

Vladyslav KIORSAK

PhD in history

Junior research fellow of the Department of Medieval History

I. Krypiakevych Institute of Ukrainian Studies of the NAS of Ukraine

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3144-2405>

e-mail: Vlad.kiorsak@gmail.com

UKRAINIAN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF ICELANDIC SAGAS

In this paper, we attempted to review the key works of Ukrainian researchers in the field of saga studies in the 21st century. We outlined the preconditions for the formation of saga studies in Ukraine and identified key trends, directions, and prospects for developing this field in Ukrainian historiography. The research mentioned is situated within the broader context of intellectual tendencies over the past 30 years of Ukrainian history.

The starting point of saga research in Ukrainian historical science was the collapse of the Soviet Union and a reassessment of the national historical narrative, which considers Ukraine an organic part of the Pan-European space. Icelandic sagas offer a new perspective for envisioning Ukraine's medieval history.

We identified the primary sources of influence and intellectual borrowings. Soviet and Russian works significantly impacted Ukrainian saga studies. Conversely, Omeljan Pritsak's Norse studies also held immense historiosophical significance for Ukrainian history. They were translated into Ukrainian between 1997 and 2003. Methodological achievements and approach to systematizing Northern European medieval references to Eastern Europe highlighted directions that warranted further thorough research. His distinct approach, diverging from that of Russian historians regarding state-building processes in Early Medieval Eastern Europe, enabled Ukrainian scholars to establish a new research framework. This framework allowed for the adaptation of sagas within the context of contemporary Ukrainian perspectives on the history of Rus.

Ukrainian researchers have primarily focused on studying Rus in sagas. Evidence from these texts is often used to support either Normanism or anti-Normanism theories. However, despite these limitations, sagas are often contextualized within a broader framework, comparing them with archaeological materials, ethnographic data, and local written sources. This multidisciplinary approach lends importance to these studies, not only for analyzing perceptions of Rus and its surrounding areas but also for their methodological value, as they can influence comparative studies.

Key words: Icelandic sagas, historiography, philosophy of history, Omeljan Pritsak, Rus-Scandinavian relations.

It is hard to imagine research in Norse studies without the analysis of one of the most prominent genres of Northern European literature – Icelandic sagas. Despite originating from Iceland, these texts represent the worldview and past of Scandinavians in general.

Often influenced by oral traditions transmitted by Icelandic immigrants from Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, these sagas also reflect Iceland's integral role in the broader Nordic community, maintaining close relations with other Scandinavian kingdoms and even Rus (Orning, 2016, p. 353–378). Icelandic scholars frequently worked in the courts of Norwegian and Danish kings. They contributed to the construction of the *Origo Gentis* of that time (Lassen, 2012, p. 33–58). These factors make these texts a unique source for studying cross-cultural relations and socio-political history in the Nordic region during the Medieval period (Clunies Ross, 2009, p. 317–330).

Icelandic literature is a valuable source for studying the perceptions of Medieval people. It contains rich ethnographic information and reinterpreting ideas from continental European scientific and folk traditions. Therefore, it offers unique insights into the social history of Iceland, other Scandinavian countries, and territories related to Northern Europe. In this context, sagas might also be relevant to researching Ukrainian history, as they mention these territories and even integrate them into their imaginary community. In particular, sagas have become an often-used source for studying one of the most mystifying periods of Ukrainian history – the Rus age.

The reliability of sagas as historical sources remains polemical in medieval studies. While some historians argue that unique details in the sagas preserve authentic historical information, others contend that their late composition date undermines their historical value. This ongoing debate has revealed new perspectives on both saga interpretation and Rus-Scandinavian relations.

This paper examines how Ukrainian historians have approached saga research, with a particular focus on three key aspects: the early history of Rus, the complexity of Rus-Scandinavian relations, and the methodological challenges of analyzing sagas as a historical and literary genre. By examining these intersecting themes, we aim to highlight both the achievements and potential new directions in Ukrainian saga studies.

