THE DANISH VERSION OF THE LEGEND OF RONCEVAUX AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHANSON DE ROLAND.

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This contribution is the abstract of a thesis discussed at the University of Padua on the *Karl Magnus Krønike*, KMK, the Danish version of the legend of Roncevaux and its relationship with the *Chanson de Roland*[1].

KMK is a compilation of eight branches the seventh of which deals with the *Slaget i Ronceval*. We own of this work three texts. The Børglum manuscript, today in the Royal Library of Stockholm, gives its own date as 1480. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the KMK was printed several times by Gotfred of Ghemen in Copenhagen, but the only survival of these early prints is a fragmentary from c. 1509, deriving from a manuscript different from the one of Børglum. The fragmentary is today in the University Library of Uppsala. Finally the Chr. Pedersen printed edition of 1534, a revised version of Ghemen's text. Chr. Pedersen, one of the most famous humanist of the sixteenth century, corrected and improved the Danish, and as a supporter of the Protestant Reformation, he also cancelled some Catholic remains in the text. We own two copies of this edition. One is in the University Library of Uppsala, and another in the Royal Library of Stockholm.

KMK seems to be an abridgement of the Norse *Karlamagnus Saga*, KMS, translated from French during the reign of Haakon IV (1217-1263), but none of the versions of the saga preserved can have formed the basis of the Danish adaptation. Due to the fact that the KMK contained Swedishism and that there was also a Swedish adaptation of the Saga, S, from the fifteenth century, the idea of a Swedish intermediate link has been discussed by several scholars. The idea was first elaborated by Storm[2], whose arguments are not very conclusive. The weightiest contribution is due to D. Kornhall[3], who does not want to deny categorically that the transmission of S and KMK may to some extent have shared a common fate in the tradition. However, he postulates the existence of a complete Swedish text without any immediate connection with the existant S-texts. P. Lindegaard Hjorth[4] discusses the problem too, but he does not come to a definite solution of the problem.

Recently KMK has been edited by P. Lindegaard Hjorth[5]. This edition contains the three versions of the text and it is the first time the fragmentary printed by Ghemen is published. The Børglum manuscript and the Chr. Pedersen printed edition were already published in the nineteenth century by J.C. Brandt[6]. The text which has form the basis of the present work is the text of Chr. Pedersen according to the transcription of P. Lindegaard Hjorth.

The present work is concerned with two main problems: first the relationship between the seventh branch of KMK and the eight branch of KMS *Af Runzival Bardaga*,

a translation quite close to the *Chanson de Roland's* manuscript of Oxford. Secondly, the relationship between KMK and the other versions of the *Chanson de Roland.*

The versions with which we shall have to compare KMK are the following:

1) The Oxford MS, O, written by an Anglo-Norman scribe in the second quarter of the 12th century. It is an assonanced version, containing 4002 verses, divided into 291 laisses of unequal lenght.

2) The Venice MS, V4, written about 1300, in Franco-Italian. This version, too, is assonanced.

3) The Chateauroux MS, C and

4) The second Venice MS, V7.

These two MSS contain the complete text of the *version rimée* and there are relatively few differences between them. Both MSS belong to the period about 1300.

5) The Paris MS, P, which dates from the 13th century.

6) The Lyon MS, L, which belongs to the 14th century.

7) The MS of Trinity College, Cambridge, T, written in the 15th century, or about 1500.

8) The German *Ruolandes Liet*, a much changed version, by a certain Konrad, who wrote it in 1172. The German poem is an adaptation rather than a translation of the *Chanson de Roland.*

9) The Latin *Chronicle of Pseudo-Turpin* from the XII century which is not deriving from the manuscript of O or its prototype. It represents another form of the legend of Roncevaux, issuing from other traditions and has something in common with the *Carmen de Prodicione Guenonis*, a Latin poem more or less from the same period.

