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A NOTE ON THE SHAPE OF ROME IN FÓSTBRÆÐRA SAGA

ONE of the digressions included in the *Codex Regius* text of *Fóstbræðra saga* concerns the founding of the city of Rome:

Romaborg letu gera bræðr íj het annar Romulus enn annar Remus, þeir voro tviburar, borg var gor eptir enu oarga dyri, var dyrit ristit a jorðunni, oc þar upp af voro reistir borgarveggir, er hofuþit dyrsins fyrir norðan ana . . . er sa hlutr borgarinnar kallaðr Roma, enn sa lutr er fyrir utan ana er heitir Latransborg e(ða) Latran e(ða) Latera, enn þat þiðiz siþur, enn þa er borginn var algerr þa urðu þeir osattir um þat, af hvers nafni er borginn skylldi nafn taka, oc þvi reð Romulus broður sinum fiorrað oc drap hann, var þa borginn kend við Romulum oc kollut Romaborg¹

The statement that Rome was built in the shape of a lion is not found in the shorter version of this passage in *Flateyjarbók*.² Nor does this curious piece of information appear to figure in any other accounts of Romulus and Remus preserved in Old Icelandic texts.³ In a paper delivered at the First International Saga Conference, Jónas Kristjánsson noted that the source for the passage was 'undoubtedly some medieval Latin work' and asked for helping in tracking it down.⁴

¹ *Membrana Regia Deperdita*, ed. A. Loth, *Ed. Arn.* A 5 (1960), 151/4–12. Cf. *Fóstbræðra saga*, ed. Björn K. Þórolfsson, *STUAGNL* 49 (1925–27), 201; *Vestfirðinga sögur*, ed. Björn K. Þórolfsson and Guðni Jónsson, *ÍF* 6 (1943), 257, n. 1.

² Cf. *Flateyjarbók*, ed. C. R. Unger and Guðbrandur Vigfússon (1860–68), II, 224/36–225/3.

³ Cf., e.g., *Veraldar saga*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, *STUAGNL* 61 (1944), 46/18ff.; *Breta sögur*, ed. Eiríkur Jónsson and Finnur Jónsson, *Hauksbók* (1892–96), 253/1–2; 'Upphaf Rómverja', ed. Konráð Gíslason, *Fire og Fyrretyve . . . Þrøver af oldnordisk Sprog og Literatur* (1860), 381/4ff., 385/9ff.; *Alfræði íslensk I*, ed. Kr. Kálund, *STUAGNL* 37 (1908), 51/26–27.

⁴ 'Elements of Learning and Chivalry in *Fóstbræðra saga*', *Proceedings of the First International Saga Conference* (1973), 275; cf. idem, *Um Fóstbræðrasögu*

Honorius Augustodunensis refers to the habit of the ancients of constructing their cities in the shapes of beasts in his *Imago Mundi* (I.28, 'De Italia', *PL* 172, 129C-D):

. . . In hac est urbs Roma, a Romulo constructa, et sic dicta. Antiqui civitates secundum præcipuas feras, ob significationem formabant. Unde Roma formam leonis habet, qui cæteris bestiis quasi rex præest. Hujus caput est urbs a Romulo constructa: lateritia vero ædificia utrobique disposita: unde et Lateranis dicitur. Brundisium autem formam cervi, Carthago bovis, Troja equi figuram habuit.⁵

(1972), 248–9. Heinrich Beck ('Hit óarga dýr und die mittelalterliche Tiersignificatio', in J. M. Weinstock, ed., *Saga og Språk: Studies in Language and Literature* [Hollander Festschrift, 1972], 99) includes the passage among his examples of the image of 'hit óarga dýr als verweisendes Tiersignum', and suggests,

Der Beleg ließe sich am ehesten als eine abgewandelte Gründungssage begreifen. Das Tier bzw. das Tierzeichen sollte das Wohlergehen der Stadt garantieren — so wie im Altertum der um die Peripherie der Stadt getragene Löwe die Uneinnehmbarkeit der Stadt gewährleisten sollte.

He refers the reader to Otto Keller's general discussion of the apotropaic use of lion-figures by the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans (*Die antike Tierwelt* [1909, rpt. 1963] I, 56), but cites no analogues for the digression in *Fóstbræðra saga*.