While some researchers have partially covered this topic in their works (Пайтаровська, 2018, с. 43–50), our paper is the first to specifically highlight the contributions of Ukrainian scholars and their development in this area.

The study of medieval Icelandic literature in Ukrainian historical science began in the last decade of the 20th century. The active interest in these works is linked to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the development of new historiographical traditions that were previously censored. The dissolution of the Soviet Union impacted the renewal of discussions dedicated to the Normanist theory on the origin of Rus. Political liberalization, the absence of restrictions, and plurality of national worldviews led to new approaches and theories to find Ukraine's place in European civilization history.

The starting point of Ukrainian saga studies was the Soviet scientific heritage. Key researchers in this field included Mikhail Steblin-Kamensky (Стеблин-Каменский, 1979; Стеблин-Каменский, 1984), Yelena Ridzevskaia (Рыдзевская, 1978), Aron Gurevich (Гуревич, 1972), and Yelena Melnikova (Мельникова, 1986). Mikhail Steblin-Kamensky and Aron Gurevich played significant roles in developing the methodology for working with sagas. They investigated how the texts reflected social transformations in medieval Scandinavian society. They examined class relations and power dynamics in saga narratives using Marxist methodology. Their research also explored how oral storytelling traditions shaped the sagas' content and transmission. Mikhail Steblin-Kamensky and Aron Gurevich laid the foundation for research on saga structure, historical reliability, unconscious authorship questions,

and syncretic truth. Soviet Scandinavian studies were primarily concentrated in Moscow and Leningrad (Saint Petersburg). These centers formed scientific schools that continued researching saga-related topics even after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The translation of the book «The Origins of the Old Rus» was a significant event for Ukrainian Scandinavian studies at the turn of the millennium. This work, a magnum opus by Omeljan Pritsak, a Ukrainian researcher from Harvard, is a two-volume publication that includes a list, a brief characteristic, and a summary of most Scandinavian historical sources mentioning territories in Eastern Europe (Прицак, 1997; Прицак, 2003). The second volume of this work is specifically dedicated to Icelandic sagas. This foundational research simplified the scientific endeavors of historians who sought to incorporate data from sagas, rune stones, chronicles, and other written sources from Scandinavia into their studies. The book also provided useful bibliographical information about text publications, translations, and analyses. Additionally, it offered an extensive list of literature related to the latest research in Scandinavian studies.

Omeljan Pritsak perceived sagas, including legendary ones, as sources that contain important information about the past. This information is often concealed behind fictional stories, chivalric poetry, mythological elements, and political influences of later periods. This is why historians should reconsider the significance of plots and attempt to comprehend their original meanings. According to this approach, historians view a text as a memory storage that preserves information about the most crucial events of the past by reshaping them into a storyline (Прицак, 2003, с. 45–50).

The primary historiographical conclusion of «The Origins of the Old Rus» was that eddas and sagas, despite their specificity, can be important sources not only for the period during which they were written but also for the period they describe. Through the deconstruction of myths and structural research, the eddic tradition, poetry, and legendary sagas can illuminate the obscure aspects of Ukrainian history and enhance our understanding of ethnocultural processes in Eastern Europe during the Early Middle Ages (Прицак, 2003, с. 45–50).

The importance of O. Pritsak in Ukrainian Scandinavian studies is hard to overestimate. Along with source publications, Ukrainian historians adopted methods, perceptions, and scientific frameworks in working with these texts. The Ukrainian translation of this work introduced a new perspective on Scandinavian sources, differing significantly from established approaches in Soviet science.

The work of Omeljan Pritsak significantly influenced the scientific outlook of one of the most important saga researchers in Ukraine, Leontiy Voitovych. Initially, sagas were not the primary focus of his studies. In his early publications, he concentrated on the Rurik dynasty. It was an understudied topic at that time. He incorporated the use of European sources that indirectly mentioned Rus and its ruling elite. The author used not only Rus chronicles but also Arabic, German, Polish, Lithuanian, Hungarian, and Czech written sources. Scandinavian texts included Sigtuna Annals, Gesta Danorum by Saxo Grammaticus, a cycle of works about Saint Olaf, and Icelandic sagas. Among the sagas, he focused on Kings' sagas and Legendary sagas (Войтович, 1990; Войтович, 2006; Войтович, 1996; Войтович, 2014).

