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### North-Western Russia before its Settling by Slavs (8<sup>th</sup> Century BC – 8<sup>th</sup> Century AD)

This paper is a brief review of the archaeological evidence dated from the Early Metal period to the early Middle Ages in north-western Russia, found particularly in the areas around the Volkhov River and Lake Il'men'.

During the Early Metal period, according to our studies, the region under consideration was occupied by the Volkhov archaeological culture, which probably belonged to a population that spoke Proto-Finnic or early Proto-Finnic (Finnic-Lappish) dialects. The appearance of these peoples in the northern Baltic region has been traced to the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC (Toivonen 1950; Haidú 1985; Xelimskij 2004). Next, I will discuss archaeological finds of the early Iron Age in light of the evidence provided by the written sources on the population of the forest zone during that period. The next phase in the development of the region was the Migration period which is represented by stray finds. By the end of that period, the culture of Pskov long barrows had established itself on a part of that territory. Solving the problem of the ethnic roots of the bearers of that culture is extremely important for our understanding of the cultural processes that were taking place in north-western Russia during the early Middle Ages and the beginning of Slavic colonisation of this territory. This paper will also explore and briefly outline some of the basic problems concerning the origin of the Slavs and their appearance in north-western Russia. The upper chronological limit of the present studies is determined by three factors: the appearance of undoubtedly Slavic elements of material culture, the first loanwords from early Slavic in the Finnic languages (dated by linguists to the 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> centuries AD) and the beginning of relations between Slavs and Scandinavians who took part in the formation of a stratified society in this territory.

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## 1. The Volkhov Culture

The origin of the Volkhov culture was preceded by the breakthrough of Lake Ladoga to the Gulf of Finland and formation of the Neva River. That event has been found to occur at the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> – the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC (Saarnisto & Grönlund 1996; Malaxovskij et al. 1993). During the period about 850–750 BC a rapid increase in humidity and temperature took place, particularly in north-western Europe, corresponding to a transition from the Subboreal to the Subatlantic period. This marked the beginning of an epoch of an intense activity of human communities of Eurasia in various spheres of life. It is to that period that the Volkhov culture in the North-West of Russia belonged. The Volkhov culture has been traced to the 8<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC by radiocarbon testing and by a range of artefacts. This culture is mainly presented in the Il'men'-Volkhov region – at the sites of Gorčakovščina, Ljubša, Lopino, Juškovo, the fortress of Kamennaja (Stone Fortress) in Staraja Ladoga, Pobedišče, Porogi II, the Priladožskie sites (Inostrancev's sites), Mar'ino, Prost', etc. (Gurina 1961; Juškova 2004). The most informative site is Škurina Gorka in the lower reaches of the Volkhov River (Timofeev 2000; Juškova 2003). Similar archaeological materials are known from Karelian Isthmus, the eastern Ladoga area, as well as in the upper reaches of the Velikaja and Msta rivers. However, no burial sites have been found there. The economy of that period was based on cattle breeding, hunting and fishing. The materials used then are represented by pottery decorated with variable stamp impressions on their entire surface and tools made from flint, slate, quartz and bone, as well as a few bronze objects. Yet the pottery with the textile impressions is not typical of that given ceramic complex, whereas the predominance of textile pottery is reported from sites of an earlier period (Izsady, Pod Sopkoj).

The materials used in the Volkhov culture have been revealed at practically all the major settlements of the Volkhov region, which means that this area was intensively settled in the 8<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.

## 2. Archaeological finds of the early Iron Age (pre-Roman and Roman periods)

Very few sites and only with poor and fairly inexpressive archaeological materials represent the Early Iron Age in this area. Finds concerning this period have no precise dates, nor do they form any obvious separate unity. Tentatively, these finds are dated to the turn of the eras or to the first centuries AD. The first Early

Iron Age pottery has been described by Ploxov on the basis of materials of the settlement-site of Xolopyj Gorodok (Nosov & Ploxov 1989). This complex was dated from the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC to the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD. Similar pottery has been discovered at some sites within the Il'men'-Volkhov basin, viz. Mar'ino (Volkhov Most), Porogi II, Prost', Pod-sop'e, Gorodok-on-the Lovat', Kobyl'ja Golova, Georgy, Vasil'evskoe, Goroškovo, Mšaga, as well as Bor and Belaja on the Luga River. However, no direct continuity of the ceramic tradition from the Volkhov culture to the pottery of the Early Iron Age have as yet been revealed.

