

E.N. Nosov

NEW DATA ON THE RYURIK GORODISHCHE NEAR NOVGOROD

Abstract

The article deals with materials from the new excavations of the Ryurik Gorodishche near the town of Novgorod. In the course of the 9th–10th centuries AD the site was an important centre of trade and craftsmanship, as well as a military-administrative centre in the Lake Ilmen' area, situated at the crossing of the Baltic-Volga route and that from the Varagians to the Greeks. The material culture of the site contains a clear assemblage of objects of Scandinavian origin, alongside artefacts attributable to the Slavs. The residence of the Novgorod princes was founded at the Ryurik Gorodishche in the 9th–10th centuries AD; it is well attested by written sources beginning with the 12th century.

Evgenij N. Nosov, Academy of Sciences of the USSR, Leningrad Branch of the Institute of Archaeology, Dvortzovaya nab. 18, 191041 Leningrad, USSR.

Novgorod, the centre of Northern Russia, was founded to the north of Lake Ilmen at the sources of the River Volkhov, one of the most fascinating historical regions of the ancient *Novgorod Land*. Archaeological investigations launched by Artemy Artsikhovskiy, a prominent Soviet archaeologist, in 1932 shed new light on certain specific and colourful features of life in Novgorod and provided answers to many problems concerning the emergence of the Old Russian state. Some of the discoveries, such as the birchbark scrolls, are of world importance. It is impossible, however, to correctly interpret all specific features of Novgorod's origins and historical development without a more or less profound knowledge of the settlements around it.

I shall deal here with archaeological studies of a most interesting site near Novgorod—Gorodishche, which is usually referred to as the Ryurik Gorodishche (Fig. 1). The hill is situated 2 km to the south of Novgorod on the right bank of the Volkhov River where it takes its sources from Lake Ilmen (Fig. 2). "Gorodishche is a remarkable place", wrote Nikolai Roerich, an artist and archaeologist, closely connected with the Novgorodian region. "You are surrounded with deep blue, enticing distances. One can see

Lake Ilmen. On the other side of the Volkhov there is the St. George and the former Arkazhi monastery. St. Sophia's dome shines to the right, the Kremlin fringes the river like a brown band. A group of white churches can be discerned on the Torgovaya side. From the hill one sees Lyadka, Volotovo, the St. Cyril Monastery, Nereditsa, Seltso, the Skovorodsky Monastery, the Nikola-na-Lipne Church and Bronnitsa beside the forest. Everything is seen like on a gold platter."

Starting with 1103, when the place was first mentioned in a chronicle in connection with the Church of the Annunciation, the second after the St. Sophia Cathedral, a stone church in Novgorod the Great, built by the Novgorodian Prince Mstislav Vladimirovich, Gorodishche was for many years repeatedly mentioned in Russian chronicles. It is not a chance phenomenon. During the existence of the Old Russian state Gorodishche served as the residence of Novgorodian princes who were squeezed out of the city by the developing republican system. This fact made it, together with the Novgorod Kremlin and the Yaroslav Dvorishche, an important political centre of Novgorod. It was the place where the prince's palace was found as well as numerous



Fig. 1. Ryurik Gorodishche. The photo taken in the early 20th century.

administrative and household constructions and shops of artisans. It was here that princes built their churches. In one of these buildings the prince's archive was kept of which nothing but hundreds of pending lead seals which had been attached to numerous documents were found. It makes Gorodishche, to quote Valentin Yanin, "the main Old Russian sphragistic treasury". The place is associated with many vivid episodes in the history of Russia. Its significance can be likened to that of other princely residences such as Vyshgorod in Kiev or Smyadyn in Smolensk. It was even greater if we take into account the role it played in the emergence of Novgorod.

The very names of Novgorod (the New Town) and Gorodishche (a place where there was a town) led the first Russian historians of the 18th century to conclude that Gorodishche pre-dated Novgorod. This was corroborated by Russian chronicles dated to the second half of the 17th century and the 18th century which informed that Novgorod had been laid of a new place not far from Slovensk, the old capital of the Ilmen Slavs, which was identified with Gorodishche.

This idea dominated the 19th–20th century writings of historians and enthusiasts of local lore. In their work, however, they mainly relied on general historical considerations, written

sources and folklore, completely ignoring archaeological data.

This situation gives rise to the justified question of whether the archaeologists were aware of Gorodishche's significance. The question should be answered in the affirmative, though circumstances prevented them from fully realising their plans. In any case, while M. Polyansky, a historian from Novgorod, conducted excavations in 1901 with the narrow objective of finding leads seals, N. Makarenko and N. Roerich, prominent Russian archaeologists, in 1910, on the eve of the 15th Russian Archaeological Congress in Novgorod, were guided by wider objectives. They started their investigations simultaneously at two key points: in the Novgorod Kremlin (Detinets) and in Gorodishche, extending, as it were, the traditional comparison between the New Town and the old town. It is not a fortuitous fact that A. Artisikhovskiy, the founder of the archaeology of Novgorod, preceded his first excavations in Novgorod in 1932 with archaeological investigations in Gorodishche in 1929. In later years M. Karger, G. Grozdilov, M. Poluboyarinova, and N. Pakhomov also worked in Gorodishche.

