Konungs skuggsjá and the Interplay between Universal and Particular

KARL G. JOHANSSON AND ELISE KLEIVANE

In mid-thirteenth century, Norway emerged as the realm of a king with European ambitions. Hákon Hákonarson had become king at a young age with the earl Skúli Bárðarson as the real ruler, but by 1240 the earl was dead and Hákon ruled his kingdom alone. It is in this period and within the elite culture of the strong and stable kingdom that the work Konungs skuggsjá is thought to have been created.1 It was a work that would be of interest in elite milieus throughout the Middle Ages. In Iceland the interest is seen primarily from mid-fourteenth century and well into the post-Reformation period, and is attested by the large amount of manuscripts containing text witnesses of the work. In this article we present the work and its original context in the elite milieus of Norway in the second part of the thirteenth century, its relation to the European tradition, as well as its further dissemination in Norway and Iceland throughout the Middle Ages as it is reflected in the extant manuscripts. Finally we treat briefly the scholarship and later reception of Konungs skuggsjá in order to enhance the reading of the more detailed studies presented in this volume.

A Norwegian Speculum regale

The Norwegian Speculum regale, or Konungs skuggsjá, is an original work in the vernacular. It is possible, however, to detect influences both concerning structure and content from European works (see further below), both from the Speculum tradition and from a more general encyclopaedic one. The work should therefore be treated primarily as a contribution to the original literature in the vernacular that was produced in Norway in the second half of the thirteenth century. And yet, as it is clear that Konungs skuggsjá was written with models found in contemporary European literature, it could also be seen as a secondary translation.2 With Konungs skuggsjá the Speculum genre is not simply translated into Norse, it is appropriated and presented as an indigenous genre.

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1 In English this work is referred to as the King's Mirror, but henceforth in this book the title Konungs skuggsjá or Kgs will be used.
2 The concept secondary translation has been used by Rita Copeland (1991) to describe original works produced from foreign models in a conscious ambition to introduce e.g. a new type of text in the target culture. Copeland states: “These texts [secondary translations] carry out the prescriptions of the artes poetriae by turning the techniques of exegesis into techniques of topical invention. In this way they also
The educative matter that the *Konungs skuggsjá* addresses is presented as a dialogue between a father and his son, where the latter humbly asks for advice as to how to make his way in this world. It has become customary within the scholarly and editorial practice concerning *Konungs skuggsjá* to present the work as consisting of three distinctive parts. The first part, which is referred to as the Merchant’s chapter, takes us through discussions of the merchant’s trade and what the young man needs to know in order to be successful. In this part there are also passages describing the geography of what can be seen as important but peripheral parts of the realm of the Norwegian kingdom: Iceland, Ireland, Greenland and the north of Norway (admittedly leaving out England, Scotland, the Hebrides, Orkneys and Shetland). The Merchant’s chapter also provides information about natural phenomena and the relation of a round earth to the bodies of the sky, the sun and moon. The descriptions and explanations in the geographical parts are based on contemporary medieval erudition where God is the creator of everything, and thereby one can study Nature as God’s plan.

In the second part the role of the courtier is treated. Here the father introduces the virtues of a retainer at the king’s court and what the son should think of in order to make a good appearance before the king. The advice concerns conduct, dress, and language, but the father also introduces and explains important political issues to the son by way of parables.

The last part of the work is not separated from the previous part, as clearly as between the first and second part, and this will be discussed below. This last part concerns the role of the king and how he is expected to act in order to answer to the demands of being the representative of God in earthly matters.

In addition to the main part of *Konungs skuggsjá*, there is also a prologue. The prologue is only preserved in later Icelandic manuscripts, and the question is whether or not it is an original part of *Konungs skuggsjá* or was written and added later. This is still unsettled. The question arises not only from the exclusively Icelandic and later transmission of the prologue, but also from a sequence of the prologue which describes the contents of *Konungs skuggsjá*, and which seems to contradict the tripartite structure which scholarly tradition has seen in the work.

A first-person narrator speaks in the prologue, and he identifies himself as the son in the following dialogue. He presents in retrospect his reasons for addressing his father to inquire of the matters that follow, as well as his reasons for also committing the conversations to writing. The sequence that has added to the discussion of the prologue’s originality concerns the contents of the work:

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redefine the terms of vernacular translation itself: they use the techniques of exegetical translation to produce, not a supplement to the original, but a vernacular substitute for that original” (1991: 179).

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3 This includes cosmology, descriptions of nature, climate and creatures in the ocean, peoples and their way of life, etc.
spurningu með því at róða um ífrottir bønda ok fjölmennís þess er land byggir ok þeira síðu ok athôfi.4 (Kgs 1983: 1)

And next I began my talk with a first inquiry about merchants’ competences and their customs. And at the end of that talk and after getting answers, I became braver in my talk and inquiry, and I advanced my talk to higher competences, because next I began to be curious and ask about royal customs and other powerful men who follow and serve them. Neither did I fail to ask about lendir menn’s competences and their customs. And still I ended my inquiry by talking about farmers’ competences and the customs and habits of all the people who reside in the land.5

The narrator explains that he began by asking about merchants’ competences and their customs, and what was treated in that conversation. He then describes how he takes the conversation to another level by asking also about the royal customs and customs of other powerful men and those who follow and serve them. In scholarship on Konungs skuggsjá this is seen as corresponding to the three parts termed the Merchant’s chapter, Retainers’ chapter and King’s chapter, admittedly with the king and his retainers in revised order. It is important to note, however, that the prologue groups the latter two parts together as one. In addition, the separation of the two respective parts on the bîrd ‘retainers’ and the king is not marked as clearly in the main manuscript (AM 243 b α fol) as in modern editions.6

