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Murray, AV (2021) Aleksander Pluskowski, ed., *Ecologies of Crusading, Colonization, and Religious Conversion in the Medieval Baltic: Terra Sacra II*. (Environmental Histories of the North Atlantic World 3.) Turnhout: Brepols, 2019. Paper. Pp. xviii, 243; 9 color and many black-and-white figures, many maps, and 22 tables. €100. ISBN: 978-2-5035-5133-3. Table of contents available online at http://www.brepols.net/Pages/ShowProduct.aspx?prod_id=IS-9782503551333-1. *Speculum*, 96 (2). pp. 547-548. ISSN 0038-7134

<https://doi.org/10.1086/713413>

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at the heart of *Beowulf* was overtaken by a more potent mythic prototype at its end—the doom of the gods at Ragnarök. *Beowulf* marks not the happy mingling of pagan myth and Christian promise, but rather its demise, the last gasp of that old world as it struggled for life in the new regime of Roman Christianity. Pettit's study is well worth the effort he has put into it, gathering in one place a compendium of the solar imagery that once appealed so strongly to the *Beowulf* poet, even as he rejected it in the end.

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ALEKSANDER PLUSKOWSKI, ed., *Ecologies of Crusading, Colonization, and Religious Conversion in the Medieval Baltic: Terra Sacra II*. (Environmental Histories of the North Atlantic World 3.) Turnhout: Brepols, 2019. Paper. Pp. xviii, 243; 9 color and many black-and-white figures, many maps, and 22 tables. €100. ISBN: 978-2-5035-5133-3. Table of contents available online at http://www.brepols.net/Pages/ShowProduct.aspx?prod_id=IS-9782503551333-1. doi:10.1086/713413

This volume is the second of two publications emerging from the multinational research project entitled The Ecology of Crusading, which investigated the environmental dimensions of the long process of conquest and Christianization of the eastern Baltic countries from the end of the twelfth up to the fifteenth century. (For the first volume, see Aleksander Pluskowski, ed., *Environment, Colonization, and the Baltic Crusader States: Terra Sacra I* [2019].) The volume comprises an introduction by the principal investigator, Aleksander Pluskowski, and seventeen papers (many of them co-authored) by thirty-seven project members based at institutions in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the United Kingdom. Twelve papers are archaeological case studies, while the remainder offer more interdisciplinary approaches.

Seven papers (the largest group) deal with plant and animal remains and the detail they provide about the diet, health, and animal exploitation of the predominantly immigrant communities in Prussia and Livonia (with one study of Novgorod and its hinterland). While it is not possible to comment on every contribution in a review of this length, one can highlight some important findings in this section, for example the increasing consumption of imported marine fish (notably herring, cod, and salmon) throughout the region, the import of exotic fruits, nuts, and spices to the main centers in Prussia, and the surprising use of frogs, worms, and insects as medical remedies. The discussions on food are complemented by Juhan Kreem's investigation of written evidence about the victualing of the castles of Karksi and Viljandi in southern Estonia (77–82).

A second group of papers relates to architecture and the wider landscape. Māris Zunde's survey of tree types and the use of timber from the Iron Age to the end of the medieval period provides essential background to the history of a highly forested region, where some tree species enjoyed cultic status in pagan belief (25–34). Joanna Fonferék describes excavations leading to the discovery of the earliest castle at Elbląg, built from oak in the 1230s but soon reinforced by brick constructions as the town became the principal administrative center of the Teutonic Order in the region; this work undoubtedly will pave the way for further important discoveries (16–23). K. M. J. Hayward gives a wide-ranging survey of the composition, dating, and provenance of brick, stone, and mortar used for castle construction in both Livonia and Prussia (35–58). The palaeoecological study of the Livonian landscape by Normunds Stivriņš et al. (147–51) suggests an intensification of agrarian activity after 1200, but as these findings seem to be at variance with the evidence of excavations along the River Daugava by Laimdota Kalniņa et al. (129–45), one might assume that a more wide-ranging investigation (with common parameters) is desirable, and that this needs to be done in conjunction with the study of landholding patterns in Livonia.

Of greatest interest to historians will be the four papers discussing how the landscape of the conquered lands was transformed by the advent of Christianity in a sacral or spiritual sense. The Christian authorities erected parish churches, roadside chapels, and stone crosses, as demonstrated by Heiki Valk for southern Estonia (154–73), yet the same region saw a continuing veneration of sacred sites (such as groves, stones, and springs) and use of graveyards dating from pagan times, often in close proximity to Christian locations. Valk argues that the evidence for ritual assembles and animal sacrifices indicates “either a tolerant or fully indifferent attitude of the institutionalized Church towards popular practices of non-Christian character” (168). By contrast, Seweryn Szczepański’s study of toponyms in an archaeological context suggests that in Prussia the Christian authorities took a far more severe attitude in destroying or discrediting pagan sites, but that these, too, continued to be venerated by the indigenous rural population. One can agree with Valk that in both countries alongside a European, Christian culture, a native culture continued to exist, drawing on traditions from the pagan past. Vykintas Vaitkevičius describes a similar course of events in Lithuania, where sacral practices could have ecological consequences. After the acceptance of Christianity by the grand duke in 1387, he and the Lithuanian nobility no longer regarded forests as sacred. Mature oaks were now seen as marketable wood and cleared and sold off, leading to flooding and further erosion of pre-Christian cultic sites (185–95). Yet this significant effect should not be regarded as a deliberate facet of conversion. As stressed by Kaspars Kļaviņš in the final paper (197–208), there was no “master plan” for the Christianization of the eastern Baltic; rather, the process was confused and at times chaotic, with different Christian forces often in conflict with each other. He identifies the efficiency of the Teutonic Order as an organization compared with other actors as the single most important factor in the conquest, but also highlights the willingness of indigenous communities to ally themselves with it (although one might well question his insistence that the Order was receptive to pagan culture).

The apparatus includes numerous maps and photographs of excavations, artifacts, landscapes, and buildings, while a wealth of information is presented in the form of graphs, pie charts, and tables. It is the papers in the final section that most successfully integrate archaeological approaches with historiographical, documentary, and toponymic evidence, but overall the volume represents a laudable attempt to bring a new perspective to some of the big questions relating to the Christianization of the medieval Baltic region.

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THIJS PORCK, *Old Age in Early Medieval England: A Cultural History*. (Anglo-Saxon Studies 33.) Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2019. Pp. x, 288; 8 black-and-white figures, 5 tables, and 4 lists. \$99. ISBN: 978-1-7832-7375-1.
doi:10.1086/713154

Thijs Porck’s book on old age in England up to the eleventh century, the first full-length study of this topic, provides a vigorous and readable survey. The popular perception that virtually everyone in the early medieval period died by the age of forty is, of course, wrong, and Porck quickly demonstrates that a reasonable number of people did live to be sixty or older, before he turns to the more interesting question of the cultural conception of old age: how was old age defined, and what attitudes did people have toward aging and the aged? These are the questions that occupy the bulk of the book.

The first chapter conducts a thorough investigation of schemes of the “ages of man” available in Anglo-Saxon England, adding to the materials surveyed by J. A. Burrow in *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (1986). While Porck finds divisions of the life cycle into two, three, four, five, and six, he concludes that three phases is the predominant model, and around fifty the commonest threshold for old age; but it is clear that not only the

Speculum 96/2 (April 2021)