⁵ On this extremely influential twelfth-century encyclopaedia see, e.g., Josef Anton Endres, *Honorius Augustodunensis: Beitrag zur Geschichte des geistigen Lebens im 12. Jahrhundert* (1906), 45–49; O. Doberentz, 'Die erd- und völkerkunde in der weltchronik des Rudolf von Hohen-Ems: §5. Des Honorius Augustodunensis *Imago Mundi* in ihrem einfluss auf die geographien des mittelalters', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 12 (1881), 298–301, 387ff.; 13 (1882), 29ff.; Valerie I. J. Flint, 'World History in the early twelfth century: the *Imago Mundi* of Honorius Augustodunensis', in R. H. C. Davis and J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, ed., *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Richard William Southern* (1981), 211–238. Flint does not discuss Honorius' note on the shape of Rome in her doctoral dissertation, *The Life and Work of Honorius Augustodunensis, with special reference to Chronology and Sources* (Oxford, 1969), but perhaps more information on the subject will be provided in her forthcoming edition of the *Imago Mundi* (see *Revue Bénédictine* 92 [1982], 152, n. 1). Parallel texts for the passage in question are also found, of course, in vernacular translations of Honorius' work. Cf., e.g., *La Petite Philosophie*, ed. W. H. Trethewey, Anglo-Norman Texts I (1939), 36/1093–1108; *L'Ymagine del Mondo*, ed. F. Chiovaro (1977), 123/158–171. A Catalan rendering of this section of the *Imago Mundi* is preserved in an atlas dated c. 1375 (ed. J. A. C. Buchon and J. Tastu, 'Notice d'un atlas en langue catalane . . .', *Notices et Extraits des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque du Roi* 14 [1843], II, 8/14–9/2; see Arturo Graf, *Roma nella Memoria e nelle Immaginazioni del Medio Evo* [1882–83], I, 10).

The description of Rome in Gervase of Tilbury's *Otia Imperialia* is clearly related:

Italiae caput Roma est, ut diximus, civitas a Romulo constructa. Romani caput imperii; ad formam leonis ob insignem sui dominationem formata . . . Aurelianus imperator ipsam muris firmioribus cinxit, et fecit templum solis. Hujus caput est a ponte Tiberis usque ad primitiva Romuli mœnia: later utrimque ædificia palatiorum constructa; unde et Lateranus dicitur, ubi palatium est, olim Constantini, nunc Domini Papæ . . . Habet ergo Roma formam, ut dixi, Leonis, sicut Brundisium formam cervi, Carthago bovis, Troja equi.⁶

The immensely popular thirteenth-century encyclopaedia, *L'Image du Monde*, attributed to Gossouin or Gautier of Metz, also contains a note on the 'theromorphous' cities of Europe:

Si y a citez et regions qui prennent leur nons de bestes qui habitent en cele terre. Si en ont les citez formes prises: Dont Roume a fourme de lyon, et Troie la grant fourme de cheval.⁷

And a picture bearing the caption *Roma edificata a muodo de lione* is found in an illustrated manuscript of the thirteenth-century Italian *Liber Ystoriarum Romanorum* (see figure below).⁸

⁶ *Otia Imperialia*, ed. G. Leibnitz, *Scriptores Rerum Brunsvicensium* (1707), II, secunda decisio, ix, 'De situ Romæ', 767; *cit.* Graf, *op. cit.*, I, 10. As Doberentz notes (*Z.f.d.Ph.* 12 [1881], 415), most of Gervase's account of Rome is taken from the *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*. This well-known pilgrim's handbook, however, makes no mention of the lion-shaped ground-plan of the city. Doberentz does not include this passage in his discussion of Gervase's borrowings from the *Imago Mundi* (*ibid.*, 415–418).

⁷ *L'Image du Monde de Maître Gossouin*, ed. O. H. Prior (1913), 130/4–6, 'D'Aufrique et de ses regions'; cf. Caxton's translation, *Mirroure of the World*, ed. O. H. Prior, Early English Text Society, Extra Series 110 (1912), 94/3–7.