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The initial on the top of the manuscript’s page 94 is larger (three lines’ indent) than those marking each time the dialogue switches from father to son (two lines’ indent), but smaller than both the initial on page 1 (eight lines’ indent) which sets off the dialogue and the initial on page 48 (six lines’ intent) starting the part following the Merchant’s chapter. The initial where the king’s part allegedly begins is of the same size as the initials that mark where the prayers the king is expected to know are written (pp. 120, 128), but one of these prayers is marked by an even larger initial with a four-line indent (p. 123). The father’s answers that lead to an expanded paraphrase of Genesis, and his explanation about God’s judgement on King David (p. 140) are also marked by an initial of a three-line indent. In other words, there are markers in the manuscript that emphasise other sections just as much, and even more, than the beginning of the king’s part. The Icelandic manuscript AM 243 a fol (fifteenth century) can serve as a comparison. Here the transition from the prologue to the first part is marked only by a one-line indent (f. 1r).7

When the dialogue switches from father to son, this is regularly marked by an indent over two lines. The transition from the bîrd to the king’s part is only marked by a two-line

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4 The spelling of this and other renderings of Old Norse text has been normalised by the authors.
5 This and other translations are the authors’ own, unless otherwise specified.
6 In Holm-Olsen’s edition (Kgs 1945/1983) the two are actually grouped together. This is an edition of the main manuscript AM 243 b α fol. The manuscript is paginated by Árni Magnússon, and the numbering is adjusted to the lacunae that were there when he acquired it. The following references are to the pagination as it was done by Árni Magnússon in the manuscript. The prologue, which is not in AM 243 b α fol, Holm-Olsen prints from the sixteenth century Icelandic manuscript AM 243 e fol.
7 Only some of the initials have been filled in, but space for them has been made by indent, so the textual hierarchy can be seen from this.
indent (fol. 29'). But the transition from the *Merchant's chapter* to the following part is marked by a three-line indent, the largest of the entire manuscript (f. 15').

Further, the text of *Konungs skuggsjá* does not mark a transition from the *hirð* to the king as clearly as between the merchant and the *hirð*. In the *Merchant's chapter* the father ends the conversation by: *Nú er rás at festa hluti alla vel í hug þér fyrst er nú hefir þá heyrda, en sدن er kostr at spyrja fleira ef sýníst* (Kgs 1983: 37) ‘Now it is advised that you first fasten all this well in your mind what you have now heard, and later it will be possible to ask more if you like’. Then the text continues *Sonr: Á hinum næstaðuni er ek var á tali við ýðr, herra, þá heyrda ek af ýðrum muni [...] ok hefi ek sدن þá rððu hugleidda [...]* (Kgs 1983: 38) ‘Son: The last time I was in conversation with you, Master, I heard from your mouth [...], and since then I have been ruminating over this talk’. Here the wording of the text underlines that it is a matter of two distinct conversations. But this is not the case where the transition between the *hirð* and the king part is expected according to scholarly tradition. The text at the bottom of page 93 has the father say that the son may gain a lot from the examples he has just heard if he is offered the chance to become the king’s man and that he must learn from all examples that will be of benefit for him. This text runs all the way to the last line on this page. On top of the next page the son thanks the father for his time and patience, and continues with more questions. There are no clear textual cues to mark a new conversation or a change of topic. The discussion about the traditional tripartite division of *Konungs skuggsjá* has implications for the question about the prologue being original or not, because the narrator continues by saying that he did not leave out questions about *lendr(ma)nna*/lærðra manna íprótt ok þeira síðu ‘lendmem’/learned men’s competences and customs’, and that he ended his questions by talking about the competences of the *bóndr* and all the people that inhabit the land, and their customs and occupation. But there are no specific parts of *Konungs skuggsjá* as we have it, designated to these groups. On the other hand, there is nothing in the extant manuscripts of *Konungs skuggsjá* to suggest that there has ever been more text than what we can establish from the text witnesses. This has puzzled scholars and has caused several suggested explanations. The main issues have been whether the prologue was written by the author of *Konungs skuggsjá*, and if so, whether the *Konungs skuggsjá* that can be established from the text witnesses is either unfinished or only a part of the original work. Another suggested explanation is that the prologue was written by someone else later, someone who might not have had *Konungs skuggsjá*’s contents at hand. This last suggestion is supported by the prologue being found only in Icelandic and not in Norwegian manuscripts. The Icelandic manuscripts are also all considerably younger than the Norwegian. Finnur Jónsson, in the introduction to his edition of *Konungs skuggsjá*, concluded that the prologue was an original part of the work and that it has been lost in the main manuscript (1920–1921: 2). Ludvig Holm-Olsen is a bit more cautious and allows for the possibility that parts of the prologue are original, while other parts are perhaps to be seen as later (1981), whereas

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8 As far as it is preserved, that is. There is a lacuna where the royal prayers would have been. The father’s explanation about God’s judgement on King David is only marked by a two-line indent (fol. 38’).
9 The manuscripts disagree here. Some, like the AM 243 e fol, have *lendr(ma)nna* (a *lendr maðr* (pl. *lendir* *memn*) held a high position at the *hirð*, and had been given administrative responsibility by the king over a designated region of the realm), while other manuscripts, like the AM 243 a fol, have *lærðra manna* (*learned men*).
10 *A bóndi* (pl. *bóndr*) is a free, landowning farmer.
Sverre Bagge agrees with Finnur Jónsson and considers it to be written by the author. Unlike Holm-Olsen, he finds that the prologue fits the work well (Bagge 1994: 28–29). Other elements of the prologue have also caused dispute and have been brought into the discussion of its authenticity, such as its disparate style (Holm-Olsen 1981).

