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Migrants or Natives? The Research History of Long Barrows in Russia and Estonia in the 5th – 10th Centuries

Introduction

The central problem in the history of North-Western Russia is how the area became Slavic. About 700–1917 AD Finno-Ugric and Baltic heathen autochthons turned into Orthodox Russians speaking mostly Slavic languages. Scholars have up to now been unable to clarify when, how, and why that process took place.

Archaeologists have addressed the question of how Slavicization began in South-Western Russia by researching primarily graves, which represent the most widespread type of sites from the second half of the first millennium AD. During the period from the 5th to the 10th century, the people of North-Western Russia, South-Eastern Estonia, Eastern Latvia, and North-Eastern Belarus buried part of their dead in sand barrows, which were mostly erected in groups on the banks of river valleys, usually in sandy pine forests. Such barrows are termed *long barrows*. The shape of the barrows and burial customs vary considerably in their distribution area. Both round and long barrows were erected. The barrows are usually dozens of metres in length, in exceptional cases even a hundred metres, and their height is most often between 0.5–1 m. In such cemeteries, the cremation remains of the dead were buried either in a pit dug in the ground beneath the later barrow, placed on the ground below the barrow, or in the already existing sand barrow. Sometimes the cremated remains were buried in a clay vessel. There are numerous burials in one barrow – these are collective burial places.

Russian researchers have defined the so-called Long Barrow Culture on the basis of such sites. The area of Long Barrow Culture is divided on the basis of the size of barrows and their construction or burial customs either into two (Tarakanova 1954: 98), three (Šmidt 1968: 224–225; Schmiedehelm & Laul 1970: 162) or six (Sedov 1974: 12) subdivisions. Currently Russian archaeologists regard the northern part of this culture as the Pskov-Novgorod group or the culture of Pskov long barrows and the southern part as the Smolensk-Polotsk group or the culture of Smolensk long barrows. The area of Pskov long barrows, which covers the southern and eastern parts of the catchment areas of lakes Peipus and Pskov and South-Eastern Estonia and has the largest number of rampart-like barrows and the oldest finds, has been considered to be the core area of Long Barrow Culture (Sedov 1974: 12–13; 1982: 49; Lebedev 2001: 34).

According to the common Russian point of view, Slavicization of North-Western Russia was caused by a mass colonization of Slavic tribes. In Russia, during recent decades Slavicization has been characterized in terms of the hypothesis of 'two waves' of Slavic colonization. The 'first wave' was associated with the *Kriviches*, a tribe mentioned in the Chronicles of Old Russia, and the 'culture of long barrows'. The 'second wave' was connected with the *Slovenes* and the 'culture of sopkas'. This standpoint has repeatedly met with strong criticism. It has been shown that the emergence of long barrows cannot be associated with migration, and that long barrows were not erected by a specific ethnic group. Opponents of the theory of the early migration of the Slavs usually defend their position by claiming that the long barrows of the Pskov group were burial places of the local Baltic Finns, and not the Slavs, and that the Baltic tribes erected the barrows of the Smolensk group. Thus the Slavicization of North-Western Russia could not begin until the 9th–10th centuries. Long barrows as a new burial type did not spread in North-Western Russia with migrants, but they were adopted as a result of internal factors in the development of the local society. The Estonian archaeologist Priit Ligi noted serious errors in the theory of the early colonization of the Slavs already 15 years ago (Ligi 1993; 1994). The publications of Ligi were met with strong disapproval from the side of advocates of the early Slavic migration theory, but no adequate criticism has been presented.

The present paper makes no attempt to answer the question which ethnic group represented the people who erected long barrows, or which language they spoke. The author examines the research history of long barrows so far. The paper poses the question why most Russian researchers have associated those barrows with Slavs that were supposed to have arrived here by a massive migration in the third quarter of the second millennium. Which Russian historical myths and traditions of interpreting the archaeological material have influenced the formation of current standpoints? Is it plausible that Slavic colonists buried their dead into long barrows?

Long barrows represent the grave type that is widespread not only in Russian and Belorussian territory but also in South-Eastern and Eastern Estonia. For this reason, it is necessary to observe the research history of those sites also in Estonia. In both countries the cultural historical approach has been until recently the main theoretical framework of archaeological studies. The weakness of the cultural historical approach is manifested in the fact that the same data can be interpreted conversely depending on the interpreter's nationality. It also becomes clear that the research results of natural sciences, especially the findings of population genetics, do not support the whole idea of massive colonization of the Slavs no matter when it is supposed to have taken place.

Research history of long barrows until 1917

The earliest written record of long barrows dates from 1799 when some treasure hunters destroyed barrows in Arniko forest in Võnnu parish in South-Eastern Estonia (Schmiedehelm 1965: 17 and sources cited therein). In the 1840s Alexander Friedrich von Hueck and Johann Samuel Boubrig described and excavated some barrows in South-Eastern Estonia. Also, Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald, doctor and compiler of the Estonian national epic *Kalevipoeg*, excavated some barrows. Kreutzwald considered the barrows to represent burial places of the local population (see Tvauri 2006: 118 for research history). One of the largest barrow cemeteries in South-Eastern Estonia, situated at Loosi, was excavated in 1888 under the direction of Georg Loeschcke, Professor of Classical Archaeology and Philology at the University of Tartu. He concluded that the barrows belonged to Estonian

tribes. Loeschcke assumed that the men who occupied outstanding positions in the society were buried in sand barrows while men of lower rank and women and children were buried in stone graves (Loeschcke 1889: 210–215).

In the Southern Pskov Land in Russia, the excavation of long barrows began also in the 1840s because of scientific interest. Vladimir Sizov was the first archaeologist to observe long barrows in Smolensk territories in 1892–1903. He considered them to belong to Slavs and dated them back to 7th–8th centuries. The end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century (until the beginning of the First World War) witnessed increased interest in Pskov Land, and large numbers of long barrows were excavated. Russian scholars at that time dated the long barrows to the 9th–10th centuries (see Sedov 1974: 5–10 for research history). Long barrows as a separate type of graves were first identified by the Russian archaeologist Aleksander Spitsyn (1903). In his short study he ascribed them to *Kriviches* because long barrows were located in the territory inhabited by *Kriviches* according to the chronicle. He believed *Kriviches* to be Eastern Slavs who, according to the Old Russian Chronicles, originated from the South. Spitsyn did not regard long barrows to be a grave type of one ethnic group – he believed that the long barrows of the Northern areas were 'Finnish' sites (Spitsyn 1914).

The long barrows of Pskov Land were intensively excavated at the beginning of the 20th century before the First World War. Their scientific research, however, remained mainly undone in Czarist Russia. Archaeology was not professionalized and archaeological research was carried out in museums and scientific societies. The First World War, followed by the Russian revolution and the civil wars, cancelled out any archaeological research in Russia for decades.

Research of long barrows in Russia since the 1920s

At the end of 1917 the power in Russia was seized by the Bolsheviks who started the re-organization of the state and science. In 1919 Vladimir Lenin signed an edict about the foundation of the Russian Academy of Material Culture in Petrograd. In 1924 the Institute of Archaeology and Art Studies was created in Moscow. They were the first scientific institutions where professional archaeology was practised. In 1922–1924 archaeological divisions were set up at the departments of social sciences in the Universities

of Moscow and Petrograd (Klejn 1993: 17–18; Koryakova 2001: 159). In the 1920s the development of archaeology and archaeological education was characterized by great diversity of methodological approaches and forms. Gleb Lebedev called the period of 1922–1927 'the golden age' of archaeological education in Russia (Lebedev 1992: 427). In the 1920s Slavic or Russian nationalism was not predominant in Soviet history and archaeology as yet. Even the Bolsheviks who staged the revolution were internationalists.

