

# Investigation of the Origin of the Old Norse or Icelandic Language

Rasmus Rask (1787–1832)

RASMUS RASK

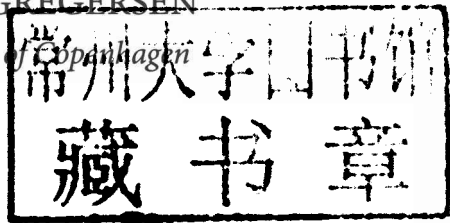
INVESTIGATION OF THE ORIGIN  
OF THE OLD NORSE  
OR ICELANDIC LANGUAGE

New edition  
of the 1993 English translation by  
NIELS EGE

With an introduction by

FRANS GREGERSEN

*University of Copenhagen*



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INVESTIGATION OF THE ORIGIN OF THE OLD NORSE  
OR ICELANDIC LANGUAGE

## AMSTERDAM CLASSICS IN LINGUISTICS, 1800–1925

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Volume 18

Rasmus Rask (1787–1832)

*Investigation of the Origin of the Old Norse or Icelandic Language*

## Foreword & Acknowledgments

The Niels Ege translation of Rasmus Rask's prize essay (1818) originally appeared in 1993 as volume 26 of the *Travaux du Cercle Linguistique de Copenhague*. The publishing house of the Travaux was the illustrious C. A. Reitzel, then owned by the enthusiast Sven Olufsen who however went insolvent in 2008. The books Olufsen held in commission for the Copenhagen Linguistic Circle, i.e., the remaining volumes of the series, not only went out of print but were for the most part destroyed in the chaotic period following the bankruptcy. However, the Circle and its series editor Una Canger managed to salvage enough copies of Ege's translation to be in a position to offer one of them to the publishing house of John Benjamins for photographic reprint. The original files for the translation had been prepared most judiciously during an extended period of repeated turns of proof reading by Niels Ege and Una Canger, so that they would be as close to perfect as humanly possible. For that reason it would have been an immense waste of effort to do anything but reproduce photographically the original edition of the translation. Together with a new, much fuller introduction it now appears as volume 18 of the *Amsterdam Classics in Linguistics* series.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the daughters of the late Niels Ege, Majken, Tina and Hannah, as well as the Linguistic Circle of Copenhagen, in particular its president Kasper Boye, for permission to reprint the translation. For his unstinting support throughout the production of the new materials for the present re-edition, I am grateful to E.F.K. Koerner, editor of the series where it rightfully belongs. I wish to thank Una Canger for her unwavering support of this project and Jens Ege, brother of the late Niels Ege, for placing at my disposal the text of his speech delivered at Niels Ege's funeral. Many of the biographical details in the section on the translator have been taken from this text.

I am also very grateful to two anonymous referees for numerous suggestions of improvements of style which have all been accepted. Their and the editor's request for additional information, I have tried to meet. All shortcomings will remain my responsibility.



## Note

The portrait of Rask was drawn by David Monies (1812–1894). The engraving is found in the *Beretning om Gravmælet over Prof. R. Rask* [Report on the monument for Prof. R. Rask] ed. by Konrad Gislason, Martin Hammerich & Peder Goth Thorsen (Kjöbenhavn: Bianco Luno, 1842). The illustration here has been taken from the inside cover of this booklet issued by the committee.

The portrait of Rask reproduced in Thomas L. Markey's re-edition of the English translation by Sir George Webbe Dasent (1843) of Rask's own Swedish *Anvisning till Isländskan eller Nordiska Fornspråket* of 1818 constitutes a reproduction of the same portrait but it has a signature added which Rask himself never used, viz. Rasmus Christian Rask. (Rask had dropped his original middle name for both orthographic and religious reasons.)

Monies introduced a number of corrections of detail according to the memory of those who could still remember Rask in 1842, but otherwise based his engraving on the only other existing portrait of Rask. This was published in his and his Swedish friend Arvid Augustus Afzelius's (1785–1871) edition of the so-called Older Edda, *Edda Sæmundar hinns froða. Collectio carminum veterum scaldorum Saemundiana dicta. Quam, ex codicibus pergamenis chartaceisque cum notis et lectionibus variorum, ex recensione ERASMI CHRISTIANI RASK curavit ARV. AUG. AFZELIUS* (Holmiae: Typis Elmenianis, 1818). The 1818 portrait is reproduced in Rask's *Selected Writings* of 1932, vol.I. One of the significant differences between the 1818 and the 1842 portraits is that in 1818 Rask is pictured in typical peasant clothes, whereas he is dressed like a gentleman professor in the 1842 version.