Leontiy Voitovych perceived sagas in a manner similar to Omeljan Pritsak. He supported the idea that most of these texts originated from a historical core, and as a result, they held a certain level of historical relevance that could shed light on little-known aspects of Rus history. In the author's opinion, *fornaldarsögur norðurlanda* contain information about

episodes of Scandinavian clans' struggles for major settlements and trade centers in Eastern Europe. Specifically, the author compared the burning of the old wooden fortification in Ladoga around 852 with mentions in sagas such as *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar*, *Sturlaug's saga Starfsama*, *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*, and other mythical-heroic sagas depicting attacks on *Aldeigjuborg* and *Gardariki*, which should be identified as Ladoga and Rus, respectively. The researcher viewed these plots as a preservation of collective memory about the conquest of Eastern Europe by the Swedish king Anund Uppsala (Войтович, 2006, с. 199–201).

The author compared data from sagas with Rus chronicles. He suggested that after the Viking triumph in Ladoga, the local Slavic elite formed an opposition led by Gostomysl, who organized a rebellion. Following military failures, the Slavs decided to invite Normans who could help resist Swedish pressure. These invited warriors were Danish Vikings led by Rurik, the founder of the Rurikid dynasty. His arrival in Rus was documented in the *Rus Primary Chronicle* in 862 (Войтович, 2006, с. 199–201).

In his later publications, the author supplemented his suggestion. He identified the main character, Halfdan, from the *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar* as a representative of the *Scylding* dynasty, specifically Halfdan the Old. This legendary figure could potentially be the father of Rurik. The author found parallels to this plot in the book of Rimbart, *Vita Ansgari*. Leontiy Voitovych proposed that the turn of the 8th and 9th centuries was marked by the emergence of a Scandinavian kingdom with a political center in Ladoga. Skalds preserved the memory of these events, and such elements of memory were constantly transforming and being actualized. After transformations, these elements found their way into sagas (Войтович, 2011, с. 157–158).

A great example of the renovation of collective memory is the literature about Ragnar Lothbrok, a legendary chieftain of the Viking Age. Leontiy Voitovych dedicated a paper to this personality titled «Was Ragnar Lothbrok on Rus Territories?». In his research, the author attempted to prove the historicity of this figure and continue theory of O. Pritsak regarding the Rus Khaganate and the Hellespont of Saxo Grammaticus, which should be identified with Constantinople (Войтович, 2016, с. 93–107).

Leontiy Voitovych was primarily interested in the Eastern vector of Ragnar's activity. The conquest of Eastern Europe was linked to Ragnar's son Hvitserkr, referred to as the ruler of the East Kingdom in the *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*. The narrative of Hvitserkr's war in Eastern Europe was primarily introduced in two sagas – *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* and *Gesta Danorum* by Saxo Grammaticus. Leontiy Voitovych studied these texts, aiming to understand their historical reliability. The author suggested that Hvitserkr could be associated with Prince Askold, who was mentioned in the *Rus Primary Chronicle*. His campaign against the Hellespont, as mentioned by Saxo, should be linked with the attack on Constantinople in 860. According to the author, the struggle with Rus rulers for control over the region reflects the memory of the conflict between Askold and Oleg mentioned in the *Rus Primary Chronicle* (Войтович, 2016, с. 31–32).

The author's research investigated Eastern European toponymy within sagas, particularly focusing on the skepticism surrounding the use of «Holmgardr» as the designation for Novgorod during the early stages of Rus existence. The argument was presented that Novgorod likely did not exist before the 11th century. Furthermore, skepticism was expressed regarding the appropriateness of such a toponym for Rurikovo Gorodische, which experienced stagnation in the 10th century (Войтович, 2015, с. 37–55). Notably, the sole significant Scandinavian center in Rus lacking a toponym in sagas is the settlement

in Gnyozdovo. This expansive settlement, replete with thousands of Nordic graves and valuable artifacts, provided compelling evidence of its pivotal role in the administrative landscape of the 10th century.

