

The Earliest *Íslendinga saga*: Another Candidate

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Serious study of the northern sagas began a century and a half ago with the publication of Theodor Möbius's monograph *Über die ältere isländische Saga* (1852). The book focused on *Víga-Glúms saga*, which Möbius dissected into eight sections with a view to distinguishing the traditional narrative from the authorial commentary in each section. Such a dissection was by no means arbitrary because the saga can indeed be understood as a concatenation of quite separable episodes. In Möbius's count, the lively story about Víga-Glúmr's hostile encounter with Víga-Skúta and their ingenious escape stratagems is the fifth episode (chapter 16). Their encounter was destined to become one of the classical problems in saga study because it recurs largely verbatim in *Reykðæla saga*. The question is therefore how these two nearly identical versions of the same story relate to each other.

In Möbius's era the problem had not yet become a focus of attention, and there was no reason for him to write at length about it. He merely recorded his view that the plus passages in *Reykðæla saga* were conscious deviations from the version in *Víga-Glúms saga*. In passing he did make the shrewd observation that in the two cases where the author of *Reykðæla saga* points out alternate traditions, he is not speaking randomly but is referring directly to the text of *Víga-Glúms saga* (1852:68). We therefore begin our story with the assumption that *Reykðæla saga* borrowed the episode from *Víga-Glúms saga*.

In the first edition of his literary history Finnur Jónsson expressed the view that the two versions of the episode were oral variants (1894-1901:2, 218-19), but it was not until a full fifty years after Möbius's publication that the problem was studied in some detail. The detail came from an unlikely source, a young American from Knoxville, Tennessee, named Claude Lotspeich, who studied with Eugen Mogk in Leipzig and devoted his dissertation to the topic in 1903. Lotspeich begins his discussion by quoting Möbius to the effect that the episode is isolated in *Víga-Glúms saga* and is not connected with the main thread of the narrative, Glúmr's feud with the *Espþælingar* (1852:63). Lotspeich then reinforces the isolation by noting that only in this episode is the protagonist referred to as 'Víga-Glúmr', whereas elsewhere he figures as 'Glúmr' plain and simple.¹ This anomaly leads Lotspeich to agree with Finnur Jónsson's assessment that the episode was interpolated into *Víga-Glúms saga*, but unlike Finnur, he does not believe in an oral source but rather in a written source, which he labels X (Finnur Jónsson 2, 219; Lotspeich 1903:34). Such a written source indeed accounts better for the close match in wording between *Víga-Glúms saga* and *Reykðæla saga*, which, Lotspeich argues, made similar use of the same written source X. Where the two sagas differ, Lotspeich judged that the author of *Víga-Glúms saga* abbreviated X.

Lotspeich's chief argument for the existence of a separate and distinctive written text was stylistic; he pointed out (1903:38) that when the historical present is a possible option, it is used overall 28% of the time in *Reykðæla saga* and 26% of the

time in *Víga-Glúms saga*. In the separate episode under study, however, it appears 75% of the time in *Reykðæla saga* and 73% of the time in *Víga-Glúms saga*. The episode therefore has a special profile, which led Lotspeich to posit a special source.

Although Lotspeich left open the possibility that the author of *Víga-Glúms saga* might have copied directly from *Reykðæla saga* (1903:32), he did not come to grips with the unlikelihood that a stray written episode about Víga-Glúmr and Víga-Skúta was circulating in the Eyjafjörður or Mývatn region without any connection to a larger narrative, on speculation, as if were, that a larger narrative might accrue. Remarkably, the speculation paid off twofold, inasmuch as not just one but two narratives picked up the episode and integrated it into larger contexts.

What would have been the point of such a fragment? It has been viewed tacitly as a sort of *þáttir*, but the *þættir* are predominantly about young Icelanders in Norway.² Perhaps the written source X could be compared to the semi-independent *þættir* of redaction C in *Ljósvetninga saga*, but in that case the *þættir* either belonged to the original redaction or they were interpolated as oral addenda. There is no evidence that they served as the point of departure for the longer narrative. Quite apart from the greater simplicity of assuming that *Reykðæla saga* copied from *Víga-Glúms saga* or vice versa, episodic narratives about Saga Age events in Iceland are hard to document before the advent of saga writing.

