The main manuscript of *Konungs skuggsjá*, AM 243 b α fol, dated to the last quarter of the thirteenth century has generally been regarded in earlier scholarship as a royal manuscript, perhaps produced in direct relation to the royal court of Eiríkr Magnússon (see e.g. Holm-Olsen 1947: 5; 1983: xi). It is not obvious, however, that this assumption is correct or that it contextualises the manuscript in any useful way. If a number of fragments of contemporary manuscripts of *Konungs skuggsjá* are taken into account our understanding of the dissemination, intended audience and reception of the work may indeed be challenged, and this could lead us to further and new insights into the literate culture of thirteenth-century Norway.¹ In this article I treat five manuscripts, that is, the main manuscript and the four fragments, as equal representations of this manuscript culture in order to question the often all too superficial understanding we have of this lively and flourishing period of Norwegian history.

The study of literate culture in thirteenth-century Norway has often, and with good reason, been focused on the courtly literature and the translations of this literature from Latin, French and German. The home of this courtly literature has generally been sought in the court of Hákon Hákonarson and his sons and grandsons, Hákon ungi Hákonarson, Magnús Hákonarson, Eiríkr Magnússon and Hákon Magnússon. After these three generations of kings the Norwegian literate culture received a severe blow in the second quarter of the fourteenth century, often explained by the arrival of the Black Death in 1348, but most likely the result of a number of circumstances in combination (see e.g. Johansson 2015). It should be clear, however, that the literate milieu of the court was not the one and only milieu in which literature was produced and used; it is rather the case that the court was only one among a number of recipients of translated literature. It should also be stressed at the outset that the producers of these translations and the manuscripts carrying them should more likely be sought in monasteries and church milieus. The following reasoning about the known production of five elaborate and expensive manuscripts virtually in the same period of a few decades is intended to put

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¹ In the following my focus will be on the fragments found in the National Archives in Oslo (NRA 58 A, B and C, the latter also represented in fragments in the Royal Library, Copenhagen with the signum NKS 235 g 4°) and a fourth today kept in the Arnamagnæan collection in Copenhagen (AM 1056 IX 4°). The latter fragment of a Norwegian manuscript dated to c. 1300 today consists of two small pieces of parchment that do not yield much information concerning the text; it may, however, add further insights into the dissemination of the work in thirteenth-century Norway. Its provenance has been tentatively identified as Trondheim or the north-western parts of Norway. This fragment will not be treated further in this article, but will obviously be taken into account when the evidence for a wider dissemination is treated below. All the fragments treated in this article have been published in facsimile form by Holm-Olsen (*Kgs* 1947).
into perspective the production and subsequent dissemination of texts in the Norwegian literate and learned élite of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century.

The provenance, date and possible context of the earliest manuscripts of *Konungs skuggsjá*

The manuscript that we generally consider the main manuscript of *Konungs skuggsjá*, AM 243 b α fol, was most likely in the hands of Norwegian aristocrats throughout the Middle Ages. Ludvig Holm-Olsen concludes his treatment of the history of the manuscript by accepting the identity of what seems to be the owner in the mid-fifteenth century, Ogmundr Lafrantsson, a wealthy farmer in Hadeland. His hand is identified with some certainty in a couple of marginal notes in the manuscript and in a charter from 29 March 1447 written in Hadeland. This Ogmundr was active in Norwegian-Danish politics and was present at the meeting of representatives of the Scandinavian union (known as the Kalmar Union) in Lödöse on 1 June 1442, where Kristoffer of Bavaria was elected king (Holm-Olsen 1952: 23). This ownership indicates that the Norwegian nobility in the fifteenth century still had an interest in literate culture similar to that seen in the flourishing literate culture of the court in early fourteenth century Oslo (see e.g. Johansson 2015). It does appear that our traditional views of the decline of Norwegian culture in the second half of the fourteenth century and in the subsequent centuries of various unions with Sweden and Denmark should perhaps be challenged or at least modified.2

If the dating of AM 243 b α fol has never really been a bone of contention, the discussion of the provenance of the manuscript as well as the original work has been more contentious and it has involved a number of scholars over the recent century of scholarship.3 Holm-Olsen provides a thorough investigation of the linguistic features of the text as it is preserved in this manuscript (1952: 24–38). He concludes:

Det kunne skillles ut flere (sør-)østlandske former, og det vestnorske språkstoffet kunne vært fyldigere fremstilt. Mange eksempler kunne også vært nevnt på at samme ord snart opptrer i vestnorsk, snart i østnorsk form. Etterat det er gjort sannsynlig at skriveren representerer en vestnorsk (bergensk) skole, mens forelegget har vært (sør)østlandsk, finner det meste sin naturlige forklaring. Her er imidlertid ikke stedet til å behandle flere detaljer. Denne undersøkelsen har bare hatt som mål å trekke opp hovedlinjene. (Holm-Olsen 1952: 38)

