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On the Authorship of *Hrafnkels saga*

I

A number of literary works have in the course of time been attributed to the Icelandic bishop Brandr Jónsson (d. 1264), though it may well be that his fame (“Hann . . . var ágætr höfðingi, klerkr góðr, vitr ok vinsæll, ríkr ok góðgjarn. Ok í þann tíma hafði hann mesta mannheill þeira manna, er þá váru á Íslandi” [*Svínfellinga saga*; *Sturlunga saga* 2:87]) as well as our fairly limited knowledge about his life and activities (see Tryggvi Þórhallsson 1923) have led scholars to credit him with more works than he actually composed.

Brandr Jónsson is commonly held to be the author of *Gyðinga saga* (GS);¹ this assumption is based on the epilogue of GS, which says that it was originally translated into Latin by Jerome and thence into Norse by the priest Brandr Jónsson, later bishop of Hólar, at the request of King Magnús Hákonarson.² As there are no other documents extant or no other evidence to prove that anyone else wrote GS, one is obliged to place some credence in the testimonial of the epilogue. Moreover, there appears to be no reason to dismiss the epilogue, appearing as it does in a codex (AM 226 fol.) written within a century of Brandr Jónsson’s death in a community where he was likely to be remembered. Since it is known that both Brandr Jónsson and King Magnús spent the winter 1262–3 in Trondheim, it has been argued that the saga was written by Brandr Jónsson or under his supervision during this year.

The question of the extent of Brandr Jónsson’s further literary activities has been a matter of controversy.³ The GS epilogue in AM 226 fol. (see n. 2), but not in the other GS manuscripts, says that Brandr Jónsson is the author also of *Alexanders saga* (AS). The attribution of this saga to Brandr Jónsson is confirmed by the epilogue of AS in AM 226 fol. and Stock. Perg.

¹ GS is found in full in codex AM 226 fol. from 1350–60. In addition, fragments are extant in AM 655 4to XXV, AM 238 fol. XVII, AM 229 fol. IV, DKNVSB 41 8vo, Lbs. 714 8vo, and Lbs. 4270 4to. Of these, the last four correspond in the main to the text in AM 226 fol.; the first two, however, differ from AM 226 fol. in that they preserve a fuller and more original rendering of the Latin source, which shows that GS in AM 226 fol. is reduced. For a discussion of the sources of GS, see Wolf 1990b.

² “Þessa bok færði hinn heilagi Jéronimus prestur ok ebresku mæli ok í latínu. Enn or latínu ok í norrænu sneri Brandr prestur Ions son. er sidan var byskup at Holum. ok sua Alexandro magno. eptir bodi virduligs herra. herra Magnúsar kongs. sonar Hakonar kongs gamla” (101,12–7).

³ For a more detailed discussion of this debate, see my articles Wolf 1988 and 1990a. The following is in the main a resumé of these two essays.

4to no. 24 (but not in AM 519a 4to).⁴ Nonetheless, the authenticity of the testimony of these epilogues concerning Brandr Jónsson's authorship was questioned by Widding (1960), who claimed that AS is superior to GS in style and that therefore the works cannot be attributed to the same man. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (1961a), however, drew attention to the defective manuscript transmission of GS and pointed out that Widding's comparison of the abridged GS text in AM 226 fol. with the unabridged AS text in AM 519a 4to must necessarily result in a misleading conclusion. In an attempt to settle the question, Hallberg (1977) undertook a stylistic analysis of AS and GS which, like Widding, he based on the abridged redaction; Hallberg naturally came to the same conclusion as that of Widding, that is, that the two sagas cannot be ascribed to the same translator.

It has also been argued that Brandr Jónsson had a hand in the Old Norse translation of Joshua – 2 Kings, the work commonly referred to as *Stjórn* III. Guðbrandur Vigfússon (1863) claimed that Brandr Jónsson was its author, and Guðmundur Þorláksson in the introduction to his edition of GS (1881:ix) comments on the fact that Vigfússon is correct in noting a striking resemblance in language and style between this work and GS and AS. Storm (1886:255–6) attacked this view on the grounds of the alliterative patterning of *Stjórn* III, which, according to him, is distinctly Norwegian, while in GS it is Icelandic. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (1961b), however, demonstrated that the alliteration in *Stjórn* III is essentially Icelandic, and the earlier view, that Brandr Jónsson may be responsible for *Stjórn* III, was again favored, first by Hofmann (1973:14–7), and later by Kirby (1986:66–9), who emphasized Brandr Jónsson's connection with the royal court in Norway; Kirby also drew attention to a number of words and expressions common to *Stjórn* III and GS (based on AM 226 fol.) and to the common approach in the use of sources. Hallberg (1977) also noted similarities in language and style between *Stjórn* III and GS (which he, like Kirby, based on AM 226 fol.); nonetheless, his conclusion was that the differences were too great to suggest that one and the same man was responsible for the composition of *Stjórn* III and GS.

In two recent articles (Wolf 1988 and 1990a), the attribution of GS, AS, and *Stjórn* III to Brandr Jónsson was reassessed on the basis of a syntactical-stylistic analysis of all three works, which took into account also the differing nature of the Latin originals. The analysis of GS was based, not on AM 226

⁴ “lycr hann þar at segia fra Alexandro magno. ok sva Brandr byskup Ionsson er snóri þessi sögu or latinu ok inorrænu” (155, textual note). – AM 519a 4to preserves a fuller and somewhat original rendering of the Latin source; the fragments AM 655 4to XXIX and Papp. fol. no. 1 also belong to the more original recension but do not cover the end of AS. In the fragment Papp. fol. 1 no. 2, which – like AM 226 fol. and Stock. Perg. 4to no. 24 – belongs to the abridged redaction, the reference to Brandr Jónsson is not found.

fol., but on the fragments AM 655 4to XXV and AM 238 fol. XVII representing a fuller and more original redaction (see n. 1). In the case of AS, the conclusion was that “[g]iven the stylistic differences of the sources, possible differing objectives in the translations, and – in particular – the defective manuscript transmission of GS, . . . stylistic criteria are not adequate to say that AS and GS are by two translators” (396). In the case of *Stjórn* III, the differences outweighed the similarities; with no medieval statements about Brandr Jónsson’s association with *Stjórn* III and with no evidence other than style, the result was that “one must ‘remove’ from Brandr Jónsson the postulated responsibility for, or involvement in, StjIII [*Stjórn* III] and limit his literary activities to GS and AS” (185).

