

The Textual History of Njáls saga: Evidence of and from
Arithmetical Proportion

by
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Over the past ten years, I have been examining a number of works of medieval literature to see if these were composed according to the canons of arithmetical proportion. This is a feature of the structure of a work whereby the various parts--chapters or other segments--are arranged in mathematically regular, often symmetrical, proportions. (For a review of research to 1972, cf. Hellgardt 1973; for the theory, cf. Peck 1980.) At the Saga Conference in Munich in 1979, I showed that the 78 chapters of Laxdaela saga were composed of six groups of 13 chapters each, and that these sections corresponded to important divisions in the content of the work. In 1982 in Toulon, I pointed out that Egils saga displayed a similar structure, in that its 87 chapters could be divided into three sections of 29 chapters each, the whole organized on the succession of generations of Kveld-Ulf, Skallagrim, and Egill, respectively. In another study, I have argued that this principle of composition lies behind the structure of the Nibelungenlied as well (Fichtner 1980). In this study, I subject Njáls saga to a similar analysis.

In the case of Njála, however, the task is made more difficult by the large number of manuscripts in which it is preserved, and by the fact that these display no little variation in the presence and position of chapter divisions. Consequently, before we examine this text for evidence of arithmetical proportion, we must review the position of each chapter division in all of the important manuscripts. After so doing, we may then look at the text for evidence of numerical composition. If we find reason to believe that this principle has influenced the organization of this saga,

we may then ask what these arithmetical relationships can tell us about the textual history of the saga.

Unfortunately, there is no edition of Njála saga which is adequate for these purposes. The chapter divisions used in the editio princeps of Olavius of 1772 have been taken over into the most important subsequent editions, i.e., those of Gislason (1875), Jonsson (1908), and Sveinsson (1954). In preparatory studies for his book on Njála (1976), Lars Lönnroth reviewed the evidence of the main manuscripts in regard to this question of the position of the chapter divisions of this saga. He presented his findings in an important article (1975) which constitutes the point of departure for the present study.

To begin with, Lönnroth accepts the following chapters (marked with an asterisk in the table in his article) as genuine because the chapter divisions occur at the same place in all extant manuscripts: chs. 1-6, 8-11, 13, 15, 17-20, 23-25, 26-36, 37-41, 42-43, 45, 46-47, 48, 50-61, 62-64, 67-76, 78-86, 87-88, 89, 90-91, 92, 93-97, 100, 101-102, 103, 106-107, 109, 110-116, 117-120, 121-124, 126, 128-129, 131-132, 133, 135, 136-137, 139-141, 143-144, 145-148, 150-151, 153-155, 157, and 158. In these 133 cases, there is no difference among the extant manuscripts as to where these chapter divisions lie.

In addition to these, there are several instances in which a chapter is well attested in several manuscripts, but missing in only one or two. With Lönnroth, we regard the omission of the chapter division in these cases as an innovation of the scribe of the manuscript in question. The following chapter divisions, despite their omission in the manuscripts indicated, are accepted as reflecting the structure of the original: chs. 21 (omitted in K), 22 (O), 66 (Gr), 77 (S), 89A (R), 91A (R), 92A (RS), 97C (R), 98 (O), 104 (O), 105A (R), 108 (R), and 138 (M).

In a number of other cases, chapter divisions appear in only one manuscript, but not in the others. Lönnroth has rejected these as innovations of a single scribe which do not reflect the structure of the original version of the saga; he

has indicated these by a minus sign in his table. The chapters in question, with the manuscripts in which the chapter division occurs, include the following: ch. 7 (found only in R), 12 (K), 12A (K), 13A (K), 14 (K), 16 (K), 25B (Gr), 36A (K), 41A (O), 44 (K), 45A (K), 61A (Gr), 88A (K), 92C (K), 97B (K), 109A (O), 127A (O), 134 (K), 135A (K), 142A (K), 142B (K), 152A (K), and 157A (O). It is noteworthy that 16 of the 23 instances above are found in manuscript K. With Lönnroth, we regard these chapter divisions as later interpolations into the saga text.

