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Thomas Frank

University of Aarhus, Denmark

**REDISCOVERING RUSSIAN-SCANDINAVIAN RELATIONS:
THE ROLE OF MEDIEVAL RUSSIAN WATERWAYS**

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This article challenges the Scandinavian silence of medieval Russian-Scandinavian relations and presents a field study (2017) of the medieval waterway Put' iz varjag v greki (the route from the Varangians to the Greeks) as a key to reopen awareness and provide new knowledge of these influential relations. The article more specifically argues that in order to understand the cultural and religious transformations in Scandinavia in the years 800–1200 it is necessary to reimagine Scandinavia with significant relations to Russia, and in light of that reconsider the entire literary evidence. The hypothesis is that field studies according to the oldest sources can substantiate these contacts and thereby allow us to review the literary evidence. As a literary proof of relations, the article outlines and discusses medieval Eastern and Western sources according to the signifiers “Rus” and “Varangians”. Furthermore, it considers the problems with former field studies and presents the findings of the new study. The findings show that travel to and from Russia and further east along the Russian rivers was within normal medieval travel-time, and at its core there was cooperation and exchange with the local population. Finally, in light of the findings the article gives a preliminary reinterpretation of the textual evidence of exchange in the period of the Danish King Harald Blathooth and the Russian Prince Vladimir the Great. It proposes that exchanges influenced the religious transformations in both Denmark and Russia.

Keywords: Russian-Scandinavian relations, the route from the Varangians to the Greeks, Old Rus', Rus', Varangians, Russian waterways, medieval Russian boats, cultural exchange, Povest' vremennyh let, Vladimir the Great, Harald Blathooth, Medieval Europe, Old Norse-Icelandic literature.

“At the same time, it must be said that the influx of eastern elements to the north must not be arbitrarily isolated, but rather must be viewed against the broad background of a comprehensive cultural importation in other areas as well”.

Danish philologist Adolf Stender-Petersen, raised in St. Petersburg

1. INTRODUCTION

A significant number of texts describe Russian-Scandinavian¹ relations in the Middle Ages². They present material evidence that people for centuries travelled between Scandinavia and Russia. En route, they exchanged new ideas, unique customs, spectacular legends, stylish garments, and a variety of goods. This paved the way for cultural and religious transformation in Scandinavia and Russia.

However, as Roman Kovalev argues, “Russia came to be written out of Medieval Europe” [Kovalev, 2015, p. 158], and because of this, medieval Russian-Scandinavian relations (MRSR) disappeared from the historical discourse in Scandinavia³. This is apparent in several Danish monographs [Fabricius, 1934; Koch, 1950; Koch, 1967; Sawyer, 1988; Lausten, 1989; Nyberg, 2002; Mcguire, 2009]⁴.

One likely explanation of this scientific silence is geographical. There is still no sufficient proof of the routes connecting far away medieval

¹ This article uses Russia as a name for Old Rus and the Old Russian state circa 800–1200. Within research, another name is Kievan-Rus. Old Norse-Icelandic literature names Old Rus and the Old Russian state Gardar or Gardaríke. Jackson discusses the development of these names in Old-Nordic texts [Jackson, 2019, p. 65–69]. The main textual source of Russia in this period is the Russian chronicle *Povest' vremennyh let*.

² The era around 500–1400.

³ It is unclear precisely why and exactly when this happened. Evidence points to the first centuries following the division of the Christian Church in 1054.

⁴ Four exceptions are the works of the philologists Gunnar O. Svane and Adolf Stender-Petersen, and the historian John H. Lind and archaeologist Søren M. Sindbæk. By great effort, Svane translated the Russian chronicle *Povest' vremennyh let* and other medieval Russian texts into Danish [Svane, 1983, 1989]. Stender-Petersen studied the influence of Eastern tales in medieval Scandinavian literature [Stender-Petersen, 1934]. Lind has more extensively studied MRSR [Lind, 2016, 2017], and Sindbæk studied the trade routes and networks connecting Scandinavia and Russia [Sindbæk, 2003, 2007, 2013].

