Translation, Transmission and Transformation. Old Norse Romantic Fiction and Scandinavian Vernacular Literacy 1200–1500

Introduction
The project outlined here treats the establishment of vernacular literacy in the period ca. 1200 to 1500, the focus being on the interplay between foreign texts and a vernacular culture. The aim is to investigate the transformations of literary genres in a medieval social context over a period of almost three hundred years. The three groups of texts that will be studied are: the translated romances known as riddarasögur thought to have been introduced at the royal court in Norway from the first half of the 13th century; the indigenous, so called fornaldrarsögur norðrlanda, which are considered to have their roots in oral tradition; and the later indigenous romances, fornsögur suðrlanda, which were produced in great numbers in Iceland in the 14th and 15th centuries. Our primary material consists of the Norwegian and Icelandic texts, but we will also allow for comparative studies of Swedish and Danish material.

The project forms a part of the interdisciplinary project Transformations in the Viking and Norse Middle Ages at the University of Oslo, and applies historical and philological perspectives on the sources and the problems they present. It consists of three detailed investigations, one for each of the groups of sagas, supplemented with two framing studies, which aim to provide syntheses from historical and philological points of view. The participants will cooperate closely, allowing for cross-fertilizing effects between different disciplines, as well as between detailed analyses and more general theoretical perspectives. The results are to be published in three separate studies (two of them as PhD theses, one as a monograph), followed by two general volumes exploring the interaction between European and vernacular genres over the whole timespan of three hundred years, seen from different – though by no means contradictory – perspectives. The subjects for the three detailed studies are:

1. The introduction of European culture through the translations of Old French romances into Old Norse riddarasögur (in the form of a PhD thesis)
2. The meeting of European elite culture and an oral popular culture in the fornaldrarsögur norðrlanda (in the form of a monograph by Terje Spurkland and Karl G. Johansson)
3. The Europeanization of Old Norse culture in the 15th century fornsögur suðrlanda (in the form of a PhD thesis)

The two framing studies are to relate closely to these three investigations. Their final form will, therefore, not be arrived at until in the fourth year. Hans Jacob Orning is responsible for the historical perspective, and the overall philological perspective will be formed by Terje Spurkland and Karl G. Johansson.

We wish to put the emphasis on the importance of the manuscript culture of the Middle Ages and its context. Our basic concern is the establishment of vernacular literacy in Scandinavia and the implications of the transformation from an oral to a literate society. Here we position our work in the scholarly tradition of orality and literacy. Within a theoretical framework of translation studies we intend to treat the import of texts, genres and culture and the meeting between a literate European culture and an essentially oral Scandinavian culture. We will concentrate on three oppositions which are often understood as representative of two almost independent cultures, i.e. imported vs. vernacular culture, literate vs. oral culture and elite vs. popular culture. Our aim is to challenge the simplistic view of these three oppositions as absolute, and rather argue for a more process oriented understanding of the introduction of a literate culture in Scandinavia.
Theoretical framework

In recent years, there has been a lively multi-disciplinary discussion concerning the assessment of our sources to the Middle Ages and the concepts on which earlier scholarship had built some of its results. The issues raised in this multi-disciplinary debate are of great importance for our work. It is our intention to take active part in the scholarly discussion in the fields of research sketched out below.

Traditional philology has often concentrated on the text as a fixed unit and considered variants as corruptions of an author’s original text. More recent scholarship has criticized this tradition, focusing particularly on the variance of the medieval text in the manuscript transmission. A central work in this field is Bernhard Cerquiglini’s critical essay on the history of philology (1989; English translation 1999), according to which a manuscript should be studied in its own right, as a witness to its own time, rather than as a witness to the original text. This critical assessment of the philological tradition was followed by a special number in *Speculum* where Stephen Nichols argued for a New Philology (1990).

In our opinion, the most important issue that has been raised in the discussion on New Philology concerns the meaning of variance. A medieval work is not the stable unit we are accustomed to in a modern print-based context. The individual work would inevitably change its form in the course of transmission from manuscript to manuscript. Compilers would use parts of a work in their compilations, and it would be adapted to various functions and audiences in individual manuscripts. Thus the only way to understand a work in this manuscript culture is to study its variants in the manuscript transmission.

