

KATARZYNA ANNA KAPITAN

Between truth and fiction or *historiæ mediæ, sive vero falsoque mixtæ*

Legendary sagas and their reception in eighteenth-century Denmark

Introduction

The previously somewhat overlooked corpus of the Icelandic legendary sagas (*fornaldarsögur*) has in the recent years received a growing amount of scholarly attention.¹ The definition of the corpus, which traditionally

This article is the result of research conducted as a part of my postdoctoral fellowship at Museum of National History, Frederiksborg Castle, *Dronning Margrethe den II's 'Distinguished' forskningsprojekt om den dansk-islandske reception af den nordiske oldtid*, awarded by the Carlsberg Foundation, but it is also partially based on my previous work on some of the manuscripts discussed here (see Kapitan 2018: 38–39, 95–102). I would like to thank Stephen Werronen for help with the transcription and translation of some problematic passages, as well as his comments on the language and style of the present article. I also thank Sheryl McDonald Werronen and Seán Vrieland for their comments on the earlier versions of the present article.

¹ The body of scholarship is growing very fast, from Tulinius's (2002) *The Matter of the North*, through the series of conference proceedings edited by Ármann Jakobsson, Agneta Ney and Annette Lassen (2003; 2009; 2012), to the most recent publication of *The Legendary Legacy* (Driscoll et al. 2018). The website of the project *Stories for all time, fasnl.ku.dk*, presents an extensive bibliography on *fornaldarsögur* compiled by Matthew Driscoll and Silvia Hufnagel.

Kapitan, K. A., Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Museum of National History, Frederiksborg Castle, Denmark. "Between truth and fiction or *historiæ mediæ, sive vero falsoque mixtæ*. Legendary sagas and their reception in eighteenth-century Denmark". *ANF* 134 (2019), pp. 103–129.

Abstract: This article discusses the scholarly reception of saga literature in eighteenth-century Scandinavia taking as its point of departure the paratextual features of manuscript AM 395 fol., held in the Árni Magnússon Institute, Reykjavík. It focuses on the additions made by subsequent owners of this manuscript, especially the table of contents which classifies the sagas included in this manuscript into subgroups based on the criteria of their historical value. It suggests who the author of the table of contents was and discusses the possible sources of the classification applied in the table of contents.

Keywords: Old Norse, Icelandic sagas, reception studies, truth and fiction, *fornaldarsögur*, manuscript studies, post-medieval manuscripts, material philology.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63420/anf.v134i.27818>

is associated with Carl Christian Rafn's publication of *Fornaldar sögur Norðrlanda eptir gömlum handritum* (1829–1830), has been a subject of an intensive debate, which concerned not only the classification of Icelandic literature in general, but also the division of *fornaldarsögur* into sub-groups (see e.g. Harris 1975; Lönnroth 1975; Andersson 1975; Righter-Gould 1980; Hallberg 1982; Hermann Pálsson 1985; Kalinke 1990; Ashman Rowe 1993).² A number of Old Norse scholars have pointed to the manuscript context as a key for understanding the genre classification of Icelandic literature (see e.g. Mitchell 1991: 21; Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir 2001: cxlvii; Driscoll 2005: 193; Ármann Jakobsson 2012), but no consensus has been reached regarding the genre boundaries between groups such as *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur*.³ The manuscript context in which texts appear can inform our understanding of how people perceived Icelandic literature throughout the centuries. The manuscript context here is understood in a broad sense, not only as co-occurrences with other texts in manuscripts but also as paratextual features of the manuscripts preserving these texts, such as running titles, title pages and tables of contents, which, even though originating in print culture, frequently appear in post-medieval manuscripts.⁴ Through the analyses of manuscripts' structures and their paratexts we can answer questions such as to what extent the groupings of sagas we apply today functioned in the past, and what other classifications were used to conceptualize the body of saga literature.⁵ The present article contributes to the discussion of saga categorisation with a case study of an eighteenth-century manuscript, AM 395 fol., held in the Árni Magnússon Institute, Reykjavík, Iceland, the structure and paratextual elements of which give us an interesting insight into the development of saga classification and the reception of saga literature in eighteenth-century Scandinavia.

The manuscript has been examined in several previous studies (Jónas

² The first classifications can be traced back to Müller (1817–1820) and Reuschel (1933). Various perspectives on the discussions regarding *fornaldarsögur* as a genre can be found in Quinn (2006), while the development of the genre was recently discussed for example by Bampi (2012) and Lavender (2015).

³ The fluid genre boundaries have been addressed by e.g. Hallberg (1982) and more recently Driscoll (2009).

⁴ The influence of print on manuscript culture has recently been the subject of the conference *Manuscript After Print: The Influence of Print on Post-Gutenberg Manuscript Culture* (6–7 April 2017) organised by Silvia Hufnagel and Nioclás Mac Cathmhaoil.

⁵ The importance of the co-occurrence of literary texts in manuscript form has been addressed for example by Yavuz (2016) and Bampi (2018). In my doctoral thesis, I illustrated different manuscript contexts in which the sagas about Hrómundur Greipsson appear (see Kapitan 2018).

Kristjánsson 1952; Blaisdell 1979; Slay 1997; Seidel 2014; Njarðvík 2017), but surprisingly little attention has been given to the analysis of the manuscript as a whole, with each study focusing mainly on the selected texts preserved in this volume. None of the known studies observed that one of the two tables of contents that appear in this manuscript (the one that classifies the sagas according to their historical value) is not an original part of the manuscript but a later addition, and therefore is relevant for the discussion of the reception of saga literature in post-medieval Scandinavia.⁶

The structure and paratextual features of AM 395 fol. give an interesting insight into the era that produced this volume. They deliver new perspectives to the recent discussions of the subject of truth and fiction in Icelandic sagas, especially *fornaldarsögur*. Several studies have demonstrated how the reception of these texts was changing throughout the centuries, from being considered as history to pure fiction (O'Connor 2005; 2008; 2018; Cormack 2007; Jørgensen 2008; Driscoll 2012; Lassen 2012; Hughes 2016). It has been pointed out that the figure of Árni Magnússon (1663–1730), the famous collector of manuscripts, plays not an unremarkable role in the reception of Icelandic literature due to his active engagement in the scholarly activities of the royal antiquarians Thomas Bartholin the younger (1659–1690) and Þormóður Torfason, better known under his Latinised name Thormodus Torfæus (1636–1719).⁷ The border between the period of “believing” and “not believing” in the historical value of the legendary sagas cannot, however be set to “before and after Árni”. Even though his critical approach to the historical value of the legendary sagas had a great influence on Bartholin and Torfæus (Jørgensen 1931; O'Connor 2018) we cannot say that after his times no one in Scandinavia believed in the historicity of the legendary sagas. The evidence delivered by the table of contents in AM 395 fol. proves otherwise. As I argue in this article, Skúli Thorlacius (1741–1815), a philologist and a member of the Arnamagnæan Commission and the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences, classified legendary saga in AM 395 fol., as mixtures of history and fiction, and clearly distinguished them from the

⁶ The presence of the table of contents has been ignored in the most of previous scholarship, but recently Njarðvík (2017), in her article for the outreach webpage of the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic studies, has drawn attention to the table of contents, but she did not mention that it is a later addition nor did she provide any interpretation of its structure.

⁷ For the biography of Árni Magnússon see Már Jónsson (2012); for his influence on Danish historiography see Jørgensen (1931).

romances, which he considered pure fiction, giving *fornaldarsögur* some right to historical value.

This article first discusses the provenance of AM 395 fol., examining the additions made by subsequent owners of the manuscript in order to establish the possible group of people that had access to this volume. Second, through analysis of the script type used in the table of contents, this article establishes by whom and when the table of contents was added to this manuscript. Third, it analyses this addition from the perspective of genre development and the reception of saga literature in post-medieval Scandinavia. It considers whether the table of contents of AM 395 fol. can have any implications for the discussion of genre classification of Icelandic literature, and whether the reception of the saga literature could be different in the middle of the eighteenth century in Iceland where the manuscript was written, and at the end of the same century in Denmark, where, as I argue, the table of contents was supplied.

Provenance and ownership history of AM 395 fol.

