

## [27] THE TEXT-BUILDING FUNCTIONS OF NAMES AND NICKNAMES IN *SVERRIS SAGA* AND *BÖGLUNGA SÖGUR*<sup>1</sup>

**Аннотация.** В статье обсуждаются корреляции между именованиями лиц и структурой средневековых прозаических памятников — древнеисландских саг. Исследуются две саги, записанные по свежим следам событий, — «Сага о Сверрире» и «Сага о Посошниках», где именования лиц могут быть представлены в виде базы данных, различающих повествовательные ранги персонажей. Форма именования и частота употреблений персонажа указывают на его ранг в этой базе, а сама она отражает структурирование информации в сознании рассказчика. Избыточное, с точки зрения современного читателя, количество имен персонажей, о большинстве которых рассказчик сообщает минимум сведений, объясняется тем, что сага претендует на описание действительного мира, где имена индивидов и события, где эти индивиды упомянуты, верифицируют друг друга. Каждый персонаж имеет свой идентификатор, привязывающий его к реальной жизни, а рассказ о событии без упоминания имен считается недостоверным. Поэтому число упоминаемых в саге людей всегда больше числа действующих лиц. В статье делается попытка охарактеризовать пять разных рангов имен — а) правители; б) вожди; в) эпизодические персонажи; г) имена в составе перечня; д) фоновые имена, — в плане значений параметров информационной структуры (данная vs новая информация) и актуального членения (тема vs рема).

**Ключевые слова:** имена собственные, именования лиц, дескрипции, перекрестная идентификация индивидов, база данных, саги о недавних событиях, нарративные стратегии.

### 1. Proper names and new information

A prominent feature of Old Icelandic Sagas is that the narrative matter is not quite new. Moreover, a Saga is reliable if and only if it refers to events relevant for the audience and accepted as true by the whole community. The goal of the present paper is to provide evidence that proper names must be regarded as references to the background knowledge of the audience. *Sverris saga* and *Böglunga sögur* (henceforth — *Sv* and *Bögl*) are especially interesting since there is no historical distance between the story and the moment of writing. The names of characters belonged to the common historical background including the information about feuds, political sympathies, and shared opinions. The narrator could mention given persons without introducing them specially. However, facts accessible to his contemporaries are no longer accessible to modern readers, who usually fail to learn anything particular about 400 persons mentioned in *Sv* and 160 persons mentioned in *Bögl* from the text itself. It is therefore

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<sup>1</sup> Первоначальный вариант опубликовано в кн.: The Ninth International Saga Conference. The Contemporary sagas. Akureyri, 1994. Добавлено разбиение на параграфы.

essential to look beyond the text and to establish the distinction between information expressed overtly and implied in *Sv* and *Bögl*. The best way to do it is to analyze the proper names as a genre feature. We shall henceforth confine ourselves with *personal designations*.

## 2. Types of proper names and text genres

The Scandinavian oral tradition developed two major narrative forms — heroic songs and Sagas. The comparison proves that the usage of proper names in these two genres is crucially different. The number of proper names in heroic poems of the Edda is close or identical to the number of *active figures*<sup>2</sup>. From the viewpoint of logic, an Eddic poem contains a set of predicates expressed on a given amount of individuals. Since all characters are involved in the same major conflict, their names are functions of the plot and can be analyzed as “defined descriptions” in terms of Bertrand Russel [Russel 1948: 74, 84]. E. g. *Helgi* from *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I* = “Sigmunds’ son” (HH I 6,2; 11,2) and = “Hunding’s killer” (HH I 10, 5–6; 53, 5–6), = “Sigríð’s bridegroom” (HH II 9,29, 56). Accordingly, *Hundingr* is “*Helgi*’s victim”, etc.

On the contrary, a Saga character, say *Gunnarr* from *Njála* is neither “Skammkel’s and Ottkel’s killer” nor “Hallgerðr’s husband” but “Gunnarr Hámundarson from Hlíðar-enda, hereditary landlord from the South Quarter” and his status is confirmed by juridic codes as *Landnáma*. If names in heroic poetry just state the referent’s role in a given song, a Saga-like name verifies him as a real person. The ontological status of *x* (cf. *x* = **Helgi Birgisson** *Bögl* 4) is established by the fact that he took part in some incident *A* where some other individuals *y* and *z* were involved as well. Important events (battles or assemblies) involve many people and serve as verifying points of reference since there exists some accepted version of these events.

