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# *Jómsvíkinga Sögur and Jómsvíkinga Drápur* Texts, Contexts and Intertexts

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## Texts of *Jómsvíkinga saga*

If we take the term ‘intertextuality’ to refer to ‘a vision [...] of authorship and reading [...] resistant to ingrained notions of originality, uniqueness, singularity and autonomy’ (Allen 2000: 6), then it seems to be a most appropriate concept for understanding *Jómsvíkinga saga*, with its multiple manuscripts, versions and cross-references to its various narrative elements in other texts. Of course medievalists have never been quite as surprised as modern theorists by Roland Barthes’ insight that ‘the origin of the text is not a unified authorial consciousness but a plurality of voices, of other words, other utterances and other texts’ (Allen 2000: 72). Particularly useful in a practical way is Gérard Genette’s refiguring of the term ‘intertextuality’ to indicate ‘a relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts’ and to reflect ‘the actual presence of one text within another’ (Allen 2000: 101). This takes us away from ‘semiotic processes of cultural and textual signification’ towards ‘a very pragmatic and determinable intertextual relationship between specific elements of individual texts’ (Allen 2000: 101). It has been a criticism of Genette that his approach ‘divides up what is indivisible within the work, its textual structure and its intertextual relations’ (Allen 2000: 114). But this criticism comes from the study of modern literary texts with, on the whole, a fixed form, not from something like *Jómsvíkinga saga*, where the opposite is the case: rather, the existence of other versions keeps interrupting the desire of critics to interpret a singular text. Thus, both Ólafur Halldórsson (2009: 292) and Torfi Tulinius (2002: 29) have to justify restricting their aesthetic or social interpretations of the saga to the version in AM 291 4to (henceforth 291) by declaring this to be the oldest or ‘best’ manuscript of the saga, whereas Norman Blake (1962: xxi–xxv) argues for the literary

superiority of Sthm. perg. 4:o nr 7 (henceforth Sth. 7). They have made the choice which was defined by Genette as ‘reading the text *for itself*’, rather than ‘in terms of its intertextual relations’ (Allen 2000: 114), but this then also depends on having defined one manuscript text as ‘the’ text of the saga.

With such redefinitions, attempts to grasp intertextuality founder in the end on the problem that the term ‘is in danger of meaning nothing more than whatever each particular critic wishes it to mean’ (Allen 2000: 2). But this brief and derivative consideration of the history of the term has at least reminded us that ‘all texts are potentially plural, reversible, [...] lacking in clear and defined boundaries, and always involved in the expression or repression of the dialogic “voices” which exist within society’ (Allen 2000: 209). Such insights from intertextuality theory are relevant to understanding the textual contexts and literary interrelations of *Jómsvíkinga saga*. They also serve to question the unitary concept implied in the designation *Jómsvíkinga saga*. The hypothesis presented here is that there is no *Jómsvíkinga saga*, at least not one about which we can generalize with confidence. Rather, there are multiple narratives (in both prose and poetry) about the Jómsvíkings which have an interesting variety of relationships to each other. A further hypothesis is that the best way of understanding the significance of the Jómsvíkings, whether in a literary or a historical sense, is to understand this variety of textual relationships.

If there is not one *Jómsvíkinga saga*, then how many are there? Although critics write of *Jómsvíkinga saga* in the singular, scholarly wisdom has generally accepted that it survives in five independent versions (e.g. Jakob Benediktsson 1957: 117; Megaard 2000). In conjunction with this, there is a theory going back at least to Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson (1937: 214), and endorsed by Jakob Benediktsson (1957: 116–17), that AM 510 4to (henceforth 510) has interpolations from an older version of *Jómsvíkinga saga* which has ‘no written connection’ to the common source of the five surviving versions, implying that there were in fact once two saga-texts about the Jómsvíkings. Ólafur Halldórsson (2009: 289–90) agrees with this, but outlines a slightly more complex relationship between the surviving versions.<sup>1</sup> In his view, the two saga-texts are represented by

<sup>1</sup> This is a rather different inflection of the relationships than that envisaged in Ólafur Halldórsson 1993: 343, where Sth. 7 is said to belong to the same redaction as 291 and Flateyjarbók.

(1) the version found in 291, but also extracted in Flateyjarbók and the AM 310 4to manuscript of Oddr munkr's saga of Óláfr Tryggvason, and (2) a lost version which was used as a source in both *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*. The other three versions, namely Sth. 7, 510, and the lost manuscript translated into Latin by Arngrímur Jónsson, are mixed versions, deriving from both of these sagas. This proposed reduction of the five 'independent' versions to two underlying saga-texts, one of which is lost, poses as many questions as it answers. It can for instance be difficult to pin down the 'mixed' quality of a version when one of the ingredients in that mix is lost. Further work with the manuscripts is certainly needed (see Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir and Veturliði G. Óskarsson's article in this volume). But at least this outline reminds us of the complexities of the textual relationships. An important aspect of Ólafur Halldórsson's argument (1969: 23; 2009: 291) is that it operates with the assumption that the two original saga-texts were so different that there was no written connection, or *rittengsl*, between them, and that they were therefore both derived from oral traditions. Even with the number of versions reduced from the five surviving ones to two fundamental saga-texts, these two cannot therefore be reconciled into one originary *Jómsvíkinga saga*.

