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PREHISTORY OF RUSSIAN ART
PRECHRISTIAN RELICS BASED ON
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MATERIAL OF
THE 4TH– 10TH CENTURIES

The foundation of the early Russian state, its adoption of Christianity and the emergence of an art culture in the 10th-11th centuries followed a period characterized primarily by the gradual conquest of vast territories of Eastern Europe from the Danube to the Volkhov and Upper Volga areas by Slavic tribes from the 6th to the 10th centuries.

During that period the cultural traditions of Slavic tribes interacted with those of Turkic- and Iranian-speaking peoples of the steppes and forest-steppes, on the one hand, and the later antiquity traditions of the Black Sea and Danube areas, on the other. That interaction was noted already by the early scholars (N.P. Kondakov, I.I. Tolstoy and A.S. Gushchin), whose works aimed above all to make a catalogue of archaeological finds, while B.A. Rybakov sought to trace the "autochthonous" sources of traditional East Slavic crafts. In the mid-20th century works by G.F. Korzukhina marked an important phase in systematising the amassed material. Modern research aims to analyse in detail the problems of chronology, technology and typology of the stock of archaeological material¹ Proto-Slavic (Balto-Slavic) Period

According to one of the more common concepts of ethnogenesis, in the middle of the first millennium A.D. the Slavs came out of the Balto-Slavic community that had existed in the early Iron Age on the territory between the basins of the Vistula and the Upper Dnieper. The migration of the Germanic peoples and Goths across the Vistula basin to the North Black Sea area and the Danube basin in the 3rd century was of special importance to the ethnogenesis of the Slavs and the evolution of their culture. The traditions of those peoples of Eastern Europe were largely influenced by the Celtic (La Tène) culture in the Pre-Roman period (the last centuries B.C.) and by provincial Roman culture in the Roman period (the early centuries A.D.). Therefore, it makes sense to summarise the more salient features of the culture and art traditions of the East European tribes of the Roman period. The tribes which directly impacted on the evolution of the art traditions of the Slavs and other peoples of Eastern Europe included above all those with whom students associate Zarubintsy, Przeworsk and Chernyakhov culture artefacts².

Basically Balto-Slavic, the Zarubintsy culture, which in the 2nd century B.C. thrived in the basins of the Upper and the Middle Dnieper, the Pripyat and the Desna, belonged, along with the Przeworsk and Chernyakhov cultures, to the broad category of the so-called urnfield cultures of the Roman period. Such burials were not marked by any special monuments (mounds, etc.) on the terrain: the dead were cremated and their ashes put in pottery vessels, or funerary urns and placed into holes in the "burial fields" (traces of post holes that might have been left by grave markers were found at some of the burials).

Developed pottery, ironmongery and jewellery making from non-ferrous metals give an idea of art culture. They were mostly modelled pots, bowls, mugs, pans and storage ewers; burnished pottery tableware was finely modelled, given finishing touches on a potter's wheel and then fired. Some pots and other vessels had a ribbed body. Ornamentation included carved straight and wavy lines, finger-pressed rims and moulded raised boss, knobs and so on. There were numerous finds of imported antique pottery – amphorae, bowls and jugs. The burnished vase of Subbotov, made in imitation of Hellenistic Greek vases with 36 canelures decorating the body, is a unique piece of pottery of the Zarubintsy culture.

Blacksmith's products – knives, barely curved sickles, etc. – intended for purely domestic purposes account for the bulk of the archaeological finds. Pieces of personal adornment are mostly fibulae and pins of bronze and, less frequently, iron wire. Fibulae of the Middle and Late La Tène type were common in Europe and typical of the costume of the Celtic tribes of the Roman periphery. Fasteners with the end of the foot flattened to form a triangular plaque were characteristic of the Zarubintsy culture per se. Fibula plaques were frequently decorated with horizontal grooves, slanting notches along the rim and so on. Also in use were bronze and iron pins with heads in the form of a nail, ring or spiral and bracelets of rods or wires, occasionally multi-wind. Bronze spirals and trapezoid bronze pendant-plaques were incorporated in necklaces made from imported beads.

Jewellery makers worked in their homes, using imported bronze that was smelted in pots on domestic hearths. The different types of cold metalwork employed included forging, wire rolling and stamping.

The Zarubintsy culture is thought to have developed due to the interaction of different ethnic and cultural components with the start of the Migration Period. The relevant items bear

an impact of Roman, Celtic, Germanic, Scythian-Sarmatian and even Dacian-Illyrian cultural traditions. Their interaction began to determine the nature of artifacts associated with the Slavic and broader Balto-Slavic group of peoples.

Continued migrations of various ethnic groups, in particular the movement of the Goths in the north and the Sarmatians in the south, led to the disintegration of the Zarubintsy culture in the 1st century A.D., impacting on vast territories from the Upper Dnieper and Desna areas to the Oka basin and, possibly, to the Middle Volga. Changes manifest themselves primarily in the location of settlements in valleys rather than on river banks, and in pottery shapes and manufacture techniques as coarsely modeled pots become widespread, as well as in the rise of ironmongery as attested by the finds of catalan hearths at Middle Dnieper area sites.

In the early centuries of A.D. the traditions of the Zarubintsy culture were influenced by the Przeworsk culture of the Vistula area, which was distinguished by well-developed ironmongery.

Although large above-ground dwellings (of over 30 sq. m) with hearths in the centre (cob oven hearths were also known) were built at the sites of that culture, half-dugouts with an area of about 20 sq m preponderated. The burial rites of the Przeworsk urnfields are characterised by a copious assemblage, including weapons and spurs (Celtic and Germanic custom influence). However, traditions of yet another – Wielbark – culture associated with the Goths start spreading from the present-day Polish coastlands to the eastern parts of the Przeworsk culture at the turn of the 3rd century A.D. The burial of the dead without any urns or weapons was an important characteristic of that culture.

In the second half of the 1st century A.D. the carriers of the Przeworsk culture start moving south-east (possibly driven by the Goths) into the Polesia area, where a new cultural community – Volhynia-Podolia – emerges, synthesizing the characteristics of the Przeworsk and Zarubintsy cultures.

Scholars point out the multiethnic nature of the Przeworsk culture with its Germanic (Lugii), Celtic and even supposedly Slavic components. Typically, Germanic customs include damage to weapons placed into burials and driving them into the ground as protection against the dead. Modelled vessels – pots, bowls, mugs and goblets – retain a link to the Late La Tène (1st century B.C. – 1st century A.D.) culture tradition. Ceremonial black or light brown burnished vessels were put into burials. Local artisans also produced tulip-shape modelled pots with weak profiles; potter's wheel ceramics (amphorae and red-lacquer pottery) typical of the provincial centres of the Roman Empire were also common.

Decorative pieces were typically represented by Late La Tène type fibulae common in Europe and by crossbow fibulae. There appeared belt decorations – buckles, hooks, fittings, etc. – usually the sign of the high social status of their owners. An openwork bronze scabbard chape with stamped figural representations from the Grinev burial site in the Upper Dniester area is a unique piece of decorative metalwork: scenes with an animal slaying a snake, a gryphon, kissing male and female figures – a sacred marriage motif (see below), an animal amid symbolical plants and an armed rider are placed in five rectangular frames. This piece has no exact analogues, although parallels are well known in Celtic, Germanic and provincial Roman art³.

Relics of decorative art and coins found in several caches in Transcarpathia (including chased plaques showing human masks and deer) and a cast bronze mask discovered outside the village of Peski show the importance of the Celtic component per se⁴. A bronze figurine of an "idol", cast unilaterally with bent legs and one arm bent at the elbow, that was discovered at the Lukashevka settlement in the Dniester area also has parallels in Celtic art. Meanwhile, the Dniester area and Transcarpathia are thought to have been dominated by the Geto-Dacian tribes, which likewise influenced the ethno-cultural processes in Eastern Europe.

The Chernyakhov culture was a major ethno-cultural community that in the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D. occupied lands from the left bank Middle Dnieper to the Black Sea and the Lower Danube areas⁵.

The community formed as a result of the interaction of the Zarubintsy, Przeworsk and Scythian-Sarmatian cultures of the Iranian-speaking population of the North Black Sea area and other peoples. The Przeworsk and Wielbark (Germanic tribes, Goths and Gepids) components formed its backbone, while the Sarmatian and Geto-Dacian elements were influential down south between the Dniester and Prut rivers and along the Lower

1. See the historiography and full bibliography in one of the latest monographs: Ryabtseva, 2005, pp. 5-14.

2. For a general systematised description of these cultures see: *The Slavs and Their Neighbours*, 1993; for specimens of decorative and applied arts see catalogue: *The Merovingian Age*, 2007.

3. Kozak, 1982.

4. Machinsky, 1973.

5. See one of the latest works on the Chernyakhov culture with respect to the Goths problem in the Pan-European cultural context: Shchukin, 2005.

Danube. Accordingly, the burial rites of the Chernyakhov culture combined the traditions of urnfield burials (cremation) with the Sarmatian tradition of inhumation in burial pits.

There were also artisan workshops. Thus, outside the village of Sobar' a stone structure was found, with another structure nearby which was sunken deeper into the ground and which was used for glass making (the complex might have been of Roman origin).

Some necropolises of the Chernyakhov culture had a regular burial layout; also known are cult pits with traces of funeral feasts (broken vessels) and crematory furnaces. A special place was accorded at those necropolises to aristocratic graves – funerary chambers (about 2 x 3 m) with rich enclosures, including imported amphorae and Roman glass drinking vessels.

The Chernyakhov population had better developed pottery making than their predecessors or neighbours. Wheel-made pottery was widespread, although pottery continued to be modelled – workshops and two-tier kilns (similar to those known among the Celts) were discovered at the Zhuravka settlement. Wheel-made pottery shapes often replicated those traditional for modelled pottery and vice versa: these included round pots, large pots, pithos type vessels (up to 1 m high), bowls, jugs, mugs and goblets. Their ornamental motifs were fairly simple and included horizontal lines or raised boss and stamped patterns.

Wheel-made tableware, burnished (or with ornamental burnished zones) grey or black (the colour achieved by smoke-firing), had special shapes. Large vessels with three handles might have been replicas of antique kraters for mixing wine with water. Two such vases were found at the base of what is supposed to be an altar hearth in Lepesovka, Volhynia, a major site of the Chernyakhov culture area. Ornamented ritual goblets were put into those vases during burials. Jugs, both elongated and squat, with a small round or biconical body, were richly ornamented with a stamp or cogwheel. B.A. Rybakov, who noticed that the ornamental zone of jugs from Romashki and Malaiesti was divided into 12 segments, made the supposition that the Proto-Slavs had the 12-month year cycle and that the above ornamentation was associated with it and with calendar cults ⁶.

Representations of scenes on vessels are exceptionally rare: primitive representations of a horse or an ox harnessed to a plough are known (Cherepin, Romashki) ⁷.

Semispherical goblets were richly ornamented with all sorts of stamps (rosettes, concentric circles, etc.). The ornamented small bottom of one such vessel suggests that they were stored upside-down to show the ornament.

The Chernyakhov costume was characterised by the so-called suspended paired fibulae, which apparently fastened the cloak or the skirt shoulder straps (the Germanic tradition) and were made mostly of bronze and occasionally of iron or silver. Mostly crossbow-shaped, they had a curved faceted body (an archaic form known from the Early Iron Age). As a rule, more massive two-plate fibulae were made of silver; with two flat plates joined by a crooked arch. Those shapes replicated the types of fasteners made in provincial Roman workshops on the Danube. Belts with iron or bronze buckles were also characteristic of men's clothes.

Necklaces, another important piece of adornment, were made of different beads of glass, paste, clay, malmrock and bronze. They also included charms of animal teeth or tusks, sea-shells, the so-called Hercules's Clubs (pyramidal charms of bone) and miniature vessels for fragrances. In addition, there also were earrings and temple rings, bracelets of massive bronze rod with thickened ends, torcs of round bronze wire, lunulae and lamellar bronze and silver pendants of other shapes. Numerous finds include one-sided horn combs with semicircular and triangular shafts, occasionally ornamented (zoomorphic ornaments are rare).

Weapons of the Chernyakhov culture are similar to those found in Przeworsk burials, with Central European shapes replicated.

In general the Chernyakhov culture was apparently characteristic of the periphery of the Gothic Empire in the North Black Sea area. The rite of cremation and suspended and two-plate fibulae of provincial Roman Danubian models are typical of relics of the Crimean Goths. No Slavic relics can be definitively authenticated in the Chernyakhov culture assemblages: it is not clear to what extent an account of the Gothic historian Jordanes about Gothic domination of the Slavs (Antes) can be trusted because he wrote his work in the 6th century, when the Antes had already settled in the Dniester area.

The so-called Kiev culture, basically similar to the Zarubintsy culture, existed in the middle reaches of the Dnieper (between the Dnieper and the Desna) concurrently with the Chernyakhov culture. Its *selishches* – open unfortified settlements – were, as a rule, located on the hillocks of tidal terraces. They were formed of several square sunken dwellings (10-17 sq m) with walls of pier structure and an open hearth in the centre. The roof was supported by the central pier coated with clay to protect it from the hearth fire. Modelled vessels finished on the potter's wheel predominated in pottery; most of them had simple shapes and included pots and ewers and, less frequently, miniature pots and dishes (bowls and so on). Alongside tulip-shaped vessels with broad necks there were biconical shapes with a rib in the centre of the body. At a later stage Chernyakhov dishes were commonly imported and antique pottery was also found.

Personal items and decorative pieces are close to Pan-European late Roman types. There were typical loop-headed pins made of iron and, less frequently, bronze, lamellar bronze lunulae (pendants for horse trappings?), bracelets, crossbow fibulae and so on.

The Kiev culture was characterised by cloissoné ornaments ⁸, namely, cast bronze adornments of diverse geometrical shapes with openwork and special compartments for enamel. Their ornamentation is based on geometrical motifs (primarily the circle, semicircle, triangle, diamond, square, cross and their combinations). The artifacts are often decorated with rollers, ledges, facets, "ribs", combs, etc. The enamel is, as a rule, red, and less frequently of other colours. One compartment usually holds inserts of the same colour, although exceptions also occur. Finds of items with enamels are known to have been made across the vast territory from the Baltic Sea to the River Kama and the Black Sea areas and are associated with the traditions of the Baltic tribes, which had spread wide across Eastern Europe in the pre-Slavic period.

