"A MATTER FOR THE HISTORY OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT":

On C. A. Klotz' assessment of Saxo Grammaticus' history of Denmark in his edition of 1771

By Karen Skovgaard-Petersen

After its first appearance in print in 1514, Saxo Grammaticus' medieval history of Denmark enjoyed a considerable reputation for its elegant Latin in the emergent European republic of learning. In the following centuries it was published again several times, the most important edition being that of Stephanius in 1644-1645. In 1771 a new edition appeared, published by C. A. Klotz in Leipzig. The paper discusses Klotz' general assessment of Saxo arguing that Klotz is at one and the same time a late representative of the European republic of learning and an exponent of Enlightenment ideas.

In the early modern reception of Saxo Grammaticus' history of Denmark, two editions are of special importance. Christiern Pedersen's *editio princeps* printed in Paris in 1514 essentially secured the survival of the text. Once printed, Saxo's history not only had a profound influence on Danish historical writing, and indeed on Danish identity, it also gained a place in the canon of European historiography. The next seminal event in the history of Saxo scholarship was the edition of Stephanus Johs. Stephanius, Sorø 1644–1645, which presented a thoroughly revised text accompanied by a comprehensive introduction and a full-scale commentary.

Almost the same span of years separates Stephanius' edition from its successor, the edition of the German Christian Adolf Klotz, published in Leipzig 1771. Unlike its predecessor, however, it does not hold a prominent place in the textual history of Saxo; it is, as Karsten Friis-Jensen notes, "chiefly a reprint of Stephanius' edition."[1] In his recent survey of editions of Saxo in *Dansk Editionshistorie*, Christian Troelsgaard has paid some attention to it. With its unassuming appearance and its neo-classical orthography this is, he sums up, the Enlightenment Saxo. This is in itself an

[1] Saxo, ed. Friis-Jensen 2015, lxii.

apt characterization.[2] In the present article I shall supplement Troelsgaard's observations by considering Klotz' assessment of Saxo's history and the values underlying it. Klotz is, I believe, at one and the same time influenced by contemporary Enlightenment ideals and a late representative of the European learned republic.

Christian Adolf Klotz

But first let me give a brief presentation of the editor, Christian Adolf Klotz, himself.[3] In the course of his short life – he died only 33 years old – he emerged as an energetic literary critic and student of Greek and Roman literature and antiquities. Born in Saxony in 1738, he studied in Leipzig 1758–1760, moved to Jena in 1761 and then became professor in Göttingen in 1762, but soon – after various clashes with colleagues – accepted an offer from Halle to become professor of rhetoric and philosophy there in 1765.

He published an overwhelming amount of writings, primarily on Greek and Roman literature and Greco-Roman numismatics. He was editor of several literary journals and involved himself in both satirical attacks on contemporary academic life and personal polemics. Nevertheless, young as he was, by the mid-1760s he enjoyed a notable reputation as a singularly gifted judge of literary taste. But soon things turned. From both G. E. Lessing (1729–1781) and J. G. Herder (1744–1803) he now encountered harsh criticism for his alleged superficial approach and unoriginal judgements.

At his death on 31 December 1771 Klotz' star had fallen considerably, but he seems to have preserved a certain reputation after his death. Two biographies were published in 1772, and 11 years later followed a collection of letters written to him by German scholars.[4] An enthusiastic review of Klotz' edition of Saxo (largely summarizing Klotz' own introduction), which was published at the time of his death in *Nova acta eruditorum*, likewise bears witness to continued recognition.[5]

One of the biographies was written by Karl Renatus Hausen (1740–1805), whose acquaintance with Klotz seems to go back to the late 1750s when they both studied in Leipzig. Hausen, like Klotz, became professor in Halle in 1765 but left Halle again the following year. The biography bears witness to a close friendship between the two, and Hausen seems to strive to give a balanced description of Klotz' strengths and weaknesses. Regretting that Klotz' polemic temper kept him from more useful academic undertakings, he

[2] Troelsgaard 2021, 797–848. On Klotz, ibid., 824–825.
[3] Bursian 1882, 228–231.
[4] Hausen 1772; Mangelsdorf 1772; Hagen 1783.
[5] Bel 1771, 64–75.

finds occasion to refer to the edition of Saxo as one his valuable accomplishments:

> Alle diese Critiken, Streitigkeiten und Angriffe raubten ihm von viel edlern und nützlichern Beschäftigungen sehr wenige Zeit. Er gab die kleinen Schriften einiger würdigen Gelehrten heraus, des Bachs, Crusius, Bayers; begleitete die Schriften verdienter Männer mit Vorreden; beschäftigte sich mit einer sehr brauchbaren Ausgabe des Saxo Grammaticus; verbesserte seine numismatischen Schriften, und besorgte eine neue Ausgabe derselben, die er auch noch kurz vor seinem Tode vollendet hat (p. 48–49).