Leontiy Voitovych conducted an analysis of sagas detailing trade routes in Eastern Europe. The author highlighted that, initially, Scandinavians employed the term «Austvegr» to designate the route connecting Scandinavia and the Byzantine Empire via the rivers Daugava and Dnipro. Key settlements along this path were identified as Holmgardr and Kænugarðar, with the latter argued to be synonymous with Kyiv. Building on this observation, the author contended that Gnyozdovo stood as the most significant settlement near the Daugava.

Leontiy Voitovych was one of the first Ukrainian historians to substantiate the significance of Icelandic sagas in shaping a new historical perspective on the role of Scandinavians in the early history of Rus state-building. According to his viewpoint, the Scandinavian presence in the territories of Eastern Europe should be dated back to the 7th century, starting from the legendary king Ivar Vidfamne mentioned in sagas. He firmly believed that these texts depict real episodes of the struggle between Swedish and Danish clans for Ladoga and other southern locations (Войтович, 2013а, с. 91–123; Войтович, 2013b, с. 21).

The statement of L. Voitovych was that sagas offer insights into key events chronicled in Rus history. The first one is the invitation of Rurik. It is also the assertion of power by Askold, and the centralization of trade routes by Oleg. The later period of Rus history is also portrayed in Kings sagas, particularly focusing on figures like Volodymyr the Great, Yaroslav the Wise, and their descendants.

Leontiy Voitovych's contribution significantly shaped the formation of Ukrainian saga studies. His theoretical insights regarding the methodology for working with these sources have had a lasting impact on the subsequent scholarly endeavors of both his colleagues and students.

The opponent of Leontiy Voitovych's concept is Olha Shchodra. She is also Lviv researcher who utilizes sagas in her research. She specializes in early Rus history and the history of Slavs. In her recent studies, she focuses on the role of the Norman factor in the formation of Rus (Щодра, 2022, с. 13–41; Щодра, 2018с, с. 158–179; Щодра, 2018а, с. 9–27). Olha Shchodra challenges Leontiy Voitovych's idea regarding the origin of the Ruriks from the Scylding dynasty, instead favoring a theory about their Slavic origins (Щодра, 2017, с. 17; Щодра, 2019, с. 127). According to her perspective, legendary sagas cannot serve as reliable sources for identifying genealogical connections due to the substantial gap between the period of writing and the actual events.

Olha Shchodra aligns with the views of Russian researchers Tatjana Jackson and Yelena Melnikova, who argue that the first reliable evidence in sagas pertains to the period of Prince Volodymyr the Great (Щодра, 2017, с. 17; Щодра, 2019, с. 127). She contends that all previous events cannot be considered historical. This suggests that sagas lacked knowledge of the earlier rulers of Rus due to limited connections between Rus and Scandinavian kingdoms, with regular connections between these territories only emerging in the 10th century (Щодра, 2017, с. 16–17).

Another argument challenging the Normanist theory of the origin of Rus, according to O. Shchodra, is the absence of the term «Rus» in sagas. Typically, authors used terms such as Gardariki, Gordum, Austvegr, or Austriki. The use of the toponym «Russoland»¹ in the

¹ The original text mentioned the term Rússía.

Hálfðanar saga Eysteinssonar supports the notion that the author sought to emphasize the territory of the Middle Dnipro. Olha Shchodra dates events in the saga to the 11th century, using this as evidence for the local origin of the name Rus and its association with the territory of the Middle Dnipro (Щодра, 2018a, с. 24; Щодра, 2018b).

