

On Lineages

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I think it somewhat naive to maintain that the traditions as we now have them in the compilations of our history represent the original renderings in unadulterated form. Both transmitters and collectors (initiators and initiates) invented and circulated reports on a large scale. This was accomplished precisely through a process of compiling and systematizing, of expanding and abbreviating, of inventing the chronology and the order of events, of omitting and creating, and through other such manipulations.¹

But we need to be clear when we begin to make accusations about charlatanism and falsification. In my observation, it is the charlatan that tends to be the most accusatory about the alleged charlatanism of others as they are more concerned with their own motives rather than what is occurring within the environment in which they live ... and when we refer to “falsification” within the framework of historiographical traditions, whether oral or written, we must understand precisely what that means otherwise we will happily leap down the exact same rabbit hole that has been blindly followed since, frankly, the 17th c. when Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism as secret societies were being formulated. Falsification, as I approach this subject, refers to the results of the work of the transmitters and not to their motives. That is, it is not meant to convey the notion that tradents* worked with the deliberate and consistent aim of producing false or misleading narratives of past events, but rather to assert that the result of the ways in which they handled their material was to give a picture of initiatic or historical events which was highly distorted, or even entirely wrong.

Furthermore, the falsification of the historical record did not result from any one particular act (unless it was by intentional design), but rather from a long process -- a process that began early, more or less at the very beginning of the historical tradition.² As in genealogical compilation, we must contend with the floating gap³ paradigm (a three-generation memory after which, the accuracy of recollection, be it from oral or written sources, becomes clouded and begin to fade from both individual and group memories). As such, compilers as well as collectors midway, even though they may introduce their own material, are to be considered primarily as links in a long chain of tradents handling received material and not as the particular individuals responsible for the biased presentations of our traditional history.

As an example of this process, refer to the sources regarding Norman history listed in “sources used” below. In the examination of Dudo St Quentin’s method in his attempt to establish a foundation for a new

¹ The fragmentation of Martinism in the early parts of the last century is a good example of this occurrence. Different tradents had different concepts as to how they thought the future of Martinism should look and each acted in accordance with their particular interpretation. In very few instances, it was decided to remain as close to the original creation as possible whereas in most other instances it was decided that additional degrees, rituals, and direction should be added, ostensibly to make for more meaning, but in reality, did little more than to expose the lack of understanding had by some regarding the depth and completeness of the system as it was originally conceived. Nevertheless, in the historiography of Martinism, those lineages were modified to accommodate for the divergent directions with each claiming originality -- a falsification without intent ... perhaps.

² Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition, A Source-Critical Study*, p. 6. Noth clearly identifies the complications that are often hidden in the historical tradition. These complications also present themselves in the historiography of initiatic systems and must be addressed without bias.

³ In constructing my position on lineage, I draw upon the floating gap paradigm as is usually applied to genealogical research. It is there that I find many parallels with initiatic transmission encountered in esoteric Orders and find it applicable to our research into those types of lineages. With time, usually within three generations, memory becomes faded and much information is forgotten. This is what is meant by the “floating gap”. We find very similar instances within the initiatic lineage. The condition and situation with a father initiator are often entirely misunderstood, misinterpreted, unknown, and frequently abridged two or three generations down the line as a result, and then later erroneously sourced back to the original. That is, from the original source a tradent midway through the chain adds to or subtracts from that original source. Later tradents refer back to the previous tradent and cites that person as if he or she had accurately depicted the original manifestation. This is a form of circular reasoning. This example can be further illustrated by the unfortunate use of the Icelandic Sagas as being an accurate source in the compilation of Medieval history.

