

**Some comments on Paul Barford's
review of Birgitta Hårdh
and Bożena Wyszomirska-Werbart (eds),
*Contacts across the Baltic Sea during
the Late Iron Age (5th–12th centuries)***

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Birgitta Hårdh and Bożena Werbart

We have with great satisfaction noted that our book *Contacts across the Baltic Sea* received a comprehensive and elaborate review in “*Archaeologia Polona*” vol. 31, 1993 (Barford 1993 : 276–83). It is of course a well-known fact that researchers in these various countries around the Baltic Sea have much too long been working in isolation from each other and that the first necessary step now is to create possibilities for them to meet, to catch a glimpse of the current research projects, and not the least to have an insight into each other's working methods and theoretical grounds. The work of creating a contact net between scientists in countries around the Baltic Sea is still just beginning, the intention of the 1991 symposium was to bring together researchers from different countries, simply to get to know each other and to begin a dialogue, to meet in a more informal way, and to make acquaintance not necessarily only with well-known and “established” archaeologists, but one of the purposes was to get to know the younger generation of scientists. It is also a very strong reason why we did not want to control the symposium through suggesting a much more narrow theme. The primary intention was to be informed about the current research in the countries around the Baltic Sea in a more global and “international” scale, as the reviewer quite rightly pointed out. The aim was, however, not only the “internationalization” of the archaeology of Northern Europe, but also to create a dialogue! Thematic symposia are of course fruitful in a different way than this. The idea was, however, that such thematic meetings should be crystallized from this beginning.

A theme which the reviewer indicated, should be to examine how “the ethnic units” (cultural identities) have been defined by archaeologists from countries around the Baltic Sea. That is an extremely important question, motivating a separate symposium. At the 2nd Annual Meeting of European Association of Archaeologists

(EAA) in Riga, Latvia, 1996, the “ethnic” question was discussed in at least three different sessions: “Population movements in prehistory”, “Cultural identity or ‘ethnicity’ in archaeology”, and “Contacts across the Baltic Sea”. Contributions from the last-mentioned session clearly showed that 1996, five years after our first informal meeting, diversified research traditions and entirely different ideas of archaeological cultures, social changes and material culture have affected each other. It also indicates a great multiplicity and pluralism of archaeological interpretations in these various countries around the Baltic Sea. This discussion, we can only hope, will continue.

As the reviewer indicated, these different articles reflect variations in research traditions in these various countries. We regarded it as one of the important results of this meeting, to have this exemplified. Without insight into that, no constructive co-operation can even begin. As the reviewer quite rightly pointed out, the fundamental differences in approaches between modern Polish and Scandinavian archaeology are perhaps symptomatic.

And now some details:

– In Scandinavia the “Early Medieval” is not understood as in Continental Europe. The so called Late Iron Age, both in Sweden and Denmark, includes the 5th to 12th centuries.

– A big problem, which all who worked with the material from Baltic Sea area have met, are the very different forms of the local names, German or Slavonic. It would be, naturally, desirable to establish a routine to always mention both the present and the earlier name forms. Here an editor can only give recommendations; we feel however that it is not the editor’s duty to change submitted manuscripts.

– It cannot be the purpose of a collection of symposium lectures like this, to give an all-encompassing synopsis of all thinkable central themes. Neither can one expect complete bibliographies. These very different contributions are, as we know, often based on comprehensive investigations. It is not reasonable that the background literature be listed in such a connection, Here one can of course go to the works of the individual authors for further information.

– The reviewer pointed out the necessity of contacts, and above all that the western writers, particularly English-speaking, must endeavour to acquaint themselves more with the research and material from Eastern Europe. We can only agree about that. The reviewer has chosen some frightful examples. The name of Arniš Radiņ should, as a logical consequence, be spelt right by the reviewer (Earford 1993 : 279), and likewise Eliza Fønnesbech-Sandberg is not from Lund, but from Copenhagen. The reviewer regrets as well that Per Ramqvist does not cite Kobylński’s book (1988) “...it would have been nice to see Kobylński 1988 cited too” (Barford 1993 : 278). Unfortunately Per Ramqvist from Umeå, Sweden, cannot speak Polish, and for that reason he could not read Kobylński’s book. He shares this ignorance with the majority of Scandinavian archaeologists, except maybe Johan Callmer and Božena

Werbart (Kobyliński 1988; Ramqvist 1991). Can otherwise Paul Barford read Swedish? No? It is a pity, for in that case he could have read and “cite” Wyszomirska-Werbart’s article (1990), where she actually described Janów Pomorski. In addition, it is not correct that Janów Pomorski “is almost ignored” in our book (Barford *op. cit.*: 281), because it is mentioned in Wyszomirska-Werbart’s article (1992), on page 69 with reference to Jagodziński and Kasprzycka (1990).

– It is a pity that the reviewer did not try enough to read the texts of various articles carefully. It is however very doubtful, if Prof. Johan Callmer from Berlin (who otherwise knows both Polish and Russian well) should be ashamed that he did not cite sources of data used in the maps, because they are his own maps, which he created on the basis of long-standing research.

– It was really unnecessary of the reviewer to point out that Daugava River is known in English as Dvina, for it is also known as Dvina in Russian, but Daugava is a Latvian name, and used today.

It is hard and slow work for English-speaking scientists to become familiar with research and material from the East, as well as for the Polish- and Russian-speaking archaeologists to become familiar with the research and material from Scandinavia. A good and important beginning is to organize symposia and study networks, so one can be aware of this research being pursued outside one’s own language area. The symposium and volume *Contacts* should be seen as a part of an introduction to such a process.

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Reply**Paul Barford**

I suspect that the intention of my remarks made in a review written over three years ago have been misunderstood in this somewhat defensive article, which fails however to address the main points I was making. Although we seem to be in agreement over several points, and on others we can agree to differ (and on one or two I stand corrected), I still feel however that the editor of a collective work has more responsibility than do my disputants, particularly in standardising terminology and the collation of the use of local variants of place (and river) names. I'm not quite clear what is meant by the imputation that I failed to read the texts I discussed carefully enough or that my admitted ignorance of Swedish affected my reading of the work I reviewed. I also doubt very much – despite the editors' assurances – whether Johan Callmer really did locate each of the sites shown on his maps by his own fieldwork all around the Baltic, and repeat my regret that the sources of his information used in compiling these interesting maps are not revealed to those – like myself – who are curious as to why the dots (sites?) are placed where they are. Per Ramqvist was writing about building traditions in northeastern Europe (including Poland) which is why I remarked on the absence of a major work on the subject he was writing on, Zbigniew Kobyliński's book has a lengthy English summary and lots of illustrations, and his or my ignorance of foreign languages is not the main problem, but a question of access to information, facilitating which I feel should be the main aim in planning such joint works as the one discussed.