

SKÁLDATAL AND ITS MANUSCRIPT CONTEXT IN KRINGLA AND UPPSALAEDDA

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1

Skáldatal has served as an important guide for the study of skaldic verse in the kings' sagas. In it we find poets from the ninth century to the end of the thirteenth century listed along side their royal or aristocratic patrons, whose exploits they extolled in verse. The patron is noted only once, but the poet's name is repeated depending on the number of his/her patrons. Skáldatal is often treated as a single easily defined text with no textual problems where the younger version is assumed to be only an expanded version of the older. This view ignores the subtle differences between the versions, which are partly due to their provenance in the manuscripts.¹

In this paper I consider the implication of the manuscript context of Skáldatal for the full appreciation of this thirteenth-century catalogue of poets. Skáldatal was preserved in two medieval manuscripts and their subject matter holds a valuable key to the particular function of Skáldatal, which in turn contributes to an understanding of the rationale behind the arrangement of these codices. The example of Skáldatal will reveal how essential it is to analyse closely the manuscript context when considering and referring to a thirteenth-century text. This rule applies not only to sagas and verse, but also to auxiliary material such as Skáldatal, which is preserved in conjunction with larger works.

Skáldatal is preserved with two of Snorri Sturluson's works. In the Kringla manuscript of *Heimskringla* (written c. 1250-80, now only in paper copies, apart from one leaf, Lbs. fragm. 82) and in *Codex Uppsaliensis* of *Snorra Edda* (DG 11, written c. 1300-1325). Other manuscripts of *Snorra Edda* and *Heimskringla* do not contain Skáldatal, and therefore it is has been questioned whether the list accompanied these works originally or whether it became associated with them after their composition. This question can not be considered until we have elucidated the significance of the list to the compilers of these two manuscripts.

2

The Kringla manuscript of *Heimskringla* perished in the fire in Copenhagen in 1728. Only a single leaf remains of the entire volume. Copies were made of the codex in the seventeenth century by Ásgeir Jónsson (one preserved in AM 35, 36 and AM 63 fol. and parts of the codex in Oslo OUB 521 fol. and AM 70 fol.) and Jón Eggertsson in 1681-2 (Sth. Papp. fol. nr. 18). Ásgeir Jónsson omitted Skáldatal in his transcript of Kringla, but Jón Eggertsson made a full copy and placed it at the end of his copy of *Heimskringla*. Ámi Magnússon also copied Skáldatal from Kringla, and his transcript in AM 761 a-b 4to is used in the edition of Skáldatal in *Snorra Edda* 1880-87. The Kringla text of Skáldatal accompanied Peders Clausøn Friis' translation of *Heimskringla*, published posthumously by Ole Worm in 1633. Worm inserted his own transcript of Skáldatal based on the Kringla text and placed it at the end of the translation of *Heimskringla* (*Snorra Edda* III:235-6). On the evidence available to us, we may assume that Skáldatal came at the end of *Heimskringla* in Kringla.

¹ The two versions of Skáldatal are printed in *Snorra Edda* III (1880-87). A is the Kringla version (SK) and B is the *Codex Uppsaliensis* version (SU). I quote this edition in the paper. I also referred to Grape's edition of *Codex Uppsaliensis*, and photographs of the catalogue in AM 761 a-b 4to and Sth.Papp. fol. nr. 18. The two versions were amalgamated and a third text of Skáldatal is printed as C in *Snorra Edda* III. This study of Skáldatal forms a part of a larger study of thirteenth-century skaldic verse which I am currently engaged in.

It is important to note that Skáldatal is not only a catalogue of poets, but primarily a list of successive kings and earls in Scandinavia. The composition of the list belongs clearly to the writing of chronology and of compiling records of the past which formed the basis for the historical writing in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The affiliation of the list to the writing of kings' sagas is borne out by the fact that not all the kings and earls listed in Skáldatal had poems composed for them. Yet they earn their place in the catalogue. It is also clear that the list in Kringla is only intended to include the poets of the rulers, but not of their queens. In Sturlunga saga it is noted that Snorri Sturluson composed a poem for Hákon galinn's wife, but Kristín is not mentioned among Snorri's patrons (Sturlunga saga I, 331), only Hákon.

