Early Christian Scandinavia and the Problem of Eastern Influences

by Ildar Garipzanov

Modern Scandinavian historiography and the problem of Eastern religious influences

The impulses that drove the Christianization of Norway came for the most part from England; consequently, the early Norwegian church was structured along the lines of its Anglo-Saxon model. This paradigm became entrenched in Norwegian historiography in the early twentieth century, influenced in particular by the works of Rudolf Keyser[1] and Absalon Taranger.[2] Such an Anglocentric vision of the early Christianization process became even more welcome in Norway after World War II, linked to wider trends whereby Norwegian society sought to disentangle itself from its cultural and historical ties with Germany and stress instead its long-standing connections with the Anglo-Saxon world across the centuries. From this perspective, it is not surprising that this Anglocentric interpretation of the Christianization of Norway continued to dominate Norwegian historical writings until the 1990s, receiving further support from historians such as Fridtjov Birkeli.[3] Only recently has this post-war trend given way to a more nuanced approach to early Christian Norway, which admits that 'the connection with England has been studied more thoroughly than that with Germany, and future research may find more evidence of German influence'.[4] Indeed, Sæbjørg Walaker Nordeide has recently questioned Birkeli's view that the early Norwegian stone crosses were inspired by Anglo-Saxon prototypes, arguing that German influences on the appearance of this phenomenon in Norway are as likely as Insular ones.[5] Furthermore, in his recent doctoral dissertation, Torgeir Landro has presented strong evidence that casts doubt upon Taranger's long-established thesis that many of the legal norms in the early

1 *Den norske Kirkes Historie under Katholicismen*, I (Christiania: Tønsberg, 1856).
2 *Den angelsaksiske kirkes indflydelse paa den norske* (Kristiania: Grøndahl, 1890).
3 Fridtjov Birkeli, *Norske steinkors i tidlig middelalder: Et bidrag til belysning av overgangen fra norrøn religion til kristendom* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1973); id., *Hva vet vi om kristningen av Norge?* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1982); and id., *Tolv vintrer hadde kristendommen vært i Norge* (Oslo: Verbum, 1995).
4 Sverre Bagge and Sæbjørg Walaker Nordeide, 'The Kingdom of Norway', in *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy*, ed. by Nora Berend (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 121–66 (p. 138).
5 'Cross Monuments in North-Western Europe', *Zeitschrift für Archäologie des Mittelalters*, 37 (2009), 163–78.

Christian Norwegian laws were influenced by Anglo-Saxon church legislation. In short, Landro argues, existing parallels between the two corpora of church law by no means testify to English influences, since they belong to the common stock of Western European ecclesiastical regulations. Indeed, specific features of the east Norwegian Christian laws link them not only to Continental ecclesiastical traditions but also to Eastern (Armenian in particular) Christianity.[6] This conclusion is quite remarkable considering that early contacts with Eastern Christianity have rarely been on the radar for Norwegian scholars,[7] for, as has been noted by Marit Myking, 'eventual influence from the east has never been studied closely, except for the discussion of the "*ermske*" bishops, and then mostly in the history of art.'[8]

This is not a phenomenon specific to Norwegian historiography. Scandinavian medievalists in general have been reluctant to acknowledge Eastern influences on early Christian Scandinavia. Nowadays, most Scandinavian scholars agree that from the very beginning Scandinavia was Christianized from the West, primarily from Germany and the British Isles.[9] Byzantine influences have been acknowledged occasionally in regard to early Swedish Christianity,[10] but it has been emphasized that there is no evidence of any Byzantine or Rus′ mission to early Christian Sweden, so that we can speak only of relationships and contacts with the Christian East but not of Eastern influences.[11] Alternatively, when such influences have been acknowledged by scholars, they have been interpreted as being transmitted via — and therefore already acculturated by — Western Christendom.[12] Such academic disengagement with Eastern traces in

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6 *Kristenrett og kyrkjerett: Borgartingskristenretten i eit komparativt perspektiv* (Bergen: Universitetet i Bergen, 2010).

7 Most importantly, Jan Ragnar Hagland, 'The Christianization of Norway and Possible Influences from the Eastern Churches', *Paleobulgarica*, 20,3 (1996), 3–18; and id., 'Armenske biskopar i Norden på 1000-talet?', in *Från Bysans till Norden*, pp. 153–63.

8 'Eventuell påverking frå aust har aldri blitt nærare undersøkt, bortsett frå i diskusjonen om dei "ermske" biskopane, og då mest innanfor kunsthistoria.' Marit Myking, *Vart Noreg kristna frå England?* Skriftserie, 1 (Oslo: Senter for studier i vikingtid og nordisk middelalder, 2001), p. 190. In this analysis, Myking provides a more detailed overview of how this 'English' paradigm was established in Norway in the nineteenth century and was updated in the twentieth century.

9 For an overview and references, see Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Kristninga i Norden 750–1200* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 2003), pp. 28–31; Olav Tveito, *Ad fines orbis terrae: En studie i primær trosformidling i nordisk kristningskontekst* (Oslo: Unipub, 2004), pp. 29–121; Bagge and Walaker Nordeide, 'The Kingdom of Norway', pp. 121–66; Michael Gelting, 'The Kingdom of Denmark', in *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy*, ed. by Nora Berend, pp. 73–120; and Nils Blomquist, Stefan Brink, and Thomas Lindquist, 'The Kingdom of Sweden', in *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy*, ed. by Nora Berend, pp. 167–213.

10 Bertil Nilsson, 'The Christianization in Sweden: Concluding Remarks', in *Kristnande in Sverige: Gamla källor och nya perspektiv*, ed. by Bertil Nilsson (Uppsala: Lunne Böker, 1996), pp. 431–41 (pp. 432–33).

11 Bertil Nilsson, 'Förekom det bysantinska influenser i tidig svensk kyrkohistoria?', in *Från Bysans till Norden*, pp. 17–35 (p. 31). One should remember that, unlike the case of papal Rome, it was not common for the Byzantine church to send missionaries to the furthest parts of Europe.

