

**Another Look at the so-called 3rd Hand
in the Angers Fragment of Saxo Grammaticus.**

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In 1920 the Danish scholar Emil Rathsach advanced the hypothesis that the '3rd hand' in the Angers fragment of Saxo Grammaticus belonged to the author of the epitome of Saxo now known as *Compendium Saxonis*.¹ The '3rd hand' has added comments, elucidations and variants to the main text of the fragment. The Angers fragment consists of four leaves of a manuscript written c.1200. It was found in Angers in France in the 1860s. In 1877 it was called to the attention of scholars by Gaston Paris. Soon after it was acquired by the Royal Library in Copenhagen where it now has the signature NkS 869g, in quarto. If Rathsach is right, the additions of the '3rd hand' must have been made before the presumed time of composition of the *Compendium*, i.e. c.1340.²

In two recent publications the hypothesis is still accepted, albeit reluctantly.³ The point in question is relevant for one aspect only as regards Saxo Grammaticus, viz. the transmission of the text, but it is of vital importance for studies on the *Compendium*. If the Angers fragment really is Saxo's original manuscript (as seems likely), then it is highly important for our understanding of the intentions behind the *Compendium* and its official or un-official character whether the epitomator had access to it. We would then be in the unique position of having not only the author's working copy but also the epitomator's and thus of being able to gain an insight in the psychology of both.

There is good reason, then, to look at the problem once again and deliberate whether the additions made in the '3rd hand' really were made by

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1. Emil Rathsach: 'Om den saakaldte 3. Haand i Angersfragmentet af Saxos Danmarkshistorie.' *Aarboeger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* III.Række 10.Bind. Kjøbenhavn 1920, p.112-124.
 2. It would be more correct to call it the '2nd hand' as there is only one older hand and not two as was believed by the scholars who examined the fragment after it came to the Royal Library in Copenhagen in 1878, cf. *Corpus Codicum Danicorum* Vol.IV. Ed. Erik Kroman. Copenhagen 1962, p.XV. However the term '3rd hand' is generally used and I shall continue to do so in order to avoid confusion.
 3. Ivan Boserup: 'The Angers fragment and the archetype of Gesta Danorum.' In: **Danish Medieval History & Saxo Grammaticus. A symposium held in celebration of the 500th anniversary of the University of Copenhagen. Vol.II: Saxo Grammaticus. A Medieval Author Between Norse and Latin Culture.** Ed. by Karsten Friis-Jensen. Museum Tusulanum Press, Copenhagen 1981, p.14; and Karsten Friis-Jensen: *Saxo Grammaticus as Latin Poet. Studies in the Verse Passages of the Gesta Danorum* = *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici, Supplementum XIV.* Roma 1987, p. 208, n.34.

the epitomator as stated by Rathsach. Whereas the other additions are mainly variants to the text, the additions in the '3rd hand' are more like alterations of the archaic vocabulary. According to Rathsach these alterations coincide almost exactly with the text of the *Compendium Saxonis*, so that they must represent the first deliberations on what should be included in the epitome and what should be left out.

Rathsach divided the additions into three groups. The first group consists of additions which seem to have been included in the *Compendium*. The second group consists of additions which are not to be found in the corresponding part of the *Compendium*, but which nonetheless seem to agree with its Latinity. The third group consists of additions which are neither included in the relevant part of the *Compendium* nor can be expected to be found anywhere else in this text as they relate exclusively to the part on king Skjold and king Gram.¹

The additions in group three cannot be used as evidence for Rathsach's thesis. In that case they would presuppose what they were meant to prove. If one wants to avoid a vicious circle only group one can be used as evidence. The additions in group two can lend support to Rathsach's thesis but only if they can be shown to represent a usage which is peculiar to the *Compendium* rather than to 14th century Latinity in general.