On this account, the Sagas need a redundant surplus of proper names which serve as “referential anchors”. The reliability of a story increases if the narrator tells the names of at least 3 of 10 persons involved in an episode. Moreover, Old Icelandic prosaic texts widely apply designations which enable the audience to associate each character with some story. Each character has a “full” or “expanded” name from consisting of his personal name + extra appositive designation, cf. **Unáss kambari** (*Sv* 1), **Hrói í Kjar-rastöðum** (*Sv* 31), **Philippus af Vegini** (*Bögl* 4). The appositive element is understood as the referent’s acquired characteristic.

## 3. Old Icelandic nicknames

Saga-like nicknames are especially telling since they are always induced by the way of life of this particular individual<sup>3</sup>. In spite of the fact that nicknames could transfer

<sup>2</sup> Mythological songs are not taken into consideration; on the contrary, West-Germanic heroic songs conform to this requirement, cf. [Heusler 1969].

<sup>3</sup> Proper names of this type, i. e. tied down to particular individuals, are called “embodied” by Alan Gardiner [Gardiner 1954: 16]. Embodied names are frequent in toponymics, cf., e. g. Dartsmouth — a) proper name; b) “the mouth of Dart”.

information humiliating or glorifying their bearers, their reproduction in a medieval society was as a rule neutral and did not imply pejorative connotations. This impression is borne out by the fact that nicknames in the Sagas do not replace personal names but are steadily reproduced together with them<sup>4</sup>. It seems likely that the main function of a nickname was to identify its referent by ascribing some particular feature to him. We have direct evidence that the nicknames were frequently used in formal contexts as in cases of address or appeal;

## (1) OLD ICELANDIC

þá mælti konungr enn: “**Páll belti** ok yðr sveit Upplendinga, takið skíð ok skíðfaeri ok stígið ok farið upp bergit fyrir ofan þá ok ...” (*Sv* 163; cf. also *Sv* 45, 110, 153, etc.).

The nicknames are usually kept apart from the other types of appositive designations. However in some contexts it is difficult to tell whether we deal with a real nickname or not. E. g. **Sveinn múnki** “**Sveinn the Monk**” (*Sv* 172) is described in the Saga as Sverrir’s scout and not as a monk. The wording “maðr er nefndr Sveinn múnki” (*ibid.*) implies that the narrator was not that sure about Sveinn either. Many examples from the family Sagas show that Old Icelandic nicknames transferred biographical information. E. g. certain **Ánn hrismagi** “**Ánn Brushwood in the Belly**” according to *Laxdæla* dreamed that someone took out his guts and thrust brushwood instead. Shortly after Ánn was severely wounded in the stomach. *Sv* and *Bögl* provide similar stories concerning the origin of nicknames like **Guðlaugr gnítaskor** “**Guðlaugr Lousy Hair**” (*Sv* 28) and **Erlingr steinveggr** “**Erlingr Stonewall**” (*Bögl* 2). The former survived an assassination attempt but was wounded in the head. The latter was put in jail (*stonewall*) but according to some accounts managed to escape. Once (*Sv* 127), the character’s nickname emerges from the context.

(2) **Hreiðarr** hét maðr víkverskr, er lengi hafði þá verit af landi í brott ok víða farit. *Hann kom þat sumar í Noreg með bréfum* ok innsigli því, er kallat var Gullbóluskra. þat innsigli *hafði sent* Kirjalax Grikkjakonungr Sverri konungi, en þat stóð í bréfum, at Sverrir konungr ...**Hreiðarr sendimaðr** talaði offliga fyrir konungi sitt erindi, ok tók konungr fyrst líkliga.

If expanded names are not commented upon in the same text they can be regarded as hidden references to other texts<sup>5</sup>. The above-mentioned **Hreiðarr The Envoy** belongs to 35 persons who occur both in *Sv* and *Bögl*, cf. *Bögl* 18:

## (2') OLD ICELANDIC

Hann {= **Pétr Steypir**} reri þá upp á skip **Hreiðars Sendimanns**.

“He {= Pétr the Trampler} run against the ship of Hreiðarr the Envoy.”

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the grotesque looking mention in *Sv* 163 where a man with a nicknames “shit of the country” is called an excellent merchant: “many excellent merchants perished on this occasion: *Sveinn sveitarskitr* (‘Sveinn the Shit of the country/shit of the troupe’)...”