12 See especially Signe Horn Fuglesang, 'A Critical Survey of Theories on Byzantine Influence in Scandinavia', in *Rom und Byzanz im Norden*, I, pp. 35–58; and Per Beskow, 'Byzantine Influence in the Baltic Region?', in *The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe AD 300–1300*, ed. by Martin Carver (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), pp. 559–63.

early Scandinavian Christianity has been, of course, partly due to the dearth of knowledge of Eastern European religious history and languages among Scandinavian medievalists. Yet this lack of interest also owes much to the wider academic perception of early Christian Scandinavia as an immanent part of Western Europe. Needless to say, such a perception has been based on the general view of medieval Europe as being sharply divided into western and eastern halves based on religious (as well as more generally cultural) grounds, starting in the early Middle Ages and with the final disruption coming after the Great Schism of 1054. The post-World-War-II division of Europe and the modern borders of the European Union, often labelled as the 'proper Europe', encouraged such an interpretation of early Scandinavian Christianity: proper European culture with Christianity at its core must have come from the West. For example, in his highly speculative book on the 'Europeanization' of the Baltic region between 1075 and 1225, the Swedish historian Nils Blomquist has stated that in this period:

> it was somehow decided that people living in and around the Baltic were to become *Europeans in the Western* sense [my emphasis — *I.G.*], while more eastern parts of the Viking world began disappearing behind a cultural border.[13]

Meanwhile, recent studies on the interactions between Latin and Greek Christianity around the time of the Great Schism clearly indicate that in this period the religious differences between Western and Eastern Christians in the Mediterranean were less noticeable to contemporaries than it is stated in modern literature. Tia Kolbaba has made this point quite clear in her recent works dealing with the 'teleology of "the schism"'. As she demonstrates, the friendly contacts between the representatives of the two churches in the tenth and eleventh centuries were as numerous as the cases of altercations, and the somewhat accidental conflict between certain hierarchs of Rome and Constantinople in 1054 was not shared by all their fellow hierarchs. It took the events of the long twelfth century and the growing religious as well as cultural divide during the first crusades — culminating at the sack of Constantinople in 1204 — before theological and ritual differences between the Catholics and Orthodox Christians turned from a matter that concerned only a few learned individuals into mutual hostility on a broader social scale. Amongst other things, this growing hostility can be testified by a drastic increase in the production of the lists of the errors of the Latins in thirteenth-century Eastern Christendom.[14]

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13 *The Discovery of the Baltic: The Reception of a Catholic World-System in the European North (1075–1225)*, Northern World, 15 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), p. 11.

14 Tia M. Kolbaba, *The Byzantine Lists: Errors of the Latins* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000); ead., 'Latin and Greek Christians', in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, III: *Early Medieval Christianities c. 600–c. 1100*, ed. by Thomas F. X. Noble and Julia M. H. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 215–29; and ead., *Inventing Latin Heretics: Byzantines and Filioque in the Ninth Century* (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University, 2008).

Nevertheless, the situation in Northern Europe was in no way different to that in the Mediterranean world. The relationship between Catholic and Orthodox Christians in the early Christian North remained quite amicable in the eleventh century and deteriorated only gradually in the twelfth with the establishment of more rigid ecclesiastical structures both in Scandinavia and northern Rus´. This was then compounded by the start of the Latin crusades on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea at the turn of the thirteenth century.[15] In other words, there were no real objections to friendly contacts and interactions between Christians across the east-west axis of Northern Europe after their official conversion up to the time when ill feeling began to grow in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. From a more practical perspective, the famous Way from the Varangians to the Greeks (*Put' iz variag v greki*) — which connected Scandinavia, Rus´ and Byzantium precisely in this post-conversion period — would have increased the frequency of such contacts.[16] Due to intensive social communication in the late Viking Age, the presence of Scandinavians in eleventh-century Rus´ was an everyday reality, with matrimonial ties tightly linking the princely clan of the early Rus´ with the nascent royal houses of Scandinavia.[17] Consequently at that time, lay people, Christian priests, monks and pilgrims were able to travel along that north-eastern axis of European communication and be accommodated by their new religious environments. As has been shown by Jonathan Shepard, Eastern clerics embarking on this route in the tenth and eleventh centuries were able to travel as far as the British Isles, and such 'Greek' clerics were mentioned in local written texts.[18] Thus, Scandinavia was within their reach in those centuries, and the main question we should ask ourselves is therefore what sources we should look at in order to trace their activities in the northern lands.

Scandinavian written narratives and religious contacts with Eastern Europe

Unfortunately, surviving narrative sources from medieval Scandinavia are of little help in this regard, since they rarely mention contacts with Eastern clerics. Yet this evidence must be treated with circumspection. Unlike in the British Isles, only a very limited number of narrative sources were written in Scandinavia in

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15 For more details, see John Lind, 'The Martyria of Odense and a Twelfth-Century Russian Prayer: The Question of Bohemian Influence on Russian Religious Literature', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 68, 1 (1990), 1–21 (pp. 20–21); and id., 'The Christianization of North and Eastern Europe c. 950–1050 — A Plea for a Comparative Study', *Ennen & nyt*, 2004, no. 4, 1–18 <http://www.ennenjanyt.net/4-04/lind.html> [accessed 8 August 2011].

16 For more details on this route, see Jonathan Shepard's essay in this volume.

17 See Fjodor Uspenskij, *Skandinavy, variagi, Rus´: Istoriko-filologicheskie ocherki* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskoi kul´tury, 2002), especially at pp. 21–63.

18 Jonathan Shepard, 'From the Bosporus to the British Isles: The Way from the Greeks to the Varangians', in *Drevneishie gosudarstva Vostochnoi Evropy, 2009 god* (Moscow: Indrik, 2010), pp. 15–42 (pp. 26–29).

the early twelfth century, while most texts in Latin and Old Norse were composed from the last decades of that century onwards.[19] As a result, what have survived are the late-twelfth- and thirteenth-century perceptions of early Christianization, which tended to obliterate facts seemingly at odds with concurrent religious contexts.