The introduction of writing and the emergence of a literate society in the Scandinavian Middle Ages is, to a high degree, related to the manuscript culture of the elite and the Church. This culture was, from the start, influenced by European texts, first in Latin but soon also in translations. Translations have been the focus of new interest in recent years, not only for linguists studying the transition from source language to target language, but also for scholars from various disciplines within the humanities. These studies are presented within the theoretical framework of Translation Studies, which accords a central position not only to the translation of the text, but also to the introduction of genres and ideology by way of translating or rewriting. Here interest in medieval translation has generated important research in such publications as the series *The Medieval Translator* (*Traduire au Moyen Age*). In the field of Old Norse, representative studies have been presented by Stefanie Würth on the translation of pseudo-historical texts in the 13th century and the use of these works in the Old Norse context (Würth 1998), and by Susanne Kramarz-Bein on the *Þiðreks saga* (Kramarz-Bein 2002).

A structuralist definition of orality and literacy is based on dichotomies (see, e.g., Ong 1982; Havelock 1986; Goody 1987). The transition from an oral to a literate society, however, includes elements of both stages, or perhaps we should rather say that the two phenomena may exist side by side and even interleave over time, thus challenging the structuralist dichotomy of orality and literacy. Already in 1979 (new and extended edition in 1993) Michael T. Clanchy put forward a study with its focus on the interplay, rather than the contrast between orality and literacy. This was followed by scholars like Brian Stock (1984), D.H. Green (1994) and Joyce Coleman (1996) who were primarily interested in the processes involved in the introduction of writing. The last three scholars mentioned have all focused on the oral performance of written texts which proceeds for a long period of time in the literate society. An important tool for our understanding of the processes involved in the establishment of literacy is the introduction of the concept of aurality which forms a transitional zone from orality to literacy where oral performance can also be based on written texts (see e.g. Coleman 1996). Another perspective on the transitional phase was presented by Marco Mostert who introduces the notion of *Verschriftlichung* for the processes involved in establishing literacy (see, e.g., Mostert 1999). The establishment of different, well defined genres is one field of interest in the study of literacy and *Verschriftlichung*.

The graphic means to handle the written language develop, as the users become more aware of the possibilities of the medium. This is an important process towards a utilitarian literacy. The writing
down of e.g. oral poetry required some thought on the part of the editors and scribes, for an oral poem is structured with alliterations and assonances, but it is not necessarily understood in terms of lines and strophes. These terms are rather inventions of a literate society. The use of graphic markers in medieval manuscripts such as layout of the page, headlines, chapter titles and initials has received interest from scholars of literacy in recent research (see e.g. Rouse and Rouse 1982: 207).

Sources
Our primary sources are often divided into three groups: riddarasögur, fornaldarsögur norðrlanda and fornsögur suðrlanda. This division is, however, not unchallenged; the three groups are generally seen as quite closely related (see e.g. Glauser 2005; and below). It will, in addition to our main sources, sometimes be necessary to approach other contemporary and earlier Old Norse sources. We will also consult some Danish and Swedish material from the period as e.g. the so called Eufemiavisor and Saxo Grammaticus’ Gesta Danorum.

The earliest translations of French romances into Old Norse are supposed to have been made on the commission of the Norwegian king Hákon Hákonarson. The works in question are Tristrams saga ok Ísönd, Strengleikar, Möttuls saga, Ívens saga and Ólís saga ok Rosamundu. They are all considered to be from the second and third quarter of the 13th century. The manuscript material is of varying status for the various works. Tristrams saga, for example, is extant only in 17th century manuscripts, while e.g. Strengleikar are preserved in MS Uppsala University Library De la Gardie 4–7, a manuscript dated to c. 1270, i.e. not very long after the translation was made.