<sup>5</sup> Special studies devoted to nicknames [Kahle 1910; Lind 1921] discuss first or foremost the origin of particular nicknames. Usually, the association between the verbal form and the situation of naming is trivial yet there are difficult cases, as e. g. **Þórðr inn lági** “**Þórðr the Short**” from *Heim* II, 135, who is reported to be “strong and extremely tall” (*ibid.*).

We propose a working hypothesis that Saga-like names are linked with coherent narrative fragments so that each reference of type (2') implies a basic text like (2).

The family Sagas confirm this hypothesis since the tradition has preserved many stories about outstanding Icelanders of the “*söguöld*” and people associated with them. So-called contemporary Sagas offer a puzzle since we do not have right many written sources about Norwegians from Sverrir’s day. We have therefore to assume that the proper names in *Sv* and *Bögl* appeal not to completed narrative texts but to the listener’s capacity to build such texts. If someone has acknowledged a name of certain **Hallvarðr hlíðarfaxi** “**Hallvarðr the Stallion from the Slope**”, he should be able to tell a text of some length about him, as e. g.:

- [1. There was a man, whose name was *Hallvarðr*.]
- [2. On some occasion this Hallvarðr was called “*hlíðarfaxi*”.]
- [3. Hallvarðr hlíðarfaxi belonged to the Birkibeinar.]
- [4. *Hallvarðr hlíðarfaxi* is one of those killed by *Trondheim’s* capture — cf. *Bögl* 11.]

This level of understanding represents an idealized model of the medieval narrative mind. Nevertheless, we should not underestimate the phenomenon of oral transmission. To possess any information meant to be able to tell it. *Bögl* 19 provides us with a fine illustration. One of the first listeners or scribes found a name familiar to him, that of **Sörkvir snápr** “**Sörkvir Dolt**” (*Bögl* 6, 18) and decided to add an extra episode from the civil war where this Sörkvir has been involved. Thus, the principle of naming — every name is induced by the referent’s way of life — approves the status of every character. The text-building function of Saga-like (or “Saga-ready” i. e. identifying) names reflects its cognitive value.

#### 4. Names and actions

We can now turn to general characteristics of *Sv* and *Bögl*. Both sagas provide no place for heroic poetry, but there are glimpses of minor genres like fables and anecdotes (mostly in Sverrir’s speeches). The most instructive context is *Sv* 47, where Sverrir tells his men before the battle that they should not be afraid of the enemies: the latter are just farmers who do not care much about the kings, everyone dreams of his sweetheart, *munnfögur Jórunn*. This prototypical “Jórunn with rosy lips” would have turned into some dignified “woman, whose name was Jórunn...” if she were involved in an episode important for the Saga. *Sv* and *Bögl* indeed mention two Norwegian beauties. Both cases conform to the same scheme — “a chieftain abducts the wife from her husband. The husband takes vengeance on the violator” — *Sv* 16, *Bögl* 8. Nevertheless, the sagas do not even mention the names of these women since they do not play any independent role. The narrator planned to tell a story about the death of a chieftain. His name (*Philippus Birgisson* / *Jón dróttning*) is of primary interest. The information about the husband is scanty. We do not know either his patronym or nickname. Still, the name of the husband (**Erlendr [prestr]** / **Erlendr [bóndi]**) must be provided since his actions led to the chieftain’s death. The wife deserves no name because the predicate “*be beautiful*” is not an action up to any standard. For the same reason, we do not know the name of king Ingi’s girl

in Trondheim (*Bögl* 11), although the tradition preserved the name of the house-keeper (*Sigurðr swardagi*). It was important to tell the location of the king by the moment of Trondheim's capture. It is instructive that when someone has to warn the king that the enemy is near, the reply is ascribed not to Ingi's concubine (*frilla*), but to some vague women (*konurnar*). Warning is a speech act. If the narrator decided to ascribe it to any particular subject, he is obliged to tell his/her name. Therefore, if the narrator resorts to saying that the *Baglar* have left in Tunsberg "one single man", he is obliged to adduce his name — **Þorbjörn the Curved**:

- (3) OLD ICELANDIC  
ok létu þar enga mann, **nema einn, er hét þorbjörn skeifr** (*Bögl* 16).

This miserable *þorbjörn* (the narrator hints that he could be an invalid or vagrant) may of course a made-up figure. Nevertheless, his name increases the reliability of the Saga; it was definitely better to invent a proper name than to say "some vagrant from Tunsberg".

