

mit den Einwohnern der Rus'. Aber die politischen Verhältnisse waren unbeständig. Wahrscheinlich kam es zu keinem umfangreichen Zusammenschluss zwischen den gesellschaftlichen Eliten, dafür waren die lokalen sozialen Verhältnisse zu unbeständig. Somit ist die politische Bedeutung der Rus' in der Region im 11. und 12. Jahrhundert nicht zu überschätzen, aber auch nicht zu leugnen.

Eine ambivalente Feststellung dieser Art, die mit der einen Hand gibt und mit der anderen nimmt, kann enttäuschend sein. Sie ist aber nicht nur durch die ungünstige Quellenlage verursacht. Sie spiegelt auch die methodologische Frage, wie eine Herrschaft und ihre geografische Ausdehnung in Osteuropa im Hochmittelalter zu definieren ist.⁹⁴ In jedem Fall scheint aber das estländische Gebiet für die russischen Zentren im 12. Jahrhundert eher von untergeordneter wirtschaftlicher und politischer Bedeutung gewesen zu sein.

SUMMARY

Was Estonia a Tributary of Rus' (10th–12th century)?

The question of whether the territory of contemporary Estonia and the whole eastern Baltic region was a tributary of the Old Rus' princes before the 13th century crusades has been widely discussed in scholarly literature. This discussion does not lack political aspects; often in the background there has been the desire to attest the “independence” or some kind of “Russianness” of the area. Different understandings and especially a modernising approach of the nature of the early Russian state and its power structures, however, caused mutual confusions between historians. The tributary relation of the Livs and some Latgalian territories to Russian princes around 1200 can be regarded as a proved fact. In several cases the tribute (*dan'*) paid by some Estonian centres to Russians in the first decades of the 13th

⁹⁴ Zusammenfassend über das Wesen des altrussischen Reiches vgl. IGOR' N. DANILEVSKIJ: Drevnjaja Rus' glazami sovremennikov i potomkov (IX–XII vv.). Kurs lekcij [Die alte Rus' in den Augen der Zeitgenossen und der Nachfahren, 9.–12. Jh. Ein Vorlesungskurs], Moskau 2001, S. 164–181. Vgl. auch STEPAN N. TEMUŠEV: K voprosu o roli nalogovo-danničeskoj sistemy v genezise i razvitii drevnerusskogo gosudarstva [Zur Frage der Rolle des Systems von Steuern und Abgaben in der Entstehung und Entwicklung des altrussischen Reiches], in: Ot Drevnej Rusi k Rossijskoj Federacii. Istorija Rossijskoj gosudarstvennosti, hrsg. von VIKTOR A. SADOVNIČIJ, St. Petersburg 2013, S. 213–222. Es handelt um einen propagandistischen Sammelband, der jedoch einzelne wissenschaftliche Beiträge enthält.

century as recorded in Russian chronicles corresponds to single payments to the besieger of these castles as narrated in the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia (written c1227).

During the earlier period the shortage of relevant sources causes difficulties in answering this question. The term *Chud* used for Finnic people in the Russian chronicles is not always related to the Estonian territory and its inhabitants. The lists of peoples and tribes paying tribute to the Russian princes in the chronicle tradition are also based on Scandinavian traditions and thus reflect the pretensions of Viking Age Scandinavian leaders in the Baltic Sea area rather than a coherent system of territories dependent on the Rus'.

The Russian, especially the Novgorodian chronicles record a number of military raids of Russian princes against Estonian centres in the 11th and 12th centuries. Grand prince Yaroslav Vladimirovich of Kiev around 1030 is said to have conquered the Estonian hill-fort Tartu and established Yur'ev castle, which existed until 1061 when an Estonian tribe called Sos-soly destroyed it. Before this incident several military actions took place in Northern Estonia (Harjuma). The raid of Yaroslav supposedly resulted in a change of the administrative system and economy of South-Eastern Estonia, but did not lead to long-term and extensive tributary relations of Estonia proper. However, the economic contact between Estonia and the Rus' in this period seems to have been considerable. The Russian raids against Estonia in the 12th century concentrated on Eastern and Southern Estonia (Tartu and Otepää). There is no evidence of intensive, centralised Orthodox mission in the Baltics.

The overall economic importance of the Estonian territory for the Rus' seems to have been still rather low in this period. There was no major transport route comparable with the Daugava or Neva rivers due to the large area of forests and marshes between the core areas of Estonia and Novgorod. The existing sources do not allow one to make clear conclusions about the "independence" or tributary position of Estonia before the crusades. Only the existence of the "Russian" Yur'ev in c1030–1061 has been proved. Most probably, one might speak about unstable political relations which could lead to a regular tribute obligation of some Estonian centre but did not result in any regular and long-lasting dependence of larger areas.