The extent of this prose narrative which once existed in two independent texts is also questionable (and it goes without saying that the two texts might have been substantially different). Although Ólafur does not say so explicitly, he implies (2009: 294) that the two parts of the saga had separate origins, by drawing attention to the beginning of ch. 8 (in 291, cf. Ólafur Halldórsson 1969: 100) which states that:

Nú hefst upp annar þáttur sögunnar, sá er fyrr hefir verið en þetta væri fram komið, og má eigi einum munnnum allt senn segja. Maður er nefndur Tóki; hann var í Danmörku í héraði því er á Fjóni heitir.

While the first seven chapters of 291 deal with the kings of Denmark, this narratorial intrusion in the first sentence of ch. 8 clearly indicates a shift in the narrative to one focused on the Jómsvíkings. Although Ólafur once stated (1969: 11) that 510 has merely 'omitted' the first part of the saga, more recently (2009: 294) he has implied that 'the actual *Jómsvíkinga saga*' ('hin eiginlega *Jómsvíkinga saga*') starts in ch. 8. In another study (2000: 85, 91), he has admitted that it is not possible to distinguish between two possible sources, a lost saga of the Danish kings, or a version of *Jómsvíkinga saga* that derives from it. We might note that 510 starts in the same saga-like way (af Petersens 1879: 3):

Madur er nefndur Toki; hann uar i Danmark i hieradi þui, er aa Fione hiet. Toki var rikur madur og mikill firer sier; [...]

and ch. 7 of Sth. 7 is similar (Blake 1962: 8), as is the second separate extract in Flateyjarbók (Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Unger 1860–1868: I, 153). All of this is compatible with an earlier text of *Jómsvíkinga saga* which focused on the Jómsvíkings and the battle, without all the preliminaries about the kings of Denmark that are characteristic of most of the surviving saga-versions. The Jómsvíkings narrative is certainly the part of the saga that was of interest to Oddr munkr and the authors or compilers of *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*. Gjessing (1877: i) suggested that a version of the text beginning ‘Maðr er nefndr Toki’ was ‘den oprindeligeste’. He also (1877: ii) sees further evidence for the secondary nature of the Danish introduction in Arngrímr’s text which introduces Harald Bluetooth as ‘Daniae præsidentem’ in Sect. III, c. XI, even though he has frequently been mentioned before. Megaard also analyses only the second part of the saga when attempting to sort out its stemma (2000). Similarly, the following discussion will concentrate on what we might call the story-complex about the Jómsvíkings, and especially the battle of Hjørungavágr.

## The poetical intertexts

Another reason for concentrating on this story-complex is that the poetical intertexts which are of primary interest here relate to the Jómsvíkings, and not to the preliminaries about the Danish kings. Most previous commentators do not consider the skaldic stanzas in the various versions of the saga as independent witnesses to the story-complex of the Jómsvíkings, but only as elements of the saga, or at best, as sources for it. Yet this material is very important precisely because it indicates the multiplicity and complexity of narratives about the Jómsvíkings that not only lie behind the surviving manuscript versions, but also, in many cases, existed independently of them. Considered in their own right, rather than merely as quotations in, or sources for, the relevant prose texts, the poetry about the Jómsvíkings provides further evidence for the story-complex about them that is largely independent of, and generally predates, the surviving prose versions.

Table 1 shows the distribution and preservation contexts of surviving poems (both free-standing individual stanzas, and stanzas from longer poems) about the Jómsvíkings and the battle of Hjörungavágr (see Whaley 2013 for further detail and recent editions of all).

The following discussion will concentrate on the *drápur*, the last four items in Table 1, since these longer poems can give a better idea of the nature of pre-saga narratives about the Jómsvíkings than the *lausavísur*, or the one or two relevant stanzas of the longer poems *Vellekla* and *Háleygjatal*. The *lausavísur* are on the whole ‘diegetic events’ (Jesch 1993: 214), and are thus, regardless of their historicity, less reliable as evidence for possible extended narratives about the Jómsvíkings which were independent of, or preceded, the surviving saga-narratives. Two of these four longer poems, Tindr’s *Hákonardrápa* and Þórðr’s *Eiríksdrápa*, seem to be contemporary praise poems in *dróttkvætt*. Þorkell’s *Búadrápa* and Bjarni’s *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, on the other hand, are retrospective poems, what Fidjestøl (1991) called ‘sogekvaede’, an early form of historical narrative in skaldic form (see also Lindow 1982: 109), and are composed in simpler metres. The original long poems have to be reconstructed from their various manuscript contexts, and these reconstructed versions can provide some insights into ways in which narratives about the events at Hjörungavágr and the Jómsvíkings could be presented other than as a saga.

