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BEINECKE MANUSCRIPT 508
AND OLE WORM'S
ANTIQUARIAN WORLD

1. Introduction

WHETHER BY KEEPING medieval vellums or making their own copies, early modern scholars curated the documents and narratives from the Middle Ages that we have today. This article seeks to identify one of these copies: A manuscript, Beinecke MS 508, that was purchased from private hands in 1971 and is now a part of the collection at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut.

Beinecke MS 508 is a small (190 by 162 mm) paper manuscript acquired by the Beinecke Library in 1971 as a gift from the Yale Library Associates.¹ The manuscript consists of two separate texts that were bound together, probably in the seventeenth or eighteenth century, although the current binding is modern.² The first section of the manuscript (fol. 1–16) contains early Anglo-Saxon laws and documents copied from the *Archaionomia, sive de priscis legibus libri*, a collection of Anglo-Saxon documents in Old English and Latin, first printed in London in 1568;³ the second section (fol. 17–89) is a copy of northern Icelandic annals made in the seventeenth century.⁴

- 1 The manuscript was purchased from L. Larsen. See Albert Derolez, “Beinecke MS 508,” in *Yale University Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, General Collection of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Pre-1600 Manuscripts* last updated 2007, accessed September 25, 2014: <http://brbl-net.library.yale.edu/pre1600ms/docs/pre1600.ms508.htm>. See also, Cora E. Lutz, “Manuscripts Copied from Printed Books,” in her *Essays on Manuscripts and Rare Books* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1975), 135. I would like to thank Professor Anders Winroth and Dr. Giselle Gos for their help in the preparation of this article. All errors are my own.
- 2 Derolez suggests that the Anglo-Saxon laws were added ca. 1700, cf. “Beinecke MS 508.”
- 3 *Archaionomia sive de priscis legibus libri*, ed. William Lambarde (London, 1568). This book is accessible through the *Early English Books Online* database.
- 4 Derolez, “Beinecke MS 508.”

The text of these annals is similar to a group of annals copied in north Iceland and called by their editor Gustav Storm the *Gottskálks Annaler*, after the copyist and author of a continuation of one version in this group, Gottskálf Jónsson (ca. 1524–ca. 1593).⁵ Beinecke MS 508's text most closely resembles the text preserved in AM 412 4to, which probably shared an exemplar with *Gottskálks Annaler* up until the year 1394, and is referred to in Storm's edition as *I*. The *I* text and MS 508 are in general the most similar, sometimes sharing spelling idiosyncrasies such as *Ansargij* where Gottskálf's copy has *Ensgarj* (referring to Bishop Ansgar of Hamburg-Bremen).⁶ Both texts also stop in the same year. Nothing about these similarities suggests that either is a copy of the other,⁷ but they are certainly more similar than AM 410 4to or AM 429 a 2 4to, the other manuscripts that Storm suggests derive from the now lost common exemplar.⁸

Beinecke MS 508 travelled under scholarly radar for centuries, and it takes a certain amount of untangling to understand the reasons for its production and long obscurity. I begin by describing the context for the exchange and copying of manuscripts in Scandinavia in the seventeenth century, especially in Iceland and Denmark, which were both under the Danish Crown. This was a time when the Danish king kept several historians on his payrolls and showed a robust interest in Denmark's ancient past.⁹ It was also a time of renewed interest in Icelandic written sources,

- 5 Gottskálf Jónsson was a priest at Glaumbær in Skagafjörður. For more information about Gottskálf's life and his books see, Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, "Gagn og gaman séra Gottskálks Jónssonar í Glaumbæ," in *Greppaminni: Rit til heiðurs Vésteini Ólasyri sjötugum* (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 2009), 377–91. Gottskálf's son wrote the final entries for the years between 1568 and 1578; Jakob Benediktsson's introduction to *Arngrimi Jonæ Opera Latine Conscripta*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 4 vols., Bibliotheca Arnarnagæana, vols. 9–12 (Copenhagen: Einar Munksgaard, 1950–57), 4:46. Gottskálf's copy of the annals is now preserved at the Swedish Royal Library in Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Perg. 5 8vo. In this article I will refer to this text as *Gottskálks Annaler*.
- 6 New Haven, Beinecke MS 508 fol., 22r; *Islandske Annaler indtil 1578*, ed. Gustav Storm, Det norske historiske Kildeskriftfonds Skrifter, vol. 21 (Christiania: Grøndahl og Søns Bogtrykkeri, 1888), 312.
- 7 Some spelling, for instance, is the same in MS 508 and in *Gottskálks Annals* but not in *I*.
- 8 This is reassuring given that these two manuscripts are compilations of annals, not strictly speaking copies, although both were produced in the north of Iceland at the diocese of Hólar. See Storm's introduction to *Islandske Annaler*, xxvi–xxvii, xxxii, li–lii.
- 9 Karen Skovgaard-Petersen, *Historiography at the Court of Christian IV (1588–1648): Studies in the Latin Histories of Denmark by Johannes Pontanus and Johannes Meursius*, *Renæssancestudier*, vol. 11 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2002), 23–35;

at least as they could shed light on early Danish history. It was in this connection that one of the great antiquarians of the period, Ole Worm (1588–1655), came into contact with one of the first Icelanders to publish historical works about Iceland for a wider audience, Arngrímur Jónsson (1568–1648). The two men undertook a correspondence that ended only with Arngrímur's death in 1648.¹⁰ After establishing this context, I describe the manuscript itself, concentrating on the second part, which contains a seventeenth-century copy of the Icelandic annals, tentatively dated to about 1650 in the Beinecke catalogue.¹¹ This copy was not known to Gustav Storm when he edited the medieval annals from Iceland in the late nineteenth century and is not cited in his edition.

There are, however, excellent reasons for believing that the annals preserved in Beinecke MS 508 are a copy of Icelandic annals made in the north of Iceland and sent to Ole Worm by Arngrímur Jónsson sometime before 1641.¹² Previous scholars believed that this manuscript was lost in the library fire in Copenhagen in 1728,¹³ but it survived the fire, probably because it had left Denmark.

