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ADVANCED USE AND TEXTUAL CHANGE:
PARATEXTUAL COMMENTARIES IN MEDIEVAL
NORWEGIAN AND ICELANDIC LAW MANUSCRIPTS

Medieval Norwegian and Icelandic law books containing vernacular secular and ecclesiastical legal codes are the subject of a complex research field in Nordic manuscript studies. These compilations consist of a large variety of regulations and legal provisions that were shaped and advanced over a long period of time¹. Current and previous research has recognised them as the product of a mixture of (primarily royal) legislation that reflects compounded social, political and not least religious developments within Norway and Iceland in the Middle Ages². Both the layout, material representation and related textual changes in selected single law manuscripts have been investigated³, as well as investigations dedicated to larger corpora of

1. For overviews, see Ó. Lárusson, «Grágás og lögbækurnar», *Fylgirit Árbókar Háskóla Íslands*, (1922-23), 25-75, P. Norseng, «Gammel rett, ny lov - et fett?», *Historisk tidsskrift*, 66 (1987), 62-81, M. Rindal, «Dei eldste norske kristenrettaner», in *Religionsskiftet i Norden. Brytinger mellom nordisk og europeisk kultur 800-1200 e.Kr.*, Oslo 1994, 103-37, and J. Sunde, «Landslova av 1274 mellom historisk brot og kontinuitet», *Historisk tidsskrift*, 104:4 (2022), 271-85. See further J. Sunde, «How Nordic are the Nordic Laws?», in *How Nordic are the Nordic Medieval Laws. Ten Years After*, Copenhagen 2014, 23-38.

2. For current examples, see the chapters, and references therein, by E. Mundal and J. Sunde in *Historisk tidsskrift*, 104:4 (2022), and E. Mundal and A. Horn in *Lov og lovgivning i middelalderen. Nye studier av Magnus lagabøtes landslov*, Oslo 2020.

3. For examples, see the chapters, and references therein, by L. Rohrbach and P. Boulhosa in *The Power of the Book. Medial Approaches to Medieval Nordic Legal Manuscripts*, Berlin 2014, M. Jónsson, A. Winroth and S. Drechsler in *Old Norse Law Books from a Material Perspective*, Oslo 2024, and S. Drechsler, «Production and Content of the Fourteenth-Century Norwegian Law Manuscript *Lundarbók*», in *Law|Book|Culture in the Early and High Medieval West*, Leiden 2021, 17-50.

Icelandic and/or Norwegian law books⁴. Yet, despite their relevance for e.g. the prolonged use of these same manuscripts, paratextual commentaries were seldom investigated⁵. This article has two aims: first, it maps the different forms of paratextual commentaries in medieval law manuscripts from Norway and Iceland⁶. Second, in explores the variety of paratextual commentaries added by a learned scribe in ca. 1500, this article investigates *Svalbarðsbók* (Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum [SÁM], 1330-40), one of the key manuscripts from medieval Iceland that features paratextual commentary. Paying particular attention to the question of how textual additions in manuscript margins reflect the advanced use of, and legal changes within, the law books produced and used during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it will be argued in the following that it is especially those law texts that brought more

4. For examples, see J. Schnall, «Recht und Heil. Zu Kompilationsmustern in Handschriften der Jónsbók», *Gripla*, 16 (2005), 75-114, L. Rohrbach, «Die Fabrikation des Rechts. Implikationen medialer Ausformungen in west- und ostnordischen Rechtsbuchhandschriften», in *Á austrvegi. Saga and East Scandinavia*, 2, Gävle 2006, 807-15, M. Jónsson, «Manuscript Design in Medieval Iceland», in *From Nature to Script. Reykholt, Environment, Centre, and Manuscript Making*, Reykholt 2012, 231-43, M. Jónsson, «The Size of Medieval Icelandic Legal Manuscripts», in *The Power of the Book. Medial Approaches to Medieval Nordic Legal Manuscripts*, Berlin 2014, 25-38, A. Horn, *Lov og tekst i middelalderen. Produksjon og resepsjon av Magnus Lagabøtes landslov*, Gothenburg 2016, and S. Drechsler, «The Production and Use of Norwegian Law Manuscripts 1280-1400», *Opuscula*, 20 (2022), 193-273.

5. For examples, see M. Driscoll, «Postcards from the Edge: An Overview of Marginalia in Icelandic Manuscripts», in *Scandinavia and Christian Europe in the Middle Ages. Papers of the 12th International Saga Conference, Bonn/Germany, 28th July-2nd August 2003*, Bonn 2003, 21-36, S. Drechsler, «Marginalia in Medieval Western Scandinavian Law Manuscripts», *Das Mittelalter*, 25:1 (2020), 180-95, C. Schott, «Footnotes on Life. Marginalia in Three Medieval Icelandic Manuscripts», MA Thesis, Reykjavík 2010 (here 17-28, 41-63), E. Walgenbach, «Kristinréttur Árna og neðanmálgreinar frá miðöldum - AM 49 8vo», on <https://www.arnastofnun.is/is/utgafa-og-gagnasofn/pistlar/kristinrettur-arna-og-nedanmalsgreinar-fra-midoldum-am-49-8vo> (accessed: 06.05.2024), and L. Pokorny, «Correcting Icelandic Manuscripts in the Second Half of the Fourteenth Century. Techniques and Context», *Scripta Islandica*, 75 (2024), 123-66.

6. For the term paratext and its use in literature, see G. Genette, *Paratexts. Thresholds of Interpretation*, Cambridge 1997. For its use in manuscript studies, see P. Andrist, «Towards a Definition of Paratexts and Paratextuality: The Case of Ancient Greek Manuscripts», in *Bible as Notepad. Tracing Annotations and Annotation Practices in Late Antique and Medieval Biblical Manuscripts*, Berlin 2018, 130-50.

stability to Norway and Iceland in the period after 1270 that indicate the most varied use and reflection of its text. With regard to the topic of the present volume, this article argues that paratextual commentaries in the Norwegian and Icelandic law manuscripts may be seen as both a pragmatic and a critical engagement, as well as indicators of textual change over time.

For centuries, the vernacular legal landscapes of medieval Norway and Iceland consisted of combined secular and ecclesiastical provincial customary law codes that partly date as far back as the early eleventh century. In Norway, the legal landscapes were divided up into different legal provinces, law assemblies and law codes until the early 1270s: one for the north, the *Frostathing* (*Frostaping*), two in the east, the *Borgarthing* and *Eidsivathing* (*Borgarþing* and *Eiðsifáþing*) and one in the west, the *Gulathing* (*Gulaþing*). Both these and the legal compilation in use during the Icelandic Commonwealth⁷, entitled *Grey Goose* (*Grágás*, 1117/1118 and after) and including a Christian law section named *Kristinna laga þáttur*⁸, are complex entities in terms of their content, age and not least in their development over time⁹.

A major step in royal legislation took place during the reign of King Magnús Hákonarson (r. 1237–80) in the late 1260s, and especially during the following decade¹⁰, when the Norwegian provin-

7. During the main part of the Commonwealth period (ca. 965–1262/64), Iceland was divided into four administrative regions and a national assembly, the *Althing* (*Alþingi*). For the political system of Iceland during the Commonwealth period and *Grágás* in particular, see J. Sigurðsson, «Chieftains and the Legal Culture in Iceland c. 1100–1260», in *Narrating Law and Laws of Narration in Medieval Scandinavia*, Berlin 2020, 39–56, with further references.

8. *Kristinna laga þáttur* is generally considered the first chapter of the *Grey Goose* and was composed in ca. 1125. From the fourteenth century onwards, *Kristinna laga þáttur* was often recorded as stand-alone Church law, similar to the provincial Church laws of Norway. For *Kristinna laga þáttur* and its introduction, see P. Foote, *The Early Christian Laws of Iceland: Some Observations*, Cambridge 2004.

