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The Islamic World, Russia and the Vikings, 750–900. The Numismatic Evidence by Thomas S. Noonan

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and the Inventing of Eastern Europe' (pp. 1–14). Dupcsik not only subjects Larry Wolff's *Inventing Eastern Europe* (Stanford, 1994) to a devastating critique but also indicates that the idea of Eastern Europe and of its backwardness partly originated in the region itself as a means of justifying autocratic government.

An interesting feature of the issue under review is the large section devoted to 'journal reviews' (pp. 91–152). These summarize selected articles from some of the journals of the region arranged by country. Such an exercise must inevitably involve a high degree of discretion. The journals published in the Czech Republic and Poland from which articles are drawn and abridged, are in the main heavyweight historical journals. The Hungarian periodicals chosen are largely in the field of political science and economics, those from Slovakia are in literature and ethnography, from Macedonia in comparative literature, and from Slovenia in feminist theory. The selection of journals thus itself inscribes a cultural geography of its own on the mental map of the region and may say much about the way intellectual circles in the countries of Eastern Europe perceive each other's academic strengths and missions.

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Noonan, Thomas S. *The Islamic World, Russia and the Vikings, 750–900. The Numismatic Evidence*. Ashgate Variorum, Aldershot, Brookfield, VT, Singapore and Sydney, 1998. x + 340 pp. Index. £55.00.

THE dearth of contemporary written sources for the early history of Rus' is partly alleviated by other materials. Foremost among these are the tens of thousands of Islamic coins that have been unearthed between the Caucasus region and the Gulf of Finland. However, their sheer quantity and the diversity of their find-sites have obstructed publication of a full catalogue and this in turn hinders analysis of them. Thomas S. Noonan stands virtually alone in studying these coins as both numismatist and general historian. That six of his most important studies are now between hard covers is a very welcome development.

In 'Why the Vikings first came to Russia' Noonan considers both the general significance of the Islamic dirhams found in what is now northern Russia and the 'Normannist question'. He demonstrates the connections between the two problems crisply and convincingly. His answer to the question of what drew the Vikings eastwards is unambiguous: Muslim silver. Staraia Ladoga is, in Noonan's words, 'the key site in any attempt to understand when and why the Vikings first came to Russia' (p. 330) and no comparable emporium has come to light elsewhere in the north-west. He highlights a hoard of twenty-six tools found in a workshop that is datable by dendrochronology to the 760s, almost the lowest sub-stratum at Staraia Ladoga. The tools are of types virtually identical to those found in Scandinavia, and it does not seem rash to suppose that they were brought and used by a Scandinavian. This and other evidence points to the presence

of Scandinavians at the foundation of Staraja Ladoga, but Noonan is wary of concluding that Scandinavians were the sole, or principal, founders, noting the evidence of trading links between Polabian and Pomeranian markets and the Ladoga region in the ninth century. He adduces the existence of early hoards found along the Upper Volga and on the left bank of the Dnieper to conclude that, while some dirhams were borne north-westwards to the Baltic region, 'a large part of the dirhams which reached central and northern Russia were kept by the indigenous peoples of these areas for a variety of purposes' (p. 343). As he points out, the *Primary Chronicle's* mentions of tribute paid in silver to the Khazars by some Slav groupings strengthens the probability, albeit for a slightly later period.

