

Lasse Mårtensson

Skrivaren och förlagan. Norm och normbrott i Codex Upsaliensis av Snorra Edda (Bibliotheca Nordica 6).—Novus forlag, Oslo 2013, 332 pp., (ISBN 978-82-7099-747-3).

Mårtensson's book is a detailed study of the orthography and paleography of the Codex Upsaliensis of the Prose Edda (DG 11 or U). The main objective is to uncover what traces U shows of its lost exemplar. In Mårtensson's theoretical framework there is a set of principles which can be discerned in medieval writing, most importantly: phonological spelling, morphological spelling, and the copying of the exemplar *sign by sign*.

What Mårtensson calls morphological spelling is the scribe's normal orthography. Deviations from this norm can sometimes be explained as phonologically motivated. Previous research suggests that proper names in particular are frequently spelled with an eye towards phonology and Mårtensson finds a few possible instances of this in U. For example, the name *Gerðr* is once spelled with a svarabhakti vowel, *\gerþvr*, which is not in accordance with the general orthography of U. But generally speaking, the scribe of U rarely resorts to phonological spelling.

A much more frequent source of deviations from U's norm is influence from the orthography of the exemplar. One of Mårtensson's central concerns is to identify under what circumstances the U scribe abandons his own norm in favour of the practice of the exemplar. This seems to happen with some frequency in proper names, lists of poetic terms (*heiti*), and in verse quotation.

The U scribe normally uses *\æ* rather than *\e* to represent long open e. In some 24 cases, however, *\e* does occur—mostly in mythological names and *heiti*. Mårtensson convincingly argues that this reflects the orthography of U's exemplar. Words with *\e* include *\leþing*, *\hɛnir*, *\oþrɛrir* and *\avrvallda ens frɛkna* (p. 71). Since those words are believed to originally have a rounded vowel (*/œ/*), Mårtensson argues that the exemplar of U must postdate the merger of */æ/* and */œ/* (mid to late 13th century). This is convincing and the conclusion is of some importance for understanding the manuscript tradition of the Prose Edda.

Mårtensson further argues (p. 265) that the many eccentricities in the mythological names in U are more likely to derive from U's exemplar than from the scribe of U. This, too, is convincing and interesting. Finally, Mårtensson believes that the quotations from Eddic poetry show traces of orthographic conventions similar to those of the Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda (GKS 2365 4to). He boldly concludes that “[t]his shows that the verse quotations have

reached Snorra Edda through manuscripts with eddic and skaldic poetry, not through oral versions of the poems” (p. 288).

In general, Mårtensson’s methodology is sound and his conclusions are, for the most part, carefully argued and based on solid data. As a look at the index will confirm, reference is frequently made to the other textually important manuscripts of the Prose Edda. Yet, more comparison might have been desirable. In all cases where *U* has an odd spelling it is natural to ask whether that spelling also occurs in the other manuscripts—but this does not appear to be systematically checked.

One example where additional comparison would have been useful is the spelling *\biblindi* of one of Odin’s name in a quotation of *Grímnismál*. Mårtensson says that the expected form is *Biflindi* and indeed that is the form found in GKS 2365 4to and its sister manuscript AM 748 I a 4to. Mårtensson argues that the form in *U* is an example of a phonological spelling of a proper name and shows the Icelandic change of /f/ to /b/ before /l/. Since this change usually did not occur on morpheme boundaries, Mårtensson notes that “[s]omeone, perhaps the scribe of DG 11, must have analyzed the name as a simplex. At least he must have regarded /f/ and /l/ as belonging to the same morpheme” (p. 274).

What goes unmentioned is that the same spelling is found in the corresponding place in Codex Wormianus (*w*) and the form in GKS 2367 4to (*R*) suggests that its exemplar, too, had the same form. The spelling of the four main manuscripts is as follows: *\blindi* (*R*), *\biflindi* (Codex Trajectinus), *\biblindi* (*wU*). The same name occurs in chapter 3 of *Gylfaginning* where the spelling is *\bifliþi eða biflindi* (*R*), *\biblide eða biblinde* (*T*), *\bifliði eða biblindi* (*w*), *\riflindi* (*U*). In this context it is clear that the spelling with *\b* cannot originate as a phonological spelling in *U*—it must come from its exemplar. Presumably the form was understood in the context of Odinic names such as *Helblindi* (which occurs earlier in the same *Grímnismál* quotation), *Gestumblindi*, *Gunnblindi*, *Herblindi* and *Tvíblindi*. It may well originate as a scribal error but that would have been early in the Prose Edda tradition and it is doubtful whether it has anything to do with the change of /f/ to a plosive in the /fl/ cluster.

Despite this limitation, Mårtensson’s book can be recommended to any scholar interested in detailed knowledge of the manuscript tradition of the Prose Edda. The book contains an extensive English summary which successfully relays the main points.

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