II

In 1961, Hermann Pálsson extended Brandr Jónsson’s authorship to include also *Hrafnkels saga* (HS). In his view, the author’s social and ethical attitude, his narrative skills, and the small role played by women in the saga reflect that he was a cleric, and not a chieftain as argued by Sigurður Nordal (1940:68). Pálsson also draws attention to a few verbal similarities between HS and AS and to certain statements in HS that seem to echo AS; he suggests, for instance, that the characterization of Hrafnkell may have been influenced by the depiction of Alexander in AS.

According to Pálsson, there is also external evidence that Brandr Jónsson wrote HS. He refers to the testimony of *Sturlunga saga* that he was a distinguished man who on several occasions acted as a mediator in the violent disputes of the time between the Icelandic chieftains, though with varying success; the author of HS displays a similar dislike for violence, strife, and manslaughter. Pálsson also points out similarities between Brandr Jónsson’s supposed utterances in *Porgils saga skarða* and those of the characters in HS. Finally, he claims that HS was no doubt written for or by a member of the Freysgyðlingar, to whom Brandr Jónsson belonged, and points out that the saga seems to reflect a series of tragic happenings recorded in *Svínfellinga saga* that overtook that family during the period 1248 to 1255. Among the most significant parallels between these events and HS, Pálsson notes the dispute between Brandr Jónsson’s brother-in-law, Qgmundr Helgason (who corresponds to Hrafnkell), and Brandr Jónsson’s nephew, Sæmundr Ormsson (who corresponds to Sámr), and argues: “Höfundur Svínfellinga sögu er að rekja sömu atburði og orðið höfðu Brandi ábóta svo ofarlega í huga, er hann samdi Hrafnkels sögu” (117). He concludes by pointing out a few details in HS, which, he argues, support the claim that HS is based on contemporary events.

In 1962, Pálsson adduced other, primarily external, evidence in support of

his theory that Brandr Jónsson is the author of HS. Pálsson argues against Nordal's statement that the purpose of the composition of HS, if any, was to demonstrate that the Fljótsdælagoðorð was in the possession of Hrafnkell's descendants from the very beginning (1940:69). Pálsson considers it unlikely that an author writing at the end of the thirteenth century (Nordal's dating) would be concerned with documenting the origin of the Fljótsdælagoðorð or would write a saga with the intention of falsifying historical facts. Finally, he claims that Hrafnkell's acquisition of the *goðorð* is not the main point of the saga. In his view, HS is a social criticism of the Sturlung Age, composed with the intention of revealing certain failings of the chieftains:

Höfundur Hrafnkels sögu horfir um öxl, ekki einungis aftur til tíunda aldar, heldur festir hann auga á nýorðnum atburðum og ritar viðvörunarsögu um þá. Með því móti er hann ekki einkum að kenna mönnum kenningar um mannlega hegðun og vandamál, heldur öllu fremur að knýja þá til að skoða nýliðna atburði frá ákveðnu sjónarmiði (20).

Pálsson suggests that Brandr Jónsson may have written the saga “til skemmtunar” for Bøðvarr in Bær, his relative and friend, who – according to the Melabók version of *Landnámabók* – was a descendant of Hrafnkell.

Nordal considered the saga to have been composed at the very end of the thirteenth century, primarily because *Njáls saga*, written about 1290, agrees in certain details with *Landnámabók* rather than with HS. In Pálsson's opinion, there is nothing to prove that the saga could not have been composed shortly after the middle of the thirteenth century, as it is conceivable either that the author of *Njáls saga* simply was not acquainted with it, or that he preferred the *Landnámabók* version. Pálsson argues that HS was written at Hólar after Brandr Jónsson's return from Norway, that is, 1263–4. Due to the influence of AS, HS must postdate AS, which he believes was written in Norway 1262–3 because of the reference to King Magnús Hákonarson in the epilogue of GS, which in his view applies only to AS. He also points out that the fate of Oddr Þórarinsson, Brandr Jónsson's nephew, is likely to have been on the author's mind when he was living in the same area as the cairn at Seyla containing Oddr's mortal remains, and that HS shows signs of having been composed far away from its scene and written for individuals unfamiliar with the area. The fact that Brandr Jónsson is called a priest in the epilogue of GS he interprets as showing that GS is from the time before Brandr Jónsson became abbot of Þykkvabær in 1247. In a later essay (1984), he substantiates his dating of GS (here 1232–47) on the basis of an apparent allusion to 1 Maccabees 6:43–7 in the *Málsháttakvæði*, which he dates to the mid-thirteenth century: “Eljárnir var trúr at hug. / Fílinn gat hann í fylking sótt; / fullströng hefir sú mannaun þótt”; he believes the

name Eljárnir is a compound of Eleazar and “aljárnaðr” and that the poet was depending on GS (28,1–10) for the name.

Finally, in 1977, Pálsson pointed out similarities in language and style as well as in content between *Stjórn* III and HS. He draws attention to the fact that most of the examples appear in the dialogues and argues that this is to be expected, as it is here an author’s personal diction is likely to be most distinct.

III

Pálsson’s study certainly probes many areas which are important for our understanding of HS. Some of his arguments in favor of Brandr Jónsson’s authorship are, however, not beyond scrutiny.

Thus, Skúli Þórðarson (1964:301) and Kratz (1981:432) comment on Pálsson’s reliance on the truthfulness of *Porgils saga skarða*’s rendering of Brandr Jónsson’s utterances; they draw attention especially to the dialogue between Brandr Jónsson and Þórðr Hítnesingr after the meeting at Rauðsgil (*Sturlunga saga* 2:176–7) and demonstrate that it is inconsistent with Brandr Jónsson’s attitude towards the individuals involved and with the intention of the composition of the saga in general. Skúli Þórðarson also claims that although Brandr Jónsson might have had Bøðvarr in Bær in mind, the content of HS shows that it was hardly intended as a “skemmtisaga”. Kratz (1981:429–35) expresses scepticism about Pálsson’s argumentation or methodology in general (“when similarities to thirteenth-century matters are present in *Hrafnkels saga*, they are seized upon as proof of his theory; if details are present in *Hrafnkels saga* alone, they are interpreted as throwing hitherto unknown light upon the events of the thirteenth century” [431–2]) and, with weighty evidence, argues against Pálsson’s hypothesis that the events in HS are patterned after events described in *Svínfellinga saga*:

Even if I leave myself open to the charge of density, I fail to see that there is much similarity between this chain of events and those narrated in *Hrafnkels saga*. . . . Actually, any parallelism between the two chains of events is more than obscured by the differences. It must be remembered that the mere fact that a feud, murder, and litigation at the assembly are present in both instances is of little significance, as there is scarcely a saga about Icelanders where this is not true (429).

