excavations, that there is settlement continuity in the present town centre already from the 5th century (Tušemlja cultural complex).79 We have already mentioned some early dirham finds from Vitebsk. The armlet was found in an early layer in the Lower Castle together with characteristic finds of cut beads. The excavator dates the layer to the 10th century, but both the beads and the armlet indicate an earlier date.80 The armlet has a division into two ornamental fields with a central tripartite ribbon and lateral bipartite ribbons (Fig. 17). The ornamentation features s-shaped, broad grooves. From the same excavation there is a comb with broad connecting plates and lateral double
linear grooves. The type is typical Scandinavian and belongs to the middle of the 9th century (Fig. 17). Russian archaeologists date these combs slightly later with reference to the stratigraphy at Staraja Ladoga. Scandinavian combination-dating supports the earlier dating preferred here.

A similar armlet was found in the northern periphery of the watershed zone at Erochino, at a place called Krasnyj Ručej, close to the sources of the Western Dvina. The find context is highly interesting. The armlet was found in a pit of uncertain function very close to a big barrow of the sopka type. It is worth noting that this find locality is at the southern periphery of sopka territory. The sopka barrows are mainly distributed in the Il'men' basin, and belong to a material culture complex different from the Long Barrow complex of the Smolensk type. The black humus of the pit at Krasnyj Ručej was filled with burnt stones, calcinated animal bones, a little hand-made pottery, a knife of Scandinavian type and three pieces of female dress accessories (Fig. 18). First there was a band shaped annulet with scythe-shaped terminals (a typical Long Barrow type well known from most 9th century barrow cemeteries in the region mentioned above). The second item was a fragmentary neck
ring with saddle-shaped terminal. Neck rings of this type are introduced in the 8th century and they continue into the 10th, but the majority probably belong to the 9th century. They are well known from both Long Barrow territory and the Latgallian lands. There are also Estonian and Finnish finds. The third object is an armlet of the same general type as the armlet from Vitebsk. In this case the transversal division into fields is very similar but there is also a central ribbon resulting in four long fields of ornamentation. These fields have a zigzag pattern with sharp angles.

A third find of a Scandinavian armlet comes from the locality of Usvjaty II at the open water linking Lakes Usvjat and Uzmen. The site was obviously the place of what is today an almost completely destroyed barrow cemetery. Excavations of a Stone Age site revealed two hearth-like constructions representing the last traces of the barrow cemetery. Among burnt bones and some shards of hand-made pottery a fragmentary armlet was found in construction 2. This armlet has a similar division into fields as the Erochino find (Fig. 19). In this case the fields are plain, without ornamentation. A close parallel was found in a grave at Birka. Rows of triangular stamps follow the edges of the transversal ribbons on the armlet from Usvjaty. All three Russian specimens mentioned here above are in fact fragmentary. The armlet from Vitebsk lacks one terminal, the armlet from Erochino has one terminal broken and the Usvjaty specimen lacks both terminals. This trait has parallels in Scandinavian cremations where terminals have often been broken off. This most probably has some connection with the burial rite, where objects (mostly weapons) are made useless.

From this period, there is also the find of an equal armed brooch from Klímenki, Rudnja raj, Smolensk oblast' (Fig. 19). A. Abramov acquired this brooch on his journey in the countryside around Smolensk in 1905. There is no guarantee that the brooch comes from this village, but the site is interesting with the mouth of the Rutaveč into the Kasplja close by. The brooch belongs to the later Ljönes series. The type is the Trotteslov type, which means that it belongs to the rather early equal armed brooches of the later series. There is a perforation and a bronze ring set in the hole. This is typical of East Scandinavian dress customs. The ring normally carries a metal chain or cord.

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Fig. 19. Armlet found at Usvjaty, Usvjaty rajon, Pskov oblast'.

0 cm 5 cm
with a pin or some small implement hanging. The brooch is fragmentary but the fracture seems to be rather new. It is likely that the brooch comes from a grave context but a settlement background cannot be excluded. The brooch is Scandinavian, as already stated, but the question of its final cultural context must remain open. With reference to the grave finds with Scandinavian female jewellery already described above, it is most likely that it also comes from a find milieu dominated by the Long Barrow cultural complex. Another equal armed fibula of the later Ljônes series was excavated in 1901 by S. Sergeev in barrow 85 at Gnezdovo. This is of course interesting in connection with possible early dating at Gnezdovo itself (c.f. below).

