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Stewards, Soldiers and Court Officials: Three Scandinavian Elements in the Language of Old Russian Law

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Frontpicture: An Old Russian Prince with his retinue: *Oleg of Novgorod's campaign against Constantinople*. Source: illuminated manuscript of the *Radziwiłł Chronicle* in a copy from the 15th century. Author unknown. *Radziwiłł Chronicle,* folio 14v. Source: Wikimedia Commons. Accessible at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:14_2_List_of_Radzivill_Chron.jpg

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1 Introduction

»[T]o be responsible historical linguists, we will sometimes have to say that we don't know and can't guess what happened in some particular historical situation.«[1]

In this book we shall attempt to answer certain linguistic questions connected with the historical links between North Germanic Scandinavia on one hand, and the East Slavic region on the other. It focuses primarily on the field of medieval legal documents, which, from the point of view of contact and diachronic linguistics, has so far been researched very little and superficially, even though the linguistic aspects of Old Russian legal texts and their content have always played an important role in the argumentation about one of the most controversial subjects of debate of East Slavic historiography – the very foundation of the empire of old Rus', the ethnicity of its founders and the historical circumstances surrounding its birth.

1.1 Introduction to the subject

The primary impulse for extensive research and an endless argument that began several centuries ago came from the tales in Nestor's *Primary Chronicle* (*Повесть временных лет*), which is not just the most important, but also the only domestic source on the early history of the Rus'. It comprises two not particularly long sections of the chronicler's depiction of events occurring in the years 859 and 862. According to this source, *Varangians from overseas* appeared in 859 to collect tribute from East Slavic and Finnic tribes (Chudes, Slovenes, Meryans and Kriviches): »[И]маху дань Варѧзи изъ заморьꙗ · на Чюди и на Словѣнехъ · на Меряхъ · и на всѣхъ Кривичѣхъ«[2] (Varangians from overseas had tribute from the Chudes and Slovenes, from the Meryans and from all of the Kriviches).

[1] Thomason 1989, p. 486.

[2] *ЛЛ*, p. 19.

The key passage that started the controversial, heated debate over the Varangians is the section that describes the later events of the year 862. The chronicler notes for that date that the Slavs and the Finno-Ugric tribes no longer wanted to pay tribute and so drove the Varangians from their land and began to rule themselves. However, according to Nestor, this model did not work particularly well, since various local tribes were constantly quarrelling and so they called the overseas foreigners back soon again to rule them and help them impose order in their land. At this point the commander and prince Rurik, the legendary founder of the first ruling dynasty of Rus', is mentioned as leading the Varangians. Cf. the laconic depiction of the events of 862, surviving in the *Laurentian Codex*:

> Изъгнаша Варѧги за море и не даша имъ дани · и почаша сами в собѣ володѣти · и не бѣ в нихъ правды · и въста родъ на родъ · и быша в нихъ усобицѣ · и воєвати почаша сами на сѧ и рѣша сами в себѣ · поищемъ собѣ кнѧза · иже бы володѣлъ нами · и судилъ по праву · [и] идоша за море къ Варѧгомъ к Русі · сице бо сѧ звахуть и · варѧзи суть · ꙗко се друзи зъвутсѧ Свиє · друзии же Оурмане · Анъглѧне друзіи Гъте · тако и си · рѣша · Русь · Чюдь и Словѣни · и Кривичи · всѧ земля наша велика и ѡбилна · и нарѧда в неи нѣтъ · да поидѣте кнѧжитъ и володѣти нами · и изъбрашасѧ трие братьꙗ · с роды своими · и поꙗша по собѣ всю Русь · и придоша старѣишии Рюрикъ [сѣде Новѣгородѣ] · а другии Синеоусъ на Бѣлѣѡзерѣ · а третии Изборьстѣ · Труворъ · и ѿ тѣхъ Варѧгъ прозвасѧ Рускаꙗ земля Новугородьци ту суть людьє Нооугородьци ѿ рода Варѧжьска · преже бо бѣша Словѣни.[3]

> They drove the Varangians across the sea, gave them no tribute and began to rule themselves, but no law reigned among them. Clan rose against clan, quarrels began and they began fighting each other. And they said to themselves: let us find a prince who would rule us and judge according to the law. And so they went across the sea to the Varangians, to the Rus', since the

[3] Ibid., p. 19 f.