### *Hákonardrápa*

Eleven stanzas or part-stanzas survive of Tindr Hallkelsson’s poem conventionally known as *Hákonardrápa* (all references and quotations below are from Poole 2013). This title is based on *Fagrskinna*’s identification of the poem as a *drápa*, even though that text does not cite any of it. 510, on the other hand, calls it a *flokkr*, and there is no surviving evidence for a refrain which would confirm its status as a *drápa*. The preserved stanzas appear all to be about a single military event in Hákon’s life, and there are several clues within the text (as well as in its prose contexts) which indicate that this event was the battle of Hjörungavágr, although Poole (2013: 338) draws attention to ‘the generic, non-specific content of the extant stanzas’. It is conceivable that the poem was a *flokkr* focused on this one event, but if it was a *drápa* it may have covered other events of Hákon’s life. However, the poem is very poorly preserved and

Tab. 1. The distribution and preservation contexts of surviving poems about the Jónsvíking's and the battle of Hjörungavágr

	AM 291 4to	Perg. 4:o nr 7	Flat	AM 510 4to	Fsk	Hkr	ÓsTm	SnE	Other
Eyvindr skálda- spillir Finnsson, <i>Háleygjatal</i>						st 11			
Einarr Helgason skálaglamm, <i>Vellekla</i>								sts 33–34	
Einarr Helgason skálaglamm, <i>Lausavísur</i>	sts 1–3	sts 2–3	sts 1–3	sts 1–3	st 3				sts 1–2 in <i>Egils saga</i> ; st. 3 in <i>Laufás Edda</i>
Porleifr skúma, <i>Lausavísa</i>	st 1	st 1	st 1	st 1	st 1				AM 242 fol. (FoGT)
Vígfúss Víga- Glúmsson, Poem about Hákon jarl				st 1	st 1				
Vígfúss Víga- Glúmsson, <i>Lausavísa</i>		st 1	st 1	st 1	st 1				
Vagn Ákason, <i>Lausavísa</i>	st 1	st 1	st 1	st 1					

	AM 291 4to	Perg. 4:o nr 7	Flat	AM 510 4to	Fsk	Hkr	ÓsTm	SnE	Other
Anonymous, <i>Lausavísa</i>				st 1	st 1				
Tindr Hallkels- son, <i>Hákonar- drápa</i>				sts 1–11	<i>referred to but not cited</i>	sts 1, 3, 4	sts 1, 3, 4	st 1	
Porðr Kolbeins- son, <i>Eiríksdrápa</i>				sts 2–3	sts 2–5	sts 1–4	sts 1–4	st 2	
Porkell Gíslason, <i>Búadrápa</i>							sts 1–12		
Bjarni byskup Kolbeinsson, <i>Jómsvíkinga- drápa</i>							sts 10–12, 17–18, 20, 26, 29–30, 32–34, 38, 41–45		sts 1–40 in GKS 2367 4to



it is difficult to pronounce on any aspect of it with confidence. The focus in the surviving stanzas on one series of closely-related events might suggest that it was composed shortly after the battle, as assumed by Poole. Although the poem is not narrative in the same way as *Búadrápa* and *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, there is some evidence of an awareness of chronology and the sequence of events, as well as indications of the poet's stance towards these events and his audience.

In st. 2, Hákon is identified only as *þrænzkri jarl* 'the Trøndelag jarl', suggesting an audience who was knowledgeable about the object of praise. Indeed, Hákon is referred to as *jarl* four times (sts 1, 2, 5, 7), by a kenning or circumlocution eight times (sts 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 [twice], 7, 11) and is named only twice, in sts 8 (see further on this below) and 10. Also in st. 2, the poet claims that he heard about some prior raiding of Búi and Sigvaldi in Norway before they encountered Hákon: this is the solitary use of the 'I have heard' (*frák*) formula in the poem. It is important to remember that this word is the result of an editorial emendation, but it is a plausible one, and such a comment would make sense if the poet had been present at the actual battle, but not at the prior skirmishes for which he had some other source. Stanza 6, as interpreted by Poole, similarly suggests that the Danes raided in Norway before the battle. There may also be reference to earlier Danish activity in Norway in st. 11.

Better-attested examples of first-person forms occur in sts 5 and 8. In st. 5, the poet announces that he 'declare[s]' (*ræsik*)<sup>2</sup> his topic (which in this stanza is general martial praise of Hákon) in poetry. Stanza 8 alludes to something that 'people will know' (*veit öld*). Again, this rests on an editorial emendation, but the comment is plausibly related to 'the life' (*ævi*) of Hákon. In the second half of the same stanza, the poet twice says 'I think' (*hykk*), though what the poet thought is now impossible to reconstruct, as the stanza is too corrupt.

