

Law of the General Assembly on Steelyards

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Introduction

This is an edition and translation of a medieval Icelandic legal document. It is intended to serve as an example for how historical texts might be translated and distributed more openly, especially as drafts prior to publication; cf. my OpenTranslation project on Github.

In the left column is the original text copied from the source (n.b. manually copied, so there may well be errors; ideally this would be imported or copied and pasted in cases where the editorial work has already been done). Spelling, punctuation and syntax have been retained from the edition, but no attempt has been made to replicate non-standard characters in the edition. The character 'o' with ascending hook is here rendered as 'ö'. Small caps in the edition have been ignored.

Edition

The source text below comes from *Diplomatarium Islandicum*. 1857-76. Vol I, pp. 311-312. At the time of writing a copy is freely available online on baekur.is. It is dated there to c. 1200 and presented in three witnesses: A, B and C. The text here is from A, which was edited from AM 347 fol. (*Belgdalsbók*), a manuscript dated to c. 1340-70 according to the catalogue description in Handrit.is. It has also been printed as an addition in Vilhjálmr Finsen's edition of Grágás. [will need to expand this]

Translator's statement

Wherever possible the translation below follows the conventions for translating medieval Icelandic legal terminology into English set by the 1980-2000 translation of *Grágás* by Foote, Perkins and Dennis.¹

Introduction

This short text refers to regulations for steelyards, scales used for measuring items by weight [could use a good reference on medieval steelyards]. N.b. something is amiss with footnotes within the parcolumns package. Need to figure out what this is.

82. Law of the General Assembly on Steelyards

Vm loghpundara eða mælir [maðr] rangar alnar.

þat er logpundari er atta fiorðungar eru j vett. en .xx. merkr skulo j fiorðung vera.

Ef maðr a pundara meira eða minna en mællt er ok varðar þat .iiij. marka sekt.

Nu reiðir hann rangar vettir eða mælir hann rangar alnar sva at munar vm oln j .xx. alnum. þa varðar fiorbaugs garð.

[p. 312] sa a sok er sins hefir j þui mist. en ef hann vill eigi sökia þa a sa er vill. Til sakar þeirrar skal kuæðia a þingi .ix. heimilis bua þess er sottr er.

On lawful steelyards or if someone wrongly measures ells.

That is a legal steelyard which is eight 'quarters'² in weight, and there shall be 20 marks in a quarter.

If a man has a steelyard greater or less than stated, then the penalty is a fine of three marks.

Now if he prepares false weights, or he measures false ells so that there is a difference of 1 ell in 20, then the penalty for that is lesser outlawry.

[p. 312] The one whose property is lacking is to have the case. And if he does not wish to prosecute it, then whoever wants is to have it. Nine neighbours of the one accused

¹Dennis, Andrew, Peter Foote and Richard Perkins, trans. 1980–2000. *Laws of Early Iceland. Grágás*. 2 vols. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press

Sök þeirri skal stefna at heimile þess er sotr er. eða þar sem hann heyrir sialfr aa.

Rett er þeim er sökir at stefna j þingbrekku a varþingi. þui er hann heyr sialfr. ok skal þui at eins rett at stefna þar j dom ef sa er a þingi er sotr er. en elligar skal stefna til alþingis.

Ef sia sok verðr rett höfðut. ok koma þau gaugn fram með henni at domi sem henni eigu at fylgia þa skulo eigi varnir metaz vm þat mal ok eigi skulo gagnsakar. metaz ef þat eru [eigi] sekðar sakar amot. alna mals sok.

Pott eigi se lengra vaðmal mællt rongum alnum. en .iij. alnar ok varðar þo. fiorbaugs garð. ok von er at muna mundi oln. j .xx. alnum ef sua langt vaðmal væri. slikum alnum mællt.

Slikt varðar vm rangar alnar lerepte sem a vaðmalum.

Rett er at sökia vtan landz menn vm alnar rangar at heraðs domi. slikri sokn sem til er mællt vm rettafars sakar.

are to be called to the assembly for those cases.

That case is to be summoned at the home of the one accused or there ?to which he belongs.³

It is lawful for those who are prosecuting to issue a summons at the assembly slope at the spring assembly to which he himself belongs. And it shall only be lawful to issue a summons there in a court if the one being accused is at the assembly. But otherwise the summons is to be issued for the General Assembly.

If that case is lawfully brought forth, and formal means of proof are produced for it at the court to which it [the case] should accompany, then no defense is to be considered for that case, and there is to be no counter-suits. There will be consideration if there are [not] outlawry cases ?against him, ??a case for the measure of ells.

Even though homespun cloth is not wrongly measured more than three ells, then the penalty is lesser outlawry. And it is expected that there will be a difference of one ell in 20 if the homespun cloth is that long. ?in such ells measured.

It is the same penalty for wrong ells of linen as for homespun cloth.

It is lawful to prosecute foreign men for wrong ells at the quarter court with the same prosecution as is stipulated for cases concerning personal compensation.