The artefacts dated to the Early Iron Age are fairly rare. Especially noteworthy are several items of the southern provenance. At the settlement-site of Georgy in the Il'men' Lakeland, a bronze crossbow-shaped fibula was found. Similar examples exist among the materials of the Černjaxov culture which have been determined to be from the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD or, more commonly, from 330–380 AD according to E.L. Goroxovskij's chronological scheme (Nosov 2002). During the excavation carried out by A.N. Kirpičnikov in 2003, a pyramidal terminal part of a twisted brass *grivna* (neck-ring) was uncovered at the Zemljanoe Gorodišče (or Earthen Town) in Staraja Ladoga (Kirpičnikov 2004: fig. 14, no. 611). This find has a direct parallel in the Moščino hoard of the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> centuries known for its ornaments with enamels. Among the materials from Staraja Ladoga, there is also an iron razor with a loop-shaped tang (Staraja Ladoga 2003 Catalogue: 98–99, no. 279) paralleled by razors widespread in central Europe during the late La Tène and Roman periods.<sup>1</sup>

The evidence from the sites of Gorodok-on-the Lovat', Bor, and Kobyl'ja Golova are considered as being the closest parallels to finds of the Dnieper-Dvina culture or even as belonging to one of its variants (at the later stage of the development of this culture) (Korotkevič 2001).

A number of burial sites found in the area possibly belong to the Tarand culture, viz. Velikino and Valgovicy in the lower course of the Luga River, and possibly Solonicko in the western Il'men' area, as well as Vybuty in the lower reaches of the Velikaja River (Kulešov 2005). Most of the materials of the Tarand culture have been reported from Estonia and dated to between the last century BC and the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD.

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to V.S. Kulešov who informed me about these finds of the Roman period from Staraja Ladoga.

### 3. The earliest evidence of written sources

The second half of the described epoch (1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD) is the earliest period attested in written documents. In the final part of Tacitus' "Germania", it is stated: "...As to the tribes of the Peucini, Veneti, and Fenni I am in doubt whether I should class them with the Germans or the Sarmatae. ... The Veneti have borrowed largely from the Sarmatian character; in their plundering expeditions they roam over the whole extent of forest and mountain between the Peucini and Fenni. The Fenni are strangely beast-like and squalidly poor; neither arms nor homes have they; their food is herbs, their clothing skins, their bed the earth. They trust wholly to their arrows, which, for want of iron, are pointed with bone..." (Tacitus, *Germania*, 46; translated by Alfred J. Church and William J. Brodribb). Studies of the system of written sources of the 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as the evidence of linguistics, have shown that Tacitus' Venetians were Proto-Slavs and eastern Balts (Mačinskij & Tixanova 1976). The name of the Fenni is derived from the Gothic verb: *finþan* 'to go, or to find something when walking' (Much 1967) and thus means something like 'wandering finders or gatherers'. Usually, the Fenni are regarded as being the ancestors of the Saami or Lapps and they are placed within the zone of domination of the Finnic toponymy. What is of concern is possibly a territory on the southern coast of Lake Ladoga. Nevertheless, no reliable archaeological evidence on the Fenni has however as yet been found.

Almost five centuries after Tacitus' "Germania" had been written, the Gothic historian Jordanes (about 550–551 AD) shows a remarkably more detailed knowledge about the peoples of the forest zone of Eastern Europe; some of his records referred directly to the north-eastern part of the mentioned territory, i.e. the south-eastern Ladoga region.

Jordanes writes about innumerable peoples from which Suehans (Svioni) were supplied with precious furs which they transferred further on to the Roman Empire. Jordanes' list of "northern" peoples was recently re-examined in detail by Mačinskij and Kulešov (2004). These authors conclude that the enumeration of peoples (at least the first of them – *Golthescytha*) was comprised originally in the tale of Hermanaric's conquests, and hence it reflects the realities contemporary to the latter's rule (the third quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD). The first section of the list of peoples after the *Golthescytha* appears as follows: "Thiudos Inaunxis Vasinabroncas Merens Mordens Inniscaris". A hypothetical translation is '[people] of the Thiudos in [the land of] Aunxis[, people of the] Vas in [the land of] Abroncas[, people of the] Merens [and] Mordens in [the land of]

