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Abstract:

The Arnamagnæan Institute at the University of Copenhagen houses the Old Norse-Icelandic manuscript collection of the famous Danish linguist Rasmus Rask (1787-1832) that comprises 127 post-medieval volumes. The topics covered in the manuscripts reflect Rask's widespread interests and range from literature to non-fictional works, such as linguistics, history, law and liturgy. It seems that Rask's large network of friends and acquaintances was of help in his efforts of acquiring manuscripts. Three of them are discussed in greater detail in this article: Rask 16 (nineteenth century) contains the lexicon of Jón Ólafsson from Svefneyjar with Rask's notes, Rask 32 (eighteenth century) containing Old Norse-Icelandic romances, and Rask 98 (seventeenth century) containing 223 Icelandic songs with musical notations.

Keywords: Rasmus Rask, Icelandic manuscripts, Old Norse-Icelandic linguistics, Old Norse-Icelandic literature, Icelandic hymns, Nineteenth-century studies

Résumé:

L'Institut Arnamagnéen de l'Université de Copenhague abrite la collection de manuscrits norrois et islandais du célèbre linguiste danois Rasmus Rask (1787-1832) qui comprend 127 volumes post-médiévaux. Les sujets abordés dans ces manuscrits reflètent les innombrables centres d'intérêt de Rask, de la littérature aux œuvres non fictionnelles relevant notamment de la linguistique, l'histoire, la législation ou encore la liturgie. Il semble que le vaste réseau d'amis et de connaissances de Rask fut d'une grande aide dans son effort d'acquisition des manuscrits. Trois d'entre eux seront examinés plus en détail dans cet article: le Rask 16 (XIX^e siècle) contenant le lexique de Jón Ólafsson de Svefneyjar annoté par Rask, le Rask 32 (XVIII^e siècle) contenant des sagas légendaires (fornaldarsögur) et des chevaliers (riddarasögur), et le Rask 98 (XVII^e siècle) contenant 223 chansons islandaises avec notations musicales.

Mots-clés: Rasmus Rask, manuscrits islandais, linguistique norroise et islandaise, littérature norroise et islandaise, hymnes islandais, XIX^e siècle

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*Riassunto*¹:

L'Istituto Arnamagnano dell'Università di Copenhagen ospita la collezione di manoscritti norreni ed islandesi del celebre linguista danese Rasmus Rask (1787-1832) che comprende 127 volumi postmedievali. I soggetti trattati in questi manoscritti riflettono gli innumerevoli interessi di Rask che vanno dalla letteratura alle opere non di finzione e in particolare, alla linguistica, alla storia, alla legislazione o ancora alla liturgia. Sembra che la vasta rete di amicizie e di conoscenze di Rask fu di grande aiuto nel processo di acquisizione dei manoscritti. Tre di questi saranno esaminati dettagliatamente in questo articolo: il Rask 16 (XIX secolo) contenente il lessico di Jón Ólafsson di Svefneyjar annotato da Rask, il Rask 32 (XVIII secolo) contenente delle saghe leggendarie (fornaldarsögur) e cavalleresche (riddarasögur), e il Rask 98 (XVII secolo) contenente 223 canzoni islandesi accompagnate da notazioni musicali.

Parole chiave: Rasmus Rask, manoscritti islandesi, linguistica norrena e islandese, letteratura norrena e islandese, inni islandesi, XIX secolo

The Arnamagnæan Institute at the University of Copenhagen houses a collection of primarily Scandinavian manuscripts. The main part of this collection is the result of the efforts of the Icelandic manuscript collector Árni Magnússon (1663-1730), from whom the Arnamagnæan Institute takes its name. A smaller, yet no less important, part of the collection comprises the Old Norse-Icelandic² manuscript library of the famous Danish linguist Rasmus Christian Rask (1787-1832). He is today renowned for his linguistic works and knowledge of a multitude of languages: it is claimed that he studied 55 different languages³, and is known as one of the founders of Iranian philology⁴, Nordic philology and historical linguistics⁵. The Old Norse-Icelandic manuscripts stand very much in the shadow of Árni Magnússon's collection and Rask's collection of Oriental manuscripts, one of the finest world-wide and today housed at the Royal Library in Copenhagen, but they are a mirror of his early research focus and of his deep passion and interest of everything Icelandic. This article will give an introduction and overview of Rask's Old Norse-Icelandic manuscripts. First, the life and work of Rask will be introduced through a short biography, his journey to Iceland in 1813-1815 and his Icelandic network. Second, a general overview of his manuscript collection will be given, followed by three exemplary manuscripts discussed in greater detail to highlight specific interests of Rask. Third, his Old Norse-Icelandic collection will be briefly compared with his Oriental collection in order to show similarities and differences in his modes of manuscript acquisition.

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1. Traduction de Laura VANGONE, Centre de Recherches Archéologiques et Historiques Anciennes et Médiévales, Normandie Univ, UNICAEN, CNRS, CRAHAM, 14000 Caen, France.
 2. In this article no difference will be made between Old Norse and Modern Icelandic, according to Rask's own usage of the terms.
 3. N. M. Petersen is cited as the originator of this number, cf. THOMSEN, 1940, p. 191.
 4. ASMUSSEN, 1987, p. 13.
 5. LOUIS-JENSEN, 1987, p. 8.

Biography of Rasmus Christian Rask (1787-1832)⁶

Rask was born on 22. November 1787 in Brændekilde near Odense in Denmark. His father, a tailor and cottager, was a very well-read and knowledgeable man with particular interests in medicine and history and the owner of a surprisingly large library well stocked with historical works. Rask was taught at home until officials recognised his abilities, after which he was sent to the Latin school in Odense in 1801 with his father's intention of preparing him for a clerical career. There, he borrowed books on Old Norse-Icelandic language and literature from his teachers. On the basis of these books and later also the edition of *Heimskringla*, a history of the kings of Norway⁷, which he won in 1804 as an award for his studiousness, he taught himself Old Norse-Icelandic and compiled a first draft of a grammar and dictionary of this language. In 1807 he finished school and moved to Copenhagen to study theology, which he soon dropped in order to focus on linguistics. He assisted his teacher, Prof. Rasmus Nyerup, with a translation of *Snorra Edda* and published *Vejledning til det Islandske eller gamle Nordiske Sprog* (Guide to the Icelandic or Old Norse language), an Old Norse grammar, in 1811. In the following year he travelled to Sweden for the first time, where he studied Swedish, Finnish and Sami languages. Upon his return to Copenhagen he started working on his submission to an essay competition, the topic of which was the origin and structure of the Scandinavian languages. His article, which he finished in 1814 during his stay in Iceland (1813-1815), won the gold medal and was published in 1818 under the title *Undersøgelse om det gamle Nordiske eller Islandske Sprogs Oprindelse* (Study of the origin of the Old Norse or Icelandic language). During his stay in Iceland he also initiated the founding of *Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag* (The Icelandic Society of Literature), of which he became the first president, and perfected his command of Icelandic.

