarbók* contains interpolations, these are few and minor; consequently, it is probably near to what **Sturlunga saga* must have been like. *Reykjarfjarðarbók*, for its part, is thought to have been more representative of the pre-compilation texts of the *Sturlunga saga* canon than *Króksfjarðarbók* (Björn M. Ólsen 1902, 196). This view can be substantiated through two arguments which indicate that the editor of *Reykjarfjarðarbók* consulted independent versions of the texts in **Sturlunga saga* while producing his or her manuscript of *Sturlunga saga*.

The first is Björn M. Ólsen's argument that because *Reykjarfjarðarbók* was far more religious in character than *Króksfjarðarbók* (and more detailed in most places – my own observation, which is supported by Guðrún Nordal 2010, 182-3 & 186-7), it must be a better indication of what the individual texts of *Sturlunga saga* were like before they were first compiled into **Sturlunga saga*, given what we discussed earlier about the compiler's working method. Nonetheless, it is important to temper this with an awareness that, apart from providing a basis on which to adjudicate nearness to **Sturlunga saga* or pre-compilation texts, some of the differences between *Króksfjarðarbók* and *Reykjarfjarðarbók* can also be interpreted as products of each manuscript's origins. Guðrún Nordal is particularly strong on the importance of understanding the divergences between the two *Sturlunga saga* vellums in their respective spatiotemporal contexts, as social, political and/or economic factors would have demanded that certain material be included or excluded (Guðrún Nordal 2006, 311-2). It could be argued for instance that aspects of *Reykjarfjarðarbók*'s heightened religiosity (compared with *Króksfjarðarbók*) could be explained by the Icelandic Church's pressure or influence on the editor. After all, the strongholds of the Northern Icelandic Benedictine School (at Þingeyrar and Munka-Þverá) were not far away from Akur.

The second argument which can be made in favour of the editor of *Reykjarfjarðarbók* having consulted independent versions of the texts in **Sturlunga saga* while producing his or her manuscript of *Sturlunga saga* is based on the identity of *Reykjarfjarðarbók*'s editor. Palaeographic evidence strongly suggests that *Reykjarfjarðarbók* was produced by Björn Brynjólfsson (and/or possibly his brother Benedikt) at Akur, which is thought to have housed a scriptorium (Stefán Karlsson 2000, 310). Björn is known to have written up to eleven of the medieval Icelandic manuscripts which have survived down to the present day (Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2005, 253). We may surmise that other texts

known to have been written by Björn might give an indication of the editorial approach taken to *Reykjarfjarðarbók*. As an example, let us consider Björn's manuscript AM 62 fol., a manuscript of *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar hin mesta*, which in all its recensions is the most extensive of the sagas centred on the life and deeds of King Olav Tryggvason of Norway (hence its name 'the greatest saga'). Elizabeth Ashman-Rowe notes that in making AM 62 fol., Björn took enhanced an early recension of *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* by supplementing it with material from *Færeyinga saga*, *Hallfredar saga*, *Jómsvíkinga saga* and *Landnámabók*, in addition to completely incorporating versions of *Helga þáttur Þórissonar* and *Norna-Gests þáttur* and expanding the conversion narrative with lost Latin material written by the monk Gunnlaugur Leifsson about Olav Tryggvason's attempts to spread Christianity (Ashman-Rowe 2005, 158). Therefore, Björn is known to have supplemented the saga books which he edited using numerous other texts on at least one prior occasion. The question now is whether or not Björn also did this when he edited *Reykjarfjarðarbók*.