The last third of the 9th century

As stated above, the hoards from Dobrino, Sobolevo and Lučesa may indeed have been deposited only in the beginning of this last third of the 9th century. A huge dirham hoard found 40-50 km from Vitebsk may also fall in this group of hoards. The exact location of the find is not yet identified (but could probably be established) in the former Vitebsk gubernija. In the far north-east a very late dirham hoard was recovered in 1960 at Torope. A considerable part of the hoard was lost, but as many as 73 coins ended up in the museum. The terminus post quem is AD 867-868. The find spot on a low sandy hill on the west side of Lake Želikovë also yielded finds from a 10th century high status grave with Scandinavian artefacts. Taken together, the archaeological evidence from Torope suggests the existence of local Long Barrow groups in the area in contact with the Rus’ network already in the earliest part of the 9th century. A low-level centre with some continuity may have been established on Lake Želikovë in the middle of the century if not earlier.

The last third of the 9th century is close to the foundation of Gnezdovo as an entrepot, but it is necessary first to consider some artefact finds from the watershed zone. Of great interest is the find from Rokot of a lower guard of a sword of type E (according to the typology of Petersen 1919). The find comes from a hillfort on the Klec River, a tributary of Lake Kasplja, the source of the river with the same name (in its turn a tributary of the Dvina) (Fig. 20). The hillfort has cultural layers of considerable depth. It seems to be founded in the Dnepr-Dvina phase. Later material includes pottery of the Long Barrow culture and wheel thrown Old Russian pottery (11th century and later). Kirpičnikov has dated the Russian finds of type E swords to the 10th century. In Northern Europe all finds seem to belong to the later part of the 9th century or the very beginning of the 10th. It has so far not been possible to explain why there should be this discrepancy between the dating of finds in Russian and Scandinavian contexts. In my opinion, a general retardation of the East European finds in relation to the Scandinavian finds is unlikely. The appearance of some type E swords in a late context both in Scandinavia and in Eastern Europe does not change this.
Several finds from the big Long Barrow cemetery of Zaozer’e belong to the middle or second half of the 9th century. The site is located very favourably, where the Rutavče’ River flows into Lake Bol’saja Rutavče’. Nearby is an open settlement with finds from the Tušemļa cultural complex and the Long Barrow culture, including traces of houses, hearths and a furnace. E. Šmidt excavated 29 barrows of this cemetery, once perhaps counting a hundred barrows. A majority of the barrows belong to the Long Barrow culture (cremation graves) but there are also barrows with inhumations of the Old Russian culture dating to the 11th century. There is rich material from the cremation graves. From barrows no. 52, 63 and 64 there are very interesting finds of Scandinavian broad-plated antler combs (Fig. 21). Two of the combs have a decoration of two distal longitudinal grooves combined with double transversal grooves flanked on the sides by bullseyes. This is a very well known Scandinavian decoration pattern on combs. The third comb has a similar decoration but in addition to the distal grooves it has constellations of bullseyes. Other finds of early Scandinavian combs, like the one from Kupniki barrow no. 395 and Šugajlovo barrow no. 6, grave 196 suggest that they were brought into the watershed zone in considerable numbers during the whole 9th century. There is also an equal armed brooch of the later Ljones-series from barrow no. 68 at Zaozer’e. It is of the Salmeke type and dates to the very end of the 9th century or c. AD 900. Among the frequent finds from the Zaozer’e graves we must also stress numerous knives of Scandinavian type (Minasjan’s type 4).

