



PONTIFICAL INSTITUTE OF MEDIAEVAL STUDIES

---

*Karlamagnús Saga. The Saga of Charlemagne and His Heroes. Volume 3: Parts V–X.* Translated by Constance B. Heatt. *Mediaeval Sources in Translation* 25. 1980; xii, 368 pp. ISBN 0-88844-274-2 | 978-0-88844-274-1.

While the most celebrated literature of medieval Scandinavia is the native literature of Iceland, medievalists are also aware of the important body of Norse literature that is neither native nor Icelandic: the translations into Old Norse of English and Continental literature, mainly in Norway. Among these is a large body of translations from the *chansons de geste* and Carolingian romances of France, including the *Karlamagnús Saga*, a thirteenth-century version of poems sometimes known as “Geste du Roi” or “Gestes du Charlemagne et de Roland.”

The contents of this collection range from fairly close versions of surviving French poems, such as the *Pelerinage* (or *Voyage en Orient*) *de Charlemagne*, to translations of works of which there is no surviving close analogue; it includes a version of the *Song of Roland* which is very close to the Oxford manuscript, but probably translated from an even earlier version – possibly from a source of that manuscript.

The *Saga* is of interest in indicating a medieval translator’s interpretation of terms which modern scholars find crucial to the understanding of texts; or it preserves or provides clues to the contents of older versions than the extant originals. As a work of literature, it bears interesting resemblance to Malory’s compilation of the Arthurian cycle of tales, although the *Saga* is evidently the work of several hands, and not of one individual.

The present edition is the first translation of the entire work into any modern language. The translation is published in three volumes, each of which contains an introduction, notes, and glossary of names. The translation and its extensive apparatus should be of use to specialists in comparative medieval literature, folklorists, students of Old French, and those who read sagas.

Part V, “Guitalin the Saxon,” recounts a campaign against the Saxons, similar to the source of Jean Bodel’s *Chanson de Saisnes*. Part VI, “Otuel,” is very close to the French text of the *Chanson d’Otinel*, and in places agrees with the Middle English *Roland and Otuel*. Part VII, “The Journey to Jerusalem,” is a close translation of the Old French *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*. Part VIII, “The Battle of Runzival,” is the part of the saga parallel to the *Chanson de Roland*.