> Varangians call themselves this, as others call themselves Svear, others Normans, others Angles and Goths, so they too [call themselves Rus']. The Rus', Chudes, Slovenes and Kriviches declared: our country is large and fertile, but without order. Come to rule our country. And so three brothers and their families were chosen and they brought the entire Rus' [people] with them. The eldest, Rurik, came and settled in Novgorod, the second, Sineus, by the White Lake and the third, Truvor, in Izborsk. The land is called Rus' after these Varangians and people of Novgorod are now the Varangian clan, since before that they were Slovenes.

On the basis of testimony in this chronicle, several alternative claims of the location of Rurik's first residence have been put forward, which may have been influenced not just by the political environment of the time, but also by local patriotism of scribes or of the original author of the chronicle. In the *Laurentian Codex* cited above, Rurik came directly to Novgorod, where he settled and began to rule. Contrary to this, the account of the events of 862 surviving in the *Hypathian Codex* presents a considerably expanded version, according to which Rurik first settled in Ladoga and only later founded a new town, Novgorod, which he declared to be the main princely seat (while in both versions, Sineus and Truvor settled by the White Lake and in Izborsk):

> [И] изъбрашасѧ · триє брата · с роды своими · и поѧша по собѣ всю Русь · и придоша къ Словѣномъ пѣрвѣє · и срубиша город Ладогу · и сѣде старѣшии в Ладозѣ Рюрикъ · а другии Синеоусъ на Бѣлѣѡзерѣ · а третьи Труворъ въ Изборьсцѣ · и ѡт тѣхъ Варѧгъ · прозвасѧ Рускаѧ землѧ · по дъвою же лѣту · оумре Синеоусъ · и братъ єго Труворъ · и прияѧ Рюрикъ власть всю ѡдинъ · и пришед къ Ильмерю · и сруби город надъ Волховою · и прозваша и Новъгородъ · и сѣде ту кнѧжѧѧ · и раздаѧ мужемъ своимъ волости · и городы рубити · ѡвому Полътескъ · ѡвому Ростовъ · другому Бѣлоѡзеро · и по тѣмь городомъ суть находницѣ · Варѧзи · пѣрвии наслѣдници в Новѣгородѣ Словенѣ · и в

Полотьскѣ Кривичи · Ростовѣ Мерѧне · Бѣлѣѡзерѣ Весь · Муромѣ Мурома · и тѣми всѣми ѡбладаше Рюрикъ ·[4]

Three brothers and their families were chosen and they brought all of the Rus' with them. First, they came to the Slovenes and built the town of Ladoga. The eldest, Rurik, settled in Ladoga. The middle one, Sineus, settled by the White Lake and the third, Truvor, in Izborsk. The land was called Rus' after these Varangians. Two years later, both Sineus and his brother Truvor died, and so Rurik assumed power alone. He arrived at Lake Ilmen, built a town above the River Volkhov and named it Novgorod. There he settled and ruled. He gave out estates to his men and built towns: to one he gave Polock, to another Rostov and to another Beloozero. The Varangians were immigrants to these towns. The original inhabitants were the Slovenes in Novgorod and the Kriviches in Polock, the Meryans in Rostov, the Veps in Beloozero and Muromians in Murom. And Rurik ruled them all.

The data contained in the aforementioned chronicles prompted passionate discussion which subsequently crystallised into several questions that became so fundamental for historiography (primarily, but by far not only Russian) that they provoked the so-called *Varangian Controversy* (for more details, see chapter 2.1). No unequivocal and generally accepted answer to these controversial questions exists to this day. The most disputed of them are the following:

- Who was the founder of Kievan Rus'?
- If it was the Varangians mentioned in chronicles, who were they and where did they come from?
- Were Nestor's *Rus'* and the Varangians one ethnic group?
- If not, who were these *Rus'*, from which the ethnonym *Russian* and the name of the empire itself – *Rus'* and later *Russia* derive?

The fact that this issue is still current and interesting at least in the Russian environment is testified for example by celebrations in honour of the Rurik dynasty held on repeated occasions during Russia's history. The tradition of celebrating the year 862, when, according to sources, Prince Rurik began to rule the Rus' and founded the Russian Empire, started on a large scale back in 1862. In that year a monumental memorial was unveiled

[4] *ИЛ*, p. 15 f.