# Introduction to the New Edition of Niels Ege's 1993 Translation of Rasmus Rask's Prize Essay of 1818\*

## 1. Introduction

This edition constitutes a photographic reprint of the English edition of Rasmus Rask's prize essay of 1818 which appeared as volume XXVI in the *Travaux du Cercle Linguistique de Copenhague* in 1993. The only difference, besides the new front matter, is the present introduction, which serves to introduce the author Rasmus Rask, the man and his career, and to contextualize his famous work. It also serves to introduce the translation and the translator, Niels Ege (1927–2003).

The prize essay was published in Danish in 1818. In contrast to other works by Rask, notably his introduction to the study of Icelandic (on which, see further below), it was never reissued until Louis Hjelmslev (1899–1965) published a corrected version in Danish as part of his edition of Rask's selected works (Rask 1932). It was thus rare, but not impossible, to find, and certainly very expensive to buy, until Roy Harris included a photographic reprint of the original 1818 edition in his 13-volume Routledge series *Foundations of Indo-European Comparative Philology 1800–1850*, where it makes up volume 2 (Rask 1999). Thus there are now two Danish editions readily available to the public, the original and the corrected edition (Rask 1932). The present work is, however, the only translation of the work into English and indeed into any other language.

During Rask's lifetime the sections on the so-called Thracian language family were translated into German as part of Johann Severin Vater's (1772–1826) *Vergleichungstafeln* (Vater 1822; cf. Koerner 1976), and there is a summary of

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\* I most gratefully acknowledge the stylistic corrections suggested to me by Professor John Considine (University of Alberta), all of which I have found to be improvements of my narrative. I also take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to Konrad Koerner for his constant support and frequent suggestions for revisions, all of which have prompted me to rethink my argument. The remaining shortcomings are my own.

it in Danish in the first edition of the Royal Danish Academy's *Oversigt* (i.e., summary of proceedings), Ørsted 1813–1815. For readers of German it is interesting to note that the 1932 corrected edition features a parallel German apparatus and a translation of the introduction as a separate work. The work itself, however, is still in Danish.

The reason for this strange state of affairs seems to be that Jacob Grimm (1785–1863) made the results of the prize essay available to a linguistic community generally unable to read Danish (obviously, he himself was) as an integrated part of his second edition of his German grammar (Grimm 1822); and due to the rapid development of Indo-European comparative philology in the early 19th century, the substantial results of the prize essay, notably the contributions to the delimitation of the Indo-European family and the specific letter correspondences governing the relationships between Germanic and Greek and Latin, were soon considered common knowledge (the latter under the name of Grimm's Law), or even out of date since Sanskrit had not been taken sufficiently into account.

That might again make readers wonder whether publishing the reprint and the translation is a service only to historians of linguistics. Of course, it is a service to historians of linguistics to make a classic text available in the only language which the majority of historians feel at ease with. And it is to be hoped that the burgeoning field of the history of linguistics will thereby receive a new impetus to scrutinize the early beginnings of Indo-European scholarship. But, just as importantly, the translation of this work of genius reveals that even if details in the substantial treatment of the various branches of language have now been superseded, the theoretical parts of the book, notably the introduction and the first chapter, are still worth reading by all linguists for their own sake.

## **2. Rasmus Rask, the man and his career**

### **2.1 Early years**

Rasmus Rask, or to use the earliest form of his name, Rasmus Christian Rasch, was born in a small village called Brændekilde on Funen, one of the Danish islands, on 22 November, 1787.

Rask's father was not a farmer, but a village tailor, and he earned his living also by being a 'wise man' which at that time may best be characterized as a healer and a barefoot doctor rolled into one. He educated his son himself until Rasmus was sent to grammar school in Odense at the age of thirteen, either in April 1801 (Petersen 1834: 2) or on 3 June 1801 (Diderichsen 1960: 28, with reference to Rønning 1887: 4, based on the school protocol). Here he was fortunate enough

two years later to experience a breakthrough of a new pedagogy and new regulations which replaced a fundamentally medieval tradition of grammar-school teaching in Denmark. The new order was at the beginning only established in Trondheim, Copenhagen, and Odense since it was considerably more costly (cf. Paludan 1885: 78–79, and Henrichsen 1861, where the content of the reform is outlined). It is an accident, but an extremely lucky one, that Rask was able to transfer in 1802 to the new type of school which in Odense was apparently blessed with an extremely well-qualified faculty, many of whom were soon promoted, some to the university (Diderichsen 1960: 28–29 and elsewhere).