'Why dirhams first reached Russia . . .' offers a wide-ranging survey of the regions of origin of the earliest Islamic silver to reach the north. Having already established that the coins were not conveyed from the central lands of the Abbasid Caliphate by way of Central Asia, Noonan poses the fundamental questions of which routes were used, and why. Analysis of the composition of hoards found in Caucasia and the north leads him to conclude that the dirhams went mostly by way of the Caucasus. He links this with changing conditions in the Khazar khaganate, which dominated the routes north of the Caucasus. Noting that Khazar traders were already frequenting Darband in the 730s he argues that the tempering of the northern *jihad* from the mid-eighth century onwards created better conditions for exchanges between Muslim and Khazar traders. In such conditions, contacts with northern-based fur-traders might rapidly have been made (or re-forged), especially as the commodity in general demand, silver, was being issued in the form of unprecedented quantities of coins at that very time. In 'Early Abbasid mint output' Noonan shows that dirhams were struck in huge quantities by the Abbasids, especially between 749–50 and 778–79, and that the composition of pre-850 hoards (in terms of the mints where their coins were struck) is quite consistent in far-flung regions — the Middle East, the Caucasus, European Russia and the Baltic zone. This implies fairly lively, frequent exchanges between the regions, and it matches recent archaeological evidence from Staraja Ladoga suggesting that Islamic coins arrived there within a few years of being struck in Abbasid mints.

Other studies offer a preliminary catalogue of ninth-century dirham hoards found on the territory of European Russia; the first publication of a hoard of (probably) the 830s — one of the very few to have been found in the northern reaches of the Khazar khaganate; and methodological considerations as to what precisely constitutes a 'hoard'. The due rigour with which Noonan confines himself to using well-published, complete, hoards limits the size of his data-base and this inevitably makes some of his observations about apparent changes in hoard compositions rather speculative. Furthermore, there are still important issues to be addressed, such as the inter-relationship of the silver trade with the 'Silk Roads', whose relevance is recognized in 'Why dirhams first reached Russia'. But, taken together, the studies in this volume present a convincing framework for the reconstruction of economic, social and political developments in Western Eurasia, with some important

implications for the Pirenne thesis. They constitute a real advance in historical understanding.

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Inalcik, Halil. *The Customs Register of Caffa, 1487–1490*. Sources and Studies on the Ottoman Black Sea, Volume 1. Studies in Ottoman Documents Pertaining to Ukraine and the Black Sea Countries, 2. Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University. Harvard, MA, 1996. xi + 201 pp. Maps. Tables. Indexes. Appendixes. \$39.95.

THE present volume is an edition of a register of customs-arrears from the port of Caffa on the Crimea together with a translation and facsimile of the original text. The edition is supported by essays written by Halil Inalcik on the organization of the Ottoman customs and on the Black Sea trade as well as examinations of the type of imports and exports passing through the port, and of the origins of its merchants and sea-captains. The text of the register, which is hard work for the non-specialist, is made a little more accessible by the inclusion of a glossary of terms and a concordance of weights and measures. In order to facilitate comparative investigation, Inalcik also gives a report from 1490 on the customs regime at Kili (Kiliya) on the Danube delta, and a summary of Claude Peyssonel's mid-eighteenth century account of the Crimean trade.

Analysis of the customs register amply suggests the closing of Black Sea trade which followed hard upon the Turkish cutting of the passage through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles in 1452–55 and the capture of Caffa from the Genoese in 1475. Although a diversity of goods passed through Caffa in the late 1480s (including babies' dummies, p. 68), these were almost entirely conveyed by Ottoman subjects. Even the so-called *efrenc* turn out upon closer inspection to be Italian merchants resident in Chios and Moldavia.

By itself, this register cannot tell us much, and with its solitary reference to 'Rus tents' (p. 58) it must have been a little disappointing to its Ukrainian sponsors. Nevertheless, when combined with the proper analysis and publication of other registers from the Ottoman western emporia, it will surely contribute to a new understanding of the commercial relations of the Turkish empire and the place therein of Moldavia, the Eastern Balkans and the southernmost parts of Ukraine.

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Labunka, Miroslav. *The Legend of the Novgorodian White Cowl (the Study of its "Prologue" and "Epilogue")*. Monographs, 56. Ukrainian Free University, Munich, 1998. x + 339 pp. Notes. Appendixes. Bibliography. Price unknown.

WITH Old Rome in the grip of the Latins, and with New Rome (Constantinople) in the grip of the infidel Turks, the mantle of spiritual authority passed to