



THE RURAL VIKING
IN RUSSIA AND SWEDEN

CONFERENCE 19-20 OCTOBER 1996
IN THE MANOR OF KARLSLUND,
ÖREBRO, SWEDEN

LECTURES

EDITED BY PÄR HANSSON

ÖREBRO BILDNINGSFÖRVALTNING

Myrman

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in contrast to those in the west, did not bring their own place-name tradition with them from their homeland. This research, however, is still in its beginning phase and this first impression will perhaps be modified.

It will also be interesting to see what light a future study of the ancient agricultural remains in the terrain in the shape of fossile ploughing fields, crop-marks, soil-marks and other traces of agricultural field-work might throw over the character of the varjag society in Russia.

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Ingmar Jansson

WARFARE, TRADE OR COLONISATION?

SOME GENERAL REMARKS ON THE EASTERN EXPANSION OF THE SCANDINAVIANS IN THE VIKING PERIOD

Viking is a Scandinavian word meaning "sea warrior" or "pirate", and the *Viking Age* (late 8th–late 11th centuries A.D.) is the period when many Scandinavians travelled by ship to foreign countries in the east and west. The most well-known purpose of these journeys was raiding. Frankish, English and Irish chronicles of the time give short but reliable accounts of attacks on monasteries and towns. A closer study, however, reveals that the Scandinavians were also engaged in other activities. In 876, 877 and 880 the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that the Viking leaders shared the occupied land in northern and eastern England and that people "were engaged in ploughing and in making a living for themselves". The *Danelaw* – the area under Danish jurisdiction – became the name of these parts of England for several centuries even if English kings had won all of it back by the middle of the 10th century. The area around the mouth of the river Seine was given by the French king to a Scandinavian chieftain in 911, and it became known as Normandy, "the land of the Northmen". In the north Atlantic, Scandinavians explored and colonised hitherto uninhabited lands like the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland. They even attempted to settle in North America.

Perhaps trade played an even more important role in the Scandinavian activities. The 8th and 9th centuries are characterised by increasing economic activities and a revival of urban life in Western Europe. Urbanism was also introduced into Northern Europe during this period. In Ribe in south-western Denmark a market-place was established around the year 710, and this market-place soon developed into a town which still exists. Hedeby, now in northernmost Germany, and Birka in Lake Mälaren west of Stockholm probably developed in the late 8th century. Both these settlements were deserted in the late Viking Age and their role as trading places was taken over by the still existing towns of Schleswig and Sigtuna.

The development in the west is in its main outlines well-known and undisputed thanks to the contemporary chronicles. In Britain and Ireland the Scandinavian settlers were gradually assimilated, but they have influenced the English language considerably. Place-names of Scandinavian origin are also

well-known in the Danelaw, in northern and western Scotland, along the coasts of Ireland and in Normandy. The Scandinavian settlements on the Faroe Islands and Iceland have survived to our time.

If we go east, the historical problems of the Viking period are greater and the opinions more varied, because there are practically no written sources from that time preserved in Eastern Europe. The most important source is the Russian Primary Chronicle ("Nestor's Chronicle"), which was compiled in the early 12th century in Kiev, the capital of the grand prince of Rus', Old Russia. It gives a detailed description of the origin and early years of the Russian kingdom, and the Scandinavians, called "Varangians" (*varjagi*), play a prominent role in the story.¹

Under the year 862 the Laurentian edition of the Chronicle says that the Varangians, who had taken tribute from various tribes in the north, were driven out and people set out to govern themselves. *There was no law among them, but tribe rose against tribe. Discord thus ensued among them, and they began to war against one another. They said to themselves, 'Let us seek a prince who may rule over us and judge us according to the law'. They accordingly went overseas to the Varangian Rus': these particular Varangians were called Rus', just as some are called Sveie (Svear, Swedes) and others Nurmane (Norwegians), Angljane (English) and Gote (Gotlanders), for they were thus named. The Čud', the Slovene (Novgorod Slavs), the Kriviči and the Ves' said to the people of Rus': 'Our land is great and rich, but there is no order in it. Come to rule and reign over us.' They thus selected three brothers, with their kinsfolk, who took with them all the Rus' and migrated. The oldest, Rurik (Scandinavian Rörik), located himself in Novgorod; the second, Sineus (Signjut?), at Beloozero; and the third, Truvor (Thorvard?), in Izborsk. On account of these Varangians, the district of Novgorod became known as the land of Rus'. The present inhabitants of Novgorod are descended from the Varangian race, but aforetime they were Slavs. After two years, Sineus and his brother Truvor died, and Rurik assumed the sole authority. He assigned cities to his followers, Polotsk to one, Rostov to another, and to another Beloozero. In these cities there are thus Varangian colonists, but the first settlers were, in Novgorod, Slovene; in Polotsk, Kriviči; at Beloozero, Ves', in Rostov, Merja; and in Murom, Muroma. Rurik had dominion over all these districts* (Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor 1953, pp. 59 f.).

Another edition of the Chronicle, the Hypathian, gives a somewhat different version of the story of the arrival of Rurik and his brothers: *They took with them all the Rus' and came first to the Slovene, and they built the*

city of Ladoga. Rurik, the eldest, settled in Ladoga; Sineus, the second, at Beloozero; and Truvor, the third, in Izborsk. From these Varangians the land of Rus' received its name. After two years Sineus died, as well as his brother Truvor, and Rurik assumed the sole authority. He then came to Lake Il'men' and founded on the Volchov a city which they named Novgorod, and he settled there as prince (Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor 1953, p. 233, note 20).

From this point the Chronicle continues with its description of the establishment of the Russian kingdom. When Rurik died, his son Igor was still a child, and Rurik was therefore succeeded by his kinsman Oleg. In 882, according to the Chronicle, Oleg moved south, *taking with him many warriors from among the Varangians, the Čud', the Slovene, the Merja and all the Kriviči*, and he captured Smolensk and Kiev. *Oleg set himself up in Kiev, and declared that it should be the mother of Russian cities. The Varangians, Slovene, and others who accompanied him, were called Rus'* (Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor 1953, pp. 60 f.).

This legend about the creation of the Russian kingdom has led to a long and lively debate called the Normanist controversy, which started in the 18th century and still attracts interest, although it has left the agenda of serious research. The creation of a state is a complex process which cannot only be ascribed to foreign warriors. Most scholars agree that the Scandinavians played a significant role in the early history of Rus', besides the Slavic, Baltic and Finnic inhabitants of the area, and that their role diminished at the end of the Viking Age, when southern – Byzantine and steppe nomadic – influences grew. The question is what, more exactly, were their activities in Eastern Europe and what was their role in the various circles of society.

Soviet and Russian scholars have mostly stressed the importance of the Varangians in the retinues of local princes, a view which is mainly based on information from the Chronicle. It is doubtful whether the Chronicle's stories about events in the 9th century can be used for historical reconstructions. However, for the 10th and especially the 11th century the Chronicle contains reliable information, and here Varangians usually appear as retainers of princes and also as princes.

Modern Scandinavian and western researchers have mainly followed the information of 9th- and 10th-century Byzantine and Islamic sources, which mention only a few raids around the Black and Caspian Seas and instead stress the trading activities of the Rus' and Varangians. The Byzantine and Islamic sources are contemporaneous with the events and activities that they describe and therefore, from the point of view of source criticism, more reliable than

the Russian Primary Chronicle. It is obvious, however, that they give very little information about the internal events in Eastern Europe.

To my mind, neither war nor commerce can satisfactorily explain the large archaeological material from these centuries in Eastern Europe which is connected with Scandinavia. This material from Rus' is much larger than that from Western Europe, and I am certain that a closer study of these finds and their context will help us to get a more varied and true picture of the Scandinavian activities in Rus' in the Viking period.

Before turning to the archaeological material it is necessary to establish a general picture of the society in Eastern Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. For this it is important to make use of the results achieved not only by archaeologists but also by other scholars, and first and foremost by historians and philologists as their source material often yields more direct evidence of the social order and politics. Even if the historical and philological sources for the areas that interest us here are very meagre, general conceptions about the historical development in Europe and general view-points from social anthropology can help us better understand the society and environment to which the archaeological material belongs. However, I would like to stress that it is difficult for a Swedish archaeologist to make full and correct use of all relevant source material and all research work produced in Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and other parts of the world. An added difficulty is that the basic scientific and historical considerations often diverge. This article should therefore be understood as a preliminary attempt to summarise the situation and use facts and interpretations which I have come to know through the literature and through discussions especially with helpful Russian colleagues.

EASTERN SCANDINAVIAN SOCIETY IN THE VIKING PERIOD

The word "Viking" often gives us an idea of the Scandinavians as wild and ruthless men attacking the civilised inhabitants of Western Europe and other areas. This is also the impression given by most descriptions of the Viking raids in the western chronicles. However, this is a biased description. Raiding was a widespread and socially accepted activity characteristic of the upper social strata in Europe of that time (Duby 1973, pp. 60 ff.; Lucas 1967). A chieftain would try to keep his land or home region under his control by gathering warriors around him and, on certain occasions, attack other chieftains or regions in order to win fame and riches for himself and his men. It is in the light of these customs that the Viking raids should be seen. When the western chronicles give detailed information, it is clear that the Viking hosts

were led by "kings" or "chieftains", and – as indicated above – when settlement started, it was organised by these rulers who became the legal rulers of larger or smaller areas. In the late 10th and 11th centuries the wars were often led by the kings or future kings of Denmark and Norway.

When we turn to Eastern Scandinavia and to the eastern journeys, the sources are much less informative and often doubtful. There is, however, a relatively large number of rune stones from the 11th century, which tell about people who had gone abroad (Fig. 1; S.B.F. Jansson 1987, pp. 38 ff.; Mel'nikova 1977, pp. 39 ff.; Larsson 1990a, pp. 137 ff.; Åhlén 1994, map p. 46). These memorials are important from two points of view. Firstly, they show that people went abroad not only from the coastal regions but also from inland regions, and that people in Eastern Scandinavia went both east and west. Secondly, the inscriptions often indicate the social position of the dead and their main activity abroad. Many inscriptions tell of men with a high position in society at home (also indicated by the archaeological environment of the stones; Larsson 1990a, pp. 93 ff.). And a very large part of the commemorated men "fell" or "were killed" which, together with other expressions, shows that their main activity abroad was connected with raids, wars or service in retinues.

The most illustrative inscription in this respect is that from Turinge in Södermanland (Fig. 2): "Kättil and Björn, they erected this stone in memory of Torsten, their father, Anund in memory of his brother and the retainers (*huskarlar*) in memory of the just and wise man, Kättilö in memory of her husband. The brothers were among the best men in the land and out in the host (*i lidhi*), treated their retainers well. He fell in action east in Rus' (*Gardhar*), the leader of the host, of 'land-men' the best" (S.B.F. Jansson 1987, pp. 58 f.; Ljunggren 1959).

A leading man in society thus had retainers. Characterisations such as "generous with food and eloquent" known from other rune stones indicate how a chieftain acted at home (S.B.F. Jansson 1987, pp. 126 ff.). When he went "out", he was the leader of the host or "lid" (Old Scandinavian *lidh*). Another word for lid is "rod" (Old Scandinavian *rodhr*, up to the beginning of the Viking period pronounced *rodhz*), which means "rowing", "a rowing expedition" or "a company of rowers". "He was the best man (*bondi*) in Håkon's rod", says the stone from Nibble in Ekerö, Uppland (Wessén & Jansson 1940–43, pp. 24 ff.).

This word "rod" became the name used by Finnic-speaking people for visitors from the western side of the Baltic, and to this day Sweden is called



Fig. 1. Rune stones from the 11th century in eastern Central Sweden mentioning foreign journeys. ● eastern journeys. ★ western journeys. ○ others. After Larsson 1990a.

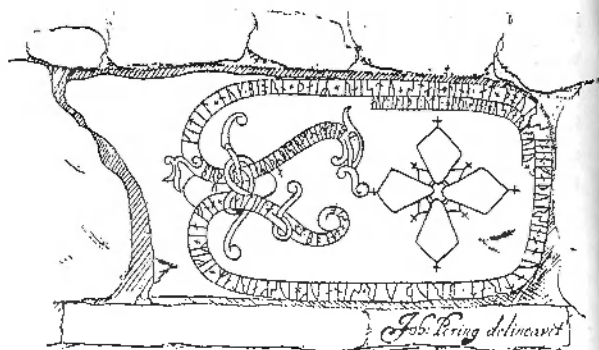


Fig. 2. Rune stone in Turinge Church, Södermanland, mid- or late 11th century. The last part of the inscription runs along the edge of the stone and therefore not visible. Drawing by Johan Peringskiöld, state antiquary 1693–1720.

Ruotsi/Rootsi in Finnish and Estonian. The eastern Slavs borrowed this Finnic word, first to denote Scandinavians and later the leading social group and the land of Rus', the Old Russian kingdom (Ekbo 1981; Falk 1981; Mel'nikova & Petruchin 1991).

A rod of one ship was small, because the ships used in the northern Baltic were usually only about 10 m long with a crew of perhaps 10 men, and the boats used by the Rus' in the 10th century on their journeys from Kiev to Constantinople were described as *monoxyla*, "single-trunks", that is, dug-outs (Constantine Porphyrogenitus, chapter 9; Crumlin-Pedersen 1989; Edberg 1996). But a rod or lid would often consist of many ships. The largest expedition known through the rune stones is that of Ingvar the Far-travelled, famous also on Iceland. Some 25 stones spread in Uppland, Södermanland and Östergötland, in an area c. 200 km long, commemorate this expedition which ended in the Islamic world in the early or mid-11th century (S.B.F. Jansson 1987, pp. 63 ff.; Larsson 1990a, pp. 106 ff., 1990b).

Ingvar's expedition is often explained as a *leding* expedition organised by the Svea king, as described in the medieval eastern Swedish provincial laws (e.g., Larsson, cited works). According to these laws, every district was obliged to participate with ships in a war expedition each year if the king called for it (Hafström 1965 with refs.). "Now the king calls out *lid* and *leding*, *rod* and *red*," begins a paragraph in the Uppland law, using four alliterating and more or less synonymous words. The division of Uppland, Västmanland and Södermanland into *hundaren* ("hundreds") and, along the Uppland coast, *rod* districts is connected with the *leding*, and the earliest dated evidence of the *hundare* division is found on a rune stone from the middle or second half of the 11th century (Gustavsson & Selinge 1988, pp. 40 ff., 73 ff.). It is impossible to say how long before this date the *hundare* division was established, but the general tendency among modern Swedish scholars – in opposition to earlier scholars – is to refer it to a late period and to see the typical Swedish war expeditions in the Viking period as enterprises of local and regional chieftains. Ingvar the Far-travelled has also been explained as such a regional leader, who for a short time managed to establish his authority over a larger area (Sawyer 1982, p. 32, fig. 39; Lindkvist 1988, pp. 31 ff., esp. p. 44 f.). In any case, it is a fact that the only royal expedition explicitly mentioned on Swedish rune stones is the English campaign of the Danish king Knut the Great, and the only royal retinue is the Tingalid in England founded by king Knut (S.B.F. Jansson 1987, pp. 77 ff.).

The information given by the runic inscriptions of the 11th century cannot

be valid in all respects for the first centuries of the Viking period, but I am certain that the general aspects given here are relevant for Eastern Scandinavian society also in the early Viking period. This is indicated, among other things, by the only known inscription from the 9th or 10th century which mentions a long-distance journey. This is the stone from Kälvesten in western Östergötland, c. 70 km from the nearest bay of the sea, which tells of Öjvind who "fell in the east with Ejvisl" (S.B.F. Jansson 1987, pp. 38 ff.).