One of the unique features of Beinecke MS 508 is the Latin translations in the margins of the annals text. In the final part of this article, I analyze these translations and discuss why they were made, considering why and for whom the manuscript was most likely produced. I further argue that the translations offer an explanation for how this copy of the annals survived and moreover came to be bound with the Anglo-Saxon documents that now form the first half of the manuscript.

Ellen Jørgensen, *Historieforskning og historieskrivning i Danmark indtil aar 1800*, 3rd ed. (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1964), 117–60.

- 10 Jakob Benediktsson's introduction to *Ole Worm's Correspondence with Icelanders*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, *Bibliotheca Arnarnagæana*, vol. 7 (Copenhagen: Einar Munksgaard, 1948), xvi–xxi.
- 11 Derolez, "Beinecke MS 508."
- 12 We do not know precisely when Worm received the manuscript, but it was in his possession by 1641 when it is mentioned in a letter to Worm from Stephanius, Jakob, cf. *Ole Worm's Correspondence*, 357 (letter 39, 4 December, 1641).
- 13 Jakob Benediktsson believed, like Storm, that the manuscript was lost in the Copenhagen fire; see *Ole Worm's Correspondence*, 520 (n. 357, superscript 25). Anthony Faulkes also believed the manuscript was lost; see his introduction to *Two Versions of Snorra Edda from the 17th Century*, vol. 2, *Edda Islandorum; Völuspá, Hávamál*, P.H. Resen's Editions of 1665, ed. Anthony Faulkes, *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, Rit*, vol. 14 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1977), 19.

2. Historiography in the Seventeenth Century

The seventeenth century in Denmark was a good time to be a trained historian. The Danish king Christian IV was keen to support historical research and publishing on Danish history, not least to counter rival Sweden's claims to a heroic past.¹⁴ He supported several historians with salaries to complete the task of writing a history of Denmark up to his own time and also supported the collection of undiscovered documents and narratives.¹⁵

Some sources came into scholarly or royal hands with the dissolution of the monasteries during the Reformation (when much was also destroyed or lost),¹⁶ but Danish antiquarians and officials were just beginning to become aware of the material preserved in Icelandic manuscripts, and in the Old Norse-Icelandic language.

3. Ole Worm and Arngrímur Jónsson

One of the first Danish scholars to seek Icelandic sources was Ole Worm. A medical doctor by training, Worm was also passionate about Danish antiquities, especially runic inscriptions, and natural history. He published several books, kept a *Wunderkammer* of natural phenomena, and corresponded with a wide circle of scholars in several countries.¹⁷ Worm himself never mastered either contemporary Icelandic or the language in which the runes that so intrigued him were written — although this deficit did not prevent him from publishing several books on the subject.¹⁸ His curiosity surpassed the technical skills he had to satisfy it. This was especially true for rune stones and runic inscriptions. He struggled with the language and the deciphering of runic scripts, never mastering either.

14 Skovgaard-Petersen, *Historiography at the Court*, 9, 28.

15 Often through orders put into effect by his chancellor, Christian Friis, who was personally interested in the subject. *Ole Worm's Correspondence*, xv–xvii; Skovgaard-Petersen, *Historiography at the Court*, 25.

16 Jørgensen, *Historieforskning og historieskrivning*, 65–66.

17 Much of this correspondence is still preserved either in Worm's copy book or the original letters, cf. *Ole Worm's Correspondence*, xi–xxxv. All of Worm's surviving works and letters are in Latin, the language of humanist scholarship during the seventeenth century. Worm was, however, the editor of a Danish translation of *Heimskringla* by Peder Claussøn.

18 *Ole Worm's Correspondence*, xvii–xxiii.

Worm sought linguistic help from his Icelandic correspondents and students in Copenhagen. It was a common, though inaccurate, belief in this period that the language of everything from tenth-century Danish runestones to fourteenth-century sagas was essentially identical with the Icelandic currently spoken.¹⁹ This assumption, though inaccurate, is understandable in light of the fact that there were no dictionaries, grammars, or other aids for interpretation of not just Old Norse-Icelandic but of medieval vernacular languages generally.²⁰

The Icelander Arngrímur Jónsson was among Worm's correspondents and friends. Arngrímur first wrote to Worm in 1626 at the prompting of Þorlákur Skúlason (1597–1656), who was the first Icelandic student under Worm's supervision in Copenhagen, and had recently returned to Iceland.²¹ Worm had read Arngrímur's *Crymogæa* (1609), a history and defense of Iceland, and wanted to find out what else Arngrímur knew.²² Worm harbored the hope that Arngrímur could help him to interpret Danish runestones. But he was disappointed. Arngrímur knew little about runes and was unable to discover much more. Moreover, the Icelandic of

- 19 Jakob points out that the language preserved in the runic scripts that Worm was trying to decipher was not the same language as that of the sagas or of the early modern Icelanders (or of many Swedish runestones for that matter), although the general view at the time maintained that they were the same or essentially the same; *Ole Worm's Correspondence*, xii, xvi–xvii, xxii. An advertisement poster produced in Stockholm in 1624 suggests how difficult runestones were to interpret (and how much desire there was to understand them). This poster, which is a reproduction of two images from Bureus's book on runes, invites readers to interpret the writing on two runestones for a reward. This appeal suggests that there was a lack of established experts on the topic and help was being sought wherever it might be found. There is a copy of this poster preserved pasted into the back cover of the Beinecke Library's 1636 edition of Ole Worm's *Runic: Seu, Danica literatura antiquissima, vulgò gothica dicta luci reddita, opera Olai Wormii... Cui accessit De prisca danorum poesi dissertatio* (Copenhagen, 1636). The existence of this leaf in the Beinecke copy has not been noted previously; Johannes Bureus, *Monumenta helsingica à Throne in Angedal ante aliquot cent. annorum posita* (Stockholm, 1624). On this rare broadsheet, preserved only in two other copies, both in Sweden, see, Elisabeth Svärdröm, *Johannes Bureus' Arbeten om svenska runinskrifter* (Stockholm: Wahlstrom and Widstrand, 1936), 14.
- 20 John Considine, *Dictionaries in Early Modern Europe: Lexicography and the Making of Heritage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Ethel Seaton, *Literary Relations of England and Scandinavia in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1935), 210–11.
- 21 He soon after was elected bishop of Hólar; *Arngrimi Jonae Opera Latine Conscripta*, 4:21–23.
- 22 *Ole Worm's Correspondence*, xvi.