There are, however, 26 further cases in which a chapter division present in two or more manuscripts is not found in two or more others. In some cases, Lönnroth rejects these; in others, he takes no position either way. We will now examine these cases to see whether they, too, should be included among those which we regard as genuine. In so doing, we will refer not only to the presence or absence of a chapter division in the manuscripts, but also to the characteristics of the text in the passage in which they occur.

Ch. 25A (p. 70, l. 1 in E. O. Sveinsson's edition): this is found only in manuscripts Gr and S, both of the Z-class, and hence is probably an innovation by the scribe of their common exemplar; we reject it as an interpolation.

Ch. 36B (95,16): this phrase occurs in K and fragment Delta of the X-class, and in M of the Y-class; it is missing, however, in R of the X-class and in O of the Y-class, as well as in Gr of the Z-class. Hence, it is probably an innovation by the scribes of K, M, and Delta, perhaps suggested by the introduction at this point of the character Atli ("Atli heiti ek"). This hypothesis is supported by the fact that S introduces a chapter division two lines later (95,19), where Atli explains his plight ("Ek em maðr vistlaus"). We reject it as an interpolation.

Ch. 44A (112,1) and 44B (114,4): both of these chapter divisions are missing in R and K, manuscripts of the X-class, but present in manuscripts of the Y- and Z-classes; hence, we regard their omission in the X-class as an

innovation in the exemplar of those manuscripts. We accept the chapter division as genuine.

Ch. 47A (121,12 and 121,16): as Lönnroth points out, the appearance of a chapter division at two closely related points suggests that different scribes tried to introduce a new chapter at the beginning of a segment which they considered important. Consequently, we reject these chapter divisions as spurious.

Ch. 49 (124,11): Lönnroth considers this chapter to be an interpolation. However, it is attested in K and O, members of the X-class and the Y-class, respectively. Moreover, it comes at a natural break in the continuity of the narrative, and is introduced by a formula characteristic at the beginning of chapters, i.e., "Nú er at segja frá Skamkatli". For these reasons, we regard it as genuine.

Ch. 65 (161,19) and 65A (162,8): as in the case of 47A, the occurrence of chapter divisions near one another suggests an attempt by individual scribes to introduce a new division at the beginning of a segment felt to be important. In this case, we regard ch. 65, with the important information about the return of Valgard the Grey to Iceland, as a good indication that this is a genuine chapter division, but the division at the less important information at 65A as an interpolation, and therefore spurious.

Ch. 86A (208,11): though attested in two branches of the saga, it contains only three sentences, and stands at the end of ch. 86. It may be regarded as spurious, its insertion perhaps motivated by the phrase "Um v́arit"; references to the season often introduce chapters.

Ch. 99 (252,17): this division comes at a natural break in the narrative, and is attested in several reliable manuscripts. Though Lönnroth does not commit himself either way, we accept it as genuine.

Ch. 100A (256,14): in this section of the saga, the interpolation describing the introduction of Christianity into Iceland begins, and there is evidence of some revision. Hence, the omission of this chapter, even in R, S, O, and fragment Epsilon is not surprising. The chapter is probably

genuine.

Ch. 102A (264,13): the presence of this chapter division in manuscripts of the Y- and Z-classes, suggests that its omission in others of the X-class is a result of its being overlooked in an exemplar high in the stems of this class. We accept it as genuine.

Ch. 105 (270,14): this chapter opens with the genealogy of Thorgeir Tjörvason, who plays an important role in the introduction of Christianity. As Lönnroth points out, this a natural point at which to begin a chapter, and for this reason we regard it as genuine.

