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## HRÓMUNDAR SAGA GRIPSSONAR AND THE GRIPLUR.

“Hrómundar saga Gripssonar” has survived only in paper MSS. of the seventeenth century, which clearly are closely related. Of the various MSS., AM 601b, 4to, *pap.* is probably the best.<sup>1</sup>

The “Griplur,” or “Hrómundarrímur,” have been preserved in full in only one MS., AM 610c, 4to, *pap.* from the seventeenth century, in the hand of Jón Gissursson.<sup>2</sup> The oldest text of the “Griplur” is in a Wolfenbüttel parchment, Guelf. Aug. 42, 4to, from about 1500. Another fragment, which once formed part of AM 603, 4to, *perg.* from the sixteenth century, is missing.<sup>3</sup>

At the end of the saga MS. the copyist has added a note to the effect that his original was a “saga” not in a very legible condition. Árni Magnússon, however, has not only written an initial note, “úr rímunum,” in the margin, but has added his final comment on the copyist’s statement: “mendacium est. þetta er tekið úr rímunum.”

Finnur Jónsson (whose edition of the “Griplur” appears in *Rímnasafn* I, Copenhagen, 1905-12) agrees in regarding the saga as a mere paraphrase of the rímur. Professor A. LeRoy Andrews (*Studies in the Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda in Modern Philology* viii-ix) holds a similar view. E. Kölbing (*Beiträge zur vergleichenden Geschichte der romantischen Poesie des Mittelalters*, Breslau, 1876) suggested that saga and rímur were independent of one another, and postulated a common origin in a saga version of which the rímur were a more faithful reproduction.

But it is clear that saga and rímur are related, directly or indirectly, and the question is “How?” Close word-parallels testify to the relationship: there occur in the saga (beginning of chapter 2) even the rhymes “nafni: stafni” in the passage corresponding to that of the “Griplur,” but then these are quite common words in common phrases.

<sup>1</sup> See [Kr. Kaalund], *Katalog over den Arnemagnæanske Haandskriftsamling*, I, 769.

<sup>2</sup> *op. cit.* II, 15.

<sup>3</sup> *op. cit.* II, 4.

It is pointed out by Andrews as an indication of the inferiority of the saga that its names are corrupt, that it has no *vísur*, that it omits much, and that it transposes much.

The condition of certain of the names is indeed corrupt, but so are some in one of the texts of the *rímur*; and in either case they could be explained by the state of a common original, whether it was a prose or rhymed version. A similar explanation would account for the absence of *vísur*. As the "Griplur" only refer to *vísur* (I, 30, 39 and II, 26), but do not contain them, the saga is scarcely inferior in this particular.

It is claimed that the saga omits much. But the very fact that the "Griplur" represents a fuller and more expanded version might be regarded as an argument that the saga is the older; for expansion in a metrical version of a saga is exactly what is to be expected.

It is well known, also, how easily transposition of parts of a text can occur in orally transmitted works, and examples are to be found in the different texts of the *rímur* themselves, as well as in the saga. This is especially notable in the orders in which the dreams occur as they are recorded in the "Griplur" (e.g. see *Rímnasafn* part 5, p. 400, and footnotes; see also Andrews *op. cit.* for a full list of transpositions in three MSS. of the "Griplur"). It might also be observed that in the account of Hrómundr's fight with Helgi on Vænis ís, and the following events, the saga order is probably superior to that of the "Griplur."

The best argument in support of the "Griplur" as the original lies in the fact that the lost MS. of the poem in AM 603, 4to, *perg.* is the only MS. of the "Griplur" known to have contained both these *rímur* and the "Bragða-Ölvis *rímur*," which is the source of the only other saga appearing in AM 601b, 4to, *pap.* with "Hrómundar saga"; and it seems quite possible that the saga may have originated, directly or indirectly, from this source.

On the other hand, the supplementary statement at the end of the saga, written by the copyist, definitely names a source

which is described as a "saga" not in a very legible condition. Unfortunately the citing of Magnús í Laufási Ólafsson as his authority does not help to clear up the matter, for his published writings reveal no trace of a similar statement. The lack of knowledge of the earlier history of the MSS. makes it appear quite as probable that saga and rímur are independent of each other, both being related to an older saga version very similar to, and possibly the original of, the "Griplur" version in the lost MS. which also contained the "Bragða-Ölvis rímur." Whatever be the relationship of saga and rímur, it does not seem probable that the saga is merely a paraphrase of the rímur.

Kölbing (*op. cit.*) makes a close comparison between saga and rímur, and quotes passages in which verbal parallels occur. But, while it is scarcely to be expected that the saga would make any large addition to the rímur, there are, nevertheless, short phrases and passages in the saga which have no counterpart in the rímur, e.g. when in the saga Blindr is telling the king his dreams, he relates one "er hann sjálfan snerti, ok mælti, Mér þótti járnhringr settr á minn háls." This passage is lacking entirely in all the Griplur MSS. which give only the king's interpretation of the dream, which naturally follows (see Griplur VI, 30. and Bemærkninger). It seems certain too, as Kölbing remarks, that the dreams concerning Hrómundr and Hagall are rightly placed in the saga at the end; whilst, in the "Griplur," one is separated from the other and is included amongst the first (Griplur VI, 11-14). It may be noticed also that the typical words "þý, standa, hræra, möndull," occurring in both "Helgakviða Hundingsbana II" and in the "Griplur" in the description of the scene of Blindr's search at Hagall's for Hrómundr, are all lacking in the saga.