As for the topography of HS, Macrae-Gibson (1975–6) maintains that “in certain parts at least the author seems not only himself to have used, but to have relied on in his readers, a very detailed acquaintance with the ground” (262).

Amongst other failings in the argumentation is the description quoted from *Árna saga byskups* (“... því hann sa þennann mann mikinn atgiörfe-mann j hag leik og rite, og hvassann j skilninge til boknams so ad um þann hlut var hann formentur flestum mǫnnum ad jǫfnu näme”), which does not apply to Brandr Jónsson (cf. Pálsson 1962:50), but to his pupil Árni Þorláksson.

Pálsson's dating of GS is not well founded either. Jón Helgason (1966:XXIX, n. 6) has pointed out that the apparent ambiguity in the epilogue (in AM 226 fol.) concerning King Magnús's association with AS or GS or both depends on an interpretation of the punctuation of the epilogue: “If the punctuation of the manuscript, ‘er sidan var byskup at Holum. ok sua Alexandro magno. eptir bodi . . .’, is followed strictly, this can be understood as if the king's command applied only to Gyð.; if the point is retained after ‘Holum’, but deleted after ‘magno’, this could signify that only Al. was translated at the request of the king”. Nonetheless, he still maintains that the most sensible interpretation would be to assume that King Magnús was involved in having both sagas translated: “It seems most natural to take the appended phrase ‘at the command . . . of King Magnús, the son of King Hákon the Old’ as applying to both sagas” (XXVIII). Here it should, perhaps, be noted that the three manuscripts, DKNVSB 41 8vo, Lbs. 714 8vo, and Lbs. 4270 4to, omit the reference to AS and expressly state that GS was written at King Magnús's request. As for the postulated dependence of the poet of *Málsháttakvæði* on GS for the name Eljárnir, Pálsson offers no evidence for his dating of the poem, and it is difficult to see why the hero, Eleazar, and the enemy elephant should be combined in any way. Indeed, there is no need to think Eljárnir is original, known only in one manuscript long after the poem was composed; the possibility of corruption is self-evident. Furthermore, only the first “e” is made obligatory by the meter, the rest of the name is a matter of metrical indifference. As there is nothing else in the quote which suggests influence from GS, it would seem dubious to base the dating of GS on the grounds of an idiosyncratic interpretation of a single word in a totally unrelated poem. In addition, in GS itself some indication of its date is given in a remark added by the translator about papal authority over canonization (97,2–5). The establishment of the papal control over canonization was initiated by Alexander III ca. 1170, but the formal legal establishment was not settled until the publication of the *Decretals* of Gregory IX in 1234. It is reasonable to assume that such wholehearted endorsement of papal claims would be unlikely to have taken effect before the middle of the century, especially in Norway and Iceland.

Finally, it has been demonstrated that *Stjórn* III cannot be ascribed to Brandr Jónsson (cf. above). This, of course, does not exclude the possibility of biblical influence or influence from *Stjórn* III on HS. Cook (1985), for

example, demonstrates traces of a number of scriptural motifs and scenes in several sagas of Icelanders.

A portion of Pálsson's external evidence in support of his theory is thus questionable. Much the same applies to his internal evidence, his alleged parallels between HS and AS (and GS). Pálsson discovers what he sets out to find, and the supposed similarities are not weighed against possible differences. Moreover, the example material is too scanty for it to be conclusive. Kratz (1981), reiterating Óskar Halldórsson's (1976:45–6) view, says:

Pálsson finds that the style of *Hrafnkels saga* closely resembles that of *Alexanders saga* and *Gyðinga saga*, but the parallel passages that he cites (esp. pp. 81–91) to prove his contention are far from convincing. For the most part they are comparable only in a very general fashion, or, indeed, so different that one wonders where the similarity is supposed to be. The very few that do have similar wording prove nothing except that the authors of both works spoke the same language (428–9).

Thus, whereas Pálsson's argument that Hrafnkell's destiny is summarized in AS with Darius's words, “Þat er manzens eðle at þola stundom stor áfoll. en fagna stundum af farselligom lutum. bogna fire harðrette risa því nest vpp við aprt fengenn tima” (80,24–6), is very much to the point, and his argument that the advice given Alexander by Aristotle (“Storlatr haufðinge ma iafnan oruggv vm sec vera fyrir ahlaupom ovina sinna. þvíat hvart sem friðr er eða vfríðr. þa kemr honum storlæti sitt fyrir sterkan borgar veg. En smalatum hofðingia tiar hvarke ramligt vige ne mikill vapnabunaðr” [6,22–6]) serves to clarify why Sámur was unable to retain his chieftaincy, may be accurate, other alleged direct or indirect parallels to AS, most of which concern the description of Hrafnkell's personal development, are less convincing. Pálsson's statement, for example, that the comments on “superbia” in AS (“Superbia. þat er drambsemi. hennar athofn er sv at scelkía iafnan at oðrom. þickiaz yfir ollom, vilia eigi vita sinn iafningia” [145,16–8]) and Galterus's words, “Eigi scylldo dauðlegir menn . . . stóraz af gefnom ricdome. ok fyrlíta ser minne menn” (37,10–2), underly the depiction of Hrafnkell's arrogance, which expresses itself in his words to Þorbjörn, who insists on arbitration (“Pá þykkisk þú iafnmentr mér, ok munu vit ekki at því sættask” [10,5–6]) and in his reaction to Sámur's legal action (“Honum þótti þat hlægiligt” [13,13–4; cf. 12,8–9]), is dubious. The idea of “superbia” could be derived from a number of medieval writings, if indeed it is necessary to seek foreign models. Similarly, the resemblance between the account of Hrafnkell's rise to power (“Hann þrøngði undir sik Jøkulsdalsmønnum til þingmanna” [2,17–8]) and the plea of the messenger from the Scythians (“En þu þarf eigi þat at etla at þeir verðe þér tryggvir. er þu þrøngvir undir

þec með ofrafle” [128,26–8]) seems far-fetched; the verbal similarity is not striking, and the contexts are entirely different.⁵

AS relates the superstition of the people at Sardis that the one who unties the Gordian knot in the temple will gain possession of all Asia. Alexander cuts the knot and says: “Mikill hegome . . . at trúa slico” (21,6). When Hrafnkell hears that Freyfaxi has been killed and the gods and the temple have been burned, he says: “Ek hygg þat hégóma at trúa á goð” (29,3–4). Apart from the slight verbal similarity, there are fundamental differences between the two statements. Hrafnkell refers to his own belief, whereas Alexander refers to the superstition of the people of Sardis. In HS, it is Hrafnkell’s enemies (not Hrafnkell himself) who – as Pálsson maintains – cut the knot that was too hard for him to untie, that is, his relationship to Freyr. Both gain – Alexander in a concrete and Hrafnkell in an abstract sense – but Hrafnkell gains by losing the objects of his love.