In October 1816 he embarked on his long journey to the East with the aim of finding the origin of the Indo-European languages and acquiring manuscripts. He spent two years in Sweden and travelled from there to Finland and Russia, where he started studying Sanskrit, among other languages. In 1819 he continued eastwards, crossing the Caucasus Mountains and travelling further via Tiflis (now Tbilisi), Tehran and Isfahan to the Persian Gulf, where he embarked on a ship to Bombay. He acquired a large number of manuscripts and studied several oriental languages, for example Avestan, an Old Persian language. At the end of 1820 Rask set out on his way back to Denmark via Tranquebar (now Tharangambadi) and Colombo, where he bought many palm leaf manuscripts. His onward journey was redirected to Calcutta due to a shipwreck, but there he went on board a Danish ship and arrived finally in Copenhagen in the spring of 1823.

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6. This part of the article is based on the standard biography of Rask, THOMSEN, 1940, unless otherwise stated. A biography with a considerable amount of personal information is RASK, 2002.
 7. For introductory information on *Heimskringla*, cf. articles such as in SIMEK and HERMANN PÁLSSON, 2007, p. 169-170 or the monograph WHALEY, 1991.

During his last years Rask worked on the publication of grammars, linguistic studies and also Old Norse sagas. While employed at the University Library in Copenhagen, he received job offers from Sweden and Edinburgh, but declined them and applied instead for several positions at the University of Copenhagen. He was made professor in 1818, but was not awarded with a chair in oriental languages, which was his true aim, before 1831. At that time he was already suffering severely from tuberculosis, however, and died shortly afterwards on 14 November 1832 in Copenhagen.

Paul Diderichsen contextualises Rask's scholarly work within the history of linguistics, and analyses influences on him from linguists and his teachers at the Latin school in Odense. He divides Rask's works before the journey to the East into two periods: the first period between c. 1805 and 1810 is one of mainly input, when Rask learnt the languages that would become important for his later years, for example Old Norse-Icelandic, and when he read the major works of linguistics, philosophy and science of the time. In particular Johann Christoph Adelung (1732-1806), Johann Werner Meiner (1723-89) and Johann Georg Wachter (1663-1757) influenced Rask profoundly. Of his teachers, Ludvig Heiberg (1760-1818) and S. N. J. Bloch (1772-1862) turned out to be most influential. In Rask's second period, which Diderichsen puts between c. 1811 and 1818, he studied a multitude of different languages and published his major works, among them the prize-winning *Undersøgelse om det gamle Nordiske eller Islandske Sprogs Oprindelse* on the origin of the Old Norse-Icelandic language. It was also in this period that Rask worked on the principles of Indo-European sound changes, which Jacob Grimm systematised and developed further and which subsequently became known as "Grimm's Law"⁸.

Icelandic network and journey to Iceland

Already during his time as a student at the University of Copenhagen Rask made his first Icelandic acquaintances, such as Árni Helgason, Bjarni Thorsteinsson and Bjarni Thorarensen, who became close friends of Rask⁹. Árni (1777-1869) studied theology at the University of Copenhagen in 1804-1807 and got after his graduation a stipend from the Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen, before he became vicar close to Reykjavík, provost, and later also bishop, *alþingismaður* (member of the Icelandic parliament) and Knight of the Dannebrog (a Danish royal order awarded for outstanding contributions to the country). He was among the founding members of *Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag* (the Icelandic literary society) and *Hið íslenska Biblíufélag* (the Icelandic Bible society) and penned many sermons and obituaries and played a key role in the new translation and publication of the Bible¹⁰. Bjarni Thorsteinsson (Þorsteinsson, 1781-1876) studied

8. DIDERICHSEN, 1976.

9. BJÖRN MAGNÚSSON ÓLSEN, 1888a, p. 7.

10. *Íslenskar æviskrár*, 1948-1952, vol. 1, p. 49-50.

law at the University of Copenhagen in 1804-1807 and worked at the Danish royal chancery until 1821, when he was appointed *amtmaður* (governor) in western Iceland. Later he became president of the *alþingi* (the Icelandic parliament) and Knight of the Dannebrog. He was one of the founding members of *Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag*, too, and played a vital role in the publication of *Sturlungasaga*, a collection of sagas set in Iceland's commonwealth period¹¹. His wife and Árni's second wife were both daughters of the late Bishop Hannes Finnsson¹². Bjarni Thorarensen (Vigfússon, 1786-1841) studied law at the University of Copenhagen in 1803-1807, got a stipend from the Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen and worked at the Danish royal chancery, before he was appointed *yfirdómari* (superior justice) in 1817 and governor of northern and eastern Iceland in 1833. He was Knight of the Dannebrog as well and a very prominent poet¹³. We can see many similarities in the three biographies: they studied at the same university, worked in the same or similar institutes, came to hold some of the highest offices in Iceland and were active philologists and editors.

Rask spent two years in Iceland from autumn 1813 until autumn 1815¹⁴. He sailed for free on the ship "Skálholt" from Copenhagen to Iceland with financial aid of the well-known patron Johan Bülow (1751-1828), the Danish King and the Norwegian industrialist Jacob Aall (1783-1844)¹⁵. Rask spent the first time in Reykjavík with his friend Bjarni Thorarensen, whence he travelled to visit his friend from university Árni Helgason, who was vicar at Reynivellir north of Reykjavík at the time, for a week¹⁶. After a short time back in Reykjavík, Rask visited Steingrímur Jónsson (later Bishop, 1769-1845)¹⁷ at Oddi (a medieval learned centre in southern Iceland) for a week as well. He made a trip to Hliðarendi (the farmstead of the eponymous saga hero Njáll) and, together with Steingrímur's step-son Ólafur Finsen (1793-1836)¹⁸ to Geysir, Þingvellir (the seat of the medieval parliament) and Skálholt (the bishopric and learned centre in southern Iceland). Rask stayed again with Bjarni Thorarensen in Reykjavík until Christmas, and the rest of the winter and spring 1814 was spent at Reynivellir again, where Rask taught some youths English, Greek and geography in return for support for his journey north, which he started in July. Via the interior highlands he travelled to Hólar (the bishopric of northern Iceland) and Eyjafjörður and visited the poet Jón Þorláksson (1744-1819) at Bægisá, sheriff and historian Jón Espólin (1769-1836) and governor Stefán Thorarensen (1754-1823) at Möðruvellir, the grandfather of Rask's friend Bjarni Thorarensen. He continued

11. *Ibid.*, p. 199-200.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 50 and 200.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 194-195.

14. All the information on his journey to Iceland are taken from BJÖRN MAGNÚSSON ÓLSEN, 1888a, p. 13-20, except biographical information.

15. All sponsored, among other Old Norse-Icelandic publications, Rask's edition of Björn Jónsson's Icelandic-Latin dictionary in 1812, cf. MÜLLER, 1814, p. vii-ix.

16. *Íslenzkar æviskrár*, 1948-1952, vol. 1, p. 49-50.

17. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 348-349.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 42-43.

his journey to the Eastfjords and arrived in the autumn back in Reykjavík, where he stayed again at Árni's who had been appointed chaplain at the cathedral in the meantime. During the summer of 1815 Rask travelled to western Iceland, where he visited Reykholt (home of poet and politician Snorri Sturluson, 1179-1241, and another medieval centre of learning and culture) and met *dómsjóri* (chief justice) Magnús Stephensen (1762-1833), sheriff Jón Johnsonius (1749-1826) and the poet Rev. Þorvaldur Böðvarsson (1758-1836). Rask returned to Copenhagen in the autumn of 1815.