More traits from the (south-)eastern part of the country could have been distinguished, and the linguistic features from the western parts could have been presented in further depth. Mention could also have been made of the many examples of the same word

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2 It could be of interest in this context to further study the marginal notes to the text throughout the manuscript. Holm-Olsen dates them to c. 1400 (1947: 7) but it rather looks as if they are in the same hand as the one attributed to Ogmundr Lafrantsson. This would yet again show that the Norwegian owners of old manuscripts did read them even when the period of literary flourishing was over.
3 For a discussion of this scholarship see Holm-Olsen (1952: 24–38). The bibliography in the present book provides all the bibliographical references for this discussion.
appearing now in eastern and now in western Norwegian form. Once it is established with some certainty that the scribe represents a western Norwegian school (from Bergen), while the exemplar has been (south-)eastern, most things find a natural explanation. This is, however, not the place to go into further detail. This investigation has aimed only to draw the main lines.\(^4\)

From this it could be stated with some certainty that if the work *Konungs skuggsjá* was produced in the east, perhaps at the court, judging from the eastern, or south-eastern linguistic traits most likely transmitted from the exemplar, the actual manuscript was produced by someone with a background from the Bergen area. In both cases, however, it is important to stress that scribes did move: linguistic traits do indicate the provenance of the scribe (or even author), but not necessarily the provenance of the manuscript (or even work). It should also be noted that both Oslo and Bergen were part of the courtly network of the Norwegian kings of the period; the manuscript could therefore still have been produced for the courtly milieu in Oslo, even if its provenance points in the direction of Bergen.

If we now move on from the main manuscript and its alleged role in the court milieu, and take a look at the fragments of three manuscripts that today are found in the Norwegian National Archives in Oslo, perhaps a different image could be obtained of the dissemination and reception of *Konungs skuggsjá* by the Norwegian nobility or learned élite.\(^5\) These fragments do not, obviously, provide that much information about the work itself, but they have all still contributed significantly to Holm-Olsen’s text critical analysis. More importantly in our context, they provide a lot of information relevant to our understanding of the literate culture in late thirteenth-century Norway as well as to the role *Konungs skuggsjá* played in this culture. It is clear already at the outset that there was not just one costly manuscript available to eager readers and listeners at the end of the thirteenth century. Rather there were a number of manuscripts competing to be the most costly and precious, a treasure marking the status of its owner. This would indicate that the owners needed to keep up not only with new ideas of kingship and politics, but the nobility and the learned were also confronted with encyclopaedic knowledge well in line with what was fashionable in the rest of Europe. The focus on the main manuscript has, I contend, blocked the view of insights into this far more expansive literate culture than one limited to a single manuscript treated as the courtly manuscript *par excellence*. Rather, the fragments indicate that there was large-scale production of rewritings of this work and that these codices were distributed throughout the realm.

The first fragment to be treated here is NRA 58 A \((a)\).\(^6\) This fragment is dated by various scholars within the timespan 1260–1300; most lean towards the second half of

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\(^4\) Unless otherwise stated all translations are my own.

\(^5\) The three fragments kept in the Norwegian National Archives, NRA 58 A, NRA 58 B and NRA 58 C, and the fragment AM 235 g \(^4\) are edited by Holm-Olsen (*Kgs* 1983), and Georg T. Flom has edited NRA 58 A (*Fragment RA 58 A*: 1930) and NRA 58 C (*Fragment RA 58 C*: 1911). The three fragments have recently been transcribed and digitised by Nina Stensaker and are now available in the Medieval Nordic Text Archive (Menota: [http://clarino.uib.no/menota/catalogue?session-id=241318323689042](http://clarino.uib.no/menota/catalogue?session-id=241318323689042)).

\(^6\) The most recent thorough treatment of the three fragments found in the Norwegian National Archives was presented by Holm-Olsen in 1952. In the following Holm-Olsen’s presentation has formed the starting point for my discussion. I have, however, generally returned to the scholarly works referred to by Holm-Olsen to examine them first-hand as the objective of my investigation is quite different from his. Whenever
the thirteenth century or its last quarter. It is interesting to note that a number of scholars date the fragments explicitly in relation to the main manuscript as if this manuscript had some kind of absolute status. After an investigation of the linguistic traits of the manuscript, Holm-Olsen concludes with some caution:

Kanske tør man etter det som her er anført, hevde at \( \alpha \) [NRA 58 A] har et litt eldre preg enn både hovedh. og \( \beta \gamma \) [NRA 58 C/ NKS 235 g 4°] og at bladene neppe er skrevet senere enn ca. 1260. (Holm-Olsen 1952: 78)

Perhaps, after what has been presented above, one may dare to claim that \( \alpha \) [NRA 58 A] makes a rather older impression than both the main manuscript and \( \beta \gamma \) [NRA 58 C/ NKS 235 g 4°], and that the leaves are not likely to be younger than c. 1260.

