

Recensiones

LECH LECIEJEWICZ



Karol Modzelewski: *L'Europe des barbares. Germains et slaves face aux héritiers de Rome*, Paris: Flammarion, 2006, 448 pp. (ed orig. polaca: *Barbarzyńska Europa*, Varsovia, 2004, 520 pp.).

The long awaited book on barbarian Europe by K. Modzelewski recently came out in print. K. Modzelewski, with an established name in medieval sciences, both in Poland and Europe, had planned for some time to address this subject; the first signal of his future project was signalled in a study published in 1975 on tribal legacy in the political system of Poland under the Piast dynasty.¹ A contribution to the *Culture of the Early Medieval Europe* publication series on economy and society of early medieval Italy demonstrated to K. Modzelewski the value of insight from collected barbarian laws for understanding the tribal past of political elites of post-Roman Western Europe.² After publishing a volume on peasants in early Piast Poland³, which to some extent also touched on this group of issues, Modzelewski turned his focus on forms of social and political organisation developed by inhabitants of

the former *barbaricum* publishing the results of this research in assorted studies and papers.⁴ The book reviewed here presents an all round perspective of organisation of the life of tribal societies of barbarian Europe in the antiquity and the early medieval period.

As ever the case with K. Modzelewski, this study is distinguished by subtle analysis of written sources, accompanied by proposals of model generalisations, which form a basis for a synthetic view of the past, in this case, the coming into being of medieval Europe. Modzelewski would not be himself, if he did not make references to the present, which helps to make his dissertation more attractive, without detracting from its substantive value. In the first two chapters K. Modzelewski examines the reliability of the narrative sources written mostly by outsiders, as well as of some native contributions from collections of barbarian laws. In the first case some reservation may be raised by equal treatment which is given to the account of Tacitus and to that of Adam of Bremen, his junior by thousand years later, and, in case sources on early Slavs, works of Helmold and Saxo Grammaticus written another hundred years later. Still, Modzelewski draws attention to undeniable similarities

¹ K. Modzelewski: «Dziedzictwo plemienne w ustroju Polski Piastowskiej», *Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej*, 13 (1975), 351-383.

² K. Modzelewski: *Spółczesność i gospodarka*, (in:) *Italia*, ed. Tabaczynska, Wrocław 1980, pp. 149-274; cf. by the same author, «La transizione dall'antichità al feudalesimo. Storia d'Italia», *Annali*, 1, Torino 1978, 3-109.

³ K. Modzelewski: *Chłopi w monarchii wczesnopiastowskiej*, Wrocław 1987.

⁴ K. Modzelewski: «Europa romana, Europa feudale, Europa barbara», *Bullettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo e Archivio Muratoriano*, 100, 1995-1996, 377-409; by the same author, «Omni secunda feria. Ksiezycowe roki i nieporozumienie wokół Helmolda», *Slowianszczyzna w Europie sredniowiecznej*, vol. 1, ed. Z. Kurnatowska, Wrocław, 1996, pp. 83-88 and others.

shared by these sources which testify to the existence of genuine structural affinities, which cannot be viewed as topic motifs. He is also aware that legal norms which were supposed to have been binding in everyday practice did not always correspond to reality nevertheless, they refer to customary solutions, adherence to which, as is demonstrated by comparative data, used to be the guarantee of tribal social order.

K. Modzelewski subsequently examines the role of individuals within the tribal community, first and foremost, the importance of bonds of kinship. Its expression was the obligatory blood feud (*vendetta*) to avenge a slain member of the family, which to preserve sacred peace occasionally was replaced by payment in money, or *wergeld*. But the latter method of sustaining peaceful relations in society became increasingly important only with time, appreciated chiefly by state authorities. Next to shared guilt an element which had a special role in cementing the bonds of kinship was the idea of group honour and collective oath. In this context notable is the power of men over women, typical for patriarchal societies. A different question, that of social stratification, is discussed in a separate chapter. Quite a number of unfree men were deprived of rights; Modzelewski suggests that the *laeti*, whose status was similar to that of slaves, rather than being semi-free—as traditionally accepted in historiography—should be understood as freed slaves. The class of free men was not homogeneous, although this did not find legal expression in all tribal communities. Differences in status could be reflected to a certain extent times by differences in the amount of *wergeld*, and the distinction into freemen and nobles is time and again indicated in the written sources.

