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tial distribution of the oldest runic monuments in the Nordic countries. Oliver Ernst’s and Stephan Elspaß’ article elucidates work with a history of language from below, and deals concretely with “althochdeutsche Glossen,” but the article has a more general theme than that. Peter Trudgill presents in his study of copulae “language-contact speculations in first-millennium England.” But the perspectives are widened even more; thus Theo Vennemann’s controversial thesis of a Mesolithic “Europa Vasconica” is discussed. Based on an interesting source material Jonas Wellendorf deals with pragmatic translations in the West-Nordic area. Anatoly Liberman’s article has the heading “A Short History of the God Óðinn,” but is in reality a voluminous study (80 pages) that in a many-sided way deals with the figure of Woden and the changes of it and the derivation of the name of the god. The article is reasoning and discusses previous investigations—made within different research paradigms—from different periods. This is very meritorious, since in the treatment of such a thoroughly studied subject as this it is necessary to understand why different results have been obtained in different “schools” in the search for the deity’s background and the basis of his name. Liberman’s contribution is in this way interesting from the point of view of methodology and history of science. In spite of the difficult subject the article is easily readable. As a whole this special issue of NOWELE is valuable for the reader as regards the elucidation of a number of current problems in the Germanic and Scandinavian research field. The value is enhanced not least by the accounts of source materials that are found in several places in the volume. An introductory editorial text would however have made it easier for the reader to see the theme of the volume even better.

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This impressive work in the area of Nordic legal history has been compiled by the researcher who must be regarded as the now most prominent expert on mediaeval Nordic law, Dieter Strauch. He is emeritus professor at the Institut für Neuere Privatrechtsge- schichte, Deutsche und Rheinische Rechtsgeschichte at the University of Cologne. This comprehensive book contains a broad and well-informed description of Nordic law from the Viking Age up to the sixteenth century, and of the different sources where this law is found, thus not only law but also records and literary sources. In an introductory part the source situation is depicted and the reader is given a more general conception of the influence of Christianity in Scandinavia—which naturally also has a bearing on the legal sources—and “Die Veränderbarkeit des Rechts,” where among other things Elsa Sjöholm’s controversial interpretations are refuted, after which the more specific conditions in Norway, on Iceland and in Denmark and Sweden are accounted for. Sweden is dealt with in the longest section, where among other things one can read about the devel-
opment of the Church in the twelfth century, the relationship between the Church and the royal power in the thirteenth century, and many other things. A lot of detailed information is given, which is relevant for understanding the conditions of the legal history, such as concerning Skänninge Meeting in 1248 (pp. 78 ff.) and Tälje Provincial Council in 1279 (pp. 90 ff.), only to mention two examples. A section on slavery and its abolition concludes this introductory presentation. There follow seven chapters in which the conditions in different states and areas are described in detail. In the first chapter on Norway there is not only an account of the Norwegian legal sources but there are also sections on the conditions on the Faroe Isles (among other things Seyðabrævið and Hundabræv), the Orkney Islands, Shetland (Hjaltland) and the Hebrides, the Isle of Man and Ireland. The chapter on Iceland and Greenland describes among many other things the Icelandic conditions in the Althing, presents Grágás (the Grey Goose Laws), paying attention also to language conditions, and in a short section the testimony of the Sagas. The limited information that exists about the conditions on Greenland is also presented (pp. 267–279). The third chapter deals with the Danish legal sources with Zealand, Scania and Jutland laws, urban laws and later legal sources, and the issue of Danish law in England is also included. The short chapter 4 deals with Normandy, where the traces that may exist of Norman legislation are accounted for, among other things regarding terminology (pp. 375 ff.). The following chapter deals in great detail with Sweden; the chapter comprises more than 200 pages. It describes the Elder and the Younger Västgöta Law, the Östgöta Law and other Göta laws, further the Uppland Law, the Södermannska Law, the Hälsinge Law, the Guta Law, the Bjärkön Legislation, Visby Urban Law, to mention a couple of more important examples. A short section here deals with Forsaringen (pp. 501 ff.). The national law codes and Magnus Eriksson’s urban law are accounted for. A special section deals with Um Styrilse Konunga and Höfdinga. The conditions in Finland are dealt with in a separate chapter, where not unexpectedly for example the fishing legislation is described as well as the Bjärköa legislation in Finland. The chapter touches on both the Kvenir/Kainulaiset and Birkarla problems (pp. 630 ff.) and the Swedish colonisation (pp. 632 ff.). The last chapter deals with the Scandinavian legislation in Russia with a detailed description of legal sources and comparisons with the Old Swedish conditions. The book is concluded with an account of sources and literature comprising almost 140 pages. There are also comprehensive person, place and subject indexes; the last index contains a number of important lexemes in the legal sources. The book also contains a large number of maps of areas that are dealt with, not only national maps but also detailed maps of Shetland (p. 199), Sodor and Man and the Isle of Man (pp. 206 ff.), Greenland (pp. 268 ff.) and Russian areas (p. 670). The maps have been taken from primary sources, but the fact that they have been gathered here is valuable. Hopefully this content summary indicates the book’s many-sidedness but also its depth. Literature in many languages is referred to and summarised, including some works in Finnish and Russian, and it is actually difficult to find anything that is missing in the documentation. Dieter Strauch’s Mittelalterliches nordisches Recht bis 1500
is as already underlined an impressive work. As a reference work concerning an essential part of the Nordic medieval history the book will remain important for a very long time to come.