Rathsach first turned his attention to two instances of *nota bene* and *nota* in the margin of f.1a of the Angers fragment (lines 2-3 and 12 respectively).²

In the first instance attention is called to an explanation of why the Danish kings were called 'Skjoldunger'. The second instance concerns a single combat between a Danish and a German warrior, fought in the presence of the Danish and the German armies. Both passages are found in the *Compendium*.³

As regards the origin of the name 'Skjoldunger' this can be assumed to interest any reader and Rathsach's linking of the *nota bene* in the Angers fragment with the occurrence of the same explanation in the *Compendium* seems unnecessary. Nor does the single combat bear out his idea. Rathsach noted the great interest in single combats shown by the author of the *Compendium*, but failed to recognise that he shares his interest with large

1. Rathsach, *op. cit.* p.114.

2. I shall use the same method of reference as Rathsach, i.e. the recto side of the first leaf is f.1a, the verso is 1b etc. References to Saxo is to the latest edition: *Saxonis Gesta Danorum*. Edd. J.Olrik & H.Ræder. Tom.I. Hauniæ 1931. Reference to the *Compendium* is to the edition in *Scriptores Minores Historiæ Danicæ Medii Ævi*. Ed. M.Cl.Gertz. Vol.I. København 1917-18.

3. Saxo, p.11,21. *Compendium Saxonis*, p.221,8sq.

parts of mediaeval literature. It is in fact a common theme, as noted by E.R.Curtius.¹ Descriptions of single combats are so common in both historical and epic literature that it led an older generation of historians of war to believe that mediaeval armies lacked all faculty for tactical co-ordination. Allegedly the reason for this was the obsession with personal honor which led the individual men-at-arms to resist the necessary discipline. Today this idea has been abandoned by just about everybody, but we are left with the fact that descriptions of single combats are very numerous.² The glory of the single combat and its ordeal-like character must have fascinated the audience. Another reason for marking out this passage might be the fact that it is the first instance of Danish-German conflict in Saxo.³ It is clearly unwarranted to assume the epitomator to have been the only one with an interest in this passage.

On p.1a (l.13) of the fragment the '3rd hand' has added *Nota iste postea pugnavit contra alemannos*. This note refers to *omnem allemannorum gentem perinde ac ducis sui interitu debellatam tributi lege choercuit*. In the *Compendium* this is rendered as *Teutonium sibi tributariam fecit*.⁴ The text of the *Compendium* follows the text of the fragment much closer than the note does. Rathsach ascribes this fact to inaccuracy on the epitomator's part. Instead of counting this note among the ones in the first group it should rather be placed in the third group.

Rathsach's fourth argument is an interlinear addition of the letters at above the last syllable of the word *desponsam* on f.2a of the fragment (l.14).⁵ As Rathsach points out the word should be read as *desponsatam*. This is the word used by the *Compendium* which never uses *despondeo* but only *desponso*. In this respect it probably agrees with the ordinary usage of the day. In classical Latin *despondeo* seems to have been more common than *desponso* but that is hardly the case in mediaeval Latin. So if *desponso* was more common than *despondeo* the addition is more likely

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1. E.R.Curtius: *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur romanischen Philologie*. Francke Verlag Bern/München 1960, p.193ff. Cf. also Maurice Keen: *Chivalry*. Yale University Press 1984. p.87 and 203.
 2. J.C.W.Oman: *The Art of War in the Middle Ages A.D. 378-1515*. Rev. and ed. by J.H.Beeler. New York 1953, p.57ff.; R.C.Smail: *Crusading Warfare*. Cambridge University Press 1956, p.128ff.; J.F.C.Fuller: *The Decisive Battles of the Western World and their Influence upon History*. Vol.I. Paladin 1970, p.244ff.; Georges Duby: *Le dimanche de Bouvines. 27 juillet 1214. Trente journées qui ont fait la France*. 5. Gallimard, Paris 1973, p.165.; Philippe Contamine: *La guerre au moyen age*. Nouvelle Clío. L'histoire et ses problèmes. No.24. Presses universitaires de France 1980, p.351-353 & 411.
 3. This explanation was suggested to me by Dr. Inge Skovgaard-Petersen with whom I have had a fruitful discussion on the subject.
 4. Saxo, p.12,12. *Compendium Saxonis*, p.221,25.
 5. Saxo, p.13,10. *Compendium Saxonis*, p.222,5.

a case of textual criticism or a gloss¹ than a stylistic emendation as Rathsach seems to think.

