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Co-operation between the Viking Rus' and the Turkic nomads of the steppe in the ninth-eleventh centuries

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by

Csete Katona

(Hungary)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Master of Arts degree in Medieval Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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Abstract

Early medieval Scandinavians operating in European Russia, often labelled as Rus' or Varangians in contemporary sources, were in contact with steppe nomadic tribes since the ninth century. These contacts, however are largely neglected in scholarly discourse. In the present thesis, it will be pointed out on the basis of Byzantine, Muslim, Slavic and Old Norse written sources that apart from occasional hostilities, the relationship of the Viking Rus' with the various (culturally) Turkic groups of the Volga-Dnieper region (with emphasis on the Volga Bulghars, Khazars, Pechenegs and Magyars) could have been fruitful on multiple levels. Besides the Slavs, Turkic nomads were the main partners of the Viking Rus' in the period, testified to by close commercial ties and joint operations in warfare. It will be argued that these contacts resulted in cultural borrowings, and contributed decisively to the development of Rus' identity during the course of the ninth-eleventh centuries. Although mainly a historical study, the investigation will be occasionally supplemented with archaeological and linguistic evidence.

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Introduction

Scandinavian Vikings who as early as the eighth century had already begun to penetrate Eastern Europe via the Russian waterways were referred to as Rus' or Varangians in contemporary Latin, Muslim, Slavic and Byzantine sources.[1] The cultural interactions between these Scandinavian incomers and the Slavs of Eastern Europe have been extensively studied within the framework of the 'Normanist-controversy', a historical debate concerning the political role played by Scandinavians in the establishment of the first Slavic state, known as the Kievan Rus'.[2] However, it has been often overlooked that the Varangian-Rus' also maintained relationships with other inhabitants of the Eastern region. Especially significant in this regard are the contacts with the steppe nomadic groups, such as the various nomadic Turkic tribes that were dwelling along the Dnieper and the Volga, where the Rus merchants appeared with their goods or their warriors entered courtly services as mercenaries.

No comprehensive study so far addressed this phenomenon, and Rus-Turkic relations were either discussed under general Russian-Turkic contacts, giving none or minimal attention to Scandinavians among the Rus population in these processes,[3] or were focusing on a

[1] Fedir Androshchuk, "Vikingarna – ruserna – varjagerna", *Historiska Nyheter. Olga & Ingegerd – Vikingafurstinnor i öst* (2004–2005): 36–39; Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson, "Creating a Cultural Expression. On Rus' Identity and Material Culture", in *Identity Formation and Diversity in the Early Medieval Baltic and Beyond*, ed. Johan Callmer, Ingrid Gustin and Mats Roslund (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 91–106; compare with: Przemysław Urbańczyk, "Who were the early Rus'?", in *Rus' in the ninth–12th centuries: Society, State, Culture*, ed. Nikolaj A. Makarov and A. E. Leontiev (Moscow: Drevnosti Severa, 2014), 228–33.

[2] Adolf Stender-Petersen, "The Varangian Problem", in Idem: *Varangica* (Aarhus: B. Lunos, 1953), 5–20; Knud Rahbek Schmidt, "The Varangian problem. A brief history of the controversy", in *Varangian Problems. Scando–Slavica Supplementum I.*, ed. Knud Hannestad, Knud Jordal, Ole Klindt-Jensen, Knud Rahbek Schmidt and Carl Stief (Copenhagen: Munskgaard, 1970), 7–20; Leo S. Klejn, "The Russian controversy over the Varangians", in *From Goths to Varangians. Communication and Cultural Exchange between the Baltic and the Black Sea*, ed. Line Bjerg, John H. Lind and Søren M. Sindbæk (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2013), 27–38.

[3] Imre Boba, *Nomads, Northmen and Slavs. Eastern Europe in the Ninth Century* (The Hauge: Mouton, 1967); Josef Marquart, *Osteuropäische und Ostasiatische Streifzüge. Ethnologische und historisch-topographische Studein zur Gesichte des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts (ca. 840–940)* (Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagbuchhandlung, 1903); Thomas S. Noonan, "Rus', Pechenegs and Polovtsy: Economic Interaction along the Steppe Frontier in the pre-Mongol Era", *Russian history/Historie Russe* 19, no. 1/4. (1992): 301–26.

distinctive part of these relations separated from the overall picture.[4] Scholars dealing with Scandinavian history, not without justification, often incorporated their results on the Volga Bulghar- and Khazar-Viking trade into their research on Scandinavian-Islamic connections.[5]

These scholarly attitudes partly derive from the fact that there is still no consensus on the precise meaning of the term, Rus, and on the development of Rus identity in general. Although the unequivocal elusion of the Rus' with the Slavs by Soviet scholarship is now outdated, interpreting the term as an ethnic designation for purely 'Eastern Scandinavians' might be also misleading. It has been argued, for instance, that the term Rus, similarly to 'Viking', rather describes an association or a 'way of life' than an ethnic group, and refers to warrior-merchant groups of mixed ethnic background incorporating people of Scandinavian, Slavic and Balto-Finn origin.[6] Attention has also been brought to the matter that not all medieval authors employed the term in the same meaning and that they often adopted earlier historiographical tradition by copying designations without illustrating the change which might have occurred in the identity of the given group.[7] Hence, the designation Rus' will denote here a population of initially predominantly Scandinavian origin (including women and children) mixed with the local Slavic and Balto-Finn inhabitants of Eastern Europe, and which in relation to later periods should perhaps better be translated vaguely as 'northern

[4] For instance the thorough investigation of Scandinavian and Russian coin hoards (see below in the 'Trade' section), or the first Rus political unit, known as the Rus Khaganate fall into this category. On the latter see: Peter B. Golden, "The Question of the Rus' Qaganate", *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 2 (1982): 85–97; Bollók Ádám, "„Inter barbaras et nimiae feritatis gentes". Az Annales Bertiniani 839. évi rhos követsége és a magyarok" ['Inter barbaras et nimiae feritatis gentes'. The Rhos delegation of the Annales Bertiniani in the year 839, and the Hungarians]. *Századok* 138, no. 2. (2004): 349–80; James E. Montgomery, "Vikings and Rus in Arabic Sources", in *Living Islamic History. Studies in Honour of Professor Carole Hillenbrand*, ed. Yasir Suleiman, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 163–64; Ildar H. Garipzanov, "The Annals of St. Bertin (839) and Chacanus of the Rhos", *Ruthenica* 5 (2006): 7–11.

[5] See the collection of essays in: Elisabeth Piltz, ed., *Byzantium and Islam in Scandinavia. Acts of a Symposium at Uppsala University June 15–16 1996* (Jonsered: Paul Åströms Förlag, 1998).

[6] Benjamin P. Golden, "Rūs", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Dozel, and W. P. Heinrich (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 618–629; Elena A. Melnikova, Vladimir J. Petrukhin, "The Origin and Evaluation of the name Rus'. The Scandinavians in Eastern European ethno-political processes before the 11th century", *Tor* 23 (1990–1991) 203–234. For the designation Viking and its misuse see: Eric Christiansen, The Norsemen in the Viking Age (Malden: Blackwell, 2006), 1–4.

[7] Montgomery, "Vikings and Rus in Arabic Sources"; Idem, "Ibn Fadlān and the Rūsiyyah", *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 3 (2000): 1–21.

foreigner'. Regarding the ethnic connotations of the word Rus', the Slavic component, at least in the Kievan Rus' principality, became more decisive over time and Russian sources rather refer to 'northern foreigners' as Varangians.[8]

The slightly different term, Varangian, appearing only from the eleventh century in the sources, also has a Scandinavian connotation with a reference to professional warrior groups or associations operating in European Russia as looters, hired mercenaries or bodyguards.[9] This meaning, however also changed over time and the ethnic composition of Varangian contingents have been loaded up with other 'foreigners' (e.g. Englishmen and Franks in Byzantium).[10]

These terms, therefore, if taken as ethnic and not profession markers should be situated within modern theories about ethnic identity. As it was put recently, ethnicity is rather a practiced (and chosen) than inherited identity and was constantly under change and renegotiation. Ethnic groups clustered around emerging power centres as 'situational constructs' and not necessarily on the basis of shared cultural norms, language or biological ancestry.[11] Accordingly, references to Rus' and Varangians as information pertaining evidently and only to Scandinavians is not pursued in the present thesis, but rather the multiple shades of this identity will be highlighted through the investigation of the 'Turkic question' which was significant for not solely the local Slavic communities or the state of the Kievan Rus', but also to Scandinavians who settled in Eastern Europe.

[8] Jonathan Shepard, "The Viking Rus and Byzantium", in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price (London: Routledge, 2008), 509.
[9] See footnote 1.
[10] On the changes connected to this term see: Roland Scheel, *Skandinavien und Byzanz. Bedingungen und Konsequenzen mittelalterlicher Kulturbeziehungen*, Vol. 1. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015).
[11] Carter G. Bentley,"Ethnicity and Practice", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29 (1987): 24–55; Patrick Geary, "Ethnic Identity as a Situational Construct in the Early Middle Ages", in *Writing History: Identity, Conflict, and Memory in the Middle Ages*, ed. Florin Curta and Cristina Spinei (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2012), 1–18; Walter Pohl, "Conceptions of Ethnicity in Early Medieval Studies", in *Debating the Middle Ages: Issues and Readings*, ed. Lester K. Little and Barbara H. Rosenwein (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 13–24.

As the title suggests, rather than hostile military actions, it will be co-operation between the Varangian-Rus' and the various Turkic ethnic groups (as well as tribes dominated in the steppe zone by Turkic cultural influences),[12] which will be pursued in the present thesis (*Fig. 1*). It will be argued that the Rus' maintained close friendly contact with the local nomadic tribes of European Russia on multiple levels. The most important partners of them were the Khazars and the Volga Bulghars along the Volga, and the Pechenegs and Magyars in the Dnieper region. Other tribes who were present in Eastern Europe, but about whom we possess scanty information regarding their contacts with the Varangian-Rus', such as the Alans, Oghuz', Burtas' or the Baskhirs, will be also referred to, albeit only sporadically (*Fig. 2*).

The histories of all these tribes' were intimately linked to the Volga and the Dnieper rivers, and they must have had contact with various Scandinavian groups who were sailing on the Russian rivers in the ninth-eleventh centuries (*Fig. 3*). Apart from occasional or more frequent hostilities, the Rus' often co-operated with these tribes in the period both in economic and military sense. These amicable relations will be discussed in four thematic chapters: trade, warfare, religion and customs, and communication. The first two chapters collect data on the Scandinavian trade with the various Turkic tribes, and the mutual participation of Varangian-Rus and Turkic warriors in campaigns and guard duties of the different courts of the region. The possible cultural influence resulting from the extensive trade relations and military co-operations will be discussed under the 'Religion and customs' chapter. The last part goes back to the beginnings and gradual development of these contacts along a basic question: how Scandinavians and Turkic people communicated with each other in everyday dealings?

The examination covers a period of roughly 150 years, starting from the ninth century when the Rus' started to venture south more frequently from North-Western Russia—where they have been settled—and Scandinavia. The upper edge of the chronological framework is

[12] The Magyars and the Alans belong to language groups other than Turkic, namely Finno-Ugric and Iranian, respectively. It is their close cultural affinity to Turkic people which justifies their inclusion in the examination.

justified by the assimilation of Scandinavians among the local population, and the lack of new influx of Scandinavian groups of considerable size into Eastern Europe after the mid-eleventh century. This date will be only exceeded in exceptional cases.

Since the investigation draws upon written sources of diverse origin and usefulness, issues regarding their limitations and historicity will be addressed in corresponding parts, however a short summary is desirable here.

The bulk of the source material consists of contemporary documents. The first group of these are the Byzantine historical sources, which contain valuable information on the steppe, and on Rus and Varangian groups operating in or in the vicinity of the Empire. Although these accounts usually served state purposes and thus are largely reliable, they tend to ignore the differences between similar ethnic groups and build on earlier scribal tradition when describing them. Therefore, it is sometimes problematic to correlate Rus' or Turks with specific ethnic groups which is further enhanced sometimes by the typologization of certain ethnographic details. Central works to my argument are nevertheless examined, such as the works of Constantine VII's; *De administrando imperio* and the *De ceremoniis*, as well as Leo the Deacon's *History*.

The second cluster of contemporary accounts which can orient us concerning Rus-Turkic relations are Muslim travel narratives. Muslim travelers, often employed by their state as soldiers, spies and diplomats and were trained in geography whilst inspecting the surrounding world and its inhabitants with keen interest. Thus, similarly to Byzantine works they also served state purposes and the intention of lying or distortion of facts can be excluded in their case. However, we have to bear in mind that these authors viewed foreigners through their own cultural filters, and explained certain ethnographic details by their own terminology. In addition, their handling of ethnic designations is far from clear, and one cannot safely assume

in every case that a certain author perceives foreigners as an intact ethnic group or some kind of loose association.

Contrary to Byzantine and Arabic sources, the Slavic source which is of primary interest here was composed later than the events it describes and sometimes incorporates sources of various authenticity. Thus, the chronicle of the *Tale of Bygone Years*, produced in the twelfth century and more commonly known on its Russian name, *Povest' Vremennykh Let*, or simply as *Russian Primary Chronicle*, have to be handled with care. This mostly applies to the period of the ninth century, which is semi-legendary at best in its report on the arrival of the Rus' and the Varangians. Although the chronicle becomes more trustworthy from the reign of Vladimir I, previous sections describing his predecessors', such as Prince Sviatoslav's, rule are also taken as authentic as they are corroborated by Byzantine accounts.

Similar concerns surface in connection to Old Norse-Icelandic sagas, literary texts being produced centuries later, usually in the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries. However, the sagas' depiction of the Viking Age draws on earlier oral traditions and thus, in certain cases (for instance regarding customs and social norms) they contain enlightening material both for Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. Political events in the sagas are not taken at face value (unless confirmed by other sources), and their stories are to tincture the argument. They are usually not handled as authentic, however when alike accounts on the basis of analogies allow, saga episodes are presented as 'potentially believable' regardless whether the events actually occurred exactly as described in the narrative or not.

Latin works, which are usually of supplementary nature to the central argument but are contemporary accounts, are treated more freely, albeit their reports are sometimes also questioned. In addition, the examination will be occasionally supplemented with the results of other disciplines, mostly archaeology focusing on material culture and burial customs connecting the Scandinavian, Slavic and the Turkic world.

Before proceeding to the analytical part, for the matter of context, the histories of the main Turkic tribes in question—the Khazars', Volga Bulghars', Magyars and Pechenegs—should be presented briefly.

The major power on the Ponto-Caspian steppe in the period between the seventh and ninth centuries was the Khazar state, emerged as a successor state of the Western Turk Khaganate. The early development of their state and the exact origin of the Khazar tribe remain unclear, however, in most of their cultural traits (language, religion, political structure) the Khazars resembled common Turkic ethnic groups. Their empire at its zenith stretched from the Slavic populated lower Dnieper in the West, the North-Caucasian territories in the south to the Volga Bulghar state in the North, and as a consequence incorporated miscellaneous ethnicities. Among these, in their capital, Itil, in the Volga delta, a considerable Muslim population lived together with Turkic, Finno-Ugric and Slavic people. The Khazar state was weakened by continuous onslaughts from nomadic tribes, such as the Pechenegs and the Magyars, and the sedentary Rus'. After the final strike, given to them by the Rus' in 965, the Khazars dispersed in the region or were amalgamated in the neighbouring tribes. Their ruling system was based on 'dual kingship', in which a sacred ruler, the khagan, held supreme religious power, but let the practical government to be directed by a king, often referred to in the sources as *beg*. In the Khazar Khaganate all major religions were entitled to their own judges, despite the ruling strata of the society converted to Judaism at around the turn of the ninth century. The Khazars practiced a semi-nomadic way of life based on nomadic pasturage and transit commerce (their main income being various tithes), coloured with sedentary elements such as cultivated fieldworks and the establishment of towns.[13]

[13] For the genereal history of the Khazars, see the following introductory works with extensive references: Denis Sinor, ed., *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 263–70; Benjamin P. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples. Ethnogenesis and State-Formation in Medieval and Early Modern Eurasia and the Middle East* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992), 233–44; István Vásáry, *Geschichte des frühen Innerasiens* (Herne: Tibor Schäfer, 1993), 152–58; Alexandrowna S. Pletnjowa, *Die Chasaren. Mittelalterliches Reich an Don und Wolga* (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1978).

The Volga Bulghars were a branch of the Bulghar tribal union, who after their defeat from the Khazars on the Pontic steppe in the middle of the seventh century, migrated to the Upper-Volga-Kama region. Just like other nomadic groups, the Volga Bulghar tribes were not ethnically homogenous. The territory around the Volga-Kama rivers were already subject to small-scale migration of people of Turkic and Iranian origin, and the Volga Bulghars brought with themselves Sabir and Khazar ethnic elements. The Volga Bulghar state, which vanished under the Mongol invasion of the thirteenth century, was the most organized military power in the area during the Viking Age, fulfilling a significant role as a middleman in the transit trade between Asia and Northern Europe by founding market towns along the Volga. Initially being the subordinates of the Khazars, the Volga Bulghars adopted Islam in the early tenth century in order to become independent. About their political structure, we possess little information. According to the Muslim traveller and diplomat, Ibn Fadlan, in 922 their ruler was the 'King of the Saqaliba', whose sons ruled as sub-kings. Hostilities between their individual tribes occurred occasionally and the process of their unification and state organization is unknown. The Volga Bulghars had a complex economy based on agriculture, steppe nomadic cattle-breeding (with winter and summer headquarters), and forest exploitation on the expense of the neighbouring Finno-Ugric population of the forest belt.[14]

The early history and ethnogenesis of the Ancient- or Proto-Hungarian tribes, often called Magyars, is a topic of continuous and exalted debates, which should not be elaborated here. What seems to be accepted concerning this in modern scholarship is that the Hungarians' language belongs to the Finno-Ugric language family, whilst their culture was Turkic in character. Leaving the Finno-Ugric tribal communities at some point, the Magyars moved southwards to the forest-steppe zone and intermingled with local Oghuric groups in the

[14] On the Volga Bulghars see: Sinor, ed., *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, 234–42; Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 253–58; Vásáry, *Geschichte des frühen Innerasiens*, 146–49; István Zimonyi, "Wolgabulgaren", in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, Vol. 9., ed. Robert Auty and Charlotte Bretscher-Gisiger (Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1998), 315–17.

vicinity of the Volga Bulghars, probably eventuating a gradual embracement of a steppe nomadic lifestyle. The area near the Southern Ural mountains is frequently considered to be the ancient homeland of the Hungarians (*Magna Hungaria*), from where the long steppe migration of their tribes began probably in the mid-eighth century. What prompted the Magyar migration remains unresolved (such as its precise date or route), however during the ninth century they most probably lived within the orbit of the Khazar Khaganate in a place called Levedia (east of the Dnieper), and after driven away by a Pecheneg attack in the middle of the century, in Etelköz (west of the Dnieper). The Magyars were finally pushed out of the Dnieper region as well, again by the Pechenegs, in 895, and migrated into the Carpathian Basin, where they for long maintained contact with the steppe. Their political organization was centralized, and developed under Khazar influence; having a sacred ruler (*kende*) and a profane military leader (*gyula*). During their stay in the south Russian steppe, their economic culture rested on cattle-breeding and slave trade.[15]

The Pechenegs first appear in Chinese sources of the seventh century as a tribe inhabiting a territory somewhere between today's Kazakhstan and the North Caucasian steppe. Later, they were continuously pushed by the Oghuz tribal federation and from the Aral-sea–Syr Darya region migrated to the Volga. Under continuous pressure, the Pechenegs were again forced to migrate westwards, driving the Magyars in front of them in two phases (889, 895). They remained in the Pontic steppe from the late-ninth to the mid-eleventh century when the Oghuz-Cuman attacks forced them to the Danubian frontier of the Byzantine Empire. Finally they were crushed here by a joint Byzantine-Cuman operation in 1091 after which they ceased to be a decisive military force and dispersed among the nearby Turkic tribes or settled in the

[15] On the Magyars see: Sinor, ed., *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, 242–48; Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 258–62; Vásáry, *Geschichte des frühen Innerasiens*, 158–66; András Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages. An Introduction to Early Hungarian History* (Budapest: CEU Press, 1999); compare with: István Fodor, "The Culture of Conquering Hungarians", in *Tender Meat under the Saddle. Customs of Eating, Drinking and Hospitality among Conquering Hungarians and Nomadic Peoples*, ed. József Laszlovszky (Krems: Medium Aevum Quotidianum, 1998), 9–43.

Empire, the Kievan Rus' and Hungary. Their eight tribes with their individual rulers were dwelling in both sides of the Dnieper in the tenth century and were in charge of frequent trade routes leading through their territory. They formed a loose tribal federation, with weak and probably only *ad hoc* central authority. The Pechenegs were a ferocious tribe, often utilized by the Byzantines as their hired agents to balance power relations in the steppe. Besides bribes and gifts they received as mercenaries, the Pechenegs obtained their riches through raids launched against almost anybody in the region, most frequently the Rus'. Apart from plunder, their economy was purely nomadic, with extensive animal husbandry, characterized by the lack of towns or permanent centres.[16]

[16] On the Pechenegs see: Sinor, ed., *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, 270–75; Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 264–70; Vásáry, *Geschichte des frühen Innerasiens*, 167–70; Omeljan Pritsak, "The Pechenegs: A Case of Social and Economic Transformation", *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 1 (1975): 211–35.

Chapter 1 – Trade

In the present chapter, mercantile relations between the Rus' and the Turks will be established. The major trade routes and their chronological development will be discussed by addressing the commercial use of the Volga and the Dnieper rivers, respectively. The goods traded between the Rus' and the various Turkic tribes will be identified on the basis of written testimonies, analogies and supporting archaeological evidence if available.

The bulk of Scandinavian activities in Russia were inherently linked to lakes and riverways, which were the main transportation routes in the steppe and the sole passable tracks in the forest belt. The terrestrial routes also followed the rivers when possible because of safe orientation and continuous supplies. Thus, since waterways were inherently linked to transportation, population clustered around lakes and rivers which gave rise to the development of *emporia*. Scandinavian groups coming first and foremost to acquire and trade animal furs in the rich forest regions of North-Western Russia, started to settle along the Lake Ladoga and Ilmen in the first place already from the eighth century, connected by the River Volkhov and advancing southwards on the River Lovat, and finally through smaller portages and tributaries into the Dnieper. A similar route could be found through lakes and portages from the Western Dvina to reach the Volga from Lake Ladoga.[17]

Rivers also fulfilled an essential part in the steppe's way of life, since wandering herder communities nomadized alongside them. Nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes were changing between summer and winter headquarters along or near big rivers in order to suffer less from

[17] On the river routes and the Scandinavian expansion see: Boba, *Nomads, Northmen and Slavs*, 19–23; Johann Callmer, "At the watershed between the Baltic and tee Pontic before Gnezdovo", in *From Goths to Varangians. Communication and Cultural Exchange between the Baltic and the Black Sea*, ed. Line Bjerg, John H. Lind and Søren M. Sindbæk (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2013), 39–85; Søren M. Sindbæk, "Varægiske vinterruter. Slædetransport i Rusland og spørgsmålet om den tidlige vikingetids orientalske import i Nordeuropa" [Varangian winter routes. Sledge transport in Russia and the question of early Viking Age oriental import into Northern Europe], *Fornvännen* 98, no. 3. (2003): 179–93; Ingmar Jansson, "Warfare, Trade or Colonization? Some General Remarks on the Eastern Expansion of the Scandinavians in the Viking Period", in *The Rural Viking in Russia and Sweden*, ed. Pär Hansson (Örebro: Örebro kommuns bildingförvaltning, 1997), 9–64; and the works listed in footnote 13.

the drop of temperature and to provide sufficient grazing grounds for their herds. This common importance of waterways for the nomads of the steppe and the 'nomads of the sea' soon resulted in the establishment of contact.

The result of initial contacts along the Russian waterways was a flourishing trade system between the Rus' and the various Turkic tribes during the ninth–eleventh centuries. Trade relations between Scandinavians and Turkic people belong to the history of the Viking trade in the 'East' and is also connected to Islamic people in the Volga, and Slavs in the Dnieper area, which were the two rivers playing major roles in 'oriental' trade. Much has been said about this commerce and the famous route which, according to the twelfth-century *Russian Primary Chronicle*, led '*from the Varangians to the Greeks*' that is from Scandinavia to Byzantium through the river Dnieper or the Volga.[18]

From all these contacts, the Viking trade with (or through) the Khazars and the Volga Bulghars is of outmost importance in the Volga region, whilst the relationship with the nomadic Pechenegs and the Magyars in the south Russian steppe and the Carpathian Basin were significant for the areas which came to be known as the Kievan Rus'. In spite of pointing out differences between the 'Dnieper' and the 'Volga' Rus community, interconnectedness existed. People from the Dnieper also visited Khazaria and Bulghar, and the reverse occurred too: a major land trade route connected Bulghar with Kiev that continued towards the Central European markets. Thus, it is essential to stress that despite the geographical proximity, Pechenegs and Magyars were not the most important trading partners of the Kievan dominion but were important (passive or active) agents in the trade that led through their lands.

[18] *The Russian Primary Chronicle. Laurentian text*, ed. and trans, Samuel Hazzard Cross and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (Cambridge: Crimson Printing Company, 1953), 53–54 (henceforth: RPC); Hilda Ellis Roderick Davidson, *The Viking Road to Byzantium* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976), 17–106; Wladyslaw Duczko, *Viking Rus. Studies on the Presence of Scandinavians in Eastern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 61–64; Simon Franklin and Jonathan Shepard. *The Emergence of Rus 750–1200* (London: Longman, 1996), 3–148; Jonathan Shepard, "From the Bosporus to the British Isles: the way from the Greeks to the Varangians", in *Drevnejshhie gosudarstva Vostochnoj Evropy 2009 god* (Moscow: Institut vseobshhej istorii PAH, 2010), 15–42.

Trade in the Volga region

The Scandinavian-Khazar and Scandinavian-Volga Bulghar trade have been dealt with in detail by great numismatists, Thomas S. Noonan and Roman K. Kovalev whose interpretations I am relying on in the followings. The 'oriental' trade with Scandinavia mostly developed due to the influx of Arabic silver which attracted Scandinavian merchant groups to the region, who offered furs and slaves in exchange for Arabic silver coins, called as dirhems.[19] It is now established through the examination of dirhem finds and the written sources that during the ninth century, Scandinavian merchants ventured up until Baghdad itself on camel backs to reach Arabic markets, and obtained dirhems flowing from lands beyond the Caucasus. The Khazarian capital, Itil, in the Volga delta, however served as an intermediary in the Arabic–Scandinavian trade. In the tenth century, another major market in the region became essential; Bulghar in the Upper Volga. From then on, Scandinavian traders did not have to travel far into the Arabic lands since commerce was exclusively conducted through Turkic intermediaries, the Volga Bulghars and the Khazars.[20]

In this trade system, the position of the Khazars gradually declined compared to the Bulghars due to a variety factors. First and foremost, in the tenth century a new trade route was established which was kept off Khazar territory, leading from Khorasan and Transoxiana through the territories of the Oghuz Turks and the Bashkirs (between the Aral Sea and the

[19] Thomas S. Noonan, "Why the Vikings first came to Russia?", *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 34, no. 3. (1986): 321–48; Janet Martin, *Treasure of the Land of Darkness. The fur trade and its significance for medieval Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Nikolaj A. Makarov, "Traders in the Forest: The Northern Periphery of Rus' in the Medieval Trade Network", in *Pre-Modern Russian and Its World. Essays in Honor of Thomas S. Noonan*, ed. by Kathryn L. Reyerson, Theofanis G. Stavrou and James D. Tracy (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2006), 115–34; James Howard-Johnston, "Trading in Fur, from Classical Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages", in *Leather and Fur. Aspects of Early Medieval Trade and Technology*, ed. Eshter Cameron (London: Archetype Publications, 1998), 61–79.

