

A newly discovered manuscript of Magnús Ólafsson's Edda
Private collection, London.

This 8vo manuscript, purchased in Denmark a few years ago, was probably written in Iceland in the late 18th or early nineteenth century. It is written on paper, apparently by a single hand (with the minor exceptions noted below), in black ink, with some coloured (red and green or blue) decoration to the lettering of the title page. The binding is certainly more modern; it has marbled boards and a cloth spine without any lettering. The binder has cut the bottom of the leaves very close, in a few cases taking off part of the last line of writing (e.g. on page 142). The spine has become very dry and brittle and the volume has suffered from much use. The name written on the front flyleaf in a different and probably much later hand than the text is difficult to decipher, but may read 'Þórarinsson'. This un-Icelandic use of the patronymic alone, without the owner's first name, suggests that this Þórarinsson, who is of course unidentifiable, had emigrated from Iceland to Denmark, perhaps in the second half of the 19th century, and had there used his patronymic as a surname in the Danish fashion. If so, this emigrant presumably brought the manuscript from Iceland to his new home with him.

The title on the title page reads 'Edda . . . med Vidbætir', and this corresponds well with the contents of the volume, which is an interpolated and re-arranged version of Magnús Ólafsson's Edda with an appendix containing material about Icelandic runes. Magnús Ólafsson's Edda was itself a re-arrangement of Snorra Edda (the Prose or Younger Edda), a treatise on poetry compiled in the first half of the 13th century by the Icelandic historian and poet Snorri Sturluson. Snorra Edda contained a Prologue about the origin of Norse religion, Gylfaginning (mythological narratives from the Creation down to Ragnarökkr, the Twilight of the gods), Skáldskaparmál (a discussion of the kennings and heiti, or poetical terms, of Old Norse poetry, including stories explaining the origins of some of these),¹ and Háttatal, a poem by Snorri Sturluson with commentary in praise of King Hákon Hákonarson and Earl Skúli in 102 stanzas exemplifying a wide variety of verse forms that could be used in Old Norse poetry.

Magnús Ólafsson's Edda was compiled by the Icelandic priest and poet Magnús Ólafsson (c. 1573–1636) in the early years of the 17th century.² Magnús later (1622) became minister at Laufás in northern Iceland, and hence his Edda has come to be referred to as the Laufás Edda. His work survives in two versions, known as the X version, parts of which survive in his own hand as well as in three manuscript copies, and the Y version (of which the X version is an abbreviation). Of the latter we have nothing in Magnús's hand, though it survives in whole or in part in over 100 manuscripts dating from the 17th to 20th centuries, and more are still turning up from time to time, of which the present version is an example.

Magnús Ólafsson re-arranged Snorri's text, so that the Prologue was followed by 67 'Dæmisögur' (mythological narratives from Gylfaginning and Skáldskaparmál), and then Annarr Partur (a list in alphabetical order of their significations of kennings and heiti based mostly on Skáldskaparmál, beginning with Nöfn Asanna). Háttatal is not included.

Magnús Ólafsson's Edda was far more popular than Snorri Sturluson's Edda in post-medieval times; the latter survives in comparatively few manuscripts, while the former was not only frequently copied down to modern times (often with many additions and expansions of Magnús's original), even after the publication of Resen's Edda, but also became the basis of several other

¹ Snorri Sturluson. *Edda: Skáldskaparmál*. Edited by Anthony Faulkes. London: Viking Society for Northern Research 1998.

² *Edda Magnúsar Ólafssonar (Laufás Edda)*. Edited by Anthony Faulkes. Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar 1979. [Abbreviated EMÓ. References to the Introduction to this volume are to paragraph numbers, those to the texts are to page numbers.]

rearrangements and adaptations as well as being used as the foundation of the first printed edition of the Prose Edda, that of P. H. Resen (Copenhagen 1665). There exist also translations into Danish and Latin. It is clear that Magnús's version was found more useful as a textbook for poets and readers of Icelandic poems than Snorri's.