In the assemblages (troves) cast ornaments occur alongside lamellar bronze artifacts with hammered decoration. Fibulae, all sorts of lunulae, cross-and-diamond pendants, torcs, and so on are characteristic of that period.

The Migration Period caused by the Hunnic invasion in the late 4th century led to the eclipse of the traditions of the Roman period, including the production of enamels deriving from the Roman glassmaking skills. The barbarian "style of polychrome works" – adornments with numerous colour insets of gems, semi-precious stones, glass or wholesale cloissoné and filigree work – developed in the Hunnic period. Originating in the Bosphorus workshops of late Antiquity and carrying on the Sarmatian traditions, that style exercised practically no influence on the development of decorative and applied arts of the forest/steppe and forest zone. Geometrical ornament predominated in the Hunnic period while vestiges of the Animal Style of the Scythian-Sarmatian epoch were rare.

Proto-slavic Period

The period of Slavic (Proto-slavic) unity was characterised by the Slavic settlement of Central and Eastern Europe in the 6th – 10th centuries. The so-called Prague (Prague-Korchak) culture of the 6th-7th centuries known from archaeological research laid the groundwork for the rise of the Proto-Slavic and early medieval Slavic cultures in Central and Eastern Europe. Spreading from the modern-day Czech Republic to the Middle Dnieper area, that culture retained some features of the late Roman period, including the relatively underdeveloped traditions of pictorial art ⁹.

Tulip-shaped pots, large pots and pans were characteristic of Prague culture pottery (pots with biconical bodies and bowls are found less frequently). Potter's wheel skills had been lost, its traditions only traceable in the Middle Danube area (gray-clay potter's wheel utensils of Chernyakhov culture origin are found at Prague culture sites), the burnishing technique had likewise waned. Ornamentation was rarely used and, as a rule, was restricted to straight or wavy lines and slanted notches along the edge of the rims.

In their funerary rites the Proto-Slavs continued to cremate their dead, and sometimes made semi-spherical mounds (about 0.5 m high kurgans surrounded by circular trenches) above the remains put in urns or small pits. Blacksmith's tools, melting pots, ladles (*lyachkas*) and bronze casting moulds were found at Zimno (on the River Luga, Volhynia).

6. Cf. Shchukin, 2005, pp. 168-9. The rims of vessels from Lepesovka are also divided into ornamental segments, one into 12 and the other into 9.

7. Slavs and Their Neighbours, 1993, p. 143.

8. More than 200 items have been found either individually or as part of caches (see: Korzukhina, 1978).

9. For the systemic description of the Proto-Slavic and Slavic "tribal" cultures see: papers by I.P. Rusanova and V.V. Sedov, including Rusanova, I.P., 1976; Sedov, V., 1982; Sedov, V., 2002.

The site also yielded bronze and silver belt buckles and plaques of varied geometrical (“heraldic”) shapes, including openwork in the form of a bird figurine, bronze and silver bracelets with knobbed ends, and bell-shaped or trapezoid pendants.

Personal adornment sets on the whole retained the traditions of the late Roman period: Danube-Byzantine type fibulae were common; the so-called finger fibulae (whose structure is traced to earlier two-plate fibulae), with their plates having five symmetrical ray-like shoots (fingers), became common at a later stage, their shape likewise stemming from the traditions of the provincial Byzantine and Bosporan workshops. Fibulae of those types were usually attributed to the Goths¹⁰.

Far more varied are the artifacts of the Penkovka culture, which existed between the Dnieper and Dniester rivers in the 6th-7th centuries. This is explained by the fact that the local traditions interacted not only with those of the Roman and Byzantine provinces, but also with the art of the steppe peoples: the Iranian speaking Alans (descended from the Sarmatians) and Turks (Bulgarians). The Penkovka culture is traditionally associated with the southeastern grouping of Proto-Slavic tribes, the Antes (the name given to them by the neighbouring Turks or Iranians and apparently meaning “allies”). A.A. Spitsyn conventionally referred to the ornaments found in treasure troves of the 7th-8th centuries discovered in the area of the Penkovka culture as “the Antes’ relics”.

After the Hunnic invasion the local population retained some of the Chernyakhov traditions, including gray-clay wheel-made pottery, and also developed its own forms: modelled pots and large biconical and round pots. Wheel-made pottery of the North Caucasus (Alan) type was produced at a number of sites, such as Kantsirka. Meanwhile, other crafts, including ironmongery and jewellery, went into decline.

The Chernyakhov culture traditions were carried on in the construction of early dwellings. Sunken structures heated by hearths and clay or stone ovens preponderated; however, dwellings with central support posts were also found, providing evidence of the penetration of the Kiev traditions into the Penkovka culture area. Walls were made mostly of logs. The south Penkovka culture area is known to have round or oval sunken dwellings reminiscent of the yurt-like abodes of the Bulgars and Khazars, the Turkic-speaking nomads of the Black Sea coast.

Settlements (on an area of 0.5 to 2 hectares) were located on elevated terraces above flood-plains and therefore did not require any fortification. However, one of the central sites of the period – the major Pastyrskoye site of the second half of the 7th – mid-8th centuries, occupying about 25 hectares outside the village of Pastyrskoye (right-bank Dnieper) on the Sukhoi Tashlyk River in the Tyasmina River basin – was surrounded by a solid earthwork and a trench of the Scythian period. The site produced, among other things, bracelets with hollow knob ends, stamped pendants replicating the shape of Byzantine earrings, etc.

Scholars describe the archaeological material of the Pastyrskoye site¹¹ as that of a mixed Slavic/nomadic type. Most of the finds are of the Lower Danube origin – the local jewellery makers who used embossing, filigree and stamping techniques might have been resettlers from the Lower Danube area¹². The site might have been raided by the Khazars in the first half of the 8th century.

The numerous bronze and silver ornaments found in treasure troves are evidence of developed jewellery making. One of the most interesting hoards of the second half of the 7th century with about a hundred silver objects was discovered outside the village of Martynovka on the Ros’ River (most of the artifacts are at the Museum of Historical Treasures of Ukraine (MIDU) and some at the British Museum in London). It included headdress pieces (headbands, earrings and temple rings with spiral ends); East European torcs (of copper rods encased in silver); finger and patterned fibulae with plates in the form of symmetrical zoomorphic protomoi; sundry plaques, mounts, silver earrings and belt ornament tips; two silver bowls with Byzantine markings, a dish fragment, a spoon, and nine characteristically stylised anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines (MIDU)¹³.

The composition with the symmetrical representations of horses (horseheads as in the Antes fibulae mentioned above) on both sides of an anthropomorphic figure apparently goes back to the ancient Scythians. Double-sided kon’kovye pendants with horseheads looking in different directions are known in the Scythian-Sax culture and the traditions of different European peoples, from the Anglo-Saxons to the Volga Finns.

Fibulae take fanciful forms: within the general pattern of the finger fibula the central ray is rendered in the form of an anthropomorphic mask, the lateral extensions in the form of bird

and snake heads (silver fibulae from the Pastyrskoye site), and the foot in the form of a dragon mask¹⁴ and such like forming a sort of crown. Large lamellar fibulae are divided into anthropomorphic (with what seems to be the outlines of the female figure of a “goddess”) and zoomorphic. They are occasionally patterned with embossment in imitation of granulation. Attempts to correlate the zoo-anthropomorphic images of the fibulae with Slavic mythical characters, even with the universal images of the type of the “great goddess” flanked by representatives of the animal world, look groundless¹⁵.

The production techniques used, such as casting, forging, embossing and stamping, testify to the existence of well-developed and specialised jewellery making in the traditions of the Byzantine provinces. A jeweller’s workshop unearthed at the Bernashevka site (associated with the Prague culture) in the Dnieper area yielded stone casting moulds to make lunulae, other pendants and finger fibulae. A more sophisticated process was employed to carve in the moulds negatives of the soldered items produced in the Danube area¹⁶. Wax models were apparently made in those moulds and then lined with clay to form a shell-like mould for casting non-ferrous metal items. Analysis of the composition of metal from “Antes’ hoards” has shown that silver was used sparingly: its content does not exceed 30-37 percent. Copper and lead were added as alloying agents, which deadened the colour of items. The alloy composition points to the link between its production process and the Byzantine workshops on the Danube (possibly itinerant jewelers). Treasure troves include both sets of production raw materials that must have belonged to jewellers and jewellery items per se. Thus, the Martynovka and Pastyrskoye site troves, as well as that of the Veliki Budki site (Middle Dnieper area) yielded scrap jewellery along with artisans’ tools and products.

Suggestions that the precious ornaments found in those troves belonged to the Slavic tribal “elite” sound convincing (such items are found among grave goods only in isolated cases). The vogue of the period was shaped by sundry influences of the Byzantines, Germanic tribes and nomads. The Eurasian tradition embraced by the Proto-Slavs and shared by the syncretic pre-state culture of “barbarian society” as a whole incorporated Byzantine-type earrings and the belt sets evolved by the nomads (the vogue for “heraldic” belts formed in the Danube area, including among the Avars, in the 6th-7th centuries), in combination with fibulae of Germanic origin¹⁷.

The steppe people also left behind numerous treasures, of which the best known is the so-called Pereshchepina hoard, formerly attributed to a Slavic leader; currently, most of the scholars believe it to have belonged to Kuvrat (Kubrat), Khan of the Old Great Bulgaria, or to his heirs¹⁸. It took 25 kg of gold and 50 kg of silver to make the found gold and silver drinking vessels from Byzantium and Iran, weaponry and horse trappings, Byzantine gold coins and the ring with Kuvrat’s monogram. Those grave goods were meant to demonstrate the khan’s might. The Old Great Bulgaria is thought to have exercised tangible influence also on the Slavs living on the steppes periphery.

The Slavic tradition influenced the culture of the forest tribes. For instance, finger fibulae travelled along the customary river routes to the Baltic peoples of the Upper Dnieper area and to the Oka River basin, which was settled by the selfsame Balts. The so-called Kolochin culture is thought to have inherited the traditions of the Kiev culture. Assemblages similar to those of the Penkovka culture are known to have been found in its area, including the 7th-century Gaponovo hoard (paired finger fibulae; bronze torcs with notch ornaments and knobs at the ends; temple rings with spiral points; trapezoid lamellar pendants and belt sets¹⁹. Some ornaments (with the exception of lunulae), in particular lamellar headbands (occasionally with spiral scrolls at the ends and embossed or engraved pattern) found in the Martynovka, Gaponovo and other hoards of the 7th century survived to the Early Russian period. Temple rings could be suspended from their birch-bark, leather or fabric base. Early Russian hoards are known to contain silver and bronze torcs of straight or faceted rods with loop-like clasps and cast bracelets with knobs at the ends.

The situation in the Middle Dnieper area (just as in the forest zone of Eastern Europe) changed in the late 7th – first half of the 8th century, evidently with the beginning of the Khazar expansion. The local population hid their treasures in caches. The composition of those caches of the first half of the 8th century likewise changed: man’s accoutrements – belt sets, weapons and also woman’s headbands and temple rings were no longer there; instead there appeared characteristic star-shaped or hollow pendant earrings. The bulk of woman’s accoutrements – earrings

10. The Merovingian Epoch, 2007, pp. 73-4, 284-325.

11. Prikhodnyuk, 2005.

12. Prikhodnyuk, 1994.

13. Prikhodnyuk, Shovkoplyas, Olgovskaya, Struina, 1991.

14. Of the latest works see: Rodinkova, 2006.

15. Similar compositions in 19th- and 20th-century Russian embroideries are traced to the motifs of paired horses or birds by the “world tree” (or tower or pivotal anthropomorphic symbol) common among various peoples, are not directly related to archaic paganism and therefore cannot be used for the reconstruction of pagan “temples”, etc. (cf.: Vasilenko, 1977, pp. 2-167; Rybakov, 1981; Dintses, 1951).

16. Cf. Vinokur, 1997; Minasian, 2003, pp. 26-211.

17. Cf.: Kovalevskaya, 2000; Riabotseva, 2005, p. 15 and subsequent pp.

18. Zalesskaya, Lvova, Marshak, 1997.

19. Gavritukhin, Oblomsky, 1996.

and temple rings, torcs, beads and metal necklaces, fibulae and sets of bracelets – were still present ²⁰.

The Slavs formed new cultural traditions that apparently reflected the ongoing split of the Proto-Slavic culture into dialects. The Luka Raikovetskaia culture emerged as the heir to the Prague culture in the right-bank Dnieper area in the 8th-9th centuries. The Prague culture traditions, such as the sunken dwellings either with a post structure and wattle wall carcass or in the form of a log cabin with a corner oven (hearths are also known), persisted into the 9th century. Modelled pots with wheel-finished rims were found, their ornamentation primitive and restricted to indents, notches, and nail and finger impressions along the edge of the rim and a wavy-line pattern on the body. Wheel-made pottery began to spread in the 10th century, that is, starting from the Early Russian period.

Elements of a regular layout can be discerned in settlements, with rural unfortified settlements (*selishche*) occasionally concentrating around the hillfort. In funerary rituals kurgans surrounded by small trenches became common alongside cremation and earth graves.

Among the better studied sites Khotomel in the lower reaches of the Goryn River (Stolin District, Brest Region, Belarus) consists of a hillfort and a *selishche* with sunken dwellings and pisé ovens and an earth grave field with incineration urns. Along the earthen wall the cultural deposit has two horizons: the first one with 7th-century shards is associated with the later period of the Prague culture; in the second one there has survived a long ground-based public structure. The latter has yielded a seven-ray temple ring with imitation granulation, a piece of a broken silver bracelet, arrowheads, a spear, armour plates and 8th-9th century shards of early wheel-made pottery.

The range of ornaments characteristic of jewellery making and costume of the Luka Raikovetskaia culture is rather modest. Breast ornaments of the type of torcs and pendants are not typical. The seven-ray ring found at Khotomel is an early specimen of temple rings in imitation of Byzantine granulation work that were typical of the Eastern Slavs. Simple cricoid temple rings, occasionally in the form of a 1 1/2 coil spiral, became common in that culture area and then typical of all the Slavs. Large-granulation metal beads stand out as another ethnographical characteristic of the accoutrements of the group of Slavic tribes who, according to the chronicles, settled in the right-bank Dnieper area and included the Polonians, Drevlians, Volhynians and Dregoviches. Also known are lunula earrings, horseshoe-shaped fibulae, Saltov (Alanian) earrings and finger rings, as well as other ornaments characteristic of the steppe lands.

