

in Holstein auf vier oder fünf Tage angewachsen (S. 124). Es sei jedoch angemerkt, dass sich zu Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts die Zahl der durchschnittlich zu leistenden Frondienstage in Estland und auf Ösel bereits auf sechs Tage wöchentlich belief. Seltener war dies in Livland der Fall, wo üblicherweise fünf Frondienstage pro Woche geleistet werden mussten.

North stellt in seiner Studie einen Zusammenhang zwischen den wichtigsten Wendemarken, Ereignissen, kulturellen Errungenschaften und ökonomischen Entwicklungslinien in der Geschichte der Ostseeländer her. Das Buch verfolgt nicht in erster Linie das Ziel, neue Fakten und originäre Ansichten darzubieten, sondern es ist bestrebt, die bisherigen Forschungsergebnisse von einem sicheren Standpunkt aus zusammenzufassen. Beeindruckend ist die schiere Zahl der herangezogenen Literatur (S. 400–429), wobei sogar noch 2011 erschienene Publikationen genannt werden. Dem Verfasser ist es durchaus gelungen, den Leser davon zu überzeugen, dass es sich beim Ostseeraum um eine einheitliche Region handelt. Diese synthetische Herangehensweise hätte es dem Autor sicherlich ermöglichen können, in weitaus größerem Maße eigene Schlussfolgerungen zu ziehen. Zusammenfassend lässt sich aber feststellen, dass es sich beim anzudeutenden Buch um eine gelungene Übersichtsdarstellung handelt.

Hilfreich sind die zu Beginn eines jeden Kapitels gelieferten Karten des Ostseeraums im betreffenden Zeitraum. Der Anteil der Illustrationen des Buches hätte sogar noch größer sein können, insbesondere wenn man berücksichtigt, dass die meisten Abbildungen *Wikimedia Commons* entnommen sind (S. 397ff.).

MARTEN SEPPEL

ANDREJS PLAKANS: *A Concise History of the Baltic States*. Cambridge University Press. New York 2011. XVI, 472 pp. ISBN 9780521541558.

In *A Concise History of the Baltic States*, Andrejs Plakans takes on the difficult task of presenting a broad history of the Baltic Eastern Littoral – the area which would eventually come to comprise modern-day Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Following the recent trend of looking at the Baltic Sea Region as a “region,”¹ Plakans identifies overarching trends and themes that go beyond national borders, past and present, including location, language, statehood, leadership and fragmentation. Illustrated with

¹ For example, as articulated in *The Baltic Sea Region – Cultures, Politics, Societies*, ed. by WITOLD MACIEJEWSKI, Uppsala 2002.

beautiful period maps, his work clearly depicts shifting borders, making a complex regional history comprehensible to the reader. It allows the reader to see contemporaneous developments in the various parts of the Littoral in parallel, in an unprecedentedly effective way. Without a doubt, with this regional history, Plakans moves in the opposite direction of the so-called “nationalist histories” which he argues have fallen out of favour among Western academic audiences. Plakans’ book is designed to be a university course reader, as well as a book for business people and travellers to the Baltic States. At a length of 448 pages, Plakans concisely covers a vast period of history: from the end of the ice age to the 21st century. Plakans manages to include political, military, cultural, and social history, of the various entities in the Baltic Eastern Littoral, over this stretch of time.

Plakans’ account of the ancient history of the Eastern Baltic Littoral is very well organized and readable. He looks beyond the first written mention of the Baltic region, into the temporal realm of anthropologists, who excavate graves, hill mounds, pottery, tools, etc., and make hypotheses based on their findings. According to Plakans, little can be said definitively about Baltic pre-history, short of educated guesses. In his detailing of the various Baltic and Finnic tribes of the 12th century – Estonians, Latgalians, Livonians, Couronians, Aukstaitians, Zemaitijans and others – Plakans emphasizes that the territories inhabited by the many tribes commonly understood as proto-Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians do not correspond to modern day borders, although ancient history has been often used by nationalists for their purposes. He reminds readers that the tribal borders mapped out by historians were not so airtight, and that, subgroups within tribal zones likely attacked each other, as well as Slavic Tribes. Plakans notably adds that Slavic surrounding tribes at this time were similar to Baltic ones, and just as fragmented – although, he regrettably does not dwell on them in detail, preferring to devote attention primarily to Baltic and Finnic tribes. Plakans briefly touches on belief systems in his discussion of ancient Baltic history, although he does not provide specific details about folklore, as can be found in older historical surveys such as Arnolds Spekke’s *History of Latvia*.² Plakans asserts that 19th and 20th century attempts to recover a Baltic “pantheon of gods” have been romanticized over-exaggerations. However, he does feel that the pagan nature of the Baltic tribes is worth mentioning – if only because the Baltic people became of interest to Western European powers, after Scandinavia was Christianized, as the “last pagan region of Europe.”