[20] Omeljan Pritsak, "An Arabic Text on the Trade Route of the Corporation of ar-Rūs in the Second Half of the Ninth Century", *Folia Orientalia* 12 (1970): 241–59; Thomas S. Noonan, "Scandinavian-Russian-Islamic trade in the ninth century", *Wosinszky Mór Múzeum Évkönyve* 15 (1990): 53–63; Thomas S. Noonan, "The Tenth-Century Trade of Volga Bulghāria with Sāmānid Central Asia", *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 11 (2000–2001): 140–219; Roman K. Kovalev, "Khazaria and Volga Bulğāria as intermediaries in trade relations between the Islamic Near East and the Rus' lands during the tenth to early eleventh centuries: The Numismatic Evidence I.", *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 18 (2011): 43–156.

Volga) to Bulghar.[21] Secondly, the advance of the Rus' in the Middle Dnieper area resulted in the loss of Slavic tributaries for the Khazars,[22] whilst the appearance of the Magyars and the Pechenegs in the Black Sea steppe disturbed land and river routes previously utilized by Rus merchants to reach the Dnieper and the Volga delta.[23] It has been estimated by Noonan through the examination of dirham finds in European Russia and the Baltics that the trade with the Khazars became approximately 4–5 times smaller than the one with Bulghar in the tenth century.[24]

Regarding what wares has been brought and taken by the Rus' from Itil and Bulghar we have to rely on Muslim sources and archaeological evidence. In the ninth century, the Rus' merchants who travelled through the Black Sea and the Caspian to reach Baghdad carried with themselves beaver and black fox skins as well as swords.[25] Skins definitely were imported by the Khazars[26] but double-edged swords, usually wielded and traded by the Vikings,[27] might have been of limited use for the Khazars due to their habit of steppe nomadic

[21] Noonan, "The Tenth-Century Trade of Volga Bulghāria with Sāmānid Central Asia", 163–64.
[22] *RPC*, 61.
[23] Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, Vol. 1., ed. Gyula Moravcsik, trans. R. J. H. Jenkins, Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 1 (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1967), 56–63 (henceforth: DAI).
[24] Thomas S. Noonan, "Some Observations on the the Economy of the Khazar Khaganate", in *The World of the Khazars. New Perspectives Selected Papers from the Jerusalem 1999 International Khazar Colloqium*, ed. Peter B. Golden, Haggai Ben-Shammai and András Róna-Tas (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 235–36.
[25] Pritsak, "An Arabic Text on the Trade Route of the Corporation of ar-Rūs", 256.
[26] *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness: Arabic Travellers in the far North*, trans. by Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone (London: Penguin, 2012), 155.
[27] Szabolcs Polgár, "Kora középkori (9–12. századi) kelet-európai fegyverkereskedelemre utaló feljegyzések az írott forrásokban" [Early Medieval (ninth-twelfth century) accounts about Eastern European weapon trade in the written soruces], in *Fegyveres nomádok, nomád fegyverek*, ed. László Balogh and László Keller (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2004), 92–101. The production base and the distribution patterns of double-edged swords were widespread, the main workshops supplying these weapons being in Frankia and Scandinavia. Whether the 'Frankish type swords' that the Vikings traded in the East according to Arabic sources were manufactured by them, the locals or were brought from Frankia or Scandinavia cannot be asserted with certainty, however it is reasonable to assume that the Vikings contributed to the spread of blacksmith techniques. The question of origin in case of a given sword is even more complicated since the blade and the hilt could be produced in different workshops, and pattern-welding inscriptions with a few exceptions (for instance runic inscriptions) were often not restricted to a specific area. Counterfeiting markers of distinctive workshops (e.g. the notorious 'Ulfberht' swords) was for instance practiced in the North. Regional differences in sword finds throughout Scandinavia (with Norway having far the largest specimens) are inconclusive either in relation to the geographic origin of Viking swords as they only signal the social utilization of swords in burial customs and not the definite number of swords that once were in circulation. On all of these problems see: *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness*, 45–46; Anne Stalsberg, "Why so many Viking Age swords in Norway?", in *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference. Interethnic Relations in Transylvania Militaria Mediaevalia in Central and South Eastern Europe Sibiu, October 14th–17th, 2010*, ed. Ioan Marian Ţiplic (Sibiu: Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu Publishing

mounted warfare for which the curved bladed sabres were more suitable. At least this is the impression gained from the *Russian Primary Chronicle* when the Slavic subjects of the Khazars were said to supply them with tribute in the form of double-edged swords, which did not satisfy the Khazars' needs.[28] The ignorance of Viking swords by the Khazars is slightly suggested by archaeology as well, albeit only on the basis of *argumentum ex silentio*: so far only a single bronze scabbard (the only Scandinavian find) from the Lower Volga is known.[29] However, the Khazar army consisted of thousands of Muslim mercenaries, who could well make use of Viking swords which were of outstanding craftsmanship. According to a contemporary Persian historian, Ibn Miskawayh, Muslims in the tenth-eleventh centuries used to rob the graves of buried Rus warriors for their excellent swords.[30]

Whether honey and wax, products usually levied from the Slavs in the forest and forest-steppe region, were brought by Scandinavian merchants to Itil is debated due to the eleventh-century Persian al-Gardizi's statement that the Khazar lands were rich in the mentioned products.[31]

It is not reported what the Rus' took from the markets of Khazaria in return for their wares, but it can be assumed that they mostly sought silver coins. The Khazars imitated Arabic

House, 2011), 47–52; Irmelin Martens, "Indigenous and imported Viking Age weapons in Norway – a problem with European implications", *Journal of Nordic Archaeological Science* 14 (2004): 125–37; Anatoly N. Kirpichnikov, Lena Thålin-Bergmann and Ingmar Jansson, "A New Analysis of Viking-Age Swords from the Collection of the Statens Historiska Musser, Stockholm, Sweden", *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 28, no. 1–4. (2001): 221–44; Anatoly N. Kirpichnikov, "Connections between Russia and Scandinavia in the ninth and tenth centuries, as illustrated by weapon finds", in *Varangian Problems. Scando–Slavica Supplementum I.*, ed. Knud Hannestad, Knud Jordal, Ole Klindt-Jensen, Knud Rahbek Schmidt and Carl Stief (Copenhagen: Munskgaard, 1970), 50–76; Ádám Bíró, "Dating (With) Weapon Burials and the »Waffenwechsel«. A Preliminary Report on New Investigations of the so-called Viking-Age Swords in the Carpathian Basin from a Chronological Point of View", in *Die Archäologie der frühen Ungarn. Chronologie, Technologie und Methodik. Internationaler Workshop des Archäologischen Instituts der Ungarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften und des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums Mainz in Budapest am 4. und 5. Dezember 2009*, ed. Tobias Bendeguz, (Mainz: Schnell & Steiner, 2012), 191–218; Sven Kalmring, "Of Thieves, Counterfeiters, and Homicides. Crime in Hedeby and Birka", *Fornvännen* 105 (2010): 281–90. At the time of writing unfortunately I did not have access to Fedir Androshchuk's extensive study on Viking Age swords: Fedir Androshchuk, *Viking swords. Swords and social aspects of weaponry in Viking Age societies*. Stockholm: Historiska Musset, 2014.

[28] *RPC*, 58.

[29] Fedir Androshchuk, "The Vikings in the East", in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price (London: Routledge, 2008), 523.

[30] Harris Birkeland, *Nordens historie i middelalderen etter arabiske kilder* (Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1954), 57–58.

[31] Arsenio P. Martinez, "Gardīzī's two chapters on the Turks", *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 2 (1982): 155; compare with: Noonan, "Some Observations on the the Economy of the Khazar Khaganate", 215.

dirhems, and also produced some by themselves which were even found in the island of Gotland, Sweden.[32]

Another characteristic of the ninth-century Scandinavian trade with Itil was the tithe that the Khazars imposed on the wares of passing-by Rus ships.[33] Even though mostly associated with hostile attacks against the Khazar dominion, the erection of the Khazar fort, Sarkel, might rather be connected to the taxation of ship or caravan cargoes.[34]

Viking Rus merchants traveling through Itil to Bulghar were also subject to tithe levied on them by the Bulghars.[35] Many of the products coming there from the North or the lands of the Slavs were re-exported by the Bulghars to Khazaria or to Khwarezm, since some of them are listed in a catalogue of Bulghar export wares provided by a tenth-century Arab geographer, al-Muqaddasi'.[36] The slaves traded by the Rus' in Bulghar were possibly transported to Central Asia. The other in-brought products of the Rus' consisted of pelts of different kinds, honey, wax and double-edged swords. The latter were especially sought after by the Arabs (suspected by Ibn Miskawayh's previously mentioned passage) and thus, similarly to slaves, the final destinations of Viking swords were most probably the inner-Arabic territories. Concerning the fur trade, there is reason to assume that some kind of rivalry between the Rus' and the Volga Bulghars existed as the latter also tended to acquire pelts on their own, mostly from the inhabitants of the Wisu regions, north of Bulghar.[37]

Besides the currency of Arabic dirhems, Scandinavians in the Bulghar market also obtained silk, clothes of oriental fashion and decorative fittings which appear in a description

[32] Roman K. Kovalev, "Creating Khazar Identity through Coins: The Special Issue Dirhams of 837/8", in *East Central & Eastern Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Florin Curta (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 220–53.
[33] Pritsak, "An Arabic Text on the Trade Route of the Corporation of ar-Rūs", 257.
[34] Szabolcs Polgár, "Sarkel", in A *Kárpát-medence és a steppe*, ed. Alfréd Márton (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2001), 106–26; Pletnjowa, *Die Chasaren*, 103–05; for an English summary of the different theories about Sarkel see: István Zimonyi, *Muslim Sources on the Magyars in the Second Half of the 9th Century. The Magyar Chapter of the Jayhānī Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2015) 340–42.
[35] *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness*, 44.
[36] *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness*, 169–70.
[37] *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness*, 39.

of a Rus chieftain (buttons, silk shirt),[38] and archaeological evidence in the Swedish commercial centre of Birka.[39] In addition, even though animals could be transported on boards of Viking ships, the more shallow Russian waterways prevented the use of seagoing ships,[40] and thus it can be proposed that some of the animal supplies had to be purchased on sight in Bulghar. The numerous animal species (sheep, cows, dog, horses, cock, hen) sacrificed by the Rus' upon their arrival to the Volga and during the funeral of a chieftain in the Arabic traveller's, Ibn Fadlan's, famous description from 922, presupposes this assertion. The Bulghars and the nearby Turkic tribes along the Volga, for instance the Oghuz', the Burtas and the Baskhirs, herded huge flocks of cattle and sheep which were most probably traded as well.[41] Since the Rus' were not sedentary in the region, this trade in live animals was probably restricted to buying supplies for the river voyages or occasional ritual purposes.

Trade in the Dnieper region

The situation was different in the Dnieper area, which was under extensive use from the end of the ninth century when the Rus' firmly established themselves in Kiev. The motivation behind the seizure of this *emporium* was most probably its proximity to the prosperous southern markets of the Byzantine Empire, which could be reached via the River Dnieper. However, besides the luxury products taken from the Byzantines, the sedentary Kievan Rus principality was in severe need of animals, especially horses, which were obtained from the

[38] *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness*, 45–46.; Birkeland, *Nordens historie i middelalderen etter arabiske kilder*, 29.
[39] Inga Hägg, "Birkas orientaliska praktplagg" [Birka's oriental garments], *Fornvännen* 78 (1984): 204–23; Heiko Steuer, "Mittelasien und der Wikingerzeitliche Norden", in *Die Wikinger und das Frankische Reich. Identitäten zwischen Konfrontation und Annäherung,* ed. Kerstin P. Hofmann, Hermann Kamp and Matthias Wemhoff (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2014), 217–38.
[40] Anne Stalsberg, "Scandinavian Viking-Age Boat Graves in Old Rus'." *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 28, no. 1–4. (2001): 368–77; Petr Sorokin, "Staraya Ladoga: a seaport in Medieval Russia", in *Connected by the Sea. Proceedings of the Tenth International Symposium on Boat and Ship Archaeology Roskilde 2003*., ed. Lucy Blue, Fred Hocker and Anton Englert (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2006), 157–62.
[41] *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness*, 22; Noonan, "Some Observations on the the Economy of the Khazar Khaganate", 227–28.

nomads of the south Russian steppe and the Carpathian Basin during the course of the tenth century.[42]

The nomadic Turkic Pecheneg tribes (eight in number) dwelt in the steppe from the river Don until the lower Danube since driving the Magyars out of the area in 895. As it is reported by the Byzantines, the Rus' were keen on remaining in peace with the Pechenegs '*for they buy of them horned cattle and horses, and sheep, whereby they live more easily and comfortably, since none of the aforesaid animals is found in Russia.*'[43] The Pechenegs' main export wares to the Rus', thus seem to be animal products.

What kind of wares the Pechenegs received from the Rus' in return for the animals can only be speculated. These likely included the traditional products steppe nomadic societies had shortage of, such as grain and other food, clothes and iron tools.[44] It was frequent in the region that goods bought by someone were re-exported for more needed products. Such was the case with the Chersonites (inhabitants of a major market on the Crimea), who if did not '*journey to Romania and [sold] the hides and wax that they [got] by trade from the Pechenegs, they [could not] live*'.[45] Hides could evidently been produced by the cattle herder Pechenegs, but wax is more problematic. The wax was one of the most important products of the forest region, and was given by the Rus' to the Byzantines as gift and as commodity.[46] Whether wax and honey were produced at this time on the Eastern European steppe can be debated. In the region, it is only reported about the Khazars that they abounded in these goods, however, the confirming statement provided by al-Gardizi could have easily referred to the territories of Khazar tributaries, the lands of the Burtas and the Volga Bulghars, who were engaged in extensive beekeeping. It seems more reasonable that the Pechenegs—

[42] Isaev I. Froianov, "Large-scale Ownership of Land and the Russian Economy in the Tenth to Twelfth Centuries", *Soviet Studies in History* 24, no. 4. (1986): 9–82.
[43] *DAI*, 48–51.
[44] Noonan, "Rus', Pechenegs and Polovtsy", 318.
[45] *DAI*, 286–87.
[46] *RPC*, 77, 83, and 86.

similarly to the Chersonites who, according to the quote above, exchanged it in the territory of the Byzantine Empire—, transferred wax from the Rus' to the Chersonites. This surmised intermediary trade was carried out by the Pechenegs in order to receive luxury goods in return.[47]

Besides wax, occasionally goldsmith products and weapons could have been also provided by the Rus' to the Pechenegs, which is surmised by the latter's organization. The Pechenegs were unsettled nomadic folks who had to provide themselves with tools unavailable in the steppe, either through raids or commerce. Gold and silver vessels, weapons and silver belts, all in which the Pechenegs were rich according to the sources, were most probably plundered by Pecheneg raiding parties.[48] In tandem, objects related to Pecheneg culture (belt-buckles, sabretache-locks, boot mounts, harness equipment) have been discovered in the Don-Dnieper area and the Crimea (Gayevka, Kamenka, Kotovka, Staro-Shvedskoye, Gorozheno), which exhibit Nordic metalwork influences pointing towards the spread of common metalwork techniques.[49]

Another important aspect of the Rus-Pecheneg mercantile relations were the control of the Dnieper water route, which will be discussed in more detail below in connection with the Magyars. Suffice it to say here that even though on the short run, plundering passing-by Rus merchant ships could be fruitful for the Pechenegs, on the long run it was not in their interest to permanently disrupt trade in the region which was essential for their own economic prosperity.[50]

[47] *DAI*, 52–53.
[48] Martinez, "Gardīzī's two chapters on the Turks", 151–52.
[49] András Horváth Pálóczi, *Kelei népek a középkori Magyarországon. Besenyők, úzok, kunok és jászok művelődéstörténeti emlékei* [Eastern folks in medieval Hungary. Cultural historical relics of Pechenegs, Oghuz', Cumans and Iasians] (Budapest: Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem, 2014), 22–23; Ibid, *Pechenegs, Cumans, Iasians. Steppe peoples in medieval Hungary* (Gyomaendrőd: Corvina, 1989), 31–32 and 264.
[50] Benjamin P. Golden, "Aspects of the Nomadic Factor in the Economic Development of the Kievan Rus'", in *Nomads and their Neighbours in the Russian Steppe. Turks, Khazars and Qipchaqs*, ed. by Peter Benjamin Golden (Cornwall: Ashgate, 2003), 94–95.

Prior to the arrival of the Pechenegs, the Magyars occupied the Lower Dnieper-Don area. Unfortunately no written sources mention Rus-Magyar trade during the ninth century, nevertheless suggestions had been put forward. The only written source mentioning Rus-Magyar dealings comes from al-Gardizi, according to whom the Magyars repeatedly rushed at the Slavs and the Rus', and sold their taken slaves at the Byzantine port of Kerch.[51] Despite these occasional conflicts (usually interpreted as small scale raids), scholars developed the idea that Rus-Magyar relations during the century were relatively peaceful.[52] Two suppositions were taken into account concerning this: the lack of sources on the disturbance of the Dnieper route towards Constantinople, and archaeological evidence that pointed towards commercial contacts between the Rus' and the Magyars.

It has been claimed that the Dnieper route must have been safer during the ninth century in contrast to the tenth when the Pechenegs occupied the area. Based on the testimony of the Byzantine work, *De administrando imperio* written by Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus VII (945–959) around the 950s, the Pechenegs regularly attacked the Rus ship caravans at the fords and cataracts of the river when the ship's cargo had to be unloaded, and thus made the Rus commerce to Constantinople perilous.[53] The Kievan Grand Prince, Sviatoslav, also fell victim to a Pecheneg ambush in 972 at the river cataracts.[54] That the route must have been safer in the ninth century was suspected by the occurrence of the 860s Rus raid against Constantinople, for which the Dnieper routes were most likely used, implying that the Rus' had to pass through Magyar territory. Based on the testimony of the *De administrando imperio,* it seemed likely that the 860s raid against the Byzantine capital could only have been achieved if the Rus' had secured their passage on the Dnieper's streams—which were controlled by the Magyars at the time—either by paying tribute or by being on good terms

[51] Zimonyi, *Muslim Sources on the Magyars in the Second Half of the 9th Century*, 309.
[52] For discussion see: Zimonyi, *Muslim Sources on the Magyars in the Second Half of the 9th Century*, 320–27.
[53] *DAI*, 50–51.
[54] *RPC*, 90.

with the Magyars in general.[55] A possible reason why a Rus pact with the Magyars could have been arranged easier, lies in their political organization, which unlike the Pechenegs', were under unified leadership by the *gyula* and the *kende*. Even though Kurya, the murderer of Prince Sviatoslav, was labelled as '*Prince of the Pechenegs*', his title did not imply firm political rule over all tribes, since Constantine Porphyrogenitus refers to princes at the helm of each of the eight Pecheneg tribes.[56] Thus, supposedly all the Magyar tribes honoured an established agreement, whilst the existence of a uniform Pecheneg policy in the period is less probable.

Even though I find the theory sound that the Magyars were allies of the Rus' during the 860' raid against Byzantium, or at least neutral towards them, written sources warn us to generalize this for the whole century. Besides al-Gardizi's previously mentioned statement on time-to-time Magyar raids on the Rus', there are two other sources which hint at the perilous nature of travelling through Magyar territory at the time.

First to be reported is the much discussed passage of the Frankish annals, the *Annales Bertiniani*, according to which Rus envoys could not return to their homelands from Byzantium in 839 due to fierce and savage tribes blocking their way.[57] These tribes were often associated with the Magyars, although this identification is problematic for a variety of reasons. Firstly, in fact this passage is the only one which would refer to the Magyars in the south Russian steppe so early in the ninth century. Secondly, to identify these tribes with precision we should know the exact route the Rus envoys intended to take. This, however, is the not case, and the Rus Khaganate where these envoys presumably headed have been localized radically differently by researchers theories reaching from Northern Russia, to the

[55] Nándor Fettich, "Adatok a honfoglaláskor archaeologiájához" [Data to the archaeology of the Conquest era], *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 45 (1931): 54; Boba, *Nomads, Northmen and Slavs*, 128; Bollók, "„Inter barbaras et nimiae feritatis gentes"; George Vernadsky, *The Origins of Russia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 213; Zimonyi, *Muslim Sources on the Magyars in the Second Half of the 9th Century*, 327.
[56] *DAI*, 167.
[57] *Annales Bertiniani*, ed. Georg Isidore Waitz, Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum 5 (Hannover: Hahn, 1883), 19–20.

Volga and finally Tmutarakan on the Northern shores of the Black Sea.[58] Lastly, the Rus' frequently used alternative river and also terrestrial routes in the region, thus even if we would be aware of their exact destination the path would still be difficult to establish.[59] These problems are further intensed by the supposition that the the Rus' used the report on the disturbance of route only as justification of their arrival to the Frankish court. This can be suspected by the unusually long roundabout they were making to return to their homeland, the intriguing fact that they apparently succeeded in *getting* to Constantinople, and the Frankish Emperor's, Louis', acts of imprisoning them on the suspicion of spying.[60]

The other source in question is the Old Slavonic *Vita Constantini*, dealing with the life of the Christian missionary, Cyril, and describing the later saint's tour through the lands of the Magyars in 861:

> And while he was reciting the prayer of the first hour, Hungarians fell upon him howling like wolves and wishing to kill him. But he was not frightened and did not forsake his prayers, crying out only, "Lord, have mercy!" for he had already completed the office. Seeing him, they were calmed by God's design and began to bow to him. And upon hearing edifying words from his lips, they released him and his entire retinue in peace.[61]

Although this incident definitely illustrates that the Magyars were ready to take arms against unexpected visitors passing through their lands, whether they let Cyril and his retinue leave due to the holiness of the missionary is less convincing than assuming some form of payment on behalf of the safe passage. Nevertheless, despite occasional hostilities, compared with the

[58] Bollók, "„Inter barbaras et nimiae feritatis gentes""; Márta Font, "A magyar kalandozások és a kelet-európai viking terjeszkedés" [The Hungarian incursions and the Eastern European Viking expansion], in *Állam, hatalom, ideológia. Tanulmányok az orosz történelem sajátosságairól*, ed. Márta Font and Endre Sashalmi (Budapest: Pannonica Könyvkiadó, 2007), 37; Vernadsky, *The Origins of Russia*, 193–198; Golden, "The Question of the Rus' Qaganate", 92–97.

[59] Csete Katona, "Rusz-varég kereskedelmi útvonalak a IX–X. századi Kelet-Európában és a Kárpát-medence" [Varangian-Rus commercial routes in ninth-tenth century Eastern Europe and their relation to the Carpathian Basin], *Jósa András Múzeum Évkönyve* (2017) (Under Press)

[60] *Annales Bertiniani*, 20.

[61] Marvin Kantor, *Medieval Slavic Lives of Saints and Princes* (Michigan: Ann Arbor, 1983). Accessed online: 11 June 2018. http://macedonia.kroraina.com/en/kmsl/kmsl_1.htm

more numerous Pecheneg attacks, Magyar-Rus dealings could have rested on more placid grounds in the period.

That the Magyars did not interrupt or pull back the Rus' trade in the region decisively, is supported by further evidence concerning Rus-Magyar trade relations. During the ninth century, the Rus' have not yet established themselves firmly in the Middle Dnieper area and thus, their needs for animal supplies must not have been decisive yet. However, some archaeological objects in Kiev and the surrounding settlements could be the signs of co-operation between the two ethnic groups. These are artefacts of Nordic origin which exhibit typical Magyar style embellishments or steppe nomadic objects decorated with Nordic metalwork techniques. Good examples for the first category are the Chernigov drinking horns and the Viking sword of Grave 108 of the Kievan Golden Gate, both decorated with palmette motifs.[62] Steppe nomadic weapons, such as the Khoinovsky and the so-called Charlamagne sabres, with their Nordic inlays are prominent examples for the second phenomenon.[63] Thus, despite the fact that the evidence is fragmentary (and in some cases even debatable),[64] most Hungarian archaeologists accept the idea that lively commercial contacts existed between the Rus' and the Magyars during the ninth-tenth centuries, which culminated in the development of merged styles and the mutual borrowings of techniques and craftsmen.[65]

[62] Fedir Androshchuk and Volodymyr Zotsenko, *Scandinavian Antiquities of Southern Rus'. A Catalogue* (Paris: The Ukrainian National Committee for Byzantine Studies, 2012), 97; Csanád Bálint, *Archäeologie der Steppe. Steppenvölker zwischen Volga und Donau vom 6. bis zum 10. Jahrhundert* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1989), 113.
[63] István Fodor, *Verecke híres útján… A magyar nép őstörténete és a honfoglalás* [On Verecke's famous path… The ancient history of the Hungarian nation and the Conquest], (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 1980), 205–14.
[64] The Chernigov drinking horns are probably also (or more) related to Khazar culture. See: Elena A. Melnikova, "Retinue culture and retinue state", in Elena A. Melnikova: *The Eastern World of the Vikings: Eight essays about Scandinavia and Eastern Europe in the early Middle Ages* (Gothenburg: Litteraturvetenskapliga Institutionen, 1996), 71; Bálint, *Archäeologie der Steppe*, 116–17. A stone mould found in Podol (district of Kiev) inscribed with the epigraph 'Yazid' (meaning the Turk) has been interpreted by the Hungarian archaeologist, Károly Mesterházy, as the sign of common Turkic-Rus manufacture. Károly Mesterházy, "A felső-tisza-vidéki ötvösműhely és a honfoglalás kori emlékek időrendje" [The goldsmith workshop of the Upper-Tisza Region and the chronology of the Conquest Period remains], *Agria* 25/26 (1989–1990): 236–37. Duczko, however, relates it to Muslim craftsmen living in the Rus'. Wladyslaw Duczko, "Viking Age Scandinavia and Islam. An Archaeologist's View", in *Byzantium and Islam in Scandinavia. Acts of a Symposium at Uppsala University June 15–16 1996*, ed. Elisabeth Piltz (Jonsered: Paul Åströms Förlag, 1998), 113.
[65] Fettich, "Adatok a honfoglaláskor archaeologiájához", 60–72., Arnold Marosi, "Levediai vonatkozások a székesfehérvári múzeum anyagában és a rádiótelepi kard" [Levedian aspects in the material of the Museum of

Much firm is the evidence, both written and material, for contacts throughout the tenth century. Although settled within the Carpathian Basin, the Magyars launched raids against Western Europe and the Byzantine Empire until the third quarter of the century. The Rus-Magyar trade in the tenth century can be described by indirect ways that is meeting in markets foreign for both the Rus' and the Magyars. However, it can also be argued that direct commerce between Kiev and Hungary also existed, especially in the first half of the century.

Starting with the undoubted evidence, Magyar-Rus commercial meetings did take place in the period. Both markets associated with the Magyars after the middle of the tenth century were visited by Rus merchants too. First to be reported is the market of Pereyaslavets on the Danube to where Prince Sviatoslav intended to transfer his seat saying '*that is the center of my realm, where all riches are concentrated: gold, silks, wine and various fruits from Greece, silver and horses from Hungary and Bohemia, and from Rus' furs, wax, honey and slaves*'.[66] According to the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, this happened in 969, exactly at the time when the Pechenegs started to threaten the Dnieper waterway seriously. As noted, Sviatoslav himself was murdered by the Pechenegs later in one of the river fords and it seems possible that with the Pereyaslavets plan the prince partly aimed to look for alternative horse supplies which can flow from the Magyars rather than the Pechenegs who were not under unified rule and were less trustworthy.

Besides Pereyaslavets, Rus merchants also visited the market of Prague alongside the Magyars. Ibrahim Ibn-Ya'cub at-Turtushi, a Jewish traveller, in 965 noted the followings about the town: '*Russians [Rus'] and Slavs come there from Karakwa [Cracow] with goods.*

Székesfehérvár and the sword from Rádiótelep], *Székesfehérvári Szemle* 8, no. 3–4. (1938): 49–55; János Kalmár, "Pécsi sisak a honfoglalás körüli időből" [The helmet of Pécs from times around the Conquest], *Pécs Szab. Kir. Város Majorossy Imre Múzeumának 1942. évi Értesítője* (1942): 22–29; Mesterházy, "A felső-tisza-vidéki ötvösműhely", 236–37., István Fodor, "Leletek Magna Hungariától Etelközig" [Finds from Magna Hungaria to Etelköz], in *Honfoglalás és régészet. A honfoglalásról sok szemmel*, Vol. 1. ed. László Kovács (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 1994), 51–53; László Kovács, "Beregszász-Birka: Beiträge zu den Mützen mit Blechspitze des 10. Jahrhunderts", *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 54 (2003): 205–42; compare with: Bálint, *Archäeologie der Steppe*, 113–16.