Rask managed to increase his network of acquaintances and friends considerably during his journey around Iceland¹⁹. It is furthermore noticeable that he met the most important figures of Icelandic politics, learning and literature of his time. Magnús Stephensen studied philosophy and law at the University of Copenhagen, became barrister, judge and chief justice and was made *konferensráð* (a high Danish title similar to a title of nobility)²⁰. He was "the main champion of the Icelandic Enlightenment" and regarded literature and education as important tools for progress and improvement²¹. He was also the main driving force behind the publications of the *Landsuppfræðingarfélag* (Educational society of the country) that published mainly religious and judicial works, although also some literary and historical works and two periodicals²². Stefán Thorarensen (Þórarinnsson) studied law at the University of Copenhagen, worked in the Danish royal chancery, was appointed governor of northern and eastern Iceland, was made *konferensráð* and Knight of the Dannebrog and was a great reformer²³. Magnús and Stefán were both married to daughters of sheriff Vigfús Scheving²⁴. Jón Þorláksson was one of the most famous poets of his time, and several of his poems, as well as his translation of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, were published in print²⁵. The Rev. Þorvaldur Böðvarsson from Holt in Öfundarfjörður in the Westfjords was a vicar, provost and famous poet, particularly well known for his psalms and his translations of the German poet and philosopher Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (1715-1769), both of which were printed²⁶.

With many of Iceland's most important people he was in contact by letter as well. He was an avid letter writer, and today there are 1,092 letters, including drafts and copies, extant that are either written by or to him²⁷, and the original number must have been considerably higher²⁸. At least 302 of those extant letters,

19. He met of course many more during his two years in Iceland than are mentioned here, but here is only space for a selection.

20. *Íslenzkar æviskrár*, 1948-1952, vol. 3, p. 457-458.

21. INGI SIGURÐSSON, 1996, p. 179.

22. HELGI MAGNÚSSON, 1990, p. 198-207.

23. *Íslenzkar æviskrár*, 1948-1952, vol. 4, p. 339-340.

24. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 458 and vol. 4, p. 340.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 316-317 and BECK, 1933, p. 572-585.

26. *Íslenzkar æviskrár*, 1948-1952, vol. 5, p. 240-241.

27. *Breve fra og til Rasmus Rask*, 1941-1968.

28. It is conspicuous that more letters to Rask are extant than letters he wrote to Icelanders, and with many of them it is clear that they are replies. From all this we can deduce that many letters are now lost, which is supported by a letter to Grímur Jónsson, dated 23 August 1832, in which Rask

or approximatively one quarter, are to and from Icelanders²⁹. Most of them are between him and his close friends Bjarni Thorsteinsson (36 to him between 1810 and 1832 and 35 from him between 1816 and 1832) and Árni Helgason (31 from him between 1817 and 1833 and 4 to him between 1808 and 1820). Nearly as many are to Grímur Jónsson (28 to him between 1810 and 1832 and 22 from him between 1817 and 1832), who became a friend as well. The frequent correspondence with philologist Prof. Finnur Magnússon (1781-1847³⁰, 22 from him between 1816 and 1821 and 16 to him between 1816 and 1819) seems to be, though amicable, more about scholarship and work on editions and is furthermore confined to a few years after Finnur had taken over editing Björn Halldórsson's dictionary³¹. Similar in tone and numbers are the letters between Rask and headmaster and poet Sveinbjörn Egilsson (1791-1852³², 21 from Sveinbjörn between 1817 and 1833 and six to him between 1827 and 1832). Letters between Rask and his friends from university, the teacher, linguist and poet Hallgrímur Scheving (1781-1861)³³, and Bjarni Thorarensen are remarkably few: only three letters from Bjarni between 1818 and 1830 and one letter from Hallgrímur from 1815 are extant. Equally few letters are extant between Rask and the highest of Iceland's church and administration: six letters that Magnús Stephensen sent Rask between 1824 and 1829 are extant, as well as one from Bishop Steingrímur Jónsson from 1828, two to Steingrímur from 1830, one to Bishop Geir Vídalín from 1817 and one to Geir from 1818. Of the remaining correspondents we find several sheriffs, such as Jón Espólín, who is today perhaps most famous for his annals³⁴; five letters between 1828 and 1831 from him are extant today, and one to him from 1827. Among famous poets we find a letter to Jón Þorláksson from 1814, while Rask was in Iceland, and one letter from 1816 from Þorvaldur Böðvarsson from Holt.

But it was not only the upper layer of society that Rask was in correspondence with. There are a surprisingly high number of letters extant from Einar Jónsson (eleven from him between 1825 and 1832) and his son Japhet (six from him between 1826 and 1828). Einar (1775-1839) was a merchant in Reykjavík and, according to his biography, not very learned³⁵, which did not hinder him in

mentions letters from Grímur that never arrived at their addressee, cf. *Breve fra og til Rasmus Rask*, 1941-1968, vol. 2, p. 389. Rask furthermore asked his friends to burn the letters that deal with the polemic between him and Baldvin Einarsson, cf. BJÖRN MAGNÚSSON ÓLSEN, 1888a, p. 118.

29. Unfortunately this high percentage is not reflected in the percentage of published letters, cf. the edition of *Breve fra og til Rasmus Rask*, 1941-68, where the focus is on Danish correspondence. BJÖRN MAGNÚSSON ÓLSEN, 1888b lists many letters to and from Icelanders as well, but has in a few instances a different number of letters, which is mostly due to findings after his article was published.

30. *Íslenzkar æviskrár*, 1948-1952, vol. 2, p. 13-14.

31. BJÖRN MAGNÚSSON ÓLSEN, however, interprets the letters differently and describes them as "aldavinir" (close friends), BJÖRN MAGNÚSSON ÓLSEN, 1888a, p. 9.

32. *Íslenzkar æviskrár*, 1948-1952, vol. 4, p. 361-362.

33. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 288-289.

34. INGI SIGURÐSSON, 1972.

35. *Íslenzkar æviskrár*, 1948-1952, vol. 1, p. 369.

ordering books from Rask though³⁶. Japhet (c. 1805-before 1860) was a goldsmith in Reykjavík³⁷, but spent some years in Lund, whence he sent his letters to Rask³⁸.

Several of these friends and acquaintances assisted him in acquiring manuscripts, as will be shown.

The manuscript collection

After Rask's untimely death in 1832, the Arnamagnæan Commission in Copenhagen bought his Old Norse-Icelandic manuscript collection for the price of 150 silver rixdollars from his brother and heir, who delivered it to the librarian of the commission on 13 March 1833³⁹. The collection consists of 127 volumes with the shelf-marks Rask 1-119, of which eight items, Rask 9-10 and 114-119, are in fact printed books of both his own works and works he edited, all of which contain notes and annotations in Rask's hand⁴⁰. Most of the manuscripts are paper, apart from the three parchment manuscripts, Rask 72 a-b and 73, which contain *Jónsbók* (Jón's book), the code of laws that were valid in Iceland from 1281 until 1662⁴¹, and are dated to the sixteenth century. Eight manuscripts are dated to the seventeenth, 53 to the eighteenth and 51 to the nineteenth century. The time of origin of four manuscripts span more than one century; they are miscellanies written in a variety of hands and sometimes put together from different manuscripts. The fact that there is only a very limited number of parchment manuscripts, and no manuscripts from the Middle Ages, is most likely due to previous manuscript collectors, first and foremost Árni Magnússon, who had already got hold of almost all such manuscripts, though Rask's precarious financial situation probably also played a role⁴². Ten of the manuscripts were written by Rask himself.