The well-known case of the Armenian bishops in late eleventh-century Iceland is a good illustration of this active process of remembrance and forgetting.[20] The first Icelandic text written in the vernacular, the early twelfth-century *Íslendingabók*, describes various clergymen arriving in Iceland in the eleventh century and names three Armenian bishops among them — Peter, Abraham and Stephen — who must have arrived at the time of the country's first official bishop, Ísleifr (1056–80).[21] This neutral remark did not survive the consolidation of the two Icelandic bishoprics (Skálholt founded in 1056 and Hólar founded in 1106), for three generations later (*c.* 1200), the Icelandic *gesta episcoporum* known as *Hungrvaka* disapprovingly mentioned anonymous foreign bishops present in Iceland along with Bishop Ísleifr, who found support among local evil men because of their apparently more lenient commands.[22] Finally, *Kristni saga*, composed around the mid-thirteenth century, describes Ísleifr as having the whole-hearted support of all the Icelanders. The presence of subversive foreign bishops with an Eastern pedigree was not compatible with this thirteenth-century view of the past and thus was written out of Icelandic post-conversion history.[23] Therefore, the memory of the Armenian missionary bishops in early Christian Iceland gradually faded into obscurity by the time when the confessional divide between the Western and Eastern Churches became a well-known fact in the European North.

The case of the Armenian bishops in Iceland is rather unique in that we have in our possession an early text enabling us to see a real historical event behind

19 For more details and references, see *Historical Narratives and Christian Identity on a European Periphery: Early History Writing in Northern, East-Central, and Eastern Europe (c. 1070–1200)*, ed. by Ildar H. Garipzanov, Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe, 26 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011).

20 For more details and references on this case, see Magnus Már Lárusson, 'On the so-called "Armenian" bishops', *Studia Islandica*, 18 (1960), 23–38; Ia. R. Dashkevich, 'Les arméniens en Islande (XIe siècle)', *Revue des études arméniennes*, 22 (1986–87), 321–26; id., 'Armiane v Islandii (XI v.)', *Skandinavskii sbornik*, 23 (1990), 87–97; Hagland, 'The Christianization of Norway', pp. 3–18; id., 'Armenske biskopar i Norden', pp. 153–63; Fjodor Uspenskij, 'Marginalii k voprosu ob armianakh v Islandii (XI vek)', *Scando-Slavica*, 46 (2000), 61–75; Myking, *Vart Noreg kristna*, pp. 126–28; Margaret Cormack, 'Irish and Armenian Ecclesiastics in Medieval Iceland', in *West over Sea: Studies in Scandinavian Sea-borne Expansion and Settlement before 1300*, ed. by Beverley Ballin Smith and others (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), pp. 227–34; and Ildar H. Garipzanov, 'Wandering Clerics and Mixed Rituals in the Early Christian North (c. 1000–c. 1150)', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 63 (2012, forthcoming).

21 *Íslendingabók. Kristni saga*, trans. by Sian Grønlie (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2006), p. 10, n. 78.

22 *Hungrvaka*, in *Biskopa sögur II*, ed. by Ásdís Egilsdóttir, Íslenzk Fornrit, 16 (Reykjavik: Hið Íslenzka fornritafélag, 2002), pp. 8–9; and *Origines Islandicae*, ed. by Gudbrand Vigfusson and F. Yorke Powell (Oxford: 1905), I, pp. 425–57 (p. 429).

23 *Kristni saga*, in *Biskupa sögur I, síðari hluti – sögutextar*, ed. by Sigurgeir Steingrímsson and others, Íslenzk fornrit, 15, 2 (Reykjavik: Hið Íslenzka fornritafélag, 2003), pp. 38–40.

the transforming historical narratives of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. We are less fortunate in other instances when no such text has survived, as in the case of the unfinished pilgrimage of the Danish king Erik Ejegod and his wife Bothild to Jerusalem in 1103. This pilgrimage was described by the skald Markús Skeggjason in his poem *Eiríksdrápa*, composed soon after the death of the royal couple on this trip.[24] Thirty-two stanzas have survived to the present day: one of them mentions Erik's pilgrimage to Jerusalem in general terms (no. 26), another describes solemn liturgical processions with which the Danish king and his companions were greeted in the cities of another country on the way to Constantinople. Precious reliquaries and portable crosses were carried in these processions, and they were accompanied by the sound of ringing bells (no. 27).[25] The country is not identified, and the land route taken to Constantinople remained unspecified. Yet there is a stanza (no. 3) that mentions his visit to Rus´, the rich gifts the king received there from local rulers, and his popularity in 'all the eastern regions'.[26] Considering the existence of the well-known route that ran from the Varangians to the Greeks in the eleventh century, some scholars have interpreted this stanza as referring to such eastbound travel to Constantinople.[27] By contrast, in the 2009 critical edition of this poem, Jayne Caroll attributes this event to the time of Erik's exile after around 1086 since another stanza describes his return from Rus´ to Denmark, which she dates to some time before 1095.[28] In her interpretation of these stanzas, Caroll follows *Knýtlinga saga*, which incorporated most known stanzas from that poem in its narrative, and according to which Erik and Bothild's way to Constantinople lay via Germany.[29] The saga's version is in agreement with a pilgrimage land route from Western Europe along the Danube to Constantinople and further to the south, which is known to have been established in the second quarter of the early eleventh century.[30]

Yet *Knýtlinga saga* was written in Iceland in the mid-thirteenth century, one-and-a-half centuries after Erik's pilgrimage had taken place, and the poetic *Eiríksdrápa* might have been the only reliable piece of evidence that the saga author had in his hands. Meanwhile, in the saga's narrative, the stanza describing

24 It is dated between 1103 and 1107. For more details and references, see *Eiríksdrápa*, ed. by Jayne Carroll, in *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 2: From c. 1035 to c. 1300*, ed. by Kari Ellen Gade (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), pp. 432–59 (pp. 432–33). The stanza numbers in this poem are given according to this latest edition.

