



Making Livonia: Actors and Networks in the Medieval and Early Modern Baltic Sea Region, ed. Anu Mänd, Marek Tamm, Routledge, Abingdon–New York 2020, pp. 338, ISBN 978-0-367-27309-5, 978-0-36748128-5.

This volume has been brought together by two very knowledgeable and accomplished scholars of Tallinn University that, between them, have published more than 10 monographs and edited collections. This experience is evident in the relative polish and cohesion of the present collection of essays, most of which convey results from an Estonian Research Council Project, ‘The making of Livonia: Actors, institutions and networks in the medieval and early modern Baltic Sea region.’ As set out in the editors’ introduction to the volume, all the constituent chapters have, to a greater or lesser extent, employed a network-orientated approach. In Anu Mänd and Marek Tamm’s words, ‘network analysis is neither a strict methodology nor a general paradigm in this volume but, rather, a way to see past reality with a focus on social interaction and mobility’. This light-touch theoretical framing means that the authors of the volume’s 14 case studies have been able to engage pragmatically, rather than slavishly, with actor-network theory and similar analytical tools. Overall, this is effective, and in all chapters the ‘network’ theme feels relevant.

The case-study chapters have been ordered chronologically, and the volume is divided into two parts, Part I: ‘Early making of Livonia (thirteenth–fourteenth centuries)’, containing eight case studies, and Part II: ‘Late making of Livonia (fifteenth–seventeenth centuries)’, containing six case studies. It is unclear why this division into ‘parts’ was felt necessary, as it reflects no clear thematic division between the two groups of case studies, is justified in neither the introduction nor conclusion, and, indeed, Chapter 9 (the first in Part II) ranges from c. 1250–1558. The division in fact serves to highlight the disproportionate focus on Estonia and Tallinn in Part II. This is admittedly, however, a superficial quirk of a volume which is generally sensibly constructed.

Any attempt to indicate simplistically the thrust of 14 diverse case studies, as appear in this volume, is bound to overlook key details and subtleties. The reader, therefore, may interpret the following as only an indication of the richness of these generally fine essays. Chapter 1, by Marek Tamm, ‘Mission and mobility: The travels and networking of Bishop Albert of Riga (c. 1165–1229)’, reconstructs the personal exertions of Bishop Albert in establishing the new crusader state focused on Riga. It emphasises his remarkable physical mobility, and his capacity to build political support through friendship, patronage and kinship. Chapter 2, by Marika Mägi, ‘Political centres or nodal points in trade networks? Estonian hillforts before and after the thirteenth-century conquest’, investigates the relationship between pre-conquest hillforts and their post-conquest fates. The picture painted is complex; it is argued that a nexus between factors, including a position on (especially winter) trading routs that remained relevant and a continuing political relevance, may have been the best

predictor of a hillfort's continuation after crusader colonisation. Chapter 3, by Kersti Markus, 'Visual performances of power in the period of the Danish crusades', examines a distinctive group of round churches constructed in twelfth-century Denmark, the style of which, probably copied from similar Polish churches, was intended to call to mind the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. It is contended that their construction under kings Canute VI and Valdemar II reflected preparations for the Baltic Crusade, that they were adapted for storage and (sometimes) protection, and that they were placed along communication routes. Chapter 4, by Linda Kaljundi, 'Neophytes as actors in the Livonian crusades', surveys the depiction of recent Christian converts in Livonia. Focusing on the *Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*, versus later Baltic crusade literature, it is argued that Henry differed from other writers in depicting neophytes as quasi-crusaders, whereas the term 'neophyte' would later become a term used as an ethnic descriptor emphasising the disloyalty and perfidy of indigenous peoples.