The author views sagas as a contributing factor to the creation of erroneous historical beliefs, specifically the overestimation of the influence of Scandinavians on state-building processes in Eastern Europe. The main reason for this is the fact that the saga prototypes were influenced by various myths and legendary tales. Centuries of such influences make it impossible to highlight exact dates or individualize characters. The author frequently cites Russian saga researchers and Peter Sawyer, who demonstrated that authors from the 13th to 14th centuries often employed categories closely related to their contemporary period when describing the Viking Age.

The primary conclusion drawn by the author regarding the significance of sagas is that their silence holds more importance than their voice. The absence of historical references to Eastern Europe in the context of Early Medieval history within sagas suggests that this region was not closely connected to the Scandinavian cultural sphere. However, the author overlooks the fact that all territories, including Scandinavian kingdoms, were often portrayed in a legendary manner in the context of ancient history. The debatability of the historicity of sagas stems not solely from the lack of cultural connections with Rus but from the overall complexity inherent in these texts.

One of the few Ukrainian researchers who explore sagas outside the context of Eastern European history is Ivan Vorotniak. His research in Scandinavian past is dedicated to the colonization of Greenland and the Viking discovery of North America. Key sources in this context are the Vinland sagas – the Saga of the Greenlanders and The Saga of Erik the Red.

Through the lens of these sources, he attempts to comprehend the motivational aspects of Scandinavian colonization and Viking mobility in general. In addition to social and political reasons, the author also emphasizes the specific worldview shaped by the popular culture of that time. The desire for travel was fueled by religious beliefs that encouraged young individuals to seek fame in battles. Furthermore, he highlights the significance of charismatic leaders, such as Erik the Red, who were unable to fulfill their potential in their homeland and were compelled to pursue a better life through distant journeys, realizing their ambitions in newly discovered lands (Воротняк, 2023a, с. 424–435).

Ivan Vorotniak analyze the image of newly discovered lands, such as Vindland through the prism of the intellectual culture of that time. He compares the Icelandic perception of Vindland with biblical narratives. Mentioned lands in his research became an example of literary sacralization of particular territories.

According to the author, certain fragments serve as archetypes intended to explain the significance of these discoveries and motivate people to relocate there. Additionally, sagas had a didactic purpose, aiming to showcase the greatness of Christianity and its civilizational dominance over the pagan beliefs deeply rooted in Greenlandic society during that era (Воротняк, 2017a, с. 120–159; Воротняк, 2017b, с. 71–94).

The author views the saga as a genre actively developed in oral form. Icelandic tradition served as a memory storage. These memory elements constantly adapt to political changes and cultural influences. Despite being Christians, Icelandic authors reinterpreted pagan passages and attempted to present them in the context of their own vision of the religion. The statement is made that sagas represent intricate social transformations associated

with the adoption of Christianity, the expansion of the ecumene, cultural influences from Continental Europe, and other factors (Воротняк, 2016, с. 124–164).

It is also important to note that sagas were a tool that formed the image of standards of conduct during that time. Through sagas and their characters, authors sought to explain certain patterns of worthy and unworthy behavior. Characters in these texts became role models or anti-heroes for listeners and readers. For example, the depictions of Leif Erikson and Gudrid Thorbjarnardóttir represented the ideal man and woman. These literary characters were popular in Greenland and Iceland. They became important symbols of the Scandinavian politics of memory. Saga authors used these images to explain and legitimate crucial virtues, introduce ideological changes, and solidify the legitimization of Christianity. In this regard, they resemble hagiography, but the source of their images derived from characters in folklore (Воротняк, 2015b, с. 246 – 291; Воротняк, 2015a, с. 144–164; Воротняк, 2023b, с. 138–149).

Sagas have also been studied by Ukrainian archaeologists, with Fedir Androshchuk playing a pivotal role. Fedir Androshchuk is famous for his research in the field of Ukrainian archaeology from the 9th to 12th centuries, Rus-Scandinavian relations, Viking swords, numismatics, and church archeology. He is recognized as a historian who has contributed to the theoretical and methodological foundation of contemporary studies on Viking expansion in Eastern Europe.

The main sources for the research of this topic are archeological finds but researcher also include sagas as additional sources. These text helps interpret archeological artifacts. They support better understanding of political aspects, social transformations, and ideological orientations.