The torture of Hrafnkell and his humiliation make him a better man. This, Pálsson argues, is clear not only from the story, but also from an episode in AS, which gave the author the idea. In reply to the choice between being put to death or being taken to a place of Sámr’s choice, Hrafnkell says: “Mǫrgum mundi betr þykkia skiótr dauði en slíkar hrakningar” (25,20–1). In AS, Alexander says to his terror-stricken physician Critobulus, who is worried about the effects of the removal of the barbed point with which the king had been struck: “ef þu ser at eigi ma gręða þetta sar. þa scalltv minka meinleti mitt. oc gera mer sciotan dauða með harðri læcningo” (142,2–4). Pálsson fails to point out that in AS the choice is not between death or humiliation, but between risky surgery or death, and, in any case, Alexander chooses a quick death, Hrafnkell humiliation.

HS specifies that Porkell’s most striking feature is his tuft of white hair (“leppr”; 14,21–3). This tuft makes him conspicuous (“auðkenniligr”), and this reminds Pálsson of AS, where Alexander is also described as being conspicuous, though, as evident from the quote, for quite different reasons:

⁵ Much the same applies to the ensuing description of Hrafnkell, “Hann var linr ok blíðr við sína menn en stríðr ok stírdlyndr við sína óvina” (2,19), in which Pálsson sees influence from Aristotle’s advice to Alexander: “Pat røð ec þer . . . at þu ser miukr ok linr litillatum. auðsottr oc goðr bæna þurftugom. en harðr oc úeirinn drambsaumom” (5,12–5). Nonetheless, Pálsson attaches great significance to this parallel, claiming that Aristotle’s words elucidate the general attitude towards Hrafnkell. He focuses on the words “litillátr” and “drambsamr” and argues that the former applies to the people of Hrafnkelsdalr and the latter to those of Jökulsdalr. Here it must be noted that the word “drambsamr” does not appear in HS at all; “litillátr” occurs, but only as an adverb (“litillátliga”) about the manner in which Sámr suggests that he and Þorbjörn deal with Hrafnkell after the murder of Einarr. – Aristotle’s advice (5,12–5; cf. above) is seen also as an analogue to the advice given Sámr by the sons of Þjóstarr: “Þjóstarrsynir réðu honum þat, at hann skyldi vera blíðr ok góðr fiárins ok gagnsamr sínum mǫnnum, styrkðarmaðr hvers sem þeir þurfu við” (27,13–5). The resemblance is not clear, and the parallel between the sons of Þjóstarr’s advice about being generous (“góðr fiárins”) and Aristotle’s words, “scalltu vþpluka fe hirðzlom þinom. oc gefa atvér hendr riddoronom” (6,13–5), is no parallel at all.

“Ecki þyrfti hann at scryða sec dyrlego konungs scrúðe at konungr vere auðkendr þar sem hann var. Þviat yfirbragð þat sem honom fylgðe hversdagliga gerðe hann auðkendan af aullo folkino” (9,28-10,3).

Pálsson attributes the fact that Þorkell and Eyvindr have spent time in Constantinople in service with the emperor of Byzantium to the indirect influence of AS. Moreover, he maintains that Þorkell was so ready to help Sámur because he had known his brother in Constantinople. In the first place, the sagas mention several Icelanders who were supposed to have joined the Varangian Guard in Constantinople in the late tenth or early eleventh centuries, e.g., *Grettis saga*, *Njáls saga*, and *Laxdæla saga*. In the second place, Kratz (1981:433) notes that six years had passed between the time when Sámur and Þorkell met at the Alþingi and the time Eyvindr was killed, while Eyvindr had been away seven years, the first one of which he had spent in Norway. Kratz concludes that “[e]ven if Þorkell at the time of his meeting with Sámur had just stepped off his ship, he would not have been able to know Eyvindr in Constantinople”.

Pálsson notes that the only character in HS who is seriously concerned with heroic values is Hrafnkell’s servant, who lectures Hrafnkell on the duty of revenge and leads him to slay Eyvindr: “Verðr sú lítil virðing sem snemma legsk á, ef maðr lætr síðan síalfr af með ósoma ok hefir eigi traust til at reka þess réttar nokkurt sinni, ok eru slík mikil undr um þá menn sem hraustir hafa heitit” (31,16–20). According to Pálsson, this speech has its counterpart in AS, which relates that Alexander delays his grand assault on the Indians and camps by a deep and turbulent river, which is difficult to cross. This prompts the following remark from the soldier Symmachus to his comrade Nicanor: “Er þat eigi . . . undr mikit. er slícr hofðenge sem konungr var er Alexander. er alldrege for her til vsigr. scal eitt litit vatn lata nu við ser taca” (131,15–7). Symmachus is, however, not goading either Alexander or Nicanor, but simply expressing his frustration. And his and Nicanor’s frustration, which makes them leap into the river and attack the enemy on the other side, results in their own death.⁶

Finally, Pálsson notes a few topographical similarities between HS and AS. He points out that the description – seen with Hrafnkell’s eyes – of Hrafnkeldalur (“Hrafnkell reið upp eptir Fliót<s>dalsheiði ok sá hvar eyði-