The Volyntsevo culture of the late 7th – early 9th centuries is a later variant of urnfield cultures on the Kievan right bank and left bank Middle Dnieper area. Its distinguishing feature is a developed wheel-made pottery tradition with Alanian influences: burnished wheel-made pottery included high-rimmed pots and bowls and gray-clay ewers of Saltov origin. Black Sea area amphorae are also known. Ornamentation consists of burnished indented lines, rope and comb stamp impressions and so on. However, modelled pots, bowls, cups and pans of simple forms, often in imitation of wheel-made vessels, predominated. Their ornamentation was different and consisted of finger, nail or rope impressions along the rim.

Household structures were not sunken and had walls of clay-lined wattle frames and pisé floors. Structures with remnants of iron-making kilns stood out for their size.

The accoutrements found at the Volyntsevo settlements testify to diverse cultural contacts of their inhabitants. These include gold and silver star-shaped drop earrings with granulation work (in imitation of Byzantine samples), cast earrings of the Volyntsevo type and Saltov pear-shaped drop earrings, anthropomorphic fibulae, wire torcs and belt plaques.

The so-called Kharyevsky (Kharyvsky) cache of silver objects found in a Volyntsevo type pot in the Sumy Region is a major treasure consisting of more than ten torcs, including a unique hollow one; six anthropomorphic fibulae; a pair of gold ball-shaped pendant earrings decorated with granulation pyramids; Byzantine pendants in the form of lunulae with star-shaped (gilt silver) drops; forged silver bracelets; and openwork items. Torcs made of silver rod may be of Baltic origin, meanwhile lunula pendants similar to those of the Kharyevsky cache were also encountered at the Pastyrsky site mentioned above, in hoards found in the South Bug area and elsewhere. Alongside objects made under the impact of the Byzantine applied arts, imported things of the Danubian and Khazar (Saltov) origin continued to influ-

ence the nature of the festive accoutrements of the emergent elite of Slavic society.

The special role played by Saltov type relics in the stock of artifacts and in pottery production of the Volyntsevo culture makes it possible to suggest that the respective settlement area was associated with the territory of Slavic tribes (Polonians, Severians and Radimichs) that, according to the chronicles, in their pre-state period paid tribute to the Khazar Khaganate. The Danubian influences – Avar, Slavic and Moravian – traditional for the urnfield cultures, remained just as strong.

In the first third of the 9th century the Volyntsevo culture in the left-bank Dnieper area gave way to the so-called Romenskaya culture of the 9th-10th centuries, which was akin to it and contemporaneous with the Luka Raikovetskaia relics. Meanwhile, the Borshevskaya culture in the Don basin was related to the Romenskaya culture.

In the 9th century people of the Romenskaya culture evidently exchanged grain for Oriental silver coins coming to Eastern and Northern Europe by rivers across Khazaria. That promoted the development of jewellery making, its hallmark being torcs with hammered out edges and bracelets with overlapping broader ends. A bronze mould found at the Novotroitsk site is evidence of the production of belt set plaques by embossing technique. A cache of silver objects – Arab dirhams, Saltov type earrings and a ring – was found in a pot near one of the dwellings. Those objects had defects and, apparently, were scrap metal intended to make jewellery. The weight of silver jewellery was a multiple of the weight of coins.

The Saltov culture primarily influenced the formation of the corpus of the Romenskaya type accoutrements. Similarities with Finnish-Ugrian and Baltic antiques, as well as with Danubian (including late Avar and Moravian) specimens typical of the Byzantine provinces were insignificant. Cast earrings of the Saltov type and “noisy” Finnish-Ugrian pendants have been found; jewellery made using sophisticated technology, such as granulation work, was most likely imported from Byzantium. Cast seven- or five-ray temple rings with imitation granulation characteristic of the Romenskaya and later the Radimich culture are also traced back to Byzantine earrings with granulation “rays”. Thus, the ring-shaped earrings from the Supruty site hoard (outside Tula, 10th c.) have retained the Byzantine motif of paired birds above the plate ²¹.

Local jewellers relied mostly on casting and forging and did not master the more sophisticated techniques of granulation, embossing and soldering. Finger and other types of fibulae of the Antes epoch disappeared from the accoutrements, giving way to horseshoe fibulae characteristic of East European men’s and women’s costume of the 10th-13th centuries, and also rod torcs and bracelets (from the Baltic lands?).

Funerary rites were characterised by the raising of kurgans with the urns placed in the upper part of the earth bank, which seems to conform with the chronicler’s description of the funerary ritual of the Viaticchi, who put the bones of the cremated into urns that were raised “onto columns”. Rare occasions of inhumation are known.

Pots, bowls and pans were mostly modelled. Wheel-made vessels similar to the Saltov type originated in the Khazar Khaganate while amphorae were brought from cities of the Northern Black Sea coast. The varied ornament included, in addition to the simplest motifs, waves, zigzags, diamonds and other shapes impressed with the help of rope stamps, hollow indents, and so on, as well as rare zoomorphic motifs ²². Wheel-made pottery spread in the 10th century.

To judge by the chronicles, the Romenskaya culture tribes inhabited the northern lands. One of their centres – Novgorod Seversky – grew out of the Romenskoye settlement in the 10th century. If the spread of jewellery is anything to go by, a system of ethno-cultural lines of communication also formed in Eastern Europe in the 10th century, encompassing not only the middle reaches of the Dnieper, but also the Don and the Upper Dnieper area and giving birth to pre-state culture.

The problem of hieratic representations and buildings for public worship still holds a special place in the prehistory of Russian art and culture. Their relationship to mythological notions is not clear because mythological texts as such have not survived

20. For a general description of accoutrements taking into account specialised papers by O.A. Shcheglova see: Ryabtseva, 2005, pp. 17-23.

21. *Sokrovishcha vskumeny* (Ecumene Treasures), 2005, p. 120; Grigoriev, 2000, pp. 128-9. For the Byzantine and Antiquity traditions ornaments of the ancient Orient prove to be the distant prototypes of such rings (the same as of the lunulae) (Belyayev, L., 1999, pp. 17-20).

22. Sukhobokov, 1975, p. 116.

in the Slavic tradition (although imparting apotropaic magic to ornaments is universal). The anthropomorphic stone statues – “idols” – discovered in the forest and forest-steppe zones were, as a rule, outside the archaeological context of settlements or sanctuaries and therefore cannot be dated definitively. The iconographic features of the figure found at the Chernyakhov culture settlement of Stavchany (Podolia) – a braid, cap and drinking horn in its hand – classify it as an early Cuman (Polovtsy) statue. The dated statue of the Zbruch idol is of the early Russian period.

The so-called sacrificial pits are structures of public worship at sites and burial grounds of the Roman and Proto-Slavic periods: ashes, coals, animal bones and shards filling them are traces of sacrificial rites. Seven clay loaves – flat cakes imitating bread – were placed in a row in a pit at a Prague-Korchak culture settlement (in Volhynia); such cakes, occasionally with incised crosses, were found by the ovens in houses starting from the Chernyakhov culture period. A cabin-like structure was built above the pit.

The tradition of sacrificial pits persisted in Old Rus'. One such pit was discovered at an uninhabited site in Novgorod (10th c.). It contained seven scoops placed edgewise; two scoops lay upside down in the centre of the pit; there also were two semicircular pieces of wax in the pit. Another pit had two bull skulls with a scoop between them. A horse skeleton was found in still another pit. The skull had been severed and placed separately, together with a candle and a whip. That sacrificial assemblage is regarded as traces of a brotherhood feast at which sacrificial animals were eaten²³; the feast might have been held to consecrate an urban development site.

Neither written nor archaeological sources provide any evidence of pagan temples among the Eastern Slavs. Rituals were held at open-air heathen sanctuaries, cult trees, etc. In all likelihood, V.V. Khvoika unearthed one such sanctuary during excavations on Mount Starokievskaya in Kiev. He found an oval stone-paved spot with four projections in the cardinal directions and traces of burnt fire and animal bones by the paved spot. The regular shape of the paving is insufficiently documented and for this reason its cult nature is open to doubt. A structure of public worship at the Shumsk settlement (Volhynia) is better documented: a slightly sunken sanctuary was cruciform with projections in the cardinal directions. In the centre was a hollow with fastening stones (for a wooden idol?), an ashpit with an accumulation of ashes and charcoal evidencing multiple use of burnt fire and stone slabs (altars?) by which there were burnt bird and bull bones, a flint arrowhead (thunder arrow in the pan-Slavic tradition), and fragments of modelled and wheel-made pottery of the 9th-10th centuries. Remnants of a large surface house (a priest dwelling?) – a half-dugout and several pole outbuildings – were found by the place of worship. Nearby was a ground burial field with ashes of the cremated put into holes without any urns. Settlements of the same period were found in the vicinity of the sanctuary.

Supposedly, sites with areas not exceeding 15 m in diameter, that is, unfit for habitation and unlikely to be used for refuge, were assigned sanctuary functions²⁴. There are next to no occupation layers at those sites; instead ashpit stone paving was found. Fires were also made at earth banks and in trenches. Such sanctuary sites have been discovered in different areas, including the Smolensk, Pskov and Pripyat Polesie regions, and outside the village of Rzhavintsy in the Carpathian region of Ukraine.

In the forest zone of the Upper Dnieper and Oka River areas there existed in the 6th-8th centuries cultures traditionally associated with the Balts. Slavs appeared in the Baltic habitat and at settlements of the Balts, yet the Danubian-Byzantine influences are less manifest there than in the south.

Jewellery making among the Balts of the forest zone was characterised by finger fibulae and objects decorated with enamels, as is vividly demonstrated by the Moshchinsky hoard (State Historical Museum)²⁵. Trapezoid pendants and similar items were typical of the Baltic ornament. The spread of bracelet-like bronze, silver and occasionally iron temple rings is connected with the arrival of Slavs. In the east those rings spread as far as the Merya lands in the Upper Volga area and the Muromians' territory on the Oka River²⁶.

In the second half of the 1st millennium A.D. farther north there formed cultures characterized by unusual funerary monuments: they were the long-tumulus culture in the Smolensk and

Pskov areas and the tumulus culture in the Volkhov area. They were traditionally attributed to the tribal alliances of the Krivichi and the Ilmen Slovenians, known from the chronicles. According to the chronicles, the Krivichi resided in the Upper Zapadnaya Dvina, Dnieper and Volga areas; their very name derived from words meaning “inhabitants of the outskirts” – indeed they settled on the edge of the Proto-Slavic colonisation area. The Slovenians, who settled on Lake Ilmen in the neighbourhood of the Chud' (ancestors of the Estonians), and other Finno-Ugoric tribes called themselves by the same name as the Proto-Slavs on the Danube.

The Danubian cultural impulses thus reached the outskirts of the Slavic areal. Scarce artifacts of the Prague culture were found in the north. The funerary kurgan rite existing there apparently originated from the custom of making a semi-spherical barrow over the cremated remains in urns or without them, which was characteristic of the Proto-Slavs. The culture of burial grounds possibly preceded the long tumulus culture. Judging by the dated finds, such as V-shaped grooved belt buckles, Slavs started moving from Central Europe to the Pskov area in the middle of the 1st millennium A.D. The local Balt and Balto-Finnish inhabitants were assimilated by the Slavs. The Krivichi settlements (*selishche*) are poorly studied. The modelled pottery found there consisted mostly of little-profiled pots.

The long kurgans (up to 120 m long in the Pskov area and up to 30 m long in the Smolensk area) formed as a result of subsequent burials adjoining the initial barrow with cremation in an urn, ashpit or lengthwise along the entire horizon. From the turn of the 8th century the kurgans started to be built up vertically: up to four subsequent burials were made atop the initial barrow, reaching a height of up to 10 m. The Polotsk-Smolensk long kurgans differed from those of Pskov not only in size, but also in the composition of grave goods, which yielded remnants of women's headbands of the type of Letto-Lithuanian *vainas*, semi-spherical plaques, trapezoid and otherwise shaped pendants characteristic of the Baltic women's attire. The typical bracelet-like temple rings served as a model for a new variant of temple ring with lamellar broadening at the open ends (in imitation of the “lunula” ornaments of the Danubian area?) that appeared in the 10th century²⁷.

The largest concentration of barrows was found in the lower and upper reaches of the Volkhov River, where the cities of Ladoga and Novgorod came into being. The settlements of the Ilmen Slovenians, just as those of the Krivichi, have been studied poorly, and to all appearances they were unfortified *selishches*.

The Lyubshanskoye cusp hillfort on the Volkhov opposite the Staraya Ladoga is truly unique. Digs carried out by E.A. Ryabinina and other archaeologists yielded traces of vibrant bronze and iron making (crucibles, ladles and casting moulds). This is borne out by lamellar and lunula temple rings, horseshoe fibulae and trapezoid pendants, among other things (see also below). The hillfort was destroyed in the second half of the 9th century, apparently, in connection with the summoning of Varangian princes.

The barrows yielded modelled pottery (mostly stocky pots with round bodies), small dress ornaments (bronze shell-shaped plaques, trapezoid pendants, etc.) and bronze bracelets with widening ends.

When the barrows were made, their foundation outlines were revetted with boulders in one to three tiers. At the foot of the barrow there was also a stone paving of various shapes or just heaped up stones (apparently under the influence of the Baltic Finns' or Norse rituals).

The erection of massive burial monuments that were not characteristic of the Slavs on other territories is explained by Slavic colonisation, in particular, of the “Chud” – Finno-Ugorian – lands. In the absence of any patently cult architecture among the Slavic tribes of Eastern Europe burial monuments connected with the ancestral cult retained priority. They were meant to secure control over the colonised territories by the Krivichi and the Slovenians. Diverse dialectal forms of Slavic culture took shape alongside the Krivichi and Slovenian language dialects.

