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te – noch auf bulgarischem Boden für die Verwendung der Handschrift im Gottesdienst ergänzt worden ist, bevor sie ihren Weg in die Moldau gefunden hat.

Die vorliegende Publikation ist trotz gewisser technisch bedingter Mängel bei der Wiedergabe der Handschrift ein wertvoller Baustein für die weitere Arbeit mit diesem nicht nur wichtigen, sondern ausgesprochenen schönen Denkmal der slavischen Literatur.

NICOLINA TRUNTE

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Tatjana N. Jackson

Eastern Europe in Icelandic Sagas

Leeds: Arc Humanities, 2019. VIII, 216 S. = ARC – Beyond Medieval Europe.

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The *Quellenwert* of the Icelandic sagas has long aroused controversy among scholars, especially between historians and those specializing in philology or literature. If nineteenth-century historians tended to accept them word for word, structural analysis and determination of the late composition-dates of narratives on the part of literary scholars has cast serious doubt on the sagas' worth for reconstructing events, culture and society in the Viking-Age, as against in the era from which their earliest extant texts date. Given the dearth of narratives composed around the Baltic Rim or among the East Slavs before the twelfth century, historians have continued to look to the sagas for the deeds of the historical figures they feature, notably Norwegian *konungar* like Olaf Tryggvason. After all, the sagas incorporate verses that were composed by skalds between the ninth and the twelfth centuries, and even verses purportedly composed by King Harald III. Hardrada (r. 1046–1066) himself. However, these will only have been written down long afterwards, and some recent scholars have questioned the fidelity of oral transmission while emphasizing the ability of later scribes to alter verses despite the apparent constraints of archaic metre and language. Were this viewpoint to prevail, it would rob general historians of a rare contemporary voice telling of Nordic elites' engagement with the lands east of the Baltic in the Viking-Age. Fortunately for historians, Tatjana Jackson does not subscribe to this hypercritical school. She endorses the more balanced position of T. M. Andersson, Gísli Sigurðsson and others concerning the interplay between the spoken and the written word, whereby writers of sagas drew upon both components. And she approaches the Old Norse Kings' Sagas in light of Aron Gurevich's dictum: it is "not a question of whether to use the sagas ..., but of how" (p. 11).

Not that Jackson dismisses these sagas' shortcomings as historical sources. The *skalds*, she observes, sang the praises of *konungar* and *jarls* in terms of elite rivalries, battles and bloodshed. Their verses tell of the close interrelationship between leading Norse and Svear families, Rus' princes and their respective armed followings. They sometimes allude to campaigns which Rus' narratives also mention, for example Prince Iaroslav's 1031 campaign against the Poles. Their focus is, however, on

these elites and on the last century of the Viking Age, up to around 1070. They say very little about the communications and commerce that went on at lowlier socioeconomic levels. Indeed, through concentrating on rulers' courts, and travels from Scandinavia and Rus' to Constantinople along "the Way from the Varangians to the Greeks", the sagas give a partial – even misleading – picture of Nordic involvement with the Eastern Lands and the polity that took its name from an offshoot of the Svear – the Rus'. One hears next to nothing of the myriad commercial ventures – sometimes peaceful, often coercive – of dealers in furs and slaves in the Eastern Lands from Lake Ladoga to the Upper Volga and Desna Rivers and beyond, from the late eighth century on. Nor do the sagas say anything about the migration of Scandinavians in substantial numbers to the Upper Volga and, on the Upper Dnieper, Gnezdovo, which archaeological data attests. To her credit, Jackson points out their virtual silence about the Volga route and the import of Muslim dirhams: those few sagas mentioning towns like Suzdal' in northeast Rus' probably drew on contemporary – thus much later – informants and on an Icelandic geographical treatise which perhaps incorporates an earlier list of Rus' powerbases. Even the Volga barely earns mention from the sagas beyond a vague allusion in Yngvars saga to "the largest" of the rivers flowing through Rus' which, as Jackson observes, merely signals longstanding Nordic awareness of a waterway reaching far to the south (pp. 50f.).