Based on Poole's emendations and interpretations of these stanzas, we seem in summary to have a poet who may have been present at the battle, but who had to be informed of Danish activities prior to the battle, and who composed a poem of conventional praise of Hákon directed at an audience of his followers, most likely fairly soon after the event. The focus is entirely on the Norwegian camp, from which the poem seems to derive.

<sup>2</sup> This reading is not in doubt, though the meaning of the word in this context is 'posited uniquely for this instance' by Poole (2013: 348).

### *Eiríksdrápa*

Þórðr Kolbeinsson's *Eiríksdrápa* (all references and quotations below are from Carroll 2013) is rather different: a sweeping poem in praise of Eiríkr jarl Hákonarson, in which only the first five stanzas (of seventeen surviving ones) are relevant to the Jómsvíkings, as the poem then goes on to celebrate other events in his life. The identification of the poem as a *drápa* is well-attested in the prose contexts, although again no refrain survives to confirm this. The chronological sweep of the poem suggests that the poet had no personal knowledge of the battle of Hjørungavágr (or indeed of any of the other events celebrated) though, as Carroll points out (2013: 489), his 'role as poet (and presumably performer) is frequently foregrounded through first-person forms [...] and present-tense forms'. It may be this distance from the events which led the poet to feel the need to affirm the authority of his information by using the adverb *sannliga* 'in truth' in his very first stanza, and by drawing attention to his own poem in st. 2. As in Tindr's poem, the jarl is referred to simply as *jarl* in st. 3 (also st. 4), where his opponent Sigvaldi is named, or by kennings or circumlocutions (in sts 2 and 5). That his opponents were 'Danes' is identified already in st. 1 and repeated in sts 4 and 5. Eiríkr is not named until st. 7, when the poet has changed topic to Eiríkr's exile in Sweden on the death of his father. This reticence by the poet about naming his hero in this part of the poem (he is named more frequently later on) could be suggestive of an original context similar to that of *Hákonardrápa* (i.e. an audience knowledgeable about the object of praise), or even influence from that poem.

Carroll (2013: 492–93, 511) has noted that sts 2 and 15 of *Eiríksdrápa* show parallels with *Hákonardrápa* sts 9 and 4. There are also possible echoes of *Hákonardrápa*'s difficult st. 8 in *Eiríksdrápa* st. 6, which is concerned with the murder of Hákon. In the context of a longer poem about Eiríkr, covering several of his life-events, it is conceivable that Þórðr not only borrowed some of Tindr's expressions and general approach, but also that his knowledge of the battle against the Jómsvíkings came from Tindr's poem. Thus, although *Hákonardrápa* and *Eiríksdrápa* were praise poems contemporary with the events surrounding Hjørungavágr, or at least with the lifetimes of some of the actors at Hjørungavágr, it is clear that they had a different relationship to those events. By virtue of composing about the younger generation, namely Eiríkr, son of Hákon, and by virtue of composing a poem with a longer biographical spread, Þórðr is already

at one remove from the events involving the Jómsvíkings, and his poem was possibly already dependent on Tindr's somewhat earlier account.

### *Búadrápa*

At an even further remove is Porkell Gíslason's *Búadrápa* (all references and quotations below are from Lethbridge and Whaley 2013), which is conventionally thought to date from some two centuries after the battle, by a poet of whom nothing is known but his name. With twelve whole or part-stanzas, the poem is incomplete, although the narrative sequence of the surviving stanzas is coherent, focusing on the Jómsvíkings from when they approach the battle-site to when they are defeated. Again, the fact that it is a *drápa* is given by the prose source, though no refrain survives. As Lethbridge and Whaley note (2013: 941), the poem is 'fairly general and stereotyped', but does at times focus on named individuals, Búi (sts 8, 11) and Vagn (st. 12) on the side of the Jómsvíkings, and Eiríkr (st. 12) on the Norwegian side, but this interest in individuals comes only after a lot of vague battle-description. Unlike Tindr and Þórðr, who might have named their hero's opponents, but nevertheless very clearly took sides, Porkell seems to be more neutral: in many of the stanzas it is impossible to tell which group of warriors is shown in action; the passive verb form in st. 3 *nýtt nest gafsk hrofnun* 'fresh provisions were given to ravens' is indicative of this refusal to take sides. In st. 8, which is about Búi, the plural pronoun in *lið þeira* 'their troop', referring to his opponents, suggests both Hákon and Eiríkr as leaders of the troop.

The poet's presence is not intrusive. Twice he uses the formulaic *frák* 'I have heard' (sts 1, 8) and once the equally formulaic *hykk* 'I think' (st. 11). All three of these refer to the Jómsvíkings: st. 1 is about them preparing their ships for the voyage north, st. 8 refers to Búi's bold advance through the enemy troop, and st. 11 describes Búi leaping overboard with his two chests before the poet sententiously concludes *hykk ferð misstu friðar* 'I think men missed out on peace'. In the following stanza (12), Eiríkr has cleared Vagn's ship and the Jómsvíkings are defeated. This might suggest a separate source for the Jómsvíkings, though the evidence is hardly conclusive.