Russian settlements with Scandinavia. We do not know for sure if the main waterway Put' iz varjag v greki (PIVG), the route from the Varangians to the Greeks, as it is described in the Russian chronicle *Povest' vremennyh let* (PVL) and in the Byzantine text *De administrando imperio* (DAI), existed and was frequently travelled by Scandinavians. Notwithstanding material evidence, this geographical uncertainty is a mental barrier to our understanding of relations between medieval Russia and medieval Scandinavia.

Another possible explanation is the literary evidence investigated by Danish scholars. The focus of interest has been Western sources (written in Latin) with few indications of relations, and Old Norse-Icelandic texts, which are predominantly fictional. A third and equally probable explanation is limited exchange of research between Scandinavia and Russia, and few interdisciplinary studies.

This article argues that in order to understand the cultural and religious transformations in Scandinavia in the years 800–1200, it is necessary to investigate if Russia, as supported by evidence and claimed by Kovalev, was part of Medieval Europe⁵ with significant relations with Scandinavia. If this is true, we must reconsider the literary evidence, including the Eastern sources, with the methods of both theology and history, as well as literary science⁶. The article, furthermore, argues that the key to this investigation is field studies of medieval Russian waterways. Field studies can verify 1) if PIVG existed and was frequently used, and 2) if Scandinavians, as described in DAI, sailed in small and simple locally constructed boats from the Russian part of PIVG. If this verification is possible, it will imply that medieval travel along PIVG was in itself an expression of exchange (due to transfer of boat technology). Moreover, we will have proof of frequent travel between Russia and Scandinavia. This will provide a basis on which to reexamine the non-fictional ele-

⁵ Christian Raffensberger advances the same claim [Raffensberger, 2012]. However, Kovalev argues that Raffensberger goes too far in his attempt to place Old Rus within a Medieval Europe of the Latin rite: “Rus’ should not be excluded from the study of medieval Europe, although its precise place in it still needs to be located. But to do so, it is necessary to reimagine “Europe” and perhaps one way to do so is to expand, diversify its parameters to include Kievan-Rus’, without compromising the latter’s uniqueness” [Kovalev, 2016, p. 187].

⁶ Revision of the texts is also the argument of Jackson [Jackson, 2019, p. 172]. Here, the question of genre is important and the fact that it is difficult to discern non-fictional elements from the sagas [Finlay, 2014].

ments within the fictional evidence of Old Norse-Icelandic literature, together with the evidence in both Eastern and Western sources, and the much stronger material evidence in archaeological finds⁷.

The article first outlines the Eastern and Western literary evidence of Scandinavian-Russian relations according to the signifiers “Rus” and “Varangians”, and then presents the field study of PIVG accomplished by the author in 2017, which situated Russia within normal medieval travel-time. Finally, in view of this study, it offers a preliminary reinterpretation of the textual evidence of exchange between Russia and Scandinavia in the period of the Danish king Harald Bluetooth (c. 911–986) and the Russian prince Vladimir the Great (c. 948–1015).

2. THE EASTERN AND WESTERN LITEARY EVIDENCE

There is solid material evidence of medieval Scandinavian-Russian encounters [Noonan, 1980, Franklin, Shepard, 1998; Lebedev, 2005; Kovalev, 2012; Bjerg, Lind, Sindbæk, 2013; Androshchuk, 2016; Makarov, 2017]. Different types of artifacts from Scandinavia have been found in kurgans (burial mounds with internal chambers) and hoards in the vicinity or within the early settlements along the rivers in Russia. Artifacts as far as the Near East was transported via Russian waterways to Scandinavia. In addition, there exist a large number of texts in different literary genres with indications and evidence. The Russian scholar Tatjana N. Jackson has listed eight different genres within the Old Norse-Icelandic evidence:

“Skaldic poetry, runic inscriptions, sagas (Islandinga-, konunga-, fornaldersögur), chronicles, books of homilies, and lives of saints, geographical treatises, and annals” [2019, p. 171].

