



Saxo Grammaticus on Slavic Pre-Christian Religion: The Relevant Fragments from Book XIV of Gesta Danorum (Sielicki's History Singles)

Stanislaw Sielicki

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Duke Henry the Lion, King Waldemar, and Bishop Absalon answer the Pope's call for the Northern Crusade to Christianize Baltic Slavs. Being successful in achieving their goal, and having subdued the Slavs, they witness the strange and unusual temples, statues, customs, and divination rituals of the Wendish Slavs, artefacts and practices that are scarcely, if at all, documented in other sources, and appear or deduced from archeological finds. Among the literary sources on the pre-Christian religion and mythology of the Slavs, the Western, German-Danish, and Latin texts, while predominantly highly fragmented and biased, distinguish themselves when compared to the Arab and Old Rus' sources by their relative scrupulousness and less obvious agendas. Even in the backdrop of the other Western sources, accounts of Saxo Grammaticus are especially characterized by the detailed and rigorous descriptions and the minimal use of ideologically motivated narrative instruments. The following translation, with all its imperfections, is intended to make Saxo Grammaticus' texts more accessible for a wider circle of readers, both specialists and not; present frequently overlooked fragments; and correct some of the errors, traditionally creeping from one of the Saxo's account overview to another.

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