The argument that the descriptive prefix 'Víga-' is attached to Glúmr and Skúta only in this episode is at first bluish seductive, but we might note that Barði Guðmundarson is mentioned 32 times in *Grettis saga*, 31 times in the form Barði and only once in the form Víga-Barði. The single occurrence of Víga-Barði has not led to the positing of an additional source for *Grettis saga*.

It is in fact surprising that Lotspeich's hypothesis carried as much weight as it did. When Knut Liestøl wrote an essay on *Reykðæla saga* in 1928, he did not refer to Lotspeich, but he may have been familiar with the conclusions through the second edition of Finnur Jónsson's literary history (2, 223, 501). Liestøl focused on the mismatch between chapter 26 of *Reykðæla saga* and the saga as a whole; in the episode we find 41-42% direct discourse, whereas the saga from beginning to end shows only about 6% (1928:40). Liestøl did not draw the perhaps obvious conclusion that the episode was lifted out of *Víga-Glúms saga*, which also shows about 40% direct discourse. He remains neutral on the relationship of *Reykðæla saga* and *Víga-Glúms saga*, saying only that it seemed quite certain that the episode in *Reykðæla saga* was an interpolation. On the origin of the interpolation he is agnostic (1928:40): 'Whether it was the author himself who added it in by using an unknown written source or a scribe who interpolated it (from an oral or written source), we have no way of deciding with certainty.' Nor does Liestøl clarify the problem in a brief mention in *The Origin of the Icelandic Family Sagas* published two years later (1930:53). On the other hand, his reference to 'an unknown written source' suggests that Lotspeich's hypothesis was still alive.

A few years later Gabriel Turville-Petre developed a special interest in *Víga-Glúms saga*, first aired in a paper from 1936.³ Here he is quite definite on the existence of a prior written *þáttir* interpolated into both *Víga-Glúms saga* and *Reykðæla saga*, in compressed form in the *Mjóruvallabók* version of the former and in fuller form in *Reykðæla saga*. Though critical of the lack of clarity in Lotspeich's

dissertation, he supports the conclusion (1936:64): 'For all the weakness of his argument, Lotspeich's conclusion may well deserve support.' As verification of the distinctive, and hence interpolated, state of the episode he cites Lotspeich's evidence that the name 'Viga-Glúmr' occurs only here and that the historical present is used disproportionately (1936:61). Returning to the first of these arguments a little later (1936:63), he notes that the name 'Viga-Glúmr' occurs for the first time in chapter 23 of *Reykðæla saga* and believes that this occurrence reinforces the idea of a separate *þáttur*. He does not consider the possibility that the use of 'Viga-Glúmr' here could have been prompted by the fact that the author of *Reykðæla saga* was at this point copying from *Viga-Glúms saga*, or that the rich use of the historical present could be explained in the same way.

But Turville-Petre may have had second thoughts because he was rather more circumspect when he published his comprehensive edition of *Viga-Glúms saga* four years later. Here he neither accepts nor rejects Lotspeich's view but, like Liestøl, leaves the question open, suggesting that 'the *þáttur* must first have been copied into *VGI*, [*Viga-Glúms saga*], either from a text which was also the source of Ch. xxvi of *R*. [*Reykðæla saga*], or else from a manuscript of *R*. itself (1940: xxix). Turville-Petre was nonetheless convinced that the episode could not be an original part of *Viga-Glúms saga* (1940: xxiv). That belief together with the allowance for 'a text which was also the source for Ch. xxvi of *R*' shows Lotspeich's persistent footprint. Unfortunately, Turville-Petre did not pursue the matter further; we therefore do not know whether he favored the separate text or a direct loan from *Reykðæla saga*.