The next subject to come under scrutiny is the village or neighbourhood community and its territorial range. The point of departure for analysis is the common use of land. This question used to be a subject of controversy among historiographers,⁵ but K. Modzelewski notes correctly that without negating the role of the rights of land ownership in organising the medieval

village commune, shared use of common woodland is quite substantiated in older source evidence, suggesting that this type of solution reached back to the tribal period. The territorial bounds of a community denoted the area within which strangers were not allowed to settle. It is worth adding here that new perspectives for investigating this question are now at hand thanks to the development of settlement studies made on a microregional scale, made possible by an improved archaeological record. Neighbourhoods also had their political dimension, which is examined in a separate chapter, with analysis focused on the basic territorial unit, confirmed in the written sources, ie, the district, in which power belonged to the assembly of all free men. Modzelewski convincingly demonstrates that local communities, which in a later age played their part in enforcing law and keeping order within the state organisation, definitely derived from the tribal period.

Apart from the loyalty to one's kin and village community bonds the next and vital bond for people of barbarian Europe was the connection to one's tribe. This made it of essence in the analysis to determine institutions which were decisive for the existence and stability of the tribal community. K. Modzelewski notes that tribal these structures based on smaller social units, examined earlier in the book, which not infrequently were ranged hierarchically, on three levels of increasing importance: neighbourhood community, small tribe, great tribe, a federation of a number of smaller tribes. Their stability was sustained by the institution of assembly and the sharing of the same religious ideology. In some tribes another important institution was that of the monarch. The king, as he was often known, as the leader of free men was a representative of military authority, and—to quote K. Modzelewski—functioned as a «keystone of the tribal community». It is also worth noting that his special position may have been gained in strength in the unstable living conditions proper to the period of migrations. Absence of «kings» among Frisians and Saxons may be explained eg by their long period of settled life in a territory which only came to be occupied by Carolingian rulers. From the institution of

⁵ Cf. jointly A. Dopsch: *Die Wirtschaftsentwicklung der Karolingerzeit vornehmlich in Deutschland*, vol. 1, 3rd edition, Weimar, 1962, pp. 361-402.

the monarch it was just a step away to forming the first seeds of state authority.

In developing his analysis K. Modzelewski draws from written sources pertaining to early Germanic and Western Slav peoples. It is a pity that although in looking for analogies he also on occasion refers to Early Russian sources,⁶ he does not make a more extensive critical analysis of the Russian Primary Chronicle, invaluable source as it is on the tribal world and its traditions among Eastern Slavs. Still, the decision to expand the scope of inquiry in this manner would have made it necessary to delve into Byzantine sources (*De administrando imperio* of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus!) so at some point it simply may have been necessary to draw the line somewhere.

A different sort of reservation is raised by Modzelewski's decision to consider in his analysis ancient German tribes side by side with Western Slavs. It is true that they had a common Indo-European origin, were subject to similar historical developments during later antiquity and ostensibly evolved a number of similar social and political structure. Nevertheless, in the light both of the written evidence and archaeological sources the two ethnic formations appear obviously dissimilar. Germans, formed in south Scandinavia and in the great Northern German Lowland, diverged in many aspects of culture from Slavs who emerged in the forest-field and forest-steppe part of the European continent. Both the written sources and archaeological traces confirm that the mainstay of economy of Germanic tribes was animal husbandry, whereas Slavs had a culture marked by evidently agrarian elements, their economy dominated by farming.⁷ Barbarian laws indicate that the importance of livestock breeding was eclipsed by cereal farming among the Germanic tribes

⁶ Only the collection of oldest laws of Kievan Rus is taken into consideration at more length, A.A. Zimin: *Pravda Russkaja*, Moskva, 1999, and of older studies eg. B. D. Grekov, newer literature: I. J. Frojanov, but not by the same author. *Drevnjaja Rus: Opyt issledovanija istorii social'noj i političeskoj bor'by*, Sankt-Peterburg, 1995.