The origin, provenance and part of the manuscript's history can be established using internal evidence. The first clues appear already on the cover of the manuscript. There is a gilded embossing of the name "JOH: ARNÆUS" and the date "1766" at the bottom of the front cover, and another embossing "S[NÆF]ELLS NESS | SYSSLU | HERAD[S] RETTAR | [PRO] TOCOLL" on the back cover.⁸ The second set of clues appear on the first leaf of the manuscript, in the form of two notes. One, written in ink at the bottom of the page, reads "kiöbt paa sysselmand Jon Arnesens | auction d. 4. Janu. 1779. | cst. 3 Rd:" (bought on the auction of the district administrator Jón Árnason on the 4th of January 1779 for 3 rigsdallars), and another, written in pencil on the top-margin of the page, reads "e libris Birgeri Thorlacii" (from the library of Birgir Thorlacius). They give a good insight into the manuscript's history, associating it with Jón Árnason (1727–1777), a *sýslumaður* (district administrator) from Ingjaldshóll on Snæfellsness in western Iceland (Páll Eggert Ólason 1948–1952: III, 46–47), and Birgir (or Børge) Thorlacius (1775–1829), professor of classics at the University of Copenhagen, the son of Agatha Riisbrih and Skúli Thorlacius (Bricka 1887–1905: XVII, 268–270).

⁸ The embossing is scrubbed and today hard to decipher, the transcription is given following Slay (1997: lxvi).

According to the online catalogue *handrit.org* (last accessed 29/04/2019), the commissioner of the manuscript was Jón Árnason, a bishop of Skálholt (1665–1743), but there is no evidence to support this hypothesis. In the *Antiquarisk Tidsskrift* for years 1846–1848 there is a brief description of the manuscript, from which we learn that “bók þessa hefir átt Jón sýslumaður Árnason í Snæfellssýslu, og seinna Byrgir prófessor Thorlacius” (this book was owned by Jón Árnason, the district administrative of Snæfellssýsla, and later professor Birgir Thorlacius; Det Kongelige Nordiske Oldskriftselskab 1847: 154). The embossing on the back cover suggests that the cover was re-purposed, and previously served as a cover for some book of court records from Snæfellsnessýsla in western Iceland, supporting the identification of the commissioner, or at least the owner of the manuscript, as Jón Árnason from Snæfellssýsla rather than Jón Árnason, the bishop.⁹

Even though there are several signed and dated colophons in the manuscript, various interpretations of the distribution and identification of the scribal hands have been proposed, distinguishing from one to four different hands.¹⁰ In the oldest known description of the manuscript in the *Antiquarisk Tidsskrift*, we can read that AM 395 fol. was “rituð með skýrri snarhönd að framan en fljótaskript aptantil, herumbil 1764, af Þ. Sigurðssyni á Ökrum” (written with a clear humanistic script at the beginning and cursive at the end, around 1764, by Þorkell Sigurðsson from Akur; Det Kongelige Nordiske Oldskriftselskab 1847: 154). This suggests that the entire manuscript was written by one scribe, Þorkell Sigurðsson from Akur. Þorkell Sigurðsson was a son of Sigurður Hög-

⁹ Slay (1997: lxvi) and Njarðvík (2017) arrived at the same conclusion.

¹⁰ According to Kålund (1889–94: I, 304–305), AM 395 fol. was written in various hands in the eighteenth century, without specifying how many hands he distinguishes. Jónas Kristjánsson (1952: xviii–xix) suggested that the scribe of *Valla-Ljóts saga* seem to only have written this saga, but he did not comment on the rest of the manuscript, so it is uncertain what was his opinion about the other hands. Blaisdell (1979: cxxxviii) considered the manuscript as written in various hands, without specifying how many hands he distinguished in the manuscript. Slay (1997: lxvii) suggested that the manuscript was written by four different scribes: Scribe A wrote *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Þórarins þáttur ofsa* pp. 5–76 (ff. 1–37r), which are followed by blank pages 77–81; Scribe B wrote *Valla-Ljóts saga* pp. 82–107 (ff. 40–52v), which is followed by blank pages 108–111; Scribe C (Þorkell Sigurðsson) wrote sagas on pp. 112–350 (ff. 57r–173v), which are followed by blank pages 351–352; Scribe D wrote the rest of the manuscript pp. 353–972 (ff. 175r–464v). Most recently, however, the online catalogue *handrit.org* (AM 395 fol. was digitally catalogued in 2002 by Drífa Kristín Prastardóttir, last accessed 29/04/2019) and Teresa Dröfn F. Njarðvík (2017) suggested that the manuscript was written only in two hands: the first hand wrote pp. 5–350 and the second hand wrote pp. 353–979. In my doctoral thesis I explored the possibility that the entire manuscript was written by one scribe, see Kapitan (2018: 95–102).

nason, a *sýslumaður* from Akrar. Þorkell was born around 1724 and was called Laga-Móri due to his wide knowledge of law and was known as “góður skrifari og skrifaði fyrir men” (a good scribe and copied for others) (Aðalsteinn Halldórsson 1969–2007: XII, 247–48). His hand can be found in a number of manuscripts, such as Rask 8a in the Arnarnæðan Institute in Copenhagen, dated to 1765 (Jónas Kristjánsson 1952: XIX; Kålund 1889–94: II, 511), Acc. 5 in the Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavík, written around 1772 (Kålund 1889–94: II, 610), or the following manuscripts in the National and University Library of Iceland in Reykjavík: Lbs 839 4to (Páll Eggert Ólason 1918–37: I, 368) dated to 1770–1771, JS 42 4to dated to 1780 (Páll Eggert Ólason 1918–37: II, 498), and parts of ÍBR 28 8vo, written around 1760 (Páll Eggert Ólason 1918–37: III, 233), and Lbs 3623 4to, written around 1756 (Grímur Helgason and Lárus Blöndal 1970: 33), which demonstrate the wide array of script types that he used.

One of these manuscripts, Lbs 3623 4to, was copied in Akrar in Mýrasýsla mainly by Árni Böðvarsson (1713–1776), but partially also by Þorkell Sigurðsson, as indicated in the colophon following *Rímur af Flóres og Leó*: “Skrifað ef svo má kallast frá miðri 4ðu rímu til enda af Þorkeli Sigurðssyni anno 1756” (written if it can be called this way from the middle of the fourth ríma to the end by Þorkell Sigurðsson year 1756). This collaboration between Árni Böðvarsson and Þorkell Sigurðsson is very intriguing, since according to Páll Eggert Ólason (1948–52: III, 47) and Björn K. Þórólfsson (1963: 161–162) Árni Böðvarsson was a great friend of the aforementioned Jón Árnason (1727–1777). Jón Árnason received Snæfellsnessýsla in 1754 and afterwards Árni became his main poet, who composed several *rímur* for him. It is known that Árni was for some time living in the close neighbourhood of Sigurður Högnason, the father of Þorkell Sigurðsson, and they did not like each other very much (Björn K. Þórólfsson 1963: 172; Bogi Benediktsson 1881–1932: III, 360). The cold relations between Árni and Sigurður apparently did not influence the relations between Árni and Þorkell, as the collaboration between them in producing manuscripts suggests. Since Lbs 3623 4to is one of the earliest known manuscripts in Þorkell Sigurðsson’s hand, it might be through the agency of Árni Böðvarsson that Þorkell made his way to the scribal network of the *sýslumaður* Jón Árnason, which would also support the identification of Jón Árnason as not only the owner of AM 395 fol. but also its commissioner.

Jón Árnason is known to have owned a great collection of books and manuscripts, which was sold at auction in Copenhagen on the 4th of

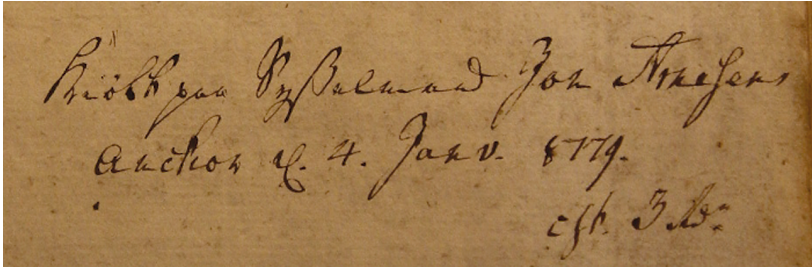


Figure 1. A note on the first leaf of AM 395 fol. in the Árni Magnússon Institute, Reykjavík, Iceland. Photo: Katarzyna Anna Kapitan.

January 1779 (Ilsøe 2007: 184).¹¹ It is unknown who bought this manuscript in 1779, but it could not have been Birgir Thorlacius as he was only four years old at that time. Slay (1997: lxviii) suggested, based on the handwriting of the acquisition note, that the manuscript was probably bought by Birgir Thorlacius's father, Skúli Thorlacius (1741–1815), at that time the rector of the Metropolitan school in Copenhagen (Páll Eggert Ólason 1948–52: IV, 294; Bricka 1887–1905: XVII, 270–71) and later came into the possession of his son. Skúli Thorlacius is also known as a great collector of books and a participant in various auctions, including for example the auction of Peter Suhm's (1728–1798) books in 1800 (Ilsøe 2007: 224–25; Sveinbjörn Rafnsson 2007: 232). Therefore, it is possible that he also participated in the auction of 1779 and there purchased AM 395 fol. Even though the sample of writing in AM 395 fol. (the aforementioned note on the first leaf of the manuscript, reproduced in Figure 1), is very sparse and rather difficult to identify it with certainty, Slay's hypothesis seems reasonable when we compare it with a sample of Skúli's writing from the archives of the Arnamagnæan Commission No 126 (Figure 2). In particular, the word "Sysselmand", on the first lines of both samples, is written in a very similar way.