This is Hausen's only reference to the Saxo edition. But he draws attention to several features of Klotz' academic mindset which are also evident in the Saxo edition, first and foremost his lively and sharp style marked by distinct judgements and his ability to quickly grasp a new subject.

A similar picture emerges from the other biography, written by a student of Klotz' in Halle, Karl Ehregott Mangelsdorf (1748-1802). Though enthusiastically celebrating Klotz' academic merits – and generally taking Klotz' part in the numerous disputes in which he involved himself – Mangelsdorf is not blind to his weaknesses, among them his irascibility.[6] The edition of Saxo is to Mangelsdorf an astonishing illustration of Klotz' versatile intellect. Schooled in classical literature as he was, he nevertheless conducted a many-sided and discerning discussion of Saxo's Danish history in his substantial introduction.[7]

In later German intellectual history Klotz' reputation seems to have been determined by the attacks of his more prominent opponents, Herder and Lessing. Indeed, Herman Jaumann in a recent short biography (2004) claims that Klotz fell victim to a regrettable tendency to accept the canonized. Be that as it may, the result is, as pointed out by Jaumann, that none of Klotz' many works have been object of closer study.

The dedicatory letter to Christian VII.

Klotz dedicated his edition of Saxo to the Danish king, Christian VII (*r*. 1766-1808). In this he followed convention since it had been common practice since the sixteenth century to dedicate monumental works of national history – and an edition of Saxo certainly belongs to this category – to the ruling king.

[6] Bursian describes Klotz' talents in this way: "die Fähigkeit, sich auf verschiedenen Gebieten ohne tief eindringende Forschung zu orientiren, die Gabe lebhafter und witziger Darstellung in lateinischer wie in deutscher Sprache und die in jener Zeit der „schönen Geister" besonders ansprechende ästhetisirende Behandlungsweise des klassischen Alterthums …".

[7] Mangelsdorf 1772, 76–77.

It may be, as suggested by Christian Troelsgaard, that Klotz wanted to pave the way for an academic position in Denmark, but that must remain a speculation. What we do know with a high degree of certainty is that the king rewarded Klotz with a gold medal.[8]

Klotz' dedicatory letter is, however, noteworthy for another reason. It celebrates in enthusiastic terms Christian VII's recent and spectacular abolition of censorship. This pioneering act, granting unrestricted freedom of the press by a cabinet order of September 1770, was in effect the work of the German J. P. Struensee (1737–1772), doctor to the king and de facto ruler of Denmark for a brief and turbulent period until his downfall and execution in January 1772. In Copenhagen the sudden abolition of censorship gave rise to a massive amount of pamphlets, a day to day debate on a wide variety of topics.[9] From France Voltaire (1694–1778) famously celebrated the Danish freedom of press in a letter to Christian VII, and Klotz' dedication is yet another indication of the attention Struensee's initiative attracted also abroad.

In his dedicatory letter Klotz, praising the king's wisdom in abolishing censorship, articulates the widespread Enlightenment position among intellectuals of his day, that the securing of freedom of press is a beneficial act to mankind as a whole:

> You realized that writers who wish to benefit the human race through their writings, should not have to depend on other people's will. You did not want freedom of thought and writing to be subjected to the authority of any mortal […] Hail again, your Majesty, who has served mankind so excellently.[10]

Rising above the barbarism of his own age

Klotz accompanied his edition with a substantial introduction to Saxo's history, entitled – like his predecessor Stephanius' introduction to his edition – *Prolegomena*. It is Klotz' ambition, he explains (p. 3), to cover Saxo's life and writings based on the rich scholarly literature on Saxo, throughout adding his own judgements.

In the following discussion of Klotz' *Prolegomena* I shall not go into his many – and impressively learned – discussions of various topics of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Saxo scholarship, such as Saxo's sources

[8] Bel 1771, 74.

[9] This fascinating material has recently been subjected to thorough investigation in Horstbøll, Langen & Stjernfelt 2020.

