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Edited by

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Cover image: an 8th–9th century bronze pendant decorated in Broa style, excavated at the Mullutu harbour site, Saaremaa; drawing by Indrek Jets.

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The mode of retelling: *Bjarnar saga Hítðlakappa* in *Bæjarbók á Rauðasandi*

Daria Glebova

The 14th c. expanded version of the *Separate saga of St. Olaf* in the codex known as *Bæjarbók á Rauðasandi* (AM 73 b fol.) survived in whole only in its later paper copies (AM 71 fol., AM 73 a fol., AM 76 a fol.). These manuscripts contain an abridged redaction of *Bjarnar saga Hítðlakappa* while the longer version can be found in AM 551 d α 4to and its copies: the *Bæjarbók* version corresponds to ch. 5,5-10 of the Íslenzk fornrit edition (*Bjarnar saga*) where 551 was used as a base text. The *Bæjarbók* version has been seen as a reworking of *Bjarnar saga* to the needs of the *Separate saga of St. Olaf*: as an adaptation (Simon 1966, I: 26) or even as a summary (Finlay 2000: xlvii). A close comparison of the versions, as well as considering the structure of the *Bæjarbók á Rauðasandi* codex, allows one to re-evaluate these assessments, specify the narrative strategy of the *Bæjarbók* scribe and discuss their copying *modus operandi*.

1. The retelling mode

The parallel fragments between the versions have a similar length: the *Bæjarbók* version is around **3050** words (3050 in 71, 3064 in 73 a), the 551 version is around **2955** (2955 in 551, 2923 in AM 488 4to, used to check the readings in 551).¹ The length correspondence excludes the idea of a summary for the whole parallel fragment; this evaluation is just, however, for the first chapter where the compiler explicitly states that they are cutting the early history of the main characters' relationship and everything that happened in Iceland after Björn's return (*Bjarnar saga* 112). There are two factors that contribute to the similarity in length. First, both versions have unique additions – for example, 551 often has more details about the people travelling with Þórðr or Björn, while *Bæjarbók*'s additions are often connected to the main characters characteristics, eg. there are several appraisals of Björn and specifications of his relationship with king Óláfr. Second, most of the verbal variation between the versions can be described as paraphrasis – the lexico-grammatical and syntactic synonyms situated within the parallel clauses prevail over the factual changes (see the example in Table 1).

Table 1. Paraphrastic variation: 1,2 – anaphoric synonyms, 3,4 – lexical synonyms, 5 – narrative synonyms (direct vs. indirect speech)²

Bæjarbók (71, 69r)	551, 3v
Eptir 1fund þ(eira) Biarnar og Þorðar , atti Biörn stefnu við 2lið sitt , og 3sagðeft vilía 4fin(n)a Oláf k(onung), og 5koma af ser Reiðe han(n)s fyrer fiär upptóku þessa	Eptir 1þetta ätti Biörn stefnu við 2Auðun fielaga sinn . Og 3kuaðft vilía 4fara til fundar við Olaff k(onung), og 5vil eg e(igi) Reyði hanns yffer mier fyrer kaup man(n)a Rän

In many cases, like the one given in Table 1, the source of variation cannot be traced to one ideological or stylistic strategy used by the scribe either of *Bæjarbók* or 551. However, some of the variation found in the *Bæjarbók* version is more concerned with undermining the image of the main antagonist of the saga, Þórðr Kolbeinsson – for example, if in 551 both Þórðr and Björn are able to approach king Óláfr without any mediation, in *Bæjarbók* this ability is left only to Björn while Þórðr approaches Óláfr only with help from his friend and relative, Þorkell Eyjólfsson (Table 2) (see the discussion in Glebova 2021: 168-172 and Glebova forthcoming). The example in Table 2 is the episode when Þórðr seeks Óláfr's help in his business of getting

¹ The first section summarises the findings I have been writing about elsewhere (Glebova 2021, Glebova forthcoming). The most extensive overview of *Bjarnar saga* manuscripts and their relationship to each other can be found in Simon 1966 I.

² Here and in other examples the additions are marked in *italics*, inversion is underlined by one line, the entirely different information is underlined by two lines, and synonymous wording is in **bold**. The expanded abbreviations are marked by '()'; the ends of the line are marked by 'l'.

inheritance from his deceased uncle in Denmark (*Bjarnar saga* 126). One can see that the sequence of events is different in 551 and in *Bæjarbók*. In 551 after Þórðr's arrival, I) he tells the king about his matter; II-III) Þorkell Eyjólfsson persuades the king to help Þórðr; IV) the king agrees to help and issues a letter to his friends in Denmark. In *Bæjarbók* the sequence changes as Þórðr is well received **because** II) Þorkell Eyjólfsson has already introduced Þórðr's matter to the king; I) they talk **together** about the matter again; IV-III) they ask the king to issue a letter to his friends in Denmark. Therefore, in *Bæjarbók* Þórðr completely depends upon Þorkell Eyjólfsson, while in 551 he is allowed to present his case on his own. One should notice that the 'ideological' change in the narrative strategy is also accompanied by the synonymic variation inserted in the parallel clauses – even when they are placed in a different order.