Miscaris'. Concerning the first of the toponyms, there is an accepted opinion of the relation between Finnish-Baltic place-names of Olonec and Aunus (or the Olonec region) with *aunxis* of Jordanes. As to the phrase *Thiudos* (corresponding to the Gothic *þiudōs* or 'peoples') in Aunxis (i.e. *Aunus* or Olonec), the authors of the mentioned article proposed to translate it as the "peoples between Ladoga and Onega lakes". Thus they suggest that this passage reflects the practice of deriving ethnonyms from designations of unfamiliar peoples by Goths (Mačinskij & Kulešov 2004: 50–51). Finally, Mačinskij and Kulešov concluded that from the detailed comparison of different sources they have succeeded in reconstructing the route which lead from Sweden via the Ladoga and Volga areas to the Kama region in the Urals. This route was determined to be from at least as early as the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD (Ptolemy's map), intensively functioning in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> – first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, and undoubtedly it retained its significance later.

It is remarkable that for *thiudos* ('peoples' in Gothic) no archaeological support has been as yet revealed between the Ladoga and Onega lakes. In fact, the entire south-eastern Ladoga area remains at present a 'zone of archaeological voids' for the period beginning in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC (sites of the Ust'-Rybežna 2 type) to the late 8<sup>th</sup> century (the sites near v. Gorodišče on the Sjas' River) and late 9<sup>th</sup> century (the Ladoga Kurgan culture).

#### **4. Archaeological finds dated from the Migration Period (370–510 AD)**

The next territory in terms of chronology in north-western Russia is the horizon of European and Baltic imports dated from the Migration Period (ca. the mid-1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD). This group of antiquities includes a funerary assemblage from Določskij Pogost and two stray finds.

The cremation from Določskij Pogost contained weapons of the western Baltic type including a socket rhomboid spearhead and a shield umbo of the Liebenau type with a "pearled" design at its periphery, as well as three-piece bits with ring-shaped cheek-pieces in the Sösdal style. For this assemblage, a date between the last quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> and the first quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century has been obtained (Kargopol'cev & Ščukin 2002). Furthermore, a single-blade battle knife with a bronze hilt found near Luga has direct parallels among materials from cemeteries in north-western Spain of the late 4<sup>th</sup> – early 5<sup>th</sup> century (Ščukin 2005: 217–218, 412–419). In the Volosovo region of the Leningrad oblast', an iron axe with silver inlaid star in the Sösdal style on the butt was found. This find was traced to the third quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century (Kargopol'cev & Ščukin 2002).

The finds described above are thought to be a mark of the movements of the militarized populations from west and south-west to north and north-east. The stimulus for those movements may have been to establish their domination in the fur trade. As is well documented, furs became to be much in demand in the Roman Empire from the turn of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries (Šuvalov 2004).

## 5. The culture of the Pskov long barrows

Many scholars focus their studies on the sites of the culture of Pskov long barrows. This section introduces a discussion of the results of studies on the genesis of this culture, the origins of the barrow rite and the ethnic identity of the people who practised it.

The culture of Pskov long barrows arose in north-western Russia in the end of the Migration period and this culture is represented by kurgan burial grounds, a few settlement-sites and even by a number of town-sites in the western areas. This culture has been dated to the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. The oldest date is supported by the chronology of some finds, in particular B-shaped fluted clasps, speckled blue beads, and a lunula pendant in the Sösdal style (Bažan & Kargopol'cev 1989). The earliest sites (5<sup>th</sup> century) have been revealed both in the westernmost part of the area and near its eastern limits (on the Mologa River), suggesting an explosion-like distribution of the kurgan tradition throughout the entire area of the culture (Lopatin & Furas'ev 1995: 139). This area has odd outlines: it practically does not reach the Il'men' or Volkhov, as if "by-passing" the territory of the future distribution of the culture of sopkas (as has been already noted before: Mačinskij 1986: 11; Nosov 2002). Instead, this area reaches the Mologa and Čagoda rivers in the north-east (Nosov 1981; Bašen'kin 1997). At the settlement-site of Prost' (in the Il'men' region where burial sites of the culture of long barrows are absent) fragments of handmade pottery with inexpressive profiles were found, as were biconical spindle-whorls with a broad perforation and blue speckled beads which have parallels among complexes of the culture of the Pskov long barrows (Nosov & Ploxov 2002).