Jackson has convincingly analysed the presence of MRSR, including royal marriages, in these texts. Regarding the runic texts, she states two important proofs:

“They supersede fourfold the number of Scandinavian memorial runic inscriptions connected with western activities” [2019, p. 8].

“They point to good acquaintance of Scandinavians with the East European territory, and mostly with the main sea and river routes from the Baltic to the

⁷ Likewise, the Russian scholar Gleb Lebedev saw field studies of PIVG as the key to the much-debated Varangian question [Lebedev, 2020].

Black and the Caspian Seas, as well as to various long-established contacts between Scandinavia and Eastern Europe” [2019, p. 9].

However, Old Norse-Icelandic literature is part of a much larger textual complex, with both Western and several Eastern texts in Slavic, Koine Greek and Arabic. Some texts are concurrent; others, like most of the Old Norse-Icelandic texts, refer to earlier times and/or are relying on older texts (Table 1).

Table 1. Western and Eastern texts with “Rus” and “Varangians”

Written in Slavic	Written in Latin (Western evidence)
Povest' vremennyh let, c. 1100 (The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian text) Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis', c. 1000– 1400 (The Chronicle of Novgorod 1016–1171)	The annals of St-Bertin, c. 839 Descriptio civitatum ad septentrionalem plagam Danubii, c. 840–880 The works of Luidprand of Cremona, c. 960
Written in Koine Greek	Written in Arabic
Georgios Monachus, c. 860 The homilies of Photius, c. 860 The life of St. George of Amastris, c. 900 Leonis Imperatoris Tactica, c. 900 De administrando imperio, c. 950 De cerimoniis aulae Byzantinae, c. 950 John Skylitzes: A Synopsis of Byzantine History 811–1057, c. 1057 Strategikon of Kekaumenos, c. 1078 The Alexiad, c. 1148	The book of routes and provinces, c. 850 Ibn Rustah's Book of precious things, c. 900 Ibn Fadlan's Journey to Russia, c. 920 The book of countries, c. 950 El-Mas'udis's Meadows of gold and mines of gems, c. 950 The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from Al-Kamil Fi'L- Ta'Rikh, c. 1230

In these texts, “Rus” and “Varangians” are signifiers of Scandinavian presence and activity. “Rus” occurs most often in the texts. PVL, Old-Nordic-Icelandic and some Byzantine texts (The Alexiad, Strategikon of Kekaumenos) use “Varangians”⁸. Both “Rus” and “Varangians” signify individuals and groups of individuals from Scandinavia, but also

⁸ The earliest textual evidence of “Rus” is from 839, and of “Varangians” from around 1080. Use of “Varangians” is not present in DAI. It occurs several times in Heimskringla, the history of the kings of Norway written by Snurra Sturluson in the 13th century.

from other regions of medieval Europe, including Russia itself. Two Arabic texts speak of “Rus” as the name of a group of different ethnicities, including people from the north and Russia⁹.

Contrary to the predominant silence of MRSR within Danish research, these texts, like Old Norse-Icelandic literature, indicate a frequent exchange, typically by men engaged in trade and warfare in Russia and further south and east. They reveal, in line with material evidence, that Russia (known in Scandinavia as Gardar or Gardaríki) in the Middle Ages was more than a transit area. As geographical studies demonstrate, Russia constituted the heart of trade routes between north and south, east and west. The texts indicate that the exchange took place during a long period (at least two centuries), and over long distances (around 6,000 kilometres). Scandinavians travelled via Russia much further than Eastern Europe, as far as Byzantium, Rome, what is now Israel, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan. As a piece of literary evidence, runic inscriptions have been found along PIVG, on the island of Berezan where the river Dnepr empties into the Black Sea, and in Byzantium. [Jackson, 2019; Jansson, 1964].