25 Ibid., pp. 455–57.

26 Ibid., pp. 435–36.

27 Abno Fellman, *Voyage en orient du roi Erik Ejegod et sa mort a Paphos* (Helsinki: Osakeyhtio Weilen, 1938); and Sigfús Blöndal and Benedikt S. Benedikz, *The Varangians of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 135.

28 *Eiríksdrápa*, ed. by Carroll, pp. 436–37.

29 Ibid., pp. 453–54.

30 Françoise Micheau, 'Les itinéraires maritimes et continentaux des pèlerinages vers Jérusalem', in *Occident et orient au Xe siècle: actes du IXe congrès de la société des historiens médiévistes de l'enseignement supérieur public (Dijon, 2–4 juin 1978)*, Publications de l'Université de Dijon, 17 (Paris: Société les Belles Lettres, 1979), pp. 79–104 (pp. 90–91).

Erik's trip to Germany (no. 24) is followed first by the stanza mentioning the foundation of the archbishopric of Lund (no. 25) and only thereafter by the stanza reporting his decision to embark on a pilgrimage. From this perspective, the stanza narrating Erik's trip to Germany might have been unrelated to the description of his pilgrimage, and the saga's narrative accompanying that stanza might simply have been a thirteenth-century Icelandic interpretation of the event, based on existing knowledge of pilgrimage routes to Jerusalem. An earlier Icelandic pilgrimage account, composed by Abbot Nicholas in the mid-twelfth century, likewise describes that cleric first travelling to Germany. Yet Nicholas' itinerary after Germany is strikingly different to Erik's: Nicholas takes the land route to Italy and then travels by ship via the Eastern Mediterranean. On his way, he passes Cyprus, the resting place of King Erik, but never visits Constantinople.[31] By contrast, the author of *Knýtlinga saga* knew of Erik's stay in the Byzantine imperial capital, and hence needed to bring his royal hero directly to Byzantium from Germany. This interpretation may explain the absence in the saga of any detailed information regarding Erik's trip from Germany to Constantinople.

Meanwhile, a generation earlier in Denmark, there was an alternative interpretation linking Erik's pilgrimage route to Rus´. According to Saxo Grammaticus, Erik first reached Rus´ on a boat and then travelled through it by land before arriving in Byzantium, thus following the route well-known to such an eleventh-century Scandinavian ruler as Harald Hardråde.[32] Saxo Grammaticus is of course known to have invented many events and distorted others in his construction of a glorious Danish past comparable to that of the Romans, but his passage on Erik's travel via Rus´ is very short and plain. It adds nothing to Erik's glorification and cannot be explained as a mere rhetorical invention. Saxo is believed to have used *Eiríksdrápa* too, and thus his reference to the Rus´ route to Constantinople may have derived from this early poem.[33]

Pilgrimages from Rus´ to Jerusalem began soon after the Holy City had been captured by the Crusaders. Between 1104 and 1108, a Rus´ hegumen named Danila undertook a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and left a detailed written account

31 For more details and references on this account, see Francis Peabody Magoun Jr., 'The Rome of Two Northern Pilgrims: Archbishop Sigeric of Canterbury and Abbot Nikolas of Munkathvera', *The Harvard Theological Review*, 33, 4 (1940), 267–89 (pp. 277–88); and Joyce Hill, 'From Rome to Jerusalem: An Icelandic Itinerary of the Mid-Twelfth Century', *The Harvard Theological Review* 76, 2 (1983), 175–203.

32 'Interea Ericus petitam navigio Rusciam terrestri permensus itinere, magna Orientis parte transcursa Bizantium veniebat'. Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, 12. 7. 1. 1, ed. by Karsten Friis-Jensen and Peter Zeeberg, 2 vols (Copenhagen: Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab & Gad, 2005), II, p. 78.

33 Bjarni Guðnason, 'The Icelandic Sources of Saxo Grammaticus', in *Saxo Grammaticus: A Medieval Author between Norse and Latin Culture*, ed. by Karsten Friis-Jensen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 1981), pp. 79–94 (pp. 89–90).

of his travels.[34] These facts demonstrate that the pilgrimage route from Rus´ to the Holy Land was already established by the time of Erik's voyage, and he could have chosen this eastern route instead of the western one via Germany. Furthermore, an Anglo-Saxon princess Gytha, who stayed at the Danish court before her marriage to the Rus´ Prince Volodimer Monomakh, apparently went on pilgrimage in 1098 and passed away in Jerusalem.[35] Her son Mstislav Volodimerovich was married to the Swedish princess Christina and was known in Scandinavia by the Norse name 'Harald'. This Rus´ ruler with his close contacts with the Scandinavian royal houses was prince of Novgorod, the key northern town lying on the route to Byzantium. Consequently, if the Danish royal couple had visited there, they would have had received a warm welcome, similar to the one described in *Eiríksdrápa* (stanza no. 27). On the other hand, the 1103 entry in the *Primary Chronicle* describes a military conflict that took place between Rus´ princes and the nomadic Cumans around the southern Dnieper, that is, in the region that was crucial for any travel from southern Rus´ to Byzantium. The two involved parties broke the 1101 peace agreement and were engaged in military clashes south of the Dnieper Rapids in the spring of 1103.[36] Such hostilities would probably have prevented anyone from travelling via the Dnieper at that time, although Erik's company might have passed the volatile region before the outbreak of military activities in the spring of 1103.

All in all, both thirteenth-century narrative versions of Erik's pilgrimage have their advantages and weaknesses, and the dearth of earlier sources makes it impossible to establish conclusively which route Erik would have taken from Denmark to Byzantium. This case thus highlights the essential problem of using Scandinavian narrative texts composed in the late-twelfth and thirteenth centuries as sources for Scandinavian post-conversion history, and for contacts between early Christian Scandinavia and Rus´ in particular. These narratives, as Leslie Abrams puts it, 'are retrospective and inherently unreliable, sometimes flagrantly so'.[37]

This statement can hardly apply to the earliest narrative sources composed in Denmark in the early twelfth century: Ælnoth's *Gesta* of the kings Svein and St Knud (*c*. 1110–11) and the *Chronicle of Roskilde* (*c*. 1138).[38] Yet they suffer from another shortcoming: they were composed by clerics attached to established

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34 Aleksandr V. Nazarenko, 'Rus´, Zapad i Sviataia zemlia v epokhu krestovykh pokhodov (XII vek)', in *Drevniaia Rus´ na mezhdunarodnykh putiakh* (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul´tury, 2001), pp. 617–48 (pp. 640–41); and *Khozhdenie Igumena Daniila*, in *Biblioteka literatury Drevnei Rusi*, IV: *XII vek*, ed. by D. S. Likhachev and others (St Petersburg: Nauka, 2004), pp. 27–117.