During the analytic work of comparison between KMK and KMS we notice first that the seventh branch of KMK is much shorter than its correspondent. KMK is less detailed. In particular the Danish version lacks information on the pagans, on the enumerations of the towns and countries conquered by the principal characters and the titles of the characters. The descriptive passages of KMS have undergone a strong reduction. The Danish author is interested in the action, and many elements are implicit. The sentences of transition, the sentences which anticipate the narrative and the authors observations are completely omitted as well as the description of the heathens. Before the battle of Roncevaux we read in KMS, chap. XIX and chap. XX, how the twelve heathens, all men of great courage, come forward to their king and announce that they will not only kill Rollant, Oliver and the twelve peers, but also that the French shall die in shame and misery and King Karlamagnus shall never after bear his crown on his head. The French will have to give back Spain and the heathens shall possess France. Maumet is mightier than Peter the Apostle of Rome etc.. Chapter XX, however, concludes with the following observation from the author: "and this miserable army streamed out from Spain towards Rollant and his men". The bragging of the heathens is omitted in KMK and the twelve pagans are only named, and we can add in this connection that the Arabic world with all its luxury and exotic is absent.

The abridgements consist mainly of reductions and omissions of details, but there are also examples of whole episodes omitted. An example is the story about Basan and Basilies murdered by Marsile's men. This event, mentionned in the 5th chapter of KMS, is of importance for the issue of the decision of the French. It is mainly because of Marsile's infidelity that Roland does not want to accept his proposal.

KMK does not only differ from KMS because of its abridgements. There are also some additions. Some are quite simple and probably added by the hand of the Danish author to bring the text up to date. This is the case with the presence of the secretary, who handles the letters written by Charlemagne to Ganelon asking him to bring them to Marsile. We can even specify that the addition derives from the Ghemen fragmentary, because the Børglum MS corresponds with KMS and the other versions of the *Chanson de Roland*, where it is the emperor himself who handles the letter to Ganelon.

Besides abridgements and additions in KMK, there are also some changes in the narrative, which may or may not have correspondences in the other versions in question.

To make more clear the discussion, we present beneath a survey which shows some of the most striking correspondences and differences between KMK and the other versions of the legend of Roncevaux.

1) *KMK agrees with KMS and differs from the other versions*:

a) In KMK (p. 292-293) and in KMS (chap. 17) in the first dream of the emperor it's the angel of God who breaks his spearschaft. In O (vv. 836-837) and the other versions it's Ganelon.
b) In the emperor's second dream in KMK (p. 304) and KMS (chap. 38) it is 30 men, who attack the emperor. In O (vv. 2558-2559) and the other versions it is 30 bears which speak like a man.
c) In KMK (p. 321) and in KMS (chap. 40) Roland and Oliver are burried at Arles. In O (vv. 3689-3693) and the other versions they are burried in Blaye.
d) The Pinabel-Tierri episode is omitted.

2) *KMK and KMS differ from O and agree with other versions*:

a) Concerning the scene of investiture of Ganelon, in KMK (p. 286) and in KMS (chap. 6) Ganelon drops the letter. In O (vv. 331- 333) he drops the glove. In C and V7 Ganelon drops the letter (v. 457) and the glove (v. 495).
b) In KMK (p. 315) and in KMS (chap. 36) Durendal must be given to the earl of Canterbury. O (v. 2320) mentions *un cunte cataignie*. The Scandinavian texts correspond with P (v. 2640).
c) In KMK (p. 315) the name *Germany* figures among the countries conquered by Roland. KMK corresponds with the B,b versions of KMS (chap. 36) and with V4, K, T and L.

d) In KMK (p. 321) the emperor prays to God to distinguish between Christians and heathens. The following morning hawthorns had grown over the heads of the heathens. In KMS (chap. 40) bushes had grown over the bodies. The passage has parallels in C and V7.

e) Concerning the fate of Durendal, in KMK (p. 319-320) and in KMS (chap. 39) Charlemagne tells his knights to take Roland's sword, but they are not able. Charlemagne then takes the sword and breaks it, and throws the blade into the sea. The Scandinavian texts accord with the Provençal poem ***Ronsasvals*** (XLIV) and partly with C and V7 (vv. 4120-27), and T (vv. 1997-2001). In C, V7 and T the sword is, however, thrown into water by Roland before dying.