Between Turville-Petre's first and second statements there appeared the posthumously printed lectures of Björn M. Ólsen from the years 1911 to 1917. Björn refers to the problem briefly but decisively (1937-1939: 356, 424). He emphasizes the discrepancies between the accounts of Þórlaug's marriage and the identifications of the weapon Flugá: 'In both places where *Viga-Skútu saga* addresses the discrepancies it plainly refers to the narrative of *Glúma*. That makes it clear that *Skútu saga* made use of *Glúma* in this section and not the other way around.' In the later mention (p. 424) Björn adds that the author of *Reykðæla saga* made use of a redaction of *Glúma* closer to the *Vatnshyrna* fragment than the *Mjóruvallabók* redaction.

If Turville-Petre became less certain of an independent *þáttur* underlying the two sagas, the same cannot be said of Björn Sigfússon, who brought out his edition of *Reykðæla saga* in the same year in which Turville-Petre's edition of *Viga-Glúms saga* appeared. Far from downplaying the *þáttur*, he advocated fuller dimensions for it (1940: LXIV-LXIX), theorizing that it included the narrative pertaining to Glúmr's daughter Þórlaug and her marriage to and divorce from Skúta. He therefore identified Þórlaug as the central character and named the *þáttur* 'Þórlaugar þáttur' in her honor. According to *Viga-Glúms saga* Skúta married Þórlaug but later repudiated her, giving rise to the subsequent enmity between Glúmr and Skúta. But *Reykðæla saga* offers a different account. Here Glúmr and his daughter connive to procure a better marriage, and she abandons Skúta. The author of *Reykðæla saga* knows the version in *Viga-Glúms saga* ('some people take the view that Skúta sent her home to Glúmr') but opts rather for the tale of trickery.

Björn Sigfússon does not understand the repudiation motif as a reference to *Viga-Glúms saga* and suggests instead that the author took the motif from 'Þórlaugar

þátrr' but changed it in order to improve Skúta's image. This is a complicated hypothesis that piles unknown on unknown; we do not know that there was a 'Þórlaugar þátrr' or, if there was, what it contained, but Björn not only treats it as a given but goes on to speculate about the content, then speculates further that the author of *Reykðæla saga* rejected the content. Far simpler would be the assumption that the author of *Reykðæla saga* knew the repudiation motif directly from *Víga-Glúms saga* but also knew another version (perhaps a regional variant) more favorable to Skúta.

More compelling than Björn Sigfússon's hypothesis was Jónas Kristjánsson's analysis of the problem in his edition of *Víga-Glúms saga* (ÍF 9: especially XV-XXI). His contribution was remarkable both for clarity and independence, especially with respect to the inherited assumption that a separate *þátrr* was interpolated into *Víga-Glúms saga*. He begins by noting how out of keeping the style of the episode is with *Reykðæla saga* as a whole. In particular he calculates that, whereas chapter 26 of *Reykðæla saga* has 41-42% direct discourse, chapters 23-25 have only about 4.5%. He therefore considers it unlikely that these chapters all derive from a single source, Björn Sigfússon's 'Þórlaugar þátrr'. He argues that it is furthermore unlikely that the author of *Reykðæla saga* would have borrowed only one chapter from a long *þátrr* if such a text had really been at his disposal. That consideration makes him open to Björn M. Ólsen's idea that *Reykðæla saga* borrowed directly from *Víga-Glúms saga* and used other sources as a basis for chapters 23-25.

The chief objection to such a direct borrowing had been the widely held belief that the episode was an interpolated *þátrr* in *Víga-Glúms saga*. Jónas reviews the reasons underlying that belief: the fact that the daughter Þórlaug is mentioned nowhere else in *Víga-Glúms saga*, not even in the listing of Glúmr's children in the following chapter; the sole occurrence of the name form 'Víga-Glúmr' in chapter 16; Lotspeich's observation of a disproportionate use of the historical present in chapter 16. With respect to the historical present, Jónas expresses some doubt about the significance of Lotspeich's figures; his own calculation suggests a 63-64% use of the historical present rather than 73%, and he thinks that the sample may be too small to exclude coincidence.