[10] "Non ex aliorum voluntate, qui scriptis suis prodesse velint humano generi, rem agere debere censuisti; libertatemque cogitandi scribendique nullius mortalis arbitrio subditam esse voluisti … Iterum salue, Rex de humano genere optime merite." (Klotz' dedicatory letter, Saxo 1771, unpag.). On discussions of censorship and freedom of press, see Tortarolo 2015 with further references. On the theme of mankind, see e.g. Bristow 2017.

to the older part of Danish history, his alleged Danish bias, and the fabulous and supernatural elements in the early part of his history. My focus will be on Klotz' general assessment of Saxo – and hence also on his motives for publishing a new edition – as well as his final treatment of Saxo's language and style. On this field, which is closely related to his overall evaluation, Klotz delivered his own contribution to Saxo scholarship.

From the outset (p. 1–3), Klotz makes clear that Saxo's history, oratorically brilliant as it is, ranks among the works of the best of the classical historians. It is characterized by Saxo's prudence, seriousness and wide knowledge, an excellent disposition, and a harmonious and transparent narrative.[11] The last part of this characteristic is borrowed from Quintilian's description of Livy's narrative qualities, thereby indirectly suggesting Saxo's equivalence with the Roman historian.[12]

However, what is particularly remarkable about Saxo, Klotz goes on, is the utter barbarism of the age in which he lived. Klotz goes to some length and uses strong and indignant words to describe the literary decay of the Middle Ages when "the worst and most depraved discourse prevailed" ("vitiosissimum corruptissimumque dicendi genus regnabat", p. 2). When we come across a text from that period which stands out for its liveliness, Klotz goes on, we must embrace it with the same admiration and joy as a star brightening up a pitch-dark heaven or a specimen of excellent virtue in a totally depraved society. Saxo's qualities, he insists, are truly immortal and place him among the very best historians, and it I no wonder, then, that learned men have discussed and commented upon Saxo in the same way that they have Livy, Thucydides, Sallust, and other classical historians unanimously praised for their elegance (*elegantia*) and prudence (*prudentia*).

Even in our depraved age, more prone to silliness and pleasure than to serious studies, Klotz reflects, Saxo's work will be well received. Klotz has no doubt of the importance of his endeavour:

> It is certainly a matter for the history of the human spirit to learn about this man who has so definitively distanced himself from the studies of his

[11] "Cuius posteaquam Historiam Danicam, tot verborum et sententiarum luminibus distinctam, attentius examinaui, optimorum historicorum numero locoque illum habendum esse, mihi persuasi. Quanta ille non solum prudentia et grauitate, sed etiam orationis elegantia res memoratu dignas explicuit! quae in eo antiquitatis cognitio! quae locorum hominumque scientia! Quam apta totius operis dispositio! In narrando vero miram illius iucunditatem clarissimumque candorem nemo est qui non animaduertat facile, et animaduersum amet laudetque." (Saxo, ed. Klotz 1771, *Prolegomena*, 1).

[12] "[…] nec indignetur sibi Herodotus aequari Titum Livium, cum in narrando mirae iucunditatis clarissimique candoris […]" (Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 10.1.101, my emphasis).

contemporaries and with the brilliance of his mind surpassed his own age,[13]

– he solemnly concludes this first part of his introduction.

In short, Saxo, being on a par with the great classical historian, belongs to the timeless elite of historians who have a place in the common history of mankind. In this context, Klotz displays no interest in the medieval, Nordic context of Saxo's text. On the contrary, he is aggressively negative towards medieval literature, and he sees it as a tribute to Saxo's genius that he was able to rise so high above his contemporaries.

Having thus established the immortal quality of Saxo's text Klotz adds the practical circumstance that it is difficult to find copies of the older editions – and hence how he sees it as a duty to the world to secure its availability. His own edition, he adds, commends itself for its *luculenta species*, its clear and trustworthy appearance.

A philological justification for a new edition

Soon after, however, it becomes clear that Klotz had yet another motive for publishing a new edition of Saxo. He found the edition of his immediate predecessor Stephanius inadequate in several respects.

After an overview of Saxo's biography (p. 3–15) he embarks on a discussion of the history itself (p. 15ff), beginning with the previous printed editions – Christiern Pedersen ed. 1514, Oporinus ed. 1534, Lonicerus ed. 1576, and Stephanius ed. 1644–1645 – devoting particular attention to the latter.

Stephanius, he notes, did not have any medieval manuscripts at his disposal, and hence he put the more effort into meticulous considerations of textual emendations. Again, Klotz cannot resist another jibe at pointless medieval learning: No wonder we have no medieval manuscripts of Saxo, since the hands of the fat monks were used to writing complex trifles, not useful books.[14]

But Klotz' central point is that Stephanius' editorial achievement does not live up to the high standards announced in his introduction. To be sure, Stephanius has conducted impressive and convincing textual emendations,

[13] "Pertinet certe ad historiam ingenii humani, illum virum cognouisse, adeo qui recesserit ab aequalium studiis, suamque aetatem ingenii praestantia superauerit." (Saxo, ed. Klotz 1771, *Prolegomena*, 2–3).

