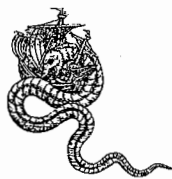


did. Did he consider it an isolated pearl in the vast *corpus* of the *Gesta*? No, he did not. Before publishing the *Orationi in materia civile e criminale* Nannini published in Venice (Giolito de' Ferrari 1557 and 1560; later, still in Venice, Alla insegna della Concordia 1585) a larger collection of *Orationi militari, raccolte da tutti i historici*, where he includes - as Carlo Santini has already pointed out ("Lettori, spettatori e pubblico nei *Gesta Danorum* di Saxo Grammaticus", in the volume edited by him *Tra testo e contesto. Studi di scandinavistica medievale*, Roma 1994, p. 48) - five speeches taken from those of Dorno (book II, p. 39), Torkillus (book II, p. 47-48), Britannicus (book II, p. 48-49), Frotho (book V, p. 142-143) and Eric (book V, p. 143-144) whose speech closes the *Orationi militari*. The very last words of the book, however, are the author's own:

Io so che ci sono molti altri Historici latini, come Suetonio, Iustino, Floro, Eutropio, Sesto Aurelio, Cornelio nipote, e molti altri, ne' quali non hauendo trouato orationi, ne ragionamenti militari, se non pochissimi e breuissimi, però non mi è paruto opportuno mettergli qui altrimenti, perche attendo a mettere insieme i parlamenti di qualche importanza, non ho giudicato esser buono occuparmi in ogni minima cosa (p. 552 of the 1560 edition).

This closing statement leaves no doubt that Nannini ranked Saxo among the great historians whose works contain models of eloquence. The two disciplines were quite close and often overlapping in the Humanistic and Renaissance tradition, that is until the crises of the «ars historiae» brought a neat separation between them. Nannini, the first to introduce Saxo in vernacular, clearly understood what modern scholars have been trying to prove: namely that this Northern historian was nurtured by Clio and bathed in the waters of the Tiber.



SCANDINAVIAN STUDIES HELD IN SICILY - 1992 TO 1995

by Rudolf Simek, University of Vienna

In February 1992, Peter Springborg, Arnamagnæan Institute, University of Copenhagen, spent a week at the University of Catania, at the Department of Germanic Philology, where he gave lectures on the Jelling Monuments and on Old Icelandic manuscripts.

In the following year, 1993, he also lectured at the University of Catania on the history of the Danish language, and tried - with great success - to make the students pronounce and comprehend modern Danish texts.

Also in 1993, François-Xavier Dillmann lectured in Catania, and an abstract of his paper will soon be published in *Classiconorroena*.

On 3rd and 4th of March 1994, Doz. Dr. Rudolf Simek, University of Vienna/Austria, gave a series of 3 lectures (6 hours, in English) on the general of Saga Literature at the Department of Modern Philology, University of Catania, at the invitation of Prof. Ute Schwab.

The first lecture was dedicated to the early history of Icelandic literature as such in its total socio-cultural context. Starting point were the oldest manuscripts and fragments of manuscripts, rather than some fictitious works of oral poetry, as their authenticity is in many cases more than questionable. These oldest written sources date from the 12th century and represent the genres of literature available at the time: laws, liturgical and other religious literature, scientific literature (*Fachprosa*) and, a little later, history. To these may be added, tentatively, what evidence we have about other early genres as mentioned by texts from the 13th century. Dealing with manuscripts as the earliest source of Old Icelandic literature one has to explain, as far as possible, both the history of mentality of the Scandinavian Middle Ages as well as the physical and social preconditions of manuscripts production.

The second lecture dealt firstly with question of genre in Old Icelandic literature, such as the historical if not universally valid distinction between Eddic and Scaldic poetry, the various types of prose texts found in the Scandinavian Middle Ages, and finally with the subdivision of those texts that are generally classified as sagas. A critical explanation of the distinction made between Saints' sagas (hagiographic texts), Kings' sagas and Sagas of Icelanders (pseudo-historical texts), Fornaldarsögur and Riddarasögur (legendary or self-proclaimed fiction) as well as some actual historical texts in the medieval sense of the world, such as *Gydinga saga* and *Breta sögur* cannot be made without dealing with the history of research in the field of Old Norse-Icelandic Studies, because the positions regarding the creation of sagas have differed widely during the history of saga scholarship.

The third lecture was finally dedicated to those two genres which have mainly earned Icelandic saga literature a place in the history of world literature, namely the Íslendiga sögur and the Fornaldarsögur. A critical reading of two exemplary texts of each genre was presented to the students together with excerpts (in Old Norse and English). For the Íslendiga sögur, *Grettis saga* and *Hrafnkels saga* were chosen as two outstanding examples of the family sagas, whereas the *Örvar-Odds saga* and *Egils saga einhenda* were taken as typical examples of the Fornaldarsögur; special emphasis in these readings was given to aspects of overall importance for the whole of saga literature on the one hand, on the other hand to items specific of the genres dealt with.