Later AM 395 fol. became part of *Det kongelige Nordiske Oldskriftselskab* collection, and the *Oldskriftselskab* had to receive the manuscript

¹¹ The manuscript is included in the auction catalogue from 1778 under number 32, listed as “Den Islandske historie...” (*Fortegnelse over endeel gode og velconditionerede Bøger, samt nogle Manuscripter, tilhørende afd. Sysselmand i Snefieldsness-Syssel paa Island Herr John Arnesens Stervboe* 1778: 2). The auction catalogue is also preserved in JS 107 fol. in the National and University Library of Iceland, but I didn’t have chance to consult this manuscript in order to examine whether it contains additional information about this volume.

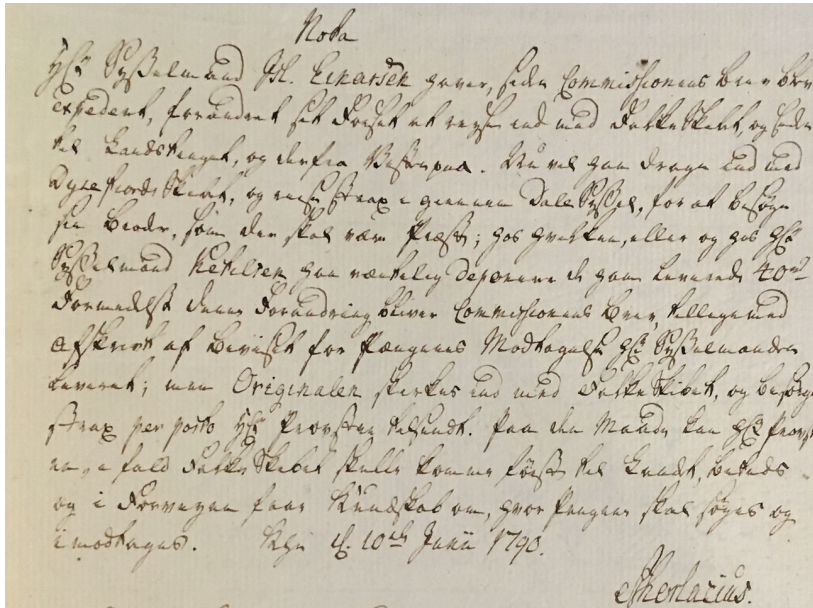


Figure 2. A sample of Skúli Thorlacius's handwriting in the letter from 1790, kept in the archives of the Arnamagnæan Commission No 126, The Arnamagnæan Institute, Copenhagen, Denmark. Photo: Katarzyna Anna Kapitan.

around the year 1847, as in the *Antiquarisk tidsskrift* for the years 1846–48 we can read that “Síðan vér rituðum hina fyrstu skýrslu um safn þetta [...] hefir það eigi alllítið auðgætt að íslenskum handritum og ymsum skýrslum” (Since we wrote the first report about this collection, there has not been an insignificant increase of Icelandic manuscripts and various documents; *Det Kongelige Nordiske Oldskriftselskab* 1847: 154). This first report which is mentioned here was published in the same volume of *Antiquarisk tidsskrift* on pages 39–44 for the year 1846. Therefore, the manuscript came most likely to the collection around 1847 and it could not arrive directly from Birgir Thorlacius, as Njarðvík (2017) recently suggested, since he died eighteen years earlier, in 1829.

The whereabouts of AM 395 fol. between Birgir Thorlacius's death in 1829 and the acquisition of the manuscript by *Det kongelige Nordiske Oldskriftselskab* around 1847 are unknown. The manuscript was set on auction in Copenhagen on 6 September 1830, as it is listed in the auction catalogue as number 8 under “Libri manuscripti in folio” but it is un-

known whether it was bought by anyone.¹² It seems likely that someone bought the manuscript at this auction and later gave it to *Det kongelige Nordiske Oldskriftselskab* around 1847, but it remains a hypothesis, as I know of no record of its sale at this time.

AM 395 fol. became a part of *Den Arnamagnæanske Samling* in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1883 when it was donated by *Det kongelige Nordiske Oldskriftselskab* (Kålund 1889–94: I, 304–5). Later, in 1994, it was transferred to *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar* in Reykjavík, Iceland, where it has been held since.

From the history of ownership of AM 395 fol. it is clear that the manuscript was from its early days associated with the learned elites of Iceland and Denmark, and in this context the following description of the table of contents has to be analysed.

Table of contents and its classification of the sagas

AM 395 fol. preserves twenty-three sagas, which are traditionally classified as *Íslendingasögur*, *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur*. They appear in the following order: *Ljósvefninga saga* (2r–36r) together with *Pórarins þáttur ofsa* (36r–37r), *Valla-Ljóts saga* (40r–52v), *Svarfdæla saga* (57r–92v), *Flóamanna saga* (93r–113v), *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* (114r–122v), *Finnboga saga ramma* (123r–153r), *Brandkrossa þáttur* (154r–157v), *Vopnfirðinga saga* (158r–173v), *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* (175r–182r), *Áns saga bogsveigis* (183r–200r), *Bragða-Ölvis saga* (201r–206r), *Mírmanns saga* (207r–238v), *Kirjalax saga* (240r–284r), *Hálfdanar saga Eysteinnssonar* (285r–302r), *Elís saga og Rósamundu* (303r–328r), *Fertrams saga og Platós* (329r–351r), *Friðþjófs saga* (352r–365r), *Úlfs saga Uggasonar* (366r–374r), *Hervarar saga og Heiðreks* (375r–402r), *Ála flekks saga* (403r–415r), *Clarus saga* (416r–432r), *Parcevals saga* (433r–449v), *Ívens saga* (451r–464v). Some of the texts are defective and there are blank pages left to supply the missing texts. The first part of the manuscript (ff. 2r–173v, f. 74r–v blank), containing *Íslendingasögur* and *Íslendingaþættir*, is written in book hand, while the second part of the

¹² The auction catalogue was published as *Catalogus librorum manuscriptorum et typis exscriptorum quos reliquit Dr. Birgerus Thorlacius, professor [...]* (1830). Some of Birgir Thorlacius's books were bought by Jacob Westin, and today are held in the University Library in Uppsala: Westin 79–84, 86–89, 91–95, 97–110 and 112–113 (Davidsson 1989: 51; McDonald Werronen and Kapitan 2018: 192–93).

manuscript (ff. 175r–464v), containing mainly *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur*, is written in cursive. It is significant, from the perspective of our further discussion, that *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur* are mixed together in the second part of the manuscript, while the *Íslendingasögur* are kept separately.

After the last saga, there are two tables of contents, one on f. 465v and other on f. 468r. The table of contents on f. 468r starts with a rubric, which reads “Registur | yfer Saugur þær sem ero aa Bók þessare” (“Register of the sagas which are in this book”). It is a simple list of all the texts preserved in the manuscript presented in the order of their appearance. The table of contents on f. 465v is more intriguing as it lists sagas preserved in the manuscript not according to their position in the volume but according to their credibility (Figure 3). The table of contents reads as follows:

In hoc volumine continentur

I) Historiæ veræ *vel* vero proximæ

- 1) Liosvetninga Saga. edr. Reikdæla def. p. 5 [...]
 - 2) Sagan af Vallna Liote. pag. 82
 - 3) Svarfdæla Saga. pag. ii6. def.
 - 4) Flooamanna Saga. p. 189.
 - 5) Sagan af Gunnari Kioldugnups Fifle p. 232
 - 6) Sagan af Fimboga Ramma p. 249.
 - 7) Brandkrossa Paattur p. 311.
 - 8) Broddhelga, edr. Vopnfyrdinga Saga def. p. 319
- NB Alle desse ere skreven med Gotheske bogstaver. Setta skrift

II) Historiæ mediæ, *sive* vero falsoque mixtæ.

- 9) Sagan af Hromunde Greipssyne p. 353.
- 10) Sagan af An Bogsveiger, p. 369.
- 11) Sagan af Bragda Aulver p. 405.
- 12) Sagan af Halfdane Eisteinssyne p. 613.
- 13) Sagan af Fridþiofe Frækna p. 747.
- 14) Sagan af Hervöru og Heidreke Konge

III) Historiæ prorsus fabulosæ *sive* Liga Sögur

- 15) Sagan af Mirmant p. 417.
- 16) Sagan af Kiriellaxx Keisara p. 483. def.
- 17) Sagan af Elis p. 649
- 18) Sagan af Fertram og Plato p. 701.
- 19) Sagan af Ulfe Uggasynne p. 775.
- 20) Sagan af Alafleck
- 21) Sagan af Claro Keisara Syne og Serenu Drottningu
- 22) Sagan af Parceval
- 23) Sagan af Iuvent Riddara.