The Beginning of the Early Russian Period Fortified settlements that, naturally, were a more reliable means of defending tribal territories sprang up at the borders of the Krivichi-Slovenian and Chud zones starting from the 8th century. They included Izborsk of the Krivichi and Ladoga and Novgorod of the Slovenians. The emergence of towns was connected with the formation of the state as reflected in the first Russian chronicle – *The Tales of Begone Years* – compiled in Kiev at the turn of the 12th century (see M.A. Sagaidak, “On the History of Urban Development in Ancient Rus'”, in the present

23. Sedov, V., 1957.

24. Rusanova, Timoshchuk, 1993.

25. Sedov, V., 1982, pp. 44–5.

26. Sedov, V., 2005, pp. 811–23.

27. Sedov, V. 1999/1, pp. 144.

publication). It is noteworthy that a 859 A.D. chronicle mentions two spheres of influence in Eastern Europe. In the north the Chud, Slovenians, Krivichi and Merya paid tribute to the Varangians, who came from across the sea (from Scandinavia); in the south the Polanians, Severians and Radimichs in the middle reaches of the Dnieper and the Vyatichi on the Oka paid tribute to the Khazars. The chronicle account is corroborated by an anonymous Arab source of the last third of the 9th century reflected in Ibn Rustah's *Records* and other Arab writings of the 10th century. They wrote of the al-Rus, who live on an island and harass the Slavs ("al-saqaliba"), using ships to reach them; they carry them off as slaves and ... sell them in Khazaria and Volga Bulgaria. Meanwhile, in the south the Slavs were laid under tribute by the Hungarians (subjects of Khazaria), who sold Slavs off as slaves on the Bosphorus (in Kerch).

The presence of grave goods and structures of the Alanian-Khazar (Saltov) type in the area of the Volyntsevo culture in the middle reaches of the Dnieper and, to a lesser extent, of the Romenskaya culture (as evidenced by the mortuary monuments of the Pereshchepina and Voznesenka type with their treasure troves) bespeak the importance of their lands for the rulers of the "nomadic states". The building of stone fortresses relying on the Alanian (North Caucasus) and Byzantine traditions on the North Donets, Don and other rivers helped maintain Khazar control over the forest-steppe areas and the principal river routes. Commissioned by the Khazar Khaganate the Byzantine master builder Petrona built the Sarkel brick fortress on the Don around 840 A.D.

Khazaria's stone construction had next to no effect on the construction of defenses and its development in the Slavic lands: as before, the Slavs built earth banks and trenches for fortifications, sometimes with wooden walls. However, common economic and cultural interests had brought together the whole of Eastern and Northern Europe ever since the turn of the 9th century. Arab silver coins started to be shipped to Scandinavia by river routes at that time. Dirhems minted in different cities of the Caliphate are found in caches along the rivers of Eastern Europe, on the coast of the Baltic (Varangian) Sea and in Scandinavia. Graffiti in Norse runes and other inscriptions and drawings, including Turkic tamga-like and Russian princely markings, were often put on the coins. Oriental sources connect the inflow of silver with commercial activity of "al-Rus", who took their wares and slaves along the rivers to Khazaria. According to Ibn Khordadbeh (940-980s), they paid a tithe (tax) to the Khagan there, disembarked on the southern coast of the Caspian Sea and followed caravan routes to Baghdad or sailed the Black Sea to Constantinople. There the emperor charged them a tithe. Importantly, a sizable portion of silver was left behind at settlements along East European rivers – the Oka, the Upper Volga and the Volkhov. This means that the Russian travellers had to pay for the services of the local Slavs when plying trade routes. Apparently, the Slavs of the left-bank Dnieper got some of their silver from the Khazars. One way or another, silver ornaments were made of raw materials coming in the form of coins (cf. the aforementioned hoard at the Romenskaya hillfort of Novotroitskoye). In Scandinavia that production flourished in the era of the Vikings (9th-11th cc.), sometimes referred to as the Silver Age.

The ornamental style of the common belt fittings changed: in the 8th century the geometrical "heraldic" ornament gave way to the foliate ornament of palmettes, lotuses and so on. It had parallels both in the Iranian and in the Byzantine (Danubian) tradition. Some motifs of the animal style were revived. Things of simpler outlines replaced the earlier fibulae of fanciful zoomorphic and similar forms. In the second half of the 8th century tiny lead-tin plaques, pendants, rosettes and other ornaments known from the Antes antiques in the Dniester area and further on among the Avars and in the Crimea, where similar plaques were sometimes made of gold, spread through the Volkhov and Chud areas²⁸.

The earliest silver hoards were mostly found both in towns, Ladoga included, and at Gorodishche outside Novgorod. Ladoga was a very old centre of trade and crafts, oriented both to East European trade and to contacts with the Baltic region. Traces of a whole crafts quarter with horn, bone, amber, bronze and, possibly, glass workshops are supposed to have been discovered in Ladoga. Among its earliest (mid-8th century) buildings is a two-chamber pier structure with a hearth. It accommodated a smithy, as is borne out by a trove of blacksmith and jeweller's tools of Norse origin totalling 26 items, including several pincers, an iron punch, a tiny jeweller's anvil, three jeweller's hammers,

chisels, jeweller's scissors, augers, wire-drawing dies and an embossing anvil.

Crucibles, a fragment of a casting mould, a tin ingot and other items indicating that a smelting furnace (?) might have been there were found next to a flagstone paved spot within that structure. The blanks and finished products discovered at the workshop included rivets used in building boats, knife blades, an arrowhead and many other things. The smith must have worked with both ferrous and non-ferrous metals. Jeweller's hammers and the iron binding of a "soft" wooden anvil for embossing and stamping²⁹. The assemblage had a lot of glass beads, more than a quarter of them rejects, which attests to their local production. A stone casting mould to make silver ingots as semi-products and so on, is testimony of mature jewellery making. All of the above is proof of the existence of differentiated urban crafts in Ladoga and their Pan-Baltic nature.

By the early 10th century pottery making had emerged on the basis of the local tradition – modelled pottery similar to that of the barrow culture. Numerous ornaments found in the cultural layer together with items of Norse nature were also of the local tradition, the barrow and long-tumulus culture. These included Slavic temple rings, a lunula temple ring and a stone casting mould for a three-horn lunula. A bone finial of a staff (?) with a sculpted dragon head found in one of the Ladoga mounds and a hook with a zoomorphic end³⁰ are all remarkable specimens of decorative and applied arts.

Ladoga was the poly-ethnic centre of a territory inhabited by the Slovenians, the Krivichi, the Finnish-speaking Chud (ornaments with "noisy" pendants were characteristic of the Finns that combined North European and Moravian traditions in its decoration. Oriental silver hoards are evidence of wealth accumulation and redistribution processes in the 8th-10th centuries. According to the chronicles, life then was not devoid of conflicts.

Under an 862 A.D. entry the chronicle reports that the local tribes expelled the Varangians beyond the sea (the Ladoga fire layer is sometimes associated with that event) and refused to pay tribute to them. The rebellious tributaries then began to "govern themselves" and "there was no truth in them": one clan rose against another. When the internecine strife was over, the former tributaries decided at a *veche* (public assembly) to call in a prince who would govern them and judge them "by law". To this end envoys were sent across the sea to one of the Varangian alliances, Rus. Three brother princes responded to the call, took "the entire Rus" along with them and came to the Slovenians, the Krivichi and the Merya who had summoned them. According to one version of the legend about the calling of the princes, Rurik, the eldest of them, first ruled in Ladoga and then built Novgorod, Truvor got Izborsk in the Krivichi land, and Sineus Beloozero in the land of the Finnish tribe called Ves (the Slovenian colonisation area).

Scholars connect the Norse burial kurgan at the Plakun *urochishche* outside Ladoga, under which Norse cremations in boats were found, among other things, with the calling of the Varangian warriors. Coins confirm the dating of those events in the chronicles: from the 860s, when passage along the East European rivers was normalized, there was an active inflow of Oriental coins to Eastern Europe and Scandinavia. The appearance of a network of towns during that period is also confirmed. Izborsk is the oldest of them; no traces dating to the 9th-century have been uncovered in Beloozero, but remnants of a 10th-century burial ground with the cremated deceased and Norse shell-like fibulae are known. In addition, objects of Norse origin have been found alongside traces of smith's and jeweller's crafts of later dating at the unfortified settlement of Krutik on the Sheksna River (a beaver hunting centre) in the vicinity of Beloozero.

Similar to Ladoga, Izborsk, founded in the 8th-9th centuries by the Krivichi, was an inter-tribal centre, whose cultural layers contain Chud and other Baltic area artifacts.

Among the finds are Oriental and Byzantine coins, including three hoards of dirhems, beads, artifacts of Norse and Pan-Baltic types, weights and parts of scales. Bronze smelting, bone carving, weaving and other crafts were the main types of activity for the Gorodishche inhabitants, who also produced ornaments, including of the Norse types. Such were the unfinished fibula, a lead finial in the form of a dragon head, a silver Valkyrie figurine³¹, etc.

Kiev, in the area of which rural Slavic settlements of the 6th – 8th centuries are known to have existed, too, could have had a similar history. The early history of Kiev is connected with a chronicle legend of Prophetic Oleg and Igor moving the capital from Novgorod to Kiev. Oleg, who had brought his *druzhina*

28. Two copper alloy master gages to make rectangular embossed ornamented plates or casting moulds were found in a trove of metal ingots and semi-finished and finished goods at the Lyubshanskoye hillfort (the right bank of the Volkhov River) dating to the 8th-9th cc. A similar casting mould of stone was unearthed at the Kamno hillfort outside Pskov. (See: Shcheglova, 2002, pp. 134-50; Shcheglova, 2004, pp. 263-71).

29. Parallels are known to have been found in early (10th c.) Novgorod deposit layers and medieval (16th-17th cc.) production complexes of Pskov.

30. See catalogue: Staraya Ladoga, 2003.

31. Nosov, 1990, pp. 157, 122.

of Varangians and Slovenians, referred to a Rus, proclaimed Kiev a “metropolis” – “the mother of Russian cities”³².

Pottery, finger and anthropomorphic fibulae and a fragment of a bronze cloisonné fibula found in the area of Kiev date from the pre-Christian period. Hundreds of kurgans, including large princely ones, were destroyed in the process of urban development. Remains of an early settlement of the 9th - 10th centuries were unearthed at the Zamkova Hora (Castle Hill) together with a cache of Oriental coins of the 8th – 10th centuries and a mould to cast dirhems (often worn as necklace pendants). The memory of *mohylas* (graves) – large kurgans of the first Kiev princes Askold and Dir – lingers on in the names of *urochishches*.

Druzhina grave goods provide the bulk of material for the description of the applied arts of 10th-century Kiev. The cultural layer contains objects typical of a broad area of Slavic culture. Thus, a stone mould for casting a Moravian temple ring of the Bijelo Brdo culture type is evidence of traditional contacts with the Danube area and Moravia; earrings of the Moravian Nitra type with a plate in the form of a lunula were discovered in the Monastyrek settlement outside Kiev. Significantly, the composition of the earring metal is similar to that of other Kiev wares, for which raw materials might have also been imported from Moravia (cf. a chronicle report about Prince Sviatoslav’s plans to found a Rus capital on the Danube, to which all riches were supposed to flow, including silver from Moravia).

Alongside ornaments of the Pan-Slavic type, Norse male and female accoutrements featured prominently in the ruling elite culture of the emergent Old Rus state. For instance, Moravian granulation work pendants combined in a woman’s dress with a silver Norse fibula, the massive ring of which has three beads and round gold mounts fixed by gold joint-pins, were found in Kievan *druzhina* chamber tomb No. 112.

Objects with Oriental motifs were another component of the *druzhina* culture. A 10th-century Kievan workshop, the remnants of which were unearthed at Podol, made belt fittings for members of the Kievan *druzhina*; a fragment of an inscription has been discovered on a mould for casting belt plaques.

To judge by the found casting moulds, ball-shaped buttons with a loop produced in Kiev were a characteristic detail of the Russian *druzhina* costume: bronze with a higher content of antimony, bismuth and other metals was also used to make belt and bridle ornaments. Kievan casting moulds were amassed in a jeweller’s workshop of the turn of the 11th century excavated in 1981 at the Starokievskaya Hora. The workshop could have been connected with the ducal palace structure ensemble (the nearby vestiges of a stone structure are thought to be the palace of Princess Olga³³).

Products of Kievan jewellers’ are regularly found among the grave goods of the *druzhina* kurgans of a vast region encompassing, in addition to the Kievan Right Bank, the Chernigov (Severian) Left Bank, that is, the lands that Oleg with his Varangians and Slovenians conquered after having settled in Kiev. That area in the middle reaches of the Dnieper, which had paid tribute to the Khazars before Oleg’s ascent and which came to be referred to in the chronicles as the land of the Rus, was the domain of the Kievan prince. Judging by the grave goods, the uniform *druzhina* culture spread throughout that area.

The Kievan chamber tombs with female internments are the most representative assemblages of the Old Russian *druzhina* costume and jewellery of the mid-10th century. The goods found in chamber tomb No. 124 include paired Norse shell-like fibulae (the ongoing Germanic tradition of wearing paired fastenings); gilt bronze with a cast openwork mount (“shell”) between five conical projections; a pair of Slavic silver temple rings of the so-called Volhynia type with three hollow drop beads decorated with granulation work; a necklace of various beads; a silver pendant and two Byzantine silver coins with a suspension eye. A bronze cross with equal arms was also part of that necklace. Chamber tomb No. 125 also contained paired shell-like fibulae; four silver and gold wire earrings with inset rock crystal beads; a necklace of glass and paste beads; a dirhem pendant with an eye; and finally, two silver crosses with equal arms and widening ends. Characteristically, the two burials date from the time of the rule of Princess Olga, who together with her retinue visited Constantinople, where she was baptised under Constantine VII (one of the coins in the necklace from chamber tomb No. 124 was minted under that emperor).

Similar grave goods mixing different traditions, including Christian, are known to have been found at major early Russian settlements and communication hubs where *druzhinas* were sta-

tioned: in Gnezdovo on the Upper Dnieper; Timerevo on the Upper Volga and Pskov.

