Swedish Historical Works in Eighteenth-Century Russian Translations: A Bibliography

Scholarly works treating the Swedish state were commonplace throughout the eighteenth century in Russia. At the end of the seventeenth century, a statistical description of Sweden was included as an appendix to the manuscript compilation *O nachatke shvedskogo i gotskogo gosudarstva* (On the origin of the Swedish and Gothic state),[1] and in 1797, Jean-Pierre Catteau-Calleville's *Tableau général de la Suède* was translated into Russian and published in Saint Petersburg.[2]

What follows is an overview of eighteenth-century Russian translations of Swedish historical works published between the sixteenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries. One of the first of these translations was *Perevod s knigi lichnoj shvedskago gosudarstva* (A translation of a private book about the Swedish state), translated from Latin.[3] The translation dates from 1724 and was the work of Dmitry Grozin, a translator from Latin who contributed to Dmitry Kantemir's translation of *Kniga sistemy ili sostojanija muhamettanskoj religii* (Book on the system or status of the Mohammedan religion). The book serves to give a descriptive historical overview of Sweden, focusing on castles and palaces, ruins and cities, pagan antiquities and the burial sites of ancient kings and heroes, and recounts numerous Swedish victories over the Danes and other peoples. It also records a number of Swedish legends, for example the victory of the 'woman-bogatyr Blanda' over one thousand Danish horsemen, and the 'royal grave' of King Angantyr's brother, Ladur. But in the Russian version of the text there is no commentary explaining who these figures were. The translator neglects to inform the reader that these figures were mentioned in the famous *Hervarar saga*, which had been partially translated into Russian.

Numerous editions of the Icelandic sagas were published in Sweden during the century spanning between the 1660s and 1760s. Translations of these works, often accompanied by the commentaries of Swedish scholars, began to appear in Russia in the eighteenth century. Among the Swedish editions translated into Russian were *Hervarar saga* (Uppsala, 1672), *Herrauds och Bosa saga* (Uppsala, 1666), *Olai Vereli Notae in Hist. Gotrici et Rolvonis* from *Gothrici et Rolfi Westrogothiae regum historia* (Uppsala, 1664), *Sagan om Ingwar Widtfarne och hans son Swen* (Stockholm, 1762),[4] *Historia Hialmari regis Biarmlandiae atque Thulemarkiae* (Stockholm, 1700), and also extracts from *Heimskringla* (Stockholm, 1697).

It is worth noting that the Russian translators did not view the Swedish editions as unimpeachable historical sources, but rather found it fitting to 'improve' them to suit their own tastes. In *Herrauds och Bosa saga*, for exam-

ple, Bosi has maimed three of the villain Sjod's henchmen. In the Russian translation, Sjod is the first of Bosi's victims.[5] Another example can be found in the extracts from *Heimskringla* translated into Russian. The last chapter of the translation is an extract of 'Om Konung Olåfs Järtekn ibland Wäringarna' (King Olaf's Omen among the Varangians) taken from *Konung Håkon herdbreidas saga*, which tells of the miraculous victory of a small group of Varangians over a massive pagan army. Both the Icelandic original and the Swedish translation recount how the blind leader of the pagan army was able to discern a rider on a white horse in the enemy camp. For the author of the saga, it was important to stress the miraculous fact that only a blind man was able to see Saint Olaf, who had come to the aid of the Varangians. In the Latin translation, however, the rider on a white horse was transformed into a horseman in white clothes, and in the Russian translation the same figure became more generally 'someone' in white clothes.[6]

One might suppose that such changes in the Russian text were made under the influence of the Latin translation. But the Russian translator of *Heimskringla* used the Swedish, not the Latin, text. In contrast with the two Scandinavian texts, the Russian translation mentions nothing about the blindness of the pagan leader: The entire army was able to see the saint-warrior. It appears likely that the Russian translator amended the original so that it might better accord with the Russian literary tradition. Images of saints in white clothes appeared frequently in medieval Russian military stories recounting victories over heathen enemies. These saints either appeared to the Christians on the eve of battle, or were witnessed by the enemy army as a whole.