All the above stated enables us to propose a formula:

- (i) The sagas are exclusively devoted to the active figures; people regarded as actors must be provided with names. Actions require definite names and, in turn, definite names must be verified by some particular actions.

We arrived at the conclusion that all proper names in *Sv* and *Bögl* can be explained as functions of the phrases like *one single man* (cf. *Bögl* 16). It is therefore instructive to analyze the fragments which antecede the proper names in the Sagas, i. e. the *introductory formulas*. The proper names in formulas of the type "*X hét maðr*" behave as definite noun phrase, which is emphasized by means of syntax, cf. relative clauses and/or anaphoric pronouns:

- (4) OLD ICELANDIC  
**Eyvindr skrápi** hét maðr. *Hann* var forn Birkibeinn, ok inn mesti hermaðr... *hann* tóku þeir ór kórnum Kristkirkju (*Sv* 27).
- (5) OLD ICELANDIC  
*Sá maðr er nefndr* **Þorgrímr**, er fyrir var buöndunum ok æsir var þessa samnaðar (*Sv* 21).
- (6) OLD ICELANDIC  
Ok hét sá **Andrés**, er stvrði (*Sv* 41).
- (7) OLD ICELANDIC  
Sá maðr hljóp í síðari lagi, er **Helgi** hét ok var **kallaðr byggvömb** (*Sv* 28).

### 5. Ranking of names

The introductory formulas may be analyzed as completed mini-texts, while the structure of an introduction depends on the person's role in the Saga. Both *Sv* and *Bögl* display a consequent system of narrative ranks. It is convenient to propose following classification for *Sv*:

1	2	3	4	5
Rulers	Chieftains	Episodic characters	Names in enumerations	Background names

Following [Chafe 1976], we will keep apart two cognitive parameters: the division into “given” and “new” elements and the theme / rheme bi-partition. The information-structural characteristics *given / new* refers to words and larger text fragments. It shows the position of the element in the text. E. g. the verbs of naming *heita*, *kalla*, *nefna* imply that proper names in (4) — (7) enter in the Saga for the first time and are “new”. The subdivision into *theme / rheme* characterizes communicative-syntactic structures whereby the *rheme* is defined as “the communicative purpose of a sentence”.

#### 4.1. Rulers

This rank includes people whose social position must be regarded as unique. Hence proceeds the possibility of replacing their personal names with descriptions, e. g. **Sverrir** > “the king”, **Margrét** > “the queen”, **Erlingr skakki** > “the earl”, ...*x...* > “the king’s son”, ...*y...* > “the bishop”, and the narrator often applies to this trick. RULERS are normally not introduced at all. The impostors, Sverrir (*Sv* 1) and Eiríkr (*Sv* 59) form a remarkable exception, but they were brought up as ordinary people and not as king’s children so that their status is not approved from the very beginning.

#### 4.2. Chieftains

There are 80 persons mentioned on at least two different occasions. We tag them as CHIEFTAINS because people belonging here are as a rule officers, rich landlords, or governors (*hirðmenn*, *sveitarhöfðingjar*, *lendr menn*). The verbs of naming fail in the first reference to a CHIEFTAIN. Contrariwise, both examples where *Sv* comments the origin of a nickname fall on this rank (*Sv* 28, *Sv* 127). The names of CHIEFTAINS always present “given” information. At the same time, their communicative status is variable. There are sentences where a CHIEFTAIN’s name forms the focus of contrast and is “rhematic”. In the notation of (8) the rheme is put into braces:

- (8) OLD ICELANDIC  
*Var þar {<sub>RHEME</sub> Jón Gunnarsson} fyrir því liði (*Sv* 15).*  
 “It was {<sub>RHEME</sub> Jón Gunnarsson who} was the head of the troop.”

The neutral word order would be Subject — Verb, with a rhematic Verb Phrase.

- (8’) OLD ICELANDIC  
 Jón Gunnarsson {<sub>RHEME</sub> var fyrir því liði}.  
 “Jon Gunnarsson {<sub>RHEME</sub> was the head of the troop}.”

In a large majority of cases a name occupies the clausal-initial position and presents the theme, cf :

- (9) OLD ICELANDIC  
**Philippus af Vegini** {<sub>RHEME</sub> *var lostinn með öru*} (Sv 161).  
 “**Philippus from Vegin** {<sub>RHEME</sub> *was stuck with an arrow*}.”