Although many of the other scribes are known by name, it is not always clear how the manuscripts came into Rask's possession. His Icelandic friends

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36. His letters from 8 August 1826 and 30 August 1829, *Breve fra og til Rasmus Rask, 1941-1968*, vol. 2, p. 356 and 372.
 37. Þjóðskjalasafn Íslands, n.d., for the years 1835-1855.
 38. *Breve fra og til Rasmus Rask, 1941-1968*, vol. 2, p. 353, 357, 361, 362, 366 and 367. There is furthermore a receipt of a loan extant that Ólafur, Japhet's brother, sent to Rask on 7 June 1832, cf. *Breve fra og til Rasmus Rask, 1941-1968*, vol. 2, p. 387.
 39. A copy of the librarian's letter to the Arnamagnæan Commission, dated 1 April 1833, the Arnamagnæan Collection, arkivæske 12. The first mention of the purchase is in a letter by C. C. Rafn and Finnur Magnússon to the commission, dated 18 February 1833, in which they advise the commission to accept the sales offer of Rask's brother, cf. *the Arnamagnæan Collection*, arkivæske 12, and is again mentioned in the minutes of meetings of the commission for 22 February 1833 as item no. 10, cf. *the Arnamagnæan Collection*, arkivæske 5, forhandlingsprotokol, p. 279-280.
 40. *Katalog...*, 1889-1894, vol. 2, p. 509-563.
 41. A short overview of the historical background of the *Jónsbók* and its ramifications can be found in GUNNAR KARLSSON, 2000, p. 90-92. The standard edition of the code of laws is *Jónsbók, 1970*, but an English translation and introduction can be found in *Jónsbók, 2010*.
 42. Rask's pecuniary struggles are mentioned several times in his biographies, cf., for example, RASK, 2002, p. 77-78.

and acquaintances have helped him with acquisitions and loans, and it seems probable that he bought several manuscripts from them already during his student years. Most probably, however, Rask bought many manuscripts during his stay in Iceland between 1813 and 1815. At least two manuscripts are connected with Rask's friend Bjarni Thorarensen and his family: Rask 19 contains a draft of an Icelandic grammar in Latin in Bjarni's hand, and Rask 65 is a law manuscript that Bjarni's grandfather Stefán gave Rask when he visited in 1814⁴³. Bjarni's father-in-law was Benedikt Bogason (1749-1819), whose name, as well as the name of his father Bogi Benediktsson, occur in some of Rask's manuscripts, such as Rask 32. The poet Þorvaldur Böðvarsson seems to have sold him several manuscripts⁴⁴, and Jón Þorláksson sent him parts of his translations of Milton's *Paradise Lost* and gave or sold him manuscripts containing his own poetry⁴⁵. The latter is contained in Rask 84, which was written by three people, including Rask, who states on fol. 4v that he collected the various parts in Reykjavík in 1814⁴⁶. It is furthermore likely that Rask bought manuscripts from scribes who were his contemporaries, such as Rask 36 that contains a note on fol. 122v, stating that Rask bought it from its scribe Ólafur Sigurðarson. Rask bought Rask 85, which contains Jón Þorláksson's poetry as well and which was written in 1815 by Jóhann Bjarnason (1790-1855) in Bessastaðir⁴⁷, perhaps from Jóhann or his teacher Hallgrímur Scheving, Rask's friend from university⁴⁸. In some instances Rask bought manuscripts from the scribes' descendants, for example Rask 66 which was written by Magnús Ketilsson (1732-1803) and which he bought from Magnús' son Skúli (1768-1837)⁴⁹. In general, it seems that Rask purchased a considerable number of manuscripts in western Iceland, especially the areas of Skarðsströnd and Fellsströnd and the islands in Breiðafjörður. Benedikt Bogason lived on the farm Staðarfell⁵⁰, Skúli Magnússon lived at Skarð and was married to Benedikt's sister⁵¹, and the Rev. Eggert Jónsson (1775-1846), with whom some of Rask's manuscripts are connected, lived at Ballará. He was married to the sister of Skúli Magnússon⁵². 18 manuscripts may be connected with these family

43. *Katalog...*, 1889-94, vol. 2, p. 513 and 540.

44. Þorvaldur, in turn, seems to have got several manuscripts from the Rev. Jón Ásgeirsson (1740-1810) from Sandar, such as Rask 27, which was written partly by Jón's father-in-law and partly by Þorvaldur himself, cf. *Katalog...*, 1889-94, vol. 2, p. 517. Þorvaldur bought Rask 28, 30 and 51 on 17 August 1811, cf. *Katalog...*, 1889-94, vol. 2, p. 518, 519 and 536, most likely from Jón's descendants or at an auction of Jón's legacy.

45. BJÖRN MAGNÚSSON ÓLSEN, 1888a, p. 16. Part of the translation is still extant and bears the shelf-mark Rask 46 b.

46. *Katalog...*, 1889-1894, vol. 2, p. 548.

47. *Ibid.* Hallgrímur Scheving, the teacher at the school, was Rask's friend from the university in Copenhagen and it is said that Hallgrímur supplied Rask with linguistic works, cf. BJÖRN MAGNÚSSON ÓLSEN, 1888a, p. 18.

48. Hallgrímur made annotations to Bjarni Thorarensen's Icelandic grammar in Rask 19 and added a table of contents to Rask 83, cf. *Katalog...*, 1889-1894, vol. 2, p. 513 and 583.

49. *Katalog...*, 1889-1894, vol. 2, p. 540.

50. *Íslenzkar æviskrár*, 1948-1952, vol. 2, p. 120-121.

51. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 292.

52. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 322-323.

members⁵³. Jón Ólafsson (1731-1811) from the islands Svefneyjar and his father Ólafur Gunnlaugsson (1688-1784) are connected with at least four manuscripts⁵⁴. Taken all that into account, it comes to light that a large part of the Icelandic manuscripts that are today kept at the Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen form the oldest part of Rask's manuscript collection.

The manuscripts are rather plain and undecorated. In general, Icelandic manuscripts tend to be rather simple and plain in comparison to manuscripts from continental Europe, and even the most lavish Icelandic manuscripts such as the famous *Flateyjarbók*⁵⁵, cannot match the splendour of the *Book of Kells* or the books of hours of the duc de Berry. This is even more true for post-Reformation Icelandic manuscripts. The Rask collection houses hardly any manuscripts that contain coloured initials, drawings or other forms of decoration and that could be described as objects of status. The manuscripts can be better described as commodities or objects of utility.

