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Studi Tedeschi

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THE OLD NORSE *TRANSLATIO* OF THE LATIN
INVENTIO CRUCIS

di
Veronka Szőke
Cagliari

1. INTRODUCTION

The encounter between the Nordic world and the Latin texts which came about during the Middle Ages¹ resulted in an intense activity of translation. Translation played a prominent role as an instrument of instruction, and also influenced the development of literary production in the vernacular over the centuries, even though the extent of this influence is difficult to determine. The process of *transfer of knowledge* carried out through the translations implied an adaptation to the audience's cultural and social background. This objective was pursued not only by intervening in the lexical and morpho-syntactic fabric of the texts, but also by carrying out changes at the material and structural level of the narrative (a procedure entailing addition, omission and condensation). This method accorded well with the medieval practice of translation, in which the rendering of foreign works into the vernacular was more similar to the activity of a redactor or compiler rather than that of a modern translator, and the search for verbal equivalence was confined to glossing activities². This process often resulted in deeply reworked texts³.

¹ Alongside the predominance of Latin sources used in the North, as regards some homilies of the Norwegian *Homily Book*, ABRAM (2004, pp. 1-35) points out that the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition also had a significant influence on Norwegian medieval literature.

² Astrås 1991, pp. 19-20.

³ Regarding the Old Norse translations, see, for instance, the in-depth studies by WÜRTH, who focuses her attention on the five main pseudo-historical works translated into Norse, that is, *Rómverja saga*, *Breta sögur*, *Trójumanna saga*, *Gyðinga saga* and *Alexanders saga* (1992, 1998, 2006). BARNES (1975, 1977) and KALINKE (1991, 2005) have

Furthermore, the fact that medieval texts were considered as open texts, and therefore liable to manifold revisions during the various stages of their transmission is something that cannot be overlooked⁴. Any evaluation of the vernacular renderings that attempts to determine the phase of transmission in which the redactional interventions occurred, and whether they were carried out by the original translator or by a later redactor or scribe, is usually complicated by the fact that in some cases it is very difficult, if not impossible, to identify the exemplar that was available to the translator/redactor⁵.

To some extent, these difficulties also characterize the Old Norse translations of the story of the recovery of the True Cross, the amplest version of which is known as the *Inventio Crucis* (hereafter *NIC* = *Norse Inventio Crucis*). Its source has been identified in the version labelled as BHL 4169 (which will be referred to as *Latin Inventio crucis* = *LIC*), although we must bear in mind that this version may not coincide fully with the actual exemplar on which the Norse translator worked⁶. The story of the *Inventio* is also attested in two homilies, handed down in the Norwegian *Homily Book* (*In inventio sanctae crucis sermo*)⁷ and in the Icelandic *Hómiliúbók* (*De sancta cruce*), respectively⁸.

studied the group of the so-called *riddarasögur*, Norse translations of French courtly romances (see also GLAUSER 2007, pp. 372-387).

⁴ As BATTISTA (2005, p. 1) notes, «in a manuscript culture, every step in the process of translation, transmission, and copying of a text is the occasion for a new revision, and each version of the same work can be regarded as an original approach to the same subject matter». WELLENDORF (2011, pp. 321-322) also effectively sums up the manifold difficulties underlying the study of medieval renderings.

⁵ See also BATTISTA 2004, pp. 101-110; WÜRTH 2007a, pp. 11-12, 30-31; WELLENDORF 2011, p. 321; 2012, pp. 304-305.

⁶ In the light of the impossibility of distinguishing between the interventions carried out by the original translator/redactor and by possible later redactors or scribes, the label 'redactor' will be used throughout the analysis of the *NIC*, for convenience's sake.

⁷ INDREBØ 1966, pp. 102-105. The Norwegian homily begins with a synopsis, which narrates the burial of the Cross and the circumstances of its recovery by Helena. From this account, Constantine's battle against the barbarians and the episode of the Vision are absent, and the story ends with a reference to the festivity of the Exaltation of the Cross, which recalls the events narrated therein (ll. 1-30, INDREBØ 1966, p. 102; ll 1-11, INDREBØ 1966, p. 103). This version of the *Inventio* follows a different tradition from the one handed down in the *NIC*. The second part of the homily is a dense exegetic meditation on the meaning of the Cross and Christ's death in the salvation history. Eventually, the author deals in detail with the topic of the four dimensions of the Cross. The homily was deeply influenced by Honorius of Autun's *Speculum ecclesiae*.

⁸ The Icelandic homily lacks the narrative introduction concerning the *Inventio* proper;

The legend of the Finding of the True Cross goes back to the second half of the fourth century and was probably triggered by the recovery of a piece of wood, deemed to be a relic of Christ's Cross, during the reign of Constantine the Great⁹. Narratives concerning the circumstances of the finding soon originated to explain the presence of the relic in Jerusalem or in the surrounding area¹⁰. At a stage which cannot be determined with certainty, they were connected with the imperial house in the person of the Empress Helena¹¹, mother of Constantine the Great, probably on the basis of a journey she made to Palestine for both spiritual and political purposes, when she supervised the ongoing building of churches promoted by her son¹². The version of the narrative involving the Empress (called the *Helena legend*) was the basis for two further versions of the *Inventio*, both of oriental origin, that is, the *Protonike legend* and the *Judas Cyriacus legend*¹³. The latter – pivoting on the new figure of the Jewish Judas Cyriacus¹⁴ –

its exegetical section is very similar to that attested in the Norwegian version (WEENEN VAN DE LEEUW 1993, pp. 17, r. 22-18, r. 30).

⁹ On the historical truth behind the *Inventio*, see DRIJVERS 1992 [1989] and BORGEHAMMAR 1991.

¹⁰ The Jerusalemite origin of the narrative of the Finding has been pointed out in several studies (see DRIJVERS 1992 [1989], p. 183; HEID 1989, pp. 49, 57; BORGEHAMMAR 1991, pp. 9, 57-59; BAERT 2004, pp. 31-32).

¹¹ For a detailed analysis of the historical and fictional figure of Helena, see the comprehensive study by DRIJVERS 1992 [1989] and HARBUS 2002. Though it is a common view that the Empress had no actual connection with the Finding of the Cross, BORGEHAMMAR (1991, pp. 124-142) has proposed a revision of the date of Helena's pilgrimage to Palestine, which would allow her to be involved in the recovery of the relic. However, this assumption has not gained consensus (HARBUS 2002, pp. 20-21).

¹² DRIJVERS 1992 [1989], pp. 63-65; HARBUS 2002, pp. 17-18; BAERT 2004, pp. 35-37.

¹³ The main stages of the development of the three versions of the *Inventio* legend and the survey of the sources dealing with them are analysed in detail by DRIJVERS (1992 [1989], pp. 79-180) and BORGEHAMMAR (1991, pp. 7-81). On the subject, see also BAERT 2004, pp. 42-53.

¹⁴ The character of Judas, who acts as Helena's helper in the recovery, is first mentioned by the Greek Church historian Sozomen (BORGEHAMMAR 1991, p. 8). Sozomen's work, as that of other authors of *Church Histories*, such as Rufinus, Gelasius of Cyzicus, Socrates and Theodoret, goes back to a lost *Church History* by Gelasius of Caesarea, of which Borgehammar proposes a reconstruction (BORGEHAMMAR 1991, pp. 11-55). This work is probably the earliest Greek source on the Finding. It preceded the attestation in the Latin funeral oration written by Bishop Ambrose, in 395, on the death of Theodosius I, known as *De obitu Theodosii* (DRIJVERS 1992 [1989], pp. 95-99 and BORGEHAMMAR 1991, p. 60).

rapidly spread throughout the Western world after the fifth century, and became the most popular version of the Finding in the Middle Ages, as attested by its many vernacular translations¹⁵.

The present study aims at discussing the peculiar features of the *Norse Inventio Crucis* and at showing that the Norse redactor did not produce a slavish rendering of its Latin source¹⁶. To begin with, he carried out a conspicuous expansion of the *LIC* through the interpolation of an ample introduction which provides the narrative with a detailed historical frame. Besides this major amplification and a few additions of minor import, the Norse redactor also abbreviated the Latin narrative by excising or shortening those passages he did not consider functional to the advancement of the story or those which did not serve his specific aims. His interventions will be accounted for in detail in the following sections, thus providing a close insight into his working method and the possible motivations behind the accomplished changes¹⁷.

2. THE NORSE *INVENTIO*: ADDITIONS

The Norse *Inventio Crucis* is handed down in four manuscripts, none of which preserves the complete version; the longest redactions are those attested in AM 238 XI fol (ca. 1300-1325) and in AM 233 a fol (ca. 1350-1360), of Icelandic provenance, probably written in the Helgafell monastery¹⁸. UNGER used the former for his edition, which also includes variant readings from the latter¹⁹. In both manuscripts, the narrative comes to an abrupt end after the miraculous recognition of the True Cross, when the

¹⁵ For a survey of the medieval translations of the *Inventio* legend, see BORGEHAMMAR 1991, p. 194 n. 33.