The fornaldarsögur norðrlanda were not necessarily seen as constituting a genre in the Middle Ages. The name and grouping are from the 1829–1830 edition presented by Carl Christian Rafn. The group consists of some twenty-five sagas and a number of shorter works, where the best known probably are Ásmundar saga kappabana, Gautreks saga ok Gjafa-Refs, Göngu-Hrólfs saga, Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks, Królfs saga kraka, Völsunga saga and Örvar-Odds saga. The earliest works are dated to the second half of the 13th century and were copied and, not least, rewritten throughout the 14th century. Most of these works are preserved in often significantly diverging versions in the manuscript material primarily from the 14th and 15th centuries. A good example of this is Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks, where the manuscript material can be divided into three groups representing versions that may in many cases be seen as different works.

The largest group within the source material consists of the indigenous romances, or fornsögur suðrlanda, which are dated from the late 14th century to the Reformation. It should be noted, however, that this genre was continued in copies and in new works well into the 20th century in Iceland. These sagas are produced from the model of the translated French romances, but need to be read and understood as works in their own right and in their own context. The authors who created these works did not only copy the style and content of the riddarasögur but often formed narratives that bear witness also of independent and indigenous traditions. Examples of the works from this group are Hermanns saga ok Jarlmanns, Konraðs saga keisarasonar, Rémundar saga keisarasonar, Samsons saga fagra and Sigurðar saga fóts, which are illustrative of how the European model, here the bridal quest motif, was transformed in the Icelandic tradition.

Three sub projects
The three sub projects presented below will concentrate on each of the three groups of saga texts thoroughly from the perspectives described above. A common starting point is the concept of adaptation and rewriting in the translation of foreign material as well as in transforming oral tradition, and on the transmission of texts in the manuscript culture. To rightly assess the value of the sources it is important to take into account the various contexts in which they were produced and those in which they were used.
1. *Riddarasögur* as patterns for European culture in the 13th century

This study will treat the introduction of European culture to the Norwegian elite in the form of translations of Old French texts. The Old Norse translations will be studied not only as translated texts, but also as bearers of generic patterns and, therefore, as parts of the process of *Verschriftlichung*. The *riddarasögur* are defined as translations of French romances for an audience within the court of the Norwegian king Hákon Hákonarson. When these translations, preserved in sometimes substantially later manuscripts, are related to the extant source language works, however, they display significant divergencies. Formally they present prose narratives while the source language texts are metrical texts, but more significantly, the content has often been drastically rewritten in the process. The traditional explanation of this has been that medieval translators did not work as their modern counterparts, trying hard to achieve an equivalent translation; rather they paraphrased the source text and adapted it to the demands of the target language culture. A supplementary explanation, which has been argued by e.g. Marianne Kalinke (e.g. 1981) and will be pursued in our study, is sought in the subsequent transmission of the translations in the manuscript tradition, where compilers and scribes rewrote the texts to adapt them to various functions and contexts. According to Kalinke, the original translations must have been closer to their source. The translation of texts could generally be expected to carry cultural values and ideals from the source language culture to the culture of the target language. In the case of the *riddarasögur* this has been related to the wish of the Norwegian king to introduce European court ideals in Norway. It could be argued, however, that the cultural influences of the *riddarasögur* were not instrumentally intended but rather should be seen as unintended and with a wider spectrum of social consequences. Here it is important to see the translated works in relation not only to their sources but also relate them to the indigenous culture where they were introduced, as this could be expected to have influenced both the form and content of the texts. It is important to stress, however, that this is not a simple undertaking as a contextualisation of the translations inevitably will influence our reading of the texts, i.e. we are aware of the risk of circular arguments in this analysis. The sub project therefore will have to be carried out in the following steps:

To be able to assess the range and depth of the adaption of *riddarasögur* it is necessary to relate the target language texts to the source language texts. This is a difficult task, as there are a number of problems concerning the sources. First, the source language texts which are preserved cannot with certainty be said to represent the versions used by the Norwegian translators; we therefore cannot say definitely whether a diviance between the source language text and the target language text is relevant or not. Second, the Norwegian texts have been tampered with by compilers and scribes in the manuscript transmission in ways that are difficult to evaluate. Nevertheless it is possible to retrieve valuable information about the relation between French source texts and Norwegian target texts which can enable us to define what is imported and what should be seen as indigenous in the extant versions of the *riddarasögur*.