It is quite clear that the work as it is extant today does not fit the description in the prologue if this is read as a table of contents for what is to follow. As was demonstrated above, the text and the layout in the (main) manuscript(s) do not support the tripartite division which has become the customary form of reference, and there are no specific parts designated to the description of either lendir menn/learned men or bôndr. But on the other hand, what the prologue describes here is not the written text which is to follow, but the conversations between father and son. The narrator then relates how he has been convinced by others who had listened to the conversations, that he should record them in writing so the wisdom could be of use for others as well. He also describes what he did: studeradí ek mikit í þeim öllum ráðum med athugsamligu minni, ok setti ek allar þær ráður í einna bók (Kgs 1983: 2) ‘I studied well all of the advice with an attentive memory, and I put all these conversations in one book’. The ráð here could either refer to the conversations with the father, which seems to be most likely judging from the context, or it could be a reference to the wishes and advice from those having listened to the conversations that the son should put them into writing. Nevertheless, what the narrator explains in the prologue is that what he has achieved is an edited version of the (imagined) conversations between father and son, and that the conversations covered the previously mentioned topics. So the “list” is not referring to chapters in the book. And the work as it is preserved does indeed discuss also the learned men (that is, the Church’s men, the variant lendir menn too is covered in the hirð/king part) and touches upon bôndr, indirectly, since these are the ones who will try to become accepted at the hirð, but also more directly as in the description of Greenland and what the people there produce for their own sustenance.

From this we draw the following conclusions regarding the prologue and the contents of Konungs skuggsjá. First that there is nothing in the prologue that must mean the work is not complete as we have it. Second that judging from what is written in the prologue there is nothing to disqualify it as a prologue to the original work – the transmission of the prologue is what could lead to the suspicion that it might be younger. Our third conclusion is that there are strong arguments against operating with a tripartite division of the work, and that the text and the (main) manuscript(s) rather suggest a two-part structure, as indeed also Holm-Olsen (1945/1983) advocates in his edition. However, references to the three parts or ‘chapters’ will be retained in this anthology for the sake of convenience and convention.

The title Speculum regale and Konungs skuggsjá is given in the prologue and the use of the speculum metaphor is also cause for discussion. The question is how the metaphor is supposed to be interpreted: morally or as more practical and hinting towards an encyclopaedic scope. This is again linked to the views taken on the prologue, and whether or not it was written as an introduction to the work for thirteenth-century Norwegian nobility or for fourteenth- or even fifteenth-century Icelanders. When the Konungs skuggsjá is discussed in relation to the speculum genre and the use of the speculum metaphor in titles in the European tradition, we see that both the genre and the metaphor are used differently for different works, and therefore do not help us decide how the Speculum regale is to be understood.
The medieval use of the *speculum* metaphor probably goes back to Augustine and his *Speculum de Scriptura Sacra* (shortly before 430). Only a few titles are known from before the twelfth century. But from c. 1100 onwards several *specula* are written, e.g. *Speculum Ecclesiae* by Honorius Augustodunensis (c. 1100). The same title is also used by others such as pseudo-Hugo of Saint Victor (c. 1150). There is a *Speculum Mariae* (unknown author, before 1175), a *Speculum universale* (Radulphus Ardens, between 1179 and 1200), and a *Speculum regum* (Godfrey of Viterbo, 1180–1183) to name only a few. During the thirteenth century the metaphor becomes very popular in work titles, not only in Latin works, but it is also used in for example French (*miroir*) and German (*Spiegel*) (Grabes 1982: 248–50). We know that the Norwegian royal house was interested and actively engaging in French and German relations in the thirteenth century and at the beginning of the fourteenth (see further below for examples of literary influences). Influences on *Konungs skuggsjá* from French and German works – not only works in Latin – are possible, even if no specific work is known to have served as a source for the work.

The *Konungs skuggsjá* is related to the genre *Fürstenspiegel* or *Mirror of Princes*. This is a genre that had several representatives already in the ninth century. It was revived by John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus*, written in Latin for the English King Henry II in 1159. Henry was experienced and learned and he would most likely not have needed the *Policraticus* for himself. As the work discusses ethics and politics, and aims at defining the responsibilities kings have towards their subjects and *vice versa*, the original intended audience was probably the nobility and perhaps the Church rather than the king and princes. The *Konungs skuggsjá* is for a large part preoccupied with the division of power between king and Church, and it is tempting to see a possible source of inspiration to this discussion, not only in the local dispute over royal power between King Sverrir (1177–1202) and the Church, as has been suggested more than once in discussions about *Konungs skuggsjá*, but also in John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus*, and the conflict between Henry II and Archbishop Thomas Becket. Henry II appointed Thomas archbishop in 1161, but a conflict that soon arose between them ended with the king having the archbishop killed in 1170. To avoid conflicts of this kind must have been of great importance for a king in order to maintain peace and secure his power.

More or less contemporary with the *Konungs skuggsjá* is Thomas of Aquinas’s *De regno*. Thomas was inspired by Aristotle’s *Politika* ‘Politics’ which had recently been translated to Latin from Greek – via Arabic. With *De regno* a more political science in addition to the moral and ethical aspects that had been the main tendency of the genre earlier was introduced. Sverre Bagge states about *Konungs skuggsjá* and the genre of *Mirrors of Princes*:

There is, however, no striking similarity between them and nothing to suggest that the author knew any extant Mirror or deliberately composed his own work according to the dictates of this literary genre. (Bagge 1987: 19)

It is interesting to note, with Bagge (1987: 19), that *Konungs skuggsjá*, if it is considered to be part of the genre of *Mirrors of Princes*, must be seen as a rather early example of this genre. Bagge, however, has not been able to find clear influences from any particular