Furthermore, the saga version is definitely superior in the account of Hrómundr's fight with Helgi. In the saga version, after being wounded by Helgi, Hrómundr binds up his wounds immediately Helgi is despatched. The "Griplur," less naturally, make Hrómundr continue fighting and dispose of

Váli, before attending to his injuries. If the saga is a mere paraphrase of the "Griplur," as Finnur Jónsson and Andrews say, whence have these differences come? It may, of course, be answered that a generally inferior copy of the "Griplur" is responsible, and that the seventeenth century saga MS. is but a paraphrase of a poor copy of the rímur now lost. Evidence is lacking to prove the case either way.

But, however, we have the direct and important evidence, furnished by the copyist himself, that his original was definitely a "saga," and that it was illegible. The following are his words to be found at the end of the saga MS.:—"Sú saga sem þetta var eftir skrifað, varð naumlega lesin, og ei sem skiljanlegust um landa eður staða heiti sum; þó er það víst að ráða hér af Kóng Ólafur muni verið hafa kóngur að nafnbót í Danmerkurveldi einhverstaðar þar, sem nær grensað hefur við Svíþjóð, því þá hefur Danmerkurríki haft marga smákónga, sem bevisast kann af fornum fræðum. Svó skrifar síra Magnús í Laufási Ólafsson etc." This is the statement marked down by Árni Magnússon's "mendacium est. þetta er tekið úr rímunum." Having discovered that a number of other sagas were dependent upon their corresponding rímur, Árni Magnússon seems to have developed a fondness for this explanation and to have used his formula after only a cursory investigation. There seems, however, to be no comprehensible reason why the copyist should designate his original as a saga if it were not so; and it does not seem possible that the "saga" mentioned in the supplement can refer to the rímur, as Andrews actually suggests.

As there is nothing against our accepting the copyist's statement, let us assume, therefore, that he was telling the truth, and that his original was a saga, and, as he says, a copy that was not at all clear.

Now, it is not at all unlikely that the copyist would know something of the Hrómundr tradition, and even of the "Hrómundar rímur." This, then, is what might have taken place. The copyist in the course of his work came to portions of the text which were illegible. These compelled him to

paraphrase, and account for the relative shortness of our seventeenth century copy, and the brief and summary description of events, e.g. at the beginning of the first and second chapters of the saga, notably chapter two on the first appearance of Helgi inn frækni, who, as Kölbing points out, is to play such an important part later. Quite obviously, something is missing here. But in other cases where the reading was not clear and the copyist had to summarise, he was enabled to fill in from his knowledge of the *rímur* and a knowledge of the contents of the saga, sometimes applying traditional adjectives to the characters (e.g. in the first chapter, already mentioned as one of the portions of the text which has been paraphrased, the saga has simply: “þeir vóru illir oc undirfórulir.” (cf. *Griplur* I, 22-24 in which these adjectives occur in the general description), sometimes calling on his memory of the “*Griplur*” to incorporate the substance of whole phrases. In some cases he alters the word-order of the *rímur*, substituting perhaps words of similar sense, but preserving, for example, the same verbs in different tenses, as in chapter 4 of the saga which has “kelling hafði falið Hrómund undir hitunarkatli sýnom,” compared with *Griplur* V. 41,

“ . . . Hrómund fal í hávum sal  
heitu katli undir.”

also saga chapter 2, “Glýmdu þeir hart oc leingi . . . þar til um sýper að Hrómundr felldi hann á fótarbragði. Þá var ordit miðk dimt,” and *Griplur* III, 47.

“Mjög var orðið myrkt í haug,  
mátti þanninn verða,  
með fótar bragði fornan draug  
feldi beytir sverða.”

In other cases, possibly where his memory is more accurate and where the word-order is suitable in a prose saga, the copyist introduces a portion of the “*Griplur*” almost word for word, as in chapter 2: “. . . leingi hefi ek lifað í haugi mýnom, oc lafað á fé, enn eigi er gott að trúa gripum sýnom [þó góþir þike] of miðk,” and *Griplur* III, 50.

“ Svǫ hef eg lengi loðað á fé,  
 og lifað í haugi mínum,  
 ei er gott, þó góðir sé,  
 gripum að treysta sínum.”

It is suggested, therefore, that the general relationship is as follows:—a copy of the original saga (to whose existence and contents the well known reference is made in Sturlunga I, 22-3, ed. G. Vigfússon, I, 19-20), with certain interpolations from other sources, served as a basis for the “Griplur.” A not very clear copy of this same MS. also provided the material for the seventeenth century copy of the saga found in AM 601b, 4to, *pap.*, into which the copyist introduced from memory parts of the rímur where his original was illegible. “Griplur” and seventeenth century saga are, therefore, independent of each other (except for certain introductions by the copyist, as explained), and both go back eventually to a common original, the saga through the intermediate illegible copy.

The following diagram shows the relationship suggested of the various works on Hrómundr:—