We know from IIp that in complete form, *Reykjarfjarðarbók*'s account was almost always more detailed than *Króksfjarðarbók*'s (for a useful handlist, cf. Guðrún Nordal 2006, 307-8). For instance, notwithstanding that there is additional content in *Króksfjarðarbók*'s recension of *Þórðar saga kakala* which was not present in *Reykjarfjarðarbók* (e.g., some of the content about the incursion into Dalir around the time of Tumi's execution), let us consider that 'Tumi's execution [chapter 24 of *Þórðar saga kakala*] is described in more detail in' *Reykjarfjarðarbók* than it is in *Króksfjarðarbók* (Guðrún Nordal 2006, 307). We ought to be mindful of Ólafía Einarisdóttir's proposal that *Þórðar saga kakala* was shorter in *Reykjarfjarðarbók* than in *Króksfjarðarbók*, based on her interpretation of a marginal annotation in BL Add MS 11,127 which she suggests implies that chapters 47-9 were not present in the former of the two vellums (Ólafía Einarisdóttir 1968; 1995, 51; Kålund 1911, 101n1). My own view is that the wording in BL Add MS 11,127 – 'önnur saga jök þessu' ('another saga added to this') – refers only to chapter 47, given that this chapter is absent from AM 439 4to whereas 48 and 49 are not. It is not clear whether chapter 47 was a portion of **Sturlunga saga* that Björn decided not to copy into *Reykjarfjarðarbók* for some reason, or if it was an addition by the editor of *Króksfjarðarbók*.

Another example to show Björn's supplementary editorial approach is the case of chapters a-e (designated such by Kristian Kålund 1906-11, 116-9) of *Svinfellinga saga* in *Reykjarfjarðarbók* (as preserved by IIp). Chapters a-e are not present in *Króksfjarðarbók*. There has been much debate regarding the origins of chapters a-e. Pétur Sigurðsson asserts that chapters a, b, d and e were taken directly by the editor of *Reykjarfjarðarbók* from **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka*, while c was the editor's own creation using *Þorgils saga skarða* (Pétur Sigurðsson 1933-5, 94-9). Finding Pétur's view compelling with respect to the origins of chapters a-e, Grégory Cattaneo goes on to explain his view that the editor of *Reykjarfjarðarbók* must have thought these additions would serve to better integrate the remote easterners into their recension of *Sturlunga saga*, which has an overwhelming western and northern bias (Cattaneo 2016, 97). The origins of chapter c have proved controversial: while Jón Jóhannesson shared Pétur's point of view that it was written by the editor of *Reykjarfjarðarbók*, Björn M. Ólsen and Finnur Jónsson

were of the opinion that it came from **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* (Jón Jóhannesson 1946, xlvi; Björn M. Ólsen 1902, 469ff; Finnur Jónsson 1923, 730-3). In much more recent times, Úlfar Bragason has agreed with Björn and Finnur (Úlfar Bragason 1986, 78). Guðrún Nordal notes that *Reykjarfjarðarbók*'s editor evidently augmented his version of *Svinfellinga saga* material but has opposed Pétur's view, maintaining that chapters a, b, d and e cannot have come from among **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka* because the *Króksfjarðarbók* recension of *Sturlunga saga* does not contain said content anywhere (Guðrún Nordal 2006, 308; 2010, 183). Nordal instead holds that chapters a, b, d and e were the invention of the *Reykjarfjarðarbók* editor. Yet, Nordal does not consider the possibility that the original sagas from which *Sturlunga saga*'s constituent texts stemmed were most probably still extant and in circulation during the late fourteenth century. Moreover, the reasoning that **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka* cannot have contained chapters a, b, d and e because **Sturlunga saga* most probably did not is flawed, given what we know about the compiler's propensity to redact. It is plausible, therefore, that the information about Þórður from chapters a, b, d and e of *Reykjarfjarðarbók*'s recension of *Svinfellinga saga* came from **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka*, as Pétur Sigurðsson claims. If Ólafía Einarisdóttir's view that the editors of the fourteenth-century vellums copied selectively from **Sturlunga saga* is adopted, one may construe that this happened because the *Króksfjarðarbók* editor decided for some unknown reason to omit these parts of **Sturlunga saga*'s version of *Íslendinga saga*. As discussed above, I do not agree with Ólafía's view that the fourteenth-century editors selectively copied material: I think it is more likely that the *Reykjarfjarðarbók* editor simply added them to his recension using **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka*.