Few if any antiquities of the preceding period have been discovered in most of the area. The mapping of various groups of grave goods from long barrows has shown that the objects of female garments differed in the western and eastern parts of the territory, whereas men's attire was the same (Lyč 2000: 76). Lyč came to the conclusion that the character of that culture was influenced by the invasions of some militarized parties (the unity of the male subculture) who subdued the local population (the absence of the unity of the female subculture).

Lopatin and Furas'ev defined sites of the Zaozer'e type as the basic ones for the culture of Pskov long barrows. These sites of the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> centuries are located in the regions of the middle Dvina and upper Velikaja rivers. They include settlements, burial grounds and an elongated kurgan near the village of Povališino; their origins were related to some group of the Kiev culture (Lopatin & Furas'ev 1995). According to Koneckij, it is more correct to search for the origins not only among sites of the Zaozer'e type, but at all of the various sites of the upper Dnieper region of the first to fifth centuries AD (Koneckij 1997: 216).

Two major presuppositions are made concerning the origins of the burial rites: first, the development of the kurgan rite by stages from the flat-grave one (R.S. Minasjan, M. Aun, E.N. Nosov, V.V. Sedov), and second, that the idea of building barrows was borrowed from the culture of the east Lithuanian barrows (M.M. Kazanskij, S.Ju. Kargopol'cev, V.Ja. Koneckij) or from the steppe regions (E.R. Mixajlova). Burial sites of previous periods in the zone of distribution of the culture of Pskov long barrows are known only on the Mologa River. These are the “houses of the dead” revealed by A.N. Bašen'kin. Possibly, the wooden structures found inside the mounds were the continuation of those funerary rites (Koneckij 1997: 223).

There are two different approaches to the problem of the ethnic origins of the people of Pskov long barrows. In the territory of that culture, both Finnic and Baltic (or Proto-Balto-Slavic) toponymy is widespread. Sedov (1979) and Nosov (1982; 1988) consider the people to be Slavs, who during their migration northwards, had amalgamated the local Finno-Ugric population. The authors believe those Slavs to be the Kriviči of the chronicles. Koneckij demonstrates that the economy of the culture of long barrows, similarly to the Early Iron Age, was based on the slash-and-burn agriculture and animal husbandry. Hence basically the Finno-Ugric population must have been living here since the Early Iron Age. The arrival of the Slavs, in Koneckij's opinion, was reflected in the appearance of tilled agriculture in the culture of sopkas from the last quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD (Koneckij 1998: 237–238). Minasjan (1982: 29) and Nosov (1988: 36–38) explain the economic difference mentioned above, proposing that the bearers of the culture of Pskov long barrows were the first wave of Slavs with a less advanced economy, whereas the people of the culture of sopkas belonged to the second wave of the Slavic occupation.

Mačinskij supposes that the dominating ethnos (or language) of the people who left the Pskov long barrows varied over time. At the early stage (5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> century), the ancestors of the culture, particularly their southern groups, possibly spoke Proto-Balto-Slavic or Baltic dialects. However, during the final stage (9<sup>th</sup>

– 10<sup>th</sup> centuries), under the influence of the substratum population, the bearers of the culture may have become Finnic-speaking (Mačinskij 1990: 116–119). On the basis his consideration of the written sources of the 12<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> centuries and toponymy, Mačinskij has shown that the basin of the Velikaja River, the Eastern regions of Lake Čudskoe, the upper reaches of the Luga River and south-east of Lake Il'men' were all occupied by the people of Nereva ~ Norova ~ Mereva. The mapping of ethnonyms and toponyms with similar roots has demonstrated that these encompass Lake Il'men' in a broad semicircle from the west, east and south. That semicircle overlaps with the area of the culture of Pskov long barrows with which therefore the above-mentioned ethnos has been correlated (Mačinskij 1986: 8–9).