Diderichsen 1960 demonstrates in detail how much Rask owed to his school days at Odense precisely because the reform had as its explicit goal to further independent thinking. This was ideal for Rask (Bjerrum 1959: 17–18) and it is interesting to see that one of his most important teachers, the mathematician Carl Ferdinand Degen (1766–1825),<sup>1</sup> characterizes him as among the most gifted in these words:

Talent for application of already acquired knowledge, that is a *practical genius*, and for applying them in a new way, that is a *heuristic genius*, I think I have detected with R. ... R does show an aptitude for independent judgment and reasoning.<sup>2</sup> (Degen in the school protocol 31 March 1803, after Diderichsen 1960: 20)

Diderichsen has also documented that the philologist S.N.J. Bloch (1772–1862) who was Rask's teacher of Greek, profoundly influenced his general linguistic outlook, and his grammatical apparatus in particular (see Diderichsen 1960: 33–39). Yet, Bloch praises precisely Rask's independent mind:

And he is not one of those numerous individuals who without any further investigation takes for granted all that his teacher says; oftentimes he will make good, well founded, even very fine protests and counter suggestions.<sup>3</sup> (Bloch in the school protocol of October 1803; after Diderichsen 1960: 32)

It was while still in school that Rask found his unique object of study, Old Norse. It is certainly true that there was an interest in matters Icelandic among his

1. On Degen's own attempts to create a new etymological method cf. Karlsson et al 2000: 158.

2. "Talent til at anvende allerede erhvervede Kundskaber, altsaa et *praktisk Genie*, og til at anvende dem paa en ny Maade, altsaa et *heuristic Genie*, troer jeg at have sporet hos R. [...] R. viser altsaa Anlæg til at dømme og slutte selv." (Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Danish originals are the present author's own: F.G.)

3. „Og er han ikke af den store Hob, der uden videre Undersøgelse tager for fuldt alt hvad Læreren siger. Idelig gjør han mig gode, velgrundede, ofte endog meget fine Anmærkninger og Indvendinger.“

contemporaries but the lack of knowledge of Icelandic, the language of the sagas, was almost total. So, Rask had to start by himself. He had already begun studying Icelandic early in 1804 (Diderichsen 1960: 30) but in March 1805 he had, as a tribute to his diligence, been awarded the Schøningh edition of Snorri Heimskringla, more specifically the three parts which had appeared by then bound in one volume (Diderichsen 1960: 30; Petersen 1834: 4-5; *Letters I*: 298). In his biography of Rask, his schoolmate, and later the first professor of the Nordic languages in Denmark, Niels Matthias Petersen (1791–1862), details the method invented for this purpose (Petersen 1834: 5–6):

The only means which Rask had at his disposal for the study of this language [i.e. Old Norse] was Heimskringla itself, the text with the translations [into Danish and Latin]; while reading it he would extract, using the same method which he applied in his many linguistic studies later, the morphological structure [Dan. *Formlære*] of the language by scrutinizing the various contexts in which each word occurred. With a language as difficult as the Old Norse it would have been thought impossible for anyone else his age. The difficulties were multiplied considerably by the uncritical treatment of the text (which in later years he would often elaborate on *privatissime* for me) since not only was the same word not written in the same way, the very grammatical forms were confused. It was thus a hard and tedious job by repeated comparisons to discover which form was the right one. He proceeded in the following way: he wrote down each form of the word as it occurred in the text in his notebook and quoted the passage where it was found, compared when he found it repeated and thus carried on until finally a number of nouns, pronouns and verbs etc. were completed. This was continued until as many paradigms were laid out as were necessary to complete the system; then began the ordering of declensional classes and finally a complete make-over after an ordered plan.<sup>4</sup>