The Contents of the Edda Manuscript

T.p.: 'Edda. Samanskriðad af Snorra Sturlusýne á Reikholti. Anno–MCCXV. med Vidbætir'

Rev. of t.p.: Magnús Ólafsson's preface (*EMÓ* 189).

Pp. I–XIX: 'Formáli.' = Preface II (see *EMÓ* §§ 29.2, 43, 104, 108, 115, 117, 118, 121, 122, 124, 126, 129, 130, 131, 149, 150, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, [172], 173, 174, 185; p. 463). This preface, which is not by Magnús Ólafsson, is thus found in a wide variety of manuscripts and already existed in the second half of the 17th century.

Pp. 1–110: 'Gylfaginning. Firsta Dæmisaga–XLVII. Dæmisaga' = Dæmisögur 1–49, *EMÓ* 189–233 (Y version). Dæmisaga 11 is rather garbled, possibly some words inserted not in *EMÓ* from another source with a text more similar to that of the Codex Regius. Some words added in the last sentence similar to the text of the Codex Regius. A sentence is added at end of Dæmisaga 18. Addition at the end of Dæmisaga 21. Dæmisaga 33 (unnumbered) is after Dæmisaga 34 (numbered 33), then Dæmisaga 35 (unnumbered). Dæmisaga 36, 37, 38, 39 etc are numbered 34, 35, 36, 37 etc. (to the end of Gylfaginning). Various small items omitted and some interpolated, probably mostly scribal additions or comments, but some words from the Codex Regius omitted by Magnús Ólafsson are included, cf. *EMÓ* § 43. At the end of Gylfaginning, where X¹ has 'Hier til Hårslye, Bragarædr fylga eptir' (*EMÓ* 234) is written: 'Hér endar Hars-lýgi, finst ok getiþ, at þar hafi Gilfi heirt þulin Háva-mál sem annarstaðar standa i frædi'. Cf. Thott 1494 4to, *EMÓ* § 45.

Pp. 110–147: 'Braga=rædr. (: edr Braga-lýgi:). XLVIII Dæmisaga–LX Dæmisaga' = Dæmisögur 50–62, *EMÓ* 234–246 (Y version). Again, some minor additions, often comments at the end of stories.

Pp. 147–181: 'Vidbætir edr vidrauki nokkra Frásagna. LXI Dæmisaga–LXV. Dæmisaga' = 'Vidur auki nokkra frásagna', Dæmisögur 63–67 in the X version manuscript Thott 1494 4to (the story of Otrgjöld and the Gjúkungar, Skáldskaparmál 45/3–50/21, derived ultimately from the Codex Regius but omitted from Magnús's original Edda as they were from Magnús's main source, Codex Wormianus (cf. *EMÓ* 249/13–17, 250 line 21–251 line 5 and § 43) and also interpolated in Sth. Papp 4to nr 10, another manuscript of the X version, and Resen's edition, Dæmisögur 68–78). Added at the end is 'Hedann kennist grjót grand Sörla og Hamdijs enn hlifar þeirra herklædi og annad soddan', cf. *EMÓ* 251 line 5. This is followed by 'LXVI Dæmisaga Hvi Gull kallast Fródamjöl' = *EMÓ* Dæmisaga 66, 'vm Fröda Feniu og Meniu' (text again corresponding to Thott 1494 4to, not to the Y version; also not in the original Codex Wormianus); 'LXVII. dæmisaga Hvi gull er kallat Kraka sád' = *EMÓ* Dæmisögur 63 'AP(OLOGUS) vm ägæti Hrölf's kraka' and 64 'APOL(OGUS) Wm frækneik Hrölf's kraka'; 'LXVIII. Dæmisaga, vm Holga kóng' = *EMÓ* Dæmisaga 65; and 'LXIX. Dæmisaga, um Höгна og Hildi dóttir hans' = *EMÓ* Dæmisaga 67. At the end of this last Dæmisaga in this section, there is an additional passage also found in Thott 1494 4to, cf. *EMÓ* 250, note to line 20. But the passages 'Vm Erp Sorla og Hamder', *EMÓ* 250–251 (see above), 'Epilogus partis. prioris', *EMÓ* 251 and 'Þoku menn', *EMÓ* 252 (derived from the Fourth Grammatical Treatise) are omitted. The order of the narratives in this part of the manuscript is thus very similar to that of the Codex Regius, and different from that of *EMÓ* (and Resen's Edda).