the seventeenth century was by no means the same language as that of early Danish runestones.²³

Nevertheless, the two maintained a correspondence and helped each other in the ways that they could. Arngrímur translated, sent Worm documents and other materials (including an important early manuscript of the *Prose Edda*, commonly called *Codex Wormianus* or *Wormsbók*), and read over and commented on some of Worm's writings.²⁴ Worm used his political and social connections to help ensure that Arngrímur was paid for his work collecting sources.²⁵ He also sent preserved ginger and medical advice.²⁶ The two never met in person, but they exchanged letters and favors for some twenty years.

Typical for the period, Worm and Arngrímur shared a rather literal approach to medieval sources, what they were useful for, and how they should be evaluated.²⁷ Annals especially were most often viewed simply as a way to help date events. They were sometimes referred to as chronologies.²⁸ One exception to a general faith in medieval sources and the written word can be found in Arngrímur's doubts about the reliability of Saxo Grammaticus (d. 1220), which probably stemmed more from a reflexive belief in the superiority of Icelandic sources than from reflection on source criticism.²⁹

23 Arngrímur himself explained to Worm that because of associations between runes and magic, many people with knowledge about runes were too afraid to share it, cf. *Ole Worm's Correspondence*, 29 (letter 18, 18 August 1632).

24 *Ole Worm's Correspondence*, 10 (letter 5, 4 September 1628).

25 Worm was among other things, personal physician to the Danish king Christian IV.

26 Jakob Benediktsson's introduction to *Arngrimi Jonae Opera Latine Conscripta*, 4:28; *Ole Worm's Correspondence*, 36 (letter 17, 27 August 1633).

27 *Arngrimi Jonae Opera Latine Conscripta*, 4:52.

28 In one of the letters that suggests that Worm had the annal manuscript from Arngrímur by 1641, for instance, the annal is referred to as *chronologia*, as a chronology, which was used to check facts and establish dates for particular events; see the letter from St. J. Stephanus to Ole Worm in *Ole Worm's Correspondence*, 357 (letter 39, 4 December 1641).

29 Arngrímur was particularly upset by claims that Iceland could be identified with the Thule of classical antiquity, cf. *Arngrimi Jonae Opera Latine Conscripta*, 4:59. He was also quite dismissive of Adam of Bremen, cf. *Arngrimi Jonae Opera Latine Conscripta*, 4:58–59.

4. English Connections

Arngrímur was not simply an Icelandic curate with a taste for antiquities or Ole Worm's friend, but a published author with a readership that reached across northern Europe, at least in certain learned circles (he published all of his best-known works in Latin).³⁰ Arngrímur was also well-known at least in part because Worm, who addressed a European-wide audience, persistently cited him in his works.³¹

Denmark was not alone in its efforts to recover an ancient past. In its rival Sweden similar attempts were underway.³² In England too, antiquarians and scholars showed renewed interest in their own "Germanic" or vernacular past. These endeavors stemmed, at least in part, from a desire to find (and create) the national equivalents of a glorious ancient Rome to look back on.³³ In England this meant not only a renewed interest in Anglo-Saxon language and culture but also growing awareness of the historical connections between England and Scandinavia.³⁴ English antiquarians in particular had an appetite for northern antiquities and were interested in the connections between England and the Scandinavian countries in the Middle Ages as it provided them with an ancient identity outside Roman influence. But English antiquarians also had difficulties with medieval vernacular languages. Old English had become a foreign tongue (also sometimes using runes) without many tools to help in its interpretation. It is in this context that Beinecke MS 508 finds a home.

5. Identifying the Manuscript

In the Beinecke catalogue, Albert Derolez, with the help of Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, identifies these annals as closely related to the *b* version

30 Seaton, *Literary Relations*, 10–11, 21–22, 225.

31 *Arngrimi Jonae Opera Latine Conscripta*, 4:38.

32 Skovgaard-Petersen, *Historiography at the Court*, 121. One of the more fantastical of these efforts can be found in Olof Rudbeck's *Atlantica*, in which he claims, among other things, that Plato's Atlantis can be identified as Sweden; see Ernst Ekman, "Gothic Patriotism and Olof Rudbeck," *The Journal of Modern History* 34 (1962):59–60.

33 See Graham Parry, *The Trophies of Time: English Antiquarians of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

34 Seaton, *Literary Relations*, 202–74.

of the *Gottskálks Annaler* as presented in Storm's edition.³⁵ The *b* version includes all of the manuscripts of the annals Storm groups with the *Gottskálks Annaler* except for the *Gottskálks Annaler* themselves (which continue on to 1578 with an independent chronicle of events after the annals he was copying stopped in 1394).³⁶

In Storm's edition, *b* does not reference an extant manuscript but is rather shorthand for a now lost annals manuscript that he believes shared an exemplar *a* with the annals used by Gottskálk for events up to 1394.³⁷ Storm posits that the other manuscripts he mentions and uses in his edition derive from this now lost text.³⁸ These versions stop in 1394 when the now lost exemplar seems to have stopped; they are not incomplete copies of the *Gottskálks Annaler*.

Storm uses three manuscripts in his edition of the *Gottskálks Annaler*. Manuscript 5 octavo (late sixteenth century), in the Royal Library in Stockholm, which is the copy made and continued by Gottskálk and his son, is the main text. Storm notes variants from AM 412 4to (1600-1650), which he abbreviates as *I*, and AM 429 a 4to (1600-1700)³⁹, which is abbreviated *H*. Storm is also aware of two other manuscripts that he believes derive from the same *b* exemplar, although he does not use them to establish the text. These are AM 410 4to (c. 1640) and excerpts made by Otto Sperling in GKS 3638 8vo (seventeenth century).⁴⁰

35 Derolez, "Beinecke MS 508."

36 *Islandske Annaler*, xxv–xxvi.