9. For an introduction to medieval Norwegian and Iceland law codes, see D. Strauch, *Mittelalterliches Nordisches Recht bis 1500. Eine Quellenkunde*, Berlin 2016, 103–71, 205–50.

10. J. Sunde in «Daughters of God and Counsellors of the Judges of Men: Changes in the Legal Culture of the Norwegian Realm in the High Middle Ages», in *New Approaches to Early Law in Scandinavia*, Turnhout 2020, 131–83 (here 134–41), argued for two phases of legal production: In the *legal compilation phase*, dated to 1267–69, a movement is seen from stand-alone law books to unified and harmonised legal entities and collections, while in the *law-making phase* in 1271–81, primarily royal legislators introduced new laws and regulations grounded in newly introduced principles.

cial law codes gave way to the national *Laws of the Land* (*Landslög*, 1274), as well as renewed town laws (*Bæjarlög*, 1276), an advanced law code for the royal retinue (*Hirðskrá*, ca. 1273–77) and new naval laws (*Farmannalög*, 1276). In addition, two Icelandic law codes were introduced, one soon after the other. This happened after the North Atlantic isle became part of the Norwegian realm in 1262–64: first the (largely rejected) *Ironside* (*Járnsíða*, 1271) and, soon afterwards, the (more welcome) *Jónsbók* (1281)¹¹.

Although codified in single law books, the manuscript corpus of both the Norwegian *Laws of the Land* and the Icelandic *Jónsbók* – the most copied vernacular texts in medieval Norway and Iceland, respectively – is textually richly layered. Both extant textual content and structure vary, in some sections drastically, and no textual stemma exist for the Norwegian *Laws of the Land* that explain in a sufficiently text-critical manner the development of the medieval law code¹². For the Icelandic *Jónsbók*, the stemmatic model likewise appears to be complex¹³. Both indicate that writing of vernacular law codes remain an often-individual practice in the Middle Ages.

11. For the legislation processes in Norway and Iceland during the 1260s and 1270s, see E. Mundal, «I kva grad kan forholdet til Island ha påverka den norske lovgjevinga som fører fram til Landslova av 1274?», in *Lov og lovgivning i middelalderen. Nye studier av Magnus lagabøtes landslov*, Oslo 2020, 67–98, and A. Horn, «Lovrevisjonene til Magnus Håkonssons Lagabøte – en historiografisk gjennomgang», *Maal og Minne*, 2 (2018), 1–27. For *Ironside* specifically, see M. Jónsson, «Texture in *Járnsíða*», in *Networks in the Medieval North. Studies in Honour of Jón Viðar Sigurðsson*, Turnhout 2023, 189–207, with further references.

12. M. Rindal, «Etterord», in *Magnus lagabøtes landslov og viktige rettarbøter 1280–1327*, Oslo 2024, 329–41 (here 337–38, with further references). For the medieval manuscripts and fragments of the *Laws of the Land*, see M. Rindal and B. Spørck, *Kong Magnus Håkonsson Lagabøtes landslov. Norrøn tekst med fullstendig variantapparat del I*, Oslo 2018, 18–38.

13. For medieval Icelandic manuscripts that feature *Jónsbók*, see Ó. Halldórsson, «Haandskriftsfortegnelse», xli–lvii, and S. Karlsson and Ó. Halldórsson, «Rettelser», x–xli, in *Jónsbók: Kong Magnus Hakonssons Lovbog for Island vedtaget paa Altinget 1281 og Réttarbætr: De for Island givne Retterbøder af 1294, 1305 og 1314*, Odense 1970, O. Widding, «Jónsbóks to ikke-interpolerede håndskrifter. Et bidrag til den islandske lovbogs historie», *Scripta Islandica*, 18 (1967), 3–20, and M. Jónsson, «Textatengsl nokkurra elstu handrita Jónsbókar», in *Lindæla: Sigurður Lindal sjötugur*, Reykjavík 2001, 373–89, and for a diagram showing their textual relations, see S. Drechsler, «Law Manuscripts from Fifteenth-Century Iceland», *Gripla*, 32 (2021), 165–98 (here 168).

In medieval Norway and Iceland, rules were often promulgated by the king or through his council¹⁴. The rules on royal lineage from 1164 are likely the first true royal legislation in medieval Norway. Nevertheless, preserved legal manuscripts, fragments and charters from the middle of the thirteenth century indicate the introduction of new regulations, so-called *nýmæli* (sg. *nýmæli*) or *skipanir* (sg. *skipan*) from at least the early twelfth century onwards. Predominantly after 1270 – and in much larger numbers –, law amendments, so-called *réttarbótr* (sg. *réttarbót*), were added to existing legal provisions. Extant manuscripts containing both of these rules indicate that the writing and proclamation phases had existed side-by-side¹⁵.

The earliest stand-alone Norwegian ecclesiastical law, **Gold feather* (**Gullfjǫðr*), is generally dated to the second half of the twelfth century but is known largely by name only¹⁶. Provincial Church laws remained dominant, particularly those regional redactions that were issued by King Hákon Hákonarson (r. 1217–63) and Archbishop Sigurðr Eindriðason (1231–52) around 1250 for (at least) the *Borgarthing* and the *Gulathing*¹⁷. After 1265¹⁸, the same Church laws are likely to have been further extended by the son of King Hákon, the aforementioned King Magnús. It is likely that King

14. For this practice, see E. Mundal, «Forholdet mellom gamma log ny rett i norsk og islandsk lov i middelalderen», *Historisk tidsskrift*, 101/4 (2022), 286–98 (here 290–92).

15. A. Horn and K. Seip, «Landsloven 750 år: Loven i en håndskriftkultur», in *Lov og lovgivning i middelalderen: Nye studier av Magnus lagabøtes landslov*, Oslo 2020, 13–31 (here 17).

16. According to ch. 117 in the vernacular *Sverris saga*, **Gold feather* is a product of Eysteinn Erlendsson (ca. 1120–88), the second Archbishop of Niðaróss (est. 1152/53). After its establishment, Niðaróss was a vast archdiocese which covered the whole of the North Atlantic area, including Norway (with parts of today's Sweden), Iceland, Orkney, Faroes, Shetland, Outer Hebrides and (partly) Greenland. Eysteinn was one of the most influential archbishops, primarily due to his intentions of bringing the vernacular Church laws into line with Canon law. For Archbishop Eysteinn as legislator, see E. Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein. Statsmann og kirkebygger*, Oslo 1996, 130–71, with further references. Sections of **Gold feather* likely survived in the provincial laws for the *Frostathing* and the *Gulathing*; see B. Eithun, M. Rindal and T. Ulset, *Den Eldre Gulatingslova*, Oslo 1994, 32–33, and J. Hagland and J. Sandnes, *Frostatingslova*, Oslo 1994, XXXI–XXXII.

17. A. Riisøy and B. Spørck, «Datering av nyere Borgartings kristenretter», *Collegium Medievale*, 12 (1999), 57–74 (here 71), with further references.