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11 See list in Grabes (1982, revised and translated version of his 1973 German book) in the Appendix on p. 235 onwards, which includes titles of works in both Latin and vernacular languages.
work. After a thorough treatment of the ideological parallels between *Konungs skuggsjá* and the European *Mirrors of Princes*, Bagge concludes:

This conclusion does not tell us much about the trends or traditions in which the author worked, nor does it show whether he had direct knowledge of any of the works we have referred to. No stylistic or textual evidence points to direct influence. The fact that his sources are confined to the Bible and a few legends, while the European *Mirrors of Princes* make frequent reference to classical literature, also makes direct dependence unlikely. (Bagge 1987: 109)

This confirms our initial statement that *Konungs skuggsjá*, rather than being a translation of any specific source text, is the result of a combination of knowledge of Continental matrices and indigenous learning and lore. For our modern appreciation of the work as a *Mirror of Princes*, an appropriation of this genre in the vernacular indigenous literate culture, more aspects may therefore be taken into account. For example the tradition of composing encyclopaedic texts with the purpose of educating young noblemen provides another important background for *Konungs skuggsjá*. Bagge continues:

The main element in the author’s doctrine, the ideal of the *rex iustus*, must have been so well known in educated circles, both before and at the time when The King’s Mirror was written, that the question of direct sources becomes meaningless. But the analogy between the king’s government of society and God’s government of nature was probably to some extent influenced by twelfth-century sources – possibly French – from which the author must have derived a good deal of his scientific knowledge, though even here it is difficult to trace precise lines of influence. (Bagge 1987: 109)

Despite the difficulties in finding indisputable sources for the work *Konungs skuggsjá* there are therefore still many routes of investigation that could be pursued. The interest in geography and nature displayed in the *Merchant’s chapter* may for example lead to further studies of the Celtic material that is reflected there.

As with most of the Old Norse literature, it is not possible to pinpoint exactly when *Konungs skuggsjá* was written. The author remains anonymous, in accordance with his own statement that no one needs at forvitnast þess nafn eðr hvat manna sá var er saman setti ok rita lét þessa bók (Kgs 1983: 2) ‘to be curious about the name or who he was who put together and had this book written’. It is not that scholars have refrained from attempts to satisfy just this curiosity. The debate concerning the authorship has primarily focused on the milieu surrounding Hákon Hákonarson, and there is much that would support this. Earlier scholarship saw in *Konungs skuggsjá* a voice in the debate between the Church and king, in favour of the latter, and argued from this that the work was written in the milieu surrounding King Sverrir (r. 1177–1202). Later scholarship has argued for a later dating, and sees the court of King Hákon Hákonarson (r. 1217–1263) as a plausible environment. The most widely accepted dating now is c. 1240–1263, between the end of the civil wars and King Hákon’s death. The dating of the earliest manuscripts serves as a *terminus ante quem*. These are dated to the 1260s and 1270s (NRA 58 A, NRA 58 C/NKS

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12 See the presentation and discussion of arguments in Bagge (1987: 11–21) with references.
235g 4to and the main manuscript AM 243 b α fol), and they are as such very close in time to the original composition of the work. Apart from that, the dating must be based on the text itself: what it describes, its ideology and how its style and composition relates to other texts. Altogether these are not very precise parameters, but still they supply enough to suggest an approximate date and a probable milieu for the work’s composition. The contention that the work was written to educate princes and prepare them for their possible future role as kings has also influenced the dating. King Hákon, first a child-king himself, had sons who would benefit from such royal education. Two of his sons lived long enough to come into consideration here, Hákon ‘the young’ Hákonarson (1232–57), who died before his father, and Magnús ‘the lawmender’ Hákonarson (1238–80), who succeeded King Hákon on the throne. But the Konungs skuggsjá did have a wider audience than the princes, even wider than the nobles surrounding the king. The immediate and fast dissemination of the work indicates that the intended audience was both wider and more dispersed than the king’s court. Also the content of the Konungs skuggsjá, which not only describes how people at the hrōð and the king should behave, but also their responsibilities, suggests that the work must have been useful also for those outside of the inner circles, in order to learn what they might expect from their superiors.

The thirteenth century was a flourishing period in Norwegian cultural history. In the translated work Tristrams saga ok Isoldar dated to 1226 it is related how the young Norwegian King Hákon Hákonarson has ordered a certain brōðir Robert to make the transfer into Norse. Of the whereabouts of this brother, who is presumably a monk from one of the orders that had established themselves in Norway, little is known. He may be the same person who is referred to as abōt Robert and attributed as the translator of Elíss saga ok Rósamundu, but we know very little with any certainty. Nevertheless the reign of Hákon Hákonarson and subsequently of his sons, Hákon Hákonarson ungi (‘the young’) and Magnús Hákonarson, and grandsons, Eiríkr Magnússon and Hákon Magnússon displays a rich variety of literary works, translations from Latin such as the Barlaams saga ok Josaphats, from German the Piðreks saga, or from French like the Strengleikar or the above mentioned Tristrams saga. In research these works are all generally viewed as part of a court literature sponsored by the kings. A recent example of this attribution of practically all literature extant from the thirteenth century is found in an article by Susanne Kramartz-Bein, who in relation to the translated Parcevals saga states:

The saga was an integral component of the courtly agenda of the Norwegian king Hákon IV Hákonarson (r. 1217–63), who, unlike any Norwegian king before him, sought to make connections with European courtly culture (particularly that of England, France and Castile). Consequently, during his reign numerous European epic poems were translated into Norse saga prose, including the first Tristrams saga (in 1226, according to the prologue), the Arthurian tales Ívens saga, Erex saga and Mottuls saga, and a translation of the lais attributed to Marie de France (Strengleikar). The defining work written at Hákon’s court is the contemporary Konungs skuggsjá (King’s Mirror), which contextually shaped Parcevals saga. The Old Norse works Karlamagnús