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As we know, the Elder Västgöta Law is one of the most important sources from the Swedish middle ages. It is then not strange that this Old Swedish text has been published no less than ten times, and has in addition been translated eight times, four of which (1883, 1923, 1924, 1946) into Swedish.

When Per-Axel Wiktorsson took on the task of publishing the law text, he wanted to publish the complete manuscript in question, that is Cod. Holm. B 59, in which the Elder Västgöta Law is included. In addition he wanted to publish both the facsimile and the text edition and translation in one connection, and in the translation he had the ambition to position himself as close to the original as possible, not only regarding wording but also concerning the division of the text on pages and lines. He also felt that it was important to clarify the different involved scribes’ contributions—this is after all Wiktorsson’s expert area. As luck would have it the publisher was given a free hand to work with the publication on this basis, and the result is praiseworthy. In his introduction in Part 1 the publisher gives a brief but well organised and highly interesting account of the manuscript’s contents, use and history and above all of its scribes. In this last-mentioned section Wiktorsson distinguishes Vidhemsprästen (Herr Lars), “kursivhanden” [=the italics hand], Tyrgils Kristinesson and Lydikinus. The identification of the different handwritings in B 59 is completely different from what previous research has assumed, which is a very important contribution to the research. In his contribution in Part 1 Göran B. Nilsson conceives of the manuscript B 59 as a workbook “established by Skara cathedral chapter to serve as an aid before and during the negotiations about the Younger Västgöta Law” (p. 59); when it had served this primary purpose it came into other hands that then designed its more mixed appearance. Some of the names found in the Elder Västgöta Law’s appendices, namely those referring to the common waters, are dealt with by Svante Strandberg. Among these are lodne for Hornborgasjön, scadur for Skagern and ymsi for Ymsen. This is included in Part 1, which however chiefly contains the facsimile edition of the manuscript in colour but also place and person indexes and a survey of the contents of the manuscript. In so far as it has been possible Part 2 contains a rendition of the manuscript based on its pages and lines on the left-hand page and a translation on the right-hand page. It is important to be given in this way a total picture of all the appendices, including texts, among many other things, about the borders of Västergötland, the doomsmen of the inhabitants of Västergötland, Christian bishops, and not least, in the later parts, Lydekinus’s memoranda and Tyrgils Kristinesson’s minor texts, even if there are cryptic elements in these latter parts. Wiktorsson tries to