Ch. 116A (292,6): this chapter division occurs at the beginning of the genealogy of Ingjald at Keldum. Though genealogies of this length often occur at the beginning of chapters, they usually appear when a character is introduced for the first time. Ingjald has already been mentioned twice in the saga, in chs. 25 and 34. It is not unlikely that this genealogy was placed in ch. 116 during a revision of the saga. Its presence there then motivated scribes of the Y- and Z-class to insert a chapter division at this point. With some reservations, we reject it as spurious.

Chs. 124A (318,18) and 124B (320,1): though both divisions occur at breaks in the narrative, they are not so important that one would be compelled to accept them as chapter divisions on that ground alone. Moreover, each is attested in only two manuscripts, Gr and S, both members of the Z-class. These chapters were probably introduced by the scribe of their exemplar, and are probably not genuine.

Ch. 125 (320,18): this chapter contains the vision of Hildiglum Thorsteinsson, and is clearly a separate section of the saga. We accept it as genuine.

Ch. 127 (323,10): this chapter opens with a change of scene, and is introduced by a formula typical at the beginning of a chapter, i.e., "Nú er þar til máls at taka". Like ch. 125, it was probably omitted by the scribes of R and M independently. We accept it as genuine.

Ch. 130 (333,1): while Lönnroth considers this to be an interpolation, it comes at an important point in the

account of the Burning, and begins with a formulaic introduction, i.e., "Nú er at segja frá Skarphedni". It is probably genuine.

Ch. 141A (377,1): this chapter division stands in the middle of the negotiations at the Allthing after the Burning; it is attested only in Gr and Sv. There is evidence of a change of exemplar in Gr at this point, which may also have motivated the introduction of this chapter division by the scribe of Gr. We reject it as spurious.

Ch. 142 (378,6): this chapter division is attested in R, though missing in KMO. However, it occurs at a natural break in the narrative, at an important point during the legal maneuvering at the Allthing. It is probably genuine.

Ch. 144A (396,23): omitted in R, but preserved in M and O, this section occurs at a break in the narrative, and is introduced by a typical formula, i.e., "Nú er þar til máls at taka". It may be regarded as genuine.

Ch. 149 (426,1): though present only in R, it occurs at a natural break in the narrative, and is introduced by the formula "Nú er þar til máls at taka". Though Lönnroth regards it as an interpolation, we accept it as genuine.

Ch. 152 (435,21): like ch. 149, it is present only in R, and missing in the other extant manuscripts. However, it opens with a change of scene, and with an introductory formula, i.e., "Nú er at segja frá Kár^a". Despite Lönnroth's skepticism, it may be regarded as genuine.

Ch. 156 (446,17): though it appears only in K, it opens with a complete change of scene. It may be genuine.

Ch. 159 (462,12): the last chapter in the saga, it is attested only in R. However, it begins with a change of scene and an introductory formula, and hence may be regarded as genuine.

After considering all these possibilities, we are left with a text divided into 164 chapters, which are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Chapters in Njála

1	2	3	4	5	6	8	9	10	11	13	15	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36		
37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44A	44B	45	46	47	48	49	50		
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65		
66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80		
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	89A	90	91	91A	92	92A		
93	94	95	96	97	97C	98	99	100	100A	101	102					
102A	103	104	105	105A	106	107	108	109	110	111	112					
113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120	120A	121	122	123					
124	125	126	127	128	129	130	131	132	133	135	136					
137	138	139	140	141	142	143	144	144A	145	146	147					
148	149	150	151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159					

We must now pose the crucial question: are there any features of this text which would enable us to segment it into groups of chapters which might, as discrete units, be related to one another in arithmetically regular or symmetrical proportion? Our answer is that there are two: one feature of form, and one of content. The formal feature is the appearance of introductory genealogies at the beginning of two successive chapters; the feature of content is the continuity of narrative which obtains between many sequences of chapters. When these features are added to the chapters above, a new set of relationships begins to crystallize out. The adjustments are shown in Table 2. In that table, the chapters with genealogies are marked by superscript numbers indicating the number of ancestors mentioned; narrative continuity is indicated by parentheses enclosing chapters which contain an account which is substantially uninterrupted. The asterisk indicates the beginning of a section.