3. FIELD STUDY OF PIVG

PIVG has, as Christian Raffensberger [Raffensberger, 2012, p. 856] claims, been the main analytical framework regarding Rus’ and Medieval Europe¹⁰. The Russian scholar Gleb Lebedev states that PIVG “should be assessed by modern scholars as the first and earliest example of international cooperation, by way of cultural and human communications, in the construction of Europe” [Lebedev, 2005, p. 378]. Moreover, PIVG, according to Lebedev, “promoted urbanization in Scandinavia, from Birka and Haithabu, to Sigtuna, Oslo, Nidaros, Bergen, Aarhus, Roskilde, Lund and Visby, among others” [Lebedev, 2005, p. 377].

⁹ “The Russians consist of several different nations and distinct hordes.” [El-Mas’udi, p. 416]. “The Russians are divided into three tribes; one lives near the Bulgarians; their king lives in the city of Kuthaba, which is larger than Bulgar. The second tribe is called Slaven, and the third Uthanie; your king lives in Arba.” [Ebu Issak, p. 106]. Interestingly, PVL includes “Rus” among “Varangians”: “They accordingly went overseas to the Varangian Rus’: these particular Rus’ were known as Varangians” [PVL, p. 59].

¹⁰ Other routes existed. Rivers such as Dvina, Dniester and Volga were part of a larger medieval system of Russian waterways.



Figure. PIVG according to PVL. Map elaborated by Thomas Frank on the basis of <https://mapswire.com>

PVL and DAI outline the itinerary of PIVG, and DAI in detail describes the boats used, circumstances regarding the river and sea, and the dangers from hostile tribes along the way. These two texts make it possible to reconstruct PIVG (see figure).

“When the Polyanians lived by themselves among the hills, a trade-route connected the Varangians with the Greeks [Put’ iz varjag v greki]. Starting from Greece, this route proceeds along the Dnieper, above which a portage leads to the Lovat’. By following the Lovat’, the great lake Il’men’ is reached. The river Volkhov flows out of this lake and enters the great lake Nevo. The mouth of this lake opens into the Varangian Sea. Over this sea goes the route to Rome, and on from Rome overseas to Tsar’grad. The Pontus, into which flows the river Dnieper, may be reached from that point” [PVL, p. 53].

“The monoxyla¹¹ which come down from outer Russia to Constantinople are from Novgorod, where Sviatoslav, son of Igor, prince of Russia, had his seat,

¹¹ “Monoxyla” literally means boats made from one tree trunk. In addition to the reference in DAI, these boats are mentioned in other Byzantine sources [Tactica

and others from the city of Smolensk and from Teliutza and Chernigov and from Vyshegrad. All these come down the river Dnieper and are collected together at the city of Kiev [...] And in the month of June, they move off down the river Dnieper.” [DAI, p. 57–59]

Today, PIVG and the Russian waterways have changed on larger stretches because of power stations. The cataracts of PIVG mentioned in DAI have been overflowed. Along the Ukrainian part, there are large areas of sea, where river valleys before defined the landscape. Moreover, entire river sections in the Russian part have been abandoned. Vegetation now dominates these parts. Lastly, since the Middle Ages, geography has changed due to uplift and natural changes of the river flow. Therefore, it is no longer possible to explore PIVG exactly as it was in medieval times. Still, studies of old maps, satellite photos and the oldest known descriptions of the route make it possible to reconstruct a likely route of PIVG.