in the Kremlin of Novgorod, the *Millennium of Russia* (*Тысячелетие России*), where the Varangian Prince Rurik himself stands proudly at the head of other prominent personages of Russian history. The most spectacular event however was the declaration of a new public holiday on the day that was proclaimed not so long ago as the date of Rurik's arrival by the Russian Federation on the occasion of the 1150th anniversary of the ›foundation of the Russian State‹. A spectacular festival comprising a total of 150 events was held in Novgorod from 21 to 23 September 2012 (i.e. 1,150 years after the year 862). The main ceremonies were held, very symbolically, on 21 September, which is also the day of remembrance of the victory of Dmitrij Donskoj over the Mongols and a day that occupies a special place in the Orthodox calendar, since it is the celebration of the *Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (*Рождество Пресвятой Богородицы*). This anniversary was celebrated in style with the participation of prominent political and ecclesiastical personages, including President Vladimir Putin, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, and Metropolitan Leo of Novgorod.[5]

1.2 Tasks, goals and methods

The book addresses various aspects and therefore various methods are applied. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 contain linguo-philological research and each chapter is divided into several subsections. Chapter 2 *Science and Ideology: Disputes over the beginnings of Russian history* is divided into three parts. The first part (subchapter 2.1) focuses on the influence of ideology on historiography and philology. It follows the most significant moments in the development of the Varangian controversy along a timeline, applying text analysis of secondary literature that addressed and still addresses this issue. The chapter tries to map and explore the context of hitherto research, while attempting to achieve the greatest possible objectivity in assessment and the maximum possible impartiality. Neither this chapter (or any other) will address the Varangian issue itself, but merely examine the course and development of disputes between the advocates of various approaches and theories. Subchapter 2.2 addresses the concrete influence of ideology on hitherto research of Scandinavian borrowings and the issue of Scandinavian borrowings in Old Russian. Analysis of the works of selected authors (philologists and historians) attempts to highlight the importance

[5] More information e.g. at http://www.culture.ru/movies/715/k-1150-letiyu-rossiyskogo-gosudarstva-mi-russkiy-narod [17 July 2018].

of linguistics in the controversy and how encumbered academic literature has become with deposits of ideological ballast which must be eliminated to enable critical research.

The pivotal part of this book lies in chapters 3 and 4, which contain morphological, phonological and semantic diachronic analysis of chosen vocabulary on the basis of research of sources dating to a defined period (see chapter 1.3) and thorough analysis of the resulting material. The words chosen for analysis were the Old Russian nouns *jabednik* (*ябедникъ*), *tiun* (*тиунъ*) and *gridь* (*гридь*), which have been inexorably linked to the Varangian controversy from the very start. All three occur in the earliest surviving East Slavic legal compendium, *Rus' Justice*, where they refer to men who served in the closest circles surrounding the prince. Although this does not expressly concern legal terminology in all cases, all of these positions were closely linked to the prince's bureaucratic apparatus and all had high status, as is evident from the fact that under the Old Russian legal system the killing of any such person meant the exaction of the highest possible fine (40 grivna). The fundamental part of the research uses a source basis of Old Russian and Middle Russian legal and administrative texts, where the influence of Church Slavic is minimal and which, conversely, reflect the living Old Russian language, primarily in terms of terminology.[6] The chosen words and derivatives that have formed around them are subjected to linguistic analysis, focusing on describing the development not just of the morphological and phonetic attributes of primary borrowings and their subsequent development in the East Slavic linguistic area, but also of transformations of meaning, such as semantic shifts, and therefore the historical-semantic method is applied.[7] Such transformations are followed not just chronologically but, where necessary, in a wider spatial context not restricted just to the East Slavic linguistic area, but taking in the neighbouring Baltic languages and Polish.

[6] Живов 2002, p. 194.

[7] The term *historical semantics* was introduced to Czech historiography and linguistics by historian Josef Macek. According to Macek, historical semantics examines the meanings of signs, mainly words and names in synchrony and diachrony; and at the same time changes in the meanings of signs, words and names with regard to historico-social, cultural and mental changes; and finally the creation of new words and names and their disappearance in consequence of developments in society. Therefore it involves also following transformations in the meaning of words and names with respect to changes in their usage in various contexts (Macek 1991, p. 9; David 2013, p. 16 f.). The term had already been used by Roman Jakobson, referring to developmental changes of word meanings (Jakobson 1932, p. 115). For more on the development and theories of lexical semantics, see Geeraerts 2010.

Since the chosen vocabulary is still blurred by ambiguity and imprecision as to its origin and the way in which it travelled to Old Rus', another task of this book is to revise and correct the etymology of the primary borrowings, potentially adding to and expanding on it. To this end, primarily a historical-comparative method will be applied, along with analysis of source materials surviving from medieval Scandinavia, containing mainly texts of a legal and administrative nature. These texts date approximately to the period that may correspond with the historical circumstances under which the vocabulary in question infiltrated Old Russian (if the theory of their North Germanic origin proves probable). A description of sources and the criteria for choosing them from a geographical and temporal viewpoint are presented in subchapter 1.4.