Such attempts to locate 'Russian' fragments in the sagas serve to explain some of the more notable errors in the *Heimskringla* translation. For example, the translation of the second and the third chapters of *Konung Harald Hårdrådes saga* mention that Harald was in Russia before moving on to Greece, where he became a servant of Empress Zoe. In the autumn of that year he led a huge army to fight in galleys in the Greek Sea, and after some time became leader of the Varangians. During his exploits among the Greek Islands, we are told that 'he seized great territories from the Russians'.[7] This last statement appears incongruous with the rest of the narrative. Given the author's earlier relation that Harald had established friendly relations with King Yaroslav of Russia, it would appear illogical for Harald to seize land from his friend and ally. Moreover, the vague reference to Russian territories in Greece serves as a mystery in its own right. The presence of this curious passage can undoubtedly be attributed to both a mistake of the Russian translator and a typographical error in the second volume of the Swedish edition of 1700. The Swedish translation states that Harald conquered immense territories 'af Russarna'. *Russarna* here should probably be read as a misprint of *Kussarna* (corsairs), which is corroborated by the presence of 'Corsariis' in the accompanying Latin translation. In this case it appears that the Russian translator ignored the Latin text, resulting in the attribution of the unspecified territories to the Russians.[8]

If works such as *Perevod s knigi lichnoj shvedskago gosudarstva* were entirely focused on Sweden, the editions of the Icelandic sagas allowed Russian scholars to glean valuable information about Russian history, a recognition that often played a role in determining the form and content of the translations themselves. While the sections of *Hervarar saga* that refer to Russian history were translated in extenso, other sections were given only short summaries (as was the important nineteenth chapter, which recounts how the Goths defended themselves against the Huns).[9] The extracts from *Heimskringla* likewise show that the Russian translator was careful to include everything that had any bearing on Rus-

sia. And although Russian themes are absent in the translation of *Herrauds och Bosa saga*, all the translator's changes may be attributed to his desire to 'improve' the original.

These saga editions were well known in Russian academic communities, and were used by historians in the composition of their own works on Russian history. Vasily Nikitich Tatischev in particular knew the material well. During his stay in Sweden in 1724–1726, he met with Eric Julius Björner, secretary of the College of Antiquities and contributor to some of the aforementioned editions. The two men would even find themselves engaged in a scholarly controversy.[10] Tatischev drew on the Swedish editions while working on the *Istorija Rossijskaja* (History of Russia), a work that cited a number of the aforementioned Swedish texts: *Hervarar saga* and *Herrauds och Bosa saga* among others.[11]

Included in the Russian translation of *Olai Vereli Notae in Hist. Gotrici et Rolvonis* is a fragment of *Krákumál*, sometimes referred to as the *Death-Song of Ragnar Lodbrok*, which marked the first Russian verse translation of a Scandinavian poem:

Оставим все теперь.
Меня зовут там девы,
Отверз где Один дверь.
Мне сладки их напевы.
Иду я пиво пить
В чертог с его друзьями.
Уж полно жизнь мне жить.
Я разлучаюсь с вами.[12]

(Let us leave everything.
Maids are calling for me, where
Odin opened the door.
Their melodies are sweet to me.
I am going to drink ale
With his friends in the hall.
It is too late to live my life.
I am separating from you.)

Ragnar Lodbrok is not mentioned in *Gothrici et Rolfi Westrogothiae regum historia* itself. The fragment of his death-song (given in both the Icelandic original and Latin translation) is found in Verelius's Latin commentary on the word *Valhalla* in the notes to the second chapter. As no Swedish translation is given in the notes, the Russian verse translation was based on the Latin text.

Krákumál is a twelfth-century skaldic poem whose authorship was traditionally attributed to the ninth-century skald Bragi Boddason.[13] The poem, consisting of twenty-nine stanzas, was first printed in Ole Worm's *Literatura runica* (1636; second edition, Copenhagen, 1651), in which the original text, presented in runic script, is accompanied by an interlinear Latin verse translation. Later, the Icelandic original was published alongside Swedish verse and Latin prose translations in *Ragnar Lodbroks och hans söners saga* (The saga of Ragnar Lodbrok and his sons), included in Eric Björner's *Nordiska kämpa dater, i en sagoflock samlade om forna kongar och hjältar* (Nordic military deeds, collected together in a compendium of sagas pertaining to ancient kings and heroes; Stockholm, 1737). In the second volume of *L'Histoire de Danemark*, entitled *Monuments de la mythologie et la poésie des Celtes et particulierment des anciens Scandinaves* (Copenhagen, 1756), Paul Henri Mallet included a French translation of Ragnar's song, probably based on Björner's Latin translation.