This indicates that Holm-Olsen considers this fragment to be earlier than the main manuscript, and that he does not take it for granted that it is later and dependent on the more well-preserved manuscript. He is also clearly dismissive of the idea that the fragments were written by an Icelander and later in the transmission. It could further be noted that he dates the fragment more or less to the time when the work Konungs skuggsjá is traditionally thought to have been written. In the final stemma codicum Holm-Olsen concludes that NRA 58 A cannot be related to either of the two main branches, but rather tentatively has to be directly connected to the archetype or possibly with one lost exemplar in between (1952: 128). This would mean that the fragmentary text of NRA 58 A is perhaps the closest text witness to the work which was composed in mid-thirteenth-century Norway. Holm-Olsen formulates the text-critical implications:

\[ \text{Viktig er det også at } \alpha \text{ synes å kunne stilles utenfor de to klassene [A and B]. Derved kan det brukes som prøvesten så långt det når, hvis A- og B-klassens håndskrifter har motstridende lesemåter. Den som eventuelt faller sammen med } \alpha \text{'s, må være den opprinneligste.} \text{ (Holm-Olsen 1952: 129)} \]

It is also important that it seems to be possible to place \( \alpha \) outside the two groups [A and B]. It can therefore be used as a reference point as long as it reaches, if the manuscripts of the A- and B-groups have different readings. The one that has the same reading as \( \alpha \) ought to be the one closest to the original.

The fragment consists of three rather mistreated and cut leaves providing only glimpses of the once stately text they carried. The manuscript the three leaves belonged to was written in one column with about 40 lines per page. Holm-Olsen states that it has been “atskillig større av format enn hovedh.”, but he comments that its writing was not close to “måle seg med dettes i skjønnhet, og initialerne er meget mindre og enklere utført”
Holm-Olsen (1952: 76) has identified the text of the leaves and provides information about where it would have appeared in the manuscript before it was cut to pieces. The first fragment presents text which would have been on the third leaf while the two following fragments originally formed part of leaves 5 and 6. This means that all of the text belongs to the first part of Konungs skuggsjá, what is often referred to as the Merchant’s Chapter. Holm-Olsen concludes that the manuscript in order to contain the whole Konungs skuggsjá text would have consisted of six quires of eight leaves, that is, approximately 48 leaves (1952: 76).

Finnur Jónsson in the first edition of his history of Old Norse-Icelandic literature (1894–1902, III: 992) suggested that the scribe was Icelandic, but this seems to have been rejected by later scholarship, including Finnur Jónsson himself in his edition of Konungs skuggsjá (1920–1921: 27). Today there is rather a consensus that the scribe was Norwegian and that his dialect would point in the direction of south-western Norway. As a conclusion Holm-Olsen states that it is plausible to think that the manuscript was produced in the Bergen area (1952: 79). But of course the need for caution mentioned above in relation to the provenance of the main manuscript is equally valid for the provenance of the fragments; a scribe could have moved freely and therefore linguistic traits could primarily just tell us something about the provenance of the scribe, not of the manuscript.

Holm-Olsen’s interest is focused on the text-critical and linguistic aspects of the fragment. Therefore he does not suggest any conclusions as to the implications of his dating and establishing of a provenance for the scribe. His dating would indicate, however, that the manuscript of which these fragments at one time formed a part was produced very close in time to the original writing of Konungs skuggsjá, that is, the text of the fragments would represent an early stage in the transmission of the work and the text could be expected to have been written in close proximity to the milieu in which the work was formed. It would therefore be of great interest to further our understanding of the circumstances in which this manuscript was originally written and to locate the milieu with greater certainty. It should be clear, alas, that this is a rather awesome and arduous task and one most likely not to lead to much success considering the state of the material.

What could be of possible interest to my investigation here is the fact that the leaves all have been reused to bind accounts for the bailiff in Lofoten for the year 1617 (cf. Holm-Olsen 1952: 76). This indicates that the manuscript as a whole was in Lofoten at this point. Unfortunately it does not provide any absolute information, as manuscripts that were cut up were often sent to various parts of the country. The fact that all three leaves of the fragment have been located to Lofoten could still be of some importance, however.

The second fragment of interest here is NRA 58 B (ε). This fragment consists of six pieces from originally two leaves. The manuscript of which they once formed a part was written in two columns. In earlier scholarship it was dated to the first half of the fourteenth century, but Holm-Olsen narrows the time of production down to c. 1300 or shortly thereafter (Holm-Olsen 1952: 79).