Starting with the mid-1920s the writing of history was adapted to Marxist historical materialism. The 'theory of the stages' became the new theoretical base of history and archaeology. It was worked out by Nikolai Marr and became predominant after 1929. According to this theory, the past was conceptualized in terms of a unilinear sequence of stages: primitive society, slave society, feudal society, etc. Marxist philosophy saw the basis for the development of society in the increase of the productive forces – mostly all kinds of forms of technology – which led to increased production, which, in turn, gave rise to tense social relations that finally changed the *social formation*. In the 1920s and the early 1930s Soviet Russian archaeology took no interest in ethnogenesis. On the contrary, it was not permitted to study ethnic groups beyond the archaeological material (Klejn 1993: 75). According Marr's theory, the genesis of new ethnic groups took place as a result of social development within society; thus, historical processes were not explained by migrations.

The end of the 1920s saw another extensive documentation and excavation of long barrows in the Soviet Union. At that time the long barrows of the Smolensk Land in particular were ascribed to the Lithuanians. This view was, for example, characteristic of Spitsyn in 1928 (Sedov 1960: 47) and the historian and archaeologist Jurij Got'e as evidenced by his overview published in 1930 (Got'e 1930: 192).

The atmosphere of freedom, which contributed to the political pluralism of the early 1920s, came to an end by the early 1930s. In the middle of the 1930 the Soviet leadership decided to reintroduce 'national historical writing'. The latter can be seen as a response to the ideas in Nazi Germany claiming the superiority of the Germanic race over the underdeveloped Slavs (Hillerdal 2006: 92). In the same manner as the Germanic race was promoted in Nazi Germany, the Slavs started to be seen as the leading subject of history in the

USSR. As a result of the Second World War history in the Soviet Union become more nationalistic. The defeats of the first war years showed the weakness of the Stalinist 'barracks socialism', and Stalin began to promote the patriotism of Soviet nations but predominantly Russian patriotism (Klejn 1993: 23). Victory in the Second World War and the following cold war strengthened the Russian nationalist sentiments. This motivated the Soviet archaeologists to pay more attention to ethnogenesis, especially to the origin of the Slavs. There was considerable interest in such topics as *ethnicity, migrations, influences, inheritance, assimilation*, etc. Strangely enough, the Russians adopted the standpoints of the German archaeologist Gustaf Kossinna according to which archaeological cultures represent specific ethnic groups. During the Stalinist period the Soviet researchers proceeded from the thesis that archaeological cultures represent real past ethnic groups (Prjaxin 1990: 30).

In 1938–1940 Nikolaj Černjagin excavated several barrow cemeteries in Pskov Land. He dated the barrows to the 6th–9th centuries and ascribed them to *Kriviches*. For him the main argument for ascribing the long barrows to *Kriviches* was the fact that they were situated in areas where the chronicles maintained that *Kriviches* had lived and that long barrows are similar to the semi-spherical mounds with cremation burials from the 9th–10th centuries. Černjagin completed the first distribution map, which unfortunately did not cover the Estonian and Latvian long barrows (Černjagin 1941).

Extensive research on the barrows of the Pskov group started in 1949 and has continued until today. The eastern barrows between Lake Pskov and the upper reaches of the Pljusa river and on the lower reaches of the Velikaja river were excavated predominantly by Susanna Tarakanova, but also Grigori Grozdilov and Inga Labutina carried out some research there.

The intermingling of the 'theory of the stages' and Russian national history resulted in the aspiration to show the origins of the Slavs in Russian territory as early as possible. It was undesirable to discuss Slavic colonization of these areas in this connection (Koneckij 1998: 228). Until the beginning of the 1950s it was generally maintained that already in the Pre-Roman and Roman Iron Age early Slavonic tribes inhabited the headwaters of the Dnieper and the Dvina rivers, from where they later moved northwards (Tret'jakov 1953).

The publications by Tarakanova present a good example of how this official position was applied to the interpretation of long barrows. For example, she

considered that the settlement stage of the Pskov Castle, which had been ascribed to the D'jakovo Culture of the Early Metal Age belonged to the Slavs. Accordingly, Pskov became the tribal centre of the *Kriviches* in the middle of the 1st millennium AD (Tarakanova 1950). Tarakanova suggested that the erection of long barrows and, thus, the appearance of Slavs in North-Western Russia could be dated to the 2nd–3rd centuries AD (Tarakanova 1954). Tarakanova reached this conclusion by taking the earliest possible date of the finds from the barrows as the basis of her study (Sedov 1960: 49; 1974: 8).

The 'theory of the stages' was discarded in 1950 when the dictator Josif Stalin himself called it invalid (Klejn 1993: 24). The period after Stalin's death in 1953 had a somewhat more liberal intellectual climate during the reign of Xruštšov when many Russian archaeologists lost their belief in autochthonous schemes of ethnogenesis. Ethnogenesis started to be explained by migrations, and archaeologists sought compliance with the leading ethnic groups of today, especially the Slavs (Klejn 1993: 25). The prominent archaeologists of this period (Mixail Artamonov, Piotr Tret'jakov, Ivan Ljapuškin, Valentin Sedov) shared the belief that archaeological cultures can be connected with past ethnic groups and that archaeological material reveals 'ethnical markers' that are associated with a particular ethnic group. However, their results varied with regard to specific questions (Klejn 1993: 43). Russian archaeologists started to interpret archaeological evidence in terms of migrations at a time when Western archaeologists had already given up migrationism.

The first serious problem for the immigration theory emerged when it became obvious that the oldest southernmost long barrows (the Smolensk group) were at least four hundred years younger than the early northern long barrows (the Pskov group). In the 1950s both archaeologists and linguists supposed that the area of the upper reaches of the Daugava (Western Dvina) and the Dnieper were habited by the Baltic and not Slavic tribes until the second half of the 1st millennium (Moora 1958; Stankevič 1960). The so-called 'Baltic barrier' called into question the possibility of the early migration of the Slavs into North-Western Russia. Therefore, the first *ad hoc* modification was introduced. According to Valentin Sedov (1960), the *Krivich* tribes had originated from eastern Poland, from where they first moved through the lands of the Baltic tribes to the Pskov region, and only then to the

south. Accordingly, the main justification for ascribing the long barrows to *Kriviches* was that long barrows supposedly had an 'evolutionary link' with the later 'definitely *krivichian*' semi-spherical mounds with cremation burials from the 9th–10th centuries (Sedov 1960: 48–49). The same justification was suggested by Černjagin in 1941. A confirmation of the migration is also evident in the changes apparent in the cultural layer of the stronghold at Pskov – the earlier 'Finnish' layer attributed to D'jakovo culture was replaced by a layer of a new settlement type in the middle of the 1st millennium. Apparently, one cannot explain it in any other way but by the migration of the Slavic *Kriviches*. The continuity that was revealed in pottery was rationalized as evidence of the peaceful co-existence of the local Finno-Ugrians and the migrated Slavic people (Sedov 1960: 53)! The concept of the origin of the Long Barrow Culture by Sedov initially contradicted the ruling idea (as represented by Boris Rybakov and P. Tret'jakov). However, Sedov's theory prevailed in time. The reason for this partly lies in the fact that for decades Sedov conducted excavations at the stronghold of Staryi Izborsk (Irboska) on the border of Estonia and Russia, which he in his numerous publications considered to be the tribal centre of the *Kriviches* during the 2nd half of the 1st millennium (Sedov 2002b).

