

### Sturlunga's text of *Prestssaga Guðmundar góða*

The *Sturlunga* compilation is dated c. 1300. It is generally accepted that it was compiled by one of the Narfasons of Skarð, presumably lawman Þórðr Narfason. In my doctoral dissertation, "On the Poetics of *Sturlunga*", and several articles on the structure and meaning of the compilation, I have challenged the negative view on this cycle of *samtíðarsögur* (contemporary sagas) as "en *dynge* af historiske begivenheter [Finnur Jónsson 1923: 721]" and criticized scholars, Stephen Tranter being one of the few exceptions (Tranter 1987), for not having thoroughly considered the manner in which the compiler edited the sagas he compiled. I have emphasized, on the contrary, that the compiler had not only a chronological scheme for his compilation of contemporary sagas, but also a genealogical one, and I have shown that he used four techniques in putting the extant sagas together on a chronological basis: 1) cutting and pasting, 2) rearranging, 3) abridging and eliminating, and 4) adding, in accordance with an understanding of the potential of the medieval Icelandic narrative. In so doing he made a statement about the struggle for worldly power in Iceland in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

As Carol J. Clover has pointed out, cyclic compositions were quite common in medieval Scandinavia (including Iceland), as elsewhere in Europe (Clover 1982: 54-60). The idea behind the cyclic form was to link previously unconnected material in chronological and genealogical order, and sometimes to rephrase it, provide transitional material and add preludes, sequels and interpolations. This additive character of medieval writing has to do with the preference for adding to knowledge, and the reluctance to omit material found in other sources. Further, the introduction of the genealogical order of narrative reflects the importance of proper origin or lineage for noble families in the High Middle Ages, in order to legitimise their power (Ryding 1971: 53-61; Spiegel 1983; Clunies Ross 1993; Úlfar Bragason 1993).

Björn M. Ólsen thought that if we could decide, we would choose to have the sagas of *Sturlunga* preserved independently, rather than in the compilation (Ólsen 1902: 509). There is no doubt that it would be of great advantage if all the individual sagas were extant separately. It seems, however, that it would be a great loss to be without *Sturlunga*, since the compilation is not only a good example of medieval cyclic narrative, but also gives an insight into the type of meaning production available in the culture of thirteenth-century Iceland. The content and structure of *Sturlunga* was to a great extent determined by the sagas compiled. Nevertheless, the composite work was the compiler's creation, although the cycle was conventional in form, and although he did not add much to the existing narrative corpus. The creative compiler of *Sturlunga* was everything at once: author, editor and copyist. We can see the compiler at work by comparing *Hrafn's saga Sveinbjarnarsonar*, which is preserved independently, with the text of the compilation (Úlfar Bragason 1988). The same is true for *Prestssaga Guðmundar góða*.

Four different sagas of Bishop Guðmundr Arason are preserved. They were composed in the first part of the fourteenth century, probably all after 1315 when the Guðmundr-cult was authorized by the Church. These sagas were based on older "sources". One of these was *Prestssaga*. The so-called *Elzta saga* of Bishop Guðmundr Arason, which is in the manuscript *Resensbók* (AM 399 4to), is nothing but a collection of the sources. It is maintained that *Prestssaga* is preserved in this context in its most original form. In the so-called *Míðsaga* (AM 657c 4to), *Prestssaga* is supposed to be in a more edited form, and also more related to the version of the saga which is included in the *Sturlunga* compilation from about 1300

(Stefán Karlsson 1985; see also Stefán Karlsson 1983, esp. pp. xxx-xlii, cxliv-clxviii; Widding 1960).

The author of *Prestssaga* is not explicitly named in any source, but, taking into account the general biases of the saga, it has been generally accepted that he was one of Guðmundr's disciples. Guðbrandur Vigfússon suggested Abbot Lambkár Þorgilsson (±1249) (Guðbrandur Vigfússon 1858). Lambkár became a disciple of Father Guðmundr in the year 1200, and continued to be his follower and close friend after Guðmundr was elected and consecrated bishop of Hólar. Lambkár presumably wrote *Prestssaga* after Guðmundr's death in 1237, as there are indications that the author had had an opportunity to consider the stormy life of Guðmundr as a bishop. If Lambkár was the author, the saga must have been written in the years 1237-49 (Ólsen 1902: 225-26). The author probably died leaving his work unfinished, as the saga ends abruptly.