Rathsach's fifth argument is taken from f.2b (l.3). Over the word **Gothia** is added **Swethia**. The *Compendium* uses **Swecia** in this passage.² The indices of the editions of *Vitae Sanctorum Danorum*, *Scriptores Minores* and the Danish annals show only few instances of the name **Gothia**. Saxo and the *Compendium Saxonis* have the highest frequencies of **Gothia** with 14 and 8 occurrences respectively. The other texts rarely have more than one or two. It is not unlikely, then, that other readers than the epitomator would want to gloss the unusual **Gothia** with the more common **Swethia**. It might also be argued that he thought the two interchangeable since he added **rex Gothie** above the name Sigtryg on f.3a (l.11). In Saxo and in the *Compendium* Sigtryg is called **rex Sueonum**.³

Rathsach goes on to treat a series of additions in the Angers fragment which are not found in the corresponding passages in the *Compendium*, but seemingly reflect its usage.⁴ He openly admits that these additions do not in themselves prove the connection between the fragment and the *Compendium*. They may however serve as circumstantial evidence, provided they do not merely reflect the ordinary Latinity of the Middle Ages. His first example is a case where **perinde (ac)** has been glossed with **taliter (ac)**.⁵ As Rathsach remarks, **perinde ac** is frequent in Saxo, whereas the *Compendium* either leaves out the comparison or changes it. None of his examples show **taliter ac** for **perinde ac**, a fact of which he is fully aware. I have never come across **taliter ac**, although it may be possible in a Mediaeval text.⁶

The rest of Rathsach's examples do not seem to be as typical of the *Compendium* as he believes. In one passage **duxit** is listed as a variant to **adciuit**.⁷ The *Compendium* nowhere substitutes **duco** for **ascisco** but uses **ordino**, **do**, **procuro** etc. It is not very remarkable that a vague word like **ascisco** is changed into a more unequivocal one.

1. I use the term gloss in the general sense of a word or phrase that explains a word or phrase in the text, cf. Martin L. West: **Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique**. B.G. Teubner, Stuttgart 1973, p.22.

2. Saxo, p.13,13. *Compendium Saxonis*, p.222,6.

3. Saxo, p.13,10. *Compendium Saxonis*, p.222,4.

4. Rathsach, op.cit., p.116. A computerized version and a concordance of the *Compendium Saxonis* were placed at my disposal by the Institute of Greek and Latin Mediaeval Philology at the University of Copenhagen. They were of great help in the examination of Rathsach's examples.

5. Saxo, p.12,13. Fragment f.1a (l.14).

6. For the similar expression 'talīs atque', see: Hofmann-Szantyr: **Lateinische Syntax und Stilistik**. Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft II.2.2. München 1965, p.478.

7. Saxo, p.13,6. Fragment f.2a (l.6).

This also goes for Rathsach's third argument. Above the word *exuuias* is written *abitus* (i.e. *habitus*).¹ In the *Compendium* *exuuie* is once rendered *vestes*.² All other passages where Saxo has *exuuie* are so abbreviated in the *Compendium* that neither the word itself nor a substitute appears. The word *pedissequis* is once explained by *ancillis*.³ As Rathsach says, the *Compendium* normally uses *pedissequa*. This fact (which all considered tells against his thesis) he explains by saying that this is not the only case in which the alterations have not been carried out.⁴

Rathsach also notices that an *in equo* is added above *equo* and finds this to be in accordance with the *Compendium's* many 'superfluous' prepositions. Mediaeval Latin does however use many prepositions that would have been left out in a classical text.⁵

As for the remaining examples they are all explanations of rare words: *dic* for *promito*,⁶ *pena* for *trux* (possibly misread as *crux* by the '3rd hand'),⁷ *inferno* for *manibus*,⁸ *mortem* for *funera*,⁹ and *ira* for *billis*.¹⁰ None of these explanations or emendations are characteristic enough to lend support to Rathsach's thesis. On the contrary they mirror a widespread, mediaeval usage. Anyone could have made these glosses in the Angers fragment. Apart from this we find an addition which definitely tells against Rathsach's thesis. On f.1b (l.5) the '3rd hand' has added *quartus rex*. This refers to Gram who is mentioned here for the first time. Rathsach remarks that Gram was not the fourth but the fifth king, but ascribes this discrepancy to mere inexactitude on the epitomator's part.¹¹ But he overlooked that even if Dan was undoubtedly the first ruler of Denmark, Saxo is adamant on the point that neither Dan nor his brother Angul with whom he ruled jointly were termed kings. This title had not come into use yet, Saxo says.¹² If Humblus, the son of Dan, who

1. Saxo, p.13,15. Fragment f.2b (l.6).

2. *Compendium Saxonis*, p.285,14.