Uniform cultural development trends, including those connected with the spread of Christianity before the official baptism of Rus under Prince Vladimir, took shape on the route “from the Varangians to the Greeks” in the land of Rus (middle reaches of the Dnieper) in the 10th century. Alongside the then dominant pagan cremation there existed the rite of internment in a grave with the head oriented westward and occasionally with pectoral crosses and scarce grave goods, including simple wire temple rings and so on. *Druzhina* burials with an assortment of arms, occasionally with a bridled horse at the feet and a woman slave buried next to her master, and opulent grave goods were the richest complexes. In the second half of the 10th century such chamber graves under kurgans could contain both cremated and inhumed deceased. The so-called large kurgans with specific rites and grave goods stand out from among the 10th-century Russian *druzhina* necropolis. Their mounds up to 10 m high were made in two stages: the primary earth bank was covered by a “clay cap” that retained its semi-spherical shape, preventing it from crumbling. Chernigov and Gnezdovo are known to have such kurgans (including the biggest ones – Chernaya Mohyla (Black Grave) and Gulbishche (Ambulatory), which have not survived in Kiev. The closest parallels are known in Sweden (including on the royal estate of Adelsö next to the key Swedish center of Birka on Lake Mälaren on the route from “the Varangians to the Greeks”). Under a large kurgan there is, as a rule, a double ship cremation (a warrior and a woman), horse and other animal sacrificial remains, arms sets and funeral feast goods.

B.A. Rybakov, who studied the Black Grave field excavation papers (1870s), suggested that the local pyre had had the form of an otherworld house; however when grave goods were sorted out large ship rivets were found – the ship had been installed on a rectangular pyre, which tallied with the description of ship cremation in an account by the Arab author Ahmad ibn Fadlan (920s), who witnessed the rite in Volga Bulgaria.

The kurgan is about 11 m high, has a base diameter of about 40 m, a circumference of 125 m and a 7 m wide trench. The pyre was built on the initial sand bank (1 – 1.5 m high and 10 – 15 m in diameter). Judging by the arrangement of goods, B.A. Rybakov supposed that there had been three corpses on the pyre – an adult warrior, a woman (to his right) and a warrior youth (between them), their heads pointing westwards. To the left of the adult warrior was a heap of arms, including two swords of the second half of the 10th century. The gilt silver handle of one of them, with the guard bent downwards, is engraved with a foliate scroll pattern in a loop-like framing. When the fused mass of iron objects was being restored, fragments of at least three more swords were discovered. The site also yielded a sabre, a spear (ten spearheads have been found at the pyre), bits of chainmail (three coats of mail with decorative fringes of woven copper rings have been found at Black Grave), remnants of a wooden shield with a bronze cover fixed by iron rivets. Two bridled horses had been laid at the feet of the warrior: horse bones, bit rings, two pairs of round stirrups and two conical helmets have been found. Arms are represented by a battle axe, arrows, evidently in a quiver (12 arrowheads), of which iron mounts have survived, and one-edged Norse scramasax knife. An iron vessel with burnt ram bones, a bronze brazier with coals and a bronze vessel with ram ankle-bones for knuckle-bones were found in the eastern part of the pyre (at the feet of the deceased?). The western part was occupied by iron hoop-shaped binding and wooden bucket handles (a dozen of buckets). The work implements consisted of an adze (in the heap of arms) and chisels; ten sickles were at the feet of the woman, together with bones of a bull or a cow and grass seeds. A lock and keys found there may be connected with the pagan ritual of “locking up” the deceased at the place of burial. Of women’s accoutrements there have survived one-bead temple rings, broken pieces of bone combs, a clay spindle whorl and two awls, one bronze and the other bone. Two clay wheel-made pots had a linear ornament. Also found at the pyre were five knives, including with bone handles; whetstones; belt rings and bronze belt tips; dice; semi-spherical gaming bone figurines; and a bronze barrel-like weight. A gold Byzantine coin of 945-959 A.D. found at the pyre makes it possible to date the construction of the kurgan the 960s.

Upon the cremation the two helmets, coats of mail with fused bones and two scramasax knives were extracted from the pyre. Then another mound was made to the height of about 7 m, atop of which the remains of the deceased were put together with

³² Chronicle entry under 882 A.D. (see: Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles, 1998, vol. 2, clm. 17).

³³ Kharlamov, 1985.

the armour removed from the pyre. To these were added two rhytons, a bronze statuette of a seated Norse god.

Old Norse pagan poems shed light on ritual symbolism. In *Elder Edda* Thor is capable of cooking goats harnessed to his chariot in a cauldron, while preserving their skins and bones intact, and then the goats come back alive (the statuette of a seated god touching his beard from Black Grave and the bearded mask from Gnezdovo evidently represent the thunderer god: the beard is his characteristic attribute); a similar cauldron crops up in the description of Valhalla, the Norse hall of the slain: there a boar is cooked for the dead who fall in battle and become adopted sons of Odin, the Allfather of Norse gods. His men spend time in battle and feasts, and those slain are brought back to life to attend Odin's feast, for which the boar is likewise brought back to life. Feasts were a typical feature of both Norse and Old Rus warrior way of life: it is not by chance that large barrows contained ritual cauldrons that were thought to be always full of food, and also feast sets (rhytons and so on). The initial Black Grave mound with a cauldron and armour at its top served as an afterlife abode of the type of Valhalla, the walls of which were bedecked with armour.

The large kurgans are traditionally ascribed to Old Rus princes. Indeed, a princely "Rus clan" of Norse descent ruled in Old Rus and its representatives had to be in control of the main trade routes, above all the route from the Varangians to the Greeks. The biggest commercial and crafts centre of Rus on that route, the Gnezdovo settlement, was founded 12 km south of Smolensk at the place where the Volkhov water system meets that of the Dnieper on the way from Scandinavia and Novgorod to Kiev and Constantinople³⁴. The settlement consisted of a hillfort, rural settlements and eight kurgan clusters. Gnezdovo had appeared by the 10th century and ceased to exist in the early 11th century. Its appearance is tied to the emergence of the trading axis of the Old Rus state, Oleg's getting hold of Kiev and putting the "upper" lands of the Krivichi (in whose area Gnezdovo and Smolensk were located), the Slovenians and the Merya under tribute.

Gnezdovo began to be studied after a rich hoard of silver ornaments and several coins had been found there in 1867. A settlement area of over 5,000 sq m and some 1,500 kurgans were excavated, and seven 10th century hoards were found; at least four hoards were unearthed in the rural settlement area.

The hillfort occupied 1.1 hectare in the central part of the complex on the left bank of the Svinets River, and the surrounding rural settlements spread over 17.5 hectares on both banks of the stream. The cultural layer brimmed with pottery shards, whereas fragments of modelled pottery were scarce. The finds included numerous beads, mostly of Byzantine glass, bronze and silver ornaments and costume details, household utensils, tools, arms and armour, as well as Byzantine and Arab coins of the 8th – 10th centuries.

The large Gnezdovo treasure trove – a chance find of an assemblage of ornaments and coin silver – included 20 coins (Byzantine, Anglo-Saxon, Iranian – Sasanian dirhems – and even an Indian coin turned into a pendant). The trove was dated mid-10th century on the basis of the coins. The ornaments are conventionally categorised as Old Russian and imported. The former are represented by four torcs made of three double twisted rods with tied-up ends; 10 big and small lunulae with granulation work; two granulation work pendants with a small soldered hemisphere in the centre; two cast pendants with foliate design and a human figure between two birds; a cast belt buckle with a foliate design turned into a pendant; bracelet-like temple rings with tied-up ends; and 32 hollow silver beads with filigree ornament (different for every bead). The imported ornaments include a large hollow torc with overlapping ends terminating in ribbed rosettes; two bronze Norse shell-like fibulae; two cast round Norse fibulae with a twined ornament and four sculpted figurines of stags (rhombic pendants are attached to one of the fibula); 19 cast openwork gilt pendants in the Norse animal style; a cast mask – a bearded face under a visor, as a rule, of Khazar and Volga Bulgarian provenance. And, finally, the reliquary boxes were widespread among the Western Slavs, including in Moravia. It is not clear whether the trove belonged to a jeweller who was ready to use it as raw material (coins included) or whether its items formed part of a female Gnezdovo resident costume. Similar sets of pendants are characteristic of necklaces found in Gnezdovo burials.

The kurgan clusters were located on both banks of the Dnieper. Most of the kurgans are 1.0 – 1.5 m high and hemi-

spherical in shape; rectangular mounds are quite rare. Cremation was the prevalent funerary rite at Gnezdovo. Inhumation in grave pits and burial chambers, occasionally with special wooden structures inside, accounted for a small group of burials. Among the finds were arms, such as arrows, spears, axes, swords, scramasaxes, helmets and coats of mail; ornaments and accoutrements, including fibulae, pendants, temple rings, glass and stone beads, rings, buckles and belt fittings; household utensils; pagan amulets – torcs with Thor hammer-pendants, miniature representations of arms, etc.; and trading implements and Byzantine and Arab coins. Apparently, there were also some ship burials, to judge by the boat rivets found at pyres. Of greatest importance among the finds is an early inscription in Russian on an earthen pot from kurgan 13 of the early 10th century (ship burial).

It was primarily pottery (including wheel-made vessels that were close to Moravia culture type and spread by the mid-10th century) that bears evidence of the development of the Slavic cultural tradition in Gnezdovo. Finger-ring-shaped temple rings were found in several kurgans with inhumation burials, their ritual and grave goods similar to those in the middle reaches of the Dnieper. Individual finds of Baltic things were made in the settlements' cultural layer. Also found were things of Norse origin (ship fittings, iron torcs, some types of fibulae and other ornaments), West European swords (with Norse handles), Byzantine glass beads, coins and glazed pottery, as well as rich clothing. The type of temple rings, certain arms and the nature of wheel-made pottery suggest Moravian contacts.

In the second half of the 10th century the settlement saw vigorous activity, as is borne out by the expanded area under the rural settlements and the growing number of kurgans. There undoubtedly local crafts at the settlement, where Norse type wares were also made. Finds made at one of the structures give an idea of local jewellery making and include a copper mould to make semi-spherical rosettes, shell-like fibulae, etc.; a stone mould for casting temple rings of Nitra type originating from Moravia; a Norse charm in the form of a valkyrie made of sheet silver, and so on. Also found were fragments of split clay moulds for casting Norse shell-like and trefoil fibulae³⁵.

With the development of a network of cities in the 11th century Gnezdovo lost its importance and gradually shrank to a small fortress and, eventually, a village. In the 10th century multi-ethnic traditions of crafts were spread in the 10th century by itinerant artisans, who, apparently, belonged to an organisation servicing the needs of the Old Rus *druzhina*. The mortuary complexes with jeweller's tools, casting moulds and so on are attributed to them (in Lopin outside Smolensk, Shestovica (Shestovitsa) outside Chernigov, Peresopnitsa (Peresopnitsa) in Volhynia and Mikhailovskoye in the Upper Volga area)³⁶.

Among the multitude of artefacts found by archaeologists in the area of Slavic settlements in the 6th – 10th centuries, some items stand out for their especially smart forms and rich decorative elements, both ornamental and theme-related. With a rare exception, there are no monumental relics among them: practically all of the handicrafts mentioned above are of small size. Ornamental motifs predominate in their decoration; the rare theme motifs – zoomorphic, including of the Norse animal style, the "gripping beast" and such like, and anthropomorphic amulets in the form of a valkyrie or human figure between two birds or animals – are incorporated in ornamental compositions. Representations on the chape of a large rhyton from the Black Grave sacrificial complex (State Historical Museum) are thought to be the earliest theme scene in Russian art. The gilt silver mountings along the mouth of the rhyton were stamped, engraved and nielloed. Their foliate ornament – entwined gilt palmettes against a silver background – is close to the 10th-century Hungarian decorative style³⁷. The gilt background, against which the figures of animals and archers are stamped in flat relief, is punched (as in Sasanian silver vessels)³⁸. The rhyton mounting rim is decorated with ten nielloed palmettes replicating the belt plaque motifs – a decorative technique characteristic of Khazar ceremonial vessels.

The large rhyton has a multi-part stamped, nielloed and gilt composition with representations of two gryphons whose interlaced tails form a shape reminiscent of the palmette. The master craftsman replicated in it the pattern of a heraldic composition combining paired motifs – two gryphons (a similar motif is on the granulation work pendant from the Gnezdovo trove), two archers between two birds, and two tailed monsters tearing at each other, which likewise form a palmette-type motif. Already I.I. Tolstoy and N.P. Kondakov pointed out that that type of representations

34. See: *Put' iz Varyag* (The Route from the Varangians), 1996.

35. For a general description of jewellery making in Gnezdovo see: Eniosova, 1999.

36. Eniosova, Nefedov, 1999, pp. 54-63.

37. The Hungarian style foliate ornament on the chape of one of them has a parallel in the decoration of the so-called Charlemagne sabre.

38. Bowls from the Afanasievsky hoard on the Kama (second half of the 8th – first half of the 9th cc.).

traceable to ancient prototypes are executed in the traditions of the “Greco-Oriental animal style”³⁹.

The interlaced foliate ornament relates the gryphon representation to the neighbouring images of a beast showing its teeth and an eagle. Under the legs of the eagle and the gryphon are representations of small animals in which one can guess hares. The motif of a hare mauled by a predator bird is traditional for the Greco-Oriental animal style. The composition gravitating to ornamentalism and regularity is characteristically asymmetrical: the gryphon is “connected” with the bird on the one side and a predatory animal of the other.

The archers are between two birds – the rooster (domestic/earthly) and the eagle (heaven’s predator). At first glance, the birds are the targets. However, the arrows do not hit the “targets”; conversely, three arrows are flying by and one is directed at the shooting archer⁴⁰. The other archer, with the back of his head facing the viewer, has his hair braided. Many-figured compositions similar to that on the rhyton mounting are known from other artefacts close in time, including the Byzantine hunting “horn of Lehel”. In it, the Byzantine master bone-carver reproduced deer and lion hunting scenes traditional for Eurasian art; a deer mauled by a predatory bird; beasts locked in combat; a predatory bird in the centre of a composition between two gryphons and so on. These motifs are believed to convey mostly circus scenes. Neither functionally nor stylistically can the hunting horn be seen as a direct parallel to the Black Grave rhyton, yet the typological similarity of individual pictorial motifs makes it possible to regard it as a likely model clumsily copied by a craftsman of the time of Prince Sviatoslav⁴¹.