Ivan Ljapuškin has argued that the long barrows are distributed in a much wider area than the chronicles ascribe to the *Kriviches*. He came to the conclusion that the settlements of the Slavic tribes mentioned in the chronicles cannot be regarded as the basis of grave types. According to him, two types of burial sites should be distinguished in Smolensk Land – long barrows belong to the Balts and round barrows to the Slavs (Ljapuškin 1966: 130–131; 1968: 20–22). He was the first Russian archaeologist after Spitsyn to call into doubt the ruling theory that long barrows belonged to the Slavs. Soon other researchers expressed similar opinions. Jevgenij Šmidt, who had excavated the long barrows in Smolensk since the 1950s, suggested the existence of a separate archaeological culture of long barrows (Šmidt 1968). Accordingly, the culture of long barrows of Smolensk developed in the 8th–10th century when the inhabitants of Eastern Latvia and Eastern Lithuania, located eastwards between the Dnieper and Western Dvina rivers spread to the territory of Tušemlja Culture. He thought that the Smolensk long barrows represented the burial places of the Baltic and Slavic mixed population who could have been the *Kriviches* mentioned in the chronicles. Šmidt believed

that long barrows could not be connected with only one archaeological culture in their whole distribution area (Šmidt 1983: 30–31). Mal'm and Fehner were the first to suggest that the barrows at the upper reaches of the Volga could have belonged to the local Finno-Ugrians (Mal'm & Fehner 1969).

By the 1970s it became obvious that no suitable candidates could be found for the earlier 'roots' of the long barrows in the assumed initial territory of the *Kriviches* (Ligi 1993: 34). According to next modification of Sedov's migration theory (Sedov 1974; 1982), the *Krivich* immigrants invented the new grave type (the long barrow) only after having reached in North-Western Russia. The fact that the main argument for discarding the 'Finnish' origin of the long barrows (lack of local 'roots') could no longer be used was never discussed (Ligi 1993: 34). Abundance of urn burials, the relative shortness of barrows in the cemetery, lack of overlong (over 60 m) barrows, the variety of grave goods, and the appearance of long barrows only by the turn of the 7th and 8th centuries made Sedov to conclude that the Smolensk territory represented the periphery of the Long Barrow Culture where *Kriviches* had migrated later from the Pskov area (Sedov 1974: 27; 1982: 49).

Gleb Lebedev, an archaeologist from Leningrad, turned a new page in the research of long barrows. He suggested that the people of the culture of long barrows were Baltic Finns linguistically. In his view, the Pskov *Kriviches* in the 6th–7th century could be an unexplained island of the Slavic world in the far north in the circle of Finno-Ugric and Baltic cultures. He believed that there was no continuance between the long barrows and later Slavic round barrows, as Sedov had claimed. He argued that the appearance of long barrows could be explained without the arrival of new people. He introduced the term 'pre-barrow culture' (*предкурганная культура*) and showed that the North-Western Russian territory had been inhabited already before the emergence of long barrows and sopkas (Lebedev 1977; 1982; Bulkin *et al.* 1978: 43). He departed even more from the ruling paradigm and considered the builders of the sopkas to be linguistically Baltic Finns (Gerd & Lebedev 1991). He reached this conclusion on the basis of the find material of the oldest sopkas, which corresponds to the material in long barrows (Lebedev 1994). Lebedev has admitted that his standpoints were marginal in Soviet archaeology (Lebedev 1994: 89). By the mid-1980s it became clear that the geographical distribution of the long barrows to the north-east proved to be

much broader than had been previously assumed (Nosov 1981), comprising the territory of the upper reaches of the rivers Sjas, Lid, Tšagoda, and Mologa (Bašenkin 1987: 12). This fact in itself eroded the plausibility of the immigration theory (Ligi 1993: 34). The belonging of long barrows to the Slavs was called into question by the research results of Dimitrij Mačinskij (1982; 1986; 1990). In the 1970s the meritorious Russian historian Mixail Artamonov concluded that long barrows and sopkas could not represent the sites of the Slavs (Artamonov 1990: 271–290).

In the 1980s Jevgenij Nosov, an archaeologist from Leningrad, published his version of the theory of the early arrival of the Slavs. Nosov linked long barrows directly with the spread of the Slavs to the catchment area of Lake Pskov and the Velikaja river as early as the 3rd quarter of the 1st millennium and argued that the counterarguments of Ljapuškin and Lebedev did not hold water. Nosov argued whether the early Slavs of North-Western Russia could have originated from the south, as similar pit cremations with somewhat similar pottery had been found there (the Tušemlja-Bančerovo culture, 5th–7th centuries AD) (Nosov 1982; 1988). Priit Ligi referred to the weakness of this theory – as these antiquities were spread over a comparatively limited area and represented the same age as the early long barrows, they could not be used to locate the 'homeland' (Ligi 1993: 34).

Pavel Doluxanov and Jevgeni Nosov carried out a survey to check the observations that long barrows and sopkas are usually found in different landscape settings. These studies showed that cemeteries with long barrows are normally concentrated on undulated fluvioglacial plains covered with sandy soil and pine forests. They concluded that the population with left long barrows practised predominantly a swidden-type cultivation, supported by hunting and fishing (Doluxanov & Nosov 1985; Doluxanov 1986).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union the questions concerning the Slavicization of North-Western Russia became more important than ever before in Russian history. After the Ukraine, which had been considered to be the original home of the Russian nation, gained independence, the role of western Slavs in the Slavicization of North-Western Russia has been emphasized more and more. Although the role of western Slavs in the development of the Russian nation had been discussed earlier (Valentin Janin, V. Sedov), it became part of the Russian official history treatment only in the 1990s. The role of the northern Old Russian centres (Staraja-Ladoga,

Novgorod, and Pskov) has been emphasized in the formation of the Russian statehood and nation, even at the expense of Kiev. In this connection the questions associated with the culture of long barrows have stayed highly on the agenda.

Since the 1990s Russian researchers have been divided in two groups. One group of researchers adheres to the view that the emergence of long barrows is connected with Slavic migration. Valentin Sedov, who kept publishing numerous papers until his death in 2004, represented this camp. However, he added little new to what he had already stated in the 1970 (e.g Sedov 1994; 1999; 2002a). Several younger archaeologists have engaged in looking for the Slavic roots of the Long Barrow Culture (Lopatin & Furas'ev 1995; Lopatin 2003). Boris Lyč has shown that female garments differed in the western and eastern parts of the distribution area of long barrows while male attire remained the same. He came to the conclusion that this culture had been influenced by the invasions of militant males who subdued the local population (absence of unity in the female subculture) (Lyč 2000).

Mostly younger archaeologists and researchers with the Leningrad / St Petersburg background support the idea that the sites of the Pskov group of the Long Barrow Culture can be ascribed to the Baltic Finns (Koneckij 1997; Kuzmin & Mixailova 1997). Gleb Lebedev published several papers on the topics under discussion before his death (Lebedev 2001). According to Vladimir Koneckij, the examples of long barrows should be put in a wider perspective among the various sites of the Upper Dnieper region of the 1st–5th centuries AD. Koneckij does not consider the Slavic attribution to the Long Barrow Culture to be justified (Konečkij 2007). Sergei Beleckij, an archaeologist from St Petersburg, has demonstrated that Pskov as well as the Izborsk stronghold had belonged to the Baltic Finns until the second half of the 9th century. Rather, one can see some similarities with the sites in South-Eastern Estonia, for example, the Rõuge hillfort and settlement site (Beleckij 1996; Beleckij *et al.* 1997). However, it once again contradicts the theory of the early migration of the Slavs. Jelena Mixailova during her excavations has observed that the custom to bury in long barrows is inconsistent with the previous theories (Mixailova 1993; 2006). As a rule, the archaeologists who ascribe long barrows to Baltic Finns are also convinced that the Slavicization of North-Western Russia took place because Slavic colonists arrived from the

southern Slavic areas in several waves. The people of the culture of long barrows are said to have died out, and they did not contribute anything to the development of the later nationality and culture of North-Western Russia (Koneckij 2003: 211).