As was the case with the scribe of the previous fragment, the hand of this fragment has been suggested to be Icelandic (Keyser et al. 1848: xiv) while Finnur Jónsson considered

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9 “compete with the beauty of it, and the initials are a lot smaller and less elaborate”.
10 For discussions about the distribution of cut-up manuscripts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see e.g. Gunnar I. Pettersen (2013).
it to be Norwegian (1920–1921: 28). Holm-Olsen states already at the outset that the fragment seems to form part of the Icelandic transmission as this can be studied in the large amount of extant Icelandic manuscripts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (1952: 79, see also 142–143). He concludes, however, that the dialect of the scribe must rather be Norwegian and from the south-western part of Norway (1952: 79). He states:

Det kan i enkelte tilfelle være vanskelig å avgjøre om en tekst er islandsk eller norsk. I dette tilfelle er de norske trekkene så mange at man tør regne med at håndskriftet er skrevet av en nordmann. Fragmentene er jo også funnet i Norge. Språklig har det ikke kunnet påvises trekk som bestemt taler for at forelegget har vært islandsk, men heller ikke noe som taler imot det, og plassen i stemmaet (se s. 145) gjør det sannsynlig at ε har islandsk grunnlag. (Holm-Olsen 1952: 83)

In certain cases it can be difficult to decide whether a written text is Icelandic or Norwegian. In this case the Norwegian traits are so abundant that one must reckon the manuscript as written by a Norwegian. The fragments were also found in Norway. Linguistically it has not been possible to demonstrate traits that would indicate for certain that the exemplar was Icelandic, but nor is there anything to suggest the opposite, and the position in the stemma (see p. 145) makes it plausible that ε has an Icelandic foundation.

In this fragment we find a typical example of the uncertainty of the information we can gather from the later use of fragments to bind bailiff accounts. The fragments of NRA 58 B were split so that some were used in Hardanger 1637 and some in Sunnmøre 1637 and 1638. This demonstrates well how leaves from the same manuscript could be distributed to various areas and be used for different years.

It is interesting to note that this early fragment is placed in the A group of the stemma by Holm-Olsen. He concludes:

ε knytter det seg speciell interesse til fordi disse små bladstumpene er rester av det eldste håndskriften av A-klassen, og fordi håndskriftet er det eneste innen A-klassen som har norsk språkform. (Holm-Olsen 1952: 142)

ε merits special interest as the fragments are the remains of the oldest manuscript of the A class and with a Norwegian linguistic form.

The provenance of ε is still uncertain, but there are indications that it should be regarded as Norwegian and that it rather represents the ongoing cultural exchange between the Norwegian and Icelandic nobility or learned élite in this period.11 The manuscript was most likely produced in Norway at the beginning of the fourteenth century and stayed in Norway throughout the Middle Ages as it was subsequently used as bindings for bailiff accounts from Hardanger and Sunnmøre. There was a rich exchange of goods and ideas between the central parts of the Norwegian kingdom and its more peripheral areas such as

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11 The most famous Icelandic representatives would be members of the Sturlung family, e.g. Snorri Sturluson and his two nephews Óláfr bóðarson and Sturla bóðarson. In the fourteenth century Haukr Erlendsson is probably the most well-known representative of this mobile nobility.
Iceland. Stefán Karlsson has demonstrated in two articles how Icelandic scribes produced manuscripts for export to Norway (1978; 1979), and Icelanders like Sturla Þórðarson and Haukr Erlendsson made their careers in Norway (see e.g. Johansson forthcoming a and b). It is also clear that Konungs skuggsjá soon was a popular work to reproduce in the Icelandic milieux, well documented in the many extant manuscripts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The NRA 58 B fragment should most likely be seen as part of this exchange of information. Members of the Icelandic nobility seem to have taken part in Norwegian politics throughout the Middle Ages, or rather, until the decline of the Norwegian kingdom from 1319.

The third and last fragment in the Norwegian National Archives is NRA 58 C (β) which has been accepted as originally forming a part of the same manuscript as NKS 235 g 4° (γ) in the Royal Library, Copenhagen. NRA 58 C today consists of two pairs of connected leaves. According to Holm-Olsen they have formed leaves 3 and 6 respectively in two subsequent quires of 8 leaves (1952: 83). Holm-Olsen locates the text of the fragments in 2116–2220 for leaf 1, 2427–2531 for leaf 2, 3019–3131 for leaf 3, and 3413–3531 for leaf 4 (1952: 83; page references are to the edition (Kgs 1983)). NKS 235 g 4° is a single leaf. This fifth leaf contains text located at 548–5519 in the edition (1952: 84). The manuscript has been rather large (approx. 28.5 × 21.5 cm) with 25–27 lines per page (Holm-Olsen 1952: 83). The text in β represents the first part of Konungs skuggsjá while the text in γ is found in the second part of the work.