The main subject of this book is the lexical level. As such, it presents research on the level of lexical units (in this case individual borrowings) and their derivatives defined by certain relationships (groups of derivatives which originated from the new lexicon). Special emphasis is placed on lexical semantics (semasiology) using a diachronic viewpoint through which we attempt to analyse and describe the semantics of the chosen lexical units, the origin of their semantic content, their development, shifts, transfers and obsolescence.[8] At the same time, we attempt to explain the etymology and identify the motivation behind changes in meaning.

1.3 Definition of terms and periods

Fairly little is known about Germanic loanwords in the early phase of East Slavic history and academic research of the topic is still quite scarce, especially when it comes to Old Russian. A *Germanic loanword* in this book means a lexical unit which came into Old East Slavic dialects from any Germanic language. The text then specifies more precisely what Germanic area the vocabulary might relate to, for instance if it concerns *Scandinavian* borrowings (i.e. vocabulary of North Germanic origin), *Old High German* borrowings, *Old Saxon* borrowings and so on.

From a linguistic point of view, this was simply a question of contact and mutual interference of languages. The discipline that studies languages in contact is currently most frequently known as *contact linguistics*. Terminology may differ from author to author, and since in this case basic terms suffice, in this book we use the terminology of a pioneer in contact linguis-

[8] For more on the definition, see Horálek 2005, p. 10.

tics, Uriel Weinreich, and, from more recent years, that of Sarah Grey Thomason. The aforementioned researchers call languages (two or more) that are in contact as the *source language* on the one side and either the *recipient language* according to Weinreich or the *target language* according to Thomason on the other.[9] Then the processes of influencing and transfer during contact between two or more languages are called *borrowing* and *interference* or *shift*.[10]

1.3.1 Loaned vocabulary, borrowings and foreign words

When classifying loaned words, we bear in mind partially the differentiating terms *borrowing* and *foreign word*, despite the fact that such differentiation is currently used rather rarely and sometimes is considered to be outdated.[11] A *borrowing* here refers to a lexical unit that has been borrowed from the source language (or *donor*) and is already incorporated in the recipient language, while not being a loan translation (calque). Contrarily, we understand a *foreign word* to be a lexical unit that has not yet been lexicalised in the recipient language, in other words it is neither morphologically nor phonologically incorporated in the system of the recipient language, which might mean that it was borrowed only shortly before its occurrence (which at a time so distant in the past is of course debatable), or that the user (in this case the author or the scribe of an Old Russian text) did not understand it properly, or it was soon pushed out of the language perhaps by a different unit, or disappeared once there was no longer any need to identify the given phenomenon.

A word that is loaned incorporates itself into the domestic language primarily according to function and meaning, its form being appropriately adapted so that it can function normally in the target language.[12] From a semantic point of view, a lexeme may be borrowed completely (with all of its meanings) or just with one of several original meanings, indicating that it is merely a partial borrowing. For instance, *concretisation* often occurs in case of specialised terminology, where it usually involves special application of a word that, in its original language, had a wider or more general meaning, but has been accepted into other languages as a technical term, e.g. corresponding to one specific (type of) use. Often *semantic shifts*

[9] Weinreich 1970, p. 50, Thomason 2001, Thomason – Kaufmann 1988.

[10] Weinreich 1970, p. 50 ff., Thomason 2001.

[11] E.g. Peter von Polenz as early as 1979 (von Polenz 1979, p. 9 ff.).

[12] Čermák 2012, p. 52.

occur, i.e. changes in the meanings of words that may develop already during the assimilation process, but also later in the target language while or after they adapt within the vocabulary (during the lexicalisation process). Such shifts in meaning may sometimes be considerable.

