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[STYLESHEET](#) [EDITORS](#)[OPEN JOURNAL SYSTEMS](#)[Journal Help](#)[Home](#) > [2017 Reviews](#) > **Cole**[The Medieval Review](#) 17.06.25

Jezierski, Wojtek and Lars Hermanson, eds.
Imagined Communities on the Baltic Rim, from the Eleventh to Fifteenth Centuries. Crossing Boundaries: Turku Medieval and Early Modern Studies . Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016. pp. 394. ISBN: 978-90-8964-983-6. (hardback).

Reviewed by:

Richard Cole
University of Notre Dame
richardcole@alumni.harvard.edu

The introduction by Wojtek Jezierski (11-33) opens by using Ibrāhīm ibn Ya'qūb's tenth-century adventures in northern Europe to exemplify the sort of fresh-eyed, anthropologically-minded approach that these essays aim to take. Jezierski focuses on the anthropologist Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" (alluded to in the title of the book) and the medievalist Barbara Rosenwein's "emotional communities." Most of the contributors go on to make at least passing references to both these scholars. The introduction is well-executed, and convinces the reader of the possibility--and importance--of a variety of Baltic studies which moves between the diverse cultural and class communities of the region, recognizing difference while acknowledging that a great deal of labor has been expended to construct that difference. If one were to offer a small suggestion for improvement, the use of a 1946 Latin translation of Ibrāhīm ibn Ya'qūb's account might be profitably exchanged for the 2012 English translation by Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone (in *Ibn Fadlān and the Land of Darkness*, New York: Penguin 2012, 162-8). On a similar note, Jezierski presents as plain fact that Ibrāhīm was a slave-trader (11). This is possible but there is no decisive evidence to that effect from his writing: indeed, scholars have otherwise described Ibrāhīm as a diplomat, merchant, or even a medical expert.

The book is thereafter divided into four subsections. The first is called "Visions of Community." It begins with Thomas Foerster's "Imagining the Baltic. Mental Mapping in the Works of Adam of Bremen and Saxo Grammaticus, Eleventh-Thirteenth Centuries"

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(37-58). As the title suggests, Foerster's essay traces the changing geographical and aesthetic implications of the northern seas (the Baltic, but sometimes Norway's coastal waters too). Foerster finds that Adam's Baltic contains many fantastical elements compared to Saxo's *realpolitische* (my choice of words, not Foerster's) view of the Baltic as a campaign map for the burgeoning Danish colonial project. The essay offers a fascinating insight into the imaginations of two different observers of life in the Baltic, writing at two different turning points in northern European history.

The next chapter is by Lars Hermanson, "Discourses of Communion, Abbot William of Æbelholt and Saxo Grammaticus: Imagining the Christian Danish Community, Early Thirteenth Century" (59-87). Hermanson describes the language through which communities were constituted in each example. Hermanson works rather more closely from Anderson's and Rosenwein's schemas than the preceding chapter does. This strategy provides a novel and illuminating approach towards Danish monastic and ecclesiastical culture. However, the present reviewer was sometimes left hungry for further substantiation. For example, the reader may be tantalized by the suggestions that "only through a sacral language could the ontological proof of the foundation for solidarity be expressed" (62) or indeed that "within the oral culture norms were instead activated in concrete situations" (72). Nonetheless, Hermanson's penetrating terminological study will be of use to historians of the Danish church.

Margaretha Nordquist concludes the first subsection with "Envisioning a Political Community. Peasants and Swedish Men in Vernacular Rhyme Chronicles, Late Fifteenth Century" (89-119). Nordquist surveys the *Sturekrönika* in particular, an East Norse rhyming chronicle from the late 1400s. The essay is a delicate examination of the emergence of *swänske* and *swänske meen* as meaningful terms during the period in question. Particularly relevant in our modern era of heightened nationalism, the study shows that Swedishness has in no way been a historically stable phenomenon. Nordquist shows that "Swedish men" in the *Sturekrönika* might include Finnish-speakers (96-97) but probably did not include the peasantry (110-114), even though the latter were the majority of the population in Sweden. No doubt owing to a word limit, Nordquist's study rarely reproduces actual text from the *Sturekrönika*. Instead, footnotes provide references to line numbers in Klemming's edition. Therefore a reader unfamiliar with the rhyming chronicle, or who does not have the edition to hand, will often have to take Nordquist's readings in good faith. Nonetheless, it must be stressed that this is a minor gripe. Nordquist's study is highly engaging and lucid.

The second subsection, "Cultic and Missionary Communities," begins with Grzegorz Pac's "Communities of Devotion across the Boundaries, Women and Religious Bonds on the Baltic Rim and in Central Europe, Eleventh-Twelfth Centuries" (123-154). Pac provides a case study of how noble women, married across dynastic lines, brought new saints' cults to various areas of northern Europe. Pac notes that cults of saints, plausibly transmitted by incoming

queens, could cross the schism between the western and eastern churches. Pac draws on work by John H. Lind in his survey of Western-to-Eastern transmission, but makes an original contribution with his suggestion of a case going in the opposite direction. He suggests that the cult of St. Nicholas of Myra was brought to Poland at an earlier date than elsewhere in Europe via the marriage of Queen Richeza (granddaughter of the Greek Empress Theophanu) to King Mieszko II in 1013.

