

PART 1
Articles and Studies



COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE VIKING RUS' AND THE TURKIC NOMADS OF THE STEPPE

Csete Katona

Early medieval Scandinavians were active participants not just in the history of Western Europe but also Eastern Europe from the ninth to the mid-eleventh century, a period commonly known as the Viking Age (c. 800–1050). During their various activities in the regions encompassing today's European Russia and beyond, Viking merchants, warriors and settlers came into contact with people of diverse origin. Among these contacts, the Slavic, Baltic and Finno-Ugric relations of the Scandinavians were the closest ones, manifested in intermingling and the development of the Kievan Rus' state – in which Scandinavians played a decisive role from the ninth century onwards. Inhabitants of this state were designated in contemporary documents as Rus', denoting a population of mixed ethnicity, which besides Scandinavians, also incorporated the previously mentioned groups.¹

Besides the Slavic and Balto-Finnic relations, other contacts were also significant for the Scandinavians which are rarely discussed in modern scholarship.

¹ On the differing views regarding the development of Rus' identity, see: Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson, "Creating a Cultural Expression. On Rus' Identity and Material Culture," in *Identity Formation and Diversity in the Early Medieval Baltic and Beyond*, eds. Johan Callmer, Ingrid Gustin and Mats Roslund (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 91–106; cf. Przemysław Urbańczyk, "Who Were the Early Rus'?", in *Rus' in the 9th–12th centuries: Society, State, Culture*, eds. Nikolaj A. Makarov and A. E. Leontiev (Moscow: Drevnosti Severa, 2014), 228–233; Benjamin P. Golden, "Rūs," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Dozel, and W. P. Heinrich (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 618–629; Elena A. Melnikova, Vladimir J. Petrukhin, "The Origin and Evaluation of the Name Rus'. The Scandinavians in Eastern European Ethno-political Processes before the 11th Century," *Tor* 23 (1990–1991) 203–234; James E. Montgomery, "Vikings and Rus in Arabic Sources," in *Living Islamic History. Studies in Honour of Professor Carole Hillenbrand*, ed. Yasir Suleiman (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 151–165. To highlight my focus on the Scandinavians within this ethnic group, I add the attribute "Viking" to Rus, when I intend to emphasize the Scandinavian sides of Rus–Turkic relations (in contrast to handling Rus–Turkic contacts as purely Russian–Turkic ones). I am well aware of the problems around the term Viking, which is used here as a matter of a convenience. For its misuses, see: Eric Christiansen, *The Norsemen in the Viking Age* (Malden: Blackwell, 2006), 1–4. A further note on terminology concerns another frequently encountered designation, Varangian, which in contemporary reports mostly referred to Scandinavian warrior groups operating in the East. Adolf Stender-Petersen, "Zur Bedeutungsgeschichte des Wortes vǫringi, Russ. Varag," *Acta Philologica Scandinavica. Tidskrift för nordisk språgforskning* 6 (1931–1932): 26–38; Fedir Androshchuk, "Vikingarna – ruserna – varjagererna," *Historiska Nyheter. Olga & Ingegerd – Vikingafurstinnor i öst* (2004–2005): 36–39.

The core areas controlled by the emerging Kievan Rus' state, were bordered from the south and east by the so-called steppe belt, a geographical region inhabited by various nomadic tribes of predominantly Turkic origin. The major rivers used by the Scandinavians for water transport in European Russia also flowed through the territories of the nomads. The geographic proximity made it inevitable that these ethnic groups should maintain close connections with each other. Contacts were established in the spheres of trade, warfare and culture between the Viking Rus' and the nomadic tribes along the Volga, Dnieper, Don and other Eastern European rivers. Nomads along these waterways, including the Khazars, the Volga Bulgars, the Magyars and the Pechenegs, all came into contact with the Northerners at an early stage, likely already in the early ninth century.² Trading partnerships, military alliances and cultural borrowings between Scandinavians and Turks were even enhanced throughout the tenth century.³

One of the puzzling questions concerning Viking-nomadic relations, however, remains: how did early medieval Scandinavians communicate with the Turks of the steppe? Conducting trade, being engaged in negotiations, understanding local customs, adopting fashion, forming alliances or acting together on the battlefield all require an ability to understand each other. How were everyday encounters managed between ethnicities so distant from each other in terms of language? This is the fundamental question the present article seeks to explore. Besides the occasional references to linguistic evidence, Muslim, Byzantine, Slavic and Old Norse written sources describing direct communication between various groups of people in Eastern Europe will be discussed. These accounts explore the multiple means of communication that must have been used between the Scandinavian and Turkic ethnic groups in the Viking Age.

The following scenarios are possible concerning the procedures of communication between the Viking Rus' and the nomads of the steppe: 1. Communication without speech. 2. Communication through interpreters employed by one or both parties. 3. Both groups acquired the knowledge of

² For a general history of these tribes with extensive literature, see: Denis Sinor, ed., *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Benjamin P. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples. Ethnogenesis and State-Formation in Medieval and Early Modern Eurasia and the Middle East* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992); István Vásáry, *Geschichte des frühen Innerasiens* (Herne: Tibor Schäfer, 1993).

³ I provided a comprehensive view of the subject in my MA thesis entitled "Co-operation between the Viking Rus' and the Turkic nomads of the steppe in the ninth-eleventh centuries," defended at the Central European University in 2018. As a prequel to the present topic, my thesis discussed various contact zones – commerce, warfare and customs – where Scandinavian and Turkic groups interacted with each other.

communicating in Slavic. 4. Some of the people from each group learned each other's native language. Whilst not denying that the first possibility could occur occasionally, there is firm evidence for the second and third categories. Even though the attestation is weaker, careful suggestions will be put forward concerning the fourth scenario as well.