[66] *RPC*, 86.

Moslems, Jews and Turks [Magyars] come there from the country of the Turks [Hungary] and bring goods and trade balances. Flour, tin and various kinds of furs are exported from there.'[67]

What kind of goods the Magyars could have received from the Rus'? Judging by archaeological evidence, it seems probable that in the second half of the tenth century the Magyars bought weapons and other goldsmith products from the Rus'. In the Carpathian Basin, Scandinavian-Rus manufactures: swords, axes and a lance, all datable to the second half of the tenth century or even to the eleventh have been found.[68] Many of these and related items (e.g. miniature axe pendants) could have been imported from the Kievan Rus'. Their Scandinavian provenance is less likely as most of their analogies are to be found in Ukraine and Russia rather than Scandinavia. Even in the case of some of the 'Viking' objects found in Hungarian soil that demonstrates evident linkage with Gotlandic products (a lance, some swords and jewellery) it is possible that they came to the Carpathian Basin through the mediation of the Kievan merchants in Pereyaslavets or Prague. Nevertheless, some Viking wares did reach Hungary perhaps directly from Scandinavia as well, since in the early eleventh century St. Stephen's coins—possibly taken as payment—were discovered in Scandinavian hoards.[69] Relics of Magyar craftsmanship can be found in Russia and Scandinavia as well. Counterparts of Magyar sabretaches were discovered in Chernigov, Smolensk, Lake Ladoga and the Swedish Birka.[70] In addition, a higher concentration of

[67] Dmitrij Mishin, "Ibrahim Ibn-Ya'qub At-Turtushi's Account of the Slavs from the Middle of the Tenth Century", *Annual of Medieval Studies at the CEU* (1994–1995): 186.
[68] Csete Katona, "Vikings in Hungary? The Theory of the Varangian-Rus Bodyguard of the First Hungarian Rulers", *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 17 (2017): 37–49.
[69] Lajos Huszár, "Der Umlauf ungarischer Münzen des XI. Jahrhunderts in Nordeuropa", *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarium Hungaricae* 19 (1967): 175–200; István Gedai, "The Circulation and the Imitation of Hungarian Coins in North Europe", in *Proceedings of the International Numismatic Symposium*, ed. Gedai István and Katalin B. Sey (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), 133–35.
[70] István Fodor, "On the Contacts of Hungarians with the Baltic area in the 9th–11th centuries. From an Archaeologist's Point of View", *Hungarian Studies* 2, no. 2. (1986): 218–20.

Magyar related weapon finds (bows, arrows, finger rings) is to be found in Birka's garrison.[71] Thus, the exchange of wares seems to be mutual.

Besides weapons and jewellery, the Rus' also could have paid for the Magyar commodities with dirhems (which were also found in Hungary) since there is evidence for monetary circulation of coins within Russia and thus it seems likely that dirhems were not only hoarded but also used by the Rus' as currency (although probably for a lesser extent).[72]

Apart from live animals (horses, and possibly also cattle and sheep), the Rus' might have shown interest towards another product of the Carpathian Basin as well. In the recent past, some scholars suggested that from the parts of the Vikings there proved to be decisive demand for European salt in Frankia, Poland and Bulgaria.[73] Following up on this, I find it very likely that the Transylvanian salt mines' products too aroused the interests of the Rus'. The salt mines in the Carpathian Basin were of great value since the ninth century; the Avars and the Bulghars who occupied the territory at that point were both trading with it. Many surmise that the Bulghars occupied Transylvania for salt, and that the Byzantines were also involved in the salt trade with this region.[74] When the Magyars took over the Carpathian

[71] Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson, Lena Holmquist Olausson and Margaretha Klockhoff, *Oriental Mounts from Birka's Garrison. An Expression of Warrior Rank and Status* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2006); Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson, "Magyar – Rus – Scandinavia. Cultural Exchange in the Early Medieval Period", *Situne Dei* (2009): 47–56; Eadem, "Traces of Contacts: Magyar Material Culture in the Swedish Viking Age Context of Birka", in *Die Archäologie der frühen Ungarn. Chronologie, Technologie und Methodik. Internationaler Workshop des Archäologischen Instituts der Ungarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften und des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums Mainz in Budapest am 4. und 5. Dezember 2009*, ed. Tobias Bendeguz (Mainz: Schnell & Steiner, 2012), 29–46.

[72] Thomas S. Noonan, "Monetary Circulation in Early Medieval Rus", *Russian history/Historie Russe* 7 (1980): 294–311. On the Hungarian dirhems see: László Kovács, "Muslimische Münzen im Karpatenbecken des 10. Jahrhunderts", *Anateus* 29–30 (2008): 479–533.

[73] Leszek Gardeła, "Vikings in Poland. A critical overview", in *Viking Worlds. Things, Spaces and Movement*, ed. Marianne Hem Eriksen, Unn Pedersen, Bernt Rundberget and Irmelin Axelsen (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2015), 218; Stephen M. Lewis, "Salt and the Earliest Scandinavian Raids in France: was there a connection?", *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 12 (2006): 103–36; Duczko, *Viking Rus. Studies on the Presence of Scandinavians in Eastern Europe*, 77–78.

[74] Paul Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier. A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900–1204* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 42–45; Uwe Fiedler, "Bulgars in the Lower Danube region. A survey of the archaeological evidence and of the state of current research", in *The Other Europe in the Middle Ages. Avars, Bulgars, Khazars and Cumans*, ed. Florin Curta and Roman Kovalev (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 162; compare with: Victor Spinei, *The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads North of the Danube Delta from Tenth to the Mid-Thirteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 58–60.

Basin, salt production probably continued under their supervision.[75] It even resulted in internal conflicts between the first king, St. Stephen (1000–1038) and a local chieftain, Ajtony, who tried to monopolize the tolls of salt trade on the river Maros for himself near the turn of the millennium.[76]

As an exchange commodity, salt might have been more important for the Rus' of Kiev than previously assumed, which is suggested by later accounts. A franciscian friar, William of Rubruck, reports that the Russians were still in need of salt in the thirteenth century, and at that time they had to venture for it to the Caspian Sea.[77] Earlier, at the end of the reign of Sviatopolk II of Kiev (1093–1113), uprisings broke out in Kiev as the Halichian salt import ceased and the city remained without salt stock, resulting in speculation of the salt price by various merchants groups and the grand prince.[78] The Kievan prince Mstislav Iziaslavich was also disturbed by the fact that the Cumans blocked the so-called 'salt-route' of the Rus' in 1168.[79] These accidents support that the need for continuous salt supply was a necessity in the Kievan Rus' and it was not without difficulties to ensure it from local resources. The mines in Transylvania in fact would have been one of the closest options for the Kievans to import salt in the tenth century.

As I have argued elsewhere, the Carpathian Basin was not a favoured route towards Constantinople for Varangian-Rus merchants for multiple reasons, such as the time consuming length of the route, the obstacles raised by the Carpathians which would have had

[75] Alexandru Madgearu, "Salt trade and warfare in early medieval Transylvania", *Ephemeris Napocensis* 11 (2001): 271–84; Idem, "Salt Trade and Warfare: The Rise of the Romanian-Slavic Military Organization in Early Medieval Transylvania", in *East Central & Eastern Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Florin Curta (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 103–20; Gábor Vékony, "Sókereskedelem a Kárpát-medencében az Árpád-kor előtt" [Salt trade in the Carpathian Basin before the Árpád Age], in *Quasi liber et pictura. Tanulmányok Kubinyi András hetvenedik születésnapjára*, ed. Gyöngyi Kovács (Budapest: ELTE Régészettudományi Intézet, 2004), 655–62.

[76] *Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum*, Vol. 2., ed. Emericus Szentpétery (Budapest: Nap Kiadó 1938), 489–90.

[77] *The Journey of William of* Rubruck, in *The Mongol Mission. Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, ed. Chrisopther Dawson (New York: Sheed and Ward 1955), 93.

[78] *The Paterik of the Kievan Cave Monastery*, trans. Muriel Heppell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 171–74.

[79] Franklin and Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus 750–1200*, 325–27.

to be crossed with carts or boats, and the taxes payable to the Magyar agents in the passes of the mountains.[80] This was the case although, some archaeologists find it probable that the Hungarian river system was operating as a trade route towards the south,[81] and that Swedish experimental archaeologists demonstrated that Constantinople could have been reached by boats pulling it through the Carpathians and sailing on the Hungarian Bodrog, Tisza and finally the Danube rivers up until the Black Sea.[82]

Long-distance trade usually emerged around nodal points when nature presented obstacles and where the likeliness of meeting other long-distance traders was high.[83] Both of these requirements were fulfilled in the case of Prague and Pereyaslavets as they were located on the meeting points of land and water, and were visited by a variety of foreign traders. In Prague Rus', Slavs, Jews, Muslims and Magyars, whilst in Pereyaslavets Rus', Slavs, Greeks and Magyars were present. However, it is still possible that the Upper-Tisza region, which probably operated as a princely headquarter in the first half of the tenth century, and which has the richest archaeological material, served as a temporary nodal point for Rus traders, who could fill up their provisions and sell some of their wares before journeying to Cracow and Prague in the North. Salt could also have been brought here on the river Maros and Tisza,[84] or on land routes on mule backs and carts,[85] whilst animals could have been taken back to Kiev

[80] Katona, "Rusz-varég kereskedelmi útvonalak".
[81] Károly Mesterházy, "Régészeti adatok Magyarország 10–11. századi kereskedelméhez" [Archaeological data for the commerce of tenth-eleventh century Hungary], *Századok* 127, no. 3–4. (1993): 455.
[82] Erik Nylén, *Vikingaskepp mot Miklagård. Krampmacken i Österled* [A Viking ship towards Miklagård. The Krampmacken on the Eastern Way] (Stockholm: Carlsson, 1987); Rune Edberg, "Vikingar mot strömmen. Några synspunkter på möjliga och omöjliga skepp vid färderi hemmavattnen och i österled" [Vikings against the waves. Some observations on possible and impossible ship voyages in home waters and the eastern way], *Fornvännen* 91 (1996): 37–42.
[83] Søren M. Sindbæk, "Networks and nodal points: the emergence of towns in early Viking Age Scandinavia", *Antiquity* 81 (2007): 119–32; Idem, "Local and long-distance exchange", in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price (London: Routledge, 2008), 150–58.
[84] *Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum*, Vol. 2., 489–90.
[85] Beatrix F. Romhányi suggested that the memory of a water route during the tenth-eleventh centuries likely stem from fourteenth century conditions and thus, the salt was transported in the earlier period on land routes. Beatrix F. Romhányi, "A beregi egyezmény és a magyarországi sókereskedelem az Árpád-korban" [The treaty of Bereg and the Hungarian salt trade in the Árpád Age], *Magyar Gazdaságtörténeti Évkönyv* (2016): 282–89; Idem, "Salt Mining and Trade in Hungary before the Mongol invasion", in *The Economy of Medieval Hungary*, ed. József Laszlovszky, Balázs Nagy, Péter Szabó and András Vadas (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 197.

on a shorter way than from the Danube delta or Bohemia. Most of the Hungarian dirhem finds and some of the Rus artefacts are both located in this region. The land route from Bulghar on the Volga also operated in the period without disturbance and thus, the Magyar participation in this commerce is to be expected.[86]

As a summary, it can be stated that Scandinavian traders entered into commercial contact with steppe nomadic (culturally mostly Turkic) tribes already in the earliest phase of their settlement in Russia during the ninth century. The major rivers inextricably colligated the two groups due to their special lifestyles inherently linked to the Russian waterways. Long-distance exchange from the North was conducted through these various water routes flowing through the territories of nomadic tribes, some of whom joined the extensive trade systems with market towns founded at nodal points of the River Volga. The main agents of this transit commerce, the Khazars from the ninth and the Volga Bulghars from the tenth century, were prosperous dominions with well-developed regulations and flourishing markets. The Rus' did not trade here commodities taken from Scandinavia direct (except perhaps double-edge swords), but products or slaves levied by force from the subjugated territories of North-Western and Southern Russia on the expense of the Slavs. After settling in Kiev in the mid-ninth century, the Rus' bordered other nomadic tribes, first the Magyars and then the Pechenegs, with whom they organized their commercial policy as a form of assurance to prevent hostile raids and to secure more lucrative trade routes leading through the steppe. This commerce in character was very different compared to the one conducted on the Volga, as it did not accumulate huge wealth but was rather centered on basic products usually exchanged between sedentary societies and unsettled nomadic folks. During the course of the second half

[86] Boba, *Nomads, Northmen and Slavs*, 30; Szabolcs Polgár, "Útvonalak a Volga-vidék és a Kárpát-medence között a 10. században" [Routes between the Volga region and the Carpathian Basin in the tenth century], in *Orientalista Nap 2000*, ed. Ágnes Birtalan and Yamaji Masanori, (Budapest: MTA Orientalisztikai Bizottság – ELTE Orientalisztikai Intézet, 2001), 159–73; Idem, "A Volga-vidékről a Kárpát-medencéig vezető utak említése egy muszlim forrásban és a magyar fejedelmi székhely a 10. század első évtizedeiben" [A reference to the routes leading from the Volga region to the Carpathian Basin in a Muslim source, and the Hungarian Princely headquarter in the first decades of the tenth century], in *Központok és falvak a honfoglalás és kora Árpád-kori Magyarországon*, ed. Julianna Cseh Kisné (Tatabánya: Tatabányai Múzeum, 2002), 217–30.

of the tenth century other international markets developed within the reach of Kiev which could be visited by Rus merchants also (or only) on terrestrial routes, and where most probably a wider scale of commodities could have been exchanged then previously assumed.

Chapter 2 – Warfare

In addition to markets, another contact zone between Scandinavian and Turkic ethnic groups should be looked for in courts of the region where employing Varangian and nomadic retainers was in fashion. Scandinavian Vikings were amongst the most excellent warriors of the era and thus various courts sought after their services. This is signalled by the expression 'Varangian', which denoted professional warrior groups of Scandinavian pedigree operating in European Russia.[87] The etymology of the phrase goes back to the Old Norse compound word *væring*, meaning a 'companion who takes an oath'.[88]

Sworn Varangian bodyguards appeared in various courts of the contemporary 'East', where according to the written sources, Turkic mercenaries were also hired. Active Varangian-Rus bodyguards and retinues are known from Kiev (*druzhina*), Constantinople (Varangian Guard), and the capital of the Khazar Khaganate, Itil. Although firm evidence is lacking, in three other areas—Volga Bulgharia, Hungary and Poland—the possibility of Varangian-Rus retainers entering local service was also raised. In this part of the thesis it will be attempted to prove the joint participation of Varangian and Turkic retainers in these courts, and to explore the effects of this common service on Varangian mercenaries in a military-cultural sense. It will be illustrated that Scandinavians taking service in these courts assimilated quickly to the local Byzantine and Slavic cultural- and military customs, and thus it will be proposed that the mutual presence of Turkic retainers might have triggered similar effects on them.

[87] Androshchuk, "Vikingarna – ruserna – varjagerna".
[88] Adolf Stender-Petersen, "Zur Bedeutungsgeschichte des Wortes væringi, Russ. *varʹag*", *Acta Philologica Scandinavica. Tidsskrift for nordisk sprogforskning* 6 (1931–1932): 26–38.

The Kievan Rus'

The Rus' presence in the region became decisive after the occupation of Kiev, which according to the legendary tradition preserved in the *Russian Primary Chronicle* occured at the end of the ninth century.[89] Archaeological evidence in the Rus 'capital', however, rather suggests that Scandinavian presence became decisive there only in the tenth century.[90] Regardless of the precise date, in Kiev, it was likely the Varangians, who formed the bulk of the retinue called *druzhina*, as they took possession of the town as an aggressive military unit.[91] The *druzhina* is a concept, deriving from the Russian word *drug* ('friend'), which denoted the armed retinue of princes living within the territories of the Kievan Rus'.[92] For the Rus princes, later on, the logic of hiring ethnically distinct retinue members rested on two basic foundations. On the one hand, in tribal and kinship societies, mercenaries arriving from abroad were not linked to any kin, and thus the rulers did not have to be afraid that their hired hands would betray them or would be refrained from taking actions due to their blood relations to a local family.[93] On the other hand, by putting their traditional tribal warrior gears

[89] Thomas S. Noonan, "Scandinavians in European Russia", in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings*, ed. Peter Sawyer (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 134–55; Boba, *Nomads, Northmen and* Slavs, 113–29.; Sándor László Tóth, "Birodalmak, államok és népek a IX. századi Kelet-Európában" [Empires, states and nations in ninth-century Easter Europe], *Életünk* 7 (1996): 571–98.

[90] Duczko, *Viking Rus. Studies on the Presence of Scandinavians in Eastern Europe*, 220 and 257; Franklin and Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus 750–1200*, 98–109; Fedir Androshchuk, *Vikings in the East. Essays on Contacts along the Road to Byzantium (800–1100)*, Studia Byzantina Upsalensia 14 (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2013), 31–32 and 216–217.

[91] *RPC*, 60–61.

[92] Melnikova, "Retinue culture and retinue state"; Uwe Halbach, *Der Russische Fürstenhof vor dem 16. Jahrhundert: eine vergleichende Untersuchung zur politischen Lexikologie und Verfassungsgeschichte der alten Rus'* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1985), 94–110; Márta Font, "A kijevi (nagy)fejedelmi hatalom jellegéről" [On the nature of the power of the Kievan (Grand) Prince], in *Állam, hatalom, ideológia. Tanulmányok az orosz történelem sajátosságairól*, ed. Márta Font and Endre Sashalmi (Budapest: Pannonica Könyvkiadó, 2007) 74–80.; Franklin and Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus 750–1200*, 194. n. 41; in a wider meaning, the word could included a person's political supporters, a region's male population or artisan guilds. Duczko, *Viking Rus. Studies on the Presence of Scandinavians in Eastern Europe*, 246. However, this is an extended meaning and also a later development, thus here we will be confined to the traditional narrow meaning of the term.

[93] Márta Font, "Druzhina", in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Medieval Warfare and Military Technology: Mercenaries - Zürich, Siege of : 596 S.*, ed. Clifford J. Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 549–50.

on display (often taken together with with a distinctive body-build and special martial skills), foreign retainers enhanced the court's esteem and prestige.[94]

Even though it is beyond doubt that local (Slavic) retainers were employed too, Rus retinues in the period mostly consisted of Scandinavian Vikings, who arrived to Eastern Europe with their own ships, crews and weapons to search for glory.[95] Successful and settling Scandinavians, however became Slavicized with time which is illustrated by the articles of the Rus-Byzantine treatises preserved in the *Russian Primary Chronicle*. At the contract of the year 912, all Rus retinue members bore a Scandinavian name,[96] whilst during the peace treaty of 944, the list of names of the contracting party was broadened with Slavic ones.[97] Ethnicities therefore highly merged during the tenth century. The *Chronicle* also testifies that in order to seal the contracts with the Byzantines, the retinue members, according to Scandinavian customs, took oaths on their weapons in 907, however they (already) venerated Slavic gods, Perun and Volos.[98] Vladimir the Great grand prince of the Rus' (978/980–1015) supposedly also set up pagan idols of different kind in the Kievan castle hill to create a common identity to his ethnically miscellaneous retinue.[99]

Later the *druzhina*s incorporated not only Scandinavian and Slavic but also nomadic elements. This phenomenon most likely started with joint campaigns between the Rus' and the nomads. The army of the Polish prince Bolesław the Brave (992–1025) launching at Kiev

[94] According to Tacitus, the Germanic *comitatus* is 'in peace ornament, in war protection' (*in pace decus, in bello praesidium*). Tacitus, *Germania*, Ch. 13. Acessed online: 12 January 2018. <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/tacitus/tac.ger.shtml>

[95] *Eymundar þáttr Hringssonar*, in *Flateyjarbok. En samling af norske konge-sagaer*, Vol. 2., ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Carl Rikard Unger (Christiania: P. T. Mallings, 1862), 120.

[96] Alexander Sitzmann, *Nordgermanisch-ostslavische Sprachkontakte in der Kiever Rus' bis zum Tode Jaroslavs des Weisen* (Vienna: Praesens Verlag, 2003), 58–61; Elena A. Melnikova, "The List of Old Norse Personal Names in the Russian–Byzantine Treaties of the tenth century", *Studia anthropomynica scandinavica: Tidskrift för nordisk personnamsforskning* (2004): 5–27.

[97] *RPC*, 73; Sitzmann, *Nordgermanisch-ostslavische Sprachkontakte*, 61–69.; Melnikova, "The List of Old Norse Personal Names".

[98] *RPC*, 65.

[99] Márta Font, "A magyar kalandozások és a kelet-európai viking terjeszkedés", 44; Vernadsky, *The Origins of Russia*, 123.

was accompanied by Magyar and Pecheneg auxiliaries.[100] According to the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, after the Kievan campaign in 1018, Bolesław returned home with Varangian prisoners of war,[101] who most probably became enrolled into his retinue and whose graves are claimed to be found by archaeologists in Lutomiersk.[102] During the reign of Bolesław, therefore Varangian and nomadic (culturally Turkic) retainers both got into contact with the Polish *druzhina*.

Similarly to the Polish example, in Rus campaigns led by Kiev during the tenth century, Magyar and Pecheneg warriors also took part.[103] In the year 944, Prince Igor advanced against the Greeks '*after collecting many warriors among the Varangians, Russes, the Polyanians, the Slavs, the Krivichians, the Tivercians, and the Pechenegs*'.[104] The traditional Varangian and the steppe nomadic tactics obviously learned from each other during the common campaigns. The result of this cooperation could be the introduction of horses to Viking warfare techniques,[105] usually illustrated by the words of the Byzantine chronicler Leo the Deacon who highlighted that the Rus cavalry, which advanced against the Byzantines in 971 at the battle of Dorostolon, was inexperienced as they were usually not trained for mounted warfare.[106]

In addition, Prince Sviatoslav's (945–972) retinue members were already evidently horsemen according to the *Chronicle*'s and Leo the Deacon's descriptions.[107] At the same time, however, certain warriors of the grand prince bore footsoldier equipment more typical of

[100] Thietmari Merseburgensis. *Episcopi Chronicon*, ed. Friedrich Kurze, Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum 54 (Hannover: Hahn, 1889), 257–58.
[101] *RPC*, 132.
[102] Błażej M. Stanisławski, "Preface", in *Scandinavian Culture in Medieval Poland*, ed. Sławomir Moździoch, Błażej Stanisławski and Przemysław Wiszewski (Wrocław: Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, 2013), 10.
[103] Leonis Diaconi, *Historiae*, ed. Caroli Benedicti Hase, Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae 11 (Bonn: Weber, 1828), 18–19 and 108; *Georgius Cedrenus Ioannis Scylitzae*, Vol. 2., ed. Immanuele Bekkero, Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae 14 (Weber: Bonn, 1839), 288–91.
[104] *RPC*, 72.
[105] Androshchuk, *Vikings in the East. Essays on Contacts*, 222–23.
[106] Leonis Diaconi, *Historiae*, 134.
[107] *RPC*, 84; Leonis Diaconi, *Historiae*, 156–57.

Viking warriors than nomads, namely breastplate, shield and sword. The Rus commander, Pretich, gifted these weapons as his own to the Pechenegs during a peace treaty, whilst those offered him their own distinctive weapons: spear, sabre and arrows.[108] The participation of Rus merchants in contemporary arm-traffick also shows that they wielded straight double-edged swords,[109] whilst Leo the Deacon described their tactics analogous to the Viking shield-wall.[110] It is also reported by the Byzantine chronicler that in the battle fought in front of the city of Dorostolon, certain Rus warriors behaved liked mad animals and performed savage roars.[111] Combat ecstasy like this is mostly known from the Scandinavian pagan tradition of the berserks, who acted as mad bears and wolves during battles.[112] Scandinavians still held high status offices, such as the deputy commander of the grand prince, Sveinaldr, and Sviatoslav's personal preceptor, Asmundr.[113] In contrast, however, the *Chronicle* also informs us that Sviatoslav not solely hired nomadic mercenaries of Inner Asian or Turkic origin, but he himself lived his life in the saddle and was always on the warpath as a typical nomad.[114] The retinue of Sviatoslav and the later Rus princes, thus were unique alloys of fighting corps amalgamating nomadic and Viking warfare tactics and weaponry.

That nomadic people occasionally also benefited from Scandinavian warfare tactics might be supported with the individual case of a retainer in the service of the Rus prince Iaropolk. The retainer (and apparently also counsellor) of the prince was called 'Varayazhko', that is a 'Varangian', who, upon Iaropolk's death and defeat from Vladimir, fled to the Pechenegs '*in whose company he fought long against Vladimir till the latter won him over only with*

[108] *RPC*, 86.
[109] Polgár, "Kora középkori (9–12. századi) kelet-európai fegyverkereskedelemre utaló feljegyzések az írott forrásokban".
[110] Leonis Diaconi, *Historiae*, 133.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Benjamin Blaney, "Berserkr", in *Medieval Scandinavia. An Encyclopedia*, ed. Phillip Pulsiano and Kirsten Wolf (London: Routledge, 1993), 37–38.
[113] *RPC*, 78–80 and 89–90; *The History of Leo the Deacon. Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century*, ed. and trans. Alice-Mary Talbot and Denis F. Sullivan, Dumbarton Oaks Studies 41 (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2005), 181. n. 38.
[114] *RPC*, 84. See also the 'Religion and customs' chapter.

difficulty by means of a sworn pledge.'[115] Other common joint operations of Rus' and nomads could be mentioned, such as Sviatoslav's alliance with the Oghuz' in 965 and 985,[116] or the Rus' and Alan attacks on Sharvan and Darband in 1032–1033.[117]

The Byzantine Empire

Even though being located south of Scandinavia properly, Constantinople, the region's largest centre was also amongst the stations of the 'Eastern Way', called as *austrvegr* in the language of the Scandinavians.[118] Although by the eleventh century were also recruited from Anglo-Saxons, Franks and Normans, the notorious Varangian Guard operating in Constantinople consisted of Scandinavians in the tenth–eleventh centuries and was responsible for the personal defence of the *basileus* himself.[119]

The years long service doubtlessly influenced Scandinavians living in Byzantium, who quickly got accustomed to the environment. Many of them became baptized and it seems likely that they had their own church in Constantinople, consecrated to Saint Óláfr or the Virgin Mary.[120] They also started to adopt Byzantine fashion, such as for instance the wearing of the well-known Byzantine tunic, the *skaramangion*.[121]

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[115] *RPC*, 93.
[116] *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness*, 175.
[117] Vladimir Minorsky, *A History of Sharvān and Darband in the 10th–11th centuries* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1958), 47.
[118] Sverrir Jakobsson, "On the Road to Paradise: 'Austrvegr' in the Icelandic Imagination", in *The Fantastic in Old Norse/Icelandic Literature. Sagas and the British Isles: preprint papers of the 13th International Saga Conference Durham and York, 6th–12th, August, 2006.*, ed. Donata Kick, David Ashurst and John McKinnel (Durham: Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006), 935–43; Judith Jesch, *Ships and Men in the Late Viking Age: The Vocabulary of Runic Inscriptions and Skaldic Verse* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001), 89–107.
[119] Sigfús Blöndal, *The Varangians of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Scheel, *Skandinavien und Byzanz*; Sverrir Jakobsson, "The Varangian Legend: Testimony from the Old Norse Sources", in *Byzantium and the Viking World*, ed. Fedir Androshchuk, Jonathan Shephard and Monica White (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2016), 345–62; Krijna Nelly Ciggaar, "L'emigration anglaise a Byzance apres 1066", *Revue des etudes Byzantines* 32 (1974): 301–42; Jonathan Shepard, "The English and Byzantium: a study of their role in the Byzantine Army in the later eleventh century", *Traditio* 29 (1973): 53–92.
[120] Krijna Nelly Ciggaar, *Western Travellers to Constantinople: The West and Byzantium, 962–1204: Cultural and Political Relations* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 126.
[121] Androshchuk, "The Vikings in the East", 535.