In the following, *Sturlunga's* text of *Prestssaga* will be compared with the text of *Elzta saga* of Bishop Guðmundr, with the purpose of showing how the compiler of *Sturlunga* treated *Prestssaga*.<sup>1</sup> We will also discuss the intention and views reflected in the changes made to *Prestssaga* in the *Sturlunga* version. In its new context *Prestssaga* has to be considered in connection with other parts of this voluminous compilation. One must take into consideration that "[t]he inner and as yet unfinalized determinacy of its structure provides a reservoir of dynamism when influenced by contacts with new contexts [Lotman 2000: 18]."

The bias of *Prestssaga* as told in the context of *Elzta saga* becomes obvious in the narrator's comments and in the selection and organization of the subject matter. The prologue to the *Míðsaga* of Bishop Guðmundr contains a description of the content and form of the life story. After pointing out that the biography consists of three parts, the author continues:

Í inum fyrsta þriðjungi er greind ættatala hans ok frænda hans ok uppruni hans ok lífnaðr fram til þess, er hann var vigór til prests. Í öðrum segir frá þeim tíðendum, er gerðust, meðan hann var prestur, ok heitir sá hluti sögunnar prestssaga hans. Í inum þriðja er sagt frá þeim þrautum ok ónáðum, er hann þoldi í sínum byskupsdómi af sínum mótstæðumönnum, ok frá lífláti hans, ok þar með at lyktum eru skrifðar nökkurar jarteignir, þær er almáttigr guð hefir látit sér sóma at vinna fyrir sakir verðleika þessa sins þjónustumanns, ins góða Guðmundar byskups, honum til vegs ok virðingar [393-94].

Here the similarities between *Prestssaga* and the lives of saints are emphasized. Of course, Guðmundr may have imitated different saints in his way of life. But there are so many similarities between the saga and the biographies of the confessor-bishops, and they are so striking, that Guðmundr's life must have been understood and accounted for using *gesta episcoporum* as a literary model (see Gad 1961: 54-58; Ásdís Egilsdóttir 1992).

Jón Jóhannesson accounted for the findings of the research on how *Prestssaga* is incorporated into *Sturlunga*: a) The compiler has divided the saga into four sections and inserted them in his collection between parts of other sagas without mixing the different texts. b) The compiler has often abridged *Prestssaga* and dropped some passages from it, especially miracles. c) On the other hand, he has in ch. 15 added a passage about St. Þorlákr which he has composed himself (Jón Jóhannesson 1946: xxvii-xxviii; see also Ólsen 1902: 224-32). We shall now examine in some detail the compiler's changes to the text, and explain the intention of his work.

Scholars have praised the chronological skills of the compiler. In the *Sturlunga* prologue, which is inserted in the compilation immediately before *Prestssaga*, the compiler explains his chronological plan and clarifies the span of time for the individual sagas,

<sup>1</sup> For the *Sturlunga* version of *Prestssaga*, see Jón Jóhannesson et al., *Sturlunga saga* 1. See also the diplomatic edition, Kálund, *Sturlunga saga* 1. For the *Elzta saga*, see Guðni Jónsson, *Byskupa sögur* 2. See also Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Jón Sigurðsson, *Biskupa sögur* 1; Stefán Karlsson, *Guðmundar sögur biskups*, 1.

particularly mentioning their simultaneity with the saga of Guðmundr Arason (see Pétur Sigurðsson 1933-35: 6-8; cf. Ólsen 1910: 7-14). He says:

Margar sögur verða hér samtíða, ok má þó eigi allar senn rita: saga Þorláks biskups ins helga ok Guðmundar ins góða Arasonar, þar til er hann var vígðr til prests -, saga Guðmundar ins dýra hefst þrjú vetrum eftir andlát Sturlu [Hvamm-Sturlu] ok lýkr þá, er Brandr biskup er andaðr, en Guðmundr inn góði er þá vígðr til biskups. - saga Hrafns Sveinbjarnarsonar ok Þorvalds Snorrasonar er samtíða sögu Guðmundar ins góða, ok lýkst hon eftir andlát Brands biskups, svá sem Sturla Þórðarson segir í Íslendinga sögum [115].