The site of Novosedki should also be mentioned here. This barrow cemetery is situated only c. 5 km to the north-east of Gnezdovo on a small river, the Poležanka, which flows into the Dubrovenka, in its turn a tiny tributary
of the Dnepr. There is also a hillfort and a settlement, both contemporary with the cemetery (Fig. 22).\(^9\) This cemetery, which no doubt belongs to the local Long Barrow culture, features several certain 10th century graves. As seen above, there are few dates well into the 10th century from the Long Barrow culture. The cemetery has been excavated by E. Šmidt and by S. Širinskij (12 barrows). In barrow no. 5, in the cremation, a sword of Petersen's type B was found. According to the excavator (E. Šmidt) there were several artefacts of 9th century date in the grave. Later, E. Šmidt changed his dating to the 10th century.\(^{10}\) It is however possible that the beginning of this settlement and cemetery was some time in the late 9th century or around AD 900. It must also be considered that many barrows have been destroyed here (of 36 barrows in 1924 only 24 remained in 1954). Only a few hundred metres to the north-east a long barrow cemetery at the deserted village of Plechtino has been recorded (now completely destroyed). The complex at Novoselki has much in common with that at Rokot and perhaps also Gorodok at Šiškino on the Carevič (both mentioned above). These three localities and some other similar complexes will be treated below.

There are also some comb finds from Vitebsk most likely belonging to the late 9th century. They have been found in the course of excavation at Nižnij Zamok. These combs strongly indicate continuity of settlement at this local-
ity. The bead material supports this interpretation of the chronology of the settlement at Vitebsk.\textsuperscript{101}

The interesting lacuna of dirham hoards in the forest zone of Eastern Europe from the beginning of the 870s to well into the 890s has already been stressed. Dirhams, many of which by now were Samanid coins, begin to flow in ever increasing numbers at the very end of the 10th century.

And what of a “pre-Gnezdovo” phase at Gnezdovo itself? E. Šmidt is of the opinion that there is an older settlement at Gnezdovo, at least from the beginning of the 9th century.\textsuperscript{102} The incomplete standard of publication of the excavations of the settlement, started in 1967, and the hillfort at Gnezdovo, does not allow a detailed discussion of the possibilities of non-permanent activities before the permanent trading settlement and extensive barrow cemeteries were established. Among the restricted information available there are some data which in fact suggest activities already in the first half or the middle of the 9th century. Most important is the summary publication by Puškina of the coin finds from Gnezdovo.\textsuperscript{303} From her presentation it becomes clear that there is a striking discrepancy between the composition of the coin material found in the settlement and at the hillfort (174 coins), in the graves (98 coins) and in the four hoards (515 coins) respectively. It is not so that the coins in the graves feature somewhat earlier coins than the hoard material (with a number of exceptions). In the find material from the settlement and the hillfort there is a distinct group composed of a single Choresmi coin and more numerous Sasanian drachms, Tabaristani halfdrachms and Omayyad and early Abbasid

Fig. 22. Artefacts from the cemetery at Zaozer’e, Rudnya rajon, Smolensk oblast.
dirhams (including some North African issues). This group of early coins is not represented in the hoard material and with just a few exceptions, as mentioned, it is also lacking among the grave coins. These drachms, halfdrachms and early dirhams are typical of a coin pool circulating in Eastern Europe in the first half or even the first third of the 9th century AD.\textsuperscript{104}

There are also non-monetary artefacts indicating activities in the 9th century. There are some combs with broad connecting plates and double grooves following the edges from the settlement,\textsuperscript{105} which belong to the 9th century. Two Khazar finger rings from the settlement could also be dated so early, and a Sasanian seal stone is even earlier.\textsuperscript{106} A Scandinavian equal armed brooch could be dated to the middle of the 9th century.\textsuperscript{107} A similar or possibly slightly later date applies to a terminal of a Scandinavian armlet found close to the river terrace overlooking the Dnepr.\textsuperscript{108} It is interesting that, as we have seen, arm rings (often fragments) and equal armed brooches are quite often found on native sites and in native graves in the region in the 9th century. Recently, \textsc{Puškina} published an intriguing find of a silver pendant consisting of three 9th century heart-shaped belt mounts attached to a cut Tabaristan halfrachms.\textsuperscript{109} Neither the coin nor the belt mounts are much later than the middle of the 9th century. \textsc{Vešnjakova} and \textsc{Bulkin}, on the basis of the settlement excavation 1967-1968, have argued that 9th century settlement remains are concentrated on both banks of the Svinka flowing through the settlement area.\textsuperscript{110} Last but not least \textsc{Smidt} has argued that there is evidence of Long Barrow settlement at Gnezdovo dating back to the 9th century.