18. B. Spørck, «Innledning», in *Magnus Hákonsson Lagabøtes kirkelig lovgivning*, Oslo 2024, 12–13.

Magnús's development of the Church law, which was intended to act as a single national law code but with a number of regional peculiarities¹⁹, was presented at the law assemblies, together with renewed redactions of the secular provincial law codes for the four legal provinces, in the late 1260s. According to the Icelandic *Annales regii* for the years 1267–69, it was accepted at all of the assemblies apart from the *Frostathing*²⁰. In comparison, the Church law promulgated by King Magnús was not widely accepted in the following decades²¹, and in the early 1270s, new Church laws promulgated by Church authorities for (perhaps all of) Norway (*Kristinréttir Jóns erkbiskups*, ca. 1273) and Iceland (*Kristinréttir Árna biskups*, 1275) were introduced²². However, due to a prolonged struggle between Crown and Church in Norway following the death of King Magnús in 1280²³, three law amendments issued in 1290, 1316 and 1327, respectively, decree that older Church laws were to be followed in Norway²⁴. These probably refer to those made in 1250. Consensus among scholars today is that *Kristinréttir Árna biskups* was valid for all of Iceland from 1275²⁵.

The oldest known vernacular law fragments from Norway and Iceland are dated to 1150 and 1180, respectively²⁶, while the oldest

19. Spørck, «Innledning», 17.

20. The rejection of the new law book at *Frostathing* is likely related to Archbishop Jón of Niðaróss, who according to ch. 10 in the Icelandic *Árna saga biskups* forbid secular people to legislate in matters related to the Church. As a consequence, he had his own Christian law made soon after the meeting at *Frostathing* in 1269. For the annal entries, see G. Storm, *Islandske Annaler indtil 1578*, Christiania 1888, 137, and for the section in *Árna saga byskups*, see *Biskupa sögur*, 1, Copenhagen 1858, 691.

21. The Christian laws instructed by King Magnús are preserved fragmentarily in an Old Norwegian redaction, as well as an Early Modern Danish translation; see Spørck, «Innledning».

22. A. Winroth, «The Hमार Lawbook», in *Old Norse Law Books from a Material Perspective*, Oslo 2024, 78–111 (here 80–85).

23. For the struggle between Church and Crown in the Norwegian politics during the late 1260s and 1270s, see further K. Helle, *Norge blir en stat 1130–1319*, Oslo 1964, 98–107.

24. For these law amendments, see R. Keyser and P. Munch, *Norges gamle Love indtil 1387*, 3, Christiania 1849, 17–18, 116–17, 153–54.

25. See, for example, M. Magnússon, «Kátt er þeim af kristinrétti, kærur vilja margar læra. Af kristinrétti Árna, setning hans og valdsviði», *Gripla* 15 (2004), 43–90 (here 65–81), and M. Magnúsardóttir, *Bannfæring og kirkjuvald á Íslandi 1275–1550. Lög og rannsóknarforsendur*, Reykjavík 2007 (here 303–6).

26. For overviews, see O. Haugen, «The Development of Latin Script I: in

complete texts still extant in manuscripts are not older than ca. 1250. It is due to these comparatively late traces of textual evidence that the manuscript-based study of legal writing in medieval Norway and Iceland is particularly challenging. Another characteristic of the Nordic law manuscripts is their layout. Although well-organised, using guiding aids²⁷, tables of content, historiated illuminations and graphical annotations related to paratextual commentaries²⁸, the *mise-en-page* of Nordic law manuscripts appears to be hardly any different from other vernacular writing of the same time and area²⁹. Thus, although manuscripts and fragments containing the influential, mass-copied *Corpus Juris Civilis* or the equally widely distributed twelfth-century *Decretum Gratiani* are known to have been distributed and used in Norway and Iceland during the second half of the twelfth century and onwards³⁰, the layout applied in the Nordic law manuscripts is little related to the widely used standard of Latin law codes elsewhere in Europe³¹. In the (late) thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, which may be considered the main cen-

Norway», and S. Karlsson, «The Development of Latin Script I: in Iceland», in *The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*, Berlin 2002, 824–32, 832–40. Unless otherwise stated, all dates of Norwegian and Icelandic manuscripts and fragments are taken from the online database of the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* at <https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?m> (accessed: 06.05.2024).

27. Guiding aids known from Canon and Roman law manuscripts, such as *deixis*, *asterisks*, dots, dashes and other graphical annotations, are well known from Norwegian and Icelandic law manuscripts. It is likely that they were introduced in the North by people who had studied law theology in Paris and Bologna. For such students, see S. Bagge, «Nordic Students at Foreign Universities until 1660», *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 9:1 (1984), 1–29, and for selected guiding aids in Nordic manuscripts, Drechsler, «Marginalia», 184–89, and Pokorny, «Correcting», 135–48.

28. By following Andrist in «Paratexts», 137–39, in the following, paratexts are understood to be written texts added to a manuscript in addition and related to what is considered the core of its textual content, i.e. the main text.

29. L. Rohrbach, «10. Inscriptions. The Staging and Making of Networks in Late Medieval Icelandic Manuscripts», in *Networks in the Medieval North: Studies in Honour of Jón Viðar Sigurðsson*, Turnhout 2023, 208–28.

30. Gunnes, *Erkebiskop*, 133–39; S. Líndal, «Um þekkingu Íslendinga á rómverskum og kanónískum rétti fra 12. öld til miðrar 16. aldar», in *Útljótur Afmælisrit*, Reykjavík 1997, 241–73.

31. For the layout of medieval Icelandic and Norwegian manuscripts, see Rohrbach, «Fabrikation», 810–12, Jónsson, «Manuscript Design», and Drechsler, «Marginalia».

turies of medieval vernacular Norwegian and Icelandic law manuscript production, the layout is dominated by a single- or double-columned *mise-en-page* without the standardised glosses found in manuscripts containing Latin civil or Canon law³². Nevertheless, the rapid growth in administrative literacy in Norway and Iceland during the fourteenth century indicates that they were up to date in terms of legislation during the Middle Ages³³.

Paratextual annotations and commentaries in the margins of Nordic law manuscripts fall into more or less the same two types as the ones W. Schippers has identified in medieval European Latin manuscripts³⁴. According to him, the first type includes all forms of writings that are directly related to the primary text. These include direct speech such as *nota bene* marks, as well as corrections, variant readings, index words, longer commentaries, corrections, commentaries, translations and additional notes that provide the reader with instructions on how the primary text should be used. In relation to the Nordic manuscripts, cross-references may be added, as well as the addition of further official texts such as law amendments. The second type includes all commentaries that are not related to the primary text and may include signatures, ownership marks, poems, chronicles and penitential notes. In addition to these commentaries, the Nordic material sometimes contains writing exercises including, among others, vernacular charter formulae. The following section will discuss the use of variant readings, cross-references, commentaries and additional notes in the margins of Norwegian and Icelandic law manuscripts that can be dated to the Middle Ages.

General variant readings are found in Norwegian and Icelandic law manuscripts in the same form as they appear elsewhere in medieval Europe³⁵. A detailed example is found in three Norwegian

32. For glosses in Latin writing in medieval Norway and Iceland, see C. Benati and S. Boeck, «Medieval Scandinavian Glossaries», in *Medieval Glossaries from North-Western Europe*, Turnhout 2023, 571–84 (here 571–73), and K. Vadum, *Bruk av kanonisk litteratur i Nidarosprovinsen ca. 1250–1340*, Oslo 2015, 53–67.

33. L. Rohrbach, «Construction, Organisation, Stabilisation. Administrative Literacy in the Realm of Norway, the Case of Iceland», in *Rex Insularum. The Realm of Norway and its Dependencies*, Trondheim 2014, 227–63.

34. W. Schippers, «Textual Varieties in Manuscript Margins», in *Signs on the Edge. Space, Text and Margin in Medieval Manuscripts*, Paris/Leuven/Dudley (CA) 2007, 25–54. More generally and in relation to Icelandic manuscripts, see Driscoll, «Postcards».