The supplementary details in *Reykjarfjarðarbók* attested in these two examples must have come from somewhere (even if it was simply the editor's imagination); nevertheless, it is unlikely – given what we know about the editor's identity – that the extensions were down to mere invention on his part. Moreover, *Reykjarfjarðarbók* includes recensions of *Þorgils saga skarða* and *Sturlu þáttur* unlike *Króksfjarðarbók*; thus, there is already hard evidence for the editor of *Reykjarfjarðarbók* consulting thirteenth century texts to augment his copy of **Sturlunga saga*. The editor of *Reykjarfjarðarbók* also added versions of *Jarteinasaga Guðmundar biskups* and *Árna saga biskups*. These were not inserted amongst the copy of *Sturlunga saga* in *Reykjarfjarðarbók*; consequently, *Jarteinasaga Guðmundar biskups* and *Árna saga biskups* should not be regarded as augmentations of the same type as *Þorgils saga skarða* and *Sturlu þáttur*. However, despite the different integrative process, this is still further evidence of *Reykjarfjarðarbók*'s editor consulting other texts to supplement his copy of *Sturlunga saga*. Consequently, it would make more sense if the editor of *Reykjarfjarðarbók* took his extra content from pre-compilation recensions of the texts in **Sturlunga saga*, including **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*.

IV. *ÞÓRÐAR SAGA KAKALA HIN MIKLA

A. The unpreserved opening chapters: the years c. 1233-42

Let us begin by considering the opening of *Þórðar saga kakala*. Chapter 1 opens by recapitulating the events discussed in the preceding chapters of *Íslendinga saga* in *Sturlunga saga*, such as the death of Snorri Sturluson, the banishment of

certain Sturlungar and allies, and Kolbeinn's seizing of power in Eyjafjörður and Western Iceland (*Sturlunga saga* 2010, 459). Úlfar Bragason has noted that this cannot be how **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* began as it lacks the features we expect to see at the beginning of a saga, commencing as it does *in medias res* (Úlfar Bragason 2010, 101). Nearly all sagas open with an ancestor narrative before introducing the protagonist. The ancestor narrative will explain where – or, rather, from what family stock – the titular character came from (recall that Icelandic society to this day makes use of patronymics), and the protagonist will typically be introduced as a young man (in rare cases the character's life is related with very spare detail from birth). Subsequently, the antagonist and/or source of conflict is introduced – almost always before the plot has actually begun to unfold (*Njála* could be read as a prominent exception to this rule because of its convoluted multigenerational plot). Evidently, this general observation of the common features of saga openings applies to the biographical contemporary sagas; for example, *Arons saga Hjörleifssonar* and *Hrafn's saga Sveinbjarnarsonar hin sérstaka*, which are extant in unredacted form, fit this mould. The absence of the features characterising the beginnings of Icelandic sagas from *Þórðar saga kakala*'s first chapter strongly suggests that this cannot be where **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* began.

It is most likely, instead, that part or all of chapter 1 was not even part of the original saga. The compiler of **Sturlunga saga* had a proclivity for using summaries to shift the focus from one component text to another. To show this, all one need do is compare the beginning of *Hrafn's saga Sveinbjarnarsonar* with *Hrafn's saga Sveinbjarnarsonar hin sérstaka* (cf. *Sturlunga saga* 2010, 230; *Hrafn's saga Sveinbjarnarsonar hin sérstaka* 2010, 883). It is, nonetheless, worth noting that these transitional summaries are not found when interlaced component texts of *Sturlunga saga* are switched between in quick succession.

As chapter 1 of *Þórðar saga kakala* appears like a summary intended to aid the transition to a new component text, we may surmise that it was probably written by the compiler – using content from the original saga – to preface the continuous block of material he had taken from **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*, it needing an introduction after his having chopped off the beginning of the saga. Needless to say, whatever the provenance of *Þórðar saga kakala*'s first chapter, the original saga began with earlier events than these. For example, the opening words of *Þórðar saga kakala* – 'einum vetri eftir lát Snorra Sturlusonar' ('in the year following Snorri Sturluson's death') – implies that Snorri Sturluson's death was mentioned if not described in **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* (*Sturlunga saga* 2010, 459).