⁷ L. Leciejewicz, *Normanowie*, Wrocław 1979; idem, *Gli slawi occidentali. Le origini delle società e delle culture feudali, Medioevo*, Traduzioni 2, Spoleto, 1991, and also by the same author: «Il barbaricum: presupposti dell'evoluzione altomedievale», *Storia d'Europa*, vol. 3, ed. G. Ortalli, Torino 1994, p. 41-83.

only as they settled in former Roman provinces.⁸ For German peoples living in the Scandinavian Peninsula and on the coast of the North Sea, differently than for Slavs, a truly distinguishing mark was their close relationship to the marine environment. Such differences in economy found expression also in the methods of organising social space. While among the Germans the dominant type of homestead was the longhouse, which brought together under one roof the family, servants and farm hands and, presumably, livestock, among Slavs the typical dwelling was a small structure on a square plan, able to accommodate no more than a family group.⁹ Some important changes took place only in the course of the 11th-12th c. as a result of various social and economic developments. To do justice to these processes it might be necessary to introduce some degree of nuance into the perspective proposed by Modzelewski.

Nevertheless one cannot argue with K. Modzelewski when he makes the object of his analysis only those social structures which are documented by written sources. The decision to proceed in this manner certainly helps to make interpretations proposed by him more explicit. In doing so Modzelewski readily makes use of information found in the written sources on the subject of social function of elements of symbolic culture, first of all, in religious worship. Recourse to insights provided by ethnology helped him to clear up the confusion regarding the mysterious term *secunda feria* used by Helmold in his narrative when specifying the date of holding gatherings to mete out justice among the Vagri on the Baltic; once we interpret the term with reference to the lunar cycle it is possible to explain the relationship of the time and frequency of these gatherings, held the sacred grove, to the Christian calendar. Equally convincing is the argument that the assembly of Saxon tribes at Marklo on the Weser, described by the earliest biographer of St. Lebuin, took place in a separate district of worship rather than

⁸ Cf. eg. P. Galetti: «Le strutture insediative nelle legazioni "barbariche"», *Edilizia residenziale tra V e VIII secolo*, ed. G.P. Brogiolo, Mantova, 1994, p. 15-23.

⁹ P. Donat: *Haus, Hof und Dorf in Mitteleuropa vom 7.-12. Jahrhundert*, Berlin, 1980.

at one of the main tribal temples—to judge by the rich plunder taken from it in AD 772 by Charlemagne—which was found elsewhere, near Eresburg, located on river Diemel. Modzelewski's study contains some other similarly tantalising conclusions which are the result of interpretation of written sources with the help of insights from culture anthropology. They help to add to it an additional dimension, of great essence when making an all round synthesis.

K. Modzelewski is aware that the results of his research to some extent may be somewhat static. Actually, as may be seen from archaeological evidence, there must have been essential differences in social structures of the peoples of the European *barbaricum* as compared to that of Neolithic farmers and stock breeders, or pastoralists, settled in the region, who underwent substantial social and cultural transformation during the Bronze Age and at the onset of the Iron Age. Moreover, the culture of the peoples of the *barbaricum* of later antiquity had been subject to substantial change—more among Slavs than Germans— during the critical migrations period. Of particular importance from the point of view of social organisation were next to it the beginnings of fortified settlements. The view would increase in complexity if the analysis included also the Baltic tribes of the forest zone, even though this step might have brought Modzelewski many valuable analogies for his subject.¹⁰ This subject is a promising one for future research.

In remarks which close the analysis of European barbarian ancestry its Author gives his reason for not going into the process of formation of bonds of ethnicity, so topical at present in research stating that to his mind the subject was discussed in satisfactory manner by R. Wenskus and other researchers who followed in his wake.¹¹ Nevertheless we regret this decision since the bond of ethnicity is, after all, a species of social bond tie, with important bearing on the durability of links between individual neighbourhood

communities. Consistently with his line of reasoning in seeking for an appropriate definition for forms of government examined in his study K. Modzelewski proposes to use the term «barbarian collectivism». It seems however that the terms «tribal community», accepted in research, most faithfully gives the crux of the matter, since the word *tribe* (Latin *tribus*, at times also *gens*, 'people') was used with reference to barbarian peoples both by classical and early medieval authors, contemporary to events of which they were writing. Military leadership of tribal monarchs in modern ethnology is referred to as «system of leadership», and while it may offend by invoking the idea of «leaders» of the 20th century, it does justice to the essence of internal organisation of these peoples. In the light of archaeological evidence the origin of tribal institutions of barbarian Europe reaches back in time to the Neolithic period whereas leadership groups started to form at least during the Bronze Age.

