

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Misāns, Ilgvars & Neitmann, Klaus (eds.) *Leonid Arbusow (1882–1951) und die Erforschung des mittelalterlichen Livland*, Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2014, 383pp. ISBN 978-3-412-22214-7**

*Leonid Arbusow (1882–1951) und die Erforschung des mittelalterlichen Livland* is a highly respectable work specially dedicated to the life and legacy of Leonid Arbusow, Jr., undoubtedly the most prominent medievalist in Latvia during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and a man whose impact on Livonian medieval studies can hardly be overestimated. As summoned by the Baltic Historical Commission, the book was published in print this year as Volume 24 of the *Quellen und Studien zur baltischen Geschichte*.

In accordance with the title of the book, the content has been thematically divided into two main blocks. Following the highly insightful introduction by Ilgvars Misāns and Klaus Neitmann, the first thematic block, *Leonid Arbusow und sein historiografisches Erbe* consists of six papers highlighting mostly the scientific career of Leonid Arbusow and focusing on the creation of his most influential works. As a complimentary addition, the book also comes with a bibliographical index of the works by Leonid Arbusow, Jr. The second half of the book, entitled *Neuere Forschungen zur Geschichte des mittelalterlichen Livland* consists of eight papers encompassing some of the key aspects in the contemporary field of Livonian medieval studies. All the papers throughout the book have been fitted out with extensive footnotes reflecting the primary sources and providing excellent guidance to secondary literature.

The opening and most extensive chapter of the first part, ‘Das wissenschaftliche Lebenswerk Leonid Arbusows’ by Klaus Neitmann illustrates the scientific notions of the Baltic-German historical tradition that influenced the work of Leonid Arbusow, Jr. the most. Following the comprehensive yet intriguing overview of Arbusow’s academic career and achievements as editor and commentator,



Neitmann also focuses on the changing political conditions and controversies of the interwar period, which ultimately led to Arbusow's exile.

The following chapter, 'Leonid Arbusow und die lettische Geschichtsschreibung' by Ilgvars Misāns addresses the same topic in more detail by analysing Arbusow's ambivalent relationship with the emerging Latvian historical community. On the one hand, Arbusow is depicted as the most important teacher of the first generation of Latvian historians, on the other hand, he is portrayed as rigorous opponent of the nationalistic ideas expressed by the new history writing. Misāns analyses in depth the increasing conflict and Arbusow's gradual falling out of favour with the academy in Riga.

The third chapter, entitled 'Oskar Stavenhagen, Leonid Arbusow und die Akten und Rezesse der livländischen *Ständetage*' by Matthias Thumser thoroughly explores the creation of the monumental collection of the legislative records and Acts of Livonian *Ständetage* from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century—an extensive project that was first initiated at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Oskar Stavenhagen, then continued by Arbusow, and is yet to be concluded. In like manner, the following chapter, 'Konzeption und Standort von Leonid Arbusows "Einführung der Reformation in Liv-, Est- und Kurland"' by Bernhard Jähnig accurately characterises the creation and lasting significance of Arbusow's most celebrated work: the monolithic book on the arrival and introduction of the Reformation in sixteenth-century Livonia.

The fifth chapter, 'Leonid Arbusow als Erforscher der Kulturgeschichte Alt-Livlands' by Inna Põltsam-Jürjo evaluates Arbusow's work from the perspective of cultural history. She draws the conclusion that Arbusow was indeed mindful of the contemporary research in the field of cultural history—as reflected by his works—but also mostly disregarded the methods of the discipline, thus inevitably predetermining the relative boundedness of his work.

'Leonid Arbusow d.J.' by Peter Wörster is the last chapter of the first block dedicated to Arbusow's legacy, in which Wörster focuses on the unpublished materials—personal records, unfinished works, correspondence, etc.—left behind by Arbusow, which provide a valuable source for understanding Arbusow's personal affiliations.

The first chapter of the second block, entitled 'Zerschlagung, Verlagerung und Neuschaffung zentraler Orte im Zuge der Eroberung Livlands' by Raoul Zühlke focuses on interpreting the importance of pre-conquest centres during the

thirteenth-century Livonian campaign. In this chapter, the author compellingly argues that one of the keys to success for the German conquerors was the reshaping and skillful incorporation of existing centres into the newly established military structure.

The next chapter, 'Verkündigung und Kreuzpredigt in und für Livland im 13. Jahrhundert' by Tiina Kala investigates the development of the Baltic crusade ideology and the gradual transformation of Livonia into the substitute Holy Land, starting from end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Both of the following two chapters, 'Die livländischen Bistümer im Spätmittelalter' by Henrike Bolte and '14<sup>th</sup> Century Crisis in Livonia?' by Eva Eihmane analyse in great detail the continuous power struggles between Livonian prelates, the Teutonic Order and the Papal Court. By examining the correspondence between the Holy See and the Livonian overlords, Eihmane stresses the importance of bribery in the fourteenth- to fifteenth-century political affairs and also strikingly illustrates the contemporaneous moral decay within the Roman Catholic Church.

The sixth chapter, 'Randgruppen in den mittelalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Großstädten Livlands' by Paweł A. Jeziorski carefully examines the legal status of two important boarder groups in the medieval towns of Livonia—executioners and prostitutes—and also seeks to understand the attitudes of medieval townspeople.

The last three chapters of the book are dedicated to the sixteenth-century crisis in Livonia. 'Der Deutsche Orden im 16. Jahrhundert' by Juhan Kreem illuminates the Teutonic Order's changing political agendas during the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and also further explains the role of the military order in the collapse of the Livonian confederation. 'Versuche staatsmännischer Gestaltung in der Spätzeit Alt-Livlands' by Thomas Lange offers an interesting analysis and re-evaluation of the hitherto mostly negatively depicted Wilhelm von Brandenburg, the last Archbishop of Riga during the prelude to the Livonian War. Last but not least, 'Die Reformation in Livland und konfessionelle Aspekte des livländischen Krieges' by Anti Selart compellingly portrays the similar, yet contradictory, religious rhetoric of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church and protestant preachers in explaining the reasons for the outbreak of the Livonian War.

To sum up, it has to be mentioned that the book is a significant addition to understanding the scientific and historiographical background of Livonian medieval studies as well as contemporary perspectives, advancements and

re-evaluations in the field. Regardless of the varying nature of the different chapters—either on the more informative or the interpretative side—the book as a whole offers a steady and satisfying read. Further importance is gained by the fact that this work also tackles some of the still unresolved debates regarding the Latvian and Estonian history writing. All of the authors deserve high praise for both their individual efforts and collective contribution in accomplishing this book.

**Artur Alajaan**

Institute of History,  
Tallinn University  
Rüütli 6,  
Tallinn 10130, Estonia  
E-mail: alajaan@tlu.ee