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4. „Den eneste Hjælp, som Rask havde til at studere dette Sprog, var Heimskringla selv, Teksten med Oversættelserne; under Læsningen uddrog han, på samme Måde, som i sine mange senere Sproggranskninger, Sprogets Formlære ved at betragte de forskjellige Forbindelser, i hvilke hvert Ord forekom; ved et så vanskeligt Sprog som det islandske, måtte det for enhver anden på hans Alder tykkes en Umulighed. Vanskeligheden forøgedes meget ved den ukritiske Behandling af Teksten (hvilken han i senere År oftere *privatissime* har udviklet mig), da ikke blot det selvsamme Ord ikke var skrevet på samme Måde, men selve de grammatikalske Former vare forvirrede; det var derfor et møjsommeligt Arbejde, ved gjentagen Sammenligning endelig at udfinde, hvilken Form der var den rette. Hans Fremgangsmåde dermed var følgende: han optegnede hver enkelt Ordform efterhånden som den forekom på sit Sted i sit Hæfte, og siterede hvor den fandtes, sammenlignede, når den kom igjen, og blev således ved, indtil enkelte Navneord, Stedord, Gjærningsord, o.s.v. stode opstillede fuldstændig; dette fortsattes så længe, indtil så mange Paradigmata vare forhånden, at der kunde granskes over det hele System, hvorefter Deklinationer, o.s.v. skulde ordnes; da begyndte en Omarbejdelse efter ordnet Plan.”

In a biographical letter to his Swedish friend Anders Jacob Danielsson Cnattingius (1792–1864), Rask complains that it was impossible for him to obtain any dictionary or grammar, but this is part of the solution to the riddle of how he was able to break new ground: he started from scratch by making his own.

The work invested during his school years was to remain the basic capital for his work with Icelandic and Old Norse and it was to place him as the only linguist in his time who really understood virtually every word in the old texts.

While in Odense, Rask made the acquaintance of Johan von Bülow (1751–1828), a gentleman of means who had been close to the king until he was relieved of his duties in 1793. Bülow had retired to his manor house, Sanderumgaard on Funen, and had started to use his considerable fortune to support all kinds of scholarly activities. He seems to have had a penchant for Nordic history and prehistory. Bülow was to remain a central source of support for Rask at the beginning of his career, and Rask wrote numerous letters to him, partly as reports on how work that had already been supported was progressing, partly as more or less poorly disguised applications for money for new projects. Rask seems to have been quite candid in his letters to Bülow about his reliance on him as his only benefactor until he was later supported by public funds (i.e., the royal treasury) and indeed considered him a paternal friend in whom to confide his deepest desires.

Rask remained in the Odense school until late in 1807. As an incident in the pan-European Napoleonic wars, Copenhagen was bombed by the British in early September 1807, and the war was not over until October 1807, when Rask was to be sent by the school to the University of Copenhagen 'as soon as circumstances allow it' (Diderichsen 1960: 28). He was enrolled to study theology, the only humanistic study which could lead to any job at the time.

Rask was soon given a (free) room at the Regensen, the royal college in the centre of Copenhagen, close to the university, and a job at the university library assisting the Professor of Literary History (and provost of the Regensen) Rasmus Nyerup (1759–1829), who was to remain a close friend and colleague, playing a significant role in his life until the end.

The first book that Rasmus Rask published was on Icelandic. It was called *Vejledning til det Islandske eller gamle nordiske Sprog* (A guide to the Icelandic or old Nordic language) (1811), a title which clearly showed that for Rask the contemporary Icelandic language was either identical to the Old Norse or so closely related to it as to be for all research purposes identical. He changed his mind on this issue in the second Danish edition of the book (1832), cf. the preface where he notes that in the original work 'the old and common Nordic language is not as clearly differentiated from the new Icelandic language as it probably should have been in order to be used for deeper studies of language [i.e. for comparative

historical purposes]'.<sup>5</sup> The book was translated by its author into Swedish and considerably enlarged (1818) and this enlarged edition minus the author's preface was translated into English by Sir George Webbe Dasent (1817–1896). That edition has been reprinted photographically as no. 2 of *Amsterdam Classics in Linguistics* with an introduction by Thomas L. Markey which partly also covers the prize essay and its importance (Markey 1976: xxvi–xxix). This volume also includes valuable bibliographical information on manuscripts and works on Rask to which I hereby refer the reader of the present work. The bibliographical details may, however, now be supplemented by direct searches via the web in the collections of the Danish Royal Library at [www.kb.dk](http://www.kb.dk) using 'Rask' as the author entry, since the various Rask manuscripts are now included in the searchable catalogue.