The item studied here is the translation of not only the texts, but also the translation of generic features as well as cultural matter supposedly aimed at an elite culture in Norway. We assume that the translation of source language texts will always include adaption to the target language on the textual level, and that this was accentuated in the 13th century translations (see e.g. Dominte Antonsen 2006). It could be argued that the translated texts were formed to be performed at public readings and perhaps adapted to a form that was appreciated and well known from the traditional oral performances, i.e. the translations were formed to remind the audience of vernacular narratives. On the generic level, however, these works seem to have introduced new ideas which should be seen in the light of *Verschriftlichung*, i.e. we expect that the French source texts have carried generic and cultural traits which have not only been transferred to the translations, but also have influenced generic transformations of indigenous traditions. The translation of texts, genre and culture must therefore in our opinion be related to the processes involved in transforming the primarily oral society of
Scandinavia into a literate culture. This study is formed to elucidate the processes of translation and rewriting which are involved in this transformation.

2. **Fornaldarsögur norðrlanda and the Verschriftlichung of oral culture in the late 13th and 14th centuries**

The *fornaldarsögur norðrlanda* have traditionally been considered as based on oral tradition. Generally they are seen as younger than the earliest of the *riddarasögur*, but this has lately been questioned by Torfi Tulinius (2002), who views some of them as earlier written works, contemporary to the earliest family sagas. An important task for this sub project is to assess the Verschriftlichung process of the *fornaldarsögur* in relation to the assumed oral tradition as well as in relation to the *riddarasögur*. It will therefore be necessary also to reopen the question of when the former were written down.

A first study concentrates on the relation to an oral tradition. Here the project will draw on Karl G. Johansson’s monograph study of the Verschriftlichung of Eddic poetry (Johansson forthcoming; see also Johansson 2005). The Eddic verses that are found in some of the *fornaldarsögur* are tentatively understood as reflections of oral tradition. The poetic form and expression of the poetry from the *fornaldarsögur* will be set in relation to the Eddic poems proper, in order to assess its place in the oral tradition. Are the poems found in *fornaldarsögur norðrlanda* to be considered as less literate than the main corpus, where the poems are clearly part of a literate work in the compilation found in Codex Regius (GKS 2365 4to), or are they part of the same process of Verschriftlichung? From this study we will subsequently investigate the relation between poetry and prose in the sagas, the so-called prosimetric form, which is generally considered to be a reminder of the oral tradition. A central theoretical standpoint in this study concerns the writing down of oral tradition (see e.g. Amodio 2004).

There is narrative evidence of oral performance of the *fornaldarsögur* in a number of 13th century Icelandic sources. From these accounts, however, it is not clear whether the performance is based on an oral tradition or on a written source. It is therefore relevant to consider whether the performances of *fornaldarsögur* could have been part of a form of public reading from written texts similar to that suggested for the *riddarasögur* or if they were performed from memory. In this study we intend to apply methods from recent studies concerning medieval English and German public reading (see Green 1994 and Coleman 1996) to investigate the *fornaldarsögur* for literate markers of oral performance.

The popularity of the *riddarasögur* in the 13th and 14th centuries is important to take into account in relation to the *fornaldarsögur*. When this latter – presumably oral – genre was committed to parchment, it seems to have been under influence from the translated *riddarasögur*. This may not necessarily have been a one-way influence as it is quite possible that some of the *fornaldarsögur* were committed to parchment before the earliest translations of *riddarasögur* were made. The contact with this European written culture may have been twofold; manuscript texts formed literate patterns for the ‘literalization’ of the Icelandic texts, while the oral performances of the same texts most probably interrelated with the vernacular oral tradition.

In order to investigate the introduction of patterns from the translated works, therefore, we need to assess the interplay between the two genres. Our hypothesis is that we are dealing not simply with an imported, literate genre meeting an oral tradition, but rather with a meeting and cross-fertilization between the two. We intend therefore to carry out extensive investigations into the relations between the translated *riddarasögur* and the *fornaldarsögur norðrlanda*.