The communicative purpose of (9) is to tell what happened to a CHIEFTAIN in the battle. This analysis goes from the assumption that both the description of the battle and the CHIEFTAIN’s name are already introduced in the preceding fragment. The name “**Philippus af Vegini**” is indeed mentioned a few chapters before (Sv 156), but the first reference does not serve as the basic context either since its structure is identical to that of the second: the name remains thematic and unexplained:

- (10) OLD ICELANDIC  
 En Hallvarðr **af Sástöðum** ok **Philippus af Vegini** / {<sub>RHEME</sub> *vildu biða konungs*}, /  
 en biscop réð at út var róit... (Sv 156).  
 “But **Hallvarðr from Sástaðir** and **Philippus from Vegin** / {<sub>RHEME</sub> *wanted to wait for the king*}, / yet the bishop insisted...”

It is possible to assign (10) an underlying theme-rheme structure (10’): the strikethrough font marks the thematized (defocused) element.

- (10’) “There was a man, whose name was {<sub>RHEME</sub> **Philippus**}. ~~Philippus~~{<sub>RHEME</sub> wanted to wait for the king}.”

However, this step is risky since the Saga does not apply to this strategy. A more cautious explication is sketched below as (10’’):

- (10’’) “There was {<sub>RHEME</sub> **a council**}. Philippus<sub>i</sub> / {<sub>RHEME</sub> was there}. He<sub>i</sub> {<sub>RHEME</sub> wanted to wait}.”

Finally, the name of a CHIEFTAIN may be commented afterwards, cf. (8).

- (11) OLD ICELANDIC  
 Ásbjörn Jónsson<sub>i</sub> {<sub>RHEME</sub> *kom fjórða dag páska til Konungahellu*}. **Hann**<sub>i</sub> {<sub>RHEME</sub> **var af liði Magnúss konungs**} (Sv 83).  
 “Ásbjörn Jónsson<sub>i</sub> / {<sub>RHEME</sub> *arrived at Konungahella on the fourth day of Easter*}.  
**He**<sub>i</sub> {<sub>RHEME</sub> **was from king Magnús’s men**}.”<sup>6</sup>

### 4.3. Episodic characters

This rank includes people whose role in the Saga is restricted with one particular situation. All 50 persons introduced with *heita*, *kalla* or *nefna* belong to this group. The references are arranged as “short stories” (*þættir*) and consist of two parts. The exposition

<sup>6</sup> This context is not entirely decisive: *Ásbjörn* has been mentioned before, for the first time — in Sv 53 but Sv 53 and Sv 83 are possibly written by different people so the second scribe decided to repeat general information concerning this CHIEFTAIN.

asserts the existence of X, the final part ascribes some properties or actions to X. The verbs of naming serve as existential predicates, which proceeds from the segmentation, cf. (12):

(12) OLD ICELANDIC

**Ljótr** hét maðr. // *Hann* var Haraldsson. *Hann* var á báti ok tveir menn með honum... (Sv 95).

“There was a man whose name was **Ljótr**. // He<sub>i</sub> was Haraldr’s son. He<sub>i</sub> was on boat with two companions...”

The first part of (12) just states the fact of Ljótr’s existence. Whatever extra information concerning him, even his identification by a patronymic designation (Ljótr = **Haraldr’s son**) is ousted to the final part.

Normally, CHIEFTAINS had a higher social status than EPISODIC characters, so there is some correlation between social and narrative ranks. However, a reservation is needed. In the days of civil war in Norway around 1200 A.D. the distinction between CHIEFTAINS and EPISODIC does not always reflect the character’s social position. Some CHIEFTAINS were surely of low origin (*borparasynir* “villains” — in terms of Sv 91), whereas the list of EPISODIC characters includes some noblemen, cf. e. g. *Ívarr elda*, *maðr göfugr* (Sv 87). What matters it is the function of their names in the text. CHIEFTAINS (say, **Ásbjörn Jónsson** from ex. 11) are important as such, their names are pivots verifying the narration. The names of the EPISODIC characters, say, **Ljótr Haraldsson** from ex. 12 are important because of their role in one particular episode<sup>7</sup>. This **Ljótr Haraldsson** deserves a mention as *the man who managed to found king Magnús’s corpse*. From a formal point of view, an episode is linked with a short text. This text presents several predicates linked with the same actor. Hence follows that the EPISODIC names enter in the Saga at least twice, wherein their status changes. In the exposition, they are new / rhematic, then their usage is anaphoric, and they turn to be given / thematic.