An eloquent example in this case is the study of mounds in Scandinavian society. In researching Varangian mounds on the territory of Ukraine, F. Androshchuk draws parallels with sagas and Eddas, where these burials held a sacral significance. Sagas indicate that burial mounds of renowned personalities also functioned as administrative places, cultural centers, and places of memory. He provides examples from the Haralds saga hárfagra, which contains information about the ritual of sitting on the mound and rolling from the mound during the king's enthronement. The author applied this information to the research of the Halychyna Grave in Halych, which was a symbolic burial without a deceased. He suggests that this grave served as a symbolic place designed for the initiation of local chieftains (Андрощук, 2003, с. 5–10).

Fedir Androshchuk sees sagas as an ethnographic source. In one of his papers dedicated to Scandinavian swords, he analyzes sagas that mention swords as sacred artifacts. Additionally, he examines these texts in studies of Arabic sources that reference Rus. The author compares the mention of «Rus Island» by Ibn Rustah and other Arabic authors with Holmgard in Icelandic sagas. Androshchuk asserts that this toponym is a mental concept. The author refers to Scandinavian cosmogonical texts, according to which the place inhabited by humans is called Midgard, meaning «middle yard» or «middle area» (Андрощук, 1994, с. 6–7; Андрощук, 2014). This world is envisioned as a vast island surrounded by the large sea serpent Jörmungandr and located at the center of the Universe. Consequently, Holmgard could be a symbolic term used in early Scandinavian contexts without being specific to particular locations but rather representing all of Rus in general.

The author also utilized sagas to formulate historical hypotheses. He compares visual epigraphic materials with Saga and Edda motifs. Additionally, he employs these

texts to support arguments related to the existence of fur trade between Scandinavia and the Eastern Baltic (Андрощук, 2004, с. 122), traditions of purchasing and selling real estate in Scandinavia (Андрощук, 2007, с. 107), and the creation of genealogical lists of Danish rulers and their connections with Rus (Андрощук, 2022). In one of his works dedicated to the Church of the Tithes in Kyiv, the author explores unique architectural elements reminiscent of a palace in Asturias. Drawing on sagas, the author suggests that such architectural borrowings could be attributed to Viking raids on the Iberian Peninsula, where Vikings served as mediators in cultural exchange (Андрощук, 2021, с. 20).

Sagas are also crucial sources for the research conducted by Vita Polovynska. This researcher specializes in political and socio-cultural relations between Rus and Scandinavia in the 9th to 12th centuries (Половинська, 2015). An important focus within this context is the perception of Prince Yaroslav the Wise and his wife, Swedish Princess Ingigerd, in Scandinavian literature (Половинська, 2018а, с. 270). Additionally, V. Polovynska explores religious influences and cross-cultural exchanges between these territories (Половинська, 2013, с. 166–176; Половинская, 2014, с. 14–18).

In her opinion, knowledge about Rus in sagas emerged due to widespread trade and military activities involving merchants and mercenaries from Northern Europe who conveyed this information to their homelands. Vita Polovynska is skeptical of sagas, asserting that these texts are a form of literature with a nuanced interpretation of truth. While acknowledging that their plots may have historical counterparts, she notes that sagas are replete with stereotyped information (Половинська, 2018b, с. 204–219).

The author is convinced that the portrayal of Prince Yaroslav in sagas is an eloquent example of such stereotyping. This image, according to the author, cannot be considered a reflection of reality but rather a complex literary representation conforming to the Icelandic canon of that time. Vita Polovynska explains the depiction of Yaroslav as indecisive and greedy, which is a typical literary device aimed at exalting the main character, causing other characters to fade into the background. Simultaneously, the author asserts that Eastern European storylines held significant importance for Scandinavians, serving as reflections of the general perception of interstate relations personified through Yaroslav (Половинська, 2020, с. 4–14).