⁶ Amongst other examples of AS-influence on direct speech in HS, Pálsson maintains that Þorgeirr’s offer to keep on supporting Sámur after Hrafnkell’s defeat at the Alþingi (“munu vit skyldir til þykkia at fylgia þér” [22,25–6]) echoes the description of Darius’s expression as he speaks to his soldiers: “oc af því eno goða yfirbragðe er hann hafðe monde hver dugande maðr íherinom þickiaz scylldr til at veita honom” (29,25–7). The similarity is not striking. Similarly, Pálsson’s argument that the wording of AS (“ec bið hann vera varan vm sec. ok sia vandlega við slíkum svikvm” [109,18–9]) is clearly repeated in the advice of the sons of Þjóstarr when Sámur decides to spare Hrafnkell’s life (“vertu varr um þik, af því at vant er við vándum at síá” [27,18–9]) is not particularly convincing.

dalr gekk af Jökulsdal. Sá dalr sýndisk Hrafnkatli byggiligri en aðrir dalir, þeir sem hann hafði áður sétt” [2,1–3]) may have been influenced by the Scythian messenger’s description of Scythia: “byggir hon íeyðe morc. her oc hvar þar er oðrom monnum man helldr obygelect þyckia” (128,1–3). Apart from the use of the words “eyði-dalr/mörk” and “(ó)byggiligir” there is no resemblance at all, and it is hard to see why an Icelandic author would think of turning to a foreign source to describe a terrain with which he was presumably familiar.⁷

IV

In spite of the flaws in Pálsson’s argumentation, we are a long way from refuting his theory that Brandr Jónsson is the author of HS. In the following, the Brandr Jónsson connection will be reassessed on the basis of a stylistic analysis of HS, AS, and GS in order to round off the discussion of the extent of Brandr Jónsson’s authorship. The stylistic analysis is based on general impressions as well as statistical evidence and takes into account the fact that AS and GS are translations, and thus that the style of the Latin originals may have influenced certain aspects of the style of the two sagas. The analysis of AS is based on AM 519a 4to and GS on AM 226 fol., though with reference to the fragments AM 655 4to XXV and AM 238 fol. XVII. The analysis of HS is, as far as possible, based on the Grafarkot manuscript (AM 551c 4to), which in Pálsson’s view is superior to the other manuscripts and points directly to Brandr Jónsson, because it has some passages that have direct counterparts in AS.⁸

1 *Adverbial modification.*

HS, on the one hand, and AS and GS, on the other, show a similarity in the distribution of a number of synonymous adverbs or adverbial phrases.

⁷In the description of Fljótsdalsheiðr, Pálsson notes the author’s emphasis on how difficult the moor was to pass: “Fljótsdalsheiðr er yfirferðarill, grýtt miðk ok blaut, . . . Hallfréði þótti sú leið torsótt ok leitaði sér leiðar fyrir ofan fell þau er standa í Fljótsdalsheiði” (2,23–3,2). This reminds him of the accounts in AS of Parmenion’s route to pursue Darius and Alexander and his men’s journey from Egypt to the seat of Libyan Ammon: “biðr hann fara þar sem landet er betra yvirfarar . . . En hann fer sialfr at leita hans með einvala lið sitt þar sem landet er verst yvirfarar. oc vegrenn liggir yvir stor fioll oc margar aðrar torföror” (89,15–21), “Þangat var at fara harða mikit torleiðe þott fair menn oc vaskir velðez til þeirar farar. þviat betr mego søkia langan veg oc torsóttan faer men ok fræknir en margir” (50,17–20). Again, it would seem unlikely that an Icelandic author would turn to a foreign model for a description of Icelandic topography.

⁸Kratz (1981:435) notes that “some of the readings are preferable to those of the other manuscripts, but many more are far inferior, and the supposed parallels to *Alexanders saga* . . . are no parallels at all.”

Thus, in the choice between the adverbs “ávalt” and “jafnan”, all three works contain examples of only “jafnan”; HS has three examples, and AS and GS have 39 and 14 respectively (cf. Hallberg 1977:341). The GS fragments AM 655 4to XXV and AM 238 fol. IV, however, contain one example of “ávalt”.

Similarly, in the distribution of the temporal adverbs or adverbial phrases “síðan”, “eptir þat”, and “því næst”, all three works give preference to “síðan”, though HS has a relatively high frequency of “eptir þat” in comparison with AS and GS:

	HS	AS	GS
síðan	54.5 %	60.5 %	83.9 %
eptir þat	41.0 %	25.6 %	10.7 %
því næst	4.5 %	13.9 %	5.4 %

In the GS fragments, the distribution of the three adverbial phrases is 77 %, 15 %, and 15 % respectively.

It can also be noted that GS has 17 examples of “litlu síðarr” and two of “nøkkuru síðarr”; AS has one example of “litlu síðarr”, none of “nøkkuru síðarr”, but one of “stundu síðarr”; HS has one example of “nøkkuru síðarr”.

In the distribution of the adverbs “gerla”, “harðla”, and “varla”, there is a pronounced difference between HS and GS, but less so between HS and AS:

	HS	AS	GS
gerla	–	11 %	–
harðla	100 %	42 %	–
varla	–	47 %	100 %

The adverbs are not in evidence in the GS fragments.

A characteristic of AS and GS is the frequent use of adverbs ending in “-liga”. HS contains the following: “óvarliga”, “glaðliga”, “ákafliga”, “lítillátliga”, “hrapalliga”, “réttliga”, “djarfliga”, “nálīga”, “virðuliga”, “harðfengiliga”, “drengiliga”, “trúliga”, and “herfiliga”. The following figures show the frequency percentage in each work based on the total number of words. HS comprises approximately 9,500 words, AS around 48,500 words, and GS roughly 26,800 words.

	HS	AS	GS
Adverbs ending in “-liga”	0.15 %	0.32 %	0.19 %

In the GS fragments, comprising around 2.480 words, the frequency percentage is 0.12 %. In HS, only “óvarliga”, “ákafliga”, “réttliga”, and “harðfengiliga” have short forms: “óvarla”, “ákaft”, “rétt”, and “harðfengla”. In GS and AS about 60 % and 43 % respectively have short forms. The following adverbs are common to all three works: “óvarliga”, “djarfliga”, “náliga”, “virðuliga”, and “drenkiliga”. The adverbs “ákafliga”, “réttliga”, and “trúliga” are common to HS and AS, and “harðfengiliga” and “djarfliga” are common to HS and GS.