Table 2. 1, 5, 9, 10 – lexical synonyms, 8 – contextual synonyms, 3, 7 – morphological change (preterite/present; article), 3, 4, 6 – factual change

Bæjarbók (71, 67v)	551, 2r
var <u>h(onum)</u> þar <u>1allvel</u> fagnat, (II) <u>þvíat þ(ar)</u> var <u>þá fyrir Þorkell Eyjólfsson</u> , og túlkaðe vel <u>2mál Þórðar</u> , (I) <u>3fögðu þ(eir)</u> k(onun)ge <u>5málavöxtu</u> á, um ferð <u>6hanns</u> , og beidde at (IV) <u>7k(onu)ngrin(n)</u> <u>8flkyllde flkrifa með h(onum)</u> til vina <u>finna</u> í Danmörk, (III) at hann <u>9næðe</u> <u>10arfinum</u> . <i>Konungrinn gærir svá.</i>	<u>Honum</u> var þar <u>1vel</u> fagnad. (I) <u>3segir 4han(n)</u> ko(nu)ngi <u>5vauxtu</u> á um ferð <u>6sýna</u> . (II) Þorkell var þá þar og túlkaði vel <u>2málið</u> við konung, (III) að han(n) <u>9fengi</u> <u>10fíe</u> sitt. (IV) <u>7K(onungr)</u> <u>8liet giora honum Brieff</u> til vina sinna í Danmörk ok setti fyrir sitt insigli.

A similar narrative strategy aimed at demeaning Þórðr can be detected not only in the changes introduced in *Bæjarbók* but also in the fragments it leaves almost intact. There are only three fragments when the number of words participating in the variation is less than 25%.³ Two of them also portray Þórðr in a dim light — as a coward (exchange with Kálfr (*Bjarnar saga* 128)) and as a pitiful weak man (scene when Björn sends Þórðr to the Orkney islands (*Bjarnar saga* 130)). The last one is the final dialogue between Þórðr and Oddný, when Oddný accuses Þórðr of being full of lies and deceit (Table 3). Oddný's accusation contributes to Þórðr's infamous portrayal, so one could argue that the *Bæjarbók* compiler did not want to change anything in this fragment as it was harmonious with their narrative aim.

Table 3. The final dialogue between Þórðr and Oddný. Unlike many previous fragments, here the amount of variation is quite low; it mostly contains morphological changes (6-7) or additions of individual words, except for one change in syntax (1-3).

Bæjarbók (71, 70v-71r)	551, 5r
Nær getr þú <u>þúi</u> , fl(egir). hon. <u>1fregit</u> /71r/ hefer ek <u>2þau</u> tíðinði <u>3at flkip er komit i Hrutafíorð</u> , og er þar á Biörn sá er þú sagðer andaðan, Þorður mællti, <u>vera</u> <u>má</u> at þ(ér) þýke(sic!) þat tíðinði, víft eru þat tíðinde <u>4lagðe</u> hon og <u>veit eg nú en giörr</u> hverfú eg em gefinn. Eg hógða þig vera <u>5Rólkan(n)</u> dreng, en þú ert fúllur af lýge og laúfúng, þat er mællt <u>6lagðe</u> Þorður at yferbætur see til alls <u>lagðar</u> . mig grúnar <u>þat</u> s(egir): hon at fealfúr mune han(n) hafa <u>7flkipat</u> ser <u>laú nin(n)</u> og	Nær gietúr þú seigir hún. <u>1friett</u> hefi eg <u>2það</u> er mier þykia(sic!) tyðinði, mi er er sogð <u>3flkipkoma i hrúta fyrði</u> , og er þar á Biörn sá er þú sagðer ándadan. Þorður mællti. <u>Það má vera seiger h(an)n </u> að þier þýki(sic!) það tyðindi, Vyft eru það Tyðinði <u>4seigir</u> hún Og <u>en(n)</u> gior veýt eg <u>nú seigir hún(sic!)</u> húorfú eg er giefin(n), Eg hógða þig vera <u>5goðan</u> dreing, en(n) þú ert fúllur aff Lygi o(g) Laúfúng. Það er mællt <u>6seigir</u> Þ(ór)ður, að yferbætur sie til allz. Mig grúnar, seigir hún,

³ To illustrate the switch between the fragments with dense variation and the ones copied closely, the parallel text has been divided into chunks from 60 to 100 words, according to the content and as closely to the periodic structure as possible. There is also one fragment which has less than 60 words but also presents a separate unit of content – it is a bit narrating the whereabouts of Björn's body and the relics in Iceland in the anecdote about how Björn received St. Óláfr's garters (*Bjarnar saga* 133-134). While the other parts of the story have a lot of variation, this fragment is copied almost word-for-word – which would be consistent, first, with the pious nature of the *Separate saga of St. Olaf* and, second, with the Icelandic provenance of *Bæjarbók* as a codex. The whole parallel fragment with marked variation can be found in Glebova 2021: 284-304.