K. Modzelewski's key thesis is that barbarian legacy played an extremely important role in the process of crystallisation of societies of medieval Europe and their culture. It may be detected both in the mentality and forms of social ties. To quote directly from Modzelewski's study: «[...] l'heritage cultural barbare est une composante essentielle de l'identit  europ enne [...]. Le bilan des influences mutuelles entre la culture classique et les cultures traditionnelles du *barbaricum* comporte plusieurs facettes et sa diversit  est bien pr sente dans l'Europe d'aujourd'hui» (p. 385). One can only rejoice therefore that the view, which seems to be taking root in medieval sciences,¹² has gained an important advocate. I am convinced that thanks to the conscientious nature of Modzelewski's research apparatus, excellent capacity to formulate model generalisations, all the while keeping faith with his written sources, his study will occupy a significant position in the discussion on barbarian roots of modern Europe.

Lech Leciejewicz

¹⁰ H. Lowmianski: *Studia nad poczatkami spoleczenstwa i panstwa litewskiego*, vol. 1-2, Wilno, 1931-1932; by the same author, *Prusy-Litwa-Krzyzacy*, Warszawa, 1989.

¹¹ R. Wenskus: *Stammesbildung und Verfassung. Das Werden der fr hmittelalterlichen gentes*, K ln, Graz 1961; 2nd edition, 1977; also, studies of H. Wolfram, W. Pohl and others.

¹² Cf. eg. F. Simoni: «Oriente ed Occidente d'Europa nella cultura europea dell' Ottocento», *Bullettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo e Archivio Muratoriano*, 100, 1995-1996, 331-376; also, L. Leciejewicz: *Nowa postac swiata. Narodziny sredniowiecznej cywilizacji europejskiej*, Wroclaw 2000.

Wladyslaw Duczko: *Viking Rus. Studies on the Presence of Scandinavians in Eastern Europe*, Leiden, Boston: The Northern World 12, 2004, 290 pp.

Studies on Scandinavian penetration in the so-called eastern route and the rise of the early medieval state of Rus lately gained a new important contribution — a study by W. Duczko of Viking Rus reviewed here. Its author, established researcher and lecturer at Uppsala University, is a recognised specialist on culture of early Medieval Scandinavia. His list of credits includes a valuable study on filigree and granulation techniques, documented in the impressive set of silver ornaments recovered from the cemetery at Birka, as well as a number of source publications and studies on contacts of Norsemen with other peoples and cultures of the age.¹ Duczko evidently has an good knowledge of Scandinavian archaeological sources and as a native of Poland is not troubled by the language barrier which for some non-Slav researchers may at times be a real obstacle. With all this it is fortunate that Duczko chose to address a key subject which until recently was one of the most disputed issues of early medieval history of East Europe.

The point of departure for analysis is a reference in the Annals of St. Bertin to the coming to the court of emperor Louis the Pious in Ingelheim in AD 839 of a group of Rus (*Rhos*), who arrived with a Byzantine legation. This account has long been of interest to researchers because it describes the foreigners as *Sueoni* ie, Swedes. Duczko claims that the emissaries arrived from a region of Scandinavian penetration on the eastern Baltic, ie. on Lakes Ladoga and Ilmen partly basing his argument on the name of their ruler which the annalist wrote down as *chaganus*, a term with evidently east European connotations. An important innovation

introduced by Duczko is that the coming of the Rus to Ingelheim may have been a deliberate ploy of Byzantine diplomacy. Finds of three seals dating from exactly the same period in the major centres of early medieval Denmark (Hedeby, Ribe, Tisso), made out by a high official from Constantinople, suggest lively exchange of letters with Norsemen during this time. Duczko convincingly demonstrates how accurate interpretation of the function and context of archaeological evidence may create a base for formulating far-reaching conclusions. By taking into account the broader European background he also found support for his argument that the Byzantine Empire was looking for allies in its confrontation with Arabs who were posing threat in the Mediterranean.