The four leaves of NRA 58 C were found in 1867 in the National Archives of Sweden in Stockholm, forming covers for accounts. In 1886 they were transferred to Norway and ended up in the Norwegian National Archives (Holm-Olsen 1952: 83–84). The adventures of the single leaf found in Copenhagen seem to have been similar to the treatment of the fragments found in Stockholm; it had been used in the binding of a book, but today we have no information as to what kind of book it was.

There have been two scribes at work in this fragment. Holm-Olsen divides their work so that the first scribe wrote the whole text of leaves 1–3 while the second scribe produced leaf 4 and the single leaf found in Copenhagen (1952: 84). Holm-Olsen notes that the second hand presents a considerably older stage in his writing style as well as linguistic forms (1952: 85). The manuscript of which these five leaves once formed a part was just as stately and expensive as the main manuscript. Holm-Olsen expresses his admiration for the work of the scribes and for the quality of the illuminated initials (1952: 84).

The earliest datings of the fragments suggested a time at the end of the thirteenth century and a provenance in Norway (e.g. Keyser et al. 1848: xvi). The more specific provenance was suggested to be in the south-western parts (e.g. Fragment RA 58 C: 42–45) or the eastern parts of Norway (Hægstad 1935: 98–99). Holm-Olsen states:

Det er naturlig å tenke seg at βγ neppe er skrevet senere enn i tiåret 1260–1270. De språklige eiendommeligheter som skal behandles i det følgende, synes også å vise at siste fjerdedel av 13. årh. vanskelig kan komme i betraktning. (Holm-Olsen 1952: 86)

It is plausible to think that βγ was written no later than in the decade 1260–1270. The linguistic peculiarities that are to be treated in the following seem to indicate that the last quarter of the thirteenth century can hardly come into consideration.
Holm-Olsen is not explicitly stating his own view on the provenance of the two scribes, but implicitly he leans towards supporting Marius Hægstad’s conclusion, that is, that they are from the eastern part of Norway (Holm-Olsen 1952: 86; Hægstad 1935: 98–99). He refers to Trygve Knudsen who has suggested in lectures that the tradition of the two scribes points in the direction of St Mary’s church and St Hallvard’s church in Oslo respectively (1952: 87). The former of these churches housed the chancellery of the king while the latter was the seat of the bishop of Oslo. This would indicate a collaboration between scribes from two scriptoria or at least trained in two different milieux. The evidence so far indicates that this expensive and impressive manuscript could possibly, with the cautions already mentioned, have been produced in a milieu close to the court in Oslo. It is also interesting to note here that Holm-Olsen considers the βγ fragments to be either from a copy of the main manuscript (or the reverse) or to be a sister manuscript with a common exemplar (1952: 155). After scrutinising the relation between the two manuscripts, Holm-Olsen concludes that βγ must be the exemplar for the main manuscript (1952: 156–164).

One thing that could be relevant to note here is that the one responsible for the rubrics of the fragment in the few extant examples has written the Latin words pater and filius where all of the other Norwegian text witnesses have faðir and sonr in various spellings. This could possibly also indicate influence from the manuscript which the scribe of the main manuscript used as his exemplar: he wrote p and f where the rubrics should be added, and these were subsequently written in the vernacular, although with a few mistakes most likely due to misunderstanding of the Latin initial (see e.g. Holm-Olsen 1952: 17).

It is interesting for my discussion to note here Holm-Olsen’s comment regarding the physical shape of the two manuscripts:

Det er for det første stor ytre likhet mellom βγ og hovedh. Begge er tospaltet og så like av format at de uten vanskelighet kunne hørt til samme codex. Viktigere er det at de stykkevis ligger så nær hverandre at linjene i det ene håndskriftet begynner og slutter med samme ord som i det annet. (Holm-Olsen 1952: 159)

There is generally great physical similarity between βγ and the main manuscript. Both are in two columns and so similar in format that they could without difficulty have formed part of the same manuscript. More important it is that they are so close to each other in parts that the lines in one manuscript begin and end with the same word as in the other.