Chapter 5, by Wojtek Jezierski, 'Politics of emotions and empathy walls in thirteenth-century Livonia', argues that the *Chronicle of Henry of Livonia* and the *Livonian Rhymed Chronicle* convey similar emotional landscapes, particularly with respect to in-groups (i.e. crusaders) and out-groups (i.e. their enemies), but while the *Chronicle of Henry of Livonia* uses emotions in a way that suggests the out-group could potentially join the in-group, the *Livonian Rhymed Chronicle* suggests that their out-group states would be enduring. Chapter 6, by Anti Selart, 'Donating land to the Church: *Topos* as a legal argument in thirteenth-century Livonia', argues that among the competing actors seeking to assert territorial authority in crusade-era Livonia, the 'donation' of the entirety of one's actual or claimed dominions to the Church was a method of attempting to establish valid title. Eight such donations are surveyed, and most, as recorded, are found to be at least partially fictitious, but nevertheless to have had a role in settling disputes between Catholic actors. Chapter 7, by Juhan Keem, 'Mobility of the Livonian Teutonic Knights', focuses on hierarchical, and especially spatial, mobility within and between the order's areas of operation. He stresses that while most mobility was unidirectional (i.e. to area of assignment) some notable mobility existed between Livonia and Prussia, especially in the thirteenth century. Chapter 8, by Tiina Kala, 'Manuscript fragments as testimony of intellectual contacts between Tallinn and European learning centres in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries', indicates that about 100 volumes in the Tallinn City Archives contain within their binding materials fragments of medieval books, the fragments coming from about 100 different texts: liturgical, legal, philosophical, etc. A focused discussion is offered regarding the local binding of Tallinn council minutes with fragments of Thomas Aquinas and Romanus Orsini, suggesting potential contacts between local Dominicans and the scholarly milieu of the University of Paris and elsewhere; precious little comment is given on the other medieval manuscripts represented in surviving binding materials.

Chapter 9, by Tapio Salminen, 'City scribes and the management of information', discusses the professionalisation of the office of the city scribes of medieval Tallinn, its evolution and the qualifications of the scribes, who ultimately held a permanent post, took an oath of office, and likely offered legal advice to civic authorities. It outlines the way in which scribes came to shape the activities and perception of the city through their information management and provides interesting brief biographies of

Tallinn's late medieval scribes. Chapter 10, by Gustavs Strenga, 'Cistercian networks of memory', presents two case studies, one of Cistercian confraternal memorial bonds involving Livonian nunneries and one of the (arguably) memorial annals of Daugavgrīva Abbey. These case studies feel like somewhat odd bedfellows, but the main thrust is that formative memorial bonds existed beyond those between religious houses, with the Cistercian nuns of Riga maintain a mutual memorial relationship with the Beer Carters' Guild and the Cistercian monks of Daugavgrīva Abbey (later Padise) with the Teutonic Order in Livonia. Chapter 11, by Illka Leskelä, 'The "Hanseatic" trade of the Finnish Skalm family in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries', uses the relatively rich records of members of the Turku- and Stockholm-based Skalm family (who would eventually enter the Swedish nobility) to explore regional trade, landholding and social networks. It outlines the rise of this burger family into the Swedish fighting lower nobility as it shifted its focus from commerce to landholding and officeholding, the suggestion being that other families may have followed a similar pattern. Chapter 12, by Anu Mänd, 'Merchants as political, social and cultural actors: Tallinn burgomaster Hans Viant (d. 1524)', comprises an interesting biography arguing, as the title would suggest, for the wide-ranging influence of prominent burghers in multiple spheres of activity. The detail presented is impressive, as was the career of Viant, who accrued to himself a remarkable degree of wealth that catapulted him to the centre of Tallinn life.

Chapter 13, by Ivar Leimus, 'Mintmasters as nodes of the social and monetary network: The life and career of Paul Gulden (c. 1530–93)', comprises another biography, this time of a mintmaster who served the Livonian Master of the Teutonic Order, the Town Council of Tallinn, (possibly) the City of Riga and the Duchy of Prussia. Again, the detail gathered is impressive, not only about Gulden's history and litigation, but also about his connection with the transmission of knowledge regarding minting with a rolling mill. Chapter 14, by Krista Kodres, 'Self-representation and social aesthetics: Wealthy Tallinn burgher homes in the early modern period', surveys burghers' homes, focusing on the repetition of certain interior elements and decorative motifs throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The key findings here are perhaps that interiors were typically multi-layered, with individual elements periodically added or changed rather than rooms receiving comprehensive redecoration, while higher-status burghers nevertheless strove to mark themselves out from their less-affluent neighbours.