971

In hoc volumine continetur

I) Historia vera v. vero maxima

- 1) Eivvellinga saga. con. Reidala def. p. 549
- 2) Saga af Vallra Lioke. p. 32.
- 3) Karðala saga. p. 116. def.
- 4) Flooamanna saga. p. 189.
- 5) Saga af Gunnari Kuldugrups Ríða p. 232
- 6) Saga af Þorboga Þamma p. 249.
- 7) Brandkroga Þaakur p. 311.
- 8) Þroddhelga, con. Þorþyðinga saga def. p. 319

þessi dy. in. þinnar and dy. þinnar. Sæla þessi

II) Hist. media, i. vero falsky misth.

- 9) Saga af Arnarke Grepssky p. 355.
- 10) Saga af ða Þorþvegen p. 369.
- 11) Saga af Þragda Halver p. 405.
- 12) Saga af Þalþane Grepssky p. 613.
- 13) Saga af Þroþiof Þamma p. 747.
- 14) Saga af Þervon og Þedrene Þorge

III) Hist. profu þaboloþa i. by. Þyn

- 15) Saga af Þormann p. 417.
- 16) Saga af Þivulann Þeigan p. 483. def.
- 17) Saga af Elv p. 649.
- 18) Saga af Þorþan og Þato p. 701.
- 19) Saga af Ulfe Þegassky p. 775.
- 20) Saga af Þilafleir
- 21) Saga af Þato Þeivann og Þerene Þroþinga.
- 22) Saga af Þarval
- 23) Saga af Þuvert Þiddan.

Figure 3. Table of contents, AM 395 fol., f. 465v. Photo: Katarzyna Anna Kapitan.

The table of contents starts with the typical phrase, “in this volume are contained”, which introduces the lists of sagas. These are categorized into three groups, presented in a descending order of their credibility. In

the first group there are eight “true stories, or those very close to truth”: *Ljósvetninga saga*, *Valla-Ljóts saga*, *Svarfdæla saga*, *Flóamanna saga*, *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*, *Finnboga saga ramma*, *Brandkrossa þátur*, and *Vopnfirðinga saga*. The next group includes six “intermediate stories, or hybrids of truth and falsehood”: *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar*, *Áns saga bogsveigis*, *Bragða-Ölvis saga*, *Hálfdanar saga Eysteinsonar*, *Friðþjófs saga*, and *Hervarar saga og Heiðreks*. While the last group contains nine “entirely fictional stories or lying sagas”: *Mírmanns saga*, *Kirjalax saga*, *Elís saga og Rósamundu*, *Fertrams saga og Platós*, *Úlfs saga Uggasonar*, *Ála flekks saga*, *Clarus saga*, *Parcevals saga*, and *Ívens saga*. This classification of the sagas corresponds to our modern division into *Íslendingasögur*, *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur* and it is clear that the author of this table of contents considered *Íslendingasögur* as true stories, *fornaldarsögur* as mixture of history and fiction, and *riddarasögur* as pure fiction.¹³

The table of contents on f. 465v is clearly a later addition, and until now it has been unknown who was responsible for this addition, as there is no signature which would identify the scribe. Based on palaeographic criteria, the main scribe of AM 395 fol., can be excluded as a possible scribe of the table of contents on f. 465v, but he can be identified as being most likely responsible for the other table of contents on f. 468r. Moreover, it is unlikely that an Icelandic commissioner, living in Iceland, even though fluent in Danish as Jón Árnason, would write a note in his private copy of Icelandic sagas in Danish: “NB Alle desse ere skreven med Gotheske bogstaver. Setta skrift” (“all these texts are written in a Gothic script, a book hand”). Therefore, this note, and the entire table of contents, should be associated with the Danish part of the manuscript’s history, after 1779, when, as previously mentioned, Jón Árnason’s collection was sold at auction in Copenhagen.

Both, Skúli Thorlacius and Birgir Thorlacius, who were the owners of AM 395 fol., would be obvious candidates to be responsible for the table of contents. They both were educated men who actively participated in the activities of the Arnamagnæan Commission towards editing and

¹³ One text in the second group, *Bragða-Ölvis saga*, is not traditionally seen as *fornaldarsaga*, since it was not included in Rafn’s (1829–1830) collection, but the history of this text’s transmission, which frequently appears in manuscripts with *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* (see Kapitan 2017; 2018; 2019), together with its style and structure (Njarðvík 2017 personal communication) suggest that it has a lot in common with *fornaldarsögur* and should be interpreted in this context. Teresa Njarðvík is currently working on her doctoral thesis devoted to the study of *Bragða-Ölvis saga* as a *fornaldarsaga*.

Hr. Høiædne H. Schæring er mig for det pædagogiske
 Dominarium, af hvis philologiske Glas han næsten i
 sin Skole har været Medlem, paa det forslagskrigste
 Sekretariat, som en Person af grundige philologiske
 Kundskaber, og af ubegrænset Tid og Lyst til
 at gaar form paa Videnskaberne hans. Med en
 aal. Endersmand, og det anstændigste Forfald for
 Kinder han den første Samvirkingsfuldstændighed i an-
 seer sigte Opfyldelse, saa at han med Tid vil
 blive en meget dygtig og retskaffet Enders-
 mand. Gode kan jeg ikke andet end hilsne
 efter hans Anmodning.
 Hobenavn d. 24. August 1808. Thorlacius.

Figure 4. Sample of Birgir Thorlacius's handwriting in the letter from 1808, kept in the archives of the Arnamagnæan Commission No 203d, The Arnamagnæan Institute, Copenhagen, Denmark. Photo: Katarzyna Anna Kapitan.

translating Old Norse literature into Latin, such as the editions and Latin translations of the Poetic Edda (*Edda Sæmundar hinns fróða. Edda rhythmica seu antiquior, vulgo Sæmundina dicta* published in three volumes in 1787, 1818, 1828), *Njáls saga* (*Nials-Saga. Historia Niali et filiorum* published in 1809), and *Laxdæla saga* (*Laxdæla-Saga, sive historia de rebus gestis Laxdölensium* published in 1826).

Based on the palaeographic analysis of the handwriting used in the table of contents it is more probable that Skúli Thorlacius was responsible for the addition of the table of contents, rather than Birgir. Even though Birgir used a script type which appears to be patterned after his father's writing, as visible in their signatures in Figures 2 and 4, the script used in AM 395 fol. bears more similarity to Skúli's hand than Birgir's. The resemblance is especially clear on the loops of the letter d, which can be found in both AM 395 fol. (for example in lines 3, 7, and 9 of the table of contents) and the sample of Skúli's writing in Figure 2 (for example in lines 2, 3 and 7), but not in the sample of Birgir's writing in Figure 4. The characteristic feature of Skúli's writing, the regular bottom line of the

words with some letters lying flat on the base line, which is not very clear in the letter, appears in the table of contents in AM 395 fol. and in Skúli's hand-written dedication to Ludvig Harboe (1709–1785), Danish historian and bishop of Sjælland (Bricka 1887–1905: II, 84–7), in one of the copies of the second volume of *Antiquitatum Borealiū Observationes Miscellanae* (Thorlacius 1780), held in the Royal Library in Copenhagen.¹⁴

The table of contents which lists the sagas according to their historical value with no regard to the order in which they appear in the volume can be interpreted as evidence that the original organization of the manuscript was not satisfying for its later owner. Even though there was a table of contents in AM 395 fol. at the time when it got into Skúli Thorlacius's possession, he decided to classify texts in the volume according to his own criteria: from true stories through stories which mix truth and fiction to pure fiction. This division, which is otherwise not visible in AM 395 fol., corresponds to our modern division of Icelandic literature into groups such as *Íslendingasögur*, *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur*. The question that has to be asked here is whether the correspondence between our generic division of sagas and the classification of the sagas according to the truth value can be used as evidence that these groups were already well established in the eighteenth century and each of them had some given truth value assigned, or the overlap is accidental and can only serve as evidence of Skúli Thorlacius's reception of these twenty-three sagas preserved in AM 395 fol.

As previously mentioned, the internal organisation of this manuscript can be interpreted as a division between *Íslendingasögur* in the first part of the manuscript (written in book hand) and *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur* mixed together in the second part of the manuscript (written in cursive). We cannot be sure to what extent the internal organisation of the volume reflects the commissioner's reception of these sagas. It seems clear, however, that there was no need for separating *fornaldarsögur* from *riddarasögur*, and they were most likely copied one after another (possibly from the same exemplar). The changes in the script types used in various parts of the book might be explained by possible changes of the exemplar. All the sagas written on ff. 175r–402r were probably copied directly from Lbs 633 fol., held in the National and University Library of Iceland in Reykjavík, where all texts are written in cursive script.¹⁵ It

¹⁴ The book in question has a barcode 130021919323 and has been digitized by the library.