#### 4.4. Names in the contexts of enumeration

A large number of names occur only in the contexts of ENUMERATION. The lists of Saga-like names have a close parallel in the Old Germanic *pulas* i. e. oral recollection of synonyms. There are remnants of this genre in the Anglo-Saxon and Eddic poetry, cf. the well-known Old English poem “Wīðsīð” and Eddic “Grímnismál”. Separate *pulas* survive in the Scaldic tradition, some of them are included in the “Snorra-Edda” [Gurewitsch 1992: 15]. A *pula* names a set of things or people without saying anything particular about them; all we really have to know about the names is that they represent objects of the same kind, say “DWARFS” or “KINGS” [Stebelin-Kamenskij 1974:106]. In the same vein, enumerations of saga characters are homogeneous. The saga assigns

<sup>7</sup> The segmentation of a Saga into “situations” provides some difficulties. The description of a battle may occupy several chapters.



the same index to them — all of them are, e. g. “the fallen in the battle of X” (*Sv* 93) or “the victims of *Heklungar*” (*Sv* 143). This general characteristic is often the only thing we get if the name emerges in one single case of ENUMERATION. E. g. one should include both CHIEFTAINS in example (10) — **Philippus** and **Hallvarðr** — into this rank if we had no other references to them, e. g. example (9). Most enumerations combine the names of CHIEFTAINS with those which do not pop up in other contexts. The favorite form of enumerations is a martyrology. Its maximum — 18 names — is reached in *Sv* 93. The names of the fallen usually enter in the Saga for the first and last time. The contexts of ENUMERATION favor nicknames and patronyms and require identifiable individuals. The formal analysis is: the narrator sets a classifying predicate e. g. “be present at X”; the correct substitution is the list of individuals  $\{a_x, b_x, c_x, \dots, n_x\}$ . The predicate introducing the list is rhematic, while the substituting names are thematic. In contrast to CHIEFTAINS, the names here are derived from the context and ought to be regarded as “new”.

#### 4.5. Background names

Each Saga mentions people from remote ages or remote countries. *Sv* adds several exotic names as *Pharaó* or *Adam* to the conventional list of patronyms and names of ancient kings. The ranking of names is summarized in Tab. 1: The parameters are: given / thematic or given / rhematic.

Table 27.1

Information structure and ranking of proper names

	A. Rulers	B. Chieftains	C. Episodic	D. Enumeration	E. Background
Description	+	–	–	–	–
given / new	given	given	new / rheme	(new)	given
communicative status	Theme / rheme		given / theme	theme	theme / rheme

### 5. Comparison of two contemporary Sagas

*Bögl* is 6 times shorter than *Sv*, but has a higher proportion of proper names. It refers to 160 different people vs ca. 400 in *Sv*. *Bögl* is written shortly after *Sv* and begins exactly where *Sv* stops. 35 characters, e. g. 20% of the total amount, are mentioned in *Sv*. The assumption that *Bögl* relates to *Sv* as to the basic Saga is confirmed by the fact that *Bögl* avoids introducing new objects, the verbs of naming are scarce<sup>8</sup>, the names of most characters enter in enumerations. Despite the fact that *Bögl* is written down later,

<sup>8</sup> *Bögl* definitely avoids introducing new objects. The formula “*X hét maðr*” is applied only 8 times vs 50 in *Sv*; it introduces 5 episodic characters and 3 kings (sic!). The total amount of contexts with *heita*, *kalla*, *nefna* is: 87( *Sv* ) vs 15 ( *Bögl* ).

it does not follow the narrative method of *Sv*. Moreover, it presents a less developed compositional principle. Each narrator has to select relevant information. *Sv* has two metatextual passages where the narrator elucidates his criteria: “there have happened many things worth mentioning, yet we follow the events we regard as most significant, where the kings themselves were present” (*Sv* 71, cf. also *Sv* 163). *Bögl* describes a society where the kings (children or impostors) serve as a cover for the fighting parties. Both *Birkibeinar* and *Baglar* advance, elect and promote their own kings. In these conditions, the descriptions “the king”, “the earl” are ambiguous and the opposition between RULERS and CHIEFTAINS is violated. The test “NAME / description” does not work, if there are many possible substitutions. E. g., an expression as “the Earl” in *Bögl* 12 is ambiguous. It refers either to a) the earl of the *Birkibeinar* → **Hákon** or b) to the earl of the *Baglar* → **Philippus** since this fragment can be linked with both of them. And in turn since “the earl” is just “one of the officers”, the name “Philippus” refers in *Bögl* 11 to two possible hosts: a) = “the earl; b) = “Philippus af Vegini”. To sum up, the narrator has to follow not one central figure (the king or the earl), but a large number of field officers in both camps. The epic measure grows small and one gets a dry synopsis of local campaigns, local successes and failures. There is no place for the learned eloquence à la *Sverrir*, speeches and dialogues are reduced to the minimum. Monologues are ascribed only to FIGURES. Quite analogically, propositional attitudes as “X SAID that P” / “X THOUGHT that P” / “X DECIDED that P” only mark the names of the higher rank in the indirect speech.