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Table 2. Chapter groupings in Njála by narrative continuity
and by genealogical introductions in sequences of two
chapters

* (11 2 34 4 51 6 8) (9 10 11) (13 15
17) (18)

* (19¹⁰ 20⁸) (21 22 23 24)

* (25¹⁹ 26¹⁸ 27 28) (29 30 31 32 33) (34⁸
35) (36 37 38 39² 40) (41² 42 43 44A 44B 45)

* (46¹⁰ 47⁷ 48 49 50 51) (52¹ 53 54 55
56⁵)

* (57⁹ 58⁴ 59) (60 61 62 63) (64 65 66)
(67 68 69 70) (71 72 73 74) (75 76 77) (78
79 80) (81) (82 83 84 85⁵ 86) (87¹ 88) (89
89A) (90 91 91A 92 92A 93 94)

* (95¹⁴ 96⁷) (97 97C) (98 99) (100 100A
101 102 102A 103 104) (105⁶ 105A) (106) (107 108
109 110 111 112)

* (113²⁴ 114¹⁶ 115 116 117 118 119 120 120A
121 122 123 124) (125¹) (126 127 128 129 130
131 132) (133 135 136 137) (138⁸ 139 140 141
142 143 144 144A 145 146) (147 148 149 150 151
152 153) (154 155 156 157 158 159)

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All of these sections which begin with two successive chapters introduced by genealogies stand at the beginning of important sections of the narrative: ch. 19 introduces Gunnar, ch. 25 Valgard the Gray, ch. 46 Otkel, ch. 57 Starkadr and the men from Thrihyrdning, ch. 95 Flosi Thordarson, and ch. 113 Gudmund the Mighty. On the other hand, these divisions produce sections which contain widely varying numbers of chapters, from 6 (chs. 19-24) to 48 (chs. 113-159). An inspection of this table, however, reveals that some of these larger groups could be divided in half if a single chapter beginning with a genealogy were allowed to

mark the initial boundary of the segment. This would create four new groups, producing the arrangement given in Table 3.

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 Table 3. Chapter groupings in Niäla by narrative continuity and by genealogical introductions in sequences of one and two chapters

* (11 2 3⁴ 4 5¹ 6 8) (9 10 11) (13 15
 17) (18)
 * (19¹⁰ 20⁸) (21 22 23 24)
 * (25¹⁹ 26¹⁸ 27 28) (29 30 31 32 33)
 * (34⁸ 35) (36 37 38 39² 40)
 * (41² 42 43 44A 44B 45)
 * (46¹⁰ 47⁷ 48 49 50 51)
 * (52¹ 53 54 55 56⁵)
 * (57⁹ 58⁴ 59) (60 61 62 63) (64 65 66)
 (67 68 69 70) (71 72 73 74) (75 76 77) (78
 79 80) (81) (82 83 84 85⁵ 86)
 * (87¹ 88) (89 89A) (90 91 91A 92 92A 93
 94)
 * (95¹⁴ 96⁷) (97 97C) (98 99) (100 100A
 101 102 102A 103 104)
 * (105⁶ 105A) (106) (107 108 109 110 111 112)
 * (113²⁴ 114¹⁶ 115 116 117 118 119 120 120A
 121 122 123 124)
 * (125¹) (126 127 128 129 130 131 132)
 (133 135 136 137)
 * (138⁸ 139 140 141 142 143 144 144A 145 146)
 (147 148 149 150 151 152 153) (154 155 156 157
 158 159)

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What is emerging by these procedures is a text with segments of approximately equal length, each segment containing on the average of 10-11 chapters. Since we know what the average length is, let us again examine the text to

see if sections substantially in excess of that number could be broken up to yield sections of approximately 11 chapters; let us also combine shorter narrative segments to see if these cannot be grouped together to form sections of 10-11 chapters. The results of this procedure are added in Table 4.