1.3.2 Language and time frame

The question of the genesis of the Slavic proto-language is a key issue for Slavic studies (and equally for Baltic studies). A range of various theories and chronologies have been presented on this topic, although complete consensus among researchers has not yet been found. In this book we refer to the Slavic proto-language using the term *Proto-Slavic*, basing this mainly on the approach of Arnošt Lamprecht. The separation of Balto-Slavic (considered by certain linguists to be the probable common ancestor of Baltic and Slavic languages in the period known as the *Balto-Slavic linguistic unity* or *Proto-Balto-Slavic*) from Germanic languages (i.e. from Proto-Germanic) is estimated by Lamprecht to have occurred sometime after 2000 BC, perhaps around 1500 BC.[13] In his opinion, Proto-Slavic departed from this common Balto-Slavic branch or Proto-Baltic linguistic continuum[14] around 400–500 BC, followed by a fairly long period of *Early Proto-Slavic*.[15] He dates the origin of *Classic Proto-Slavic* to approximately 400–800 AD, which is a period characterised by typical Proto-Slavic phonetic changes, such as the ›law of open syllables‹ or tendency towards increasing sonority, palatalisation of velar consonants, monophthongisation of diphthongs, the formation of nasal vowels and metathesis of liquid consonants.[16] He estimates the Proto-Slavic language community from which individual Slavic languages split off to have begun disintegrating approximately in the 10th century.[17] At that point in time a large number of phonological changes were taking place in Slavic languages. These correspond to the growth in the number of dialectal differences which are reflected in surviving *Old Church Slavic* texts.

Lamprecht's theory has been recently revised by Václav Blažek and Petra Novotná, who applied glottochronological methods on the basis of lexical matching. Their model proposes an alternative chronology which

[13] Lamprecht 1987, p. 13.

[14] Ibid.; see also Erhart 1982 and Dini 2014, p. 96 and 102 ff.

[15] Lamprecht 1987, p. 13.

[16] Ibid., p. 8.

[17] Ibid., p. 5.

dates the disintegration of Balto-Slavic linguistic unity to sometime around 1400 BC. According to their theory, the Proto-Slavic language began to diversify in the 6th century AD with the separation of East Slavic from the Proto-Slavic basis. Division continued gradually, with the Southwest Slavic dialects splitting off in the first half of the 8th century, West Slavic and South Slavic languages in the course of the 10th century, and was not complete until the formation of the East Slavic groups in the 12th century.[18]

The *Old Russian era* is most often defined as running from the 11th to the end of the 13th century[19] and from a historical point of view this corresponds approximately with the era of the Kievan Rus'. The main language of East Slavic manuscripts in the early historical era was *Church Slavic*, a written language based on Old Church Slavic (South Slavic dialects), enriched with elements of local (East Slavic) variants. Alongside this, documents began to appear written in a variant based on vernacular language, known as *official correspondence*, comprising commercial, official and legal documents, with a strong dialectal flavour. These documents contain fairly simple, practical texts and were written primarily for administrative purposes. The all-embracing term *Old Russian* (*древнерусский язык*) is commonly used to designate the vernacular language used at that time and during the subsequent period in the East Slavic region, and this is the term we prefer to use in this book. The Old Russian period is also the main focus of the book. Certain researchers assume that a ›proto-language‹[20] existed in the East Slavic region which was supposedly uniform to a certain extent, even though a certain differentiation between East Slavic dialects came about after the disappearance of yers in the 12th century.[21] Further, this book opts for an overlap into the *Middle Russian* period (from the end of the 14th century to approximately the end of the 17th century, i.e. until the reforms of Peter the Great), especially the early part, covering the Muscovite era.

In linguistic terms, a deepening diglossia is characteristic of this period, already involving considerable differences between Church Slavic and the communication language based on vernacular dialects. The importance of

[18] Blažek – Novotná 2007, p. 209 and 342.

[19] Leška 2003, p. 193 f.

[20] Amongst others, Aleksandr Isačenko speaks of *Early East Slavic* (»Früh-Ostslavisch«) until the year 1050 and *East Slavic* (»Ostslavisch«) from 1050 until 1350. He admits the existence of isoglosses, but does not consider them sufficiently differentiating to be an adequate argument against East Slavic linguistic unity (Issatschenko 1980, p. 44 ff.).

[21] Leška 2003, p. 193 f.

the latter grew mainly in consequence of the foundation of a central office for communication with foreign lands in Moscow in 1549 (*Посольский приказ*, literally ›Ambassadorial Order‹). A *communication administrative language* (*деловой язык*) was important for the development of Russian and creation of a literary language also because it reflected the influences of the West on the language and society of Rus'. Legal documentation was written using precisely this variety.[22]

This study is focused especially on the Old Russian period in a more confined sense, as described above, i.e. the language of the 11th–13th centuries and the historical period of the Kievan Empire, during which the first wave of Scandinavian loanwords arrived in Rus'. However, the research considerably exceeds this limit, dipping into the Middle Russian period, and analyses reflections of selected Scandinavian loanwords in sources up until the end of the 16th century, where it concentrates mainly on official correspondence, supplemented with further Old Russian materials as well as later sources, folklore etc. (see below).

