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EXEGETICAL NOTES ON THE LATIN  
SOURCES OF NORTHERN EUROPE

T u o m o P e k k a n e n

1. *Novas* (Val. Fl. 4,719)

In 4,717ff. of his *Argonautica* Valerius Flaccus enumerates the rivers flowing to the Black Sea from the lands of Scythia:

*nam super huc vastos tellus quoque congerit amnes.  
non septemgemi memorem quas exitus H i s t r i,  
quas T a n a i s flavusque Tyres Hypanisque N o v a sque  
addat opes, quantosque sinus Maeotia laxent  
aequora.*

The names *Hister* (Danube), *Tanais* (Don), *Tyres* (Dniester), and *Hypanis* (Bug) are well-known in ancient literature,<sup>1</sup> but *Novas* appears only in Valerius, who also mentions it in 6,99ff.:

*nec procul albentes gemina ferit aclyde parmas  
hiberni qui terga N o v a e gelidumque securi  
eruit et tota non audit Alazona ripa.*

According to A. Heeren,<sup>2</sup> the verse 6,99 was put together by Valerius from Verg. *Aen.* 7,687 *pars spicula gestat / bina manu* and 7,730 *teretes sunt aclydes illis / tela*. The name *Novas* is identified by Heeren with *Nais*, known from the cosmography of Iulius Honorius and the anonymous cosmography of the sixth century that repeats the same

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1 For *Tanais*, *Tyres*, and *Hypanis*, see the respective entries of P. Aalto and T. Pekkanen, *Latin sources on North-eastern Eurasia I-II*. *Asiatische Forschungen* 44 and 57 (1975, 1980).

2 *De chorographia a Valerio Flacco adhibita*. Diss. Gottingae 1899, 48f.

materials.<sup>3</sup> A striking similarity with Valerius, however, is found in Sen. Herc. O. 85f.:

*mutetur orbis, vallibus currat novis*

*H i s t e r n o v a s q u e T a n a i s accipiat vias.*

In the latter verse a hasty reader may easily take the adjective *novas* for a name and understand *Hister novasque*, especially when written as *HISTER NOVASQVE*, as "Hister and Novas". It seems to me that this is what happened either to Valerius himself or to the anonymous writer of the chorography, from which he drew his geographical materials.<sup>4</sup> Heeren has established that the chorography in question cannot have been written until after the war of 49 A.D., which brought the name of the Alans for the first time into literature.<sup>5</sup> If the name *Novas* already was in this chorography, it was not written until after Seneca's Hercules Oetaeus, and its *terminus post quem* may be moved from 49 A.D., suggested by Heeren, as far as the sixties of the first century.

## 2. *Mixi Evagre Otingis* (Iord. Get. 22)

A case, similar to that previously discussed, is found in Jordanes' list of the Scandinavian tribes:

Get. 22f. *dehinc Mixi, Evagre, Otingis. hi omnes excisis rupibus quasi castellis inhabitant ritu beluino. sunt et his exteriores Ostrogothae, etc.*

Of the tribal names, enumerated in the quoted passage, only *Ostrogothae* is known from other sources.<sup>6</sup> Of the remaining three names the variants of the MSS. are: *mixi* HPVLAO, *mixti* BXY, *euagre*

<sup>3</sup> Iul. Hon. cosmogr. 33 and Cosmogr. 1,33 (in Geographi Latini minores ed. Riese). According to the editor, however, *Nais* has been corrupted from *Halys*.

<sup>4</sup> The classical example of a similar mistake is the town *Siatutanda* next to *Phleum* in Ptol. geog. 2,11,12, taken from Tac. ann. 4,72 *soluta iam castelli (sc. cui nomen est Flevum) obsidio et ad sua tutanda degressis rebellibus*. See RE II A (1923) col. 2068 s.v.

<sup>5</sup> Op.cit. 26f., 89.

<sup>6</sup> See M. Schönfeld, Wörterbuch der altgermanischen Personen- und Völkernamen, 1911, s.v.