3.1. Former studies: their successes, biases and problems

The Russian, Swedish and Norwegian field studies in 1985–2016 [Lebedev, Zhvitchashvili, 2000; Edberg, 2017; Nylén, 1986, Widberg, 2016] achieved some success. Nevertheless, questions remain. All these studies had the same problematic bias concerning the Russian inland waterways and the Black Sea: the idea that Scandinavians used their own much larger, heavier and more technically refined ships on the entire length of PIVG. As mentioned and seen above, this is contrary to the description of boats in DAI. Moreover, it is not entirely consistent with Russian research and material evidence at Veliky Novgorod, Staraja Ladoga and Gnezdovo [Murasheva, Malysheva, 2017; Sorokin, 2020].

These field studies experienced serious challenges on parts of the route, and none of these expeditions journeyed the full length of the PIVG. Some had to move the boats long distances over land because of the size of the boats. Their results demonstrated that travel by Russian waterways in these boat types, compared to other medieval travel, was very difficult and time-consuming. As an example, the Swedish expedi-

of Leo VI; the works of Luidprand of Cremona; A Synopsis of Byzantine history]. The archeologist Ole Crumlin-Pedersen has studied the importance of this boat type [Crumlin-Pedersen, Jensen, 2018].

tions in 1994 and 1996 (from Sweden to the outflow of the River Dnepr in the Black Sea) took 113 days without the days spent for transport.

Though they provide important evidence about travel on the Baltic Sea, none of these studies can sufficiently claim to corroborate the textual and material evidence. In fact, the results of these studies suggest, as DAI claims, that Scandinavians needed to use smaller locally made boats as early on PIVG as Veliky Novgorod or even Staraja Ladoga.

3.2. An alternative theory

In 2003, the Danish archaeologist Søren M. Sindbæk presented an elaborated theory of winter transport. According to him, use of sledges was probable along the Northern section of PIVG (from Staraja Ladoga to Gnezdovo) [Sindbæk, 2003]. Part of his argument was the results of the former field studies [Sindbæk, 2003, p. 182] — specifically, the fact that they proved PIVG to be a very difficult and time-consuming route to sail in Scandinavian ships from the period. His model of transport also found support in archaeological finds from Staraja Ladoga and Veliky Novgorod, and in similar ideas by the Russian archaeologist Alexander M. Miklyaev [Miklyaev, 1992]. This theory, together with the ideas of Miklyaev, will have to be revised if convincing evidence is found for frequent use of smaller local boats.

3.3. Hypothesis and results

The hypothesis of the field study in 2017 was that PIVG, from Staraja Ladoga to Constantinople, could be conquered in simple and smaller locally built boats, and faster than previous studies showed. This would prove the exchange of boat technology and a high frequency of travel, and thereby overall strong and vivid MRSR.

First, the results of the field study, which was made during autumn, substantiated the itinerary of PIVG and DAI's claim of smaller boats. In 59 days, it was possible for one man to travel the entire length of PIVG from Russia by rowing a small boat weighing circa 60 kilograms, including provisions, and 5.5 metres long, similar to some finds of monoxyla [Crumlin-Pedersen, Jensen, 2018, p. 14–15] (Table 2).

At speeds between three and four knots and against the current, it took four days to sail from Staraja Ladoga to Veliky Novgorod, from Veliky Novgorod against the current to the first dragging point 11 days,

and from there three days to Gnezdovo at the river Dnepr. From Gnezdovo, it took ten days at speeds over four knots and with the current to Kiev. From Kiev, it took 15 days at speeds over four knots and with the current to the place where Dnepr flows into the Black Sea. From the outflow of Dnepr to Constantinople, it took 16 days under good weather conditions. Here it was proved, as DAI claims, that is possible to use small boats (“monoxyla”) on the Black Sea. The entire length of the reconstructed and tested PIVG was around 3500 kilometres. Besides the 59 days, five days were spent on layover. The average speed against the current until Gnezdovo was around 3.5 knots, with the current, and on the Black Sea around four knots.