Table 4. Chapter groupings in Njala by narrative continuity, by genealogical introductions in sequences of one and two chapters, and by adjustments in the position of narrative segments

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Table 4. Chapter groupings in Njala by narrative continuity,
by genealogical introductions in sequences of one and two
chapters, and by adjustments in the position of narrative
segments
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* ( 11 2 34 4 51 6 8 ) ( 9 10 11 )
* ( 13 15 17 ) ( 18 ) ( 1910 208 ) ( 21 22 23
24 )
* ( 2519 2618 27 28 ) ( 29 30 31 32 33 )
* ( 348 35 ) ( 36 37 38 392 40 ) ( 412 42 43
44A 44B 45 )
* ( 4610 477 48 49 50 51 ) ( 521 53 54 55
565 )
* ( 579 584 59 ) ( 60 61 62 63 ) ( 64 65 66 )
* ( 67 68 69 70 ) ( 71 72 73 74 ) ( 75 76 77 )
* ( 78 79 80 ) ( 81 ) ( 82 83 84 855 86 )
* ( 871 88 ) ( 89 89A ) ( 90 91 91A 92 92A 93
94 )
* ( 9514 967 ) ( 97 97C ) ( 98 99 ) ( 100 100A
101 102 102A 103 104 )
* ( 1056 105A ) (106) (107 108 109 110 111 112 )
* ( 11324 11416 115 116 117 118 119 120 120A
121 122 123 124 )
* ( 1251 ) ( 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 )
( 133 135 136 137 )
* ( 1388 139 140 141 142 143 144 144A 145 146 )
* ( 147 148 149 150 151 152 153 ) ( 154 155 156
157 158 159 )
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By this procedure, we have grouped the chapters of Njáls saga into 15 sections containing between 9 and 13 chapters each; the average number of chapters in each section is 10.9, or virtually 11. To be sure, we have moved some chapters beginning with genealogies standing at the beginning of a narrative segment into the interior of a section, i.e., ch. 19, ch. 41, and ch. 52. It is also true that some sections are no longer introduced by chapters beginning with genealogies. On the other hand, we have exposed a surprising degree of regularity in the structure of the saga. I wish to suggest that the text of Njáls saga, at one phase of its evolution, was composed of 15 groups of 11 chapters each, or 165 chapters in all--one more than in our existing texts.

But how many sections were there originally? It has long been believed that the saga contains two interpolations: one from the Kristni saga, and another from a lost Brjána saga. Let us identify those chapters^{and}, set them aside, to see what effect this will have on our picture of the structure of this saga. The results of this operation are presented in Table 5.

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Table 5. Chapter groupings in Njála by narrative continuity, by genealogical introductions in sequences of one and two chapters, by assignment of segments to form groups of about 11 chapters, and by segregation of the interpolations from the Kristni saga and Briáns saga

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*	(11 2 3 ⁴ 4 5 ¹ 6 8)	(9 10 11)
*	(13 15 17)	(18) (19 ¹⁰ 20 ⁸) (21 22 23 24)
*	(25 ¹⁹ 26 ¹⁸ 27 28)	(29 30 31 32 33)
*	(34 ⁸ 35)	(36 37 38 39 ² 40) (41 ² 42 43 44A 44B 45)
*	(46 ¹⁰ 47 ⁷ 48 49 50 51)	(52 ¹ 53 54 55 56 ⁵)
*	(57 ⁹ 58 ⁴ 59)	(60 61 62 63) (64 65 66)
*	(67 68 69 70)	(71 72 73 74) (75 76 77)
*	(78 79 80)	(81) (82 83 84 85 ⁵ 86)
*	(87 ¹ 88)	(89 89A) (90 91 91A 92 92A 93 94)
*	(95 ¹⁴ 96 ⁷)	(97 97C) ... (105 ⁶ 105A) ... (107 108 109 110 111 112)
	from the <u>Kristni saga</u> :	(98 99) (100 100A 101 102 102A 103 104) ... (106)
*	(113 ²⁴ 114 ¹⁶ 115 116 117 118 119 120 120A 121 122 123 124)	
*	(125 ¹)	(126 127 128 129 130 131 132) (133 135 136 137)
*	(138 ⁸ 139 140 141 142 143 144 144A 145 146)	
*	(147 148 149 150 151 152 153)	(154 155 ... 158 159)
	from the <u>Briáns saga</u> :	(156 157)