[14] "Nec mirum. Obesorum monarchorum manus difficilibus nugis, non libris vtilibus, scribendis adsuetae erant." Klotz here remarks on the intriguing but probably false claim by the philologist Caspar Barth (1587-1658) that he had been in possession of a manuscript version and two transcriptions of Saxo's text – but alas, they had burned. (Saxo, ed. Stephanius, 1644–1645 *Notæ uberiores*, *Prolegomena*, 8).

but too many errors have crept in, probably due to excessive haste. Klotz' judgement is merciless:

> This edition is marred by innumerable errors, and the signs by which the different parts of the discourse are separated, have been placed so poorly that the reader cannot figure out what Saxo wanted to say and gets tired from prolonged reading.[15]

Based on these grounds, Klotz has seen it as his own mission to present a better and more trustworthy text. His corrections are of two main types, he explains. Misplaced punctuation marks have been adjusted, and a number of emendations that Stephanius had suggested in his notes, have been noted as variants at the bottom of the page in question.

It is not the aim of the present paper to subject the validity of Klotz' statement to closer scrutiny. A few random tests suggest that Klotz in many cases has added commas around participle constructions which may be said, as he himself claims, to facilitate the reading. But apart from that Klotz seems to have reproduced Stephanius' text faithfully, and seen with modern eyes his sharp criticism seems exaggerated. Be that as it may, according to Klotz himself his new edition was justified by his allegedly innumerable corrections.

A change in scholarly communication

Klotz also finds faults with Stephanius' commentaries to Saxo's text, the *Notæ uberiores*. His criticism in this respect is of a more principled nature and reflects a broader change in scholarly communication.

Stephanius' edition of Saxo's text in 1644–1645 had marked a watershed in the scholarly history of Saxo. Accompanied by a thorough introduction and substantial commentaries to the text, it demonstrated not only Saxo's debt to classical authors but also the close relationship between his history and the Old Norse literature, offering in addition a multitude of antiquarian observations and philological discussions.

This broad approach is what Klotz finds problematic. Though Stephanius' commentary certainly deserves praise for its richness, it is in his eyes too wide-ranging and goes in too many directions, "embellished by a variety of digressions, seeking detours where either I myself get seriously lost or those people who are dominated by their love of antiquity, can rest peacefully," Klotz declares somewhat sarcastically, paraphrasing a passage from Livy's history where the historian declares his intention of not making unnecessarily

[15] "Nam scatet innumerabili errorum copia haec editio, eaque, quibus membra orationis distinguuntur, signa, tam vitiose posita apparent, vt saepe, quid Saxo dicere voluerit, nescias, diuque fatiges animum lectioni intentum" (Saxo, ed. Klotz 1771, *Prolegomena*, 18).

digressions.[16] Indeed, much in Stephanius' commentary is simply superfluous in Klotz' eyes: "Frankly, the reader who requires nothing more from the commentator than that he should briefly explain the difficult passages, may easily do without most of these notes."[17]

On the other hand, Klotz also recognizes the value of Stephanius' approach: If the reader goes to Stephanius' *Notæ uberiores* to sharpen his intellect and for the sake of refinement, rich awards in terms of manifold knowledge are in store. He will see that Stephanius' approach is very similar to those who have written brilliant commentaries to the texts of the old Greek and Roman writers. Indeed, Klotz declares, Stephanius may well be counted among the great heroes of learning such as Carl Andreas Duker, Caspar Barth, Isaac Casaubon and Justus Lipsius.[18]

This is indeed a precise description of Stephanius' ambition in the *Notæ uberiores*. He strove to present Saxo's text as a part of the common European literary heritage and did so by writing a commentary that closely resembled contemporary commentaries on classical authors. He entered into discussions on antiquarian, philological and even societal issues, raised by other members of the learned republic in their classical commentaries.[19]

Klotz, as we saw, shares this wish to demonstrate that Saxo belongs to the common history of humanity on a par with the admired writers of Antiquity, acknowledging that Stephanius' commentary may well be compared to classical commentaries of the most famous philological scholars of the 17th century.