Holm-Olsen concludes that the main difference between the A- and B-group of the stemma codicum, the change in order of the passages treating Iceland, Ireland and Greenland, very well could have taken place in βγ (1952: 164–165). This could support the suggestion that these fragments actually not only form the remains of one of the earliest manuscripts of Konungs skuggsjá, but that the manuscript has been important for the dissemination of the Norwegian text in Iceland. Two manuscripts closely related in form and content, probably produced in the same environment in Norway in the last part of the thirteenth century could therefore have been intended as equally prestigious and with an intended audience in the Norwegian-Icelandic nobility and learned élite.
It is interesting to note that this fragment is stemmatically connected to the main manuscript as well as to a couple of Icelandic manuscripts in what Holm-Olsen characterises as the B Class (1952: 121–123). This indicates that the fragments under scrutiny here are not only among the oldest text witnesses to *Konungs skuggsjá*, but also that there was, at least in some milieux in Iceland, a direct line to the oldest Norwegian text witnesses. Holm-Olsen has, however, pointed to a number of problems for such an interpretation (1952: 122–123).

From the text-critical analysis of the earliest manuscripts and fragments Holm-Olsen is able to present a *stemma codicum* (Figure NN) which I reproduce here in a reduced version for the first generations, excluding the subsequent tradition of rewriting *Konungs skuggsjá* in Iceland in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a tradition that definitely would need a thorough study in its own right.

![Stemma codicum](image)

*Figure NN. Stemma codicum for the earliest manuscripts of Konungs skuggsjá based on Holm-Olsen (1952: 179).*

If we accept Holm-Olsen’s argument for the *stemma codicum* we can conclude that there are today a number of extant fragments representing four different early manuscripts (α, βγ, ε, and δ) the latter of which, δ (AM 1056 1X 4°, dated to c. 1300), is not further treated here. But this is not the only conclusion we can draw from the *stemma codicum*. Another interesting thing to note is the deduced nodes needed to explain variants in the extant fragments and the main manuscripts, that is X (the archetype), A, B, D, E, F and G. They indicate that Holm-Olsen has to account for at least another seven manuscripts added to the original one, which leaves us with a total of thirteen manuscripts produced in the short interval c. 1260 to c. 1300, that is, in the course of little more than one generation.

There is also much to indicate that we must expect there to have been at least one manuscript between the archetype and α, that is, another rewriting of the work within the first decade of its existence. This should, I contend, challenge our understanding of the work and its dissemination in the late thirteenth century. It was not exclusively produced in one handsome manuscript as it could appear judging from earlier research, but rather it was rewritten and presented to a larger audience in a large number of manuscripts.
It is now time to look more closely at the layout and form of the fragments in relation to the main manuscript. In Holm-Olsen’s studies of these fragments the focus was on the stemmatic relations to a lost archetype and less on the implications of their appearance in a short period of time relatively close to the production of the original work.

The first fragment to be treated here is NRA 58 A (α). Holm-Olsen assigned this fragment a special significance in the stemma codicum as it does not belong to either of the main groups, A or B, but rather must be placed in a branch of its own. This indicates that there was very early a distribution of the work in scriptoria where different exemplars were used. As the fragment is dated earlier than the main manuscript it is of even greater relevance to pay some more attention to its format. It is also important to note its suggested provenance in south-western Norway, possibly close to Bergen. Its later history, however, seems to have taken it to Lofoten where it was used for binding accounts in the first half of the seventeenth century. If we could further strengthen the original provenance in Bergen and the third quarter of the thirteenth century, this would place this manuscript in relatively close proximity to the main manuscript but without being closely related to it. And as the fragments of NRA 58 C/NKS 235 g 4° seem to be closely related to the main manuscript, there would have been three manuscripts produced close in both time and space, but at least in two different milieux.

The layout of α was characterised by Holm-Olsen:

Det har vært et staseligt håndskrift, åtskillig større av format enn hovedhåndskriften, men skriften kan ikke måle seg med dette i skjønnhet. (Holm-Olsen 1947: 17)

It has been a stately manuscript, considerably larger than the main manuscript, but the writing cannot compete regarding beauty.

This description could perhaps be further elaborated. The text is presented in one column on the page which could be seen as one more indication that it is rather older than the other manuscripts which are all written in two columns or that it was at least formed in an older tradition. The layout is rather simple with the writing placed neatly within a well-defined block of text. The first line is decorated throughout with ascenders prolonged into the upper margin. The enlarged minuscule a on the first line of the first leaf is worth a special mention. The few enlarged initials usually stretch over two lines and are painted in red and blue, sometimes in combination. The Father and Son passages are provided with rubrics, faðer svarar, sonr etc. in red, and once in blue ink.