Languages in the East

Before proceeding to the argument, it has to be clarified what languages or language groups were at play in Eastern Europe at the time. The Scandinavian language group was divided into a West-Norse (Icelandic, Norwegian) and an East-Norse (Swedish, Danish) dialect. Both groups were represented in Eastern Europe, but a much higher proportion of the latter is discernible. Nevertheless, despite the regional variations, it is generally believed that Old Norse speakers fluently understood each other throughout the "Viking world."⁴

The closest partners of the Scandinavians in Eastern Europe were the East Slavs, who were similarly unified in terms of language. Whilst Slavic groups even in smaller territories (like the West or South Slavic areas) became divided into sub-groups (e.g. Sorbian, Polabian, Polish-Pomeranian, Bulgaro-Macedonian), the East Slavs preserved their linguistic unity in a much larger area, probably partly due to the Nordic political authority that united the diverse tribes.⁵

The tribes of Turkic origin, however, were less unitary and spoke rather different tongues and dialects even within the same empires or tribal federations due to their heterogenic populations. The Khazar Khaganate, for instance, was a contemporary cultural melting-pot of Arabic Muslim, Slav, Rus and various Turkic people. In these poly-ethnic nomadic societies, the functional role of languages dominated, which manifested itself in multilingualism or in the parallel existence of "official" languages employed in cultural or economic interactions. The language of the ruling strata in a given nomadic entity was therefore subject to rapid change and flexibility.⁶

The Khazars, who were the main trading partners of the Viking Rus' in the ninth–tenth centuries, most likely spoke a unique branch of the Turkic linguistic

⁴ Judith Jesch, *The Viking Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2015).

⁵ Bohdan Struminski, *Linguistic Interrelations in Early Rus': Northmen, Finns and East Slavs (Ninth to Eleventh Centuries)* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1996), 11–23.

⁶ Omeljan Pritsak, "The Pechenegs: A Case of Social and Economic Transformation," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 1 (1975): 22–24.

family called Oghuric.⁷ Their language was likened by various Muslim authors to the Volga Bulghar language, the remnants of which were mostly preserved in the Chuvash of today.⁸

The Pechenegs' language cannot be identified with certainty. Their organization was not unified and never developed to an extent that would allow the introduction of a common "national" language adaptable to all of their existing components. According to some scholars, their confederation contained Iranian, Tokharian and Bulgaric (Turkic) speakers, whilst others surmise they generally spoke common Turkic.⁹

The language spoken by the Magyar tribes belongs to the Ugrian branch of the Finno-Ugric languages. Thus, despite the fact that the Magyars practiced a nomadic way of life and culturally resembled the Turkic tribes of Inner Asia, their language was distinct. This might raise a methodological problem when discussing Scandinavian–Turkic communication since the Magyars should be addressed separately. However, Turkic elements do not surface in vain in Magyar culture as they were in considerable contact with the various Turkic tribes of the Volga region, including the Volga Bulghars, the Bashkirs and the Khazars. The high amount of early Turkic loanwords (around 300 in number), appearing in the Hungarian language are the vestiges of this extensive co-habitation of the seventh–ninth centuries. Whether, how and when these loanwords entered the Hungarian language has no scholarly consent; the Bashkirs and Volga Bulghars from the seventh century and/or the Khazars later are the major candidates for the transmission.¹⁰ The Magyar tribal elite (many of them bearing Turkic names) was likely bilingual and fluent in common Turkic.¹¹

Since all these communities were highly mixed ethnically, it is fair to assume that speakers within the Turkic language groups must have understood each other in everyday matters despite the occasional dialectical differences.

⁷ Marcel Erdal, "The Language of the Khazars," in *The World of the Khazars. New Perspectives*, eds. Peter B. Golden, Haggai Ben-Shammai, and András Róna-Tas (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2007), 76–108; Alan K. Brook, *The Jews of Khazaria* (New Jersey: Jason Aronson, 1999), 80–81.

⁸ István Zimonyi, "The Origins of the Volga Bulghars," Ph.D. dissertation, Studio uralo-altaica (Szeged: University of Szeged, 1989), 8–9.

⁹ Pritsak, "The Pechenegs: A Case of Social and Economic Transformation," 22–24; Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 265.

¹⁰ István Zimonyi, *Muslim Sources on the Magyars in the Second Half of the 9th Century. The Magyar Chapter of the Jayhānī Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 346–348.

¹¹ Compare with: András Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages. An Introduction to Early Hungarian History* (Budapest: CEU Press, 1999), 350–351, 389.

It is worth highlighting that a functional use of a language is different from the full acquisition of the same language as in most cases it is enough to possess a limited communicative level to make one understood by foreigners. The degree to what extent Scandinavians might have needed foreign languages in the East is unfortunately hard to measure. Accordingly, only certain patterns will be outlined in the followings which sometimes reflect only on individual experience.

Communication without Speech

The prerequisite of any kind of interaction except warfare is communication. The only exception from this rule that existed in traditional societies might be the so-called silent trade, a method of exchanging goods without speaking. The silent trade resulted from the unintelligible or incomprehensible communication between two parties and was secured by mutual trust.¹² It seems probable that the custom goes back to a long tradition in the northern areas of the Baltic and Russia. The Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta, in his *Travels* written in the fourteenth century recorded the silent trade performed by the inhabitants of the “Land of Darkness,” north of Bulghar, and visiting traders:

Each one of them leaves the goods he has brought there and they return to their usual camping-ground. Next day they go back to seek their goods, and find opposite them skins of sable, minever, and ermine. If the merchant is satisfied with the exchange he takes them, but if not he leaves them. The inhabitants then add more skins, but sometimes they take away their goods and leave the merchant's. This is their method of commerce. Those who go there do not know whom they are trading with or whether they be jinn or men, for they never see anyone.¹³

The Persian scholar, Al-Biruni, around 1030 also confirms that the inhabitants of these northern regions practiced this form of barter.¹⁴

Apart from this method which Scandinavians might have applied with some Northern Baltic or Finnish tribes, trade without proper communication often failed. This can be illustrated with analogies involving Scandinavians. In the fourteenth-century Icelandic *Grœnlendinga saga*, describing the Viking voyages and temporary

¹² Hamilton J. P. Grierson, *The Silent Trade. A Contribution to the Early History of Human Intercourse* (Edinburgh: Willian Green & Sons, 1903), 41–54.

¹³ Ibn Battúta, *Travels in Asia and Africa. 1325–1354*, trans. Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), 151.