Nevertheless, Klotz distances himself from the all-inclusive approach of the learned republic in Stephanius' day. His criticism of Stephanius' notes for being too broad, too encompassing, applies to the early modern commentary tradition in general. The early modern commentary was, as it has been

[16] "immensam illae [Stephanius' notes] praeferunt lectionis vim, variaeque doctrinae vberrimam copiam. Exspatiatur Stephanius non raro liberius, declinat a rerum ordine, atque varietatibus distinguendo opus diverticula quasi quaerit, vbi aut ego vehementer erro, aut, qui antiquitatis amore ducuntur, suauiter requiescunt." (Saxo, ed. Klotz 1771, *Prolegomena*, 19). Cf. Livy 9.17.1: "Nihil minus quaesitum a principio huius operis videri potest quam ut plus iusto ab rerum ordine declinarem varietatibusque distinguendo opere et legentibus velut deverticula amoena et requiem animo meo quaererem …" (my emphasis).

[17] "Profecto carere potest magna harum animaduersionum parte, qui nil aliud ab interprete postulat, quam vt is difficiliora loca paucis explicet." (Saxo, ed. Klotz 1771, *Prolegomena*, 19).

[18] "… neque alio modo in explicando Saxone versatum fuisse Stephanium videbit, quam qui veteres Graeciae et Romae auctores luculentis commentariis illustrauerunt. Equidem Stephanio inter Dukeros, Barthios Casaubonos, Lipsios locum dare nullus dubito." (Saxo, ed. Klotz 1771, *Prolegomena* p. 19).

[19] See Skovgaard-Petersen 2020.

formulated, "storehouses of learning."[20] The classical texts commented on served as point of departure for discussions of all sorts of topics precisely as in the case of Stephanius' *Notæ uberiores*.

To Klotz, writing in the second half of the eighteenth century, the classical commentary had lost this function. His view that a commentary ought only to explain difficult passages reflects the change that had taken place in scholarly communication in the eighteenth century. With the emergence of new genres and media of scholarly debate, notably the periodicals, commentaries on classical texts no longer functioned as vehicles for many-sided discussions.[21]

Interestingly, Klotz' sarcastic remark about Stephanius' boundlessness in the passage quoted above was reused 30 years later by Johann Wilhelm Raphael Fiorillo (1778–1816), philologist and librarian in Göttingen, in the preface to his edition of Herodes Atticus. Here Fiorillo, while expressing his admiration for the scholarship unfolded in a learned commentary of the seventeenth century – in this case by the French scholar Claude Saumaise (Salmasius, 1588-1653) – disapproves of its digressiveness using the same words as Klotz:

> Salmasius, in his great commentary, displayed an enormous abundance of many-sided learning. He often divagates rather far, and by embellishing his work by a variety of digressions he seeks detours where those people who are dominated by their love of antiquity, can rest peacefully.[22]

Whether Fiorillo took the wording from Klotz or they had a common source, the point is the same, that they distance themselves from the commentary tradition of the seventeenth century.

Klotz himself simply refrained from furnishing Saxo's text with commentaries on single words and passages. The text of his edition is accompanied only with an index of memorable things as well as a few foot notes presenting variant readings. His sole aim, he explains, is to offer a clear and trustworthy edition of Saxo's text – again he uses the adjective *luculentus* to describe his ambition – in order that everybody will be able to become acquainted with Saxo's elegance and eloquence so often praised by learned

[20] See Enenkel & Nellen 2013, especially the editors' introduction.

[21] The period after 1700 is briefly touched upon by Enenkel & Nellen 2013, 69f. There is a rich literature on the emergence of the periodical press and more generally of new channels for circulating knowledge, see e.g. Siskin & Warner 2010 and Burke 2000 & 2012.

[22] "Aliam viam inii in explicandis carminibus. Salmasius, in magno suo Commentario, immensam protulit variae eruditionis copiam; exspatiatur non raro liberius, atque varietatibus distinguendo opus, diverticula quasi quaerit, ubi, qui antiquitatis amore ducuntur, suaviter requiescant." Herodes Atticus 1801, vii. Cf. the quotation from Klotz in note 16 (my emphasis).

men.[23] We may take it that he regarded this purpose to be fulfilled without further commentaries on philological or antiquarian matters.

Saxo's linguistical and stylistic shortcomings

To Klotz, then, elegance and eloquence are the central qualities of Saxo's text. In order to understand the closer meaning of these concepts we must turn to the final part of his *Prolegomena* which Klotz has devoted to a detailed description of Saxo's Latin language and style (p. 47–63).

Saxo's Latin style had been praised by many scholars such as Erasmus (1466–1536), Johannes Ludovicus Vives (1493–1540) and Gerardus Vossius (1577–1649). But as Klotz observes, none of them had undertaken to explicate the reasons for their appreciation of Saxo's Latin.[24] This deficiency is what Klotz aims to remedy, and he now embarks on a discussion of diverse linguistical and stylistic aspects of Saxo's text.