35. For Icelandic examples, see Pokorny, «Correcting», 148–52.

manuscripts dated to around 1320. All three were written by the same scribe and produced at a professional scriptorium³⁶, with a similar layout and more or less strict set of standard texts for varied use³⁷. In the codices AM 322 fol. and AM 304 fol. (both Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling), a considerable number of paratextual comments are added to the inner and outer margins, as well as in between lines of the *Laws of the Land*. In another, slightly smaller and more moderate manuscript written by the same scribe shortly afterwards, AM 60 4to (Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling), many of these comments have been incorporated into the text³⁸. Although the size and overall layout of AM 60 4to is less luxurious, the development indicates a revised version of the text.

More advanced variant readings that refer to both older and newer legal material can be seen in the only complete manuscript of the older provincial law of the *Gulathing* in western Norway, the so-called *Codex Rantzovianus* (Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, MS DonVar 137 4to) from ca. 1250 (see Figure 1). Likely compiled for active use³⁹, the *Codex Rantzovianus* serves as an example of different legal regulations being written and compiled together and likely used side-by-side. The codex is a vernacular compilation of rules and legal provisions that was first assembled in the Early Middle Ages and extended throughout the High Middle Ages, with the earliest parts dating to shortly after 1040 and the latest to ca. 1200–23⁴⁰. Two particular redactions are identified in both interlineal notes and rubrics: the older, so-called “Óláfr” redaction that is commonly dated to between 1070 and 1111⁴¹, and the younger

36. Horn, *Lov og tekst*, 106–20, with further references.

37. Drechsler, «Production and Use», 229–35.

38. G. Storm, *Norges gamle Love indtil 1387*, 4, Christiania 1889, 476, 502, 548.

39. K. Maurer in *Die Entstehungsgeschichte des älteren Gulapingslög*, Munich 1872, 137, argued for an antiquarian interest, but I follow A. Taranger here, who in «De norske folkelovbøger (før 1263)», *Tidsskrift for retsvidenskap* 39/1926, 183–211 (here 198–99), saw it as a combination of older and newer laws side-by-side. Among others, this is supported by the simple fact that by the time of writing in 1250, the law code was still in force in western Norway. However, K. Robberstad in *Gulatingslovi*, Oslo 1981, 250–63, 385, is certainly right in his judgement that the text in *Codex Rantzovianus* is in parts poorly compiled.

40. For this, see Eithun, Rindal and Ulset, *Den Eldre Gulatingslova*, 32–33.

41. E. Hertzberg, «Vore ældste Lovtexters oprindelige Nedskrivelsestid», in *Historiske afhandlinger tilegnet Professor Dr. J. E. Sars paa hans 70. fødselsdag*, Kristiania 1905, 92–117. It is unknown to which king the name Óláfr refers. The

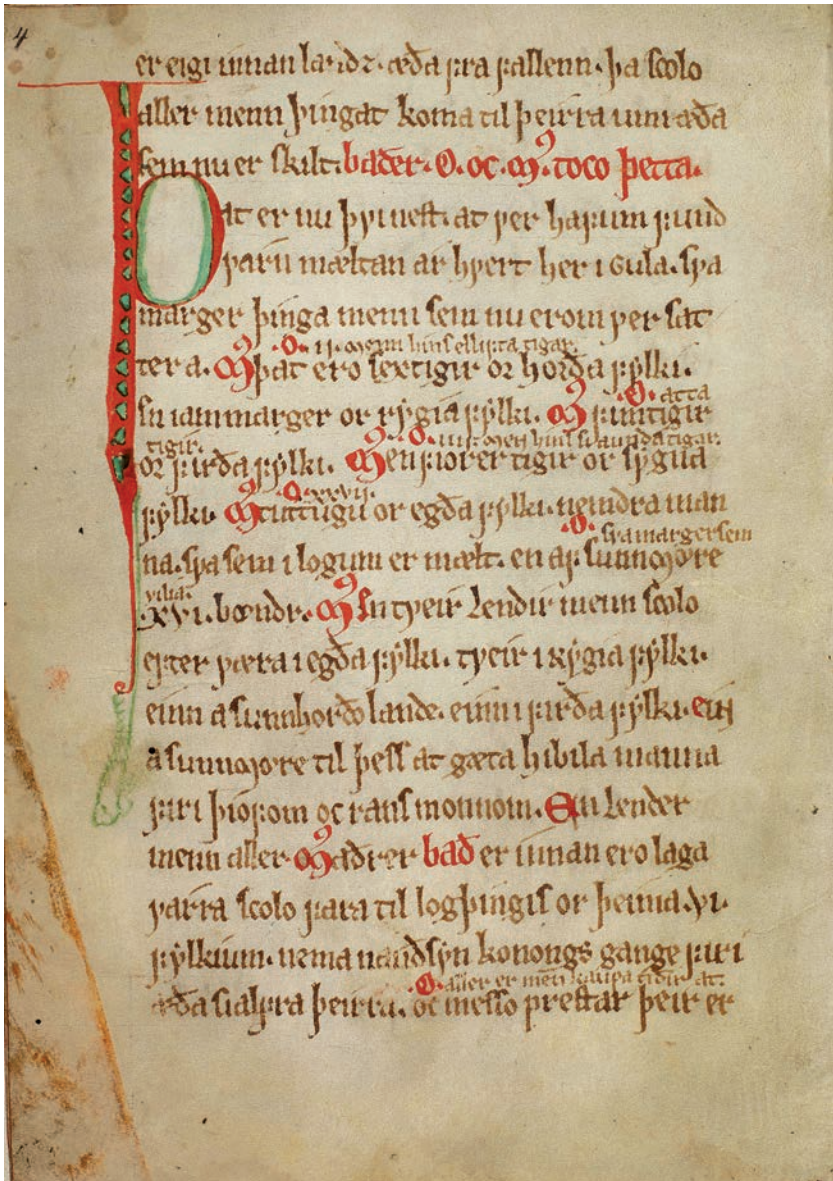


Fig. 1. Interlineal commentary in *Codex Rantzovianus* indicating the Óláfr redaction (O.) and the Magnús redaction (M.), as well as shared passages (baðer/bað.). MS DonVar 137 4to, f. 2v. 1250. Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek. Photo: Det Kongelige Bibliotek.

“Magnús” redaction, which was compiled in the years following the coronation of the Norwegian King Magnús Erlingsson (r. 1161–84) in 1164⁴³. In the *Codex Rantzovianus*, *nýmæli*, *skipanir* and law amendments relating to King Magnús and earlier kings and rulers are indicated by name. Of the altogether 320 chapters, nine rubrics indicate instructions made by both kings (3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 20–22, 24, 55). Only two are said to have been issued by one of the kings named Óláfr (9, 19), and two are attributed to King Magnús alone (8, 32)⁴³. The latter and many of the rubrics mentioning both kings appear in renewed Church law sections. New provisions are indicated in interlineal notes or, more often, in rubrics.

Shortly after the codification of the new law codes began to take form in the 1270s, source references are found in increasing numbers, such as those containing the Icelandic *Kristinréttur Árna biskups*. This vernacular Church law was formulated in 1275 by its name-giver, Bishop Árni Þorláksson (1238–98) of Skálhólt, to replace the earlier *Kristinna laga þáttur*. Annotations made to *Kristinréttur Árna biskups* are found in two medieval Icelandic law manuscripts, AM 49 8vo (Reykjavík, SÁM) and *Skarðsbók* (Reykjavík, SÁM, AM 350 fol.), dated to 1300 and 1363, respectively. The similar use of the margins of these manuscripts by contemporary, medieval users strongly hints at a highly educated study of the vernacular ecclesiastical laws: annotations were made contemporaneously to the law text, perhaps by the scribes themselves, and references were included not only to earlier Norwegian law compilations for the *Gulathing* and the *Frostathing*, and likely to the earlier Icelandic *Kristinna laga þáttur*, but also to respective sections of the Norwegian *Kristinréttur Jóns erkibiskups* from ca. 1273, as well as collections of the *Decretals* such as the *Liber Extra* (see Figure 2)⁴⁴. Although no specific chapter numbers are given, the referencing system may indicate that the

oft-mentioned theory that the name refers to king Óláfr Haraldsson (the Saint) (r. 1015–28) is nowhere supported in the rubrics and the main text. A more probable candidate is King Óláfr Haraldsson (the Peaceful) (r. 1067–93), since it is during his time the law code was likely first written down.