The big burial mounds and boat-grave cemeteries in the Mälaren provinces from the Migration, Vendel and Viking periods give evidence of a stratified society with a clear continuity into the Middle Ages. One example of this is the parish of Vendel in northern Uppland, where the big "Ottar's mound" from c. 500 is situated on the land of a medieval royal manor, Husby, and where a boat-grave cemetery from the 6th–11th centuries has been excavated at a site earlier called Tuna, which was the centre of a large medieval noble estate (Stolpe & Arne 1912; Lindqvist 1936, pp. 37 ff.; Rahmqvist 1996, pp. 136 ff.). Between these two sites there is a third with ordinary grave mounds from the late Vendel and Viking periods, well equipped with weapons and bronze jewellery. The name of the village is Karby, "the men's settlement", and there is reason to believe that this refers to the men of a king or chieftain (cf. Hellberg 1984; in the Middle Ages Karby belonged to the noble estate). Weapons and bronze jewellery are also found among the grave-goods in other village cemeteries in Vendel as well as in other parts of Sweden.

The royal seats of Old Uppsala, Old Sigtuna (near the town of Sigtuna) and Adelsö (near Birka), which archaeologically can be traced back to the Viking period or earlier, should also be mentioned (Damell 1993 with refs.; Brunstedt 1996). Such facts, together with legendary material in the medieval Icelandic literature, led to the idea that the Swedish kingdom was established in its medieval size (excluding Finland) long before the Viking period. This is no longer held true, however. The Swedish kingdom has its roots in the society of pre-Viking Eastern Scandinavia, but no doubt it only gradually became a more stable and organised state or kingdom in a process which continued up to the 12th–13th centuries (Lindqvist 1988; Sawyer 1991).

The Englishman Wulfstan has given a description of a journey by ship from Hedeby to Truso in the south-eastern corner of the Baltic (Lund et al. 1983, pp. 24 ff.). He says that, among the lands to port, Langeland, Lolland, Falster and Skåne "belonged to Denmark", whereas Bornholm had its own king and Blekinge, Möre, Öland and Gotland "belonged to the Svear" (*to Sweon*). This probably indicates that the Swedish kingdom at that time

dominated a large part of Eastern Scandinavia. But it *may* also indicate that "Svear" was used by Wulfstan as a collective term for Eastern Scandinavians in the same way as "Wends" and "Ests" were used as collective terms for the Slavic- and Baltic-speaking peoples on the southern and south-eastern coasts of the Baltic Sea. Wulfstan says that all the way to Witland, where Truso was situated, he had "Wendland" to starboard, but Witland "belongs to the Ests". We have good reason to believe that the Wends and Ests were divided into several political units in those days, and the same was probably also true for Eastern Scandinavia if we look upon the 9th and 10th centuries as a whole. However, Ansgar's and Unni's Christian mission to the Svear and their port Birka in c. 830, 850 and 936 (Rimbert, chapters 9–12, 14, 17–20, 25–30, 33; Adam of Bremen, I, chapters 60–62) indicates that the Svear were regarded internationally as an important political power already during these centuries.

When we turn from politics and warfare to trade, the problems are greater. What is certain is that long-distance trade in the early period was mainly a trade in luxury goods and that the introduction of urban settlements in the Viking period must have started a development whereby trade became more professional, larger in scale and gradually included more and more necessary goods. This can be understood from both written and archaeological sources. But who were the agents of trade, what was their local base and social position, and how did they work at home and among foreigners? It is often said that the Vikings shifted from raiding to trading and back to raiding according to what was most lucrative for the moment. This may be true, but there is hardly any evidence of it (Askeberg 1944, pp. 137 ff.). In discussions of trade, the role of the first urban centres like Birka is justly stressed, but it must be underlined that the few early towns cannot have attracted more than a part of the trade.

As in the centuries after the Viking period, long-distance trade must have been controlled by those who could afford to organise the journeys and get the support that was needed in foreign lands, because foreigners were legally unprotected (Enemark 1961; Yrwing 1961; for general information about western Europe, see DUBY 1973, pp. 113 ff.) Goods could be gathered and exchanged at local fairs or collected as tribute more or less by force. In his geography from the late 9th century, King Alfred of England included information from Ottar, a farmer in the far north of Norway who became rich by collecting tribute from the Saami and – probably in order to sell or exchange these goods – travelled to the ports of Skiringsal (in southern Norway) and Hedeby and also visited "his lord" King Alfred (Lund et al.

1983, pp. 20 ff.). The fact that Alfred is said to be Ottar's "lord" seems to indicate that Ottar was regarded as a retainer at the court. Ottar must have had many counterparts around the Baltic, and we cannot yet say more exactly how a Birka trader differed from a trader who, like Ottar, had his base in the countryside.

The dead in the rich Birka graves are usually – and probably correctly – identified with the "merchants" (*mercatores*) which are mentioned by Rimbert (chapter 9) as the inhabitants of the place in addition to the "people" (*populus*). This identification may be supported by the fact that some of the dead are furnished with scales and weights for weighing precious metal. But it should be pointed out that weaponry, splendid dress and foreign tableware are more characteristic elements of the rich Birka graves, which makes them conform in most respects to the rich graves on rural sites, for example, to the boat-graves which also sometimes contain scales and weights (Fig. 3). These Birka "merchants" may therefore also have been the retainers of the king, who was the lord of the town (Hägg 1984; Gräslund 1989, p. 162).

We can therefore describe Eastern Scandinavia in the Viking period as a rural society, where the first urban centres appeared at this time. The society was dominated by an upper stratum of chieftains living on farms, who were surrounded with retainers and who often went on raiding, tribute-collecting or trade expeditions in order to gain wealth. When possibilities arose, these chieftains must have been open to settle in the areas they visited. Eastern Scandinavia was not politically united, but there was a kingdom of Svear which sometimes attracted attention abroad, and where one of the earliest urban centres in the north, Birka, arose. The distribution of eastern silver and eastern mass commodities such as beads, together with the runic inscriptions, shows that all parts of Eastern Scandinavia took part in the eastern journeys, but the finds that indicate closer eastern relations are concentrated to the provinces around Lake Mälaren and the Åland islands, and partly also to Östergötland and Öland (Fig. 4; I. Jansson 1989, pp. 631). It must be from these regions that the majority of the eastern journeys were organised.

EASTERN EUROPEAN SOCIETY IN THE VIKING PERIOD

Our knowledge of Eastern European society at the beginning of the Viking expansion is as fragmentary as our knowledge of Eastern Scandinavian society, but we can assume that there were great differences within the vast area that became known as Rus' during the Viking period. In the southern areas, which today form part of the Ukraine, the archaeological material

Northern Europe, 9th–10th centuries. 1 – early types, bronze. 2 – early types, silver, mainly with secondary function. 3 – later types, bronze. 4 – later types, bronze, with secondary function. 5 – Birka with several finds of type 2 and 3. 6 – areas with single finds. After Jansson 1989.

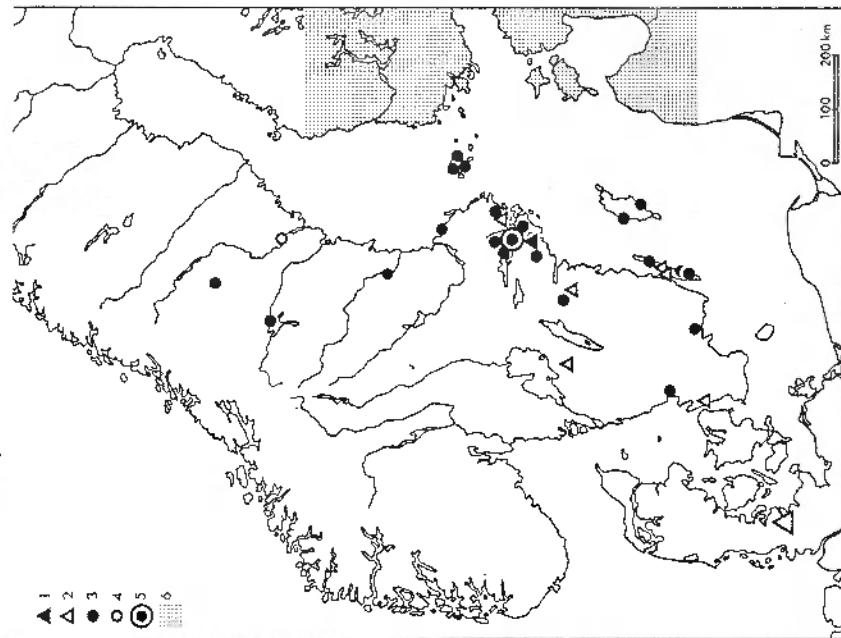
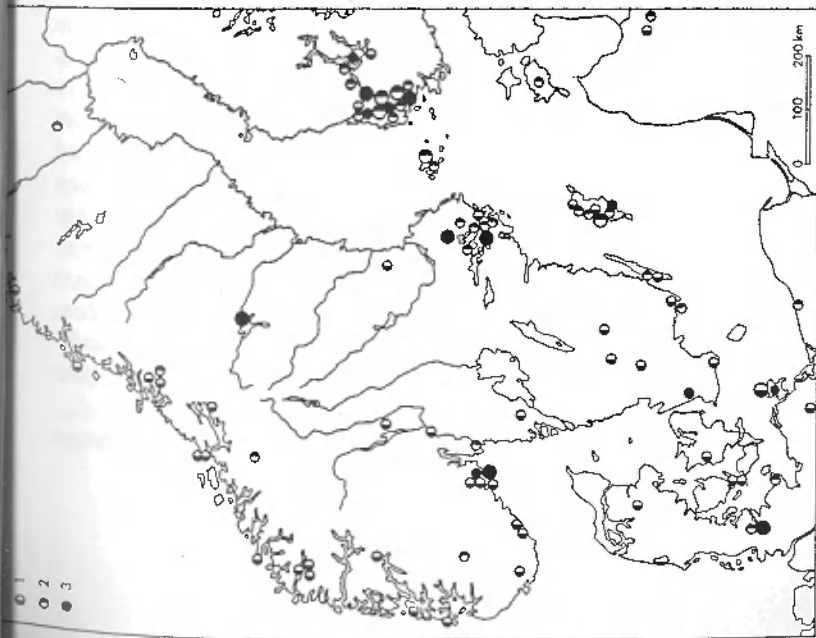


Fig. 3. Distribution of scales with folding arms and polyhedral weights in Northern Europe, 9th–10th centuries. The prototypes originate in the Caliphate. 1 – scales. 2 – weights. 3 – both. Large symbol = two or more finds. After Jansson 1989.

indicates an agrarian society with a network of embryonic political centres in the form of hill-forts. The language spoken here was mainly Slavic. In the northern areas the archaeological material from the centuries before the Viking period is very meagre, but from our general knowledge we can probably conclude that these areas were sparsely inhabited by farmers and hunters speaking Baltic and Finnic languages and organised in communities with a less developed social stratification. Roughly at the same time as the Scandinavians appeared, or somewhat earlier, Slavic-speaking people seem to have immigrated from the south or south-west.

The Russian Primary Chronicle (the introductory part, Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor 1953, pp. 52 f.) speaks about this Slavic movement as a migration of large population groups or tribes. This is also how it is normally understood by the researchers of our time. It is seen as a "migration of peoples" (Russian *pereselenie narodov*, Swedish *folkvandring*) and is compared to the Germanic migrations in the "Migration period" (5th–6th centuries). The Scandinavian movement is not called a migration because it is understood as a movement of certain "professionals" – warriors and/or traders (e.g., Nosov 1994, pp. 187 ff.). However, this distinction between the Slavic and Scandinavian movement is, in my opinion, not based on sufficient facts. It should be kept in mind that we know very little about the size and character of early migrations. Normally they cannot have been mass migrations of the kind we know from the last two centuries, and often they were probably only movements of certain influential groups, which created the idea of a "migration of peoples".

In Eastern Europe extensive research has been devoted to identifying the Eastern Slavs in the archaeological material, and mapping their migrations geographically and chronologically (e.g. Sedov 1982). There is no possibility to analyse and evaluate these studies here, but I would like to stress that there is a distinctive difference between modern scholars in Eastern Europe and other countries in their understanding of ethnic groups. According to modern western scholars, the basic element of ethnicity is neither blood-relationship nor language or culture but self-ascription, to which are linked various true or false ideas of a unity. Any attempts to reconstruct the ethnic situation in a period when we lack contemporaneous evidence of people's self-ascription, can therefore only be tentative. For Eastern Europe (as for Eastern Scandinavia, cf. above) we have practically only ascriptions made by foreign or later writers.²

"Slavic" and "Finno-Ugric" are, strictly speaking, names of language

families but are used by historians and archaeologists as denominations of large cultural entities or groups of cultures with at least partly the same geographical distribution as the language families. "Scandinavian" is similarly used as a term for the Scandinavian culture spread over roughly the same geographical area as the Scandinavian languages (thus excluding the "Finno-Ugric" or Saami area in the north of the Scandinavian peninsula). Philologists, archaeologists and historians usually understand "Slavs", "Finno-Ugrians" and "Scandinavians" as ethnic groups, but the ethnic groups of these days were much smaller entities, as indicated by the Russian Primary Chronicle and other written sources. "Supra-ethnic" denominations of the kind mentioned here have probably mainly been used for ascriptions by outside observers.

The Russian Primary Chronicle bases its description of the origin and spread of the Slavs in Central and Eastern Europe on the Bible, Byzantine scholarship and Eastern European tradition. The area that became known as Rus' in the 9th–10th centuries was, according to the Chronicle (the introductory part, Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor 1953, p. 55), inhabited by Slavic and non-Slavic tribes. Among the tribes mentioned in the above-cited legend about the invitation of Rurik and his brothers, the Čud' and the Ves' (maybe also the Kriviči) were non-Slavic tribes. Place-name studies have also shown that Baltic languages were earlier spoken in the central parts of Rus', and Finnic languages in the northern parts. When archaeologists have tried to identify the Slavs in the archaeological material, they have usually interpreted widespread archaeological cultures as Slavic, for example, the Sopka culture in north-western Rus' (Fig. 5). If this is correct, it means that the Slavic movement was a large-scale migration. This can be doubted, however, and a recent critic has even denied that there was a Slavic migration into northern Rus', and argued instead that there was a change of language caused by the political integration of the area into the Kiev state (Ligi 1993, pp. 34 ff.). To my mind, the historical truth probably lies in a combination of these two opinions. There was probably a Slavic immigration into northern Rus', but not so large as usually believed. This migration, together with the political development, resulted in a unification of the language.