The topics dealt with in the manuscripts in Rask's collection cover a wide range. Approximately one fifth of them are dictionaries and linguistic works, including six printed books by Rask. One of them, Rask 116, is the aforementioned prize-winning *Undersøgelse om det gamle Nordiske eller Islandske Sprogs Oprindelse* (Study of the origin of the Old Norse or Icelandic language). It was printed in 1818 and has a blank leaf between each printed leaf bearing Rask's own corrections and notes⁵⁶. More than two fifths of the manuscripts contain literary works⁵⁷. Especially poetry such as *rímur*, Icelandic metrical romances⁵⁸, seem to have been of great interest to Rask, but also sagas occur frequently in the manuscripts. Roughly one third of the saga manuscripts contain *Íslendingasögur* (Icelandic family sagas)⁵⁹, another third contain *biskupa- and konungasögur* (sagas of bishops and kings)⁶⁰ and one third contain *fornaldar- and riddarasögur* (mythical-heroic sagas and chivalric romances)⁶¹. Several miscellanies contain both poetry and sagas. The rest of the manuscripts contain non-fictional texts. Approximately one tenth of all the manuscripts are of a legal nature, such as the above-mentioned parchment manuscripts containing *Jónsbók*. Circa one

53. These are Rask 7, 27-32, 34, 38, 48, 51-53, 55, 66-68 and 89 a. Rask mentions in a letter to Grímur Jónsson, dated 21 April 1817, a manuscript that he got from the Rev. Eggert, cf. *Breve fra og til Rasmus Rask*, 1941-1968, vol. 2, p. 220. This manuscript bears now the self-mark Rask 7.

54. These are Rask 4, 16, 19 and 103.

55. *Flateyjarbók* (the book of Flatey, GKS 1005 fol., The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies, Reykjavík) is a large, decorated Icelandic manuscript from the end of the fourteenth century and contains mostly kings' sagas, cf., for example, ASHMAN ROWE, 2005.

56. *Katalog...*, 1889-1994, vol. 2, p. 562.

57. Commendable introductions to Old Norse literature are found in *Old Norse-Icelandic literature*, 1985 and *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, 2007. SIMEK and HERMANN PÁLSSON, 2007 is a concise lexicon in German and *Medieval Scandinavia*, 1993 in English.

58. For a first overview, cf. SIMEK and HERMANN PÁLSSON, 2007, p. 320-322 or VÉSTEINN ÓLASON, 1982, p. 52-78.

59. Besides the aforementioned introductions, cf. VÉSTEINN ÓLASON, 1998.

60. Besides the aforementioned introductions, cf. CORMACK, 1994 and MEULENGRACHT SØRENSEN, 2006, p. 173-207.

61. For a first overview cf., for example, SCHLAUCH, 1934 and KALINKE, 1990.

tenth are manuscripts of a historical nature. Rask 50, to name but one, is a paper manuscript from the eighteenth century, containing Icelandic annals covering the years 1740-1779⁶². There are also several manuscripts with religious or theological content. Rask 105, for example, is a handbook for vicars and was written in 1640⁶³. The contents of the remainder of the manuscripts belong to the fields of geography, economy, medicine and music.

In general, the manuscript collection reflects the widespread interests of its owner Rasmus Rask. It is clearly visible by looking at the contents of the manuscripts that linguistics and literature were of particular interest to him, and especially his work on Old Norse-Icelandic dictionaries stands out. The literary manuscripts must have been helpful for the anthologies that he published, although it must be stated that hardly any of the texts contained in those anthologies are found in his manuscripts. To give an example, several manuscripts contain romances but very few Icelandic family sagas; the mythical-heroic saga *Örvar-Odds saga* is the only romance in Rask's anthologies that otherwise contain excerpts of several Icelandic family sagas. It seems rather that the literary manuscripts were bought to appease Rask's hunger for literature. Supporting this, the considerable number of poetry manuscripts might reflect an equally strong interest in poetry. Although such interest is usually not mentioned in his biographies, it is once said that he composed a few poems during his time at the Latin school in Odense⁶⁴. Perhaps Rask's interest in metrical compositions never ceased, but was overshadowed by his output of linguistic works. Also history and legal matters were apparently major fields of interests for Rask. Taken all the topics covered in the manuscript collection into account, it is impossible to narrow Rask's interests down to one or two specific topics. It seems rather that Rask was interested in anything Old Norse-Icelandic, and that the collection reflects what written material was available at the beginning of the nineteenth century in Iceland.

In the following, three manuscripts of the Rask collection will be discussed in greater detail that highlight Rask's various better and lesser known interests. They give an excellent overview of his Old Norse-Icelandic manuscript collection, his main research fields and some hidden gems of the collection: the first manuscript concerns linguistics, or more precisely lexicology, the second concerns literature and the third concerns music.

Rask 16

Rask 16 is an excellent example of Rask's scholarly interests and his modes of work and manuscript acquisition. The scribe is anonymous. It was written around the year 1800, consists of 66 paper leaves measuring 21.2 × 17cm and

62. Cf. *Katalog...*, 1889-1894, vol. 2, p. 534. The scribe is to my knowledge anonymous.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 558-559.

64. RASK, 2002, p. 32. Rask also consumed literature for the sake of recreation, as his involvement in the theatre during his stay in Iceland bears witness, cf. LOUIS-JENSEN, 1987, p. 7.

contains an Old Norse-Latin dictionary by Jón Ólafsson (1731-1811) from Svefneyjar with additions in Rask's hand⁶⁵. Jón studied philosophy and theology at the University of Copenhagen in 1753-1765, received a stipend from the Arnamagnæan Institute and became a great scholar and publisher of Old Norse-Icelandic manuscripts⁶⁶. Rask visited him often and learnt a great deal from their conversations⁶⁷. On the title-page Finnur Magnússon wrote: "*En kortfattet poetisk Islandsk-Latinsk Ordbog til Snorros Edda og Skalda ved John Olafsen fra Svefneyum med gjennemskudte Blade, hvorpaa nogle Tillæg af Rask*" (A concise poetic Icelandic-Latin dictionary to the Snorra-Edda and the Poetic Edda by Jón Ólafsson from Svefneyjar with inserted leaves, on which some additions [are written] by Rask). Rask wrote a short note on fol. 65r stating that he purchased the manuscript from Jón Johnsonius (1749-1826) at Eyri in Seyðisfjörður in north-western Iceland, which must have happened during his journey to western Iceland in the summer of 1815.

The dictionary is laid out in three columns. Entries consist of a lexical entry, some grammatical information and a translation of the entry into Latin, e.g. "Falr, n: nani" (the name of a dwarf) on fol. 13r, 3rd column, line 10. Rask has underlined it and added "Gylf. 14" (i.e. *Gylfagynning*, chapter 14, the source of the entry) below. He sometimes added entries that do not occur in the dictionary on the inserted blank leaves, e.g. "Vala, f. völrur Gijlf." (rolling knuckle-bone, used for yarning and fortune-tellings) on fol. 56r. They were inserted later, as there are single leaves at the outer parts of the quires, but bifolios in the middle of the quire. Perhaps Rask ordered the insertion himself, as inserted leaves would make the manuscript easier to use as a "working manuscript" where he could add notes and comments. The original leaves with the dictionary do not provide enough space for comments longer than a few words because the margins are very narrow. With the inserted leaves, the manuscript became a true object of utility, useful for lexicologists and students of Old Norse-Icelandic poetry, and it must have been this quality that made it important for Rask⁶⁸.

Rask 32

Rask 32 (fig. 1) is a paper manuscript written by the Rev. Gísli Jónsson (c. 1699-1781) and his son, the Rev. Ólafur Gíslason (1727-1801), in the second half of the eighteenth century. It contains chivalric romances (*riðdarasögur*) and mythical-heroic sagas (*fornaldarsögur*), altogether 19 sagas from both medieval and post-medieval times. The first two leaves of the manuscript, including the

65. *Katalog...*, 1889-1894, vol. 2, p. 512.

