

Anastasia Tenchurina, Viking Age Russia and Czech-Russian Contacts in the Early Middle Ages. Bachelor thesis. Prague, FHS UK 2023, 66 pp.

supervisor assessment

The bachelor theses deals with origins of the Russian state (from the historiographical point of view) and analyses (in the second part) Czech-Russian contacts in the early middle ages.

As Vikings played a significant role in the formation and early history of Russia, the topic required analyses of wide range of sources, that is from runic inscriptions, sagas, and skaldic poetry to Czech, Russian, West-European, and Byzantium chronicles. Last but not least it was necessary to consider also Arabian accounts. In this light it is understandable that the A. Tenchurina worked with translations (esp. Russian and English) of the primary sources. It is also understandable that she used archeological sources with help of secondary sources, res. scholarly literature.

In the first part of the theses she discusses the different types of sources informing about the Viking presence in Russia. At the same time, she shows how different historians interpret them. It is very important that she studies both Russian historians and authors from the Western Europe. Finally, she arrives at an important conclusion that the primary sources (both written and archaeological findings) may be interpreted differently, according to the political ambitions or views both rulers or politicians or historians. But she also presents a significant fact that among historians who left Russia after the Revolution of 1917 there were adherents of both Normanist and Anti-Normanist theory. I would however appreciate some conclusion regarding recent research, i.e. whether “Vikings” more divide or more connect Europe, res. European historians.

Authors proper analysis of written and material sources also shows that we can find quite many contacts or traces of contacts (dynastic, religious, trade) between early medieval Bohemia and Russia. And if at least the Russian elites were of Viking, respective Scandinavian origin, then Russia with a high probability constituted the main Bohemian contact with Viking or Scandinavian culture in the early middle ages. Another possible source of information could be here coins as there is an evidence that one Viking hoard could contain not only Islamic, Byzantine, German, Italian, Hungarian, English, Irish and Scandinavian coins but also Bohemian (e.g. The Everlöf hoard).

However, the main problem of the thesis is that it would need more time to edit the text and better formulate otherwise very interesting findings (esp. in the second part). A reader might appreciate a

map (as an appendix) to get easier oriented in the Viking world.

Based on the above-mentioned facts I suggest grade *very good* (=2).

9th of September 2023, Prague

Mgr. Marek Suchý, Ph.D.