The ordering of the kings and earls reflects the hierarchy among the kings in Scandinavia, as it is set forth in Heimskringla. Skáldatal in Kringla begins with the heading: *Scaldatal dana kononga oc Svía*. Starkaðr is noted as the oldest known skald, and Ragnarr loðbrók, his wife Áslaug and their sons, are also skalds. The first and only Danish king mentioned at this point in Skáldatal, however, is King Ragnarr loðbrók, who is named first, and his poet Bragi Boddason. Then the catalogue leaves Danish territory and turns to Swedish kings (and then earls), which are listed into the thirteenth century. It is significant that the Swedish kings are placed before their counterparts in Norway. Ynglinga saga discloses the mythical roots of Swedish kingship out of which the Norwegian tree of kings grows.

This similarity between the ordering of material in Skáldatal and Heimskringla is further attested by the reference in Skáldatal to the poem Ynglingatal by Þjóðólfr ór Hvin, which is the source for Ynglinga saga. This reference is preceded by a new heading distinguishing a new chapter in Skáldatal: *Her (hefr) up Scaldatal Noregs kononga*. The Norwegian kings are listed from Haraldr hárfagri to Hákon the son of Hákon the crowned king Hákonarson. The chronological framework of Skáldatal agrees with that of Heimskringla. They belong to the same tradition. These headings are not in SU.

Another break in Skáldatal is introduced at the end of the list of the Norwegian kings, when the catalogue of the Norwegian earls is preceded by a reference to Eyvindr skáldaspillir's Háleygjatal. The list begins with Hákon Grjótagarðsson, a contemporary of Haraldr hárfagri, and concludes with Knútr Hákonarson. There is no break, however, in the list between the catalogue of Norwegian Earls and that of the Danish kings and earls. The last man mentioned in SK is the chieftain Þorleifr inn spaki. The list is longer in SU, not only because SK finished counting by c. 1260 and SU by c. 1300, but also due to the addition of English kings and Norwegian chieftains to the list (see below).

The catalogue is on another level a list of sources for the writing of the kings' sagas, and it is probable that it originated in conjunction with the writing of Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla (Finnur Jónsson 1923:782-3). Bjarni Guðnason calls it 'fyrstu bókmenntasögu Íslendinga' (Bjarni Guðnason 1982:xi), and this is a fair description. Skáldatal in Kringla functions as a footnote to the testimony of the skalds in Heimskringla and thereby strengthens Snorri Sturluson's claim in the Prologue that:

[...] sumt þat, er finnsk í langfeðgatali, þar er konungar eða aðrir stórættaðir menn hafa rakit kyn sitt, en sumt er ritat eptir fornum kvæðum eða söguljóðum, er menn hafa haft til skemmtanar sér (Heimskringla p. 3-4).

and a little later:

Með Haraldi konungi váru skáld, ok kunna menn enn kvæði þeira ok allra konunga kvæði, þeira er síðan hafa verit í Nórgei, ok tókum vér þat mest dæmi af, þat er sagt er í þeim kvæðum, er kveðin váru fyrir sjálfum höfðingunum eða sonum þeira (Heimskringla p. 5).

We have noted that the ordering of the section within *Skáldatal* indicates that it is an offspring of the strong interest in the writing of kings' sagas in the thirteenth century. There is also an apparent textual relationship between the Prologue in *Heimskringla* and *Skáldatal*. The Prologue was not in the *Kringla* manuscript when it was copied, even though it is likely to have belonged to the vellum originally (Storm 1873:206-7, Louis-Jensen 1977:16fn1.). It is, however, interesting to note that the implicit message of *Skáldatal*, that of the reliability of the testimony of the skaldic poets, is also the main argument put forward in the Prologue. The central place of the genealogical poems, *Ynglingatal* and *Háleygjatal*, especially in the earliest writing of the kings, is emphasised in both versions of *Skáldatal* and in the Prologue:

SK

Pjóðolfr hinn Huinversci
orti um Rognvald heiðum
hæra Ynglingatal brøðrung
Haralldz hins hárfagra. oc
talði xxx. langfeþra hans.
hann sagði fra dauða hvers
þeirra oc legstað.