In the North Germanic language environment, this book touches on the *Proto-Norse* period, which tends to be estimated as between 200 and 750 AD, when the *Proto-Norse language* (also called *Proto-Nordic*, *Proto-North Germanic*, *Proto-Scandinavian*, *Ancient* or *Primitive Norse*, *Early Runic* etc., Ger. *Urnordisch*, Nor. *Urnordisk*, Sw. *Urnordgermanska*) is considered to have been the common North Germanic proto-language.[23] It focuses especially on the subsequent Viking Age (the *Old Norse*[24] phase) and on the Scandinavian Middle Ages. In this book we use the term *Old Norse* in a broad sense (i.e. as a translation of the Sw. *fornnordiska*, Dan. *gammelnordisk*, cf. Ger. *Altgermanisch*) for the language of the entire North Germanic area during the years 750–1100, which historically covers the Viking period.[25] Old Norse written records demonstrate the features of

[22] The work on this subject by the prominent Russian linguist Andrej A. Zaliznjak deserves special attention. He has long been engaged in very detailed research of medieval Russian, primarily Novgorod koine and Old Novgorod dialect and, in close cooperation with archaeologist Valentin L. Janin, analysed a wealth of birch bark manuscripts (e.g. Зализняк – Янин 1986; Зализняк – Янин 1993; Гиппиус – Зализняк – Янин 2004). See particularly the extensive monograph by Zaliznjak (Зализняк 2004), but also a range of his earlier studies on the topic, such as Зализняк 1987, Зализняк 1988 etc.

[23] Torp – Vikør 2003, p. 33; Wessén 1968, p. 29 f.

[24] The Old Norse period is often considered the richest cultural period in the history of Scandinavia and remains to this day a significant factor component to the identity of contemporary Germanic-language-speaking Scandinavians.

[25] Palm 2010.

three dialects: *Old West Norse* in the territory of today's Norway, Iceland, the Orkneys and the Faroe Isles (*fornvästnordiska*, *norrønt mál*), *Old East Norse* in the territory of today's Denmark and Sweden (*fornöstnordiska*, *oldøstnordisk*) and *Old Gutnish* on the island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea (*forngutniska*).[26] Individual languages developed within these branches and then until the end of the Scandinavian Late Middle Ages (i.e. in the historical period up until the final dissolution of the Kalmar Union in 1523 and until the Protestant Reformation in the 1530s). We speak separately of *Old Swedish* (*fornsvenska*),[27] *Old Danish* (*olddansk*, *gammeldansk*),[28] *Old Norwegian* (*norrøn* and *mellomnorsk*)[29] and *Old Icelandic* (this period in the development of Icelandic is known as *forníslenska* and *miðíslenska*)[30] as the ancestors of contemporary North Germanic languages.

1.4 On sources and their selection

Several serious inconsistencies relate to the aforementioned *Primary Chronicle* that make working with it considerably difficult and so the historical credibility of this source was fairly soon called into doubt to various extents. The most serious point of arguments is generated by the fact that the text survived only in later copies, the earliest of which dates only to the 14th century. The considerable temporal distance of the oldest copy from the described events alone (about 400 years) provokes justified doubts about just how much the information contained in it differs from historical fact. Additionally, even the assumed (lost) first version must have been merely a compendium of earlier chronicles penned in the late 11th/early 12th century. And even these were compilations of other sources, perhaps at least 50 years older. The author (or rather compiler) of the earliest com-

[26] Ibid., p. 329.

[27] Old Swedish (translation for Sw. *fornsvenska*): a term referring to a phase of medieval Swedish which was spoken approximately between 1225 and 1526 (Wessén 1968, p. 89 ff.).

[28] Old Danish (known as *gammeldansk* in modern Dan.) is usually delimited in Danish historical linguistics by approximately 1100 to 1515 (Moltke 1976, p. 326).

[29] Old Norwegian is known as *mellomnorsk* (from the 11th century until 1350) but confusingly sometimes also under the term *norrøn* (as of approx. 700, which then includes both the Old West Norse and Old Norwegian periods) (Torp – Vikør 2003, p. 49 f.).

[30] The term Old Icelandic includes a period in the development of Icelandic known as *forníslenska* (800–1530), and a second part sometimes identified in Icelandic linguistics as *miðíslenska* (approx. 1300–1530) (Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon 2008, p. XV; Wessén 1968, p. 34 f.).

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