Jónas attaches more weight to the author's apparent unfamiliarity with the terrain of the Eyjafjörður region in chapter 16, whereas elsewhere he seems perfectly at home in the area. Another discrepancy is that the action of chapter 16 seems less realistic and more improbable than in the remainder of the saga. These factors conspire to isolate chapter 16 and suggest that it was not written by the author of the main saga, although Jónas finds it difficult to decide whether the episode was incorporated by the author himself or was a later interpolation. That the incident is well positioned in both manuscripts of the saga inclines him to believe that it belongs to the original composition rather than being an interpolation.

In his later survey of medieval Icelandic literature Jónas Kristjánsson settled on a compromise solution; he accepted that there was a separate 'Skútu þátrr', but he considered that it was not absorbed independently into both sagas, only into *Víga-Glúms saga*, from which it was adopted by the author of *Reykðæla saga*. His summary statement is as follows (1988:244):

Víga-Glúms saga and *Reykðæla saga* have one chapter in common, an account of Skúta's trip to Eyjafjörður to attack Glúmr, who had been his

father-in-law: an excellent story but probably not by the author of *Víga-Glúms saga* and certainly beyond the powers of the author of *Reykðæla*. An independent *Skútu þáttur* seems to have been taken up in the saga of Glúmr and borrowed from there—along with other matter—by the author of *Reykðæla saga*.

Jónas Kristjánsson's earlier analysis was not available to Walter Baetke when he published a paper that appeared two years later (Baetke 1958: 21n.2), but he arrived independently at similar conclusions. Like Jónas, he criticizes Björn Sigfússon's hypothetical 'Þórlaugar þáttur' and challenges Lotspeich's figures on the historical present. Involuntarily picking up on Jónas's doubts about such a small sample, he makes the interesting observation that other small samples also produce disproportionate percentages of the historical present. Thus chapter 13 of *Reykðæla saga* shows 64% and chapter 15 shows 71% (Baetke 1958: 20). Baetke also reemphasizes the fact that the high percentage of direct discourse isolates the episode in the context of *Reykðæla saga* but not in the context of *Víga-Glúms saga*.

In general Baetke favors the simpler option of deriving one saga from the other rather than introducing unknown quantities into the relationship (1958: 10). In addition he points out that Glúmr's character in the episode is in line with *Víga-Glúms saga*, whereas Víga-Skúta's personality is at odds with *Reykðæla saga* as a whole (1958: 11). That suggests that the episode is more naturally situated in *Víga-Glúms saga* than in *Reykðæla saga*. On the other hand, the mention of narrative variants in chapter 26 of *Reykðæla saga* is characteristic of that saga and makes it easy to believe that the author altered what he found in *Víga-Glúms saga*, especially since the most explicit deviations respond specifically to variants found in chapter 16 of *Víga-Glúms saga* (1958: 12-13).

Baetke notes a further echo of *Víga-Glúms saga* in *Reykðæla saga* (1958:14). The latter characterizes a certain Þorvarðr Örnólfsson in chapter 15 as 'vitr maðr en miðlungi góðgjarn'. The wording is close to a characterization of the same man in *Víga-Glúms saga* (ÍF 9:73): 'Þorvarðr var vitr maðr ok var þá gamall, meðallagi góðgjarn'.⁴ That the wording represents a draft by the author of *Reykðæla saga* on *Víga-Glúms saga* is made plausible by the fact that Þorvarðr has a role in *Víga-Glúms saga* but is mentioned only twice and is as good as invisible in *Reykðæla saga*. From his accumulation of evidence Baetke concludes that the author of *Reykðæla saga* lifted the encounter between Víga-Glúmr and Víga-Skúta directly from chapter 16 in *Víga-Glúms saga*.