SU

Pjópolfr hinn hvín[ver]ski
orti vm Rognvalld heiðvm
hæra ynglinga tal
bræþrvng harallz ins
harfagra ok talþi .xxx.
langfeþga hans ok sagþi
fra hver[s] þeirra davþa ok
legstaþ.

Heimskringla

Pjóðólfr inn fróði ór Hvini
[...] orti kvæði um
Rognvald konung
heiðumhæra, þat er kallað
Ynglingatal [...] í því
kvæði eru nefndir þrír tígir
langfeðga hans og sagt frá
dauða hvers þeira og
legstað.

Eyvindr Scaldaspillir orti
vm Hacon hinn ríka qvæþi
þat er heitir Háleygjatal.
oc talði þar langfeðga hans
til Oðins oc sagði fra
dauða hvers þeirra oc
legstað.

Eyvindr skallda spillir orti
vm hakon jarll inn ríka
kvæþi þat sem heiti
ynglinga tal ok talþi þar
langfeþga] hans til oþins
ok sagþi fra davþa hvers
þeirra ok l[eg]staþ.

Eyvindr skáldaspillir talði
ok langfeðga Hákonar jarls
ins ríka í kvæði því, er
Háleygjatal heitir, er ort
var um Hákon [...] Sagt er
þar ok frá dauða hvers
þeira ok haugstað.

These quotations illustrate that the close similarities between the prose sections and the Prologue are not incidental. The argument raised in the Prologue to *Heimskringla* that the testimony of the poets is trustworthy is strengthened by shrewdly placing the poets in a chronological context in *Skáldatal*. If it is a correct assumption that the Prologue belonged originally to *Kringla*, it seems that the compiler of this earliest known manuscript of *Heimskringla* felt the urgency to emphasise the historical accuracy of the verse in the compilation by placing this skeleton of kings' lives, the source list and the chronology of kings and earls, at the end of the work. On the other hand it may also be argued, that the existence of *Skáldatal* in *Kringla* is precisely due to the fact the Prologue is missing.

3

Codex Uppsaliensis (U) is among the oldest and most intriguing of Snorra Edda's manuscripts, probably written c. 1300-1325. The content and arrangement of the manuscript is of great interest. Opinions are divided as to the nature of the relationship between U and the original version of Snorri's Edda. This remains an unresolved problem. Mogk argued that U contained the shorter version (1904:353-4), which was expanded in *Codex Regius* of Snorra Edda, but Finnur Jónsson maintained that U was an abbreviated version of Snorri's Edda (1931:xxxix).

U is the only Edda-manuscript to refer to the authorship of Snorri Sturluson ((U:1; de Vries 1967:215-16). The heading at the beginning of the manuscript not only mentions Snorri's name but alludes to the tripartite structure of the manuscript:

1. The stories of the æsir and Ýmir. This emphasis on Ýmir shows the importance of the creation myth in *Gylfaginning*, which resurfaces in *Litla Skálda* in AM 748 Ib 4to and AM 757 a 4to, preserved in conjunction with *Skáldskaparmál*.
2. Explanation of the *fkalldka[ar mai] ok heiti margra hlýta*.
3. Snorri's *Háttatal*.

This description fits with the arrangement of the vellum. The manuscript begins with the Prologue of *Snorra Edda*, and concludes with verse 56 of *Háttatal* (depicting *egilshátr*; the end of the poem is missing because the scribe decided to stop at this point), exactly in the way described by the heading. The text of *Snorra Edda*, however is not rendered unbroken, and the interpolations have confused readers of the codex. The content of the manuscript is thus:

1. Prologue (1-3)
2. *Gylfaginning* (3-35)
3. The beginning of *Skáldskaparmál* (35-42).
3. *Skáldatal* (43-47)
4. The genealogy of the *Sturlungs* (48)
5. *Lögsögumannatal* (48-9)
6. Drawing (50)
7. The second part of *Skáldskaparmál* (51-87)
8. The Second Grammatical Treatise (88-92)
9. First lines of the stanzas in *Háttatal* 1-34, 36 (93)
10. *Háttatal* v. 1-56 (94-109)

There is no apparent break in the manuscript between sections 1, 2 and 3. The Prologue, *Gylfaginning* and the first part of U-version of *Skáldskaparmál* are rendered in an unbroken sequence, which agrees with the first part described in the heading. There is, however, a distinct break when the three lists are introduced. The drawing on page 50 depicts *Gangleri's* conversation with *Þriðji, Jafnhárr og Hárr*. *Skáldskaparmál* proper, again concurring with the heading, starts on page 51. Scholars have speculated on the reasons why *Skáldatal*, The genealogy of the *Sturlungs* and *Lögsögumannatal* were inserted into the manuscript and have come to no conclusive answer.