This is also an indication of some of the compiler's "sources," although he mentions *Þorláks saga ins helga* which is not a part of *Sturlunga*. The compiler's sources contain more simultaneous accounts in the period 1185-1202, when Guðmundr Arason was a priest, than elsewhere. The compiler interweaves *Guðmundar saga dýra*, *Íslendinga saga*, and *Prestssaga* in this period, leaves out the account of *Hrafns saga* before 1203, and adds *Haukdæla þáttur* to his corpus.

The compiler explains the simultaneity and the special arrangement of his narrative in other places than the prologue. In ch. 8 of *Prestssaga* he reminds us that thus far *Sturlu saga* has been simultaneous with *Prestssaga*: "Nú er þar komit þessi sögu, sem frá var horfít Heiðarvígssögu [i.e. *Sturlu saga*] ok hafa þær lengi jafnframt gengit [131]." In a similar way he indicates the simultaneity between *Prestssaga* and *Guðmundar saga dýra* when he starts to relate the former in ch. 17, after having followed the latter for awhile: "Þat vár it sama, er þeir váru vegnir um haustit í Laufási Þórðarsynir ok Arnþrúðarsynir, fór Guðmundr prestur Arason til vistar til Staðar í Skagafjörð ... [142]." These and other examples demonstrate that the compiler had a clear plan for the organization of his text.

It is one of the compiler's main rules not to retell an event that has been told in another context. Because of this principle he sometimes makes changes to *Prestssaga*. He has, for example, undoubtedly abridged the account of the battle between Hvamm-Sturla and Einarr Þorgilsson in *Selingsdalsheiðr* in ch. 4 (cf. ch. 7, p. 184 in *Elzta saga*) because this is a main event in *Sturlu saga*. Ch. 25 of *Elzta saga* tells of a conflict between Ögmundur Þorvarðarson and the Þórðarsons of Laufáss (p. 224). This event is a part of *Guðmundar saga dýra* in *Sturlunga*, and is not mentioned in *Prestssaga*. The burning of Öundur of Langahlíð is the first climax of *Guðmundar saga dýra*. *Elzta saga* notes this event in ch. 27, but it is omitted in the *Sturlunga* version of *Prestssaga*. Nevertheless, there are examples of one event occurring twice in *Sturlunga* because the compiler is following different sagas (Pétur Sigurðsson 1933-35: 8-11). For example, ch. 12 of *Íslendinga saga* recounts that Bishop Brandr of Hólar died and Kolbeinn Tumason had Guðmundr Arason elected as Brandr's successor. These events are related in *Prestssaga*. In ch. 21 Bishop Brandr's death is mentioned, and Guðmundr receives the news that he has been elected in ch. 23. In ch. 25 Kolbeinn also tells Guðmundr about the circumstances of his election. Relating the same story event twice could be a lapse (Pétur Sigurðsson 1933-35: 9). However, the compiler may have considered this retelling of events informative, as will be pointed out later.

There is no doubt, from the ways the compiler divided *Prestssaga* into sections, that he not only had knowledge and understanding of the chronology and the historical content of the saga, but also of its ordering and theme. The first fourteen chapters of *Prestssaga* tell of Guðmundr's origin and kinsmen, and his life until he becomes a priest in Svarfaðardalr in the north. These chapters are in accord with the genealogical interest of the saga and its character description. Guðmundr's character changed drastically during his youth, and ch. 14 tells about the signs that he had received the Holy Spirit. Chs. 15-16 relate Guðmundr's life when he was a priest in Svarfaðardalr. Ch. 25 of *Guðmundar saga dýra*, which follows in the compilation, tells in fact about the Arnþrúðarsons, the common friends of the two Guðmundrs in that district, and the compiler probably saw it as digression from the account of *Prestssaga* (cf.