⁸ The drawing, from the Hamburg ms. of the *Liber Ystoriarum Romanorum* (dated c. 1280–1300), col. 107B, is reproduced here from Ernesto Monaci, ed., *Storie de Troja et de Roma . . .*, Miscellanea della R. Società Romana di Storia Patria (1920), LII (cf. 298 n., and Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach, ed., *Bibliotheca Uffenbachiana Universalis* [1729–31], III, 107, no. CXXXV). The picture does not appear to illustrate the surrounding text (unless it refers obliquely to Domitian's programme of 'urban renewal' described earlier on the same page, *Storie . . .*, 296/23ff.). Monaci (LIIIf.) associates the drawing with the lion-motif used on coins issued by Brancaleone degli Andalò who held dictatorial powers in

It seems unlikely, however, that the list of 'feriform' cities presented in the *Imago Mundi* could have originated with Honorius. Isidore, for instance, refers to the derivation of the name Brundisium from a 'Greek' (i.e. Messapian) dialect-word, *brunda*, meaning 'the head of a stag', and explains that the name of the city mirrors its shape:

Brundisium construxerunt Graeci: Brundisium autem dictum est Graece quod brunda caput cervi dicatur: sic est enim ut et cornua videantur et caput et lingua in positione ipsius civitatis.⁹

And the same information is provided by Strabo and Stephanus of Byzantium among others.¹⁰ It is also interesting to compare the passages from Honorius and Gervase with a longer catalogue of the animals associated with various cities included in the early-fourteenth-century Milanese chronicle of Galvanus de Flamma. Galvanus names 'Varro the poet' as his authority, but I have not been able to find a source for the list:

... Auratæ Virginis candidum Gallum bajulantis, speciosissimam formam Mediolani, totius Italiæ, Normandiæ, et Saxonïæ ferentem diadema, designat figura. Sic Roma leonis, Brundisium cervi, Troja equi, Carthago bovis, Janua griffonis, Cremona porcæ, Papia vulpis, Placentia galli, ob significationem Varro Poëta testatur.¹¹

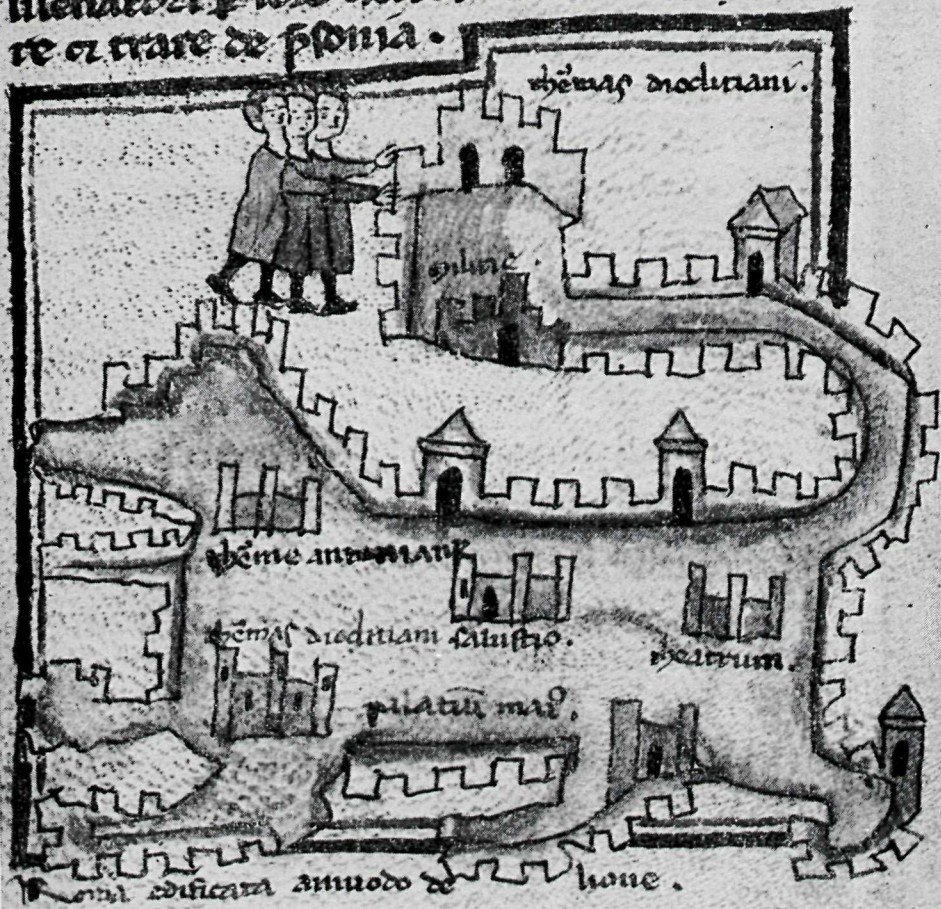
Rome from 1252 to 1257 (the period during which the Italian version of the work was composed), and suggests that it may have been to him that the book was dedicated. Monaci also recalls the parallel passage in the *Imago Mundi*, and adds that the same information about the shape of Rome is found in a letter written by Cola di Rienzo (ed. K. Burdach and Paul Piur, *Briefwechsel des Cola di Rienzo*, in Burdach, *Vom Mittelalter zur Reformation* [1912–29], II.3, Nr. 57 [August, 1350], 275/1108–9): '... et ipsi muri Urbis edificati sunt in formam cuiusdam leonis iacentis' (cf. *ibid.*, 275, n. ad loc.; II.5, 378,474).