Klotz' approach is strongly normative. He reveals himself as a rather narrow-minded classicist, and it now turns out that he does not find Saxo as unaffected by medieval depravity as his initial praise of the historian as a lonely star in the medieval darkness might suggest (p. 49–58).

His first complaint concerns Saxo's extensive use of Valerius Maximus and Martianus Capella. Indeed, Saxo, in Klotz' view, could hardly have chosen worse models – Valerius Maximus being uncultivated, plebeian and somewhat obscure, Martianus Capella barbarian and excessively pretentious. And though Saxo surpassed them both in elegance, there is no denying that they left their filthy traces in Saxo's prose.[25]

These were not the only writers to exercise their deplorable influence on Saxo, Klotz goes on, offering a list of "bad words" (*vitiose dicta*) in Saxo's text, "spots that deform a beautiful body,"[26] and even though many of them have the authority of late antiquity writers, they must still, in Klotz' eyes, be considered barbaric since they were unknown in ancient Latin.

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[23] "Nihil enim mihi aliud propositum fuit, quam luculentam Saxonis editionem adornare, quae copiam faceret omnibus cognoscendae, toties in illo laudatae a viris doctis, elegantiae et facundiae." (Saxo, ed. Klotz 1771, *Prolegomena* 18).

[24] "Praeclara omnino fuit horum virorum opinio de Latinitate Saxonis, licet subtilius opinionis suae causas explicare iidem debuissent." (Saxo, ed. Klotz 1771, *Prolegomena*, 48). Klotz is aware of the existence of a work whose title promises to deal with Saxo's Latin, Heinrich Hierild's dissertation *Saxo Grammaticus vindicatus sive dissertatio philologico-historico-critica de puritate linguae latinae et castitate historiae Danicae in Saxone contra Joh. Goropi Becanum, Boxhorni et alios*, 1702, but regrets that he has not been able to acquire it. The little book does take up stylistic questions, but only superficially.

[25] "Nam traxit inde oratio Saxonis sordes quasdam et maculas, quae aures oculosque nostros offendunt." (Saxo, ed. Klotz 1771, *Prolegomena*, 49).

[26] "deformant hae maculae pulchrum corpus" (Saxo, ed. Klotz 1771, *Prolegomena*, 51).

Also syntactically Saxo sometimes deviates from the Latin of the "best age," using for instance *quod* constructions instead of the accusative and infinitive. Klotz here refers to a heated philological discussion carried on over centuries about the acceptability of *quod* after *dico* and similar verbs. He firmly disagrees with the philologists Perizonius (1651–1715), Gerardus Vossius and Kaspar Scioppius (1576–1649) who have defended this phenomenon in classical Latin.[27] To Klotz the decisive argument is that the construction is not found in the authors "who alone are to be imitated."[28]

Nor was Saxo immune to rhetorical imperfections of his age. His metaphors are often flat and inappropriate, and he is too fond of superficial and empty wordplay, which conflicts with the *gravitas* required of historiography.[29] And even though poetry and historiography are closely related and the historian may well make use of poetical effects as we see in Xenophon, Livy and Thucydides, Saxo on his part tends to confuse the poetical and prosaic styles. The same can be said of numerous philosophical words used by Saxo, words that seriously stand in the way of historiographical lustre (*splendor*, p. 58).

Briefly put, in Klotz' view Saxo's stylistic shortcomings – vocabulary, syntax and rhetorical conventions – are signs that he was not after all unaffected by the barbarian age in which he lived.

Elegance and prudence

This criticism, however, concerns Saxo's prose. As to the poetical parts of Saxo's history, they are in Klotz' view much purer. Saxo's verses stand out for their splendour, their power and gravity and magnificence of spirit. These memorable products of the human mind have a universal appeal, Klotz declares echoing his initial statement about Saxo's place in the history of mankind.[30]

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[27] One important platform for the discussion was Perizonius' commented edition of the *Minerva sive de causis linguæ Latinæ* (1562, 1587) by the Spanish philologist Franciscus Sanctius (1523–1600). Perizonius' commented edition came out in 1687 and several times in the eighteenth century. I here quote some excerpts from Perizonius' extensive discussion of the *dico quod*-construction: "Existimat ergo Sanctius barbare loqui, qui dicant, *Scio quod, Dico quod, Credo quod*, & similia … In contrariam itaque sententiam abierunt Manutius ad Cicer. *Famil.* VII. 28., Henr. Stephanus de Latin. falso susp. Vossius de Construct. cap. 20 & 62. sed maxime Scioppius … Et tamen, ut verum fatear, prorsus ego quidem cum Scioppio, &c. heic sentiam" (Sanctius, ed. Perizonius 1714, 501–502).