Simpson 1960: 158). In chs. 17-19 of *Prestssaga* Guðmundr is a priest in Skagafjörðr. Then we are told about the canonization of the two Icelandic bishops, Þorlákr and Jón, and about some miracles related to Guðmundr. Here Guðmundr is clearly seen in connection with the holy bishops, and he is looked upon as chosen by God, just as they are. The very last part of the saga tells about Guðmundr's election and voyage to his consecration and forms a structural whole. Guðmundr's election is connected with the controversy between the magnates Sigurðr Ormsson and Sæmundr Jónsson, which is discussed in ch. 11 of *Íslendinga saga*. This explains how *Íslendinga saga* is woven into *Prestssaga*. The election is the climax of *Prestssaga*, but it is also a major event in the compilation because of the conflicts it causes. The beginning of these conflicts is recorded in the chapters of *Íslendinga saga* which follow *Prestssaga* in *Sturlunga*. The part of *Hrafn saga* which is included in the compilation is also in a sense a continuation of *Prestssaga*, because it begins when Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson the magnate comes back to Iceland after having accompanied Guðmundr to his consecration in Niðaróss.

We have seen how the compiler interwove *Prestssaga* and other sagas in *Sturlunga*. One may ask why he incorporated *Prestssaga* in his work, and not other bishops' lives, such as for example *Þorláks saga ins helga*, that he mentions in the prologue and later refers to, or *Páls saga*. Both these sagas are parallel in time to his work. The answer might be as simple as the fact that these sagas were not available to him. Another and better answer is that the compiler had in mind *Prestssaga*'s connection with the events of *Íslendinga saga*. The saga is a prelude to Guðmundr Arason's storyline in *Íslendinga saga*. Hence, he incorporated *Prestssaga* into his plan for the compilation and adjusted the "saint's life" to the other sagas as much as he could without rewriting it totally.

Some of the changes of *Prestssaga* in the *Sturlunga* compilation are in the transition from one saga to another.<sup>2</sup> For example, *Prestssaga* in *Resensbók* begins by giving the time of the story: "Á dögum Inga konungs Haraldssonar, er þá réð Noregi, en byskupar váru á Íslandi Klængr í Skáláholti, en Björn at Hólum, bjó sá maðr undir Hvassafelli í Eyjafirði, er Þorgeirr hét [169]." On the other hand, *Sturlunga*'s text begins with the introduction of Þorgeirr, and this dating of the events is omitted because it is superfluous in that context. At the end of the *Sturlunga* version of *Prestssaga*, the compiler has added a few lines about Guðmundr's consecration in Norway, which he presumably borrowed from *Íslendinga saga*. In other respects he has left out *Íslendinga saga*'s account of this event (Stefán Karlsson 1983: clii-cliii).

We have pursued some of the compiler's changes to *Prestssaga* in the junctions between sagas. Further, scholars agree that the compiler of *Sturlunga* had a tendency to abridge or omit miracles, in particular in his version of *Prestssaga*. Along with these changes he sometimes eliminated annal notices, with the result that the double character of the saga as annals and narrative became less obvious. As Ólafía Einarisdóttir has shown, there is a rigid time scheme in the original. The author has resolved to account for every year in Guðmundr's life and often uses the following format: He mentions where Guðmundr lived during a given winter and after that what happened to Guðmundr and his family in that year; then he refers to different occurrences which took place at the same time; finally he states how old Guðmundr was. In the meantime he mentions several happenings which are irrelevant for the saga. Ólafía Einarisdóttir therefore argues that the author has constructed an annal and woven it into his saga about Guðmundr. Actually, the first nineteen years of Guðmundr's life are recounted in *Elzta saga* in a form more like annals than a biography (Ólafía Einarisdóttir 1964: 293-317; cf. Stefán Karlsson 1983: cxlvi-cl).