¹⁶ A fragment of the beginning of the *Inventio*, concerning Constantine's political career before his conversion, is also handed down in a later manuscript, AM 667 4to (ca. 1525), the source of which was probably a Low German *Passionael*. This text is edited by OVERGAARD (1968, p. 58, 7-14).

¹⁷ The Latin text is quoted according to the first critical edition of the *Inventio* by Borgehammar, who consulted twenty-one manuscripts attesting the Latin text (1991, pp. 255-271). The excerpts will be followed by the indication of the page and line(s) quoted. The English translation of the *LIC* is also by BORGEHAMMAR (1991, pp. 154-161), if not otherwise indicated.

¹⁸ STEFÁN KARLSSON 1977, p. 116.

¹⁹ The Norse text used is the one edited by UNGER (1877), which has been normalized.

devil angrily blames Judas for having deprived him of many souls by allowing the recovery and hence the conversion of many people²⁰.

Part of the missing story is attested in the unedited fragment NRA 75 (ca. 1250-1275), of Icelandic provenance; the fragment was probably written down in the Benedictine monastery of Þingeyrar²¹. A fourth Icelandic witness is AM 764 4to, a miscellaneous compilation which mostly includes religious and historiographic texts. SVANHILDUR ÓSKARSDÓTTIR has made a transcript of the three passages of the *Inventio* handed down therein²²: the first one (f. 20r, 6-12) is a much shortened version of the historical introduction which opens the *NIC*; the second, which amounts to just a few lines, concerns the identification of the True Cross (20v, 9-12), whereas the third and largest section (21v, 4-25)²³ recounts Constantine's conversion through the intercession of Pope Sylvester and his heavenly vision preceding the battle against the barbarians²⁴.

The Norse rendering of the *Inventio* begins with an interpolated passage, concerning Constantine's rise to power and his spiritual progress²⁵, which affects the structure of the narrative by supplying it with a historiographical framework. This choice is in keeping with the rooted interest in historiography which characterized the Norse literary tradition from its very beginnings²⁶. This introduction is based on the conflation of several sources, well-known in the North, and precedes Constantine's vision of the Cross and his victory over the barbaric hosts threatening the Eastern borders of

The quotations from and references to the text will include the indication of the page(s), followed by the number of the line(s) quoted.

²⁰ The text in AM 238 XI fol is extended for a few more lines than in AM 233 a fol, and foreshadows Judas's martyrdom under Julian the Apostate (UNGER 1877, p. 308). The Norse translation of the *Inventio* probably dates from the thirteenth century (STEFÁN KARLSSON 1977, p. 118).

²¹ STEFÁN KARLSSON 1977, p. 116.

²² SVANHILDUR ÓSKARSDÓTTIR published the transcript of ff. 1-23v of AM 764 4to as an Appendix to her PhD dissertation (2000, pp. 242-305).

²³ SVANHILDUR ÓSKARSDÓTTIR 2000, pp. 294, 295, 298, respectively.

²⁴ On the manuscripts handing down the Norse *Inventio* and their editions, see also WOLF 2013³, pp. 83-85.

²⁵ The introductory section has been thoroughly analysed by STEFÁN KARLSSON (1977), who has also traced its sources.

²⁶ WÜRTH 2007b, p. 156.

the Roman Empire at the Danube²⁷. These events also open the *Inventio* story in the Greek and Syriac versions²⁸, whereas, at the beginning of the *NIC*, the redactor briefly traces the disrupting political upheavals that characterized the last part of Diocletian's reign: the persecution of the Christians and the subsequent division of power which led to the establishment of a tetrarchy, when Diocletian shared the rule of the empire with Maximianus Hercules, and Galerius and Constantius Chlorus became *caesars* (*NIC*, 301.20-302.9). In compiling this section, it is likely that the redactor made use of a version of *Veraldar saga* 'History of the World', an ample narrative dating from the twelfth century which described the world's history according to the conception of the six *aetates mundi*. There is consensus on the fact that this saga is not the translation of a Latin original, but a compilation from different sources, probably put together by a redactor who relied mainly on Bede's *Chronica maiora*²⁹ and Isidore's *Etymologiae* and *Chronica maiora*³⁰.

The redactor links the historical events taking place in Rome with the peripheral kingdom of Britain through *caesar* Constantius, who was sent to the island to tame the rebellion against the Roman conquerors. An agreement allowed the British leader Cole to continue ruling until his death, but named Constantius as his successor and, hence, king of Britain when this happened. Indeed, shortly after the agreement was made, Cole died

²⁷ On the motif of supernatural help in battle, see MACDONALD 1979, pp. 289-296. BORGEHAMMAR (1991, pp. 151, 247-248) claims that the episode of the Vision was not part of the original version of the Finding, as several clues would confirm, such as the system used to reckon time. See also FOWDEN 1994, p. 159.

²⁸ Unlike DRIJVERS (1992 [1989], pp. 172-175), who claims that Syriac was the language in which the *Judas Cyriacus version* was written down, BORGEHAMMAR (1991, pp. 149-150) maintains that Greek was its original language, that it was then translated into Latin, and that there was a Latin text at the basis of the Syriac version.

²⁹ According to STEFÁN KARLSSON (1977, pp. 125-128, 130), the version of *Veraldar saga* used by the redactor of the *NIC* was more detailed and contained more information from Bede's *Chronicle* than the version handed down to us.

³⁰ STEFÁN KARLSSON 1977, p. 128; see also WÜRTH 1998, pp. 173, 176-177; 2007a, pp. 16, 30. The works by Isidore and by Bede, alongside Honorius Augustodunensis's *Imago mundi*, were particularly influential in the historiographic tradition of the Middle Ages, when history was essentially Biblical history, but also often included major events drawn from Greek and Roman historiography (SVANHILDUR ÓSKARSDOTTIR 2000, pp. 218-220, 231 and SVERIRR JAKOBSSON 2007, p. 34).

and Constantius started his reign³¹. He then had a son, Constantine, with Helena, Cole's daughter³². After his father's death, Constantine became ruler of Britain, and then Emperor, after defeating Maxentius in Rome (*NIC*, 302.14-31). This account is probably based on a version of *Breta sögur*, the Norse rendering of the *Historia regum Britanniae* by Geoffrey of Monmouth, which dates from around 1200³³.

In the concluding part of the introduction, the Norse redactor recounts Constantine's spiritual development: the Emperor had been a fierce persecutor of Christians, which caused God to strike him down with leprosy (*NIC*, 302.31-36); thanks to the intercession of Pope Sylvester, he converted to the new religion and was baptized³⁴; he then became a fervent supporter of Christianity and was miraculously healed from the disease³⁵. The

³¹ In the Norse introduction, Constantine first married Theodora, daughter of the Emperor Maximian, and then had a relationship with Kohel's (Cole) daughter, Helena (*NIC*, 302.10-11; 23-26), whereas, according to the historical sources, he abandoned Helena to marry Theodora, thus building the premise of his career as a *caesar* (HARBUS 2002, p. 13).

³² This account is part of the tradition according to which Helena was of British origin, daughter of the legendary King Cole. HARBUS (2002, pp. 10-19) maintains that this tradition developed from a misunderstanding concerning Constantine's birth, wrongly claimed to have occurred in Britain, and also from the paucity of the historical data on Helena's birth and early life because of her low social origin. Helena's British connection is already present in early sources, such as Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*, the Old English translation of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, and Welsh genealogies from the tenth century; it is also attested in later popular works, such as Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum* and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*. In fact, the only historical connection between Helena and Britain seems to be the fact that her partner, Constantius Chlorus, died in York, where the troops proclaimed his son Constantine *augustus* (HARBUS 2002, pp. 3, 13-14, 34-44, 52-82).

³³ *Breta sögur* has been handed down to us in a later elaboration of an earlier translation (WÜRTH 1998, p. 56; 2006, p. 297). As STEFÁN KARLSSON (1977, pp. 123-125) points out, it is not possible to establish which part of the *NIC*, in common with *Breta sögur*, goes back directly to the Latin *Historia* and which one to a Norse version.

³⁴ According to the *Vita Constantini* (IV, 62,4), Constantine was baptized in May 337, by Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia. A few years later, Eusebius was moved to Constantinople, which gained a reputation as the *New Rome*. This led to confusion and to the misleading labelling of Eusebius as Bishop of Rome (FOWDEN 1994, p. 153).

³⁵ The account of Constantine's leprosy and miraculous healing was also handed down by other influential medieval works, such as the *Legenda aurea* and *The South English Legendary* (HARBUS 2002, pp. 24-25).

narrative concerning Constantine's conversion is also attested in *Veraldar saga*³⁶; STEFÁN KARLSSON claims that both this version and the one in the *NIC* go back to the more detailed account of the events offered in *Sylvester saga*³⁷, the Norse translation of the Latin *Actus beati Sylvestri*, which dates from 450³⁸.