Archery scenes – the so-called heaven hunt motifs believed to go back to “primitive” Eurasian cosmogonic myths about a hunter following a heavenly deer and so on – form part of the representations of royal hunt in Sasanian art, which had a tremendous impact on the art of the Eurasian steppes, Khazaria included. Among the well-known examples are scenes of a lion hunt on a gilt silver scoop from Kotsky Gorodok (Khanty-Mansi National District) and hunting scenes with palmettes between them on a Khazar scoop from the Kip-III burial ground (Irtysk area)⁴². On the Kotsky scoop a hunter with braided hair is fighting a character whose hair is tied with a band (according to a description of a Turkic kagan left by the 6th-century Chinese author Xuanzang (Hsuan-tsang), he is accompanied by nobles with braided hair)⁴³. The meaning of the opposition lies in the mythological motif of “the golden branch”, which was popular among the Turkic tribes and the Khazars: the kagan has a co-ruler and rival among his nobles, who kills the kagan when he grows old and is found incapable of governing. Typologically the scoop is also close to the Chernigov rhyton because the composition on the mounting is segmented by palmettes executed in the style of Saltov belt plaques⁴⁴.

One of the archers on the Chernigov rhyton also has his hair braided. Consequently, here too the archery motif is treated not merely as a hunting scene, but as a contest. The other archer is evidently being defeated: the arrow aims at the back of his head⁴⁵. The combat motif is known in the art of the Eurasian steppes already from the Scythian period (Kul-Oba archers) and has parallels in Achaemenid art (a cylinder from the National Library of Paris). A comparison can be drawn between the representations of the two central characters with different hairdos on the pectoral of the 4th century B.C. from the Tolstaya Mogila (Fat Grave) and the representation of two Scythians, one of whom has braided hair (Kiev)⁴⁶. The closest parallel is found in the motifs of Khazar belt plaques from a barrow in the Ingul River basin: a bearded old man with loose hair held by a band is shown in the centre of a fastener; the plaques show young men with their hair tucked in a bun at the back of the head⁴⁷. On the aforementioned Grinev mounting the embrace of the characters – one with loose and the other with braided hair – is a symbol of a “holy marriage”. It is noteworthy that the Achaemenid cylinder with the scene of a “Scythian” archer combat becoming a hand-to-hand flight has in the centre of the composition a winged creature that is usually interpreted as a symbol of “farn” – the regal charisma. The combat motif therefore signifies the victory of the holy king piercing his enemy with a sword.

In all likelihood, the scene of two warriors in combat is a symbolically important motif in the art of Khazaria (in a broad sense, including Bulgarian and other parallels), despite the scarcity of such compositions known so far. For instance, two jousting horsemen are represented on the so-called reliquary

found outside the village of Mayaki⁴⁸: the spearman hits his foe, who drops his sword. The composition also includes representations of a bird (falcon?) above the winner’s shoulder (cf. Iranian ideas of “farn” as a bird) and a snake behind the loser’s back, which is important for understanding the symbolism of the scene as a whole. This “zoomorphic code” also brings to mind the composition of the Chernigov rhyton, in which a predatory bird is shown before an archer with braided hair and a rooster (earthly domestic bird) behind the loser’s back. The universal cosmological meaning of such subjects is clearly opposition and struggle between the heaven above and the earthly world below⁴⁹. The composition on the rhyton, however, looks more complex.

The steppe “Khazar” culture spread along the left-bank Dnieper from the Volynstvo period (the 8th century). The use of a “Khazar” theme in the design of Old Russian princely ritual vessels of Chernigov was only natural: the Severian land of Chernigov had long paid tribute to the Khazars, the Chernigov princes had received Khazarian land (Imutarakan) as their crown domain and, last but not least, the early Russian princes up to Yaroslav the Wise in the 11th century had aspired to the Khazar “imperial” title of kagan.

Different elements coexisted in the costume of the members of the prince’s troop: ornaments of Norse origin were used alongside Khazar belts and horse trappings (including masks of South Siberian – Minusinsk – origin, as is borne out by their finds in Novgorod and Gnezdovo), a nomad lance and so on; woman’s costume could mix Norse shell-like or otherwise shaped fibulae with Slavic temple rings and earrings, as well as similar accoutrements of Byzantine origin. It is noteworthy that rectangular mountings on the two rhytons are decorated with rectangular palmettes and have parallels in the design of five paired rectangular silver and gilded caftan buckles from the large Gulbishche kurgan (also found there were Saltov plaques and other details of a nomad’s belt); similar buckles were found in the Old Russian town of Uglich in the Upper Volga region, at Iskorosten’ in the middle reaches of the Dnieper and elsewhere.

It can be surmised that the accoutrements found in the fortified settlements on the route from the Varangians to the Greeks and along the Volga reflected the synthesis of diverse influences characteristic of an emergent civilisation rather than the syncretism of a “barbarian culture”⁵⁰.

Norse motifs also influenced emergent Old Russian art through anthropomorphic charms and Norse gods. These included the seated idol from the Black Grave mentioned above and the “valkyrie” statuettes found at the Rurikovo *gorodishche* (a valkyrie casting mould has been found in Ladoga) and at Gnezdovo.

Also characteristic are unique figurines of the so-called Viking, which are bronze relief casts, evidently from the same mould: one was found outside the town of Novy Bykhov on the right-bank Dniepre, another at the Daugmal hillfort in the Zapadnaya Dvina estuary, on the rivers of the Eastern route as Rus’ and Eastern Europe were referred to in sagas. The figurines represent a walking bearded warrior with a belted sword, whose hilt has a Norse ornament; the warrior’s left arm is thrust forward and in his right hand he holds a helical ring behind his back.

Although there are no exact parallels to these bronze figurines in Scandinavia (or elsewhere), the motif of warriors carrying rings in their hands is typical of Norse art, Gotland memorial (picture) stones (stelae) in particular. Their cult compositions (dated ca. 800-1000) with scenes of the slain warrior triumphantly entering the Valhalla (pagan warrior heaven), ring in hand, have prototypes in Roman art in the representations of victors with wreaths. The hero is welcomed by a valkyrie with a drinking horn – representations on stone are typologically close to the cast valkyrie figurines. In the Norse tradition itself, however, rings are a sacred object and symbol of unbreakable oath (betrothal) to the chieftain, and in the scenes of entering the Valhalla to join Odin, the ruler of that warrior heaven, who assembles an army of slain heroes in his afterlife hall. That motif might have been adopted by Old Rus. Its 944 treaty with the Greeks reads, “non-Christian Rus shall lay down its shields and naked swords, *rings* and other arms and pledge everything”⁵¹.

In addition to the Gotland parallels, the East European figurines of the so-called Viking have more precise parallels in Old Norse art from the point of view of both style and chronology. Parallels with the belted sword of the “Vikings” have been found in representations on runestones of the first half of the 9th century in Røke, Sweden. A runestone of the first half of the 11th century from Drävle (Uppland, Sweden) belongs with the same group of pictorial themes: they share a common motif of the main

39. Russian Relics in Art Monuments, 1897, p. 14.

40. B.A. Rybakov found a parallel to the motif of an archer being struck by his own arrows in Russian folklore (*bylina* about Ivan Godinovich). In it Koshchei carrying away Ivan’s beloved takes a shot at the “raven”, the prophetic bird, but the arrow hits the evil-monger himself. If the human figurines are seen as representing a couple – a man and a woman – the motif interpretation can multiply indefinitely from ravishing onwards. Rybakov also suggested an ancient “calendar” interpretation variety as Persephone being carried off by Hades (see: Rybakov, 1949, pp. 47-50). However, the absence of the main character – Ivan – from the composition remains unaccounted for in the former interpretation; furthermore, the archer with a braid has no arrows; perhaps it is the arrow shot by him that has hit the other archer.

41. Shcheglova: 1997, pp. 246–57.

42. Flerova: 2001, p. 98.

43. Foniakova, 2003, pp. 45–8.

44. A Sasanian silver scoop from the Podgornensky kurgans (Don area, 7th c.), on which hunting scenes (an archer shooting at a lion and a dismounted hero fighting a bear) are separated with tree motifs, dates from an earlier period. Tanais Archaeological Reserve Museum.

45. A close pictorial motif of two archers hunting a wild mountain goat is known from the petroglyphs of Zhaltyrak-Tash (Aktai) of medieval (Turkic) times. The solar sign in the composition invokes the celestial sphere; the archers have different hairdos. However, overall the composition differs from the scenes on the vessels: the hunters are shooting in the same rather than opposite directions.

46. Mozolevskii, 1979, p. 87.

47. Bokii, Pletneva, 1988, pp. 99–116.

48. Pletneva, 2000, Fig. 124.

49. Cf. Flerova, 2001.

50. See “The Route from the Varangians” exhibition catalogue, 1996.

51. Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles, 1997, vol. 1, clm. 53.

heroic deed of Sigurd stabbing the dragon Fafnir with his sword, Gram. A flowering cross is in the centre of the composition, above which Sigurd performs his exploit, and on the sides of the upper branch is a running man with his left arm extended and a ring in his right hand, and a woman with a drinking horn ⁵².

According to legend, the person with the ring is Andvari, a dwarf who was the first owner of the Niflung gold: the cunning god Loki forced him to relinquish all treasures that Andvari had hidden in the rock, including the magic ring which he held especially dear – like the Draupnir ring of Odin, it could restore the dwarf's riches. Therefore Andvari cursed his wealth. However, the composition on the Drävle runestone obviously has to do not with Andvari but with Sigurd himself, the new master of the ring and of the treasure he got by stabbing the dragon guarding them. In addition to the ring, the “Viking” also has the belted sword, another Sigurd attribute ⁵³.

The picture of a woman's figure meeting the hero with a rhyton in hand is known not only from Norse pictorial art as represented by the selfsame Gotland stones, but also from eddic poems (and Skaldic poetry). “With wine valkyries greet the chieftain” ⁵⁴ is also a scene related to the arrival of the hero at the Valhalla. The Drävle runestone character and the “Vikings” of the Dnieper and the Daugava have their arms stretched out as if ready to accept the rhyton. It is not accidental that the Novy Bykhov figurine was found in a barrow, possibly in a special casket by the left arm of the deceased: the amulet was supposed to serve as a “pass” to heaven.

The composition of the hero's meeting on the Uppland runestone and the Gotland stelae also has parallels in the Norse applied arts of the 6th-9th centuries, including votive golden plaques with stamped pictures of meeting and embracing couples, of which scenes with a woman holding a branch (rather than a rhyton) in her hand are closest to our theme. The scenes convey the subject of a holy marriage (hieros gamos), a universal ritual myth an epic variety of which can be seen in the marriage of the hero (Sigurd included) to a valkyrie. An early variety of such composition is a scene on the 5th-century gold bracteate from Vikena (Norway), in which a woman holding a branch (or a small tree) is facing a man holding a ring behind his back. On the other side of the bracteate the hero is shown riding a horse and with a lance (?) and shield (the same motifs of holy marriage and a rider with a shield are reproduced on the already mentioned sword scabbard mounting from Grinev); individual motifs on the bracteate and the mounting may convey some epic subject. In general, owing to these Norse parallels the individual and seemingly isolated amulet figurines (Vikings and valkyries) found at diverse archaeological sites of Eastern Europe fit into a single subject scheme.

The branch or small tree in the “holy marriage” composition brings to mind the wedding tree that is traditional for many European peoples. True, the tree also epitomizes the world axis, just as the flowering cross on the Drävle runestone, but the world tree was at the centre of most of the mythological or epical subjects in the archaic period. Meanwhile, the female character on the bracteate has in her hand an object that must have been seen as a symbol no less meaningful than the ring in the hand of the male figure. It can be surmised to be a spindle, a typical attribute of the goddesses (spirits) of fate, the Nornir, Disir and Valkyrja, such as Sigdrifa (Brynhild) in the epic poem of Volsungs-Nibelungs. Another problem that links the amulets from the “Eastern route” with the Drävle runestone has to do with the existence of subjects and even cult objects of the pagan period in Northern and Eastern Europe after it had embraced Christianity ⁵⁵. This problem does not boil down to the mechanistically interpreted phenomenon of dual faith. The Volsungs Saga motifs, above all Sigurd's exploits, were popular in Norse Christian art, including in Norwegian church decoration. The Drävle runestone erected by the sons in honour of their father (according to the inscription) was at the same time a Christian monument as is attested by the cross in the centre. Apparently, the exploits of the Norse pagan hero Sigurd, just as those of Siegfried in the chivalrous *Song of the Nibelungs* in German art, were not univocally considered as contradicting the new ideas of Christianity of the early medieval period. Significantly, both the Novy Bykhov amulet and the runestone scenes were connected with the funerary cult and the fate of the deceased. Sigurd could not have been a guide to the Valhalla: the main Norse epic hero had to go to the underworld because he was not slain in battle, but treacherously killed. Yet, Sigurd attained what in the Viking Age was valued most, that is, posthumous glory, and

his image, as well as the Viking figurines, became a symbol for that period of the downfall of traditions ⁵⁶.

The tendency of correlating various motifs of decorative art with characters known from written monuments of different traditions, which is common in archaeological writings, is not quite justified. For instance, the motif with the anthropomorphic figure in the centre flanked by two birds – in the decoration of steels from the Kama area and Kiev and a pendant from the Vladimir kurgans and Gnezdovo – is correlated with the Norse myth of Odin and the ravens, his two messengers. The finial from Ladoga and other objects match that interpretation. The symmetrical decorative motif of a human between two birds (two animals, etc.) in itself is, importantly, a universal (it is encountered, for instance, in finger fibulae) ⁵⁷. According to the Norse tradition, Odin is “asymmetrical” – he is blind in one eye and this “marker” has to be taken into account when interpreting an anthropomorphic character.

The so-called war axe of Andrei Bogoliubsky, a well-known piece of Old Rus' decorative and smith's work dating from the first half of the 11th century, is connected with the Volsungs Saga motifs (which became a medieval “itinerant theme” (stock-in-trade) borrowed, among others, by the German *Song of the Nibelungs*). In form it is an Oriental (Volga Bulgarian) hatchet with the common motif of two birds by the tree on one side of the blade and the Norse motif of a dragon stabbed by the sword on the other: copper cladding and damascene work were used to make the pictures. The outlines of the stabbed dragon look like the Slavonic/Cyrillic letter A; there is no representation of Sigurd himself (the “pagan” subject is rendered meaningless).