Plakans provides a stellar account of the introduction of a new, Europeanized / Christianized order to the Baltic region from 1200 to 1500, which is not an easy task, as it took radically different forms in the Estonian-Latvian and Lithuanian contexts. He presents the two histories in a parallel, yet well-integrated format. Plakans details how German crusaders came to

² ARNOLDS SPEKKE: *History of Latvia: An Outline*, Riga 2006.

form a multifaceted polity known as the Livonian Confederation, taking a dominant position over local Balts, while, during the same time period, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania emerged as a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional state – led by Lithuanians, who spoke the Lithuanian language, under the leadership of the King Mindaugas. Plakans attributes the success of Mindaugas and his successors, compared to Estonian and Latvian tribal equivalents, to their having had more time to prepare an offensive, while German crusaders were fighting in the north, and also, to a more successful method of gaining allies through intermarriages, and setting up a Boyar system. Plakans rejects as an explanatory factor the supposed greater “fierceness” of Lithuanians, compared to their northern neighbours. Of note is Plakans’ discussion of religion in both the Livonian Confederation and the Lithuanian Duchy. He argues that, for Latvians and Estonians, Christianity was something negative, forced upon them from the foreigners, whereas in Lithuania, Christianity was accepted willingly by Mindaugas, perhaps for political reasons, and therefore not looked upon so negatively. This foregrounds religious differences which would resonate for centuries.

In his account of the eventful years 1500–1710, Plakans deals with the Livonian Wars, waged by a newly aggressive Muscovy under Ivan the Terrible, and the resulting collapse of the Livonian confederation and transfer of its territories to Sweden and to Poland-Lithuania. Here, Plakans addresses the formulation of Poland-Lithuania as a “Republic of Two Nations” with a cultural and linguistic shift towards Polish as the dominant nation. As is characteristic of Plakans’ book as a whole, a lot of attention is given to the unique histories of the Duchy of Courland (formed after the Livonian Wars under the last Master of the Livonian Order, and affiliated with, but not part of, Lithuania-Poland) and Inflanty (Latgale) which was incorporated into Poland-Lithuania, unlike the majority of the lands inhabited by the proto-Latvians. Here, Plakans also deals with the myth of “Good Swedish Times” before moving onto the Great Northern War, through which Swedish Livonia was carved up between the Russian Empire of Peter the Great, and Poland-Lithuania. Plakans makes a very complicated period of history comprehensible, effectively highlighting differences between different parts of the Littoral.

In his account of the years 1710–1800, Plakans describes the bringing of Lithuania-Poland into the Russian fold, through the Partitions of Poland, and the resulting transfer of Courland, Latgale, and most Lithuanian areas to Russia, under Catherine the Great. Plakans identifies during this time period a worsening of the lot of the serfs; he argues that serfdom came qualitatively closer to slavery, as serfs could be bought and sold, moved around, and corporally punished at their masters’ will. Plakans describes 16th century Imperial Russia as “Permissive Autocracy” which allowed a lot of autonomy for the Baltic German nobility – privileges to keep them loyal to Russia, as opposed to Sweden, in the event of her resumed interest in

the region. As a result, this period saw the entrenchment of Baltic German noble families in a register (*Matrikul*), which cemented their position at the top of the social hierarchy. In this chapter, the coming of Enlightenment ideas to the Baltic is also discussed, which manifested in an interest among the new *Literaten* in the state of the peasantry, and in the promotion of their well being. Here, Plakans provides an overview of the key contributions of Germans Jannau, Merkel, and Herder, as well as the Lithuanian Donelaitis, to the intellectual world of the Baltic.

Plakans then turns his attention primarily to the peasantry for two chapters, describing the emancipation of serfs in Estland, Livland and Courland, in the period 1816/19, followed by the much later abolition of serfdom in Lithuania and Vitebsk (including Latgale) in 1861. Plakans spends a good deal of time describing changes in the lives of the peasantry subsequent to emancipation, not surprising, as this is one of Plakans areas of expertise. Topics discussed include the adoption of surnames and new individualized identities, and the increased likeliness of getting an education and becoming a professional/intellectual – although early in the century, assimilation into the German or Polish literati was the norm in these cases. According to Plakans, this tendency would change with the National Awakening, after which writing in one’s own language was linked to identity formation. For Lithuania, however, Plakans finds that this process was more difficult, due to harsh repressions following the 1863 Revolt, including the forbidding of the Lithuanian language in print. Furthermore, Plakans argues that achieving a sense of national identity was more difficult for Lithuanians, due to so much ethnic and religious diversity, and the existence of so many borders dividing the proto-Lithuanian people – although, of course, they did have the past statehood to look back on.

