

From Text to Artefact

Studies in Honour of Anne Mette Hansen

Edited by Katarzyna Anna Kapitan,
Beeke Stegmann, and Seán D. Vrieland

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and Seán D. Vrieland

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A DANISH COLLECTION OF OLD NORSE SAGAS

Material-Philological and Textual Studies of Acc. 61

Katarzyna Anna Kapitan

Arnamagnæan Institute, University of Copenhagen

IN 2007 THROUGH THE AGENCY OF PETER Springborg, the former head of the Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen, the institute acquired a collection of twelve handwritten books donated as a gift by the Cathedral school in Nykøbing on Falster. This donation is one of the most recent acquisitions of the institute and the manuscripts became a part of the Accessoria collection with the shelfmarks Acc. 51–62 (Figure 4.1).¹ The collection in its entirety has not been a subject of scholarly investigation yet, and this article is a first attempt to shed light on one of the volumes in this collection: Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, Acc. 61.

The manuscript preserves early nineteenth-century transcripts of four Old Norse legendary sagas written in the original language. The present study examines the manuscript from the perspective of a textual and material philological

approach, with the special focus on the arrangements of the texts and the variation that appears in them. Based on textual analysis and an examination of the quire structure and the layout of the titles, as well as the order in which the texts appear in this volume, this article suggests that all texts preserved in Acc. 61 were based on the printed edition of legendary sagas by Erik Julius Björner (1737) and that the transcripts were produced in at least two stages.

Acc. 61 is a paper manuscript in quarto, which consists of i+135+ii leaves gathered in eighteen quires of mostly four conjoint leaves per quire (I–VI⁸, VII², VIII–XVII⁸, XVIII⁶).² The leaves are trimmed to the size of 197 mm × 152 mm and

1 The only later acquisition is Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, Acc. 63, which joined the collection in 2014.

2 The last quire has a peculiar structure: f. 131 (pp. 159–160) is a conjoint leaf with the pastedown, f. 132 (pp. 161–162) is a conjoint leaf with the blank leaf 135 (no pagination), f. 133 (pp. 163–164) is a conjoint leaf with f. 134 (p. 165–unpaginated page). Two bright blue dyed rear flyleaves are inserted between f. 135 and the pastedown, and they are folded over the two innermost conjoint leaves; they are inserted within the outermost

bound in a library binding with the fore-edges painted blue. The manuscript is half-bound with boards covered in marbled paper (brown, gray, and blue) and a light brown leather spine and corners. Bright blue-dyed paper is used for the front pastedown and flyleaves. Gilded floral patterns are embossed at the head and foot of spine and the image of an urn in the middle. A gilded title is embossed into the spine: “SOGUBOK ALFE 3 HROLFE 3 &c” (Figure 4.2).

The manuscript is made of one type of paper, which has a watermark with the initial “Ø & N”. The watermarks appear in the upper parts of leaves very close to the binding, making it rather difficult to document.³ A very similar watermark appears in pl. 61 in the catalogue

conjoint leaf of this quire f. 131 + pastedown (hooks visible between ff. 131 and 132).

- 3 The same paper was used for the dyed flyleaves, as the same partial watermark can be found on all three of them.

of Danish watermarks and it is associated with the paper mill Ørholm-Nymølle (Fiskaa and Nordstrand 1978: 395). The production of paper in Ørholm on the Mølleå river started in 1793 when two Englishmen, Henry Nelthropp and John Joseph Harris, received a royal license for the establishment of the paper mill. In 1794 their license was extended and included Nymølle paper mill. The “Ø & N” watermark is associated with Nelthropp’s son, John Bromley Nelthropp, who was first a master papermaker at Ørholm-Nymølle and from 1832 its owner (Fiskaa and Nordstrand 1978: 328–329). In the catalogue, the “Ø & N” watermark is associated with the period between 1832 and 1837 when John Bromley Nelthropp was the owner of the paper mills, but it cannot be excluded that it was also in use earlier, perhaps from 1805 onwards when Ørholm and Nymølle were transferred to a holding company which introduced a series of different