42. T. Kundsén, «Gulatingsloven», in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder*, Oslo 1960, 559–65 (here 562).

43. Eithun, Rindal and Ulset, *Den Eldre Gulatingslova*, 198–206. In addition, two chapters were issued by other people (148, 316) and in one of the rubrics naming King Magnús (2), additional rulers are added as authors.

44. Walgenbach, «Kristinréttur Árna».

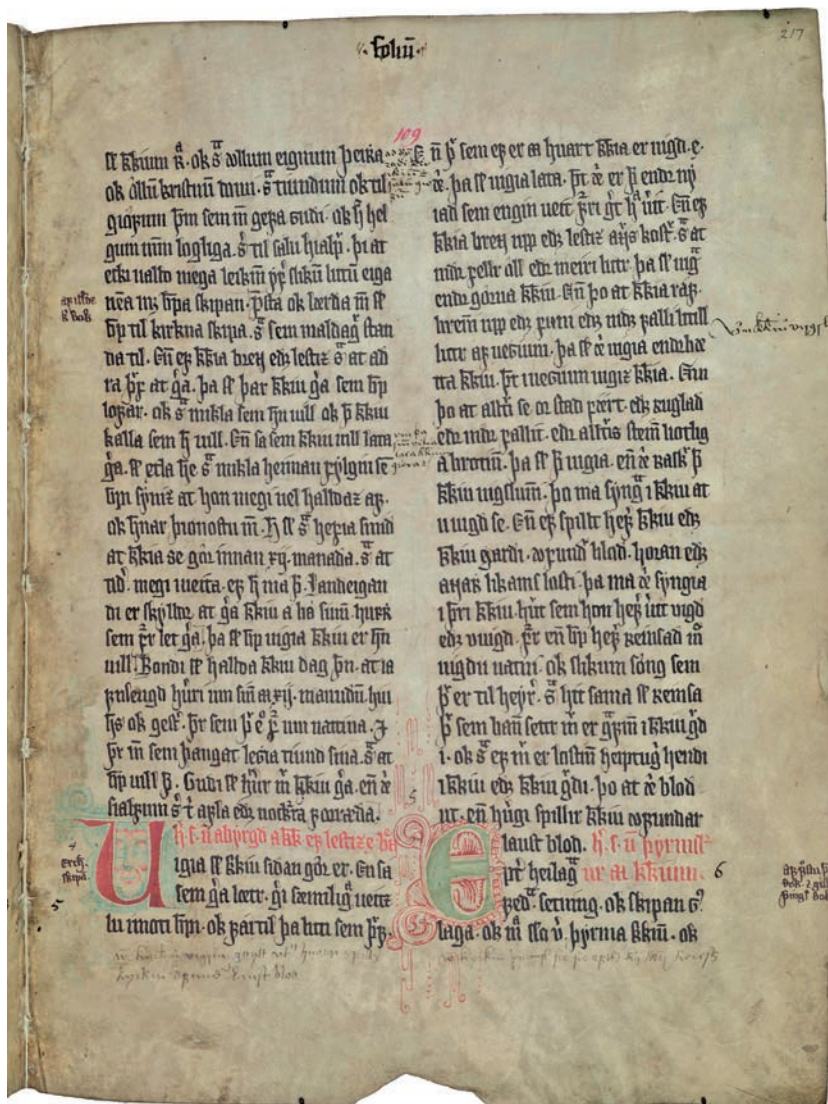


Fig. 2. Cross-text references in *Skarðsbók*, referring to earlier provincial laws (*Frostathing*, *Gulathing*) and contemporary Norwegian Church laws (*Kristinrétt Jóns erkibiskups*), as well as earlier Icelandic Church laws (likely *Kristinna laga þátr*). AM 350 fol., f. 109r. 1363. Reykjavík: SÁM. Photo: Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir.

manuscripts were used in larger libraries⁴⁵. The references given to *Gulathing* likely indicate the use of a regional redaction of the Church laws by King Magnús⁴⁶, and thus refer to the legal status of those Church laws at the scriptorium where the Icelandic Church laws were copied and written. It is likely that the annotations in both AM 49 8vo and *Skarðsbók* stem from a pre-existing source⁴⁷, perhaps even the original manuscript that was brought to Iceland in 1274, a year prior to its official introduction⁴⁸.

The Icelandic law compendium *Staðarhólsbók* (Reykjavík, SÁM, AM 334 fol.) from ca. 1260–1300 also features cross-references but with a different use: in the margins of the Icelandic *Grey Goose* law code, a number of *nýmæli* are indicated in the margins by the original scribe. Unlike *Codex Rantzovianus*, the *Grey Goose* text in *Staðarhólsbók* is largely compiled as a single unit throughout⁴⁹. E. Mundal has assumed that, in previous manuscripts, *nýmæli* were first added into the margins and then incorporated into the main text in subsequent versions⁵⁰. Although this is not evident from the known medieval manuscripts, it is not unlikely that such practices existed, since at times, sections were indeed taken out of the law book again: the particular use of the term *taka af* (to take out) is for example known from ch. 78 in *Staðarhólsbók*, as well in the rubrics for ch. 4 and ch. 21 in *Codex Rantzovianus*⁵¹. *Staðarhólsbók* is particularly relevant in this regard: in relation to the changes of governance in Iceland at the time of writing (this section is generally dated to ca. 1260–70), it is likely that *Staðarhólsbók* was produced as a guidance for Norwegian lawmen in order to respect the older Icelandic legislation while putting together the later Icelandic law codes, first and foremost *Jónsbók*⁵².

45. E. Walgenbach, «Fourteenth-century Manuscripts of *Kristínréttur Árna Þorlákssonar*, the ‘New’ Christian Laws for Iceland», in *The Materiality of Law Manuscripts* (forthcoming).

46. Spørck, «Innledning», 29.

47. B. Spørck, *Nyere norske kristenretter (ca. 1260–1273)*, Oslo 2009, 166–68, with further references.

48. Ó. Halldórsson, «Skarðsbók – Uppruni og ferill», in *Skarðsbók. Codex Scadensis: AM 350 fol.*, Reykjavík 1981, 19–25 (here 24).

49. L. Rohrbach, «Matrix of the Law? A Material Study of *Staðarhólsbók*», in *The Power of the Book. Medial Approaches to Medieval Nordic Legal Manuscripts*, Berlin 2014, 98–128 (here 101–13).

50. Mundal, «Forholdet», 291–92.

51. Mundal, «Forholdet», 290.

52. With reference to P. A. Munch, J. Sigurdsson and K. Maurer, the theory

Thus, similar to the annotations in AM 49 8vo and *Skarðsbók*, some of the sections in *Staðarhólsbók* may refer directly to the usage of its content soon after completion.