Table 2. PIVG from Russia. Distances and days spent with rest during nights.
Thomas Frank, 2020

Start	End	River and Sea	Days	Distance (km)
Staraja Ladoga	Veliky Novgorod	Volkov	4	210
Veliky Novgorod	Kholm	Lovat	7	461
Kholm	1. dragging point/Usvjaty	Lovat	4	743
1. dragging point	2. dragging point/Gnezdovo	Kaspla/Udra	3	898
Gnezdovo	Kiev	Dnepr	10	1,719
Kiev	Kerson	Dnepr	15	2,690
Kerson	Constantinople	Black Sea	16	3,533
			59	

In theory, even fewer days would have been necessary, when travelling during nights and with speeds known from antiquity: a high average of six knots and an extreme fast speed of eight knots. Moreover, calculations by ORBIS, the Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World, reveal that instead of 16 days on the Black Sea, as few as six days were necessary¹².

¹² Interestingly, the return, from Gnezdovo to Staraja Ladoga, with the current, would be several days faster. Likewise, the return from Kiev and Kerson, against the current to Gnezdovo, would demand more time. Into consideration must be taken,

3.4. Results compared

Though PIVG from Russia was travelled in a smaller boat and much faster than previous studies, the results need to be compared to normal medieval travel-time.

Medieval texts indicate normal travel-time¹³. Adam of Bremen wrote in *Gesta Hamburgensis* around the year 1000 that it took 14 days to sail from Harald Bluetooth's settlement Wolin in present-day Poland to Russia. Unfortunately, there is no account of where in Russia (the field study points at two likely places, Staraja Ladoga and Veliky Novgorod). In a source from the late ninth century [Lund, 1983], Ottar reports that he, from his home in Helgoland (in Norway) travelled an entire month to Kaupang (near the present city of Oslo). The Scandinavian seafarer Wulfstan, in the same source, states that it took him seven days and nights to sail from the Danish trade city Haithabu (Modern day Schleswig in Germany) to Truso in present-day Poland [Lund, 1983]. Compared to evidence of similar and frequent travels in antiquity, these numbers are convincing [Casson, 1951]. This means it is reasonable to say that 5-30 days were normal medieval travel-time on sea.

In addition, skaldic poetry and sagas mention 12 Russian towns, among them Staraja Ladoga 40 times [Jackson, 2019, p.85]. *Gesta Danorum* mentions places related to the PIVG about 50 times. In other words, together with the material evidence, this literary evidence and PVL connect Scandinavian travels to Russia.

The compared results of the field study, with rather few days between the known settlements along PIVG [Franklin, Shepard, 1998; Sindbæk, 2003; Lebedev, 2005; Androshchuk, Shepard, White, 2016; Makarov, 2017] Staraja Ladoga, Veliky Novgorod, Kholm, Usvjaty, Gnezdovo and Kiev (see table 2), place PIVG, at least as far as Kiev, within normal medieval Scandinavian travel-time by sea. Therefore, as DAI indicates, it is reasonable to propose that Scandinavians, even though they needed assistance, did not consider travel on Russian waterways to be a one-way expedition. Moreover, it was frequent, compared to medieval travel in general, as suggested by literary sources and material evidence. Familiar

that the field study was made in autumn, with less water in the rivers and fewer hours of light to navigate safely. These circumstances will be investigated, in a forthcoming field study in spring 2021.

¹³ Further development of this concept is necessary. It will be part of a forthcoming field study in spring 2021.

travel-times between Russian settlements gave Scandinavians courage to sail further and further to the East, and travel to and from the settlements, without the necessity of overwintering.