Örnólfur Thorsson has noted that he shares Jón Jóhannesson's opinion that the lost opening chapters had told 'frá æsku Þórðar og uppvaxtarárum á Íslandi og vist hans í Noregi 1237-1242' ('about Þórður's childhood and years growing up in Iceland, as well as his stay in Norway between 1237 and 1242') (Örnólfur Thorsson 2010, xxviii). But, can this interpretation be substantiated?

Let us work backwards from 1242. It is fairly clear that **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* must have provided some sort of account of Þórður's time in Norway between 1237 and 1242. We know that the compiler cut off the beginning of **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* and that material largely or totally unrelated to Icelandic feuds – for example, that

discussing foreign travel – was shortened or redacted by the compiler of **Sturlunga saga*. Úlfar Bragason has hinted that he thinks **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* contained material discussing Þórður's encounters with Aron Hjörleifsson (Úlfar Bragason 2013, 127). Nevertheless, the portrayal of Þórður in *Arons saga Hjörleifssonar* is disjunctive when compared with *Þórðar saga kakala*, so it would seem that the material must have been different in emphasis and/or content.

It also seems likely that there was some discussion of events taking place in Iceland during the period that Þórður was in Norway: for example, the injury sustained by Kolbeinn ungi following the Battle of Örlygsstaðir is mentioned a couple of times *Þórðar saga kakala* in a manner that suggests the text had already narrated how Kolbeinn received this.

But did the narrative run further back in time than 1237? We noted earlier that on incorporating the texts into **Sturlunga saga* he nearly always shortened or redacted material duplicated in two or more texts, leaving one of the component texts to provide the information. It seems likely, if **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* covered Þórður's time in Norway, during which time he is known to have encountered Snorri, that the text had at least made mention of the discord between Snorri and Sighvatur earlier in the 1230s. The compiler would not have kept both tellings; consequently, today we only have the account given in *Íslendinga saga*.

If Sturla Þórðarson used **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* as a source, perhaps he drew on it for his account of these years. There is a section to be found in *Þórðar saga kakala* which would seem to provide direct support of the claim that **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* discussed events which took place earlier in the 1230s. In it, Kolbeinn alludes to a time where Þórður and the Skagfirðingar were friends, and he specifies also that Þórður did not take advantage of him when he depended on him most (*Sturlunga saga* 2010, 502). The occasion referred to in this quotation is doubtless the period in 1235 when Þórður was left as interim leader of Kolbeinn's domain while he was abroad, which is described in *Íslendinga saga* (*Sturlunga saga* 2010, 372). It is unlikely that the section in *Þórðar saga kakala* which describes Kolbeinn's meeting with the Skagfirðingar was an interpolation made by the compiler, given how well this extract fits into the speech. It seems likely that the account of Kolbeinn's oration to the Skagfirðingar in *Þórðar saga kakala* was in **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*. The knowledge assumed by the saga's author in this section therefore suggests that events stretching back to at least 1235 had been described in **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*. As Þórður only appears first in the historical record (specifically, *Íslendinga saga*) as an adult in 1233 and 1234, then, carrying forward the assumption that Sturla used **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* as a source, we can suppose that this was probably the earliest **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* can have meaningfully started. The earliest date Þórður is mentioned in *Íslendinga saga* is 1233, present when his father and Snorri reached a settlement in one of the many disputes between their respective factions (*Sturlunga saga* 2010, 348). *Íslendinga saga*'s coverage of 1234 (*Sturlunga saga* 2010, 358) says of Sighvatur's sons that at that time 'hinir yngri voru þá eigi vopnfærir' ('the younger ones [i.e., younger than Kolbeinn and Þórður] did not yet carry weapons'). Possibly, these anecdotes from Þórður's late adolescence/early adulthood were included at the beginning, after a genealogy of the Sturlungar and a list of Sighvatur

Sturluson's children rather than a nativity narrative, as Örnólfur seems to suggest.