Moving into the 20th century with his chapter “Statehood in troubled times, 1905–1940,” Plakans packs a great number of important events into one short chapter: the 1905 revolution and its aftermath, World War I, the Russian Revolution, the creation of the three independent Baltic States along ethnic lines, and also the history of the entire independence period – including the years of parliamentary democracies and then authoritarian regimes. It is surprising that Plakans did not separate this material into two chapters, giving the independent Baltic States their own independent chapters. Due no doubt to space limitations, and the glut of material to cover, there was not as much focus on social and cultural history as in previous chapters, which was disappointing. Notably, from a historiographical perspective, Plakans condemns interwar Latvian dictator Kārlis Ulmanis, arguing that the often-repeated story of his having become an authoritarian dictator to prevent a coup by extremists was blatantly fabricated, and that this was only used as a pretext for the coup – although in the case of Konstantin Päts, he finds the same argument more acceptable.

Similarly, in “The Return of Empires, 1940–1991,” Plakans deals with a massive number of important events: the first Soviet occupation, the Nazi Occupation, and then the entire Soviet period, all in one chapter. A lot of attention given to the Nazi occupation – nine pages – which is more than Plakans devotes to post-war Stalinism. The discussion of the Holocaust is of interest; Plakans appears to disagree with Ezerģails, the leading expert on the Holocaust in Latvia, on various points. Plakans indicates that anti-Semitism had a strong presence in the interwar Baltic States, and that as a result, in numerous localities, Latvians and Lithuanians spontaneously killed Jews in significant numbers (p. 352). (According to Ezerģails, the scope of pogroms in Latvia was grossly over-exaggerated by Nazi agencies, in a “misinformation” campaign intended to shift blame to the Latvian population; furthermore, he does not see Latvian anti-Semitism as a significant explanatory factor for the murder of Jews.³) Plakans seems to reject Ezerģails’ argument that there could be no true collaboration under the context of occupation.⁴ Unfortunately, as there are no citations in Plakans’ book, it is impossible to know where from he derives these arguments.

Still in the same short chapter, going forward into the second Soviet occupation, Plakans moves through the Stalin times, brilliantly highlighting the atmosphere of fear, and the need for accommodation to the new regime in order to survive. He briefly talks about collectivization of agriculture, the making of kulak lists and the 1948/49 mass deportations, perhaps not devoting quite enough space to these important and disturbing phenomena. There is also some discussion of anti-Soviet resistance movements, although, again, given the constraints of space, it is limited. Plakans moves seamlessly through the Khrushchev, Brezhnev and Gorbachev years, dealing with political developments, as well as social and cultural questions; including artistic and historical representation within the limits of censorship. Plakans also addresses the role of Baltic émigré communities, detailing their representation by the Soviet state, their efforts at keeping alive the nation, and their experiences when visiting the “home country” as tourists. The movements leading to independence, beginning with environmental protests, and culminating in the Popular Fronts are also highlighted. Overall, Plakans does an excellent job summarizing the entire Soviet period, plus the Nazi occupation, in just one small chapter – although it is a shame that he had to do so. It was no doubt a difficult task to cram so much history into sixty-four pages, but Plakans makes it comprehensible, and seems not to have omitted anything absolutely essential.

³ ANDREW EZERĢAILIS: *The Holocaust in Latvia, 1941–44: The Missing Center*, Riga 1996, pp. XVI–XVIII.

⁴ IDEM: *Collaboration in German Occupied Latvia: Offered and Rejected*, in: *Latvija nacistiskās Vācijas okupācijas varā 1941–1945: Starptautiskās Konferences referāti 2003. gada 12.–13. jūnijs / Latvia under German Occupation, 1941–45. Materials of an International Conference 12–13 June, 2003*, Riga, pp. 119–140.