¹⁴ *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of the Darkness: Arabic Travellers in the far North*, trans. Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone (London: Penguin, 2012), 179.

settlement in America around the turn of the millennium, the Vikings encounter local Indians with whom they initially trade peacefully until misunderstandings arise and fighting breaks out.¹⁵ The same patterns are discernible in *Yngvars saga víðförla*, a legendary saga about a Viking expedition into the East. Here Sveinn, the son of the eponymous saga hero Yngvarr, and his company conduct trade in a peaceful manner with some unnamed local inhabitants of the Volga region on the first day (apparently with hand signs and tokens), but have to engage in battle with them the next day due to confusion caused during a transaction. After this, an identical incident is repeated in the saga once more, this time the fight breaks out at a feast.¹⁶ Ultimately, both calamities arose due to the lack of adequate knowledge of the local language.

The Use of Interpreters

In order to avoid situations like those outlined above, fluent communication had to be established. The employment of interpreters in Scandinavian–Turkic communication likely bridged the language gap initially.¹⁷ There is evidence for the presence of interpreters within the ranks of Scandinavian and also Turkic societies.

Interpreters were widely used by Scandinavians in the region. One of the earliest references to the Rus', found in the Arabic work of Ibn Khurradadhbih, reports that the Rus' already in the ninth century journeyed as far as Baghdad where they used Slavic slaves as interpreters in their dealings with the Muslims.¹⁸

¹⁵ "Grœnlendinga saga," in *Eyrbyggja saga*, eds. Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthias Þórðarson, Íslenzk fornrit 4 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1935), 260–264.

¹⁶ *Yngvars saga víðförla. Jámte ett bihang om Ingvarsinskrifterna*, ed. Emil Olson (København: S. L. Møllers, 1912), 35–36 and 39–40. Whether these encounters actually happened or not is irrelevant for the present discussion, since the main point is that the audience and composers of these accounts were aware of the problems which arose during trade relations with unknown people. The killing of a local reeve by the Vikings on the Dorset coast in the year 789 might also be the consequence of a mishandled trade transaction as looting did not follow the incident. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. and trans. Michael J. Swanton (New York: Routledge, 1996), 54.

¹⁷ In this regard, it should be briefly mentioned that translator and interpreter are not synonyms; the former concerns him/herself with the translation of a written text, whilst the latter is one who intervenes and "translates" in oral communication. The differentiation is important regarding the fact that interpreters could be (and often were) illiterate, and probably bilingual by education or from young age. These two professions are somewhat blurred in the sources, but presumably interpreters were more widespread, and they are the subject of discussion here. For this differentiation, see: Denis Sinor, "Interpreters in Medieval Inner Asia," in *Studies in Medieval Inner Asia* (Ashgate: Variorum, 1997), 305–306.

¹⁸ Omeljan Pritsak, "An Arabic Text on the Trade Route of the Corporation of ar-Rūs in the Second Half of the Ninth Century," *Folia Orientalia* 12 (1970): 257.

Ibn Fadlan from the Caliphate also had to employ an interpreter to understand the rituals of the Rus' whom he encountered at the River Volga in 922. The identity of the latter middleman is still subject to speculation, as it is hard to figure out from the Arabic text whether he was an Arab or perhaps a Slav.¹⁹ However, the word *tólkr*, meaning an interpreter, came into the Old Norse language from Old Russian, presupposing the fact that the interpreters employed by the Scandinavians were of Slavic origin.²⁰ In addition, if the interpretation of the Old Russian word *tolkoviny* as interpreter is to be accepted, then its occurrence in the *Russian Primary Chronicle* as an attribute of the Slavic tribe, the Tivercians, is indicative again of the profession's Slavic roots.²¹

More interestingly, the Tivercians, who fought alongside the Rus', are sometimes considered to be a folk originally of Turkic stock, melded with the Slavic population of the Dniester–Dnieper area during the ninth century, something which suggests that they were bilingual.²² The employment of interpreters goes back to a long historical tradition in Inner Asia and Eastern Europe.²³ Judging by Slavic words (*zakana*, *voevoda*) used in the conversation between the Byzantine Emperor, Constantine Porphyrogenitus (945–959) and his Pecheneg and Magyar informants, the negotiations between the Byzantines and these nomads likely

¹⁹ Jens Peter Schjødt, "Ibn Fadlan's Account of a Rus Funeral: To What Degree Does It Reflect Nordic Myths?," in *Reflections on Old Norse Myths*, eds. Pernille Hermann, Jens Peter Schjødt, and Rasmus Tranum Kristensen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 133. Uncertainties about this situation might be well conveyed in the famous Hollywood movie, *The 13th Warrior*, in which the Arabic translator talks to his Viking colleague in Latin.

²⁰ Ian McDougall, "Foreigners and Foreign Languages in Medieval Iceland," *Saga-Book* 22 (1986–1989): 218; Bohdan, *Linguistic Interrelations in Early Rus'*, 252.

²¹ Most Russian scholars accept this interpretation and it is followed by the recent Hungarian interpretation too. *Régmúlt idők elbeszélése. A Kijevi Rusz első krónikája* [Tale of the Bygone Years. The first Chronicle of the Kievan Rus'], eds. László Balogh and Szilvia Kovács, trans. István Ferincz (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2015), 39. Sakharov, however, believes the term to mean "allies." *Povest' Vremennykh Let* [Tale of the Bygone Years]. (http://lib.pushkinskijdom.ru/Default.aspx?tabid=4869#_edn89, n. 89, Last accessed April 02, 2018). Cross and Sherbowitz-Wetzor translate it as 'pagans'. *The Russian Primary Chronicle. Laurentian text*, ed. and trans. Samuel Hazzard Cross and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (Cambridge: Crimson Printing Company, 1953), 64 (henceforth: RPC). This, however, would not make much sense as all the other tribes enumerated next to the Tivercians in the *Chronicle's* relevant passage were pagans at the time and there is no indication why would this be highlighted concerning the Tivercians.

²² Compare with: Victor Spinei, *The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads North of the Danube Delta from Tenth to the Mid-Thirteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 83–86; *Régmúlt idők elbeszélése*, 39.