Besides this composite preface, a few details are attested in the *NIC* which find no correspondence in the source. In a few cases, they are related to geography and chronology. The specification, for instance, that Helena reached Jerusalem by sea («um haf», *NIC*, 303.20) may have been a useful indication for a Norseman, unfamiliar with the geography of the Mediterranean and the Near Eastern area³⁹. In two cases, time indications have been complemented with the expressions 'after Christ's birth' and 'since Christ's passion': first of all, in establishing the chronological setting of Constantine's confrontation with the barbarians, the redactor specifies that it occurred in the year 233⁴⁰ «frá burð Krists» 'after Christ's birth' (*NIC*, 303.2)⁴¹, whereas Judas tries to elude Helena's questions by invoking the more than two hundred years that have elapsed since Christ's passion («[...] þá eru nú liðin meirr en 200 vetra frá píningu Krists [...]»; *NIC*, 306.17-18). However, the reference to the Passion is absent from the source, which only indicates the number of years («Quemadmodum habetur in gestis, sunt iam anni ducenti plus minus» 'As the records indicate, it is already more or less two hundred years ago', *LIC*, 264.127-128).

A different case of expansion appears in Stephen's prayer begging forgiveness for the Jews who are about to stone him. The Latin invocation «Ne statuas illis hoc ad peccatum, Domine» 'Do not reckon this sin to

³⁶ JAKOB BENEDIKTSSON 1944, pp. 58-59.

³⁷ STEFÁN KARLSSON 1977, pp. 126-127. SVANHILDUR ÓSKARSDÓTTIR (2000, p. 202) is more cautious with regard to the identification of *Sylvester saga* as the source of the *NIC*.

³⁸ As HARBUS (2002, p. 26) points out, the *Inventio* legend and the *Actus beati Sylvestri* are often transmitted together in medieval manuscripts.

³⁹ The crossing of the sea to reach Jerusalem is dealt with in detail in the Old English poem *Elene* by Cynewulf (ll. 225-255; KRAPP 1932, pp. 72-73).

⁴⁰ On the mistaken indication of the year of the Finding, see BORGEHAMMAR 1991, pp. 181-182.

⁴¹ The Incarnation used as the starting point of Christian chronology may be a clue as to the influence of Bede, who adopted Dionysius Exiguus's system of chronology (SVANHILDUR ÓSKARSDÓTTIR 2000, pp. 222-223).

them, o Lord' (*LIC*, 262.105) has been enlarged in the *NIC* by adding an argumentative clause – «Dróttinn, láttu eigi þeim þetta at synd verða, þvíat þeir vita eigi hvat þeir gøra» 'Lord, do not reckon this sin to them, for they know not what they do' (*NIC*, 305.22-23) – which recalls the wording of Luke 23.34⁴².

Besides these examples, the *NIC* also includes adaptations which serve the function of bringing the source closer to social conventions familiar to the Norse audience (§ 5). One instance of this choice occurs in Judas's account of the story of the hidden Cross; the anxiety related to its recovery derives not only from the fact that, as stated in the *LIC*, this event would lead to the end of the Jewish tradition and law («[...] nam uere destruentur paternae traditiones et lex ad nihilum redigetur» '[...] for truly will our ancestral traditions be destroyed and the Law made to nought', *LIC*, 261.87-88), but also from the awareness that it would bring dishonour to the Jews («[...] þá manu eyðask lög vár ǫll, ok munum vér sjálfir vera virðingarlausir» '[...] all our laws will be destroyed, and we will be dishonoured', *NIC*, 305.3-4).

3. OMISSIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

A comparison of the Norse rendering with the Latin *Inventio* clearly shows that the interventions of the redactor through shortenings and omissions, and subsequent adaptations, are far more numerous than the amplifications he introduces. This choice is partly the result of the redactor's foremost interest in the progress of the story line, which is a tendency that is also apparent, for instance, in the Norse translations of popular pseudo-historical works⁴³.

The first example of this kind of condensation occurs in the passage describing the barbarians' movements on the borders of the Empire⁴⁴: «[...]

⁴² «Pater, dimitte illis, non enim sciunt quid faciunt».

⁴³ In her analysis of the pseudo-historical works and their translations, WÜRTH repeatedly points out that *brevitas* is a characteristic feature of the Norse renderings (see 1992, p. 20; 1998, pp. 182, 249 and *passim*; 2006, p. 321; 2007a, p. 15). On this aspect, see also SVANHILDUR ÓSKARSDÓTTIR 2000, p. 236.

⁴⁴ *LIC*, 255.3-7: «[...] gens multa barbarorum congregata est super Danobium fluium, parati ad bellum contra Romaniam. Nuntiatum est autem regi Constantino, et congregans et ipse multitudinem exercitum profectus est in obuiam ipsorum, et inuenit eos, qui auarica-

þá kom fjöldi víkinga liðs ad Danubium þeirar ár, ok váru búnir at ganga á Rómverja ríki. En er Konstantinus spurði þat, þá fór hann í móti með her sinn» [...] great hordes of barbarian troops arrived at the river Danube, and were ready to attack the Romans. When Constantine learnt this, he moved with his troop against them' (*NIC*, 303.2-6)⁴⁵. Later on, the redactor omits the indication that the battle began at the break of day («proxima luce», *LIC*, 256.16), and then leaves out the date on which Helena entered Jerusalem, only mentioning that 'she arrived in Jerusalem at the end of the month called April [...]' («Hon kom ofarliga þess mánaðar er Aprilis heitir í Jórsalaborg [...]», *NIC*, 303.25-26). Also, whereas the Latin version specifies all the areas from which Helena assembled the Jewish wisemen whom she intended to question («in circuitu castellis, possissionibus uel ciuitatibus»), and hence conveys the difficulty of finding a congruous number of them⁴⁶, the Norse redactor only translates the next sentence which

uerant in Romaniae partibus et erant secus Danobium» [...] a large barbarian host gathered beyond the Danube, prepared to wage war against the Roman Empire. When this was announced to King Constantine, he too mustered a great army and set out against the enemy. He found they had laid claim to and had occupied parts of Roman territory on the Danube' (ALLEN / CALDER 1976, p. 60). Considerable attention is devoted in *Elene* to the episode of the battle and its result (see ll. 18b-53, 105-143; KRAPP 1932, pp. 66-67, 68-69). On this subject, see also GARDNER 1970, pp. 65, 67.

⁴⁵ The rendering of Judas's release from the pit into which he had been confined because of his unwillingness to confess what he knew about the Cross shows a similar process of condensation. In the *NIC*, the event is summed up in one sentence: «Enn er hann var látinn upp ór grófinni, þá fór hann í þann stað sem krossinn var ok mæltisk þar fyrir á ebreska tungu [...]» 'When he was released from the pit, he went to the place where the Cross lay and spoke in Hebrew [...]' (*NIC*, 307.2-3). In the Latin version (*LIC*, 265.141-144), the account is wordier: «Cum transissent autem septem dies, clamabat Iudas de lacu, dicens: 'Obsecro uos, educite me et ego ostendam uobis crucem Christi!' Cum ascendisset autem de lacu, perrexit usque ad locum, et nesciens certius locum, ubi iaceret crux, leuauit uocem suam ad Dominum Hebraica lingua [...]» 'But when seven days had passed, Judas cried from the well, saying, 'I beseech you, get me out of here and I shall show you the Cross of Christ'. When he had come up out of the well he went to the place, and not knowing exactly where the Cross lay, he raised his voice to the Lord in Hebrew [...]'.

⁴⁶ See *LIC*, 258.44-47: «Non solum autem eos, qui in ea erant ciuitate, sed et eos, qui erant in circuitu castellis, possissionibus uel ciuitatibus, Iudaeos congregari praecepit. Erat autem Ierusalem deserta tempore illo, ita ut inuenirentur omnes Iudaei tria milia uiroorum» '[Helena] ordered not only those who were in that city, but also those who were in the neighbouring villages, estates and towns of Judea, to be assembled. For Jerusalem lay waste at the time, so that all the Jews found were three thousand men'.

refers to the desolation of Jerusalem and to the extent of the gathered crowd: «Enn í þann tíma var Jórslaborg mjök eydd at bygð ok monnum. Þá samnaðusk saman þriár þúsundir Gyðinga á fund drótningar» ‘At that time Jerusalem was bereft of inhabitants and people. Three thousand Jews were gathered together to meet the Queen’ (*NIC*, 303.28-30)⁴⁷.