HPLA, *euagrae* VXYZ, *euagere* O, *euagerae* B, *othingis* OBX. In his critical apparatus Mommsen points out about the last name: "Possis cogitare de Greutungis". In Mommsen's *index locorum* s.v. *Otingis* Karl Müllenhoff accepts this interpretation, when he writes: "Scribendum omnino mihi videtur, posito post *prumtissimum* commate, *dehinc mixti Evagreotingis*. quamquam *Eva* quid sit non intellegimus, Greotingi tamen proximis verbis *hi omnes excisis rupibus quasi castellis inhabitant* apte illustrantur. *griot* enim lingua Norroena dicuntur saxa et lapides; Greotingi igitur, a quibus ad litteras et singulas voces Greutungis Gotici haud differunt, sunt saxicolae. intelligendi autem sunt qui montana infra Vetterem lacum incolebant." Svennung corrects the names to <sup>+</sup>*Hixi Evagreotingi[s]* interpreting them as 'die Hisingbewohner, die Bewohner der Insel <sup>+</sup>His, jetzt Hisingen' and 'die Felsenbewohner der Inseln',<sup>7</sup> which is not worth more than an arbitrary guess, since he only substitutes two *hapax legomena* for the earlier three.

I think Müllenhoff was on the right track, even though he could not find out a satisfactory explanation of *Eva-*. The most reasonable way of discussing names, recorded only once, is to try to identify them with other names that really exist. The attempts of identification must be based on the study of the whole context, not only on the single names and their often arbitrary etymologies.<sup>8</sup> In the case of the *Mixi Evagre Otingis*, mentioned in Get. 22 together with the *Ostrogothae*, this principle implies that we must study what kind of peoples are mentioned with the latter elsewhere. Before Jordanes, the *Ostrogothae* appear in literature in Trebellius Pollio (the latter half of the 4th century A.D.), Claudianus (399 A.D.), and Sidonius (c. 430-482), and in the first two sources their name is already attached to that of the Greutungis (also written in the extant sources as *Greuthungi*, *Greothingi*, *Grauthungi*, *Gruthungi*, *Grutungis*):

Treb. Claud. 6,lf. *illi Gothi...omnes gentes suorum ad Romanas*

<sup>7</sup> Jordanes und Scandia, 1966, 79-86.

<sup>8</sup> For the methods of deciphering unknown names of peoples and places, see Arctos, Suppl. I (1968) 18-22.

*incitaverunt praedas. denique Scytharum diversi populi, Peuci,  
 Grutungis, Austrogothi, Tervingi, (Vi)si, Gipedes,  
 Celtae etiam et Eruli, praedae cupiditate in Romanum solum intruperunt.*  
 Claud. 20,151 *Non tibi Riphaeis hostis quaerendus ab oris,  
 Non per Caucasias accito turbine valles  
 Est opus. Ostrogothis colitur mixtis-  
 que Gruthungis  
 Phryx ager: hos parvae poterunt impellere causae  
 In scelus; ad mores facilis natura reverti.*

Müllenhoff's suggestion that Get 22 *-gre otingis* should be read as *greotingis* finds strong support in the two passages. But not only that, for even the problem of the remaining *mixi (mixti) eua-* seems to find its solution in the latter passage, for the similarity between Claudianus' *mixtisque Gruthungis* and Jordanes' *mixi (mixti) euagre otingis* is too conspicuous to be a coincidence. In my opinion, it is quite evident that the latter wording has its origin in the former. For *mixi* the preference must be given to its variant *mixti*, as was already done by Müllenhoff, and *eua-* is a corruption of *-que*, i.e. Jordanes' *mixti euagre otingis* originally was <sup>+</sup>*mixtique greotingis*. In this particular case the name-list of Jordanes seems to be based on the misunderstanding of the verse of Claudianus, unless we prefer to consider it as an intentional falsification. It is quite clear that this kind of conclusions make the historical value of the peripheral names recorded by Jordanes highly questionable in those cases in which it is not possible to control his evidence with other sources.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. *Vagi fluvius* (Iord. Get. 17)