¹⁵ Detailed analysis of Lbs 633 fol. was published by Slay (1994).

is known that around the time when AM 395 fol. was written in Akrar in Mýrasýsla, Lbs 633 fol. belonged to Kár Ólafsson at Munaðarnes, which also is in Mýrasýsla (Slay 1997). Therefore Lbs 633 fol. could easily serve as a direct exemplar for AM 395 fol.¹⁶ I know of no manuscript which preserves all sagas written on ff. 1–173v, so perhaps the change in the script type between *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Valla-Ljóts saga* and again between *Valla-Ljóts saga* and *Svarfdæla saga* reflects the change of the exemplar. Until the detailed stemmatic studies of these sagas are published this remains only a hypothesis.

Truth and fiction in the sagas from the eighteenth-century perspective

The classification of the sagas applied in this table of contents seems to be characteristic of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century scholarly approaches to saga literature, but it is difficult to identify its direct sources. Traces of a similar taxonomy can be found in the three-volume *Sagabibliothek med anmærkninger og indledende afhandlinger* published by Peter Erasmus Müller (1776–1834). The first volume contained *Íslendingasögur*, the second volume contained *fornaldarsögur*, while the *riddarasögur* were only listed by title at the end of the third volume, with the header “Alphabetisk Register over islandske af fremmede Sprog oversatte eller efterlignede Romaner” (Alphabetic register of Icelandic translations or imitations of foreign romances), and all sagas preserved in AM 395 fol. are included in that list. Müller’s publication, however, could not have direct influence on Skúli Thorlacius, as his *Sagabibliothek* was published in the years 1817–20 and Skúli died in 1815, therefore the influences must be found elsewhere.

The work of Torfaeus would be an obvious source while looking for inspirations of the saga classification scheme, since, as pointed out for example by Jørgensen (2008: 484–85) and O’Connor (2018: 138–41),

¹⁶ There has been only a handful of detailed stemmatic studies of the texts preserved in AM 395 fol., but Slay’s (1997) study of *Mírmanns saga* and Kapitan’s (2018) study of *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* demonstrated that at least these two sagas were transcribed directly from Lbs 633 fol. to AM 395 fol. For the purpose of the present study the beginnings of the other sagas preserved on ff. 175–402r were compared with Lbs 633 fol. and the analysis did not deliver any evidence against the hypothesis that all these texts were transcribed from Lbs 633 fol.

Torfaeus developed a system of categorising Old Norse literature according to the historical value of particular texts.¹⁷ Torfaeus's division is based on four main categories, with three of them being divided internally into further two groups. In Torfaeus's categorisation there is no overlap between the modern genre boundaries and the groups based on the interpretation of the truth value of particular sagas. Sagas belonging to almost all modern genres are freely mixed in various categories. For instance, some *Íslendingasögur*, such as *Króka-Refs saga* are grouped under the category of "confictas narrationes [...] sine ullo recondito sensu" (invented stories without any hidden meaning; Torfaeus 1702: 12), and in the same category we can find *riddarasögur*, such as *Mágus saga jarls*, and *fornaldarsögur* such as *Hálfðanar saga Brönufóstra*. Similarly, in the category of "historias ex veris principiis deductas fabulis interspersis" (stories spun out of true elements, with fables interspersed; Torfaeus 1702: 12) there are *fornaldarsögur*, such as *Örvar-Odds saga*, but also *konungasögur*, such as *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar*. Moreover, in the group of "historias authenticas" (genuine stories; Torfaeus 1702: 13) together with e.g. *Sturlunga saga* there is one *fornaldarsaga*, *Fundinn Noregur*. Therefore, Skúli's division of sagas cannot originate directly from Torfaeus's work. It is, however, highly possible that the overall notion of truth and fiction is somewhat influenced by Torfaeus, as his notes and letters were published by P. F. Suhm in 1777 in *Torfaeana sive Thormodi Torfaei notae posteriores in Seriem Regum Daniae, Epistolae Latinae et Index in Seriem Regum Daniae*, and his work had to be well-known among Danish scholars in the eighteenth century.¹⁸

A similar approach to saga literature, as demonstrated by the tripartite grouping of sagas in the table of contents of AM 395 fol., can be found in the preface to Ms Icel. 32 in the Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. This manuscript is contemporary to the addition of the table of contents of AM 395 fol. and is dated to 1789.¹⁹

¹⁷ The division appears in both Torfaeus's main works *Series dynastarum* (1702: 12–13) and *Historia rerum Norvegicarum* (1711: *Prolegomena*).

¹⁸ Erich Christian Werlauff (1781–1871), Danish historian and professor, mentioned in his memoirs that books in Nordic history were fairly cheap in his times, and that he bought some works of Torfaeus and Bartholin for reasonable amounts: "Bøger til den nordiske Historie vare dengang i meget ringe Priis; saaledes har jeg i Aaret 1797 kiøbt Saxo., Steph. Udg. For 1 Rbdl., Bartholins Antiquitates ubeskaaret for 8 Skilling, Torfaei Trifolium for 8 Skilling..." (Werlauff 1910: 27). Copies of works by Bartholin and Torfaeus appear also in the auction catalogue of Birgir Thorlacius's books (*Catalogus...* 1830), indicating that these works were still known and read in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

¹⁹ An earlier attempt to classify Icelandic sagas can be found, for example in *Sciagraphia Historiae litterariae Islandiae*, published in 1777 by Hálfðan Einarsson, but there is no clear

The scribe of this manuscript, Halldór Jakobsson (1734–1810), a *sýslumaður* in Strandasýsla, divides the sagas preserved in that volume into fiction, mixed, and true stories (Hughes 2016: 7–8). The members of the subsequent categories do not, however, fully overlap with the categorisation applied in the table of contents of AM 395 fol. The first category of sagas described in the preface to Ms Icel. 32 contains sagas which were composed exclusively for pleasure and entertainment (“*einunges til gamans og skemtunar eru of lærdum og skarpvitrum monnum til Dæg[ra]stíttningar uppdictadar*”; Hughes 2016: 28) such as *Þjalar-Jóns saga* and *Rósanía*. The second category includes the sagas that have some truth but they are mixed with worthless fables and fairy-tales so it is impossible to separate truth from the fables (“*sonnu eitthvert til hæfe [...] þó*” so fullar of *fänytum* *fabulum*, og *liga æfentyrum*, *konstugliga blöndudum* [...] *ad ömoguligt er ad greina sannleikann frá skróksogunum*”; Hughes 2016: 28), such as *Örvar-Odds saga*, *Bósa saga*, *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*, and *Egils saga einhenda*. Finally, the third category consists of sagas that are closest to truth, and these are *Ragnar saga loðbrókar* and *Áns saga bogsveigis* (“*Sögurnar of Ragnar Lodbrök og Än Bogsveiger eru of ollum hier skrifudum ad minni meining náskilldazar sannleikanum*”; Hughes 2016: 29).

The notion of truth and fiction in Ms Icel. 32 is somewhat similar to that of AM 395 fol., but in MS Icel. 32 the division between *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur* cannot be identified. The texts that are traditionally classified as *fornaldarsögur*, belong to the second group, which consists of texts that mix together truth with fiction, but also to the third group, which consists of texts that are closest to truth. Only romances are considered pure fiction. Sources of this classification are not easy to identify besides a general observation that they resemble somewhat Torfaeus’s work on the truth value of saga literature. Hughes (2016: 9) observed that Halldór Jakobsson spent some time in Copenhagen in the winter 1764–1765 and was in contact with Jón Ólafsson from Grunnavík (1705–1779), an assistant of Árni Magnússon and the first beneficiary of the Arnamagnæan stipend (Bricka 1887–1905: XII, 385–87).²⁰ Even though Kålund

division of the sagas based on their truth value. There, legendary sagas, kings’ sagas, and the sagas of Icelanders are treated together in one group and the only sub division is based on geography, i.e. sagas dealing with the history of Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and together Iceland and Greenland. A translation of *Sciagraphia Historie litterarie Islandiæ* into Icelandic is currently in progress and will be published by Gottskálk Jensson in the series *Íslensk bókmenntasögurit*.