4. RECONSIDERING THE LITERARY EVIDENCE OF EXCHANGE IN THE PERIOD OF THE DANISH KING HAROLD BLUETHOOTH AND THE RUSSIAN PRINCE VLADIMIR THE GREAT

The verification of frequent medieval travel in simple locally made boats on Russian waterways, and sometimes all the way to Constantinople, allows us preliminarily to reconsider the textual evidence in the time of the Danish king Harold Bluetooth and the Russian prince Vladimir the Great. In PVL, there are indications of massive and lively traffic between Scandinavia and Russia in 850–980. In the year 941, PVL remarks that “Igor began to collect a great army and sent many messengers after the Varangians beyond the sea, inviting them to attack the Greeks, for he desired to make war upon them” [PVL, p.72]. This article, in line with Androshchuk [Androshchuk, 2016], proposes that Denmark was among the recruitment areas, and as Saxo and Njal’s saga indicate that Harald Bluetooth had contacts with Russia and most likely was in Old Rus’ far beyond Staraja Ladoga.

“When Gorm was dead, Harald was eager to increase the reputation of the kingdom he had inherited from him, by excellent brave exploits, and he therefore sailed with a Viking fleet to the east and ravaged the sea around there” [Gesta Danorum, s. 383].

“The king [Harald Bluetooth] gave him [Gunnar] a dress of honour, a pair of gold-stitched gloves and a headband with gold knots on it, as well as a hat from Gardar” [Njal’s saga, chap. 31].

Both Gesta Danorum and PVL are quiet about associations between Scandinavian kings and Russian princes. They did, however, exist, as we know from the evidence of several royal marriages [Jackson, 2019; Hermanson, Magnusdottir, 2016]. According to archaeology, the heyday of MRSR was in the period when Harald lived, in the last half of the tenth century [Franklin, Shepard, 1996; Avdusin, Puskina, 1988; Mukarov, 2017]. Harald Bluetooth must have known of the existence of the Russian prince Oleg and his wife Olga, who were baptized in Constantinople, and their son Sviatoslav, and their grandson Vladimir the Great. The hat mentioned in Njal’s saga could be a proof of that. On the

other hand, Vladimir the Great is likely to have met Harald Bluetooth when he went to Scandinavia to gather troops around 977. According to PVL, he stayed there for three years. In that context, we must examine the establishment of the hillforts during Harald's reign at that exact time¹⁴. Within reach of normal travel as Russia and Scandinavia were from each other (as indicated by the field study), influential exchange in both directions took place.

It is reasonable, and in line with Lebedev [Lebedev, 2005] to propose religious exchange in the period of the Danish king Harald Bluetooth and the Russian prince Vladimir the Great. The hypothesis to put forward is that Harald Bluetooth's relations to Russia played a role in his religious transformation of Denmark around 965 [Koch, 1967; Lausten, 1989]. Conversely, many of the troops recruited by Vladimir the Great in the time of Harald, who assisted him in establishing his reign, might have been recently baptized in Denmark¹⁵. That could have influenced Vladimir's religious transformation of Old Rus' around 988, according to PVL.

5. CONCLUSION

Russian-Scandinavian relations were written out of Medieval Europe in spite of ample material evidence, Eastern and Western sources, and many possible non-fictional elements in the Old Norse-Icelandic literature. An effort to write Russia back into Scandinavian history was made with the present field study. This is in line with previous efforts, especially those of Stender-Petersen, Svane, Noonan, Lebedev, Raffensberger, Kovalev, Edberg, Widerberg, Androshchuk, Lind, Sindbæk and Jackson. The field study of Put' iz varjag v greki rediscovered a central Russian-Scandinavian waterway. Russia in the Middle Ages was rather close to Scandinavian coasts and inlands, as imagined in the dramatic stories in Old Norse-Icelandic sagas. It was within normal medieval travel-time. More Scandinavian scholars need to include MRSR in their research. We must picture groups of medieval Scandinavians living with

¹⁴ Androshchuk [2016, p.108] argues that the technology to construct the hillforts came to Denmark from Byzantium. If that is correct, this could have been via Vladimir.

¹⁵ Thietmar writes around 1000 that Kiev was full of Danes [The Chronicle of Thietmar of Merseburg].

Russia geographically and culturally as an integral part of their identity and mental map, as pointed out by Jackson [Jackson, 2019].

