

ГРАМОТА НА БЕРЕСТЕ У САКСОНА ГРАММАТИКА

Birch bark inscription in Saxo
Grammaticus'? What did the Scandinavians
knew about Old-Russian Way of Writing?

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Literacy in Medieval Europe

- In learned languages:
- Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic

- In vernacular (*in vulgaris*)
- Old Irish, Old High German, Old Norse, Old French, Old Church Slavonic

- Literacy or half-literacy!
- Düwel about runic literacy: „Schriftgestützte Mündlichkeit”

Bergen (runic stocks) vs. Novgorod (birch bark) - similarities

- Language – local!
- Intense use!
- Similar purposes for writing
- Local material for writing (stocks vs. birch-bark)
- Similar social milieu (big wooden merchant towns linked to Hansa)
- Christian background (in social milieu and in the form of literacy!)

Differences:

- Language
- Alphabet
- Material (wooden stocks vs. birch bark)

Old Russian birch bark inscriptions

- About 1000 pcs known, mostly from Novgorod
- North of Russia (plus Karelia!)
- Nothing from the South!
- Nothing from outside Russia
- Language – Old Russian only
 - But ONE OLD NORSE IN RUNES!
 - Question about origins and popularity
 - Scandinavian factor!

- No birch bark inscriptions outside of Russia (including nothing in Scandinavia)
- But...
- What did the Scandinavians know about Old Russian way of writing?
- And how to prove it?

Saxo Grammaticus

Gesta Danorum III, 4, 4

- Saxo Grammaticus' (Danish?) version (not the oldest nor the best) of Rindr (mother of Vali) episode
- Differences to „orthodox” or „standard” myth
- Vali, avenger of Baldrs death, by Saxo is named Bo(us)
- Many details, arranged in a good story about Odin wooing for Rindr in order to get a son who would avenge Balders death

- Finnish (Saami?) connection/motif:
 - After Balders death Odin discovered from a Finnish sorcerer called Rosthiopus (*cui Rosthiopus Phinnicus predixit*) that he would be able to beget a son-avenger only from Rindr....

Place – Rus'

- Rindr according to Saxo was the daughter of the king of Rus' (*Ruthenorum regis filia*), no Kings name unfortunately recorded (or invented) by Saxo
- Three (fairy tales number) attempts to achieved the goal.

First attempt

- Odin comes in disguise (as always) to the King of Rus' firstly as a simple soldier, promoted quickly to the rank of army commander (*magister militum*), successfully conquering enemies. Finally confessed to the King that he wish to marry his daughter.
- The king allowed him to meet her, but when Odin only tried to kiss Rindr, she immediately slapped him in the face (*alapam recipit*).

Second attempt

- On the next year Odin once again offered his services to the King this time in the disguise of a goldsmith, giving for the women on Kings' court a big lump of gold. He try to give the most beautyfull things to Rindr and to kiss her, but she boxed him with much stronger slaps (*colapho percussit*).
- Saxo comments that the clever girl already noticed that something strange is happening around her.....

Third attempt

- After some time Odin, as always in disguise, once again offered his services to the King as a soldier and was as usually again victorious. But again he was unable to convince Rindr. This time he received from her just one slap, but it was so strong that he flew up in the air and fell down headfirst
- *ita ab ea propulsus est ut mentum terrę nutabundus impingeret*

Similarities to *Þidreks saga* 228

- Where king Gunnar tries during his wedding for three subsequent nights to sleep with his new wife Brunhildr and she treat him even worst. Similar milieu where the redaction of the Thidreks saga text was written (much probably Bergen!)
- Ok nú er þau eru tvau saman, vil konungr eiga lag við konu sína, en hún vil þat víst eigi. Ok svá þreyta þau þetta sín á millum, at hún tekr sitt belti ok svá hans ok bindr fætr hans ok svá hendr, ok nú festir hún hann upp á ein nagla með fótum ok höndum, ok þar er hann nálíga til dags. (...) Ok aðra nótt ferr á sömu leið ok svá ina þriðju nótt...

Epilogue with the charm on a (birch)bark

- Odin after he picked himself up after the fall, touched Rindr with a **piece of bark covered with written spells**
- ***cortice carminibus adnotato***
- And disappeared while the women fell ill. Then Odin come to the court of the king for the fourth time pretending to be a woman experienced in healing and in such disguise finally succeeded to have intercourse with Rindr.

- Saxo speaks about bark (*cortex, -is*) only.
- Which is covered with charms (ON *galdrar*) written on it (*carminibus adnotato*)
- However normal situation in Scandinavian culture was to **carve** (*rista*) runes on **wood** (wooden stocks or pieces)!

Harthgreip episode (Saxo, I, 6, 4)

- Comparable episode from the same work of the same author!
- Some Harthgreip carves runes on a piece of wood in order to get knowledge about the future of his pupil and lover Haddingus from a dead person (necromantic ritual).
- Saxo writes about horrible spells carved on wood that were placed under dead man tongue (*diris admodum carminibus ligno insculptis iisdem linguae defuncti (...) suppositis*).

Rindr episode - Harthgreip episode

- carmina
 - cortice
 - adnotatae
 - Way to write charms on birch bark (in cyrilic?)
 - Place: Rus'
- carmina
 - ligno
 - insculptae
 - Way to carve charms in runes on wood (in Old Norse)
 - Place: Indefinite, but somewhere in Scandinavia

Facit

- Saxo knew what he wish to write and distinguish very well between carving spells in runes and writing spells with letters on bark. The only bark proper for writing is a birch bark. The Rind episode is taking place in Rus'. So Saxo knew very well that to the local culture of Rus' at his time belong writing on birch bark and used this to make the scenography of his story located in Rus' trustworthy!