W. Duczko broaches his proper subject in his next chapter where he proposes to specify more closely the possible region of origin of the Rus emissaries at Ingelheim. Analysis of archaeological evidence points to intensive Swedish penetration during this age in the area of Lakes Ladoga and Ilmen. Recent dendrochronological analyses help to refine the dating of finds and there is no longer any doubt that in the latter half of the 8th century two important centres of economy and authority developed in the area Staraya (Old) Ladoga, Aldeigja of Scandinavian sources, and presumably, only slightly later, the so-called Rurikovo Gorodishche close to Great Novgorod, identified with Holmgårdr known from the sagas. Structure of archaeological finds indicates that the two settlements were inhabited both by men and women, ie, entire families of Norse origin. Duczko supports his argument by fine-tuned analysis of the function and symbolic content of ornamentation seen on some of these analysed objects. Next to the two settlements on river Volkhov also notable was the seat of the legendary Truvor, which by Duczko is identified with nearby Pskov, rather than with Izborsk, on the mouth of the river Velikaya near to where it enters Lake Peipus.²

¹ W. Duczko: *The Filigree and Granulation Work of the Viking Period, Birka IV*, Stockholm 1985, see also by the same author eg. «Gamla Uppsala», *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, vol. 10, ed. H. Beck, H. Steuer, D. Timpe, Berlin, New York, 1997, pp. 409-418; «Byzantine Presence in Viking Age Sweden. Archaeological Finds and their Interpretation», *Rom und Byzanz im Norden*, ed. M. Müller-Wille, v. 1, Stuttgart, 1997, pp. 291-311; «Scandinavians in the Southern Baltic between the fifth and the tenth centuries AD», *Origins of Central Europe*, ed. P. Urbanczyk, Warszawa, 1997, pp. 191-211.

² This view recently was justified in comprehensive manner by S.V. Beleckij, *Nachalo Pskova, Sankt-Peterburg* 1996, who conceded at around AD 850 the commercial centres at today's Izborsk was destroyed, a Varangian settlement set up nearby, on site of what today is Pskov, the seat of the legendary

W. Duczko also places the original Rus on the Volkhov finding support from the exceptionally intensive saturation of the region by finds showing features of Scandinavian culture. He makes a detailed analysis of eg miniature objects associated with magic and of graffiti engraved on some finds which are evidently associated with the Vikings. Duczko also notes that elements of burial custom, described in the well known description given by Ibn Fadlan of a funeral of a Rus merchant at Bulgar on the Volga, were noted in burials discovered on the Volkhov. The presence in this area of Scandinavians, who as Duczko argues, mainly originated from central Sweden, seems to be well established. Nevertheless, direct translation of archaeological evidence to ethnic geographic definitions is never entirely free from reservation. The thing is, that the name «land of the Rus», known from the 11th and 12th century historiographic records, definitely denotes the territory in the middle reaches of the Dnieper, area lying around the main centre of the Rurikid state, ie, Kiev.³ Proximity to the zone of contact with the peoples of the steppe is supported by the title *chagan* recorded by the chronicler from St. Bertin, although it must be admitted that traces of Scandinavian penetration of this area earlier than AD 839 are rather tenuous.

In his next chapter W. Duczko examines archaeological evidence on Scandinavian presence on the upper Dnieper, the route known somewhat later to Russian chronicler as «the way from the Varangians to the Greeks». From this perspective the most important archaeological site has ever been the settlement complex at Gnezdovo near Smolensk. It has been noted in literature that the present-day place name suggests that Gnezdovo may be the earliest settlement of Smolensk, known to 10th century chronicle and to Constantine Porphyrogenitus (earliest traces of settlement in the area of the modern city of Smolensk are not earlier

than AD 1050).⁴ Be as it may, Duczko is interested mainly in evidence on Scandinavian presence in this area tangible in the funerary custom. He notes that the great barrows containing cremation burials find close analogy in similar structures across the Baltic sea, as do the smaller mounds which produced Scandinavian grave goods. Functional analysis indicated that they may be interpreted as burials of higher ranking individuals of Norse origin. This is supported especially by chamber graves, well known from eg the cemetery at Birka; it is interesting, that they contained the earliest Christian objects recorded in those parts. Technology of execution of ornaments (pendants, brooches, etc.) discovered in the graves, in the settlement layer and in a number of silver hoards, also testifies to their Scandinavian provenance. Gnezdovo, which developed with Varangian contribution as early as in the 9th century, only after AD 930, following the arrival of a new group of Scandinavian settlers, would have grown into the main trading and crafts centre on the Dnieper route. It continued in this role until the beginning of the 11th century.