## 2.2 To Iceland

Rask not only wanted to study the Icelandic language in manuscripts; he wanted to actually go to Iceland to see for himself the places where all the events he had read about had taken place and to learn the language to perfection. First, however, he got the chance to go to Sweden and Norway with Nyerup. The travels were dressed up as scientific but also had the secret objective of espionage which Rask naively betrayed to Bülow (*Letters I*: 109; 116). The voyage occurred at the time when Napoleon was about to invade Russia and there were tensions along the borders. But as it happened Rask met individuals in Stockholm (notably Arvid August Afzelius (1785–1871)), in Uppsala and in Norway, who were later to be of importance in his work on Icelandic.

Rask had mentioned his intention to go to Iceland already in a very personal and frank letter to Bülow about his future position and scientific plans (*Letters I*: 106–115 at 112), and had thus indirectly sought Bülow's support. He now received support to finish his prize essay, not only from Bülow but also from the influential Norwegian businessman Jacob Aall (1773–1844) (*Letters I*: 157), and an Icelander offered him free passage to Iceland. Finally, he had in fact also received the support of the Board of the University (commentary in *Letters III*, 1: 62).

While he was in Iceland Rask finished the prize essay and sent the manuscript down to the Royal Academy in Copenhagen (*Letters I*: 172). In a long letter of 4 July 1814 to his former professor of theology Peter Erasmus Müller (1776–1834), Rask does everything he can to downplay expectations about the

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5. "[H]vor [...] den gamle og almenndiske Sprogform ikke er så tydelig adskilt fra den ny islandske, som den vel burde været, for med sikkerhed at kunne anvendes i dybere Sprogundersøgelser"

quality of the manuscript: he was forced to work in the only room in the house (i.e. surrounded by a lot of people and unable to lay out his books) and he makes many excuses about the style of his work, while insisting so much the more on its valuable content. The prize essay must have been underway for quite some time for it was only received at the Academy on 2 December 1814 (Lomborg 1960: 481).

Rask was deeply surprised by the poverty he found where the events described in the sagas had once taken place; but he was even more impressed by the natural scenery and the people he met on the island. In letters he boasted that he was actually taken for an Icelander, so well had he learnt to speak the language, and he gave vivid descriptions of the *geysirs* in whose immediate vicinity he had been camping together with a friend.

The importance of Rask's visit to Iceland lies in the fact that he acquainted himself thoroughly with Icelandic through hunting down the individuals who spoke the language to perfection (he complains about Reykjavik being infected by Danish). He writes in English in a letter to an unknown recipient that

This most valuable remainder of Gothic Antiquity, and almost the only one preserved in Iceland, is certainly the ancient general language of all the kingdoms of the North; which is still spoken throughout that Island to a truly astonishing degree of purity and elegance. This I may pretend to ascertain; for having travelled through the kingdoms of Denmark, Sweden and parts of Norway in order to study the languages and the philological antiquities of the North, I have now spent these two years in travelling around the island of Iceland to inquire into the present state of that remarkable language, and in every corner of the country I have been able to converse with the natives in the antient [*sic*] Scandinavian tongue and I have found them reading still the old *sagas* of the heroic age. (*Letters I*: 183)

Rask had thus entered into close friendships with a number of Icelanders who were active in preserving the island's cultural heritage. This was the golden age of learned societies. They would produce the critical editions needed for the advancement of knowledge and they would form the material basis of production by securing enough subscriptions. In picturing the lonely genius in his study, it is often overlooked that Rasmus Rask was an expert at doing such organizational work. He virtually created the two societies that were to become central in promoting scholarship on Icelandic (cf. commentary in *Letters III*, I: 66f): Hið íslenska Bókmenntafjelag and the Nordisk Oldskriftselskab. He served as the chairman of both.

Back from Iceland Rask had formed another plan. He wanted to get the prize essay published and he also wanted to work further along the lines suggested in



it, but most of all, and all through his life, he wanted a job that would enable him to establish his own household and let him work solely on the issues he was concerned with. Thus, the perennial problem for Rask was how to navigate strategically in order to make himself attractive as a candidate for a professorship for the powers that be, while still producing scholarly publications. The problem was in principle unsolvable. If he did not produce any scholarly work, he would not get a position because he would be considered finished as a scholar. If he did publish, he would risk, in the eyes of the authorities, seeming not to be in need of a permanent position at all.