²³ "Interpreters in Medieval Inner Asia", in Denis Sinor, *Studies in Medieval Inner Asia* (Ashgate: Variorum, 1997), 293–320.

were conducted in Old Russian.²⁴ It was also suspected that during the Magyar campaigns in Iberia (942), a Slavic servant (many resided in Islamic Spain in the period) must have been mediating between the Magyars and the local Muslims.²⁵ In addition, the office of the *tulmač*, literally meaning a translator, was linked to the tribal princes in the Pecheneg tribal federation, highlighting its importance. The Hungarian form of the word, *tolmács*, is of Pecheneg and not Slavic origin.²⁶ Since the Slavic word was adopted from the Altaic languages, it seems valid to think that the profession/institution developed first in the Turkic world, and was adopted by the Slavs when the two groups established contact with each other.²⁷

These examples imply that in communication, especially during the ninth century, translators must have been employed between the Viking Rus' and the Turks, something which might have partly changed in the course of the tenth century when Scandinavian groups gradually embraced Old Russian.

This, however, might not have excluded completely intermediaries who fulfilled a pivotal role in commercial transactions as is illustrated by the fourteenth-century manuscript of *Óláfs saga hins Helga*, in which the Old Norse word *brakki* (in the plural form *brakkarnir*), meaning an 'intermediary, broker', is equated to *túlkr*.²⁸ This implies that the job of interpreters was (and is) not merely formal translation work, but a sensitive task that also involved negotiations on behalf of one's master. Interpreters were useful tools, offered clear advantages in business relations, and probably were preferably recruited from one's own trusted neighborhood rather than from the locals on site where the transactions occurred. The high status of interpreters is not only testified by the nomadic *tulmač* office

²⁴ Sinor, "Interpreters in Medieval Inner Asia", 300; György Györffy, "A magyar-szláv érintkezések kezdetei és Etelköz múltja" [Beginnings of Hungarian-Slavic interactions and the past of Etelköz], *Századok* 124, no. 1 (1990): 16–18.

²⁵ György Györffy, "Vezéri szálláshelyek emlékei" [Memories of princely headquarters], in *Honfoglalás és régészet. A honfoglalásról sok szemmel*, Vol. 1., ed. László Kovács (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 1994), 130. On the Saqāliba slaves in Spain: Dmitrij Mishin, "Saqlabī Servants in Islamic Spain and North Africa in the Early Middle Ages," Ph.D. dissertation (Budapest: Central European University, 1999), 63–101.

²⁶ Gyula Németh, "Zur Geschichte des Wortes *tolmács* 'Dolmetscher,'" *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 8, no. 1 (1958): 1–8.

²⁷ Sinor Denis, "Interpreters in Medieval Inner Asia," 294–295; Peter B. Golden, "The Nomadic Linguistic Impact on Pre-Činggisid Rus' and Georgia," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 10 (1998–1999), 75.

²⁸ *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga: Den store saga om Olav den hellige efter pergamenthåndskrift i Kungliga Biblioteket i Stockholm nr. 2 4to med varianter fra andre håndskrifter (1–2)*, eds. Oscar Albert Johnsen and Jón Helgason (Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1941), 776.

from which the word's 'translator' meaning developed, but by concrete historical examples as well. The delegation led by the Rus' Princess Olga to Byzantium in 945/947 for instance was accompanied by three interpreters, of whom one was linked to the personal service of the princess herself.²⁹

The Use of an Intermediary Language

The society of the Rus' was multi-ethnic, and the question of which languages were used within their own communities is an intricate one. It is supposed by some scholars that Scandinavians assimilated quickly within the Slavic communities, usually illustrated by the appearance and dominance of Slavic names in the Rus' princely family and the Rus' elite from the mid-tenth century.³⁰

Other evidence, however, suggest that Old Norse was still a spoken language among the Rus' during the tenth century. This is corroborated by the famous descriptions of the Dnieper rapids in the *De administrando imperio* of the Byzantine Emperor, Constantine Porphyrogenitus, who provides the names of the river cataracts (crossed by Rus' merchants on their way from Kiev to Constantinople), both in Slavic and Old Norse.³¹ A rare piece of evidence, a tenth-century Old Norse runic inscription carved into a stone on the island of Berezan, also testifies that a considerable part of the travelers of the Dnieper route came from a Scandinavian community.³² Old Norse runic inscriptions on wooden sticks were found also in the northwestern Russian town, Novgorod.³³

In the Byzantine Empire, Varangians also preserved the *dönsk tunga* ('Danish tongue'), as the language of the Scandinavians was referred to in their own words. The Byzantines employed their own Greek interpreters to communicate with

²⁹ Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis aulae Byzantinae*, Vol. 2, ed. Johann Jakob Reiske, Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae 17 (Bonn: Weber, 1830), 597–598.

³⁰ Alexander Sitzmann, *Nordgermanisch-ostslavische Sprachkontakte in der Kiever Rus' bis zum Tode Jaroslavs des Weisen* (Vienna: Praesens Verlag, 2003), 58–61; Elena A. Melnikova, "The List of Old Norse Personal Names in the Russian–Byzantine Treaties of the Tenth Century", *Studia anthropomynica scandinavica: Tidskrift för nordisk personnamnsforskning* (2004): 5–27; Bohdan, *Linguistic Interrelations in Early Rus'*, 162–180.

³¹ Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, Vol. 1, ed. Gyula Moravcsik, trans. R. J. H. Jenkins, Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 1 (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1967), 57–63 (henceforth: DAI).

³² Fedor Braun and Ture Johnsson Arne, "Den svenska runstenen från ön Berezan jä utanför Dneprmyrningen" [The Swedish runestone from the island of Berezan following the mouth of the Dnieper], *Fornvännen* 9 (1914): 44–48.

