

Report to the Viking Society for Northern Research Travel Support Fund for Conference Attendance

Theoderic of Verona in the Germanic Traditions: Interdisciplinary Perspectives
Fondazione Biblioteca Capitolare di Verona, 24–26 June 2026

The Conference

I had the privilege of attending and presenting at the international conference “Theoderic of Verona in the Germanic Traditions: Interdisciplinary Perspectives” held at the *Fondazione Biblioteca Capitolare di Verona* from 24 to 26 June 2026. The event was organised on the occasion of the 1500th anniversary of the death of Theoderic the Great (c. 453/454–526 CE) and brought together scholars from across Europe and beyond to reassess, from an interdisciplinary standpoint, the rise, development, and transmission of the legend of Theoderic of Verona through different linguistic and cultural contexts: starting from its Late Antique origins, and going through the medieval literary traditions of the Germanic world, up to post-medieval and modern receptions.

The conference was co-organised by the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures of the Università di Verona with Anna Cappellotto as the main organiser, and by the Departments of Modern Languages and of Cultural Heritage of the Alma Mater Studiorum, Università di Bologna, with Davide Bertagnolli and Alessandro Zironi forming the scientific committee. The *Fondazione Biblioteca Capitolare* provided not only the splendid venue but also a special exhibition “Sotto il segno di Teodorico: storia e miti della Verona gota” (Under the Sign of Theodoric: History and Myths of Gothic Verona), which offered a rich material context for the scholarly discussions.



Fig. 1: The conference venue, Fondazione Biblioteca Capitolare di Verona.

Programme and Highlights

The programme was structured around four thematic sessions, each covering a different dimension of the Theoderic legend.

Session 1: Theoderic the Great and the Rise of the Legend

The opening session on 24th June set the historical and literary scene. Cristina La Rocca (Università di Padova) examined how memory of Theoderic was selectively transformed and suppressed after his death, establishing the conditions for legendary elaboration. Andrea Antonio Verardi (Pontificia Università Gregoriana) analysed the image of Theoderic as projected by the Roman Church through the *Liber Pontificalis*, while Daniela Fruscione (Independent Scholar) presented Theoderic in his role as legislator. The session ended with a contribution by Maria Luisa Meneghetti (Accademia dei Lincei) on the intertwined fate of Theoderic and Boethius in the Romance medieval tradition, and a paper by Alessandro Zironi (Università di Bologna), President of the Italian Association of Germanic Philology (AIFG), on the Old English textual transmission, in which Theoderic figures as *rex nefandissimus*.

Session 2: Theoderic in the Nordic Tradition

This session was of particular relevance for me and to researchers in the field of Old Norse studies, as it is in this moment of the conference I was involved with my presentation, also because it focused on the most valuable information for my research interests. It marked the beginning of the second day, 25th June, which started with Mikael Males (Universitetet i Oslo) tracing the earliest attestations of Theoderic in ninth-century Scandinavian sources, and pointing to a forthcoming publication of his. My presentation titled “Theoderic and the Rök Stone: A Runological Perspective” gave a thorough presentation of the runic stone and text from a runological perspective, including an overview of how runologists have interpreted it through the centuries, including the very last geosemiotic proposal. Bianca Patria (Università di Firenze) addressed the enigmatic mention of Theoderic on the Rök stone, one of the most debated runological monuments of the Viking Age in relation to the employed metric system. After the coffee break, Odd Einar Haugen (Universitetet i Bergen) offered a comprehensive survey of eight centuries of editorial engagement with the Saga of Theoderic of Verona in the medieval Nordic tradition, and Veronka Szóke (Università di Cagliari) illustrated the political dimensions of *Þiðreks saga af Bern* at the court of King Hákon IV Hákonarson.

Sessions 3 & 4: Late Heroic Tradition and Post-Medieval Reception

The afternoon of 25th June and the morning of 26th June were dedicated to the longer afterlife of the legend. Massimiliano Bampi (Università di Trento) examined the Swedish reception of *Þiðreks saga* in the late medieval period, and further contributions addressed the figure of *Dietrich von Bern* in Middle High German heroic poetry, such as those complementary by Florian Kragl (Friedrich-Alexander- Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg) and Cordula Kropik (Universität Bayreuth). The final session turned to post-medieval contexts, including the remarkable Old Yiddish adaptation of Theoderic material, discussed by Philipp Friedhofen (Universität Mannheim) and Claudia Rosenzweig (Bar-Ilan University), and a paper on nineteenth- and twentieth-century German juvenile fiction by J. Hermann (Albert-Ludwig-Universität Freiburg). The conference was closed by Anna Cappellotto with a paper tracing

Theoderic's negotiation of identities from the medieval tradition up to the 2024 television series *Der Diplomat*.

Theoderic Beyond the Conference

The conference organisers thoughtfully complemented the academic programme with two memorable activities. On the evening of 24th June, participants were welcomed to visit the exhibition *Sotto il segno di Teodorico* at the Biblioteca Capitolare, followed by an aperitivo in the cloister, a convivial setting that facilitated the kind of informal exchange between scholars. On 25th June, a guided tour by Katia Galvetto (Coordinamento Guide Verona) pleasantly led participants through the sites in Verona associated with Theoderic: from mentioning the monumental gateway of Porta Borsari to the remains of the Roman theatre and those areas of the city that preserve traces of Ostrogothic presence mixed with Roman spolia. Walking these streets in the company of specialists in Germanic philology, runology, and medieval history lent an additional dimension to the scholarly event.