In his concluding chapter, Plakans turns his attention to the post-Soviet Baltic States – taking as key themes demographic change, increases in income disparity, employment problems, the great turn toward the West linguistically and otherwise, and the important role of émigrés. He provides a rather extensive focus (considering the fact that this is a concise history) on the political parties of post-Soviet Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia – a useful contribution, which would no doubt be appreciated by readers of general interest, hoping to gain political orientation in any one of the three Baltic States. Plakans does an excellent job addressing the lingering problem of fragmented public opinion on what the state should be, with well-articulated position statements on Right, Left and Centre political philosophies. Plakans covers many of the lingering issues facing the post-Soviet Baltic States, including corruption, speculation, the persistence of the black market, the migration of young skilled workers, the reduction of pensions and elimination of formerly “free” social services, and of course the Russian-minorities existing to this day within Latvia and Estonia as “resident non-citizens.” Naturally, Plakans also devotes attention here to the joining processes of Western Institutions – EU, NATO, etc. Fittingly, Plakans closes his book with a discussion of the problems arising from the “rewriting of history.” Overall, this closing chapter is a very sensitively written and well-balanced conclusion to Plakans’ book, which takes into account different perspectives in a way that does not privilege one over the other.

Throughout this work, Plakans is very explicit and self-conscious about primary sources used in the making of Baltic history, inherent biases in them, and historiographical shifts over time. Short descriptions of relevant Chronicles, ethnographic treatises, topographical surveys, and literary works provide an orientation for the reader interested in the process of the crafting of history. However, perhaps the greatest criticism that can be directed at Plakans is that *A Concise History of the Baltic States* is completely lacking in citations, and furthermore, that it also lacks a works cited page, having only a “suggested readings” list at the end of the book. While perhaps this follows the requested format of the Cambridge Concise Histories series, it makes the book far less useful than it could have been for the academic who wants to know the sources of arguments and ideas. In particular, the discussion of such contentious and controversial topics as the Holocaust in the Baltic States, knowing the source from which the author has drawn his arguments is essential. Also, this format hides the contributions of countless historians and other academics, who have no doubt informed Plakans’ narrative – not to mention, it clouds the reliability of some of the statements made.

In particular, Plakans’ chapters dealing with the Medieval and Imperial Russian phases of Baltic History are strong, and in their unprecedented concise and comparative nature, innovative. Furthermore, while comparative

examinations of the 20th century Baltic States have been published before, this fresh examination, taking into account historiographical shifts, is very useful. Overall, this book is exactly what its title says it is – “concise” – and it would thus make a good textbook for an introductory Baltic History course covering the entire scope of Baltic history. It certainly does cover all of the most important topics and themes, at least briefly, and in an enjoyable format. Given the task of combining thousands of years of the histories of Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians, as well as other peoples living amongst them, Plakans has done an excellent job. Who could be better suited to this formidable task? After a lifetime career dedicated to Eastern European and especially Baltic History, and the publication of such well-respected works as *The Latvians* (1995) and *Historical Dictionary of Latvia* (2008), Plakans is arguably the biggest name in Latvian history in North America.⁵ For a non-sentimental, objective, and most importantly, comparative look at the histories of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and the many entities that preceded them, taking into account the complexities and specificities inherent, and that would perhaps have been overlooked by a less diligent scholar, Plakans’ most recent work certainly deserves praise as a significant contribution to English language historiography on the Baltics.

KRISTINA PAUKSENS

ДЕНИС Г. ХРУСТАЛЁВ: *Северные крестоносцы: Русь в борьбе за сферы влияния в Восточной Прибалтике XII–XIII вв.* [Die Kreuzfahrer des Nordens. Die Rus’ im Kampf um Einflussphasären im östlichen Baltikum des 12.–13. Jahrhunderts]. Verlag Евразия. Санкт-Петербург 2009. 2 Bde.: 416+464 S., Abb. ISBN 9785918520055.

Die östliche Küste der Ostsee geriet seit den 1180er Jahren in den Fokus sowohl der römisch-katholischen Welt als auch der russischen Fürsten, wobei dieses Interesse rasch stärker wurde. Die Welt des Westens expandierte nach Nordosten in Form der Kreuzzüge, womit für diesen Kulturraum das Mittelalter begann und sich neue soziale, politische und kulturelle Phänomene entwickelten, durch die die Region zu einer *frontier* der katholischen Welt wurde. Das Zeitalter der baltischen Kreuzzüge, die christliche Mission im Baltikum und die deutsche Ostsiedlung fand traditionell besondere Beachtung in Arbeiten deutscher Historiker. In den

⁵ ANDREJS PLAKANS: *The Latvians: A Short History*, Stanford 1995; *Historical Dictionary of Latvia*, ed. by IDEM, Lanham 1997 (2nd ed. 2008).