66. *Íslenzkar æviskrár*, 1948-1952, vol. 2, p. 239-240.

67. BJÖRN MAGNÚSSON ÓLSEN, 1888a, p. 10-11.

68. He thought, in fact, not highly of the manuscript. In the note about the previous owner of the manuscript on fol. 65r, he adds a comment about frequent mistakes in the dictionary. This makes its contents perhaps less valuable from a scholarly point of view, but it still shows that he used it and studied it thoroughly.

table of contents, were written later by Benedikt Bogason (1749-1819) who is also its first known owner⁶⁹. The Rev. Ólafur wrote fols. 2r-94v, at which point his father took over until fol. 100r. Ólafur continued with fols. 100v-174v, where his father took over again until fol. 188v. The last leaves, fols. 189r-222v, were again written by Ólafur⁷⁰. As it must have been difficult to carry an unbound manuscript⁷¹ back and forth several times without damaging or soiling it, it seems more likely that the two scribes lived under the same roof, or at least in close proximity to each other, when they took turns writing Rask 32. This would narrow down the possible time of origin to the years 1756 and 1765 when Ólafur was the assistant to his father⁷². The manuscript was originally bound in a dark-brown leather binding with an embossed flower motif, but its current binding dates from c. 1880-1920. It was until its most recent restauration in 2010 in rather poor condition: some leaves were soiled, the margins frayed and brittle, the ink faded and at some point the sewing at the spine was inexpertly repaired with stitches through whole quires into the written area.

Rask 32 represents what may be called a “paperback” manuscript. Such manuscripts are made of inferior paper, are plain and unadorned and do not feature any decoration, but focus on the texts they contain. As such, the content is more important than the material, which makes them very similar to today’s paperbacks. They are usually written by rather impecunious scribes and have a high text density, i.e. a high number of characters on each page⁷³. The paper of Rask 32 is of poor quality and the manuscript has no decoration and narrow margins, the main text is heavily abbreviated and has a high text density. It seems that the manuscript was written for the personal use of the two scribes. Both of them are said to have been talented poets⁷⁴, and it is reasonable to assume that they wanted the manuscript for their own entertainment or perhaps even as a source of inspiration. The bad condition of the manuscript is a clear sign that it was heavily used, read and re-read until it fell apart – which is another reason for classifying Rask 32 as a paperback-manuscript.

The 19 sagas in the manuscript belong to the groups of chivalric romances and mythical-heroic sagas, as was stated before. Translated chivalric romances are a group of sagas that were – more or less loosely – translated at the Norwegian court during the thirteenth century from other European, mostly French, stories with many fantastic and supernatural elements and bridal quests. The indigenous Icelandic chivalric romances are very similar to the translated romances, but are not translated from foreign sources⁷⁵. Mythical-heroic sagas are similar to the chivalric romances, insofar as they also contain a wealth of

69. *Katalog...*, 1889-1894, vol. 2, p. 521.

70. For a detailed manuscript description, cf. *Handrit*, n.d. and HUFNAGEL, 2012, p. 177 and 189.

71. Manuscripts were generally bound after they were written, cf. JAKOBI-MIRWALD, 2004, p. 125.

72. *Íslenzkar æviskrár*, 1948-1952, vol. 2, p. 63 and vol. 4, p. 45.

73. HUFNAGEL, 2012, p. 180.

74. *Íslenzkar æviskrár*, 1948-1952, vol. 2, p. 63 and vol. 4, p. 45.

75. For a first overview cf., for example, KRETSCHMER, 1982 and *Les sagas de chevaliers*, 1985. KALINKE and MITCHELL, 1985 provide a bibliography for the genre.

supernatural elements and bridal quests, however, their framework and main activities are set in Scandinavia⁷⁶. Especially mythical-heroic sagas enjoyed great popularity in post-Reformation Iceland, as the multitude of extant manuscripts prove⁷⁷. Rask 32 reflects both this popularity and the particular interests that Rasmus Rask took in Old Norse and Icelandic language and literature. It is perhaps no coincidence that C. C. Rafn based his edition of *Sörla saga sterka* in his three-volume edition of mythical-heroic sagas, *Fornaldar sögur norðrlanda* (1829-30), on the text in Rask 32⁷⁸. Both Rask and Rafn were founding members of *Det nordiske Oldskriftselskab* (The Nordic society of antiquities), under whose auspices Rafn published his edition. Rask 32 is therefore a memento of popular literature in Iceland and of the literary interests of Rasmus Rask.

Unfortunately it is not clear how or when Rasmus Rask acquired this manuscript. Otto Zitzelsberger assumes that Rask bought it during his stay in Iceland from 1813 until 1815⁷⁹, and it seems indeed likely that Rask bought it directly from Benedikt Bogason, its first known owner, during his travels around western Iceland in the summer of 1815.

Rask 98 “Melódía”

One of the lesser-known gems of Rask’s manuscript collection is “Melódía” (Melody) with the shelf-mark Rask 98 (fig. 2). It is a paper manuscript in an oblong octavo format containing 95 paper leaves, measuring 11.3 × 16.4cm. Its name is derived from the title: “MELODIA. Nockrer útlensker Tonar Med ijslenskum skállskap, og marger af þeim nitsamleiger til andlegrar skiemtunar” (Melody. Some foreign tunes with Icelandic poetry and many of them useful for spiritual enjoyment). As can be deduced from this title, the melodies are in the foreground, whereas the lyrics are only secondary to the tunes. Furthermore, the melodies for all songs are given with musical notation, but only the first stanza of each song is cited⁸⁰. All in all, the manuscript contains 223 songs⁸¹. It was written

76. For an introduction, cf., for example, TORFI H. TULINIUS, 2002 and the conference proceedings *The legendary sagas*, 2012. *Stories for all time*, n.d. provides an extensive online-bibliography, including information on manuscripts that contain mythical-heroic sagas.

77. A large research project, based at the Arnarnaganean Institute in Copenhagen, conducted research in the transmission of the mythical-heroic sagas, cf. the project’s website for more information: *Stories for all time: The Icelandic fornaldarsögur*, n.d. A project anthology is furthermore in preparation.

78. Rafn cites the manuscript under its old shelf-mark Addit. 82b, cf. *Fornaldar sögur...*, ed. RAFN, 1830, p. xi.

79. *Sturlaugs saga starfsama*, 1969, p. 333.

80. ÁRNI HEIMIR INGÓLFSSON, 2012, p. 7. Square notation is used, which was already out-dated by the time “Melódía” was written (personal e-mail communication with Árni Heimir Ingólfsson, 30 January 2012).

81. Most of the songs have been published in *Íslensk þjóðlög*, 1906-1909, p. 209-315. A CD with 33 songs from the manuscript was published in 2007 (*Kammerkórinn Carmina*, 2007). In addition, some songs have been recorded on the CD *Tvisöngur*, 2004.

in the seventeenth century⁸², probably no later than 1660-1670⁸³. Opinions differ on the identity of the scribe. Jón Þorkelsson claims that the scribe is Jón Ólafsson, an otherwise unknown son of the Rev. Ólafur Jónsson (1560-1627) from Sandur⁸⁴. Jón Helgason, however, claims that it was Jón Ólafsson Índíafari (1593-1679) who wrote the manuscript⁸⁵. More recent research places the manuscript's origin and usage in the vicinity of the Latin school in Skálholt⁸⁶.