The other main route of Scandinavian penetration in Eastern Europe was down the Volga. In its upper reaches in the forest zone it ran through lands inhabited by Finno-Ugrians, at the mouth of the Kama the route was controlled by Kama Bulgars, and continued to the south in the zone of steppe dominated by Khazars. This area in the course of the 9th-10th century developed trading and crafts settlements, documented in the upper reaches of the Volga by archaeological sites at Bolshoye Timiryevoye, Pyotrovskoye and Mikhailovskoye near present day Yaroslavl. Only the first of these was investigated more fully, but to a much more modest extent than the settlements on the Volkhov and the upper Dnieper. The main subject of interest to W. Duczko are the finds and features of funerary custom recorded at Timiryevoye. Here also he finds evidence to connect the emergence of the settlement in the 9th c. with penetration by Norsemen and rapid development of this

Truvor, known in Russian Primary Chronicle as Isuborg. The site at Izborsk was reoccupied only around AD 1050.

³ Cf eg. of older publications A. N. Nasonov: «Russkaja Zemlja» i obratovanie territorii drevnerusskogo gosudarstva, Moskva, 1951, p. 28 f.; more recently, the «southern» interpretation was supported by eg. H. Lowmianski: *Poczatki Polski. Z dziejow Slowian w I tysiacleciu n.e.*, vol. V, Warszawa, 1974, p. 145 f., with discussion.

⁴ Cf. eg. L. V. Alekseev: *Smolenskaja zemlja*, v. IX-XIII, Moskva, 1980, p. 135 f.

centre starting from the 930s. The settlement declined only when princes from Kiev extended their domination over the area and Yaroslav the Wise raised the city of Yaroslavl. The Scandinavian 'perspective' adopted by Duczko visibly prompts him to underestimate the role in the development of trading and crafts settlements in the region of the local Finno-Ugrian element and with time, also to a certain extent, the Slavic element. This leads him to interpret even the enigmatic clay bear or beaver paw amulets, by analogy to similar finds from the Åland archipelago, as evidence of Scandinavian presence. This despite the fact that worship of bears is considered —not without reason— as typical for the Lapp (Saami) inhabitants of Scandinavia.⁵ Duczko fails to appreciate the economic potential of local communities which centred on the settlement at Sarskoe Gorodishche some distance from the Volga. Finds of objects of Scandinavian character and - at times - also the presence of features typical for Scandinavian burials in the basin of the Klyzma and near Murom on the river Oka, confirm that contacts were maintained with the Norsemen but had all change in the region been triggered by these outsiders alone? A wider perspective on the cultural potential of the local environment could result in more cautious conclusions.⁶

Definitely, one of the more fascinating issues is how to interpret evidence of Scandinavian presence from the area on the middle Dnieper, ie, the region which in the 9th-10th c. formed the nucleus of the Rurikid state. The subject is examined in the chapter entitled appropriately as «Towards the Rus state» with analysis focused on assemblages dated to before 970s, ie the end of the reign of Svyatoslav, son of Igor. Varangian activity during the time is well supported relatively well by Byzantine sources and Russian Primary Chronicle. Duczko stresses that moving among indigenous Slavs the Rus had at their disposal an efficient system of au-

thority which reached back to at least the early decade of the 9th c. They were able to develop a strong state, with Kiev in the territory of Poliane as the main centre, and to gradually spread their sphere of influence to the neighbouring tribes, freeing some of them from under the Khazars. W. Duczko also notes that whereas in the entourage of Oleg in AD 911 all have Scandinavian names, in AD 944 his son, Igor, is apparently accompanied by a number of men who were Slavs. The process of assimilation of the power elites with the Slav element was rapid and the next generation of Rurikid princes tend to have Slav names. Even so, his 'Scandinavian' perspective induces Duczko to seek in the elite circles for traces of Norsemen only and overlook evidence, observable in the written sources, of local and native contribution to the process of state formation.⁷