P. 181: 'Sidari partur Snorra Eddu um Kenningarnar' = 'Annar partur Eddu vmm kiennyngar', *EMÓ* 328 (Y version).

Pp. 181–182: Preface to Annar partur = *EMÓ* 328.

P. 182: 'Nöfn Asanna' = *EMÓ* 328.

Pp. 182–188: 'Nöfn-Óðins' = 'Nofn Odinz' (omitting lines 55, 60–68, 80–84, 91–110), *EMÓ* 328–332.

Pp. 188: 'Synir=Ódíns' = *EMÓ* 332.

Pp. 188–189: 'Þór heitir í kenningum' = *EMÓ* 332 'Þor heiter að kiennyngu' (some names omitted).

P. 189–196: 'Baldr. kiennist'; 'Njördr'; 'Freyr'; 'Heimdallr' (here is added 'Heimdallarhöfud – mjótuðs', cf. Skáldskaparmál 19/11–13); 'Tyr'; 'Bragi'; 'Vidar'; 'Vali'; 'Hauður'; 'Ullr'; 'Hæmir'; 'Loki'; 'Merk'; 'Nöfn Asynja' (expanded from þulur in Skáldskaparmál 114–115, cf. *EMÓ* §111); 'Höfud Asinjur kennast svo'; 'Frigg'; 'Freya' (expanded with a couplet attributed to Arnórr, 'Sæll er syr hallar. Seida brynreiðar', see *EMÓ* § 117; this too corresponds to AM 742 4to); 'Sif'; 'Jdun'; 'Regla' (added: 'merk: til allra qvenna ásanna skal konur kenna.') = *EMÓ* 333–337.

Pp. 196–217: 'Nú eptir filgja Heiti og Kenningar ymislegra hluta eptir Stafrofs-orðu. Ar-heiti'; 'Arvatn heitir' (omits lines 12–14); 'Arnar=heiti'; 'Boga heiti'; 'Bjarnar=heiti'; 'Brynja=heiti'; 'Dverga. Kènníngar'; 'Dags=Kènníngar'; 'Díra=heiti' (attribution of final stanza to Haustlöng [96] added, together with four extra lines, 'Hveða skal hróðr fyrir hriðar | hræblaksindum særar. | drikkur var durnis rekkum | dókkur ljósari nókkvi.');

'Daggar og drifu kenningar'; 'Eya heiti'; 'Elds-kenningar'; 'Fugla=kenningar'; 'Fiska heiti nokkor'; 'Fót má kalla' (verse attributed to Eyjólfur Brúnason added, cf. X², *EMÓ* 269–270); 'Gras kallast' (reference to Arnórr jarlaskáld added, cf. *X⁴, *EMÓ* 272 n.); 'Gata=heiti' (added: 'jardar og hennar heiti'); 'Geit kallast'; 'Gölltr-heiti'; 'Gullsheiti og kènníngar' (at *EMÓ* 346 line 19 adds 'Grátr dalneidar látra', cf. Skáldskaparmál verse 145/4; omits line 21; at *EMÓ* 346 line 27 adds Eigill's verse, 'Gladdist flotna fjöl', cf. Skáldskaparmál v. 184; at *EMÓ* 349 line 108 adds 'Riett er at kalla gulls at handar sæfar og ása'; and there are various occasional omissions and minor additions throughout) = *EMÓ* 337–349.