2 Adjectival modification.

AS is characterized by a very high frequency of adjectives ending in “-ligr”. HS has fewer such adjectives, altogether 14 different examples: “görviligr”, “byggiligr”, “efniligr”, “ókræsiligr”, “ópökkuligr”, “hefiligr”, “makligr”, “hlöegiligr”, “þrekligr”, “auðkenniligr”, “ráðligr”, “skörligr”, “ólíkligr”, and “reisiligr”. As evident from the following figures, the frequency of these adjectives in HS is comparable with that in GS:

	HS	AS	GS
Adjectives ending in “-ligr”	0.20 %	0.42 %	0.19 %

In the GS fragments AM 665 4to XXV and AM 238 fol. XVII, the frequency percentage is 0.20 %. In HS 21 % of these adjectives have short forms, so it is questionable how far there was a choice in other cases. In GS and AS approximately 35 % and 38 % respectively have short forms. For the discussion to be conclusive, the occurrence of these short forms should ideally be taken into consideration for comparative purposes. The form “auðkenniligr”, for example, is used in HS, whereas in AS only the short form “auðkendr” is in evidence. The only “-ligr” form common to all three works is “makligr”. The adjectives “(ó)byggiligr”, “herfiligr”, “(ó)ráðligr”, and “(ó)líkligr” are common to HS and AS.

3 Verbs and tenses.

A characteristic feature of saga style is the mixture of the present and preterite tenses, often within the same passage or even the same sentence. The sagas display a great variety in the use of this historic present tense, and Hallberg (1968:66) argues that it can be used as a criterion for determining common authorship. His investigation of the occurrence of present and preterite tense forms of 50 selected verbs in the narrative parts in HS reveals that 50 % of the verbs are in present tense forms (1968:65). GS too has a

high frequency of the present tense; Hallberg (1977:237) estimates the frequency in GS, which he bases on AM 226 fol., to 57.3 %. A comparison of the fragments AM 655 4to XXV and AM 238 fol. XVII with the corresponding sections in AM 226 fol. reveals that the percentage of present tense forms was higher in GS in its original form. AS shows the exceptionally high frequency of 72.6 % (Hallberg 1977:237).

Hallberg (1977:242) draws attention to the extraordinarily frequent use of the construction “fá” + supine in AS. He finds altogether 96 examples, whereas in GS there are only five examples. HS has one example of “fá” + supine. GS has six examples of “geta” + supine and AS only one example (Hallberg 1977:242); in HS the construction “geta” + supine is not in evidence.

In the distribution of the verbs “frétta”, “fregna”, and “spyrja” in the meaning “to hear news”, there is a similarity between HS and AS, both of which contain examples of “spyrja” only:

	HS	AS	GS
frétta	–	–	24 %
fregna	–	–	29 %
spyrja	100 %	100 %	47 %

The GS fragments AM 655 4to XXV and AM 238 fol. XVII contain one example of “spyrja” and one of “fregna”.

4 *Syntactical considerations.*

An indicator in questions of attribution is, according to Hallberg (1965:157), the proportion of reverse word order in narrative parts in usual main clauses. As Hallberg (1977:238) notes, the frequency of reverse word order in AS and GS is very low; reverse word order forms only 11 % and 8.4 % respectively. The usual average of reverse word order in saga texts is around 30 %. An analysis of the fragments AM 655 4to XXV and AM 238 fol. XVII reveals, however, that in GS the proportion of reverse word order was originally somewhat higher. In the Latin sources it does not appear that normal word order is given preference, so there is no reason to think that the distribution of normal and reverse word order is influenced by the Latin. The frequency of reverse word order in HS is approximately 26 %.

Another criterion of individual style, according to Hallberg (1965:161–2), is the ratio of “En er” / “Ok er” when introducing a clause. In the choice between “En er” (“En er Hrafnkell kom heim” [2,4]) and “Ok er” (“Ok er hann kom til hrossanna” [6,3–4]), HS shows a preference for the latter of

54 %. In GS and AS “Ok er” is overwhelmingly more common than “En er” with a frequency percentage of 76 % and 94 % respectively.

5 Native stylistic features.

In Old Norse-Icelandic sagas, the phrase “þar som heitir” is common when places are introduced, especially for the first time. It is believed that the phrase has its origin in very literal translations of the Latin “in loco qui dicitur” (cf. Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1965:129). Pálsson notes that HS – like AS and GS – has a high frequency of this phrase. Hallberg (1968:177), however, remarks that other native sagas have an equally high, if not higher, frequency of this phrase and that HS is not unique in this respect; he refers specifically to *Kjalnesinga saga*, *Króka-Refs saga*, and *Fljótsdæla saga*.

AS contains a number of examples of the stereotyped formulae used to introduce a new episode, to resume a suspended episode, and to terminate an episode, e.g., “Nu er at segia fra Alexandro” (23, 18), “Nu er aprt at hverva til sogonnar sialfrar” (32,9–10). GS too contains a few examples, e.g., “Nu er at segia fra Trifon” (55,9), “Ok er hans eptir þat ecki getit” (59,19–20). Such phrases are not in evidence in HS, except for the concluding sentence (“Ok lýkr þar frá Hrafnkatli at segia” [40,11]; missing in the Grafarkot manuscript), perhaps because its plot is more unified, concentrating, as it does, on very few persons.

A number of proverbs or metaphorical phrases are found in HS: “veldrat sá er varir” (5,8–9), “sá er svinnr er sik kann” (10, 14), “morgum teksk verr en vill” (17,29–30), “má mer þat sem yfir margan gengr” (19,10–1), “hefir sá ok iafnan er hættir” (19,11), “skqmm er óhóf<s> ævi” (26,14–5), “vant er við vándum at síá” (27,19), “svá ergisk hverr sem eldisk” (31,16). Proverbs are common in AS too (cf. Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1972:38–9): “kemr þo iafnan logn a bac vinde” (16,27–8), “fátt er sva illt at einvge dvge” (46,28), “scal bol bota at biða meira” (56,31), “betra er heilum vagne heim at aka” (60,22–3), “margr melir þa fagrt er hann hygr flátt” (98,16–7; cf. 128,26–31; 148,11–4), “sinom forlogum verðr hverr at fylgia” (99,31), “ecke ma feigum forða” (101,15–6), “heliar maðrenn er harðr við at eiga” (105,14–5), “biðendr eigo byr. en braðir androða” (114,19), “. . . at honum vere sem auðrom dyrt latannda drottins orð” (122,24–5), “optlega velltir litil þufa miclo lasse” (126,28), “meira þickia vndir vm fręðð. en langlive” (131,21–2; cf. 143,29–30). Einar Ól. Sveinsson (1972:39) draws attention also to “þat er brunum nest er veslo batnar” (cf. 4,25) and says: “cette forme est sûrement celle d’un proverbe, mais il est possible que cela soit une création de Brandr. Il ne se trouve pas dans les collections de proverbes, et les dictionnaires n’ont que ce seul exemple”. Actual proverbs are not in evidence in GS; note, however, the aphoristic “eckí ma vid marginum” (36,29) and “engín er meiri enn

madr” (36,29–37,1). None of the proverbs in HS appears in AS or GS.