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13 In recent volumes of Bibliotheca nordica the focus has been on various works from this thirteenth-century court literature, see Johansson & Arvidsson (2009) on Barlaams saga ok Josaphats, Johansson & Flaten (2012) on Piðreks saga and Strengleikar and Johansson & Mundal (2014) on riddarasögur.
saga and Piðreks saga are also great epic texts that can be attributed to this courtly literary milieu. (Kramartz-Bein 2015: 246)

There are perhaps good reasons to be a bit cautious about all these attributions, because the evidence for the common provenance of all these works is not as certain as the quotation from Kramartz-Bein may imply. But the sheer amount of translated and indigenous learned texts produced more or less within one generation is still impressive. And as mentioned above this focus on the court of the Norwegian kings in relation to the import and dissemination of European court literature among the Norwegian nobility has a long scholarly tradition. It is not our intention here to question the relevance of the court of Hákon Hákonarson, his sons and grandsons for the literate culture of the thirteenth and early fourteenth century. Our contention is rather that there are reasons to expand our perspective in order to further our understanding of this flourishing literate culture; the court was an ambulatory institution and it is therefore obviously difficult to use for example the provenance of manuscripts and scribes in order to establish a more certain knowledge of its role in the emerging literate culture (see e.g. Hagland 1986). It is also obvious that we perhaps underestimate the emergence of a new learned audience in the thirteenth century outside of the closer court circles, eager to acquire erudition as well as the status related to state-produced manuscripts. Another aspect worth attention concerns the idea of Hákon Hákonarson as the importer of European culture and literature. There is, one could claim, a risk that we judge the situation very much based on nineteenth-century ideas of literacy and culture, and not least, our preconceptions of Norway as being on the very periphery of European culture and subordinated politically and culturally. It could perhaps be suggested that this was not a question of conscious cultural import from a self-understanding as peripheral, but that the activities rather represent a stage when Norway took active part in the regular cultural exchange within the Christian world on equal terms. Rather than understanding the activities at the court of Hákon as the result of subordination and a need for import of European culture and erudition, perhaps we should see them as a natural stage in the processes of Europeanisation and vernacularisation based on the emerging vernacular literacy in general. Here the speculum metaphor and the genre of encyclopaedic compilations in vernacular French and German in the thirteenth century may have their Norse counterpart in the Konungs skuggsjá, often seen as unique in its form and content. The Continental works referred to as specula could very well be sources of inspiration for Konungs skuggsjá – in so far as no direct sources for translation have been found. It may not only be the Latin learned texts of the speculum genre and other Latin erudition that served as inspiration; in addition it might be worthwhile to see Hákon in the light of those he likes to compare himself to – or strives to live up to, and look at what situations similar texts may be responses to. In these various works we find discussions on the relationship between king and subjects and king and Church and this becomes an obvious thing also for the Norwegian king to relate to.

The interest in Hákon Hákonarson and his court as a literary milieu has generated much inspiring scholarship in recent decades. Susanne Kramartz-Bein has been one of the strongest proponents of this scholarly emphasis.¹⁴ Marianne Kalinke has devoted a

¹⁴ Suzanne Kramartz-Bein has published extensively on the production and reproduction of texts in connection with the Norwegian court (see e.g. Kramartz-Bein 2015).
number of studies to the translations of French courtly literature in relation to the court of the Norwegian kings. In more recent scholarship the courtly literature has been treated by scholars such as Sif Rikharðsdóttir (2012), Stefka Georgieva Eriksen (2014a), Ingvil Brügger Budal (2009), Suzanne Marti (2011), and Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2013). Our understanding of this courtly culture has thereby been significantly increased.

Even if the court was ambulatory there are reasons to look more closely at two important aspects of the dissemination and reception of the learned literate culture. One of these aspects concerns the production and reproduction of texts in the manuscripts. We still have few real insights into the work of the translators, for example men like bróðir/ábóti Robert mentioned above, who is credited by the medieval tradition as the translator of Tristrams saga and Elíss saga ok Rósamundu, and, by scholarship, Parcevals saga, or the scribes who took care of the distribution of texts in new manuscripts.

The court of Hákon and Eufemia was still a thriving milieu and the venue for the production of the so-called Eufemiavisor which are the earliest extant example of literary activities in the vernacular of the Swedish realm. With Hákon Magnússon, however, the flourishing literate culture came to an end in Norway. Hákon and his wife Eufemia did not produce a son to inherit the kingdom. When King Hákon died in 1319 their daughter Ingeborg had been married to the Swedish nobleman Erik Magnusson and the two kingdoms were merged in a union with their son Magnus Eriksson as king, which in practice moved power and economic strength away from the Norwegian realm to the eastern parts of Scandinavia.

Our insights into the literary culture close to the court of the Norwegian king are generally supported by texts found in considerably later manuscripts, often in manuscripts copied in Icelandic scriptoria. But there is manuscript evidence contemporary with the flourishing culture of Hákon Hákonarson and his sons and grandsons. The main manuscript of Konungs skuggsjá is itself an important witness to the Norwegian manuscript culture of the thirteenth century, as are the Norwegian fragments dated to the same period. But there are also a number of other manuscripts that are relevant to mention in the context of the royal literary interests.