There is no requirement for a thorough palaeographic and orthographic analysis in this article, but there are reasons to note some traits that could perhaps further help us in relating the fragments to the main manuscript and to the Norwegian palaeographic development at large in the second half of the thirteenth century. The first general impression of the fragment NRA 58 A is that of a neat proto-Gothic writing. There are few traces of insular writing, but some examples of insular f are to be seen. The insular f is to be expected in all Norwegian writing from this period. Here it is written with two
dots loosely connected to the ascender above the base line in the direction of writing, and
with a descender under the base line.\textsuperscript{12}

If we now turn to the fragment NRA 58 B (ε), it was situated in group A in Holm-Olsen’s
stemma codicum which primarily is represented in later Icelandic manuscripts. This is interesting as the manuscript was clearly produced in Norway, but still, according
to Holm-Olsen, reveals a closer affinity to the Icelandic dissemination of Konungs
skuggsjá (Holm-Olsen 1952: 142). It is still, however, clearly a part of the Norwegian
reproduction of the work in new manuscripts.

What can be seen of the layout of NRA 58 B is rather different from that of the other
fragments. It is written in two columns but considerably more crammed than the main
manuscript and NRA 58 C/NKS 235 g 4\textdegree. The writing is neat but significantly smaller
than that of the two mentioned manuscripts. It can be characterised as Gothic script and
differs in a number of traits from that of the older manuscripts. But still it is dated within
the first two generations of the dissemination of Konungs skuggsjá in Norway, the centre
of interest in this article.

Holm-Olsen (1952: 79–83) treats palaeographic and orthographic features of this
fragment in some detail; I therefore just point here to the most significant ones for the
Norwegian provenance and for comparison with the other fragments and the main
manuscript. One central feature in this context is the consistent use of insular ſ for \(<v>\) (I
have found no evidence for it being used for \(<u>\)). The scribe not only uses it, he is
obviously also well acquainted with the use of the character type. Whereas the earlier
fragments use \(<ð>\) to mark a voiced fricative, this scribe uses the round allograph of \(<d>\)
throughout, where an Icelandic scribe in this period would most likely still have used
\(<ð>\).

As was pointed out above, the relation between the main manuscript and the fragments
of NRA 58 C/NKS 235 g 4\textdegree (βγ) is uncertain, but much indicates that the main
manuscript is a rewriting of the manuscript represented by the fragments or of a common
exemplar for both of them. This implies that the two manuscripts most likely were
produced in the same milieu or at least in close proximity so that the scribes would use
the same exemplars in their work. The provenance here could therefore provide more
insights into the milieu where these manuscripts were produced, and perhaps in the next
step into the dissemination of the work in the Norwegian nobility and learned élite.

The layout of NRA 58 C/NKS 235 g 4\textdegree does remind us of that of the main manuscript.
The two columns are placed more or less in the same fashion on the page with well
defined right margins. The coloured initials that are to be found on the pages of the
fragment appear very much in the same fashion as the ones found in the main manuscript.
And in many cases they do show great similarities down to the slightest detail. There are,
however, differences that indicate that the illuminator most likely was not the same man,
unless it could be argued that he developed his skills between the earlier manuscript now
only extant in fragments and the later, more fully preserved manuscript. A comparison

\textsuperscript{12} It is interesting that this fragment is contemporary with or perhaps even a bit older than \(βγ\) and the main
manuscript but differs in form and is placed in its own branch of the stemma. If the work Konungs skuggsjá
was produced in Oslo and subsequently was reproduced in texts from different scriptoria the branch
containing \(α\) would further strengthen other indications that there most probably was an exemplar for \(α\)
(parallel to \(X\)) between the archetype and the extant witness (tentatively called \(Y\)). The relation between
this lost exemplar and the lost exemplar \(X\) would demand an archetype between \(X\) and \(Y\) and the original
manuscript, further adding to the possible number of lost manuscripts.
could for example be done between the $N$ of NRA 58 C and the $E$ found on page 58 of the main manuscript.

In the main manuscripts two scribes have been responsible for the rubrics (Holm-Olsen 1952: 16). The few rubrics found in NRA 58 C/NKS 235 g 4° could possibly be the work of the same hand that wrote the rubrics, for example, on pages 45, 65, 71, 101 or on page 135 in the main manuscript. It is worth noting here that the rubrics of the fragment are in Latin. If these rubrics are the result of the work of the same scribe the connection between the two manuscripts is further strengthened.

Holm-Olsen has praise, most of all for the style of the first of the two scribes:

Særlig den første av dem har en ualminnelig vakker skrift, klarere og fastere til og med enn hovedhåndskriftets. (Holm-Olsen 1947: 19)

Especially the first scribe writes an unusually beautiful hand, clearer and more stable even than the one of the main manuscript.