Although **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* may have opened before 1242, we can safely assume that the hypothesised pre-1242 material was expository and need not have been particularly protracted in length: recall that in other contemporary sagas written in the biographical mode (this subgenre is referred to hereafter as the biographical contemporary sagas), for example *Hrafn's saga Sveinbjarnarsonar hin sérstaka* and *Arons saga Hjörleifssonar*, the pre-plot details are given in brief (*Hrafn's saga Sveinbjarnarsonar hin sérstaka* 2010, 884; *Arons saga Hjörleifssonar* 1946, 237f). Probably, only a handful of chapters from the beginning of **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* are missing from *Þórðar saga kakala*.

B. The mostly extant core chapters: the years 1242-50

Scholars have not attempted to identify content redacted by the compiler from among the portion of **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* still extant in *Þórðar saga kakala*. Nevertheless, it is possible to sketch out some thoughts concerning this.

Let us recall that the *Reykjarfjarðarbók* editor probably consulted the original recensions of the sagas in the *Sturlunga saga* canon to supplement their texts, a group which includes **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*. We may say with some confidence on this basis that the content found in *Reykjarfjarðarbók's* recension of *Þórðar saga kakala* but not in *Króksfjarðarbók's*, was in **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*. But we can go even further than this.

Þórðar saga kakala leaves some subplots hanging without adequate resolution. An examples of this can be found by considering an episode in chapter 20 where Ormur Bjarnarson assassinates Þórður Bjarnarson at Garðar (*Sturlunga saga* 2010, 498). After this, Ormur Bjarnarson is abandoned as a character in *Þórðar saga kakala*, terminating the subplot telling of his own conflict with Þórður *kakali*. It does not make sense for his part in the saga to end abruptly and arbitrarily with this incidence: no vengeance is taken for the killing of Þórður Bjarnarson, one of Þórður's inner circle of followers. While it is difficult to know how much or what, if anything, might have been lost from this subplot, it is fairly straightforward to identify where it must have closed in **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*. Consider the details from *Høyersannáll's* notices for 1249 and 1250 where it is noted that Þórður drove Ormur abroad in 1249 and then records Ormur's death in 1250 (*Høyersannáll* 1888, 66). The banishment of Ormur by Þórður and his death in exile the following year would be a well-fitting end, for it is suggestive of vengeance for Þórður Bjarnarson. This is far from the only example of an unresolved subplot in the saga.

Úlfar Bragason has suggested that there exists material in *Þórðar saga kakala* (or particular recensions of it) which was not in **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*, stating that the compiler of **Sturlunga saga* inserted chapters at strategic points in his grand, chronologically ordered narrative as recapitulations of the action previously described (Úlfar Bragason 2010, 102). He gives chapter 121 of *Íslendinga saga* and chapter 47 of *Þórðar saga kakala* as examples of this (Úlfar Bragason 2010, 102). I would nuance this by noting that these are merely post-compilational additions: possibly written by the compiler but just as likely to have been added by one or other of the fourteenth-century editors. For example, as discussed earlier,

chapter 47 of *Þórðar saga kakala* may well have been added by the *Króksfjarðarbók* editor. Chapter 1 of *Svinfellinga saga* is a further example of the kind of chapter represented by chapter 121 of *Íslendinga saga* and chapter 47 of *Þórðar saga kakala*. These chapters – drawn from three separate component texts as they are found in *Sturlunga saga* – are written according to the same, annalistic formula, with a number of reference events being used to date a key event in the history of thirteenth-century Iceland. Consequently, while the chapters act more as temporal signposts than recapitulations, Úlfar Bragason is most likely correct in his view that they were not present in their respective sagas prior to compilation. We should therefore adopt the conclusion that chapter 47 was not part of **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*.

I would also add that the amplifications of *Þórðar saga kakala* in *Króksfjarðarbók* – when compared with the text of *Reykjarfjarðarbók* – seem unlikely to have been derived from **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* (Guðrún Nordal 2006, 307f). Unlike in *Reykjarfjarðarbók's* case, there is no strong evidence suggesting *Króksfjarðarbók's* editor consulted **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* to augment his or her version of *Sturlunga saga* and the absence of the supplementary details found in *Króksfjarðarbók* from *Reykjarfjarðarbók* indicates they were absent in **Sturlunga saga*, which makes it still more unlikely that **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* contained them.

