

Prophets and Augurs

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Definitions

- Platon's *Phaedrus* (Φαῖδρος, circa 370 BC)
- ἡ οἰωνιστική (*hē oiōnistikḗ*) 'interpretation of signs'
- ἡ μαντική (*hē mantikḗ*) 'inspired divination'
- μανιακός (*maniakós*) 'mad'
- cf. Starý 2006, 2009

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Outline

- Definitions
- Latin and Greek Sources
- Norse Sources
- Christian Prophets in the Middle Ages

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Definitions (cont.)

- 'augur': someone who interprets signs to gain insight into past, present, or future events (from Latin *augur*)
- 'prophet': someone who gains insight into the occult through direct contact with the numinous reality (from Greek πρό + φημί *pró + phēmí* 'before + (I) tell')

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Latin and Greek Sources

Prophets

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Prophets

- *Germ.* 8: Veleda and Aurinia
- Elephantine ostrakon: Βαλουβοργ Σή[μ]νονι σίβυλλα
(*Balouborg Sē[m]noni sībullāi*) ‘Valuborg, Semnonic seeress’
- Ganna (92 BC, king Masyus)
- *Hist.* IV,61: Veleda, Bructeran virgin
- Cassius Dio (LV,1,3–4), Suetonius (*Claud.* I): Drusus the Elder

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Latin and Greek Sources (cont.)

Augurs

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Augurs

- don’t practice professionally
- mostly men
- social roles more important than personality
- cleromancy, ornithomancy, hippomancy

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Norse Sources

Prophets

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Prophets

- DR 360: **uþArAbAsbA** (*óþqrf spá*) 'I predict destruction'
- Valuborg, *vǫlva*: *vǫlr* (lat. *vallus* 'stake, palisade')
- Ganna, Gambara: *gandr*
- *vǫlur*, *spákonur*/*spámeðjar*, or *vísendakonur*, not *-menn*

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Prophets (cont.)

- *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*: *níð*, *ergi*
- *Eiríks saga rauða*, *Kormaks saga*, *Vatnsdóla saga*, *Víga-Glúms saga*, *Landnámabók*
- *Víga-Glúms saga*

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Norse Sources (cont.)

Augurs

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Augurs

- *Eyrbyggja saga*: Þórólfr Mostrarskegg
- augurs separated from the divine sphere

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Christian Prophets

- ‘Typology’: OT events, persons, or statements as pre-figurations, antitypes of events or aspects of Christ, his revelation
- Apostles’ Creed
- 15th fresco in the apse of *Saints Peter and Paul* (Reichenau island, Lake Constance)
- 15th chalk paintings of *Risingemästaren*: Risinge gamla kyrka, Örberga kyrka

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Christian Prophets in the Middle Ages

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