One additional argument might be deduced from Baetke's material. He notes (1958: 6) the old argument that the name form 'Víga-Glúmr' occurs only in chapter 16 of *Víga-Glúms saga*, with the result that this chapter stands apart from the rest of the saga. He notes too that the name 'Víga-Glúmr', alongside 'Víga-Skúta', is used the first time Glúmr is mentioned in *Reykðæla saga* (chapter 23). This correspondence has more often than not been viewed as evidence that the name form derived from a separate *þáttur*, but it could also be construed to mean that when the author of *Reykðæla saga* set out to describe the encounter between the two warriors, he was looking at chapter 16 of *Víga-Glúms saga*, where, perhaps not coincidentally, the forms 'Víga-Glúmr' and 'Víga-Skúta' also appear more or less side by side.

With the publication of Jónas Kristjánsson's probing recapitulation and Walter Baetke's decisive assignment of the priority to *Víga-Glúms saga*, it looked as though there was a consensus in the making, but a third contribution appeared at about the same time (1956) and complicated the issues considerably. Arie C. Bouman's monograph provided a veritable flood of stylistic statistics on such matters as direct and indirect discourse, sentence length, and tense. The statistics are so unsurveyable as to make the argument difficult to evaluate, but they led Bouman to the conclusion that chapters 13-16 in *Víga-Glúms saga* stand apart from the rest of the saga in terms of sentence brevity, parataxis in preference to hypotaxis, predominance of the historical present, and abundance of direct discourse. This profile is particularly evident in the *Mjóruvallabók* (*M*) redaction, which Bouman believed to be primary. The run of chapters from 13 to 16 includes not only the encounter between Glúmr and Skúta but also the episode in which Glúmr kills Kálfr of Stokkahláða and then incriminates a certain Ingólfr. Because Bouman found the two episodes to be stylistically uniform, he theorized that they were joined in a common written text X, which was copied into the *M* version of *Víga-Glúms saga*. The *M* version then became the source of the *Vatnshyrna* version as well as chapter 26 of *Reykðæla saga*.

Bouman appears to embrace the idea of a separate *þáttur* incorporated independently into *Víga-Glúms saga* (chapter 16) and *Reykðæla saga* (chapter 26), but his *þáttur* is in fact quite different. It is about two disconnected episodes (the Kálfr episode and the encounter between Glúmr and Skúta), and it was not copied into *Reykðæla saga*; rather, it was copied from *Víga-Glúms saga* (*M*) into *Reykðæla saga*. In our assessment of the relationship between these two sagas the *þáttur* is not implicated. It is merely a source for *Víga-Glúms saga*, which in turn became a source for *Reykðæla saga*. From the limited perspective of the two sagas it can be said that Bouman agrees with Baetke's conclusion that *Víga-Glúms saga* is the direct source for *Reykðæla saga*. In effect Bouman's work strengthens the growing consensus favoring the priority of *Víga-Glúms saga*.

That consensus was upset again in 1972 when Dietrich Hofmann published a tightly argued paper reversing the priorities. Hofmann finds the idea of an episodic *þáttur* intrinsically implausible and therefore concentrates on the direct relationship between *Reykðæla saga* and *Víga-Glúms saga*. He asks first of all in which of these sagas the episode is better integrated and gives decided preference to *Reykðæla saga*, noting Jónas Kristjánsson's observation that the author of the episode in *Víga-Glúms saga* betrays a lack of familiarity with the locale. He also enlists the isolated appearance of Þórlaug in the episode and emphasizes the poor motivation of the episode in *Víga-Glúms saga*, in which Skúta repudiates Glúmr's daughter and then adds injury to insult by launching an unexplained attack on his father-in-law. In *Reykðæla saga*, by contrast, the episode follows logically on the heels of other strained dealings between the two.

The most palpable problem for those favoring the priority of chapter 26 in *Reykðæla saga* is the great disproportion of direct discourse in relation to the rest of the saga, a feature that argues for a poor fit of chapter 26 in the narrative as a whole. Hofmann seeks to counter this anomaly by suggesting that the encounter between the two warriors may have spurred the author on to an uncharacteristically lively presentation (1972: 6), but the argument that there can always be an exception is not

necessarily persuasive. Hofmann also argues that the use of spies and assassins is quite in the spirit of *Reykðæla saga*, but we might demur on the ground that subterfuge is an even more recurrent feature in *Víga-Glúms saga*.