When studying the political history of early Rus' with the help of the Russian Primary Chronicle, we must keep in mind that the Chronicle was written more or less at the court of the Grand Prince in Kiev. To my mind, this explains why the Rurikids are described as having been invited to govern the country, and why there is so little evidence of the disruption which is a

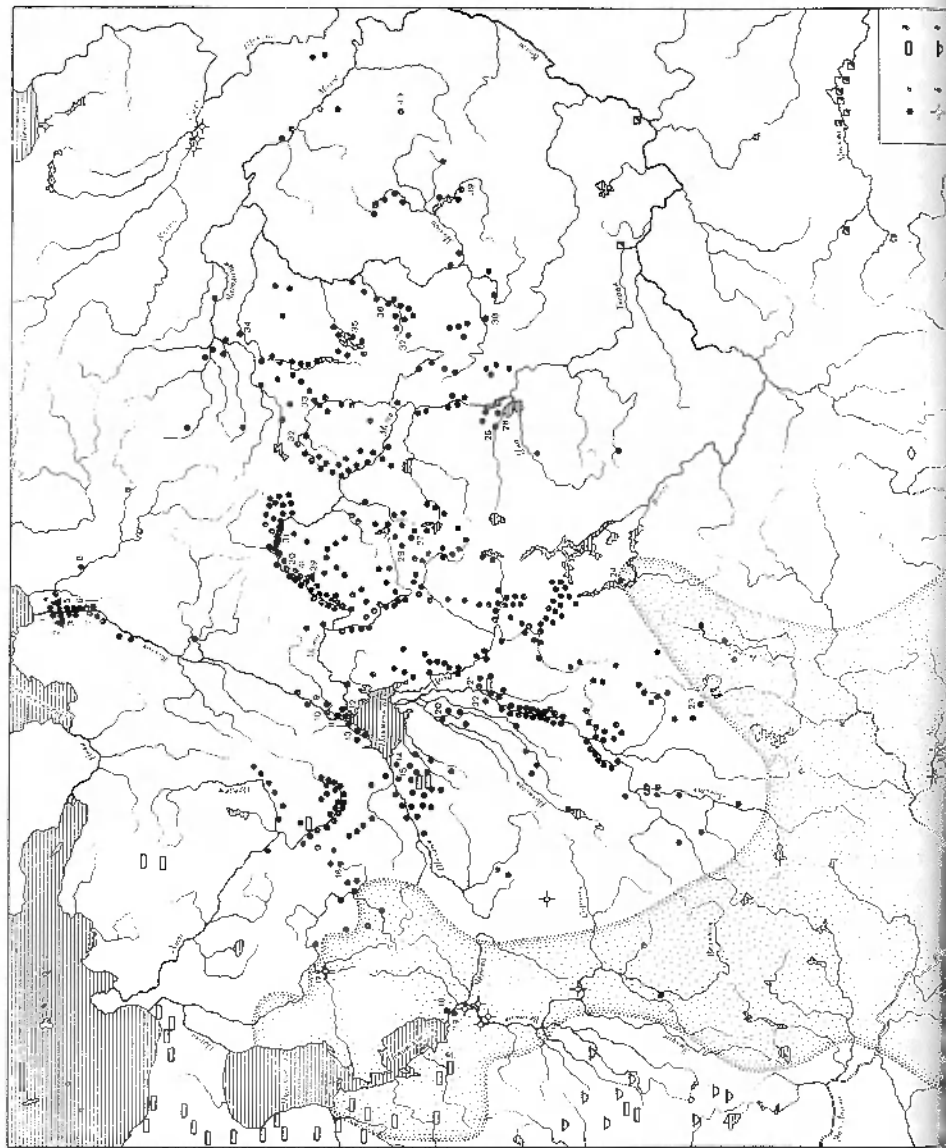


Fig. 5. Distribution of the sopka culture in northern Rus'. a – certain sopkas. б – possible sopkas. в – settlements belonging to the Sopka culture. The other symbols concern other cultures. After Sedov 1982.

characteristic feature of early kingdoms elsewhere in Europe. The Chronicle tells that many Slavic tribes were led by princes before the Rurikids (the introductory part, Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor 1953, p. 55), but that almost all of Rus' was united under the first two rulers, Rurik and Oleg. Even if the Old Russian kingdom arose remarkably quickly and became a great power already in the course of the 10th century, the truth must have been much more complicated. There are, in fact, indications in the Chronicle of later principalities with their own dynasties, among them a Scandinavian dynasty in Polock on the Western Dvina (see under the year 980).

In my view, the political development in the 9th and 10th centuries in Rus' was in many ways similar to that in Scandinavia. The country was probably divided into several political units led by princely families and chieftains, who often waged war upon each other. The collection of tribute by the Rus' from various tribes, which is described in the Russian Primary Chronicle as well as by Constantine Porphyrogenitus (chapter 9; see below), must often have been of the same violent nature as the Scandinavian collections of tribute known from the Baltic Sea and from Western Europe. Tribute may also have been collected during expeditions of a more peaceful, commercial character, like the "Finn tax" (tribute from the Saami) collected by the Norwegians and described by Ottar in the late 9th century and by the Icelanders in the Middle Ages (Authén-Blom 1959, pp. 282 ff.; for Ottar, see above). In the introductory part (Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor 1953, p. 55) the Russian Primary Chronicle enumerates all tribes which pay tribute to Rus', and the list includes distant peoples such as the Jam' in present-day central Finland (cf. the name of the province Häme), the Kors' (Curonians) on the coasts of present-day Latvia and Lithuania, and the Perm' and Pečora in the far north-east of present-day European Russia. Thus, for the Viking period the collection of tribute cannot be taken as evidence of a united state. It must mainly be understood as a frequent or infrequent, violent or more peaceful exploitation of dependent or independent, close or distant neighbours. A real taxation of a sovereign's own country was a later development in Scandinavia (in Sweden it was introduced in the 13th century; Lindkvist 1988, p. 15), and I therefore believe that this was also the case in Rus'.

When Prince Igor' of Kiev demanded more tribute than usual from the Derevljane, who lived north-west of Kiev, he was killed by them, and their prince Mal tried to take over Igor's kingdom by wooing his widow Olga (see under the year 945 in the Russian Primary Chronicle). True or not, this and other passages in the Chronicle give us a picture of the political strife that

first in the Christian period led to a more unified state. The retinues of the Rurikids are often mentioned in the Chronicle, but also other rulers and chieftains must have had retinues. And Scandinavians must have been engaged not only in the retinues of the Rurikids but also in those of other leaders.

The description of the Rus' in Constantine Porphyrogenitus' book *De administrando imperio* is of special importance for the study of the 10th century, since it was written in this period and gives very detailed information. It was compiled in the 950's, but chapter 9, which describes the journeys of the "Rhos" from "Rhosia" to Constantinople,³ is believed to date from c. 944:

The monoxyla ("single-trunks", "dug-outs") which come down from outer Rhosia to Constantinople are from Nemogardas (probably Novgorod), where Sfindosthlabos (Svjatoslav), son of Ingor (Igor), prince of Rhosia, had his seat, and others from the city of Miliniska (Smolensk) and from Telioutza (Ljubeč?) and Tzernigoga (Černigov) and Bousegrade (Vyšgorod). All these come down the river Danapris (Dnepr), and are collected together at the city of Kiobaba (Kiev), also called Sambatas. Their Slav tributaries, the so-called Krivetaieni (Kriviči) and the Lenzanenoi and the rest of the Slavonic regions, cut the monoxyla on their mountains ... and come down to Kioba (Kiev), and draw the ships to be fitted out, and sell them to the Rhos... (Here follows the famous description how in June, after all necessary preparations, the Rus' move down the Dnepr with slaves and other goods, how they pass the dangerous Dnepr rapids, whose names are given in both "Russian" and "Slavic" language – identifiable as Scandinavian and Slavic respectively – and only after having passed the Danube delta feel totally safe from the Pečeneg nomads who dominate the steppes) ... *The severe manner of life of these same Rhos in winter time is as follows. When the month of November begins, their chiefs together with all the Rhos at once leave Kiabos (Kiev) and go off on the polydia* (the Slavic word poljud'e), which means 'rounds', that is, to the Slavonic regions of the Berbianoi (Drevljane) and Drougouvitoi (Dregoviči) and Krivitzoi (Kriviči) and Severioi (Severjane) and the rest of the Slavs who are tributaries of the Rhos. There they are maintained throughout the winter, but then once more, starting from the month of April, when the ice of the Danapris river melts, they come back to Kiavos. They then pick up their monoxyla, as has been said above, and fit them out, and come down to Romania (the Byzantine Empire).

It is probably significant that the Poljane are missing in Constantine's

enumeration of the Slavic tribes which pay tribute to the Rus' of Kiev. The "capital" of the Poljane was Kiev, and their land, often called *Russkaja zemlja* ("the Russian land"), was the true kingdom of the Kiev prince. But the Kiev prince was often the overlord of closer and more distant tribes or principalities, and gradually this overlordship developed into a more unified state of the kind that is described in the Russian Primary Chronicle and other sources from the Christian period.

As in Scandinavia, the Viking centuries mark the introduction of urbanism in Rus' and a drastic rise of trade. In the Soviet period the dominating explanation was that the towns developed out of political centres in densely settled areas as a result of the internal development of economy and society (see especially Tichomirov 1956, and for a history of research Nosov 1993). This explanation, however, does not seem appropriate for the geographical situation of several of the earliest urban or proto-urban settlements, nor for the archaeological finds they have yielded (see especially the description below of Staraja Ladoga). In the 1970's, comparisons with Scandinavia and the North Sea area gave rise to an explanation according to which external long-distance trade initiated the urbanisation. An article titled "Gnězdovo and Birka" (Bulkin & Lebedev 1974) forms the starting-point for this research line, which has been developed further by Evgenij N. Nosov (1993, pp. 251 ff.; 1994). In the south of Rus', he argues, towns developed largely out of local political centres (archaeologically marked by hill-forts), but in the north of Rus', as around the Baltic and the North Sea, the earliest urban sites appeared along the major water routes, and the archaeological finds from them display a mixture of local and foreign cultures. Another striking feature is that most of these early sites in Rus' and Scandinavia disappeared around the year 1000, that is, roughly at the same time as the establishment of Christian kingdoms, and were replaced by still surviving towns in the neighbourhood: Gnězdovo was replaced by Smolensk, Rjurikovo Gorodišče by Novgorod, Birka by Sigtuna, Hedeby by Schleswig. With reference to Anders Andrén (1989), Nosov explains the changes in the urban network as part of a general north European phenomenon caused by great changes in society – politically from external to internal exploitation, and economically from long-distance trade to interaction with the hinterland.

Tamara A. Puškina and Vladimir Ja. Petruchin (1979; see also Petruchin 1995, pp. 154 ff.) have tried another line, starting from the explanation of the Old Russian towns as developing mainly out of internal factors. According to them, pairs like Gnězdovo–Smolensk represent different functions in the early

kingdom: the first place was a princely centre for the collection of tribute, called *pogost* in the Russian Primary Chronicle (under the year 947), and the other place was a tribal centre which first in a later period, when the princely power was more firmly established, took over also the state functions. The presence of the princely retinue in the first type of place is indicated by the strong Scandinavian cultural elements, and the needs of the retainers and the tribute which they collected gave rise to crafts and international trade.

The strong connection between princely power and international trade is well evidenced by the apparently authentic treaties between Rus' and Byzance, which are included in the Russian Primary Chronicle (under the years 907, 912, 945 and 971; Hellmann 1987) and by Constantine Porphyrogenitus (chapter 9; cited above). There are, however, difficulties in connecting the written records directly with the archaeological information. Most important is that there is no archaeological proof of any important pre-urban activities in Smolensk and the other alleged tribal centres. Therefore, when the written sources speak about Smolensk in the 9th and 10th centuries, it seems most probable that they refer to Gnězdovo, the archaeologically attested centre nearby (Nosov 1994, p. 248; before him, e.g., Arne 1952, p. 337).

With these general notes on society in mind, I would like to make some comments on the archaeological finds from a few places or regions in modern Russia, that is, in the northern and central parts of Old Rus'. First of all, I would like to stress the well-known fact that the largest archaeological material that can definitely be assigned to the Scandinavian culture consists of female bronze jewellery. Such finds are known from Finland, the Baltic countries and the area of Rus'. In Finland and the Baltic countries only a few types of ornaments are known, and they appear as single elements in a dress and in graves which in other respects stand out as typically local. In Rus' practically all types of Scandinavian female jewellery are represented, and they appear in typical Scandinavian combinations in the graves, which also in other respects (the whole composition of the grave-goods and the burial rite) conform in a remarkable way to the Scandinavian culture.

Scandinavian elements related to religion and magic are practically absent in Finland and the Baltic countries but are numerous in Rus'. The so-called Thor's hammer rings of iron form one example (Novikova 1992). They also indicate the area within Scandinavia which apparently had the closest connections with Rus': they are typical of the regions around the eastern part of Lake Mälaren, where Birka is situated. A few more specimens are known

from Sweden, mostly further west in the Mälaren basin, and from the Åland islands. Male artefacts of Scandinavian character are also found in the same types of graves and on the same sites as female and religious/magic artefacts, but they also have a wider distribution further east and south (for a general survey of the Scandinavian material in Rus', see Tamara Puškina's article in this volume and I. Jansson 1987, pp. 775 ff.).

To my mind, such a large material with such a strong representation of female objects cannot only have been connected with warriors or traders. Neither can it be interpreted as the result of Scandinavian cultural influences among Finnic, Baltic and Slavic peoples. General historical considerations make such a strong Scandinavian influence highly doubtful, and there is remarkably little in the material which indicates a remodelling or development of Scandinavian prototypes by local craftsmen. The material must instead indicate a fairly large immigration of whole families from Scandinavia, who were so strong that they could preserve their distinctive features for a couple of generations.

In such a large group of immigrants, coming from a rural society with state formation and urbanism only in its initial stage, there must have been people interested in starting a rural life also in the new homeland.

STARAJA LADOGA AND THE SOUTH-EASTERN LADOGA REGION

Staraja (Old) Ladoga – Aldeigjuborg in Icelandic sources – is the earliest archaeologically attested trading place in Old Rus' and the one lying closest to Scandinavia (Srednevekovaja Ladoga, 1985; Kirpičnikov 1989). It was reached from the Gulf of Finland by sailing and rowing up the river Neva, across the southern part of Lake Ladoga and, finally, 12 km up the river Volchov (Fig. 6). The trading settlement, which was situated on the western bank of the river at the mouth of a small tributary called Ladožka, developed into a town. The cultural layers of the 9th–11th centuries cover an area of no less than 10–12 ha (Kirpičnikov 1985, p. 171; Birka's cultural layer covers 7 ha). Some minor rural settlements from the Viking period are also known in the neighbourhood, but the soil in the area is said to be poor, and in earlier centuries the forest lay close to the river.