[28] "Nam auctorum, quos vnice sequi fas est, exemplum aduersatur" (Saxo, ed. Klotz 1771, *Prolegomena*, 55).

[29] E.g. "iam non lecto, sed letho studentes" (VII,6,8), "protinus solicitudini remedium solitudine quaesiuit", (IX,4,34).

[30] "Quis enim adeo incuriosus viuit cum rei poeticae tum antiquorum temporum, qui memorabilia haec ingenii humani monimenta cognoscere nolit?" (Saxo, ed. Klotz 1771, 52).

Moreover, we now learn that Klotz finds much more to praise than to blame in Saxo's prose. After all, he says, the many reprehensible features are just spots. The central point is that Saxo, with his elegance and grace (*elegantia et venustas*), easily surpasses his contemporaries and may be ranged on a par with the best of the classical writers.[31] We have already seen how Klotz highlights *elegantia* as the overall quality of Saxo's text. On these final pages (p. 58–63) he describes the features that constitute Saxo's *elegantia* and demonstrate his *prudentia*.

Klotz singles out four areas of Saxo's mastery: His selection of important and relevant material, his vivid and visual descriptions of a wide variety of events and phenomena, his use of direct speech and his many useful sententiae and maxims. Throughout, Saxo is measured up against the classical historians. In Klotz' eyes his excellence lies in his eminent ability to learn from the classics.[32]

Following their example, Klotz notes, Saxo has inserted a large number of direct speeches into his narrative. Klotz is aware of Jean Le Clerc's (1656-1736) rejection of invented speeches in his *Ars Critica* (1696) in opposition to Vossius' *Ars historica* (1623), and Klotz sides with Vossius' defense of classical historiographical convention.[33] He explains that the rendering of speeches by the persons involved is an efficient way of showing their motives, deliberations and plans, and for which reason speeches fit well into a pragmatic history.

This is the first time Klotz refers to Saxo's history as pragmatic. But it now becomes clear that Saxo, in Klotz' view, lives up to the classical ideal of pragmatic history, whose goal it is – as he illustrates with a quotation from Polybius (second century BC)[34] – to explain the causes of events and thereby

[31] … satis diu commorati sumus in vituperando Saxone, cuius oratio licet conspersa sit quibusdam maculis, elegantia tamen et venustate longe superat omnes, qui eo tempore vixerunt, scriptores, immo ab optimis antiqui aeui auctoribus proxime abest (Saxo, ed. Klotz 1771, *Prolegomena*, 58).

[32] "Quae qui exempla consideraverit, nae ille admirabitur verborum vim, orationis vigorem, ingenii vbertatem, nihilque iis par aut simile illud aeuum protulisse fatebitur. Facile inde quisque intelliget, quanto studio pulcherrima antiqui Latii monimenta imitatus sit Saxo, quamque felici successu animum adiecerit ad exprimenda eloquentiae exempla praestantissima" (Saxo, ed. Klotz 1771, 60).

[33] Jean Le Clerc, *Ars Critica*, 1696, 3,3,8,15, p. 488; Gerardus Vossius, *Ars historica*, 1623, ch. 20–21.

[34] Polybius, *Histories* 3, 31,12: ἱστορίας γὰρ ἐὰν ἀφέλῃ τις τὸ διὰ τί καὶ πῶς καὶ τίνος χάριν ἐπράχθη τὸ πραχθὲν καὶ πότερον εὔλογον ἔσχε τὸ τέλος, τὸ καταλειπόμενον αὐτῆς ἀγώνισμα μὲν μάθημα δ' οὐ γίνεται ("For if you take from history all explanation of cause, principle, and motive, and of the adaptation of the means to the end, what is left is a mere panorama without being instructive," trans. Shuckburgh).

to be instructive and useful. It was a historiographical ideal still held in high esteem in Klotz' day.[35]

This didactic aspect is further foregrounded in Klotz' final praise of the many sententiae, i.e., general moral precepts, whereby Saxo strove to make his narrative as useful as possible. Aimed at the readers' instruction, these sententiae are, says Klotz, always elegant and powerful, and Saxo has an excellent understanding of where and when to place them.[36] Sometimes they are even beautifully integrated into the narrative so that they appear not as a teacher's precepts but as human examples of what is useful and what is harmful.