The Byzantine Empire's art of warfare also left an impact on the Varangians. The Icelandic *Laxdœla saga* reports about a Varangian named Bolli Bollason returning from Byzantine service to Iceland, that he wielded a *glaðel* (a short sword) according to foreign customs.[122] Even though Bolli's attire might not be described in the saga completely authentically (e.g. the knight painted on his shield which could not have been a Viking custom), it is still probable that warriors active abroad acquired new, distinctive weapons. The most famous Varangian guardsman's, Haraldr hárðráði's armour, *Emma* for instance was manufactured in Byzantium if one of the shorter stories about Harald's life is to be believed.[123] Weapons brought from abroad (especially from rulers) were regarded in high esteem in the North.[124] Although Byzantine weapon finds in territories of the Rus' and Scandinavia are rare, some are known: for instance a lamellae armour from Birka's garrison and several Byzantine type scabbards from Kiev, Turaida (Latvia), Gotland and Ocksarve (Sweden).[125]

Varangians adapting to Byzantine courtly and war fashion took service alongside Turkic retainers from the beginning of the tenth century since Rus' troops were already in Byzantine pay from that time. In his book *De ceremoniis aulae Byzantinae*, written around the middle of the century, the Byzantine Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus mentions 700 Rus sailors participating in the 902 Cretian campaign.[126] Following this, one of the provisions of the Rus-Byzantine peace treaty of 912 clearly states that the Rus' could enter Byzantine service whenever they desire.[127]

[122] *Laxdœla saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 5 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1934), 225.
[123] *Snegluhalla þáttr*, in *Flateyjarbok. En samling af norske konge-sagaer*, Vol. 3., ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Carl Rikard Unger (Christiania: P. T. Mallings, 1868), 418.
[124] Scott Ashley, "How Icelanders Experienced Byzantium, Real and Imagined", in *Experiencing Byzantium. Papers from the 44th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies. Newcastle – Durham, April 2011*, ed. Claire Nesbitt and Mark Jackson (London: Routledge, 2013), 217–20.
[125] Fedir Androshchuk, "What does material evidence tell us about contacts between Byzantium and the Viking World c. 800–1000?", in *Byzantium and the Viking World*, ed. Fedor Androshchuk, Jonathan Shephard and Monica White (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2016), 104–05.
[126] Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis aulae Byzantinae*, Vol. 2., ed. Johann Jakob Reiske, Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae 17 (Bonn: Weber, 1830), 651.
[127] *RPC*, 68.

Parallel to the Byzantine employment of Rus-Varangian troops, Byzantine sources also testify about Khazars and the so-called *Tourkoi* within the personnel of the Byzantine bodyguard already from the late ninth century. During the Bulgarian-Byzantine fights of the year 894, the Byzantine bodyguard troops, suffering a defeat from the Bulgarian tsar Symeon the Great (893–927), included Khazar warriors, whose noses were cut off by Symeon and were sent to the Byzantine court.[128] At the turn of the ninth and tenth centuries, Harun ibn Yahya, a Muslim prisoner of war in Constantinople, described Khazars and Turks among the guards of the city gates and the bodyguard of the Emperor.[129] The Byzantine official Philotheos also confirms in his list of Byzantine offices and court precedence in 899 that the imperial bodyguard's officers were made out of Turks (*Tourkoi*), Khazars and others.[130] Under the designation *Tourkoi*, Byzantine historiography usually understood the Magyars in the period.[131] It is Constantine who makes notice again about Turkic warriors in Byzantine service: in Romanos Lekapenos' (920–944) Italian campaign 84 *Tourkoi*, i. e. Magyar, warriors took part.[132]

Not just the flow of Rus-Varangian soldiers was continuous, but the service of the Magyars also did not cease in Byzantium. Liutprand of Cremona (from 986) reports that 40 Magyar warriors were captured by Emperor Nikephoros Phokas II (963–969) in 966, all of whom were melted into the emperor's bodyguard.[133] The influence of Byzantine fashion also reached the Turkic retainers: Emperor Nikephoros for instance, made the captured Magyar

[128] *Theophanes Contiunatus, Ioannes Cameniata, Symeon Magister, Georgius Monachos*, ed. Immanuel Bekker, Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae 45 (Bonn: Weber, 1838), 853–55.
[129] Zimonyi, *Muslim Sources on the Magyars in the Second Half of the 9th Century*, 86–87.
[130] Nicolas Oikonomidés, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles*, (Paris: CNRS, 1972), 208–09. For the identification of the Turks in this particular source with the Magyars see the discussion in: Zimonyi, *Muslim Sources on the Magyars in the Second Half of the 9th Century*, 87–89.
[131] István Zimonyi, "Why were the Hungarians referred to as Turks in the Early Muslim Sources?", in *Néptörténet – Nyelvtörténet: A 70 éves Róna-Tas András köszöntése*, ed. László Károly and Éva Nagy Kincses (Szeged: SZTE BTK Altajisztikai Tanszék, 2001), 201–12; Gyula Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica. Sprachreste der Türkvölker in den Byzantinischen Quellen*, Vol. 2 (Budapest: Pázmány Péter Tudományegyetemi Görög Filológiai Intézet, 1943), 270.; Idem, *Byzantium and the Magyars* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert Publisher, 1970), 37.
[132] Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis aulae Byzantinae*, Vol. 2., 466.
[133] Liutprandus Cremonensis, *Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana*, ed. Joseph Becker, Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum 41 (Hannover: Hahn, 1915), 199.

warriors dress up according to Byzantine fashion in valuable vestments (‘*vestibus ornatos*’).[134]

Besides the common bodyguard duties in the capital, common campaigns were another possible contact spheres for Turkic and Varangian retainers. The note of the *Annals of Bari* in the year 1027 (probably referring to events of 1025) records among the Byzantine auxiliary forces participating in the Italian campaign *Tourkoi* (Magyars), Rus’ and *Guandali* (sometimes also identified as Varangians).[135]

Conflict within the court could have been aroused between the Varangians and some Turkic retainers during the activity of Emperor Michael V (1041–1042) who changed his Varangian bodyguards to ‘Scythians’ (possibly nomads of some Turkic stock).[136] After his death, however, Varangians were reinstituted into their former positions.

As it was demonstrated, in tenth–eleventh century Byzantium, the presence of Turkic and Rus-Varangian bodyguards and mercenaries is almost continuously verifiable, which highly raises the possibility that retainers of these ethnicities got into contact with each other. Unfortunately written accounts concerning nomadic Turkic impact on Scandinavian retainers in Byzantium is not available, however some of the archaeological material which will be discussed below might be linked to the common Turk-Varangian duties in Constantinople.

The Khazar Khaganate

It was a well-established custom among the Eurasian nomads to employ foreign bodyguards.[137] A Khazar version of the Varangian Guard, therefore, is usually accepted

[134] Ibid.
[135] Terézia Olajos, “Egy felhasználatlan forráscsoport a 11. századi magyar-bizánci kapcsolatok történetéhez” [An unused group of sources to history of the eleventh-century Hungarian-Byzantine connections], *Századok* 132 (1998): 220–21.
[136] Michael Psellus, *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers*, trans. Edgard Robert Ashton Sewter (Suffolk: Penguin, 1979), 131.
[137] Benjamin P. Golden, “The Khazar Sacral Kingship”, in *Pre-Modern Russian and Its World. Essays in Honor of Thomas S. Noonan*, ed. Kathryn L. Reyerson, Theofanis G. Stavrou and James D. Tracy (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2006), 79; Idem, “Some notes on the comitatus in Medieval Eurasia with special reference

among scholars[138] by referring to the Muslim writer of the middle tenth century, al-Masudi, who accounts that '*the Rūs and the Saqāliba, who are pagans as we have said, served as mercenaries and slaves of the king*.'[139] It is also known from the same source that in the Khazar capital, Itil, the Rus' were in the khagan's and the *beg*'s (king) service together with Jews, Muslims and other steppe nomadic people.[140] The Khazars themselves were of Turkic origin too, however, from al-Masudi's wording the presence of other steppe Turkic nomadic tribes in contemporary Itil is suspected: '*The pagans who live in this country belong to many different races, among which are the Saqāliba and the Rūs*.'[141] Since according to the account, the Rus' and the Saqalibas formed only one portion of the country's pagan population, it can be claimed that other heathen—most probably Turkic—tribes could also live there as Jews and Muslims are separated from these within the source's context.[142]

It has also been raised that the ruler called *chacanus* (khagan) of the arriving Rus envoys into the court of the Frank king Louis the Pious (814–840) in Ingelheim under the year 839 in the Western chronicle of the *Annales Bertiniani*, was not designating the ruler of a separate Rus Khaganate but referred to the Khazar khagan himself.[143] Objections against this assertion could definitely be put forward, but if this is to be accepted then the appearance of the Rus' in Khazar service should be dated to the 830s, instead of the 930s when Rus warriors were stationed in a Khazar fort guarding the straits of Kerch.[144]

to the Khazars", *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 28 (2001): 153–70; György Györffy, "Dual Kingship and the Seven Chieftains of the Hungarians in the Era of the Conquest and the Raids", *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 47, no. 1. (1994): 87.

[138] Montgomery, "Vikings and Rus in Arabic Sources", 161–64.; György Györffy, *Tanulmányok a magyar állam eredetéről. A nemzetségtől a vármegyéig, a törzstől az országig. Kurszán és Kurszán vára* [Studies on the origin of the Hungarian state. From the Hungarian genus to the county, from the tribe to the country. Kurszán and his castle] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1959), 60; Blöndal, *The Varangians of Byzantium*, 7.

[139] *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness*, 133.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Ibid., 132.

[142] Ibid., 131.

[143] Montgomery, "Vikings and Rus in Arabic Sources", 163–64.

[144] Norman Golb, and Omeljan Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew documents of the tenth century* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1982), 116–117.

The Khazars definitely maintained close ties with the Rus' in the ninth–tenth centuries, however, I somehow find the supposition unlikely that even those Rus' who appear in Ibn Fadlan's description in 922 would have been the Khazars' mercenaries or slave soldiers as it was suggested.[145] The group depicted by Ibn Fadlan came to conduct commercial business in Bulghar and by itself traded with slaves.[146] In addition, the Volga Bulghars were trying to get independent from the Khaganate just at that time according to the testimony of the Muslim emissaries,[147] and thus linkage or mentioning of the Khazar-Rus (slave) soldiers with the current situation would have had to be expected from the report.

In spite of these objections, the Khazar cultural influence on the Rus' is above any controversy, and the retinue of the Rus king introduced in Ibn Fadlan's account strikingly resembles the bodyguards of the Khazar khagan:

> One of the customs of the King of the Rūs is that in his palace he keeps company with four hundred of his bravest and most trusted companions; they die when he dies and they offer their lives to protect him. Each of them has a slave-girl who waits on him, washes his head and prepares his food and drink, and another with whom he has coitus. These four hundred <men> sit below his throne…[148]

Hungary

The possibility of hiring Varangian-Rus bodyguards has also been proposed in the case of Hungary. The noted Hungarian medievalist, György Györffy asserted in some of his works that from the end of the tenth century onwards Varangian-Rus mercenaries stood in the service of Grand Prince Géza (972–997) and the first king, Saint Stephen I (1000–1038).[149]

[145] Ibid., 163.
[146] *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness*, 47.
[147] Ibid., 3 and 44–45.
[148] Montgomery, "Ibn Fadlān and the Rūsiyyah", 21.
[149] György Györffy, "A magyar nemzetségtől a vármegyéig, a törzstől az országig II." [From the Hungarian genus to the county, from the tribe to the country II], *Századok* 92, no. 5–6. (1958): 573–80; Idem, *Tanulmányok a magyar állam eredetéről*, 47, 60, and 86–92; Idem, *István király és műve* [King Stephen and his work] (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2013), 108, 195, 313–14, 339, 375, 379, 513; Idem, "Államszervezés" [State organization], in *Magyarország története. Előzmények és magyar történet 1242-ig*, Vol. 1., ed. Bartha Antal (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1984), 750 and 831–32.

Even though his hypothesis has been questioned previously by Gyula Kristó (another famous Hungarian medievalist and contemporary of Györffy) on chronological and linguistic grounds,[150] the thesis is still popular in scientific circles.

According to the theory, the appearance of the Varangian-Rus' in Hungary is datable to the 980s near the end of Géza's reign, when the Pechenegs started to threaten the Dnieper waterways seriously, prompting the Rus' to march from Kiev to Constantinople (and backwards) through the Magyar territories which were believed to be more friendly, and there some of them entered Géza's service.[151] The migrating Rus' bodyguards could have come to Hungary in larger numbers with time, since Stephen (who followed Géza on the throne), according to the *Russian Primary Chronicle* maintained good relations with the Kievan Grand Prince, Vladimir the Great,[152] in whose court the presence of Magyar warriors was believed to be testified by the archaeological material of the so-called '*druzhina*-graves'.[153] Besides, the 'bodyguard exchange' between the Kievan and the Hungarian court, another wave of Scandinavian retinue members was represented by those Varangians who arrived to Hungary with the suspected Byzantine fiancée of Stephen's son, Emeric.[154] Since Emeric, is labelled as '*dux Ruizorum*' that is 'prince of the Rus'' in the *Annales Hildesheimenses* at the year

[150] Gyula Kristó, "Oroszok az Árpád-kori Magyarországon" [Russian in Árpád Age Hungary], in Gyula Kristó: *Tanulmányok az Árpád-korról* (Budapest: Magvető Kiadó, 1983), 191–208.
[151] Györffy, "A magyar nemzetségtől a vármegyéig, a törzstől az országig II.", 580; Györffy, *Tanulmányok a magyar állam eredetéről*, 92.
[152] *RPC*, 122; see also: Ferenc Makk, *Magyar külpolitika (896–1196)* [Hungarian foreign policy (896–1196)] (Szeged: Szegedi Középkorász Műhely, 1996), 55–56; Márta Font, "Magyarország és a Kijevi Rusz az első ezredfordulón" [Hungary and the Kievan Rus at the first millennium], *Történelmi Szemle* 44, no. 1–2. (2002): 1–10; Eadem, "Orosz-magyar kapcsolatok" [Russian-Hungarian connections], in *Korai magyar történeti lexikon (9–14. század)*, ed. Gyula Kristó (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1994), 509.
[153] Galimdzsán Tagán, "Honfoglaláskori magyar sír Kijevben" [A Conquest period Hungarian grave in Kiev], *Folia Archaeologica* 3–4 (1941): 311–13; Adnrás Borosy, Vélemények a kora-feudális fejedelmi kíséretről" [Opinions on the early feudal princely retinue], *Acta Historica* 70 (1981): 34; Mesterházy, "A felső-tisza-vidéki ötvösműhely", 236–37; István Fodor, "Olmin dvor. Bemerkungen zu einem Ortsnamen der Russischen Urchronik" *Folia Archaeologica* 53 (2007): 193–99; István Erdélyi, *Scythia Hungarica. A honfoglalás előtti magyarság régészeti emlékei* [Scythia Hungarica. Archaeological remains of the pre-conquest Hungarians] (Budapest: Mundus Magyar Egyetemi Kiadó, 2008), 20.
[154] Gyula Moravcsik, Görögnyelvű kolostorok Szent István korában [Greek cloisters in the age of Saint Stephen], in *Emlékkönyv Szent István király halálának kilencszázadik évfordulóján*, Vol. 1., ed. Jusztinián Serédi (Budapest: MTA, 1938), 388–422; Makk, *Magyar külpolitika (896–1196)*, 59–60; Györffy, "A magyar nemzetségtől a vármegyéig, a törzstől az országig II.", 580; Györffy, *Tanulmányok a magyar állam eredetéről*, 92.

1031,[155] Györffy thought him to be the leader of the royal bodyguard as traditionally the heir to the throne commanded the foreign auxiliaries. The Varangians escorting Emeric's fiancée from Byzantium could have been settled near the central territories of the kingdom, in Tolna and Somogy counties, where two settlements, Várong and Varang, seemed to hold the Old Norse *væring* root. In contrast, retinue members arriving from Kiev could have received lodgings not far from the contemporary borders, following up on settlement names with the Hungarian stem *orosz* originating from the word 'Rus'. This was strengthened by the secondary meaning of *orosz* as 'bodyguard' or 'doorkeeper',[156] although Kristó demonstrated that it was not in use before the sixteenth century.[157] The existence of a Varangian-Rus bodyguard in Hungary was backed up with the analogous institutions of Kiev, Poland and Byzantium.[158]

My doubts regarding the theory were elaborated in a previous article,[159] however, in case of any Scandinavian warriors appeared in Hungary they must have had close contact with nomadic military culture since the Hungarian army still mostly consisted of steppe nomadic light cavalry.[160]

There is another topic which relates to the question of Scandinavian retinue members in Hungary, and this is the case of the Kylfings. The Scandinavian name, *Kylfingar*, occur in various forms in medieval sources such the Slavic *kolbiagi* or the Greek *koulpingoi*, but they are always differentiated from the Rus' or the Varangians. Uncertainties concerning the

[155] *Annales Hildesheimenses*, ed. Georg Isidore Waitz, Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum 8 (Hannover: Hahn, 1878), 36.
[156] Györffy, "A magyar nemzetségtől a vármegyéig, a törzstől az országig II.", 571–580; Idem, *Tanulmányok a magyar állam eredetéről*, 83–92; Idem, *Az Árpád-kori Magyarország történeti földrajza* [Historical geography of Hungary in the Árpád Age], Vol. 1. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1966), 126 and 464–65; Idem, *Az Árpád-kori Magyarország történeti földrajza* [Historical geography of Hungary in the Árpád Age], Vol. 3. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1987), 365–66; Idem, *Az Árpád-kori Magyarország történeti földrajza* [Historical geography of Hungary in the Árpád Age], Vol. 4. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1998), 169–171.
[157] Kristó, "Oroszok az Árpád-kori Magyarországon", 199–201.
[158] Györffy, "A magyar nemzetségtől a vármegyéig, a törzstől az országig II.", 575–80; Idem, *Tanulmányok a magyar állam eredetéről*, 87–92; Idem, *István király és műve*, 108, 313, 471.
[159] Csete Katona, "Vikings in Hungary? The Theory of the Varangian-Rus Bodyguard of the First Hungarian Rulers", *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 17 (2017): 23–60.
[160] Györffy, "Államszervezés", 750.

Kylfings are manifold in research and are unlikely to be solved with the evidence present at hand. There is not even agreement in the nature of their organization, namely whether the Kylfings should be considered a tribe or some kind of association. The ambiguities are also illustrated through various attempts to trace their original ancestry back: there have been theories about the Kylfings' Finnish, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish and Slavic origin as well.[161]

Hungarian historiography, in addition, often associates the Kylfings with the Kölpénys, a nomadic tribe of possibly Pecheneg origin who according to the Hungarian chronicle *Gesta Hungarorum* (composed in the twelfth century) arrived to Hungary during the reign of Grand Prince Taksony (955–972?) judging by the chronicle's personal name, Kölpény.[162] In the chronicle, Kölpény was the father of Botond, one of the most famous Hungarian heroes of the time and thus the personification of this tribe in the *Gesta* might show the importance of the Kölpénys in tenth-century Hungary, also partly supported by place names related to Kölpény. According to Györffy, St. Stephen's new royal army which included heavy cavalry was partly recruited from the Kölpénys or Kylfings.[163]

Modern Western European research, however expresses doubts on the connection between the two names.[164] Nevertheless, I am less skeptical, mostly due to the obscurities covering the history of the Kylfings. Similarly to the Rus' or the Varangians, the Kylfings popped up in various parts of the Nordic and Eastern regions and thus, their organization could have been similar to what has been asserted about the Rus' too: a merchant-warrior group who was

[161] Theodore Andersson, "Kylfingar", in *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, Vol. 17., ed. Heinrich Beck (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001), 520–22.
[162] Loránd Benkő, "Barangolások egy ómagyar tulajdonnév körül" [Roamings around an ancient Hungarian property name], *Magyar Nyelv* 95 (1999): 25–40; Györffy, *Tanulmányok a magyar állam eredetéről*, 89–90; Zoltán Tóth, "A Botond-monda eredete s az anonymusi Botond-hagyomány" [Origins of the Botond legend and the Botond tradition at Anonymus], *Hadtörténeti Közlemények* 35 (1988): 467–83; György Székely, "Hungary and Sweden – Historical contacts and parallels in the Middle Ages", in *Hungary and Sweden. Early contacts, early sources*, ed. Folke Lindenberg and György Ránki (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1975), 11.
[163] Györffy, *István király és műve*, 313.
[164] Scheel, *Skandinavien und Byzanz*, 143–44.

active in Northern Europe, the Baltics, European Russia and Byzantium.[165] This is corroborated by the different sources in which they appear (*Russkaya Pravda*, place names around the Baltic coast, Swedish runestones, Icelandic works and Byzantine chrysobulls).[166] In this regard, their absence in the Arabic sources, which were mostly concerned of the affairs in the Volga area is remarkable and either indicates that they were not or less active there, or perhaps that they should have been sought under a different name.

Nevertheless, since their organization seems to be similar to the Rus', their adaptability of absorbing local customs and norms can also be expected. The Kylfings could have easily become acquainted with Slavic, Scandinavian and Turkic cultures along the way. The Kylfings, plundering the Lapps in the Icelandic *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar* during the tenth century,[167] were more related to the Scandinavian cultural milieu than perhaps those Kylfings who somehow got into touch with the Pecheneg tribes in the Dnieper area and arrived to the Carpathian Basin during the time of Prince Taksony, under whose reign we possess evidence about the immigration of Volga Bulgharian and Pecheneg groups.[168] The Pecheneg Külbej tribe, from which some scholars originate the Kölpény name, for instance was dwelling exactly in the Dnieper estuary, closest to the route that Rus and—proved by their occurrence in the Byzantine sources—probably also Kylfing warrior-merchants took on their way to Constantinople. Unfortunately due to the lack of further and concrete evidence, the identification of the Kylfings with the Hungarian Kölpénys remains on the level of speculation.

[165] Golden, "Rūs"; Holger Arbman, *The Vikings* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1961), 90–91.
[166] Scheel, *Skandinavien und Byzanz*, 142–51.
[167] *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, Íslenzk fornrit 2 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1979), 27–28.
[168] Taksony himself took wife from the land of the Cumans ('*de terra Cumanorum*'), however during his reign the Cumans were not present in Eastern Europe and thus the chronicler most probably employed an ethnic designation of his own time to the inhabitants of the South Russian steppe. Thus, Taksony's wife likely came from the Pechenegs or the Volga Bulghars. In addition, the *gesta* also recalls three Muslim immigrants by the name Billa, Baks and Hetény from Bular, referring to Volga Bulgharia. Tonuzoba, a Pecheneg prince also arrived to Hungary during Taksony's reign and received lands around the Tisza. *Anonymus and Master Roger*, ed. and trans. János M. Bak and Martyn Rady, Central European Medieval Texts Series 5 (Budapest: CEU Press, 2010), 127.

Archaeological traces

The picture drawn by the written sources concerning Turkic-Scandinavian co-operation in warfare is tinctured by archaeological evidence. Some Scandinavian weapons (mostly straight double-edged swords) found in Hungary has also been associated with the retinue formed by Géza and St. Stephen,[169] despite the fact that they were stray finds or came from graves furnished with typical Magyar style objects. Viking weapons found in Hungary could have strengthened the theory of the Rus bodyguard but the possibility of a Scandinavian warrior buried in Hungary could be raised only concerning a single burial, which was interpreted to hold a 'high status Rus warrior'.[170] The burial in question was discovered in Székesfehérvár-Rádiótelep and was dated to the tenth century, however the grave was disturbed (the skeleton was completely missing), and was poorly documented (no information on the deposition of grave goods). In addition, it stands without parallels and thus its interpretation is highly problematic. On the basis of typology and ornaments, only in the case of a few swords and a spear decorated in the Ringerike-style can the supposed Scandinavian provenance be confirmed,[171] these weapons, however, are almost exclusively stray finds and therefore interpreting them as signs of a Viking retinue's armament is questionable.

Co-operation between nomadic (Turkic) and Rus craftsmen, however, is discernible on certain weapon finds. Viking weapons with steppe style decorations and typical nomadic weapons with Nordic embellishments are known from settlements in and around Kiev, which are usually interpreted as proof for the vivid cultural transfers between the Rus' and the

[169] Györffy, *István király és műve*, 108.
[170] László Kovács, "Előkelő rusz vitéz egy Székesfehérvári sírban. A rádiótelepi honfoglalás kori A. sír és kardja" [High status Rus warrior in a grave from Székesfehérvár. The 'A' grave from Rádiótelep in the conquest period, and its sword], in *Kelet és Nyugat között. Történeti tanulmányok Kristó Gyula tiszteletére*, ed. László Koszta (Szeged: Szegedi Középkorász Műhely, 1995), 291–308.
[171] Fodor, "On the Contacts of Hungarians with the Baltic area"; Peter Paulsen, *Wikingerfunde aus Ungarn im Lichte der Nord- und Westeuropäischen Frühgeschichte* (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum, 1933); László Kovács, "Die Budapester Wikingerlanze. Geschichtsabriss der Ungarischen Königslanze", *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientlarum Hungaricae* 22 (1970): 324–39.

Magyars in the Dnieper area (see the 'Trade' chapter). Fragments of composite bows discovered in major Russian settlements associated with the *druzhina* culture are also growing, and many of these weapons and other accessories (quivers, bow cases) were found in graves furnished in Scandinavian style.[172]

Based on the presence of Viking weapons (mostly double-edged swords and a shield boss) unearthed in the territory between the Volga and the Kama rivers, as well as in Biljar and Bulgar, archaeologists believe that a similar Rus retinue operated in the Muslim convert Volga Bulghar court.[173] Apart from the swords, the archaeologist developing the idea, Iskander L. Ismailov built his argument on the parallel institutions among which he also enumerated the questionable Hungarian Varangian-Rus retinue.[174] The possibility of some Rus warriors entering Volga Bulghar service cannot be ruled out and might be connected to the phenomena of Turkic cultural borrowings in the Volga area which testifies the close link between Scandinavians and the local population in the region (see the 'Religion and customs' chapter).[175] It has been suggested that the indigenous Volga Bulghar coins which were struck in the 950s and 970s might also be the signs of Swedish mercenary activity in the Volga Bulghar court since these dirhems are abundant in Sweden but rare in the Kievan Rus', and thus can be interpreted as military pay brought back to the Viking homeland directly from Bulghar.[176]

[172] Kirill A. Mikhailov, and Sergej Yu. Kajinov, "Finds of Structural Details of Composite Bows from Ancient Rus", *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 62 (2011): 229–44.
[173] Airat G. Sitdikov, Iskander L. Izmailov and Ramil R. Khayrutdinov, "Weapons, Fortification and Military Art of the Volga Bulgaria in the 10th – the First Third of the 13th Centuries", *Journal of Sustainable Development* 8, no. 7. (2015): 167–77; see also: Florin Curta, "Markets in Tenth-Century al-Andalus and Volga Bulghāria: Contrasting Views of Trade in Muslim Europe", *Al-Masaq* 25, no. 3. (2013): 315–16.
[174] See for Izmailov's Russian references: Sitdikov, Izmailov and Khayrutdinov, "Weapons, Fortification and Military Art of the Volga Bulgaria", 168–69 and 171.
[175] Thorir Jonsson Hraundal, "New Perspectives on Eastern Vikings/Rus in Arabic Sources", *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 10 (2014): 65–97.
[176] Roman K. Kovalev, "Were there direct contacts between Volga Bulğāria and Sweden in the second half of the tenth century? The numismatic evidence", *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 20 (2013): 89.