Figure 4.1: Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, Manuscripts Acc. 51–62 with the opening from Acc. 61 in the front. Photo: Suzanne Reitz.

watermarks, including “DET ØRHOLMSKE / INTERESSENTSELSKAB” and “ØRHOLM & NYEMØLLE” (Fiskaa and Nordstrand 1978: 329, 405, 408).⁴

Acc. 61 is written in a neat, modern handwriting consistent throughout the manuscript. The same hand appears in a number of other manuscripts in the Accessoria collection, and thanks to the signed title pages in some of these manuscripts, this hand can be identified as that of Frederik Julius Schaldemose (1783–1853). Schaldemose was a Danish author, translator, and poet, whose literary endeavors have not received much attention in modern scholarship. He has been previously called “en stor og glemt forfatter” (“a great and forgotten author”; Storm 2002), which accurately reflects how little we know about this prolific author

and translator. Schaldemose was born on 15 February 1783 in Wedellsborg and died on 22 February 1853 in Copenhagen. He was the son of Niels Schaldemose (1742–1789), a forester, and Cathrine Marie Schmidt (1756–1799). After his father’s death, Frederik lived with his mother in Horsens, where he attended secondary school. He served as a second lieutenant in the military and was taken to England as a prisoner of war in 1808. Shortly after he came back to Denmark, he became a teacher at the Cathedral School in Nykøbing on Falster in the years 1816–1825 (Bricka 1887–1905: XV, 48–50). Probably around the same time, he donated his manuscripts to the school’s library, as Acc. 61 contains a provenance note on f. 1r, which reads “Skjenket Skolebibliotheket af Hr. Schaldemose” (“Given to the school library by Mr. Schaldemose”).

Schaldemose translated various works of world literature into Danish, from medieval

4 For the most recent work on paper produced at Ørholm-Nymølle see Nielsen (2014).



Figure 4.2: Spine of Acc. 61. Photo: Suzanne Reitz.

texts such as *Beowulf* and *Widsith* (1847) to contemporary authors such as Goethe, Gogol, and Scott. He was also interested in old stories and legends and his interest manifested itself in the publication of, for example, *Sagn og Æventyr* (1842), *Krønnike-Lises Æventyr* (1844), and *Danske Kæmpeviser* (1846). His translational enterprise included multiple languages such as Latin, Russian, Spanish, French, German, English, Italian, Swedish, and Dutch (Erslew 1843: III, 23–24; Bricka 1887–1905: XV, 48–50). Not much is known, however, about his activity as a scribe, and even less about his interest in Old Icelandic literature. Icelandic is not even included in the list of the languages he worked with (as presented by Storm 2002: 61, 69), making his collection of manuscripts a unique source of knowledge for his intellectual exercises.

Frederik Julius Schaldemose most likely worked on Acc. 61 sometime between 1805 and 1818. It belongs to the collection of manuscripts he gave to the Cathedral school in Nykøbing. The latest date attested in Schaldemose's Collection (in Acc. 58) is 1818, so this date can be considered the *terminus post quem* for the acquisition of the collection by the Cathedral school in Nykøbing. The evidence of watermarks in Acc. 61 suggests that the manuscript could not have been produced before 1805 when the holding company Ørholm-Nymølle introduced a number of various watermarks, as mentioned above.

The manuscript preserves four sagas, all traditionally classified as legendary sagas, these are: *Hálfs saga og Hálfsrekka* (ff. 1r–17v), *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* (ff. 18r–29r), *Hálfðanar saga Brönufostra* (ff. 30r–49v), and *Hrólfs saga kraka* (ff. 51r–134r). All texts are introduced by title pages which are blank on their verso sides. While the first three sagas are written one after another with no overlap between quire boundaries and text boundaries, the last saga, *Hrólfs saga kraka*, starts on the first leaf of a new quire, quire VIII. The preceding quire consists of a single conjoint leaf, of which only one half was

written (f. 49r–v), while the other half was left blank (f. 50r–v), hypothetically leaving space to start a new saga. This might suggest that *Hrólfs saga kraka* was copied at a different point in time than the remaining texts and later put together into one volume.

