

## PREFACE

The work here edited is part of the so-called Asloan manuscript, an important Scottish miscellany, dated about 1515, which since December 1966 has been the property of the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh (press-mark Acc. 4233). The book bears the name of Asloan because John Asloan was its scribe, signing himself as such in the explicits of most of the items of which it consists. The whole Asloan manuscript was edited by Sir William Craigie for the Scottish Text Society (NS 14 & 16, 1923 & 1925). In this edition Craigie printed the full contents of the manuscript with short descriptions of the various items, some corrections and a few notes, but without glossary or any other kind of apparatus.

In the present work my aim has been to offer a new transcription of one of the most important items found in the manuscript, the anonymous Middle Scots poem *The Buke of the Sevyne Sagis*, and to provide an adequate apparatus, a detailed description of the language and a full glossary. I have wished to facilitate the work of others and so I have tried to present the material in such a way that it can be easily compared with related studies, especially those that have to do with Middle Scots. As a result some information may appear twice, but this will make reference easier and help the specialist to find what he is looking for.

*The Buke of the Sevyne Sagis* is a Scottish version of the widely known medieval collection of tales within a framework narrative, usually called *The Seven Sages of Rome*. This version is independent of the Middle English rendering which is preserved in eight manuscripts, dating from between c.1320 and c.1530. For a full description of these manuscripts the reader is referred to pp. ix ff. of Karl Brunner's edition (EETS OS 191, 1933) and to Section XIV, pp. 194-95 below. There are no other known copies of *The Buke of the Sevyne Sagis* as presented here. A later Scots version is the poem *The Seuin Seages* by John Rolland of Dalkeith, which is dated about 1560 and which is not directly related to the present version; in fact, it is said on the title-page to be

'Translatit out of prois in Scottis metre' (STS III 3, 1931).

In 1898 Hermann Varnhagen in an article (*Englische Studien*, XXV, pp. 321-25) announced that he was preparing an edition of *The Buke of the Sevyne Sagis* for the Scottish Text Society. Evidently nothing ever came of it, and in 1933 Brunner in the preface to his above-mentioned edition said that the Scottish version in the Asloan manuscript deserved of a special edition as soon as the manuscript itself and not merely Laing's transcript was made accessible to scholars. It is rather surprising that Brunner apparently did not know about Craigie's edition of 1923-25.

It was Mr A.J.Aitken M.A., Senior Lecturer in English Language at the University of Edinburgh, and Editor of the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*, who suggested to me the editing of this texts as a suitable subject for a doctoral thesis, and for this I wish to express my sincerest thanks to him; also he allowed me again and again to use unpublished material of his, and generally the present book owes a very great deal to his help, advice, support and supervision during the many years over which the work was extended.

The initial part of the labour was executed under the encouraging tutelage of my former teacher and head of department Professor Dr A.A.Prins when he occupied the chair of English Language at Leiden till 1968. It gives me pleasure to acknowledge my gratitude and indebtedness to him. It is largely due to the educational innovations since then and the ensuing time-consuming but fascinating new methods of university teaching in our department that it has taken me so long to get this edition ready for the press. I wish to express here my appreciation of the patience of my younger colleagues who bore with me and took over part of my teaching when, through the kindness of the Faculty of Letters, I was given a semester's leave of absence.

I also wish to acknowledge my great gratitude for the inspiring guidance of my promotor, Professor N.E.Osselton, the stimulating lessons of Professor Dr G.I.Lieftinck and his successor, Professor Dr J.P.Gumbert, in the field of palaeography, and for the latter's willingness to go over the palaeographical items of my edition and suggest several improvements.

Thanks are also due to Lady Joyce Talbot de Malahide who during her ownership of the Asloan manuscript allowed me to have photographs made of it and who gave me valuable information about its history; to Dr N.R.Ker for his kindness in comparing the handwriting of the *Scottish Troy Book* fragments in MS. Douce 148 (Bodleian Library, Oxford) with that of the Asloan MS. and confirming my assumption that they are identical; to Mr D.D. Murison M.A. (Aberdeen), B.A. (Cantab.), Editor of the *Scottish National Dictionary*, for his unfailing willingness to answer questions on points of language and history, and for allowing me to go over the then unpublished material of the *Dictionary*; to Miss Helen Armet, one-time Keeper of the Burgh Records of the City of Edinburgh, for kind assistance in the research concerning Edinburgh notaries; to Mme M. Berne née Aïache, who readily lent me her unpublished thesis of the Ecole des Chartes, Paris, on the French prose versions of the *Roman des Sept Sages*; to Mr H. Voorn of the Museum Meermano-Westrenianum at The Hague for help in the matter of the watermarks; to the Staffs of the National Library of Scotland, the Public Library of Edinburgh, the Scottish Record Office in Her Britannic Majesty's Register House, Edinburgh, the University Library of St. Andrews, the British Library, the Bodleian Library, St.John's College, Oxford, the Cambridge University Library, the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris, to Captain and Lady M.H.Erskine-Wemyss of Wemyss Castle, Fife-shire, and the Staffs of Leiden University Library and the Royal Library at The Hague, for allowing me to consult manuscripts and books in their keeping.

I gratefully acknowledge grants from the Netherlands Organisation for the Advancement of Pure Research (Z.W.O.) and from the Curators of Leiden University, which made possible the photographing of some manuscripts and enabled me to consult manuscripts in Edinburgh, Oxford, Cambridge and London in 1964.

Finally I wish to express here my gratitude to Mrs Drs G.G.J. Duijfjes-Vellekoop, Miss M.Gentevoort and Dr J.Kerling for their willingness to assist me in the creation of this edition.