Pp. 218–235: 'Himins kènníngar'; 'Herklæði' (here there are some additions similar to Skáldskaparmál 67/17–69/14; cf. also 'Skjöldr heitir', pp. 315–317, *EMÓ* 396–397); 'Hjálmr=heiti'; 'Hvalfiska nöfn nokkr' (with additions corresponding to Skáldskaparmál 63/9–10 and 13–14; cf. pp. 280–281, *EMÓ* 378, 'Kuenna heite' 122–127); 'Hrafna=heiti'; 'Hesta-heiti' (2 lines, 'tvenna fjóra | tróð sá fætur', added at the end of Kálfs-vísur, cf. *EMÓ* § 111); 'Höfuðs=kenningar' (some minor additions); 'Auga' (here two quotations from Kormákr's verse added, as in X⁴; cf. *EMÓ* 276, note to line 11); 'Brár'; 'Grát'; 'Eyru' (with a brief addition corresponding to Skáldskaparmál 108/14); 'Munnr' (4 words added at end); 'Tunga'; 'Nef'; 'Skegg'; 'Tennr' (4 words added at end); 'Hár' (some words added, *EMÓ* 356 lines 70–72 omitted); 'Hjarta' (last 2 lines replaced by 'og sæ nu land og lád', cf. 'Brjóstr' below); 'Hugr' (added at end: 'edr ein hvörs fugls heitis til Ódins kenningar'); 'Brjóstr' (transposed from 'Hjarta' above); 'Hönd-kallast' (order changed and some expansion); 'Hundr heitir' (4 words inserted at beginning and some elsewhere); 'Húð uxa'; 'Hríngur'; 'Hús' (3 words inserted at beginning; first couplet in final verse omitted, cf. *EMÓ* 280 note to line 7; and *EMÓ* 358 line 18 also omitted); 'Hrútr-heiti'; 'Hafr heitir' = *EMÓ* 349–358.

EMÓ 358 'Js heite kiennist' omitted.

Pp. 235–284: 'Jörd-heiti'; 'Jötna-heiti' (names put into alphabetical order, some added); 'Kónga heiti og Kenningar' (couplet added from Skáldskaparmál 101/5–7 before final sentence); 'Uppruni nokkra Kónga-heita' ('hinn gamli' added in first line; some additions in the list of the second nine sons of Halfdan; Skáldskaparmál 104/20 inserted after *EMÓ* 362 line 2; in *EMÓ* 362 line 41 a further definition of *skattkonungar* is given; the last line of this article omitted, as in AM 743 4to); 'Kistr'; 'Kallmanna-Kènníngar' (etymologies of *skáld* and *greppr* inserted; *EMÓ* 366 lines 10–11 expanded, and a reference to Fossverjar in Víglundar saga is included; addition ('Skeggjar') at *EMÓ* 367 line 22; various other changes and additions in these lists, e.g. at *EMÓ* 372 line 1); 'Kvenna heiti og kenningar' (*EMÓ* 374 lines 7–10 are here more like Skáldskaparmál 107/29–33 and there are some items added or changed in this passage; Items added after *EMÓ* 375/37, 376/66); 'Kilfa er kend í þessari visu'; 'Kúa-heiti' (expansion at the end) = *EMÓ* 358–380.

Pp. 284–317: 'Læti og um þær kenningar'; 'Lif'; 'Leggja-heiti' (two verse quotations added, one attributed to Bjarni and also in AM 742 4to, see Jón Helgason 1966, 178–179,³ and one to Sturla

³ Jón Helgason, 'Verse aus der Laufás-Edda', *Festschrift Walther Baetke* (Weimar 1966, pp. 175–180).

