

Gunnar Harðarson & Karl G. Johansson (eds.), *Dominican Resonances in Medieval Iceland. The Legacy of Bishop Jón Halldórsson of Skálholt* (The Northern World, 91), Leiden: Brill 2021, ISBN 9004448799, IX+337 pp.

Until recently, many scholars were eager to ascribe Old Norse narratives to a handful of evocative names from the Icelandic Middle Ages that we happen to know today, be it Sæmundr the Learned, Ari the Learned or the allegedly greatest of them all, Snorri Sturluson, who, in more recent times, has even been accompanied by his nephew Sturla Þorðarson—a narrative of presumed importance had to be connected to a man of presumed importance, entailing mutual confirmation. While this tendency can still be found in Old Norse scholarship, the last decade or so has seen increasing attempts to overcome the limitations of this selective appreciation. This has broadened the view towards formerly neglected texts, individuals and ideas from formerly unappealing time periods of the Nordic Middle Ages.

The present conference volume is the result of such a re-perspectivation. It focuses on the Iceland bishop Jón Halldórsson in the first half of the fourteenth century, and explores his possible connections to a variety of cultural currents at the time: clerical education, liturgy, saga literature, and manuscript production, for example. Eleven papers, written by scholars at different career stages, seek to place Jón and his legacy within these subfields, and these contributions have in common that they are stated to be tentative and speculative. With that said, Jón's significance for the argument of a specific paper is varying. In some contributions he takes centre stage, others mention his name in passing and then set out to explore a more general phenomenon. As the editors state in their brief preface, the published essays are only partly building on presentations at the related conference in 2016, with some lectures having been published elsewhere or not at all, and other contributions having been added later.

The result is a potpourri of scholarly reflections that are all somehow connected to Jón Halldórsson, but which deal with separate topics, often connected to ongoing research foci or earlier publications by the respective authors. This is, of course, typical of a conference volume, and by no means a bad thing: the variety of approaches offers aspects for further debate in various subfields, and it is refreshing to see how far the discussion of a formerly rather neglected fourteenth-century individual can go. As mentioned above, most authors are careful to present any possible connection of their subjects of interest with Jón as a hypothesis which requires further inquiry. Still, the overall tone is clear: Jón was a man of uttermost erudition in his time (and was lucky enough to be remembered as such), and his years-long stay abroad for educational reasons makes him an ideal candidate to ponder on the introduction of continental ideology to the North. Whether this really only happened as of the fourteenth century, and how both the twelfth and the thirteenth century may be related to this development, is open to further discussion, as is the question of which other learnings, politics, and mentalities in Central Europe might have had an impact on Old Norse literature and culture during these centuries. From this point of view, a particular merit of the volume at hand is that it questions scholarship's traditional limitation on the so-called *Sturlungaöld* in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.

The book provides a solid index and a few interesting appendices, but no joined bibliography, although many papers mention the same publications. Given such overlap, it would have been interesting to try to connect the argument of the individual contributions. However, for the most part, the individual authors take no notice of what their co-authors are writing, and the editors do not try to merge the range of approaches into a meaningful whole other than through very broad rubrics that are open to different readings.

Still, the present volume is a rich source for colorful details, not only on Jón Halldórsson but on (late) medieval Iceland in general. The book is appealing through the varied range of its contributors and their latitude in approaching Jón's legacy from their individual points of view. It is to be hoped that more publications of this type will see the light of day in the near future, with more attention being paid to the complex and revolutionary developments that marked medieval Europe beyond its present borders.

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