²⁰ On Jón Ólafsson and his scholarly interests see Jón Helgason (1926), and recently Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir (2018).

describes Jón Ólafsson as “ukritisk og overtroisk” (uncritical and superstitious; Bricka 1887–1905: XII, 386), Jón was well versed in Árni Magnússon’s criticism of the historicity of saga literature, and he was familiar with the correspondence between Torfaeus and Árni, in which historical value of sagas is widely discussed.²¹ He also frequently mentions both Árni and Torfaeus in his *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu* from 1738 where Jón’s interest in the historicity of the sagas is clearly expressed (Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 2018: 6–7). Jón divides sagas into true (*sannar*), half true (*hálsannar*) and false (*upplognar*). The first category includes contemporary sagas and kings’ sagas (*Sturlunga saga* and *Heimskringla*), the second category includes *Íslendingasögur* (e.g. *Laxdæla saga* and *Njáls saga*) while the third category includes *fornaldarsögur* (e.g. *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* and *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*) and *riddarasögur* (e.g. *Nikulás saga leikara* and *Þjalar-Jóns saga*), but also *Íslendingasögur* and *þættir* (e.g. *Króka-Refs saga* and *Brandkrossa þáttur*).

Jón Ólafsson’s criticism of saga literature in action is to some extent reflected in the organisation of his catalogue of the Arnarnagæan Collection from 1730.²² The catalogue, as preserved in AM 456 fol., gives an overview of books belonging to Árni Magnússon, both handwritten and printed, which are classified into groups such as “Libri Historici” (historical books), “Libri Juridici” (judiciary books), and “Libri Sacri” (sacred books), but also into sub-groups. For instance, within the category of “Libri Historici” we have sub-groups of “Historia Danica” (Danish history; catalogue numbers 1–33) with sagas such as *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* and *Hrólfs saga kraka* and “Norvegica” (Norwegian [history]; catalogue numbers 34–103) with sagas such as *Ólafs saga Helga* and *Fundinn Noregur*, but also “Exotica et plurima fabulosa” (foreign and very fabulous [history]; catalogue numbers 166–191), with saga *Egils saga einhenda* and *Trójumanna saga*. The term “historia” appears to be used here in the broad sense as a “story” or a “tale” (Danish *fortelling* and Icelandic *saga*), not in the modern sense of history, and because of that it does not carry any explicit declaration of the truth value. At the same time, the distinction of the group “Exotica et plurima fabulosa”

²¹ For the discussion of the correspondence between Árni and Torfaeus see O’Connor (2018).

²² There are several transcripts of the catalogue, e.g. AM 384 fol. and AM 477 fol., both held at the Arnarnagæan Institute in Copenhagen, and JS 71 fol. held at the National and University Library of Iceland. References in this article are to AM 456 fol., which is written in Jón Ólafsson’s own hand.

may suggest that the truth value of the sagas included in these categories was a matter of interest.

Even though the catalogue itself does not provide straightforward evidence for what Jón Ólafsson considered to be true, there is at least one other known manuscript, in which sagas are classified according to their truth value and where the saga classification can be associated with Jón Ólafsson, giving a more nuanced overview of his reception of Old Norse literature. It is Thott 1768 4to held at the Royal Library in Copenhagen.²³ The texts preserved in this manuscript are written mainly in the hand of Ásgeir Jónsson (ca. 1657–1707), a scribe known primarily for his work for Torfæus from 1688 onward (Páll Eggert Ólason 1948–1952: I, 91–2), but there are two tables of contents or indices supplied on the previously blank leaves, ff. 4v–5r, which attempt to classify sagas according to their historical value. These tables of contents were supplied by Jón Ólafsson in March 1754, as the note on f. 5r indicates:

Scriptae omnes manu Asgeiris, qvi permultos libros Bibliothecæ Magnæanæ perscripsit. Bona cura *et* antiqvo Scribendi genere. [sed non satis ubiqve accurate, sed ut solitus erat, calamo festinante, addit Joh. Olavius Senior, qvi Librum hunc paulisper perlustravit anno M.DCC.L.IV. mense Martio.] (Thott 1768 4to, f. 5r)

All written in the hand of Ásgeir [Jónsson], who wrote out in full very many books of the Arnamagnæan Library with good care and in the old style of writing [but not everywhere accurately enough, however, as he had become accustomed to, with a hurring pen adds Jón Ólafsson the older, who this book briefly examined in the month of March year 1754]

On f. 4v there is an incomplete list of sagas included in the volume, which starts with the header “Personæ videntur forte exstittisse” (Persons which seem to have perhaps existed), where the sagas are grouped by geographical area, first Norway, then Sweden, followed by Denmark, and finally Iceland. This division resembles the grouping of sagas in the catalogue, as preserved in AM 456 fol. On f. 5r there is another table of contents, in which all the sagas are listed in the order in which they appear in the manuscript, but in the margins additional comments are made regarding their historical value. The historical spectrum of this table of contents spans from “pudendum figmentum” (shameful fiction) through “vera forte aliquatenus” (to some extent probably true) to “vera” (true). Not all titles appearing in the table of contents are accompanied by such marginal notes, but from the ones that are, we can clearly see that some of the

²³ For more details on Thott 1768 4to see e.g. Loth (1960), Kapitan (2018: 38–39).

text that we today classify as *Íslendingasögur* are considered as the most likely to be true: *Fóstbræðra saga* is described as “vera” (true), *Þórðar saga hreðu*, *Svarfdæla saga*, *Droplaugarsona saga* are described as “veræ aliqvatenus” (to certain extent true), *Brandkrossa þáttur* is “vera forte aliqva ex parte” (perhaps to some extent partially true), and *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* is also “vera forté aliqvatenus” (to some extent probably true).

The single *riddarasaga*, that appears in this manuscript is *Möttuls saga*, a Norse adaptation of the Old French *Mantel mautaillié*, is accompanied by the marginal notes “Romaine. Moralia” (romance, moral). These notes somewhat leave this story outside the spectrum of historicity, perhaps because it is supposed to serve a moral purpose, not historical. This approach can be compared with the classification of *Völsa þáttur*, one of the so-called “conversion þættir” (Ashman Rowe 2004) which in Thott 1768 4to is classified as “pudendum figmentum” (shameful fiction). It seems like this description was not a clear enough expression of the dismissal of the truth value of this text for Jón Ólafsson, because the title is accompanied by an additional marginal note “phij!”, which can be interpreted as an emphasis that this *þáttur* is purely fictional. After all it is an interesting story of phallic worship, which from the perspective of Jón Ólafsson, a learned man and student of Árni Magnússon, could not be considered true.

The situation is more complicated with the sagas that we today classify as *fornaldarsögur*, since some of them are considered as fiction, while others as to some extent true: *Frá Fornjóti og ættmönnum hans* and *Hálfs saga og Hálfsrekka* are described as “fabulosum” and “fabulosæ” (storied, fabulous), while *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* is described in the same terms as *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*, “vera forté aliqvatenus” (to some extent probably true). The classification here is similar to Halldór Jakobsson’s division of the texts preserved in Ms Icel. 32, where two *fornaldarsögur* (*Ragnar saga loðbrókar* and *Áns saga bogsveigis*) are considered to be closest to true. Taking into consideration the chronology, the additions in Thott 1768 4to dating to 1754 and the preface to Ms Icel. 32 to 1789, it cannot be excluded that the saga classification presented in Ms Icel. 32 was composed under Jón Ólafsson’s influences.

Coming back to AM 395 fol. now, it has to be mentioned that Skúli Thorlacius studied at the University of Copenhagen since 1758, where at that time Jón Ólafsson was working as the first stipendiary of the Arnarnagðæan scholarship, which he received twice, first in the years 1732–43 and again in 1751–79 (Páll Eggert Ólason 1948–52: III, 238).

Skúli Thorlacius became a member of the Arnarnagnæan Commission in 1780, so only one year after Jón Ólafsson's death. Even though there is no direct evidence that Skúli Thorlacius was inspired by Jón Ólafsson's work, there is a fair possibility that these two Icelanders associated with the Arnarnagnæan milieu knew each other and that Skúli was familiar with Jón's work, which is preserved in multiple manuscripts in the Arnarnagnæan Collection. Therefore, it is possible that the saga classification in AM 395 fol. was to some extent also influenced by Jón Ólafsson.

The evidence of AM 395 fol. seen in its own context, might lead us to conclude that in the late eighteenth century all *fornaldarsögur* were seen as a separate group which contained texts that mix truth and fiction. This brings questions regarding the role the criterion of truth value played in classifying sagas into groups; indeed, whether it played any role. Based on the analysis of the table of contents in AM 395 fol. it might seem that the division of Icelandic literature into *Íslendingasögur*, *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur* was already established in the eighteenth century, and each group was assigned its own truth value. However, seen in the context of other eighteenth-century manuscripts analysed in this study, this interpretation seems rather superficial. The examples delivered by Thott 1768 4to and Ms Icel. 32 clearly show that some of the texts, which we classify today as *fornaldarsögur*, in the eighteenth century were considered as historically reliable texts, while other texts from the same group were dismissed as fiction. Some of the texts which Halldór Jakobsson considered to be true, such as *Ragnar saga loðbrókar* simply do not appear in AM 395 fol., so we cannot know how they would be classified by Skúli Thorlacius. The only overlap that there is in these manuscripts, in regard to *fornaldarsögur*, is *Áns saga bogsveigis* that appears in AM 395 fol. (where it is classified as mixture of truth and fiction) and Ms Icel. 32 (where it is classified as closest to truth) and *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* that appears in AM 395 fol. (where it is classified as mixture of truth and fiction) and Thott 1768 4to (where it is classified as to some extent probably true).