bœtúrnar, Þorður mællte haf þat fyrer satt sem þer sýnift,	ad sialfúr múni hann hafa flkapaðar sier Bœtúrnar, haff þú það fyrer satt sem þier synest seigir han(n).
19 / 101 (20%)	21 / 106 (21%)

2. The narrative strategy and the mode of copying

The reason for the narrative strategy focused on demeaning Þórðr could lie in the *Bæjarbók* compiler's goal to create a darker background for Björn as the main protagonist. This would be consistent with Sean Grønlie's view, who interprets the *Bjarnar saga* fragment in *Bæjarbók* as a story of the right relationship of sinner (Björn) to saint (Óláfr) (Grønlie 2017: 244). The figure of Björn seems to be even more pious when it is juxtaposed with other *þættir* included in *Bæjarbók*. While most of them follow the canonical list of *þættir* usually included in the *Separate saga of St. Olaf*, there are two texts that are included in *Bæjarbók* only. One of them is *Bjarnar saga* with the whole story about the conflict with Þórðr, another is a fragment from *Laxdæla saga*, narrating the story of how Þorkell Eyjólfsen met with Óláfr and how he tried to build a church in Iceland of the same height as the one built by Óláfr. Unlike Björn, who listens to Óláfr and changes his ways of life (mainly stops pillaging and raiding), Þorkell does not follow the king's advice, persists in his plans, and dies in the storm losing all the timber for the church.

There are some details pointing in the direction that Þórðr had more value for the *Bæjarbók*'s compiler than just a background character as he is even more connected to Þorkell Eyjólfsen, the hero of the next *Íslendingasaga þáttr* in *Bæjarbók*, than Björn who is linked with him by contrast. First, the *þáttr* starts with figure of Þorkell Eyjólfsen (everything happens when he was welcome in Norway) and then proceeds to Þórðr. Those two characters are associated together – it is known from *Bjarnar saga* that they are friends and kin (Þorkell as *vinr* (*Bjarnar saga* 126), as *frændi* (*Bjarnar saga* 209)). Moreover, they share the same characteristic – both are described in their sagas as very conscious of their reputation: Þórðr – “*Hann var skáld mikit ok helt sér mjök fram til virðingar*” (“He was a considerable poet, and did much to maintain his own reputation”)⁴ (*Bjarnar saga* 111); Þorkell, although this description exists only in the long saga and not in the *þáttr* in *Bæjarbók* – “*Þorkell Eyjólfsen gerðisk höfðingi mikill. Helt hann sér mjök til vinsælda ok virðingar*” (*Laxdæla saga* 255).

According to ONP, the characteristic *halda sér til virðingar* is rarely used – much more often characters care for someone else's reputation and not their own (cf. this kind of description in *Laxdæla saga*: “*Faðir hans hélt honum mjök til virðingar*” (*Laxdæla saga* 85-86)). The cases of *halda sér til virðingar* are not so widespread and they also have one thing in common as the character who is described this way is either not able to hold his reputation as he wants it or even perishes: Þórðr's secret comes out and destroys his relationship with Óddný, Þorkell Eyjólfsen destroys his relationship with Óláfr and then dies in the storm. Another character with this description, Björn Sæmundarson in *Sturlunga saga* (“*Biorn [Sæmundar] son bio þa i Gunnars-hollte, hann hellt ser mest til mannvirðingar þeira bræðra*” (*Sturlunga saga* I 426)), steps forward to handle the lawsuit against Sturla Þórðarson and not only fails but does not even show up when the case is being discussed. The similarity of contexts allows one to see *halda sér til virðingar* as a formula (as described in Sävborg 2018).

Considering the semantic aura of *halda sér til virðingar* and the beginning of *Bjarnar saga þáttr* with Þorkell Eyjólfsen and Þórðr, one could argue that the *þættir* made from *Bjarnar saga* and *Laxdæla saga* could be brought together as stories about two powerful men who worry too much about their reputation, which becomes their undoing as Þórðr loses his wife's respect and Þorkell loses not only Óláfr's good faith but even his life. This interpretation explains the interest of *Bæjarbók*'s compiler in the last dialogue between Þórðr and Óddný and their reluctance to

⁴ Trans. by Alison Finlay (Finlay 2000: 1).

change or cut it (Table 3) even though it is not connected to the story of Björn and Óláfr – it becomes the moral of Þórðr's story anticipated from his very first description.

The close study of variation between the versions of *Bjarnar saga* allows one to see the switches between the two modes of copying – one is characterised by dense variation and another by its opposite. These modes seem to manifest different writing and language practices that were available for a compiler or a scribe. The fragments where variation is sparse can help see the compiler's narrative strategy more clearly as here the main aim of the compiler/scribe is to save the text as it is. In contrast, dense variation marks fragments that should be changed or simply do not have to be preserved. In these cases the copying process allows more freedom, which is restrained, however, by the limits of synonymy.

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