Taken together it is reasonable to interpret Gnezdovo, before the extensive barrow cemeteries and the permanent settlement, as a place where long distance traders from the territory in the north dominated by the Rus’ made a stop to trade for necessities with the local people. They also had to decide which way to follow further on.

\textbf{Conclusion}

What do these data really reveal about the developments in this central region on the watershed between the Baltic and the Pontic in the early medieval period? Are the various sources, like numismatic finds and other artefact finds, really compatible? In my opinion we have to look upon the relationship of these different sources with caution. First the artefact finds. When the find context can be ascertained, these North European imports are closely connected with the Long Barrow culture of the Smolensk type. This has been interpreted above as the material culture remains of a population with a long and strong continuity in the area. The Scandinavian finds do not in themselves prove the permanent presence of Scandinavians there. Not in one single case has it been possible to demonstrate Scandinavian ethnicity. However, when looking at details in the contexts, like the way the brooches from Toropec and Gorodok were carried, how the brooch from Klimenki was adapted, or how
the armlets were treated when deposited, it is most likely that Scandinavians were in close contact and were able to bring information about their views on these matters to the people at the watershed. That means that it is very likely that carriers of Scandinavian cultural traditions were present there, living there for shorter or longer periods with the Long Barrow groups, or passing by on long-distance expeditions. Why were these strangers (individuals or small collectives) there? Why did they set out for the watershed zone and why did they cross into the lands beyond? Is it reasonable to think that the majority of the long-distance traders came from the north, from the Il’men’ basin? Elsewhere I have argued that a political and economical organisation under the name of Rus’ already began to appear in the first half of the 9th century or even around 800. The main purpose of this organisation was to tap the resources of fur-bearing animals and collect other products from the woods in the forest zone of Eastern Europe. Already in the first half of the 9th century this early ‘Inner Rus’” (to use the phrase of Constantine Porphyrogenitus) had expanded into the Caspian basin, and why not into the Pontian? The economic system was not only based on the collecting of fur taxes but included a certain reciprocity (though no equality). Trade goods arrived in considerable quantities in the ordinary settlements. A strong argument for the extension of this political and economic system into the lands of the Long Barrow culture is the simultaneous occurrence of Scandinavian artefacts in the watershed zone and numerous finds of artefacts of the Long Barrow culture found at Staraja Ladoga. Until the middle of the 9th century Staraja Ladoga, in my opinion, was the centre of the Rus’”. Only in the middle of the century was Ladoga succeeded by Gorodišče near later Novgorod.

The system of exploitation was dendritic in character with lower tier centres. This pattern is characteristic of tribute economies and similar colonial economies. Partly against a different background, the structure of the system in the Baltic drainage of north-western Russia has been discussed by V. Koneckij and E. Nosov and by J. Callmer. Where were the centres for this system of political and economic dominance in the watershed zone? The observations from Vitebsk on the Western Dvina suggest continuity and the position of the site is very favourable with regard to communication. As already discussed above, a centre on the Dnepr would be important both for contacts with the local population and for further communication towards the south-east and the south. Gnezdovo is an obvious candidate with numerous stray finds of early artefacts found during the excavation of the settlement. In the 9th century these two sites certainly comprised a settlement of the Long Barrow population, storage facilities and open spaces for tents and trading. It is likely that the last mentioned parts of the settlements would not leave many traces behind except for lost or discarded artefacts, hearths and perhaps, but not necessarily, occasional pits. The hillfort-settlement-cemetery complexes of Rokot, Novoselki and perhaps Gorodok on the Carevič, Usvjaty and Staroe Sjalo to the west of Vitebsk (just outside the map) could also have
Fig. 23. The complex at Novoselki, Smolensk rajon, Smolensk oblast’ and its spatial relationship to the Gnezdovo settlement.
played a role in this system, but on a lower level. The same has been argued for Turopec. They may have been the seats of local big men who controlled routes. The interaction between the Rus’ from the north and the local population was intensive at these sites. The exchange of products was considerable including iron tools with steel edges (probably not only knives), fine antler combs, bronze jewellery, beads of glass and cornelian, and possibly weapons, cloth and beer. The local population was certainly influenced by this situation of intense interaction as we may glimpse from the grave finds. However, the special character of the Long Barrow culture did not vanish. As already stated, the Long Barrow culture can be followed well into the 10th century, only to fade out in the middle of that century. The sopka burial rite so closely connected with the heartland of the Inner Rus’ was, with only a couple of exceptions, never adopted in the watershed zone. Later, possibly at the very end of the 9th century, some sopki were built on the Dvina and on its tributary Kasplja, indicating an intrusion from the north. The site of Gorodok na Lovati is situated in the border zone between sopka and Long Barrow territories. Its main period is the 10th and 11th centuries, but some finds could indicate activities already in the 9th century. There is another find of an equal armed brooch very similar to that from Klimentki from the site.