The view that the editor of *Króksfjarðarbók* did not augment his text using **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* may well be a misapprehension, but I am trying to be cautious. The easiest way to disprove it is to put forward a conclusive argument showing firstly that chapters 47-9 of *Þórðar saga kakala* were not in *Reykjarfjarðarbók* (as the marginal note in BL Add MS 11,127 can be read as suggesting) and secondly that the provenance of these chapters lay in **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*. Ólafía Einarsdóttir has attempted to do this, but the matter is far from decided (Ólafía Einarsdóttir 1995, 51).

C. The barely surviving closing chapters: the years 1250-6

Úlfar Bragason has argued that 'sennilega hefur sögunni lokið með frásögn af dauða Þórðar' ('the saga probably ended with tell of Þórður's death') in 1256 (Úlfar Bragason 2010, 101f). Chapter 49 – considered the final chapter of *Þórðar saga kakala* by Örnólfur Thorsson's predecessors as editors of *Sturlunga saga* – does not discuss this, and instead focuses on the events around Þórður being recalled to Norway in 1249 (*Sturlunga saga* 2010, 549f). Úlfar Bragason's considers that chapter 49 – the final chapter of *Þórðar saga kakala* in the editions which preceded that of Örnólfur Thorsson – cannot be where **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* ended because there are no concluding words or other signposts such as a list of the protagonist's descendants or a statement stating that the saga has ended (Úlfar Bragason 2010, 101). Across the saga corpus, there are four things which are typically discussed at the ending of a saga: an epilogal episode following the saga's denouement, commentary on the protagonist's and antagonist's lives after the epilogue (or, if there is not one, the denouement), provision of genealogical information such as a list of descendants, and a statement that the saga is complete. These are features found at the end of biographical contemporary sagas such as *Hrafn's saga Sveinbjarnarsonar hin sérstaka* and *Arons saga Hjörleifssonar*.

Certainly, there is no statement at the end of chapter 49 which explicitly states that it is complete. Yet it is worth

nuancing Úlfar Bragason's observation that the saga shows no sign of coming to an end, for there is a list of Þórður's children to be found midway through chapter 49. The placement of this list, however, is not where one would expect it (i.e. after the close of events) for, subsequently, the narrative continues. Therefore, it is clear that the list of Þórður's children should not be taken as a signpost of narrative termination in *Þórðar saga kakala*. In **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* the list would likely have been situated among or after the content extant in chapter 50 of *Þórðar saga kakala*.

Because of the lack of a self-reflective closing statement, a properly situated list of descendants, a real summary of either Þórður's or Gissur's life following the events of chapter 48, or an epilogical episode, chapter 49 of the saga cannot be where **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* concluded, if it were ever even in the latter. Additionally, the composition of chapter 49 appears rushed and somewhat disconnected; consequently, it is not a stretch to consider that, as in chapter 1's case, it was the compiler's own creation. Even if this is so, doubtless the compiler would have used material from **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* to write it.

There is an interpolation extant in IIP manuscripts of *Sturlunga saga*, which tells of Þórður's life between 1254 and 1256. It is not present in *Króksfjarðarbók* and must have been added by the editor of *Reykjarfjarðarbók*. Örnólfur Thorsson is of the view that this interpolation was a direct copy of the final chapter of **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*. Because of this, he classified it as chapter 50 of *Þórðar saga kakala* in his edition of *Sturlunga saga*. We have established that the editor of *Reykjarfjarðarbók* made use of pre-compilation versions of the texts in the *Sturlunga saga* canon, including **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*. It is therefore highly probable that Örnólfur Thorsson is correct.

