

Wiederentdeckung manch eines entlegenen Spezialliteraturtitels, der gewiss nicht jedem, den Estlands Hauptstadt fachlich interessiert, spontan geläufig ist.

Leipzig

Andreas Fülberth

**Anti Selart: Livonia, Rus' and the Baltic Crusades in the Thirteenth Century.** (East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, Bd. 29.) Brill. Leiden u. a. 2015. XI, 385 S. ISBN 978-90-04-28474-6. (€ 140,-)

This book has been long in the making. Conceived and written in the late 1990s to early 2000s, it was defended as a doctoral thesis at the University of Tartu in June 2002.<sup>1</sup> Five years later, the dissertation was updated and translated into German.<sup>2</sup> The English revised edition of the book, translated from German by Fiona Robb and published in 2015, is probably the final harbour of this long scholarly journey, started more than fifteen years ago.

Three different editions of the same research testify to the importance and topicality of Anti Selart's work. The story of the 13th century Russian-Livonian relationship has often been examined within the general framework of East-West or Orthodoxy-Catholicism relations. This framing gives the story its highly charged significance and explains its actuality. The military expeditions organized against the Baltic pagans by various Catholic powers from the end of the 12th century onwards brought the crusaders into conflict with Rus' and its various principalities. In relation to this fact, S. formulates the question that very much guides his research: 'Was this confrontation merely a by-product of the war against the pagans or did the crusaders harbour secret plans from the beginning of gaining control of Russian territories as well, or perhaps even the whole of Rus'?' (p. 2). In a detailed discussion of the historiographical tradition, S. shows convincingly that the latter view has been predominant in previous research. Most of the interpretations tend to consider the Baltic crusades not as a series of local struggles but as parts of a comprehensive confrontation between East and West, between Russian Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. The author's main agenda is to deconstruct this well-established *idée reçue*, to question on the basis of a meticulous reading of all the contemporary written sources the clear politico-cultural boundaries between Livonia and Rus', the strong religious conflicts between Orthodoxy and Catholicism, and the existence of a 'Russian threat' in 13th and 14th century Livonia. The case to the point is S.'s interpretation of the so-called Battle of the Ice in 1242, repeatedly interpreted as the culmination of the East-West confrontation in the 13th century: 'The place given to the Battle of the Ice as a significant event even in world history is based on purely ideological concerns and has little to do with the historical evidence. A distinction must be made between the great importance that the Battle of the Ice has undoubtedly had in the 20th century and its importance for contemporaries in the 13th century' (p. 168).

In temporal terms the book covers about 150 years, from the 1180s to the 1320s, called by the author 'the long 13th century' (p. 12). The writing follows the chronological line and forms a series of source-critical studies of the political events from the beginning of the crusading movement on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea up to 1330. The book is divided in two parts and consists of seven chapters, preceded by a long historiographic introduction. The scholarly apparatus of the book is very impressive, S. has read virtually everything relevant to his research topic and combines a remarkable knowledge of both Latin and Old Russian sources.

<sup>1</sup> ANTI SELART: Liivimaa ja Vene 13. sajandil. Uurimus poliitilisest ajaloost [Livonia and Rus' in the 13th Century. A Study of Political History], Tartu 2002.

<sup>2</sup> IDEM: Livland und die Rus' im 13. Jahrhundert, Köln u. a. 2007.

The book belongs clearly to the field of political history understood in the broad sense of the term. The author reads all the medieval sources through a political lense and construes them as part of various power struggles. Texts, in S.'s reading, do not reflect reality, but perform it, they make claims, imply actions, conceal real intentions. This approach, in strong contrast to previous scholarship, offers many interesting and innovative results. However, there is also a clear danger to over-politicize the sources, especially by reducing all the religious arguments to empty rhetorical tricks or political acts of legitimation. I find the author's attempt to disregard almost all the religious and confessional arguments slightly overstated, although one can only agree with his sound remark that '[i]n the language used by the contemporary Livonian sources it is virtually impossible to separate political and religious categories' (p. 308). But this statement is valid in both directions, i. e. it is also difficult to understand medieval political categories outside of religious thinking. It is my impression that a merely political reading of the Russian-Livonian relations in the 13th century doesn't do justice to the very complex nature of this relationship, and a truly comprehensive account should also tackle more seriously the cultural and religious aspects.

Case by case, S. diligently demonstrates that contemporary sources don't support the existence of any kind of European 'master plan' to conquer and convert medieval Rus'. Catholic Europe, Livonia and Rus' were anything but unified entities in the 13th century and the various conflicts have to be studied on the level of local and regional powers. 'It was these specific relationships that ultimately shaped the relations between Latin Europe as a whole and Rus' as a whole, and between Catholicism and Russian Orthodoxy, not vice versa', S. writes to the point (p. 18). He also claims convincingly that in the 13th century, Livonia and Rus' belonged to the same realm of political culture, an argument summarized on p. 183: 'In the first few decades of the 13th century Livonia and neighbouring Rus' constituted a common political culture in which religious difference was not decisive in terms of political decision-making.' The concept of a 'Russian threat' is a later invention, S. claims. 'It is clear, therefore', he concludes at the end of the book, 'that very little can be explained by the concept of the "Russian threat" in the 13th and 14th centuries in Livonian history and that the sense of fear of such a "Russian threat" need not be dismissed but nor should it be overestimated' (p. 311).

S.'s book is an excellent exercise in critical reading of medieval political and polemical texts, a truly impressive deconstruction of two centuries of Western and Russian scholarship and an important contribution to the history of 13th-century Livonia.

Tallinn

Marek Tamm

**Jürgen Heyde: Transkulturelle Kommunikation und Verflechtung.** Die jüdischen Wirtschaftseliten vom 14. bis 16. Jahrhundert. (Quellen und Studien / Deutsches Historisches Institut Warschau, Bd. 29.) Harrassowitz. Wiesbaden 2014. VI, 280 S. ISBN 978-3-447-10311-4. (€ 48,-)

„There is no history of Poland without the history of the Jews and no history of the Jews without the history of Poland“ – dieser berühmte Satz des kürzlich verstorbenen polnisch-israelischen Historikers Jakub Goldberg bildet den Ausgangspunkt der Monografie von Jürgen Heyde. An die einschlägige Forschung zum Thema anknüpfend, stellt er sich die Aufgabe, die christlich-jüdischen Beziehungen im Mittelalter im Königreich Polen zu untersuchen. Die Studie umfasst den Zeitraum vom 14. bis zum 16. Jh., wobei die Untersuchung im letzten Drittel des 14. Jh. einsetzt, d. h. zu der Zeit, als die Quellen zur jüdischen Geschichte in Polen zahlreicher wurden: Den Schlusspunkt bildet das Ende der Regierung der Jagiellonen-Dynastie (1572). Die Studie umfasst damit eine lange und wechselvolle Zeitspanne, es ist aber zu betonen, dass der Autor die diachronischen Unterschiede sehr bewusst betrachtet. Die Nuancen verschiedener Epochen werden genau herausgearbeitet. Geografisch umfasst die Studie das Gebiet des Königreichs Polen in den Grenzen vor der Lubliner Union. Aufgrund der zur Verfügung stehenden Quellen bilden die Groß-