Porkell's dependence on his sources is suggested by several aspects of the poem. There are a few parallels with Tindr's *Hákonardrápa*, which

might not be significant on their own, but which collectively conjure up a faint echo of that poem (for details, see Table 2). But the very conventionality of *Búadrápa*, while suggesting its derivative nature, at the same time makes it rather difficult to pin down any particular source. Depending on the date of the poem, a saga source is possible: the reference to the troll-wife shooting arrows from her fingers in st. 10 is the first poetic reference to this marvel, and it has been suggested that it derives from a version of the saga (Ólafur Halldórsson 2000: 81). At any rate, it is included in Fidjestøl's category of 'sogekvæde', as noted above.

### *Jómsvíkingadrápa*

The final poem in this survey is *Jómsvíkingadrápa* by Bjarni Kolbeinson, bishop of Orkney (all references and quotations below are from Lethbridge 2013; see also Jesch 1998). Forty-five complete and partial stanzas of this poem survive, with five or more now missing. It is the first of the four poems which has preserved the structure of a standard *drápa*, with a central *stefjabálkr* 'refrain section' marked by repetition of the *klofastef* 'split refrain' in six stanzas. Indeed the refrain is one aspect of this poem which has made it interesting to scholars (e.g. Sävborg 2007: 278), since with this Bjarni 'weaves the theme of love into the battle narrative he presents', and each of the refrain stanzas 'offers a fresh variant on the contrast between the love theme and the bloody clash between the Jómsvíkingar and the Norwegian jarls' (Lethbridge 2013: 957). The romantic content of the refrain is of literary-historical importance, but much less relevant to the Jómsvíkings and the battle. However, the structure of the poem which depends on this refrain is relevant to an understanding of its narrative mode.

The poet spends the first six stanzas establishing the metatextual fact that it is a poem which he has composed, using a variety of synonyms for 'poem' and the act of composition. While the Jómsvíkings are introduced in st. 6, the story proper begins in st. 7, with *Hvervetna frá k heyja / Harald bardaga stóra* 'I have heard that Haraldr fought great battles everywhere'. This emphasis on the poet's secondhand information is a constant throughout the poem. In the remaining text, formulas such as *frák/frágum* 'I/we have heard', *geta skal* 'mention shall be made', *sagt var* 'it was said', *hykk* 'I think' occur in 18 stanzas. There are also some

less formulaic but equally revealing comments. In st. 11, the poet refers to his *yrkisefni* ‘material for a poem’ and in st. 34 *era þorð at segja þann þátt* ‘there is no need to relate that episode’. These formulas and comments do not occur in the refrain stanzas, but are so frequent in the narrative stanzas that only six of these have no reference to the poem or other formulaic comment. The cumulative effect of all this is to suggest a poet explicitly reworking some kind of literary material. For Lethbridge (2013: 954), ‘the poem relates historical and legendary traditions about the famous sea-battle of Hjørungavágr’, but she does not express a view on whether these traditions were oral or written, poetry or prose.

Although the narrative focuses on the Jómsvíkings, the poet, like Porkell, is fairly even-handed in his treatment of individuals. Seven Jómsvíkings are named, as are six in the Norwegian troop. Lethbridge (2013: 969, 972) notes the following echoes of *Búadrápa*:

- st. 16, describing the ships of the Jómsvíkings heading north in cold waters, is reminiscent of st. 2 of *Búadrápa*
- sts 12, 26 and 41 contain the adverb *fíkjum* ‘extremely’, also found in *Búadrápa* st. 10

## Links between the *drápur*

There are in fact verbal and conceptual echoes between all four poems, as set out in Table 2. These parallels are noted as comprehensively as possible, while acknowledging that many of the parallels derive from well-established skaldic conventions which individually have little or no significance in demonstrating relationships between different poems. Nevertheless, when there are many of these, the overall pattern may be significant. Numbers refer to stanzas in the editions cited.

Undoubtedly, many of these echoes are rather faint, and much of the vocabulary is so conventional that no great emphasis should be placed on individual similarities. Yet there are some concatenations worth noting:

- The extremely problematic st. 8 of *Hákonardrápa* seems to have influenced both *Eiríksdrápa* st. 6 and *Jómsvíkingadrápa* st. 1, though in rather different ways. In *Eiríksdrápa*, a reference to the death of Hákon, at a pivotal moment in the poem, harks back to the

earlier poem about Hákon. In *Jómsvíkingadrápa* the jocose introductory stanza picks up on the Odinic imagery and the vocabulary of *Hákonardrápa*, and Óðinn (or rather Yggr) gets a few more mentions. Otherwise, as Holtsmark (1937: 5) points out, *Jómsvíkingadrápa* is ‘nesten fritt for mytologi’. All three stanzas have a metatextual function, drawing attention to the poem, the poet and/or the audience.