3. Saxo, p.13,16. Fragment f.2b (l.8).

4. Rathsach, p.117.

5. Saxo, p.13,16. Cf. K.Strecker: *Introduction to Medieval Latin*. Transl. by R.B.Palmer. Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung 1957, p.64-65; and K.Langosch: *Lateinisches Mittelalter. Einleitung in Sprache und Kultur*. Darmstadt 1963, p.56-57.

6. Saxo, p.14,20. Fragment f.3a (l.1).

7. Saxo, p.14,24. Fragment f.3a (l.5). Rathsach thought it misread but Sofus Larsen considered 'pena' a perfectly understandable variant to 'trux'. See Sofus Larsen: 'Saxo Grammaticus, hans Værk og Person.' *Aarboeger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie*. III.Række. 15.Bind. Kjøbenhavn 1925, p.119, n.1.

8. Saxo, p.15,27. Fragment f.4a (l.3).

9. Saxo, p.15,38. Fragment f.4a (l.14).

10. Saxo, p.16,16. Fragment f.4a (l.15).

11. Saxo, p.12,16. *Compendium Saxonis*, p.221,27.

12. Saxo, p.10,7-8. I am assuming that the 1514 editio princeps is in accordance with the text in the lost part of the Angers fragment on this point.

succeeded them, is to be considered the first king instead of the second then naturally Gram becomes the fourth and not the fifth. In contrast, the *Compendium* states flatly: 'Primus igitur rex Danorum fuit Dan.'¹ The other Danish mediaeval chronicles and king-lists share this view.² We shall probably never know whether the '3rd hand' had numbered all the Danish kings in the manuscript of which we now have only the four leaves of the Angers fragment, but it is a fair guess that he did. He may have done so for the sake of convenience or because he found it significant that all other traditions, to which he had access, differed from Saxo on the point as to whether Dan was termed king or not. Calling Gram the fourth king is consistent with Saxo's text but quite inconsistent with the text of the *Compendium* which leaves no doubt that Gram was the fifth king.

We cannot rule out the possibility, however, that the '3rd hand' added the gloss as a sign of disagreement. Some of the Danish king-lists have Gram as the fourth king (while still maintaining that Dan was the first). Despite close affinities they differ enough to merit being termed two different branches rather than a single unified tradition. They are as follows: **A.** *Series ac brevior historia regum Danorum* - written sometime between 1219 and 1241.³ **B.** the Old Danish king-list, preserved in five versions which despite minor discrepancies clearly derive from a common ancestor, probably written before or around 1300.⁴ The gloss **quartus rex** could have been added by someone who had his information from one of the two sources just mentioned. Since none of these seem to have been known outside Denmark in the middle ages this would indicate that the manuscript was in Denmark when the gloss was made. The exact date will have to be established by a palaeographical examination. Hitherto the writing has been dated on the assumption that the '3rd hand' belonged to the epitomator who was presumed to have been working c.1340.

1. *Compendium Saxonis*, p.220,21.

2. See the editions in *Scriptores Minores Historiae Danicae Medii Aevi*. Ed. M.Cl.Gertz. Vols. I-II. København 1917-1920.; *Danmarks middelalderlige annaler*. Ed. Erik Kroman. København 1980; and *Gammeldanske Krøniker*. Ed. M.Lorenzen. København 1887-1913.

3. *Scriptores Minores*. Vol.I. p.161-166.

4. *Gammeldanske Krøniker*, p.227-252.

In conclusion we can say that our examination did not bear out Rath-sach's thesis. We can leave out the arguments in his third group entirely. They are only compatible with his thesis if the other arguments hold up. As shown above they do not. It does not necessarily follow from this that the epitomator could not possibly have had access to the manuscript of which the Angers fragment now form the sole surviving part. This is hardly possible to prove, but the direct connection between the Angers fragment and the *Compendium* is no longer the starting-point for research on the textual history of the *Compendium*.

I am not able say whether a new palaeographical examination will confirm the traditional dating of the script to c.1340 or result in a new dating, but it is clearly a matter of some importance in view of the fact that it is still debated whether Saxo was widely read in the Middle Ages. Whatever the date may be we have at least found one more reader who studied Saxo's text closely. Whether we will be able to answer the questions - when, where, who - that arise from this is another matter.