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As Table 5 shows, the seven chapters comprising the

interpolation from the Kristni saga include chs. 100-104. I consider the Lyting episode, chs. 98-99 and 106, as a related interpolation; the slaying of Lyting by Amundi in ch. 106 is a Christian exemplum, demonstrating the power of the new religion; the earlier chapters merely set the stage for it. By removing these, as well as chs. 156-157, which contain the interpolation from Briáns saga, we reduce the number of chapters to 152. However, this requires that we amend our hypothesis to state that, at some phase of its evolution, Njáls saga consisted of 14 groups of 11 chapters each, thus containing 154 chapters. It also implies that the interpolations from the Kristni saga and Briáns saga were not part of the original version of the saga, but were added by a later redactor.

But there are even earlier phases in the evolution of this saga which we may now discern. One fact compels us to ask whether it was originally a single work. Lönnroth and others have noted the large initials at the beginning of chapter 100 in several manuscripts, as well as the difference in style between the first part of the saga and the part following ch. 100. I consider it very likely that Njáls saga, in its original state, consisted of 9 sections containing 11 chapters each, or 99 chapters in all; it ended with the final settlement after the slaying of Gunnar, in our present editions after ch. 94. The extension consisted of 5 sections of 11 chapters each, or 55 chapters, beginning with the chapter now numbered 95, which opens with the genealogy of Flosi Thordarson.

We have noted the prominence of the initial letters at the beginning of certain chapters in various manuscripts. It is highly significant that, in many manuscripts, there is a very large initial at the beginning of ch. 19; this chapter opens with the genealogy of Gunnar Hamundarson. Lönnroth and others have noticed that the "normal" saga opens with a genealogy introducing the main character in the form of his genealogy: Njáls is unusual in that ~~it~~ it moves in medias res after the briefest introduction of Mord Fiddle and the Dala-Kolssons. I wish to suggest that, at an early stage in

the revision of this text, these two chapters, 19 and 20, which open with the genealogies of Gunnar and Njall, respectively, were moved from their original position at the beginning of the saga to their present position between chs. 18 and 21; this implies that the large initials at the beginning of ch. 19 are a kind of scribal memory of their original position. This would have the effect, too, of bringing chs. 18 and 21 together; both of these refer to the fate of Unn, Mord Fiddle's daughter. This change also requires that we adjust the boundary between the first and second groups by moving chs. 9-11 to the section section, so as to approximate as closely as possible a section length of 11, which not breaking up any sequences of chapters as defined earlier by narrative continuity. On this hypothesis, the structure of the saga would appear as presented in Table 6. The Roman numerals refer to the original groups of eleven.

 Table 6. The original structure of Njáls saga: Chapter groupings in Njáls by narrative continuity, by genealogical introductions in sequences of one and two chapters, by assignment of segments to form sections of about 11 chapters, by segregation of the interpolations from the Kristni and Brjáns sagas, and by the shifting of chs. 19-20 to the beginning