- There are numerous repetitions of vocabulary between sts 6–11 of *Búadrápa* and 24–37 of *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, both describing the battle itself. The vocabulary is conventional, and is not always used in the same way, but its concentration within these stanza sequences seems significant. Unfortunately, *Hákonardrápa* ends more or less at this point, though the occurrence there (st. 10) of both *hjørvar* (as in both poems) and *fyr borð* (as in *Jómsvíkingadrápa*) suggests that there might have been more extensive correspondences if only we had further stanzas of *Hákonardrápa*.
- There are some correspondences between the earliest poem, *Hákonardrápa*, and the latest, *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, which do not appear in the intermediate poems. The Odinic reference already noted appears in the use of *Hangi* (*Hákonardrápa* sts 1, 7) or *hangi* (*Jómsvíkingadrápa* st. 4), and the reference to the heathenness of the warriors (though using different words) in *Hákonardrápa* st. 7 and *Jómsvíkingadrápa* st. 7 is also notable. More stereotypical are the gaping wolf in *Hákonardrápa* st. 3 and *Jómsvíkingadrápa* st. 31, and the concept of battle as an assembly of weapons in *Hákonardrápa* sts 2, 7, and *Jómsvíkingadrápa* st. 6.

Despite the poor, or at least incomplete, preservation of all four poems, it seems probable that they were composed in a tradition in which the later poets were aware of the work of their predecessors, in some cases using it as a source, or providing deliberate echoes of it.

In addition to these similarities with other poetry on the Jómsvíkings, it has to be recognized that *Jómsvíkingadrápa* is a patchwork of influences from a variety of earlier poetry, not all of it about the Jómsvíkings (Holtsmark 1937: 10). Yet the basic story must have come from somewhere, and the question is, was it from a saga, or from the poetic tradition? Here, the date of its composition, if only it could be determined, would be of great significance. Bjarni had a long life, he died in 1223, having become bishop of Orkney in 1188. Previous scholars have considered *Jómsvíkingadrápa* to be inappropriate to a bishop (‘óbyskupslega kveðið’, Ólafur Halldórs-

Tab. 2. Verbal and conceptual echoes between the four poems

<i>Hákonardrápa</i>	<i>Eiríksdrápa</i>	<i>Búadrápa</i>	<i>Jómsvíkingadrápa</i>
1: <i>Hangi</i> [= Óðinn, in a warrior-kenning] 7: <i>Hangi</i> <sup>a</sup> [= Óðinn, in a raven-kenning]			4: <i>hangi</i> [= 'the hanged one'] <sup>b</sup>
2: <i>þrænzkr jarl</i>	7: <i>þrænzkr jarl</i>		
2: <i>sverða þing</i> 7: <i>odda ofþing</i>			6: <i>málmþing</i>
		2, 10: <i>hregg</i> [= storm]	20, 30, 36: <i>hregg</i> [= storm, in a warrior-kenning] 32: <i>hregg</i> [= storm]
3: <i>vargr gleypiti</i>	6: <i>vargr</i>	5: <i>vargr</i>	31: <i>gein vargr</i>
3: <i>Sqrli</i> [in a mail- shirt kenning, with <i>serkr</i> ]		14: <i>Hamðir</i> [in a helmet- kenning]	4: <i>Hamðir</i> [in a mail-shirt kenning, with <i>serkr</i> ]
4: <i>ferð</i> [= flock, in a raven-kenning]		11: <i>ferð</i> [= men]	
4, 9, 10: <i>skeið</i>	1, 2, 4: <i>skeið</i>		15, 40: <i>skeið</i>
4, 5, 9: <i>hrjóða/ hrauð skeiðar</i>	4: <i>hrauð</i> [skeiða]	12: <i>skip hrjóða</i>	38: <i>skip hroðin</i>
5: <i>víkingr</i>			22: <i>víkingr</i>
6: <i>grimmr</i>		3, 4, 10: <i>grimmr</i>	12, 15, 19, 23, 25, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 35: <i>grimmr</i>
7: <i>heiðinn dómr</i>			7: <i>siðfornir</i>
8: <i>öld, aldir</i>			1: <i>öld</i>

<sup>a</sup> N.B. this is an emendation.<sup>b</sup> N.B. this is editorial conjecture.