The manuscript that has perhaps most often been mentioned in relation to the Norwegian court is the De la Gardie manuscript 4–7 fol (DG 4–7) dated to c. 1270 and today kept in the University Library in Uppsala. This manuscript presents witnesses to works that are all more or less directly related to the court. The two most well-known works represented in the manuscript are Elíss saga ok Rósamundu and Strengleikar, translations from French already mentioned above. The manuscript also contains a fragmentary witness to Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar considered to be a translation of a Latin text by the Icelandic Benedictine monk Oddr Snorrason, and two shorter translations of

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15 Kalinke has published extensively on the Norse romances in general. For her work on the courtly romances see e.g. her book on Arthurian literature (1981) and her more recent work in this field (2011a; 2011b).

16 For recent discussions regarding the translations attributed to Robert, see Kramartz-Bein (2015). For a thorough treatment of the translation and subsequent transmission in the vernacular of Elíss saga ok Rósamundu, see Stefka Georgieva Eriksen (2014a).

17 For a recent anthology focusing on the court of Eufemia see Ferm et al. (2015).
Latin works, Pamphilus and the Dialogue between Courage and Fear or Viðræða æðru ok hugrekki (from Pamphilus de Amore and Morallium dogma philosophorum respectively).\(^\text{18}\)

In the manuscript Holm perg 4 fol dated to c. 1275–1300 the only medieval text witness to Þiðreks saga is found. The manuscript is today kept in the Royal Library collection in Stockholm. There are at least five scribes involved in the writing of this manuscript which indicates that it was made in a rather large scriptorium. It has been suggested that it was owned by the Bergen bishop Árni Sigurðsson and that it was moved to Sweden together with Holm perg 6 fol already in the fifteenth century (Storm 1880: 190–192).\(^\text{19}\) A third manuscript, Holm perg 6 fol, dated to c. 1250–1275 contains the oldest text witness to Barlaams saga ok Josaphats, a Norwegian translation of a Latin text that was popular throughout contemporary Europe. As mentioned, there are indications that it was moved to Sweden together with Holm perg 4 fol in the fifteenth century, and that it was used as one of the sources for the Swedish version of the narrative about Barlaam and Josaphat.\(^\text{20}\)

The lives of kings are found in a couple of manuscripts from the period. A text witness of the so-called Legendary Saga of St Olav is found in DG 8 II dated to c. 1225–1250. A second contemporary manuscript to be mentioned is AM 310 4° dated to c. 1250–1275, which contains another text witness to the Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar mentioned above in relation to DG 4–7. The Benedictine monk Oddr is thought to have written the work at the Þingeyrar monastery in northern Iceland, but the manuscript was most likely produced in Norway. There has been a debate regarding the scribe, whether he was a Norwegian or an Icelander (see e.g. Holtmark 1974: 11). However, this debate is perhaps not central to our understanding of the work of medieval scribes as we know that they were a movable lot.

As discussed above, Konungs skuggsjá is based on European models, but obviously is still an original work in the vernacular. It is relevant to note its popularity and how quickly it was disseminated in a number of manuscripts in Norway, now mostly extant in fragments, and not so much later in Iceland where it subsequently was rewritten in a large number of manuscripts adapted to Icelandic contexts over the next two hundred years and well into the post-Reformation period. If we turn to the Icelandic tradition we see that the text was re-written several times and that it had influence on other texts being produced in Iceland. Passages from the text can even be found incorporated in new texts. In his edition of the fragments of Alcuin’s De virtutibus et vitiis, Ole Widding treats the short passages from Konungs skuggsjá that are found in some late manuscripts of the Icelandic law code Jónsbók (Widding 1960: 34–45). Widding concludes that the manuscript AM 243 c fol may contain a copy of a lost exemplar (C) that is the source for some of the passages found in the Jónsbók manuscripts (Widding 1960: 41). It is also interesting to note that a short passage from Konungs skuggsjá according to Widding (1960: 43–44) is written by a

\(^{18}\) For recent treatments of aspects concerning Elíss saga ok Rósamundu and its representations in various text witnesses, see Stefka Georgieva Eriksen (2014a). Strengleikar has received a thorough treatment in Ingvil Brügger Budal’s PhD thesis (2009). The manuscript and its content were treated in a number of articles in the edited volume Francia et Germania (Johansson & Flaten 2012).

\(^{19}\) For a recent discussion of the manuscript see Eriksen and Johansson (2012). Þiðreks saga has received new interest in a number of articles in Francia et Germania (Johansson & Flaten 2012).

\(^{20}\) Barlaams saga ok Josaphats and its manuscript transmission has recently been treated in a number of articles in the edited volume F Barlaam i nord (Johansson & Arvidsson 2009).
mid-sixteenth century hand attributed to Jon Simonsen in the miscellany AM 114 a 4° (fol. 1° column b). Jon Simonsen was a Norwegian aristocrat in the mid-sixteenth century who displayed knowledge in the Norse language found in the old laws. He is known to have owned a number of medieval manuscripts still extant.

There are today about 60 extant manuscripts of Konungs skuggsjá in full or fragmentary condition, most of them written in Iceland from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century. The oldest fragments are dated to the third quarter of the thirteenth century and were all produced in Norway. It was only after the mid-fourteenth century that the earliest extant Icelandic manuscripts were written, at a time when manuscript production had more or less ceased in Norway. In his monograph on the manuscript tradition of Konungs skuggsjá Ludvig Holm-Olsen presents useful descriptions of all the extant manuscripts, written on both parchment and paper.