Part I

<I> (19¹⁰ 20⁸) (1¹ 2 3⁴ 4 5¹ 6 8) <= 9
 chs.>
 <II> (9 10 11) (13 15 17) (18) (21 22
 23 24) <= 11 chs.>
 <III> (25¹⁹ 26¹⁸ 27 28) (29 30 31 32 33)
 <= 9 chs.>
 <IV> (34⁸ 35) (36 37 38 39² 40) (41³ 42
 43 44A 44B 45) <= 13 chs.>
 <V> (46¹⁰ 47⁷ 48 49 50 51) (52¹ 53 54
 55 56⁵) <= 11 chs.>
 <VI> (57⁹ 58⁴ 59) (60 61 62 63) (64 65
 66) <= 10 chs.>
 <VII> (67 68 69 70) (71 72 73 74) (75
 76 77) <= 11 chs.>
 <VIII> (78 79 80) (81) (82 83 84 85⁵ 86)
 <= 9 chs.>
 <IX> (87¹ 88) (89 89A) (90 91 91A 92
 92A 93 94) <= 11 chs.>

Part II

<X> (9514 967) (97 97C) ... (1056 105A)
 ... (107 108 109 110 111 112) <= 12 chs.>

from the Kristni saga: (98 99) (100 100A)
 101 102 102A 103 104) ... (106) <= 10
 chs.>

<XI> (11324 11416 115 116 117 118 119 120
 120A 121 122 123 124) <= 13 chs.>

<XII> (1251) (126 127 128 129 130 131
 132) (133 135 136 137) <= 12 chs.>

<XIII> (1388 139 140 141 142 143 144 144A 145
 146) <= 10 chs.>

<XIV> (147 148 149 150 151 152 153) (154
 155 ... 158 159) <= 11 chs.>

from the Briens saga: (156 157) <= 2 chs.>

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Up to this point, we have tried to reconstruct the earliest form of the text of Njáls saga largely by reference to structural features, e.g., the presence of a genealogy at the beginning of a chapter, the length of that genealogy, the continuity of narrative between individual chapters, the segmentation into groups containing approximately 11 chapters. Let us now test this structure against the content of those sections. Chs. 19-20 and 1-8 introduce the main characters--Gunnar, Njal, Mord Fiddle, Unn, and Hrut and Hoskuld Dala-Kolsson--and recount Hrut's unfortunate marriage to Unn. Section II (chs. 9-18, 21-24) deals with Hallgerd's marriages to Thorvald and Glum, and Gunnar's recovery of Unn's dowry from Hrut. Section III (chs. 25-33) introduces Valgard the Gray and tells of his marriage to Unn, and of Gunnar's marriage to Hallgerd. Section IV (chs. 34-45) introduces Thrain Sigfusson, and describes how the enmity between Hallgerd and Bergthora arose. It closes with Gunnar's and Njal's declaration of solidarity in ch. 45.

Section V (chs. 46-56) opens the genealogy of Gizur the White, and recounts the confrontation between Gunnar and Otkel Skarfsson; it closes with Gunnar's settlement with Gizur (ch. 56). Section VI (chs. 57-66) contains the account of the contest of Gunnar with Starkadr and the men of Thrihyrdning, and ends (ch. 66) with Gunnar's legal victory at the Allthing. Section VII (chs. 67-77) records the attack of the survivors of the three previous episodes--Thorgeir Otkelsson, Thorgeir Starkadarsen, and Mord Valgardsson--on Gunnar, and ends with Gunnar's death (ch. 77). Section VIII (chs. 78-88) deals with vengeance for Gunnar, and with Thrain Sigfusson's journey to Norway. Section IX (chs. 89-94) recounts the return both of Thrain and the Njalssons to Iceland, and the raising of the question of compensation from Thrain for their discomfiture in Norway. Section X (chs. 95-112) opens with the genealogy of Flosi Thordarson; it describes the introduction of Christianity into Iceland, the establishment of the Fifth Court, and the antagonism between Mord Valgardsson and Hoskuld Hvitaness-Priest; it ends with the latter's slaying. Section XI (chs. 113-124) treats of Flosi's attempt to get compensation for the slaying of Hoskuld, and of the failed settlement at the Allthing. Section XII (chs. 125-137) recounts the Burning of Njal, and preparations for the meeting of the Allthing. Section XIII (chs. 138-146) describes the settlement for the Burning at the Allthing. And finally, Section XIV (chs. 147-159) tell of the final reconciliation between Kari and Flosi and their followers.