J.H. Grisward in his article *Le motif de l'épée jetée au lac*[7], calls the attention to the episode of the sword and suggests a double tradition of the *Chanson de Roland* :

a) The sword is thrown into water by a character different from the hero

b) the sword is thrown into water by the hero before dying

and he connects the episode with the similar story of the fate of Exalibor, King Arthur's sword, thrown into water by his friend Girflet before the king dies.

f) In KMK (p. 299) and in KMS (chap. 26) Margariz escapes from the battle and arrives to Marsile. The Scandinavian texts have parallels in V4 (vv. 1389-90), C, V7 (vv. 2510), P (v. 976), T (v. 736) and K (v. 5191), which mention one who escapes from the battle.

g) Saint Basile in O (v. 2346) is replaced in KMK (p. 316) and KMS (chap. 36) by Saint Blasius. The Scandinavian texts correspond with K (v. 6875).

h) The Baligant episode and Charlemagne's conquest of Sarraguze are lacking. The Scandinavian text correspond with L.

i) After the return to France, the twelve peers are buried at Arles in KMK (p. 321) and KMS (chap. 40). In O (vv. 3689-3691) as well as in the rhymed version Roland, Oliver and Turpin are buried at Blaye. In the *Chronicle of Pseudo-Turpin* Roland is buried at Blaye and Oliver at Belin. All the important chieftains are brougt back from Roncevaux and distributed among Blaye, Belin St.Seurin of Bordeaux, Nantes, Arles and Rome.

3) *KMK differs from KMS and agrees with O and other versions*:

a) In KMK (p. 287) Marsile receives the letters from the emperor and answers, while in KMS (chap. 11) he has the letter burned out of anger as in C (v. 773). KMK agrees with O which mentions, on the contrary, what is written in the letter (vv. 487-494).

b) KMK (p. 297) and O (v.1261) mention *Engeler* as murder of a big pagan, while the saga (chap. 24) and the other versions mention *Gerin*.

c) In KMK (p. 301) the name *Antoni* is applied to the fourth christian killed by Grandones. The KMK corresponds with O (v. 1624), V4 (v. 1606) and C (v. 2761).

d) KMK (p. 316) mentions the teeth of Saint Peter, while KMS talks about the teeth of the disciple Peter. KMK corresponds with O (v. 2346).
e) In KMK (p. 315) Roland prays to God that nobody who is afraid will have Durendal after him. KMK has parallels in O (v. 2309).
f) KMK (p. 315) includes Scotland among the countries conquered by Roland and agrees with O (v. 2331).
g) In KMK (p. 321) Roland's trumpet figures among the emperor's offerings. KMK agrees with O (v. 3686).
h) In KMK (p. 321) the death of Oliver's sister corresponds with O (vv. 3705-33), but with many omissions. The rhymed version has developed the episode.
i) In KMK (p. 321) the angel Gabriel comes to the emperor and tells him to leave for Libia and help the good king Iwen, because the heathens are fighting in his country. The episode of the war corresponds roughly to a part of the concluding laisse in O, but the country where the war takes place differs. *Bire* in O (v. 3995) has been replaced by the name *Libya*, and *Reis Vivien* (v. 3996) by *Ywan*, i.e. the Ivain of the Arthurian romances. The episode is omitted in KMS.

4) *KMK differs from KMS and O and corresponds with other versions*:

a) KMK (p. 283) adds *Gallicien* among the emperors conquests. The detail figures in the *Chronicle of Pseudo-Turpin.*
b) In KMK (p. 289) Ganelon asks Marsile to send two hostages. In KMS (chap. 12) the number is not defined precisely. O (v. 572) and the rhymed version talk about twenty hostages. KMK is quite close to K (v. 2423), which mention one hostage, Marsile's son.
c) In KMK (p. 301) the place-name *Valtaborg* is applied to *Antoni*. KMK corresponds with C (vv. 2761-62).
d) Turpin takes part in the battle and survives. KMK corresponds with the *Chronicle of Pseudo-Turpin.*
e) In KMK (p. 321) Oliver's sister ask first the emperor about Oliver. KMK corresponds with V4, C, V7, P, T and L.