The main reason why a trading place arose here must be its position in the system of Eastern European water routes: the Volchov route led up to Lake Il'men', and from there river routes could be chosen which led east to the Volga and the Caspian Sea or south to the Dnepr and the Black Sea. 10 km up the Volchov from Staraja Ladoga the traveller met the first rapids. Staraja

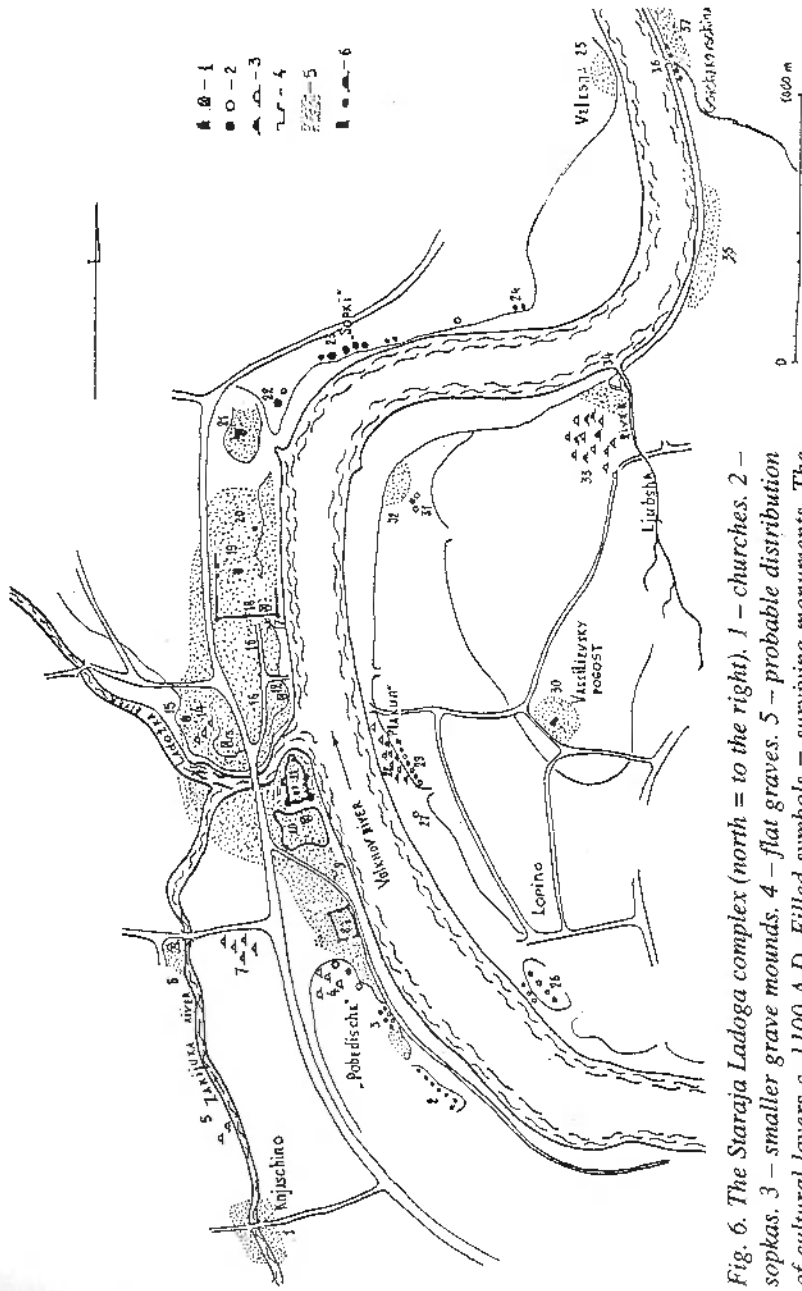


Fig. 6. The Staraja Ladoga complex (north = to the right). 1 – churches. 2 – sopkas. 3 – smaller grave mounds. 4 – flat graves. 5 – probable distribution of cultural layers c. 1100 A.D. Filled symbols = surviving monuments. The earliest cultural layers are at 10, south of the fort 11. The "Scandinavian" mound cemetery is at 28 (Plakun), the early sopka at 3 (Pobediščje) After Kirpičnikov & Nazarenko 1993.

Ladoga, no doubt, was the place where travellers stopped in order to make preparations for the continued journey, or to meet travellers who came down the Volchov from the interior of Eastern Europe. Fairs were probably also organised, where trappers from the surrounding forest regions exchanged furs for foreign commodities. The many small groups of grave mounds, mainly from the 10th century, with mixed Finno-Ugric and Scandinavian elements along the rivers south-east of Lake Ladoga (Fig. 7) are usually explained as representing settlements which became wealthy through the fur trade (e.g., Raudonikas 1930, pp. 134 ff.). Bones of furred animals (mostly bear – claws, apparently from bear fells – but also hare, fox, wolverine) and domestic animals (horse, cattle, dog, cat) in the graves indicate that both hunting and farming were important parts of the subsistence (Brandenburg 1895, pp. 13 ff.).

Extensive excavations of the cultural layers of Staraja Ladoga have taken place during our century, but the plan of the settlement is still largely unknown. The cemeteries are also insufficiently known.

Dendrochronology⁴ has shown that the settlement began on this site soon after the middle of the 8th century, and Scandinavian artefacts (e.g., Davidan 1992, Nrs. 8 and 36, pp. 27 ff., figs. 8, 11) and Arabic coins (Rjabinin 1985, pp. 51, 73; Kirpičnikov 1989, pp., 325 ff.; Davidan 1994) show that long-distance contacts were established on the site at the very beginning. Thus, Staraja Ladoga belongs to the system of trading places that arose in the 8th century and included Birka, Hedeby and Ribe in Scandinavia and further places in Western Europe.

Scandinavian finds from the earliest layers and up to the 10th century indicate that people from Scandinavia visited the site. Unfinished ornaments and other objects indicate that jewellery of Scandinavian character has been produced here (Davidan 1980, pp. 63ff., pls. 2:9, 3:5). On the eastern bank of the river at a place called Plakun there is a small cemetery which Russian archaeologists interpret as a purely Scandinavian burial place from the 9th–10th centuries. The 18 excavated low mounds contained rather simple grave-goods: no weapons and no bronze jewellery but one Western European clay jug of Tating type and many boat rivets and similar objects typical of Swedish graves (Korzuchina 1971; Nazarenko 1985, pp. 156 f., 165). A couple of oval brooches from the 10th century found on the western river bank, south of the settlement, probably come from inhumation graves in other destroyed cemeteries (oral information from Zoja D. Bessarabova, Staraja Ladoga Museum). This and other finds indicate that people of

Scandinavian descent lived here permanently. It is therefore not surprising that Ladoga is mentioned as Rurik's first residence in one of the versions of the Russian Primary Chronicle (cited above).

However, it should be underlined that there are also other finds than Scandinavian already from the earliest phase of the trading place. The hand-made pottery is of the so-called Ladoga type, which is typical of the Sopka culture spread in the Volchov river system (Davidan 1970, p. 80, figs. 1–2).

Typical of early urban sites in Scandinavia is that the plots are long and narrow, c. 6–8 m wide, with one of the short sides bordering a street and divided from the neighbouring plots by means of ditches. The market place at Ribe, for example, was laid out like this in the early 8th century (Jensen 1991, pp. 4 ff.). The dominating buildings were long houses with a central hearth. The settlement at Staraja Ladoga seems never to have conformed to this plan.⁵ In the 8th–9th centuries some buildings were large, rectangular log houses with a central hearth and an ante-room at one end. They could possibly be compared with Scandinavian long houses. However, most buildings were small log houses of Eastern European type with an oven in the corner.

On the high river banks around the settlement site there are impressive "sopkas" – big burial mounds typical of the Sopka culture. C. 40 sopkas have been registered along a stretch of 3 1/2 km of the river. With one exception (a sopka-like mound near Plakun, Nosov 1985) neither the burial rite nor the artefacts found in the sopkas shows any certain Scandinavian connections. This is also an indication of the strong presence of a non-Scandinavian population group. The meagre finds in the excavated sopkas make the dating of them uncertain. They are generally ascribed to the 8th–10th centuries, and the Ladoga sopkas seem to belong to all these centuries (Petrenko 1985, pp. 143 f.). One sopka on the site of Pobedišče, south of Ladoga, is probably even earlier than the (excavated part of the) trading settlement, and it indicates that long-distance connections probably were established already in the 7th or the early 8th century, before the appearance of Scandinavians (Callmer 1994, p. 30, fig. 16). It contained a grave furnished with strap mounts originating from the Kama region (Brandenburg 1895, p. 138, pl. 6:6, 11, 18, 20; cf. Kivikoski 1973, fig. 584–585 with refs. p. 83 after fig. 595).

The settlement of Staraja Ladoga does not seem to have had any fortifications from the beginning. A late medieval stone fortress is situated on the pointed cape between the Volchov and the Ladožka north of the earliest settlement. Just when the first fort was built on the site is uncertain.

According to Anatolij N. Kirpičnikov (1985, p.25), this occurred in the late 9th century, but the earliest cultural layers seem to date only from the 10th century (Korzuchina 1961, p. 81; cf., however, Orlov 1973, p. 269).

THE IL'MEN' REGION, NOVGOROD AND RJURIKOVO GORODIŠČE

After a journey c. 200 km up the Volchov (i.e., in a southerly direction) travellers came to the Il'men', a lake c. 40 km across, with four great rivers flowing into it: the Šelon' from the west, the Lovat' from the south, the Pola from the south-east and the Msta from the east. The Šelon' valley leads towards the basin of the river Velikaja and Lake Čudskoe (Lake Peipsi), the Lovat' to the water system of the Western Dvina (and then to the Dnepr), the Pola and the Msta to the water system of the Volga.

The region along the north-western shore of Lake Il'men' and uppermost Volchov is a plain with low hillocks rising above extensive meadows, which are flooded every spring and drained only slowly in the course of summer. In the 8th–10th centuries (the date cannot yet be determined more closely), farming settlements belonging to the Sopka culture were established on these hillocks (Fig. 8). These settlements continue into the historical period, when the region is known as one of the best agricultural areas in the north of Rus'. The soil on the hillocks is fertile, and the meadows give pasture and hay in endless quantities. The valleys of the rivers which flow into the Il'men' have also rich remains of the Sopka culture (Fig. 5).

With this geographical situation in mind, it is only natural that the political and commercial centre of north-western Rus' was established on the uppermost Volchov. This is Novgorod ("New-town" or "New-fort"), Rurik's (first or second) seat in Rus' according to the Chronicle. It was therefore a great surprise when dendrochronology revealed that the settlement in the present city did not begin until the late Viking period – the earliest dates are from about 950 (Yanin 1992, pp. 86 f.). There is, however, a settlement on a hillock c. 2 km south of the city, which has been known as Gorodišče ("the deserted fort/fortified town") since the early 12th century when it was the seat of the prince of Novgorod, and Rjurikovo Gorodišče ("Rurik's deserted fort/fortified town") since the 19th century. Here excavations by Evgenij N. Nosov (1990; 1992) have revealed the remains of an early urban centre, between 4 and 7 ha in size, with a fortified centre and with finds indicating crafts and trade and long-distance connections (Fig. 9). The cultural layers have been much destroyed by medieval and modern activities, and it is therefore difficult to date the settlement more exactly. It seems, however, to

Fig. 7. Scandinavian finds in the south-eastern Ladoga region. 1 – one find. 2 – two or more finds. 3 – exact location unknown. Filled symbols = Scandinavian presence (according to Anne Stalsberg, indicated by find associations or cult objects). After Stalsberg 1989.

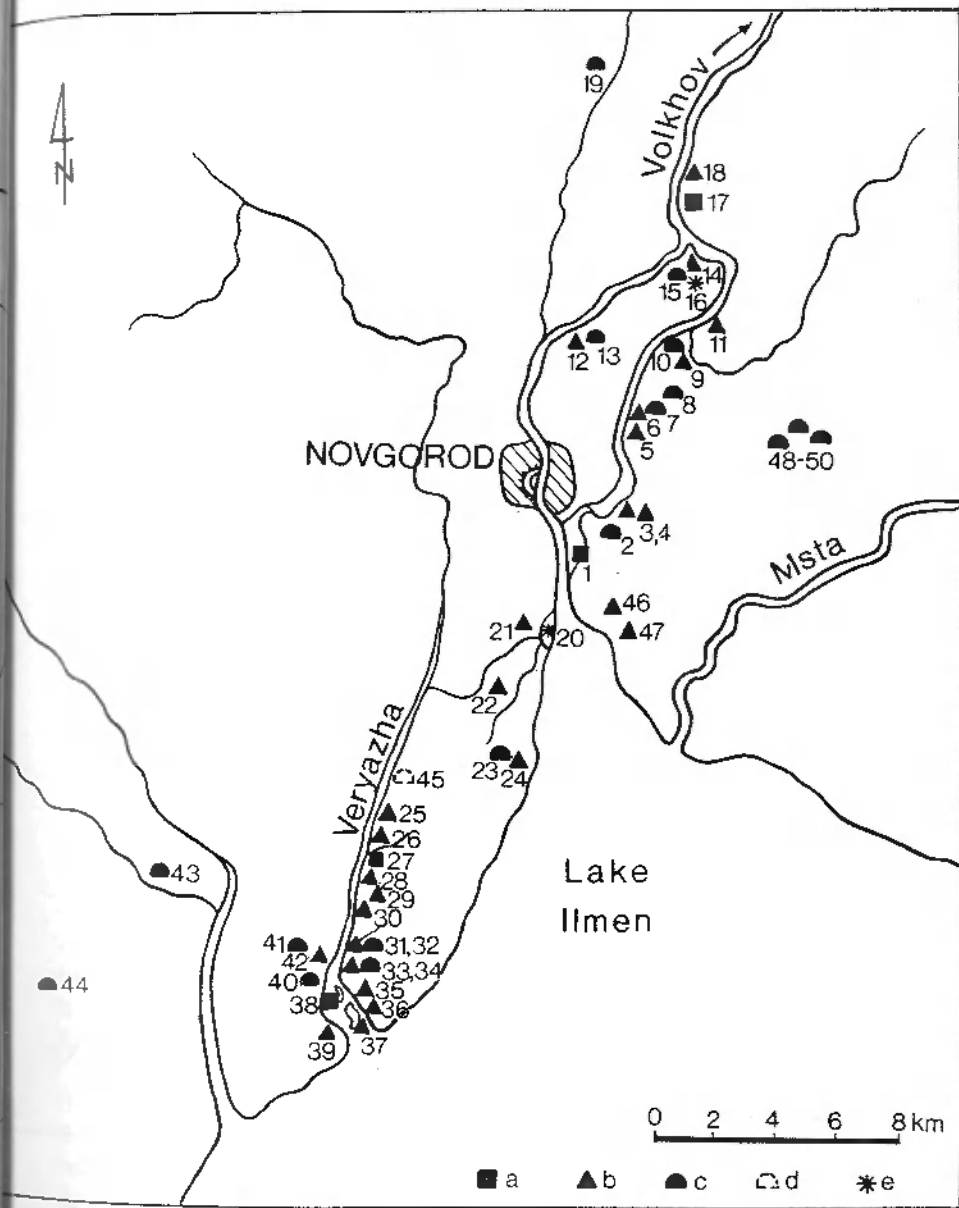
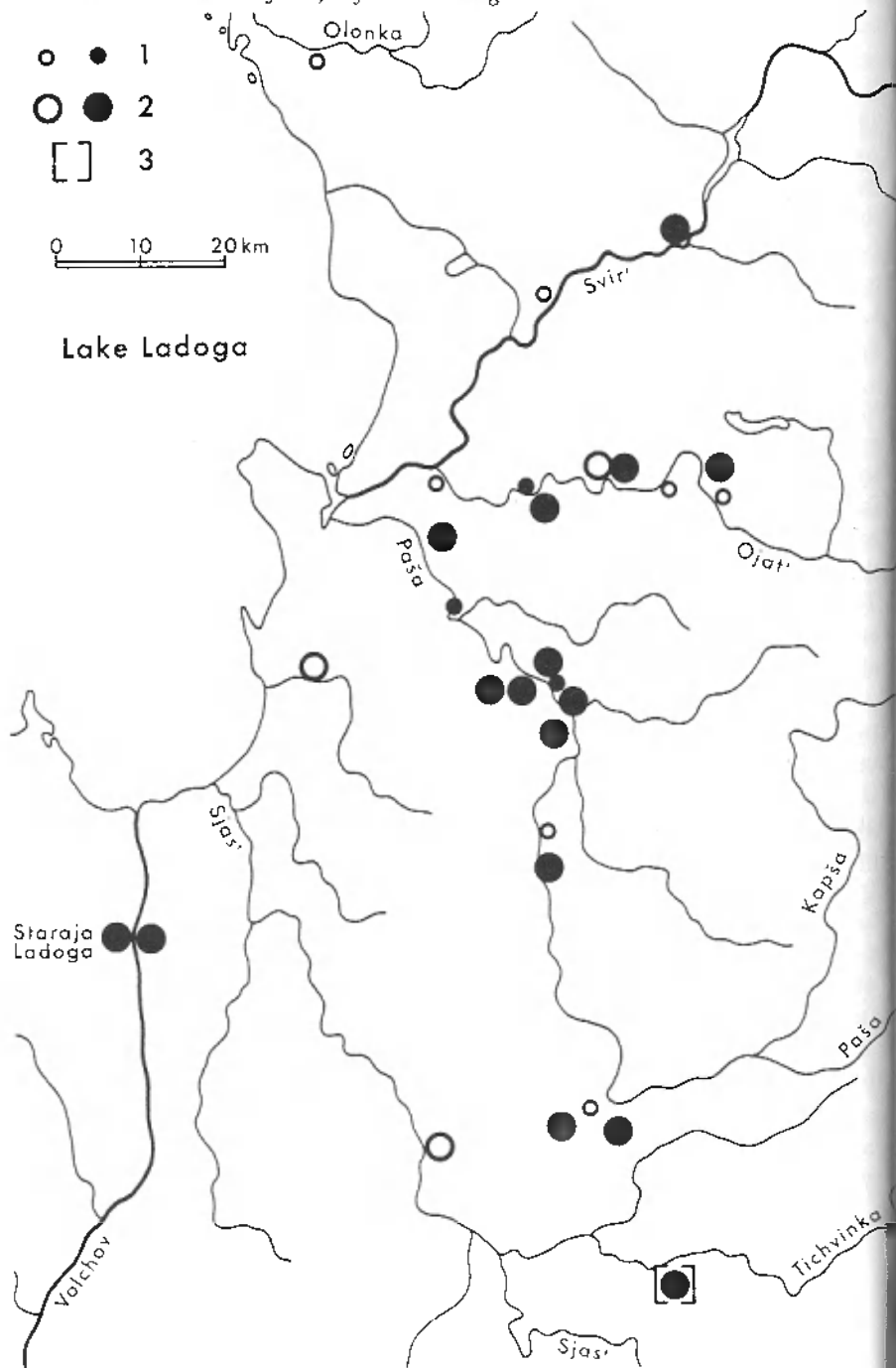