The relationship between the Long Barrow people and the Rus’ should not be understood as an altogether happy story. The south-east movement of Long Barrow groups in a late part of the 9th century and later could perhaps be understood as the result of conflicts and an ambition to evade them. Parts of the watershed zone were intensively involved, but other parts remained more or less outside the sphere of influence of the Rus’. Total control was unlikely.

The hoards tell a related but by no means identical story. A rather well developed trade system had been established towards the end of the 8th century, linking the forest-zone of Eastern Europe to the Khazar and Muslim South-east. It is likely that the Rus’ traders played an important role in this system quite early. There is however good reason not to exclude the participation of actors in several local cultures in Eastern Europe. The best argument, in my opinion, are the numerous silver neck rings of Balt types appearing in this part of the forest zone and its surroundings. The hoard with two neck rings and a trapezoidal pendant of Balt type from Ivachniki close to Poltava certainly shows the direction of the contacts. Only players in this game can have achieved the wealth invested, amongst other things, in the neck rings of silver. The hoard from Ivachniki also comprised more than a hundred beads of glass of types often found in the watershed zone. The further route is marked by several finds from the watershed zone from that great gateway into Khazaria at Verchnij Saltiv on the upper Severskij Donec (Fig. 24).

The watershed zone was probably very active and it is presumed that it was not completely controlled by the Rus’. In the long-distance trade economy of the 9th century, the watershed zone functioned as a bridge not perhaps so
often due south but more to the south-east towards the Khazar lands. The rise of Bulgar on the Volga as the big hub in the trade aiming at the Caliphate came only in the beginning of the 10th century. The Byzantine market was not altogether uninteresting (notwithstanding the conflict of AD 860) but much less interesting than the Muslim Middle South-east. There are in fact some important early proofs of Byzantine contacts in the Il'men' basin recently discussed by Musin (2010).

All this has, as mentioned, a relationship to the question of the Slav colonisation of the middle and northern part of the forest zone of Eastern Europe. I have already argued for a strong ethnic continuity in the watershed zone from the Late Bronze Age up to and including the Long Barrow culture. If it is assumed that the Long Barrow culture was not carried by people with a Slav ethnicity (as numerous scholars concede, cf. above), it must be admitted that the Slav colonisation was a process starting in the 9th century and most active, even explosive, in the 10th century. In the early phase of the Rus' dominion in north-western Russia the economy based on the collection of tributes of forest products, most prominently high quality furs, was dependant on the dominance over and collaboration of local populations in the forest zone with expert knowledge of how to procure these products. Only in the second phase, when the Rus' dominion was expanding significantly down to the border of the steppe, did the control of agricultural resources become more and more interesting for the leading groups among the Rus'. Not only did control over agricultural districts become important in the south, but potential agricultural lands were increasingly cleared and settled in the forest zone. Here, the Slav populations of the south soon became dominant. The general
tendency is the same whether looking at the development in the watershed zone or in the Opol’e of Suzdal’ or in the Novgorod heartlands. As already said, the process was extremely rapid, even explosive, and in three or four generations the political, economical, demographic and cultural milieu was completely changed. In the formation of the later Rus’ the entrepots, of which Gnezdovo was one of the most significant, were of immense importance for the establishment of Slav communities in the Forest zone, a major medieval accomplishment in Eastern Europe. It is a challenging task to analyse this process in the watershed zone with its interplay of politics, sociology, economy and demography and not to forget culture.

**Epilogue**

After the conclusion of the text in 2010 another two important and highly relevant works have reached me.

