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Heimskringla is an abbreviation of *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna*

Hulda is a fourteenth-century manuscript containing the histories of the Norwegian kings from 1035 to 1177. *Hrokkinskinna* is almost identical to *Hulda*, and although it is somewhat younger, it is not a copy of it. Both manuscripts are probably copies of one now lost.

Hulda-Hrokkinskinna (hereafter “*H-Hr*”) is generally thought to be a compilation of *Morkinskinna* and the last third of *Heimskringla*. However, the evidence of *H-Hr*’s derivation from *Heimskringla* is inferior to the evidence of the contrary. The last third of *Heimskringla* is an abbreviation of *H-Hr*.

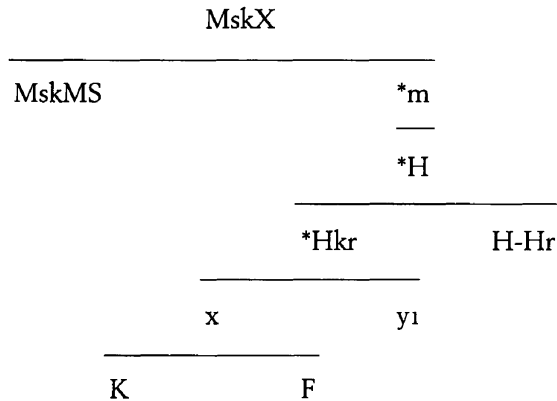
The last two centuries of evidence and arguments involving the relationship of *Heimskringla* and *H-Hr* are summarized in Jonna Louis-Jensen’s *Kongesagastudier: Kompilationen Hulda-Hrokkinskinna*, Bibliotheca Arnamagnaeanae 32 (Reitzel; Copenhagen, 1977), pp. 1–5. There, Jonna Louis-Jensen reports that *Heimskringla*’s priority was doubted by such scholars as P. E. Müller and Guðbrandur Vigfússon, but Gustav Storm decided the issue once and for all in his *Snorre Sturlassöns Historieskriuning* (Copenhagen 1873). Jonna Louis Jensen, pp. 4–5, remarks that Storm’s methods were not the methods of modern textual criticism she used in reaching the conclusions presented in her *Kongesagastudier*, but his results nevertheless coincide with hers, and refute those who thought *H-Hr* was prior to *Heimskringla*. “P. E. Müller’s and Guðbrandur Vigfússon’s opinion that *H-Hr* was a source for *Heimskringla* is incompatible with the position which the compilation’s *Heimskringla*-text turns out to have in the stemma of *Heimskringla* manuscripts on p. 43.”

On p. 43 of *Kongesagastudier* is a stemma of the relationship of some *Heimskringla* manuscripts to *H-Hr*. On pp. 35, 40, 59, 72 and 93 are other stemmas. Assembling these stemmata, this is the picture presented by *Kongesagastudier*:

				Msk ₂	
*Hkr				MskY	MskX
x		y			
K	x ₁	y ₁	y ₂	*m	MskMS
39	F	z ₁	z ₂	*H	
		E*U	J G	H-Hr	

The methods of modern textual criticism used by *Kongesagastudier* work like this: at the lower left are the *Heimskringla* manuscripts Eirspennill, Jöfraskinna, and Gullinskinna (E, J, G). Since J and G are very much alike, but neither is a copy of the other, they must have had a common source, z₂. Since E is also very like J and G, but lacks some readings shared by J and G, it did not use z₂ but a manuscript like it, z₁. The two similar lost manuscripts z₁ and z₂ imply a common lost source, y₁. Since *H-Hr* shares many readings with E, J and G against the x class of *Heimskringla* manuscripts (Kringla, Codex Frisianus, “39”, left edge of stemma), it must have used a *Heimskringla* manuscript of the y class, but not y₁, because *H-Hr* also has some readings on common with the x class against E, J and G. Therefore *H-Hr* must have used a y class manuscript that had some x class readings, which we will call y₂. Since there is a y₁ and y₂, there must have been a y.

The method is so mechanical that its results seem incontrovertible, except that it is immediately apparent that the method can work as well in the opposite direction. The method can be used to derive apes from men, since it cannot fail to generate missing links. The method does not provide its own starting point, and so the method can use the very same data to show quite objectively, and with fewer missing links, that *Heimskringla* is derived from *H-Hr*.



This new stemma is superior to *Kongesagastudier*'s in that the chimerical y_2 , which was generated to explain why *H-Hr* shares readings with both the x and y classes of *Heimskringla* manuscripts, is not necessary. The shared readings are explained in the new stemma by common derivation from *H.