From this survey of the content of the saga, we can see that it falls into two parts: Sections I-IX, dealing with Gunnar's rise and downfall, and its aftermath; and Sections X-XIV, dealing with the circumstances surrounding the Burning of Njal. On the basis of content, then, we represent the structure of this saga as in Table 7.

 Table 7. The organization of Njáls saga on the basis of
 content

Part I: Gunnar's saga

The rise of Gunnar

- I (chs. 19-20, 1-8): introduction; Unn's marriage
 <= 9 chs.>
- II (chs. 9-18, 21-24): Hallgerd's marriage; Unn's dowry
 <= 11 chs.>
- III (chs. 25-33):: Valgard and Unn; Gunnar and Hallgerd.
 <= 9 chs.>

The testing of Gunnar

- IV (chs. 34-45): Hallgerd (Gunnar) vs. Bergthora
 <= 13 chs.>
- V (chs. 46-56): Gunnar vs. Otkel, Hallkel, and Skamkel
 <= 11 chs.>
- VI (chs. 57-66): Gunnar vs. Starkadr and the men from
 Thrihyrdning <= 10 chs.>

The downfall of Gunnar

- VII (chs. 67-77): Gunnar's death <= 10¹ chs.>
- VIII (chs. 78-88): the avenging of Gunnar <= 9 chs.>
- IX (chs. 89-94): the return of the Sigfussons
 and the Njalsons to Iceland <= 11 chs.>

Part II: Njal's saga

X (chs. 95-99, 105-105A, 107-112): slaying of
Hoskuld Hvitaness-Priest <= 12 chs.>

XI (chs. 113-124): vengeance for Hoskuld.
Hvitaness-Priest; the failed settlement
at the Althing <= 13 chs.>

XII (chs. 125-137): the Burning of Njal
<= 12 chs.>

XIII (chs. 138-146): settlement at the Althing
<= 10 chs.>

XIV (chs. 147-155, 158-159): reconciliation <= 11 chs.>

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As the indentations indicate, we have a concentric structure in both parts of this saga: in Part I, here called "Gunnar's saga", the three central sections are enclosed by an account leading up to Gunnar's death in Section VII. In Part II, the central section is Section XII, in which the Burning of Njal occurs; this is preceded and followed by one of the two "law-sections", i.e., XI and XIII, which deal with the slaying of Hoskuld Hvitaness-Priest and the reconciliation among the survivors, respectively.

In conclusion, our analysis of the structure of the work--in particular, the discovery of significant evidence of numerical composition--has enabled us to attempt a reconstruction of the textual history of Njal's saga. The nucleus of the saga is Part I, here called "Gunnar's saga", which was originally composed of 9 sections containing 11 chapters each. At some point, the first three sections were reworked; it is likely that the present chs. 19-20 were originally at the beginning of the work.

The saga was then expanded by the addition of Part II, a "Njal's saga", which contained 5 sections of 11 chapters each. The differences in style between the two parts make it unlikely that they were originally two sections of the

same work. The composition of Part II, and its splicing onto Part I, necessitated some rewriting of Sections IX and X, which may account for the variation in chapter division between chs. 86 and 100. Later, the second part was expanded by the interpolation of material taken from the Kristni saga and the Bryáns saga; these changes lengthened the work by an additional 11 chapters. There is evidence of a further revision within the period represented by the existing manuscripts in the form of the insertion of additional verses into the branch of the X-class of manuscripts represented by R. These changes may be taken to mean that the original text of Njáls saga has been revised at least once, and possibly as many as four different times prior to the beginning of the tradition represented by the extant manuscripts. It is through a careful analysis of the chapter divisions that we have found evidence of numerical composition in the organization of this saga, and we have used our findings to trace the evolution of its text.

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