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THE ORIGIN OF RUS'

VOLUME ONE

Old Scandinavian Sources
other than the Sagas

Distributed by Harvard University Press
for the
Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute 1981

The Texts of the Icelandic Itinerary Literature

Nikulás Bergsson's *Leiðar-vísir*

Nikulás Bergsson's *Leiðar-vísir* is embedded in a geographic miscellany called *Landafræði* and has been preserved in two vellum manuscripts: AM 194, 8^o fols. 11-16 (written in west Iceland in 1387) and AM 736 II, 4^o, fol. 1 r.v. (written about 1400). The text has been published twice: in E. C. Werlauff's *Symbolae* (Kbh, 1821), text and Latin translation, pp. 9-32; commentary, pp. 32-54; and by Kristian Kålund in his critical edition of the Icelandic encyclopedic text, *Alfræði Íslenzk: Íslandsk encyclopædisk litteratur. I. Cod. Mbr. AM 194, 8vo* (Kbh, 1908) (*SUGNL XXXVII*) Introduction, pp. xix-xxv and text, pp. 12-31.

The entire translation of the text has also been published twice, in Latin by E. C. Werlauff, *Symbolae* (Kbh, 1821), pp. 32-54, and in Danish by Kr. Kålund in *ANO* 3rd ser., vol. 3 (Kbh, 1913), pp. 52-61. A partial Latin translation appeared in *AR* II, pp. 405-415; Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr. translated into English and commented on the greater part of the text (the route from Iceland to Rome, including a description of the eternal city) in four meticulous articles: *Mediaeval Studies* 6 (1944), pp. 314-354; *Scandinavian Studies* 17 (1943), pp. 167-173; *JEGP* 42 (1943), pp. 210-218; *The Harvard Theological Review* 33 (1940), pp. 267-289. The special literature is: Paul Riant, *Les Scandinaves en Terre Sainte* (Paris, 1865), pp. 80-90; Finnur Jónsson and

Ellen Jørgensen, *ÁNO* 1923 (Kbh, 1924), 1-36 pp. and *Mémoires de la Société Royale des Antiquaires du nord* 1920-1925 (Kbh, 1925), pp. 49-87 + 1 facs.; Sigfús Blöndal, *Nordisk Tidsskrift* (Letterstedts) (1940), pp. 316-327; and *Skírnir* 123 (Rvík, 1949), pp. 67-97.

The text given is that of the *Leiðarvísir* after the standard edition of Kálund; added are Magoun's emendations, and that part translated by Magoun with some changes and additions; the final part of the text was translated by me.

Sva er [sa]gt, at umhverfis Island se VII [dægra] sigling ath [ra]udum byr, ok skiptiz sva sem [þarf, þviat eigi] ma eitt ve[dr] [h]afa.

Sva ok medal Island[s] [ok] No[regs] er kallat iamlangt.

Úr Noregi er fyrst a[t] fara til Danmerkr i Ála-borg. Sva telia Romferlar, ath or Ála-borg se II dag[a] [fór] til Vebiarga. Þa er viku för til Sles-víkr. Þa er skamt til Heida-béiar,² þa[er] dag-fór til Ægis-dyr[a].

Þar mêtazt þessi lond Danmork ok Hollsetu-land, Sax-[land] ok Vinn[d]land. Þa er dagfor i Heitsinn[a]bé aa Hollsetu-landi. Þa ferr yfir Saxelfi til Stöðuborgar.

Aa Saxlandi er þiod kurteisuzt, ok nema þar Nordmenn mart eptir ath breyta.

I Stoduborg er biskups-sto[ll] ath Mario kirkiu.

Þa er II daga for til Ferdu-borgar. Þa er skamt til Nyioborgar. Þa er Mundio-borg, þar er byskups-stoll ath Petrs kirkiu.