The new stemma also simplifies certain "interpolations". In *Kongesagastudier*, pp. 83 ff., the y class of *Heimskringla* manuscripts is distinguished not only by certain words and phrases not found in the x class, but also by some interpolated episodes from a *Morkinskinna*-like text. Thus MskY is generated. However, MskY is also used to explain the fact that F (Codex Frisianus), a *Heimskringla* manuscript of the x class, shares the same interpolations with the y class. In the new stemma, the problem is solved by regarding K (Kringla) as the most severely abbreviated *Heimskringla* manuscript, not as the manuscript closest to a brief and business-like original *Heimskringla*. As the new stemma indicates, the "interpolations" common to all the *Heimskringla* manuscripts except Kringla are simply derived through *H, and are not interpolations at all. Kringla is not un-interpolated; it is abbreviated.

Having disposed of y_2 , the imaginary y manuscript with x class readings, and having also disposed of MskY, the special source of (re-)interpolations, the new stemma therefore can dispense with y , and thus avoid the circular stemma of *Kongesagastudier*. The methods of modern textual criticism demonstrate that *H-Hr* is prior to *Hemskringla* in the literary history.

A stemma of *Heimskringla* manuscripts can begin with the assump-

tion that Kringla is the most abbreviated, or the least interpolated, of them. The latter assumption has dominated study since Gustav Storm's 1873 *Snorre Sturlassöns Historiebeskrivning: En kritisk Undersögelse*. Storm argued that the other manuscripts had added episodes, and that occasionally these additions introduced contradictions in the texts. The contradictions are thus evidence of interpolation. One contradiction pointed out by Storm concerns the fostering of Hákon Magnússon Haraldsson. Kringla and all the other manuscripts say he was fostered by Steigar-Thórir, but according to Storm, when all the other manuscripts add a story about Sveinki Steinarsson, "we nevertheless get to hear that he was *actually* fostered by Sveinki!" p. 219. Storm mischaracterizes the texts. All the other texts actually say that Sveinki fostered Hákon and then Thórir fostered him. There is no real contradiction. Storm's other examples are no better, and thus there is no real evidence that Kringla is anything more than the most abbreviated and farthest from the original *Heimskringla* manuscript. Perhaps *Kongesagastudier's* suggestion on p. 90 that Kringla be the primary text in any new edition of *Heimskringla* is misguided.

The austere and efficient style of *Heimskringla* — and especially Kringla — has been generally preferred to the expansive style of *H-Hr* and the Longest *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, but it is doubtful that *H-Hr* has had a fair trial of taste. *H-Hr* has been available in only one edition, vols. VI–VII of *Formanna Sögur* (1831–32), whereas *Heimskringla* has been available in several editions and translations. On p. 3 of *Kongesagastudier*, Jonna Louis-Jensen suggests that Guðbrandur Vigfússon's taste was formed (or deformed) by the relative unavailability of *Heimskringla* in the Iceland of this youth, and thus he was led to champion *H-Hr's* (and the Longest *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar's*) priority over *Heimskringla*. The argument works better the other way. So many readers are familiar with *Heimskringla*, and so few with *H-Hr*, that warped tastes may be the only reason for maintaining *Heimskringla's* priority.

Taste needs testing. Is the dramatic series of duels in *H-Hr* between Haraldr harðráði and his Byzantine rival Gyrgir a tasteless expansion of the single episode in *Heimskringla*, or is that single episode only a dry relic, a dull, skeleton-like abridgement, of the series in *H-Hr*? Is Kringla's omission of Kjartan's swimming contest with Óláfr Tryggvason an improvement over Codex Frisianus's insertion of the story from the *ÁM Oddr Snorrason* version of the contest?

One textual argument for *Heimskringla's* derivation from *H-Hr* is in ch. 21 of *Haralds saga harðráða*: "En er Haraldr heyrði þetta sagt, at

Magnús konungr, fraendi hans, myndi bjóða honum saett ok félagskap ok Haraldr myndi hafa skolu hálfan Nóreg vid Magnús, en hvárr þeira vid annan hálf lausafé beggja þeira, *thá játtaði Haraldr þeiri saett af sinni hendi*. Fóru þessi einkamál þá aptr til Magnús konungs." The italicized portion is found in no *Heimskringla* manuscript and has to be supplied from *H-Hr*.

For arguments against the generally accepted belief that the first third of *Heimskringla* is prior to the Longest *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* and certain lives of Haraldr Hárfagri, see Alan J. Berger, "Heimskringla and the Compilations", *Arkiv för nordisk Filologi* 114 (1999), pp. 5–15, and "The Sagas of Harald Fairhair", *Scripta Islandica* 31 (1980), pp. 14–29.