Since the 1990s several ideas have been put forward that go beyond the framework of the present discourse. There are signs that younger archaeologists share a sceptical attitude to the belief that authentic answers to the Slavicization can be obtained with the methods of the cultural historical school. At the same time there are some researchers who call into doubt the need for the theoretical constructions concerning the Long Barrow Culture that have occupied the central position in the historiography of 'Slavonic-Russian archaeology' in North-Western Russia until now (Furas'ev 1992; Petrov & Ploxov 1993; Koneckij 1998). In the opinion of Sergei Kargapol'cev, the term 'Long Barrow Culture' and the related ethnic groups is doubtful. He uses the term Lindora-Polibino type sites for the long barrows in Estonia and Pskov Land, and he dates their appearance to the 3rd–4th century. He considers the ethno-cultural processes as a possible reason for the beginning of the construction of long barrows, which could have arisen through the activity of Gothic tribal unions. Kargapol'tsev does not associate the Lindora-Polibino type sites with any particular ethnic group but refutes Sedov's theory of the immigration of *Kriviches* from the south-west. There is no doubt that Slavic cultural phenomena appeared in the above-mentioned area only in the 8th–9th century (Kargapol'cev 1994). Pavel Doluxanov (1996) ascribes the long barrows to Slavs but considers their Slavicity to be a primarily linguistic phenomenon. As for Slavicization, he is in the opinion that modern Slavic languages may have resulted from an interaction of a new Slavic *lingua franca* with various pre-Slavic substrata, and that the greater part of Russian dialects resulted from the interaction of Slavic speech with various Finnish dialects (Doluxanov 1996: 170).

Research of long barrows in Estonia since the 1920s

As a result of the First World War, the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia (1917), and the War of Independence (1918–1920), Estonia became an independent state. Professional archaeology was already institutionalized in Estonia in 1920 when the Chair of Estonian and Nordic Archaeology was established at

the University of Tartu. The Finnish archaeologist Aarne Michaël Tallgren became the first Professor of Estonian and Nordic Archaeology in Estonia. Thanks to the activity of Tallgren, Estonian archaeology quickly reached the level of a professional and academic discipline. On Tallgren's initiative, students registered archaeological sites all over Estonia (Lang 2006: 21). Also, all long barrows known in Estonia by that time were documented. In the 1920s and the 1930s the Estonian archaeologists Harri Moora, Artur Vassar, and Osvald Saadre carried out small-scale excavations on the barrows in Eastern and South-Eastern Estonia.

In the 1920, the long barrows could not yet be distinguished from those inhumations that had been erected during the Late Iron Age. All the barrows were considered to date from the Late Iron Age (see Moora 1926: 105–106; 1928: 109). However, Moora assumed that long rampart-like barrows generally dated from the first half of the Late Iron Age (i.e. before the year 1000) and that in the case of the barrows cremation was an older burial custom than inhumation. In Moora's view, barrows in Estonia represent a foreign cultural influence that originated from the Slavs. On the basis of the finds Moora nevertheless attributed the barrows to Estonians and assumed that only the type of grave construction had been adopted from the Slavs (Moora 1932: 76). The distinction between long barrows and later barrows with inhumations was made in both Estonia and Russia only during the 1930s. The long barrows were dated to a period between the 6th and 9th centuries, and their appearance in South-Eastern Estonia was linked with the oldest Slavic influences on Estonian ethnic groups (EA I, 1935: 129).

In 1944 Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union. After the Second World War, the study of barrows became a more important issue. The reason for such a change was the demand of the Soviet authorities to study the relations between Estonian and eastern Slavic tribes during the prehistoric period. In a presentation given in Leningrad in 1949, Moora already stressed the need to investigate the relations between Estonian and eastern Slavic ethnic groups for the research of the Middle Iron Age (Moora 1949: 36). In 1951 Moora excavated three long barrows in Lindora in South-Eastern Estonia (Moora 1952: 123–124). The long barrows excavated then and those that had been investigated in Estonia earlier were found to be "total counterparts of Slavic barrows [...] in all their details" (Moora 1952: 123). In the same publication

Moora introduced into Estonian archaeological writing the official standpoint of Tarakanova about the origin of the long barrows of Estonia. It was formed at the beginning of the 1950s and remained an unquestioned postulate for the following decades: "Considering the truly Slavic character of these barrows, Tarakanova has raised a justified question whether it should be inferred from their existence that in the areas of South-Eastern Estonia there lived at the time of the construction of the barrows together with the Estonians also Slavic, more precisely, *Krivich* inhabitants, who had friendly relations with the Estonians, and were later assimilated by the latter" (Moora 1952: 124).

The official ideology of that period permitted only one description of the relations between the forefathers of the Estonians and the Russians. Relations with the Slavic neighbours exerted a "multifaceted fertile influence" on the prehistoric Estonian tribes, and these relations "accelerated economic growth, the development of social relations and culture" (Moora 1952: 17). The first volume of the new general analysis of Estonian history stated that the Slavic population had reached the southern Estonian areas as early as in the middle of the 1st millennium. In the areas where there exist both stone graves and barrows, it was stated that "Slavic and Estonian inhabitants lived amicably side by side". The Slavs were thought to have been assimilated by the Estonians by the 11th century (EA I, 1955: 65–66).

In an article published in 1956, Moora describes the spread of the Slavs to the forest zone of the eastern Baltic, its reasons, and the process in greater detail. "Improved ways and tools of grain cultivation and the higher level of development of the productive forces in general granted the Slavs some superiority over the locals in terms of economy, and, together with the more developed organization of the society, they were the reasons why they also gained superiority ethnically," he wrote (Moora 1956: 106). One can find the same conclusions in the papers by Vilma Trummal in the 1950s and the 1960s; she then studied the history of the relations between the Slavs and the Baltic Finns (e.g. Trummal 1955; 1960). The basis for such assessments was significantly influenced by the studies by Tret'jakov (1953), Tarakanova (1954), and Sedov (1954).

When commenting on the scientific literature about long barrows published in the 1960s, one should make a special reference to an article by Marta Schmiedehelm (1965). In the article she analysed the findings of excavations at Lindora in South-Eastern Estonia, where two long and three round barrows

had been excavated between 1959 and 1961. At the same time, she summarized the research results of long barrows in Estonia of that time and thoroughly observed the material published about the barrows of the Pskov and Smolensk territories. Although Schmiedehelm acquiesced to earlier claims that the appearance of long barrows in Estonia should be connected to the northward migration of the *Kriviches* (Schmiedehelm 1965: 46), she was the first Estonian researcher to draw attention to the fact, traceable from Sedov's studies, that the barrows of the Pskov group are older than those of the Polotsk and especially those of the Smolensk group. This circumstance makes the thesis that the long barrows are connected with Slavic immigrants unlikely.

The article by Schmiedehelm and Silvia Laul (Schmiedehelm & Laul 1970) was mostly based on excavation results from the cemeteries of Loosi and Kõnnu, which form an interesting complex of both long barrows and *tarand*-graves. For the first time in Estonia, the authors mentioned that these antiquities were earlier considered to be the burial places of the *Kriviches,* but the latest research, especially at the Polotsk and Smolensk groups of the long barrows, had revealed so many Baltic traces that many researchers considered these sites to be a grave type of the Balts or Slavicized Balts. The authors referred to the work of Jevgenij Šmidt and Ivan Ljapuškin (Schmiedehelm & Laul 1970: 163 and publications cited therein). Schmiedehelm and Laul also saw the influence of stone graves on the long barrows – in addition to the use of stones in the construction of barrows, the barrows had been constructed stage by stage similarly *tarand*-graves. For the first time during the Soviet period the authors left the ethnic origin of the barrows undecided; they emphasised that in order to solve this problem, thorough archaeological excavations and the full excavation of some groups of barrows would be required. At the beginning of the 1970s Laul studied the South-Eastern Estonian areas in the first half of the first millennium AD. As regards the question of the ethnic affiliation of the barrows, she went seven further and attributed the barrows of South-Eastern Estonia and the Pskov lands to the tribes of the eastern group of the Baltic Finns, namely to the *Chuds* (Laul 1971; 1973: 101). These articles met with criticism from Sedov (1974: 40), who actually based his counter-arguments on the same old data that Laul had already refuted in her article.