Þórðarson, Hákonarkviða 35/1–4); ‘Logns-heitir’; ‘Mál-heitir’, ‘Nótt-heitir’ (3 additional terms inserted after verse); ‘Naut-heitir’; ‘Orusta-heitir’; ‘Øxa-heitir og kenningar’; ‘Orma-heitir’ (some additions at the end); ‘Ørfa-heitir’; ‘Sólar-heitir og kenningar’ (2 words added before first verse; *EMÓ* 386 lines 25–28 omitted); ‘Sækónga-heitir’ (some names omitted); ‘Sjóar heiti og Kenningar’ (additions after *EMÓ* 387/4; order of material changed in some places; verses added at end, see Skáldskaparmál 38/16–29, 63/9–10, 14, including a verse attributed to Þórðr Særeksson otherwise only known from AM 742 4to, see *EMÓ* § 111 and footnote on p. 107); ‘Sauðar-heitir’; ‘Svín-heitir’; ‘Sverdaheite og kenningar’ (the list of names put into alphabetical order and some added; *EMÓ* 391 line 22 ‘sem Kormakur quad’ omitted, replaced by ‘máni Valhallar og Ódins’; several names for spear added after *EMÓ* 391 line 25, cf. Skáldskaparmál verse 464); ‘Sár-heitir’ (with addition of last line of Fóstbrœðra saga verse 40 (*Íslensk fornrit* VI 275) and a couplet attributed to Skáld-Helgi, ‘megut járn ei fet fyrnast’, cf. *EMÓ* § 111); ‘Sumar kennist’; ‘Skógar-heitir’ (the names put into alphabetical order); ‘Skipa-heitir’ (inserted at the beginning is the list of ship-names from the end of the article in *EMÓ* 395 in alphabetical order, followed by ‘Græðisvagn’ (*EMÓ* 395, line 81) and a little further on ‘geitis mar’ from Skáldskaparmál 74/14, also added in AM 743 4to, see note to *EMÓ* 392 line 3 on p. 393, while the reference to Hornklofi is omitted); ‘Skáldskapr-heitir’ (preceded by a list of simplex terms for poetry, cf. Skáldskaparmál 83/14–15, and some other additions, in some cases perhaps arising from misunderstandings and muddled re-ordering); ‘Skjöldr heitir’ (some shortening and paraphrase of *EMÓ* 397, lines 20–30, and some omissions; ‘hallarþak Ódins’ inserted) = *EMÓ* 380–397.

EMÓ 397–398 ‘Spiota heite og kiennyngar’ omitted.

Pp. 317–326 ‘Steirn-heitir’ (‘borg og bær’ added before ‘dverga’ line 6; omits the verse attributed to Þjóðólfr and the reference to Arnórr in *EMÓ* 398, line 22, as well as *EMÓ* 399, line 27, which is replaced by ‘etc.’; but adds ‘Fjörgýnjar hjarta’ at the end like AM 743 4to, cf. *EMÓ* 399, note to line 27); ‘Tröllkvenna-heitir’ (omitting *EMÓ* 399 line 2; 63 names (plus 3 added) put into alphabetical order; at the end is added ‘hingad er hugr kendr og ögxr’, cf. *EMÓ* 356, ‘Hugur’ line 6, and 384 ‘Øxa heite’ line 7 = p. 231 and 290, Skáldskaparmál 108/28 and 67/25); ‘Vopna-heitir’ (a list of 9 words for kinds of weapons inserted at beginning; *EMÓ* 400 last 8 words of lines 3–4 omitted; some words inserted, e.g. ‘þvi þau smjúga’ after ‘orma’, at *EMÓ* 400, line 5; plus a reference to Guttormr skáld for ‘balla spjót’ and at the end ‘knifurin er kalladr vargr, eda jötun Magaskógsins’); ‘Vetr heitir i Kènníngum’ (omits ‘þui þad heiter ørmur’ at *EMÓ* 400, ‘Vetur heiter j kiennyngum’ line 3; inserts before Ásgrímr’s verse st. 83/1–2 and 5–6 of Snorri Sturluson’s Háttatal, attributed to ‘Snorri lögmaðr’); ‘Vindr-heitir’ (some words for wind inserted at the beginning and some kennings towards the end); ‘Vidr-heitir’ (adds ‘item má hann kalla jardar þöngla’ and Ynglinga saga, *Íslensk fornrit* XXVI 61, verse 22/9–12 and Njála, *Íslensk fornrit* XII 354, verse 17/3–4; both verses also in AM 742 4to, see *EMÓ* § 111); ‘Vargr-heitir’; ‘Vit heitir’ (some words omitted); ‘Undirhiggja-heitir’; ‘Uxi-heitir’ (some words omitted, some added; expansion of last 4 words in *EMÓ* 402 with references to Haustlöng 5 and an unknown verse of Skúli Þorsteinsson, cf. *EMÓ* 279, note to ‘Hvd’ and Jón Helgason 1966, 179; and a list of further kennings is added); ‘Þáing og þari kènnist’ (further kennings added) = *EMÓ* 398–402.