<sup>2</sup> In comparing *Sturlunga*'s text of *Prestssaga* with that of *Elzta saga* one has to take into consideration that there are some additions to the saga in *Resensbók* taken from *Íslendinga saga* and annals. See Stefán Karlsson 1983: cxlvi-cliii; cf. Olsen 1902: 226-30.

We can take ch. 18 of *Elzta saga* as an example of how the compiler abridges the text of *Prestssaga*. The chapter tells of two visions that occurred while Guðmundr was a priest at Miklibær in Skagafljóðr. The compiler also includes these visions in his work, but he has left out the narrator's comments about these occurrences and the public interpretation of them as signs that Guðmundr had received the Holy Spirit (138-39).

Another example is ch. 30 of *Elzta saga*, which tells extensively of Guðmundr's blessing of springs and the subsequent healing power of these water sources. In ch. 18 of *Sturlunga* this account is much briefer, and the audience is given the merest clue as to why Guðmundr is travelling around the country: In the account of Guðmundr's travels which follows in chs. 18 and 19 in *Sturlunga* there are many omissions and abridgements (cf. *Elzta saga* chs. 32-34). The compiler shows, here as elsewhere, a particular tendency to change or eliminate stories about the healing power of the water which Guðmundr had blessed. This could be a sign of his scepticism about these stories, especially because he does not omit the comical narrative of the people who urinated in one of Guðmundr's blessed springs, without any effect on the water's healing power!

The compiler has changed *Prestssaga* most radically in chs. 15-16 of his text (139-41), obviously because the original was full of miracles. He has rewritten these chapters and shortened them extensively. The compiler has also left out other kinds of religious matter, as well as miracles. He has, for example, omitted the long narrative about the vision of Rannveig (cf. *Elzta saga*, ch. 28). In ch. 23 he has also eliminated the reference to this vision (cf. ch. 40 of *Elzta saga*), so he is well aware of what he is doing. On the other hand, the compiler has elaborated an account of Bishop Þorlákr's death in ch. 15, as already mentioned. In *Elzta saga* this account reads as follows: "Þenna vetr [þá er Guðmundr prestur hafði tólf vetr ok tuttugu] andaðist inn heilagi Þorlákr byskup í Skálaholti tveim nóttum fyrir jól, ok þá andaðist Snorri Þórðarson í Vatnsfirði Remigiussmessu ... [215]." This account has given the compiler a reason for giving an account of Bishop Þorlákr and his friends. It could be that these remarks caused the compiler to mention *Þorláks saga helga* in the *Sturlunga* prologue. He may have based his account on knowledge of a *vita* of Þorlákr (Ólsen 1902: 230). The compiler may have omitted the account about the apparent saintliness of Bishop Þorlákr for the same reason (cf. *Elzta saga* p. 229). Guðmundr is not mentioned in this connection in *Þorláks saga* (see *Byskupa sögur* 1: 76, 83-84). On the other hand, Guðmundr is mentioned in *Þorláks saga* (101) as a participant in the service when Þorlákr's relics were moved in 1198. In this case the compiler of *Sturlunga* (ch. 17) has not eliminated *Prestssaga*'s account although Guðmundr plays a larger role there than in *Þorláks saga*.

There are not only abridgements and eliminations of some religious matters in the *Sturlunga* version of *Prestssaga*. We also have several examples of the compiler leaving out or abridging records of public opinion (indirect commentary). Moreover, the compiler shows a tendency to revise the narrator's intrusions into *Prestssaga*. He has, for example, left out in ch. 18 a passage about Kolbeinn Tumason's opinion of Guðmundr the priest (cf. *Elzta saga*, p. 241), probably because shortly before this he had recorded another passage about how highly Kolbeinn regarded Guðmundr (142), and after that omitted some material from *Prestssaga*. This second passage was, therefore, superfluous in his version.