Apart from these simple kinds of abridgments and omissions, the *NIC* is also characterized by other changes which probably arose from the need to harmonize the text with the introductory passage and to convey a specific message. The introduction is followed by the description of the impending attack of the barbarian troops, of Constantine’s fear, of his vision before the battle⁴⁸ and the resulting victory. These events mark the beginning of the account in the *LIC*, where they are connected with the Emperor’s baptism by Eusebius, Bishop of Rome⁴⁹. However, the choice to retain both traditions regarding Constantine’s spiritual progress – his miraculous healing from leprosy and his defeat of the barbarians, under the protection of the Cross – prompted several adaptations: the redactor handles the conversion cursorily and omits some phrases and larger portions of text from his source to reconcile both versions. For instance, he omits the characterization of Constantine as a God-fearing man («[...] Dei cultore magno uiro», *LIC*, 255.2), which occurs in the sub-heading at the opening of the *Inuentio*, because he has already dealt with his spiritual portrayal earlier in the introduction. In keeping with these premises, he also excises the description of Constantine’s inquiry into the meaning of the sign seen in the sky – which in the *LIC* is deeply related to his catechization and followed by his baptism by Eusebius⁵⁰ – and gives a short account of the comple-

⁴⁷ The devastation of Jerusalem and the scarcity of its inhabitants were closely related to the prophecies of the New Testament (for instance, Matt. 23.37-38) originating from the Jews’ rejection of Christ (BORGEHAMMAR 1991, p. 164).

⁴⁸ In his *De mortibus persecutorum*, LACTANCE narrates that before the battle against Maxentius, Constantine received an angelic visitation in a dream (xliv, *Patrologia Latina* 7, 261). According to EUSEBIUS, the Vision occurred during the battle itself (*Vita Constantini*, I, 28-29). MACDONALD (1979, pp. 290-296) claims that both traditions are related to pagan motifs concerning divine intervention in human battles.

⁴⁹ The combination of the two episodes is also displayed in Latin prose texts, such as BEDE’s *De inuentione sanctae crucis* (*Patrologia Latina* 94, 495), HONORIUS’ *Speculum ecclesiae* (*Patrologia Latina* 172, 947), and also in CYNEWULF’s *Elene*, which follows Lactance’s version of the vision (see ll. 69-94a; KRAPP 1932, pp. 66-67).

⁵⁰ See *LIC*, 256.19-257.29, which recounts Constantine’s inquiry into the meaning of

tion of his conversion, which then triggered his mother's mission to Jerusalem⁵¹.

There is another instance of abridgment which also concerns Constantine. After describing the enemies' military movements in detail⁵², the Latin version explicitly refers to Constantine reacting with great fear at the sight of the threatening barbarians: «[...] contristatus est ualde et timuit usque ad mortem» '[...] he was greatly sad and mortally afraid' (*LIC*, 255.8)⁵³. In the *NIC*, this feeling of extreme apprehension has been allayed: «[...] ægði honum at berjask við þá» '[...] [Constantine] was scared to fight against them [the barbarians]' (*NIC*, 303.7)⁵⁴. It is possible that the Norse redactor considered these feelings of great fear as being in contrast with the portrayal of a true military leader, not only because of their nature but also because of their intensity⁵⁵.

Furthermore, the revision of the episode concerning the angelic epiphany, where the supernatural features are limited to the strictly necessary, contributes to putting Constantine in the foreground and to depicting him as a paradigmatic ruler: the redactor mentions a man with a luminous appearance («maðr bjartr yfirliz», *NIC*, 303.8, corresponding to the Latin's «splendidissimus uir» 'man surrounded by radiance', *LIC*, 255.9)⁵⁶, but does not specify whether Constantine saw him in a dream or whether he had a heavenly vision in the darkness of the night – as the *LIC* seems to suggest

the sign, his religious instruction, and baptism, and eventually also talks about the building of the churches he promoted.

⁵¹ See *NIC*, 303.18-22: «Þá er Konstantinus keisari var orðinn algörliða kristinn, ok hann mátti skilja af guðsspjöllum, hvar dróttinn var krossfestur, sendi hann Elenam móður sína út um haf til Jórsalaborgar at leita at krossi, þeim er dróttinn var píndr á, ok ætlaði hann í þeim stað kirkju upp at reisa, sem krossinn fyndisk» 'When Emperor Constantine was fully converted to Christianity and learnt from the Gospels where the Lord had been crucified, he sent his mother Helena to Jerusalem by sea in search of the cross upon which the Lord had been hung; he aimed at having a church built in the place where the cross would be found'.

⁵² See n. 44.

⁵³ ALLEN / CALDER 1976, p. 60.

⁵⁴ On the other hand, in *Elene*, this aspect of Constantine's reaction receives considerable attention and expansion (ll. 56b-65a; KRAPP 1932, p. 67; see also GARDNER 1970, p. 67).

⁵⁵ Self-control and a tendency to understatement are characteristic features of saga literature.

⁵⁶ ALLEN / CALDER 1976, p. 60.

through the use of the verb *suscito* («*suscitauit eum*» ‘awoke him’, 255.9) and the past participle «*expergefactus*» ‘awoken’ (*LIC*, 255.10)⁵⁷. In this perspective, it is also worth noting the concluding sentence of the episode. In the source, God’s role is openly stated: «[...] *dedit Deus in illa die uictoriam regi Constantino per uirtutem crucis*» ‘[...] on that day God granted King Constantine victory through the power of the Cross’ (*LIC*, 256.17-18)⁵⁸, but in the revised version, the triangle established between God, the earthly ruler, and the Cross is transformed into a privileged relationship between Constantine, who becomes the subject of the sentence, and the Cross: «*Inn keisari vá ágætan sigr í krapti ins helga kross*» ‘The Emperor gained a glorious victory through the power of the Cross’ (*NIC*, 303.16)⁵⁹.

These adaptations concerning Constantine are intertwined with those involving his mother Helena. In the *NIC*, the description of her religious progress is strongly abridged compared with the corresponding Latin narrative, where it is recounted in detail⁶⁰, and which ends with a brief reference to the successful outcome of her search («*Inuenit autem illud hoc*

⁵⁷ Similarly, the redactor transforms the abstract reference to the cross «*ex lumine claro constitutum*» ‘fashioned out of pure light’ (*LIC*, 255.11-12) by using a simile familiar to his audience: ‘as bright as fire’ («*svá bjart sem elldr væri*», *NIC*, 303.10-11). The redactor also omits the expression «*super de astris*» (*LIC*, 255.12), referring to the place of the inscription in the highest part of the firmament.

⁵⁸ ALLEN / CALDER 1976, p. 60.

⁵⁹ The episodes of the battle and of Constantine’s vision handed down in ms 764 differ from the version in 238 both in content and wording. The former establishes a clear-cut opposition between the Christian Constantine and his enemies, who are repeatedly labelled as heathens (SVANHILDUR ÓSKARSDÓTTIR 2000: 21v, rr. 17-25, p. 298).

⁶⁰ See *LIC*, 257.34-258.40: «*Gratia autem Spiritus sancti requieuit in beatissimam Helenam matrem Constantini imperatoris. Haec autem in omnibus scripturis se exercebatur et nimiam in domino Iesu Christo possedit dilectionem. Postmodum et salutare crucis lignum exquisiuit. Cum legisset autem intente aduentum humanitatis saluatoris nostri Iesu Christi et crucis eius assumptionem et a mortuis resurrectionem, non est se passa, donec et uictorem Christi inueniret lignum, ubi dominicum et sanctum confixum est corpus*» ‘The grace of the Holy Spirit rested on the most blessed Helena, the mother of the emperor Constantine. She practiced herself in all the Scriptures and possessed great love for the Lord Jesus Christ. Soon she also began to search for the salvific wood of the Cross. When she had attentively read about the advent in human nature of our saviour Christ, his assumption of the Cross and his resurrection from the dead, she did not rest until she had found the victorious wood of Christ, to which the holy body of the Lord had been nailed’.

modo» ‘And this is how she found it [the Cross]’, *LIC*, 258.40-41). The Norse redactor condenses the Latin passage into one sentence: «Helena drótning hafði með sér gípt heilags anda ok lagði allan hug til ástar ok elsku við almátkan guð» ‘Queen Helena treasured in her heart the gift of the Holy Ghost, and felt deep and heartfelt love for the almighty God’ (*NIC*, 303.22-24). From a narratological point of view, it is worth noting that the Norse redactor omits the proleptical note on the result of Helena’s search – which transforms the Latin narrative into a retrospective reconstruction of the events – and thus favours a plainer, chronological *ordo*.

4. THE JEWISH ISSUE IN THE *NIC*

In the central part of the *Inventio* narrative, a prominent role is assigned to the confrontation between Helena and the Jews, whose characterization in the *Cyriacus version* is affected by anti-Jewish stances, as compared to the less ideologically oriented original version of the legend. In fact, the aim of this essentially etiological narrative was originally to create a background that validated the authenticity of the relic of the True Cross and explained its sudden reappearance. The legitimation of Christianity accomplished by Constantine in the fourth century created a new religious and political scenario, which also affected the portrayal of the Jews when recounting their role in the Finding. In the first centuries of Christianity, pagan beliefs and cults were considered as the chief antagonists of the new religion; after Constantine’s decree, the focus of hostility gradually shifted towards Judaism. Several factors were involved in this process: the differences between Judaism and Christianity had not yet been clearly established⁶¹, and at this stage Judaism was still able to attract new converts from the ranks of the Christians. These elements progressively brought Ambrose, John Chrysostome, and also Augustine⁶² to violently attack the Jews and their religion, giving rise to those ideas which would then nourish the

⁶¹ BERGEHAMMAR 1991, pp. 162-164. On the complex confrontation of Christianity with its Jewish foundation, see LINDER 1976, pp. 1030-1031.