The songs in "Melódía" cover an impressive range of sources and styles. Foreign sources of a considerable number of the songs have been identified. Jón Helgason identified the lyrics of two songs with Danish folk songs⁸⁷. He also proved that several songs originated in Catholic liturgical songs, so-called sequences⁸⁸. Róbert Abraham Ottósson found the source of one song in a Sanctus-song from continental Europe⁸⁹. After the millennium Árni Heimir Ingólfsson was able to identify another song as a variant of a fourteenth-century canon from the Spanish monastery of Montserrat which enjoyed great popularity among pilgrims⁹⁰. He also identified six hymns from the so-called Buchanan psalter, psalm paraphrases by the Scottish poet George Buchanan (1506-1582) that were edited again in 1585 in Germany and were reprinted at least 18 times in Germany within 80 years⁹¹. Most recently, Árni Heimir has succeeded in discovering foreign sources of five more songs contained in "Melódía": two German polyphonic songs, so-called "Tenorlieder", with links to the court of

82. *Katalog...*, 1889-1894, vol. 2, p. 556.

83. *Íslenzk fornkvæði*, 1963, p. xxvi. The earliest research on the manuscript dates it to c. 1650, cf. JÓN ÞORKELSSON, 1888, p. 456, footnote 1. Árni Heimir Ingólfsson, who has conducted extensive research on the manuscript, argues that the manuscript was more likely to have been written between 1670 and 1680 (personal e-mail communication, 30 January 2012), but returns to cite Jón Helgason's slightly earlier dating in his most recent article, ÁRNI HEIMIR INGÓLFSSON, 2012, p. 7.

84. JÓN ÞORKELSSON, 1888, p. 456, footnote 1. The Rev. Ólafur Jónsson is considered one of the greatest poets of Iceland, cf. PÁLL EGGERT ÓLASON, 1919-1926, vol. 4, p. 610, and his poetry is contained in a multitude of manuscripts, cf. *Handrit*, n.d. and *Skrá*, 1918-1937. For a first overview of Ólafur's poetry collection (*kvæðabók*), cf. JÓN ÞÓRARINSSON, 2012, p. 271-272.

85. *Íslenzk fornkvæði*, 1963, p. xxviii. Jón Ólafsson was an Icelander who was in the service of the Danish king and travelled as far as India, cf. *Íslenzkar æviskrár*, 1948-1952, vol. 3, p. 234-235, hence his nickname "the India-traveller". How popular his autobiography and travelogue have been can be seen in the considerable number of editions and translations up to the present day. The biography and travelogue, besides his poetry, are furthermore contained in a large number of Icelandic manuscripts, cf. *Gegnir*, n.d. and *Handrit*, n.d.

86. ÁRNI HEIMIR INGÓLFSSON, 2003, p. 21-23 and ÁRNI HEIMIR INGÓLFSSON, 2012, p. 26-29. This is in open contrast to the statement by Jón Þórarinsson in his overview of Icelandic music that the most recent research supports Jón Helgason's claim, see JÓN ÞÓRARINSSON, 2012, p. 282.

87. *Íslenzk fornkvæði*, 1963, p. xxix.

88. EGGEN, 1968, liv. Turning Catholic songs into songs suitable for the Protestant liturgy was a common custom in the early days of the Reformation, beside composing new hymns and turning popular, secular songs into liturgical ones. Cf., for example, EINAR SIGURÐSSON Í EYDÖLUM, 2007, p. xiii and JÓN ÞÓRARINSSON, 2012, p. 194-195.

89. Nine of the ten manuscripts that contain the Sanctus-song are from Central Europe, cf. RÓBERT ABRAHAM OTTÓSSON, 1969, p. 257.

90. ÁRNI HEIMIR INGÓLFSSON, 2004, p. 195-198.

91. ÁRNI HEIMIR INGÓLFSSON, 2003, p. 7-8 and 13-14.

the Emperor Maximilian I, one German Christmas motet, originally in Latin and found only in a manuscript now kept in Regensburg, one French spiritual song that enjoyed great popularity among various Christian confessions, and one secular homophonic song from sixteenth-century Naples, for four voices⁹².

The manuscript is of great importance as it is a rare source of Icelandic music. It is “*lang-stærsta sönglasafn, sem vjer eigum*” (the largest collection of tunes by far that we own)⁹³ and “*eitt merkasta íslenska nótnahandrit sem varðveist hefur í heilu lagi*” (one of the most important manuscripts with musical notation that has survived as a whole)⁹⁴. Today, only c. 120 Icelandic manuscripts are extant that were written between 1550 and 1800 and that contain musical notation. These manuscripts contain c. 1000 melodies⁹⁵. Several of the songs in Rask 98 are only found in this manuscript⁹⁶. That means that this manuscript with its 223 melodies is therefore of great importance to the study of musical history. It also shows how diverse the interests of its owner Rasmus Rask were. While he stayed in Iceland between 1813 and 1815, he mentions in a letter to P. E. Müller, dated 4 July 1814, that he had learnt to play the *langspil*⁹⁷, an Icelandic drone zither with up to six strings. Rask’s ownership of “Melódía” similarly reflects his interest in Icelandic music. “Melódía” also proves that Rask’s efforts in collecting manuscripts was worthwhile and important.

Oriental manuscripts

Rask’s Old Norse-Icelandic manuscript collection seems rather small and unimportant in comparison to his Oriental manuscripts that he acquired during his journey to the East between 1816 and 1823, particularly the Sri Lankan palm-leaf manuscripts. It is stated several times that this collection, now at the Royal Library in Copenhagen, is among the finest world-wide⁹⁸. Rask conducted his hunt for manuscripts very systematically: he studied the extant manuscripts in the library of the Wesleyan Missionary House in Colombo and sought information on the literature of Sri Lanka from learned and knowledgeable men⁹⁹. He then compiled a list of all texts and works he wished to buy, with a total of 223 items¹⁰⁰. Several people assisted him in his endeavours, particularly George

92. ÁRNI HEIMIR INGÓLFSSON, 2012.

93. *Íslensk þjóðlög*, 1906-1909, p. 207.

94. ÁRNI HEIMIR INGÓLFSSON, 2004, p. 202.

95. Personal information that JÓN ÞÓRARINSSON, 2012, p. 270 got from Guðrún Laufey Guðmundsdóttir.

96. ÁRNI HEIMIR INGÓLFSSON, 2012, p. 7.

97. *Breve fra og til Rasmus Rask*, 1941-1968, p. 172.

98. Cf., for example, NORDSTRAND, 1960, p. 138. They are described in *Codices Orientales*, 1846-1957 and the catalogues of the series *Catalogue of Oriental manuscripts*, 1966. Unfortunately the information on the provenance of the Oriental manuscripts in the Royal Library is rather sketchy, cf. DAHL, 1945.