*Bögl* is arranged as a sequence of loosely connected episodes and battle scenes, whereby new situations always introduce new lists of names. Many names appear only once: all the *Saga* has to tell about the referent is expressed by the formula “X belonged to the *Baglar/Birkibeinar*”. This black-white vision has an excellent correlate in the ancient historiography. Special names for a “group of the insurgents” emerge exactly when the kings forfeit their status as legal RULERS. King **Sverrir** was in fact right when he dated Norway’s decline back to *the election of the first king who was not king’s son*, notably **Magnús Erlingsson** (*Sv* 99).

The structure of *Bögl* implies following distribution of ranks. Major FIGURES occur in at least 3 different situations<sup>9</sup>, the names of CHARACTERS are bound with short texts, the rest of referents is introduced in one single case of ENUMERATION. All but 3 persons belong to one of the fighting parties. The number of people cross-referenced by *Sv* is put in brackets. The information-structural parameter settings for FIGURES and CHIEFTAINS are “given”. Apart from 8 cases where the names enter in the formula “*X hét maðr*”; names in ENUMERATION appear to be “new”, except those attested in *Sv*. Their communicative status is ruled out by the same conditions as in *Sv*.

<sup>9</sup> This criterion gives the names of 2 women and 18 most significant people from both camps.

A. *Baglar* — 13: “The KING” → {Ingi Magnússon / Erlingr Steinveggr / Philippus Simúnarson}, “The BISHOP” = Nikúlas Árnarson; Arnbjörn Jónsson, Arnþorr foka, Benedikt af Gumanesi, Gyrðr Benteinsson, Hreiðarr sendimaðr, Loðinn stallari, Nikúlas Botólfsson, Philippus af Vegini, Þórðr dokka.

B. *Birkibeinar* — 7: “The KING” → {Hákon Sverrisson / Gutthormr Sigurðarson / Ingi Bárðarson}, Hákon galinn, Pétur steypir; Margrét dróttning, Kristín Sverrisdóttir.

Ranking of the personal names in *Sv*.

	FIGURES (incl <i>Sv</i> .)	CHARACTERS (incl <i>Sv</i> .)	ENUMERATION (incl <i>Sv</i> .)	BACKGROUND (incl <i>Sv</i> .)
Baglar	13 (4)	29 (0)	34 (2)	26 (16)
Birkibeinar	7 (4)	25 (3)	25(6)	-
Neutral	-	3 (0)	1 (0)	-

## 6. Proper names as a data base

Both *Sv* and *Bögl* show that proper names in a Saga are arranged as a data base. The system of ranks represents an idealized model of the epic world. It is no wonder that it is better expanded in the larger text devoted to a longer period (1177–1201 in *Sv* vs. 1201–1208 in *Bögl*), with a natural distance between the moment of writing and the beginning of the Saga. The names of the highest rank i. e. the RULERS form the narrative focus and enable the selection of information. The names of the well-known people, the CHIEFTAINS serve as “cognitive anchors” and verify the story. The names of the EPISODIC characters imply short texts; their purpose is to characterize one single referent and to explain his role in the Saga. The names in ENUMERATION associate the characters with particular situations.