Jezierski follows with "Risk Societies on the Frontier. Missionary Emotional Communities in the Southern Baltic, Eleventh-Thirteenth Centuries" (155-190). Jezierski deploys Ulrich Beck's notion of a "risk society," "[a] society organize[d] in response to risk...[with a] heightened preoccupation with the questions of future, unpredictability, and safety" (156). Jezierski considers examples of various missionaries in the Baltic region, e.g., Anskar, Rimbart, Helmold, Johannes Stric and Theodoric, and considers what emotions were attributed to them by medieval authors when faced with the prospect of hostile and recalcitrant pagans. There is also a survey of the frequency with which various words pertaining to emotion are used in the *Chronicon Livoniae* (174-146). Jezierski's chapter effectively conveys the sense of drama to be found in the personal stories of missionaries to the Baltic.

The next essay is "Expanding Communities. Henry of Livonia on the Making of a Christian Colony, Early Thirteenth Century" by Linda Kaljundi (191-221). Kaljundi offers a study of Henry's *Chronicon Livoniae*, particularly Henry's abundant use of Old Testament and Maccabean typology. Special attention is paid to the description of symbolic actions (martyrdom, fighting together, singing together, theatrical performances) which forged bonds between established Christians and recent converts in Henry's account. Kaljundi presents well-chosen snapshots of Henry's vivid prose to capture the potential tension (glossed over by Henry) between neophyte and missionary. The essay is highly accessible and illuminating. The present reviewer would also recommend considering it as a historical counterpart to Sarit Cofman-Simhon's "Missionary Theatre on the Baltic Frontier: Negotiating the Imagined Jew in the Riga Ludus Prophetarum" (in Cordelia Heß and Jonathan Adams, eds., *Fear and Loathing in the North: Jews and Muslims in Medieval Scandinavia and the Baltic*, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2015, 271-284).

The final essay in this subsection is Tuomas Heikkilä's "An Imaginary Saint for an Imagined Community, St. Henry and the Creation of Christian Identity in Finland, Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries" (223-252). Heikkilä analyses the *Legenda sancti Henrici* and to a lesser extent the vernacular, postmedieval *Piispa Henrikin surmavirsi* in order to trace the purposeful construction of a Christian Finnish identity during the Middle Ages. "Constructed" is a key concept here, as Heikkilä demonstrates that the cult of St. Henry (himself an Englishman, rather than a Finn or Swede) had a degree of plasticity: "most of the details [in the legend] were described so vaguely that the legend could be easily reformed and applied in diverse contexts. This was a most opportune feature, taking into consideration the

use of the story in constant redefinition of Christian group identity" (246). In concluding, Heikkilä calmly mentions that "the present author...receiv[ed] a public death threat after he put in doubt the historicity of St. Henry as written in his legend" (248). As Heikkilä himself notes, this experience indicates the power still wielded by imagined communities, and the medieval texts which contribute to their lineage.

The third subsection, "Legal and Urban Communities," begins with Thomas Lindkvist's "The Making of Legal Communities. Royal, Aristocratic, and Local Visions in Sweden and Gotland, Thirteenth-Fourteenth Centuries" (254-277). Lindkvist's fundamental contention is that "the notion of having a common law and a common set of rules provided the essential coherence of a community" (p. 256). The study is particularly illuminating in the case of the Old Gutnish lawcodes, stressing the position of rural Gotland (Lindkvist carefully gives the term *bonderepublik* a wide berth on p. 272) between the Hanseatic city of Visby on one hand and mainland Sweden on the other. Lindkvist's essay resonates thematically with Nordquist's, in that it reminds us how today's national communities have emerged from regional and class communities, in a manner that is more stochastic than organic.

Pavel V. Lukin follows with "Urban Community and Consensus. Brotherhood and Communalism in Medieval Novgorod" (279-306). Lukin's chapter provides a survey of the relationship between the concrete matter of decision-making assemblies and the abstract matter of the sentiment of community. His contribution is particularly welcome for the way that it presents Slavic sources which may be largely unknown to those more versed in the Latin Middle Ages: Lukin makes the sources feel accessible without any hint of "dumbing down." Indeed, although Lukin deploys Old Russian, Hanseatic Low German sources also come under scrutiny (287-289, 297-298); appropriate, given the collection's stated aim to consider the diverse communities of the Baltic holistically.