3. **Fornsögur suðrlanda – mirrors of European culture in the 15th century?**

The indigenous *fornsögur suðrlanda* are often treated as a part of the genre of *riddarasögur*. These late works may, however, be considered as representative of the last stage of the transformation and coalescence of an imported, literate tradition and a vernacular, oral tradition. In this study, therefore, the late sagas will be related to the two earlier genres. We will challenge the view that they form a
continuum with the translated riddarasögur uneffected by indigenous traditions with the contention that they can be seen as indigenous and independent works reflecting influences from various sources. These sagas may therefore be seen as equally valuable for our understanding of the Verschriftlichung of Old Norse culture as the generally more valued riddarasögur and fornaldarsögur norðrlanda. They are to be studied as relevant sources to the transformation of the Old Norse society in the 14th and 15th centuries.

A first field of interest in this sub project is the relationship of the fornsögur suðrlanda to the translated sagas treated above. A consistent study of changes in content and form in the fornsögur suðrlanda, set in relation to riddarasögur, will provide insights into the growth of a popular genre. As the Old Norse society of the 15th century must be considered to be to a large extent assimilated in the European literate culture, we may also expect influences from later European works. It is important to note how Continental influences spread also to the most distant parts of Europe, and how they were assimilated and transformed in the local literate culture. The fornsögur suðrlanda provide good examples of this phenomenon which will be given due attention in this study.

The fornsögur suðrlanda, despite being an integrated part of European Christian culture, show features which are not directly paralleled by trends in contemporary European literature. The very image of European culture in the sagas is therefore an interesting topic to study closer. This topic is set in relation to the exotic motifs found in many sagas, where the heroes are placed in foreign countries to encounter mores very different from those we may expect have been found in everyday life in contemporary Iceland. The exotic motifs are elaborated freely in the fornsögur suðrlanda and will be contrasted to motifs found in riddarasögur and fornaldarsögur norðrlanda. An interesting borderline case between fornsögur suðrlanda and fornaldarsögur norðrlanda in this respect is Bósa saga og Herrauðs which is traditionally placed among the later but in content and style is closely related to the former.

The indigenous romances, however, were not only influenced by the riddarasögur and European mainstream culture: it seems likely that fornaldarsögur norðrlanda also played an important role in the forming of the indigenous literate genre. It will therefore be a central task to investigate the influences of oral traditions on the fornsögur suðrlanda. It can be argued that the Old Norse literate culture was well established by this time, but it is obvious that oral performance and aural reception were still valuable features in the transmission of literate works, in what Katherine O’Brien O’keeffe (1990) has termed residual orality. It will therefore be of the utmost importance to evaluate oral markers in the manuscript texts.

The fornsögur suðrlanda rarely include poetry in the narrative. In this respect they resemble the translated riddarasögur and diverge from the form of many fornaldarsögur. It is interesting here to note the relation to the contemporary genre of rímur where the same motifs are treated in poetic form. This could indicate that the authors of the later sagas and rímur made a clear division between prosaic and poetic form. This sub project therefore will relate the fornsögur suðrlanda to the genre of rímur.

A last field of interest here concerns the manuscript culture in which the sagas are preserved. In the 14th and 15th century manuscripts these sagas form a dominating genre. They are, however, in many cases placed in a manuscript context where also riddarasögur proper and fornaldarsögur norðrlanda are present. This study will undertake a closer investigation of how the individual work is rewritten in the manuscript tradition, and how it has been modified in relation to its manuscript context.

The overall perspectives: text and context
The three sub projects described above form the base for the subsequent synthesis, in which the period c. 1200–1500 will be treated as a whole from two perspectives: firstly in a historical study, in which the genres are analysed in their ideological and political context, and secondly, one in which the overall philological perspectives will be applied and where the transformation of genres is investigated in relation to the transmission in the manuscript culture of the 14th and 15th centuries.
In these framing studies the focus will be on the crucial stage in the establishment of a written vernacular language, i.e. the period when the Latin script spread from the church institutions and was established as a tool for secular communication. This period has not received the attention it obviously deserves in scholarly work. The framing studies will pay close attention to the relations between foreign culture and the vernacular culture as they are reflected in the above presented studies of the source texts. We wish to test the traditional view of *riddarasögur* as representatives of a foreign and elite culture in opposition to *fornaldarsögur norðrlanda* and *fornsögur suðrlanda* as representatives of a vernacular and popular culture with its base in an oral tradition. The medieval manuscript culture is central to both studies.