³³ Elena A. Melnikova, "The Cultural Assimilation of Varangians in Eastern Europe," 457.

their Varangian bodyguards, which is confirmed by a Byzantine seal bearing the inscription “Michael, the great translator of the Varangians” probably dateable to the mid-thirteenth century.³⁴ The Danish chronicler, Saxo Grammaticus, also describes an event that strengthens the theory of the usage of Old Norse in the Byzantine court. According to the story, the Danish king Eiríkr Egegod (1095–1103), during his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, arrived at the walls of Constantinople but was refused entry to the city owing to the anxieties of the Emperor that the Varangian guards of the palace might join their fellow Scandinavians. Finally, the *basileus* let out his Varangians to Eiríkr in small groups, sending spies with them who understood both Greek and Old Norse.³⁵ The Byzantine custom of foreign soldiers greeting the Emperor in their own native tongue during ceremonies might also signal that preserving the native language in Constantinople was a reality.³⁶

Not all Scandinavians showed the same level of assimilation. In the case of those Rus’ who settled among the Slavs in European Russia obviously a higher adaptability is to be expected but it should be borne in mind that this also took time especially in the rural areas.³⁷ The tenth century reflects a time of transition rather than the end of cultural-linguistic assimilation on the part of the Scandinavians in Eastern Europe as the *dönsk tunga* was still used there.

Evidence of Scandinavians learning Slavic nevertheless certainly exists. Scandinavian loanwords in Old Russian, and Old Russian terms in the Old Norse language both appear.³⁸ Scandinavian loanwords in the East Slavic language are ethnic, place and personal names, or terms mostly connected to commercial or political activities (e.g. *væringr* “Varangian,” *griði* “retinue,” *akkeri* “anchor,” *pund* “pound”). Nearly the same can be said about Old Norse lexical borrowings from

³⁴ Valentina S. Shandrovskaia, “The Seal of Michael, Grand Interpreter of the Varangians,” in *Byzantium and the Viking World*, ed. Fedir Androshchuk, Jonathan Shephard and Monica White (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2016), 305–312.

³⁵ Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum. The History of the Danes*, Vol. 2, ed. Karsten Friis-Jensen, trans. Peter Fisher (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2015), 888–889.

³⁶ Hilda Ellis Roderick Davidson, *The Viking Road to Byzantium* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976), 200.

³⁷ Fedir Androshchuk, “The Vikings in the East,” in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price (London: Routledge, 2008), 534; Elena A. Melnikova, “The Cultural Assimilation of Varangians in Eastern Europe from the Point of View of Language and Literacy,” in *Runica – Germanica – Mediaevalia*, Vol. 37, ed. Wilhelm Heizmann and Astrid van Nahl (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 464.

³⁸ Gunnar Svane, “Vikingetidens nordiske låneord i russisk” [Viking Age Nordic loanwords in Russian], in *Ottende tværfaglige vikingesymposium*, ed. Thorben Kisbye and Else Roesdahl (Aarhus: Hiruni, 1989) 18–32; Clara Thörnqvist, *Studien über die nordischen Lehnwörter im Russischen* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1948); Bohdan, *Linguistic Interrelations in Early Rus’*, 229–254.

East Slavic (e.g. *safali* “sable,” *torg* “market,” *polota* “palace,” *Girkir* “Greeks”) pointing out socio-economic activities that tied together Old Norse speakers with the inhabitants of Eastern Europe.³⁹

In addition to mutual borrowings, there is evidence that Scandinavians not only acquired the local language but adopted the Slavic script as well. In the St. Sophia Cathedral of Kiev, the Norse name Yakun (Hákon) appears written with Cyrillic letters.⁴⁰ This phenomenon is also confirmed by two graffiti on the walls of the St. Sophia Cathedral of Novgorod dating from the second half of the eleventh century and 1137. Birch bark letters from the Ladoga region dated to the same period also contain Old Norse names in Cyrillic letters. In a famous tenth-century boat grave of Gnezdovo, hiding a high status Rus' warrior, the first Slavic language relic (an amphora with the inscription *gorouhsha*) has been found.⁴¹ Thus, besides preserving Old Norse, it is safe to assume that many Scandinavians living among the Slavs became bilingual by the tenth century.

According to most scholars, the *lingua franca* of the region at this time was Slavic.⁴² This assumption is most probably valid since Slavic was a spoken (native) language from Poland through the vast areas of Kievan Rus' and the Balkans as far as the Caliphate's territory which contained a considerable number of Slavic slaves.⁴³ Ibrahim ibn Ya'qub al-Turtushi, a Jewish traveler in the middle of the tenth century reports that “*many Northern tribes speak the Slavic language, for they are mixed with the Slavs. Among them are the Germans, the Magyars, the Pechenegs, the Russians, and the Khazars.*”⁴⁴

This quote also confirms that nomadic people – the Magyars, Pechenegs and Khazars – also spoke Slavic, which is additionally supported by a bilingual Turkic–Slavic graffiti in the St. Sophia Cathedral of Kiev.⁴⁵ Old Russian, therefore, could

³⁹ Bohdan, *Linguistic Interrelations in Early Rus'*, 229–254.

⁴⁰ Androshchuk, “The Vikings in the East,” 535.

⁴¹ Melnikova, “The Cultural Assimilation of Varangians in Eastern Europe,” 456.

⁴² Golden, “Rūs,” 621; Aleksander Gieysztor, “Trade and Industry in Eastern Europe before 1200,” in *The Cambridge Economic History*, Vol. 2, eds. Michael M. Postan and Edward Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 482; Dmitriij Obolensky, “The Byzantine Sources on the Scandinavians in Eastern Europe,” in *The Byzantine Inheritance of Eastern Europe* (London: Variorum, 1982), 161.

⁴³ Ahmad Nazmi, *Commercial Relations between Arabs and Slavs: 9th–11th Centuries* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, 1998), 185–186.

⁴⁴ Dmitriij Mishin, “Ibrahim Ibn-Ya'qub At-Turtushi's Account of the Slavs from the Middle of the Tenth Century,” *Annual of Medieval Studies at the CEU* (1994–1995): 190.

⁴⁵ Omeljan Pritsak, “An Eleventh-Century Turkic Bilingual (Turko-Slavic) Graffito from the St. Sophia Cathedral in Kiev,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 6, no. 2 (1982): 152–166.

easily become an intermediary language between Turkic groups and the Rus' from the tenth century onwards.