In Russia during the second half of the eighteenth century, *Krákumál* was well known in prose translations based on French and German models: Mallet's French text was translated into Russian in *Vvedenie v Datskuju istoriju* (Introduction to the history of Denmark; Saint Petersburg, 1785), and the German text of Ludwig Gotthard Kosegarten was translated in the literary periodical *Prijatnoe i poleznoe preprovozhdenie vremeni* (Pleasant and useful diversions; no. 8, 1795).[14] But the excerpt from *Krákumál* (stanza 29) contained in the notes to *Gothrici et Rolfi Westrogothiae regum historia* was

viewed by the Russian translator as a separate work. Here the translator was undoubtedly following the lead of Verelius, who presented the text as an independent poem, not a fragment. Although Verelius was perhaps not entirely without reason in doing so – in contrast with the other stanzas, which are all decastichs, the last stanza is an octastich, and does not have a specific beginning ('We struck with a sword [...]')[15] – he had in fact borrowed the Icelandic text from Ole Worm's *Literatura runica*, where the poem was printed in its entirety. For his own part, the Russian translator made no reference to Worm's text, but was guided entirely by the Latin commentary and translation of the Swedish scholar (Verelius's translation of the twenty-ninth stanza differs greatly from Worm's).

The appearance of this fragment in verse form in the translation of Verelius's commentary, as opposed to its appearance in prose in other Russian translations, has its own explanation. Unlike other poetical texts contained in the Scandinavian literary corpus, the octastich from *Krákumál* was viewed by the Russian translator not as a poetical insertion, but as belonging to a scholarly commentary. And it was for this reason that the only Russian verse translation of the text was made from Latin, the language Verelius used for all his scholarly comments.

In 1747 Kiriyak Kondratovich, a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, produced Russian translations of Theophil Siegfried Bayer's *Dissertatio de Varagis* and Johannes Magnus's *Historia de omnibus Gothorum Sveonumque regibus*. But in contrast with the translation of Bayer's work, the translation of Johannes Magnus's *Historia* was never published.[16] This is perhaps not surprising. As in the case of *Perevod s knigi lichnoj shvedskago gosudarstva*, the translation of the *Historia* contains stories about Swedish victories over the Danes.[17] But the latter translation also includes depictions of Swedish victories over Russians: small bands of Swedish troops hold off the attacks of huge Russian armies;[18] the Swedish army returns from Russia with victory flags flying;[19] Stockholm's foundation denies Russians the opportunity to attack Sweden;[20] Russians cower away from a private duel with a Swedish hero and leave the battlefield.[21] A text containing passages such as these could of course hardly be published in Russia.

Finally, at the end of the eighteenth century a Swedish work was translated and published in Russia which had nothing to do with Scandinavian or Russian history. It was devoted to a subject well known to Russian readers: the First Jewish-Roman War and Jerusalem's destruction by Titus. The appearance of this work in Russian translation can no doubt be explained by the popularity of its subject matter, which had previously been treated in a number of books published in Russia throughout the eighteenth century.[22] In the Russian translation by Isaak Zederban the work is entitled *Kratkoe opisanie o zhalostnom razzorenii Ierusalima* (Short summary of the terrible destruction of Jerusalem; Moscow, 1792). Dmitry Mikhailovich Sharypkin has argued that it is based on a translation of Josephus's *Bellum Judaicum* that had been imported into Russia by the imprisoned officers of Charles XII.[23] Yet no scholar has been able to determine precisely which Swedish text served as the source of the Russian translation.