Sagas were also referenced in the works of Ukrainian Byzantinist Oleksandr Fylypchuk. This historian is renowned for his research on the participation of warriors from Rus and Scandinavia in the army of the emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire. The main focus of his publications was dedicated to military contacts between Scandinavians and Byzantines before 988 when the Varangian Guard was formed. The author believes that sagas can be one of the sources that document these contacts (Филипчук, 2013).

For example, the author utilizes *Finnboga saga Ramma* and *Hallfreðar saga vandræðaskálds*, which describe Scandinavians serving in the army of the Byzantine emperor. The author attempts to find historical equivalence and date events described in sagas. He assumes that one of the characters in the *Finnboga saga Ramma*, Bersi, could have traveled to Bulgaria with the army of Rus prince Sviatoslav I, subsequently arriving in Constantinople and joining the army of the Basileus. Regarding *Gris Sæmingsson* from the *Hallfreðar saga*, the author perceives him as a participant in Prince Volodymyr's army, which was sent as aid to Emperor Basil II in 988. He suggests that these sagas indicate that after the end of the Rus-Byzantine war in 971, Emperor John I Tzimiskes recruited a group of warriors from Rus, forming the core of the newly created *eteria* (Филипчук, 2014а, с. 7–11).

Sagas also are a source for the research on the social status of Scandinavians who served in the Byzantine army. In one of his works, O. Fylypchuk explored the cost of maintaining a Scandinavian soldier in Byzantium. Based on various sources, including sagas, the author claims that the cost of a mercenary was continually increasing. At the beginning of the Varangian Guard, the salary of one trooper equaled 10 nomismas; in the second half of the 10th century, it was 0.5 liters of gold. The author references *Laxdæla saga* to illustrate the wealth of warriors who returned from Byzantium (Филипчук, 2008, с. 7–29).

Oleksandr Fylypchuk also studied Harald's saga Sigurðarsonar, which mentions the military service of the future Norwegian king, Harald Hardrada, in the Varangian Guard. This Icelandic text presents incredible stories about Harald's trips to Jerusalem, his attempt to blind the emperor, his affair with the niece of the empress, his imprisonment, and his escape to Rus thanks to the miracle of Saint Olaf. The author stresses that such plots should be perceived through the lens of mythologization and the literary tradition of that time. Part of these narratives paid homage to the prevailing frameworks of that era, such as romantic, pilgrimage, and adventure plots. Although Harald could have genuinely been involved in the Varangian rebellion and the blinding of Emperor Michael V Kalaphates, this information should be approached with caution. Oleksandr Fylypchuk sees a grain of truth in the story about Harald's imprisonment, suggesting it could be related to the Rus-Byzantine War in 1043. The detention of Varangians was part of a strategy to disarm these units and prevent them from potentially joining the army of the Rus prince. As Harald was one of the commanders of the mercenaries, he could have been placed under guard and released only after the Rus-Byzantium peace treaty (Филипчук, 2014b, с. 193–205).

In conclusion, we should note that saga studies are actively advancing in contemporary Ukrainian studies. These works exceed the boundaries of Ukrainian history and integrate it into a broader European context. They offer a perspective from the outside for Ukrainian scholars and complement our vision of social processes in the High Middle Ages. Contemporary Ukrainian researchers are less dependent on intellectual influences from Russia. They are more open to different historical sources and have access to original texts. At the same time, they frequently incorporating the works of contemporary European academics. It leads to the formation of new perspectives and support the exchange of scientific information.

Translations of old Icelandic literature are beginning to emerge in Ukraine. In 2020, the Poetic Edda was translated into Ukrainian by Vitaliy Kryvonos (Старша Едда, 2020). In 2023, Snorri's Edda was published (Стурлусон, 2023), and in the same year, the publisher announced the translation of Egil's Saga. All these works are accompanied by comments and forewords that aid Ukrainian scholars and individuals interested in them in gaining a better understanding of these texts. Undoubtedly, the availability of these works will impact Ukrainian Scandinavian studies and contribute to a deeper understanding of both Ukrainian and European history.