In AS, understatements are not uncommon and can clearly be attributed to the translator, e.g., “. . . quorum | Aurum cuspis habet, argentea candet harundo” (II:120–1) > “. . . er allt var spiotat. eigi var gull eða silfr sparat við spioten” (22,21–2), “Horruit aspectu” (VII:160) > “Við þessa syn varð honum eigi gott” (105,26–7). As Halleux (1963:65) points out, “la *Saga de Hrafnkel* n’en fait qu’un usage modéré”. He mentions the following instances: “eigi mun þat góðu gegna” (7,19), “Hann kvezk eigi þræta þess mega” (8,13), “er þér þat eigi ókunnigt” (9,4), “skiliask þeir nú með lítilli blíðu” (10,20), “at gomlum manni sé eigi ósárari sonardauði sinn” (18,4), “Pat hofum vér heyrt at þú hafir lítt verit leiðitamar þínum óvinum” (24,14–5).

AS and GS contain a large number of native idioms or idiomatic expressions (see Wolf 1988:387–8). HS also has a fair number of such expressions; in addition to the ones mentioned above, the following should be noted: “slíkan ægishiálmm get ek at hann beri yfir flestum sem áðr” (22,19–20), “þykki mér sem Þorkell frændi vili eigi gera endamiótt við þik” (22,22–3), “Hrafnkell dró á vetr kálf ok kið hin fyrstu misseri” (27,2). Only few of the expressions in AS and GS appear also in HS: “sitja um kyrt” (AS:18,24; GS:48,6; HS:12,13–4), “herða á einhverjum” (AS: 108:26; GS:17,34; HS:18,10),⁹ “hoggva banahoggi” (GS:9,16; HS:8,20), “Er þer várkun” (GS:41,6) / “Pat er várkunn” (HS:18,1), and “hafa bein í hendi” (AS:30,18; HS:10,15). The *Arnarnagnaean Dictionary* confirms Pálsson’s statement that AS and HS are the only extant works containing examples of this phrase. The expression “ofsa til vansa” (HS:38,6) must also be mentioned in this connection. Davíð Erlingsson (1970:36) notes that “[d]en närmaste parallellen finns i Alexanders saga i ordspråket ‘Opt verðr ofsat till vansa’ [132,8], där dock ordet *vansi* har betydelsen ‘skada’ snarare än ‘vanära’”.

Pálsson (1962:157–8) draws attention to the fact that both HS and AS contain expressions that have their basis in maritime terminology: “er á Hrafnkell gæti nokkura vik róit” (HS:19,8–9), “lítill vörn fyrir landi” (HS:21,8), “undir okkarn áraburð” (HS:39,19), “biðendr eigo byr. en braðir androða” (AS:114–19). He also mentions the phrases “en þá er eigi dýr i festi” (HS:33,12) and “þotte þeim oc veiðr íhende” (AS:140,11–2), which have their origin in hunters’ language. Davíð Erlingsson (1970:36) correctly notes, however, that “Hermann Pálssons parallell i Alexanders saga (. . . veiðr í hendi) är för avlägsen för att vara ett stöd för ett skriftligt samband mellan sagorna”.

In a few other instances there is a vague similarity in wording between HS and AS or HS and GS, e.g.,

⁹ Davíð Erlingsson (1970:35) notes that this expression occurs only in HS, AS, GS, and in *Thomas saga erkibiskups*, “annars är talesättet obekant”.

HS: "... ok kváðusk vilia síá gripi þessa er svá gengu miklar sǫgur af" (27,20–1)

GS: "... ok sea bunad þess ok dyrdír er miklar sǫgur gengu fra" (76,10–1)

HS: "Lá þá driúgum í fyrir þeim" (33,21) / "... var þar driúgt manna komit"
(36,16–7)

GS: "... driugum hellt med flotta" (36,22–3)

HS: "... ok segir Sámi um hvat leika var" (35,7–8)

AS: "... en taka fra þeim þat litla er þeir hava aðr um at leica" (128,19–20)

Note also the above-mentioned expression in HS ("sá er svinnr er sik kann" [10,14]), which Davíð Erlingsson (1970:34) sees as parallel to "Sa madr er æcki kann sealfan sik. þa þrutnar hann af metnadi imoti gudi" (GS:25,18–20). These examples are, however, no more convincing than Pálsson's alleged parallels (see above). In fact, one would expect to find a greater similarity in phraseology between HS on the one hand and AS and GS on the other if the same man was responsible for all three works. Even in cases where similar situations are described and where one would expect a similar or identical phraseology, the wording differs:

HS: "... þeir ... váru þá qlteitir" (20,16)

GS: "Ok er Simon var kátr af dryck" (58,7–8)

HS: "ok unði illa við sínar málalykðir" (21,20)

GS: "... eirir honum storilla. at sua hafdi at boríz" (16,2)

HS: "... hrinda honum af fram ok þar ofan fyrir ok týna" (28,9–11)

GS: "... var honom hrundít ofan af hafu bergi" (29,28–9)

HS: "... lætr hann leggja eld í goðahúsit ok brenna alt saman" (28,14)

GS: "... brenir hofit. ok. allt þat er ini var" (20,29–30)

A number of abstracts in "-leikr" ("-leiki") are found in AS and GS (see Wolf 1988:390–1). HS has only one example: "óskygnleiki" (18,13), which does not appear in AS and GS. The frequency of these nouns, based on the total number of words, is as follows:

	HS	AS	GS
Abstracts in "-leikr"	0.01 %	0.07 %	0.07 %

The GS fragments AM 655 4to XXV and AM 238 fol. XVII have only one example: "hraustleikr".