35 Nazarenko, 'Rus´, Zapad i Sviataia zemlia', p. 632.

36 *Povest´ vremennykh let*, in *Biblioteka literatury Drevnei Rusi*, I: *XI–XII veka*, ed. by D. S. Likhachev and others (St Petersburg: Nauka, 2004), pp. 286–91.

37 'Eleventh-century Missions and the Early Stages of Ecclesiastical Organisation in Scandinavia', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 17 (1994), 21–40 (p. 23).

38 For more details and references, see Michael Gelting, 'Two Early Twelfth-Century Views of Denmark's Christian Past: Ailnoth and the Anonymous of Roskilde', in *Historical Narratives and Christian Identity*, ed. by Garipzanov, pp. 33–55.

Danish ecclesiastical centres and therefore express their institutional agendas. Ælnoth was an English cleric from Canterbury who had moved to Denmark some time before he wrote his *Gesta* at the request of St Knud's Priory in Odense, which was established with the help of monks from Evesham Abbey in England. They guarded the relics of St Knud and needed a hagiographic text in order to develop the cult of the first Danish royal saint. The *Chronicle of Roskilde* was written a generation later by a canon of the cathedral chapter of Roskilde. Both authors wrote their narratives within an established Latin Christian tradition, and any contacts established by early Christian Denmark and its kings with the Eastern Church would have been of no importance to them.

By the way of conclusion: the traces of eastern influences on early Christian Scandinavia in non-narrative sources

Thus, considering the nature of the surviving early Christian narratives in Scandinavia, one should hardly expect to find in these narratives much evidence of the religious contacts along the Varangian–Greek route, nor any traces of the influences that might have come from such contacts. Therefore if we wish to advance our understanding of this topic, we must rely on other types of evidence, three types of which seem to be especially promising for such research.

1. The earliest canonical texts

The first type of sources that can shed more light on such contacts are the earliest canonical texts that survive from Scandinavia and early Rus´. As mentioned above, Torgeir Landro has recently identified some traces of Eastern baptismal rites in an early Norwegian Christian law, the Borgarting law.[39] Chapter Two of this law deals with emergency baptism, when a newborn child was in danger of dying before any priest could reach them.[40] In this case, the godfather was allowed to baptise the child. Yet unlike Western baptismal rites in which the marking of the body parts with chrism or spittle occurs before the immersion — except for the top of the head[41] — the formula for an emergency baptism in the Borgarting law lists this procedure as being performed with spittle after the immersion, which is a feature of Eastern baptismal rites.[42] Furthermore, the parts of the body listed

39 *Kristenrett og kyrkjerett*, pp. 34–35 and 46–68.

40 *De eldste østlandske kristenrettene*, ed. by Eyvind Fjeld Halvorsen and Magnus Rindal (Oslo: Riksarkivet, 2008), p. 122.

41 See Susan A. Keefe, *Water and the Word: Baptism and the Education of the Clergy in the Carolingian Empire*, 2 vols (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), I, pp. 80–115.

42 For examples, see Juliette Day, *The Baptismal Liturgy of Jerusalem: Fourth- and Fifth-century Evidence from Palestine, Syria and Egypt* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 110–11; and E. C. Whitaker, *Documents of Baptismal Liturgy*, ed. by Maxwell E. Johnson, 3d edn (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2003), pp. 32 and 123.

for marking in the Eastern Norwegian law are present in the description of the post-immersion anointment in the Armenian baptismal rite. Thus, the Borgarting law, which generally follows the Latin canonical tradition, demonstrates traces of Eastern influence in the baptismal sequence recorded for emergency baptism.[43] This ritual was performed in the absence of Latin priests, by lay people or unauthorised wandering clerics, some of whom arrived in Scandinavia along the Way from the Varangians to the Greeks.

The traces of such wandering people can be found in other Christian rituals recorded along this route. For example, a baptismal rite recorded in the *Inquiries of Kirik*, a Novgorodian canonical text composed around the mid-twelfth century, follows in general the Eastern tradition but demonstrates some features that may be interpreted as ultimately deriving from Ireland.[44] Such influences in the regions lying in the northern part of the route connecting Scandinavia with Byzantium are the best testimony to religious contacts and influences facilitated by a more general pattern of communication along that route. From this perspective, more thorough comparative studies of early canonical texts from Scandinavia and Rus´ might provide us with more evidence demonstrating the nature of the religious exchanges between the two regions in the early Christian period.

2. Evidence related to the cult of saints

The cult of saints is another type of evidence that can provide us with more evidence regarding early Christian impulses transmitted to Scandinavia along the Way from the Varangians to the Greeks: more precisely, the patterns of dissemination of certain cults of saints. On the one hand, it is difficult to trace specific textual borrowings between hagiographic corpora composed in Latin and Old Church Slavonic religious cultures, although Aleksandr Nazarenko has argued that the Latin miracle of St Panteleon from Cologne influenced an Old Church Slavonic miracle of St Nicholas in Novgorod.[45] On the other hand, the popularity of certain universal saints in the two regions bear witness to mutual influences, as demonstrated by the patterns of early church dedications. Such influences were due to the close links between the cult of saints and royal power in that period, leading to the promotion of certain universal saints by the Scandinavian and early Rus´ ruling families. The dissemination of the cults of

43 As Landro, *Kristenrett og kyrkjerett*, p. 63, puts it, 'Spørsmålet om austlege trek i Borgartingskristen rettens nauddåpsritual må endeleg drøftast i lys av kontaktane mellom Norden og austlege områder frå vikingtida og frametter, og gjer at eventuelle austkyrkjelege innslag i norske kristenrettar ikkje skulle vekkja for stor overrasking.'