Although Jordanes, following Mela and Ptolemaios, calls Scandi-

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<sup>9</sup> That Jordanes' names of peripheral peoples are not always based on reliable information, is also evident from his list of the tribes, conquered by Hermanaric (Get. 116), which was deciphered in my seminar in the Institutum Romanum Finlandiae in 1970-1971. For the identification of the singular names, see I. Korkkanen, *The Peoples of Hermanaric*, *Ann. Acad. Scient. Fenn. B* 187, 1975.

navia an island (*Scandza* or *Scanza insula*), his description of its location rather refers to a peninsula:

Get. 17f. *haec* (sc. *Scandza*) *a fronte posita est Vistulae fluminis, qui Sarmaticis montibus ortus in conspectu Scandzae septentrionali Oceano trisulcus inlabitur, Germaniam Scythiamque disterminans. haec ergo habet ab oriente vastissimum lacum in orbis terrae gremio, unde V a g i f l u v i u s velut quodam ventrae generatus in Oceanum undosus evolvitur. ab occidente namque immensu pelago circumdatur, a septentrione quoque innavigabili eodem vastissimo concluditur Oceano, ex quo quasi quodam brachio exiente, sinu distento, Germanicum mare efficitur.*

In the west, the north and the south *Scandza* is limited by the sea (*oceanus, pelagus*), in the east by the *Vagi fluvius*, which runs from a vast lake, lying "in the lap of the circle of the world", *in orbis terrae gremio*. The Germanic sea, *mare Germanicum*, which limits *Scandza* in the south, is according to Jordanes "a kind of arm", *quoddam brachium*, stretched eastwards from the ocean in the west.

Much effort has been made to localize the river *Vagus*, the name of which is not known from other classical sources. The lake, from which it is said to begin, has been identified by various scholars with the Swedish lakes *Vänern, Vättern, Mälaren*, or the Finnish lake *Saima*, and, correspondingly, the river *Vagus* has been interpreted as the *Göta* river, the *Motala*, the *Norrström*, or the *Vuoksi*. *Svennung*, who is the last scholar to have discussed the problem, rejects the earlier identifications and suggests the lake *Ladoga* and the river *Neva*, which connects it with the Gulf of Finland.<sup>10</sup> This is not more convincing than the previous hypotheses, for, if the river in question were *Neva*, Jordanes ought to have written *in mare Germanicum . . . evolvitur*, since the Gulf of Finland is a part of the Baltic Sea, called by Jordanes *mare Germanicum*. As he writes, however, *in Oceanum . . . evolvitur*, the river to the east of *Scandza* (*ab oriente*), running into the ocean, cannot be sought elsewhere than among the Russian

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10 Op.cit. 14-16, 20ff. with other literature.

rivers, running from the south to the Arctic Ocean.

It is very surprising that the passage of Jordanes has thus far been so badly misunderstood that the Northern Dvina, which is the first great river to the east of Scandinavia, has not been brought into the discussion. The about 500 km. long southern tributary of the river is still today called *Vaga* and in the 16th century maps of Mercator and Ortelius the name (*Waga*) is used for the whole river.

The lake from which the *Vagi fluvius* is said to have its origin, could be fictitious, for e.g. Herodotus (4,51-52) explains that the rivers Tyras (= Dniester) and Hypanis (= Bug) flow out of great lakes, although there are no such lakes in their sources in reality. It is not, however, necessary to resort to such a hypothesis. According to Jordanes, the lake was *in orbis terrae gremio*, and the expression *orbis terrae*, the circle of the world, is unambiguous in Latin and means the three-parted vast continent surrounded by the ocean, which comprises the lands of Asia, Europe and Africa. Cf. Oros. 12,1 *maiores nostri orbem totius terrae Oceani limbo circumsaeptum triquadrum statuere eiusque tres partes Asiam, Europam et Africam vocaverunt*, quoted by Jordanes in Get. 4. The wording *in gremio* refers to the interior parts of this continent, and, on this criterium alone, the lakes, formerly suggested are out of question. The only enormous lake, *vastissimus lacus*, that fills the condition is the Caspian Sea:<sup>11</sup> Kama, the tributary of the Volga, rises very near the upper course of the Northern Dvina so that these rivers together form an important way of commerce from the Caspian in the south to the White Sea and the Arctic Ocean in the north. It is this waterway that Jordanes calls *Vagi fluvius*, i.e. he uses for the whole route the name of its northern part, which is quite natural, considering the fact that he derived the new information he had about the northern Europe from Gothic sources.<sup>12</sup>

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11 L. Weibull, *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 37 (1925) 213ff. already explained the lake as the Caspian Sea, but took the name *Vagi (fluvius)* for a corrupted form of the word *quasi* in Mela 3,38 (quoted below).