During the period from 1973 to 1985 Mare Aun studied the antiquities of South-Eastern Estonia from the second half of the first millennium AD in the framework of her candidate of sciences thesis (PhD). In 1980 an intermediary summary of that work was published (Aun 1980). By 1985 Aun had completely excavated 36 barrows from different cemeteries. The extensive material collected allowed the researcher to reach some conclusions concerning the Long Barrow Culture. In particular, the results from the studies at Rõsna enabled her to state more firmly than ever before that the people who had buried their dead in barrows in Estonia and Setumaa did not arrive from any other territory. The local population who had earlier buried their cremated dead in graves dug into the ground began to construct barrows in approximately the 6th or 7th centuries. It meant that cremated bones placed in hollows dug into the ground, or positioned on the ground in formations, were covered with an agglomeration of sand, and later burials were placed in already existing agglomerations (Aun 1992: 134–136). Aun saw a difference in the social status of the people buried in the barrows. Among other reasons, she saw the difference in the fact that some of the burials did have grave goods while others had not, and only some of the burials had been positioned in special burial areas or in the agglomerations (Aun 1992: 151).

The authors of the general treatment *Eesti esiajalugu* ‘Estonian prehistory’ stressed that the northern groupings of the eastern Slavs, i.e. the *Kriviches,* the *Slovens*, and the *Vyatiches*, were largely formed on a non-Slavic, mostly Baltic and Finnish basis (Jaanits *et al.* 1982: 251). They emphasized similarities in the construction and the burial customs in the barrows and the stone graves in the rest of Estonia. The book outspokenly supported the idea that the barrows in Estonia, which belonged to the culture of the long barrows, belong to the Finnish tribes, namely to one of the easternmost groups, which mostly lived in the vicinity of Pskov and to the east and south thereof (Jaanits *et al.* 1982: 303). More recently Jüri Selirand has also supported the same standpoint, thus opposing the ideas of Sedov even more vehemently (Selirand 1983; 1992; 1996).

After the demise of the USSR in the 1991 Estonia regained its independence. Archaeological research was finally liberated from outside pressure. Priit Ligi made an significant contribution to the history of the studying Estonian barrows. At first he showed by means of demographic calculations that, judging by the number of people buried in the barrows,

barrow cemeteries should be regarded as the burial places of a single family, or at least a small group of people (Lang & Ligi 1991: 226–228; Ligi 1989). They did not serve as cemeteries of a kinship group as had been thought earlier. Furthermore, in the 1990s he argued that there was no reason to speak of a massive Slavic immigration to areas next to Estonia during the Middle Iron Age or the Late Iron Age (9th–13th centuries) (Ligi 1993; 1994; 1995). Ligi was the first to link the construction of barrows with societal changes, i.e. a transition from slash-and-burn cultivation to permanent fields. According to Ligi, the barrows can be interpreted as symbolic markers of land ownership. More importantly, the long barrows as a monumental grave construction might have had an ideological reason – they might have legitimated the growth of power and land possession of some families (Ligi 1995: 230). Ligi also paid attention to the situation that at least some of the long barrows were heaped upon more than one burial area or a smaller round barrow. This fact again raises the question of the duration of the period of time from the first burials to the final design of the long barrow. Could it be that the leading families began to construct long barrows some time (e.g. a century or two) later, thus covering the earlier burials in order to legitimate their social position? According to this interpretation, one could assume that the bigger the barrows, and the higher their number in a cemetery, the more outstanding was the family that had erected them (Ligi 1995: 230–231). The calculations based on the human remains found in the barrows had made Ligi suppose earlier that settlement in the areas of the Pskov and Novgorod groups of the long barrows had been extremely sparse (Lang & Ligi 1991; Ligi 1989). Now he presented a new interpretation, according to which only some of the members of the society were buried in the barrows while the others kept being buried in pits without visible and enduring signs above ground, or in some other way 'out of reach' of archaeology. This leads to the conclusion that the 'barrow people' were socially stratified to a considerable degree (Ligi 1995: 230).

From the end of the 1990s the investigation of long barrows in Estonia began anew after a hiatus of fifteen years. Aun has excavated many antiquities of the culture of the long barrows and has published articles concerning different phenomena of that culture, mostly concentrating on the antiquities of Setumaa. In comparison with the earlier research, burial customs as well as the

human remains found in the barrows are studied in a more detailed way (e. g. Aun 2002; 2003b; 2004; 2005; Allmäe *et al.* 2007). Aun sees clear traces in the burial custom of the barrows in South-Eastern Estonia, which allow them to be connected with the local Baltic Finnish people.

When summarizing the chapter on the research history of Estonian long barrows, one should emphasize that in the conditions of the Soviet occupation changes in the opinions concerning the ethnic affiliation of the culture of long barrows took place on the basis of the work of Russian researchers. In the 1950s, the Estonian researchers adopted the idea that these antiquities were constructed by *Kriviches* from Russian researchers. When in the 1960s the barrows of Smolensk and Polotsk territories began to be affiliated with the Balts, and the barrows at the upper reaches of the Volga with the Finno-Ugrians, the Estonian researchers were the first to call into doubt the existing dogma. During the 1960s and the 1970s, when many Russian archaeologists assumed that the long barrows of the Pskov and Novgorod groups were also the burial places of Finnish peoples, this idea was quickly adopted in Estonia. Priit Ligi has clearly expressed the reasons why Estonian archaeologists of that period had to reiterate the standpoints of their Russian colleges. When Lebedev argued that the long barrows are non-Slavic antiquities, it was acceptable. Had an Estonian archaeologist expressed the same opinion, he or she would have been accused of nationalism (Ligi 1994: 106). The same continued even after Estonia had regained its independence, as Russian archaeologists supporting the theory of the early northward migration of the Slavs accused Ligi of national extremism and anti-Communism (Panchenko et al. 1994: 96).

How did the Slavs reach North-Western Russia in the 5th century?

According to the traditional conception in Russia, Slavicization was caused by a mass colonization of Slavic tribes. The immigration of the Slavs is said to have taken place in several waves. Usually the researchers believe those Slavs who arrived with the first wave to be the *Kriviches* of the chronicles. Allegedly *Kriviches* built the long barrows that are distributed in North-Western Russia and are dated to the 5th–10th century. In the second wave of massive immigration the Novgorod *Slovenes* reached the surroundings of Lake Ilmen. Russian researchers have no consensus concerning the original

area of Slavic expansion – usually it is thought to be located in the territory of either the present-day Northern Ukraine or Eastern Poland. However, this migration theory reveals several weaknesses.

Below some of the arguments that have been presented to support the theory of early massive colonization of the East Slavs to North-Western Russia will be dealt in greater detail. What is most problematic is the way how archaeological source material is interpreted. One can see important differences in the way how archaeological find material is interpreted in Russia and in Northern Europe where the 'ethnical' background of the sites does not raise any questions. Secondly, several recent research results in the field of genetics do not support the theory of early massive colonization of the Eastern Slavs.

Cultural-historical approach

The research results in the humanities depend on many factors, such as the political and economic system, the general philosophical background, and traditions and research history. The same applies to the research into Slavicization of North-Western Russia.

When the 'theory of the stages' had finally been abandoned in the USSR in the early 1950s, Soviet archaeology had no new theoretical basis. Although one could find some quotations form the works of the classics of Marxism and Leninism in the publications by Soviet archaeologists, they were in no way connected with the research methods of a specific study. After the Stalinist period the Soviet archaeological theory fell back to the pre-revolution level. To be precise, Soviet archaeologists adopted from the West the cultural-historical paradigm, which had been developed in European archaeology by the beginning of the 20th century and was outdated in the West by the 1950s.

According to this school of archaeology, archaeological cultures were largely interpreted as ethnic groups, and ethnic groups were connected with certain languages. The changing of culture and the culturally significant artefacts were equalized with the migrations of people.