6 *Learned style features.*

Both AS and GS contain a number of examples of a preposition with an appositive past participle instead of a subordinate clause to express time,

cause, or the like, e.g., “epter fengenn sigr” (AS:20,1–2), “eptir samlag átt med bonda sinn” (GS:90,24–5). Only few of these are direct translations of similar constructions, and a number of them include the construction “at” + participle, which appears also in popular style. HS contains no examples.

Apart from the substantive use of adjectives, of which both AS and GS have a number of examples (“Hvessir sliova. en brynir hvgracka” [AS:34,8–9], “Þu hinn grimmi. ok hinn glæpa fulli” [GS:6,26–7]), other learned style features, such as the extensive use of reflexive verbs expressing the passive (“... þegar tíma stund léz til” [GS:47,21]) and the use of demonstrative and interrogative pronouns as relative pronouns (“Nu senda Romaní aprt á móti sín bref . . . huer er sua mælltu” [GS:35,12–4]), are uncommon in AS and GS and are not in evidence in HS. Nonetheless, Nordal (1940:52) argues that “[þ]að er ekki laust við, að sagan beri á stöku stað svip af klerkastíl (‘lærðum’ stíl) . . . en lítt gætir þess í orðavali”.¹⁰

7 Direct speech.

Nordal (1940:49) points out that HS contains proportionally more direct speech (dialogue) than other sagas of Icelanders. In his estimate approximately 42 % of the saga is in dialogue. The primary source of GS (1 Maccabees) is characterized by a frequent use of direct speech, but not all instances of direct speech have been retained in the translation, and some are rendered as indirect speech (e.g., 1 Macc. 2:33 > 9,28–9; 1 Macc. 2:40 > 10,8–9) or merely as narrative description (e.g., 1 Macc. 2:41 > 10,11–2; 1 Macc. 5:17 > 18,24–6). The other primary source of GS (Peter Comestor’s *Historia Scholastica*) contains less direct speech, and here the translator now and then renders indirect “utterances” as direct speech (1526D > 62,20–2; 1528A > 64,10–3; 1531A > 69,6–10) or introduces direct speech (61,11–3; 75,16–7; 77,21–2; 84,18–20). Direct speech makes up a considerable part of the *Alexandreis* text. In the translation direct speech is retained; at times indirect speech is rendered as direct speech (e.g., I:76–9 > 4,4–7; II:281–5 > 28,14–20) or direct speech is introduced (e.g., 39,29–30).

8 Alliteration.

A characteristic feature of AS and GS is doublet renderings, where a tendency toward alliteration is noticeable (see Wolf 1988:376–7). In HS, doublet phrases are common too (cf. Halleux 1963:67), e.g., “mannvænn ok gørviligr” (1,8), “linr ok blíðr” (2,18–9), “vænir menn ok efniligir” (3,8);

¹⁰ Nordal refers to the use of “linr” in the meaning “mild” and “náungi” in the meaning “relative”.

alliteration is, however, noticeable in only three instances: “hins milda ok hins matarilla” (1,3), “stríðr ok stirðlyndr” (2,19), “mikill ok vel mannaðr” (3,25–6).

In GS, alliteration is prevalent in the so-called poetic passages, in direct speech, and in passages that seem very dramatic and elaborately detailed. In AS, there seems to be no distinct pattern as to when and where alliteration is applied, though, as in GS, in some instances it is obvious that the use of alliteration is prompted by its use in the Latin. HS contains a fair amount of alliteration, although the saga contains no scaldic verse. In fact, Kratz (1978) has attempted to demonstrate that HS was composed on the basis of a lost alliterative poem, perhaps a *Heldenlied*. Kratz's analysis of the alliteration in HS reveals that it appears irregularly, i.e., in some passages alliteration is very common, whereas in others it is not in evidence; Kratz explains these second type passages as representing interpolations of material not present in the original poem. Generally, however, it is clear that alliteration is frequent especially in direct speech but infrequent or nonexistent in the description of legal matters, geographical details, as well as in the account of Hrafnkell's return to power and of the “skósveinn”.

The above analysis reveals that there are some similarities in style between HS, on the one hand, and AS and GS, on the other. These include the preference for the same words in cases where Icelandic has a number of synonyms; most conspicuous is the distribution between “ávalt” and “jafnan”, but also among “síðan”, “eptir þat”, and “því næst”, and among “frétta”, “fregna”, and “spyrja”. In addition, all three works have a high frequency of adjectives and adverbs ending in “-ligr”/“-liga”, and all exhibit a penchant toward direct speech. But the most telling point of contact between the sagas is no doubt the use in HS and AS of the otherwise unknown expression “hafa bein í hendi”. To this category belong as well the phrases “ofsa til vansa”, which also appears only in HS and AS, and “herða á einhverjum”, which is rare and which occurs in all three works. Davíð Erlingsson (1970:36) notes that “. . . de ovan berörda ordspråken [talar] bestämt för ett samband och ger en fingervisning om möjligheten av lärda inslag i Hrafnkatla”.

But the establishment of points of contact between HS, on the one hand, and AS and GS, on the other, seems, however, also to be as far as one can go, for the analysis has revealed as well a considerable number of differences that certainly do not point to one and the same author of all three works. Thus, there are only very few and vague similarities in wording between HS and the translated sagas. Moreover, HS has a somewhat lower frequency of the historic present tense than GS and, in particular, AS, and HS does not show as pronounced a preference for “Ok er” as opposed to “En er” as do

AS and GS. HS also has a higher frequency of reverse word order than AS and GS, but a lower frequency of abstracts in “-leikr” (“-leiki”). Finally, in the distribution of the adverbs “gerla”, “harðla”, and “varla” there is a marked difference between HS and GS. As Davíð Erlingsson (1970:36) notes, “. . . något övertygande bevis för ett samband mellan de båda sagorna [HS and AS] föreligger ännu inte”.

With no medieval statements to the effect that Brandr Jónsson was indeed the author of HS, any argument for such an attribution must be founded upon strong, unequivocal, and convincing evidence, particularly upon the internal evidence afforded by the texts themselves. In the case made for Brandr Jónsson’s authorship of HS, however, no such conclusive proof is set forth, and until new evidence is forthcoming, we are left only the possibility that the author of HS was acquainted with, and perhaps even used, the works of Brandr Jónsson in composing his own saga. This conclusion naturally has implications for the dating of HS, for we are no longer compelled to date the composition of HS to the mid-thirteenth century by reason of Brandr Jónsson’s death in 1264.

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