There are two eighteenth-century Swedish texts on this subject: a six-volume translation of Josephus' collected works (The last volume includes an appendix recounting events 'from the destruction of Jerusalem to the present time, taken from Baron Ludvig Holberg's history of the Jews'),[24] and *Om Titus romersk käjsare, hwilken som fältherre utförde Jerusalems jämmerliga förstöring, inkräktade judalandet, och gjorde slut på judiska regementet* (On the Roman emperor Titus, who as military commander brought about the terrible destruction of Jerusalem, conquered the Jewish homeland, and brought an end to

the Jewish revolt; Stockholm, 1771). The latter text is a truncated Swedish translation of a German biography of Titus by Johann Mathias Schröckh. The German text was published in the 1769 volume of Schröckh's series of biographies of great historical figures (*Allgemeine Biographie*). The Swedish translation, in turn, was included in the series *Lefwernes beskrifning* (Biographical accounts), edited by Carl Christoffer Gjörwell (the elder) and consisting of biographies of a number of famous historical personages (Joan of Arc, Henry IV, Cato, Hannibal, Christian II of Denmark, Frederick William I of Prussia, the Russian Field Marshal Münich, and Martin Luther).

As the title of the Swedish translation indicates, Gjörwell was interested primarily in the life story of the Roman emperor, who was held in great esteem in Sweden. The book focuses much of its attention on the events of the Jewish-Roman War, particularly the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, which Gjörwell deems to be the most noteworthy accomplishment of the great historical figure. In his introduction to the translation, Gjörwell remarks that the Roman commander 'ej at eröfra, men at förstöra Jerusalem' (had not to conquer, but to ruin Jerusalem), whose destruction became 'en af de utmärktaste Guds Hämnde-Domar' (one of the greatest divine retributions'. Gjörwell's focus explains why the title of the translation, in contrast with that of the German source text, lays particular stress on Jerusalem's 'jämmerliga förstöring' (terrible destruction).

An earlier Swedish version of Josephus's history of the Jewish-Roman War, entitled *Een historia om Jerusalems jemmerligha förstöring, korteliga författat* (A history of the terrible destruction of Jerusalem, recounted in brief), had been published in Stockholm in 1607, and was likely known to Gjörwell.[25] The focus of this seventeenth-century author, however, differed greatly from that of Schröckh and Gjörwell. The former was less interested in fleshing out the personality of Titus than in placing the story of Jerusalem's destruction in the context of the New Testament. It is therefore no coincidence that the story was published together with Martin Luther's Small Catechism and the Swedish Hymnal in the 1627 edition of Petrus Rudbeckius's *Enchiridion eller then swenska psalmboken, sampt andra wanligha handböcker* (Enchiridion, or the Swedish book of hymns, together with other common handbooks). It was this seventeenth-century history of Jerusalem's destruction that would later serve as the source text for the Russian *Kratkoe opisanie o zhalostnom razzorenii Ierusalima*. But whereas *Een historia om Jerusalems jemmerligha förstöring*, as Nils Ekedahl has argued, was intended to serve as a warning to Christians by laying stress on the punishment the Jews had received for their denial of Jesus, the Russian translation was presented as a straightforward historical narrative, and was published together with an amusing 'Turkish' story entitled 'Ah, kakaja prekrasnaja skazka!' (Oh, what a wonderful fairy tale!).[26]

That Zederban chose a Swedish text as his source can be explained by the prevailing Swedish sympathy of his publishing house in Moscow. Among the European texts published there, the majority were Swedish. Shortly after the attempted assassination of Gustav III in 1792, for example, Zederban published two pamphlets translated from Swedish: *Dostovernoe izvestie o proisshedshem v nochi s 16 na 17 chislo marta 1792 g. zlodejstvennom umysle na zhizn` ego velichestva korolia shvetskago* (Authoritative news concerning a malicious attempt on the life of His Majesty the King of Sweden, which occurred on the night of 16–17 March 1792) and *Dostovernoe izvestie o ubivstve ego velichestva korolia shvetskago [...] 10 aprelia 1792 g.* (Credible information about the murder of His Majesty the King of Sweden [...] 10 April 1792).