Such an approach relied on the imagination of romantic nationalism of the 19th century and the ideas of Gustaf Kossinna and Vere Gordon Childe about archaeological cultures as independent actors and ethnic entities. Since the

1950s ‘Slavonic-Russian archaeology’ in North-Western Russia was under the strong influence of Kossinna’s methodology of identifying prehistoric ethnic groups (Ligi 1993: 32). It seems that Soviet archaeology adopted this paradigm after the Second World War as a war trophy from Germany. As has been mentioned repeatedly, the theory of Slavic expansion reminds of Kossinna’s ideas where the roles of Germans and Slavs have been reversed (Trigger 1994: 101). In Russia this way of thinking found a very fertile soil since it has been a peculiar feature of Russian history and archaeology to look for and to map the Slavic tribes mentioned in the Old Russian Chronicles, especially in the Russian Primary Chronicle (*Повесть временных лет*).

A number of authors have convincingly proved that ethnic reconstructions based on the cultural-historical approach are hopeless from the perspective of archaeological evidence (e. g. Shennan 1989; Trigger 1994; Taavitsainen 1999; Brather 2000; Lang 2001; for Slavic studies see Ligi 1994; Curta 2001). The problems of linking archaeological cultures and ethnic groups were explained also by some Russian archaeologists already in the 1970s (Kameneckij 1970; Klejn 1970). However, in the Soviet Union the search for specific ethnic groups behind archaeological cultures was continued and is still carried out. The cultural-historical school has been influential in Russian archaeology since its ideas have been published in prominent publications both in Russia and abroad. Leo Klejn has said about the Soviet publishing policy that “an unwritten rule dominated there: only bosses or authoritative scholars could discuss theoretical or any important problems in general, and especially express their own views” (Immonen 2003: 59). The more devoted supporters of the theory of migrationism (e. g. Sedov and Nosov) were and no doubt still hold prominent positions in Russian scientific structures, and they had the possibility to introduce and spread their views in numerous publications issued both in Russia and abroad already during the Soviet period.

Many archaeologists not only connect artefacts with archaeological ‘cultures’, but they also like to interpret them as ‘ethnospecific’. In North-Western Russia much energy has been spent on searching for early ethnic groups by using ‘ethnic indicators’ – primarily grave types but also artefacts. Russian researchers often list one by one artefacts found from long barrows, which originate or examples of which can be found in southern and western areas ascribed to early Slavs.

Are imported artefacts or outside influences, for example, in pottery really proof of migration? This is certainly not the case. For example, in Estonia the artefacts used during the Bronze and Iron Ages were mostly imported or produced on the example of outside models. The Estonian graves from the Bronze and the Early Metal Age are completely similar to the graves distributed in Sweden and exact analogues to almost every artefact can be found in Scandinavia as well as in Eastern Europe. During the Roman Iron Age artefacts from the South-Eastern shore of the Baltic Sea and the present-day Lithuania were extensively distributed in Latvia, Estonia, and in Southern Finland, whereas examples of the most widespread grave type – *tarand*-graves – can be found in Eastern Sweden. In Estonia there is nothing specifically 'Finnish' in the material culture of the second half of the first millennium (Ligi 1994: 107). The situation is also similar with regard to more recent material. For example, along with local hand-moulded pottery also Slavic-type wheel-thrown pottery of North-Western Russian origin was extensively used on Estonian territory since the 11th century (Tvauri 2005). When interpreting archaeological evidence in terms of 'ethnic markers', as has been done in the case of long barrows, we could conclude that masses of Scandinavian immigrants arrived in Estonian territory during the Bronze Age. The Balts arrived during the Roman Iron Age, Slavs during the Middle Iron Age; during the Viking Age there was a large-scale Swedish colonization, and in the Latest Iron Age Slavic immigrants from Novgorod Land settled in Estonia. In the 13th century German crusaders occupied the Estonian territory. Despite this fact, according to the census of 1897, Estonians, who spoke a Finnic language, made up 90.6% of the population of Estonia, and they became a modern nationality on the German example. From where and when did Estonians arrive in Estonia?

Cultural identity and cultural influences are in most cases not translated into material culture, grave forms, or objects. In spite of many claims in support of the contrary, no single object can be regarded as ethnospecific. Different types of material culture can perhaps demonstrate the change of fashion but not ethnic diversity (Werbart 2001: 60). Although there could have been some ethnical markers, they could in no way make up the whole material culture of an area or an ethnic group. Possible ethnical markers appeared and

disappeared and cannot usually be discovered by archaeological methods (Taavitsainen 1999).

The equalization of archaeological culture and ethnicity is not the only problem. It is extremely difficult to define the term *ethnos*, especially in the prehistoric context. All modern Western scientific theories view ethnicity as a social and political construction. Ethnicity is constantly redefined and changing. According to the Russian and Soviet scholars, ethnic groups are defined by objective criteria, such as geography, language, and physical appearance. Ethnicity is consequently fixed and static (Shnirelman 1996: 1). Slavic expansion has often been presented as a determined and conscious process. To look for the place of provenance of the Slavs is a result of illusory assumptions about cultural identity, influenced by modern conceptions of nationality. Therefore, many Western archaeologists believe that ethnogenetic studies can never be productive (Werbart 2001: 60). Nevertheless, studies of the North-Western Russian sites in the 1st millennium AD have often focused on questions of ethnogenesis, more precisely, on the search for Slavic sites.

Migrationism

Archaeology as a science is relatively young; it only developed in the 19th century mainly under the influence of national romantic ideals. Archaeology adopted and started to look for the evidence of historical myths on the basis of written sources. One of the central historical myths is the arrival of people to their present habitat from somewhere as a ready-made entity. This viewpoint was primarily inspired by the Bible, which used to be the absolute written authority at least until the beginning of the 19th century. The Bible and particularly the Book of Genesis set the parameters for patriotic historiography (Vilkuna 2001: 396). Such an approach, migrationism, was typical of history writing and archaeology in the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century all over the world.

According to the migration theory, some areas were observed as cradles of nations that the surplus of people left behind from time to time and occupied the neighbouring territories. Arabian deserts and Central Asian Steppes have often been perceived as such areas (Adams *et al.* 1978: 487). Kossinna and his students who were supported by the German nationalism re-expressed the old myth of the areas of Southern Scandinavia and Northern Germany as the

initial home of peoples (Kossinna 1911). After the Second World War Slavic expansion started to be presented in the same way. According to this approach, the Eastern Slavs are viewed as a conqueror nation and the Russians as descendants of 'colonists'.

Gustaf Kossinna's works are archetypical examples of migrationism in archaeology; it later became a cornerstone of official Nazi mythology. Childe, a Marxist and the most famous representative of European migrationism, attributed nearly every major cultural development of the Neolithic and Bronze Ages to the movement of peoples, usually from the east (e.g Childe 1925).

Migrationism in archaeology was connected to the development of linguistics (see Adams *et al.* 1978: 505). Since the 19th century ethnicity has been perceived primarily as language-based, and ethnogenesis has been understood as the development of languages. Migration theory in archaeology is predominantly based on the family tree of languages. The family-tree model of a proto-language developing into several languages was well suited for the period when the natural sciences had adopted Carl von Linné's system of classification, and Charles Darwin published his main work in 1859 (Vilkuna 2001: 397). Archaeologists eagerly started to look for the traces of emigration from the initial home suggested by the linguists.

In the West migrationism was popular during the peak of colonial empires in the 19th century and the glorious days of nationalism in the 1930s when even Finns considered themselves to be descendants of colonists. The latter view has been discussed by Janne Vilkuna. It was maintained that there was no settlement in Finland during the Pre-Roman Iron Age. In order not to be without any inhabitants, the concept of settlement implied that Finns engaged in agriculture. It was mentioned only in passing that perennially nomadic Lapps also lived in Finland. The expansionist colonization of the New World, the conquest of the Wild West, was one of the great adventures of the 19th century. The colonization theory of Finnish origin was linked to the idea of the Lapps gradually withdrawing northwards as Finnish colonization progressed. Strangely enough, this concept is analogous to the fate of the North American Indians pushed westwards by the settlers. Here the Finnish colonists (palefaces) drove the Lapps (redskins) northwards (westwards) before them

(Vilkuna 2001: 398). This sheme fully corresponds to the theory of the Slavic mass colonization of the North-Western Russian territory.