44 For more details, see Garipzanov, 'Wandering Clerics'.

45 Aleksandr V. Nazarenko, 'Chudo sv. Pantelimona o "russkom korole Haral´de": monastyr´ sv. Panteleimona v Kel´ne i semeistvo Mstislava Velikogo (konets XI – nachalo XII veka)', in *Drevniaia Rus´ na mezhdunarodnykh putiakh*, pp. 585–616.

St Nicholas and St Clement in Scandinavia and Rus´ in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries exemplifies this trend neatly.

The cult of St Clement was established in Kiev immediately after conversion (988), when the relics of the saint were brought from Cherson (the northern Byzantine outpost in the Black Sea) to Kiev and deposited in the princely Tithe Church at its foundation in 996. Thus, from its inception, the cult of St Clement was promoted by the Rus´ prince Volodimer and the clergy of the Tithe Church, which led to the swift dissemination of the cult in eleventh-century Rus´. At the turn of the eleventh century, St Clement also became a popular saint in Scandinavia, promoted by Norwegian and Danish kings such as Olaf Tryggvason, St Olaf and Cnut the Great. The first two kings must have been involved in the foundation of the two earliest Norwegian churches dedicated to the saint; the church in Oslo was founded between 996 and 1028 and the one in Trondheim between 997 and 1016. It can hardly be coincidental that the two churches dedicated to St Clement were built in Norway soon after the erection of the Kievan Tithe Church and sanctified with the relics of St Clement, and that these foundations were established with some royal involvement. Varangians of high status including both Olafs visited Kiev in those years and must have been impressed and inspired by the riches of St Clement's cult as promoted by Prince Volodimer. The Eastern influence on the dissemination of the cult of St Clement in Scandinavia was then augmented by western impulses, with the concurrent popularity of the cult in England leading to the founding of St Clement's in Denmark by Cnut the Great.[46]

St Nicholas was another saint whose cult became established in Rus´,[47] Normandy and Anglo-Saxon England as early as the eleventh century,[48] and the

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46 For more details, see Erik Cinthio, 'The Churches of St. Clemens in Scandinavia', in *Res mediaevales: Ragnar Blomquist kal. Mai. MCMLXVIII oblata*, ed. by Anders W. Mårtensson, Archaeologica Lundensia, 3 (Karlshamn: Kulturhistoriska Museet, 1968), pp. 103–16; Ie. V. Ukhanova, 'Kul´t sv. Klimenta, papy rimskogo, v istorii vizantiiskoi i drevnerusskoi tserkvi IX–1-poloviny XI v.', *Annali dell'Istituto universitario orientale di Napoli: Slavistica*, 5 (1997), 505–70; Dietrich Hofmann, *Die Legende von Sankt Clemens in den skandinavischen Ländern im Mittealder*, Beiträge zur Skandinavistik, 13 (Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 1997); Barbara Crawford, 'The Churches Dedicated to St. Clement in Norway: A Discussion of Their Origin and Function', *Collegium medievale*, 17 (2004), 100–29; ead., 'The Cult of Clement in Denmark', *Historie*, 2006, 235–82; Ildar Garipzanov, 'Novgorod and the Veneration of Saints in Eleventh-Century Rus´: A Comparative View', in *Saints and Their Lives on the Periphery: Veneration of Saints in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe (c. 1000–1200)*, ed. by Haki Antonsson and Ildar H. Garipzanov (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), pp. 115–45 (pp. 130–36); and id., 'The Journey of St Clement's Cult from the Black Sea to the Baltic Region', in *From Goths to Varangians: Communication and Cultural Exchange Between the Baltic and the Black Sea*, ed. by Line Maj-Britt Højberg Bjerg and others (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2011, forthcoming).

47 For a short overview of the veneration of St Nicholas in eleventh-century Rus´, see Gerardo Cioffari, *La leggenda di Kiev: Slovo o perenesenii moshchei Sviatitelia Nikolaia* (Bari: Centro Studi e Ricerche 'S. Nikola', 1980), pp. 35–41.

48 For different views on the dissemination of the cult of St Nicholas in northwestern Europe, see Karl Meisen, *Nicholauskult und Nicholausbrauch im Abendlande: Eine kultgeographisch-volkskundliche Untersuchung*, 2nd edn, ed. by Matthias Zender and Franz-Jozef Heyen (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1981 [1931]), pp. 89–104; E. M. Treharne, *The Old English Life of St Nicholas with the Old English Life of*

popularity of the cult across Northern Europe visibly increased after the translation of the saint's relics from Asia Minor to Bari in southern Italy in 1087.[49] The feast dedicated to this event began to be celebrated not only in the Latin West but also in early Rus′,[50] where Novgorod became the main centre of this cult from the twelfth century onwards. In 1113, a stone church dedicated to St Nicholas was founded there by Prince Mstislav of Novgorod. A little earlier in around 1100, King Erik Ejegod established the Slangerup nunnery on Sjælland dedicated to the same saint,[51] which was followed by a dozen of similar dedications in twelfth-century Denmark.[52] In the early twelfth century, churches dedicated to St Nicholas were erected in or near royal headquarters in Trondheim and Oslo.[53] The promotion of St Nicholas' cult by the rulers of Denmark, Norway and northern Rus′ must have been a coordinated process considering the tight matrimonial ties linking them in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. As already mentioned, the Anglo-Saxon princess Gytha, the mother of Mstislav, spent some time at the Danish court before she married Volodimer Monomakh. Mstislav himself married the Swedish princess Christina. Their daughter Malmfrid was betrothed to King Sigurd Jorsalfar of Norway (1103–30), and after the death of her first husband she married the Danish king Erik II Emune. Confessional differences hardly created any obstacles to the promotion of St Nicholas by the royal and princely families of northeastern Europe connected via marriage alliances. In Sweden, a stone church of St Nicholas — following the layout of Byzantine provincial churches and later known as a Russian church — was founded in Sigtuna in the twelfth century,[54]

St Giles, Leeds Texts and Monographs, New series, 15 (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1997), pp. 35–42; Charles W. Jones, *The Saint Nicholas Liturgy and its Literary Relationships (Ninth to Twelfth Centuries)* (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), pp. 10–13 and 64–89; id., *Saint Nicholas of Myra, Bari, and Manhattan: Biography of a Legend* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 140–44 and 147–49; and Véronique Gazeau, *Normannia monastica*, 2 vols (Caen: Publications de CRAHM, 2008), i, pp. 188–89 and 197.