Learning Each Other's Tongues

More complicated issues such as religious customs and concepts, which seem to have been adopted by the Rus' from the Turks, had to be transmitted (to some extent) perhaps in the vernaculars.⁴⁶ This must have taken place after spending considerable time together, and thus, even though not leaving evident traces in the written records, I find it probable that Turkic languages must have been involved in the transmission of ideas despite the fact that Turkic loanwords in the Scandinavian languages – if that interpretation is accepted at all – are extremely rare and their etymological interpretation stands on shaky grounds.⁴⁷ However, the outstanding adaptability of both the Scandinavian Vikings and Turkic nomads to learning foreign languages is attested in various sources.

Unfortunately, there are no sources referring explicitly to Scandinavians learning a Turkic language. *Konungs skuggsjá*, the late medieval Norwegian King's Mirror, advises merchants to learn the languages of the places where they do business, and (especially) Latin and French.⁴⁸ These languages might have been useful for merchants of the thirteenth century – when the source originates – but possibly there would have been other languages suggested for ninth–eleventh-century Scandinavian merchants who ventured in the East. This might be supposed by the case of the Danish Viðgautr, who conducted business in Novgorod smoothly due to his knowledge of foreign languages. *Knýtlinga saga*, the compilation of stories of the Danish kings in which Viðgautr's trip was recorded, adds that he never needed an interpreter.⁴⁹ Travelling merchants usually were fluent in languages used in the territories they visited as it is also reported about the corporation of Jewish merchants called the Radhanites – going from Western Europe to China –

⁴⁶ On Turkic cultural influence on the Rus', see: Thorir Jonsson Hraundal, "New Perspectives on Eastern Vikings/Rus in Arabic Sources," *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 10 (2014): 65–97; Victor Tarras, "Leo Diaconus and the Ethnology of Kievan Rus'," *Slavic Review* 24, no. 3 (1965): 395–406; James E. Montgomery, "Ibn Fadlān and the Rūsiyyah," *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 3 (2000): 1–21.

⁴⁷ Thorir Jonsson Hraundal, "The Rus in Arabic Sources: Cultural Contacts and Identity," PhD dissertation (Bergen: University of Bergen, 2013), 170–173.

⁴⁸ *Speculum Regale. Konungs-skuggsjá*, eds. Rudolf Keyser, Peter Andreas Munch and Carl Rikard Unger (Christiania: Carl C. Werner & Company, 1848), 6.

⁴⁹ "Knýtlinga saga," in *Danakonunga sögur*, ed. Bjarni Guðnason, Íslenzk fornrit 35 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1982), 246–247.

who spoke Arabic, Persian, Greek, Latin, Frankish, Andalusian and Slavic. Their activities are interpolated into the section about the route of Rus' merchants in the ninth-century work of Ibn Khurradadhbih.⁵⁰ The Varangian merchant, Hróðfúss, who was betrayed on his voyage by his trading partners, the *blakumen* (Wallachians or Cumans), according to an eleventh-century Gotlandic runestone inscription (G 134), also must have possessed the necessary language skills for such a partnership.⁵¹

A more precise example of a Turkic language having been learned comes from the *Russian Primary Chronicle*. Here a Kievan stableman speaking the language of the nomadic Pechenegs is presented, who due to his knowledge could infiltrate the Pecheneg lines and call reinforcements from a nearby Rus' army during Prince Sviatoslav's reign (945–972).⁵² Unfortunately, the chronicle is silent about the ethnic origin of the boy, who could well be Scandinavian but just as easily (if not more likely) Slavic, judging by his occupation.

The Scandinavian Vikings were famous travelers, and Icelandic sagas, transmitted to us a few centuries later, all praise travelers with language skills.⁵³ The sagas unfortunately are not contemporary accounts and thus reflect vaguely the conditions of Eastern Europe in the ninth–eleventh centuries, especially concerning Turkic languages. This might be reflected by the semi-historical saga of Yngvarr the Far-Traveller, in which a local princess, Silkisif, besides being able to speak Roman, German, Norse, and Russian/Greek, was said to know “*many other [languages] spoken along the East road*” (“*margar adrar, er gengu um austurueg*”), without specifying any of them.⁵⁴ Even though the saga is unlikely to hold historical truth concerning Silkisif's existence, it can be safely assumed that after Latin, Norse, Slavonic and Greek, the Turkic languages held a prominent role in Eastern Europe and thus, a local princess being fluent in the language of the Turks is a potentially believable story in general.

Historical sources also support the notion that the contemporary elite did not look down on learning foreign languages. According to the testimony of Vladimir

⁵⁰ Pritsak, “An Arabic Text on the Trade Route of the Corporation of ar-Rūs.”

⁵¹ Judith Jesch, *Ships and Men in the Late Viking Age: The Vocabulary of Runic Inscriptions and Skaldic Verse* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001), 257–258. The identification of the “*Blakumen*” (in other sources “*Blökumenn*”) with the Wallachians and the Cumans is subject to debate. The latter would be an excellent example for nomad Turkic-Scandinavian commercial interactions, however newer research finds this probability less likely. See: Spinei, *The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads*, 105–107.

⁵² *RPC*, 85.

⁵³ Marianne E. Kalinke, “The Foreign language Requirement in the Medieval Icelandic Romance,” *The Modern Language Review* 78, no. 4 (1983): 850–861.

⁵⁴ *Yngvars saga víðförla*, 15. The translation here is mine.

