From Ancient Nordic to the Medieval Nordic languages

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The basis for this course is the unpublished book "Le lingue nordiche nel medioevo" (LNM), which will be made available to the students in a downloadable PDF (not to be circulated outside the participants of the course). Additional literature will be discussed during the course.

The course will open by looking at Ancient Nordic ("Urnordisch") in the context of the other Germanic languages, investigating some central Runic inscriptions in this stage of the Nordic language, then moving on to the development of the Medieval Nordic languages, beginning with the most conservative one, Old Icelandic, and continuing with Old Norwegian, Old Swedish and finally Old Danish. One text from each of these languages will be studied in some detail.

All classes will be held in Room S1 (Pc pool).

1. Ancient Nordic in a Germanic context
Monday 2nd October, 10:10–11:50
How (and when) did the Germanic languages diversify, and at which stage can we speak of a Nordic language, different from the other branches of the Germanic languages? In this lecture, we will have look at some central Runic inscriptions in Ancient Nordic, and the salient features of this linguistic stage (ca. 200–500).

2. From the Syncopation period to the Medieval Nordic Languages
Wednesday 4th October, 11:50–13:30
During the comparatively brief period ca. 500–700, Ancient Nordic went through formidable changes. In this lecture, we will be looking at this development, focusing on the Syncopation, Umlaut and Breaking processes, and the consequences these had on the phonology and word structure of the Medieval Nordic Languages. These are still characteristic of the Modern Nordic Languages.

3. Old Icelandic
Monday 9th October, 10:10–11:50
Our first text will be the story of Baldr's death and Hermóðr's passage to Hel, the Realm of the dead. This is text [16] in LNM from the manuscript Upps DG 11 (ca. 1300–1325). This is slightly different from the best-known version in the *Codex Regius* manuscript GKS 2367 4to, but the story is essentially the same in both manuscripts. As a preparation, students may want to read a standard translation of the Baldr story, e.g.

the one by Dolfini or Isnardi (see LNM p. 262) and compare it with the translation of Upps DG 11 offered in LNM.

4. Old Swedish
Wednesday 11th October, 11:50–13:30
The second text will be an extract from the most prolific of all Medieval Nordic genres, the provincial and later national laws, in this case the earliest preserved Swedish law text, *Västgötalagen*, in the manuscript Holm B 59 (late 13th century). This is text [6] in LNM. While the later Swedish texts in LNM are more modern from a linguistic point of view, the selected law text is rather conservative, and not far removed from the Old Icelandic and Old Norwegian texts.

5. Old Norwegian
Thursday 12th October, 17:20–19:00
The third text will be an extract from arguably the most important Old Norwegian work, *Konungs skuggsjá* in the manuscript AM 243 b a fol (ca. 1270). This is text [12] in LNM. The brief extract gives a fascinating insight into the nature, geography and animals of Greenland. Juliane Tiemann, PhD scholar at the University of Bergen, will join the class and give a brief introduction to the information structure in this text.

6. Old Danish
Monday 16th October, 10:10–11:50
The fourth and final text is an extract from a book attributed to the physician Henrik Harpestreng (died 1244), preserved in the manuscript NKS 66 8vo (from around 1300). In LNM, this is text [4], containing sections on herbs, precious stones and cooking. Most of the text is based on foreign models, but there are also some sections assumed to be original. Even if this text is contemporaneous with the previous extracts, it will be clear that Danish at the time had begun to develop towards a language of rather simple morphology, a development that somewhat later would take place in Swedish and Norwegian, but not in Icelandic.