49 On this event, see Marjorie Chibnall, 'The Translation of the Relics of Saint Nicholas and Norman Historical Tradition', in *Le relazioni religiose e chiesastico-giurisdizionali: Atti del II° Congresso internazionale sulle relazioni fra le due Sponde adriatiche* (Rome: Centro di studi sulla storia e la civiltà adriatica, 1979), pp. 33–41.

50 Nazarenko, *Drevniaia Rus′ na mezhdunarodnykh putiakh*, pp. 358, 557, and 596; and Cioffari, *La leggenda di Kiev*, pp. 43–71.

51 Erik Cinthio, 'Heiligenpatrone und Kirchenbauten während des frühen Mittelalters', in *Kirche und Gesellschaft im Ostseeraum und im Norden vor der Mitte des 13. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Sven Ekdahl, Acta Visbyensia, 3 (Visby: Museum Gotlands Fornsal, 1969), pp. 161–69 (p. 168); Tore Nyberg, *Monasticism in North-Western Europe, 800–1200* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 66 and 206; and Haki Antonsson, 'Saints and Relics in Early Christian Scandinavia', *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, 15 (2005), 51–80 (p. 64).

52 Per Beskow, 'Kyrkededikationer i Lund', in Per Beskow and Reinhart Staats, *Nordens kristnande i europeiskt perspektiv* (Skara: Viktoria, 1994), pp. 37–62 (p. 54).

53 *The Saga of the Sons of Magnús*, in Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, trans. by Hollander, pp. 688–714 (p. 699); Haakon Christie, 'Old Oslo', *Medieval Archaeology*, 10 (1966), 45–58 (pp. 48–50); and Larentz Dietrichson, *Sammenlignede Fortegnelse over Norges Kirkebygninger i Middelalderen og Nutiden* (Kristiania: Malling, 1888), p. 6.

54 See Jonas Ros, *Staden, kyrkorna och den kyrkliga organisationen*, Occasional Papers in Archaeology, 30 (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2001), pp. 172–76; and Anders Wikström, 'Den svårfångande

probably in the first half. It was erected with some royal involvement side by side with Latin churches, and it may have had close affiliations with Novgorodian merchants from early on.[55] Thus, the case of the cult of St Nicholas in the early Christian North indicates that close dynastic contacts between the ruling families in this region led to the promotion of certain saints across confessional borders.

3. Archaeological evidence

The final, ever-growing body of evidence that can contribute to our understanding of the contacts and influences between early Christian Scandinavia and Rus´ is archaeological data. This source of information is not unproblematic, for archaeological evidence is always prone to different interpretations, as demonstrated by a recent discussion of the finds of 'liturgical' spoons and Eastern eggs in Sweden.[56] Still, there are material objects that point to Scandinavian contacts with the early Christian East: for example, cross-pendants of the so-called 'Scandinavian type', which are dated to the tenth to twelfth centuries and found in both Scandinavia and early Rus´ (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2). Early Rus´ and Byzantium have both been suggested as their possible places of origin,[57] and it is known that the crosses of this type were produced in Kiev from early on.[58] However, the question is how we should interpret such a pattern of dissemination.[59] What is beyond doubt is that, irrespective of the origin of these crosses, they were carried to Scandinavia via the Way from the Varangians to the Greeks, and their popularity along that route — perhaps related to their original provenance in Byzantium — testifies to some kind of religious unity felt by the people who wore them on their travels and carried them to the afterlife. Those people who wore or saw such cross pendants in Scandinavia — or at least in Sweden — were most likely able to recognize them and identify their connection to the Eastern route. Yet would this comprehension carry wider religious meanings and implications for the crosses'

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kronologin: Om gravstratigrafi och problem med dateringen av Sigtunas tidigmedeltida kyrkor', *Hikuin*, 33 (2006), 223–38 (p. 226).

55 Sten Tesch, 'Kungen, Kristus och Sigtuna — platsen där guld och människor möttes', in *Kult, Guld och Makt*, ed. by Ingemar Nordgren (Göteborg: Kompendiet, 2007), pp. 233–57 (pp. 253–54); and Ros, *Staden, kyrkorna*, p. 175.

56 Fuglesang, 'A Critical Survey of Theories', pp. 35–58.

57 For early Rus´, see Jörn Staecker, *Rex regum et dominus dominorum: Die wikingerzeitlichen Kreuz- und Kruzifizanhänger als Ausdruck der Mission in Altdänemark und Schweden* (Stockholm: Almquist & Wiksell International, 1999), pp. 110–15. For Byzantium, see Vladimir Petrukhin and Tatjana Pushkina, 'Old Russia: The Earliest Stages of Christianization', in *Rom und Byzanz im Norden*, II, pp. 247–58 (p. 255); and Vladimir Ia. Petrukhin and Tamara A. Pushkina, 'Novye dannye o protsesse khristianizatsii Drevnerusskogo gosudarstva', in *Archeologia Abrahamica*, ed. by Leonid Beliaev (Moscow: Indrik, 2009), pp. 157–68 (pp. 159–61).

58 N. V. Eniosova and T. G. Saracheva, 'Drevnerusskie iuvelirnye instrumenty iz tsvetnykh metallov (resul´taty khimiko-tekhnologicheskogo issledovania', *Kratkie soobshchenia Instituta arkheologii*, 220 (2006), 86–101 (p. 89).