Such examples of paratextual commentaries, however, remain scarce in the medieval corpus of Icelandic and Norwegian law codes. Instead, there is a certain frequency of additional notes that primarily include sections of law amendments made to the Norwegian *Laws of the Land* of 1274 and the Icelandic *Jónsbók* of 1281. Upon introduction, various sections of *Jónsbók* were revised three times: in 1294, 1305 and 1314, with three law amendments that cleared up eighty-eight disputed sections. Originally, these revisions were mainly added after the main text in the so-called uninterpolated redaction of *Jónsbók*⁵³. From around 1330 on, most of these revisions were integrated into the main text⁵⁴. Yet, both missing and external revisions to the three law amendments were added into the margins by later owners – and likely active users. As such, they became a co-existing unit with the main text that was of equal importance to the medieval reader⁵⁵. Perhaps the most interesting Icelandic manuscript to contain such paratextual commentaries is *Svalbarðsbók* (Reykjavík, SÁM, AM 343 fol.), which was written in ca. 1330–40. *Svalbarðsbók* is the oldest known manuscript to contain

was first named by V. Finsen in *Grágás. Staðarhólsbók*, Odense 1879, viii–ix, and developed further by later scholars. For a discussion related to the materiality of *Staðarhólsbók*, see Rohrbach, «Matrix». See also Mundal, «Forholdet», 292.

53. Ó. Halldórsson, «Indledning», in *Jónsbók: Kong Magnus Hakonssons Lovbog for Island vedtaget paa Altinget 1281 og Réttarbætr*, Odense 1970, I–XL (here XX–XXVI). Nevertheless, no medieval *Jónsbók* text exists that does not feature at least one of the law amendment-paragraphs incorporated into the main text. For this, see M. Jónsson, «Inngangur», in *Jónsbók. Lögbók Íslendinga hver samþykkt var á alþingi árið 1281 og endurnýuð um miðja 14. öld en first prentuð árið 1578*, Reykjavík 2004, 15–34 (here 20).

54. This is unlikely to have been a response to the direct royal instruction given at the end of the youngest of these law amendments. The last section of the law amendment from 1314 mentions that these *articulos* are meant to be inserted into the the (Icelandic) book. Halldórsson in «Indledning», XXX, sees this development critically: to him, the detailed mentioning of the articles can hardly indicate an order of a new and official redaction of the Icelandic law code, for which the earliest (un-)interpolated redactions of the law code appear to be too varied. For this, see Halldórsson, «Indledning», XXX–XXXIII, and Jónsson, «Inngangur», 19–21.

55. I would like to thank Scott Reese for an interesting discussion on the matter at the *Semester's Work in Manuscript Studies* workshop on 17 June 2024 at the University of Bergen, Norway.

the interpolated redaction of *Jónsbók*. In its *Jónsbók* text, most of the sections of the three law amendments for Iceland were integrated into the main text by the original scribe, and missing references were at times added by later scribes in the margins⁵⁶. *Svalbarðsbók* generally features a large number of further marginal commentaries, such as cross-references to other parts of the law text, extensions of the text, additional texts, as well as critical commentary. Some four different scribes can be deciphered. Based on palaeographic features, one of these had perhaps added some commentaries already shortly after production had finished in 1340. Nevertheless, most additions, running titles, and cross-textual references had been added during the sixteenth century⁵⁷.

The perhaps most important scribe to have added texts to the margins of *Svalbarðsbók* was, according to J. Sigurðsson⁵⁸, Magnús Þorkelsson, magistrate of the northern Icelandic district Vaðlaþing in 1500 (or, alternatively, his son, Jón Magnússon)⁵⁹. At around the same time, at least fifteen sections of Norwegian law amendments were added to *Svalbarðsbók* that contain legal revisions that either pre- or post-date the main text, but nevertheless likely remained in force throughout the Middle Ages. Considerably late for its period, the additions are written in a fairly consistent spiky and bold *Textualis formata* script and are primarily made to earlier passages of the law code: the amendments are mostly found in sections about going to assemblies (*Þingfararbálkr*)⁶⁰, on taxes and the rights of foreigners

56. For these, see M. Jónsson, *Jónsbók. Lögbook Íslendinga hver samþykkt var á alþingi árið 1281 og endurnýuð um miðja 14. öld en first prentuð árið 1578*, Reykjavík 2004, 121, 162. For missing or changed sections, see 116, 164, 212, 238.

57. J. Sigurðsson, *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, 2, Copenhagen 1893, 162, 202–3; J. Þorkelsson, *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, 6, Copenhagen 1900–4, 447.

58. Sigurðsson, *Diplomatarium*, 162.

59. For the provenance of *Svalbarðsbók*, see G. B. Róbertsson, «Snurðan á þræði Reykjarfjarðarbókar», *Gripla*, 16 (2005), 161–95 (here 188, with further references).

60. In *Þingfararbálkr*, additions are made to ch. 4 (*about legal witnesses and judgments*, at f. 4rb) and ch. 9 (*about lawful summons*, at f. 6rb). Both are taken from sections (4, 8) of the general law amendment of King Hákon Hákonarson from 2.5.1313. For these sections, see Keyser and Munch, *Norges gamle Love*, 100, 101. Most translated titles of sections and subsections of the *Norwegian Laws of the Land* and the Icelandic *Jónsbók* are taken from J. Friðriksdóttir, *Magnus the Lawmender's Laws of the Land*, London and New York 2024, and J. Schulman, *Jónsbók. The Laws of Later Iceland*, Saarbrücken 2010.

(*Konungs þegnskyldu*)⁶¹, on human inviolability (*Mannhelgisbálkr*)⁶², as well as the combined section of marriage (*Kvennagiftingar*) and the list of inheritance (*Erfðatal*)⁶³. Two additions were made to two later sections of the law code: the one on trade (*Kaupabálkr*) and the one on maritime law (*Farmannalög*)⁶⁴.

In Icelandic law manuscripts, it is fairly unusual that such a large number of sections of law amendments other than the three ones specific for Iceland were added to the margins of the *Jónsbók* law

61. In *Konungs þegnskylda*, one addition is made. It is found in ch. 3 (*insults from foreigners*, at f. 14rb) and is taken from a law amendment by King Magnús Hákonarson from before 1280. For this section and a discussion on the dating and authorship of the amendment, see Sigurdsson, *Diplomatarium*, 161–63.

62. In *Mannhelgisbálkr*, additions are made to ch. 3 (*concerning robbers and raiding, how they shall be dealt with*, at f. 16rb) and ch. 16 (*if an outlawed man is defended by someone and the punishment*, at f. 17rb). Both are taken from respective sections (3, 8) of a law amendment of King Magnús Eiríksson from 1343. For these sections, see S. Skúlason, *Lögbók Magnúsar konungs, Lagabætis handa Íslendingum*, Akureyri 1858, 274.

63. In the first section of *Erfðatal*, entitled *Kvennagiftingar* (chapter on marriage and inheritance), additions are made to ch. 3 (*about community property and the rights of a woman*, at f. 25va) and ch. 5 (*about wives' sexual intercourse cases and cause of divorce with wives*, at f. 26va). The second section of *Erfðatal*, carrying the same name, features altogether 6 additions. These are found in ch. 1 (*the first inheritance: on the inheritance of lawfully begotten children*, at f. 27rb), ch. 2 (*the second inheritance: on the inheritance of grandchildren*, at f. 27va), ch. 6 (*the sixth inheritance: on the inheritance of nephews and nieces*, at ch. 28va), ch. 13 (*the thirteenth inheritance: on the inheritance of illegitimate children*, at f. 29ra), ch. 15 (*about adoption*, at f. 29va) and ch. 28 (*about those gifts which shall stand*, at f. 33rb). For the sections from *Kvennagiftingar* and ch. 6 of *Erfðatal*, see the respective sections (1, 2, 6) of the general law amendment of King Hákon Hákonarson from 2.5.1313. Three sections from *Erfðatal* (chs. 1, 15, 28) feature additions from the general law amendment from a redaction of the King Eiríkr Magnússon from 1280 (b, 3–8). The addition made to ch. 2 in *Erfðatal* is taken from a law amendment by King Magnús Hákonarson on the rights of inheritance of adopted children from 1318, and the addition to ch. 13 in *Erfðatal* is taken from a law amendment on the rights and obligations of the clergy by the same king from 1308/9. For the two sections in *Kvennagiftingar* and chs. 2 and 13 in *Erfðatal*, see Keyser and Munch, *Norges gamle Love indtil 1387*, 83, 99–100, 130–33. For the sections from the general law amendment by King Eiríkr Magnússon from 1280, see Sigurdsson, *Diplomatarium*, 202–3.