If a Volga Bulghar-Rus retinue indeed existed, it is probable that warriors were not solely wielding their traditional Viking weapons,[177] but also utilized local weaponry. The merge of cultures can be detected on a nomadic style axe (suitable for mounted warfare) found in the Kazan region which is decorated with a scene of the Germanic Siegfried legend in the Scandinavian Ringerike-style.[178] Two nomadic axes are also known from graves (Grab 644 and 909) in Birka.[179]

In connection to the Rus *druzhina*s, archaeological data can also be called upon. In the cemeteries of larger Rus settlements, assemblages often labelled as '*druzhina*-graves' were discovered which sometimes contained grave goods of Turkic nomadic origin.[180] Traditionally these were regarded as the equipment of Khazar, Pecheneg, Volga Bulghar or Magyar warriors who entered Rus princely service. I am more inclined to see these more nuancedly, namely as remnants of a warrior culture where retinue members could acquire distinctive weapons of other cultures as well regardless of their 'original' ethnic ancestry. For instance, the deceased of the monumental 'Black Grave of Chernigov' and the related mourning community were likely disposed to impulses similar to that of prince Sviatoslav, since in the grave besides the two Viking swords and a nomadic sabre, a Nordic drinking horn embellished with steppe motifs have been found.[181]

The common Turk-Viking service in Byzantium probably also did not pass eventless. In the Swedish garrison of Birka, multiple finds (mostly weapons) related to steppe cultures

[177] According to Ibn Fadlan, '*each of them carries an axe, a sword and a knife…*' *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness*, 45.
[178] Lesley Abrams, "Connections and exchange in the Viking Worlds", in *Byzantium and the Viking World*, ed. Fedor Androshchuk, Jonathan Shephard and Monica White (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2016), 42–50.
[179] Holger Arbman, *Birka I. Die Gräber* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1940), Tafeln 14/9–10.
[180] Duczko, *Viking Rus. Studies on the Presence of Scandinavians in Eastern Europe*, 248.; Franklin and Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus 750–1200*, 123–24.; Ivan Movchan, "A 10th-century Warrior's Grave from Kiev." In *Kiev – Cherson – Constantinople. Ukrainian Papers at the XXth International Congress of Byzantine Studies (Paris, 19–25 August 2001)*, ed. Alexander Abiabin and Hlib Ivakin (Kiev: Ukrainian National Committee for Byzantine Studies. 2007), 221–23; Androshchuk, *Vikings in the East. Essays on Contacts*, 64; Fodor, "On the Contacts of Hungarians with the Baltic Area", 219–20; Kirpichnikov, "Connections between Russia and Scandinavia", 73–76; Bálint, *Archäeologie der Steppe*, 113–16.
[181] Fettich, "Adatok a honfoglaláskor archaeologiájához", 62–68; Duczko, *Viking Rus. Studies on the Presence of Scandinavians in Eastern Europe*, 239–41; Melnikova, "Retinue culture and retinue state", 70–71.

were discovered which probably belonged to Scandinavian warriors who spent long time in contact with steppe nomadic groups and acquired their fighting habits and adopted their weaponry.[182] This could have happened in the Byzantine border zones,[183] however equally could have been the result of the mutual presence of Varangians and Magyars in the Imperial bodyguards. Varangians namely could have learned the ways of shooting with nomadic bows from the Magyar bodyguards during guard duties or common campaigns. Certain finds from Birka can explicitly be associated with Magyar material culture (sabretaches, finger rings, remains of bows and quivers) and thus might be witnesses of Magyar-Scandinavian contact in Constantinople.[184]

By the above said, it can be stated that Scandinavian warrior groups active in Russia could be miscallenous not only in external character (clothes, weaponry) but also in fighting habits (footsoldiers, navy, cavalry, archery). If the retainers' opportunity of changing courts is also taken into consideration, the alternative options regarding one's own style in a military-cultural sense is almost infinite. From all these foreign impulses which affected Scandinavian mercenaries in the East, the nomadic Turkic impact was decisive. Varangian-Rus and Turkic warriors served together in campaigns, and in several places also in guard duties if both were employed in the local retinue. The developments outlined here started two ways, and have slightly different (although certainly overlapping) effects in relation to cultural or military borrowings. Firstly, Vikings warriors participated in campaigns as hired mercenaries and

[182] Fredrik Lündstrom, Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson and Lena Holmquist Olausson, "Eastern archery in Birka's Garrison", in *The Martial Society. Aspects of warriors, fortifications and social change in Scandinavia*, ed. Lena Holmquist Olausson and Michael Olausson (Stockholm: Archaeological Research Laboratory, 2009), 105–116.

[183] Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson, "Close Encounters with the Byzantine Border Zones: On the Eastern Connections of the Birka Warrior", in *Scandinavia and the Balkans. Cultural Interaction with Byzantium and Eastern Europe in the First Millenium AD*, ed. Oksana Minaeva and Lena Holmquist (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 158–73.

[184] Hedenstierna-Jonson, "Magyar – Rus – Scandinavia"; Hedenstierna-Jonson, "Traces of Contacts".

auxiliary troops in the service of most courts of the region (even in Georgia for instance).[185] Many of these power centres owned an army trained for steppe nomadic warfare where the Scandinavians probably could witness the overpowering force of cavalry in battles fought in the open. This also occurred when nomads were hired as auxiliaries into an army mostly consisting of Varangian-Rus footsoldiers, and similarly resulted in getting accustomed to fight alongside cavalry and learn tactics and strategies.

Secondly, Varangian-Rus soldiers were also employed more permanently in the mentioned courts as bodyguards or parts of the bigger retinue. These services were most probably built on a higher level of trust than occasional military alliances, and resulted in longer service. During common bodyguard duties with other nomads, Turkic cultural borrowings were perhaps more easily transmitted to Scandinavian retainers. These could manifest themselves in a universal retinue culture or fashion, when retinue members migrating between the different courts adopted and disseminated culturally diverse elements of attire, clothes and weaponry. Joint campaigns in retinue services, however, were still significant by prodiving space and time for Varangian-Rus' and Turkic groups to adapt to new fighting techniques and weapons.

[185] Jonathan Shepard, "Yngvarr's expedition to the east and a Russian inscribed stone cross", *Saga-Book* 21 (1984–85): 222–92; Mats G. Larsson, "Yngvarr's expedition and the Georgian Chronicle", *Saga-Book* 22 (1986–89): 98–108.

Chapter 3 – Religion and customs

Scandinavians appearing along the *austrvegr* were exposed to cultural influences to a varying degree, depending on with whom they entered into contact and for how long they stayed in the area. Foreign impact on the Viking Rus' can be discerned on multiple levels, from customs and ritual practices through warfare techniques to language. It is the former two which will be the subject of scrutiny in the current chapter. Rus customs of everyday life, most importantly ritual beliefs and practices were subject to change in the period between the ninth–eleventh centuries. The role of the Slavs in this procedure has long been recognized, however, the steppe nomadic or Turkic imprint on Rus' culture has started to interest researchers only recently.[186] To follow up on these current initiatives, it will be postulated—mostly on the testimony of tenth-century Muslim, Byzantine and Slavic written accounts—that Rus cultural borrowings from inhabitants of the Volga region were decisive, but no way exclusive, as the Rus' in the Dnieper region could also have embraced Turkic (ritual) customs. The ritual practices or customs examined here will also give implications on the belief systems behind these (presumably religious) performances, although the sources do not permit us to draw straight-forward conclusions on beliefs from practices only.

Nevertheless, it seems possible that in the Kievan Rus', religious-cultural practices (and perhaps beliefs?) traditionally associated with Scandinavian, Slavic and Turkic ethnic groups manifested as a fusion. Parallels of recorded tenth-century pagan Rus rituals suggest that the originally Scandinavian or Slavic traditions could be modified, merged or distorted over time,

[186] It is mostly the works of the Icelandic historian, Thorir Jonsson Hraundal, which are noteworthy in this regard. Hraundal suggested that, on a cultural level, a differentiation should be made between a 'Dnieper' and a 'Volga' Rus community, since the Rus' along the Dnieper region were more integrated into the Slavic population, whilst those along the Volga had dealt more closely with the local Turkic tribes. Thorir Jonsson Hraundal, "Integration and Disintegration: the 'Norse' in Descriptions of the Early Rus", in *Norman Tradition and Transcultural Heritage. Exchange of Cultures in the 'Norman' Peripheries of Medieval Europe*, ed. by Stefan Burkhardt and Thomas Foerster (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing 2013), 279–93; Idem, "The Rus in the Arabic sources: Cultural Contacts and Identity", Ph.D dissertation (Bergen: University of Bergen, 2013); Idem, "New Perspectives on Eastern Vikings/Rus in Arabic Sources".

giving birth to eclectic practices. As the Rus' began to assimilate within the local population of Eastern Europe, new ritual practices arose which could hardly be classified as distinctively Scandinavian or Slavic, especially if we add to this the regional variations that existed in the ritual practices and belief systems of the two ethnic groups originally.[187] While it is hard to identify the exact effects this mixture of cultural practices had on the religious perceptions of the Rus' in general, this part of the thesis will propose that variants of the same pagan practices might have existed in the Volga-Dnieper region. In relation to this, it will be attempted to explain the outstanding adaptability that the Viking Rus' demonstrated in absorbing Slavic and Turkic elements into their ritual traditions.

Sources and problems

Descriptions of early Rus ritual practices are sparse in our sources, and even those few are subject to debate over whether they depict a tradition more akin to Slavic or to Scandinavian culture. These include accounts of Rus' ritual sacrifices and a funeral along the River Volga (recorded by Ibn Fadlan), the cremation of hostages and dead warriors carried out by the army of Prince Sviatoslav at the Battle of Dorostolon, and lastly, the rituals performed by Rus merchants on the island of Saint Gregory on their way to Constantinople.[188] None of these

[187] For Old Norse religion(s) see: Thomas A. DuBois, *Nordic Religions in the Viking Age* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); Andreas Nordberg, "Continuity, Change and Regional Variation in Old Norse Religion", in *More than Mythology. Narratives, Ritual Practices and Regional Distribution in Pre-Christian Scandinavian Religions*, ed. Catharina Raudvere and Jens Peter Schjødt (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2012), 119–51; Stefan Brink, "How uniform was the Old Norse religion?", in *Learning and Understanding in the Old Norse World: Essays in Honour of Margaret Clunies Ross*, ed. Judy Quinn, Kate Heslop and Tarrin Wills (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 105–36. The presentation of sources for both Western and Eastern Slavic paganism see: Leszek Słupecki, "Slavic religion", in *The Handbook of Religions in Ancient Europe*, ed. Lisbeth Bredholt Christensen, Olav Hammer and David A. Warburton (Durham: Acumen, 2013), 339–58.

[188] On the ethnic-religious background of the Rus' in Ibn Fadlan's description see: Montgomery, 'Ibn Fadlān and the Rūsiyyah'; Duczko, *Viking Rus. Studies on the presence of Scandinavians in Eastern Europe*, 138. Regarding the sacrifice of Saint Gregory island as Scandinavian see: Jacqueline Simpson, *Everyday life in the Viking Age* (London: Batsford, 1967), 180; for a more nuanced view: Dmitrij Obolensky, "The Byzantine Sources on the Scandinavians in Eastern Europe", in Dmitrij Obolensky: *The Byzantine Inheritance of Eastern Europe* (London: Variorum, 1982), 158.; taking it as a synthesis of Slavic-Scandinavian ritual with slight Slavic preference: Vladimir J. Petrukhin, "The Dnieper Rapids in "De Administrando Imperio": the trade route and its sacrificial rites", in *The Significance of Portages. Proceedings of the first international conference on the significance of*

rituals were recorded by the Rus' themselves but by outsiders: Ibn Fadlan was an Arab, while the authors of the latter two rituals were Byzantines: Leo the Deacon, and possibly someone from the court of the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus. This naturally presents obstacles when one tries to reconstruct pre-Christian beliefs or practices, since the authors, not being natives of the culture they describe, could have misunderstood and misinterpreted certain elements, or perhaps simply adjusted the information to fit the terminology of their own religious world (Ibn Fadlan, for instance, used an interpreter).[189] However, parallels from different sources might hint at the cultural background of the different practices, strengthening the relative authenticity of the three sources. All these rituals took place in roughly the same period in history, in a 50-year phase (922–971), and while they partly reflect uniformity, they also contain considerable differences. We are dealing with variants of rituals here—including practices and beliefs adopted from diverse cultural backgrounds. The rituals discussed represent a tradition which borrowed both physical and mental elements not only from Scandinavian and Slavic, but also Turkic cultures.

The latter is a dangerously broad term, as the Turkic tribes could have been just as different from each other as they were from the Vikings of the North or the miscellaneous groups of Rus' operating in the area. It must also be recalled that Turkic societies were often divided religion-wise to a lower and upper strata, often linked to different religious beliefs. In the Khazar Khaganate, for instance, the majority of the original population practiced a Turkic religion akin to that of the Oghuz', still after the conversion of the Khazar elite to Judaism. The bulk of the inhabitants in the Khaganate, in addition was likely formed by Muslim ethno-

portages, 29 Sept–2nd Oct 2004, ed. Christer Weesterdahl, BAR International Series, 1499 (Kristiansand: Archaeopress, 2006), 189; taking the Dorostolon and Saint Gregory island sacrifices as pure Slavic: Eugenio R. Luján, "Procopius De bello Gothico III 38. 17–23.: a description of ritual pagan Slavic slayings?", *Studia Mythologica Slavica* 11 (2008): 105–12.

[189] Robert Bartlett, "From Paganism to Christianity in medieval Europe", in *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy. Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c. 900–1200*, ed. Nora Berend (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 47–54.

religious components.[190] Traditional Turkic cultures practiced a form of shamanism, which might be differentiated from the sky-god religious system called Tengrism. The former referred to a set of religious practices conducted by a designated religious elite in tribal communities, whilst the latter was a characteristic of more stratified societies with a developed hierarchy of a sole ruler (the khagan), and was the prevalent belief system in the steppe.[191] Besides the Oghuz' and Khazars, some form of shamanism and/or Tengrism was practiced by the Magyars, the Pechenegs and the Bashkirs as well.[192]

Turkic cultures were also subject to change, and were exposed to Muslim (Volga Bulghars) and, in certain cases, Jewish (Khazars) or Orthodox-Byzantine influences (Danube Bulghars, Pechenegs). What we find in Eastern Europe at this point is a cultural melting pot, and thus clear parallels of certain practices performed by specified tribes are almost impossible to discern. Bearing these difficulties in mind, the following discussion aims to pinpoint only certain tendencies rather than clear-cut cultural transfers.

Pagan religious similarities

Early medieval pagan religions manifested essential similarities. A polytheistic pantheon of the gods, the veneration of natural spots and the sacrifice of animals or humans are not ethno-specific features, and are characteristics of pagan practices and beliefs in Scandinavian, Slavic and Turkic cultures as well. These essentially similar aspects of contemporary pre-Christian religions constantly make it difficult to distinguish ritual elements from an ethnic point of view and thus either specific correspondences, or contextual evidence have to be called upon

[190] Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 241–43.
[191] Róna-Tas, "Materialien zur alten Religion der Türken", in *Synkretismuis in den Religionen Zentralasiens*, ed. Walther Heissig and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1987), 34; Jean-Paul Roux, "Tengri", in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed., Vol. 13., ed. Lindsay Jones (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 9080–82; Idem, "Turkic Religions", in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed., Vol. 14., ed. Lindsay Jones (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 9397–404.
[192] Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, 364–71; Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 263 and 268–69; Richard A. E. Mason, "The Religious Beliefs of the Khazars", *The Ukrainian Quarterly* 51, no. 4. (1995): 383–415.

to hint at the ethnic affiliations of the rituals' participants or the origin of certain practices. These similarities created a fertile soil on which ritual variations or mixed customs and practices could develop, since the newcomers (in this case the Scandinavians) already knew or practiced these habits in some form. The three sources should now be presented to call attention to these similarities.

The best-known and most thoroughly researched account of Rus rituals, written by the Arabic Ibn Fadlan, should be recapitulated first. Ibn Fadlan was a traveller, diplomat, merchant or soldier who in 921–922 took a mission from the Abbasid Caliphate to the land of the Volga Bulghars, where he witnessed various rituals of the people called Rus'. The rituals he observed could be roughly summarized as follows: upon their arrival to the Volga, the Rus' sacrifice food and drinks to wooden idols, one idol being set up on a pole and representing a main deity, with the others personifying smaller deities. The reason for the sacrifice is to assure successful trading with future merchants. Upon finishing commercial business, the Rus' honour the idols with another offering of sheep or cows, and tie the heads of the slaughtered animals to the wooden poles.

Secondly, Ibn Fadlan describes the funerary ritual of an eminent Rus chieftain. According to the report, after his death, the body of the chieftain is kept in a tent for ten days, while his fitting funerary garments are prepared. Then the Rus burying community fill up a boat with riches—treasures, weapons, jewellery, food and drink—and sacrifice animals (horses, cows, a dog, a cock and a hen) together with a slave girl who volunteered to follow her master into a place known as 'Paradise'. The girl is used sexually by the followers or relatives of the chieftain and, after being lifted up between a door-frame multiple times, is stabbed by a woman called the 'Angel of Death', who also recites a text about the re-union of family

members in the afterlife. After loading up the ship with possessions, gifts, sacrificial animals and the girl's body, finally the Rus' cremate the boat on the water.[193]

The accounts of Muslim travellers often served state purposes and consequently are remarkable historical sources about the period in question. Ibn Fadlan's report is, quite simply, the best written record we possess about early Rus funerary rituals, and it has been taken as an authentic source describing Scandinavian habits, insomuch as its details were used to illuminate rituals in Scandinavia, as well.[194] It is true that many elements of the burial seem to have parallels with Scandinavian habits; the presence of a ship, the grave goods (especially weapons), the cremation and the animal- and human sacrifices. As we shall see, however, when an account is less detailed, distinctive ethnic patterns of either Scandinavian or Slavic customs can be easily blurred.

The second account in question was recorded by Leo the Deacon during the Byzantine siege of the Bulgarian city, Dorostolon, where the Kievan Grand Prince Sviatoslav retreated with his remaining army consisting of Slavs and Northmen in 971, right after their steppe nomadic allies of Magyars and Pechenegs abandoned them. According to the Byzantine chronicler, the Rus', whom he calls 'Tauroscythians' according to Byzantine historical traditions, performed sacrifices during the siege:

> When night fell, since the moon was nearly full, they [the Tauroscythians] came out on the plain and searched for their dead; and they collected them in front of the city and kindled numerous fires and burned them, after slaughtering on top of them many captives, both men and women, in accordance with their ancestral

[193] I consulted the following translations of the work; English: Montgomery, "Ibn Fadlān and the Rūsiyyah"; Norwegian: Birkeland, *Nordens historie i middelalderen etter arabiske kilder*, 17–24; and Hungarian: Ibn Fadlán, *Beszámoló a volgai bolgárok földjén tett utazásról* [Ibn Fadlan: Report on the trip in the land of the Volga Bulghars], trans. Simon Róbert, Fontes Orientales 3 (Budapest: Corvina 2007), 83–100.

[194] Jens Peter Schjødt, "Ibn Fadlan's account of a Rus funeral: To what degree does it reflect Nordic myths?", in *Reflections on Old Norse Myths*, ed. Pernille Hermann, Jens Peter Schjødt and Rasmus Tranum Kristensen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 133–49; Neil S. Price, "Passing into Poetry: Viking-Age Mortuary Drama and the Origins of Norse Mythology", *Medieval Archaeology* 54 (2010): 131–137; Duczko, *Viking Rus. Studies on the presence of Scandinavians in Eastern Europe*, 137–54; compare with: Montgomery, "Vikings and Rus in Arabic sources", 157–60.

> custom. And they made sacrificial offerings by drowning suckling infants and chickens in the Istros, plunging them into rushing waters of the river.[195]

The account, depicting the Dorostolon rituals, is brief and taciturn compared to Ibn Fadlan's report and as a result it is problematic to detect in it clear Scandinavian or Slavic characteristics. The vague description of cremation as well as human- and cock sacrifices could well have been 'the ancestral custom' of not only the Scandinavians but also the Slavs. For instance, on the subject of tenth-century Slavs, the tenth-century Arabic writer, Ibn Rustah, notes that they hang by the neck one of the wives of the dead and, after she has suffocated, cremate her.[196] Concerning the sacrificing of cocks, Thietmar of Merseburg, a German bishop, writes that this is a custom of the Scandinavians, but many scholars suspect it to be a Slav custom as well.[197]

The different cultural traits in Constantine Porphyrogenitus' *De Administrando Imperio* are also illustrative in this regard, when the work describes the sacrifices of Rus merchants on their way through the Dnieper to Constantinople:

> […] They reach the island called St. Gregory, on which island they perform their sacrifices because a gigantic oak-tree stands there; and they sacrifice live cocks. Arrows, too, they peg in round about, and others bread and meat, or something whatever each may have, as is their custom. They also throw lots regarding the cocks, whether to slaughter them or to eat them as well, or to leave them alive.[198]

It is again suspected that we are dealing with a 'Viking' ritual here. However, in the words of Obolensky, the ritual also '*[tallies] with our admittedly meagre knowledge of Slavonic pagan*

[195] *The History of Leo the Deacon*, 193.
[196] *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness*, 124.
[197] Thietmari Merseburgensis, *Episcopi Chronicon*, 23–24; Izabella Wenska, "Sacrifices among the Slavs: Between Archaeological Evidence and 19th Century Folklore", *Analecta Archaeologica Ressoviensia* 10 (2015): 271–313.
[198] *DAI*, 61.

ritual'.[199] A comparison of this ritual with the two others discussed previously strengthens this impression.

Regarding the location, all three rituals are performed near the water's edge, which in Scandinavian cosmology has always held a sacred place as a gateway between different worlds.[200] Viking objects found in wetlands, rivers and lakes are well-known examples of ritual sacrifices from the Scandinavian and the West-European archaeological records,[201] and some archaeologists interpret Viking swords found near the Dnieper cataracts in the same manner.[202] Adam of Bremen already noted that the Swedes carried out sacrifices at springs,[203] and it is likely that this habit was brought by the Vikings to the East as well, as the *Life of St. George of Amastris* (a ninth-century Byzantine source of otherwise disputable authenticity) also mentions the veneration of springs by the Rus'.[204] Therefore, at first glance, the location of the performances still seems to suggest Scandinavian origins, although venerating natural spots was characteristic of most pre-Christian religions, including the old religion of the Slavs.[205]

The ritual on Saint Gregory Island, however, is unique in that it is performed at a tree. In Scandinavian mythology, the world tree Yggdrasil, as an *axis mundi*, held together the different layers of the world. Besides its central place in the cosmology, the sacrifices held at this specific tree (symbolizing perhaps Yggdrasil?) may signal gratitude for the safe passage,

[199] Obolensky, "The Byzantine Sources on the Scandinavians", 158.
[200] Julie Lund, "Åsted og vadested. Deponeringer, genstandsbiographier, og rumling strukturering som kilde til vikingetidens kognitive landskaber" [Brooks and fords. Depositions, objects biographies and spatial structuring as sources for Viking Age cognitive landscapes], Ph.D. dissertation (Oslo: University of Oslo, 2008); Julie Lund, "Banks, Borders and Bodies of Water in a Viking Age Mentality", *Journal of Wetland Archaeology* 8 (2008): 51–70.
[201] Julie Lund, "At the water's edge", in *Signals of Belief in Early England. Anglo-Saxon Paganism Revisited*, ed. Martin Carver, Alexandra Sanmark and Sarah Semple (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2010), 49–66.
[202] Fedir Androshchuk, "Har götlandska vikingar offrat vapen i Dnepr-forsarna?" [Have Gotlandic Vikings sacrificed weapons in the Dnieper rapids?], *Fornvännen* 97, no. 1. (2002): 9–14.
[203] Magistri Adam Bremensis, *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, 3rd ed., ed. Bernhard Schmeidler, Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum 2 (Hannover: Hahn, 1917), 257–58.
[204] *Life of St. George of Amastris*, trans. David Jenkins, Stefanos Alexopoulos, David Bachrach, Jonathan Couser, Sarah Davis, Darin Hayton and Andrea Sterk (Notre Dame, 2001), 18. Accessed online: 17 February 2017. <https://library.nd.edu/byzantine_studies/documents/Amastris.pdf>.
[205] Bartlett, "From Paganism to Christianity in medieval Europe", 60–61.

as the ritual was carried out after the Rus' were relieved by the cessation of threatening Pecheneg attacks near the Dnieper cataracts ('*From this island onwards the Russians do not fear the Pechenegs until they reach the river Salinas*.').[206] Early pagan Slavs, however, also venerated springs,[207] the oak tree being a centre of worship of the thunder god, Perun.[208] Nevertheless, the fact that the text of the *De administrando imperio*, refers to the Dnieper rapids not only in Slavic but in the Old Norse language as well, suggests that a considerable number of the Rus passengers were still related to Scandinavia. This is supported by a stone carved with Old Norse runes found on the island of Berezan, which is also on the Dnieper route to Constantinople,[209] and the close Gotlandic analogies of the five presumably sacrificial Viking swords that were found near the island of Saint Gregory.[210] Of course, it is likely that Slavs joined in on the expedition, and the close similarities between early Slavic and Old Norse religions could only have strengthened their bonds with the assimilated Northmen. However, trees played a spiritual role not only in Baltic and Slavic beliefs,[211] but also in the religions of other eastern Turkic tribes where, as in Old Norse cosmology, they held together the different layers of the world.[212]

In all three accounts we find poultry (hens, chickens, cocks) as sacrificial animals.[213] Archaeological evidence of cocks being sacrificed can be indeed found in Scandinavian

[206] *DAI*, 61.
[207] Procopius, *History of the Wars*, trans. Henry Bronson Dewing, Procopius in Seven Volumes 4 (London: William Heinemann, 1924), 269–73.
[208] James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (London: Oxford University Press, 2009), 109–20 and 159–61. It has to be noted that oak was associated with sacrifices made to the Scandinavian god Thor as well, see: Simpson, *Everyday life in the Viking Age*, 176.
[209] Fedor Braun, and Ture Johnsson Arne, "Den svenska runstenen från ön Berezanj utanför Dneprmynningen" [The Swedish runestone from the island of Berezan following the mouth of the Dnieper], *Fornvännen* 9 (1914): 44–48.
[210] Androshchuk, "Har götlandska vikingar offrat vapen i Dnepr-forsarna?"
[211] Prudence Jones, and Nigel Pennick, *A History of Pagan Europe* (London: Psychology Press, 1995), 174; Vernadsky, *The Origins of Russia*, 123.
[212] Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism. Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, Bollingen Series 76 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 269–74; Mason, "The Religious Beliefs of the Khazars", 400–03; Vernadsky, *The Origins of Russia*, 32–34; István Fodor, "Az ősi magyar vallásról" [About the ancient Hungarian religion], *Csodaszarvas* 1 (2005): 12–13.
[213] In the case of the Dorostolon sacrifices we cannot be really sure that chickens were sacrificed as the observer likely viewed the events from probably a considerable distance (as he was presumably in the Byzantine camp)

burials.[214] Written sources from Scandinavia also confirm the sacrifice of poultry.[215] The deposition of these animals in burials and their distinctive roles in rituals might be explained by beliefs connected to them. Cocks and roosters, for instance, were important actors in Norse mythology: the cock Gullinkambi signalled the coming of the world's end, Ragnarök, with its crowing.[216] Cocks fulfilled a beacon-like role, as foreboders of great calamities, and as such their roles in Scandinavian ritual practices as instruments of soothsaying and prophecy is not surprising.

The sacrificial animals, however, are executed in different ways in the three accounts, which can perhaps be explained by the different intents of the rituals. The hen is decapitated in Ibn Fadlan's work, whilst in Leo the Deacon's *Historia* the chickens are drowned in water. Ritual drowning in water is also mentioned by Adam of Bremen in his description of the pagan habits of the Swedes, the origin of most of the Scandinavians who came into the East.[217] However, one meagre parallel might be insufficient to confirm the Scandinavian roots of this execution method. What is especially interesting is the third example in the *De Administrando Imperio*, where it is decided by casting lots whether the cocks are to be killed (in an unspecified way), eaten or left alive. The practice of casting lots is familiar from the Scandinavian tradition (*hlutkesti*),[218] however, the work *Chronica Slavorum*—written around 1172 and describing some of the sacrificial habits of the Slavs—reports that the Slavic pagan

and at midnight which both make it hard to distinguish between poultry of different kind. The 'chickens' thus could well have been roosters or hens also.

[214] Duczko, *Viking Rus. Studies on the presence of Scandinavians in Eastern Europe*, 149; Kristina Jennbert, *Animals and Humans: Recurrent Symbiosis in Archaeology and Old Norse Religion* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2011), 103.

[215] Schjødt, "Ibn Fadlan's account of a Rus funeral", 143–44.

[216] *Eddukvæði*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason, Íslenzk fornrit 1 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2014), 302 and 313.

[217] Magistri Adam Bremensis, *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, 257–58.

[218] Peter Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings. AD 700–1100* (London: Methuen, 1982), 54; Daniel Bray, "Sacrifice and Sacrificial Ideology in Old Norse Religion", in *The dark side. Proceedings of the Seventh Australian and International Religion, Literature and the Arts Conference*, ed. Christopher Hartney and Andrew McGarrity (Sydney: RLA Press 2004), 126; DuBois, *Nordic Religions in the Viking Age*, 48–49.