⁶² LADNER (1971, pp. 355-363) gives a detailed analysis of the characteristics and the anti-Jewish arguments advanced by Ambrose, John Chrysostom, and, less fiercely, by Augustine.

anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic stereotypes that abounded in the Middle Ages⁶³. As a consequence of this hostile climate, the legal protection initially granted to Jews gradually weakened, and they came under persecution. The *Inventio* legend played an important role in this process: the focus of the accusations against the Jews was their rejection of Christ as the Messiah and their denial of the deicide; their stubborn refusal to admit their knowledge of where the Cross had been buried, once the Cross had been recovered, was seen as the very evidence of their guilt and spiritual blindness, and the relic became the symbol of the victory of Christianity over Judaism⁶⁴.

The characterization of the Jews in the *NIC* appears markedly different from their portrayal in the Latin source, and in the vernacular renderings of the *Cyriacus version* of the Finding, since the Norse translation offers a less biased description of their behaviour and role in the events. Indeed, in the latter version, the textual clues that result in a more neutral characterization of the Jews are numerous and consistent. The redactor mainly operates by omitting single phrases and longer passages, especially in the *disputationes* between Helena and the Jews. Her allegations are developed in a verbal contest made up of three stages and of a final disputation between Helena and Judas. In the first heated dialogue between the Queen and the wisemen, the redactor leaves out the adjective *impiissima* 'extremely impious' (*LIC*, 258.44) referred to the *gens* of the Jews (*NIC*, 303.25-28), and the intentionality of this alteration is confirmed by the later excision of *stulti*, which also refers to the Jews⁶⁵. The redactor further intervenes by excising some biblical quotations and passages that concern doctrinal issues. To begin with, when Helena juxtaposes God's redeeming sacrifice of his Son for the Jews' sake with their blind rejection of Him, the redactor omits the specific reference to the injury caused when they spat on Christ – «[...]

⁶³ The issue of the Jews' guilt and of their responsibility in the death of Christ was at the core of many complex theological debates, centred, on the one hand, on positions advocating the Jews' ignorance, and, on the other, on their conscious rejection of Christ as the Messiah. During the early Middle Ages, the deicide was seen in the light of Jewish ignorance, also on the basis of Augustine's writings, but, by the thirteenth century, the debate had become harsher and more insistent on the intentionality of the Jews' act. COHEN (1983, pp. 1-27) offers an in-depth analysis of the theological views concerning the Jews' culpability and their development throughout the Middle Ages.

⁶⁴ DRIJVERS 1992 [1989], pp. 184-188. See also LINDER 1976, pp. 1037-1039.

⁶⁵ See § 4.

eum qui sputo oculos uestros illuminauit immundis sputibus iniuriastis [...]» ‘[...] you insulted and spat on Him who illuminated your eyes with spittle [...]’ (*LIC*, 259.52-53) – and replaces it with a reference to his Passion: «[...] þann sem [...] sýndi yðr margar jarategnir af guði, at þeim hæddut þér ok þann pínduð þér sárliga til bana» ‘[...] You mocked the One who shew you many godly miracles and tortured Him sorely to death’ (*NIC*, 304.1-4). The redactor’s softened polemic intent towards the Jews is also apparent in his rendering of the paradox in which the Jews condemned Christ to death, despite the fact that He is the very One who is trying to redeem their people from death («[...] eum qui mortuos uestros uiuificauit in mortem tradidistis» ‘[...] you [the Jews] put to death Him who gave your dead ones life’, *LIC*, 259.53-54). In the corresponding rendering of the Latin passage, he only makes a generic reference to miracles performed during Christ’s earthly life (*NIC*, 304.1-4)

After Helena’s harsh words, the Jewish wisemen went away «cum timore» ‘in fear’, *LIC*, 259.58 (a specification absent from the *NIC*), and chose a thousand among them who were to face a second *confrontatio* with the Empress. In Helena’s speech, another meaningful simplification is apparent. In the source, this section begins with Helena’s defiant question regarding the Jews’ blindness in the face of the Messiah, in spite of the prophets’ foretellings – «Non enim intellexistis in sermonibus prophetarum, quemadmodum prophetauerunt de aduentu Christi?» ‘Have you not understood from the words of the prophets how they prophesied about the advent of Christ?’ (*LIC*, 259.62-63) – followed by the extended quotations of the biblical *loci* which, according to a typological interpretation of the Scriptures, were read as prophecies of Christ’s birth⁶⁶. In the *NIC*, the Queen’s question is turned into a plain statement, and her speech does not

⁶⁶ See *LIC*, 259.64-260.70: «Quia prior Moyses dixit quia: ‘Puer nascetur et mater eius uirum non cognoscat.’ Et iterum laudationum conscriptor Dauid: ‘Praeuidebam Dominum in conspectu meo semper, quoniam a dextris meis est, ut non commouear.’ Et Esaias de uobis dicit: ‘Filius genui et exaltaui, ipsi autem me exprobrauerunt. Cognouit bos possessorem suum et asinus praeseptum domini sui; Israel autem me ne cognouit et populus meus me non intellexit.’ Et omnis scriptura de ipso locuta est» ‘For Moses said previously, ‘A boy shall be born and his mother will not know a man.’ And again the hymn-writer David, ‘I have seen the Lord before my eyes always, because he is on my right that I may not stumble.’ And Isaiah says about you, ‘Sons have I brought forth and raised, but they have spurned me. The ox knew his owner and the ass the crib of his master, but Israel did

include quotations from the Scriptures: «Ek veit, hversu helgar ritningar hafa fyrirsagt Krist dróttin koma myndu í þenna heim, eða hversu feðr yðrir dulðusk við hann, þá er hann kom» ‘I know that the Holy Scriptures foretold that Christ the Lord would come into this world and that your forefathers concealed this fact when He came’ (*NIC*, 304.11-14). Furthermore, the mention of the «feðr yðrir» aims at emphasizing the time gap between the Jews involved in Christ’s death and those living centuries after this event, which contributes to mitigating the guilt of Helena’s addressees. In the second speech, the redactor does not retain the source’s insistence on blaming the Jews for *knowing* without *understanding*, and thereby for refusing to *believe*, which arises from the initial rhetorical question (*LIC*, 259.62-63) and from the final remark: «Ergo qui sciebatis legem errastis tunc» ‘Therefore, you [the Jews] who knew the Law went astray’ (*LIC*, 260.70-71).

This dichotomy recalls the Augustinian «quoniam quod legunt non intelligunt»⁶⁷, which states that the Jews understood the Old Testament’s words literally, not spiritually; neither did they believe nor did they wish to do so, as Helena’s third speech again emphasizes: «[...] qui patrum uestrorum caecitatem secuti estis, qui dicitis Iesum non esse filium Dei, qui legitis legem et prophetas et non intellegitis!» ‘You who follow the blindness of your fathers and say that Jesus is not the Son of God, who read the Law and the prophets and do not understand!’ (*LIC*, 260.78-79). The Norse translator certainly could not reproduce the subtle wordplay of the original (*legitis legem et... non intellegitis*), but the fact that he omits the blame altogether and avoids retaining the adjective *stulti* ‘foolish’ to describe the Jews (*LIC*, 260.77)⁶⁸ is perhaps evidence of a less polemical attitude: if the omission does not erase the allegation of blindness, it does reduce the intentionality behind the guilt, as Helena’s third speech also highlights: «Þér eruð af kyni Ísrael, at því sem bækr segja, ok hafit blindleik hjarta af feðrum yðrum; þér dylisk við son guðs, þann er spámenn ok lög bera vitne» ‘You are of the breed of Israel, as the books say, and your hearts are as blind as

not know me and my people did not understand me.’ [And all the Scriptures speak of him]’.

⁶⁷ See AUGUSTINE, *Tractatus adversus Judaeos* I, 2, *Patrologia Latina* 42, 51. On this theological point, see also LADNER 1971, pp. 360-362.

⁶⁸ See § 4.

those of your fathers. You reject the Son of God, witnessed by the prophets and by the Law' (*NIC*, 304.21-24). This approach also seems to be confirmed by the excision of the Jews' stubborn answer to Helena, which appears in the Latin: «Nos quidem legimus et intellegimus» 'No, we read and we understand!' (*LIC*, 260.80).