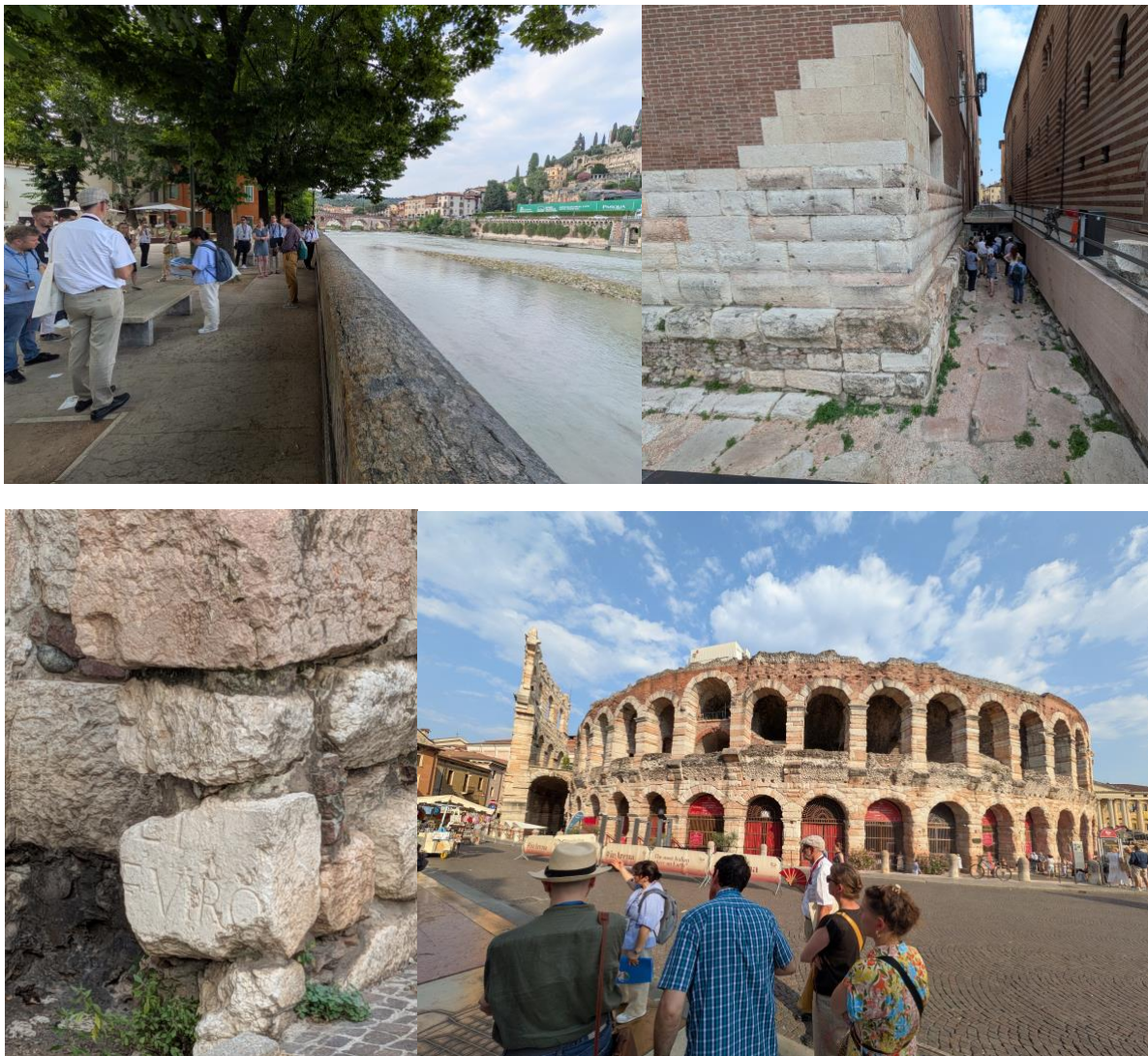


Fig. 2: Guided tour through Ostrogothic sites in Verona, 25th June 2026.

Reflections

Attending this conference proved a stimulating scholarly exchange. The interdisciplinary scope of the programme, which was to bring together historians, runologists, philologists of Old Norse, Old English, Middle High German, Old Yiddish, and Old Swedish, as well as scholars of modern reception, offered an unusually broad view of how a single historical figure generates, across more than a millennium and a half, a constellation of traditions that diverge, intersect, and reinvent one another. The opportunity to discuss my own research with specialists whose approaches differ markedly from those prevalent in Old Norse studies alone was invaluable.

The location of the conference added a further dimension. Verona, which is rendered as Bern in the Norse tradition, is not merely a backdrop: the city itself is part of the legend's topography. Being able to encounter that topography alongside scholars who have spent their careers untangling its textual representations was an experience that I hope it will be proposed more frequently in academic events.

Old and new networks formed during the three days of the conference are already generating productive scholarly collaborations. I look forward to taking these forward in forthcoming projects and perhaps publications, and I am extremely grateful to the Viking Society for Northern Research for the support that made my participation possible.

Paola Peratello

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Paris, 16th July 2026