However, it is worth noting that chapter 50 of *Þórðar saga kakala* cannot be a verbatim quotation by the editor of *Reykjarfjarðarbók* of the ending of **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*. If it were, there would be a self-reflective statement to the effect that the saga had come to an end instead of a comment pointing the reader in the direction of another – presumably greater – saga. Consequently, we may surmise that Örnólfur Thorsson is right in thinking that the editor of *Reykjarfjarðarbók* copied the ending of **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* but must recognise that it was edited prior to its insertion into this recension of *Sturlunga saga*. It is therefore likely to be a summary of the closing chapters of **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* or, at minimum, a modified version of its final chapter. However, we now have a lacuna representing four years between chapters 49 and 50: can we say at all what **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* might have said about the period 1250-54?

Following six years of peace, 1252 saw the Icelandic political elite return to a state of internecine strife. It seems probable – given that these disputes were mostly a consequence of Þórður and King Hákon independently handing out the same chieftaincies and domains as fiefs to their men – that there would have been discussion of events in Iceland during the years 1252-4 **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*.

There is another argument that could be made. Earlier, we noted that chapters a, b, d and e in IIP recensions of *Svinfellinga saga* could be interpolations the editor of *Reykjarfjarðarbók* made using sections from **Íslendinga*

saga hin sérstaka. Recall also our assumption that Sturla used **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* in writing **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka*. Chapter 49 of *Þórðar saga kakala* covers content similar to that of chapters a, b, d and e. We have already established that chapter 49 of *Þórðar saga kakala* is a summary of content from the original saga. Taking all these things together, it is therefore natural to suppose that though they were copied by the editor of *Reykjarfjarðarbók* from **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka*, the content of chapters a, b, d and e ultimately derives in turn from **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*. The only objection to this is the question of why the editor of *Reykjarfjarðarbók* would choose to use **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka* instead of **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* for chapters a, b, d and e if the same content had been in both texts. Perhaps it was because of Sturla's positive reputation as a historian, as evinced by the *Formáli*, which at its end notes his wisdom and sincerity. Alternatively, it could have been because Sturla had already extracted the essential details from **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* or even for stylistic reasons, as *Íslendinga saga* has been judged (albeit in recent times) to be of a higher artistic standard than *Þórðar saga kakala*. Any one or combination of these reasons would have provided the editor of *Reykjarfjarðarbók* with justification to prefer **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka* to **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*, and, what is more, to quote the former more-or-less verbatim without having to make alterations as he would have had to with the latter.

However, I think the prospective appraisal of events in Iceland during the period 1250-6 in **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* would have had to have been terse as would behove an author writing from the far-remove perspective of Þórður in Norway. The notion that it was brief is further supported by the absence of **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*'s coverage of these events from **Sturlunga saga*; evidently, *Svinfellinga saga* and *Íslendinga saga* were included by the compiler because their originals dealt with these disputes in greater detail.

Given the possibility that the saga about Þórður covered events in Iceland between 1250 and 1254, the narrative must also have discussed his life in Norway during that period. This too is no longer extant in *Sturlunga saga*: the compiler of **Sturlunga saga* would not have included the information about Þórður's life in Norway which may have been in **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* because the relevant details were already to be found in **Íslendinga saga hin sérstaka* (evidenced in *Íslendinga saga* and *Svinfellinga saga*) and the extra material would have been surplus to his requirements.

A review of the evidence indicates that Jón Jóhannesson, Úlfar Bragason, and Örnólfur Thorsson's vision of the content of **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* should be accepted (with the reservation that it probably did not cover Þórður's childhood), while it is clear that the earlier view of *Þórðar saga kakala* as being effectively or completely unadulterated in its progress through compilation, editing and copying phases cannot be true.

CONCLUSION

In *Þórðar saga kakala*, the story commences in 1242. Though we have already established that **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* opened earlier than this, it is likely that everything prior to 1242 would have constituted narrative exposition, describing the ancestry of Þórður, some early vignettes showing his involvement in politics and promise, and the