aristocratic House in Normandy for the Dane, Rollo, we find an example of how these errors can be incorporated into a lineage. Dudo was employed by Rollo's son, Richard I for the purpose of creating, establishing and making legitimate an aristocratic lineage that would find acceptance with the Royal Houses of Europe. In that other Houses boasted a descendance from the Emperor Charlemagne, Dudo was presented with the very real problem that the newcomer Rollo would never find acceptance with other Houses as being a proper descendant and legitimate peer of the realm. To counter this difficulty, Dudo turned to the work of Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*⁴ and from that source, fabricated a descendance from that 4th century Emperor. With the passing of time, this falsified history was further elaborated upon by others who referenced Dudo, included additional fabricated material introduced by Wace⁵ and then, once again, the reconstruction of a new history with even more unfounded material incorporated, several centuries later, by Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241), into the Icelandic Sagas. Snorri, after drawing from Dudo St Quentin's and Wace's works as his primary sources for continental history, additionally introduced elements taken from the *Orkneyinga Saga* into his version of the *Saga of Harald Fairhair* in the *Heimskringla*. This "history" then became one of several sources used to compile the *Flateyjarbók*, of which the original version was commissioned by Jón Hákonarson, circa 1394, and produced by the priests and scribes Jón Þórðarson and Magnús Þórhallsson. These and other sources are still cited by many researchers today as being an accurate and true depiction of the historical record, but in truth, constitute little more than examples of an error still being perpetuated -- the most glaring being that Göngu-Hrólfur was the son of Jarl Rognvald Eysteinnsson of Møre (Norway) and was identified to be the personage of Rollo. That is to say, the Norwegian, Göngu-Hrólfur, of the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland is identified as being the Dane, Rollo, from Scania. To accommodate for this merging of personalities, later sources are amended to reflect the new perspective. This includes the most recent version of the *Orkneyinga Saga*⁶ where it is added that Göngu-Hrólfur is the youngest son of Jarl Rognvald Eysteinnsson of Møre. Rognvald, the alleged father, is also attributed to have been involved in the founding of the Earldom of Orkney even though it is his brother, Sigurd, who becomes the first Jarl. These examples illustrate historical errors, either originally made by the author, or from the translations or transcriptions of later compilers. Wace, referencing Jordanes as to location, correctly places Rollo as coming from Scania (an island off Denmark)⁷ whereas a transcriber of Wace's *Roman de Rou* replaced "Scania" with "Ecosse" (Scotland)⁸ perhaps with intent, but probably in error. In Dudo's account, Rollo was erroneously identified as Göngu-Hrólfur, not by Dudo, but rather, by later tradents, most likely as a result of not having the proper level of literacy in Latin⁹. Various accounts describe the Göngu-Hrólfur, son of Oxen-Thorir, as being a very large

⁴ One can find a number of almost identical parallels between the life of Rollo and his relationship with his father, manners in which they both ruled, and other similarities in sections of the *History of the Normans* by Dudo St Quentin compared to that of the *Life of Constantine* by Eusebius. So much so as to conclude that elements of Constantine's life as portrayed by Eusebius was the source for Rollo's life as portrayed by Dudo St. Quentin. See also Pohl's works cited below for a more comprehensive comparison.

⁵ See Houts' *Wace as Historian* for a more detailed account on this topic, the problems of literacy, and the use of prose and verse in historical works during the Middle Ages.

⁶ The original version of the oral accounts of the *Orkneyinga Saga* was written down for the first time prior to 1230 A.D. It did not include Göngu-Hrólfur as a son of Rognvald. However, the edition used today, does. How that came to be is that initially, the *Heimskringla*, compiled by Snorri in 1230 A.D., using Dudo and Wace as his sources, inserted Göngu-Hrólfur as a son of Rognvald and also misidentified him to be Rollo. In turn, the *Flateyjarbók*, written in 1394 A.D. used Snorri as its source. After which, the more recent and oft used version of the *Orkneyinga Saga* today, edited by Vigfússon, 1860, uses the *Flateyjarbók* as its source thereby inserting Göngu-Hrólfur into the *Orkneyinga Saga*.

⁷ "The same mighty sea has also in its arctic region, that is in the north, a great island named Scandza ..." Charles C. Mierow, *Jordanes, Origins and Deeds of the Goths*, I, 9 pg. 3 and "Scandza separating Germany and Scythia. The island ..." III, 17 pg. 5.

⁸ "que Escosce passa o siz nes soulement ..." trans. "with just six ships, he crossed over to Scotland." Wace, *The Roman De Rou*, trans. Glyn S. Burgess, II, 190 pg. 14. See also, "Canza insula (R): 'ex Scanza insula' as heard under dictation. Jordanes is the source for this locality (Scania, or the whole of Scandinavia)" Christiansen, *Dudo of Saint-Quentin*, pg. 182, n. 63.