<i>Hákonardrápa</i>	<i>Eiríksdrápa</i>	<i>Búadrápa</i>	<i>Jómsvíkingadrápa</i>
8: <i>Yggr</i>			1, 4: <i>Yggr</i> [= Óðinn, in poetry-kennings] 26, 37: <i>Yggr</i> [= Óðinn, in a sword-kenning] 29: <i>Yggr</i> [= Óðinn, in a battle-kenning] 43: <i>Yggr</i> [= Óðinn, in a warrior-kenning]
8: <i>Hóðkunar ævi</i>	6: <i>Hóðkunar ævi</i>		
8: first-person forms	6: first-person forms		1: first-person forms
9: <i>þar vas lind fyr landi</i>	2: <i>mörg vas lind fyr landi</i> <sup>°</sup>		
10: <i>fyr bord</i>			36, 37: <i>fyr bord</i>
10: <i>hjørvar</i> [= swords, in a battle-kenning]		6: <i>hjørvar</i> [= swords]	30, 36: <i>hjørvar</i> [= swords, in battle-kennings]
		6: <i>orvar</i> [= arrows]	30: <i>orvar</i> [= arrows, in a battle-kenning]
		7: <i>gengu í sundr hjálmur</i>	24, 26: <i>klauf hjálma</i>
3: <i>hagl</i> [= hail, in an arrow-kenning]		9: <i>hagl</i> [= hailstone]	32: <i>hagl</i> [= hail]
		9: <i>ben</i> [= wound, in a sword-kenning] 11: <i>ben</i> [= wound, in a blood-kenning]	32: <i>ben</i> [= wounds]
		10: <i>snarpr</i> [sc. arrows]	28: <i>snarpr</i> [sc. swords]
		10: <i>fíkjum</i>	12, 26, 41: <i>fíkjum</i>
		10: <i>hlíf</i> [= shields, in a battle-kenning]	32: <i>hlíf</i> [= shields]
		11: <i>kista</i>	36, 37: <i>kista</i>

<sup>°</sup> N.B. this is an emendation from *linds*.



son 1969: 27; also af Petersens 1879: 120), implying that he composed it before he became a bishop, in which case a saga-source is less likely, simply because of the early date. Perhaps more relevant than whether or not the subject-matter is appropriate to a bishop is whether a conscientious bishop would have had the time to engage in this kind of literary activity, and even more so what kind of literary milieu would be needed to produce this text. It is usually assumed that the story was available to him in Orkney (Holtsmark 1937: 10), but Bjarni had Norwegian connections and indeed spent quite a bit of time there (Holtsmark 1937: 2–3), though the recorded trips were all during his episcopate. There is in fact nothing to preclude a variety of influences on Bjarni's poem, and both Norwegian and Danish sources seem likely, the Norwegian from his connections there, and the Danish from the well-attested interest in Danish legends in Orkney, resulting from the archiepiscopal rule of the islands by Lund from 1104 to 1152 (Nordal 2001: 48). While multiple sources seem the most likely explanation for the poem, these complicate the question of its date. Megaard (2000: 171–72) speculates that a satirical poem about a Norwegian defeat of the Danes would not have been politically possible in a Norwegian/Orcadian context after 1194 and returns to a pre-1188 date, but this seems to stretch a political interpretation of the poem too far.

In considering possible sources for *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, it is important to acknowledge the explicitly narrative nature of the poem. While this might suggest a saga source, *Jómsvíkingadrápa* is, as has already been noted, highly innovative, and there is no reason to suppose the poet could not also innovate by turning the skaldic form to narrative purposes; he does not need to have had a saga as a direct model. The narrative mode of the poem has already been analysed by Lindow (1982: 109–14), and some further points can be added. Unlike previous poetical versions of the story, this one abounds in names, the poet positively glories in telling a collective story of individual Jómsvíkings and their opponents. It is, as has already been noted, relatively neutral between the two sides, though of course the heroics of the Jómsvíkings at their execution inevitably creates a literary high-point, which is exploited by the poet with gusto, even making use of dialogue (a rarity in skaldic verse) in st. 43. The valiant Jómsvíkings are juxtaposed with Hákon's evil pagan sacrifice (sts 30, 32), of which a bishop would of course have to disapprove. But the poet is also critical of Búi, for being stingy by taking his chests with him as he leaps overboard, in st. 36, and this contrasts with the generosity for which Eiríkr is praised in st. 44. The overall impression is relatively even-handed.

On balance, it seems most likely that *Jómsvíkingadrápa* had as its main source a rich poetical tradition about the battle of Hjörungavágr. The discussion above has demonstrated the ways in which this tradition could be realized through time, in poems that found new ways of telling the same story, but which were also dependent on their poetical predecessors. *Eiríksdrápa* is however the odd one out. It is clearly dependent in some way on *Hákonardrápa*, but seems to have had no further influence itself, possibly because in it the battle of Hjörungavágr was just one incident in Eiríkr's rich life, the main achievements of which were elsewhere and later. *Búadrápa* also drew from *Hákonardrápa*, and *Jómsvíkingadrápa* drew not only on its near predecessor *Búadrápa*, but Bjarni also seems to have been familiar with *Hákonardrápa*, and to allude to it quite consciously. This evolving poetical tradition appears to have been relatively independent of the saga-tradition until the thirteenth century.