unfolding of the conflict with the Haukdælir and Ásbirningar whilst Þórður was in Norway between 1237 and 1242. The content of chapter 1 of *Þórðar saga kakala* would have been present in **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*, but in a different form to how we have it in *Sturlunga saga*. Thereafter, **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* would more-or-less have reflected *Þórðar saga kakala* for the first half of the plot (excepting, however, that the interpolations in *Króksfjarðarbók* were most likely not present). Consequently, the overarching narrative conflict in the first half of **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* told of a struggle for power, primarily over Eyjafjörður, between Kolbeinn ungi (the usurper) and Þórður kakali (the rightful leader). The fundamentally political conflict between Þórður and Kolbeinn is presented as a private dispute following the slaying of the former's father and brothers at the Battle of Örlygsstaðir. The feud chain comes to a close with a triple resolution: agreement to seek a settlement, the return of Þórður's patrimony (including authority in Eyjafjörður), and the death of Kolbeinn before the king is able to arbitrate between them. Evidently this was the end of the conflict between Þórður and Kolbeinn, and signalled the close of the first part of **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*'s plot. Úlfar Bragason notes that at this point in the plot there is a 'balance which is restored temporarily between the fighting parties', but it is not long before we begin 'loading for a new clash' (Úlfar Bragason 1986, 75). **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* followed the same ground as *Þórðar saga kakala* up to the end of chapter 46. Chapter 47 was not present in **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*, but the following chapter was. Chapter 49's content was, but it was reshaped in the process of turning **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* into *Þórðar saga kakala*. Following chapter 49, there is a lacuna covering the years between the events in Iceland in 1249/ 50 and the events in Norway from 1254-6. The following events reported in other Contemporary sagas are likely to have been reported in **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*:

- Þórður returns to Norway and is kept there, **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* must have included commentary on his time in Norway from 1250 onwards.
- Gissur sent back to Iceland in 1252 which is followed by an attempted attack by Hrafn Oddsson and Sturla Þórðarson on Gissur. Thereafter there is a resolution between certain Sturlungar (Hrafn Oddsson and Sturla Þórðarson) and Gissur. It is unclear whether or not Hrafn reneged on this reconciliation in **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*. *Íslendinga saga* reports that he knew about – but did not participate in – the Flugumýri Arson in 1253. **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* could have conceivably have cast him as a burner or, indeed, distanced him further from the arsonists than he is presented as being in *Íslendinga saga*. I mentioned earlier in this thesis that chapter 50 of *Þórðar saga kakala* provides no indication of the Battle of Þverá in 1255 having been reported in **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*; consequently, it may be slightly more likely that Hrafn's reconciliation with Gissur was not broken in the saga.
- The Flugumýri Arson, perpetrated in vengeance for the deaths of Sighvatur and his sons (among other things), resulting in the deaths of Gissur's sons and wife. Gissur hunts down and kills some of the arsonists in revenge. There is reference in chapter 50

of *Þórðar saga kakala* to Gissur hunting down the arsonists. After this campaign of vengeance, there is an attempted settlement between Gissur and the arsonists.

- Gissur summoned to Norway due to his failure to subjugate Iceland. This is implied to have taken place in **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*, given the reference to Gissur being in Norway in chapter 50 of *Þórðar saga kakala*.

Chapter 50 of *Þórðar saga kakala* reflects or summarises the ending act of **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* in terms of content but not form (it was clearly redacted by the editor of *Reykjarfjarðarbók*).

It is important to remember that, while Brandur Kolbeinsson has the appearance of being the main opponent in the second half of *Þórðar saga kakala*, this was evidently not true of **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*: there it was Gissur Þorvaldsson. To the extent that Brandur even qualifies as an antagonist, he acted as a kind of bridge between the conflict with Kolbeinn (in the first half of **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla*) and that with Gissur (in the second). What we can surmise of the principal feud in the second half of **Þórðar saga kakala hin mikla* indicates that Þórður and his proxies in Iceland were attempting to obtain justice or vengeance for the death(s) of Sighvatur (and his sons) from Gissur. The recalling of Þórður from Iceland essentially revoked the settlement brought about between him and Gissur by Cardinal William. The apparently private dispute between the principals, Þórður and Gissur, also constitutes a bitter political struggle for national dominance in Iceland. For example, consider the comments made in Brandur's letter to Gissur about Þórður's pretensions to lead the country (*Sturlunga saga* 2010, 535).

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