Fig. 8. Settlements from the 8th-10th century around Novgorod and along the north-western shore of Lake Il'men'. a – hill-forts. b – settlements. c – sopkas. d – sopkas? e – pagan shrines. 1 – Rjurikovo Gorodišče. 2 – Bereďica. 17 – Cholopij Gorodok. After Nosov 1992.

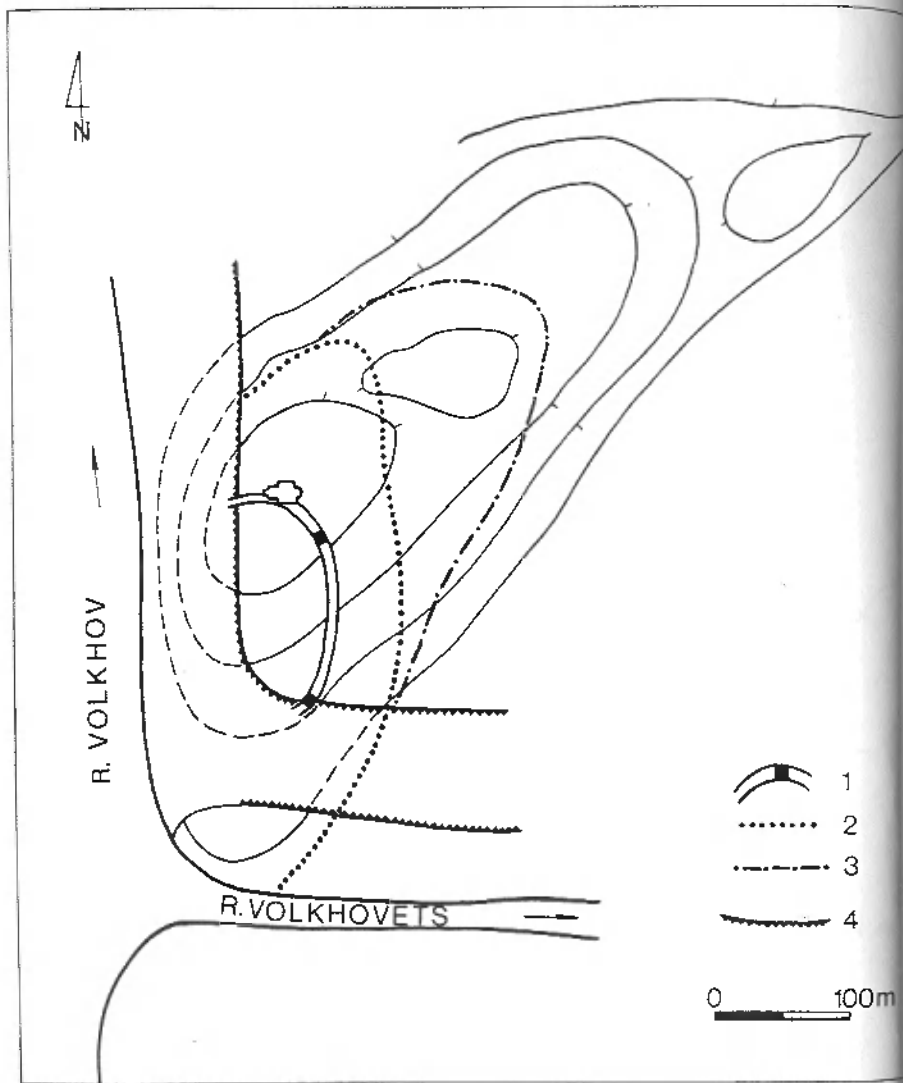


Fig. 9. Rjurikovo Gorodišče. 1 – moat with excavated sections. 2 – confirmed extent, 3 – possible extent of 9th–10th century settlement. 4 – terrace scarp along the modern river bank and the canal dug through the site in the 19th century. After Nosov 1992.

have started in the mid-9th century or earlier, and been more or less deserted around the year 1000, leaving an empty century before the medieval residence was established. During the 11th century the prince apparently had his seat in present-day Novgorod, at the place now called Jaroslavovo dvorišče (“the deserted yard of Jaroslav”, which refers to Jaroslav the Wise, prince of Novgorod from 1014 or earlier, grand prince of Kiev 1019–1054). Thus, Rjurikovo Gorodišče and Novgorod apparently functioned as the political and commercial centre of the area, one after the other.

The situation of Rjurikovo Gorodišče is even more strategic than that of Novgorod. Just north of Lake Il'men' the river Malyj Volchovec branches off eastwards from the Volchov, and 1 km further north a second river, Žilotug, branches off and joins the Malyj Volchovec, which c. 12 km further north again joins the Volchov. Rjurikovo Gorodišče is situated on the first hillock on the eastern side of the Volchov, at the first bifurcation, on the cape between the Volchov and the Malyj Volchovec, thus controlling all water traffic from the Il'men' to the Volchov and vice versa. The Scandinavian name of Rjurikovo Gorodišče/Novgorod is Holmgård (*Holmgardhr*), “the settlement on the island” or “among the islands”, which is a very adequate description of Gorodišče especially in the spring and early summer.

The Russian Primary Chronicle often points out Novgorod as a centre of Varangian activities in Rus', and, as cited above, it says that “the present inhabitants of Novgorod are descended from the Varangian race, but aforetime they were Slavs” (see under the year 862). Excavations in the present city have yielded Scandinavian artefacts (Sedova 1981, p. 181, fig. 13:6–8, maybe also fig. 13:2–5), but not in such number that it can explain the words of the Chronicle. From the very beginning Novgorod has a clearly Eastern European character. The structure of the town differs markedly from the Scandinavian pattern. The plots are large and roughly square, and the log houses usually have an oven in the corner. The artefacts are also, with single exceptions, Eastern European – of Slavic, Finno-Ugric or Byzantine-Orthodox character.

The artefacts from early Rjurikovo Gorodišče are markedly different. Here the Scandinavian element is very prominent (Nosov 1990, p. 155 ff., figs. 28, 30–31, 44–47, 48, 62–64; 1992, pp. 46 ff., figs. 20–27) and consists of male and female dress accessories and ornaments, amulets and other religious or magic objects, small tools and horse trappings. Unfinished and other objects indicate that bronze jewellery of Scandinavian character was produced on the site (Korzuchina 1965; Nosov 1990, pp. 159 ff., figs. 62:6?, 63:1, 62:2). The majority of the objects belong to the 10th century, but there is a

comparatively large number of 9th-century types. This seems to indicate an earlier date for the Scandinavian presence in Rjurikovo Gorodišče than on any other site further south or east in Rus'.

However, as in Staraja Ladoga there are also strong Eastern European elements among the artefacts – suffice it to mention the hand-made pottery of the local Ladoga type. And when we turn to the structure of the site and the buildings, the Eastern European character is very marked. A deep moat (and no doubt also a rampart, although not yet traced) surrounded the central and probably earliest part of the settlement, which makes Rjurikovo Gorodišče conform to a widespread model in Eastern Europe but differ from Birka, Hedeby and other Scandinavian sites which had no central, inhabited fortress. Log houses and ovens are of a kind known from Staraja Ladoga, Novgorod and many other sites in Rus' (Nosov 1990, pp. 163 ff.; 1992, pp. 55 ff., figs. 17–19, 30).

It has not yet been possible to discern any important changes in the culture or structure of Rjurikovo Gorodišče during its first 150–200 years of existence. The Scandinavian artefacts belong to the best dated finds and seem to be spread during the whole period. The fortification around the centre seems to have been constructed at the start of the settlement (Nosov 1990, pp. 151).

The cemeteries of Rjurikovo Gorodišče are not yet known. An oval brooch of late 9th-century type (Nosov 1990, fig. 64:1, 1992, fig. 22:1), found on the north-western slope of the hillock, apparently comes from an inhumation of a woman dressed in Scandinavian costume: the rust of the pin has preserved remains of the textile bracer of her dress. On the hillock of Neredica, c. 800 m east of the Gorodišče settlement, there were earlier traces of a mound, probably a *sopka*, but no artefacts are known from it (Koneckij 1981).

Rjurikovo Gorodišče stands out as a unique place in the Il'men' region. Other excavated settlements have yielded only single Scandinavian artefacts: a couple of arm-rings and a fragment of a partly twisted iron ring of the kind which is often furnished with Thor's hammer amulets, and which is characteristic of eastern Central Sweden and Rus' (Nosov 1990, p. 176, fig. 65:2). One of the arm-rings comes from Cholopij Gorodok, strategically situated at the confluence of the Malyj Volchovec and the Volchov (Nosov & Plochov 1987, fig. 3:8). This site is mentioned in medieval Hanseatic sources under a Scandinavian name – *Drelleborch*, which means "the slave fort" as does the Russian name – and was then one of the stations for the merchant vessels on their way to Novgorod.

Thus, according to our present knowledge only the political and commercial centre of the area – Rjurikovo Gorodišče – displayed strong Scandinavian influences in the 9th–10th centuries. However, it should be pointed out that the cultural layers of the ordinary rural settlements have yielded very few metal ornaments and other objects of the kind that can be determined as Scandinavian. Such objects are usually found in graves and, with the exception of *sopkas* and the above-mentioned oval brooch from a grave at Gorodišče, graves from the 9th–10th centuries are totally unknown in the Il'men' area.

Scandinavian objects are also practically lacking among the finds from the valleys of the rivers that flow into the Il'men'. The exception is a fortified settlement on the water route towards the Dnepr: Gorodok on the Lovat', near Velikie Luki c. 250 km south of Novgorod (among the finds, a clay mould for casting an ornament in Scandinavian style; Gorjunova 1976, fig. 2:1, 4, 6, 18).

THE JAROSLAVL'–VLADIMIR AREA

When we come to the river system of the Volga, there is one large area between the towns Jaroslavl' on the Volga and Vladimir on the Kljazma which has yielded many Scandinavian artefacts (Fig. 10).

A large material comes from the so-called Vladimir mounds, excavated at great speed by Count A.S. Uvarov and his helper P.S. Savel'ev in the 1850's in a vast area north-west of Vladimir. The number of excavated mounds amounts to almost 8 000, and it is only natural that the publications (Uvarov 1872; Spicyn 1905) give very incomplete and sometimes erroneous information about find places and find circumstances. The archive material gives possibilities to correct the information and learn more about the cemeteries, but this work has only started (cf. Lapšin 1987 and Lapšin & Muchina 1988, who also present modern excavations of nearby settlements).

According to the published information, objects with Scandinavian ornamentation or related to Scandinavian cult were found in nine cemeteries in the rich agricultural regions of the towns of Rostov, Pereslavl', Jur'ev and Suzdal'. If objects of less definite Scandinavian origin are counted, the number of sites would grow considerably. We cannot say how many graves in these cemeteries contained Scandinavian objects. However, the cemeteries were often large, with more than 100 mounds, and were characterised by cremations, which means that they belong to the early phase of the Vladimir mounds around the 10th century; mounds with inhumations are characteristic

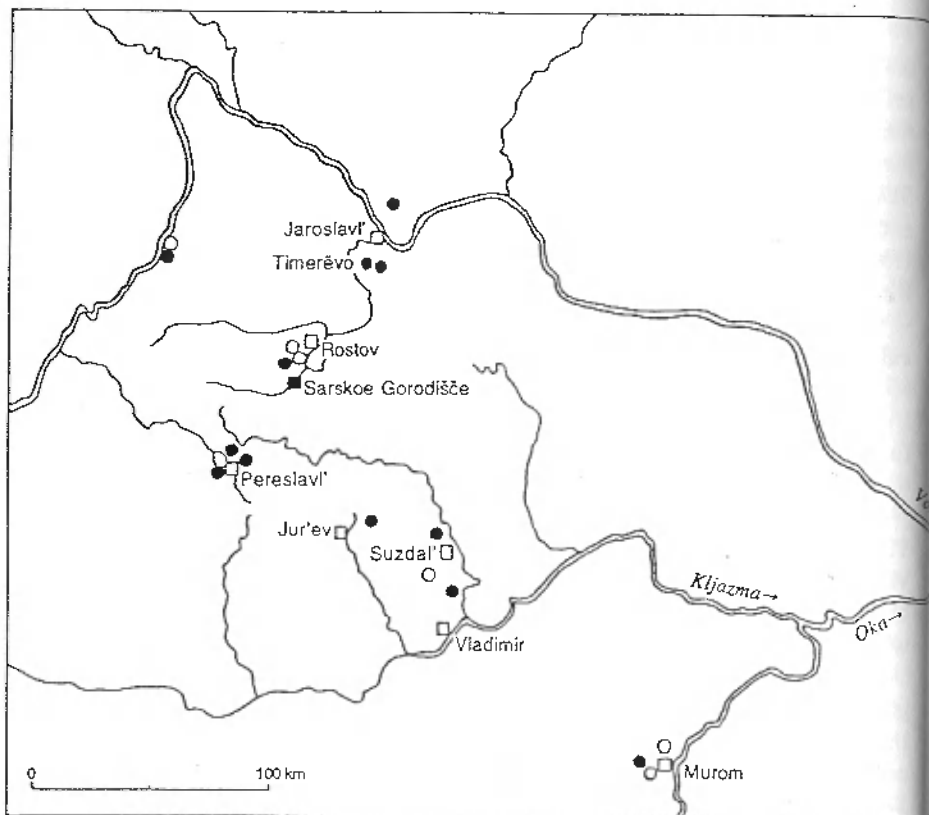


Fig. 10. Scandinavian finds in the Jaroslavl'-Vladimir area. ● cemeteries with female bronze jewellery and ritual/magic objects. ○ cemeteries with other objects decorated in Scandinavian style. ■ Sarskoe Gorodišče. □ modern towns (originating in the 11th–12th centuries). Drawing by I. Jansson.

of the 11th–12th centuries.