64. In *Kaupabálkr*, the addition is made to ch. 2 (*what men may testify and defend themselves against claims*, at f. 69rb). This is taken from a section on whores (4) in the general law amendment of King Hákon Hákonarson from 2.5.1313. For this section, see Keyser and Munch, *Norges gamle Love*, 100. The addition made to *Farmannalög* is found next to ch. 25 (*if two men or more own one ship*, at f. 83va), and is taken from the law amendment by King Magnús Hákonarson from before 1280. For this section, see Sigurdsson, *Diplomatarium*, 163.

code. Similar to the Norwegian manuscripts, they are usually added – combined with other Norwegian law amendments – after the main text of *Jónsbók*. In either way, there is little doubt that the (likely) same scribe responsible for the additions made in ca. 1500 was well informed both about the *Jónsbók* text itself and the added sections of the law amendments⁶⁵. Two small references added to f. 18va and f. 19rb, at chs. 13 and 16 of the section on human inviolability, may however provide further information about the background of the scribe: while the first refers to *Deuteronomy* (deutru·19·24) (19:4) and correctly links the *Jónsbók* section on accidents to the related section in *Deuteronomy*, the following reference to *Leviticus* (levitit 24) (likely 24:10–23) with a short comment below indicate a further reference to Mosaic Law, in this case to the rightful prosecution of a murderer.

An addition made by the same scribe to the margins in *Svalbarðsbók* may attest to his learned background. It is the longest addition made to the *Jónsbók* text and is found in the margin of f. 20rb–va, at ch. 17 of the section on human inviolability. The section itself describes both the method and role of a judge through a reference to the allegorical Four Daughters of God, the virtues Mercy, Truth, Peace, and Justice⁶⁶. It is generally seen as a new model of procedural law for the Norwegian (and Icelandic) legal traditions. Nevertheless, the text made by the scribe in *Svalbarðsbók* is again entitled to refer to the fifth Book of Moses, yet it has, to my knowledge, little to do with it textually. Divided into three parts, the Icelandic text describes general moral values a rightful judge should have. Unedited as of yet, the text is part of a learned tradition, since this particular section of *Jónsbók* is numerous commented in medieval and early modern Icelandic manuscripts and often inspired by

65. It is likely that the same (or a closely related) scribe added chapter headings and several subchapter numbers (in arabic letters and/or alphabetic letters) to the manuscript.

66. Initially based on *Psalms* 85:10, but as a stand-alone concept primarily developed during the early decades of the twelfth century by Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) and Hugh of St Victor (1096–1141), the allegory was used in the Nordic legal tradition in the later part of the thirteenth century. It was first integrated in the Norwegian *Laws of the Land* of 1274 and then subsequently added to the Icelandic *Jónsbók* of 1281. For the respective sections in these and other Norwegian and Icelandic (law) texts, see Sunde, «Daughters of God», and P. Sigurðsson, *Lagasýn*, Reykjavík 2009, 173–247.

Alcuin's *De virtutibus et vitiis* in particular⁶⁷. Accordingly, both this unique text and the previously presented additions of single sections of various Norwegian law amendments to the Icelandic *Jónsbók* undoubtedly indicate a well-skilled scribe (and/or user) of *Svalbarðsbók* in ca. 1500.

Other scribes that added further texts to the margins of *Svalbarðsbók* primarily added cross-references and minor textual extensions. Yet critical commentaries are also found. One such example is added next to the left column in Figure 3, next to ch. 7 of the land tenancy section of *Jónsbók*. It is written a reader from (likely) the early sixteenth century and says⁶⁸: "I understand the judgement to perhaps be [like this], though it is not [taking place] in the assembly because the book speaks in very general terms and mentions assemblymen's judgement" (*Mier domr me ga vera þo eij sie a þinge þui bokin talar sierdeilis vid a og nefnir þing manna dom*)⁶⁹. Accordingly, as the addition of sections from the law amendments and the present (and other) comment shows, the described development in legal thought during the 1270s in Norway (and Iceland) may also had caused problems of generalisation, which were rectified by means of law amendments, if available, or, as in the present case, highlighted as open to interpretation.

Although much greater in number and detail, sections of law amendments made for the Norwegian *Laws of the Land* were less frequently added as additional notes to the main text in the Middle Ages. Usually, the law amendments as a whole were added after the main text, similarly to how this appears in the uninterpolated redaction of the Icelandic *Jónsbók*. It is primarily during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that more and more law amendments and other texts were added into the margins of the fourteenth-century redactions of the *Laws of the Land*. Perhaps the most extreme example is AM 56 4to (Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling) from around 1300, which contains about twenty-five law amendments

67. O. Widding, *Alcuin: De virtutibus et vitiis i norsk-islandsk overlevering og udvidelser til Jonsbogens kapitel om domme*, Copenhagen 1960, 23-45, 139-54.

68. Although the script contains features of the Gothic Antiquor script, which was in use in Scandinavia in ca. 1325-1450, the orthography suggests a younger date. For the script, see A. Derolez, *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books*, Cambridge 2003, 134.

69. Jónsson, «Inngangur», 21; Drechsler, «Marginalia», 187.

and further texts added by a single scribe during the sixteenth century⁷⁰. The added texts themselves date from previous centuries but they often remained in force.

At other times, commentaries reflecting instructions for their disuse were added. An example of this is found in a passage of the Norwegian *Laws of the Land* in a manuscript dated to the first quarter of the fourteenth century, NB MS 1 (Oslo, Nasjonalbiblioteket) (see Figure 4). At the end of the section on human inviolability, the margin is inscribed with a text entitled *Um jafnaðareida* (on oaths of equity). It is written in Gothic cursive script⁷¹, perhaps from the later part of the fourteenth century. The text names a forbidden example for the use of an oath on equity. Related practices were repealed prior to the introduction of *Laws of the Land* of 1274, perhaps at a Council of the Norwegian Realm in 1271⁷², but they were not generally added to the *Laws of the Land*. As the paratext in NB MS 1 describes⁷³, such oaths were forbidden because they had caused problems in the past and only those forms of oaths that “the law book” – likely the very *Laws of the Land* – deemed rightful were permitted to be used⁷⁴. Nevertheless, oaths of equity remained in use during the fourteenth century⁷⁵, and it may be because of this long-standing tradition that the instruction was added to the margin in NB MS 1. The same regulation is found integrated into the main text at the end of the corresponding section in a further nine (of altogether thirty-nine) medieval manuscripts of the *Laws of the Land*

70. Rindal and Spørck, *landslov*, 70.

71. Derolez, *Palaeography*, 142–54.

72. The regulation is added at the end of the section on human inviolability to the Icelandic *Ironside* law code from 1271. *Ironside* is generally seen as a predecessor to the Norwegian *Laws of the Land*. For the text section in *Ironside*, see H. Bernharðsson, M. Magnússon and M. Jónsson, *Járnsíða og Kristinréttur Árna Þorlákssonar*, Reykjavík 2005, 94, and for the Council of the Norwegian Realm of 1271, see Storm, *Íslandske Annaler*, 138.