Another battle axe found in Ladoga is associated with the Norse tradition of casting: its stainless steel blade is decorated on both sides with animal figures cast in high relief and shown in movement – gryphons on the butt and a sculpted figure of a walking animal (the pattern has not survived) on the inside of the butt. A sword from Foshchevataya (Poltava area) dating from the first half of the 11th century is a specimen of Old Russian ceremonial arms decorated under the impact of Norse jewellery, its blade forged in emulation of West European (Frankish) examples and stamped in Cyrillic “made by Ludota the smith, its bronze hilt has an interlaced ornament of the Norse type replicating motifs characteristic of women's shell-like fibulae rather than of arms decoration. Another sword with a hilt decorated with a foliate pattern stamped in a style close to that of the small rhyton from the Black Grave was found in one of the Kievan chamber tombs (No. 108).

A foliate pattern of shoots, “lotos” and palmettes were the dominant ornamental motifs in the art of the steppe peoples. The uniform style used in the decoration of arms, belt fittings (characteristic of the druzhina complexes of the middle reaches of the Dnieper) and ceremonial vessels makes it possible to speak of the emergence of a certain artistic tradition centred in Kiev and Chernigov in the 10th century ⁵⁸. Wares produced in the middle reaches of the Dnieper spread wherever the Rus *druzhina* was stationed, including in Gnezdovo and Ladoga ⁵⁹. V.V. Murasheva points to the impact of steppe – Hungarian, Volga Bulgarian and Khazar – features and Norse traditions in belt and horse trappings ornaments for the *druzhina* warriors ⁶⁰.

G.F. Korzukhina focussed on another aspect of analyzing the tendencies in the development of decorative and applied art of the second half of the 9th – early 11th centuries. Proceeding from the analysis of Old Rus' troves, she identified two periods in the evolution of the ceremonial costume and decorative and applied art as a whole. She dated the first period the 9th – early 10th century. The troves of that period are concentrated mostly in the forest-steppe area and include “heavy” forged torcs of silver rods, bracelets and replicas/interpretations of earlier ornaments, including “anthropomorphic” fibulae, spiral and seven-ray temple rings and rings of Saltov origin ⁶¹.

The other period, starting from the mid-10th century, saw the spread of “light” sheet silver ornaments with embossment and granulation work forming a geometrical ornament of rows of triangles, diamonds and so on. A graphic example of that tradition is the aforementioned Gnezdovo trove. Traced back to the Great Moravia crafts, the tradition was characteristic of the entire Slavic area, including the Czechs and Poland. Possibly, through the mediation of Rus' it spread across Scandinavia and Volga Bulgaria. Volhynia could have been a granulation work centre in Rus. A burial of a jeweller with dice for embossing silverware, including “Volhynia” earrings, granulation work lunulae and hollow beads, was discovered at the necropolis of the Old

52. Düwel, 2005, pp. 417–118.

53. he gave to Brynhild, as a bridal gift, the gold ring that Loke had taken from Andvare, and he received another ring as a memento from her” (Younger Edda). In the later *Volsunga Saga* (Ch. XXI), in which the Andvari ring is no longer a bracelet, but an engagement ring, Brynhild and Sigurd exchange rings and drink together for the hero to remember that day and to learn the secret runes; the scene is obviously represented on the Drävle runestone.

54. Eyrik's Speeches (see: Younger Edda, 1970, p. 61).

55. The syncretic Daugmale culture, too, absorbed Christian impulses.

56. Petrukhin, 1999, pp. 43–6.

57. Korzukhina, 1976, pp. 135–40.

58. Orlov, 1984. V.M. Vasilenko pointed out the stylistic kinship of wares made in the middle reaches of the Dnieper.

59. Belt fittings were also common to a certain extent among the rural population.

60. Murasheva, 2000; Makarov, Mesnianskina, 2004, pp. 208–11.

61. Korzukhina, 1954.

Rus' town of Peresopnitsa. Objects of a similar type were found among the grave goods of the neighbouring kurgans while Volhynia troves yielded objects close in nature. Princely workshops are supposed to have produced things requiring sophisticated techniques, such as granulation work and embossment of hollow ornaments. Necklaces were also made of numerous glass beads, both imported (from the Middle East) and of local make. One of such earliest workshops was in Ladoga. Kievan workshops apparently produced cast buttons, a fashion for which spread across the middle reaches of the Dnieper. Copper alloyed with tin and lead was used to make buttons and belt fittings.

The decorative, applied and pictorial art of 9th – early 11th-century Rus fused various impulses coming from the north and the east, namely, from Khazaria, Iran, the Arab Caliphate⁶², Byzantium and Moravia.

It can't be said that "pagan" art traditions fully outlived their usefulness with the adoption of Christianity by Rus in 988. In its account of the choice of faith by Prince Vladimir, the *Tale of Begone Years* under a 980 A.D. entry lists the idols put up by the prince on the hill by his chamber palace: the wooden idols led by the silver-headed Perun with golden moustache included Khors, Dazhbog, Stribog, Semargl and Mokosh. This chronicle description of the heathen temple on the whole coincides with the eye-witness account left by Ibn Fadlan about Russian merchants making offerings to idols in Bulgaria on the Volga in the 920s. As soon as their ships moored, the Rus' would bring bread, meat, onions, milk and *nabiz* (alcoholic beverage) to a "long log stuck up in the ground, which had a face like that of a human being, and around it were small representations, behind which were more long logs stuck in the ground". The merchant asks idols representing the chief deity, his wives and children to help him in trade. If trade is successful, he makes a sacrifice of sheep and cows, hanging the skulls on logs put up next to the idols.

This description is largely reminiscent of the wooden deity statuettes found in Ladoga: one of them has retained a spike to be stuck in the ground or some support. They have a parallel in Novgorodian wooden rods with faces – sculpted human heads, the earliest of which comes from a pre-Christian 10th-century layer. However, the tradition of making those rods persisted in Novgorod in the Christian period up to the 13th century and for this reason they are conventionally referred to as *domovoy*s (lower house spirits) as the cult of heathen deities could not be practiced in a Christian city⁶³. Prince Vladimir arranged in Kiev for a more monumental temple requiring offerings of a different sort. Rehashing the biblical text, the chronicler says that the Kievans sacrificed their "sons and daughters" to their gods.

It has long been noted that Vladimir's pantheon consisted not only of Slavic gods: the names of Khors and Semargl have Iranian origin. Small wonder, contacts with the Iranians go back to the Proto-Slavic period, the Iranian-speaking (Alanian) inhabitants formed part of the population of Khazaria and the forest-steppe area of the Northern lands. After Svyatoslav had defeated the Kaganate in the 960s, they found themselves among the subjects of Russian princes. Characteristically, there were no Norse gods in that pantheon: Vladimir was at loggerheads with the Varangians who demanded a payoff from him for his having seized Kiev, and therefore shipped them off to Constantinople. Furthermore, the Varangian residents of Kiev were Christians, who had been baptised in Greece. In general, the pantheon which had blended diverse ethnic traditions reflected the syncretic nature of "heathen" art of the pre-state period. It represented a sort of mythological system that in the absence of recorded Slavic myths is restored mostly through the interpretation of the names of the gods⁶⁴.

The Kievan sacrificial altar with four projections, which was excavated by V.V. Khvoika and has already been mentioned above, was dated an earlier period than the heathen temple erected by Vladimir. It was said to be dedicated now to Perun, now to Sviatovit (the four-headed Balto-Slavic deity worshipped on Cape Arkona of the Rugen Island). The discovery of another "mysterious structure"⁶⁵ (fragments of plinthiform brickwork that was used to build churches in the pre-Mongol period, a trench with six or five petal-like projections and a pit with layers of ash and bones of cattle) enabled a supposition that it was a "complex" of heathen shrines. This means that the archaeologists might have discovered

that very temple of Vladimir where he had statues of six heathen gods put up, to the chief one of which bulls were sacrificed, as evidenced by Procopius of Ceasarea. The heathen temple was destroyed after the adoption of Christianity, and a church was built at its place or next to it.

However, as distinct from the Kievan "sacrificial altar" lacking any certain dating, the trench with the projections can be dated with relative certainty: it is crossed by a late 10th-century grave, while the construction debris filling it is testimony to a church having been built (or destroyed) in the vicinity. Analysis and collation of pagan Slavic artefacts make it possible to suggest that the "pillar" of Khvoika's excavations is nothing else but compressed traces of a later pit filling and the entire trench filling of "Vladimir's pagan temple" can be associated with construction debris. The dating of the Kievan "sacrificial altar" has been specified recently: pottery and glass beads unearthed during its exploration are of the 11th-13th centuries, that is, the Christian period, and 10th - 12th-century material was discovered in the "column" filling as well.

A similar situation is connected with attempts to interpret the Peryn skete – another monument of Slavic paganism, no less well-known in historiography. The 17th-century Novgorodian chronicles (in keeping with the general contemporary trend of chronicle writing which tied the name of that elevated *urochishche* on the Volkhov bank with Perun) inspired scholars to look there for the shrine founded by Dobrynya in 980, when he established the cult of Perun in Novgorod. The archaeologists' hopes seemed to have been justified when V.V. Sedov discovered fragments of a trench with the pit – the place of the idol in the centre – in 1951. The suggested reconstruction of the general configuration of the trench could have been influenced by the interpretation of the trench "petals" in the Kievan "heathen temple" of Vladimir. In plan the Peryn skete has the form of an eight-petal rosette. One way or the other, both the eight petals of Peryn and the four projections of the Kievan "sacrificial altar" seemed to be correlated with the reconstructed cult of Perun, which included the symbolism of the figure four, with the dedication of Thursday to the thunderer, etc.⁶⁶.

Meanwhile, V.V. Sedov, who was responsible for the digs, pointed out the similarity between the trench found by him and the small trenches surrounding the banks of Slavic kurgans⁶⁷ that the elevated location of the Peryn "shrines" corresponded to the traditional location of the Novgorodian mounds likewise surrounded by trenches. At the centre of those kurgans remnants of wooden columns are discernible, which naturally bred associations with the place of the "idol"⁶⁸. Future analysis of the excavation results are to clarify why the Peryn mounds were levelled out and whether that had to do with the spread of Christianity. It is worth noting, however, that the Old Rus' and Proto-Slavic word Peryn, meaning "height, upland", despite its semantic connection with the name of the thunderer Perun and mythological correlation with his residing on the mountain/in the sky, does not necessarily mean that it was a shrine. Conversely, "folk etymology" gave grounds for the compilers of 17th-century codices to place the shrine of Perun at Peryn⁶⁹.

The problem of identifying and interpreting "cult places" is universal in archaeology. This applies not only to the shrines "discovered" in Kiev and Novgorod, but also to heathen temples that were described in detail by West European chroniclers at Arkona, in Old Uppsala and elsewhere. Despite all efforts, no more or less obvious traces of those cult structures have been found⁷⁰, although thousands of pre-Christian and Early Christian monuments of public worship are well-known in archaeology. Numerous funerary monuments – kurgans – widespread in Rus' nearly throughout the pre-Mongol period evidence a developed funerary cult typical of tribal traditions.

Scholars found no religious representations – idols or such like – at those "shrines". In Ganachevka and Zvenigorod a stone looking like an anthropomorphic stele could have been an object of public worship at places of the supposed shrines. The absence of tomb structures in itself can be explained by their deliberate destruction, as the chronicle attests: after being baptised in Korsun (?) Vladimir ordered in 988 that wooden idols be overthrown and chopped or burned down in Kiev while Perun be dragged down to the Dnieper and floated down the river to the rapids beyond the boundaries of the Russian land. As pagans accompanied that act with wailing, an idea has formed in historiography that the idol mocking ritual corresponded to folklore calendar rituals, such as the symbolical burial of stuffed Maslenitsa, Kupala and such like calendar characters that were sometimes

62. See: Darkevich, 1976, pp. 167–75; Lelekov, 1978.

63. Pokrovskaya, 2004, pp. 68–73. Fig. 1 on p. 76.

64. At the same time the pantheon instituted by Vladimir in Kiev could hardly be an effective religious cult focus, an assembly of gods with differentiated functions. Indeed, to judge by linguistic reconstruction based on the meaning of the theonyms, the deities of that syncretic pantheon had duplicating and overlapping functions – both Khors and Dazhbog personified the sun, Dazhbog and Stribog gave and "extended" weal (the word *log* is a Proto-Slavic borrowing from the Iranian meaning "lot, the good" – cf. *bogatstvo* (riches), *ubozhestvo* (wretchedness), etc.). Semargl (Simargl), if correlated with the Iranian Sēmūruw (Simurgh), altogether "dropped out" of the higher "divine" row for being a chimeric creature – a dog with bird's wings, a messenger of the gods rather than a character of the same rank. Cf. the pictorial material in Trever, 1937. It is at the same time symptomatic that Semargl closed male "deity" ranks and was followed by Mokosh, the only female deity of the pantheon whose name was definitely connected with ideas of fertile moisture, mother earth. This clarifies the position of Semargl as an "intermediary" between the celestial gods and the earth mother goddess. The chronicle list of gods was obviously not a construct of an Early Rus' scribe: the chronicle lists of names (ethnonyms, anthroponyms) were in general especially particular about transmitting tradition and sticking to a special structure when opening the list with the chief (generalising) character of Vladimir's pantheon, Perun the thunderer and so on.

65. As the excavators supposed (cf. Tolochko, Borovskiy, 1979, pp. 3–10).

66. Continued excavations at Peryn yielded fragments of two more similar trenches, which did not discourage B.A. Rybakov who again applied his scheme and suggested that the skete had been initially dedicated to the Rod (Kin) and two *rozhanitsas* (spirits of fortune in Greek translations). It was not until 1980 that Dobrynya of the chronicles replaced the cult of the earlier god with the princely cult of Perun.

67. Sedov, V., 1953.

68. Konetsky, 1995.

69. The selfsame later chronicled legends describing Peryn as the dwelling of the "ferocious magician Perun" recount how pagans made a high grave above the body of Perun drowned in the river by the devils, which within three days sank into hell. That account was correlated with that type of *urochishche* mounds the memory of which long survived in legend. Cf. a similar structure of the "shrine" discovered at the pagan necropolis of Pskov, where the "shrine" trench also had a dam – entrance – in the south-west, as was characteristic of the Old Russian kurgan trenches (Labutina, 1989, pp. 100–8).