W. Duczko is interested most in the remains which document Varangian presence in the 'capital' city of Kiev. Some burials discovered at this location are truly of Scandinavian character. In Duczko's view the high level of execution of valuable jewellery discovered in these assemblages also serves to demonstrate its Scandinavian character, and some ornaments definitely are imports, not only from the territory of Sweden but also Denmark. Most striking due to their symbolic significance are of bidents and tridents, engraved on coins, and encountered on some other items too. The oldest of these representations date from the end of the 9th- early 10th c. and are tentatively interpreted by Duczko as the badge of the Rurik clan, their presence, a sign of their consolidating authority. Duczko offers an interesting explanation of the origin of the emblem, although a conclusive interpretation is obviously out of the question. Note is made in the same chapter also of archaeological evidence from Chernigov and the nearby Shestovitsa on the Desna, two possible seats of a Varangian guard. However, in my opinion even the impressive burials as Chernaja Mogila at Chernigov are not sufficient to prove the existence at these locations in the 10th c. of a centre of power

⁵ Eg. *From Viking to Crusader. Scandinavia and Europe 800-1200*, ed. E. Roesdahl, D. M. Wilson, Uddevalla, 1992, p. 72, 290.

⁶ Finno-Ugrian cultures are discussed comprehensively on the basis of current research in the collective study *Finno-ugry i balty v epochu srednevekov'ja*, ed. V.V. Sedov, Moskva, 1987, p. 67 f., *ibid.*, L. A. Golubeva, p. 77 f. on amulet finds in the region of Meria and p. 80 f. on Sarskoe Gorodishche.

⁷ Cf. eg. I. Ja. Frojanov: *Drevnjaja Rus'. Opyt issledovanija istorii social'noj i politicheskoj bor'by*, Moskva, Sankt Peterburg, 1995, p. 22 f.

independent from Kiev. Duczko ends this chapter by analysing evidence of Scandinavian penetration farther down the Dnieper, along the route running to the Black Sea and Byzantium.

The study closes with a conclusion that analysis of archaeological evidence fully confirms the presence of Scandinavians in early medieval Eastern Europe. Their point of departure was central Sweden. They reached out first to the territory occupied by Finno-Ugrian communities by whom they were given the appellation of 'Rus'. While the first settlements were set around AD 750 Varangians continued to arrive in large groups in a later period, particularly in the 850s. With time they moved deeper inland, by routes running down the Volga and the Dnieper, through the territory of Balt tribes, gradually assimilated by Slavs. Consequently by the end of the 9th c. Norsemen had reached the area of established Slav settlement, on the middle Dnieper, and set up Kievan Rus. Duczko emphasises at this point, that the role of Scandinavian settlers in Eastern Europe in the 8th-9th c. was widely different from that of Varangian mercenaries invited during a later period by princes of the Rurik dynasty. In this he questions the soundness of the tradition handed down by Russian Primary Chronicle that Varangians had been «invited» by tribal Finnish and Slav communities.

All in all we are presented with invaluable new

insight on fundamental sources of theories on the role of Norsemen in the process of formation of the early medieval Russian state. In the reviewed study competent analysis of archaeological remains is combined with subtle interpretation of their function and suggested interpretation of the social and cultural structure of the Scandinavian newcomers. It is a pity however, that Duczko gives an over cursory treatment to other centres, which according to Russian Primary Chronicle were also controlled by Varangians. They include eg Polotsk, on the Western Dvina, in the land of the Krivichi, in the latter half of the 10th c. seat of Rogvolod, who was purportedly murdered by Vladimir the Great.⁸ On the other hand by focusing mainly on evidence of Scandinavian presence Duczko has arrived at a slightly one-sided assessment of the broader socio-political, economic and culture processes at work in Eastern Europe around AD 1000. Time and again, his analysis would have benefited from deepened insight from the local context. Still, this does not detract from the generally high merit of this book, which certainly is an important contribution to the discussion on the role of Norsemen in the emergence and early development of the society and state of Rus.

Lech Leciejewicz

⁸ On archaeological evidence see G. V. Shtychov: *Drevnij Polock IX-XIII*, vv. Minsk, 1975; newer findings are presented in *Archeologija i numizmatyka Belarusi. Enciklopedyja, Minsk*, 1993, p. 506 f. and 546 (runes).