37 *Islandske Annaler*, xxxii.

38 There is no reason to doubt that the posited *b* manuscript existed, but it is only an educated supposition.

39 This manuscript is now in parts following conservation work by Birgitte Dall in 1970, as AM 429 a 1 4to and AM 429 a 2 4to. AM 429 a 1 4to contains 18 leaves and two loose leaves in a separate folder and AM 429 a 2 4to consists of a single leaf. See the entries for "AM 429 a 2 4to" and "AM 429 a 1 4to" on handrit.is (accessed March 31, 2014).

40 There was once a leaf of still another copy of these northern annals in the Árni Magnússon collection, but it has since been lost. Storm writes that, "Derimod har den samme Original maaske omtrent paa samme Tid paa Nordlandet været benyttet til en Annalsamling for Aar 636–1394, som citeres i 17de Aarhundrede under Titelen 'Annalar vm þad sierligt sem til hefur fallit i Danmark Noregi Þyskalandi og Islandi og annarstadar fra þui datum skrifadist 636' Af disse Annaler har den Arnamagnæanske Samling havt et Membranblad, som nu er tabt." [On the other hand, the same original, perhaps at nearly the same time, was used in the northern part of the country for an annal collection for the years 636–1394, which is cited in the seventeenth century under the title "Annalar vm þad sierligt sem til hefur fallit i Danmark Noregi Þyskalandi og Islandi og annarstadar fra þui datum skrifadist 636" The

6. *Arngrims Annaler*

Storm mentions that that there once existed a copy of the *b* version of the annals associated with Arngrímur Jónsson, which came into the possession of Ole Worm when Arngrímur sent it to him.⁴¹ I would like to concentrate on these elusive *Arngrims annaler*, which Storm mentions but does not offer further identifying information for, giving no shelf mark or library.

In his discussion of the lost annals manuscript *b*, Storm mentions that “A slightly older copy of the lost annals was already previously made at the initiative of Arngrímur Jónsson. Arngrímur’s copy came to Denmark by c. 1635–40. Ole Worm owned it in 1641... and his son Willum Worm gave it [i.e., the copy] to P. Resen, whose books they had in the old university library; in Resen’s *Bibliotheca* they are found (after p. 129) in Caps. VI ord. III in Qvarto No. 13 under the title: ‘Annales ex Boreali Islandia transmissi per Arngrimum Jonam Islandum.’”⁴² Peder Hansen Resen, a scholar and jurist (1625–88), donated his extensive library to the old university library in Copenhagen, enriching their collection of law books and books on Nordic antiquities.⁴³ The collection was destroyed in the library fire of 1728, and it seems that Storm came to the natural conclusion that Ole Worm’s copy of the northern annals burned with it, along with so many other books. Jakob Benediktsson, who edited the letters between Ole Worm and Arngrímur, came to a similar conclusion. He states that Ole Worm owned two copies of Icelandic annals; one of these is now AM 414 4to, but the other copy, which Arngrímur had sent to him,

Arnarnagænan collection had one leaf of these annals, which is now lost]; *Islandske Annaler*, xxviii.

41 *Islandske Annaler*, xxxi.

42 “En lidt ældre Afskrift af de tabte Annaler var allerede tidligere taget paa Foranstaltning af Arngrim Jonsson. Arngrims Afskrift kom allerede c. 1635–40 til Danmark. Ole Worm ejede dem i 1641... og hans Son Willum Worm forærede dem til P. Resen, med hvis Bøger de havnede i det gamle Universitetsbibliothek; i Resens Bibliothek fandtes de (efter p. 129) i Caps. VI ord. III in Qvarto No. 13 under Titelen: ‘Annales ex Boreali Islandia transmissi per Arngrimum Jonam Islandum.’” *Islandske Annaler*, xxxi.

43 Harald Ilsøe, “Peder Resens nordiske bibliotek katalog, bibliografi og boghandel i sidste halvdel af 1600 tallet,” *Fund og Forskning* 30 (1991):27–28. The entry in Resen’s *Bibliotheca* is on p. 130 no. 13, grouped with a number of Icelandic texts, including another annals manuscript: Peder Johannes Resen, *Bibliotheca Regiæ Academiæ Hafniensi Donata cui præfixa est ejusdem resenii vita* (Copenhagen, 1685).

Jakob claims, “was lost in the fire of Copenhagen, 1728.”⁴⁴ But it survived: Beinecke MS 508 is the copy once in the possession of Ole Worm. It is the so-called *Arngrims annaler*, whose existence Storm gestures at but can provide no bibliographical information for, believing the manuscript to have been lost.

The most obvious reason to support this argument is that Beinecke MS 508 itself associates the annals with Arngrímur Jónsson. On an otherwise blank page, bound before the beginning of the text, it is written (in a hand different from the body of the text): “Annales ex Boreali Islandia transmissi per Arngrimum jonam.” [Annals from northern Iceland sent by Arngrimus jonas].⁴⁵

This attribution matches the description made by Otto Sperling (1634–1715), who copied extracts from the annals manuscript sent by Arngrímur when it was a part of the old university library, after it had been donated by Resen but before the 1728 fire. Sperling wrote about the manuscript from which he copied his extracts: “Huc usque Annales hi Islandica lingua scripsi qui incipiunt ab anno 636, cui Titulus ‘Annales um thad sierligt sem till heffur fallid i Danmark Norige Thyskalandi Islande og annarstadar fran thui Datum skriffadist 636’. sed ego externa quae pauca sunt nec pertinent ad Septentrionalia omisi. In frontispicio alia manu adscibitum legitur ‘Annales ex Boreali Islandia transmissi per Arngrimum Jonam filium Islandum’. Exstant in Resenii Bibliotheca, nunc publica Universitatis Hafniensis in libro qui habet signum R. VI. 3 a p. 377 ad p. 501.”⁴⁶ [The annals here written in the Icelandic tongue begin from the year 636 under the title ‘Annals concerning notable events that happened in Denmark, Norway, Germany, Iceland and other places beginning from the year 636’ but I have omitted the few things that do not pertain to the North. On the frontispiece in a different hand is the attribution: ‘Annals

44 *Ole Worm’s Correspondence*, 520 (n. 357, superscript 25).