The frequent medieval travels along PIVG included at their core cooperation and exchange with the local population. Friendships grew, and by the time Scandinavians became integrated in Russia. 10th-century Danish history must be seen through the lenses of these exchanges. Otherwise, we cannot understand the religious and cultural transformations in Scandinavia and particularly Denmark. Here, Scandinavian research can benefit from Russian research. Just as exchange was the prerequisite for accomplishing PIVG, it is today a prerequisite to rediscover and revive its colourful history. In the words of Raffensberger, we need to reimagine Medieval Europe [Raffensberger, 2012].

In spring 2021, another field study will take place. The idea is to follow Russian waterways further east in a boat, as described in DAI and built in Russia by a master who has been taught the craft by his ancestors. The expectation is that this study will provide more knowledge and even stronger evidence of the exchanges via the waterways, which connected Russia and Scandinavia, and with great consequences for both. This coming study will, like the one accomplished in 2017, take up the idea envisioned by the Russian scholar Gleb Lebedev that “the time has come to examine the ancient water-route with pre-sailing boats powered exclusively by oars” [Gleb, 2005, p. 384].

ABBREVIATIONS

DAI: De administrando imperio
MRSR: Medieval Russian-Scandinavian relations
PVL: Povest' vremennyh let
PIVG: Put' iz varjag v greki

MEDIEVAL SOURCES

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Томас Франк

Университет Орхуса, Дания

**ПОВТОРНОЕ ОТКРЫТИЕ РУССКО-СКАДИНАВСКИХ ОТНОШЕНИЙ:
РОЛЬ СРЕДНЕВЕКОВЫХ РУССКИХ ВОДНЫХ ПУТЕЙ**

Для цитирования: Frank T. Rediscovering Russian-Scandinavian relations: The role of medieval Russian waterways // Скандинавская филология. 2020. Т. 18. Вып. 2. С. 409–427. <https://doi.org/10.21638/11701/spbu21.2020.213>

Автор статьи обращается к забытой теме русско-скандинавских отношений в Средние века и рассматривает полевое исследование (2017) средневекового водного «Пути из варяг в греки» с целью привлечения внимания к теме и получения новых знаний о важных для России и Скандинавии отношениях. Для понимания культурных и религиозных трансформаций в Скандинавии в IX–XIII веках необходимо по-новому взглянуть на северные страны в аспекте значимых отношений с Россией, и в свете этого пересмотреть все имеющиеся литературные свидетельства. По мнению автора, полевые исследования, основанные на древнейших источниках, могут подтвердить значимость таких контактов и тем самым позволят пересмотреть имеющиеся литературные свидетельства. В качестве доказательства этих отношений в статье представлены и обсуждаются средневековые восточные и западные источники, содержащие упоминание о Руси и варягах, а также затрагиваются проблемы, связанные с прежними полевыми исследованиями. Результаты нового полевого исследования, представленные в статье, показывают, что путешествие в Россию и далее на восток по русским ре-

кам по времени соответствует обычному средневековому времени путешествия, и целью такого путешествия было сотрудничество и обмен с местным населением. В свете полученных результатов дается предварительное переосмысление текстовых свидетельств об обмене в период правления датского короля Харальда Синезубого (ок. 911–986) и русского князя Владимира (ок. 948–1015). На основе исследования автором выдвигается предположение, что торговый и культурный обмен повлиял на религиозные преобразования как в Дании, так и в России.

Ключевые слова: русско-скандинавские отношения, путь из варяг в греки, Древняя Русь, Русь, варяги, русские водные пути, средневековые русские лодки, культурный обмен, Повесть временных лет, Владимир Святославич, Харальд Синезубый, Средневековая Европа, древнескандинавско-исландская литература.

Thomas Frank

PhD, Affiliated Researcher,
University of Aarhus,
7, Jens Chr. Skous Vej, Aarhus, 8000, Denmark
E-mail: tofr@km.dk

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