Monomakh, his father Vsevolod I of Kiev (1078–1093), who was the son of Yaroslav the Wise (1019–1054) and the Swedish princess Ingigerðr, was fluent in five languages even though he never left the kingdom.⁵⁵ By this statement it can be claimed that one of the five languages he acquired must have been a Norse language as he was half-Swedish on his mother's side and thus probably bilingual from young age. The close ties with Scandinavia might have also prompted Vladimir the Great (980–1015) and Yaroslav the Wise to learn Old Norse. It has even been raised that a Slavic-Norse hybrid language could have developed in their courts.⁵⁶

It is also known that Scandinavians easily communicated with Old English speakers,⁵⁷ and according to the ninth-century account of the Norwegian traveler, Ohthere, he was said to have communicated with a Finno-Ugric tribe in Bjarmaland (somewhere in the Baltics), by speaking the language of the Lapps.⁵⁸ In addition, it can also be postulated that some Norsemen learned Finno-Ugric languages as well. The Bjarmians' language that Ohthere did not understand and which was compared to the "*twittering of birds*" (*fuglaklið*) is usually believed to be a Finno-Ugric language.⁵⁹ According to the saga of Örvar Oddr, a Norwegian was able to communicate with the Bjarmians, which is surmised from the fact that he was dwelling with them for years.⁶⁰

Bilingualism is also reported with nomadic people. Constantine Porphyrogenitus tells that the Magyars had been taught the language of the Khazars by the adjoining tribes of the *Kabaroï*.⁶¹ Nomads' adaptability to absorb multiple languages stems from the nature of their organization, namely that they incorporated into their tribal federations other (often defeated) tribes who had a similar lifestyle. The Arabic author, al-Istakhri, also notes that the tongues of

⁵⁵ *RPC*, 211.

⁵⁶ Henrik Birnbaum, "Yaroslav's Varangian Connection", *Scando-Slavica* 24, no. 1 (1978): 7.

⁵⁷ Matthew Townend, "Viking Age England as a Bilingual Society," in *Cultures in Contact. Scandinavian Settlements in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, eds. Dawn M. Hadley and Julian D. Richard (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 89–105; Matthew Townend, *Language and History in Viking Age England: Linguistic Relations between Speakers of Old Norse and Old English* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002).

⁵⁸ *The Terfinnas and Beormas of Ohthere*, ed. and trans. Alan S. C. Cross (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1981), 19–21.

⁵⁹ "Örvar Odds saga," in *Fornaldar sögur Norðrlanda*, Vol. 2, ed. Carl Christian Rafn (Copenhagen: Hardvig Fridrek Popp., 1829), 175; Davidson, *The Viking Road to Byzantium*, 35.

⁶⁰ "Örvar Odds saga," 35–36.

⁶¹ *DAI*, 174–175.

the Bulgars and the Khazars were the same.⁶² If al-Istakhri is to be believed, this would mean that the Rus' coming to trade in the region could manage with a single language (if they did not wish to use intermediaries), as both of their main trading partners spoke nearly the same tongue.

Based on the above evidence, it could be proposed that Turkic nomads and Vikings were both accustomed to learning foreign languages more frequently than members of sedentary societies. Both nomads and Vikings amalgamated various groups into their communities and established contact with plenty of different cultural associations during their migrations. The dubious and brief statement by the Arabic writer, ad-Dimashqi, concerning the ignorance of the Northern barbarian *Waranks* (Varangians) to speak any languages, hardly challenges the evidence presented above.⁶³

Instead, we should consider that certain groups of Turks and Scandinavians spending time together would learn each other's language to a certain degree. An interesting episode might help to illustrate this, even though its interpretation is far from certain. In the fourteenth-century Icelandic *Grœnlendinga saga*, a character called Tyrkir, whose name means 'Turk', features in the story, traveling together with the Norsemen to America. Upon the expedition's arrival to the New Land, Tyrkir is sent out as a scout to discover the countryside. After returning from the exploration in a strikingly good mood, he starts to speak in a language ("*þýzku*") unintelligible to his Scandinavian companions. Tyrkir then switches back to Norse and explains his behavior by the fact that he had found grapes which reminded him of his homeland.⁶⁴

There seems to be a general agreement among Western scholars that Tyrkir was a German, probably because he was speaking in "*þýzku*", that is German.⁶⁵ In Hungary, however, it is in fact believed that Tyrkir, as his name illustrates, was a Turk of Magyar or Pecheneg origin. The first scholar to articulate such an opinion

⁶² *Ibn Faḍlān and the Land of the Darkness*, 158; Harris Birkeland, *Nordens historie i middelalderen etter arabiske kilder* (Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1954), 29.

⁶³ Birkeland, *Nordens historie i middelalderen etter arabiske kilder*, 115.

⁶⁴ *Grœnlendinga saga*, 248–253.

⁶⁵ Sverrir Jakobsson, "Strangers in Icelandic Society 1100–1400," *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 3 (2007): 152; Birgitta Wallace, "The Discovery of Vinland," in *The Viking World*, eds. Stefan Brink and Neil Price (London: Routledge, 2008), 606; Halldor Hermansson, "Tyrkir, Leif Eiríksson's Foster-Father," *Modern Language Notes* 69, no. 6 (1954): 390; "The Saga of the Greenlanders," in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders. Including 49 tales*, Vol. 1, ed. Viðar Hreinsson (Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1977), 23.

was Jenő Pivány in the beginning of the twentieth century.⁶⁶ Even though some of his arguments can be rejected based on the thorough investigation of the saga corpus,⁶⁷ some of them are compelling. Pivány for instance noted that Tyrkir's language could not have been completely unintelligible to his Scandinavian companions if he had been speaking a Germanic language.⁶⁸ As noted, Norsemen fluently communicated with Old English speakers and it feels odd that they would not have understood a word from Tyrkir's monologue if he had been speaking in German.

Another Viking group in the narrative, led by Karlsefni, could not communicate with the native American Indians as they did not understand their language.⁶⁹ This might suggest that the late medieval saga composers were aware of the difficulties which their predecessors faced when confronted by an alien language. The case of Tyrkir, therefore, would serve as a great example for a highly developed communication between Old Norse and Turkic speakers if his identity and historical existence could be validated. That acquiring distant languages was thought to be a reality (at least in the age of saga writings) is illustrated by an episode in *Eiríks saga rauða*, where two Vinland children are taken with the Norsemen and are taught the Old Norse language.⁷⁰

Evidence of more trustworthy types can perhaps support the possibility of Easterners living among the Norsemen. In an eleventh-century birchbark letter from Novgorod, the Hungarian forename Ugrin has been deciphered,⁷¹ illustrating that Hungarians could indeed have lived in distant lands in which Scandinavians

⁶⁶ Jenő Pivány, "Magyar volt-e a Heimskringla Tyrker-je?" [Was Heimskringla's Tyrker a Hungarian?], *Századok* 43, no. 7 (1903): 571–577.