Each rank of the proper names sets out its level of data analysis. The lowest level, ENUMERATION, offers a primitive model of situations. It classifies the referents by assigning them the same index; at the same time, ENUMERATION makes sense iff the names represent different individuals. Hence, ENUMERATION is the basic text form confirming the identity of particular people. If the list includes several people with one and the same personal name, they can be distinguished only upon identifying nicknames<sup>10</sup>, cf. *Dormóðr þasramr* vs *þormóðr fylbeinn*, *Guðleikr flotbytta* vs *Guðleikr skreiðungr* (*Bögl* 5). The identification requires a list of names and vice versa.<sup>11</sup> All the above stated leads us to the conclusion that in spite of the fact that *Sv* and *Bögl* possibly have not existed in the oral form, the composition of these contemporary Sagas still reflects the mechanisms of oral transmission. The framework of proper names antecedes the Sagas, and, in turn, to understand a Saga meant to derive a data base from a coherent text. There really exist Old Nordic texts belonging to an intermediate stage between data

<sup>10</sup> The namesakes can be safely distinguished as different people, if they are mentioned on the same occasion, cf. *Bögl* 18 {...+ Eiríkr Tófason + Eiríkr +...} and/or if have different nicknames, i. e. designations linked with enumerations. Otherwise, we fail to prove that, e. g. **Loðinn stallari** “**Loðinn the marshal**” (*Bögl* 9) is not the same person as **Loðinn bóndi af Leikin** (*Bögl* 4) since the Saga gives no hints that the landlord from **Leikin** could not be elected **the marshal**.

<sup>11</sup> King and contemporary Sagas usually present a large number of namesakes; the maximum in *Sv* is shown by the name *Jón* — 18 different persons. Possibly we deal with an epic attraction: the narrator recollects first and foremost those names that occur in his text several times. E. g., *Bögl* mentioned 3 women with the name *Margrét*; their bearers can be recognized as: a) the constant is = “the QUEEN” (*Bögl* 18), b) = “**Dagfinnr**’s wife” (*Bögl* 16) — less reliable since the patronym fails, c) = “one woman from *Vindland*” (*Bögl* 2) — the name is dubious.

bases (i. e. enumerations) and narrative pieces (i. e. Sagas), namely, the so-called biographies (Oícel. ævi), cf. *Ævi Snorra goða*. Modern readers are inclined to treat such texts as a resume derived from corresponding Sagas, although it is plausible that in many cases *ævi* might have been their source.

### 7. The oral tradition

A few remarks on the *sine qua non* of oral performance. *Sv* and *Bögl* give us some hints on this account. On the one hand, a Saga-like text presupposes correct, juridically grounded speech and the attitude towards extensive monologue. Codified speech with large-scale monologues was characteristic for the folk assemblies and meetings. Situations of this type are attested in the Sagas. One of the most archaic (at least in some respects) family Saga, *Heiðarvíga* the earliest version of which are believed to be written roughly in the same time as *Bögl* i. e. about 1210 includes a formulaic legal text — the “Oath of piece” (*Hvg* 33). *Bögl* refers to a similar oath proclaimed by *Birkibeinn* and landlord **Gunnarr grjónbakk** “**Gunnar Shaggy Back**” (*Bögl* 18). *Sv* adds to Gunnar’s portrait that he acted as an intercessor before the KING and saved by a subtly organized speech the deserter **Þorsteinn Kúgaðr** “**Þorsteinn the startled**” (*Sv* 153). It is therefore hardly striking that the young king Hákon Hákonarson called **Gunnarr grjónbakk** *the wisest man in Norway* (*Hák* 50).

The narrator had to address many listeners altogether since only few of them really were able to tell the story on another occasion. A large audience gets together, beyond folk assemblies, also on a feast or at the KING’s court. It is significant that *Bögl* concludes with an anecdote told by another landlord with a telling nickname, **Þórðr Vettir** “**Þórðr Chatter**” — and once again in the presence of a king (*Bögl* 20). One of the listeners — no one else than the Baglar’s king **Philippus Símunarson** himself — found the story entertaining enough to tell it once more. His listener — the narrator of *Bögl*<sup>12</sup> — decided to write it down.

#### The texts are quoted upon

*Sv* and *Bögl* — Konungasögur, II. Guðni Jónsson bjó til prentunar. Reykjavík, 1957.

*Hák* — Hákonar saga gamla. Konungasögur, III. Guðni Jónsson bjó til prentunar. Reykjavík, 1958.

*Heim* — Heimskringla Snorra Sturlusonar, I–III. Um prentun sá Páll Eggert Ólason. Reykjavík, 1946–1948.

*Hvg* — Íslensk Fornrit, III, Borgfirðingasögur. Sigurður Nordal og Guðni Jónsson gáf út. Reykjavík, 1938.

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<sup>12</sup> Þórðr’s anecdote about Óðinn is found in the *Eirspennil* version of *Bögl*.

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