Scandinavian artefacts have also been found in one settlement, Sarskoe Gorodišče – “the hill-fort on the Sara”, a navigable river – south-west of Rostov (Fig. 11; Leont’ev 1996, pp. 68 ff.). This is the only fortified site from the period in the Rostov region, but nevertheless it is characteristic of the local Finno-Ugric culture. It was inhabited from the late 7th to the early 11th century. In the (early?) 9th century the site became a centre for long-distance connections, as indicated by the finds of Islamic coins and other foreign objects. Among them there are also male and female Scandinavian artefacts from the 9th and 10th centuries (Leont’ev 1981). Andrej E. Leont’ev (1996, pp. 186 ff.) stresses that Sarskoe Gorodišče in these centuries differs from the ordinary settlements in the area, not only through the trade but also through the strong military and craft activities. The military accent is indicated by the finds of a large number of arrowheads and other weapons. Crafts such as smithing, bronze casting and jewellery production are also commonly represented in ordinary settlements but not so extensively as here. A cemetery with flat graves from both the early and the late period is typically local.

In the 10th century the fortified settlement was extended so that it covered an area of 2.1 ha, and an open settlement, somewhat smaller in size, was established at the foot of the hill-fort. Across the river a small temporary camp from the early 10th century has also been found. Its inhabitants were probably visiting warriors or merchants, because the finds from this site have a uniquely strong male and military accent shown by a variety of arrowheads, chain-mail, lamellar armour (the only find of this kind in North-Eastern Rus’) and other weapons and male objects, three Islamic coins, two weights, and only a little pottery and single female objects.

According to the Chronicle (under the year 862, cited above), Rostov was the city of the Finnic tribe Merja, and was given by Rurik to one of his followers. However, archaeological investigations indicate that Rostov came into existence rather late. The earliest layer in the town is characterised by local “Merjan” pottery and dated to the mid-10th century, and the urban development seems to have started only towards the end of this century (Leont’ev 1996, pp. 280 ff.). Sarskoe Gorodišče is therefore generally interpreted as the political and economic centre of the Rostov area in the 9th–10th centuries.

Many authors look upon Sarskoe Gorodišče–Rostov as a pair of towns like Birka–Sigtuna, Rjurikovo Gorodišče–Novgorod and Gnëzdovo–

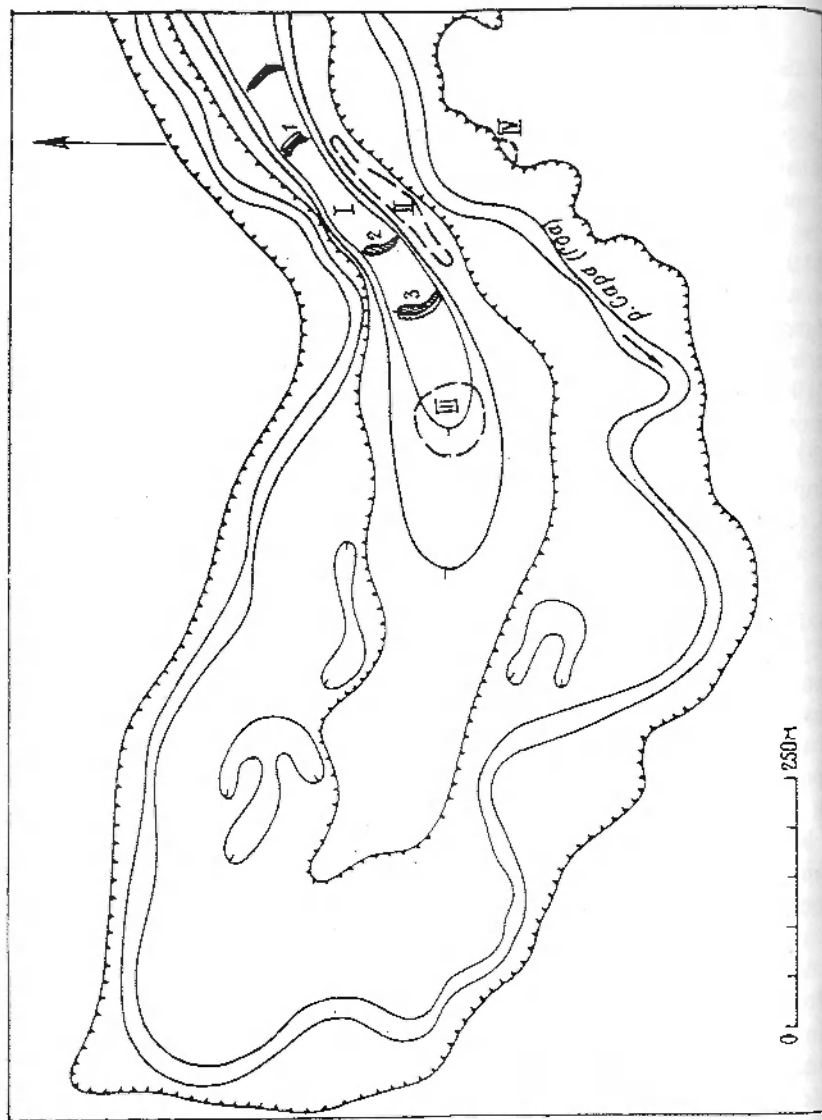


Fig. 11. The Sarskoe Gorodišče complex. I – hill-fort. II – open settlement. III – cemetery. IV – seasonal camp. 1–3 – ramparts of the hill-fort (a fourth rampart destroyed in 1854 is marked to the east of 1). After Leont'ev 1996.

Smolensk. Sarskoe Gorodišče is therefore often interpreted as the predecessor of Rostov. Against this Leont'ev (1996, p. 281) points to the fact that these two sites seem to have coexisted for half a century or more. He interprets Sarskoe Gorodišče as the tribal centre of the area and Rostov as a Merjan settlement, which in the late 10th century was taken over by immigrating Slavs and made into one of the political centres of the Old Russian state.

The Jaroslavl' cemeteries of (Bol'sho) Timerëvo, Petrovskoe and Michajlovskoe, which are treated in Veronika Murašëva's article in this volume, are much better known than the Vladimir mounds. They have been excavated from the end of the last century up to our time and also have been published in a monograph (Jaroslavskoe Povolž'e 1967). The cemeteries have been used from the late 9th up to the early 11th century. Most of the mounds contain cremation layers and grave-goods which sometimes indicate very clear and close connections with Eastern Scandinavia. There are also a few inhumation graves contemporaneous with the cremations, and a larger number of inhumations belonging to the final phase of the cemeteries.

Timerëvo is the best preserved cemetery, and after complementary excavations (see especially Dubov 1976; Nedošivina & Fechner 1985; Fechner & Nedošivina 1987; Dubov & Sedych 1992) this cemetery of c. 500 mounds is almost totally excavated and the best published cemetery from the Viking period in Russia. The adjacent settlement has also been excavated (Dubov 1982, pp. 142 ff.). This site has therefore often been used as a model or type site in different studies of the Russian Viking period. In spite of this – or perhaps because of this – the interpretations of it go in very different directions.

Regarding the ethnic interpretation, almost all researchers have argued that the population was "poly-ethnic", consisting of Finns, Slavs and Scandinavians. The Scandinavians have normally been seen as constituting only a small percentage, but in later studies their role has often been more strongly stressed (as in V.V. Murašëva's article here). Those who have tried to pinpoint the graves of the different ethnoses on a plan of the cemetery have, practically speaking, come to the same conclusion regardless of what criteria they have used: the population groups are mingled in the cemetery. According to Anne Stalsberg, who has published the latest plan of this kind, "the relationship between the Scandinavians and the rest of the population in Rus' must have been one of organization, order, peace, from the beginning. Grave fields were sacred places, and hostile aliens would scarcely be let into them over a period of at least a century and a half" (Stalsberg 1989, p. 462, fig. 4).

In an earlier article I studied the distribution of the different cultural elements in the cemetery and came to the conclusion that the Scandinavian elements were mainly found in the southern and central part, the "Finno-Ugric" mainly in the northern and the Slavic mainly in the south-eastern part of the cemetery (Fig. 12). I therefore suggested that this indicated that all three groups were well represented in the settlement. In the "Scandinavian" and "Finno-Ugric" parts of the cemetery cremations dominated. The Scandinavian objects of early Viking period types were spread in the southern part, thus indicating that this was the earliest or one of the earliest parts of the cemetery. The "Slavic" graves in the south-east were partly intermingled with the early "Scandinavian" graves but consisted of inhumations which, together with their grave-goods, showed that they were mainly late. This seemed to indicate changes in the ethnic composition of the settlement during its time of existence.

Later I have understood that the northern "Finno-Ugric" part of the cemetery ought to be mainly later than the southern and central parts (Nedošivina & Fechner 1985, pp. 110 f., fig. 7). This indicates that the cemetery was successively extended from the south to the north, and that the material culture changed successively from a more Scandinavian to a more Finno-Ugric character. Then, in the decades around the turn of the millennium, a more radical change appeared which, no doubt, must be connected in one way or another with the establishment of the Christian Russian kingdom. Thus, in the stages of the development that are represented in the Timerëvo cemetery the components of the material culture do not indicate separate population groups, but rather, a community with people of different genetic origins but viewing themselves as one community and most probably also as one ethnic group. If in the history of the settlement there was a period with two ethnic groups living side by side, this was at the end, because the date of the late cremation graves in the north and the inhumation graves in the south-east is difficult to fix. They may well be contemporaneous, and the inhumation graves may represent an immigration of Slavic settlers. However, this dichotomy can also be explained as a social dichotomy resulting from the establishment of the early state.

There are also other authors who have stressed the unity of the Timerëvo population. On the basis of the number of graves, the number of inhabitants in Timerëvo has been estimated to not more than 130 (Fechner & Nedošivina 1987, p. 114). According to Leont'ev (1991, p. 41), ethnographical comparisons make it impossible to believe that such a small population was

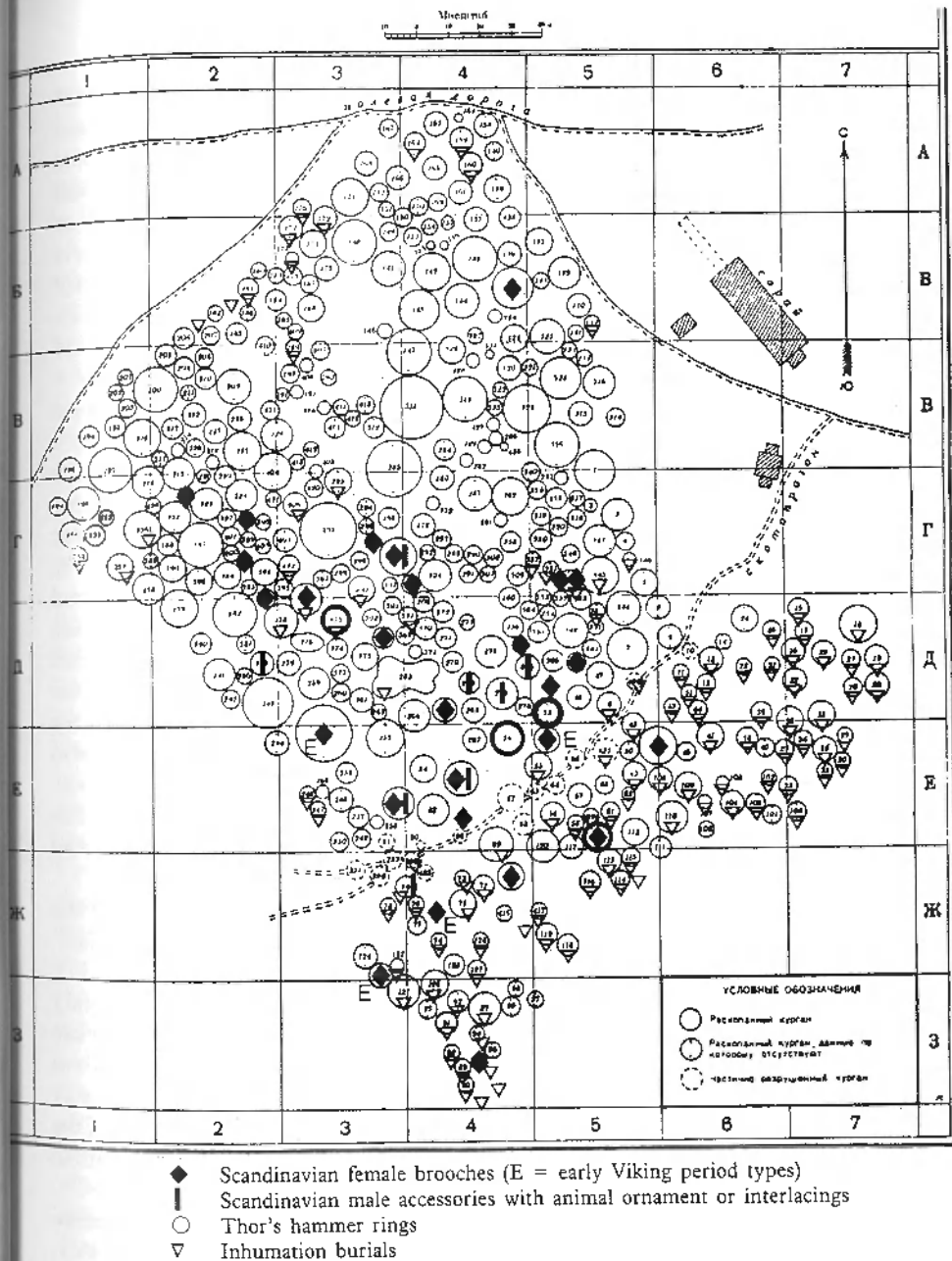


Fig. 12. The cemetery of Bol'shoe Timerëvo. After Jansson 1987 (map from *Jaroslavskoe Povolž'e*, 1963).

divided into three different ethnic groups. The "Finnic" or "Finno-Ugric" elements are odd elements originating in different parts of Eastern Europe and cannot be used for ethnic determinations. In Leont'ev's opinion the whole cemetery shall be understood as Old Russian, that is, basically Slavic, with an additional minor element of Scandinavians. The most important factor in the history of North-Eastern Rus' in these centuries was the Slavic colonisation and the establishment of the Russian state, and the great variations in the material culture and burial rites of this period shall be understood as a feature characteristic of the colonisation process (Leont'ev 1991, p. 44; 1996, pp. 285 ff.).