### 2.3 The great voyage to South Asia 1816–1823

One way to finance a scholarly career was then, as it is now, to apply for money for *projects* that only one promising individual could carry out. Rask's great voyage to the South Asia was one such project. It started out as a trip to Stockholm but this was to mark the beginning of a huge and long-lasting journey, which I shall not detail here since it is less important in this connection. The start, however, had obvious consequences both for Rask's life and for his reputation; and Rask's peculiar way of travelling and his reasons for doing so are both of immediate concern here.

Once Rask was back from Iceland he had written a report to the Board of the University of Copenhagen in November 1815, asking for a position. He received no answer. He then wrote to the Board again in July 1816 asking, first, for leave from his post as assistant university librarian and, second, asking whether on his return from a long journey financed by a private *maecenas* (i.e., Johan v. Bülow), he could expect to be affiliated with the university. He originally planned to rely solely on Bülow's money (*Letters I*: 192 and commentary ad loc.) and to go to the Caucasus via Stockholm and St. Petersburg. In answer to his letter the Board actually granted him a raise of 200 Rigsbankdaler (but made no promises as to a future affiliation). Immediately before his departure Rask also applied for money from the royal funds *ad usos publicos* to finance the printing of the prize essay (*Letters II*: 292). Rask sailed to Stockholm on 25 October 1816 (cf. *Letters III.1*: 74).

Once he was in Stockholm, however, Rask found being there so agreeable, and he met so much enthusiasm for his person and his plans that he actually wanted to stay there. At that time, the nation states of Sweden and Denmark were not on good terms, and it was seen as close to treason that a man of his standing, who had after all been supported repeatedly by the Danish King, would even consider accepting a position in Stockholm. The facts were these. Rask had accepted to help the above mentioned Afzelius produce editions of both the Snorra Edda and the Sæmundar Edda (Rask 1932–1935, bibliography, items 25 and 26).



He produced an enlarged Swedish translation of his own guide to Icelandic, the *Vejledning* (Rask 1818a) and the next year a reader of Old Norse. In short, in two years he produced a complete apparatus to renew the study of the Old Icelandic language and was thus able to finish most of the works he had wanted to work on in Denmark – yet it was all published in Stockholm.

When Rask approached the recently elected member of the Royal Danish Academy Professor P. E. Müller, a central person in Rask's life, on behalf of a certain printing agent named Scheutz who wanted to produce an edition of Johan Ihre's (1707–1780) *Glossarium Suiogothicum* (Ihre 1769) which would take advantage of the learned Iclander John Olafsen's (1731–1811) supplements (with which Rask was very familiar, having spent much of his time in Copenhagen with the late Olafsen), the Royal Academy responded with unprecedented haste and no intention to hide its hostility:

At the present point in time it would more than ever appear inappropriate that Danes should contribute to making Icelandic books and works by Icelandic authors publicly available in Sweden. When Mr. Rask wishes to publish the text of the prose Edda in Stockholm at a time when in Denmark both public and private efforts are made to publish in a worthy manner those monuments which are the pride of the North and the property of Denmark, this private indiscretion may hardly be forgiven this in other respects brilliant young man's scientific entrepreneurship; but if the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences were to embark upon a similar thoughtless course, it would in all likelihood arouse the public critique of learned men and possibly even make His Majesty the King, the Royal protector of the Academy, very dissatisfied with the Society indeed.<sup>6</sup> (Lomborg 1960: 211)

The rebuke to which Rask was subjected is somewhat mollified when the text subsequently suggests that Rask be given the assignment of publishing the Olafsen supplement to Ihre's *Glossarium* 'if he remains in Denmark', a job worth an estimated 200 Rigsbankdaler a year (ibid: 212). The plan was later to be renewed when the Academy in March 1824, at the suggestion of Müller, granted Rask the

6. "I nærværende Tidspunct kunde det mere end nogensinde synes upassende, at Danske vilde bidrage til at Islandske Skrifter og Islænderes Arbejder udkom i Sverrig. Naar Hr. Rask i Stokholm udgiver den prosaiske Eddas Text, paa samme Tid, da man i Danmark med offentlig og privat Anstrængelse stræber værdigen at publicere de Monumenter, som ere Nordens Stolthed og Danmarks Ejendom, saa kan denne private Indiscretion neppe nok tilgives den iøvrigt udmærkede unge Mands videnskabelige Nidkiærhed; men dersom Det Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab begik en lignende Ubetænksomhed, saa vilde denne vist opvække Kyndiges offentlige Uvillie, og muligen endog paadrage det Hs. Majestæt Kongens, Selskabets ophøjede Velgiørers, allerhøjeste Mishag."