⁶⁷ According to Pivány, Tyrker originated on the steppe since he was a *sudrmaðr*, that is a *southerner*. Pivány, "Magyar volt-e a Heimskringla Tyrker-je?," 573–574. However, the designation *sudrmaðr* is applied differently in the Old Norse sources, and at the end of the saga, a merchant from Bremen (Saxony) was claimed to be a "southerner" for instance. "Grœnlendinga saga," 268.

⁶⁸ Pivány, "Magyar volt-e a Heimskringla Tyrker-je?," 575. It is assumed by Ildar Garipzanov that the ninth-century Danish Viking king Harald Klak supposedly also negotiated with the Franks in the "*lingua theodisca*," i.e. German. Ildar H. Garipzanov, "The Annals of St. Bertin (839) and Chacanus of the Rhos," *Ruthenica* 5 (2006): 11.

⁶⁹ "Grœnlendinga saga," 260–261.

⁷⁰ "Eiríks saga rauða," in *Eyrbyggja saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórdarson, Íslenzk fornrit 4 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1935), 432.

⁷¹ Gábor Gyóni, "Egy Ugrin nevű személy a 11. században Novgorodban" [A man named Ugrin in eleventh-century Novgorod], in *Hadak Útján. A népvándorlások fiatal kutatóinak XXIV. konferenciája Esztergom 2014. november 4–6. II.*, eds. Attila Türk, Csilla Balogh and Balázs Major (Budapest: Magyar Őstörténeti Témacsoport Kiadványok, 2016), 379–388.

were actively present. In Kievan Rus', Prince Vladimir's son, Boris, also had a Hungarian servant by the name György (George).⁷² Though personal names are not definite indicators of ethnic identity, Tyrkir's case is also assisted by the story of the first Rus' martyr, Gleb, who in 1015 was stabbed to death by his cook called Torchin, also meaning a Turk.⁷³ The designation appears as a personal name once more in the *Russian Primary Chronicle* referring to a servant in Kievan Rus'.⁷⁴

Common guard duties and retinue services, in which Scandinavians and nomads participated in Eastern and Southeastern European courts (e.g. Kievan Rus', Khazaria, Byzantium, Hungary) also could result in similar situations of cohabitation.⁷⁵ A specific instance would be the case of the Varangian Varayazhko recorded in the *Primary Chronicle*, who, upon Iaropolk's death and defeat from Grand Prince Vladimir, fled to the Pechenegs "*in whose company he fought long against Vladimir.*"⁷⁶ Situations like these presented ample opportunities for Scandinavians to acquire Turkic or Finno-Ugric notions, words or languages in general.

Conclusion

Despite the distance between the two language groups, communication between Old Norse and Turkic speakers might have been smoother during the ninth–tenth centuries than previously assumed. Away from hostility and warfare, even the most primitive ways of exchanging goods required a general understanding or awareness of the transactions by both parties. Even though loanwords are not discernible between Old Norse and any of the Turkic languages, it has to be noted that several of these Turkic languages are unknown to us, or we possess only a few words of their vocabulary. Regardless, the historical situation demanded that speakers of Old Norse and many of the Turkic or Finno-Ugric languages should understand each other. Due to the extensive military and commercial contacts, as well as the occasional co-habitation at various parts of the "Eastern Way" that Scandinavians travelled around from the eighth century onwards, communication channels between the two ethnic groups developed gradually.

⁷² *RPC*, 127.

⁷³ *RPC*, 128.

⁷⁴ *RPC*, 198.

⁷⁵ Csete Katona, "Viking és nomád eredetű kísérettagok a 9–11. századi kelet-európai udvarokban" [Viking and nomadic retinue members in courts along the "Austrvegr" in the ninth–eleventh centuries], in *Micae Mediaevales*, Vol. 7, eds. Csaba Farkas, András Ribi and Kristóf Gy. Veres (Budapest: ELTE, 2018), 49–64.

⁷⁶ *RPC*, 93.

In the ninth century, the primary communicative channels were provided by interpreters, most probably Slavs who understood the Scandinavians and also the other inhabitants of the region. By the next century, however, the majority of the Scandinavian community in Russia became bilingual, which must have resulted in easier communication with the Turks along the Volga and the Dnieper. Turkic groups living alongside the major rivers also practiced the Slavic language which became the “new” intermediary between the Rus’ and the various Turkic tribes. In the course of time, Scandinavian groups spending considerable time in the vicinity or company of various groups with Turkic cultural backgrounds possibly felt the need to transmit or acknowledge some notions in the vernacular(s). Since according to the written sources, both Vikings and nomads of Turkic stocks showed outstanding skills in acquiring foreign languages, it seems probable that Scandinavians could also learn local languages other than Slavic in Eastern Europe, or that a few Turks were able to assimilate within the Norsemen.

Possibilities to learn each other’s languages presented themselves in courts of the East, where Scandinavian and Turkic retainers were simultaneously hired. Mercantile relations on the border zones of the steppe and the forest regions, or international markets, where temporary dwellings were established, were places where Scandinavian–Turkic communications also developed. These fairs, supervised mostly by Turkic people, acted as vigorous melting-pots of different cultures where a multitude of contemporary languages were employed. Divergences could be manifold even within the same language group or tribal association due to multi-ethnic interactions and regional variations within the same unit.

Added to this, the international character of these markets is hallmarked by the use of interpreters, mediatory languages, bilingualism and acquisition of other foreign languages to varying degrees. Despite the gradual developments outlined above, it is reasonable to assume that all these factors (interpreters, mediatory languages, bilingualism) were also at work simultaneously, depending on the level of assimilation of each group. In addition, in business relations, it was advantageous in certain situations to hide one’s own knowledge of the local language (e.g. during negotiations), or quite the opposite; namely, to acquire a basic knowledge in order to understand the transactions and one’s partners’ intentions in case of unreliable trading partners (illustrated for instance by the case of Hróðfúss). Interpreters, therefore, were possibly not abandoned with time but continued to operate even after the linguistic assimilation of the Scandinavians. These listed possibilities might have created endless combinations regarding the means of communication carried out by both Turkic and Rus’ groups present simultaneously at the same location.