12 On the sources of the *Getica*, see Korkkanen, *op.cit.* 15ff.



That the Caspian Sea was connected with the ocean in the north, was already thought by Hecataeus, Eratosthenes and several scholars of the Roman period and the Middle Ages, but in the beginning this opinion was only theoretical speculation, because the northern shores of it were unexplored.<sup>13</sup> Herodotus and Aristotle, however, already held it probable that the Caspian was a great lake, and their views were later taken over by Marinus of Tyrus and Ptolemaeus.<sup>14</sup> The last-mentioned geographer also knew the river Volga, calling it *Rha*.<sup>15</sup> Mela, who says that "the Caspian Sea rushes into the lands as a narrow and long strait like a river" (3,58 *mare Caspium ut angusto ita longo etiam freto primum terras quasi fluvius inrumpit*), may already have had some real information about the route from the great lake in the south to the northern ocean, but it is only to Jordanes that we owe the name of the northern part of this route, the Vaga-Dvina.

#### 4. Adam of Bremen 4,25

In *Arctos* 8 (1974) 105-125 I established that the *Wizzi*, *Mirri*, *Lami*, *Scuti* and *Turci*, which Adam of Bremen thought to dwell near the *terra feminarum* and the Swedes, may easily be identified with the *Albani*, *Cimmerii*, *Alani*, *Scythae* and *Turcae* (*Iyrcae*), names and peoples that in ancient literature are connected with the Caucasian Amazons. In 4,25 Adam once again describes the lands to the east of Sweden (*Sueonia*, *Suedia*), but besides the Amazons, he now mentions there the *Cynocephali*, the *Cyclopes*, and the *Himantopodes*:

*Gesta Hammab. Eccles. Pont.* 4,25 *ab oriente autem (sc. Sueonia) Ripheos montes attingit, ubi deserta ingentia, nives altissimae, ubi monstruosi hominum greges ultra prohibent accessum. Ibi sunt Amazones, ibi Cynocephali, ibi Cyclopes, qui unum in fronte*

<sup>13</sup> RE X 2 (1919) col. 2277f.

<sup>14</sup> *Ib.* col. 2280 and Suppl. IV (1924) col. 664,38.

<sup>15</sup> *Geog.* 5,8,6f. and 12; 6,14. In Latin literature, the only author that mentions the river is Ammian (22,8,28 *Ra*, var. *Rha*). The river Oarus, which according to Herodotus 4,123 flows from the country of the Thyssagetæ, has often been interpreted as the Volga, although Herodotus mentions it among the rivers that issue in the Maeetian Lake (the Sea of Azov). Cf. RE I A (1914) col. 1f.

*habent oculum, ibi sunt hi, quos Solinus dicit Ymantopodes, uno pede salientes, et illi, qui humanis carnibus delectantur pro cibo, ideoque, sicut fugiuntur, ita etiam iure tacentur.*

It is rather easy to find out that even here Adam only repeats fables of the earlier literature. Most details of the passage already appear in Mela's chorography: cf. Mela 2,1 *Riphaeis montibus proxima ... cadentes adsidue nives ... invia faciunt ...* 2,2 *hominum primi sunt Scythae Scytharumque quis singuli oculi esse dicuntur Arimaspoi, ab eis Essedones.* 2,9 *Essedones funera parentium laeti ... celebrant. corpora ipsa ... epulando consumunt.* The one-eyed Arimaspoi, that were thought to live in the north near the griffins and the Hyperborei,<sup>16</sup> are compared with the Homeric Cyclopes by Gellius (9,4,6 *Arimaspoi, qua fuisse facie Cyclopos poetae ferunt*), so that the appearing of the Cyclopes in Adam's list has a natural explanation.