The first work is an article by V.S. Nefedov K predystorii puti “iz varjag v greki” (ok. 750-850 gg.), Ladoga i Severnaja Evrazija ot Bajkala do La-Manša. Sjajajušćie puti i organizujušćice centri. Šestije četnije pamjati Anny Mačinskoj Staraja Ladoga, 21-23 decembra 2001 g. Sbornik statej. Sankt-Peterburg 2002 (pp. 101-105). Nefedov brings forth some very important supplementary information on imports from the Saltovo-Majak culture to the Long-Barrow culture of the Smolensk type.

The second work is the monograph by I.I. Eremeev and O.F. Dzhuba Očerki istoričeskoj geografii lesnoj časti puti iz varjag v Greki. Arheologičeskie issledovanija meždu Zapadnoj Dvinoj i ozerom Il’men’. Sankt-Peterburg 2010. This impressive work mainly deals with the excavations of the fortified settlement at Gorodok on the Majata on the eastern side of Lake Il’men’. Here some early indications of cultural connections with the south were recently brought to light. This early new material (6th-7th centuries) however changes little in the total picture of the cultural development between the upper Dnepr and the Western Dvina in the period 8th-9th centuries. Some of the additional information is more or less identical with Eremeev 2008.

**Notes**

1 Mikljaev 1992, Sindbæk 2003, who both stress the importance of winter travel.
3 Eremeev 2005.
7 Alekseev 2006, 6-8.
8 E.g. Furašev 2003; Olejnikov 2007.
9 Olejnikov 2007.
12 D'jakovskaja kultura 1974.
13 Mel'nikovskaja 1967.
14 Krasnov, Michal'čenko & Patrik 1997; c.f. also Šmidt 1982-3.
16 Mugglevič 1965, 54-59.
17 Urtans 1977.
18 Šmidt 2003; Sedov 1999.
23 Lopatin 2005, 476.
25 Buga 1924 already; Trubačev & Toporov 1962.
26 Sedov 1974; Enukov 1990.
29 Statistics according to Krasnov et al. 1997.
30 Enukov 1990.
32 Šmidt 1970.
33 Zarinja 1960.
34 Gavriluchin 1997.
35 Enukov 1990, 84-90.
37 Enukov 1990, 58, 60-61 or Skol'nikova 1978, 58,60-61.
40 Enukov 1990, 73 or Skol'nikova 1978, 73.
41 Barth 1969.
42 Artamonov 1990; Ljapuškin 1968.
43 Belocerkovskaja 1975; Bulkin, Dubov & Lebedev 1978.
44 Korzuchina 1964.
45 Callmer 1999, 206.
49 Markov 1910, 24.
50 Markov 1910, 25.
51 Noonan 1981, 89.
52 Noonan 1981, 93.
53 Markov 1910, 50-51.
54 Fasmer 1929, 289-290.
55 Markov 1910, 52.
56 Fasmer 1931.
57 Kropotkin 1971, 80.
58 Ereemeev 1997a.
60 Černjagin 1941, 110-111; Krasnov et al. 1997, 221.
61 Type 4 according to the typology of Minasjan 1980, 72-73.
64 Kovalevskaya 2000, 43-45.
65 Andrae 1975.
67 Cf. Petersen 1928, 78-84.
69 Malmer 1966, 204-209.
70 Rjabcević 1965, 132-160.
71 Stenberger 1947, 32.
72 Markov 1910, 3.
75 Markov 1910, 2.
76 Sementovskij 1890, 76-77.
79 Štychov 1978, 37.
80 Buben'ko 2004, 80.
81 Buben'ko 2004, 106.
82 Cf. Davidan 1999.
85 Eremeev 1997a.
86 Spicyn 1906, 209.
88 Cf. Capelle 1968.
89 Spicyn 1905, 17, 27.
93 Cf. Petersen 1919, 75-80.
94 Šmidt 2008.
95 Šmidt 2005A, 30.
96 Enukov 1990, 73.
98 Šmidt 2005a; Širinskij 1970.
100 Šmidt 2005b, 159-162.
101 Buben'ko 2004, 12-26, 89-90, 106.
103 Puškina 1999, 405-417.
104 Janin 1956, 86-100.
110 Vešnjakova & Bulkin 1999, 49.
111 Callmer 2000.
113 Johnson 1970.
117 Makarov 2008.

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