The main manuscript that has formed the basis for all modern editions is AM 243 b α fol, today kept in the Arnamagnæan Collection in Copenhagen. This manuscript has been thoroughly described, and the language of the work Konungs skuggsjá as well as of the scribal hand has been analysed by Ludvig Holm-Olsen.²¹

The earliest fragments containing text from Konungs skuggsjá are all from Norway. They will be treated more extensively by Johansson in this volume and are therefore just mentioned briefly here. There are three fragments from the second half of the thirteenth century kept at the National Archives in Oslo with the signa NRA 58 A (α), NRA 58 B (β) and NRA 58 C (γ). The latter of these fragments is considered to be part of the same manuscript as a fragment found at the Royal Library of Copenhagen with the signum NKS 235 g 4° (δ). A further fragment from late thirteenth century is the AM 1056 IX 4° (δ) in the Arnamagnæan Collection in Copenhagen.²²

As noted above, Ludvig Holm-Olsen (1952) provides a thorough treatment of all the known manuscripts of Konungs skuggsjá. Here it therefore suffices to make a short review of the Norwegian and Icelandic manuscripts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and if possible provide some more insights into the dissemination of the work over more than two centuries.

There is only one manuscript of Konungs skuggsjá that has been dated to the fourteenth century, AM 243 g fol (g). The fragmentary manuscript today consists of ten leaves, some of them in bad shape. Holm-Olsen (1952: 49) argues that the three scribal hands that can be distinguished on fol. 1, 2, and 3, and 4–10 respectively may have been working together on the same codex, but he is not certain about this suggestion. He is definitive in his conclusion that all three scribes are Icelandic while there are traits that indicate a Norwegian exemplar (1952: 50). He concludes, however:

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²¹ Parts of the main manuscript (AM 243 b α fol) are today available in digitised form in the Medieval Nordic Text Archive (Menota; http://clarino.uib.no/menota/catalogue?session-id=241319154307055). Work is being done at the moment to prepare a full text based on the main manuscript and Holm-Olsen’s edition from 1983.  
²² The fragments NRA 58 A, B and C, AM 1056 IX 4° and NKS 235 g 4° are today available in digitised form in the Medieval Nordic Text Archive (Menota; http://clarino.uib.no/menota/catalogue?session-id=241319154307055).
Det som her er nevnt, er imidlertid et altfør spinkelt grunnlag å bygge på, og g’s plass i håndskriftstemmaet gjør det ikke sannsynlig at forelegget har vært norsk. (Holm-Olsen 1952: 51)

What has been mentioned here, however, is all too little to base any conclusions on, and the place of g in the stemma does not make it plausible that the exemplar was Norwegian.

This would indicate that already by mid-fourteenth century the rewriting of *Konungs skuggsjá* in new manuscripts took place mainly in Iceland. This, admittedly, vague indication is further strengthened by the extant manuscripts from the fifteenth century, of which all are Icelandic.

The first manuscript to be mentioned in this context is Holm perg 14 4° (parchment, c. 1450). Today the manuscript is fragmentary. Little is known about its history until it was found by Jón Eggertsson during his trip to Iceland in 1682–1683 and brought to Sweden.

The parchment manuscript AM 243 a fol (a) is dated to the fifteenth century and written by two hands. It now consists of 44 leaves, written in two columns. Árni Magnússon, in a note found in the manuscript, claims that the text was earlier bound with *Sverris saga* and *Hákonars saga Hákonarsonar*, both written in the same hand. This manuscript has been identified as AM 81 a fol (Skálholtsbók yngsta; see e.g. Holm-Olsen 1952: 13). This interesting relation between two extant manuscripts has recently received more attention. In his digital facsimile edition of the *riddarasaga* manuscript Holm perg 7 fol, Christopher Sanders (2000: 41–52) discusses a group of manuscripts including AM 243 a fol and AM 81 a fol with the suggested provenance from the farm Möðruvellir fram. Sanders lists a number of manuscripts covering a wide range of genres which were most likely all produced in the same scriptorium. Besides the three manuscripts already mentioned there are fragments containing sagas, as AM 162 A ÷ fol (two leaves containing text from *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*), AM 445c II 4° (one leaf containing text from *Svarfdóla saga*) and AM 579 4° (fragments of *Elíss saga ok Rósamundu*, *Porseins saga Vikingssonar*, *Adonias saga*, *Rémundar saga keisarasonar* and *Hektors saga*). Fuller manuscripts are AM 132 4° (*Jónsbók*) and AM 343a 4° (a collection of fifteen sagas). Finally the so-called *Teiknibókin*, AM 673a III 4°, is considered to be a product of the same milieu. This large group of manuscripts may form some kind of conclusion of the medieval transmission of *Konungs skuggsjá* in Iceland, and demonstrates how various genres were collected and rewritten at a large farm in the northern part of the island by the second half of the fifteenth century. It would definitely merit a more thorough investigation where the intellectual milieu witnessed in the combination of texts was treated.

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23 The provenance was first suggested by Stefán Karlsson (1999: 152–154) with reference to Christopher Sanders’ then forthcoming work.

24 For a more thorough discussion of these manuscripts, see Sanders (2000). More recently *Teiknibókin* has been edited and commented by Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir (2013).

25 The composition of the texts found in the manuscript has recently been thoroughly treated by Hans Jacob Orning (2017).
There are a number of manuscripts or fragments of *Konungs skuggsjá* extant from fifteenth-century Iceland. The parchment manuscript AM 243 f fol (f) today consists of 64 leaves and is dated to the second part of the fifteenth century or close to 1500. The provenance is at this point unknown. A second signum, AM 243 h I–III fol (h) covers fragments from three manuscripts, all dated to c. 1500. The provenance of the three manuscripts cannot be established; these fragments, however, further strengthen the impression that *Konungs skuggsjá* was frequently rewritten in late medieval Iceland and must have been regarded as an important text by the reading audience of this period. The last extant parchment manuscript to be mentioned is dated to the second half of the fifteenth century, AM 243 k fol (k), and it now consists of 71 leaves. Its provenance is not known.