One of the reasons sometimes marshaled against the view that *Víga-Glúms saga* is the borrower is the unlikelihood that the author would have taken over the episode in chapter 26 without also making use of the narrative pertinent to *Víga-Glúmr* in chapters 23-25 of *Reykðæla saga*. Hofmann disallows this reasoning on the ground that the author, or more likely a later reviser, was under no compulsion to adopt everything available to him but was in a position to pick and choose. In a subsequent passage (1972: 10) He also points out that the episodes in chapters 23-25 are largely located to the east of Eyjafjörður, where the focus of *Reykðæla saga* is centered. These episodes may therefore have been peripheral for the reviser of *Víga-Glúms saga*. Hofmann believes that *Víga-Glúmr*'s somewhat isolated daughter Þórlaug may also have belonged to this eastern tradition and was therefore not well lodged in *Víga-Glúms saga*; the information given about her may well be spurious.

Hofmann turns then to the variant traditions recorded in *Reykðæla saga*, according to which the weapon *Fluga* could have been an axe or a sword. Hofmann finds it not surprising that the author (or reviser) of *Víga-Glúms saga* dropped the axe variant and settled on a sword, because he could deduce that *Fluga* was a thrusting weapon. When *Skúta* sees *Glúmr*'s cloak floating in the water, the text says (ÍF 10: 233): 'Hann hleypr at ok leggr til kápunnar'. Quite apart from the fact that a sword is a hewing as well as a thrusting weapon, one could object that it is possible to use 'leggja' with an axe if *Skúta* was poking at the cloak with the top of the axe shaft to ascertain whether it enveloped *Glúmr*'s body.

Finally Hofmann disallows *Baetke*'s argument that *Reykðæla saga* borrowed its characterization of Þorvarðr Ormólfsson (ÍF 10:197) from *Víga-Glúms saga* (ÍF 9:73). He admits that the introduction of Þorvarðr is awkward in *Reykðæla saga* but sees no reason not to attribute the awkwardness to the writer, who can be observed retrieving missing information in other passages as well.

Almost as an afterthought and only very briefly does Hofmann deal with the textual relationships. His reasoning is too compressed to be absolutely clear, but he seems to believe that common deviations in *Vatnshyrna* and *Mçðruvallabók* from *Reykðæla saga* forbid a simpler filiation (1972: 13): 'V und M gemeinsame Abweichungen von R gehen wohl auf den alten Bearbeiter der Glúma zurück'. In other words, he must believe that because *V* and *M* sometimes stand against *R*, *Reykðæla saga* cannot have stood model for *Víga-Glúms saga* either in the sequence *R—V—M* or in the sequence *R—M—V*. In point of fact I can only find two significant cases in which *V* and *M* stand against *R*. At the very outset *R* mentions *Skúta*'s companion Arnórr Þorgrímsson, but Arnórr is not found in *V* or *M*. The author of *R* could have added him in because he is *Skúta*'s constant companion, or the author of *Víga-Glúms saga* could have dropped him because he has no part in *Glúmr*'s story. In a later passage *V* and *M* have the phrase 'ok ríðr berbakt' not found in *R*. It could have been added by *V* and copied from *V* by *M*, or it could have been dropped by a scribe of *R*.