One very special type of ritual object which indicates the unity of the Timerëvo population is the clay paw – a clay model of, most probably, a beaver's paw. Such clay paws are characteristic of the cremations in all parts of the Timerëvo cemetery as well as of many other cemeteries in the Jaroslavl'-Vladimir area. The clay paws are usually understood as Finnic objects by Russian archaeologists. However, clay paws are also found in cremation graves on the Åland Islands and in one case in Södermanland, and part of the Åland clay paws and the Södermanland specimen belong to graves from the Vendel period, thus indicating that the rite in which they were used originated in Eastern Scandinavia. Johan Callmer has therefore argued that the three Jaroslavl' settlements were established as stations for fur trade by Scandinavians, who had many influential members from Åland, and who also integrated Finns in their communities. At a certain stage these communities established new settlements further south in the area of the Vladimir mounds (Callmer 1994, pp. 38 f.; cf. Callmer 1988 with refs. to earlier research and the positive acknowledgement by Leont'ev 1996, pp. 287 f.).

This brings us to the discussion of the function of Timerëvo. Here the interpretations are even more divergent. In the monograph on the Jaroslavl' mounds the main excavator of the cemetery, Maja V. Fehner (1963, p.17), looks upon Timerëvo as a rural site. Igor' V. Dubov, who has mainly excavated the settlement, understands Timerëvo instead as an early urban site of the same general type as Hedeby, Birka, Staraja Ladoga, Rjurikovo Gorodišče and Gnëzdovo. According to Dubov, Timerëvo was the predecessor of the town Jaroslavl', which was founded in the 11th century, and one of the many examples of how in the late Viking period an urban or proto-urban centre was moved from one place to another nearby place.

In the general discussion the idea of Timerëvo as a proto-urban centre seems to be more common (e.g., Nosov 1994, p. 192). However, Leont'ev,

who is the main authority on the settlement history of the Jaroslavl'-Vladimir area in the first and early second millennia, has presented arguments which have convinced me that Timerëvo should be seen as a rural site. I shall summarise his arguments here.

Leont'ev's first point is that typical proto-urban sites in Rus' are situated on a water route, and that they are fortified in one way or another. This is not the case with Timerëvo. Like its sister sites Petrovskoe and Michajlovskoe, which also lack fortifications, it is not situated on the Volga but c. 12 km to the south of this river (see fig. 1 in V.V. Muraševa's article here). It lies near a navigable tributary called Kotorosl' (which leads up to Rostov and Sarskoe Gorodišče) but 3 km to the east of it, where a little brook (now drained) called the Sečka cuts through an escarpment between the higher land to the south-east and the wide lowland plain around the Kotorosl' to the north-west (Fig. 13). The Sečka is definitely not navigable. It seems clear to me that the inhabitants of Timerëvo have settled here in order to get access to a variety of natural resources: water and land suitable for tillage, pasture and haymaking.

Leont'ev's second point is that the Timerëvo settlement does not differ from many other rural settlements in the Jaroslavl'-Vladimir area. It is merely better preserved and better studied. The cultural layer, which is not very thick, probably covers an area of 5–6 ha. This seems to be a large area, but there are many settlements of this size from the same period in the area, and all of them cannot have been towns. The buildings and the artefact material, which includes single objects of foreign character and slight traces of crafts (smithing, casting, antler-working), also conform to what is typical of other investigated settlements. There are more "foreign" objects known from Timerëvo, but this is due to the fact that we know the graves from this site and not from the other settlements. Objects which archaeologists can determine as foreign are usually ornaments and similar artefacts, and they are more commonly found in graves than in settlements. The other two Jaroslavl' cemeteries and the Vladimir mounds indicate the same cultural variety as the Timerëvo graves.

Leont'ev also criticises Dubov's ideas that Timerëvo and a couple of other sites were used by the Russian princes and their retainers for the control of the Volga trade route in the 9th and early 10th centuries. Princely activities of state importance, Leont'ev (1989, p. 83) maintains, did not take place in the area until the early 11th century, when Jaroslav the Wise founded the town of Jaroslavl. Timerëvo was one of several settlements of equal importance in the Jaroslavl'-Vladimir area and was probably a local centre. Partly contradicting

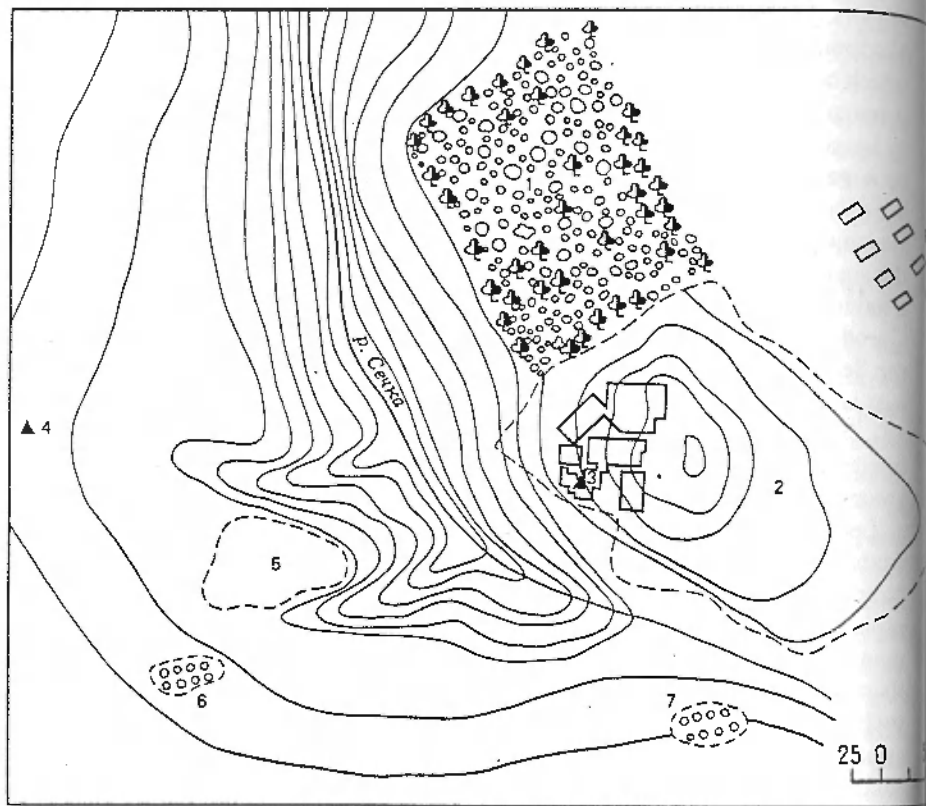


Fig. 13. The Timerëvo complex. 1 – cemetery, late 9th–early 11th centuries. 2 – settlement with excavation trenches, Viking period and later. 3–4 – coin hoards, 9th century. 5 – settlement. 6–7 – smaller mound cemeteries, 11th–12th centuries. 8 – the modern village Bol’šoe Timerëvo. After Kirpičnikov et al. 1986.

himself – as I see it – he adds as a hypothesis for future scrutiny that Timerëvo may have been a “pogost” inhabited by princely retainers who collected tribute and income from trade (Leont’ev 1989, pp. 85 f.).

I presume that the pogost hypothesis is mainly based on the general idea in Russian archaeology that Scandinavian artefacts reflect a “retainers’ culture” associated with the Old Russian state. The presence of an “elite” or “warrior class” at Timerëvo is also confirmed by some rich burials, among them also chamber tombs similar to those from Hedeby, Birka and other Scandinavian sites and from Russian centres such as Gnëzdovo and Kiev (Nedošivina & Fechner 1985, pp. 111 f.; Fechner & Nedošivina 1987, pp. 88 f., figs. 1, 2, 5; Dubov & Sedych 1992). However, there is no need to see these people as the representatives of the Kiev prince (as I think Leont’ev means). The rich graves may belong to local chieftains or retainers of local chieftains.

To my mind Leont’ev’s other arguments are convincing. Naturally the foreign objects, which include two Islamic coin hoards from the 9th century, and the migrations and military and commercial activities that they reflect form part of the processes which in the 11th–12th centuries led to the appearance of a number of towns in north-eastern Rus’ – Jaroslavl’, Rostov, Pereslavl’, Jur’ev, Suzdal’, Vladimir and others. But only Sarskoe Gorodišče is of such a complex nature and has yielded material of such a kind as to make it a proto-urban centre similar to the others discussed in this article. The Scandinavian elements in the Jaroslavl’-Vladimir area are so strong that they must represent an immigration of Scandinavians. But the Scandinavians cannot be singled out in the extant archaeological material. They are integrated into the local rural communities and have given a strong Scandinavian colour to the local culture.

GNĚZDOVO

When we come to Gnëzdovo there can be no question about the interpretation of this site as a proto-urban settlement of the same general character as Birka, Staraja Ladoga and Rjurikovo Gorodišče. This place is situated on the upper Dnepr, c. 13 km west of the present city of Smolensk, which according to the Russian Primary Chronicle was captured by Oleg on his way to Kiev. Smolensk has yielded no traces of settlement earlier than the late 11th century (only single artefacts of earlier date; Avdusin 1991, p. 8), but at Gnëzdovo there is an impressive hill-fort with thick cultural layers surrounded by a settlement covering c. 16 ha and cemeteries with more than 3 000 mounds.

This complex has yielded the largest number of Scandinavian artefacts in all of Rus', and the finds come from the hill-fort and the open settlement as well as from the graves. There is also evidence of jewellery production in the Scandinavian style and technical tradition (Mühle 1989, p. 401, fig. 18:8; Eniosova 1993). The main period of the settlement is the 10th century, but it ought to have started at least as early as the late 9th century and lived on into the early 11th century (then continuing on a smaller scale through the centuries). As far as we know, the Scandinavian element is present from the very start of the settlement.

The geographical situation and the finds show that Gnězdovo was a major commercial and political centre controlling the route from the Dnepr to the Western Dvina and the Lovat'-Volchov. The role of the Scandinavians has been both over- and underestimated. The main excavator of the site, Daniil A. Avdusin, argued in his early years that the population of the site was Slavic with a minimal Scandinavian element in the retainer class (Avdusin 1949, pp. 11 ff.). Gradually, however, he changed his opinion and ended up maintaining that only the Scandinavian population element could be clearly discerned in the cemeteries, even if the pottery was Slavic and some inhumations could be compared to Slavic graves in the middle Dnepr region. Gnězdovo is therefore a monument "belonging to a culture alien to the upper Dnepr area" (Avdusin 1993, p. 107).

Avdusin has been much criticised for his extreme ethnic interpretations (see Arne 1952, p. 343; Avdusin 1969 with comments by other scholars), but I would like to stress that they underline one very important fact: as was the case in the Jaroslavl'-Vladimir area, the culture of Gnězdovo forms one unit although with elements of different origin, and every effort to interpret certain graves as Scandinavian or Slavic (or Baltic) seems to be as misleading as interpreting the whole complex as Scandinavian or Slavic. It therefore represents a population with a mixed origin but united into one community or ethnos.

There is no need to give a detailed description of the Gnězdovo complex and the scholarly discussions about it here (see Smolensk i Gnězdovo, 1991, and for descriptions in western languages Avdusin 1977 and Mühle 1989 with numerous references). I would just like to discuss two details in the topography of the site. The first concerns Gnězdovo's location in the system of communications. This is often described as if the site controlled the portages between the Dnepr and the Western Dvina. This is not exactly the case. The portages are not mentioned in the written sources, but according to

Evgenij A. Šmidt, the main expert on the archaeology of the region around Gnězdovo, topographical conditions, archaeological remains and place-names referring to portages ("portage" = Russian *volok*) indicate three places west of Gnězdovo where boats could be taken from the Dnepr up a small tributary and along a portage to a river flowing into the Western Dvina. The two places which lead to the shortest portages (between Katynka and Kasplja and between Berezina-Rutaveč' and Kasplja, c. 6-8 km long in periods of high water) are closest to Gnězdovo but still at a considerable distance - c. 10 and 27 km respectively as the bird flies. The third place is c. 30 km west of Gnězdovo (Šmidt 1993). The little brook Svinec (Svinka), which flows through the Gnězdovo settlement, can only have been used as a water source by the inhabitants, and the small river Ol'ša (Ol'shanka) in the western part of the Gnězdovo complex was hardly navigable. In any case it only leads to swamps a few kilometers north of the Dnepr. We may therefore conclude that, even if Gnězdovo was the main commercial and strategic site in the Viking period in the area of the Dnepr-Dvina portages, there must have been also other factors than the portages which were decisive when the place was chosen. I presume that one such factor was the relation with the surrounding rural settlements.

The second point which I would like to discuss concerns the relation between settlement and cemetery. According to common Russian usage of the word "cemetery" (*mogil'nik*), the Gnězdovo complex is described as consisting of one large settlement (including the hill-fort) surrounded by one large cemetery divided into several "mound groups". This hides in some way the fact that the proto-urban settlement is surrounded by two very large cemeteries, one on each side of the Svinec, and that five other cemeteries are lying at a considerable distance from the proto-urban settlement (Fig. 14). The most distant excavated cemetery is c. 4 km west of the settlement, and another cemetery which has not yet been investigated lies c. 1 km further west. This means that the Gnězdovo complex covers an area as large as a central Swedish parish, and for a Swede it seems natural to presume that there were other settlements near the smaller cemeteries west of the main complex.

In discussions about this problem my Russian colleagues have argued that such settlements have not been found, and that the smaller cemeteries conform to the large cemeteries as far as the burial rites and grave-goods are concerned. I still would suggest that the smaller cemeteries indicate small satellite settlements. These cemeteries are lying in lower terrain than the central complex, and smaller settlements may easily have been covered by

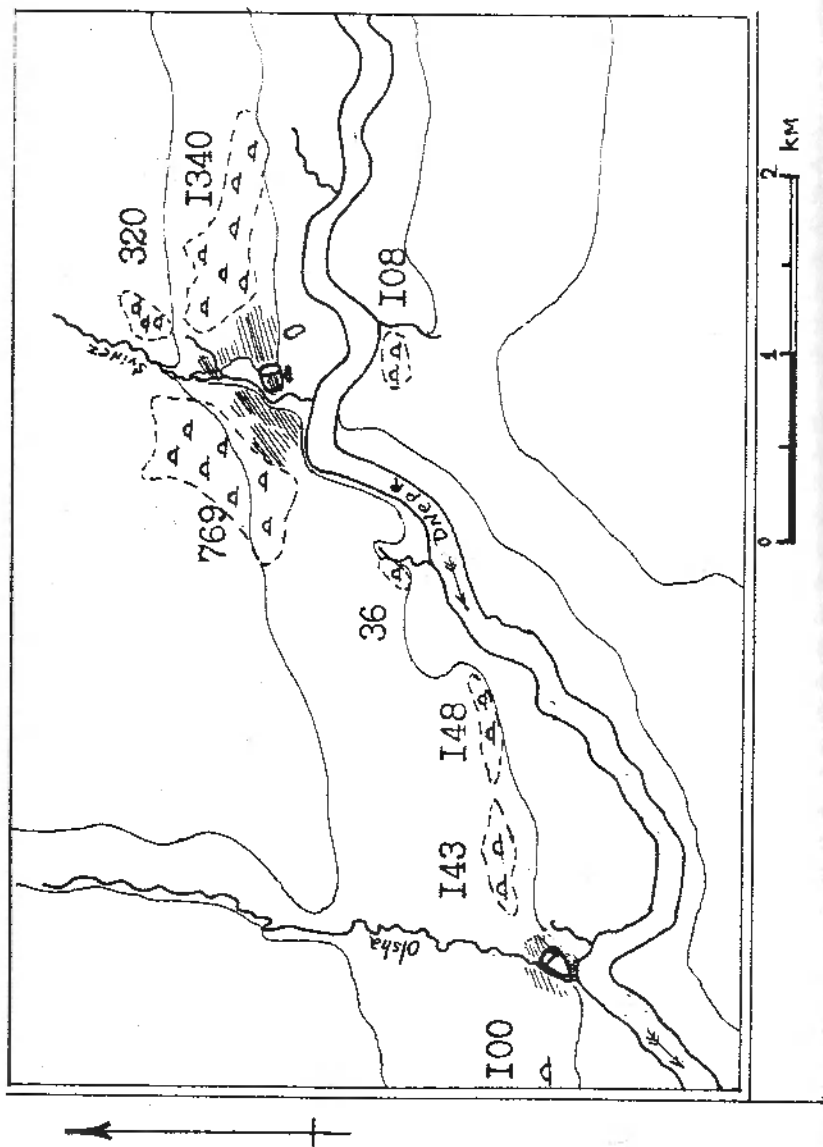


Fig. 14. The Gnězdovo complex. The central settlement with the hill-fort on a high spur above the brook Svinec is surrounded by large cemeteries. The hill-fort and the slight settlement remains at the mouth of the river Ol'ša are of uncertain age. The numbers at the different cemeteries indicate the documented number of mounds. The cemetery west of the river Ol'ša is in reality situated outside the map (see text). The thin contour lines closest to the Dnepr (running along the edges of the settlements and cemeteries on the northern side) mark the edges of the wet meadows. Drawing by T.A. Puškina.

alluvial deposits from the spring floods of the Dnepr. As I understand the situation, modern settlements have avoided these low-lying areas because of the floods, but the floods were probably less strong in earlier periods, before the expansion of agriculture and the large-scale drainages in the last centuries. It should also be remembered that water was necessary for the everyday life of early settlements. Water could be taken from rivers and brooks and from artificial wells where groundwater was close to the surface. The situation low down near the wet meadows along the Dnepr was probably also advantageous for farming settlements. Today these meadows are used for pasture and haymaking, and this must have been the case also in earlier centuries.

