

Summary

The present thesis investigates the transmission history of *Sörla saga sterka*, one of the younger *fornaldarsögur*. The methodological background to the study is the sociology of texts and material philology. The aim of the study is threefold: First, to trace the transmission history of the saga; second, to examine possible connections between the socio-economic background of scribes and commissioners and the material and textual aspects of the manuscripts they produced; and third, to prepare an electronic multi-text edition of *Sörla saga sterka* which presents the findings of this study. Underlying this research are XLM-encoded transcriptions of all extant texts, produced in accordance with the Guidelines proposed by the Text Encoding Initiative.

A definition of the term ‘version’ is given, in keeping with which it is demonstrated that *Sörla saga sterka* survives in three distinct versions which differ in length, level of detail and dramatic suspense, explanation of deeds or motivation, depiction of characters and even the narrative structure. Version A is contained in more manuscripts from the earlier eighteenth century, and version C rather more often in manuscripts from the latter half of the century. By the second half of the nineteenth century, however, version A had replaced version C, which is most likely due to the influence of printed editions. These printed editions did not bring about the end of the manuscript transmission of the saga, but in fact became part of that transmission.

The manuscripts have been divided into two groups; scholarly and non-scholarly. The extent of textual variation of the texts contained in scholarly manuscripts is very limited. These texts reflect the traditions of textual criticism of their time and were used as predecessors of printed editions, work tools for scholars and as replacements of hard-to-come-by printed editions. Textual variation in the texts in non-scholarly manuscripts is more varied. Some show hardly any variation, while others show some variation, having either a slightly less or a slightly more oral style. A third group of texts shows a good deal of textual variation. Some of the variation can be traced back to the intentions of the scribes or commissioners, as confirmed by comparisons with other saga texts and the compilation patterns of the manuscripts in question.

Material aspects of the manuscripts were then examined; the relationship between the size of the written area and of the leaves, the number of abbreviations per line and the text density in terms of the number of written characters per square metre of text. This, together with the level of decoration, was then compared with the socio-economic background of the manuscripts’ scribes or commissioners, where known. The scholarly manuscripts differ markedly from the non-scholarly ones in having larger margins, fewer abbreviations and a lower text density. The non-scholarly manuscripts can in turn be divided into subgroups, although the differences are not as clear-cut as between them and the scholarly ones. Prestigious manuscripts, usually written by wealthy scribes or for wealthy commissioners, have more decoration and tend to have larger margins, rather fewer abbreviations and a somewhat lower text density. Plain and unadorned manuscripts, the ‘paperbacks’ of their day, have no decoration and tend to have smaller margins, a greater number of abbreviations and rather higher text density. The prestigious manuscripts tend to be among the older of the preserved manuscripts and the ‘paperbacks’ among the younger. A third group combines features of both groups, prestigious and ‘paperback’.