P. 326 ‘Endir’ = *EMÓ* 402 ‘Finis Eddæ’.

P. 327 ‘Stuttr Vidbætir Eddu. Innihald. 1. Innihald Eddu. 2. Rúnir. 3. Bundnar málrúnir. 4. Þyding málrúna.’

Pp. 328–338 ‘Innihald Eddu.’ Comprises headings and page numbers of the whole contents of the volume.

Pp. 338–340: ‘Rúnir. 1. Málrúnir blasnar og stúngnar’, ‘2. Adal Rúnir’, ‘3. Torkenníngar’, ‘4. Alfarún’, ‘5. Óbreittar málrúnir’. Lists five runic alphabets. (On no. 3 cf. <http://www.sunnyway.com/Galdrastafir/runiru.htm>. On late runic alphabets in general, see <http://uu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:381128/FULLTEXT01>.)

Pp. 340–341: ‘Bundnar Málrúnir og þyding þeirra.’

Pp. 341–349: ‘Þídíngin’ (cf. Lbs 1116 4to, ff. 200v–202r, <http://handrit.is/is/manuscript/imaging/is/Lbs04-1116/200v-202r#0200v>).

At the end of the text of p. 349 (the end of the manuscript) a later hand has written ‘Hart’ (?) (perhaps a pen trial).

Evaluation

A great deal of the manuscript corresponds not to the Y version of Magnús Ólafsson’s Edda, but to the X version manuscript Thott 1494 4to, or to AM 742 4to,⁴ as well as in some cases to the Codex Regius of Snorra Edda. No evidence has been found of the influence of Resen’s Edda. On the other hand there is also a quite large number of scribal additions and changes (re-ordering, paraphrase, explanatory phrases, expansions).

Many items in Annar partur are confused or corrupt, and many kennings misunderstood. But there is also much conscious re-ordering and re-arrangement, and there are additions from other sources or scribal expansions. The scribe, or perhaps one of his predecessors, has not only made a conscientious copy of his exemplar, with very little shortening, but has also added to the material in it and become engaged with his work, so that many of his changes are positive ‘improvements’.

So although this late manuscript contains very little that is not found in earlier manuscripts, and probably preserves very little in the way of superior readings to those found elsewhere, it may be unique in its combination of what is basically the longer (Y) version of Magnús Ólafsson’s Edda with items from the shorter (X) version and other recensions such as that in AM 742 4to, which may have been made by the well-known scholar Björn Jónsson of Skarðsá (1574–1655) in the first half of the seventeenth century; and also with elements going back to the Codex Regius of Snorra Edda (probably via one of the copies made of this before it left Iceland in 1662). It bears witness to the continuing intelligent interest in Norse skaldic poetry into the nineteenth century, and if the above guess that it was taken from Iceland by an emigrant to Denmark in the nineteenth century is correct, it also shows that some such emigrants wished to preserve the memory of the culture of their land of origin in their new homeland, even the more esoteric and difficult aspects of its early culture that had been brought to Iceland from Norway in the early Middle Ages.

Anthony Faulkes
August 2013

⁴ There may be some similarity too with MS Island. 6 in University College London (see *EMÓ* § 117), which I have not recently had an opportunity to see.