45 New Haven, Beinecke MS 508, fol. 17r.

46 GKS 3638 8vo. fol. 139r. Storm makes a small transcription error in his reference to this passage. He reads an m abbreviation nasal stroke above the a in ‘Jonæ’ as forming a part of the letter æ, giving a reading of “Annales ex Boreali Islandia transmissi per Arngrimum Jonæ filium Islandum,” a reading that makes more grammatical sense given the presence of *filium*, which was not a part of how Arngrímur identified himself in his Latin works; *Islandske Annaler*, xxxi. According to Jakob Benediktsson, “On the title-pages of his printed works AJ always styles himself Arngrimus Jonas Islandus”, cf. *Arngrimi Jonæ Opera Conscripta*, 4:4 (n. 2).

from northern Iceland sent by the Icelander Arngrímur Jonas-son.’ They are in Resen’s collection, now in the public collection of the University of Copenhagen, in a book which has the shelfmark R. VI. 3, from p. 377 to p. 501].⁴⁷ The phrasing of the Latin that identifies Argrímur as the sender is the same in Beinecke MS 508, in Resen’s *Bibliotheca*, and in the reference in Sperling’s extracts — save that Resen and Sperling both use *Islandum* to further identify Arngrímur.

Further confirmation comes from the Latin translations in the margins of the manuscript. Although Worm’s letters do not mention any Latin translations in reference to the annals text sent by Arngrímur, Resen does, in his 1665 edition of *Snorra Edda*. Resen cites Arngrímur’s authority on Ari fróði, about whom Resen writes: “Hic Areta ob eruditionem, qva præ reliquis suis consortibus pollebat, cognomen Frode ꝛ: *docti seu Philosophi* accepit, et scripsit librum de literatura Runica idioma Islandico qvi tamen jam intercidit, *vt scribit Arngrimus Jonas in margine Annalium Islandicorum ex Boreali Islandia transmissorum.*” [This Areta (Ari?), received the by-name Frode, which means learned or philosopher, for the erudition which flourished in him compared with those who came later. He also wrote a book about runic literature in the Icelandic language, which is now lost, as Arngrímur Jonas wrote in the margin of the Icelandic annals sent from northern Iceland].⁴⁸ This suggests that there was Latin in the annals copy sent by Arngrímur, and that these notations were being used, and trusted by the recipients of the text, as good historical authority.

Moreover, fol. 27r of Beinecke MS 508 contains such a marginal Latin translation, although it does not mention Ari’s work on “runic literature”: in an entry that marks the birth of Ari fróði, “fæddur Ari hinn frödi” [Ari the Wise born], the margin contains the Latin translation “Natus Arius cognomento philologus (islandus).” [Birth of Ari, by-name the Learned, an Icelander]. This translation does not contain all of the information mentioned by Resen, but it does mention and translate Ari’s by-name.

47 The page numbers given by Sperling are 377–501. This suggests a text of approximately 62 folios, although it is difficult to be precise. This seems to me a reasonable match in terms of length with the annals in Beinecke MS 508, which take up 72 folios, including a blank page.

48 See Resen’s *Edda Islandorum*, m 2r of the Addenda (cf. rpt. in *Two Versions of Snorra Edda*, vol. 2). The mention occurs in the Addenda because Resen only got the manuscripts from Willum Worm after the work was edited.

We may doubt that Ari ever wrote a book about “runic literature.” Given how interested Danish historians were in runes, they tended to see them everywhere. Worm, for instance, was so certain that the early literature of the north was originally written in runes that he printed Icelandic poetry in runic letters in his *Runica*, although there is no evidence that they were originally written in this way.⁴⁹

In sum, much evidence points towards Beinecke MS 508 as the manuscript sent by Arngrímur to Ole Worm. The manuscript itself is identified as annals sent by Arngrímur Jónsson, this identification matches with the traces that Arngrímur’s annals left in other sources, and the translations in the margins further point to Arngrímur as the sender of the manuscript, and, hence, to Worm as its owner.

7. Latin in the Margins

In addition to helping us to identify the manuscript, the Latin marginal translations also give insights into how early modern scholars were using annals.

The Latin translations in Beinecke MS 508 were likely planned at the time of copying. Although the pages are unruled, each page has a fold line that creates a wide margin at the outer edge of each folio.⁵⁰ It is in this margin that the Latin translations appear. This framework implies that the translations were planned from the start, especially since the manuscript seems to have been a scholarly aid. Neither of the hands of the Latin translation is probably Arngrímur’s. Comparison between a Latin letter still preserved in Arngrímur’s own hand and dated 1641 in AM 1058 V 4to and the hands in the margins of Beinecke MS 508 reveals important differences, not least that the first hand in MS 508 appears far less practiced than Arngrímur’s. The first hand in the annotations of MS 508 contains a characteristic “g” (see *Image 1*) that is not found in Arngrímur’s own hand. The second hand (which begins on fol. 35r, see *Image 2*), while more practiced in appearance, has ascenders that loop to the right and a distinc-

49 Worm prints poems such as *Höfuðlausn* from *Egils saga* in runes, cf. his *Runir*, 227–40; Seaton, *Literary Relations*, 229.