'priest' also casts lots to designate the festivities dedicated to the gods.[219] The time span between the *De administrando imperio* and the *Chronica* is long, although Thietmar of Merseburg also records the Slavic habit of lot casting from 1005.[220] It is therefore hard to decide whether the sacrifice of Saint Gregory island stems from Nordic culture or from local Slavic habits, especially since the Slavic god Perun—to whom, as noted, oak trees were dedicated—also used to receive cockerels as offerings.[221]

Nor is the fact that the Rus' on the island of Saint Gregory allowed for the possibility to eat the sacrificial animals unique. We also hear about this not only concerning the Scandinavians in *Hákonar saga Góða*,[222] but often in relation to Turkic people as well, such as the instance in Ibn Fadlan's work where the author says that the Oghuz' used to eat the sacrificial horse.[223] Based on burial customs and ethnographic parallels, it is likely that the habit was practiced by the Magyars and other Eastern people as well.[224]

To summarize, there are striking similarities among tenth-century pagan religions. Besides the ones highlighted (location at a natural spot and the performance of sacrifices), the similar pantheons of gods could also be noted.[225] The universal features of contemporary paganism probably made it easier to adapt to the practicalities of the different rites. Certain practices thus seem to be more or less identically performed in the East, which would easily give way to the development of mixed customs.

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[219] *Helmoldi presbyteri chronica Slavorum*, ed. Georgicus Heinricus Pertz, Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum 7 (Hannover: Hahn, 1868), 52.
[220] Thietmari Merseburgensis, *Episcopi Chronicon*, 302–03.
[221] Mike Dixon-Kennedy, *Encyclopedia of Russian & Slavic Myth and Legend* (Santa Barbara: ABC CLIO, 1998), 217; Marija Gimbutas, *The Slavs*, Ancient People and Places 74 (London: Thames & Hudson, 1971), 166. As far as I am concerned, from early medieval sources on Slavic beliefs only the sacrifices during the Dorostolon siege and the ones at the island of Saint Gregory include cocks. However, the pure Slavic nature of these rituals was contested here and thus it is also possible that cock sacrifices came into the Rus' tradition through Scandinavian influence.
[222] *Hákonar saga Góða,* in Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, Vol. 1., ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, Íslenzk Fornrit 26 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2002), 167–68.
[223] *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness*, 18.
[224] Csanád Bálint, "A ló a magyar pogány hitvilágban" [The horse in pagan Hungarian beliefs], *A Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyve* no. 1. (1970): 31–43.
[225] Omeljan Pritsak, *The Origin of Rus'. Old Scandinavian Sources other than the Sagas*, Vol. 1. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 73–86; Samuel Hazzard Cross, "Primitive Civilization of the Eastern Slavs", *The American Slavic and East European Review* 5, no. 1. (1946): 79; Vernadsky, *The Origins of Russia*, 40–41.

Changes in beliefs

Eastern Turkic influence on the ritual traditions of the Rus' is discernible on a practical and most probably on a spiritual level as well. Ibn Fadlan's report is especially valuable from an ethnographic point of view and offers insights into the ethno-religious world of the Volga region.

Despite being in essence a Nordic performance, it has long been acknowledged that some of the details of the rituals recorded by Ibn Fadlan cannot be matched with any known Scandinavian examples or are not fully compatible with them, and should be sought in a Volga Turk or Khazar cultural milieu.[226] According to a recent contribution of Thorir Jonsson Hraundal, for instance, it seems problematic to correlate, as some have attempted, the crone known as 'Angel of Death' with the *valkyrja* of Norse mythology, or the afterlife called 'Paradise'—where the slave girl follows her master—, with Vallhöll, the hall of dead warriors where women were not even permitted to enter. The place called specifically as 'Paradise' by Ibn Fadlan features in his work prior to the description of the Rus', where he describes the Oghuz Turk views on the afterlife. This is the section where the information can be found that the Oghuz' place their sick individuals into tents and leave them there, strikingly similar to the story of the Rus chieftain who is left to rot in his tent for ten days. As Hraundal continues, even the tattoos on the Rus' would probably be better explained as a borrowed tradition from the East rather than from Scandinavia, as Inner-Asia is where the archaeological traces of this body embellishment are common.[227] The group performing the practices depicted by Ibn Fadlan, therefore embodied a variant of Rus identity that evolved through the interaction

[226] Peter G. Foote, and David M. Wilson, *The Viking Achievement: A Survey of the Society and Culture of Early Medieval Scandinavia* (New York: Praeger, 1970), 408; Montgomery, 'Ibn Fadlān and the Rūsiyyah', 23; Montgomery, "Vikings and Rus in Arabic sources", 163; compare with: Duczko, who stated that '*even if some features of the described rituals may be alien to Scandinavian culture, and were obtained in the East, the whole funeral has to be seen as Norse and nothing else.*' Duczko, *Viking Rus. Studies on the presence of Scandinavians in Eastern Europe*, 138.

[227] Hraundal, "New Perspectives on Eastern Vikings/Rus in Arabic Sources", 85–88.

between Scandinavian warrior-merchant groups and local Turkic tribes along the Volga. The Rus' met by Ibn Fadlan likely represented a group in (ethnic) formulation. Hraundal's thesis on the 'Volga-Rus community' is further supported by additional examples. The tenth-century Muslim author, Ibn Rustah, noted that the Rus' had their own special healing men called *atibba*, who served a function comparable to that of the shamans of the steppe.[228] Likewise, Ibn Fadlan described the spiritual role of the Rus king as being akin to that of the Khazar khagans.[229]

These Turkic influences, however, were by no means confined to the Volga area. The Dnieper region served home to many (culturally) Turkic tribes, such as the Pechenegs and the Magyars, both of which had considerable contact with the Rus' in the ninth–tenth centuries.[230] Besides the Slavic and/or Scandinavian traits in the sacrifices performed by Prince Sviatoslav's men, a detail can help to locate another cultural heritage in this ritual.[231]

It is extremely rare for the victims of Scandinavian human sacrifices to be hostages.[232] It also goes against the usual Rus mentality where the victims are not forced into the procedure. Besides the slave girl participating in the ritual voluntarily, Ibn Fadlan also describes later on how the retinue members of the Rus' king willingly submit themselves to suicide upon their

[228] Birkeland, *Nordens historie i middelalderen etter arabiske kilder*, 17.
[229] Montgomery, "Ibn Fadlān and the Rūsiyyah", 21–22.
[230] Nyikolajevics Andrej Szaharov, "Orosz-magyar szövetségi kapcsolatok a 9–10. században" [Russian-Hungarian alliances in the ninth-tenth centuries], *Századok* 120 (1986): 111–22; Márton Tősér, "A 971. évi dorostoloni hadjárat" [The Dorostolon campaign in 971], *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 115, no. 2. (2002): 335–52; *DAI*, 48–53.; *RPC*, 71–73, 85–90, 122.
[231] Victor Tarras, "Leo Diaconus and the Ethnology of Kievan Rus'", *Slavic Review* 24, no. 3. (1965): 395–406.
[232] About Viking human sacrifices see: Hilda Roderick Ellis, *The Road to Hel. A Study of the Conception of the Dead in Old Norse Literature* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 50–59; Bray, "Sacrifice and Sacrificial Ideology"; Simpson, *Everyday life in the Viking Age*, 185–86; Anders Hultgård, "Menschenopfer", in *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, Vol. 9., ed. Heinrich Beck (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001), 533–46; Klas af Edholm, "Människooffer i fornnordisk religion. En diskussion utifrån arkeologiskt material och källtexter" [Human sacrifice in Old Norse religion. A discussion based on archaeological material and written texts], *Chaos* 65 (2016): 125–47; the only example of Scandinavians sacrificing hostages (as far as I know) were made on the shores of the Seine, where the Northmen said to hang up 111 Frankish prisoners of war. *Translatio S. Germani Parisiensis anno 846, secundum primævam narrationem*, in *Analecta Bollandiana*, Vol. 2., ed. Carolus de Smedt, Gulielmus van Hooff and Josephus Becker (Brusells: Société des Bollandiste, 1883), 78. This act, however, might be more related to the frightening of the enemy rather than being offerings to the gods, and the spiritual background of the act is also dissimilar to the ones performed in Dorostolon (see the discussion below).

master's death.[233] Another Muslim writer, Ibn Hawqal, also notes that Rus' servants go into death voluntarily, just like servants in India, Gana and the Kura region.[234] The sacrifice of prisoners therefore suggests a spiritually different purpose, most likely adopted from more Eastern areas.[235] The parallels of this belief and practice were documented regarding the Khazars, about whom the Byzantine Theophanes recorded that in 710/711, after the death of one of their eminent magistrates, the *tudun*, they sacrificed 300 hostile prisoners in order to serve the *tudun* as retainers in the afterlife.[236] Besides the Khazars, the belief in the afterlife service of defeated enemies has been recorded about other nomadic tribes as well, such as the Magyars, the Mongols, the Tatars and the Oghuz'.[237]

The sacrifices during the siege of Dorostolon are likely to be interpreted this way, namely that the Rus' sacrificed hostages to avenge their fallen warriors and force the enemies to serve them in the afterlife. This is supported by Leo the Deacon's words later; as he notes that the Rus' preferred to lean onto their own swords than fall into captivity, as the one who is killed by the enemy goes on to serve him in the afterlife.[238] Probably the same notion led the young Rus warrior standing his ground ferociously during the siege of Bardha'a (943) against an overpowering Muslim force, who committed suicide before his enemies could take him prisoner, according to Ibn Miskaweyh.[239] The practice noted by Leo the Deacon and Ibn Miskaweyh seems to be tantamount with the Khazar mentality described by Theophanes, and incompatible with the Scandinavian notion of Vallhöll, a warrior heaven where the fallen warriors receive credit for dying in battle. The Rus concept(s) of afterlife seems to have

[233] Montgomery, 'Ibn Fadlān and the Rūsiyyah', 21.
[234] Birkeland, *Nordens historie i middelalderen etter arabiske kilder*, 51.
[235] Mason, "The Religious Beliefs of the Khazars", 407.
[236] *The Chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern History. AD 284–813*, ed. and trans. Cyril Mango, Roger Scott and Geoffrey Geatrex (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 527–28.
[237] Moravcsik, "Zum Bericht des Leon Diakonos über den Glauben an die Dienstleistung im Jenseits." *Studia Antiqua. Antonio Salač septuagenario oblate* (1955): 74–76; Tarras, "Leo Diaconus and the Ethnology of Kievan Rus'", 401; *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness*, 18.
[238] *The History of Leo the Deacon*, 195.
[239] *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness*, 152.

undergone a change and became in essence similar to that practiced by other inhabitants of the region.

Changes in practicalities

The changes in religious beliefs had a practical, everyday dimension as well, maybe something that contributed to the mental shift itself. Oriental fashion in the form of kaftans, loose onion-like trousers and hats from the East are known from runic pictures from Gotland and archaeological material in Birka, indicating that Scandinavian traders adopted dressing styles of a Muslim-Turkic blend along the Volga.[240] Physical evidence pointing towards the East is witnessed in Ibn Fadlan's description as well. These include the basil leaves used to embalm the dead,[241] and the buttons used on the silk shirt of the Rus chieftain,[242] none of which could have been brought from Scandinavia.

The idea that Turkic habits may have been influential is further testified to by Prince Sviatoslav's character.[243] The Rus prince was always on the warpath and lived his life in the saddle as a typical nomad, according to the *Russian Primary Chronicle*:

> Stepping light as a leopard, he undertook many campaigns. Upon his expeditions he carried with him neither wagons nor kettles, and boiled no meat, but cut off small strips of horseflesh, game, or beef, and ate it after roasting it on the coals. Nor did he have a tent, but he spread out a horse-blanket under him, and set his saddle under his head.[244]

[240] Hägg, "Birkas orientaliska praktplagg"; Steuer, "Mittelasien und der Wikingerzeitliche Norden"; Egil Mikkelsen, "Islam and Scandinavia during the Viking Age", in *Byzantium and Islam in Scandinavia. Acts of a Symposium at Uppsala University June 15–16 1996*, ed. Elisabeth Piltz (Jonsered: Paul Åströms Förlag, 1998), 41.
[241] Hraundal, "New Perspectives on Eastern Vikings/Rus in Arabic Sources", 85.
[242] Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings*, 114.
[243] Tarras, "Leo Diaconus and the Ethnology of Kievan Rus'", 401–05; Shepard, "The Viking Rus and Byzantium", 503; Clare Downham, "Viking Ethnicities: A Historiographic Overview", *History Compass* 10, no. 1. (2012): 6.
[244] *RPC*, 84.

Furthermore, he wore his hair in a pony-tail and shaved the remaining parts of his skin.[245] A coiffure of this kind was unique to the Magyars at this time.[246] Sviatoslav also wore earrings, a fashion historically associated with the East rather than with the Scandinavians or Slavs, who usually had long hairstyles and thus would not have been able to put jewellery like this on public display.[247] Sviatoslav is one of the best examples of the complexity of early medieval ethnic identity. As a Rurikid he was of Scandinavian descent, just like many of his commanders and warriors. However, he was also the first Rus prince to have a Slavic name and, moreover, to lead a nomadic life.

We have to remind ourselves that assimilation took time, and did not affect all groups evenly. This tendency might be perceived in the words of the mid-tenth century Muslim author, al-Istakhri, who clearly differentiated the Rus' custom of wearing short *qartaqs* from that of the long version of the same dress worn by the Khazars, Bulghars and the Pechenegs. However, individual choices, in creating one's own style, were probably optional in the Rus communities, which is surmised by al-Istakhri's statement that some of the Rus' used to shave themselves whilst others corded their beards in braids.[248] Although beardlessness was most likely not without precedent in Viking Age Scandinavia, it would be hard to believe it to be a common trend.[249] Nomadic people, in contrast, (partly for climatic reasons) shaved themselves regularly as it is reported by the Oghuz', the Pechenegs, the Baskhirs and the Magyars.[250] Istakhri's words perhaps grasped a Rus community in a phase of collective, and

[245] Leonis Diaconi, *Historiae*, 166–67.
[246] *Codex diplomaticus et epistolaris Slovaciae*, Vol. 1., ed. Richard Marsina (Bratislava: Academiae Scientiarum Slovacae, 1971), 34–35; *Regionis abbatis prumiensis chronicon cum contiunatione treverensi*, ed. Fridericus Kurze, Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum 50 (Hannover: Hahn, 1890), 133; Liutprandus Cremonensis, *Relatio de legatione*, 185.
[247] Tarras, "Leo Diaconus and the Ethnology of Kievan Rus'", 404–05.
[248] Birkeland, *Nordens historie i middelalderen etter arabiske kilder*, 29.
[249] Ármann Jakobsson, "Masculinity and Politics in Njáls saga", *Viator* 38 (2007): 191–215; Carl Phelpstead, "Hair Today, Gone Tomorrow: Hair Loss, the Tonsure, and Masculinity in Medieval Iceland", *Scandinavian Studies* 85, no. 1. (2013): 1–19.
[250] *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness*, 19, and 22–23. For the Magyars see above (footnote 245).

at the same time individual transition between habits taken from the homelands and experienced in the East.

Mixed customs

Due to the mixture of essentially similar religious customs, variations of ritual practices might have existed in Eastern Europe often independently of the original ethnicity of the performers. Such an instance is portrayed in the *Russian Primary Chronicle* when the Rus', upon contracting, took oaths upon their weapons, which is a well-known Scandinavian tradition.[251] However, at the same time they also pledged allegiance to Slavic gods—Perun and Volos.[252]

It is also worth drawing attention to the similarities and slight differences between the rituals of Saint Gregory Island and the one recorded in one of Ibn Fadlan's passages, where the Rus' also erected poles around unnamed idols.[253] In addition to this specific correspondence, it is notable that both rituals were performed by merchants regarding a successful business trip, and that, besides arranging poles (and arrows), in both cases food was offered, as well. The purpose and the performance of the rituals seem to be identical, the use of arrows being the sole difference. This is intriguing since the practice of pegging poles is also known in the Scandinavian cultural-religious milieu.[254] An Arab emissary of the tenth century, al-Tartushi, whose lost work survives in thirteenth-century excerpts, writes that the inhabitants of the Scandinavian commercial town, Hedeby, celebrate a feast by sacrificing an

[251] Martina Stein-Wilkeshuis, "Scandinavians swearing oaths in tenth-century Russia: Pagans and Christians." *Journal of Medieval History* 28 (2002): 155–68.
[252] *RPC*, 65, 77, 90. Cross claims that the Scandinavians retainers swore on Perun whilst the Slavs on Volos. It would also be possible that the later chronicler substituted the Scandinavian gods', Odin's and Thor's, names with the pagan Slavic deities of Perun and Volos which were known to him. Cross, "Primitive Civilization of the Eastern Slavs", 81. However, in the light of the previous discussion, I find nothing incomprehensible in this eclectic mentality.
[253] Montgomery, 'Ibn Fadlān and the Rūsiyyah', 9–10.
[254] The Icelandic poet Egill Skallagrímsson erected a horse's head on a pole to frighten away the land spirits of his rivals in Norway. The purpose and context of Egill's act, however, does not seem to correspond with the rituals discussed here. *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, 171. A more similar usage is discernible in the story of Ragnarr Loðbrok, where in Denmark, a tree idol is found, which was used to receive offerings. *Saga af Ragnari Konungi Lodbrok ok sonum hans*, in *Fornaldar Sögur Nordrlanda*, Vol. 1., ed. Carl Christian Rafn (Copenhagen: Hardvig Fridrek, 1829), 298–99.

ox, a ram, a goat or a pig, which they then hang outside in front of their houses on a pole to make it visible to everyone.[255] This strongly resembles Ibn Fadlan's description, in which the Rus' tie '*the heads of the cows or the sheep to that piece of wood set up in the ground*.'[256]

Thus, at least two interpretations are possible. Firstly, supplemented by other Scandinavian characteristics in the ritual discussed previously, the construction of sacrificial poles in Ibn Fadlan's work likely represents a Scandinavian practice. The ritual performed on Saint Gregory Island must then be a variant of the 'original' Nordic custom, where the material culture was substituted in order to better fit Slavic beliefs, specifically the veneration of the thunder god Perun with his lighting bolts. Secondly, it is also possible that the Rus' on the Volga erected idols according to indigenous Slavic habits,[257] substituting the arrows with poles under the influence of the Scandinavian participants of the commercial mission. Or the practice was mutually in existence in both traditions. Whatever the case, both Rus' communities would have been affected by both Slavic and Nordic cultures, as implied by the details of the rituals and the contextual evidence.

In addition, while stabbing spears into a tomb (presumably with a flag on them) was common among the Bulghars of the Volga (whom, as discussed, had considerable cultural influence on the Rus'), judging by the archaeological evidence and ethnographical parallels, it is likely that the Magyars also performed such funerals.[258] These are not completely analogous to the habit recorded by Ibn Fadlan and al-Tartushi, but suggest that the practice of erecting ritual poles was also known in the Turkic world. A closer analogue is mentioned by Ibn Fadlan himself when describing the habits of the Oghuz' who, during a funeral, sacrifice

[255] Jacob Georg, *Arabische Berichte von Gesandten an germanische Fürstenhöfe aus dem 9. und 10. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1927), 29; Birkeland, *Nordens historie i middelalderen etter arabiske kilder*, 103–04.
[256] Montgomery, 'Ibn Fadlān and the Rūsiyyah', 11.
[257] Słupecki, "Slavic religion", 344–45.
[258] László Kovács, "A honfoglaló magyarok lándzsái és lándzsástemetkezésük" [The spears and spearburials of the conquering Hungarians], *Alba Regia* 11 (1970): 81–108.

one- or two hundred horses and suspend the horses' heads, legs, skins and tails on wooden pales.[259]

The Slavs also employed spears in their sacrifices, though—and this might be an important distinction—never sticking them in the ground. In Thietmar's chronicle two spears are placed crosswise on the ground,[260] in Herbord's biography of Otto of Bamberg nine spears are laid down in a cubit distance from each other,[261] and in Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum* the spears are used as compasses pointing towards lands of interest, which the Slavs planned to conquer.[262] Of course, one cannot claim with certainty that the Rus' modified their habits and started to erect, rather than lay down, poles due to the influence of the Bulghars, Oghuz' or Khazars around the Volga, or the Magyars and the Pechenegs in the Dnieper region. However, it should be emphasized that certain elements in a ritual were subject to change, and, because of the dearth of sources, we cannot really measure to what extent this change was caused by foreign impact, the circumstances of the time or the available resources.

The exact reason why the Rus' used arrows for the performance in Saint Gregory island could also be sought in the circumstances of the ritual itself, rather than in a conscious cultural heritage. While the Rus' merchants on the Volga had a presumably safe passage, the Rus' on the Dnieper voyage were constantly under attack by the Pechenegs. This may explain why the Rus' of the *De administrando imperio* utilized arrows for the ritual: as arrows were the most optimal weapon for warfare on the river, they probably carried them with themselves in abundant numbers. While not excluding the possibility that the use of arrows could have been related to the violent connotations of the trip and the ritual, it is also likely that the Rus'

[259] *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness*, 18; Montgomery, "Ibn Fadlān and the Rūsiyyah", 11 n. 34. In a somewhat different form, this ritual was documented about the Mongols as well. *The Texts and Versions of John De Plano Carpini and William De Rubruquis*, 49.
[260] Thietmari Merseburgensis, *Episcopi Chronicon*, 303.
[261] *Herbordi Dialogus de Vita Ottonis Episcopi Babenbergensis*, ed. Rudolf Köpke, Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum 33 (Hannover: Hahn 1868), 91.
[262] Stanislaw Sielicki, "Saxo Grammaticus on pre-Christian religion of the Slavs. The relevant fragments from book XIV of Gesta Danorum" (2015): 9. Accessed online 23 February 2017: <https://www.academia.edu/11345671/Saxo_Grammaticus_on_pre-Christian_religion_of_the_Slavs_the_relevant_fragments_from_book_XIV_of_Gesta_Danorum_final_draft_>

merchants simply used the objects at hand to carry out the performance. Practical decisions could have easily outweighed regulations if those existed at all in such customary religions. Prince Sviatoslav, for instance, did not sacrifice weapons and food to his cremated comrades, even though the Rus' on the Volga did so. Naturally, the lack of weapons and food in the Dorostolon sacrifices can be attributed to the inattentiveness of the Byzantine spectator, but the possibility that Sviatoslav, as a practical military commander, deliberately chose not to waste valuable tools and supplies under siege cannot be ruled out. By using local materials and adapting to the situation at the time, Sviatoslav would have displayed a high level of flexibility, especially towards ritual practices. The motif of erecting poles is an example where material culture could be easily substituted or even omitted, if necessary. The construction of a temporary tent for the dead, and his embalming with balsamic leafs in Ibn Fadlan's description also relates to the employment of alternative materials that are characteristic of the region where the rituals are performed.

Previous experience

The relatively quick adaptation of the Rus' to foreign customs, apart from the concord of general pagan practices and beliefs, can be explained by another supposition as well. Scandinavians coming to Eastern Europe had already encountered nomadic people in Scandinavia, the Sámi, who performed rituals similar to those of the nomadic tribes in the East.[263] Sámi shamanistic rituals and magic seem to have had considerable impact on Old Norse religion, and the knowledge of Sámi culture among the Scandinavians must have been

[263] Åke Hultkrantz, "Aspects of Saami (Lapp) Shamanism", in *Northern Religions and Shamanism*, ed. Mihály Hoppál and Juha Pentikäinen, (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 1992), 138–46; Eliade, *Shamanism. Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, 379–87; see for instance a recorded Sámi ritual probably by an eyewitness: *Historia Norwegie*, ed. Inger Ekrem and Lars Boje Mortensen, trans. Peter Fisher (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2006), 92–93.; in the sagas, see: Hermann Pálsson, "The Sami people in Old Norse Literature", *Nordlit Arbeidstidsskrift i Litteratur* 5 (1999): 29–53.

widespread. [264] The Sámi originally dwelled in the Northern parts of present-day Finland, Sweden, and the Northern and Southern parts of Norway. Scandinavians operating in the East came mostly from these areas, which raises the likelihood of them personally meeting Sámi people before leaving to the East. Moreover, the Sámi were frequent characters in thirteenth–fourteenth-century Icelandic sagas, suggesting that their culture was well-known even in the more distant parts of the North, and centuries later at that. This means that not only 'Swedes' and 'Norwegians' could have been familiar with the variants of shamanistic customs, but others as well, so meeting folks with similar practices was certainly no shock to the Scandinavians.[265]

These might reveal why other alternative religions, such as Islam (which was also promoted by some of the Turkic people as for instance the Volga Bulghars) did not make a more decisive impression on the Viking Rus'. Vladimir the Great, for instance, received Muslim envoys in his court in order to get acquainted with Islam, but finally refused to embrace the faith due to its restrictions in consuming alcohol: '*Drinking, 'said he' [Vladimir], is the joy of the Russes. We cannot exist without that pleasure*.'[266] Abandoning the consumption of pork was also impossible for the Rus', as it is reported by Amin Razi saying that even those Rus' who allegedly converted to Islam could not refrain themselves from eating it.[267] As Egil Mikkelsen highlighted, Islam's rules were incompatible with Old Norse religious views and practices. The custom of the Rus' to depict idols for religious ceremonies would definitely go against Islam's prohibitions of drawing faces. Similarly, the lack of hygiene and the libertine sexual customs of the Rus' (public sexual intercourse with slave girls) would be unacceptable for Muslims for whom regular bathing with a religious purpose

[264] Else Mundal, "Coexistence of Saami and Norse Culture – Reflected in and Interpreted by Old Norse Myths", in *Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society. Papers of the 11th International Saga Conference 2–7 July 2000, University of Sydney*, ed. Geraldine Barnes and Margaret Clunies Ross (Sydney: Centre for Medieval Studies, 2000), 346–55; Neil S. Price, "The Viking Way. Religion and War in Late Iron Age Scandinavia", Ph.D. dissertation (Uppsala: University of Uppsala, 2002).
[265] Davidson, *The Viking Road to Byzantium*, 283–300.
[266] *RPC*, 97.
[267] Stig Wikander, *Araber, Vikingar, Väringar* (Lund: Svenska Humanistiska Förbundet, 1978), 73.

was on the daily agenda, while sexuality was a private matter. Old Norse funerary rites went against the Islamic notions as well. Ibn Fadlan was addressed by the Rus' during the funeral he described, and was told that the Arabs are fools to let the body for the worms in the ground rather than burning them as the Rus' do.[268]

As illustrated, syncretism between Old Norse, Slavic and Turkic religions seem to have worked better due to the common customs, and partly also beliefs, inclusively present in all three cultures. Since regional variations existed in all these three religions, it is impossible to assert with certainty which variations affected the other, however it seems likely that it were mostly Old Norse religious views which were influenced by some of the Turkic beliefs. For the opposite I am not aware of any evidence so far. Although the Scandinavians were the ones who had to adapt to the local environments, the lack of Scandinavian impact on nomads (albeit obviously to lesser extent), might be attributed to the darf of sources about the period. As a consequence it is equally hard to measure how widespread the above described Turkic practices and beliefs were among the pagan Rus' and in the steppe in general. The adaptation to certain practices and everyday cultural borrowings on the part of the Scandinavians can partly be ascribed to the natural environment which required flexibility in external appearance and in using alternative resources in a ritual context. This practical side of the Scandinavian-Turkic relationship went hand-in-hand with changes in beliefs, illustrated for instance by (the presumably altered) Rus afterlife notions. The possible traces this influence could have left in material culture should be touched upon by future research.

[268] Egil Mikkelsen, "The Vikings and Islam", in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price (London: Routledge, 2008), 543–49.

Chapter 4 – Communication

After tracing possible contact spheres between Scandinavian and Turkic people, I would like to address the practical side of these relations in everyday encounters. This draws us back to a basic question: how did the Scandinavians and the Turks communicate with each other? Rather than offering a straight-forward solution to this problem, the possibilities presented here are sometimes more of a suggestive nature. This mostly stems from the character of the source material, which contains fragmentary and dispersed allusions to Scandinavian and Turkic interactions and thus in certain cases had to be pushed to its limits. At the same time, the analysis of communication issues could bring us closer to understand interactions and influences in the field of trade, warfare or religious practices.

