

Narrating Law and Laws of Narration in Medieval Scandinavia

International Workshop

23 – 24 March 2017

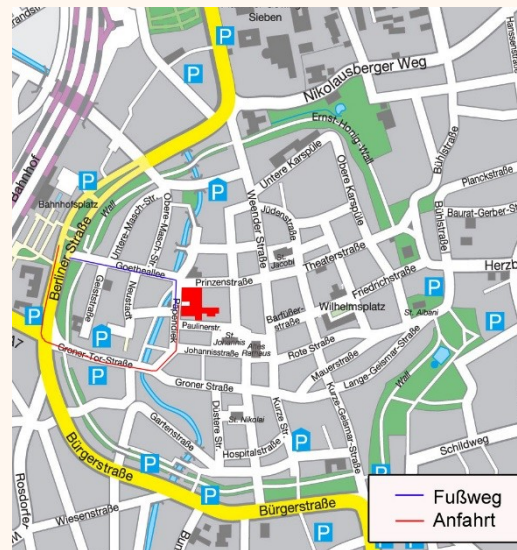
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Roland Scheel
(Georg-August-Universität Göttingen)

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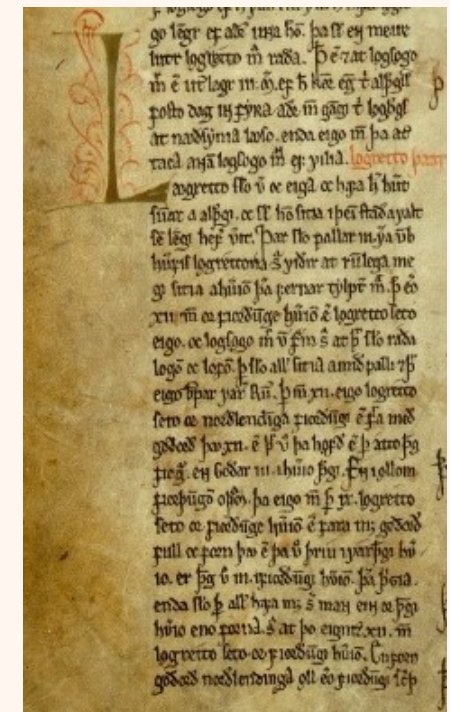
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Contact and Registration

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Grágás (Konungsbók GKS 1157 fol., fol. 42v, detail)

Thursday, 23 March 2017

Friday, 24 March 2017

Icelandic Family Sagas and Contemporary Sagas seem to be the perfect source for analyses of disputing strategies and conflict resolution in acephalic societies. Consequently, their accounts drew the interest of legal historians already in the 19th century, and impulses from anthropology were taken up quite early by scholars dealing with the sagas. Since the turn of the millennium, narrative representations of disputes, of legal, moral and social norms have received considerable attention by scholars who concentrate not only on Iceland, but also on other regions of medieval Scandinavia. Many publications provide stimulating insights into disputing strategies in the Scandinavian countries, also with respect to comparative approaches and transcultural phenomena in a wider European framework. These aspects have been dealt with mainly by historians.

At the same time, philological research into saga literature has drawn inspiration from the cultural turn(s) of the last decades. It has been demonstrated that referential narrations of different saga genres adhere to the same or very similar narratological principles, which has in turn lead to an emphasis of the literary and constructive character of historiography in a broader sense. At the same time, the polyphony of narrative voices in saga literature has been stressed. The transgression of legal norms, the unfolding of conflicts and their solution in certain sagas have been shown to be ironic or even carnivalesque in comparison to earlier texts. This, in turn, has influenced hypotheses on the development of saga literature in its cultural context.

The workshop aims to bring together the perspectives of history and philology on the literary representation of law and social norms in medieval Scandinavia, including a comparative glance at the neighbouring European regions. The following questions will be addressed: Are there specific rules of narrating the law in medieval texts from Scandinavia? How are these rules influenced by genre aesthetics and language? How can differences in the representation of norms between legal and narrative texts be explained? What are the consequences of emplotment for the source value with respect to social practice? How does mythology interact with plot structures? How is the social logic of disputes and their solution connected to the logic of mimesis in narrative?

We expect that the combination of historical and philological approaches will lead to fruitful discussions and new insights.

08:30 **Registration**

09:00 *Introduction*

A. Narrating Law: Legal Texts – Narrative Texts – Contexts

09:30-10:15 Jón Viðar Sigurðsson (Oslo): *How can Differences in the Representation of Norms Between Legal and Narrative Texts in the Icelandic Free State be Explained?*

10:15-11:00 Jenny Benham (Cardiff): *Resolving Conflict in England and Scandinavia: Law, Narration and Practice*

11:00-11:30 **Coffee**

11:30-12:15 Hans Jacob Orning (Oslo): *Between Fact and Fiction: Disputing in Law, History and Legend*

12:15-13:00 Jens Eike Schnall (Bergen): *Framing Law in Old Norse Literature*

13:00-14:30 **Lunch**

B. Laws of Narration: Narratological Approaches

14:30-15:15 Hartmut Bleumer (Göttingen): *Power, Violence, and the Poetics of Injustice in German Heroic Epics*

15:15-16:00 Hannah Burrows (Aberdeen): *Court Poetry: Narrating Law and Justice in Skaldic Verse*

16:00-16:30 **Coffee**

16:30-17:15 Roland Scheel (Göttingen): *Text Structure and Legal Norm: Composition and Ethical Values in Saga Literature*

17:15-18:00 Kyle Hughes (Dublin): *What is 'Good Law'? Law as Communal Performance in the Íslendingasögur*

18:00-18:20 **Coffee**

C. Narrating Law: Discourses on Social Norms

18:20-19:05 Mia Münster-Swendsen (Roskilde): *Inventing Past Law for the Future: The Lex castrensis of Sven Aggesøn*

19:30 **Conference Dinner**

09:00-09:45

Keith Ruiter (Aberdeen): *Berserks Behaving Badly: Manipulating Normativity in Eyrbyggja Saga*

09:45-10:30

Daniela Hahn (München): *The Right of the Little Man? Trials for Thievery and Social Standing in the Sagas of Icelanders*

10:30-11:00

Coffee

D. Narrating Law: Mythological Traditions

11:00-11:45

Heike Sahm (Göttingen): *Things and Justice. Material Objects in Retaliation Plots of Heroic Epic*

11:45-12:30

Jiří Starý (Prague): *History or Idea? The Legendary Laws of Old Norsemen*

12:30-13:30

Lunch

13:30-14:15

Anne Irene Riisøy (Buskerud/Vestfold): *Law in Old Norse Poetry*

14:15-15:00

Matthias Teichert (Erlangen/Göttingen): *Týr, Fenrir, and the Brisingamen. Tales of Law, Crime, and Violence in Eddic Mythology and their Indo-European Subcontexts*

15:00-15:30

Coffee

15:30-16:15

Final Discussion