In Skúli Thorlacius's classification of the sagas in AM 395 fol., we can see some evidence for a gradual change towards a more critical approach to the truth value of what we classify today as *fornaldarsögur*. Both *Áns saga bogsveigis* and *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar*, which were previously seen by other scholars as close to truth, in Skúli's classification are seen as mixtures of truth and fiction. At the same time there is no clear indication that Skúli saw these sagas as members of one generic group. Perhaps the absence in this volume of other more "problematic" sagas,

from the perspective of other eighteenth-century authors, such as *Ragnar saga loðbrókar*, gives us a somewhat simplified view of the reception of these texts with the illusion of overlap between modern genre boundary and truth value of these texts. What should be, however, emphasised, is that the table of contents, regardless of whether it has anything to do with genre division, informs our understanding of the reception of these sagas in eighteenth-century Denmark, where six *fornaldarsögur* were clearly seen as at least partially true.

Surprisingly, however, the same tendency cannot be observed in regard to *Íslendingasögur* and *þættir*. *Brandkrossa þáttur*, which Jón Ólafsson in his *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu* classified among sagas which are “very foolishly lied” (“ofur þurslega lognar”; Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 2018: 6), in Thott 1768 4to is considered to be “perhaps to some extent partially true”. Moreover, according to the table of contents in AM 395 fol., Skúli Thorlacius saw it as one of the “true stories, or those very close to truth”. So instead of losing its historical reliability, this particular *þáttur* gradually started gaining it. It needs to be noticed that in *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu* Jón Ólafsson makes an explicit note regarding the part of the saga he finds unlikely to be true. It is the part in which the ox Brandkrossi swam between Norway and Iceland (“að nautið Brandkrossi svam í milli Noregs og Íslands”; Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 2018: 6). Based on this episode, *Brandkrossa þáttur* is classified as an invented or “lying” saga, which gives us some insight into the reception of this saga by Jón, who appears to had read this and other sagas very literally.

Conclusion

The present study has traced the previously unknown ownership history of AM 395 fol. from its time of writing around the year 1760 to 1883, when it joined the Arnamagnæan Collection in Copenhagen. It suggested that one of the two tables of contents that appear in this manuscript is a later addition which should be associated with the Danish part of the manuscript’s history and that Skúli Thorlacius was responsible for this addition. Moreover, it analysed this additional table of contents in the context of the eighteenth-century approaches towards saga literature.

The comparison of the younger table of contents with the physical features of this manuscript suggests that the reception of saga literature in Iceland in the middle of the eighteenth century might have been differ-

ent than in Copenhagen at the end of the same century. The commissioner of AM 395 fol. Jón Árnason divided the volume into two parts: one part containing *Íslendingasögur* and the second part containing *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur* mixed together. This division of texts was not satisfying for the later owner of this manuscript, Skúli Thorlacius, who supplied a table of contents which divided the contents into three groups of stories based on their truth value. Even though the groups correspond to our modern division into *Íslendingasögur*, *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur*, they cannot be seen as clear evidence for the existence of this generic framework already at the end of eighteenth-century; on the other hand, they give us a first-hand insight into which sagas were considered to be true at that time.

As shown in this study, it is apparent that individual scholars made judgments about the truth value of each saga separately and their opinions diverge from one another. Therefore, in order to understand these aspects of the reception of the sagas, it is necessary to consider the evidence for each different scholar, including the marginal notes and tables of contents in the manuscripts they owned. Only through the analysis of this primary source material, we can achieve a full insight into the development of the scholarly classifications of saga literature. The present study showcased the possibilities that the study of paratextual features gives to expanding our understanding of the reception of saga literature in Scandinavia in the post-medieval period and hopefully will inspire further studies of a similar nature. An analysis of paratextual features of other manuscripts from this period would certainly deliver further arguments in the discussion of the reception and genre development of Icelandic literature.

Bibliography

- Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir (2001): *Úlfhams saga*, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, Rit 53, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, Reykjavík.
- Aðalsteinn Halldórsson et al. (1969–2007): *Borgfirzkar æviskrár*, 13 vols, Sögufélag Borgarfjarðar, Akranes.
- Andersson, T. M. (1975): “Splitting the Saga”. *Scandinavian Studies* 47 (4), pp. 437–41.
- Ármann Jakobsson (2012): “The Earliest Legendary Saga Manuscripts”. A. Lassen, A. Ney, and Ármann Jakobsson (eds.), *The Legendary Sagas: Origins and Development*, University of Iceland Press, Reykjavík, pp. 21–32.
- Ármann Jakobsson, A. Lassen, and A. Ney, eds. (2003): *Fornaldarsagornas struk-*

- tur och ideologi, handlingar från ett symposium i Uppsala 31.8-2.9 2001, Nordiska texter och undersökningar 28, Uppsala universitet, Institutionen för nordiska språk, Uppsala.
- Ashman Rowe, E. (1993): "Generic Hybrids: Norwegian 'Family' Sagas and Icelandic 'Mythic-Heroic' Sagas". *Scandinavian Studies* 65 (4), pp. 539–54.
- Ashman Rowe, E. (2004): "'Þorsteins Þátrr Uxafóts, Helga Þátrr Þórissonar,' and the Conversion 'Þáttir'". *Scandinavian Studies* 76 (4), pp. 459–74.
- Bampi, M. (2012): "The Development of the Fornaldarsögur as a Genre: A Poly-systemic Approach". A. Lassen, A. Ney, and Ármann Jakobsson (eds.), *The Legendary Sagas: Origins and Development*, University of Iceland Press, Reykjavík, pp. 185–99.
- Bampi, M. (2018): "Starkaður across the Centuries: Strategies of Rewriting and Manuscript Variation in *Starkaðar saga gamla*". Matthew James Driscoll et al. (eds.), *The Legendary Legacy: Transmission and Reception of the Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*, The Viking Collection 24, University Press of Southern Denmark, Odense, pp. 53–69.
- Björn K. Þórólfsson (1963): "Árni Böðvarsson skáld". *Andvari* 88, pp. 152–80.
- Blaisdell, F. W. (1979). *Ívens saga*, Editiones Arnarnagæðar Series B 18, C.A. Reitzel, Copenhagen.
- Bogi Benediktsson (1881–1932): *Sýslumannaæfir*, ed. by Jón Pétursson and Hannes Þorsteinsson, 5 vols., Reykjavík.
- Bricka, C. F., ed. (1887–1905): *Dansk biografisk Lexikon, tillige omfattende Norge for Tidsrummet 1537–1814*, 19 vols, Gyldendal, Copenhagen.
- Catalogus librorum manuscriptorum et typis exscriptorum quos reliquit Dr. Birgerus Thorlacius, professor quondam Ling. Lat. in Univ. Reg. Havniensi ... Dividentur auctione publica Hafniæ in domo No. 250 in platea vulgo "Nørregade" hora IX die VIto Septembris MDCCCXXX* (1830): Janus Høstrup Schultz, Copenhagen.
- Cormack, M. (2007). "Fact and Fiction in the Icelandic Sagas". *History Compass* 5 (1), pp. 201–17.
- Davidsson, Å. (1989): *Katalog över Westinska handskriftssamlingen i Uppsala universitetsbibliotek*, Uppsala.
- Det Kongelige Nordiske Oldskriftselskab, ed. (1847): *Antiquarisk Tidsskrift 1846–1848*, Sally B. Salomon, Copenhagen.
- Driscoll, M. J. (2005): "Late Prose Fiction (Lygisögur)". R. McTurk (ed.), *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, pp. 190–204.
- Driscoll, M. J. (2009): "A new edition of *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*, some basic questions". M. Bampi and F. Ferrari (eds.), *On editing Old Scandinavian texts: Problems and perspectives*, Università degli Studi di Trento, Trento, pp. 71–84.
- Driscoll, M. J. (2012): "What's Truth Got to Do with It? Views on the Historicity of the Sagas". T. N. Jackson and E. A. Melnikova (eds.), *Skemmtiligastar Lygisögur: Studies in Honour of Galina Glazyrina*, Dimitriy Pozharskiy University, Moscow, pp. 15–27.