Besides the occasional references to archaeological and linguistic evidence, written sources mentioning direct communication between various groups of people in Eastern Europe will be used as analogies to explore the multiple means of communication that could have occurred between the two ethnic groups. Sources drawing on both groups' abilities to acquire foreign languages, and the evident presence of Slavic as a *lingua franca* in the region makes the possible communicative channels manifold.

By the term communicative channel, I mean an intermediary of an abstract or even practical nature through which people understand each other. It can be provided by an outsider who intervenes in the communication such as a translator for instance, or another language as well which is understood by both parties. Written records such as letters or treaties would also belong to this category but since neither the Scandinavians, nor the Turkic nomads produced related documents in the period which could be studied, this aspect cannot be discussed.

It also has to be clarified what languages or language groups were at play in Eastern Europe at the time. The Scandinavian language group was divided into a West-Norse (Icelandic, Norwegian) and an East-Norse (Swedish, Danish) dialect, from which both groups were represented in Eastern Europe, however a much higher proportion is discernible of the latter. Nevertheless, in spite of the regional variations, it is generally believed that Old Norse speakers fluently understood each other throughout the 'Viking world'.[269]

The closest partners of the Scandinavians in Eastern Europe were the East Slavs, who surprisingly were similarly unified in terms of language. Whilst Slavic groups even in smaller territories (like the West or South Slavic areas) became divided into sub-groups (e.g. Sorbian, Polabian, Polish-Pomeranian, Bulgaro-Macedonian), the East Slavs preserved their linguistic unity in a much huger area, probably due to the Nordic political authority that united the diverse tribes.[270]

The tribes of Turkic origin, however, were less unitary and spoke rather different tongues and dialects even within the same empires or tribal federations due to their heterogenic population. The Khazar Khaganate, for instance, was a contemporary cultural melting-pot of Arabic Muslim, Slav, Rus and various Turkic people. In these poly-ethnic nomadic societies, the functional role of languages dominated which manifested itself in multi-lingualism or in the parallel existence of 'official' languages employed in cultural or economic interactions. The language of the ruling strata in a given nomadic entity was therefore subject to rapid change and flexibility.[271]

The Khazars, who were the main trading partners of the Viking Rus' in the ninth–tenth centuries, most likely spoke a unique branch of the Turkic linguistic family called Oghuric.[272]

[269] Judith Jesch, *The Viking Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2015).
[270] Struminski Bohdan. *Linguistic Interrelations in Early Rus': Northmen, Finns and East Slavs (Ninth to Eleventh Centuries)* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1996), 11–23.
[271] Pritsak, "The Pechenegs: A Case of Social and Economic Transformation", 22–24.
[272] Alan K. Brook, *The Jews of Khazaria* (New Jersey: Jason Aronson, 1999), 80–81.

Their language was likened by various Muslim authors to that of the Volga Bulghars, whose remnants were mostly preserved in the Chuvash language of today.[273]

The language spoken by the Magyar tribes, however, belongs to the Ugrian branch of the Finno-Ugric languages. Thus, despite the fact that the Magyars practiced a nomadic way of life and culturally resembled the Turkic tribes of Inner Asia, their language was distinct. This might give a methodological problem when discussing Scandinavian-Turkic communication, as the Magyars should be addressed separately. However, Turkic elements do not surface in vain in Magyar culture since they have been in considerable contact with the various Turkic tribes of the Volga region, including the Volga Bulghars, the Bashkirs and the Khazars. The high amount of early Turkic loanwords (around 300 in number), appearing in the Hungarian language were the remnants of this extensive co-habitation of the seventh–ninth centuries. On whether how and when these loanwords entered the Hungarian language there is no scholarly consent, the Bashkirs and Volga Bulghars from the seventh century and/or the Khazars later being the major candidates for the transmission.[274] Thus, it is also believed that the Magyar chiefly elite (many of them bearing Turkic names) was bilingual and fluent in common Turkic.[275]

The Pecheneg's language cannot be identified with certainty. Their organization was not unified and never developed into such an extent to be able to introduce a common 'national' language adaptable to all of their existing components. According to some, their confederation contained Iranian, Tokharian and Bulgaric (Turkic) speakers, whilst others surmise they generally spoke common Turkic.[276]

[273] István Zimonyi, "The Origins of the Volga Bulghars", Ph.D. dissertation, Studio uralo-altaica (Szeged: University of Szeged, 1989), 8–9.
[274] Zimonyi, *Muslim sources on the Magyars in the second half of the 9th century*, 346–48.
[275] Compare with: Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle* Ages, 350–51 and 389.
[276] Pritsak, "The Pechenegs: A Case of Social and Economic Transformation", 22–24; Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 265.

Since all these communities were highly mixed ethnically, it is fair to assume that speakers within the Turkic language groups must have understood each other in everyday matters despite the occasional dialectical differences. It is also worth to highlight that a functional use of a language can be different from the full acquisition of the same language as in most cases it is enough to possess a limited communicative level to make one understood by foreigners. The degree to what extent Scandinavians might have needed foreign languages in the East is unfortunately hard to measure. Accordingly, only general patterns will be outlined in the followings which sometimes reflect only on individual experience.

The Importance of Communication in the 'East'

The prerequisite of any kind of interaction except warfare is communication. The only exception from this rule that existed in traditional societies might be the so-called 'silent trade', a method of exchanging goods without speaking. The silent trade resulted from the unintelligible or incomprehensible communication between two parties and was secured by mutual trust.[277] It seems probable that the custom goes back to a long tradition in the Northern areas of the Baltics and Russia. The Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta, in his *Travels* written in the fourteenth century recorded the silent trade performed by the inhabitants of the 'land of darkness', north of Bulghar:

> Each one of them leaves the goods he has brought there and they return to their usual camping-ground. Next day they go back to seek their goods, and find opposite them skins of sable, minever, and ermine. If the merchant is satisfied with the exchange he takes them, but if not he leaves them. The inhabitants then add more skins, but sometimes they take away their goods and leave the merchant's. This is their method of commerce. Those who go there do not know whom they are trading with or whether they be jinn or men, for they never see anyone.[278]

[277] Hamilton J. P. Grierson, *The Silent Trade. A Contribution to the Early History of Human Intercourse* (Edinburgh: Willian Green & Sons, 1903), 41–54.
[278] Ibn Battúta, *Travels in Asia and Africa. 1325–1354*, trans. Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), 151.

The Persian scholars, Al-Biruni, around 1030 also confirms that the inhabitants of these northern regions practice this form of barter.[279] Apart from this method which Scandinavians might have applied with some Northern Baltic or Finnish tribes, trade without proper communication often failed. In the fourteenth-century Icelandic *Grœnlendinga saga*, describing the Viking voyages and temporary settlement in America around the millennium, the Vikings encountered local Indians with whom they initially traded peacefully until misunderstandings arose and a fight broke out.[280] The same patterns are discernible in *Yngvars saga víðförla*, a legendary saga about a Viking expedition into the East. Here Sveinn, the son of the eponymous saga hero Yngvarr, and his company conducted trade in a peaceful manner with some unnamed local inhabitants of the Volga region on the first day (apparently with hand signs and tokens) but had to engage in battle with them the next, due to confusions caused during a transaction. After this, an identical accident is repeated in the saga once more, this time the fight broke out on a feast.[281] Ultimately, both calamities were aroused by the lack of adequate knowledge of the local language.

Thus, conducting trade, being engaged in negotiations, understanding local customs, adopting fashion, forming alliances or acting together on the battlefield all require an ability to understand each other. The close cultural interaction and borrowings between the Scandinavians and Turkic people outlined in the previous chapters would not have been possible without a fluent communicative channel between the two ethnic groups. But how did Scandinavians and Turkic people actually speak to each other?

[279] *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness*, 179.
[280] *Grœnlendinga saga*, in *Eyrbyggja saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthias Þórðarson, Íslenzk fornrit 4 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1935), 260–64.
[281] *Yngvars saga víðförla. Jämte ett bihang om Ingvarsinskrifterna*, ed. Emil Olson (København: S. L. Møllers, 1912), 35–36 and 39–40. Whether these encounters actually did happen or not is irrelevant for the present discussion, since the main point is that the audience and composers of these accounts were aware of the problems which aroused during trade relations with unknown people. The killing of a local reeve by the Vikings on the Dorset coast in the year 789 might actually also be the consequence of a misconducted trading transaction as looting did not follow the accident. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. and trans. Michael J. Swanton (New York: Routledge, 1996), 54.

According to most scholars, the *lingua franca* of the region at this time was Slavic.[282] This assumption is most probably valid since Slavic was a spoken (native) language from Poland through the vast areas of the Rus' and the Balkans until the Caliphate territories, which owned considerable number of Slavic slaves. Taking this as a starting point, the following scenarios are possible concerning the procedures of communication between the Rus' and the nomads of the steppe: 1. Scandinavians learned Slavic, and Turkic people used interpreters. 2. In the reverse situation, Turkic people could be fluent in Slavic while the Northerners had to consult translators who spoke Old Norse. 3. Both groups acquired the knowledge of communicating in Slavic. 4. Some of them learned each other's native language. Whilst not denying that the first two possibilities could occur occasionally, there is firm evidence for the third category. Even though the attestation is weaker, careful suggestions will be put forward concerning the fourth scenario as well.

Old Norse, Slavic, Turkic

In spite of the supposed quick assimilation of the Scandinavians within the Slavic communities, usually illustrated by the appearance of Slavic names in the Rus princely family and the Russo-Byzantine treatise of 944,[283] written sources suggest that Old Norse was still a spoken language among the Varangian-Rus' during the tenth century. This is corroborated by the famous descriptions of the Dnieper rapids in the works of the Byzantine Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, who provides the names of the river cataracts (crossed by Rus' merchants on their way from Kiev to Constantinople), both in Slavonic and Old Norse.[284] A rare piece of evidence, a tenth-century Old Norse runic inscription carved into a stone on the

[282] Golden, "Rūs", 621; Aleksander Gieysztor, "Trade and Industry in Eastern Europe before 1200", in *The Cambridge Economic History*, Vol. 2., ed. Michael M. Postan and Edward Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 482; Obolensky, 'The Byzantine sources on the Scandinavians in Eastern Europe', 161.
[283] Sitzmann, *Nordgermanisch-ostslavische Sprachkontakte in der Kiever Rus'*, 58–61.; Melnikova, "The Lists of Old Norse Personal Names"; Bohdan, *Linguistic Interrelations in Early* Rus', 162–80.
[284] *DAI*, 57–63.

island of Berezan also testifies that a considerable part of the travelers of the Dnieper route came from a Scandinavian community.[285] Thus, Old Norse was still in use during the tenth century in Eastern Europe, testified also by runic inscriptions on wooden sticks found in Novgorod.[286]

In the Byzantine Empire, Varangians also preserved the *dönsk tunga* ('Danish tongue'), as the language of the Scandinavians was referred to in their own words. The Byzantines employed their own Greek interpreters to communicate with their Varangian bodyguards, which is corroborated by a Byzantine coin bearing the inscription 'Michael, the great translator of the Varangians' probably dateable to the mid-thirteenth century.[287] Saxo Grammaticus also describes an event strengthening the theory of the usage of Old Norse in the Byzantine court. According to the story, the Danish king Eiríkr Ejegod (1095–1103) during his pilgrimage to the Holy Land arrived at the walls of Constantinople, but was refused entry to the city, by this mirroring the anxieties of the Emperor that the Varangian guards of the palace might join their fellow Scandinavians. Finally, the *basileus* let out his Varangians to Eiríkr in small groups, sending spies with them who understood both Greek and Old Norse.[288] The Byzantine custom of foreign soldiers greeting the Emperor in their own native tongue during ceremonies might also signal that preserving the native language in Constantinople was a reality.[289]

Not all Scandinavians showed the same level of assimilation. In the case of those Rus' who settled among the Slavs in European Russia obviously a higher adaptability is to be expected

[285] Braun and Arne, "Den svenska runstenen från ön Berezanj utanför Dneprmynningen".
[286] Elena A. Melnikova, "The Cultural Assimiliation of Varangians in Eastern Europe from the Point of View of Language and Literacy", in *Runica – Germanica – Mediaevalia*, Vol. 37., ed. Wilhelm Heizmann and Astrid van Nahl (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 457.
[287] Valentina S. Shandrovskaia, "The Seal of Michael, Grand Interpreter of the Varangians", in *Byzantium and the Viking World*, ed. Fedir Androshchuk, Jonathan Shephard and Monica White (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2016), 305–12.
[288] Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum. The History of the Danes*, Vol. 2., ed. Karsten Friis-Jensen, trans. Peter Fisher (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2015), 888–89.
[289] Davidson, *The Viking Road to Byzantium*, 200.

but it should be borne in mind that this progress also took time, especially in the rural areas.[290] The tenth century rather reflects a time of transition than the end of cultural-linguistic assimilation on the part of the Scandinavians in Eastern Europe as the *dönsk tunga* was still practiced there.

Evidence of Scandinavians learning Slavic, nevertheless certainly exists. Scandinavian loanwords in Old Russian, and Old Russian terms in Old Norse language both appear.[291] Scandinavian loanwords in the East Slavic language are ethnic, place and personal names, or are terms mostly connected to commercial or political activities (e.g. *væringr* 'Varangian', *griði* 'retinue', *akkeri* 'anchor', *pund* 'pound'). Nearly the same can be said about Old Norse lexical borrowings from East Slavic (e.g. *safali* 'sable', *torg* 'market', *polota* 'palace', *Girkir* 'Greeks') pointing out socio-economic activities that tied together Old Norse speakers with the inhabitants of Eastern Europe.[292]

In addition to mutual borrowings, there is evidence that Scandinavians not only acquired the local language but adopted the Slavic script as well. In the St. Sofia cathedral of Kiev, the Norse name Yakun (Hákon) appears written with Cyrillic letters.[293] This phenomenon is also confirmed by two graffitis on the walls of the St. Sophia cathedral of Novgorod from the second half of the eleventh century and 1137. Birch bark letters from the Ladoga region dated to the same period also contain Old Norse names in Cyrillic letters. In a famous tenth-century boat grave of Gnezdovo—hiding a high status Rus warrior—, the first Slavic language relic (an amphora with the inscription *gorouhsha*) has been found.[294]

[290] Androshchuk, "Vikings in the East", 534; Melnikova, "The Cultural Assimiliation of Varangians in Eastern Europe", 464.
[291] Gunnar Svane, "Vikingetidens nordiske låneord i russisk" [Viking Age Nordic loanwords in Russian], in *Ottende tværfaglige vikingesymposium*, ed. Thorben Kisbye and Else Roesdahl (Aarhus: Hiruni, 1989) 18–32; Clara Thörnqvist, *Studien über die nordischen Lehnwörter im Russischen* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1948); Bohdan, *Linguistic Interrelations in Early* Rus', 229–54.
[292] Bohdan, *Linguistic Interrelations in Early* Rus', 229–54.
[293] Androshchuk, "The Vikings in the East", 535.
[294] Melnikova, "The Cultural Assimiliation of Varangians in Eastern Europe", 456.

Thus, besides preserving Old Norse, by the tenth century, it is safe to assume that many Scandinavians living among the Slavs became bilingual. Ibrahim ibn Ya'qub al-Turtushi, a Jewish traveler in the middle of the tenth century reports that '*many Northern tribes speak the Slavic language, for they are mixed with the Slavs. Among them are the Germans, the Magyars, the Pechenegs, the Russians, and the Khazars*.'[295] This also confirms that nomadic people—the Magyars, Pechenegs and Khazars—also spoke Slavic, which is additionally supported by a bilingual Turkic-Slavic graffiti in the St. Sophia cathedral of Kiev.[296] East Slavic, therefore, could easily become an intermediary language between Turkic groups and the Rus' from the tenth century onwards.

The Use of Interpreters

Besides speaking the same intermediary language, the employment of interpreters in Scandinavian-Turkic communication is also highly probable. Interpreters were widely used by Scandinavians in this region. One of the earliest references to the Rus', found in the Arabic Ibn Khurradadhbih's work, reports that the Rus' already in the ninth century journeyed until Baghdad where they used Slavic slaves as interpreters in their dealings with the Muslims.[297] Ibn Fadlan from the Caliphate also had to employ a translator to understand the rituals of the Rus' whom he encountered at the river Volga in 922. The identity of the latter translator is still subject to speculation, as it is hard to figure out from the Arabic text whether he was Scandinavian, an Arab or perhaps a Slav.[298] However, the word *tólkr*, meaning a translator, came into the Old Norse language from Old Russian, presupposing the fact that the

[295] Mishin, "Ibrahim Ibn-Ya'qub at-Turtushi's Account of the Slavs", 190.
[296] Omeljan Pritsak, "An Eleventh-Century Turkic Bilingual (Turko-Slavic) graffito from the St. Sophia Cathedral in Kiev", *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 6, no. 2 (1982): 152–166.
[297] Pritsak, "An Arabic Text on the Trade Route of the Corporation of ar-Rūs", 257.
[298] Schjødt, "Ibn Fadlan's account of a Rus funeral", 133. Uncertainties of perceiving this situation might be well grasped in the famous Hollywood movie, *The 13th Warrior*, in which the Arabic translator talks to his Viking colleague in Latin.

interpreters employed by the Scandinavians were of Slavic origin.[299] In addition, if the interpretation of the Old Russian word *tolkoviny* as translator is to be accepted, then its occurrence in the *Russian Primary Chronicle* as an attribute of the Slavic tribe, the Tivercians, is an indicative again for the profession's Slavic roots.[300]

More interestingly, the Tivercians, who fought alongside the Rus', are sometimes considered to be a folk originally of Turkic stock, melted within the Slavic population of the Dniester-Dnieper area during ninth century and who were probably bilingual.[301] This would suggest that Turkic people also used interpreters. It was suspected that during the Magyar campaigns in Iberia (942), a Slavic servant (from whom many resided in Islamic Spain in the period) must have been intermediating between the Magyars and the local Muslims.[302] In addition, the office of the *tulmač*, literally meaning a translator, was linked to the tribal princes in the Pecheneg tribal federation, highlighting its importance. The Hungarian form of the word, *tolmács* is of Pecheneg and not Slavic origin, which could perhaps suggest that the profession/institution developed simultaneously in the Turkic and Slavic word.[303]

These examples imply that in communication, especially during the ninth century, translators could have been employed between the Viking Rus' and Turks, which might have been partly changed during the course of the tenth century when Scandinavian groups gradually embraced Old Russian. This, however, might not have excluded completely

[299] Ian McDougall, "Foreigners and foreign languages in Medieval Iceland", *Saga-Book* 22 (1986–1989): 218; Bohdan, *Linguistic Interrelations in Early* Rus', 252.

[300] Most Russian scholars accept this interpretation and it is followed by the recent Hungarian interpretation too. *Régmúlt idők elbeszélése. A Kijevi Rusz első krónikája* [Tale of the Bygone Years. The first Chronicle of the Kievan Rus'], ed. László Balogh and Szilvia Kovács, trans. István Ferincz (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2015), 39. Sakharov, however believes the term to mean '*allies*'. *Povest' Vremennykh Let* [Tale of the Bygone Years]. Accessed online: 02 April 2018. <http://lib.pushkinskijdom.ru/Default.aspx?tabid=4869#_edn89> n. 89. Cross and Sherbowitz-Wetzor translate it as '*pagans*'. *RPC*, 64. This, however would not make much sense as all the other tribes enumerated next to the Tivercians in the *Chronicle*'s relevant passage were pagans at the time and there is no indication why would this be highlighted concerning the Tivercians.

[301] Compare with: Spinei, *The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads*, 83–86; *Régmúlt idők elbeszélése*, 39.

[302] György Györffy, "Vezéri szálláshelyek emlékei" [Memories of princely headquarters], in *Honfoglalás és régészet. A honfoglalásról sok szemmel*, Vol. 1., ed. László Kovács (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 1994), 130. On the Saqāliba slaves in Spain: Dmitrij Mishin, "Ṣaqlabī servants in Islamic Spain and North Africa in the Early Middle Ages", Ph.D. dissertation (Budapest: Central European Universtiy, 1999), 63–101.

[303] Gyula Németh, "Zur Geschichte des Wortes tolmács "Dolmetscher"", *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 8, no. 1. (1958): 1–8.

intermediaries who fulfilled pivotal role in commercial transactions as is illustrated by a fourteenth-century manuscript of *Óláfs saga hins Helga*, in which the Old Norse word *brakki* (in the plural form *brakkarnir*), meaning an 'intermediary, broker', is equated to *túlkr*.[304] This surmises that the job of interpreters was (and is) not merely a formal translation work, but a sensitive task that also involved negotiations on behalf of the master. Interpreters were sufficient tools and clear advantages in business relations, and probably were preferably recruited from one's own trusted neighborhood rather than from the locals on site where the transactions occurred.

Learning each other's tongues

It has to be highlighted that more complicated issues such as religious customs and concepts which seem to have been adopted by the Rus' from the Turks, had to be transmitted (to some extent) perhaps in the vernacular(s). This must have taken place after spending considerable time together, and thus, even though not leaving evident traces in the written records, I find it probable that Turkic languages could have been involved in the transmission of ideas despite the fact that Turkic loanwords in the Scandinavian languages are either non-existent, or they are extremely rare and their etymological interpretation stands on shaky grounds.[305] However, there is evidence for the outstanding adaptability of both the Scandinavian Vikings and Turkic nomads for learning foreign languages.

Unfortunately there are no sources referring explicitly to Scandinavians learning a Turkic language. *Konungs skuggsjá*, the late medieval Norwegian King's Mirror, advises merchants to learn the languages of the places where they do business, and (especially) Latin and

[304] *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga: Den store saga om Olav den hellige efter pergamenthåndskrift i Kungliga Biblioteket i Stockholm nr. 2 4to med varianter fra andre håndskrifter (1–2)*, ed. Oscar Albert Johnsen and Jón Helgason (Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1941), 776.
[305] Hraundal, "The Rus in Arabic Sources: Cultural Contacts and Identity", 170–73.

French.[306] These languages might have been useful for merchants of the thirteenth century—from when the source originates—but possibly there would have been other languages suggested for ninth-eleventh-century Scandinavian merchants who ventured along the *austrvegr*. This might be supposed by the case of the Danish Viðgautr, who conducted business in Novgorod smoothly due to his knowledge of foreign languages. *Knýtlinga saga*, the compilation of stories of the Danish kings in which Viðgautr's trip was recorded, also states that he never needed an interpreter.[307] Travelling merchants usually were fluent in languages which were in usage on the territories they operated as it is also reported about the corporation of Jewish merchants called the Radhanites—who ventured from Western Europe up until China—that they spoke Arabic, Persian, Greek, Latin, Frankish, Andalusian and Slavic.[308] Their activities are interpolated into the section about the route of Rus' merchants in Ibn Khurradadhbih's work.[309] The Varangian merchant, Hróðfúss, who was betrayed on his voyage by his trading partners the *blakumen* (Wallachians or Cumans) according to an eleventh-century Gotlandic runestone inscription (G 134), also must have possessed the necessary language skills for such a partnership.[310]

A closer example of embracing a Turkic language comes from the *Russian Primary Chronicle*. Here a Kievan stableman speaking the language of the nomadic Pechenegs is presented, who due to his knowledge could infiltrate the Pecheneg lines and call reinforcements from a nearby Rus army during Sviatoslav's reign.[311] Unfortunately, the

[306] *Speculum Regale. Konungs-skuggsjá*, ed. Rudolf Keyser, Peter Andreas Munch and Carl Rikard Unger (Christiania: Carl C. Werner & Company, 1848), 6.
[307] *Knýtlinga saga*, in *Danakonunga sögur*, ed. Bjarni Guðnason, Íslenzk fornrit 35 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1982), 246–47.
[308] *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness*, 111–12.
[309] Pritsak, "An Arabic Text on the Trade Route of the Corporation of ar-Rūs".
[310] Jesch, *Ships and Men in the Late Viking* Age, 257–58. The identification of the '*Blakumen*' (in other sources '*Blökumenn*') with the Wallachians and the Cumans is subject to debate. The latter would be an excellent example for nomad Turkic-Scandinavian commercial interactions, however newer research finds this probability less likely. See: Spinei, *The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads*, 105–07.
[311] *RPC*, 85.

chronicle is silent about the ethnic origin of the boy, who could well be Scandinavian but just as easily (if not more likely) Slavic judging by his occupation.

Nevertheless, the Scandinavian Vikings were famous travellers, and Icelandic sagas, transmitted to us a few centuries later, all praise travellers with language skills.[312] The sagas unfortunately are not contemporary accounts and thus reflect vaguely the conditions of Eastern Europe in the ninth–eleventh centuries, especially concerning Turkic languages. This might be reflected by the semi-historical saga of Yngvarr the Far-Traveller, in which a local princess, Silkisif, besides being able to speak Roman, German, Norse, and Russian/Greek, was said to know '*many other [languages] spoken along the East road*' ('*margar adrar, er gengu um austurueg*'), without specifying any of them.[313] Even though the saga is unlikely to hold historical truth concerning Silkisif's existence, it can be safely assumed that after Latin, Norse, Slavonic and Greek, Turkic languages held a prominent role in Eastern Europe and thus, a local princess being fluent in the language of the Turks is a potentially believable story in general.

Historical sources also support the notion that the contemporary elite did not look down on learning foreign languages. According to the testimony of Vladimir Monomakh, his father Vsevolod I of Kiev (1078–1093), who was the son of Yaroslav the Wise (1019–1054) and the Swedish princess Ingigerðr, was fluent in five languages even though he never left the kingdom.[314] By this statement it can be claimed that one of the five languages he acquired must have been a Norse language as he was half-Swedish on his mother's side and thus probably bilingual from a young age. The close ties with Scandinavia might have also

[312] Marianne E. Kalinke, "The Foreign language Requirement in the Medieval Icelandic Romance", *The Modern Language Review* 78, no. 4. (1983): 850–61.
[313] *Yngvars saga víðförla*, 15. Translation mine.
[314] *RPC*, 211.

prompted Vladimir the Great and Yaroslav the Wise to learn Old Norse. It has even been raised that a Slavic-Norse hybrid language could have developed in their courts.[315]

It is also known that Scandinavians easily communicated with Old English speakers,[316] and according to the Norwegian traveller's, Ohthere's, account from the ninth century he was said to have communicated with a Finno-Ugric tribe in Bjarmaland (somewhere in the Baltics), by speaking the language of the Lapps.[317] In addition, it can also be postulated that some Norsemen learned Finno-Ugric languages as well. The Bjarmians' language that Ohthere did not understand and which was contrasted to the '*twittering of birds*' ('*fuglaklið*'), is usually believed to be a Finno-Ugric language.[318] According to the saga of Örvar Oddr, a Norwegian was able to communicate with the Bjarmians, which is suspected by the fact that he was dwelling with them for years.[319]

Bilingualism is also reported with nomadic people. The Byzantine Emperor, Constantine Porphyrogenitus, in the *De administrando imperio*, tells about the Magyars that they had been taught the language of the Khazars by the adjoining tribes of the *Kabaroi*.[320] Nomads' adaptability to absorb multiple languages stems from the nature of their organization, namely that they incorporated into their tribal federations other (often defeated) tribes who had similar lifestyle. The Arabic author, al-Istakhri, also notes that the tongues of the Bulghars and the Khazars were the same,[321] which is also corroborated by later authors, such as Ibn Fadlan and Ibn Hawqal.[322] This means that the Rus' coming to trade in the region could manage with a

[315] Henrik Birnbaum, "Yaroslav's Varangian Connection", *Scando-Slavica* 24, no. 1. (1978): 7.
[316] Matthew Townend, "Viking Age England as a Bilingual Society", in *Cultures in Contact. Scandinavian Settlements in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, ed. Dawn M. Hadley and Julian D. Richard (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 89–105; Idem, *Language and History in Viking Age England: linguistic relations between speakers of Old Norse and Old English* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002).
[317] *The Terfinnas and Beormas of Ohthere*, ed. and trans. Alan S. C. Cross (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1981), 19–21.
[318] *Örvar Odds saga*, in *Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda*, Vol. 2., ed. Carl Christian Rafn (Copenhagen: Hardvig Fridrek Popp., 1829), 175; Davidson, *The Viking Road to Byzantium*, 35.
[319] *Örvar Odds saga*, 35–36.
[320] *DAI*, 174–75.
[321] *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness*, 158; Birkeland, *Nordens historie i middelalderen etter arabiske kilder*, 29.
[322] Brook, *The Jews of Khazaria*, 80.

single language (if they did not wish to use intermediaries), as both of their main trading partners spoke nearly the same tongue.