Two questions need to be considered:

1. *where* does the scribe of U make a break in his narrative of *Skáldskaparmál*?
2. *how* do the lists, *Skáldatal*, *Sturlungs' genealogy* and *Lögsögumannatal*, relate to the other material in U?

The scribe of U does not make any distinction between the end of *Gylfaginning* and the first sections of *Skáldskaparmál* (51-87). *Skáldskaparmál* in U starts in the same way as *Codex Regius* (R) of *Snorra Edda*, but the sequence is broken after the address to the young poets in chapter eight (SE 1931). Instead of continuing as R with the story of *Priamus* (omitted in U) and with the kennings for poetry, the scribe inserts the narratives of *Þórr's* conquests in the world of giants, over *Hrungnir* and *Geirröðr*. U omits the poem *Þórsdrápa*, even though the poem and its author *Eilífr Goðrúnarson*, are mentioned. The omission of the poem concurs with the scribe's practice in the manuscript. He omits *Hauströng* and *Gróttasöngur* and therefore we would not expect him to include *Þórsdrápa*. These narratives about *Þórr* are entered later in *Codex Regius*, after the account of kennings for poetry and most of the male gods.

The compiler of U leaves *Skáldskaparmál* at this point to insert three lists: *Skáldatal*, the genealogy of *Sturlungs*, concluding with *Helga Sturludóttir's* children *Egill* and *Gyða*, and a list of lawspeakers in Iceland till *Snorri's* day. These lists or records have been judged to 'bear little, if any, relation to the other subjects dealt with in the book' (Raschella 1982: 12;

Faulkes 1993:601). I maintain, on the contrary, that the writer of U had a specific reason for placing them, and *Skáldatal* in particular, in the manuscript precisely at this juncton.

What is *Skáldatal*? It is a list of poets who composed for kings and earls, exactly those poets that Snorri Sturluson regarded as the most trustworthy sources in his Prologue to *Heimskringla*. The catalogue is also a record of the achievements of the most celebrated Icelandic skalds, who had gained recognition from the rulers of Scandinavia, the descendants of Óðinn. The drawing on page 50 may be read as an allusion to this special relationship of the poet and the king. Resulting from the new arrangement of *Skáldskaparmál* in U no verse had yet been cited in the vellum to illustrate the wealth of the poetic diction and therefore *Skáldatal* serves to lay the groundwork for their testimony. The citations and references to the poets in the latter part of *Skáldskaparmál* are therefore seen in the context of the chronology of the kings of Scandinavia, and with a deference to *Heimskringla*. The U's version, more than any other version of Snorra Edda, makes clear the debt of Snorra Edda to the writing of kings' sagas, which applauded the art and the historical importance of the skalds. The reference to the art of the *hofutskald* in chapter eight of *Skáldskaparmál* (SE 1931) may simply imply that these skalds composed for the heads of society, for kings and earls.

The Sturlung-genealogy and the list of lawspeakers link the Sturlung-family to the writing of Snorra Edda, which is substantiated by the attribution to Snorri Sturluson at the beginning of the manuscript (Finnur Jónsson 1931:xi). The genealogy is traced from Adam, through the kings of Troya and Priamus's daughter, and to Óðinn. There are striking textual similarities between the Prologue to Snorra Edda and the genealogy.

Prologue to Snorra Edda (U)

Konvngr het Menon (*Múnón eða Mennón* in R); hann átti dóttur konungsins Príamí; sú hét Troiam; sonr þeira hét Trór, er vér køllum Þór (SE 1931:4).

The Sturlung genealogy

Mvnon eða mennon het konvngr i troia. han áti troan. dótr priami konvngl. ok var þeira son tror er ver kollvm þor (U:48).

