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Hungrvaka, Þorláks saga helga and Páls saga byskups: the relationship between biography, history and hagiography.

Summary

This paper briefly re-evaluates the arguments for common authorship of **Hungrvaka** and **Páls saga byskups**. The relationship between these and the surviving versions of **Þorláks saga helga** is then discussed. Arguments are presented for the view that, although the original authorship of none of the existing versions of **Þorláks saga helga** can reasonably be attributed to the probable author of **Hungrvaka** and of **Páls saga byskups**, nonetheless passages in all versions should be attributed to this author. It is therefore suggested that this author prepared a redaction of an already existing text of **Þorláks saga helga**; this redaction underlies all existing versions of the saga, each of which has been subsequently revised yet again. These three texts should therefore be seen as having formed a synoptic cycle of sagas of the bishops of Skálholt from Ísleifr Gizurarson to Páll Jónsson. This author's attitudes and intentions towards the bishops, and his very idiosyncratic presentation of his subject-matter, are discussed in brief comparison with other Old Icelandic texts. It is concluded that authorial freedom in presentation of subject matter, though qualified in a number of important ways, prevents modern scholarship from making a number of specific and useful generalisations about the Sagas of Bishops.

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