The volume's conclusion, by Alan Murray, stresses Livonia's shift from a medieval crusading frontier to an early modern 'outpost of empires' (e.g. Sweden and Poland-Lithuania). It outlines the general political and social history of medieval and early modern Livonia, stressing the region's close ties with the Holy Roman Empire and the West, as well as its very light rural German colonisation – in contrast to Prussia –, and praises the renaissance of Estonian and Latvian history writing since 1991. Its initial (and occasionally later) content feels more like historical-outline information that ought better to have been placed in the volume's introduction, to aid readers less familiar with Livonia in understanding the volume's case studies, than placed in the volume's conclusion. But the conclusion subsequently turns to the concept of actors and networks, as set out at the start of the volume, and reviews the contents of the volume in that light, helping to connect its case studies to that theme in a generally convincing way.

Overall, this volume deserves high praise, for its scholarship. It continues the work of opening up Baltic studies to English speakers who are less familiar, or less able to access, regional historiographies. It is presented in very fine English, that reads naturally; this is no small achievement given the authors' linguistic diversity.

There are some imperfections, and it is the reviewer's duty to ferret them out. Some of the chronologically early chapters suffer from typical shortcomings of good-faith research conducted in the context of a dearth of source material. Chapter 1 is well reasoned, but far too many sentences, at points, are qualified by 'possibly', 'perhaps' and similar forms of hedging, because we can never know for sure if the argument put forward is correct. Chapter 5 revisits the *Chronicle of Henry of Livonia* and the *Livonian Rhymed Chronicle*, using sophisticated modern methods and interpretations to prove things that were likely already evident and known to the conscientious reader of these texts. Henry's chronicle is perhaps more empathetic to the native than the *Livonian Rhymed Chronicle*, and neither medieval text ascribes many positive emotions to the crusaders' enemies; no amount of dazzling analytical gymnastics obviates the fact that Eric Christiansen, in effect, said the same quite adequately in 1980 (new edition, 1997)¹. Chapter 9 rather 'talks around' the topic of information management more than directly analysing it. And the volume's Estonia-centric detailed biographic research, as presented in its final chapters, leaves early modern Riga looking rather neglected.

That said, these imperfections are slight, in light of the large volume of fine research presented. Many of the chapters point the way for similar/parallel research regarding other northern European frontier zones. For example, Chapter 10 calls to mind the recent doctoral thesis of Judith Bailey on the role of the Ludlow Palmers' guild in the religious landscape and political economy of late medieval Wales². Chapter 9 raises interesting questions regarding the roles and social standing of scribes in medieval Cardiff and Dublin. Chapter 7 suggests the as yet unrealised potential for studying officials' mobility within the English colonial administration of Wales through, for example, Ralph Griffiths' partial catalogue of royal personnel³. In other words, this volume is successful in both advancing the history of Livonia *and* in inspiring one to think more widely about actors and networks on other medieval frontiers of northern Europe; that is highly praiseworthy.

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¹ Eric CHRISTIANSEN, *The Northern Crusades*, London 1997, pp. 94–97.

² Judith L. BAILEY, *Fleecing the Pious: The Palmers' Guild of Ludlow in the Central and North Welsh Marches, 1400–1530* (PhD thesis, University of Adelaide), Adelaide 2020.

³ Ralph A. GRIFFITHS, *The Principality of Wales in the Later Middle Ages: The Structure and Personnel of Government*, vol. 1: *South Wales, 1277–1536*, Cardiff 1972. The originally intended sister volume, covering north Wales, has never been completed.

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