50 Derolez, “Beinecke MS 508.”

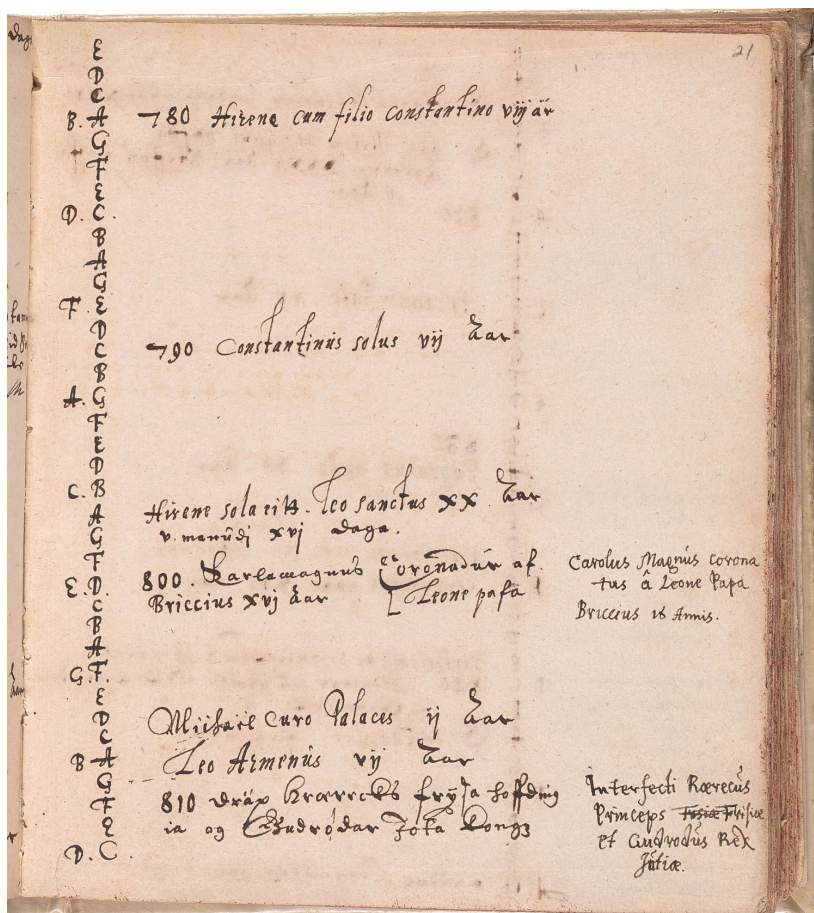


Image 1: Beinecke MS 508, 21r.

Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

tive “n”, both of which are quite unlike Arngrímur’s hand.⁵¹ I suggest that the translation was penned by a student or local priest rather than by Arngrímur himself. Given the general state of knowledge of Old Norse-Icelandic outside of Iceland in the period, it seems most likely that the translation was done by an Icelander, whether in Iceland or elsewhere.

51 It is possible that Arngrímur used a different script for manuscript annotation than for letter writing, but neither of the annotating hands appears to be particularly formal.

Although the translation is not a complete one, it is far more extensive in scope than the marginalia in the other manuscripts of the northern group of annals. The marginal content in Beinecke MS 508 is both more extensive and more uniform than the occasional marginal notes and markings in the other manuscripts,⁵² and MS 508 does not reproduce the marginal comments of any other text. The translation emphasizes brief, concrete facts like births, deaths, and canonizations. Although far from everything is translated, it is unlikely that a full translation was planned or desired, especially given the way that the translation highlights basic facts and events rather than complex narrative passages. This emphasis fits well with the early modern use of annals as sources for dating events. The translation is accurate both in terms of the content and in shifting grammatically between Old Icelandic and Latin. A typical example from early in the text is for the year 810. Here, the Old Icelandic reads “dráp Hrærecks frysa hoffdingia og Gudrodar Jota kongs” [the killing of Hræreck, chieftain of the Frisians, and of Gudrod, king of the Jutes].⁵³ The Latin in the margin reads: “Interfecti Rærecus Princeps frisizæ et Gudrodus Rex Jutizæ” [Rærecus, Prince of the Frisians, and Gudrodus, King of the Jutes, killed].⁵⁴

Occasionally, the Latin provides additional information. This happens, for instance, in the case of Haraldur *hárfagri*. The Old Icelandic offers for the year 858: “Vphaf rykis Haralldar hárfagra.” [The beginning of the rule of Haraldur *hárfagri*]. The Latin notation expands this to: “Initium regni Haraldi cognomento pulchricomi (is erat Rex Norvegæ).” [The beginning of the rule of Haraldus known as Fair-Haired (he was the king of Norway)].⁵⁵ This addition suggests that whoever made the translation had doubts about the knowledge of early Scandinavian history of at least some potential readers, aside from any language difficulties.

We find similar features later in the text, focusing on basic facts and positing a reader that might not be intimately familiar with details about early Scandinavian history. For the year 1214, the Old Icelandic records: “Vtan ferd Gudmundar bÿskops.” [Bishop Guðmundur traveled out of

52 I have examined AM 412 4to, AM 410 4to, AM 429 a 1 4to in the Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavík. Anders Winroth kindly examined the manuscript Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Perg. 8vo nr. 5 on my behalf. Storm does not discuss marginalia.