It is, in contrast, the political culture of the earliest Christian regimes of the Nordic and Rus' peoples that receives true illumination from the sagas. This is unsurprising, since the *skalds'* verses were themselves part of that culture. The *Kings' Sagas* devoted to four Norwegian rulers are the subject of Part 2 of this book and, one learns from the author's preface, this represents the fruit of labours begun on a project to amass *The Oldest Sources for the History of the Peoples of the USSR* (p. vii). This, in some ways the most commendable part of the book, demonstrates decisively the closeness of ties between *konungar* of the Norwegian and Svear and the courts of Rus' princes in the late tenth and earlier eleventh centuries. Jackson shows rigour in eschewing the romanticizing features of the sagas while showing how they offer details on happenings not attested by Rus' chronicles. Thus, for instance, Olaf Haraldson found refuge with his small son Magnus at Prince Iaroslav's court thanks, in part, to Olaf's spouse being half-sister of Ingigerðr, who was Iaroslav's wife: both were daughters of the Svear ruler Olof Skötkonung. The episode also shows up the shortcomings of the *Kings' Sagas* as sources: they feature the Anglo-Danish overlord Knut only as a background figure, and it is from Western sources that one fully appreciates how much fear of Knut invigorated the marriage-ties between the Norwegian, Svear and Rus' leaderships.

Part 1 is not without value in surveying such parts of the Eastern Lands that were of keenest concern to Nordic elites – and thus *skalds* and later sagas – of the late tenth and earlier eleventh centuries. The Western Dvina was the best-known route into Rus', judging by our Norse sources' abundance in names of places, streams, waterways and peoples located on or near it. This, Jackson fairly suggests, reflects Scandinavians' use of the river from the earliest stages of their infiltration eastwards, while philological expertise underpins her proposed identification of the Kristni saga's Dröfn with a stream or body of water near Polotsk (rather than a 'mountain' as the saga claims). Indeed, the importance of waterways to Nordic visitors to the Eastern Lands is a running theme of the book. One must, though, regret a number of sweeping statements betraying rather narrow cultural horizons. This characterizes, for example, the discussion of the meaning and derivation of Hólmgarðr, the name given in the sagas for the 'Novgorod' of the Rus' chronicles. Jackson seems unaware of the latter name's appearance (in the form Nemogardas) already in the mid-tenth century

in Constantine VII's *De administrando imperio*, despite the identification made by the early twentieth-century historian J. B. Bury and endorsed by scholars like Gottfried Schramm (*Altrußlands Anfang*. Freiburg 2002, pp. 393 f.). Dismissing the derivation of *Hólm* from Old Norse 'island' and *garðr* from Slavic *gorod*, 'town', Jackson asserts of bilingual placenames that "the second, word-building, element is of foreign origin (cf. Aldeigju-borg), but never vice versa" (p. 72). Whether or not this holds true of Rus', it is scarcely the case in the Viking world in general, as witness the so-called 'Grimston hybrids' and other compounds known from the British Isles (See, e.g. Gilian Fellows-Jensen: *Scandinavian placenames in the British Isles*, in: Stefan Brink / Neil Price (eds.): *The Viking World*. London 2008, pp. 391–400). Indeed, at one point (p. 75) Jackson seemingly accepts that the name *Hólmgarðr* may have followed the princely powerbase's shift to Novgorod (literally, 'New Town' in Slavic) from Riurikovo Gorodishche, the fortified town two kilometres to the south, looking onto Lake Il'men. This site is girted with waters of one sort or another and, in the words of its foremost excavator of the late 20th and early 21st century, its "insular character was far the most marked in spring, when the low-lying areas around it flooded and water lay in the meadows for a long time" (E. N. Nosov: *Novgorodskaja zemlia. Severnoe Priil'men'e i Povolkhov'e*, in: N. A. Makarov (ed.): *Rus' v IX-X vekakh. Arkheologicheskaja panorama*. Moscow, Vologda 2012, p. 108). Given that the spring-floods were peak-period for travel and shipping goods across the Eastern Lands, and that Riurikovo Gorodishche was the site of a major Nordic powerbase from no later than "the very beginning of the ninth century" (*ibid.*, p. 109), it could well have received the name 'Island-town' (*Hólmgarðr*) at an early stage. The views of our leading authority on Riurikovo Gorodishche should probably outweigh our author's dismissal of advocates of 'Island-town' as "perhaps not being familiar with the topography of the locality de visu" (p. 72, n. 2).

JONATHAN SHEPARD
Oxford

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Science and Empire in Eastern Europe. Imperial Russia and the Habsburg Monarchy in the 19th Century. Proceedings of the Annual Conference of Collegium Carolinum, Bad Wiessee, 5–8 November 2015

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The *imperial turn* in modern historiography has had a significant impact on the development of new topics in the scholarship on the history of European continental empires. After the heyday of imperial studies, environmental history and the history of science occupied an important place in imperial historiography. The extent of recent developments in the history of science of the Russian and Habsburg empires is reflected in the collection of essays *Science and Empire in Eastern Europe: Imperial Russia and the Habsburg Monarchy in the 19th Century*. The book resulted from the annual convention of the Collegium Carolinum in 2015. It makes an important contribution to the analysis