5) *KMK differs from all the other versions*:

a) In KMK (p. 283) Blankandin advices Marsile to write to the emperor, and later on the letter is mentioned several times. Marsile's proposal is presented by a letter and it's only Blankandin who is sent to Charlemagne (p.285).
b) The French want to return to France and say to the emperor during the meeting (p. 285) that he has to believe Marsile's letter.
c) Ganelon proposes to the emperor to send a man to Marsile. (p. 285). In KMS (chap. 5) it is Nemes, who proposes to send one of the barons. However, KMS does not follow O, but V4, V7 and the text of Konrad.

d) The secretary handles the letter written by the emperor to Ganelon (p. 286).

e) Marsile selects twelve of his best peers before the battle (p. 293).

f) Concerning the second pairs of Charlemagne's dreams there is a change in the chronology of the events. KMK inserts the dreams at the beginning of what KMS calls the third battle of Roncevaux and adds that Charlemagne has the dreams at a certain place named *Sintes* (p. 303 -304). In KMS (chap. 38) Charlemagne's dreams take place after his arrival to Roncevaux. An angel of God comes to him and he dreams the three following dreams: he saw a great commotion in the air, a sharp gale, rain and snow and violent flames. And this omen so fell upon his men that they were afraid and all cried out loudly, calling to king Karlamagnus to help them, and in the downpour their weapons were ruined. Then many wolves and lions appeared to him and many of the birds and all kind of beasts: it seemed to him they wanted to eat his men, but a lion came and jumped at him, and took both his legs in its mouth. He did not know which of them fell. In the third dream he seemed to be at home in his hall in France with shackles on his feet: and he saw thirty men going to the city called Ardena. Each spoke to the other, saying, "King Karlamagnus is overcome and never again will he bear a crown in France". In KMK the angel does not figure and the king's men do not ask for his help in the first dream. In the second dream only one lion appears and in the third dream the Danish text do not specify where the king is and that the thirty men are going to Ardena. In both Nordic texts the dreams appear as prophecy, but in KMS the dreams are foretelling an event outside the narrative, that is to say the Baligant episode and the Pinabel-Tierri episode. The dreams in KMK are, on the contrary, foretelling the death of Roland, which takes place in the narrative. In fact, in KMK (p. 304) the king the following morning says that he is afraid that Roland will not live long. The Danish text is built as a unity and do not refer to events outside the narrative. Concerning the name *Sintes*, it is possibly that it is the place-name *Seintz* mentioned in O (v. 1428). C. Segre[8] in his edition of the *Chanson de Roland* explains that Mont-St-Michel, Saintes, Besancon and Wissant delimit France in the tenth century and that the four place-names are mentioned too in the *Chronicle of Pseudo-Turpin.*

g) Roland hits the head of Marsile's sons (p. 309). The other versions talk only about one son.

h) The contest of Roland's monologue at Oliver's corpse. Oliver was born to reinforce justice and to crush pride and injustice (p. 313).

i) Among the countries conquered by Roland figures *Tuscany* in Italy (p. 315).

j) Holger the Dane throws fresch water on Charlemagne when he faints at Roland's corpse (p. 319). In KMS (chap.39) it is Nemes. The detail is omitted in O and in the other versions.

k) The emperor meets with Turpin wounded at Roncevaux (p. 321).

l) The episode of Aude comes immediately after the punishment of Ganelon. In O this episode precedes the punishment of Ganelon.

m) The emperor faints at the corpse of Aude (p. 321).

The analytic study of the relationship between the two Nordic texts leads to the conclusion that there are several differences between the two texts, but in spite of the differences, KMK contains several points in common with KMS. There are even some errors from KMS repeated in KMK. It is, however, not a shortened translation. Is is quite evident that the Danish author has not had the Norse text in front of him during his work. KMK is close to KMS, but it doesn't derive from it. The two texts are rather parallel, each with its own character. The feudal traits which characterize the French poem and KMS too are omitted in KMK. KMK appears more than the Christians fights against the pagans and the French are first of all defenders of Christianity.