**The historical perspective: transformation of genres as conflict or assimilation?**

Historians have often worked in relative isolation from philologists, even in a field like Norse culture in which both disciplines basically work with the same sources. Certainly historians have taken into consideration the results of philologists in the dating of texts, suggestions about possible authors etc. However, they have seldom paid due attention to the philological investigations on manuscript variants. Some of the explanation of this may be that the philological quest for “the original” has been taken at face value by historians, thus making further investigations into different versions of the same work superfluous. The root of the problem, however, probably is to find in a lack of interdisciplinary cooperation. In this project these shortcomings will be adressed in a thorough manner. The results of the three philological sub projects will provide the basis for further historical inquiry, as it will allow for a more precise evaluation of e.g. which parts of a text a scribe transcribed without making crucial changes in the semantic content, and which parts he omitted, added or elaborated on. The philological investigations of these matters will thus open up for a historical analysis of why these operations were carried out as they were. Whereas the philological perspective views the genres from ‘within’ (i.e. it is the transformations of the genres themselves which are in focus), the historical perspective seeks to explain such changes by relating them to external factors, looking at the transformation of genres in connection with power relations, ideological developments and normative divergences.

Firstly, the relation between French source language texts and the Old Norse translations in the case of the *riddarasögur* will be treated. Philological analysis of this relation will provide the foundation of a historical investigation of how these divergences should be interpreted. For example, what can the differences between *Tristrams saga* on the one hand, and its French original on the other, tell us about the norms and ideals of Norse society in this period? This investigation is carried out in close relation to the sub project on *riddarasögur*.

Secondly, the philological investigations about differing manuscripts – their distribution, dating and place of origin – will provide an excellent opportunity to study the relation between what has been transferred and what has been adapted. This is even more pertinent as we are here treating the most popular genres in late medieval Iceland. As an example, the rewriting of *Tristrams saga* in 14th century Iceland could be set in relation to the first translation more than hundred years earlier. What were the changes, and why was it reworked so radically?

As mentioned earlier, we will adopt a critical stance towards the oppositions between foreign and vernacular, literate and oral, and elite and popular culture. Such oppositions can be useful as analytical tools but are often too rigid. In the historical analysis, a main task will be to study the relationship between foreign and vernacular values. A first step will be to consider how the three types of sagas presented foreign and Old Norse values and norms. Did they favour norms connected with the imported culture, or did they rather celebrate traditional Old Norse norms? It is not always easy to define what is to be seen as imported or vernacular norms, but it is possible to distinguish a range of themes. Thus we will acquire a clearer view of the norms the new genres purported, and how they were transformed over time.
On a more general level the main question is whether the relation between foreign and vernacular was perceived as an explicit opposition or not. In the middle of the 13th century, the author of *Konungs skuggsiá* proclaimed that *hæverska* ‘courtesy’ was the most important virtue of a royal retainer, in opposition to being local and inexperienced in courtly things (Holm-Olsen 1983). In this opposition we may see a competition between the new, European customs of the court and traditional values. This may be viewed as a typical literate reasoning, as it assumes that different opinions co-exist and can be debated in an explicit manner (see, e.g., Goody 1996). It is difficult, however, to discern a battle over ideological or cultural hegemony following the statement in *Konungs skuggsiá*. Is this due to lack of sources giving alternative views on *hæverska*? Opponents may have had less opportunities for using the literate medium, as the 13th century Norway should probably be viewed as a predominantly oral culture. If only a few people would read or hear about *Konungs skuggsiá*, it implies that written texts were not bound to have wide repercussions in society. Furthermore, it is an open question whether European impulses were perceived as posing a challenge to the vernacular culture at all: in a culture more dominated by oral expressions, the main inclination may have been towards harmonisation and assimilation of differences, rather than confronting inconsistencies.