In the 1980s the theory of continued settlement replaced the colonization theory in Finland. Also in Estonia the migration theory about the origin of Estonians, which had been elaborated by Harri Moora, Paul Ariste, and Lembit Jaanits (Moora 1956; Ariste 1956; Jaanits 1956) during the 1950s, was dismissed in the 1990s. It was also claimed that the present-day Finns and Estonians never arrived as such in Finland and Estonia but had formed from various ethnic elements that had reached Finland or Estonia over time (Vilkuna 2001: 399; Kriiska & Tvauri 2007).

After the Second World War migrationism in archaeology as the approach connected with imperialism and nationalism was avoided in the Western world (Cassel 2000). Since the 1950s past cultural changes have been explained mostly by natural changes, technological progress, and internal societal developments. As regards the research of long barrows and Slavicization of the Russians, this explanation is very much alive in Russian archaeology. The ambition of several Russian archaeologists is to find and show the migration to North-Western Russia from the homeland of the Slavic languages. The present-day supporters of the theory of Slavic colonization have even set the conquest of the Wild West as an example (Panchenko *et al*. 1994: 98).

Settlement continuity

According to the early Slavic colonization theory, the Slavs arrived in the territory of the North-Western Russia when it was an unsettled area. If Finno-Ugrians did live there, they allegedly had nothing to do with long barrows. If the Slavs immigrated from the South and cultivated their fields differently from the hunting and gathering indigenous people, then the settlement pattern of long barrows should significantly differ from the earlier state of affairs. Was there any settlement continuity between the Early Metal Age and Long Barrow Culture or not?

Not many sites are known from the period preceding the building and use of long barrows. It is partly because in North-Western Russia noone has dealt systematically with the 'non-Slavonic' periods of Iron Age in this area. In the Early Metal Age and in the first half of the 1st millennium the common

cultural phenomena distributed from the Estonian and Latvian territory to the middle reaches of the Volga river (the area of D'jakovo Culture) and from the sources of the Dnieper to Northern Finland were Textile ceramics, Striated pottery, underground cremations, and the absence of sedentary or even semi-sedentary dwelling sites. Textile ceramics is unanimously connected with Finno-Ugrians (Lebedev 2001: 26). The southern edge of its distribution area runs along the Daugava (Western Dvina) to the sources of the Dnieper and from there to the upper reaches of the Oka and the Don. This line roughly corresponds to the southern limit of the distribution of the names of waterbodies of Finno-Ugrian origin.

According to Gleb Lebedev, there are enough artefacts known from the period preceding the barrows to introduce the term 'Pre-Barrow Culture' (Lebedev 1982: 32–33). This term is obviously a misnomer primarily because the generation of new archaeological cultures does not help archaeology to better understand prehistoric historical processes and social phenomena. More specifically, Textile ceramics, Striated pottery, underground cremations, and the absence of dwelling sites are characteristic of a much larger territory than the area where long barrows were used for burying in the second half of the 1st millennium. We are simply dealing with the Early Metal Age culture of the Northern European forest zone. Thus the Slavs did not arrive in an empty place.

Since very few settlement sites are known from the period of the barrows and the time preceding the barrows, burial sites are the most important source for studying settlement continuity. There are many examples where barrow cemeteries have been founded in the area of former graves or directly next to them. It is extremely unlikely that colonists would have buried their dead in the cemeteries used by the locals.

In South-Eastern Estonia there are long barrows that were founded directly next to the *tarand*-graves from the same period (Schmiedehelm & Laul 1970). It is hardly the case that colonists started to bury their dead in the cemeteries of the natives because one can detect direct links between the burial customs of the oldest long barrows and the earlier stone graves from the first half of the 1st millennium. Such links include, for example, the use of pottery in burial rituals (Aun 2002). The stone graves and underground cremations of the first half of the 1st millennium in Eastern Estonia, for example, scarcity of finds,

including the scarcity of pottery finds, intentional destruction of ceramic vessels, and presence of pottery sherds among the burnt bones are some of the characteristic features of the barrow cemeteries founded here in the second half of the 1st millennium.

Underground or above-ground cremations which antedate the long barrows have been found under the barrows and between them everywhere in the distribution zone of the long barrows in South-Eastern Estonia (Aun 1992: 115–116) until the north-eastern border of the distribution area (Bašenkin 1987: 12; Burov 1996: 123). Their number would be much higher if the burials discovered under the barrows had been radiocarbon-dated. Also the Smolensk and Polotsk barrows have formed on the basis of earlier local culture. Several traits characteristic of the earlier culture, such as the placing of burnt bones in a pit dug into the ground and the placing of ceramic vessels upside down lived on in these barrows (Šmidt 1968: 103).

How was massive Slavic migration to North-Western Russia possible in the first place? What was the demographic and economic basis of this supposed phenomenon? The most common theory explaining the Slavic migration claims that the Slavs brought along agriculture that was unknown to the Finno-Ugrians who supported themselves by hunting and gathering. Thus the Slavs in a way found some vacant space to occupy, and so they founded slash-and-burn fields in the middle of forests (see Moora 1956: 106). As the pollen diagrams from South-Eastern Estonia show, in the western distribution area of the Pskov Long Barrow Culture farming was known from the final centuries of the pre-Christian millennium (Laul & Kihno 1999). Recent palaeo-botanical studies in the eastern part, near Novgorod, refer to the fact that also the middle section of the settlement area, such as the D'jakovo Culture, lived mainly on farming (Köningsson *et al.* 1997: 376–377; Gunova *et al.* 1996). Thus, the palynological data confirms that the emergence of the Long Barrow Culture did not bring along the transition of the local inhabitants from hunting and gathering to agricultural activities. Farming, primarily slash-and-burn agriculture and animal husbandry, had been practised here already for centuries.

Russian archaeologists and historians have often claimed that compared to the natives, the Slavs knew a more developed agriculture when they moved to the Eastern European forest zone. This gave them an advantage for assimilating the local people (e.g Nosov 1988: 22). Rafael Minasjan has even

determined the tool kit of agricultural instruments, which was intrinsic to the Slavic culture in the 6th–7th century. The appearance of this tool kit is said to be the evidence of Slavic expansion (Minasjan 1982). Actually the technological development of agriculture did not solely comprise the presumably Slavicisized areas of North-Western Russia but the whole Northern Europe. For example, Estonia witnessed a big change in the farming system in the middle of the 1st millennium, namely the spread of the regular two-field system, which resulted in the formation of villages and the division of village fields into strips between the farmsteads (strip fields) (Lang 1996: 496). This development was not connected with migration but resulted from internal economic and social development. The context of the emergence of long barrows reminds the appearance of typical *tarand*-graves in inland Estonia and Northern Latvia in a seemingly empty place in about 300 AD where the economic and social background included the establishment of private ownership of the cultivated land.

Recent population-genetic studies also show settlement continuity. Presuming that the Slavs came to the Northern Russia in the course of a migration, it should be reflected in the genes of the Russians in Northern Russia, and they should be different from the genes of the Finno-Ugrians. While the distribution of grave types and artefacts as well as the claims by linguists can be interpreted in several ways, then the results of physical anthropology and population-genetic studies are unambiguous – the distribution of genes does not follow the linguistic, ethnic, or state borders in any way in North-Eastern Europe (see Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1994). The closest blood relatives of Northern Russians are not the Central European Slavs, not even Belorussians or Ukrainians, but actually Estonians and Latvians (Balanovsky et al. 2008; Bunak 1969; Gravere 1987; 1990; Heapost 1998; Heapost & Viikmaa 1999). The genetic distances of the Estonians to other peoples suggest that the Estonians are most closely related to the Russians, Latvians, Vepses, and Karelians; the Finns come only after them (Heapost 1998: 2157–2158; Heapost & Viikmaa 1999: 106)! The cultural as well as the settlement continuity from the Roman Iron Age (1st–4th centuries) to the Period of Migrations (5th–6th centuries) and further on is obvious on the territory of North-Western Russia.