⁹ Literacy in Latin during the Middle Ages was often defined, not by one's ability to speak and write the language, but rather by one's ability to employ a literati -- a person who does that task for them. Pohl, *Dudo of Saint-Quentin's Historia Normannorum* p.158; Bäuml, *Varieties and Consequences of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy*, p. 239 and pp. 246-7; Bachrach, *Writing Latin History for a Lay Audience c. 1000* p. 61.

Norwegian Viking. By virtue of a mistranslation of the word “equitare” in Dudo’s History¹⁰, the reference to his size caused many to associate that reference with Rollo thereby merging two separate people into being one person. Whereas the word “equitare” properly translates in the context of the phrase as “too old to go on campaigns”, it was mistranslated to mean “too large to ride a horse”¹¹ thereby contributing to the error in identifying Rollo with Göngu-Hrólfr. Even though, Göngu-Hrólfr’s parentage is clearly noted in the *Laxdaela Saga*¹², but erred in the *Orkneyinga Saga* as a result of these later insertions. Unfortunately, these same types of errors have also crept into our own traditional lineages far too often and need to be properly addressed.¹³

If one can look at historiographical tradition outside of the paradigm of the “schools” with which many people identify, we are in a better position to remark that each of the various compilations, first, contains many contradictions within itself relative to its conception of history and its presentation of events; and second, is often very similar to other compilations in precisely the same respects. The Martinism of Papus, Chaboseau and subsequent offshoots, for example, exhibit many gross contradictions in matters of fact. Martinism also juxtaposes within itself widely discrepant accounts, based in turn upon larger historical presuppositions which are clearly at odds. But we give them a pass because we accept their motive to be unquestioned and presumed to be good. Do we extend that same acceptance to others with whom we may be in competition or otherwise exist outside our field of comfort?

[to be continued: Rosicrucian traditions, religious traditions, other mystical non-ordial societies traditions]

¹⁰ “He lived for a five-year period after that, unable to [ride] from the weakness of his age, ‘his bodily strength exhausted’, and holding his pacified realm in peace and security.” Christiansen, *Dudo of Saint-Quentin*, II, 174, pg. 54

¹¹ “*equitare non valens* must, in view of the sense of *equitare* in ch. 23, mean ‘unable to campaign’ rather than ‘to ride’; however, the latter interpretation was used by later Nordic authors to identify Rollo with the hero Göngu-Hrólfr (Hrólfr the Walker), because he was too big to sit a horse (*Orkneyinga saga* ch. 4 slightly expanded by Snorri in *Haralds saga Harfanga* ch. 24).” Christiansen, *Dudo of Saint-Quentin*, n. 223 pp. 197-198.

¹² “... Ganging Hrolf, the son of Ox-Thorir, who was a most renowned ‘Hersir’ (war-lord) east in Wick.” (near Oslo, Fjord). *Laxdaela Saga*, trans. Muriel A.C. Press, ch. XXXII. pg. 39

¹³ It should be noted that not all chroniclers, historians, or tradents used questionable sources or reinterpreted existing ones. In the 15th c., Walter Bower, Abbot of Inchcolm Abbey in Scotland documented in the *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 3, Book V, pg. 25: “Here follows the generation of the Normans, of whom Rollo was the first duke, sprung from Danish stock. From Denmark he took the name Rollodane. Rollo was the father of William, William of Richard, Richard of Richard. Richard was the father of Robert; Robert was the father of William the Bastard.” William the Bastard, of course, was also known as William the Conqueror. Nevertheless, the point being, there were resources available at the time to accurately chronicle events and it behoved the historian to take special care in finding those sources. As then, so to now. It is the responsibility of the tradent, for the sake of future generations, to document their history as accurately as possible, especially when there are known discrepancies existing in the written record. An honest and accurate account goes much further in generating respect for their tradition than one founded on bias.

Glossary*

1. tradent: One who is responsible for preserving and transmitting a tradition (chiefly oral). From the Latin, tradere: defin. 6, to pass on or hand down information, teachings, or tradition. Oxford dict.

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