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Saxo Grammaticus, The History of the Danes, Books I-IX, Vol.2: Commentary

Hilda Roderick Ellis Davidson, Peter Fisher

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The first nine books of the Danish History of Saxo Grammaticus, dealing with the legendary kings and heroes of Denmark, have long been recognised as one of the major sources for the heroic and mythological traditions of northern Europe. However, they present many problems, because of the complexity of Saxo's Latin style and of the material he has brought together from many different fields, and no commentary has yet been published in either English or Danish, while there has been no new English translation since that of Elton in 1893. The new version should be welcomed by scholars in many disciplines, including those interested in folklore and in the life and customs of twelfth century Denmark, and Shakespearian scholars concerned with the sources of Hamlet, of whom Saxo gives the earliest known account. Volume II has an introduction on Saxo and his work, a detailed commentary and index, so that text and commentary can be used side by side. Three maps of Denmark, Scandinavia and north-west Europe show the places mentioned in the History. Hilda Davidson is well known for her publications on Scandinavian mythology, and the commentary will be an important contribution to scholarship in this field, while an attempt has also been made to discuss the links between Saxo's work and the heroic stories and myths in Icelandic sources, and to indicate important advances in Saxo studies by Scandinavian and German scholars.

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