*Elzta saga* contains a line about the thoughts of Ingimundr the priest, Þorgeirr Brandsson and Guðmundr Arason when they departed for the last time, and a comment of the narrator on these thoughts: "En þó hugðu þeir, at eigi mundi verða svá langr skilnaðrinn sem varð [200]." This line is left out in *Sturlunga*. The compiler may have felt that it was not appropriate to foreshadow the story in that way. It is unusual in the sagas of this collection for the narrator to tell in his own words what is going to happen later. Nor is it common to reveal what people are thinking, unless in the form of direct or indirect speech.

*Prestssaga* recounts that Guðmundr's sorrow at Þorgeirr Brandsson's death was so great that his character was significantly altered. At this point in the saga Guðmundr's piety, asceticism,

charity and learning are emphasized, and his blessing of springs and miracle-working are mentioned. Then the narrator comments on people's various opinions about Guðmundr:

En þat varð, sem hvarvetna er vant, at eigi lagði jafnt í þökk við alla, þótt góða væri til varit. Sumir þökkðu guði þeir, er þurfundr vátu ok bæði höfðu gagn af andligit ok líkamligt, en sumir öfunduðu þat, er þeir vátu minni nytjamennt af meirum ættum heldr en hann var.

En hitt skildi þó miklu meira, er þeir skyldu af sjálfum sér taka í trú ok meinlætum ok ást við guð, því at þeir sá sik hvern dag ólíka hans atferðum, því at hvert vár fór því fram, at eytt var kaupi því öllu, er hann tók, ok gaf þat til matar ok klæða fátækum mönnum ok frændum sínum, ok vátu þat sjau ómagar, er hann fæddi með þessu [203].

The religious bias and the narrator's partiality toward Guðmundr are clear in this comment. In the *Sturlunga* version of the saga this comment has been abridged (135).

There are other similar examples of abbreviation of condemnations of Guðmundr's opponents in *Sturlunga*. The narrator's intrusive words regarding a certain Kygri-Björn have been shortened. In *Elzta saga* the passage reads as follows:

En Björn sló þegar fæð á byskupsefni af öfund, er hann þóttist of lítill metinn af honum, ok spæði þat fyrir, er síðar kom fram um Björn, því at meiri ok margfaldari var sjá öfund, er fylldist honum af djöfulligu sáði óvinarins alls mannkyns ok óafátligu, ok varð hon því meira, sem hon hafði lengr staðit [263].

The compiler has left out of this passage the reference to the devil, thus tempering its vehemence (153). This Kygri-Björn was Lambkár Þorgilsson's rival, and the narrator's spiteful words about him have been interpreted as an indication that Lambkár was the author (Guðbrandur Vigfússon 1858: lviii-lx). It is interesting in this connection to consider that the compiler has left out two passages where Lambkár is mentioned (see *Elzta saga* 241, 245). If Lambkár was the author, the compiler may have felt that these personal remarks were inappropriate.

We have seen above that the compiler of *Sturlunga* has shortened *Prestssaga* in two ways: a) by abbreviating or eliminating certain material, particularly miracles but also some annal notices; b) by shortening or leaving out narratorial intrusions. These changes in the text have an accelerating effect, increase the objectivity of the narration and adjust the saga to the form of the other works in the compilation. After these changes, *Prestssaga's* double structure as annals and a narrative is less obvious. The saga is also better fitted to be a prelude to *Íslendinga saga*, which is objective in tone and includes scarcely any miracles.

But such major changes in the content and form of a saga must also affect its meaning. In the original *Prestssaga* Guðmundr's biography was interpreted according to the literary model of lives of saints. The compiler has not altered the saga so drastically that it has lost this character. His changes may indicate that he questioned the healing power of Guðmundr's blessing springs, but they do not show that he disbelieved in Guðmundr's saintliness. Taking into consideration the eulogy upon the bishop in the compilation (400) we can be sure that the compiler regarded Guðmundr highly. But Guðmundr was just one of the prominent characters in his great drama, and not the one and only as in *Prestssaga*. For the strand of Guðmundr in *Íslendinga saga* it was important to make it clear what forces were behind his election. Therefore the compiler does not leave out material about Guðmundr's powerful relatives in the first 14 chapters of the saga, or about his family ties with Kolbeinn Tumason, the chieftain of Skagafjörðr, although he did eliminate many of the miracles. His compilation is not only based on chronology, but also on genealogy and lineage. Now we can also understand why the compiler inserts a section of ch. 12 of *Íslendinga saga* between *Haukdæla þáttur* and the last part of *Prestssaga* in his collection. In *Sturlunga* the story of Guðmundr's election is repeated because of this passage mentioned above. The passage reads as follows:

Einum vetri eftir deilur þeira Sæmundar Jónssonar ok Sigurðar Ormssonar andaðist Brandr biskup at Hólum. En þá réð Kolbeinn Tumason einn öllu fyrir uorðan land. Hann kaus við ráð vina sinna Guðmund prest inn góða Arason til

biskups, er þá var prestur í Víðimýri með Kolbeini. Þau vóru bræðrabörn Gyðriðr Þorvarðsdóttir, kona Kolbeins, ok Guðmundr prestur inn góði. Hann var maðr vinsæll ok hógværr. Ok vóru þau orðtök margra manna, at Kolbeinn vildi því Guðmund til biskups kjósa, at hann þóttist þá ráða bæði leikmönnum ok kennimönnum fyrir norðan land [238].

This passage makes it clear to the audience, even if the *Prestssaga* account did not, that Guðmundr was not elected bishop because he was a pious man, but because Kolbeinn the magnate thought he could use Guðmundr as a puppet, and gain for himself power over the church of northern Iceland (cf. Franter 1987: 200-05).

The compiler's addition to *Prestssaga* in ch. 15 is presumably not made by chance either. It is hardly a coincidence that among the beloved friends of Bishop Þorlákr are the other episcopal candidate, his father, and his brother, all very prominent men. The digression, *Haukdæla þáttur*, that is inserted into the compilation just before the last part of *Prestssaga*, and which is presumably the work of the compiler, also concerns them and their family. These additions regarding the *Haukdælir*, which present them in favourable light, indicate that the compiler, like a skilful author of a conflict story, thought that Kolbeinn and Guðmundr had to have suitable and worthy opponents. These additions are also in keeping with his genealogical scheme for the compilation.

We have seen how the compiler changed the emphases and tone of *Prestssaga* by omissions and additions and by inserting the saga into a new context. In the compilation *Prestssaga* is the prelude to Guðmundr Arason's stormy life as a bishop of Hólar; in other words, to Guðmundr's strand in *Íslendinga saga*. We can now draw the following conclusions about the ways in which the compiler was working: 1) the compiler had a chronological and genealogical scheme which he used in putting different sagas together; 2) he did not copy the text he had in hand without any changes, but felt free to rearrange the material and add to or abridge the texts in ways consistent with the plan of his work; 3) in so doing, he showed an understanding of the art of the saga and of its meaning, although he changed the saga to suit his context.

The compiler has changed the individual sagas in his corpus considerably, if *Prestssaga* may be taken as an example. The same applies to *Hrafnis saga* (Úlfar Bragason 1988). However, these two sagas seem to stand apart from the others in the compilation, showing a relationship to hagiographic literature both in subject matter and form, something the compiler obviously reduced. Therefore the compiler has presumably altered *Prestssaga* and *Hrafnis saga* more than the others, so they would fit into his plan for the cycle. All the same, *Sturlunga* is the compiler's creation and the entire cycle is a distinctive literary work and not the sum of the separate *samtíðarsögur*. That work is far more than a chronicle; it constitutes a conscious historical statement about the struggle for worldly power and the faults of the ruling class in Iceland in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries from an aristocratic perspective, and not a religious one, in ways which were available for meaning production in his culture. Although the compilation is a criticism of the lack of moderation within the ruling class, there is no question that the text underscores the landed nobles' rights to power, in spite of the oath of allegiance they had sworn to the Norwegian king.

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