99. NORDSTRAND, 1974, p. 73.

100. NORDSTRAND, 1974, p. 71. The list is found in NKS 149 e 4to, 81 B, fols. 1r-2v, Royal Library, Copenhagen. A committee of the University of Copenhagen was set up to supply Rask with instructions for purchases, cf. a document copied in a letter from P. E. Müller to Rask from

Nadoris de Silva, his Pali teacher, and there are many notes in KB Add. 634 4to, Royal Library in Copenhagen, referring to manuscripts purchased or copied by him, starting on 7 January 1822¹⁰¹. Also the learned men he met helped to buy manuscripts, and Rask even got a manuscript from a poet he visited¹⁰². If Rask was not able to secure a manuscript containing a desired text or work, copies were made for him specially, some even on palm leaf¹⁰³. The Sri Lankan palm-leaf manuscripts that Rask got during his stay at the island are representative of the literature available of the time, and contain some texts that are not extant anywhere else anymore¹⁰⁴. The Avestan and Pahlavi manuscripts that he bought in India are no less impressive¹⁰⁵, and it becomes clear that Rask's Oriental manuscripts form a unique collection and are of international importance.

In comparison to them, his Old Norse-Icelandic manuscripts are seemingly of much less importance, both with regard to age (for many a parameter of quality) and quantity, however, we can sense that their contents give an impression of the available legal, historical and literary material of the time – similar to his Oriental collections. He was perhaps less systematic about his Old Norse-Icelandic acquisitions, though. No “wish list” of texts is known of, and the topics in the manuscripts cover such a wide range that specific proclivities of the collector, other than “Old Norse-Icelandic”, are impossible to detect. But this should perhaps not come as a surprise, since Rask was known for his erudition and wide range of interests. The manuscripts nevertheless give insight into his modes of working, particularly such manuscripts as Rask 16 that contains his corrections and notes¹⁰⁶, and can be very valuable to the history of sciences.

Conclusion

Rasmus Rask is today known as one of the founding fathers of several linguistic disciplines and as one of the discoverers of the Indo-European sound laws, and for his natural talent in learning languages. His collection of Old Norse-Icelandic manuscripts housed at the Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen consists of some printed matter and literary, linguistic, historical, legal and other manuscripts from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Judging from his collection he seems to have been interested in compiling a representation or digest of all the works available in Iceland at the time, and he used his large Icelandic network to achieve this goal. Through his letters it becomes clear that

13 April 1819, *Breve fra og til Rasmus Rask*, 1941-68, vol. 2, p. 321, but is it unclear if such instructions ever reached Rask.

101. NORDSTRAND, 1961, p. 56 and 70-74, where several notes are printed.

102. *Ibid.*, p. 72-73 and 64.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 73-74.

104. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

105. *Ibid.*

106. NKS 149 c and d 1 4to and NKS 2085 h 4to in the Royal Library in Copenhagen contain some of his drafts and notes on Old Norse-Icelandic, too, and are interesting for a study of his works as well.

he was in contact with many of the administrative and cultural leaders of the country, although several less distinguished people were among his addressees as well. Already during his journey to Iceland in 1813-1815 he acquired a large number of manuscripts, particularly in western Iceland, where he got many manuscripts from the people around his friend Bjarni Thorarensen and the family of Rev. Eggert Ólafsson and Skúli Magnússon. The manuscript collection gives thus not only an overview of available texts in the early nineteenth century in Iceland, but also reflects his diverse scholarly and literary interests and allows us more detailed insight into his modes of manuscript collecting.

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Figures

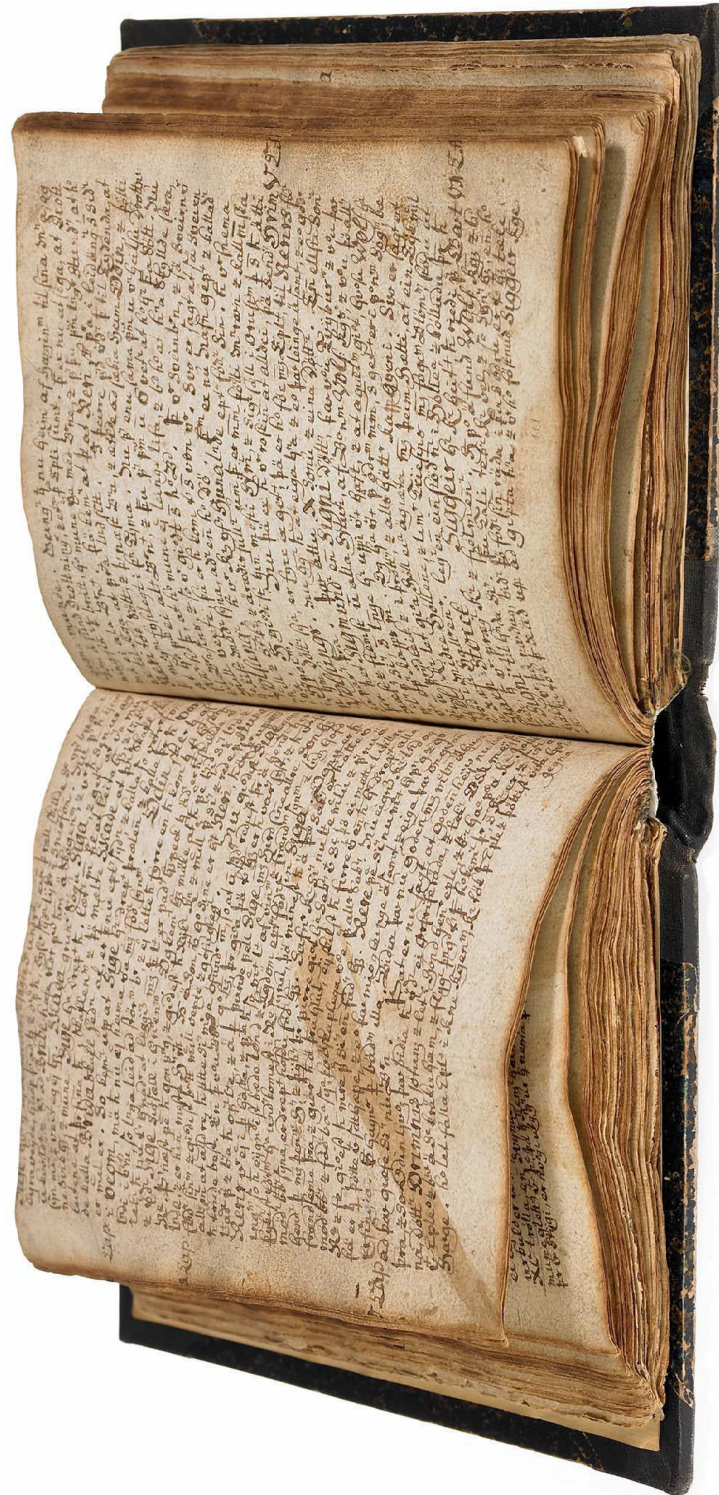


Fig. 1: Rask 32 © Suzanne Reitz, The Armagnacæan Institute, Copenhagen

J. Rask.

MELODIA.

Klækur útlendsker Tónar með jislendskum
 Þáldröf þar og marger af þeim nifsamleig
 til andlegzars þientunar.

Hs auf 2. ölli þartha, an 2. örtim þess, þ' afgröfom met - 1.
 þessum þ þartha, 2 þállsingt rþjðmi,

af
 2. 1
 af margu, mi? þiopallðr gaff þ' 6. 2. ötlendi þess.

Fig. 2: Rask 98, fol. 1r © Suzanne Reitz, The Arnamagnæan Institute, Copenhagen