A preliminary textual analysis of the texts preserved in Acc. 61 reveals that all four sagas preserved in this manuscript are very reliable copies of the texts of the printed edition published by Björner in his collection *Nordiska kampa dater* (Björner 1737).⁵ All the texts preserved in this volume are divided into the same number of chapters as the texts presented in Björner's edition, and in some sagas the subsequent chapters are introduced by short titles, also characteristic of Björner's edition. *Hálfs saga og Hálfsrekka* is divided into 18 chapters, *Hálfðanar saga Brönufostra* into 22, and each chapter in these two texts starts with a short title or a chapter heading originating from the printed edition. Similarly, *Hrólfs saga kraka* is divided into 52 chapters both in Acc. 61 and in the edition. In addition to the title page (f. 51r), characteristic to all the sagas preserved in this volume, *Hrólfs saga kraka* has an additional title on f. 52r. As clearly visible in Figure 4.3, the layout of the title of the saga, divided into six lines, imitates to some extent the layout of the edition, which reads: “Hier byriast Saga | Af | Hrolfe Konge | Kraka | Og | Hefst hier fyrst | Froda þattur” (Björner), while the manuscript reads: “Hier byriast Saga | af | Hrolfe konge kraka, | og | hefst hier fyrst | Fropa þattur” (Acc. 61). None of the other texts

5 The analysis is based on the collation of the beginnings and endings of each saga. Only the text of *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* was collated in its entirety and proved to be the descendant of the text presented in Björner's edition. Due to the recent discovery of Acc. 61, the texts preserved in this manuscript have not been included in the previous scholarship on the transmissions of subsequent sagas, such as Slay's (1960) and Lansing's (2011) studies of *Hrólfs saga kraka*, Jóhannes Bjarni Sigtryggsson's (2000) study of *Hálfðanar saga Brönufostra*, or Seelow's (1981) study of *Hálfs saga og Hálfsrekka*.

in Acc. 61 starts with the title that takes equally many lines as that of *Hrólfs saga kraka*.⁶ This might also speak in favor of the hypothesis that *Hrólfs saga kraka* was not copied at the same time as other texts in this volume.

The text of *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* in Acc. 61 is divided into ten chapters. This division originates from Björner's edition, as none of the older manuscripts preserving this

- 6 The title of *Hálfs saga og Hálfsrekka* takes only two lines in Acc. 61, while it takes six lines in Björner's edition. Neither *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* or *Hálfðanar saga Brönufóstra* have additional titles besides the ones on the title pages.

saga (i.e. manuscripts which cannot have been influenced by the printed edition) divide the saga into ten chapters, but rather into five, six or eight chapters (Kapitan 2018: 60). Unlike other sagas in Acc. 61, the chapters of *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* do not have any titles or headings. This is also influence from the exemplar, as in the printed edition Björner only gives titles to the subsequent chapters in Swedish and Latin, not in Icelandic; therefore, the titles are also missing in Acc. 61 (Figure 4.4).

The text of *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* as preserved in Acc. 61 is a unique manuscript in the

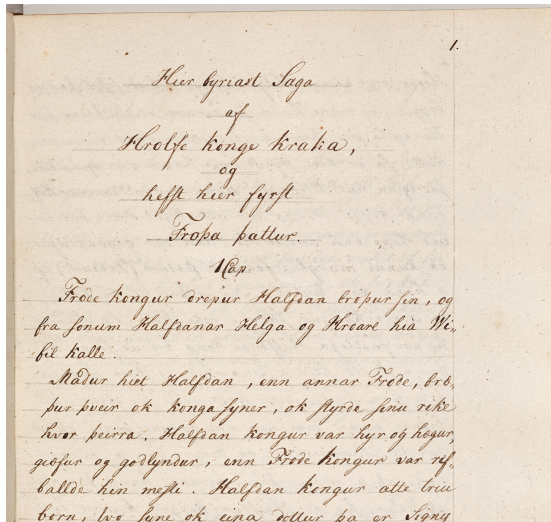


Figure 4.3: The beginning of *Hrólfs saga kraka* in Acc. 61, f. 52r (photo: Suzanne Reitz) and in Björner's edition.