It is said that all around Iceland is a seven day's [i.e. nychthemers; ca. 1,300 km.] sail with a strong favorable wind, provided that this changes as the occasion demands; for it is not possible to use only one wind. So, too, between Iceland and Norway it is reckoned an equally long sail [of seven nychthemers, i.e., ca. 1,300 km.].

From Norway¹ the first stage is to travel to Aalborg in Denmark. Pilgrims to Rome report that from Aalborg it is a two days' journey to Viborg. Then it is a week's journey to Schleswig. Then it is a short distance to Hedeby, then a day's journey to the Eider [River].

There [on the Eider] these lands meet Denmark and Holstein, [Old] Saxony and Wendland. Then it is a day's journey to Itzehoe in Holstein. Then one crosses the Elbe to Stade.

In [Old] Saxony the people are most gracious, and there the Norsemen pick up much to emulate.

In Verden³ the bishop's throne is in the Church of St. Mary.

Then it is a two day's journey to Verden. Then it is a short distance to Nienburg. Then comes Minden, where the bishop's

¹ The starting point in Norway is not mentioned, but it was most probably the trading center of Bergen, cf. Magoun, *Mediaeval Studies* 6 (1944), p. 316. A detailed linguistic and topographic commentary has been provided by E. C. Werlauff, Kálund, and Magoun. The results of their research, and that of others, have been incorporated without noting each single case.

² Here, Magoun had correctly established a scribal error in the order of names: the first should be *Sles-víkr* (not *Heida-béiar*). See *Scandinavian Studies* 17 (1943), pp. 167-173.

³ Nikulás's confusion was explained by Magoun, *Mediaeval Studies* 6, p. 320.

I útsudr þadan er Salerni-borg, þar ero lèknar beztir.

Sepont hon stendr undir Michialsfialli ok er III miluþ á breidd, en X á leing[d], ok hon á fiall.upp.

Þar er hellir Michaelis ok silkidukr, er hann gaf þangat.

Þa er dagfór til Barlar.

Þa VI milur til Traon.

Þa IIII til Bisseno-borgar, IIII til Malfeta-borgar, IIII til Ivent, þa VI til Nicholaus i Bár, þar hviler hann.

Su er önnur ferd ith vestra til Kapu or Roma-borg til Albanus-borgar.

Þadan ferr til* Flaians-bruar [< Traians-bru],²⁰ hon er III vikna for ath endilangri, ger um fen ok skoga, ok er þat eth agietazta mannvirki, ok ferr of skoga fulla dagleid, ok hvert fét öfært nema ath *Flaians-bru.

Þa er Terentiana, hana brutu Romveriar, ok er hon nu litil.

Þa er Fundjana.

[Þ]a er [Ga]ida.

Þa er II daga for til Kapu.

Þa ferr til Beneventar.

[Ut fra er] Manupl.

Þa Brandeis.

I hafs-botn þadan ero Fe[neyiar], [þar er] [p]atriarcha stoll.

Þar ero helgir domar Marcus ok Lukas.

Ska[mt fra] [D]uracur er Mario-höfn.

To the southwest [from Benevento] is located Salerno, where the medical art is the best.

Sipontum (Manfredonia) is situated on Monte Gargano [in Apulia]; it extends three miles in breadth and ten miles in length up the mountain.

There is the cave of Michael with the silken napkin he [St. Michael] gave to this place.

Then it is a day's journey to Barletta [in Apulia].

Then [it is] six miles to Trani.

Then four [miles] to Bisceglie, four [miles] to Molfetta, four [miles] to Giovinazzo, six [miles] to Bari where [St.] Nicholas rests.

There is a second route from Rome to Capua, the more westerly [route] through Albano (Alba Longa).

From here starts the Appian Way; it is a three-week journey [about 350 miles] from one end to another; it is difficult [terrain] across fen and woods, and this [the Via Appia] is a marvelous work of human hands, leading through woods for entire days, and otherwise impassable save through the Appian Way.