The next essay is "Urban Community and Social Unrest. Semantics of Conflict in Fourteenth-Century Lübeck" (307-327) by Cordelia Heß. This chapter is a fascinating study of how the 1384 Lübeck *Knochenhaueraufstand* (Butchers' Revolt)--and more importantly, its repercussions in 1385--were remembered in the *Detmar-Chronik*. As in Nordquist's study, class is relevant. However, Heß stresses that the notion of class conflict appears to be being imposed by the medieval source author himself: "The *menheyt* [general population] was often treated as interchangeable with the rioters, and this probably led Detmar, and in consequences many scholars, to assume that the rioters were mainly members of the lower classes...The assumption that rioters always belonged to the lower classes can in most cases be traced back to a given chronicler's bias and imagination" (316-317). Heß lucidly presents and interrogates incendiary source material which is otherwise not particularly well-known to English-speaking audiences. (So far as I know, the last substantial English-language contribution to research on the *Knochenhaueraufstand* was published in 1976, being Rhiman A. Rotz's "Investigating Urban Uprisings with Examples from Hanseatic

Towns", in *Order and Innovation in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honor of Joseph R. Strayer*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976, 215-234).

The fourth and final subsection is "The Baltic Rim: A View From Afar." This section is largely devoted to West Norse sources for activity in the Baltic, though the East Norse *Erikskrönika* is judiciously integrated by Bjørn Bandlien. It opens with Bandlien's "Norway, Sweden, and Novgorod. Scandinavian Perceptions of the Russians, Late Twelfth-Early Fourteenth Centuries" (331-352). This is an engrossing study of the Norwegian and Swedish view of the peoples inhabiting the area which today we might call the Barents Region. True to the theme of the collection, Bandlien demonstrates the plasticity of group identities: a Finn or Karelian might be treated by an Old Norse author in just the same way as a Russian. Moreover, Norwegian and Swedish attitudes to their Eastern neighbors were shaped by shifting materialist and ideological currents. Bandlien shows how relationships once predicated largely on trade came under influence from Crusading rhetoric and chivalric fantasies: Russians could become equivalent to Saracens on account of their non-Latin Christianity, while in Finnmark "peaceful encounters between Norwegians and Sámi [were transformed] into a religious battle between Christianity and heathendom" (348).

The next chapter is "Transient Borders. The Baltic Viewed from Northern Iceland in the Mid-Fifteenth Century" (351-378) by Hans Jacob Orning. A particular fifteenth-century Icelandic manuscript, AM 343a 4to, is examined for what its contents and organization might reveal about the place of the Baltic in the mind of a medieval Icelander. On the basis of how these various sagas treat their subject matter, Orning argues that AM 343a 4to communicates a coherent view of the Baltic: the manuscript's very own "imagined community" (367). The most convincing aspect of Orning's well-argued study is his conclusion that, contrary to much historiography to date, the fifteenth-century Icelandic elite maintained a fairly cosmopolitan horizon. It would therefore be entirely understandable for the probable commissioner of the manuscript to exhibit an interest in the Baltic Rim.

The collection concludes with an afterword by Barbara H. Rosenwein, whose work has been cited by nearly all the contributors to this volume, entitled "Imagined Emotions for Imagined Communities" (379-386). Rosenwein distills the conversation hosted in this collection into four pivotal suggestions: "(1) Brotherhood must be problematized... (2) The emotions involved in imagined communities were not only different for different groups or different authors, but also for the same groups and authors over time... (3) Because they are delimited, imagined communities tend to be twinned: there are those 'within' and others 'without'. These entities have emotional concomitants... (4) Imagined communities are filled with conflicting emotions" (381-384). The afterword is a stimulating précis of the book's essays, and the present reviewer would agree with Rosenwein's assessment that "the chapters of this book suggest, then, new ways to consider imagined communities--and not just on the Baltic Rim" (385).

As it is customary to suggest areas for improvement in book reviews, I will offer just a few pedantic thoughts: twice, in different essays, one encounters the idea that the process of Christianization in Denmark was still young by the mid-twelfth century and early thirteenth century (45, 59). But by this point Denmark had been Christian for nearly two centuries, so further substantiation of *how* Denmark was adolescent in this respect may be useful. I detected no spelling mistakes, nor any errors in the index (389-394). Once or twice 'Swinglish' forms intrude, e.g. "Karsten Friis-Jensen argues convincingly for that Saxo was a secular canon" (70), "the dragon in the Stockholm Cathedral" (93), "the kinsfolks in the south" (261) but such intrusions are very rare. Indeed, in an era where English is an international medium, tiny stylistic slips ought to be regarded as a non-issue. The style is otherwise generally very readable. Jezierski even delivers some alliterative poetry: "Were these merely parchment postulations penned by individuals or ideas cherished by dreaming elites?" (17). Given the intense multilingualism of the Baltic, the authors have done well to maintain consistency in personal and place names. I noted just one slip, "Malmfried" (142) where the author otherwise prefers "Malmfrid."

The editors and the authors are to be congratulated for producing a well-argued, cohesively organized collection. The book delivers a refreshed perspective on both Baltic and Scandinavian studies.

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