53 New Haven, Beinecke MS 508 fol., 21r.

54 New Haven, Beinecke MS 508 fol., 21r.

55 New Haven, Beinecke MS 508 fol., 22r.

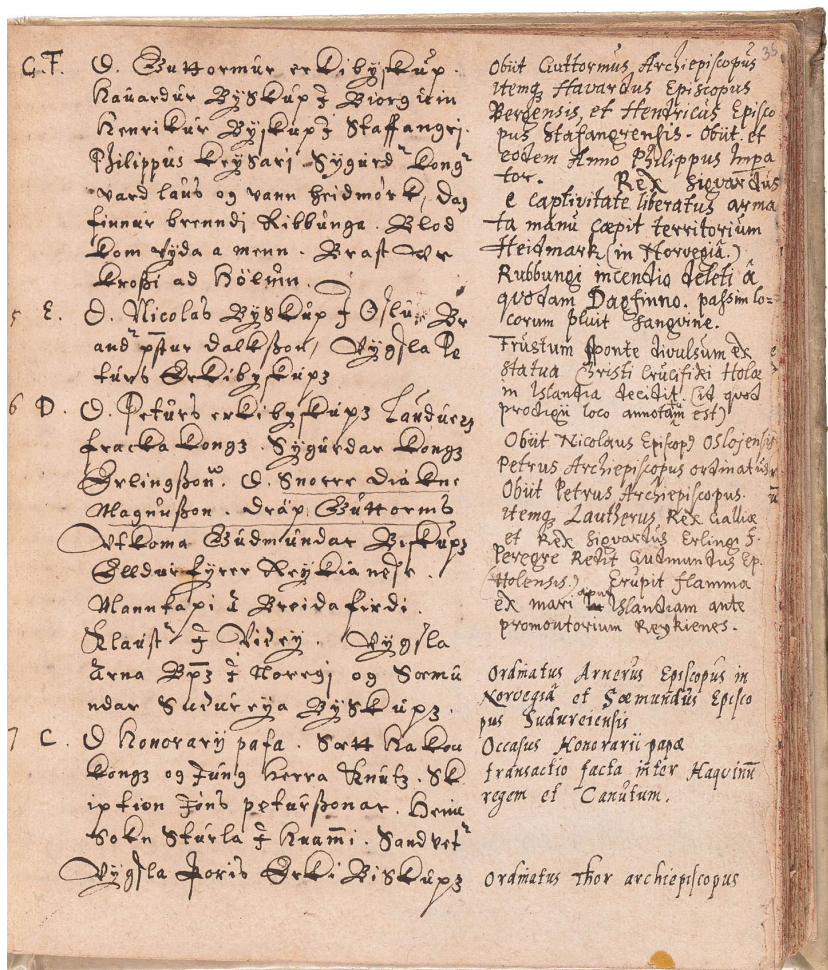


Image 2: Beinecke MS 508, 35r.

Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Iceland].⁵⁶ The Latin in the margin again expands slightly saying that: "Peregre it Gudmundus Episcopus (Holensis in Isl.)." [Bishop Guðmundur (of Hólar in Iceland) traveled abroad].⁵⁷ Here the translator makes few assumptions about what his readers might know about medieval bishops.

⁵⁶ New Haven, Beinecke MS 508 fol., 33v.

⁵⁷ New Haven, Beinecke MS 508 fol., 33v.

Bishop Guðmundur was hardly an obscure bishop within Iceland, but the translator takes the trouble to further identify him within the Icelandic diocese of Hólar.

8. Antiquarian Connections

Latin was useful as a scholarly language in the face of confusing medieval vernaculars not only for Worm but also for many other early modern scholars, not least whomever copied the text that now forms the first part of Beinecke MS 508.

Since the current binding of the manuscript is modern, we cannot say for certain when the annals were bound together with their current companion, excerpts from the *Archaionomia*, a text the catalogue dates to slightly later, perhaps ca. 1700. It would not be at all surprising, however, if the two were bound together in the early modern period. Both texts are in their own ways products of a Latin oriented scholarly milieu interested in the “Germanic” Middle Ages. The *Archaionomia* has been identified as a very early, perhaps the earliest, book to be printed in Anglo-Saxon.⁵⁸ Directed at an English antiquarian audience, the work contains legal texts, a mixture of laws and treaties associated with several Anglo-Saxon kings including Ina, Edgar, and Ethelred. The laws are printed in Anglo-Saxon with a facing-page Latin translation, except in cases in which only a Latin text was available. The book is organized and indexed for ease of use. It also contains a guide to interpreting Old English.

Beinecke MS 508 does not reproduce this entire work. It contains only two texts, both only in their Latin versions. One of these is a copy of a treaty made between King Edward the Elder and the Danish king Guttorm in the Danelaw, the other reproduces parts of the laws of Edward the Confessor, beginning with an enumeration of which areas are “under the laws of the English” i.e. not a part of the Danelaw.⁵⁹ The manuscript does not contain, or seems to have ever contained, the other texts in the *Archaionomia*.

58 Lutz, “Manuscripts Copied from Printed Books,” 135.

59 New Haven, Beinecke MS 508, fol., 5r. The catalogue is more doubtful on this point than Lutz, who identifies the treaty copied as one of Edward the Elder and the other law text as that of Edward the Confessor, cf. Lutz, “Manuscripts Copied from Printed Books,” 135.

This focus is very much in keeping with growing interest in England in the early modern period with early history and origins, not least with the connections and the potential for comparisons with Scandinavian materials. English scholars were increasingly aware of and interested in connections with Scandinavia and not least in using Scandinavian materials and sources in relation to their own.⁶⁰ There was regular communication between England and Denmark (even during the English civil war) and book lists and other evidence suggests that English scholars owned Danish books, and even a few Scandinavian manuscripts, in the seventeenth century.⁶¹ It is in this context that we need to envision the compilation of what is now Beinecke MS 508, a somewhat peculiar, Latin leaning but also a vernacular manuscript concerned with both the Scandinavian presence in England and with the events of Scandinavian history as documented in annals produced in Iceland.

The copying only of the Latin also underlines that vernacular medieval languages more generally, not just Old Icelandic, were difficult for early modern readers and enthusiasts, as mentioned above. Latin was a more familiar and accessible language for many scholars than even their own medieval vernaculars. It was also, of course, more politically useful. Works published in Latin glorifying a country's past could be read by a European audience.

It seems quite possible that an English antiquarian "borrowed" or acquired *Arngrims annaler* and made a book of North Sea history, combining Anglo-Saxon legal texts with Icelandic annals, both pieces at least partly accessible to someone who read Latin. It became an international, hybrid text.

9. Conclusions

The second text in Beinecke MS 508 is the so-called *Arngrims annaler* mentioned by Gustav Storm, the manuscript that Arngrímur Jónsson sent to Ole Worm before 1641. The manuscript itself makes this claim. Moreover, we know that there were Latin translations attributed to Arngrímur in the

60 Seaton, *Literary Relations*, 202–74.

61 Seaton, *Literary Relations*, 258–74.

margins of the annals manuscript that he sent to Worm, which fits with the marginal translations in Beinecke MS 508.