Both the number of students as well as their interest in Old Icelandic literature were notable, which shows the importance of including Old Norse literature in their studies either by local or by extramural lecturers. This was further proved by the attendance of the entire staff of the department at all the lectures, who not only took a lively part in the discussion but also continued it outside the walls of the University during their generous entertainment of the guest lecturer.

In april 1994, Prof. Dr. Heinrich Beck, University of Bonn/Germany, gave a lecture in German at the Academy of Science in Messina on the topic of Snorri Sturluson's Vision of the Pagan Past, at the invitation of Prof. Dr. Ute Schwab.

In this monumental work in Norwegian history, as presented in the *Heimskringla*, the Icelandic Historian Snorri Sturluson (1178/79-1241) starts his discussion of events far back in history: at the time of the Roman Empire, when the Ás Odin with his temple priests and a multitude of his people emigrates from Tyrkland (in Asia) into the Scandinavian North and sets up dominions in Saxony, on Fyn and on Zealand and finally in Sweden (Sigtúnir). This historical event, as described by Snorri at the beginning of his *Ynglinga saga*, is taken into a mythical dimension in the first part of his *Edda (Gylfaginning)*: the historical Æsir under Odin's government are earthly counterparts of the world of Æsir and Vanir gods, whose revelation is the actual topic of the *Gylfaginning*. This revelation is used by the Æsir by taking over the names of the transcendent world and by using mythological names for places within their environment.

Snorri's vision can be described by three aspects:

a) the historical facts and the world of the heathen gods are related in a way dominated by Christian ways of thinking (the idea of a Trinity, the idea of an All-father, the twelve disciples, etc.)

b) the euhemeristic view point of Snorri's contemporaries is replaced by a relationship between gods and mankind which not only follows the Christian example, but is also proven by the course of events. He does not rationalise away the transcendent aspects of the heathen gods, but confirms it as a pointer;

c) the pagan tradition as represented in the *Völuspá* and its mental environment, that is to say in the sources of the *Gylfaginning*, is treated with respect by Snorri, who also ascribes a certain amount of historical truth to it, against the opinion of other and older authors (e.g. the Danish historian Saxo

Gramaticus, who in this context talks of *praestigiae* and *ludificationes daemonum*). Snorri does not view the transition from Germanic paganism to Christianity as a cultural break, but rather as the fulfilment of tendency latently present in heathen times. The pagan religion had also been revealed to an Asian (the Æsir) in a central part of this world and was carried north by human propagators in one the major migrations in history.

On the 1st and 2nd of March 1995, Univ. - Doz. Dr. Rudolf Simek, University of Vienna/Austria, gave another series of 3 lectures (6 hours, in English), this time on the topic of Germanic and Northern Religion and Mythology at the Department of Modern Philology, University of Catania, at the invitation of Prof. Ute Schwab. The first lecture was completely dedicated to the sources of Germanic mythology, explaining the various types of sources: medieval scholarly authors such as Snorri and Saxo, other medieval texts like Scaldic and Eddic poems, foreign authors, esp. Tacitus and Caesar - explaining also the concepts of *interpretatio romana*, *interpretatio germana* and *interpretatio christiana*, - pictorial information, place names, the names of the gods or goddesses written on ancient votive stones (matron stones), other linguistic evidence, archaeology as well as dealing with the problems posed by sources, above all that our supposed knowledge of the pagan Germanic religion is heavily coloured by what we know from the mythographers Snorri and Saxo, who wrote over 2 centuries after the Christianization of their countries. If we do not use these high medieval interpretations of paganism, the earlier sources are far less easy to interpret and far more ambivalent; therefore it should be kept in mind that we must not overestimate the source value of those late interpretations, which may or may not only be private opinions of their authors, filling gaps on their knowledge and the heathen religion. The second major problem is that we end up with a picture put together from all these sources, over 1200 years - if we include rock-carvings, possibly 3000 years - from

different genres, from the Black Sea to Iceland, normally totally neglecting historical developments as well as regional specialities. - Another aspect that must be kept in mind when looking at source material is the influence of syncretism and the multiple contacts the Germanic tribes made with other religions over a period of more than a millenium.

The second lecture was dedicated to presenting the students with a synoptic view of northern mythology as given by Snorri Sturluson in his *Edda*, dealing with the heathen *Weltbild*, including Midgard, Asgard und Utgard, the Æsir and Vanir and the War between Æsir and Vanir, some (partly contradicting) evidence for the veneration of these gods as seen in placenames, with heroes and half-gods; the myths about Odin, about Thor, about Loki and about Baldr, as well as the heathen concepts of cosmogony and escatology (Ragnarök). When presenting such a synoptic view it must be continuously stressed that we not only deal with the genuin mythology of the pagan times (if it ever was as systematic as that) but to a greater extent with works of literature, giving mythography its literary shape.