By the above said, it could be proposed that Turkic nomads and Vikings were both accustomed to learn foreign languages on a more frequent basis than members of sedentary societies. Both nomads and Vikings amalgamated various groups into their communities and established contact with plenty of different cultural associations during their migrations. The dubious and taciturn statement by the Arabic writer, ad-Dimashqi, concerning the ignorance of the Northern barbarian *Waranks* (Varangians) to speak any languages, hardly challenges the evidence presented above.[323]

Instead we should consider that certain groups of Turks and Scandinavians spending time together would learn each other's language to a certain degree. An interesting episode might help to illustrate this, even though its interpretation is far from sure. In the Icelandic *Grœnlendinga saga*, a character called Tyrkir, whose name means 'Turk', features, who travels together with the Norsemen to America. Tyrkir, the southerner ('*suðrmaðr*') is an important figure, namely the foster-father of Leifr Eiríksson, the discoverer of Vínland. Upon the expedition's arrival to the mainland, Tyrkir is sent out as a scout to discover the countryside. After returning from the exploration in a strikingly good mood, he starts to speak on a language unintelligible to his Scandinavian companions ('*þýzku*'). Tyrkir then switches back to Norse and explains his behaviour by the fact that he had found grapes which reminded him of his homeland.[324]

There seems to be a general agreement among Western European and American scholars that Tyrkir was a German, probably because he was speaking in '*þýzku*', that is German.[325] In

[323] Birkeland, *Nordens historie i middelalderen etter arabiske kilder*, 115.
[324] *Grœnlendinga saga*, 248–53.
[325] Sverrir Jakobsson, "Strangers in Icelandic Society 1100–1400", *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 3 (2007): 152; Birgitta Wallace, "The discovery of Vínland", in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price (London: Routledge, 2008), 606; Halldor Hermansson, "Tyrkir, Leif Eiriksson's Foster-Father", *Modern*

the Eastern sphere of the continent, however, it is in fact believed that Tyrkir, as his name illustrates, was a Turk of Magyar or Pecheneg origin. The first scholar to articulate such an opinion was Jenő Pivány in the beginning of the twentieth century.[326] Pivány believed that evidence within the saga supposes the Eastern nomadic Turkic origin of Tyrkir and since this assumption has found no opposition in Hungarian scholarship. Even though some of his arguments can be rejected based on the thorough investigation of the saga corpus (for example the designation '*suðrmaðr*'),[327] some of them are compelling. Pivány for instance noted that Tyrkir's language could not have been completely unintelligible to his Scandinavian companions if he had been speaking a Germanic language.[328] As noted, Norsemen fluently communicated with Old English speakers and it feels odd that they would not have understood a word from Tyrkir's monologue if he had been speaking in German. It is also told in the narrative that another Viking group, led by Karlsefni, could not communicate with the native American Indians as they did not understand their language.[329] This might also suggest that the saga composers were aware of the difficulties which their predecessors faced when confronted by an alien language.

In addition, the designation Turk evidently referred to Magyars and sometimes other Turkic tribes such as the Pechenegs in tenth-century Byzantine and Arabic works.[330] In Old Norse sources, we encounter this phrase in contexts which have no relation to Germans (or Germanic lands) but rather suggest a Nordic awareness of the vast regions of the steppe in the

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Language Notes 69, no. 6. (1954): 390; *The Saga of the Greenlanders*, in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders. Including 49 tales*, Vol. 1., ed. Viðar Hreinsson (Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1977), 23.

[326] Jenő Pivány, "Magyar volt-e a Heimskringla Tyrker-je?" [Was Heimskringla's Tyrker a Hungarian?], *Századok* 43, no. 7. (1903): 571–77.

[327] According to Pivány, Tyrker originated on the steppe since he was a '*southerner*'. Pivány, "Magyar volt-e a Heimskringla Tyrker-je?", 573–74. However, the designation *suðrmaðr*, denoting a 'southerner' is applied differently in the Old Norse sources, and at the end of the saga, a merchant from Bremen (Saxony) was claimed to be a 'southerner' for instance. *Grœnlendinga saga*, 268.

[328] Pivány, "Magyar volt-e a Heimskringla Tyrker-je?", 575. It is assumed by Ildar Garipzanov that the ninth-century Danish Viking king Harald Klak supposedly also negotiated with the Franks on the '*lingua theodisca*', i.e. on German. Garipzanov, "The Annals of St. Bertin (839) and the Chacanus of the Rhos", 11.

[329] *Grœnlendinga saga*, 260–61.

[330] Zimonyi, "Why were the Hungarians referred to as Turks in the Early Muslim Sources?"; Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, 270; Moravcsik, *Byzantium and the Magyars*, 37.

mysterious East. These are thirteenth-fourteenth-century Icelandic works which one should not expect to be historically accurate but at least reveal a vague knowledge about the Turks and their lands.[331] Even more notable is the occurrence of the Turks in the Icelandic *Eymunds saga*, which describes the engagement of a Viking mercenary force in the civil wars of eleventh-century Rus'. In a particular episode, the Rus chief Burizleifr was said to recruit '*Turks, Black men [Wallachians or Cumans] and many other evil folk*' ('*Tyrkir og Blökumenn, ok mörg önnur ill þjóð*') against his brother Jarizleifr.[332] Based on the events of the eleventh century, the identity of the characters can be reconstructed with relative safety: Jarizleifr has been evidently identified with Yaroslav the Wise, while the name Burizleifr denotes Svyatopolk who, according to the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, '*prepared an innumerable army of Russes and Pechenegs*'[333] to march against his brother. This gives credit for the identification of Turks in the case of *Eymunds saga* with the nomadic Pechenegs.[334]

Though personal names are not definite indicators of ethnic identity, Tyrkir's case is assisted by the story of the first Rus martyrs', Gleb's (Guðleifr in Old Norse) story, who in 1015 was stabbed to death by his cook called Torchin, also meaning a Turk.[335] The designation appears as a personal name once more in the *Russian Primary Chronicle*.[336] The story might serve as an example for people of Scandinavian descent having a Turkic servant, similarly as Leifr has Tyrkir as his foster-father.

Tyrkir's physical description in the saga, even though not conclusive, also recalls some of the features which characterize nomadic people in many sources: "*He had a protruding*

[331] Heinrich Beck, "Yngvi Tyrkja konungr", in *Sagnaþing helgað Jónasi Kristjánssyni sjötugum 10. apríl 1994*, ed. Gísli Sigurðsson, Guðrún Kvaran and Sigurgeir Steingrímsson (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka bókmentafélag, 1994), 55–68; Sverrir Jakobsson, "Saracen Sensibilities: Muslims and Otherness in Medieval Saga Literature", *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 115, no. 2. (2016): 213–38; Richárd Szántó, '"Skandináv források adatai a kelet-európai steppére" [Data about the Eastern European steppe in Scandinavian sources], in *A Kárpát-medence és a steppe*, ed. Alfréd Márton (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2001), 173–80.
[332] *Eymundar þáttr Hringssonar*, 126. Translation mine.
[333] *RPC*, 131.
[334] Spinei, *The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads*, 105.
[335] *RPC*, 128.
[336] Ibid., 198.

forehead and irregular eyes, and was tiny-faced, small in stature and slim, but skilled in every crafts".[337]

Therefore, while Tyrkir could have been a German, it is equally possible that some indigenous tradition was preserved concerning the ethnic background of one of the participants of the Vinland expedition.[338] That nomadic people were occasionally taken on board of Viking ships was not without precedent. The Arabic writer, Ibn Hawqal, noted that the Rus' sometimes transferred the nomadic Pechenegs on boats to al-Andalus (Hispania) to ravage the land together.[339]

Thus, the possibility of the character Tyrkir hiding a Turkic nomad in *Grœnlendinga saga* should not be rejected outright, and he would serve as a great example for a highly developed communication between Old Norse and Turkic speakers. Of course it is still problematic to claim that Tyrkir was a historical figure. Old Norse sources are quite unreliable in this matter and unfortunately Tyrkir's existence is not confirmed by any other sources. Our parallel source about the events, *Eiríks saga rauða*, for instance informs that two Scots were being used as scouts to discover the land,[340] the same role what Tyrkir fulfils in *Grœnlendinga saga*. However, whether or not Tyrkir existed, the episode might still reflect an awareness of later saga composers that foreigners (perhaps also Eastern nomadic Turks) could learn the Old Norse language and live with the Norsemen. A more trustworthy account can perhaps support the theory. In an eleventh-century birchbark letter from the North-Western Russian town, Novgorod, the Hungarian forename Ugrin has been deciphered,[341] illustrating that Hungarians

[337] "Hann var brattleitr ok lauseygr, smáskitligr í andliti, lítill vexti ok vesalligr, en íþróttamaðr á alls konar hagleik." *Grœnlendinga saga*, 252. Translation mine.
[338] It has been claimed for instance that the frequent occurrence of Irish names in the sagas signal extensive contact with the Celtic lands. McDougall, "Foreigners and foreign languages in Medieval Iceland", 183.
[339] Birkeland, *Nordens historie i middelalderen etter arabiske kilder*, 48.
[340] *Eiríks saga rauða*, in *Eyrbyggja saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórdarson, Íslenzk fornrit 4 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1935), 424.
[341] Gábor Gyóni, "Egy Ugrin nevű személy a 11. században Novgorodban" [A man named Ugrin in eleventh-century Novgorod], in *Hadak Útján. A népvándorláskor fiatal kutatóinak XXIV. konferenciája Esztergom 2014. november 4–6. II.*, ed. Attila Türk, Csilla Balogh and Balázs Major (Budapest: Magyar Őstörténeti Témacsoport Kiadványok, 2016), 379–88.

can indeed live in distant lands in which Scandinavians were actively present. In the Kievan Rus', Prince Vladimir's son, Boris, also used to have a Hungarian servant by the name György (George).[342]

Common guard duties and retinue services outlined in the previous chapters (such as the case of the Varangian Varayazhko who fled to the Pechenegs) also could result in similar co-habitations, and present ample opportunities for Scandinavians to acquire Turkic (or in the case of Hungarians also Finno-Ugric) notions, words or languages in general.

Mercantile relations on the border zones of the steppe and the forest regions, or international markets, where temporary dwellings were established, also belong to this category. These fairs, supervised mostly by Turkic people, acted as buzzling melting-pots of different cultures were a multitude of contemporary languages were employed. Divergences could be manifold even within the same language group or tribal association due to multi-ethnic interactions and regional variations within the same unit. Added to this, the international character of these markets is hallmarked by the use of interpreters, mediatory languages, bilingualism and acquisition of other foreign languages to a varying level. Despite the gradual development of these factors (the initial use of interpreters, followed by the acquisition of the intermediary Slavic language and than perhaps some form of Turkic), it is reasonable to assume that in the case of Old Norse speakers, all these factors could have been at work simultaneously depending on the level of assimilation of each group. In addition, in business relations, it must have had been advantageous in certain situations to 'hide' one's own knowledge of the local language (e.g. during negotiations), or quite the opposite; namely to acquire a basic knowledge in order to understand the transactions and the partners' intentions in case of unreliable trading partners (illustrated for instance by the case of Hróðfúss). These possibilities create endless combinations regarding the means of

[342] *RPC*, 127.

communication carried out by both Turkic and Rus groups being present at once at the same location.

Conclusion

Scandinavian interactions with the local inhabitants of the Eastern regions included complicated and changing trade relations, various aspects of warfare, and colonisation, resulting in varying degrees of co-habitation. Although the Slavic, Balto-Finnic and the Byzantine relations are better attested in the preserved source material, the steppe dwellers representing (or dominated by) Turkic cultures were just as frequent partners of the Scandinavian merchants, mercenaries, plunderers and settlers in the ninth–eleventh centuries.

Tribes of the Khazar Khaganate, and those dwelling along the Volga, such as the Alans, Bashkirs, Oghuz' and most importantly the Volga Bulghars had close ties with the Scandinavian incomers. In the steppe zone south of Kiev, the migrating Magyar and Pecheneg tribes maintained contact with the newly established Varangian-Rus strongholds in the Middle Dnieper area from the mid and late ninth century. These relations continued even throughout the tenth century, when the Magyars settled in the Carpathian Basin.

Even though armed conflicts between the Varangian-Rus' and the various Turks were no less common, the focus in the present study was on the brighter side of these relations, i. e. on co-operation. Besides the extensive trade connections, this also involved the spheres of warfare and certain cultural transfers resulting from longer co-habitation. The latter was a consequence of the first two (often interconnected) aspects, whilst those prerequisite was most probably the ability of developing well-functioning and effective communication between the partners. This thematic, rather than chronological or politically orientated division of the topic (such as discussing the Scandinavian relations with each tribes respectively), should be attributed to the nature of the fragmentary and sometimes quite taciturn—or from a critical point of view problematic—source material. Thus, many of the findings either cannot be evidently linked to precise historical events, or they are more of a suggestive nature than firm

evidence. Nevertheless, certain tendencies, on which I have tried to shed lights on, evidently existed. The decisive interactions of the Varangian-Rus' with the steppe nomadic Turkic tribes can be touched upon in features of religious and everyday customs, trade, warfare and communication. The findings can be summarized as follows:

It was the lucrative mercantile potential of the Volga area that drew Scandinavian traders to Eastern Europe. Islamic dirhems and oriental fashion was communicated here to the Scandinavian merchants through intermediaries of Turkic ethnicity in exchange for furs, slaves and weapons. A sophisticated and well-organized system developed here, characterized by the establishment of temporary dwellings, regulations and secure supplies of food.

As opposed to the peacefulness of the Volga-trade route, the Dnieper area was less secure due to the changing political relations of the Rus' with the nomads of the steppe. Political enmities resulted in raids, aiming to take prisoners and products from each other. In more peaceful times, the traditional nomadic merchandises, mostly animals were supplied to the sedentary Rus' for metal utensils, jewellery and weapons or other products of the forest belt. The Carpathian Basin might have provided another sought after resource: salt, which could have been traded with the Magyars on land route between Kiev and the Upper-Tisza region. Other commodities could have been exchanged in foreign markets which were visited by both the Rus' and the Magyars in the tenth century.

It was also argued that Viking mercenaries showed a high rate of assimilation in Eastern Europe as they often adapted quickly to local circumstances. In all the places where their presence as hired-warriors is assumed (Byzantium, Kievan Rus', Khazaria, Volga Bulgharia, Hungary, Poland)—either as auxiliaries or retinue members—, written sources testify that alongside mercenaries of Scandinavian ethnic backgrounds, people of Turkic origin also took service at the same time. Similarly to retainers migrating between courts elsewhere in the

Viking world and transmitting knowledge, fashion and material cultural,[343] courts in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe could also have become first hand cultural transfer zones for Scandinavian retainers. Here, Turkic warriors had an effect on the Varangian-Rus retainers in a military-cultural sense. During common guard duties and joint military campaigns, Turkic nomadic warfare techniques were introduced to the Scandinavians. While Vikings originally preferred to fight on foot in closed combat, some textual and archaeological evidence suggests that 'Eastern Vikings' became accustomed to fighting alongside an ally of horsemen and that some of their groups might have acquired nomadic fighting habits including archery or mounted warfare.

Co-operation can also be touched upon to some extent in material culture. A few Viking weapons with typical Eastern embellishments and nomadic weapons with Nordic decorations found in Eastern Europe also imply that ties between some groups might have been quite close. (Although, the extent of this blend culture is in no way exhaustive, unpublished or uncatalogued material from Russian museums can surface any time).

The cultural impact these Turkic economic and military co-operations inflicted upon the Rus' were decisive and triggered changes in their identity. In the middle of the tenth century, Scandinavian analogues of certain features of pagan Rus rituals were still discernible. The prevalence of waterfront locations, holy trees, human and animal sacrifices (especially cocks), the use of weapons and other grave goods suggests that Scandinavians had not yet been fully assimilated in the tenth century. Although these elements were also similar to the habits of the Slavs, contextual evidence hints that a decisive number of the participants in these rituals came from Scandinavian ethno-religious backgrounds. However, changes in ritual practices took place, which gave rise to parallel variations of rites and concepts practiced (perhaps universally) in the steppe and the forest-steppe belts by other ethnic groups as well.

[343] Lesley Abrams, "Diaspora and Identity in the Viking Age", *Early Medieval Europe* 20, no. 1. (2012): 24.

The universal features and striking similarities among contemporary pagan religions helped the Rus' mentally adapt to specific practices and beliefs. In the case of the Slavs, the long co-habitation assured the merge of these cultures on a religious level (for instance the identification of Nordic gods with their Slavic counterparts, and later of course by adopting Christianity). However, the ongoing interaction between the Rus' and Turkic nomadic tribes also seems to have influenced Rus' ritual behaviour both on the level of practicalities and beliefs. Scandinavians operating in Eastern Europe were not completely unfamiliar with the practical side of these customs, due to the interconnectedness of religions in the Viking Age North, among which Sámi and Finno-Ugric shamanic traditions resembled the habits of the Turkic tribes encountered in Russia.

The Viking Rus' were highly pragmatic people who not only embraced new perspectives, but also adopted local fashions and replaced their genuine objects with local material culture (especially when necessary). Such flexibility in handling objects in a ritual context definitely could have supported the development of miscellaneous practices.

These influences presuppose the existence of fluent communication between the two groups. Apart from hostile aggression, even the most primitive ways of exchanging goods required a general understanding or awareness of the transactions by both parties. It can be stated that despite the distance between the two language groups, communication between Old Norse and Turkic speakers might have been smoother during the ninth–eleventh centuries than previously assumed. Even though loanwords are not discernible between Old Norse and any of the Turkic languages, it has to be noted that several of these Turkic languages are unknown to us, or we possess only a few words from their vocabulary. Regardless of this, the historical situation demanded that speakers of Old Norse and many of the Turkic or Finno-Ugric languages should understand each other fluently. Due to the extensive military and commercial contacts, as well as the occasional co-habitation in various parts of the 'Eastern

Way' that Scandinavians travelled around from the eighth century onwards, communication channels between the two ethnic groups developed gradually, but—depending on the level of assimilation of each group—also co-existed.

During the course of the ninth century, the first and foremost communicative channels were provided by interpreters, most probably Slavs who understood the Scandinavians and also the other inhabitants of the region. By the next century, however, the majority of the Scandinavian community in Russia became bilingual which must have resulted in easier communication with the Turks along the Volga and the Dnieper. Turkic groups living alongside the major rivers also practiced the Slavic language which became the 'new' intermediary between the Rus' and the various Turkic tribes. With the course of time, Scandinavian groups spending considerable time in the vicinity or company of various groups with Turkic cultural backgrounds, possibly felt the need to transmit or acknowledge some notions in the vernacular(s). Since according to the written sources, both Vikings and nomads of Turkic stocks showed outstanding skills in acquiring foreign languages, it seems probable that Scandinavians could also learn local languages other than Slavic in Eastern Europe, or that a few Turks were able to assimilate within the Norsemen.

The *austrvegr* united three (or if we count Byzantium, four) different worlds from Scandinavia, through the Slavic lands to the edge of the Turkic sphere. As an intermediary stage of Scandinavian, Slavic and Turkic interaction, Eastern Europe and most importantly the Kievan Rus', brought together the Scandinavian and Turkic regions which seem to have been in tighter connection with each other than previously thought. This is demonstratable in all examined contexts of trade, warfare, religion, customs and communication. Based on all this, it would perhaps prove fruitful for future research to concentrate on these relations in the case of material culture which could shed lights on more specific spheres of interaction.

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Appendix

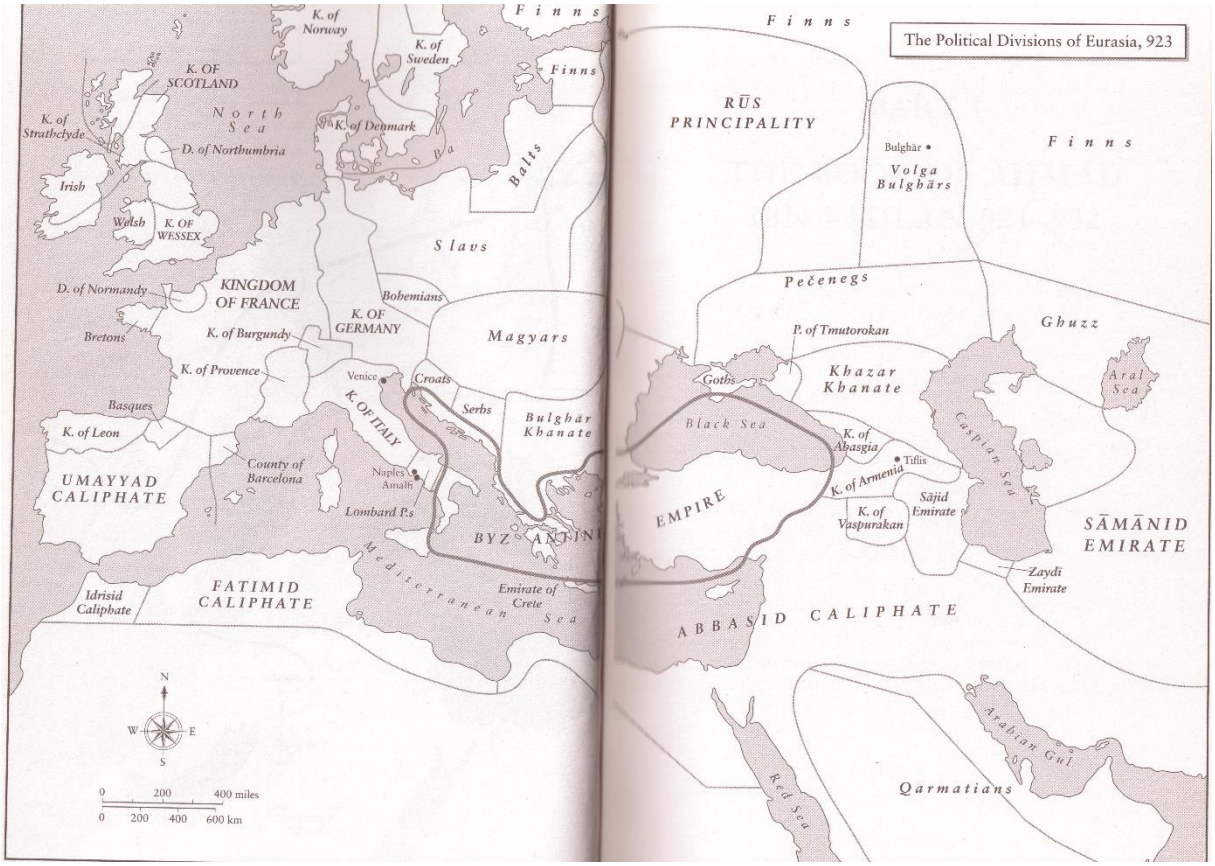

Fig. 1.

Political division of Eurasia in the first quarter of the tenth century

(Source: *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness: Arabic Travellers in the far North*. trans. by Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone. London: Penguin, 2012. XLVIII–XLIX)

Fig. 2

Nomadic tribes around the Volga in the mid-tenth century

(Source: *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness: Arabic Travellers in the far North*. trans. by Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone. London: Penguin, 2012. XXXIX)

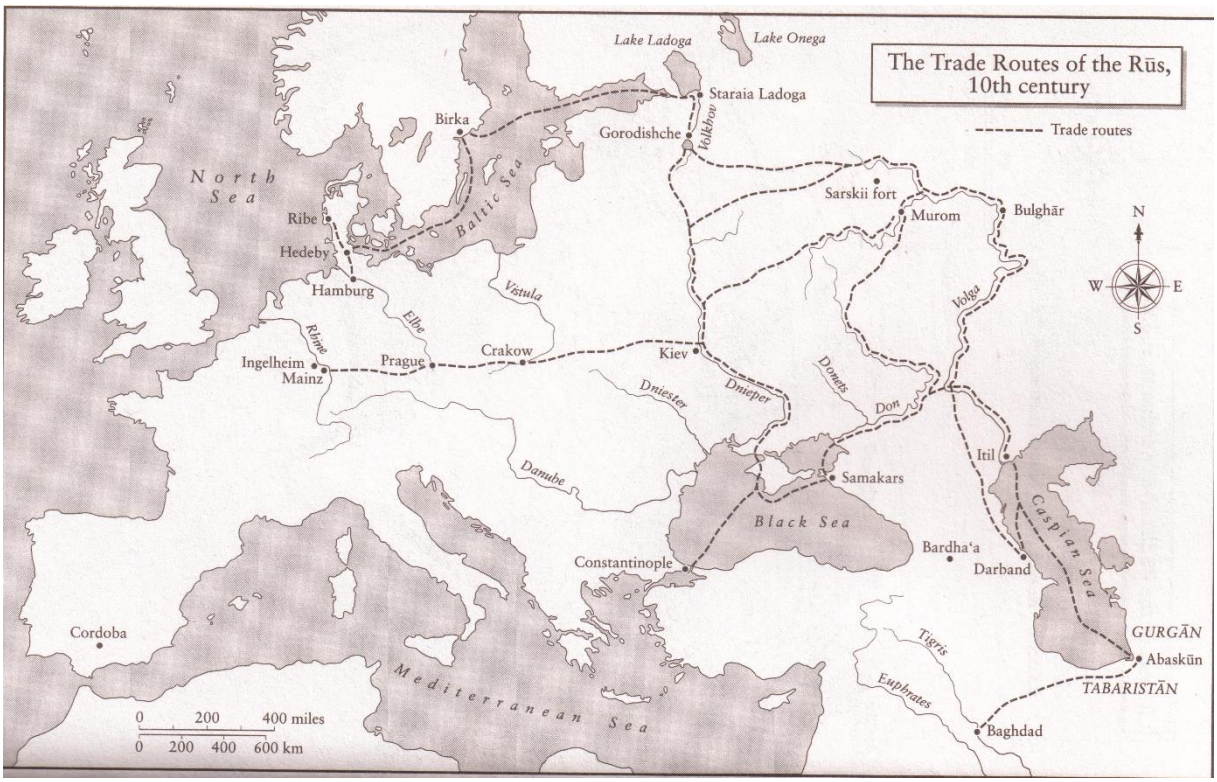

Fig. 3

Rus trade routes in the tenth century

(Source: *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness: Arabic Travellers in the far North*. trans. by Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone. London: Penguin, 2012. XLIV)

Main historical events mentioned in the text

c. 750: Scandinavians settle along Lake Ladoga

c. 830–880: The Rus' Khaganate

834: The Khazars build up the fort of Sarkel with Byzantine support

838: Envoys of the Khagan of the Rus' in the Frankish court

860: Rus raid against Byzantium

861: Cyril and Method on their mission among the Danube Bulghars

c. 870: Rus merchants in Baghdad

882: According to the Russian Primary Chronicle, Prince Oleg seizes Kiev from Askold and Dir

884–885: Oleg imposes tribute on all the Slavic tribes who previously were tributaries of the Khazars

895–896: The Pechenegs attack the Magyars who move to the Carpathian Basin

907: First Rus-Byzantine treaty

912: Second Rus-Byzantine treaty

913: The Rus' raid the Caspian

921: The Volga Bulghars convert to Islam

922: Ibn Fadlan meets the Rus' in Volga Bulgharia

943: Viking raid on the Caspian (the siege of Bardha'a)

944: Igor' campaign against the Byzantines

945: Third Rus-Byzantine treaty

950s: The Pechenegs threaten the Dnieper route towards Constantinople

965: Prince Sviatoslav destroys the Khazar Khaganate

965: Rus and Magyar merchants meet at Prague

969: Rus and Magyar merchants meet at Pereyaslavets

971: The battle of Dorostolon

972: The Pechenegs behead Prince Sviatoslav in an ambush at the Dnieper fords

986: Vladimir converts Rus' to Christianity

988: Traditional date for the establishment of the Varangian Guard in Byzantium

c. 1000: Tyrker in America with the Norsemen

1019–1054: Reign of Yaroslav the Wise, under whom Scandinavian mercenaries serve in great number