Both scribes write a clear Gothic hand, which, despite Holm-Olsen’s judgement, in the case of both scribes reminds us much of the hand of the main manuscript. A quick comparison provides many examples of similarities between the three hands. They all three use the insular $r$, consistently for <v> but in some cases also complementarily for <f> between vowels (hand A in $\beta\gamma$). All three hands use $\sigma$ for <q> with some consistency and $\alpha$ for <æ> and sometimes for <e>. There are, however, micropalaeographic differences to support the conclusion that there are three different scribes at work in the main manuscript and the fragment. These include a similar tendency on the part of the hand of the main manuscript and hand B in the fragment to write the descenders of the insular $r$ below the base line more straight with a small bend to the left at the end, while hand A has a more looping descender. In the case of <g> there is a similar distinction where hand A more often closes the descender while both the hand of the main manuscript and hand B have an open descender, and both hands end the descender with a horizontal line to the left. One interesting difference between the hand of the fragment and the hand of the main manuscript is that the former uses the tironic note for oc, by hand A written as a 7 and hand B with a horizontal stroke on the ascender, while the latter seems to be consistent in writing oc. All in all, however, the three hands are definitely close both in macropalaeography and on the micropalaeographical level.

Final remarks

We set out to further illuminate the production of a number of expensive and prestigious manuscripts of Konungs skuggsjá in the second half of the thirteenth century, most of them today only extant in sorry fragments. These fragments were all used and relevant for the text-critical work done by Holm-Olsen in the 1940s and 1950s. There has never, however, been much interest in them as representatives of the dissemination and reception of the work in this early period.

The first thing that can be concluded is that these fragments represent a rich and quick distribution of the work. They do not only display a number of costly manuscripts, but from the stemmatic relations they can be shown to be representative of a number of
manuscripts that are now lost. This means that immediately after the composition of the work it was widely distributed in prestigious and costly manuscripts.

The main manuscript, AM 243 b α fol, can be closely related to NRA 58 C (β) and the leaf from Copenhagen, NKS 235 g 4° (γ). Holm-Olsen, with some caution, considered the fragment to be the exemplar of the former. It is therefore interesting to note that the fragment NRA 58 C/NKS 235 g 4° is written by two hands that appear to be from eastern Norway, while the main manuscript is written in a hand that orthographically rather seems to be from the south-western part of Norway. Of the Norwegian manuscripts from the thirteenth century that can still be studied in the extant material, βγ is the only one displaying eastern orthography. Its further history is also different from that of the other manuscripts. These fragments have been found in bookbindings in Stockholm and Copenhagen, while fragments of NRA 58 A and NRA 58 B, both in hands that have been described as from south-western Norway, were found in bindings of bailiff accounts from the western parts of Norway. It is interesting to note that the only surviving manuscript from this period, AM 243 b α fol, also display western traits; from this it could be argued that the linguistic indications that distinguish NRA 58 C/NKS 235 g 4° from the main manuscript and the rest of the fragments under discussion here should be seen in relation to the further history of the fragments. The fragments written in hands that indicate an eastern provenance are found in bindings outside of Norway while the western fragments are found as bindings for bailiff accounts in the north-western parts of Norway.

The fragment NRA 58 B should receive some extra attention here. It is supposedly written in a Norwegian hand from the early fourteenth century, but its text witness points in the direction of an Icelandic link. Holm-Olsen considered the manuscript to be based on an Icelandic exemplar, but it could also be the case that NRA 58 B is the extant starting point for one of the lines of transmission into the Icelandic material. It could for example be argued that the manuscript was written on the instigation of an Icelandic nobleman and perhaps also based on an Icelandic manuscript, but in a Norwegian hand, perhaps in Bergen.

Who would have been the recipients of all these manuscripts? It would not be a daring conclusion to state that they were distributed among the nobility of the Norwegian kingdom. But could we say more about the recipients and how the text was used?

Here it is perhaps time to return to the court. In the extant literature from the thirteenth century there are a number of works that have been attributed in the later manuscript tradition to the kings from Hákon Hákonarson’s allegedly instigating the translation of Tristrams saga in 1226 through Parcevals saga, Strengleikar, Þiðreks saga and Barlaams saga ok Josaphats to the translations into Swedish of the so-called Eufemiavisor at the court of Hákon Magnússon and Queen Eufemia. This courtly milieu was ambulatory and most likely rather flexible in its form. The members of the Norwegian (and Icelandic) nobility would have had an interest in taking part in this political and cultural hub. But not everyone could participate at all times. There are clear indications that the status in owning books developed quickly in the second half of the thirteenth century and that the nobility was interested in building private libraries. At the beginning of the fourteenth century noblemen such as the Icelandic lawspeaker Haukr Erlendsson or Norwegians like the person who owned the books listed in what has been known as “Bishop Árni’s library” would have had libraries of their own. The immediate dissemination of Konungs skuggsjá in a large number of illuminated manuscripts tells us something about the prestige of the work, but it also tells us more about the emerging book culture in the vernacular, where it was becoming important for the individual
nobleman or learned clergyman to establish his own book collection. The fragments are the sorry remains of this book culture that supported the emerging literacy.