The only problem of the passage is, how the Cynocephali and the Himantopodes (in Adam corrupted to *Ymantopodes*) could be placed near the one-eyed people in the north?

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16 Hdt. 3,116 "some will have it that one-eyed men called Arimaspoi (sc. to the north of Europe) steal it (sc. gold) from griffins"; 4,13 "the one-eyed Arimaspoi, beyond whom are the griffins that guard gold, and beyond these again the Hyperborei, whose territory reaches to the sea." The Latin testimonies are quoted in Latin sources (see note 1 above) I 58-61. The Rhippean Mountains are mentioned with the Arimaspoi in Sol. 15,20 *Arimaspoi ... unioacula gens est. ultra hos et Riphaeum iugum regio est assiduis obsessa nivibus.* The Cynocephali and Cyclopes appear together in Isid. orig. 11,3,12 *Sicut autem in singulis gentibus quaedam monstra sunt hominum, ita in universo genere humano quaedam monstra sunt gentium, ut Gigantes, Cynocephali, Cyclopes, et cetera ...* ib. 15 *Cynocephali appellantur eo quod canina capita habeant, quosque ipse latratus magis bestias quam homines confitetur. Hi in India nascuntur. Cyclopes quoque eadem India gignit; et dictos Cyclopes eo quod unum habere oculum in fronte media perhibentur.* For the oriental Dog-heads and One-foots, mentioned in the Tartar Relation, see the edition and commentary in R.A. Skelton, Th. E. Marston, and G.D. Painter, *The Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation*, New Haven and London 1965, 282, 285. The latest edition is that of A. Önnersfors (*Hystoria Tartarorum C. De Brida Monachi*) in *Kleine Texte für Vorlesungen und Übungen* 186, 1967.

For the Himantopodes Adam expressly refers to Solinus, who, however, only mentions them in his description of Africa: 31,6 *Himantopodes fluxis nisibus crurum serpunt potius quam incedunt et pergerendi usum lapsu magis destinant quam ingressu*. Cf. Plin. nat. 5,45 and Mela 3,103. His words about the Himantopodes also differ from those of Solinus in that he describes them as one-footed (*uno pede salientes*). By Solinus this feature is attributed to the *monocoli* of India: 52,27 *Megasthenes per diversos Indiae montes esse scribit nationes capitibus caninis ... legimus m o n o c o l o s* (monocolos CNHP, monoscolos R, monoculos LMQGSA) *quoque ibi nasci s i n g u l i s c r u r i b u s et singulari pernecitate, qui ubi defendi se velint a calore, resupinati plantarum suarum magnitudine inumbrentur* (from Plin. nat. 7,23 and 28).

It seems that Adam understood the Himantopodes of Sol. 31,6 to be the same as the one-footed people of Sol. 52,27. In fact his words *Ymantopodes uno pede salientes* give the impression that he adds *uno pede salientes* as an explanation to the Greek *Ymantopodes*, which he did not understand correctly. In this way the word *Himantopodes*, used by Solinus about the fabulous people in Africa, was adapted by Adam to the Indian One-foots. That Adam knew Sol. 52,27, is suggested by the fact that both authors mention the One-foots together with the Dog-heads, the *Cynocephali ... uno pede salientes* of Adam 4,25 corresponding to the *nationes capitibus caninis ... singulis cruribus* of Sol. 52,27.

It may be that the Dog-heads and the One-foots were only transferred by Adam from India to northern Europe, because the mountains of India are the continuation of the Caucasus and the Rhiphean Mountains, that Adam thought to be in northern Europe to the east of Sweden. Cf. Sol. 38,10 *mons Taurus ab Indico primum mari surgit ... 11 ... Ripaeis se iugis adnectit ... 12 nominatus ... ubi in excelsissimam consurgit sublimitatem Caucasus*.<sup>17</sup> An additional explanation, however, may be

17 In 4,21 Adam erroneously takes the ancient Suebi (Suevi) for Swedes (Sueones), when he says: *De Sueonia vero non tacent antiqui auctores, Solinus et Orosius, qui dicunt plurimam partem Germaniae Suevos tenere necnon montana eius usque ad Ripheos montes extendi*. Cf. Oros. 1,2,53. For the Rhiphean Mountains, see Latin sources II 52-58, 266.

the word *monocoli* (Greek μονόκωλοι, from μόνος + κῶλον 'limb', 'leg'), used by Solinus about the One-foots. In most of the MSS. the word is spelled *monoculi*, which may easily be understood as 'one-eyed' (Greek μόνος + Latin *oculus* 'eye'). When the word *monocoli* of Sol. 52,27 was read and understood as *monoculi*, 'the one-eyed' it could easily be thought that the whole passage referred to the land of the one-eyed Arimaspi, which since Herodotus were an essential element in the descriptions of the northernmost parts of the world.