⁹ *Etymologiae*, ed. W. M. Lindsay (1911), XV.1. 49.

¹⁰ See *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (1900–), s.v. *Brundisium*, 2210/67ff.; A. Pauly – G. Wissowa – W. Kroll, *Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* (1893–), III.1, s.v. *Brundisium*, 902/51ff.

¹¹ *Chronica Mediolani seu Manipulus Florum*, ed. L. A. Muratori, *Scriptores Rerum Italicarum XI* (1727), 539D, cap. ii, 'De figuris, sub quibus aliquæ Civitates figurantur'. The similarity of this list (which is also found *ibid.*, 588D) to the passages from Honorius and Gervase is noted by Graf, *op. cit.*, I, 10. On Galvanus see T. Kaeppli, O.P., *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi*, II (1975), 6ff.

domitiano. Ematiale sacro uniano uenim
 catore. Vnde p gmadmito d domitiano
 beat' iohes euāgelista fo posto ipone i past
 hinc Insula. S'apola mōre d domitiano
 usenaroz i p loro actozitate lofecero lassa
 re et trare de psona.



Honorius' writings were undoubtedly popular in medieval Iceland,¹² and the author of the *Codex Regius* version of *Fóstbræðra saga* may well have had access to a complete text of the *Imago Mundi* or known the passage on the building of Rome from a *florilegium*. However, the idea that the imperial city was shaped like the king of beasts was clearly a commonplace, and may simply have been recalled as such by an author whose memory was replete with antiquarian learning derived from many sources.

I should like to thank Mariann Ege of Munich for obtaining for me a photograph of the drawing in the Hamburg ms. of the *Liber Ystoriarum Romanorum*.

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¹² See, e.g., Paul Lehmann, 'Skandinaviens Anteil an der lateinischen Literatur und Wissenschaft des Mittelalters', *Erforschung des Mittelalters: Ausgewählte Abhandlungen und Aufsätze* (1962), V, 343, 354, 357–358, 392–393; Gabriel Turville-Petre, *Origins of Icelandic Literature* (2nd ed., 1967; rpt. 1975), 118–119, 137–138; Einar G. Pétursson, 'Einn atburður og leiðsla um Ódáinsakur', *Gripla* 4 (1980), 145–147. Einar mentions several examples of direct citation of the *Imago Mundi* in Old West Norse texts: e.g., *Stjórn*, ed. C. R. Unger (1862), 384/12–14, 385/25–27 = *PL* 172, 169A–B, 585/6–7 = *PL* 172, 173C (cf. G. Storm, 'De norsk-islandske Bibeloversættelser fra 13de og 14de Aarhundrede og Biskop Brandr Jónsson', *ANF* 3 [1886], 248–249); *Alfræði islensk* III, ed. Kr. Kålund, *STUAGNL* 45 (1917–18), 75/3ff. = *PL* 172, 121A (cf. AM 238 fol., *cit.* Storm, *op. cit.*, 248; Anne Holtsmark, *Studier i Snorres Mytologi, NVAOS*, Hist.-Fil. Kl., Ny Serie 4 [1964], 32, 36, 48), 98/7ff. = *PL* 172, 154C–D. As Einar also points out, even inaccurate or fabricated 'citations' from the *Imago Mundi* testify to the fame and popularity of the work (see, e.g., *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson, *Ed. Arn.* A 1 [1958], 158, cf. *Summa totius de omnimodo historia*, *PL* 172, 193C; *Kirialax saga*, ed. Kr. Kålund, *STUAGNL* 43 [1917], 13, 63, cf. Kålund, 'Kirialax sagas kilder', *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* [1917], 9–10).