Therefore I suggest that the central proto-urban settlement was surrounded by a number of farming settlements belonging to the same society or ethnic group, that is, including people who had a Scandinavian origin. There was also another archaeologically attested smaller settlement with the same culture, although with stronger local (pre-Slavic?) traditions. This was Novosělki, which was situated c. 6 km north-east of Gnězdovo, on a small and swiftly flowing, unnavigable stream, c. 5 km above its outlet into the Dnepr (Šmidt 1963, pp. 114 ff.; cf. Avdusin 1993). The strong similarities between the cemeteries of these satellite settlements and the large proto-urban settlement in Gnězdovo do not imply that their economic basis and social structure were the same. As already stressed many times, there is good evidence of the existence of the so-called "retainers" culture" also in rural environments in Rus' and Scandinavia.

Single Scandinavian objects have been found farther away in the country between the Dnepr and the Dvina, for example, a Hedeby coin in an early 9th-century hoard and two equal-armed bronze brooches of 9th-century types from two cemeteries belonging to the local Long-barrow culture (Sedov 1974, pl. 23:18-19; Šmidt 1993, p. 124). The find-places of the coin and one of the brooches are situated on the two portage routes closest to Gnězdovo.

CONCLUSIONS

This article has dealt with a number of sites and regions which are of key importance not only for discussions of the Scandinavian activities in Rus', but also for discussions of the general economic and social development and the rise of the Old Russian kingdom. Thus, the Scandinavian activities cannot be studied separate from the general development.

To my mind, the archaeological material often gives a much more fragmentary picture of the past than believed, and it is often difficult to trace

individuals and groups of individuals, events and phenomena which are prominent in the written sources. We know from the Russian Primary Chronicle – here we are speaking about so late events that it should be trusted – that the grand princes Vladimir (978–1015) and Jaroslav (1019–1054) were surrounded by many Varangian retainers, and we know from the Swedish rune stones that many Swedes in the 11th century went as warriors to Rus' and Byzance. However, the Scandinavian finds in Rus' from this period are so scarce that they give us very small possibilities to interpret the Scandinavian activity in the country. I think this means that foreigners, who were raiding or temporarily engaged in retinues, formed such a small and special group that we only rarely can discern them in the archaeological material. I think that long-distance traders also formed such a small and archaeologically elusive group. Immigrants looking for a place where to settle must also be difficult to trace archaeologically. Not until they established themselves as permanent settlers are there strong possibilities to find their houses and their burial grounds.

I would suggest that the scattered Scandinavian artefacts with poorly dated context from before the second half of the 9th century, indicate that Scandinavians were active as warriors and traders in large parts of Eastern Europe in this period but usually as foreigners not belonging to established communities. Only in Staraja Ladoga did they form such a permanent element that we can see them archaeologically from around the 750's. A written source from Western Europe, the *Annales Bertiniani*, also gives us certain evidence that at least as early as 839 Scandinavians could travel as far as Constantinople: under that year it is recorded that some men, who called themselves Rus' but were identified as Svear, came with Byzantine messengers to the Frankish emperor and asked for permission to return home through his country.

In the second half of the 9th century settlements characterised by a blend of Eastern European and Scandinavian cultural elements were established from Lake Ladoga in the north to the Jaroslavl'-Vladimir area in the east and Gnëzdovo in the south. These settlements are best known from their cemeteries of mounds, most of which contain cremations (cremation layers) but sometimes instead inhumations (chamber graves and ordinary inhumations), and whose grave-goods are often richer than usual in Rus' and include many Scandinavian artefacts. The settlements probably appear earlier in the north than in the south. Further south, in the Ukraine, similar settlements appear only in the 10th century. Kiev and Šestovica near

Černigov are the best known sites, and the Scandinavian elements there are very much the same as farther north in Rus'. This hybrid Eastern European and Scandinavian culture lived on in Rus' up to the end of the 10th century – roughly speaking, up to the establishment of the Christian Russian kingdom.

It is this culture which is called the "retainers' culture" (*družinnaja kul'tura*) in Russian archaeological literature, and which is identified as representing the environment of the retainers of the Rurikid princes in Kiev from Oleg (882–912, according to the Russian Primary Chronicle) up to Vladimir (978–1015, who ordered the baptism of Rus' in 988). These retainers, it is said, were spread out to represent the central authority and collect tribute from the various tribes in the country. Places like Gnëzdovo, Rjurikovo Gorodišče, Sarskoe Gorodišče and Timerëvo are sometimes (see above) explained as centres where retainers had their permanent headquarters in the tribal areas and where trade and crafts developed, with the collected tribute and the needs of the retainers as their basis.

To my mind, this picture cannot be true. Firstly, it is too strongly dependent on the Russian Primary Chronicle, whose source-value for the 9th and 10th centuries must be doubted. Secondly, general considerations speak against the existence of such a large and omnipresent state apparatus in a marginal area of Europe. Thirdly, the most typical elements of this culture are of such character that it seems unreasonable to interpret them as evidence of retainers belonging to the Kiev prince. I am thinking here both of the Scandinavian female bronze jewellery and the weapons, which in Sweden and Norway are found in greater or lesser numbers (depending on the traditions of the time and the region) in the cemeteries of most settlements. They must have belonged not only to the elite of the society but also to the large class of *bönder*. For finding the elite and its environment – and even more so, for finding the king's and prince's men – we have to study more special qualities. Fourthly, the "retainers' culture" seems to appear later in Kiev than farther north, which also makes it doubtful whether this culture was created by the retinue of the Kiev prince.

If we turn back to the sites and regions presented above, the earliest site, Staraja Ladoga, has such a suitable geographical location and has yielded such finds that the background to its appearance in the 750's must have been long-distance trade – an exchange of goods which often probably also included various forms of tribute-taking. Scandinavian artefacts are present from the earliest phase of the settlement, and with this and the written Byzantine and Islamic sources in mind, I would suggest that this kind of trade was the

incentive for many journeys throughout the Viking period.

The other three discussed proto-urban centres – Rjurikovo Gorodišče, Sarskoe Gorodišče and Gnězdovo – appeared in the 9th century and seem to have functioned as regional centres from the start. One of them, Sarskoe Gorodišče, was a regional centre even long before the proto-urban development started. All three had a fortified centre. Rjurikovo Gorodišče and Gnezdovo had prominent positions in the Eastern European system of water routes, Sarskoe had not. All three disappeared around the year 1000, when new urban centres arose in their vicinity. This phenomenon – with parallels also in Scandinavia – must be related to the social and economic changes which occurred in connection with the establishment of the Christian kingdom. Staraja Ladoga, however, which owed its importance to a “gateway” position in the communication system, continued as a town up to early modern times. As in Staraja Ladoga, the Scandinavian cultural elements also appear in the other three centres from the start of the proto-urban development.

A similar culture with Scandinavian and Eastern European elements can also be traced in the areas around the four discussed proto-urban centres. It is least clear in the Il'men' area, where graves from the Viking period are almost totally lacking, and where the possibilities of finding definitely Scandinavian artefacts are therefore not very good. This mixed local and Scandinavian culture seems never to appear before the proto-urban centres, and in the south-eastern Ladoga region it is considerably later than in Staraja Ladoga. The settlements with this culture were definitely rural – although fur-trapping and fur trade was important in the north. They must have included a considerable number of Scandinavian immigrants, but we cannot give closer estimates of their number and distribution, because what we see is a mixed culture belonging to the whole society, with Scandinavian elements apparent in certain cultural sectors. The largest settlement area with this culture is that between Jaroslavl' and Vladimir.

The title of this article poses the question, what were the activities of the Scandinavians in Eastern Europe? The answer must be, all the above-mentioned activities. But what started the development, and what followed? I think that the chronology of the discussed sites gives the answer. Trade – or more precisely, trade connected with certain forms of tribute-taking – came first. It gave rise to warfare and tribute-taking with political objects and this, in turn, gave rise to colonisation. And in this process the Scandinavian immigrants became integrated into Eastern European communities which

gradually melted together into one country – Rus'.

In this article I have tried to look at the Russian historical and archaeological sources as well as the natural environment with the same source criticism and the same general conceptions as those commonly used in Scandinavian research today. Of course, there are no conceptions generally agreed upon by Scandinavian scholars. There is not even a common view as to how source criticism shall be pursued. The same is the case in Russia. Furthermore, naturally history has developed differently in different countries – what seem to be similar phenomena may have completely different explanations. But nevertheless, it is clear that modern political and language barriers have influenced research in a negative way and caused different sets of conceptions to develop in Scandinavia and the former Soviet Union. This means that many interpretations made by Russian scholars cannot be accepted by Scandinavian scholars, and vice versa. Often they cannot even be fully understood in the way they have been published.

Every scholar must try to work in agreement with a congruent set of conceptions, and when he is learning from other researchers he must consider how their conceptions agree with his own, and which of his own or his fellow-researcher's conceptions he must reject or change. I think that such a dialogue is necessary and will result in many changes of conceptions and interpretations both in Russia and in Sweden.

Concerning the historical problems discussed in this article, I think – both from a theoretical point of view and from what we know of the historical development – that archaeology should not concentrate too much on “specially desired” individuals and groups of individuals (e.g., the princes, retainers and tribes of the written sources). It is more essential to try to find the patterns special to each geographical area or common to several areas, and on this basis try to use general historical conceptions and data from the written sources – and also from place-name studies, physical anthropology and environmental studies – for comparisons of the development in different areas and for putting forward new interpretations.

The Scandinavian activities in Rus' in the Viking period may be over-emphasised in modern research and other important aspects may be overlooked. However, these activities form part of an intricate Scandinavian and Eastern European development, and they will always be of special interest for Scandinavian and especially Swedish researchers, because they are of great importance for our understanding of Swedish history.

NOTES

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¹ Chronicle-writing started in Russia in the 11th century, and the Russian Primary Chronicle is partly based on these earlier works. It exists in several versions, and there are also other early chronicles related to it. For an introduction and a discussion of Russian chronicle-writing, see Lind 1994 and Mel'nikova 1996, pp. 93 ff. In my citations of the chronicle from the translation by Cross' and Sherbowitz-Wetzor's translation of the Chronicle from 1953, I have given the ethnic names in their Old Russian form.

² I have discussed the question of ethnical interpretations in a paper at the Scandinavian conference in Moscow in 1993, which will be published in a coming number of *Drevnejšie gosudarstva Vostočnoj Evropy*. Cf. also I. Jansson 1994, pp. 18 ff. The basic works on ethnicity in western scholarship are those by the historian Wenskus 1961, pp. 14 ff., and the social anthropologist Barth 1969, pp. 13 ff.

³ The citation that follows is taken from Jenkins' translation from 1949, however with the place-names and ethnic names given in their Greek form and explained within parenthesis according to the commentary in the Russian edition from 1989 (see the list of literature). The word used for their ships, *monoxyla* ("single-trunks"), is also kept; Jenkins translates it as "single-strakers".

⁴ Thanks to the large-scale excavations in Novgorod dendrochronology was introduced as a dating method in Russian archaeology already in the 1960's. However, computer analysis of the collected data has recently shown that there are errors in the dates for the centuries before c. 1200. We can therefore expect that the on-going work will result in changes of the presently available dendro-dates ranging between single years and several decades (Ur'eva & Černych 1995, p. 112). Usually making the dates will probably turn younger (oral communication with A.F. Ur'eva and N.B. Černych).

⁵ Two recently found short ditches have been interpreted by the excavators as border ditches indicating plots of the same shape as in Scandinavia (Kirpičnikov & Nazarenko 1992, pp. 142 ff.). This remains a guess until the surrounding areas have been investigated.

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THE VIKING AGE MONUMENTS IN THE JAROSLAVL' REGION ON THE UPPER VOLGA

The three large and thoroughly studied archaeological complexes Bol'šoe Timerëvo, Petrovskoe and Michajlovskoe are situated near the city of Jaroslavl' (about 10–12 km from its outskirts) in the immediate vicinity of the greatest Russian river, Volga (Fig. 1). All three archaeological monuments are dated between the 9th and the early 11th century, that is, corresponding to the Viking Age of Northern Europe.

The Volga river in the 9th–11th centuries is known as one of the greatest trans-European routes, being part of a long road connecting Northern Europe with the East (the Khazar Empire, Volga Bulgaria, the Arabic Caliphate).

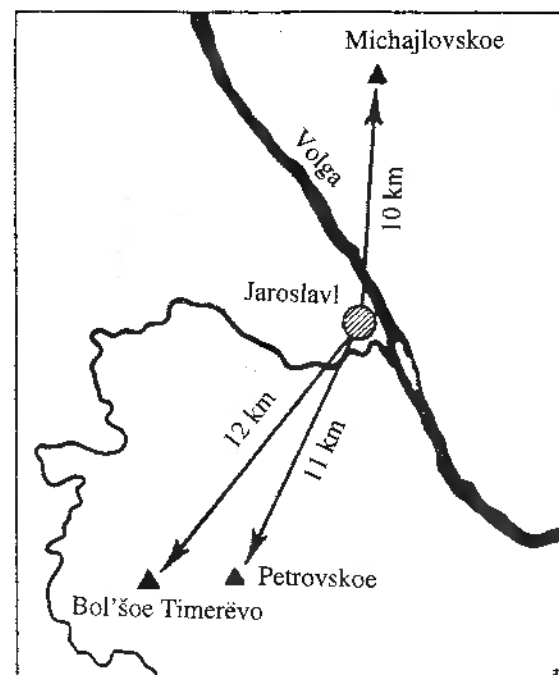


Fig. 1.