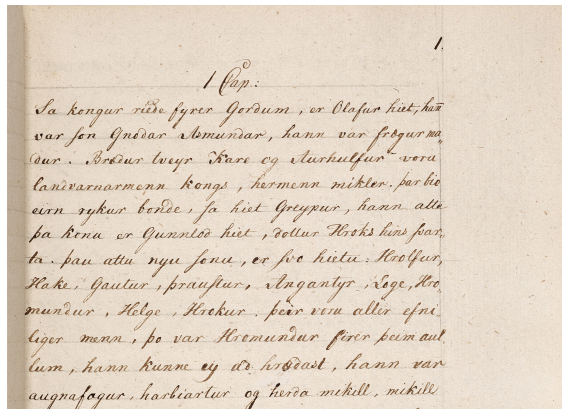
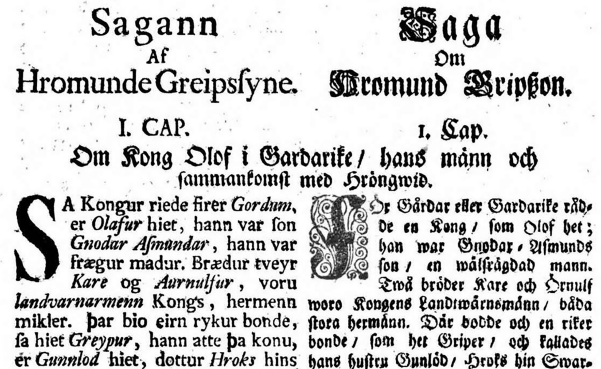


Figure 4.4: The beginning of *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* in Acc. 61, f. 19r (photo: Suzanne Reitz) and in Björner's edition.



transmission history of this saga in its conservative treatment of the text copied, something that does not happen often in the Icelandic scribal tradition. The reason for this might be that the scribe of Acc. 61 was not a native of Iceland but a Dane and perhaps his agenda behind copying these texts was different than that of Icelandic scribes. The only other manuscript preserving *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* that is equally conservative when it comes to orthography and punctuation is Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms Germ qu. 936, which is also written by a non-Icelander, most likely a German.⁷

The filiation of the text of *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* with the edition can be easily proven by two readings, which are errors of the edition. The text of *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* in Björner’s edition is based on Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, Papp. Fol. nr 67. The edition is fairly reliable to its exemplar, but there are two readings, which allow us to determine that the text preserved in Acc. 61 is based on the edition rather than on a textual descendant from Papp. Fol. nr 67, these are presented in the Table 4.1.

The first reading is a clear mistake in the edition, which is also reproduced in Acc. 61, where Papp. Fol. nr 67 reads *lendar* ‘loins’, while both Acc. 61 and Björner’s edition read *herdar* ‘shoulders’. The second reading is the correction of *austur* ‘east’ into *vestur* ‘west’ in Papp. Fol. nr 67, which is absent from the remaining manuscripts preserving *Hrómundar saga* but both the edition and Acc. 61 preserve this reading in an unusual spelling “vester”.

7 This manuscript has been investigated by Hufnagel (2012: 171–174) and Kapitan (2018: 122–124).

Schaldemose in his transcript of *Hrómundar saga* follows the text of the edition very closely, reproducing even words which are spelled in an unusual way in the edition, e.g.: “sliofast” *sljóvgast* (p. 2:14), “veþor” *veður* (p. 3:12), “sampt” *samt* (p. 3:18), “vyþa” *víða* (p. 3:21), “broþnade” *brotnaði* (p. 4:1). He does not introduce any textual variants, and his orthographical variants are very limited. He reproduces, to some extent, the punctuation and capitalization of the edition, though not consistently. The only consistent change that he made in the text of *Hrómundar saga* is the replacement of Roman numerals with Arabic numerals, e.g. “33 aar” (p. 2:11). He does not use abbreviation marks, with the exception of the nasal stroke in “hann” (p. 1:2), which is a deviation from the text of the edition, as Björner did not use any abbreviation marks in the text of *Hrómundar saga*.