Nothing stands in the way of a simpler filiation than the one proposed by Hofmann. Apart from the not always convincing critique of the derivation of

Reykðæla saga from *Viga-Glúms saga* and the complications of Hofmann's construction of the textual evidence, it must be noted that he was pleading a special conviction. He was a strong proponent of the role of oral tradition in the sagas and he begins his paper by recalling the once wide spread view that *Reykðæla saga* stands particularly close to that tradition, although skepticism had in the meantime overtaken the old consensus. From Hofmann's point of view, the new skepticism could only be abetted if it were judged probable that *Reykðæla saga* was written later than *Viga-Glúms saga*, which Jónas Kristjánsson assigned to the period 1220-1250 (ÍF 9: LIII). Indeed Björn Sigfússon hesitated to date *Reykðæla saga* earlier than 'close to the middle of the century' (ÍF 10: LXXXIX), that is, in the full flowering of saga writing. Hofmann, who believed in the saga's proximity to the transition from oral tradition, therefore had a specific incentive to make it as early as possible, hence earlier than *Viga-Glúms saga*.

Despite Walter Baetke's clear prioritizing of *Viga-Glúms saga* and Dietrich Hofmann's clear reversal, subsequent comments have been tentative. There are brief references to the problem in John McKinnell's translation of *Viga-Glúms saga* from 1987 (pp. 9-10) and in the second volume of the collaborative Icelandic literary history from 1993 (p. 104). Both of these mentions presuppose Arie C. Bouman's hypothesis of an interpolated narrative including both the Ingólfr episode and the Skúta episode, although they do not enter into a discussion of the hypothesis. That is to say, both revert to the idea that the correspondence should be explained from an interpolated *þáttur*; the author of *Viga-Glúms saga* interpolated the whole *þáttur* (covering both the anecdote concerning Ingólfr and Hlōðu-Kálfr and Glúmr's encounter with Skúta), whereas the author of *Reykðæla saga* included only the encounter with Skúta because the story of Ingólfr and Hlōðu-Kálfr had nothing to do with the action of his saga.

This hypothesis suffers from the same general implausibility that besets Lotspeich's independent *þáttur*: what is the precedent or the purpose of such a partial narrative? Why introduce the complication of an additional text when the relationship between *Reykðæla saga* and *Viga-Glúms saga* can be explained more simply by a loan from one saga to the other? It is furthermore evident that the author of *Reykðæla saga* knew the story of the encounter between Glúmr and Skúta from oral tradition because he refers to variant versions of the story and adds more information on the interaction between Glúmr and Skúta than could be found in *Viga-Glúms saga*.

Two hypotheses are possible:

1. the author of *Reykðæla saga* took the encounter of Glúmr and Skúta over from *Viga-Glúms saga* because it was well formulated in that source and offered a convenient shortcut;
2. the author of *Reykðæla saga* took the episode from an independent *þáttur*, which was equally well formulated and convenient and which, coincidentally, was also included in *Viga-Glúms saga*. There was as a consequence no first-hand connection between the full sagas; neither author knew the other saga.

The weakness of the second hypothesis, apart from multiplying the texts unnecessarily, is the assumption that the two sagas have largely identical wording but no direct connection with each other. That would force the corollary assumption that the sagas originated in the same region of Iceland but were written so nearly simultaneously that there was no time for one author to learn of the other.

In calculating the probabilities, we may also observe that it has been a majority view that *Reykðæla saga* borrowed from *Víga-Glúms saga* rather than vice versa. This was the opinion expressed by Theodor Möbius (1852: 68) and Björn M. Ólsen (1937-1939: 355-56). Lotspeich (1903: 32) and Turville-Petre (1940: xxix) left latitude for the possibility that the episode in *Reykðæla saga* was copied into *Víga-Glúms saga*, but Bouman's more complicated scheme again suggested that *Víga-Glúms saga* was the source for *Reykðæla saga* (1956: 69). Jónas Kristjánsson could find no contrary evidence (ÍF 9: XVI): 'Is it thinkable that chapter 26 in *Reykðæla saga* was taken directly from *Glúma*? That was the opinion of Björn M. Ólsen, and I have not noted anything that would speak categorically against it.' Walter Baetke (1958) was an outspoken advocate for this option, and only Dietrich Hofmann (1972) formulated arguments for the opposite view. The position taken here in favor of a priority for *Víga-Glúms saga* is therefore well founded in the previous literature.

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