Another find from the same period – probably a small stone mould for casting a three-horned unenamelled lunula pendant was discovered in Staraja Ladoga. This lunula pendant was a late survivor of the three-horned enamelled lunula pendants of the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. Since the latest enamelled pendants from the settlement-site of Demidovka on the upper Dnieper is traced, on the basis of its type, to the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century (Furas'ev 2001), the mould from Staraja Ladoga must have most likely been made in the 6<sup>th</sup> century (it was uncovered in a reused state in horizon E2 which was dated to 840–860 AD at the Zemljanoe Gorodišče). Among the collections of the Staraja Ladoga Museum, O.A. Ščeglova recently found a stone spindle-whorl fashioned from a small mould with a negative of a pendant. This mould was typologically close to that described above, although it is certainly younger (Staraja Ladoga 2003: Katalog 62, 63, no. 53). The discovery of the two moulds in the “post-enamel tradition” suggests that Ladoga of the 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> century had a population living there which either had come from the south or had southern relations. Moreover, the finds dated to the Roman period from Staraja Ladoga give us grounds to suppose that the site was possibly occupied between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, which agrees well with the evidence provided by Jordanes on the trade (?) route running in the 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> centuries via some “peoples” in the Ladoga region.

## **6. The problem of the origins of Slavs**

Considering the significance of the problem of determining the ethnic identity of Pskov long barrows and the problem of the first coming and settling of the Slavs in north-western Russia, I must discuss here briefly the problem of the origins of Slavs in general.



Indirect information on the original Slavic homeland is provided by linguistics: in Common Slavic, there are words for designation of lakes, bogs, mixed forests while names for mountains, steppes or seas are absent. The absence of Common Slavic designations for the beech, European larch, noble fir or yew-tree, points to the eastern part of the zone of mixed forests – east of the boundary of the growth of beech (which runs approximately along the Kaliningrad-Kišinev axis). The unique affinity of the Baltic and Slavic languages within the Indo-European context suggests that they derive from a single proto-language (with its dialects). This proto-language had segregated itself from some dialect of the Proto-Indo-European. The Baltic languages have retained relatively more archaic features than the Slavic languages. Earlier, these two branches of Indo-European were closer linguistically (as well as perhaps ethnically closer). The differences and, ultimately, the differentiation, may have emerged later when the Iranian languages from the south influenced the Proto-Slavic (Mažiulis 1981; Ivanov & Toporov 1961).

Within the limits of the area from the middle Dnieper to the Western Bug, a “zone of archaeological uncertainty” existed, sometimes expanding and sometimes shrinking during the period from the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century BC until the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century AD. This is the same zone which Tixanova and Mačinskij (1976) state was the basic territory of the formation of the major Slavic group known from ancient sources as *Sclavi*, *Sclavini* etc. Within the same territory, Jordanes, relating to the events of the fourth century, recorded the people of *Veneti* also known at his time as *Sclavini* and *Anti*. It is in the “zone of archaeological uncertainty”, corresponding to those *Veneti/Sclavini*, in which the earliest sites of the Korčak culture dated from the fourth century are found. The culture of the *Sclavini* has been reliably ascertained as Slavic and it also represents the core of the formation of future Slavic groups (Mačinskij & Tixanova 1976; Gavrituxin 2000).

Later, in the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> – mid-8<sup>th</sup> centuries, the established Slavic tribes occupied the vast territories, in places just sparsely settled after the Migration period – to the Elbe and south Baltic region in the west, the Danube in the south and further – as far as the Aegean and Adriatic seas. Still later, from the last third of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, a backward reflux began of some of the Slavs. This movement north-eastwards from the Danube-Carpathian area, directed towards the ancient “homeland” as far as Il’men’, has been recorded both by chronicles and archaeological evidence (I.I. Ljapuškin, D.A. Mačinskij, M.B. Ščukin, O.A. Ščeglova, V.V. Sedov).