**The philological perspective**

The relation between oral performance of an oral tradition and the performance of a written text in public reading – both cases of oral transmission and aural reception – will be addressed anew in this concluding synthesis. We wish here to draw the longer lines and to challenge the oppositions between imported vs. vernacular culture, literate vs. oral culture and elite vs. popular culture which were presented in the introduction. We expect our results to elucidate a process where these oppositions are all part of an ongoing transformation of the Old Norse society, and where they all intertwine over time. Thereby the process of *Verschriftlichung* of these specific genres is understood as representative of the overall transformation of the Scandinavian society, which was initiated by the introduction of Latin script for the vernacular.

One important issue to be treated in this study is the aspect of text production. The various sagas were not produced within the same milieus. For the earliest translations of *riddarasögur* we have information about the production on commission by the king, but for the later sagas information is limited. From the perspective of New Philology it is relevant to study the context of text production more closely, as this could provide information about the conditions under which certain works or groups of works were produced, and about the social circumstances of the production.

An important source of information to be treated is the manuscript evidence of the three genres, i.e. in which textual contexts the various texts are found. This could reveal information about how they were understood by contemporary scribes and compilers. Here we wish to underline the importance of contextualizing the manuscript evidence. From this it should be possible to assess the relation between imported and indigenous works in the manuscript tradition. It is also relevant to study more closely the milieus in which texts were reproduced in the medieval manuscript culture. We intend e.g. to study how sagas from the three genres are distributed in manuscripts over time, and, when information is available, geographically. This will enable us to draw conclusions about the conditions of manuscript production, and the social contexts in which these works were rewritten in large numbers in the late Middle Ages will be set in focus. The individual versions of sagas found in manuscripts from the 14th and 15th centuries, which often diverge so significantly from each other that they can be seen as different works, will be viewed as representatives of the transforming manuscript culture, where knowledge of reading and writing is spread from the elite into a wider social range of the population. The monastic scriptoria of the 13th and 14th centuries were challenged by a more secular manuscript production in the 15th century. We expect to find evidence in this movement from an elite literacy to a wider lay literacy for a more direct interplay between oral performance and the reproduction of written works.
Scholarly network

The international scholarship on *riddarasögur*, fornaldarsögur *norðrlanda* and *fornsögur suðrlanda* is relatively expansive. We have in the course of a number of International Saga conferences built a network within this field, however, and have in the preparations for this application received formal letters from a number of leading milieux stating the intention to cooperate with our project.

In Norway our contacts are first and foremost with the Centre for Medieval Studies in Bergen and professor Else Mundal. Here we have already a developed cooperation concerning conferences and PhD courses since a couple of years. This cooperation will be continued e.g. in the form of common conferences. Professor Jürg Glauser at the Universität Zürich, who leads the project “Inszenierungen von Schrift. Übersetzen, Vokalität und Transmission in den skandinavischen Literaturen des Mittelalters”, has stated that our projects are complementary and that the two projects therefore should preferably cooperate. In relation to the study of medieval translation we have established contacts with professor Stefanie Würth at the Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, who works with issues concerning translation and culture contact. Professor Torfi Tulinius at Háskóli Íslands in Reykjavik has been a guest in Oslo during our preparations for this application and has contributed to the form of the application. He has also stated that he looks forward to establish more formal exchanges of researchers and PhD students in the coming years in relation to our work. In the course of our preparation we have also had Dr. Annette Lassen from Háskóli Íslands as a guest, and she has contributed with suggestions to the application. Annette Lassen is a member of the organizing community for a Scandinavian conference series on *fornaldarsögur* which will be an important medium for contributions from our project and a forum for scholarly debate. The four mentioned scholars are also invited to visit University of Oslo in the course of the planned project. It is perhaps needless to say that we have well established contacts with the two Arnamagnæan institutes in Copenhagen and Reykjavik and the scholars working in these institutes, which will be of great value for our manuscript studies. We are at the time in the process of establishing contacts with scholars in the field of French medieval romances and have in the process of producing this application received suggestions from Dr. Peter Damian-Grint at Oxford University, who has stated his interest in cooperating with our project. We intend to develop our contacts further in this field in the course of the project.

Literature