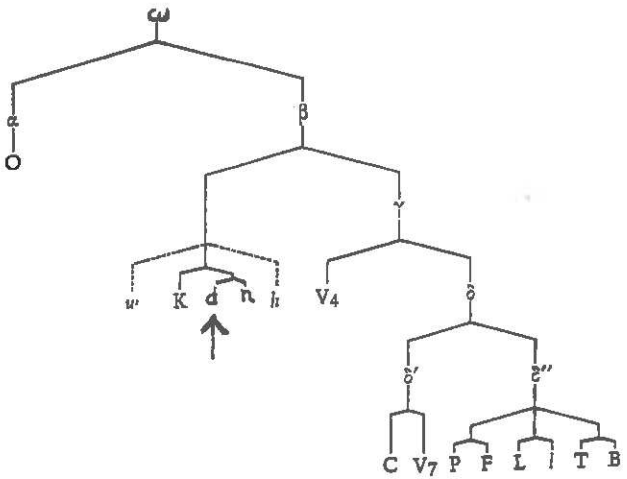
The study of the relationship between KMK and the other versions leads to the conclusion that KMK contains, in fact, a number of details mentioned now in one version now in another different from KMS.

The confrontation of KMK with the other versions of the *Chanson de Roland* calls, as showed above, attention to the fact, that the author of KMK has known other models different from the antecedent of the Saga. We have examples that show KMK in correspondence with O. This is the case with the name *Engeler* as the murder of a big pagan. The other versions mention *Gerin*, as the greater part of the editors of O. It is possible that the mistake derives from the archetype and we may add that KMK more than once contains details which might derive from the original of the French poem. As an example, the passage about Margariz who escapes from the battle and arrives to Marsile between the first and second battle. We have anyhow also several examples where KMK and KMS oppose to O and accord with the rhymed versions. This is the case with the miracle of the brambles which cover the pagans and the episode with Durendal. Here the Scandinavian texts are mainly in accordance with C, V7 and T. Once the KMK corresponds with V4 and differs from version A,a of the saga and from V7 and C. This is the case with the name *Allemagne* mentioned among the countries conquered by Roland. KMK also shows affinities with the *Chronicle of Pseudo-Turpin*. A part from the literary genre and the style, KMK contains details which are mentioned in the Latin text, as for instance, the place-name *Galice* which figures among the countries conquered by Charlemagne. Concerning the person Turpin, who takes part in the battle and survives, it is possible that also this idea derives from the *Chronicle of Pseudo-Turpin*. Regarding the return to France and the burial of the peers at Arles in the Scandinavian versions, the episode has parallels in the Latin text, where the Burgundians are buried at Arles. However, Halvorsen[9] discusses this episode, and he is more inclined to think that the fact that the heroes are buried at Arles derives from a variant of the *Chanson de Roland*, written before 1150, that both the author of the *Chronicle of Pseudo-Turpin* and the adapter of the saga may have known.

As we can deduce from the obtained results, it is not possible to determine exactly which text or texts have formed the basis of KMK. Furthermore, we want to remark

that the Danish text is also connected with other literary traditions. There are two examples which show a relationship with the arthurian tradition: the passage about the sword thrown into the lake, and the part attributed to Ivan in the episode of the war in Libya.

In conclusion, if we have to place our text at the stemma of the MSS and versions of the *Chanson de Roland* proposed by C. Segre, it is evident that KMK has to be member of the same group as the saga in the stemma, i.e. the group of the Nordic versions, which contains beside K, the KMS (designated n), a Welsh version, w, from the XIV century, and the Flemish *Roetlantslied*, h, between the XIII and XIV centuries. The relationship between K and KMS has already been studied by P. Merci[10], who sees a certain affinity between these two Nordic texts, even if he can not prove their dependence through a common intermediate link. Concerning our text we do not have sufficient prooves to determine something about the relationship between KMK and K. In all the important episodes where the KMS and our text differ from the other versions, K follows O. Therefor we limit ourselves to say that KMK (designated d) belongs to the Nordic group parallel to the Norse text and to the text of K as illustrated in the stemma beneath.



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