Examining publications by Ukrainian historians reveals the following specifics of Ukrainian saga studies. Most authors turn to sagas to research the history of Rus and Rus-Scandinavian relations during the Middle Ages. The mentioned works are used as additional sources in this complex topic research. In some cases, they were used to justify both Normanist and anti-Normanist theories. These texts were employed to identify Prince Rurik's origin, analyze Rus socio-political history, explore matrimonial relations between Rus and Scandinavian rulers, and understand mutual cultural influences between these regions. There are relatively few studies dedicated to the methodological specifics of sagas

as a literary genre and those that exist also reflect the Icelandic colonization of Greenland and North America, as mentioned in Vinland sagas.

The most popular sagas among Ukrainian historians are the King sagas and Legendary sagas, with less attention given to Icelanders' sagas. This preference is influenced by the frequency of mentions of Rus and Eastern Europe in these works. Contemporary Ukrainian saga research has been significantly influenced by Russian historians, such as Tatjana Jackson, Yelena Melnikova, and Galina Glazyrina. However, unlike these mentioned researchers, Ukrainian historians more often find rational foundations in these texts, possibly influenced by the works of O. Pritsak.

For most authors, sagas were not primary historical sources. They did not contribute significantly to the development of methodological approaches; however, they contextualized these texts within a broader framework. This can be seen in examples such as ethnographic studies of Scandinavians in Eastern Europe, which integrated archaeological data with Icelandic sagas. Additionally, this connection is evident in the context of Byzantine encounters with Scandinavians or within the struggles of Scandinavian clans for Eastern European territories and trading posts.

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Владислав КІОРСАК

доктор філософії

молодший науковий співробітник відділу історії середніх віків

Інституту українознавства ім. І. Крип'якевича НАН України

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3144-2405>

e-mail: Vlad.kiorsak@gmail.com

АНАЛІЗ САГ В УКРАЇНСЬКІЙ ІСТОРИЧНІЙ НАУЦІ

Здійснено огляд ключових праць українських дослідників XXI ст. у галузі сагознавства. Окреслено передумови формування сагознавчих студій в Україні, ключові тенденції, напрямки та перспективи розвитку цієї сфери в українській історіографії. Зазначені дослідження розглянуто у ширшому контексті інтелектуальних тенденцій у різні періоди української історії останніх 30 років.

Вказано, що відправною точкою, яка сприяла початкам дослідження саг в українській історичній науці, був розпад Радянського Союзу та переосмислення у формуванні національного історичного нарративу, в якому Україна розглядалася як органічна частина загальноєвропейського простору. Зазначено, що ісландські саги формували нову перспективу у баченні візії давньої історії України.

Визначено основні запозичення та інтелектуальні впливи. Доведено, що значний вплив на українське сагознавство мали праці радянських та російських скандинавістів. Зауважено, що велике історіософське значення мали також нордичні студії О. Прицака, які були перекладені українською у 1997–2003 рр. На основі методологічних здобутків автора, а також систематизації північноєвропейських середньовічних згадок про Східну Європу окреслено напрямки, які потребували подальших ґрунтовних досліджень. Завдяки відмінному від російських істориків погляду на державотворчі процеси у Східній Європі витворено дослідницький підхід, який дав змогу адаптувати погляд на саги крізь призму сучасного українського бачення історії Русі.

Стверджено, що здебільшого українські науковці фокусувалися на дослідженні Русі у сагах. Відзначено, що свідчення цих текстів часто ставали аргументом на користь теорії Норманізму чи Антинорманізму. Спостережено, що попри таку обмеженість, саги також вбудовували у ширшу перспективу, порівнюючи їх із матеріалами археології, етнографічними даними та локальними писемними джерелами. Виснувано, що все це робить ці дослідження важливими не лише для аналізу уявлень про Русь та її околиці, а й надає їм методологічної цінності, адже може сприяти появі компаративних напрацювань.

Ключові слова: ісландські саги, історіографія, філософія історії, Омелян Прицак, русько-скандинавські зв'язки.

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