In the narrative section which follows, Judas tells his Jewish fellows the story of the hidden Cross, he is questioned by Helena and finally confesses; afterwards a miracle allows them to establish which of the three crosses is the one on which the Saviour was hung. In this part, it is possible to detect a further change that alters Helena's haughty attitude toward Judas the Jew, which is manifest throughout the passage in the source. In the Latin version, when Judas claims that there are no written records on the burial place of the Cross, Helena first remarks that «Quidem et paulo ante confessuses a te ipso, quia sunt gesta» 'And yet a short while ago you yourself admitted that there are records' (*LIC*, 264.133-134), and then she reminds him of the testimony offered by the Gospels («Habeo beatam uocem euangeliorum, in quo loco crucifixus est» 'I have the blessed voice of the Gospels of where he was crucified' (*LIC*, 264.135). In the Norse rendering, the exchange between the two is more factual and reduced to Judas's claim that «[...] þetta er ekki á bókum várum» '[...] this is not handed down in our books' (*NIC*, 306.23) and Helena's answer: «Hefi ek þær bœkr er þat segja, hvar Krístr var krossfestur [...]» 'I have the books which say where Christ was crucified [...]' (*NIC*, 306.23-24).

The less biased characterization of the Jews in the *NIC* does not appear to be unique in the Norse context. As regards *Alexanders saga*, the Norse rendering of Galterus de Castellione's *Alexandreis* by the Icelandic priest Brandr Jónsson, COLE notes that the translator has excised the episode concerning the Red Jews, probably 'on account of his philo-Semitic leanings'⁶⁹. This episode concerns a group of Jews confined in a remote region of the world by the Christianized King Alexander on the assumption that they represented a threat, since it was claimed that they could otherwise

⁶⁹ COLE 2013, p. 8. COLE (2013, pp. 6-7, 9) claims that Snorri's *Edda* is not exempt from anti-Jewish features, which he identifies in the treatment of characters such as Loki and Hǫðr. Furthermore, the 'Muspelssynir' quoted therein recall the stereotyped characterization of the Red Jews in the literary tradition regarding Alexander.

attack Christianity and thereby bring about an apocalyptic confrontation leading to the end of the world⁷⁰.

In the thirteenth century compilation known as *Gyðinga saga*, another work ascribed to Brandr Jónsson, ROTHLAUF points out that it does not contain any comments on or any moral evaluation of the Jews' actions as regards the Crucifixion⁷¹, but only deals with the event from a historical perspective⁷². Although one cannot ignore the historical nature of *Gyðinga saga*, which tells of the Jewish history from the accession of Antiochus Epiphanes (175 B.C.) to the Jewish rebellion in A.D. 66-70, its simply descriptive approach to the Crucifixion may be significant in the light of the fact that in ms AM 238 it is handed down together with a version of the *NIC*.

The Norse redactor's efforts not to emphasize or, indeed, even to mitigate, the polemical imprint of the Latin version accords with an attitude that was prevalent at the time in Northern Europe, where the doctrinal and social polemics concerning the Jews were not in the foreground as elsewhere on the Continent. To some extent, this attitude may also be dependent on, or have been influenced by, the personal leanings of the author, as in the case of Brandr Jónsson's omissions regarding the Jews in the two translations⁷³.

5. THE *INVENTIO* THROUGH NORDIC LENSES

On several occasions, the Norse redactor revises facts and behaviours in

⁷⁰ For a detailed analysis of the Red Jews motif, see GOW 1995.

⁷¹ RENNA (2007, pp. 141, 144) notes that in the influential collection of the *Golden Legend*, which goes back to a period of an intense anti-Jewish attitude, the approach toward the Jews and the commonplaces applied to them are characterized by «noticeable restraint» in the entries concerning the Cross.

⁷² ROTHLAUF (2009, p. 51), however, observes that the Norse renderings of hagiographic works often mirror the biased portrayal of the Jews as handed down by the Church. Several decades earlier, BERULFSEN (1958, pp. 125-126) had already labelled anti-Semitism as a phenomenon imported to Scandinavia through this literary tradition.

⁷³ The ascription of both *Alexanders saga* and *Gyðinga saga* to Brandr Jónsson has been questioned on a stylistic and linguistic basis (see WOLF 1988, pp. 372-374). In fact, after a close analysis of the differences in style between their respective sources and considering the different aims of the two translations, WOLF (1988, pp. 395-396) concludes that stylistic criteria are not appropriate to ascertain the identity of the translator.

accordance with the cultural framework of the local audience⁷⁴. Not only does he allay Constantine's fear at the beginning of the narrative⁷⁵, but he also avoids making any possible accusation of cowardice and lack of honour in the portrayal of the Jews: the passage which follows Helena's first speech lacks the reference to the Jews' feelings of fear after the Queen's reprimand⁷⁶, and Judas's account of the buried Cross ends with a denial of any possible charge of dishonour against the Jews⁷⁷. Furthermore, in Judas's prayer – uttered when he decides to cooperate with Helena – the canonical image of a God who sits and moves in the sky 'upon the chariot of the [flying] Cherubs' is turned into the warlike picture of a military leader who rules over his manifold angelic hosts: «[...] þú sitr yfir Cherubin ok Seraphin ok stjórnar öllum engla fylkjúm», *NIC*, 307.5). Lastly, the redactor omits to translate the reference to the infernal dragon who afflicts the fallen angels confined to the depths of Hell with his stench⁷⁸, as if to suggest that their punishment equals their banishment, along with their leader, after a defeat in battle: «Þú hratt villtum englum í helvítis djúp með höfðingja sínom, ok munu þeir þar kveljask at eilifu um allar aldir at boðorði þínu» 'You threw the rebellious angels with their chieftain into the depths of hell and there they will be tormented eternally, according to your command' (*NIC*, 307.6-8).

These examples of adaptations to a heroic code of values that would have appealed to a Norse audience go hand in hand with the limited references – compared with the *LIC* – to the supernatural aspects of Judaism and Christianity⁷⁹. Accordingly, the detailed description of God's and the cherubs' movements in the sky on a chariot («super currum», *LIC*, 265.150) has been excised from Judas's prayer, along with the role of the Seraphs as wardens of the Tree of life⁸⁰. The redactor may have chosen to omit these

⁷⁴ See § 2.

⁷⁵ See § 3.

⁷⁶ See § 4.

⁷⁷ See § 2.

⁷⁸ *LIC*, 266.157-158: «[...] et ipsi sunt sub fundo abyssi a draconum foetore cruciandi [...]» '[...] and these are under the bottom of the abyss to be tortured by the stench of dragons [...]'].

⁷⁹ This aspect has already been discussed in § 3.

⁸⁰ *LIC*, 265.149-156: «Deus, Deus, qui fecisti caelum et terram, qui palmo metisti caelum et pugno terram mensurasti, qui sedes super currum cherubin. Et ipsa sunt uolatilia in

references to avoid possible connections with the image of Þórr riding through the sky on a chariot and the guardian-figure of the bright god Heimdallr, warden of the Norse gods.

The omission of two explicit references to life after death in the *NIC* probably stems from the translator's general attitude of reducing references, wherever possible, to non-mundane and supernatural realities. Such an attitude was often detectable in Norse religious writings of the thirteenth century, such as the biblical compilation known as *Stjórn I*⁸¹. In the *NIC*, the case is exemplified when Judas recounts the story of the Cross to his fellows after the Crucifixion, and mentions that his father Simon – who, like his father, had recognized Jesus as the Messiah – had told him not to revile those who trusted in Christ's name if he wanted to enjoy eternal life («[...] habebis uitam aeternam», *LIC*, 263.112). In the Norse version, the corresponding reward is defined generically as a prosperous condition (on earth), referred to by the use of the verb *þrifask* (*NIC*, 305.30). The other case is when Helena questions Judas and tries, at first, to convince him to reveal the whereabouts of the hidden Cross if he wishes to continue to live in heaven and on earth («[...] uis in caelis et in terra uiuere [...]», *LIC*, 264.126). In the corresponding Norse passage, Helena only threatens Judas and makes no hint at any possible heavenly retribution: «Ef þú vill lifa [...]» (*NIC*, 306.15-16)⁸².

aeris cursibus, in lucem immensam, ubi humana natura transire non potest, quia tu es, qui fecisti ea ad ministerium tuum, sex animalia, quae habent senas alas; quattuor quidem ex ipsis quae uolant ministrantia et incessabili uoce dicentia: 'Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus,' Cherubin uocatur; duo autem ex ipsis posuisti in Paradiso custodire lignum lignum uitae, quae uocatur Seraphin» 'God, o God, who made heaven and earth, who measured out heaven with the span of your hand and earth in your fist, who sits upon the chariot of the Cherubs. These fly in aerial courses, in light unlimited, inaccessible to human nature. It is you who made them, to be your servants: six animals with six wings, four of whom fly serving you, and saying with incessant voice, 'Holy, holy, holy,' called Cherubim, and two of whom, you placed in Paradise to guard the Tree of Life, who are called Seraphim'.