73. M. Rindal, *Magnus lagabøtes landslov og viktige rettarbøter 1280–1327*, Oslo 2024, 116–17.

74. For the term ‘law book’ (Old Norwegian *lǫgbók*) in Old Norwegian law manuscripts and charters after 1274, see J. Sunde, «Sem logbok vattar. Landslova av 1274 som riksdekkjande og faktisk nytta lovbok», in *Landslova av 1274 - Rett, politikk og samfunn i norsk mellomalder*, Oslo 2023, 85–111.

75. This is attested in three Norwegian charters dated to 1340, 1347 and 1348, respectively. For these, see Ch. Lange and C. Unger, *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, 4/1, Christiania 1857, 259–60, 265, and C. Unger and H. Huitfeldt, *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, 6/1, Christiania 1863, 178.

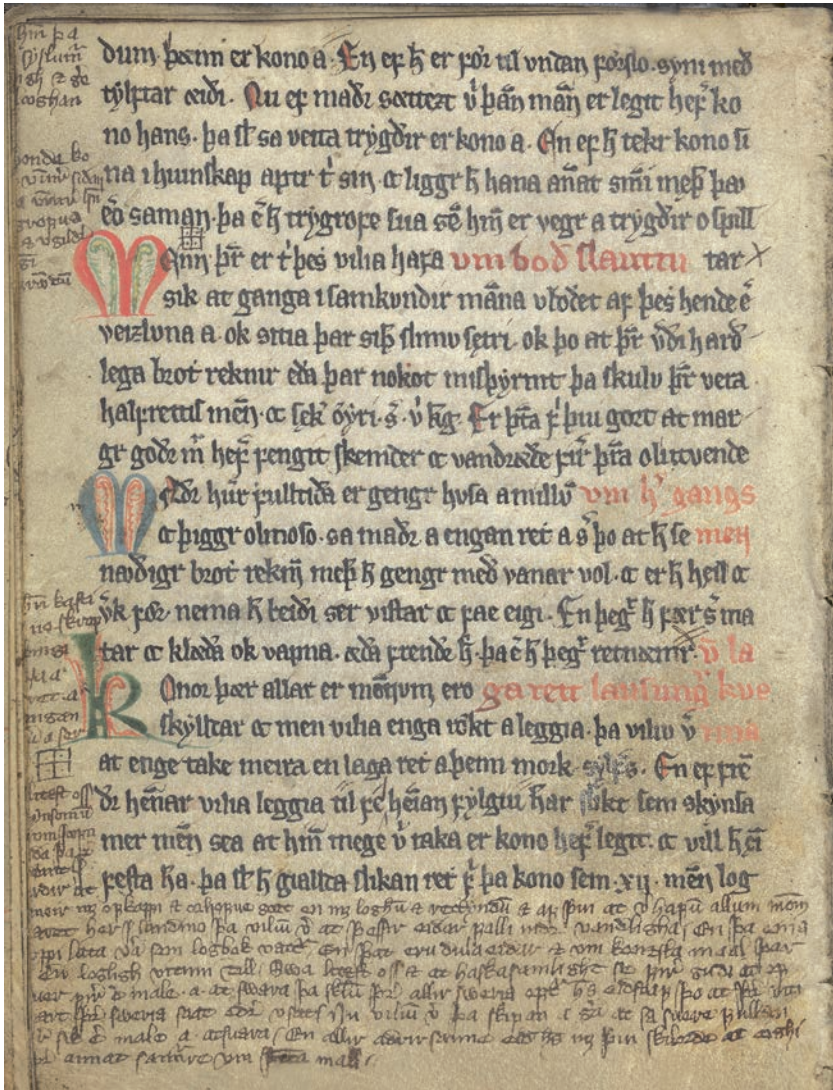


Fig. 4. Addition of a text prohibiting oaths of equity in the margins of the Norwegian *Laws of the Land*. NB MS 1 4to, f. 28v. 1300–25. Oslo: Nasjonalbiblioteket. Photo: Nasjonalbiblioteket.

and has been added to another law section in a further codex⁷⁶. This reflects well the strong affiliation the *Laws of the Land* has with the earlier provincial laws of Norway, since up to seventy percent of its regulations were at least based on some of their contents⁷⁷. Accordingly, although the *Laws of the Land* undoubtedly brought more legal stability to the Norwegian kingdom, selected (and at times abandoned) provisions from earlier provincial Norwegian laws remain very much in use and were partially added to the various redactions of the *Laws of the Land*⁷⁸.

To conclude, apart from the standardised use of the margins for variant readings and cross-references, it is especially the added sections of earlier (and later) law texts and law amendments that make the margins in the Norwegian and Icelandic law manuscripts a vivid space for legal culture in the medieval North. Annotations appear to have generally served as guidance and alteration, as references to external legal texts and law sections that were either used for the compilation or that were omitted during later stages of the re-writing process. As exemplified in the variant readings of the Norwegian *Codex Rantzovianus* and the cross-textual references in the Icelandic *Staðarhólsbók*, marginal commentary indicating new legal provisions indicates legal developments in medieval Nordic societies and thus displays first-hand evidence of such changes in legal history. The law books of Norway and Iceland may thus be seen as direct reflections of the societies that made them for use in the High and Late Middle Ages.

The most numerous additions are notes added to manuscripts that contain the Norwegian *Laws of the Land* and the Icelandic *Jónsbók*. The content of these additional notes appears to be somewhat different in Norway and Iceland. In Iceland, sections of three major law amendments are often integrated into the main text of *Jónsbók* from the 1330s onwards or were otherwise added to the surrounding margins in order to extend its textual relevance to its daily use. As shown in the manuscript *Svalbarðsbók*, in some cases sections from both earlier and younger law amendments were added in the margins by later scribes/users to further specify selected passages of the Ice-

76. Rindal and Spørck, *landslov*, 420–21.

77. See Sunde, «Landslova», 272, 279–80, with further references.

78. Rindal, «Etterord», 337–38.

landic law code. In Norway, law amendments are very rarely incorporated into the main text, which may confirm the authoritative status of the *Laws of the Land*⁷⁹. In medieval manuscripts containing the same law code, it was particularly the rules taken from the earlier provincial laws that were added both to the main text or at times added to the margins. Thus, both texts and paratexts of the Norwegian *Laws of the Land* varied between manuscripts – at times drastically – and on occasion acted as reminders of their official status as indicated in the example from NB MS 1. Both this and the other examples in this article indicate that no qualitative or authoritative difference exists between the main text and the paratext of the manuscripts, at least concerning those text sections that may be called official, such as new legal provisions, law amendments and not least those provisions that originate from earlier law codes.

ABSTRACT

Stefan Drechsler, *Advanced Use and Textual Change: Paratextual Commentaries in Medieval Norwegian and Icelandic Law Manuscripts*

This article discusses the use of marginalia in medieval Norwegian and Icelandic law manuscripts in regards to being a space for creative engagement with the text, as well as being an indicator of gradual change of its textual content over time. The article has two aims: first, it maps the different forms of paratextual commentaries in medieval law manuscripts from Norway and Iceland. Second, it explores the variety of paratextual commentaries added by a learned scribe in ca. 1500 to *Svalbardsbók* (Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 343 fol., 1330–40), one of the key manuscripts from medieval Iceland that features paratextual commentary. The article draws particular attention to the question of how textual additions reflect the advanced use of, and legal changes within, the Norwegian and Icelandic law books produced and used during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It is argued that it is especially those law texts that were supposed to bring more stability in the period after 1270 that indicate the most varied and critical reflection of their content in manuscript marginalia over time.

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79. For this, see further Sunde, «Logbok».