- Driscoll, M. J. et al., eds. (2018): *The Legendary Legacy: Transmission and Reception of the Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*, The Viking Collection 24, University Press of Southern Denmark, Odense.
- Fortegnelse over endeel gode og velconditionerede Bøger, samt nogle Manuscripter, tilhørende afg. Sysselmand i Snæfieldsness-Syssel paa Island Herr John Arnesens Stervboe (1778), Copenhagen.
- Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, eds. (2018): *Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík. Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, Íslensk Bókmenntasögurit 1, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, Reykjavík.
- Grímur Helgason and Lárus Blöndal (1970): *Handritasafn Landsbókasafns III. Aukabindi*, Landsbókasafn Íslands, Reykjavík.
- Hallberg, P. (1982): "Some Aspects of the Fornaldarsögur as a Corpus". *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 97, pp. 1–35.
- Hálfdan Einarsson (1777): *Sciagraphia Historiæ Litterariæ Islandiæ*, Copenhagen.
- Hálfdan Einarsson (forthcoming): *Sciagraphia Historiæ Litterariæ Islandiæ*, transl. by Gottskálk Jensson, Íslensk Bókmenntasögurit, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, Reykjavík.
- Harris, J. (1975): "Genre in the Saga Literature: A Squib". *Scandinavian Studies* 47 (4), pp. 427–36.
- Hermann Pálsson (1985): "Fornaldarsögur". J. Strayer (ed.), *Dictionary of Middle Ages* 5, Scribner, New York, pp. 137–43.
- Hughes, S. (2016): "Halldór Jakobsson on Truth and Fiction in the Sagas". *Gripla* 27, pp. 7–50.
- Ilsøe, H. (2007): *Biblioteker til salg. Om danske bogauktioner og kataloger 1661–1811*. Museum Tusculanum, Copenhagen.
- Jón Helgason (1926): *Jón Ólafsson frá Grunnavík*. Safn fræðafjelagsins um Ísland og Íslendinga 5, S. L. Möller, Copenhagen.
- Jónas Kristjánsson (1952): *Valla-Ljóts saga*, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur 63, Copenhagen.
- Jørgensen, E. (1931): *Historieforskning og Historieskrivning i Danmark indtil Aar 1800*. Bianco Lunos Bogtrykkeri, Copenhagen.
- Jørgensen, J. G. (2008): "Tormod Torfæus og det fantastiske i sagalitteraturen". *Historisk tidsskrift* 87, pp. 475–90.
- Kalinke, M. (1990): *Bridal-Quest Romance in Medieval Iceland*, Islandica 46, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London.
- Kålund, K. (1889–94): *Katalog over den Arnamagnæanske Håndskriftsamling*, 2 vols, Gyldendal, Copenhagen.
- Kapitan, K. A. (2017): "Network analysis of the manuscript context of Old Icelandic literature". *Digital Humanities 2017: Conference Abstracts*, <<https://dh2017.adho.org/program/abstracts>>, pp. 487–89.
- Kapitan, K. A. (2018): "Studies in the Transmission History of *Hrómundar Saga Greipssonar*". PhD thesis, University of Copenhagen.
- Kapitan, K. A. and B. Stegmann (2019): "Writing, correcting and annotating AM 601 b 4to: Material and multispectral analysis". *Opuscula* 17, pp. 129–49.

- Lassen, A. (2012): "Origines Gentium and the Learned Origin of Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda". A. Lassen, A. Ney, and Ármann Jakobsson (eds.), *The Legendary Sagas: Origins and Development*, University of Iceland Press, Reykjavík, pp. 33–58.
- Lassen, A., A. Ney, and Ármann Jakobsson, eds. (2012): *The Legendary Sagas: Origins and Development*, University of Iceland Press, Reykjavík.
- Lavender, P. (2015): "The Secret Prehistory of the *Fornaldarsögur*". *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 114 (4), pp. 526–51.
- Loth, A., ed. (1960): *Membrana regia deperdita*, Editiones Arnamagnæanæ Series A 5, E. Munksgaard, Copenhagen.
- Lönnroth, L. (1975): "The Concept of Genre in Saga Literature". *Scandinavian Studies* 47 (4), pp. 419–26.
- McDonald Werronen, S. and K. A. Kapitan (2018): "An Edition of *Ambrósíus saga og Rósamunda* based on BL Add. 24,969". *Opuscula* 16, pp. 179–215.
- Már Jónsson (2012): *Arnas Magnæus Philologus (1663–1730)*, The Viking Collection 20, University Press of Southern Denmark, Odense.
- Mitchell, S. (1991): *Heroic Sagas and Ballads*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London.
- Müller, P. E. (1817–20): *Sagabibliothek med anmærkninger og indledende afhandlinger*, 3 vols, Schultz, Copenhagen.
- Ney, A., Ármann Jakobsson, and A. Lassen, eds. (2009): *Fornaldarsagaerne, myter og virkelighed, studier i de oldislandske fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*, Museum Tusculanum, Copenhagen.
- Njarðvík, T. D. F. (2017): "Sagnaskart Jóns Sýslumanns – AM 395 fol.". Blogpost on <arnastofnun.is> last accessed 29/04/2019.
- O'Connor, R. (2005): "History or Fiction? Truth-Claims and Defensive Narrators in Icelandic Romance-Sagas". *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 15, pp. 101–69.
- O'Connor, R. (2008): "Truth and Lies in the *fornaldarsögur*. The Prologue to *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*". Ármann Jakobsson, Annette Lassen, and Agneta Ney (eds.) *Fornaldarsagaerne, myter og virkelighed, studier i de oldislandske fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*, Museum Tusculanum, Copenhagen, pp. 361–78.
- O'Connor, R. (2018): "Putrid Fables and True Histories: Perceptions of Authenticity and the Management of Scepticism in Northern Humanist *fornaldarsaga* Scholarship". Matthew James Driscoll et al. (eds.), *The Legendary Legacy: Transmission and Reception of the Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*, University Press of Southern Denmark, Odense, pp. 117–60.
- Páll Eggert Ólason (1948–52): *Íslenzkar æviskrár frá landnámstímum til ársloka 1940*, 5 vols, Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, Reykjavík.
- Páll Eggert Ólason (1918–37): *Skrá um handritasöfn landsbókasafnsins*, 3 vols, Reykjavík.
- Quinn, J. (2006): "Interrogating Genre in the *Fornaldarsögur*: Round-Table Discussion". *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 2, pp. 275–96.
- Rafn, C. C., ed. (1829–30): *Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda eptir gömlum handritum*, 3 vols, Popp, Copenhagen.

- Reuschel, H. (1933): *Untersuchungen über Stoff und Stil der Fornaldarsaga*, Konkordia, Bühl-Baden.
- Righter-Gould, R. (1980): "The 'Fornaldar Sögur Norðurlanda': A Structural Analysis". *Scandinavian Studies* 52 (4), pp. 423–41.
- Seidel, K. (2014): *Textvarianz und Textstabilität, Studien zur Transmission der Ívens saga, Erex saga und Parcevals saga*, Francke, Tübingen.
- Slay, D. (1997): *Mírmanns saga*, Editiones Arnarnagðanæ Series A 17, C.A. Reitzel, Copenhagen.
- Slay, D. (1994): "The Make-up of Lbs 633 fol.". Gísli Sigurðsson, Guðrún Kvaran, Sigurgeir Steingrímsson (eds.), *Sagnaþing helgað Jónasi Kristjánssyni sjötugum*, Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, Reykjavík, pp. 735–41.
- Suhm, P. F. (1777): *Torfaeana sive Thormodi Torfaei notae posteriores in Seriem Regum Daniae, Epistolae latinae et Index in Seriem Regum Daniae*, Copenhagen.
- Sveinbjörn Rafnsson (2007): "Oldsagskommissionens præsteindberetninger fra Island. Nogle forudsætninger og konsekvenser". *Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie. Annual of the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries*, pp. 225–45.
- Thorlacius, S. (1780): *Antiquitatum Borealiū Observationes Miscellaneæ*, Sander & Schroder, Copenhagen.
- Torfaeus, T. (1702): *Series Dynastarum et Regum Daniae, a primo eorum Skioldo Odini filio ad Gormum Grandævum*, Copenhagen.
- Torfaeus, T. (1711): *Historia rerum Norvegicarum*, 4 vols, Copenhagen.
- Tulinius, T. (2002): *The Matter of the North, the Rise of Literary Fiction in Thirteenth-Century Iceland*, Odense University Press, Odense.
- Yavuz, N. K. (2016): "Late Antique Accounts of the Trojan War: A Comparative Look at the Manuscript Evidence". *Pecia. Le Livre et l'écrit* 17, pp. 149–70.
- Werlauff, E. C. (1910): *Erindringer af mit Liv*, ed. Julius Clausen and P. Fr. Rist. Memoirer og Breve 13, Gyldendal, Copenhagen.