After Adam, the One-foots appear in the north as *Unipedes* in the map of Claudius Clavus. The Danish cartographer compiled in Italy about 1424-1430 two maps of the North and provided them with accompanying texts.<sup>18</sup> In his maps he delineated Greenland as lying to the west of Ireland and forming a peninsula, connected in the north with Sweden and Norwegia. In Claudius Clavus' first map, preserved in Nancy, there are enumerated from west to east the following peoples, whose names are written on the fictitious continent between Greenland and Sweden: *Carelorum infidelium regio maxime septentrionalis*, *Unipedes maritimi*, *Pigmei maritimi*, *Griffonum regio vastissima*, *Wildhlappelandi*. In the Nancy text the corresponding passage is: *In his Regionibus septentrionalibus sunt gentes diverse inter quas unipedes et pigmei, item griffones*. The *Careli infideles* of the map refer to the Finnish Carelians, which have erroneously been placed in the west near Greenland,<sup>19</sup> and *Wildhlappelandi* is the land of the wild Lapps.<sup>20</sup> The name *Pigmei* is probably used about the Eskimoes, which in the *Historia Norwegiae* (late 12th century) are known as *homunciones ... quos Scraelinga appellant* and placed to the north of Greenland (*trans Viridenses ad aquilonem*).<sup>21</sup> The *Griffones* of Clavus are no other than the

18 A.A. Björnbo und C.S. Petersen, *Der Däne Claudius Clausson Swart (Claudius Clavus), der älteste Kartograph des Nordens*. Neue Bearb. von Ella Lesser. Innsbruck 1909.

19 The same mistake already appears in the map of Pietro Vesconte about 1320, as is shown by P. Aalto in *Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja* 47 (1967) 192 (in Finnish).

20 See E. Kunze, 'Wild lapen, Pylappenland' im frühen Lappenbild der deutschen Dichtung, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 67 (1966) 321-356. On Claudius Clavus, *ib.* 332ff., 347.

21 The text is found in the *Monumenta historica Norwegiae*, Kristiania 1880, 105. See also Björnbo-Petersen 144.

griffins of the ancient tales about the Hyperborei and the Arimaspi,<sup>22</sup> and the *Unipedes* represent the same literary tradition as Adam's Himantopodes that were transferred from Africa to India and from there to the European north.

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22 See note 16 above. In their commentary the editors of Clavus have misunderstood the Griffones as giants, when they say p. 194: "Eine ganz andere Frage ist die: aus welchen Quellen hat Clavus die Pigmäen der Nanziger Karte, ihre Riesen (*Griffones*) und Einfüssler (*Unipedes*) geschöpft, welche alle auf der Festlandsverbindung zwischen Ostgrönland und Norwegen angebracht werden? Es ist kaum möglich nachzuweisen, welche von den zahllosen fabelhaften Berichten des Altertums und Mittelalters hier benutzt worden sind. Was die Riesen betrifft, so waren die Kyklopen des Altertums schon frühzeitig mit den Berggeistern der Nordländer oder mit den Hünen verschmolzen, welche im höchsten Norden zu Hause sein sollten, während die Pigmäen und Einfüssler in die verschiedensten Gegenden der Welt verlegt wurden." I do not think there is any reason to assume a confusion between the ancient and the nordic popular tales, for the name *Cyclopes*, when used about the fabulous people in the north (Adam 4,25), is just another name of the Arimaspi and due to the fact that the latter were conceived, not as giants, but as one-eyed, *uno oculo in fronte media insignes* (Plin. nat. 7,10).