The third lecture finally dealt with the religious life in pre-Christian Germanic Europe, presupposing the answer to two questions: when can we speak of the population of Northern Europe as Germanic (and therefore tacitly assuming some sort of continuity in religious beliefs from then on), and secondly: What is the subject of the history of religion? Gods? Holiness? The powers? The numinous experience? Cult practises? Folk beliefs? - Of many cult practises we have only late and most certainly garbled descriptions, such as about baptismal customs (if they did indeed exist), sacrifice and tempes, ritual feasting, marriage and fertility rites. Of others we have predominantly archaeological evidence, such as justice and punishment and burial customs, which also tell us something about a pre-Christian concept of soul, of an afterlife of spirits and ghosts, but amulets and rune carvings also inform us about magic and spells, even thought most of the spells are transmitted on

the vellum of the Christian manuscripts. Due to the availability of an overhead-projector it was possible to show the students about 100 illustrations of maps and objects, which greatly added to the effect of the lectures as the topic was heavily dependant on pictorial information. Despite the times of the lectures early in the morning and in the evening, all classes were extremely well attended and the students showed an increasing willingness to contribute with question; this was additionally helped by the fact that Prof. Schwab was at the same date teaching on rune-magic which resulted in a fruitful dialogue even during the course of the last lecture, when dealing with questions of magic and spells. One student contributed the fact to the discussion of pre-Germanic European beliefs of the megalithic era by pointing out that even Sicily has at least one dolmen to testify the presence of the Western European megalithic sea-people, a fact not hitherto noted in historical handbooks; this contribution was followed up on the days following the lecture and the dolmen found on the coast near Avola in Eastern Sicily.

For all those lectures, thanks must be said firstly to Prof. Dr. Ute Schwab, for the invitation and organisation of the lectures, as well as to the Italian Foreign Office and Prof. Selo-Alemanni for their generous financial support of the guest professorships mentioned.

IL RITORNO IN ISLANDA: "Níunda Alþjóðlega Fornsgnaingid"

di Giovanna Salvucci, Macerata

Dal 31 luglio al 6 agosto 1994 si è svolta, nella terra delle saghe, la "9th International Saga Conference".

Organizzata nella seconda maggiore città d'Islanda, Akureyri, situata all'inizio di quel Eyjafjörður che ha visto aggirarsi per le sue rive tanti personaggi delle saghe, la Conferenza ha fatto rivivere a molti studiosi, nella cornice delle luminose notti d'estate, delle vaste distese di lava e dei fiumi azzurri

affollati di salmoni, quello spettacolo di colori troppe volte soltanto immaginato leggendo le pagine in bianco e nero delle saghe. Tema di questa nona conferenza sono state le *Samtíðarsögur*, cioè le saghe di argomento contemporaneo alla loro redazione scritta.

La maggior parte dei 77 interventi raccolti nei due volumi di *Preprints* ha avuto come oggetto le *Biskupa sögur*, le *Heilagra manna sögur* e la *Sturlunga saga*, l'opera più legata al periodo della storia islandese conosciuto col nome di *Sturlungaöld* (c. 1183-1264). Seguendo gli sviluppi che la ricerca ha avuto in questi ultimi anni, molti autori hanno analizzato la particolare situazione politica e sociale che pose fine alla "Repubblica" islandese a favore del re di Norvegia attraverso il tessuto narrativo e le metafore utilizzate dai compilatori della *Sturlunga saga*, fra i quali risalta Sturla Þórðarson, autore della *Íslendinga saga*.

Lois Bragg ad esempio, nel suo "Disfigurement, Disability, and Dis-integration in Sturlunga saga" (*Preprints* pp. 123-137), ricorda i personaggi affetti da malformazioni fisiche e cita il caso di Þorgils Skardi (Þorgils dal labbro leporino), la cui mancata integrazione sociale a causa della sua anomalia preconizza la disgregazione della società all'epoca degli Sturlungar.

L'intervento di Jesse Byock, invece, dal titolo "State and Statelessness in Early Iceland" (155-169), torna ad analizzare gli inizi della civiltà islandese, che condivise alcune caratteristiche delle società primitive pur non essendo stata fondata da gruppi di cultura primitiva (alla stessa epoca infatti gli stessi gruppi fondavano la Normandia, stabilivano il Danelaw, avevano contatti con l'impero bizantino, ecc.). Il passaggio da un'Islanda che, come afferma Byock, era inizialmente tesa alla de-stratificazione sociale, a quell'Islanda che abbandonò la sua peculiare struttura in favore della monarchia norvegese, viene descritto nell'articolo di Ármann Jakobsson "Nokkur ord um hugmyndir Íslendinga um konungsvald fyrir 1262" (31-42) in cui l'autore esamina il giudizio islandese sulle monarchie straniere