70. See: Vasiliev, 1999, p. 297 and subsequent pages.

thrown into the river. In fact, the *Tale of Bygone Years*, which describes the ceremony of “bidding farewell to Perun” in Kiev (just as in Novgorod), is traced back to the Byzantine model (described in the Chronicle of Georgios Amartolos, a source of Russian chronicle writing) – the ritual of driving the evil February (the embodiment of winter) from Rome. At the same time, the circumstances of the discovery of rare pagan idols in Rus’ are evidence of the traditional ritual of their being thrown into the river. This is true above all of the famous Zbruch idol found in the Zbruch River (a Dniester tributary) in 1848 and the less known stone statue found during the clearing operations in the Sheksna River in the area of Old Rus’ Beloozero.

The stone statue of a Slavic deity found in the Zbruch River is a four-faceted 2.67 m high pillar of gray limestone with four figures of deities under a single hat executed in bas-relief in the upper part of the facets. The figure on one facet has female shapes and holds a ring in her hand; the figure on another facet has a drinking horn in its hand, still another has a male character with a sabre at the waist – a piece of arms not typical of the Early Slavs, which made it possible to see Turkic influence in the style of the idol and a representation of a horse at its feet; the figure of a deity on the fourth facet lacks any special symbol. The middle frieze forms a representation of a round dance of two female and two male figures holding hands; the lower frieze has a representation of three figures supporting the upper tiers with their arms. An altar could have adjoined the vacant side of the lower frieze. The idol stood for the Slavic pantheon – the chief male and female gods personifying the upper (celestial) zone of the world, the middle inhabited by people and the lower, the underworld, with chthonic creatures supporting the earth. It has been surmised that the Zbruch idol can be identified with the four-headed god Svetovid, whose descriptions are known among the Western Slavs. B.A. Rybakov, who noted the phallic shape of the idol stressed by the characteristic top in the form of a trimmed cap, made the supposition that the idol represented the God of Kin of the Old Rus’⁷¹.

A distinguishing motif connecting the Zbruch idol with other anthropomorphic Old Rus’ representations is the position of the arms of the “uppermost” personages, one of which is pressed to the chest (holding a rhyton or a ring) and the other stretched out to the waist. A small cast lead figurine found in Gnezdovo has a similar posture. For that matter, the same posture is characteristic of Early Turkic monumental stone statues⁷². The Zbruch idol epitomised the anthropomorphic model of the world of early medieval Slavdom; the Antean zoo-anthropomorphic fibulae with an axial anthropomorphic figure (world pillar – world tree and such like) can be regarded as its prototypes in the representational tradition. It has long been observed that starting from Antiquity personal accoutrements embodied “cosmic” order, as is borne out by the presence of lunulae, symbols associated with ideas of the world tree. The notion of man as a “microcosm” characteristic of the Middle Ages was evidently shared by the Slavs⁷³.

The place where the idol was found has long attracted the attention of scholars, who in the 1960s found a “shrine” where the idol might have stood – a square stone foundation on the Bogit Mountain. A special expedition explored hillforts on the Zbruch River that were interpreted as heathen shrines of the “dual faith” period of the 11th-13th centuries⁷⁴.

The archaeological context and dating of other finds of stone statues⁷⁵ are not clear. The Beloozero idol – a granite stele about 0.75 m high – also has a cap and eyes; the mouth and chin are outlined in relief (Novgorod State United Museum Preserve). Parallels to monumental stone sculptures are known in small figurines mostly among the Baltic Slavs, where staffs have been found with the representations of four-faced (Volin) and three-faced (comparable to Triglav) characters and suchlike echoing the descriptions by Latin missionaries of polycephalic idols in West Slavic churches. No such representations have been found in Old Rus’ sculptures⁷⁶. Wooden “staffs” topped with male heads and correlated with *domovnyjs* (house spirits) are traditionally categorised as pre-Christian religious sculpture; however, such representations of house spirits are unknown in folklore. For that matter, anthropomorphic figurines also crowned handles of household objects, such as a cast bronze knife handle from Novgorod (Novgorod State United Museum Preserve) [ill. 54] crowned by a seated man with a trimmed cap. A figurine of a bearded character with arms akimbo that tops a 17 cm long staff (cast from lead-tin alloy) is traditionally thought to be a representation of Perun, although the staff was

found in mid-12th-century layers. The cast figurine of Gnezdovo mentioned earlier apparently belongs with the finials which used to crown some “staff”⁷⁷. The use of staffs and even tin rods is known by Early Russian writings, however, exclusively in the context of Christian martyrs being tortured by “staff bearing” executioners.

The absence of layers of developed “heathen” culture in Rus’ can be explained by underdeveloped heathen worship practice. Vladimir had to renounce his syncretic pantheon within a few years of its establishment in Kiev. The archaic forms of the cult of the prince in Rus’ matched the tribal norms of heathen East Slavic society: the princely funerary cult was to replace the cult of the ancestors. It is not accidental that Olga forced the Drevlians, who had rebelled in 845 A.D., to attend the burial of Prince Igor whom they had killed. The princely kurgan raised next to the Drevlian city of Iskorosten’ was to epitomise the Kievan prince’s control over the land of the Drevlians (an archaic Rus’ cross of sheet silver was found in the subjugated Iskorosten’). It was not by chance that Vladimir had built the first stone church – the Tithe Church – right at the *druzhina* necropolis: the church, which served as the princely tomb, supplanted the *druzhina* kurgans⁷⁸. His son, Yaroslav the Wise, ordered in 1044 the remains of his uncles, killed during the dissension of the 970s, to be exhumed, baptised (in contravention of the Christian canon) and re-buried in the Tithe Church.

The adoption of Christianity by Rus’ had to do not only and not so much with the destruction of heathen temples and the toppling of idols. At the turn of the 11th century the entire material culture changed, transforming the decorative and applied arts and funerary rites. Cremation disappeared everywhere – in towns and at the rural cemeteries – and, although the kurgan mortuary rite persisted in the countryside till the end of the 11th century, the deceased were already buried under an earth bank, their heads pointing westward; the rite of burial in Christian graves spread through towns. Monumental Slavic funerary barrows were no longer raised, having given way to small “zhalniks” (sepultures). Crosses of sheet silver found earlier were replaced by cast crosses worn next to the skin of the so-called Norse type (the incorrect reference is explained by the fact that crosses of that type with three balls at the ends spread in the 11th century across not only Rus’, but the Nordic lands as well; the form itself is of Byzantine origin, although the crosses were made in Kiev) and became a characteristic object of worship. The rich “heathen” accoutrements, including Norse style ornaments, disappeared. The ornaments now look much plainer than in the 10th century and some elements of the “heathen” accoutrements lose their semantic meaning. For instance, silver granulation work Norse charm-pendants – Thor’s hammers – were incorporated in a necklace alongside silver beads and a cross (found within a 12th-century Kievan trove). The Early Rus’ belt fittings take shape, and some of their elements penetrate into Sweden and Gotland⁷⁹. The state-formation period inaugurated a new renaissance of decorative and applied art in both Early Russian towns and villages, a stage now and then associated with “dual faith” and the “heathen response” to the first century of Christianisation⁸⁰.

71. For latest reviews see Shupecki, 1994; Petrukhin (t/a).

72. Rybakov, 1981, p. 460 and subsequent pages. It should be pointed out that neither the Old Rus sources nor Russian folklore say anything about the God of Kin.

73. Cf. Murasheva, 2005; Sher, 1966.

74. Cf. Rybakov, 1981, p. 260 and subsequent pages.

75. Rusanova, Timoshchuk, 1990. It is reasonable to focus on that “heathen centre” and debates over its interpretation in the respective chronological chapter.

76. For their general description see Sedov, V., 1982, pp. 261-8; Rusanova, Timoshchuk, 1990, pp. 11-5.

77. Later parallels in Old Rus’ stone carving, including the four-faced capital from Bogoliubovo, can hardly be regarded as exemplifying ideological syncretism in the spirit of notions of Early Rus’ double faith (Vagner, 1969, p. 92). Murasheva, 2005.

78. For excavation results see: The Tithe Church of the Mother of God in Kiev, 1996.

80. Mikhailov, 2005, pp. 132-44. Old Rus’ culture began on the whole to impact back medieval Norse culture (see Melnikova, Petrukhin, Pushkina, 1984, pp. 50-65).

Подписи к иллюстрациям

р. 39

The image of Norse epic hero Sigurd, distinguished by a magic sword and a ring in his hand, was popular in the art of Northern and Eastern Europe

A Norse style silver mask formed part of a major treasure trove of the Viking era discovered in Gnezdovo

A five-ray Slavic earring with a Byzantine motif of a bird on a plaque is from the latest excavations of the Drevlian town of Iskorosten'

The "dancing" men from the Martynovka treasure trove reproducing the rider's posture are typical of the anthropomorphic amulets of the Migration Period

1

Cast bronze belt plaque in the form of a bird. Zimno fortified settlement on the Luga River, Volhynia, Ukraine

2

Openwork bronze scabbard chape with stamped representations. Grinev burial site, Upper Dniester area

3

Cast copper alloy belt buckles and quiver hook. Second half of the 7th – early 8th cc. Middle reaches of the left-bank Dnieper

4

Bronze pendant with cloisonné enamel inlays. Middle Dnieper area (Moshchinsky hoard)

5

Bronze necklace with cloisonné enamel inlays. Middle Dnieper area

6

Bronze fibula with cloisonné enamel inlays. Smolensk environs. Bronze finger fibula. Front and reverse sides. Vinnitsa Region, Ukraine

8

Gilt silver finger fibula. Martynovka hoard. Middle Dnieper area. 7th – 8th cc.

9

Bronze lion figurine. Skibintsy settlement. Vinnitsa Region, Ukraine

10, 11

Gilt silver figurines of fantastical animals. Martynovka hoard. Middle Dnieper area

12

Stamped gilt silver figurine in a rider's posture, the so-called dancing man. Martynovka hoard. Middle Dnieper area

13

Zoomorphic silver fibula. Pastyrskoye fortified settlement. Middle Dnieper area. 6th – 7th cc.

14

Zoomorphic silver (?) fibula. 7th c.

15

Silver fibula. Pastyrskoye fortified settlement

16

Three lamellar silver fibulae. Khariievsky treasure. Middle Dnieper area. 6th – 7th cc.

17

Types of anthropomorphic and two-plate fibulae (after V.E. Rodnikova)

18

Finger fibula stone casting mould. Front side and the reverse. Bernashevka village, Vinnitsa Region, Ukraine. 5th – 8th cc.

19

Stone casting mould. Bernashevka village, Vinnitsa Region, Ukraine

20

Gilt silver earrings with granulation work. Khariievsky treasure. Middle Dnieper area. 6th – 7th cc.

21

Gold earrings with granulation work. Khariievsky treasure

22

Bronze temple rings. Supruty fortified settlement outside Tula. 10th c.

23

Silver earring (?) 10th c. Iskorosten'. Middle reaches of the Dnieper

24

Temple rings in imitation of the "lunula" ornaments of the Danubian area:

a, c, d Middle reaches of the Danubne area

b Staraya Ladoga

e Arefino village, Smolensk Region

25

Bronze finial of a staff (?) in the form of a man's head with a horned helmet

26

Bone finial of a staff (?) with a dragon head. Ladoga. 9th c.

27

Horn mount in the form of a snake. Ladoga. 10th c.

28

Wooden zoomorphic finial (?). Ladoga. 9th c.

29

Wooden man's figurine with a high hat. Ladoga. 9th c. Detail

30

Wooden hook with a zoomorphic finial. Ladoga. 9th c. Detail

31

Bronze shell-like fibula. 9th c. Kurgan burial ground outside the village of Zaozerie. Ladoga area

32

Silver lunula with granulation work. 10th c. Kurgan burial ground at Plakun urochishche. Ladoga area

33

Bronze ornament with noisy toggle pendants. 10th c. Kurgan burial ground outside the village of Zaozerie. Ladoga area

34

Lead finial in the form of a dragon head. 10th c.

35

Stone casting moulds for belt plaques. 10th c. Podol workshops, Kiev

36

Silver scramasax, ritual knife with a mask of a bearded warrior. 10th c. Gnezdovo. Smolensk environs

37

Head of the bearded warrior. Detail of the ritual knife

- 38**
Bronze figurine of a Norse god. 10th c. From the Chernaya Mohyla barrow. Chernigov
- 39** Stamped and nielloed gild silver rhyton, small drinking horn, with a chape along the rim. 10th c. From the Chernaya Mohyla barrow
- 40**
Small horn chape
- 41** Stamped and nielloed gild silver rhyton, large drinking horn, with a chape. 10th c. Chernaya Mohyla barrow
- 42**
Laceration scene. Large horn chape
- 43**
Stylised floral ornament. Detail of a large horn chape
- 44**
Representation of warriors. Large horn chape
- 45**
Bronze belt fittings from Volga Bulgaria. Gnezdovo. Smolensk environs
- 46**
Cast and gilt bronze caftan buckles. 10th c. Gulbishche barrow outside Chernigov
- 47. 48**
Ceremonial hatchet (front and reverse). Steel, gilt sheet silver, lead-force chasing. First half of 11th c. State Historical Museum
- 49**
Sword hilt. Bronze. First half of 11th c. From the village of Foshchevataya. Poltava Region, Ukraine
- 50**
Sword. First half of 11th c. From the village of Foshchevataya. Poltava Region, Ukraine
- 51**
Finds from 9th – early 10th cc. treasure troves: fibulae, earrings, bracelets, torcs, Saltov ring and temple rings (after Makarova T.I. *Drevnaya Rus'. Kultura i byli* (Early Rus'. Culture and Facts), Moscow, 1997)
- 52**
Zbruch idol. Stone. 10th c. Archaeology Museum of Krakow, Poland
- 53**
Mask. Upper part of a staff. Wood. 10th c. Novgorod. Detail
- 54**
Wooden knife handle. 10th c. Novgorod
- 55**
Gilt silver pendant cross. 10th c. Gnezdovo. Smolensk environs Rybakov, 1987, p. 466 and subsequent pages.