Then [there] is Terracina; it was destroyed by the Romans and is now very insignificant.

Then [there] is Fondi.

Then [there] is Gaeta.

Then it is two days' journey to Capua.

Then one day to Benevento.

Next to Monopoli.

Then Brindisi.

In a gulf, after that there is Venice.

There is a patriarch's throne there.

There are preserved relics of [SS.] Mark and Luke.

Not far from Durazzo is Santa Maria del Kassopo [on Corfu].

²⁰ An ancient road converted during Trajan's reign into a main highway, called the Via Trajana. My analysis of the conclusion of the itinerary is based on the identifications made by Kålund in the index to his edition, *Alfræði Íslenzk* 1.

Þa er Visgardz-höfn.

Þa er Eng[ils-n]es.

Þa er skamt til eyiar Paciencia eda Siki-
leyiar.

[þar] er iardelldr ok votn vellandi sem á
Islandi.

Þa er borg, er Martini heitir, hon er aa
Bolgara-landi.

Þa er at sigla til eyiar, er Ku heitir, þar
koma leidir saman af Puli ok af Mikla-
gardi.

Verdr til land-nordrs á Pul, en ut i haf til
Kritar.

Ut fra Ku er ey, er Roda heitir.

Þa er ath sigla yfir til til (sic!) Griklandz ok
til Rauda-kastala.

Þa er Patera.

Þar var Nicholaus byskup féddr, ok stendr
þar enn skoli hans.

Þa e[r] MiRea-borg, þar var hann byskup.

Þa er skamt [t]il lalanda-ne[s] aa Tyrk-
landi.

Þa er ll degra haf til Kiprar

þar gengr hafs-botn, er Nordmenn kalla
Átals-fiord, enn Grickir kalla Gullus Sa-
talie.

I Kipr er borg, er Beffa heitir, þar er
Véringia seta, þar andadiz Eiríkr Dana
konungr Sveins son brodir Knutz ens
helga.

Hann lagdi fe til i Luku, ath hvern madr
skyldi drecka vin okeypis ath êrnu af
danskri tungu.

Ok hann lét gera spital VIII milum sudr
fra Plazinzoborg, þar er hvern madr féddr.

Then [there] is Porto Guiscardo [on
Cephalonia].

Then [there] is Cape Malea (= Cap S.
Angelo on Morea).

Not far from that is the island of Sapiéntza
or Sicily [belonging to the Kingdom of
Sicily?],

where there are — as in Iceland — volcanic
fires and boiling waters.²¹

Then [there] is a town city called San
Martino which is in Bulgaria [?].

Then one sails to the island called Chios,
a junction of the routes to Puglia (Apulia)
and Constantinople.

In the northwest direction one reaches
Apulia, and at the end of the sea [the
island of] Crete.

Beyond Chios there is an island called
Rhodes.

Then one sails over to Greece or to
Kastelloryzon.

Then [there] is Patara.

There was born Bishop [St.] Nicholas,
and his school remains there.

Then [there] is Myra, where he [St.
Nicholas] was bishop.

Not far from it is Cape Chelidonia (=
Gelidonya) in Turkey.²²

From there it is two days' sail to Cyprus.
There extends a gulf which the Norsemen
call Átalsfiord, and the Greeks Gullus
[< Gulfus] Satalie (= Adalia, Antalya).

There is a town city in Cyprus called
Paphos, a place of sojourn of the Varan-
gians; there [in 1103] died Eiríkr Sveins-
son, the brother of Knud [IV the Saint].
He [Eiríkr Sveinsson] exacted tax in
Lucca from everyone of the people of
Norse extraction who should drink un-
reasonably high-priced wines.

And he had a hospice built eight miles
south of Piacenza, where everybody is to
be fed.

²¹ This observation of Nikulás deserves attention, since it was made in the pre-secular age.

²² Cf. p. 241 of this volume; possibly a gloss of a later copyist. Cf. note 8 (p. 707).