This study of a hitherto unknown nineteenth-century Danish manuscript clearly demonstrates not only the lasting co-existence of a print and manuscript culture in Scandinavia, but also shows that Old Norse legendary sagas circulated outside of Iceland well into the nineteenth century. Since all the texts preserved in Acc. 61 appear to be copies of Björner’s printed edition, it is significant to note that the first three items of Acc. 61 appear exactly in the same order as they are printed in Björner’s edition, while *Hrólfs saga kraka* appears as the last item of Acc. 61. In the printed edition *Hrólfs saga kraka* is the first saga of the volume, preceded only by a set of *rímur* and a preface. Taking into consideration the material features of this text discussed above – such as the fact that *Hrólfs saga kraka* starts in the new quire following a quire of an irregular structure, that the layout of its title is slightly

Papp. Fol. nr 67	Björner (1737)	Acc. 61
“af beijnum ä lendar ofann”	“af beynum a herdar ofann”	“af beynum a herdar ofann”
“Olafur kongur {Austur} `Vestur”	“Olafur Kongur vester”	“Olafur kongur vester”

Table 4.1: Collation of selected variants in Papp. Fol. nr 67, Björner’s edition, and Acc. 61.

different than the layout of other titles in the volume, and that its position in the volume does not follow the pattern that other texts follow – it is possible that this text was copied separately from the remaining three sagas and later put together into one volume. This hypothesis remains, however, tentative until we learn more about the circumstances of production of other Schaldemose’s manuscripts.

From the perspective of further research, it is worth mentioning that other texts published in Björner’s edition also appear in other manuscripts in Schaldemose’s hand held in the Accessoria collection. These manuscripts have not yet been the subject of academic investigation, therefore the knowledge of their content and filiation is very limited.⁸ It seems possible that some other texts, which Schaldemose copied, were also based on the printed edition. It seems, however, equally possible and even more fascinating to investigate whether some of the texts in his collection were based on other manuscripts, which today may be lost or unknown to scholarship. An example of a text that could be based on another manuscript rather than on a printed edition is *Sörla saga sterka* in Acc. 57. The text, according to the online catalogue *Stories for all time*, might be based on “an unknown manuscript (possibly Westin 87 in Uppsala?) owned by B. Thorlacius” (*Stories for all time*, accessed 27.09.17).⁹ This suggestion is based on the note found on f. 2r which mentions Birgir Thorlacius, professor of classics at the University of Copenhagen, and an editor and translator of Icelandic sagas (Bricka

1887–1905: XVII, 268–270). A similar note can be found on f. 33r, which suggests that *Hálfs saga og Hálfsrekka* in Acc. 57 was also copied from an exemplar which belonged to Birgir Thorlacius.¹⁰ These notes indicate that Schaldemose was in contact with Thorlacius and probably borrowed some manuscripts from him. Moreover, after initial examination of the manuscripts Acc. 51–62 it seems possible that some of them, which are not written in Schaldemose’s own hand, could originate from Thorlacius’s collection of Icelandic manuscripts, but this clearly requires further research.

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- 8 Thanks to the support of the honouree I undertook the cataloguing project of the Accessoria collection in the winter 2018/19, during which all Schaldemose’s manuscripts have been catalogued and basic descriptions are available on *Handrit.org*: <https://handrit.is/en/biography/view/FreSch002?showall.associated_manuscripts=1> (last accessed 15.05.19).
- 9 The most comprehensive study of the transmission of *Sörla saga sterka* by Hufnagel (2012), does not mention this manuscript, as it was catalogued by J. Love on 14 January 2014, thus after Hufnagel’s study was complete; therefore the filiation of this text remains uncertain.
- 10 The most comprehensive study of the transmission of *Hálfs saga og Hálfsrekka* by Seelow (1981) does not mention this manuscript, as it was not part of the Arnarnagænan collection at this time and it was unknown to scholarship, therefore the filiation of this text remains uncertain.

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