59 For a new interpretation of finds in early Rus´, see Androshchuk's essay in this volume.

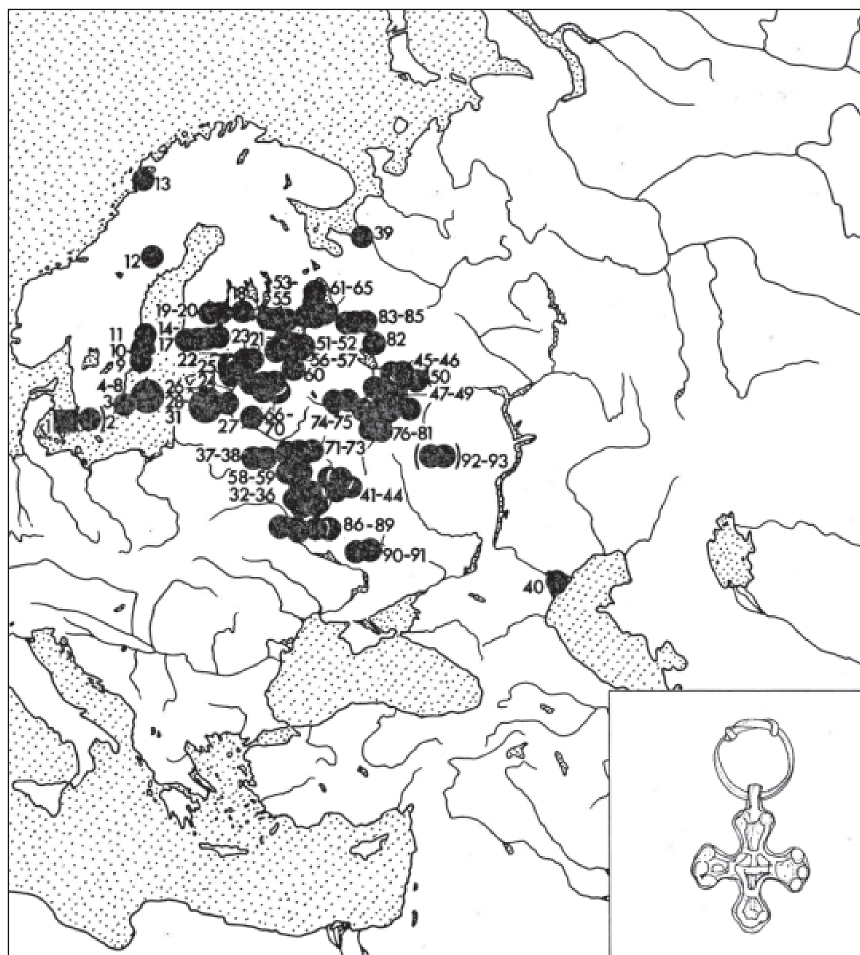
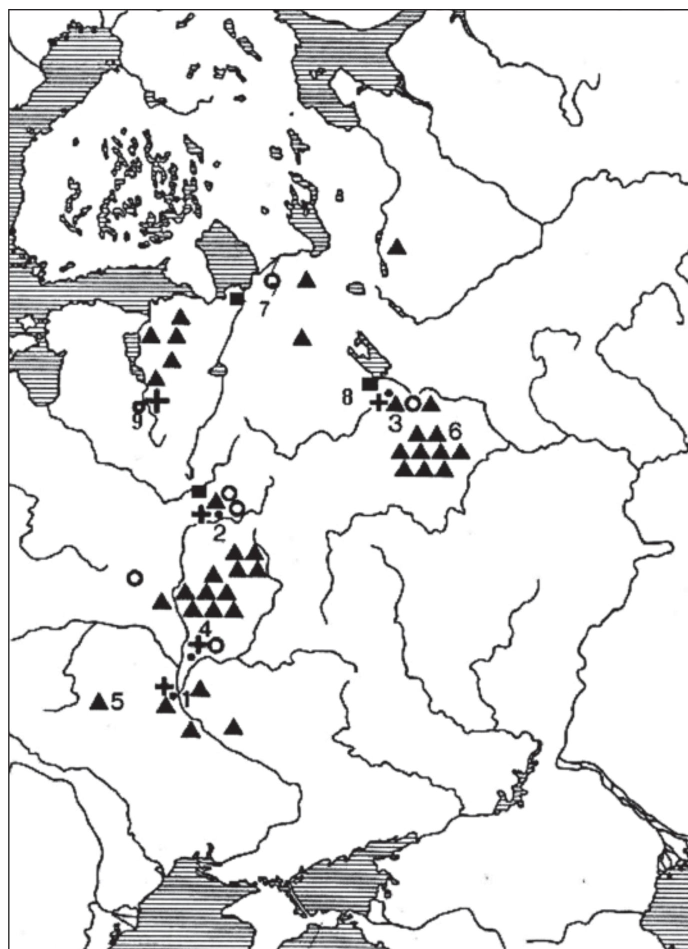


Fig. 1. **The finds of cross-pendants of the 'Scandinavian type'**
(after Jörn Staecker, 1999, type 1.4.3).



+ — cruciform pendants of sheet silver
▲ — cross-pendants of the Scandinavian type
○ — candles
■ — encolpia

1 — Kiev; 2 — Gnesdovo; 3 — Timerevo; 4 — Shestovitsa; 5 — Podgortsy; 6 — Vladimir mounds; 7 — Old Ladoga; 8 — Uglich; 9 — Pskov

Fig. 2. **The early finds of cross-pendants in Rus´**
(after V. Ia. Petrukhin and T. A. Pushkina, 2009).

owners and viewers? As this example shows, the constantly increasing volume of archaeological data posits new questions with regard to eastern impulses in early Christian Scandinavia, but it also promises us new and more comprehensive answers. Thus, bringing this new data into the wider discussion, along with early canonical texts and the evidence related to the early cult of saints, will be beneficial for both archaeologists and historians, thus enabling us to advance the debate on the nature and extent of Eastern Christian influences on early Scandinavia.