

Nonetheless, even with this sustained problem with sources, some of the contributors have managed to do a lot with little, and some others have very rich data sets; especially Marc Junge and Daniel Müller, as well as co-editor Kotljarchuk, in his excellent chapter on media and propaganda during the Great Terror.

(One minor grumble: to see serious scholars use the phrase “what we call today *fake news*” (113) gives a certain academic dignity to a phrase that is little more than a lazy, casual insult, and something far short of a concept. News *has* no doubt been sometimes inaccurate, or downright false, since news began – as well as being sometimes genuine and truthful. I would not feel very comfortable in that particular “we”).

Given the above-stated problem with sources, it must be said that the ambitions of this volume, to offer new avenues of research into the treatment of nationalities and religions during the Great Terror has succeeded admirably. This is a tribute to the methods employed by the writers; field research in the absence of documentary materials, and micro-historical scaling, both of area and group, but also precise periodisation, and finally, by quite simply asking the right questions.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/00806765.2018.1525320>



Byzantium and the Viking World, by Fedir Androshchuk, Jonathan Shepard and Monica White. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2016, 463 pp., ills, bibliography, index, ISBN: 9155494625.

Recent years have witnessed a healthy surge of interest in Byzantium and the Viking World. The writings of Sigfús Blöndal, Adolf Stender-Petersen, Benedikt S. Benedikz, Omeljan Pritsak and others did much to create the background for this field; however, this new study, written by specialists in history and archeology who come from different academic traditions, is very necessary. The volume, edited by Fedir Androshchuk, Jonathan Shepard and Monica White, presents nineteen essays based on round-table papers from the International Congress of Byzantine Studies (Sofia, 2011) and the Prepublication Conference of the Nordic Byzantine Network (Uppsala, 2013). In one important respect, this collection is without precedent. The collective work attempts to complement, but not to compete with, the *Early Christianity on the Way from the Varangians to the Greeks*, edited by Ildar Garipzanov and Oleksiy Tolochko in 2011, and *Rom und Byzanz im Norden: Mission und Glaubenswechsel im Ostseeraum während des 8.–14. Jahrhunderts*, published in 1998. The book is divided into four parts.

The first part, titled "Contacts and Cultural Transfer between Byzantium and the Viking World," consists of three papers by Jonathan Shepard, Lesley Abrams and Roland Scheel, where questions concerning the reasons and background for contacts between Byzantium and the Viking world are raised and the previous discussion summarized. These general introductory chapters explore a variety of themes, which include the concept of "Viking diaspora" (Lesley Abrams), contacts between people from the Viking and the Byzantine Worlds, the Varangians in Constantinople, contacts between Byzantium and England along "the East Way," as well as Danish art and Byzantium.

The second part contains papers dedicated to runestones and to all forms of material evidence, which can easily be divided into two categories: the first dealing with economy (including coins and silks) and social relations (slaves); the second – with Byzantine seals, the latter being represented by a single paper by Valentina S. Shandrovskaia. The opening contribution of this section by Fedir Androshchuk explores the material evidence of contacts between Byzantium and the Viking world c. 800–1000. Androshchuk relies almost exclusively on information derived from excavations, although some narratives written in Latin, Greek and Arabic are also used. I am not convinced that the Byzantine impact on Scandinavian military technique can be seen in the appearance of Danish ring forts such as Aggersborg, Fyrkat and Trelleborg, as the author suggests. His analysis is likely to spark fresh debate about the origins of Rus' troops in 989. The next two articles are concerned with Byzantine coins. Florent Audy discusses the use of Byzantine coins found in Scandinavia, focusing on, among other things, their symbolic nature. Finally, Marek Jankowiak investigates the social practices of these coins. So he asks the question, "Why, then, are there so few Byzantine coins in hoards from Scandinavia and the Slavonic lands?" Jankowiak claims that the contacts with Byzantium relied to a much more limited extent on silver, which accounts both for their resilience and for the limited quantity of *miliaresia* in northern hoards. In this connection he argues that the '*miliaresia* for slaves' perspective is, however, only part of a broader picture of the northern trade with Byzantium. His results are fascinating and it would have been interesting to see further interpretation of the role of slavery in early Rus' society. The volume also includes two articles dedicated to runestones. Magnus Källström discusses runic inscriptions in Scandinavia and runes in Byzantium which are usually considered to be "Varangians'" runestones. Källström's paper is a masterful and fascinating look at the homeland of the Varangians and their possible motivations for service to the emperor. Thorgunn Snædal analyzes the famous runes from Byzantium: the Piraeus lion. Unfortunately, Snædal ignores the article by Elena Melnikova (2005), who proposes another reading for these runes. Two papers direct attention towards the Viking trading centre Birka. In the papers by Mathias Bäck and Inga Hägg, the reader may learn about early medieval pottery and silks "made in Byzantium." A strength of the volume are several fine case studies, such as "a Viking sword-bearing resident of southern Asia Minor" (Fedir Androshchuk, Gulgun Köroglu) and the presence of Scandinavian warriors in the Balkans (Valeri Yotov).

The third part focuses on written sources. Elena Mel'nikova opens this section with a consideration of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos' image of *Rhosia* and Rus' in *De administrando imperio*. She provides a fascinating and learned overview of this source. Anna Litvina and Fjodor Uspenskij direct attention to common plot elements in Rus' chronicles and Scandinavian sagas. Litvina and Uspenskij argue that the story of Prince Svjatoslav's meeting with envoys of the Byzantine emperor can be identified in Scandinavian sources (such as Sigurd's Byzantine voyages). Sverrir Jakobsson's contribution deals with later Old Norse narrative sources about Varangians in Constantinople. Jakobsson also discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the sources of "the Varangian legend," on which he draws in order to explain a few major themes in the Old Icelandic family sagas. He concludes that one such theme was the wealth and prestige one could obtain through service to the emperor. The next article, by Scott Ashley, attempts to conceptualise a large-scale history of the Vikings. Ashley proves unequivocally that the solution in many of the tales of Varangians and Scandinavian crusaders was to imagine Byzantium as if it were Iceland. He cites numerous examples illustrating how the places, customs and institutions of one local world were translated into the terms of another.

The final part, entitled "Christianity and the Intensification of Contacts," includes two contributions mostly dealing with the role of the Varangians in Rus'. The article by Monica White discusses the perception of relics in Rus'. White argues that Rus' churchmen were probably aware of the Byzantine tendency to link the most prestigious relics to the imperial household. Finally, the contribution by John H. Lind deals with the concept of "Varangian Christianity." Lind believes that the Church of St Elijah already existed in Kyiv in 944, but that premise is far too optimistic, in this reviewer's view. We do not have any traces of an established Christian community of Kyiv during the ratification of the 944 treaty.

This book is a very welcome contribution to Byzantine and Varangian studies. The very useful illustrations and maps are of good quality. It is worth noting that the book is written for experts.

Reference

Mel'nikova, Elena. 2005. "Vizantija v svete runičeskich nadpisei." *Vizantiiskij vremennik* 64:160–80.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/00806765.2018.1525318>