⁸¹ ASTÅS 1991, pp. 142, 147.

⁸² It may be worth noticing, in Judas's account, that the theologically dense exhortation Zaccheus makes to his son Simon '[...] to get to know his [Christ's] unutterable name [...]' («[...] cognosce eius inenarrabile nomen [...]», *LIC*, 261. 96) is rendered in Norse in more tangible terms: «Trúe þú því, sonr, at mikill kraptr fylgir nafni hans» 'My son, believe that great might follows His name' (*NIC*, 305.13-14).

6. LEXICAL, MORPHOSYNTACTIC AND STYLISTIC FEATURES

The morphosyntactic fabric and the style of *NIC* show a process of ‘domestication’ that is ongoing. The redactor does not leave any Latin quotations untranslated in his text; he omits the incipit of Judas’s prayer, where an enigmatic Hebrew formula occurs. For the same reason, he also leaves out references to political institutions unfamiliar to his audience, and only retains those foreign proper names and appellations which are necessary for the story. Thus, in Judas’s account, the name of his grandfather Zaccheus is left out, as well as the technical binomials «seniores et pontifices» ‘the elders and the priests’ (*LIC*, 262.98) and «Farisaei» and «Sadducaeii» ‘Pharisees’ and ‘Sadducees’ (*LIC*, 262.102) are rendered generically as «höfðingjar (Gyðinga)» ‘chieftains (of the Jews)’ (*NIC*, 305.15), and «Gyðingar» ‘the Jews’ (*NIC*, 305.20). When the redactor deals with the conversion of Saul, he defines the would-be apostle as a «húsasmiðr» ‘house-wright’ (*NIC*, 305.25), which is a more familiar job than that of a tent-maker⁸³. Moreover, in the passage specifying the depth of the hole dug to place the Cross, the redactor transforms the Latin measuring unit «passos XX» ‘twenty paces’ (*LIC*, 267.175) into its Norse equivalent, that is, «(um) tíu faðma» ‘ten fathoms’ (*NIC*, 307.24-25).

Foreign proper names are mostly borrowed and retain their endings when the endings agree with the morphological role they play in the new context⁸⁴, but they are assigned a different Latin case-ending if the Norse context requires it. Thus, for instance, in the rendering of the sentence «[...] concitavit populum aduersus fratrem tuum Stephanum [...]» ‘[...] [Saulus] roused the people against your brother Stephen [...]’, *LIC*, 262.108-109), the Latin accusative *Stephanum* is replaced in the *NIC* by the genitive *Stephani* («[...] hann var einn ákafazstr at banorði Stephani» ‘[...] he [Saul]

⁸³ See *LIC*, 262.106-107: «[...] ante templum sedebat et exercebatur artem scinorafiam [...]» ‘[...] [Saulus] sat before the Temple and practiced the art of tent-sewing [...]’.

⁸⁴ There are examples of Latin proper names declined in the nominative, genitive, accusative, and dative. Only in one case does the redactor add a Norse ending to a proper name (f., dat. sing), namely *-u*, in the account concerning the recovery of the three crosses which were carried to Jerusalem («[...] inuenit tres cruces absconditas, quas eiciens attulit in ciuitatem» ‘[...] [Judas] found three Crosses hidden, which he took out and brought into the city’, *LIC*, 267.175-176), the Norse redactor specifies that they were taken to Helena: «[...] váru bornir at Elenu» (*NIC*, 307.26).

was the fiercest promoter of Stephen's death [...], *NIC*, 305.25-26)⁸⁵. The same procedure is applied when the translator explicitly mentions the nouns expressed in the Latin version by pronouns, and when proper names are inserted *ex novo*⁸⁶; therefore, in the translation of the passage where the council of Pharisees and Sadducees decide to condemn *eum* (= Stephen) to death («[...] consilio facto Farisaei cum Sadducaeis condemnauerunt eum [...]», *LIC*, 262.102-103), his name is clearly expressed: «fyrir þat létu Gyðingar Stephanum berja grjóti» 'thence, the Jews had Stephen stoned' (*NIC*, 305.20-21).

Christ is the only proper name which, as a rule, is handled as a Norse name (nom. *Kristr*, gen. *Krists*)⁸⁷. The names 'Romans' and 'Jews', and related place-names, are consistently rendered by Old Norse formations («Rómverjar», «Rómaborg» and «Gyðingar», «Jórsalaborg», respectively), and only once does the compiler refer to the Jews and their language with the loanwords: «ebreskra manna» ('of the Hebrew men', *NIC*, 305.8) and «á ebreska tungu» 'in Hebrew', *NIC*, 307.3).

Apart from proper names, only a few Latin loanwords occur in the *NIC*.

⁸⁵ Other quotations may support the cited example, and one of them concerns a place-name. In Helena's allusion to the Trojan War, the Latin reference is simplified («[...] ante tantis generationibus in Ilio et Troade factum est bellum [...]» '[...] the war in Ilium and Troy occurred so many generations ago [...]», *LIC*, 264.129-130) and translated as: «fyrir myklo lengra var orrosta í Troia [...]» 'a long time ago occurred the war in Troy [...]' (*NIC*, 306.19-20). In Judas's invocation to God, the noun phrase in which the Latin accusative *Moysen* occurs («[...] exaudisti famulum tuum Moysen [...]» '[...] you heard your servant Moses [...]», *LIC*, 266.162) is slightly altered through amplification, and the name takes the ending of the Latin genitive: «[...] þú [...] heyrðær bæn Moysi vinar þíns [...]» '[...] You heard the prayer of Moses, your follower [...]» (*NIC*, 307.12-13). One further instance is to be found in the devil's lament over the recovery of the Cross and the spiritual implication of the event: the instrumental *per Iudam* («Nonne prius per Iudam ego traditionem perfecti et populum concitavi impie agere?» 'Didn't I previously arrange the betrayal by Judas, and incite the people to act impiously?', *LIC*, 268.188-189) is transformed into the nominative *Iudas* («þat var fyrr er Judas veitti mér lið at því, sem (ek) vilda fram koma [...]» 'Once Judas helped me to attain what I aimed at [...]» (*NIC*, 308.9-10).

⁸⁶ In rendering Judas's reaction at the identification of the True Cross («Iudas autem gaudio repletus dixit [...]» 'filled with joy Judas said [...]', *LIC*, 267.180), the translator supplies the name of the addressee: «þá varð Judas feginn ok mællti við Elenam [...]» 'Judas rejoiced and told Helena [...]' (*NIC*, 307.30-308.1).

⁸⁷ POLI (1988, pp. 442-444, 447-448) mentions this feature in his analysis of the anthroponyms in *Matheus saga postola*.

Two of these are time indications: where the Latin version has the date '28th of the second month' («XX et VIII die secundi mensis», *LIC*, 258.42), the Norse one only specifies that the month was «Aprilis»⁸⁸; the Latin «circa horam nonam» (*LIC*, 267.179) becomes «at none dags» 'about the ninth hour' (*NIC*, 307.29)⁸⁹. Furthermore, the redactor also makes use of the two common loanwords «keisari» 'emperor' and «keisaradómr» 'empire', and a few others pertaining to the Christian religion: «kross» and its derivatives, «kirkja», «engill», «Cherubim», «Seraphin», «kristinmaðr», «páfi», «postuli»⁹⁰.

On the level of syntax and style, one can note that the *NIC*⁹¹ tends to avoid the use of heavily Latinate structures, which may be detected in some contemporary translations characterized by the so-called *learned style*⁹²; the ablative absolute constructions of the original are either omitted or rendered through temporal or causal subordinate clauses⁹³. Furthermore,

⁸⁸ See § 3. At an early stage, March came to be considered as the first month of the ecclesiastical year, on the basis of the biblical prescription concerning the date on which Easter should be celebrated, that is, on the fourteenth day of the first month of the year, according to the Jewish priestly calendar (EVENEPOEL 1988, pp. 601, 607-610).

⁸⁹ In the redaction in AM 238 XI fol, the river-name Danube is used with a Latin preposition (*ad Danubium*, *NIC*, 303.4). In AM 233 a fol, the phrase *til Dúnar* occurs (*NIC*, 303.32-33).

⁹⁰ In referring to the disciples, on one occasion the translator uses the calque *larisveinn* 'lore-swain, disciple' (*NIC*, 305.18).

⁹¹ The first detailed study of the *learned style* is by NYGAARD (1896). The limits of his analysis have been highlighted by JÓNAS KRISTJÁNSSON (1981).

⁹² The features and structures characteristic of the 'learned style' are usually absent from works translated during the first phase of the process of translation in the North which mainly interested lives of saints and homilies and were rendered in the so-called *popular style*. WOLF (1988, p. 386) points out that this kind of construction is partly attested in renderings such as *Alexanders saga* and *Gyðinga saga*, quoted in relationship with the *NIC*.