## Conclusion

The discussion above has suggested the following literary-historical outline that is at the very least worth further consideration:

- There is strong evidence for a long-lasting poetical tradition about the jarls of Hlaðir and their exploits in defeating the Jómsvíkings at Hjörungavágr. This tradition can be traced from the late tenth century into the late twelfth or early thirteenth. Poems are composed about these exploits at different points in time and for different audiences, but normally with an awareness of previous poems on the same subject.
- As this tradition develops, it becomes less focused on the Norwegian protagonists, and more even-handed, but with a growing interest in the literary possibilities of the colourful heroism of the Jómsvíkings.
- This tendency develops further in a prose narrative tradition about the Jómsvíkings, which is provisionally traceable to around 1200. This saga-tradition appropriates the poetical texts to support the narrative, but also develops the narrative through additional anecdotes about the Jómsvíkings, and adds a link to the more general history of the kings of Denmark.
- The poetical tradition undoubtedly has its origins in Norway. By

the time Bjarni Kolbeinsson composes in it, it may be that literary interest in this story has shifted to Orkney. This may have happened through Bjarni himself, who had connections in Norway. The relative even-handedness of the two later *drápur* suggests audiences that did not have any national pride invested in the story, whether through geographical or temporal distance from the events.

- The expansion of the story with Danish material may also have had its origins in Orkney, where there is evidence for an interest in Danish legends in the twelfth century.
- The connections between Orkney and Iceland, particularly at Oddi, provide the final link in the chain by which the poetical traditions are conveyed to Iceland where they are both preserved and appropriated for the saga-tradition about the Jómsvíkings and the kings of Denmark that is developed there (cf. Nordal 2001: 311–19).

This model thus enables the reconstruction of some of the ‘plurality of voices’ that Barthes identified as the ‘origin of the text’ and that continue to speak in the long-lived traditions about the Jómsvíkings, as reflected in both poetry and saga-prose. Even if this model is not correct in every detail, the analysis has shown how the story of the battle of Hjörungavágr could be narrated in both verse and prose, and revealed the complex intertextual relationships between at least some of these narratives, not to mention other narratives to which they became attached in the saga-tradition.

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## Summary

Using theories of intertextuality the paper explores the implications of the complex transmission of *Jómsvíkinga saga*, with its multiple manuscripts, versions and cross-references in other texts. It then concentrates on the story-complex about the Jomsvikings and the battle of Hjørungavágr, rather than the first part of the saga with its focus on Danish kings. The paper explores how this story-complex was realized in skaldic poetry, ostensibly a major source for the prose accounts. Following a survey of all the relevant poetry, the four *drápur* which treat the Jomsvikings are analysed in detail. Two of these are roughly contemporary with the events, while two are retrospective, narrative accounts, and there is some evidence of influence from the earlier poems to the later ones. Overall, the

analysis show how the story of the battle of Hjørungavágr was narrated in both verse and prose, and reveals the complex intertextual relationships between these narratives.

**Keywords:** Jómsvíkinga saga, skaldic poetry, intertextuality

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# Contents

Preface . . . . .	5
ÞÓRDÍS EDDA JÓHANNESDÓTTIR & VETURLIÐI ÓSKARSSON, The Manuscripts of <i>Jómsvíkinga Saga</i> : A Survey . . . . .	9

## Workshop Articles

SIRPA AALTO, <i>Jómsvíkinga Saga</i> as a Part of Old Norse Historiography . . . . .	33
LESZEK P. SŁUPECKI, Comments on Sirpa Aalto's Paper . . . . .	59
ALISON FINLAY, <i>Jómsvíkinga Saga</i> and Genre . . . . .	63
JUDITH JESCH, <i>Jómsvíkinga Sögur</i> and <i>Jómsvíkinga Drápur</i> : Texts, Contexts and Intertexts . . . . .	81
DANIEL SÄVBORG, Búi the Dragon: Some Intertexts of <i>Jómsvíkinga Saga</i> . . . . .	101
ALISON FINLAY, Comments on Daniel Sävborg's Paper . . . . .	119
JAKUB MORAWIEC, Danish Kings and the Foundation of Jómsborg . . . . .	125
WŁADYSŁAW DUCZKO, Viking-Age Wolin (Wollin) in the Norse Context of the Southern Coast of the Baltic Sea . . . . .	143
MICHAEL LERCHE NIELSEN, Runic Inscriptions Reflecting Linguistic Contacts between West Slav Lands and Southern Scandinavia . . . . .	153
HENRIK WILLIAMS, Comments on Michael Lerche Nielsen's Paper . . . . .	173
JÜRGEN UDOLPH, On the Etymology of <i>Jómsborg</i> . . . . .	183
ALEXANDRA PETRULEVICH, Comments on Jürgen Udolph's Paper . . . . .	211
MARIE NOVOTNÁ & JIŘÍ STARÝ, Rendering Old Norse Nouns and Names in Translation into West-Slavic Languages . . . . .	213

## Isländska sällskapet

AGNETA NEY & MARCO BIANCHI, Berättelse om verksamheten under 2013 . . . . .	237
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