From 1500 and onwards there are a great many paper manuscripts written in Iceland. These are treated thoroughly by Holm-Olsen (1952) and are of little consequence for the studies presented in this book. They do, however, indicate the great interest in the work *Konungs skuggsjá* in the post-Reformation period, and at least some of them are relevant to our understanding of the earliest antiquarian interest emerging in the seventeenth century. Some of these manuscripts, on the other hand, rather reflect a popular interest in the text and its encyclopaedic content also in later centuries. The list presented below provides a survey of the extant manuscripts.

**Editions**

*Konungs skuggsjá* was discovered early by scholarship, and it has been edited for various purposes a number of times. The oldest printed edition of the work was published in Sorø in Denmark in 1768 by Halfdan Einersen with the title *Kongs-Skugg-Sio utlogd a Daunsku og Latinu. Det Kongelige Speil med Dansk og Latinsk Oversetteelse, samt nogle Anmarkninger, Register og Forberedelser. Speculum Regale cum interpretatione Danica et Latina, varis lectionibus, notis & c.* (Kgs 1768). As the title suggests the edition was accompanied by translations into Latin and Danish and with notes to the text.

The first more modern edition of *Konungs skuggsjá* was published in 1848 by Rudolf Keyser, P.A. Munch and Carl Unger under the title *Speculum regale. Konungs-skuggsjá. – Konge-Speilet. Et philosophisk-didaktisk Skrift, forfattet i Norge mod Slutningen af det tolfte Aarhudsrede. Tilligemed et samtidigt Skrift om den norske Kirkes Stilling til Staten* (Kgs 1848).

Already in 1881 a new edition was presented by the German scholar Oscar Brenner (Kgs 1881). The next edition was published by the Icelandic scholar Finnur Jónsson in Copenhagen in 1920–1921 (Kgs 1920–1921). Finnur Jónsson based his edition on the main manuscript AM 243 b α fol.

In 1945 the Norwegian philologist Ludvig Holm-Olsen presented an edition of *Konungs skuggsjá* based on the main manuscript and with lacunae filled with text from later manuscripts, with the orthography of the individual text witness preserved. This edition was reprinted in 1983 (Kgs 1983). Holm-Olsen was also preparing a critical edition which unfortunately was never completed. A more popular edition was published in Iceland by Magnús Már Ólafsson (Kgs 1955).

The first facsimile edition of the main manuscript was produced by Georg T. Flom in 1915 (Kgs 1915). It was provided with a diplomatic transcription parallel to the facsimiles.
This edition is difficult to find today and is perhaps more of a scholarly curiosum than useful as a scholarly work. In 1947 Holm-Olsen in collaboration with Didrik Arup Seip presented a facsimile edition of the main manuscript and the fragments NRA 58 A, B, C, AM 1056 IX 4°, and NKS 235 g 4° (Kgs 1947).

Manuscripts of *Konungs skuggsjá*

**The Arnamagnæan Institute, Copenhagen**

AM 243 a fol (a; parchment, fifteenth century)
AM 243 b α fol (bα; c. 1275)
AM 243 b β fol (bβ; paper, c. 1700)
AM 243 c fol (c; parchment, sixteenth century)
AM 243 d fol (d; parchment, seventeenth century)
AM 243 e fol (e; parchment, sixteenth century)
AM 243 f fol (f; parchment, c. 1500)
AM 243 g fol (g; parchment, fourteenth century)
AM 243 h I–III fol (h; parchment, all c. 1500)
AM 243 i fol (i; parchment, 1588?)
AM 243 k fol (k; parchment, 1450–1500)
AM 243 n fol (n; paper, seventeenth century)
AM 243 o fol (o; paper, c. 1700)
AM 243 p fol (p; paper, c. 1700)
AM 243 q fol (q; paper, seventeenth century)
AM 243 r fol (r; paper, seventeenth century)
AM 696 b 4° (paper, 1650–1700)
AM 703 VI 7 4° (paper leaf)
AM 904 3 4° (Latin paraphrase, 1300; transcription by Ární Magnússon)
AM 1056 IX 4° (δ; 2 parchment leaves, c. 1300)
AM 241 8° (paper, after 1754)

**The Royal Library, Copenhagen**

GKS 1913 4° (parchment, 1571)
GKS 1914 4° (paper, seventeenth century)

NKS 1148 fol (paper, 1765)
NKS 235 g 4° (γ; parchment, c. 1270)

Kall 616 4° (paper, 1746–1766)

Add 7 4° (paper, 1650–1700)

**The Royal Library, Stockholm**

Holm perg 9 4° (parchment, 1600–1650)
Holm perg 14 4° (parchment, c. 1450)
Holm papp 19 fol (paper, 1688)
Uppsala University Library
DG 17 (paper, before 1639)
DG 18 (paper, Danish, 1643)

National Archives, Oslo
NRA 58 A (α; parchment, c. 1260)
NRA 58 B (ε; parchment, c. 1300)
NRA 58 C (β; parchment, c. 1270)

Library of The Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters
Manuscript nr. 7 fol (paper, after 1755)

National Library (Landsbókasafn), Reykjavík
Lbs 41 fol (paper)
Lbs 238–239 4° (paper)
Lbs 632 4° (paper)
Lbs 722 4° (paper)
Lbs 2945 4° (paper)
Lbs 2041 8° (paper)
Lbs 2319 8° (paper)

JS 36 4° (paper)
JS 66 4° (paper)
JS 593 4° (paper)
JS 594 4° (paper)
JS 382 8° (paper)

ÍB 172 4° (paper)
ÍB 269 4° (paper)
ÍB 288 8° (paper)
ÍB 341 8° (paper)
ÍBR 159 8° (paper)

County Library, Sauðárkrókur
MS Sauðárkrókur (paper)

Trinity College, Dublin
MS L 2.32, 20 (paper, seventeenth century)