⁹³ Several examples of the redactor's strategies can be detected by comparing the syntax of his rendering with that of his source. See, for instance, *LIC*, 259.58-61: «Qui recedentes cum timore, et multam quaestionem inter semetipsos facientes, inuenerunt qui dicebant se scire legem, uiros numero mille. Et adducentes eos ad beatam Helenam statuerunt, testimonium perhibentes eos legis scientiam multam habere» 'Withdrawing in fear and with much questioning among each other, they found one thousand men who claimed to know the Law; and bringing them to the blessed Helena they put them before her, testifying that they were well versed in the Law'. Its Norse rendering is as follows: «Þá tóku Gyðingar at bera saman ráð sin ok leita at þeim mǫnnum, sem froðir vǫru ok lög kunnu vel, ok vǫlðu þúsund þeira manna, sem margvisaztir vǫru, ok leiddu þá fyrir Elenam» 'Then the Jews

the redactor considerably simplifies the complex periods of his source by adopting a paratactic syntax which exploits asyndetic coordination or the common coordinator *ok*⁹⁴. He also avoids the use of present participles, a common feature of Latin and Latinate syntax⁹⁵.

A clear difference in style from the rest of the translation is apparent in the interpolated introduction, in which the presentation of new characters and the explanation of their relationships follow the typical saga procedure and phraseology. This is something that could be expected seeing that it is a compilation rather than a translation of a single Latin source:

Galerius átti dóttur Diocletiani, er Valeria hét, Konstantius átti stjúp dóttur Maximiani, er Theodora hét, ok átti hann með henne 6 sonu. Eptir Diocletianum tók Maximus son hans keisaradóm, en eptir Maximianum Maxentius son hans. Þeir váru báðir blótmenn miklir ok illir við kristna men (302.9-14)

Galerius married Diocletian's daughter, called Valeria, whereas Constantius married Maximian's stepdaughter, called Theodora, and had six sons with her. After Diocletian, his son Maximus took power and after Maximian, his son Maxentius. Both of them were great and evil pagans against the Christians.

This characterization is also used later on where Saul is introduced in the narration: «Saulus hét gyðingr, hann var húsasmiðr ok óvínr mikill Krists nafne, hann var einn ákafazstr at banorði Stephani [...]» 'There was a Jew, called Saul, who was a house-wright and a great enemy of Christ's

made counsel among themselves and sought those men who were wise and knew the Law well. And they chose one thousand among the wisest and led them to Helena' (*NIC*, 304.7-10). For further examples, see the translations of *LIC* 255.7-8 (= *NIC*, 303.6-7), *LIC* 256.13-14 (= *NIC*, 303.12-13), *LIC*, 260.74-75 (= *NIC*, 304.18-20), and of *LIC* 262.102-105 (= *NIC*, 305.20-22).

⁹⁴ In the paratactically coordinated sentences, the conjunction *ok* 'and' is almost always followed by the finite verb (FAARLUND 2004, p. 231).

⁹⁵ There are only four occurrences of present participles and they are not matched in the source. One of them is used in the adverbial phrase «með sannendum» 'forsooth' (*NIC*, 304.11); the second, in the temporal phrase «á deygjanda degi» 'on the day of his death' (*NIC*, 305.5), which is a formulaic expression (see BOSWORTH / TOLLER, s.v. *deyja* 'to die'). The locative phrase 'in the burning fire' (*NIC*, 306.9), which is also formulaic, is used in the passage in which Helena threatens to punish the Jews because of their unwillingness to answer her questions. This formula occurs both in poetry and in prose (see, for instance, *Hervárarkviða*, 22; HEUSLER / RANISCH 1903, p. 19; *Völsunga saga*, ch. 29; FINCH 1965, p. 48). The fourth occurrence concerns Christ, defined as «sonr Guðs lifanda» 'the Son of the living God' (*NIC*, 305.10-11).

name. He was one of the most eager for Stephen's death [...] (NIC, 305.24-26).

The factual saga narrative is mirrored in the concise rendering of the complex descriptions of events which occur in the source; for example, in the *Inventio* the onset of the attack and its climax are recounted through a series of verbs whose subject is Constantine (and his army): «surgens», «impetum fecit», «superueniens» and «coepit concidere [barbaros]» (LIC, 256.14-16). This elaborate, insistent description is rendered in the Norse version with the set phrase: «Þá varð orrosta mikil» 'A great battle arose' (NIC, 303.14).

The introductory chapter shows a dense use of doublets, typical of Norse prose narrative. The political association between the *augusti* (Diocletian and Maximianus Hercules) and the *caesars* (Galerius and Constantius) is referred to, respectively, as «til samveldis ok í keisaradóm» 'to jointly rule and govern'⁹⁶ and «veldi ok konungdóm» 'power and kingdom'⁹⁷. The successors of Diocletian and Maximian, Maximus and Maxentius, are defined as «blótmenn miklir ok íllir» 'great and malicious pagans' (NIC, 302.13), and the reign of Maxentius as «íllsku ok grimleik» 'malicious and fierce' (NIC, 302. 8). A balanced expression is also used to describe Constantine's leprosy («íllri ok leiðiligri» 'evil and loathsome', NIC, 302.33), whereas a positive pair of adjectives is applied to Helena, as the fairest and finest among women («allra kvenna vænst ok beszt», NIC, 302.24).

Not surprisingly, the number of doublets decreases in the rest of the NIC; however, the few instances which do occur therein are lacking in Latin equivalents: Helena's religious zeal («nimiam [in domino Iesu Christo possedit] dilectionem», LIC, 257.36) is rendered through the coupled nouns «ást ok elska» 'love and affection' (NIC, 303.23). The pit into which Judas is confined is characterized as dried-up («siccum») in the Latin version (LIC, 265.140), and as deep and dry («djúpa ok þurra») in Old Norse (NIC, 306.30-31). Finally, in Judas's prayer, the redactor expands the Latin

⁹⁶ See NIC, 302.4-5: «Tók hann þann mann til samveldis ok í keisaradóm með sér, er hét Maximianus Hercules» 'Therefore, he [Diocletian] chose the man called Maximianus Hercules to jointly rule and govern'.

⁹⁷ See NIC, 302.8-9: «Þeir gáfu veldi ok konungdóm þeim monnum, er annarr hét Galerius en annarr Konstantius» 'They [Diocletian and Maximian] gave power and reign to two men, called Galerius and Constantius'.

clause (*LIC*, 265.150) «[...] qui sedes super [currum cherubin]», which refers to God's dominion, through the two verbs «sitja yfir» 'to rule' and «stjórna» 'to govern' (*NIC*, 307.5)⁹⁸.

Apart from these examples of mostly synonymic binomials, the prose in the *NIC* is basically unadorned, and the translator's interventions in adapting the Latin respond to his chief aim of producing a clear, straightforward rendering that mainly relies on the use of a simple and conventional imagery⁹⁹.

CONCLUSION

In spite of the many uncertainties concerning the manuscript tradition of the *NIC*, the lack of the final part of the translation, and the impossibility of determining the precise exemplar on which the translation was actually based, the scrutiny of the *NIC* compared to the version of the *LIC* preserved in BHL 4169 has yielded some interesting results. The final product is a rather faithful, but not slavish rendering: condensations and excisions, and subsequent adaptations, concoct a factual and 'objective' narrative, in accordance with the saga-style that would have been familiar to the audience. Moreover, where the narrative permits, the redactor seizes the opportunity to make the events and the characters conform to native patterns of representation; to some extent, this process goes hand in hand with a reduction of the miraculous aspects of the Christian legend and with the excision of those motifs which could have triggered associations with pagan mythology.

What appears less predictable in the light of the subject of the Legend is the redactor's handling of the portrayal of the Jews: despite their negative role in Christ's death and in contrasting and misleading Helena's quest, inherent to the 'Cyriacus version' of the *Inventio*, he eliminates some of the spiteful insults and accusations against them and reduces the theological discussion involving the intentionality of their guilt. These interventions, complemented by the others analysed above, result in a more dispassionate

⁹⁸ See § 5.

⁹⁹ A prime example of this is when the redactor adds a simile comparing the Cross to the splendour of fire to emphasize its luminosity: *svá bjart sem elldr væri* (*NIC*, 303.10-11); see n. 57.

and detached account of the role played by the Jews in the Finding. We can sum up our understanding of the redactor's intentions and achievement in adapting the *Inventio* narrative for his Norse audience by borrowing the Pauline declaration of intent: what matters is not to be convincing with persuasive (and polemic) words, but with an account of God's power on which man's faith shall rest¹⁰⁰.

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¹⁰⁰ I Cor 2. 4-5: «[...] praedicatio mea non in persuasibilibus sapientiae verbis sed in ostensione Spiritus et virtutis, ut fides vestra non sit in sapientia hominum sed in virtute Dei». I should like to thank Professor Maria Elena Ruggerini for having read previous drafts of the article and for her knowledgeable advice.

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