The arrival of Slavic colonists in a ‘vacant’ place is a myth that has been contrived to justify the supposed colonization. The Northern European forest zone has been constantly inhabited and ‘full’ of people already since the Mesolithic. The population density has depended on the capacity of economy and natural conditions. At this point one should bring an analogy with the Finnish and Estonian area. Also here very few sites from the Bronze Age and the Pre-Roman Iron Age were known and still are known. In the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century it was suggested that settlement in Finland was entirely missing at this time. The theory of Alfred Hackman (1905) proceeded from this view according to which the Finns arrived in their present area from Estonia only at the beginning of the 1st millennium AD and colonized the whole Finland during the following centuries. More recent studies have shown that neither Finland nor Estonia was empty in the Early Metal Age.

What does the distribution of graves show?

As noted above, most Russian researchers have reached the conclusion that in the case of the Pskov long barrows one is dealing with the Slavic sites. This theory is based on the claim that these graves had no local ‘roots’ and the Slavs brought along their own burial customs. Actually, the oldest long barrows are located in Pskov Land (Sedov 1974: 12–13; 1982: 49; Lebedev 2001: 34). Analogues, which can obviously be considered as examples of long barrows, are nowhere to be found. It can be proved, for example, by the fact that Russian researchers offer various explanations for the development of the grave type and completely different areas where the influences might have originated.

In the north-western part of the Russian Lowland no visible graves are known from the Early Metal Age. All the cultures of this era (Dnieper-Dvina, D’jakovo, and others) are known primarily through dwelling sites. The earliest graves in the Upper Dnieper and the Dvina appear at the same time when long barrows emerge in their distribution area, that is, the 4th–5th centuries represent very different burial traditions – underground burials and barrow cemeteries (see Furas’ev 2003). Thus, the deceased started to be buried in visible graves simultaneously on a very large territory. Where did all those colonists come from?

The research history of long barrows clearly shows that the distribution of graves is automatically associated with the distribution of permanent settlement and the lack of graves would mean either the lack of settlement or the nomadic lifestyle of the people. The lack of graves does really not mean the lack of permanent settlement. In the pre-Christian period in Northern Europe the burial practice did not include all members of society. What concerns the Estonian Metal Age, demographic calculations have clearly shown it (Lang & Ligi 1991). There is nothing unusual about it – for example, in Sweden only about 1–2 persons per generation per farmstead were buried in visible grave monuments during the Iron Age (Selinge 1977).

Where the dead were treated in a way that left no traces that would be visible today, the illusion of the lack of settlement can easily appear. On the territory of long barrows there are signs of earlier graves that have been considered mortuary houses and which can indicate the earlier burial custom of the area (Smirnov 1990; Bašenkin 1996; Koneckij 1997: 216). A wooden mortuary house can be nowadays recognized only in very specific cases, for example, when it has been left under the barrow mound before complete destruction. Evidence of overground Early Metal and Middle Iron Age mortuary houses can be found on Estonian territory as well (Mägi 2005). Priit Ligi emphasized that the earliest cremations in the long barrows could well have been initially flat graves, burials in mortuary houses, or in small barrows. Only later (perhaps after 1–2 centuries) they might have been covered by an earthwork extension or a higher mound, which in turn was used for new burials (Ligi 1994: 109).

According to a common view in the so-called 'Russian-Slavic' archaeology, differences in graves and burial customs primarily reflect ethnical dissimilarities. Accordingly, variations in the grave types show the concurrent ethnic diversity of the people in a specific area. For example, Sergej Beleckij reached such a conclusion with regard to the last quarter of the 1st millennium in the lower reaches of the Velikaja river (Beleckij 1996: 45). This conclusion is definitely incorrect. Examples proving something different can be found quite near. Estonia and Finland had a highly uniform burial tradition during the Bronze and Roman Iron Ages but highly diverse burial traditions in the Pre-Roman Iron Age and the later Iron Age. At the same time there is no reason to doubt in the linguistic or ethnic homogeneity of the people during

the whole period from the Pre-Roman Iron Age until the present day. For example, in the 13th century Estonia witnessed a total change in burial customs. The graves used until then were generally abandoned and new village cemeteries were established (Valk 2001). At the same time one cannot observe any ethnic changes or even insignificant changes in everyday life. Only the religious background of people changed with the Christianization. Thus, the change in the grave type is not a sufficient argument to assume ethnic change. Moreover, different burial customs could be found inside an ethnically homogenous population, or different ethnical groups could bury their dead in similar ways.

Burial customs mostly indicate religious principles that are closely related to social structures. In medieval Europe religious and social categories dominated; ethnic questions were of second-rate importance. Thus, burial customs did not indicate the ethnicity of the deceased but in the first place his/her religious principles and social position. In that case there is no reason to associate long barrows with a specific ethnic group. In the same way that similar stone graves were built on different shores of the Baltic Sea on both the German and the Baltic Finnic territory, Finno-Ugrians and Balts erected similar graves in Pskov and Smolensk Land because their economic and social development had reached a certain phase. The elite certainly communicated with the neighbouring people, and burial forms and other novelties derived also from the outside. Also, the introduction of novelties is one of the means of elite domination. At this point the arguments presented by the Soviet and Russian researchers that Finno-Ugrians lacked their own elite (e.g. Panchenko et al. 1994: 98) can be dismissed as racist. Those who were buried in monumental graves actually were members of the elite.

Conclusions

Long barrows that were built during the period from the 5th to the 10th centuries in North-Western Russia, South-Eastern Estonia, Eastern Latvia, and North-Eastern Belarus have been systematically studied for a hundred years already. Most of the discussion has concentrated on the ethnic affiliation of this type of graves. Until the beginning of the 1970s, these barrows were mainly considered to be the burial places of the Slavs according to the assumption that was predominant among Russian archaeologists. Long

barrows were seen as evidence of the immense colonization of the Slavs of the North-Western Russian territory. More recently, some Russian and Estonian researchers have been unanimous in the question that the Pskov and Novgorod groups of the long barrows should be connected with the eastern group of the Baltic Finns.

The research of the Long Barrow Culture is a good example of how archaeological evidence has been interpreted to fit the previously designed historical myth. The Russian nationalist history treatment has first and foremost been influenced by the Bible, the Old Russian Chronicles, and romantic nationalism imported from Germany in the 19th century. The establishment of Marxism could not hide it, and the cultural-historical migrationist treatment started to prevail again after the death of Stalin. The research traditions of the cultural-historical school were also followed by Estonian archaeologists until the 1990s. Since Russian and Estonian archaeologists have reached completely different results studying the same sites with the same method, it is another example of the general hopelessness of ethnic reconstructions based on the cultural-historical approach to archaeological evidence.

The results of recent genetic studies have not been integrated in the theory of Slavicization of Northern Russia or in the study of the ethnical background of the Long Barrow Culture. The reason for this might lie in the fact that the human biological data supports the settlement continuity theory by showing the Northern Russians to have closer genetic affinities with the Baltic Finns and the Latvians than with the other Slavic populations. Thus the people of North-Western Russia did not arrive as migrants from the so-called Slavic homeland but developed in the present area. This overthrows both the theory of the early migration of the Slavs and the theory of the migration of Slavs on the whole. The linguistic and cultural Slavicization of Northern Russia did not occur as a result of mass migration but some other processes.

The research history of long barrows is a good example of the complications of creating national historical myths for a multinational giant state. The theory of the migrations of people from the original home was constructed by linguists so that its narrative should correspond to the reports written down in the chronicles at the beginning of the 12th century.

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