Summing up

Klotz' emphasis on the sententiae and general precepts highlights the timeless aspect of his interpretation of Saxo. From the very beginning he makes it clear that Saxo belongs to the group of historians whose works stand out as immortal contributions to human civilization. In Klotz' eyes, Saxo is able to exercise the *prudentia* and hence communicate with the *elegantia* of the immortal classical historians.

Klotz' complaint of Saxo's non-classical words and constructions may strike a modern reader as hide-bound and surprisingly close to the strict Ciceronian ideals of some renaissance humanists two centuries earlier. But perhaps his strict classicism could also be said to underpin his insistence on the timeless qualities of Saxo's history. Arguably, it is Klotz' position that Saxo's enduring merits would come through even better, had he communicated in the pure classical Latin of the immortal Roman writers, a Latin untainted by later developments. It may be true to say that his reference to Saxo's history as a contribution to the common history of mankind at one and the same time has a contemporary ring of Enlightenment and upholds the traditional renaissance cultivation of the classics.

Klotz insists that Saxo's text itself should be in focus, undisturbed by extensive philological and antiquarian discussions. He distances himself from Stephanius' wide-ranging commentaries and emphasizes the importance of the clear appearance, the *luculenta species*, of Saxo's text in his own edition. While these editorial features reflect contemporary conventions of scholarly communication, there is a strong element of tradition in Klotz' assessment of Saxo's text itself. Not only in his adherence to classical historiographical and

[35] See the discussion in Olden-Jørgensen 2015, 15ff. with further references.

[36] "Diserte quoque praecepta viuendi agendique tradidit, frequentissimasque sententias, quibus animus lectorum ad recte sentiendi iudicandique de rebus consuetudinem adducitur, adspersit. Quod fecit et loco et tempore aptissimo …" (Saxo, ed. Klotz 1771, *Prolegomena*, 61).

linguistical ideals but also in his dialogue with prominent scholars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Klotz, in short, is a late representative of the European learned republic. As such he wanted to secure Saxo's immortal Latin masterpiece a renewed readership in his own day. Since few copies of the older editions were available, and since he found the interpunctuation of Stephanius' edition inadequate, he had decided to publish a new edition. These are the motives Klotz himself offers as explanation for having prepared his new edition. But we cannot rule out, as suggested by Troelsgaard, that he also wanted to pave the way for an academic engagement in Copenhagen.

Had he come to Saxo's native Denmark in the 1770s, however, he would have discovered that current debates on Saxo here went in other directions. In an undated essay, "In defence of Saxo Grammaticus", the prominent historian Jacob Langebek (1710-1775) claimed that Saxo's most serious error was his choice of language:

> If Saxo can be blamed for anything, it must rather be for his much too high admiration for the Latin language, his idea that nothing of any quality could be written other than in Latin … What would Saxo not have left us, a wonderful monument, an invaluable ornament to the Danish language, had he written his entire history in the Danish language of his age … His fame may not have been as great among foreigners as it is now. But he would have earned a much more immortal name among his compatriots and deserved far more gratitude from all lovers of Danish antiquities and the Nordic languages.[37]

This is a far cry from Klotz. As we have seen, he not only echoes but also elaborates and refines upon the enthusiastic praise of Saxo's Latin elegance that European scholars had articulated since the sixteenth century. But new proto-Romantic winds were now blowing – ironically, they were inspired by Klotz' old enemy Johann Gottfried Herder – and Langebek along with other Danish scholars now saw Saxo's use of Latin as an unpatriotic mistake, almost a betrayal of his Danish roots. These scholars did not share Klotz'

[37] "Skulde Saxo lastes for Noget, da maatte det snarere skee derfor, at han har havt alt for høje Tanker om det latinske Sprog, og meent, at intet Godt kunde skrives uden paa Latin … Hvad havde Saxo ikke efterladt os en herlig Ærestøtte og uskatterlige Zir for det danske Sprog, om han havde beskrevet os sin hele Historie paa sine Tiders Dansk … Vel havde maaskee hans Rygte ikke blevet saa stort hos Fremmede, som det nu er; men han havde indlagt sig et langt udødeligere Navn hos sine Landsmænd, og fortjent langt større Tak af alle, som ere de danske Antiqviteter og de nordiske Sprogs Elskere," Langebek 1794, 299–305 (here 302–303). See also Skovgaard-Petersen (forthcoming).

fundamental point of view that it was Saxo's Latin elegance and his adherence to rhetorical norms of the classical historians that secured him a place in mankind's common history.

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