The genealogy of the Sturlungs is probably derived from the Prologue, or from a common source. The Prologue begins with a reference to Adam as the forefather of all men, and then to the Trojans and Óðinn the founder of Scandinavia. The Sturlungs have this genealogical background in common with the kings of Scandinavia.

The story of Úlfr inn óargi, a forefather of the Sturlungs, is only found in SU. This clause provides further substance to the genealogy and aristocratic background of this family, which is most firmly associated with the composing of skaldic poetry and writing of kings sagas in the thirteenth century:

Vlfr inn oargi var hesser ageþr i noregi i navmo dali faþir hallbiarnar halftrøllz faþir ketils hæings. Vlfr orti drapo a einni nott ok sagði fra þrekvi[rki]vm sinvm. hann var davþr fyrir dag (SU).

This story is not known elsewhere. Úlfr is the forefather of *Hrafnistumenn*, the *Mýrarmenn*, and therefore of the Sturlungs. This prose section relates directly to the genealogy of the Sturlungs. The reference to Úlfr is inserted before the list of the Norwegian chieftains, starting with Þorleifr spaki, and thus the Sturlung family is associated with this class of noble chieftains in Norway.

The genealogy concludes with the children of Helga Sturludóttir, the sister of Snorri. It may be noted that her son Egill Sölmundarson (probably named after Egill Skalla-Grímsson) had two sons, Jón murti Egilsson, who is one of the court poets mentioned in

Skáldatal in *U* (not in *SK*), and Þórðr *lögmaðr*. The most important poets of the Sturlung-family, Snorri Sturluson, Sturla Þórðarson and Óláfr Þórðarson, were also lawspeakers and therefore the list of lawspeaker complements the records of the other achievements of these kinsmen.

4

It has been noted that Skáldatal in *Kringla* functions as a footnote to Snorri Sturluson's Prologue to the work. The importance of the genealogical poems *Ynglingatal* and *Háleygjatal* is reiterated and the poets are ordered according to the succession of kings and earls, instead of their own achievements. The first court poet in the list (Starkaðr and Ragnarr loðbrók, Áslaug and their sons are noted in the foreword) is Bragi Boddason. Bragi is also the first poet referred to in historical works such as *Heimskringla* and *Sturlunga saga*, and also in *Snorra Edda*.

The two versions of Skáldatal earn their place in the context of *Snorra Edda* and *Heimskringla* because of the catalogue's relevance to the content of the respective manuscripts. The most significant differences between the versions further highlights their different role in the two codices.

1. *SK* only refers to rulers of Scandinavia, but *SU* adds two English kings to the list. King Athelstan and his poet Egill Skalla-Grímsson and King Ethelred and his poet Gunnlaugr ormstunga. It is clear that a reference to kings outside Scandinavia is inappropriate in the nordic context of *Heimskringla*, and this shows how intricately Skáldatal in *Kringla* is linked to the content of that manuscript. The textual context is quite different in *U*. The sagas of Egill and Gunnlaugr may have inspired the writer of *U* to introduce these two English kings to the list.

2. Many highly placed men in the service of the Norwegian kings were praised by the Icelandic court poets, as is attested by *Heimskringla*. *SK* mentions only one of them at the very end of the list, Þorleifr inn spaki Hjørða-Kárason, the first in line of important chieftains in *Heimskringla*. These men do not belong to the royalty and therefore are excluded from (or omitted in) the catalogue in *Kringla*. The writer of *SU*, however, has no such qualms, and lists eighteen additional chieftains starting with Arinbjörn hersir, Egill's friend, and concluding with the thirteenth-century chieftain and advisor to the King, Gautr á Meli.

The relationship of the Sturlungs to Gautr, a follower of King Hákon, was changeable in the thirteenth century. Snorri Sturluson while in the company of Skúli Bárðarson composed a stanza about Gautr comparing him to the devious god Óðinn. Gautr is one of Óðinn's names. This stanza is both found in Sturla Þórðarson's *Hákonar saga* and Óláfr Þórðarson's *Málskrúðsfræði*, where the allusion to Óðinn in the stanza is explained: *her er oiginleg líking milli Óðins ok nockurs illgiarns manz* (3GT:116). The stanza is clearly not laudatory.