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## 7. Arrival of Slavs to North-Western Russia

**Complexes of the third quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD.** On the basis of materials from the Udomlja Lakeland, a new type of site has been distinguished which supposedly characterizes the Slavic settlement in the third quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium. At the site of Jur'evskaja Gorka (6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> century), scholars found a Slavic semi-underground dwelling and pottery similar to that of the early Korčak type, which reflects the presence of the Sclavini. This settlement has also had materials of the Baltic circle of antiquities and the culture of Pskov long barrows with the pottery being of the “Slavic” type (Islanova 1994). The few similar sites present the first coming of small groups of Slavs from the south to north-western Russia in the 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**Complexes and single artefacts of the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> – first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> centuries.** Complexes of the 8<sup>th</sup> century are not numerous (regardless of their ethnical belonging) in the north-western territory. In the vicinity of Staraja Ladoga, these complexes include the oldest layers of the Zemljanoe Gorodišče, the earliest burial of the sopka no. 140 according to Brandenburg, the earliest burial of the sopka-like mound on the Plakun, possibly the round openwork plate from the fortress of Kamennaja in Staraja Ladoga, a fibula from the Uročišče of Sopki, and a kurgan near v. Karasenka on south-east Ladoga. In the Il'men' region, we may point to the settlement of Prost'.

Detailed studies conducted by Ščeglova of lead-tin ornaments and moulds for casting them from the earliest layers of Zemljanoe Gorodišče in Staraja Ladoga have demonstrated that similar finds from the Ladoga and Čudskoe regions are related to the jewellery tradition adopted by the early Slavs on the Lower Danube, Dniester and Bug in the 6<sup>th</sup> century (Ščeglova 2002: 135–137). It has been established that all of the types of ornaments from the north-west were widespread in the third quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD. These ornaments appeared throughout the southern and central regions of Eastern Europe at early Slavic sites of the Korčak and Penkovskaja cultures. Moreover, the region of the upper Volga and Mologa rivers are of primary importance for the problem of the character and penetration routes of that tradition northwards. There, similar moulds have been found at the sites of the Jur'evskaja Gorka type traced to the third quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD. In addition, lead-tin ornaments became widespread in Pskov long barrows, and furthermore, from the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, these ornaments and moulds for casting them are found in Čudskoe (sites of the Rõuge culture) and Ladoga lakes regions (Staraja Ladoga, Goro-

dišče-on-the Sjas') (Ščeglova 2002: 147). For that period, these items cannot be considered as being ethnos-identifying artefacts.

Other complexes of the 8<sup>th</sup> century are the sources of numerous finds of the Kama belt-fittings, suggesting the existence of contacts between the Kama region and Fennoscandia during the period from at least the 7<sup>th</sup> to the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The examples are the finds of parts of the Nevolino belt from sopka no. 140 according to Brandenburg, as well as the fibula of the 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> century from the Uročišče of Sopki, which is paralleled by similar belts in Finland. The single complex in the Il'men' Lakeland (at the settlement of Prost') which is reliably dated to the 8<sup>th</sup> century, also contained a Kama type belt set of the Nevolinskaja or Lomovatovskaja culture and a Kama-type bead. This is a "site synchronous to the period of Slavic settlement" (Nosov & Ploxov 2002: 172–176).

The women's ornaments that characterize the culture of Smolensk long barrows reflect the influence of southern examples from the Carpathian-Danubian region and the middle Dnieper. These ornaments are well represented at the Zemljanoe Gorodišče of the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> – first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century in Staraja Ladoga. The relation of the culture of Smolensk long barrows and these women's ornaments to the Kriviči of the chronicles (who were most probably a mixed Baltic and Slavic, later Slavicized, groups) is indisputable (Mačinskij & Mačinskaja 1988). The existence of these women's ornaments as well as small houses built above ground with an oven in a corner, suggests the initial thriving of the Slavic component of the inhabitants of Staraja Ladoga. Dated to the 8<sup>th</sup> – first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century is also probably a flat-grave burial ground with cremations near the Monastery of St. Nicholas in Staraja Ladoga. Some artefacts from that cemetery have parallels to some finds from both Smolensk and Pskov long barrows (Orlov 1941). In the 8<sup>th</sup> century, occupation of the Ljubša and Sjas' settlement-sites began, as well probably as of the Xolopyj Gorodok where Avar bits of the 8<sup>th</sup> century have been found. The earliest certain evidence on the residence of natives of Scandinavia in the Volkhov region also was determined to be from the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

**The material culture related to Slavonic population in the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century until the beginning of 10<sup>th</sup> century** is presented by Rjurikovo Gorodišče, including the pagan sanctuary at Peryn and settlements in north-western Lake Il'men' area. The new arising community in the North-West of Russia was formed as a multi-ethnic society with Slavic, Finnic, Baltic and Scandinavians components. The later Slavonic component became increasingly dominating in this territory.

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