Russian interest in Swedish scholarship was not restricted to historical subjects. The eighteenth century saw the publication of Russian translations of Swedish works on a

wide array of topics: Carl Linnaeus's scientific works, Philip Johan von Strahlenberg's geographic description of Russia, Johan Thuresson Oxenstierna af Croneberg's didactic essays, and other works on military, medical, industrial, and civil subjects. The historical works focused on in this bibliography were a part of this widespread Russian interest in Swedish science and scholarship during the eighteenth century.

Notes

1. Dmitry Mikhailovich Sharypkin, *Skandinavskaja literatura v Rossii* (Leningrad, 1980), p. 23.
2. Mikhail Jurevich Ljustrov, *Russko-shvedskie literaturnye sviazi v 18 veke* (Moscow, 2006), p. 62.
3. Biblioteka Akademii Nauk (BAN), r. II, op. 1, #21
4. *Sagan om Ingwar Widtfarne och hans son Swen. Från gamla isländskan öfwersatt och undersökning om wåre runstenars ålder, i anledning af samma saga, samt företal om sagans trowärdighet; hwaruti de förr hos oss utgifna sagors wärde tillika stadfästes. Altsammans, til nordiska historiens och språkets förbättring, utgifwet af Nils Reinhold Brocman* (Stockholm, 1762). (The saga of Ingvar the fartravelled and his son Sven. Translated from Old Icelandic, including an enquiry into the age of our rune stones prompted by the same saga, together with a preface on the veracity of the saga, in which the value of those sagas published previously by us is firmly established. All published for the betterment of Nordic history and the Nordic language by Nils Reinhold Brocman.)
5. Rossijskaja Natsional'naja Biblioteka (RNB), Ermitazhnoe sobr, #307, L. 6, ob. 7.
6. RNB, Erm. sobr, #310, L. 11, ob. 14 ob.
7. Ibid., L. 11, 11 ob.
8. Thanks to Prof. Hans Helander for his explanation of the translator's mistake.
9. RNB, Erm. sobr, #308, L. 18.
10. Kenneth J. Knoespel, 'The Edge of the Empire: Rudbeck and Lomonosov and the Historiography of the North', *In Search of an Order: Mutual Representations in Sweden and Russia during the Early Age of Reason*, ed. Ulla Birgegård and Irina Sandomirskaja (Huddinge, 2004), p. 141.
11. Vasily Nikitich Tatischev, *Istorija Rossiyskaja* (Moscow, 1962), vol. 1, p. 16–17.
12. RNB, Erm. sobr, #298, L. 5.
13. Sharypkin, op.cit., p. 91.
14. Ibid., p. 98.
15. The translation of this extract is taken from Christopher Abram's dissertation, *Representations of the Pagan Afterlife in Medieval Scandinavian Literature* (Cambridge, 2003). Here there is a translation of stanza 29: 'I am eager to venture there, the dísir bid me home, those whom Óðinn has sent to me from the Lord of Hosts' hall; I will drink ale with the Æsir gladly in the high-seat; life's expectations are passed, I'll die laughing' (Introduction 2).
16. Rossijskaja Gosudarstvennaja Biblioteka (RGB), F. 256, #263.
17. Karen Skovgaard-Petersen, 'Arguments against Barbarism: Early Native, Literary Culture in three Scandinavian National Histories. Johannes Magnus's History of Sweden (1554), Johannes Pontanus's History of Denmark (1631), and Tormod Torfæus's History of Norway (1711)', ed. Sophie van Romburgh and Karen Skovgaard-Petersen, *Renaessanceforum 5* (2008). http://www.renaessanceforum.dk/rf_5_2008.htm, p. 8–10.
18. RGB, F. 256, #263, L. 413 ob.
19. Ibid., L. 54.
20. Ibid., L. 402.
21. Ibid., L. 415.
22. *Istorija o razorenii poslednem sviatogo grada Ierusalima…* (History about the last destruction of the holy city of Jerusalem) was reprinted many times from 1713 to 1793.
23. Sharypkin, op.cit., p. 60.
24. *Flavii Josephi Judiske historia* I–VI (Stockholm, 1713–52).
25. *Een Historia om Jerusalems jemmerligha förstörning korteliga författat* (Stockholm, 1607).
26. Nils Ekedahl, *Det svenska Israel: myt och retorik i Haquin Spegels predikokonst* (Uppsala, 1999), p. 134.

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