The presence in the margins of unique and fairly systematic translations into Latin further suggests that this is Worm's manuscript. Worm was a scholar with an imperfect command of Old Icelandic yet a deep interest in northern history. A man excited about the possibility of new texts being found or rediscovered in Iceland, he is the person most likely to have owned and worked with this manuscript, especially given that we know that Arngrímur sent him a copy of the annals made in north Iceland, probably with Latin translations in the margins. Arngrímur probably did not pen these translations himself, but he did not need to have physically written the translation to have sent the manuscript and been associated with it, as he clearly was by several Danish scholars.

This identification cannot be entirely secure, of course, but if Beinecke MS 508 is not the manuscript sent by Arngrímur to Worm, it is still an additional seventeenth-century northern annals manuscript that needs to be accounted for. This requires us to posit that still another copy of the northern annals was made in Iceland and fitted with extensive marginal translations at a similar period and left no other trace. This is surely possible, but there seems to me no particular reason for positing an additional phantom early modern copy. If we assume that the annals sent by Arngrímur burned in 1728, the number of copies of northern annals from the seventeenth century produced at Hólar begins to multiply alarmingly. There was something of a boom in annals production at Hólar at this time,⁶² but it seems needlessly complex to assume that still another, otherwise unmentioned, copy of the annals was made in the mid-seventeenth century.

In addition to preserving a medieval annals text, Beinecke MS 508 preserves traces of how early modern scholars helped each other to access new sources, by sending, and sometimes translating, manuscripts. The balance of give and take in the relationship between Worm and Arngrímur, the well-connected doctor in Copenhagen and the curate with nine surviving children to look after, can look unbalanced. Jakob Benediktsson suggests that Arngrímur often seemed more concerned with protecting his own interests than with helping Worm.⁶³ It is hard to measure the various

62 See *Íslandske Annaler*, xxvi–xxvii, xxxii, li–lii.

63 He writes that “many of [Arngrímur’s] letters to Worm rather bear the stamp of his efforts

contributions each made to the other, and past a certain point useless to attempt, but in addition to Arngrímur's steady appeals for help for his children, friends, and legal interests, he contributed labor to the development of historical scholarship in the seventeenth century in Denmark, labor to which this manuscript attests.

It remains unclear how this annals manuscript survived, but I have a tentative suggestion. It seems possible that the manuscript was sent to or appropriated by an antiquarian working in England sometime before 1728. This is supported by the fact that the annals were eventually bound with the excerpts from the *Archaionomia*, excerpts that do not seem to be chosen at random but rather focus on content about the Danelaw and hence on Scandinavian influences. This might leave us to wonder when precisely the manuscript became separated from Resen's collection, where it presumably still was when Sperling made his extracts sometime before 1715 (when it also seems to have been bound differently, perhaps at the end of another book). We can only speculate about these details, but when the library burned, the annals sent by Arngrímur were not there. Beinecke MS 508, a lonely survivor out of a shipwrecked library, preserves neither the oldest nor the most beautiful of the Icelandic annals, but it sheds light on the movement of texts, the frustrations of medieval vernaculars, and the nature of scholarly sharing in early modern Europe.

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to protect his own interests than of the desire to further Worm's studies," cf. *Ole Worm's Correspondence*, xiv.

Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University Library,
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RESUMÉ

Beinecke MS 508 og Ole Worms antiquariske verden.

Keywords: Arngrímur Jónsson, islandske annaler, oversættelse til latin, 1600-tallet, Ole Worm.

Denne artikel fokuserer på Beinecke MS 508, et manuskript der blev givet til The Beinecke Library i 1971 og indeholder en kopi af islandske annaler fra den første halvdel af 1600-tallet sammen med uddrag fra ca. år 1700 af den *Archaionomia*, en bog med angelsaksiske dokumenter, der første gang blev trykt i 1568.

Artiklen viser, at disse annaler er de såkaldte *Arngrims annaler*, der var blevet sendt til Ole Worm af den islandske humanist Arngrímur Jónsson og var i Worms besiddelse i 1641. Worms søn, Willum, gav Peder Hansen Resen annal manuskriptet, og annalerne findes i Resens *Bibliotheca* under navnet "Annales ex Boreali Islandia transmissi per Arngrimum Jonam Islandum." Resen donerede sin samling til det gamle Universitetsbibliotek, der brændte ned i 1728. De islandske annalers sidste redaktør, Gustav Storm, og andre videnskabsmænd troede, at Arngrims annaler var gået tabt. Men de overlevede og er nu den anden del af Beinecke MS 508.

Der er manges beviser som tyder på dette. Manuskriptet selv siger, at annalerne blev sendt af Arngrímur Jónsson. Desuden er der latinske oversættelser i manuskriptets side margine, der virker at have været planlagt, og tyder på, at kopien var lavet til nogen, der ikke kunne læse gammel islandsk. I den tidlige moderne tid havde antikvarer og videnskabsmænd store vanskeligheder ved at forstå middelalderlige tekster på folkesprog. Sproget havde ændret sig meget og de havde ikke mange hjælpemidler. Ole Worm havde altid problemer med at forstå gammel islandsk og tog ofte imod hjælp fra islændinge til sine bøger om runer og nordisk historie.

Den første tekst i manuskriptet viser, hvordan annalerne kunne have overlevet. I 1600- og 1700-tallet var der en stigende interesse for sin egen oprindelse. I England der var nogle videnskabsmænd, der også var meget interesserede i historiske forbindelser mellem England og de nordiske lande. Vi kan se det i Beinecke MS 508, hvori nogen kopierede afsnit fra angelsaksiske lov og traktater i store traktater om Danelagen. Der var regelmæssig kommunikation mellem Danmark og England og det er klart, at englændere købte og erhvervede skandinaviske bøger og mindst et par manuskripter. Det virker sandsynligt, at en antikvar i England fik *Arngrims annaler* før 1728 og udarbejdede en bog om "nordiske" oldsager.

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