When Sturla Þórðarson goes on his 'höfuðlausn'-excursion to the court of King Hákon in 1263, which is recounted in *Sturlu þátir* in *Sturlunga saga* (probably a fourteenth-century addition to the saga) Gautr á Meli proves his only supporter; he, in the same way as Arinbjörn in *Egils saga*, risks his own position at court to help Sturla. Skáldatal does not list Sturla among Gautr's poets. Only one member of the Sturlung family composed in praise of him, Steinvör Sighvatsdóttir, the niece of Snorri Sturluson, but regrettably none of her verse is preserved.

3. The two versions of Skáldatal relate differently the poets who praised Skúli Bárðarson:

SK

Hákon galinn
Snorri Sturluson
Steinn Ofeigsson
Liotr scald
Þorsteinn Eyjolfsson

Skúli hertogi
Snorri Sturluson
Ólafur Þorþarson
Jatgeirr scald
Liotr scald
Alfr Eyjolfsson
Sturla Þarþarson
Guðmundr Oddsson
Teitr scald
Roðgeirr Aflason
Þóralfr prestur

SU

Skúli jarl
Snorri stvrlo son
ólafur þorþar son

Hákon jarl galinn
Jvarr kalfs son
Steinn kalfs son
Steinn ofeigs son

Skúli hertogi
liotr skald
þorsteinn ofeigs son
snorri Stvrlo son
Ólafur þorþar son
iatgeirr torfa son
liotr skald
alfr eyjofs son
Stvrla þorþar son

SU makes a distinction between the poets of Earl Skúli and Duke Skúli, but SK refers only to the title he held during the last period of his life. Snorri and Ólafur are the only poets noted during his earldom.

This list of thirteenth-century poets, the contemporaries of Snorri Sturluson, is noteworthy for another reason. We have a tendency to be incredulous of the existence of poets of ninth- and tenth-century kings if there is no evidence of their verse. Of the ten poets listed along side Duke Skúli in SK, only five are known as poets from other sources: Snorri, Ólafur, Jatgeirr, Sturla Þarþarson and Guðmundr Oddsson, and of those five only Snorri and Ólafur are quoted in connection with Skúli's life in Hákonar saga.

4. Snorri Sturluson is not listed as Sverrir Sigurðsson's court poet in SU, and none of his verse for Sverrir is preserved.

5

Skáldatal heralds the professional accomplishments of poets at the courts of kings and earls in Scandinavia, starting with the half-mythic Starkaðr and Bragi Boddason. It records their achievements in a historical context and thus places their work firmly in time. The catalogue is not written as a laudatory list, but rather as a source list for the writing of kings' sagas. Snorri Sturluson argues in the Prologue to *Heimskringla* for the historical reliability of the court poetry. The relevance of Skáldatal to his testimony is made lucid by locating the catalogue at the very end of *Heimskringla*, after the citations. Textual similarities make probable the idea that an earlier version of Skáldatal underlies the writing of the Prologue of *Heimskringla*, rather than the other way around.

The writer of U clearly appreciated the historical credentials of Skáldatal and uses it to corroborate the poetic quotations in *Skáldskaparmál*. These were the *hofutskáld*, a term which may allude to their status as poets for the heads of society. The reordering of Skáldskaparmál in U is related to the intention of the compiler to insert the three lists in

the work, and I hope to have shown that the catalogue formed an integral part of the design of the codex from the beginning, rather than being used to fill empty space. It would have been against the general practice of the scribe to include Þórsdrápa in the work. U reflects the many interests and roles of Snorri Sturluson and his contemporaries: he was a skald and historiographer, a lawspeaker, a man concerned with associating himself with the most distinguished men of the Scandinavian past and a grammarian (the Second Grammatical Treatise is associated with Snorri's Háttatal).

The question at the beginning of the paper, whether Skáldatal was associated with these two works originally, can now be considered. We have seen the clear textual similarities between Skáldatal and the Prologue to Heimskringla. The fact that the catalogue is preserved in these two manuscripts, which were written only a few decades after Snorri Sturluson composed Heimskringla and Snorra Edda, indicates that Skáldatal was considered highly relevant to these works.

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