What can account for the fact that these excavations failed to produce the expected results,

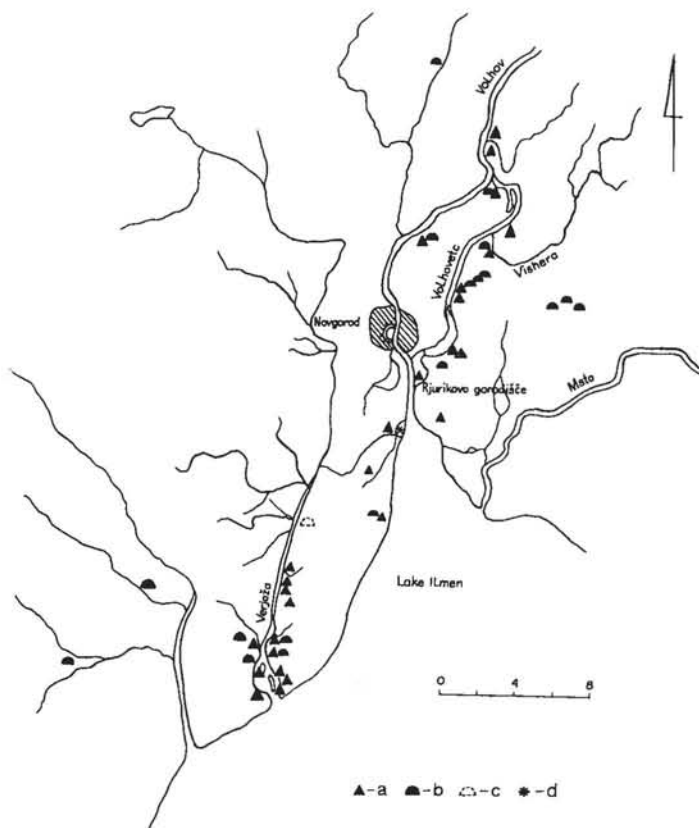


Fig. 2. Sites of the late 1st millennium AD in the Novgorod area: a – dwelling sites; b – mounds ('sopki'); c – suspected mounds; d – the pagan Slavic sanctuary of Perun'.

taking into consideration spectacular successes in Novgorod? The reason is the different degrees of preservation of the cultural layers.

Novgorod stands on clayey soil. It makes the cultural layer saturated with water, which ensures perfect preservation of organic remains. This circumstance also prevented people from digging deep pits or deeply embedding household constructions. As for Gorodishche, it stands on a loam-and-sand hill where wood could not be preserved except in a small section of the promontory. The 1.5 m thick cultural layer of the prince's residence consists of amorphous humus which for hundreds of years was disturbed by dwellings, household constructions and churches. The hill housed six churches and the Argamakov Monastery. During the Second World War it was the scene of military actions which greatly damaged the site. One should also remember that the central part of the hill is occupied by a cemetery and that the promontory

is practically absorbed by the Sivers channel. All this clearly points to the fact that this outstanding archaeological site was less fortunate than the town proper as far as the degree of the cultural layer's preservation is concerned. Being confronted with this fact, researchers relied on small-scale excavations and test pits which, naturally, yielded restricted results.

The Expedition of the Leningrad Branch of the Institute of Archaeology of the USSR Academy of Sciences took the previous experience into account and approached its task from different positions. Survey studies were followed with a wide-scale investigation of Gorodishche's central part which seemed to be most damaged. For ten years now, archaeologists have been engaged in regular excavations. Their efforts brought to light the fact that the damaged layers conceal a lot of ancient, often unique, objects. Undamaged constructions and pits have been found among later soil movements. The results

surpassed our expectations though the condition of the layers prevented us from finding answers to all questions and many losses proved irreparable.

The date of the settlement was the main question we sought an answer to. For many years it was in the centre of heated scientific debates fed by the long established historiographic tradition of opposing Gorodishche to Novgorod. A discovery of thick 8th–9th-century layers in Novgorod could have settled the problem since there would be no need to look for predecessors outside the town limits. The search for earliest layers in Novgorod synchronous to the earliest information found in written sources proved to be unsuccessful despite the efforts of archaeologists who, especially in the pre-war period made test excavations in what seemed to be most promising parts of the city – in Slavna, the Yaroslav Dvorishche and the Kremlin. Artsikhovsky even surmised that there had never been such layers and that the city sprang into existence only in the 10th century, (Artsikhovsky 1956 : 15, 42, 43). Yanin is inclined to think that future archaeological investigations will be rewarded with discoveries of the earliest urban nuclei (Yanin 1977 : 229). Absence of 9th-century layers in Novgorod's key points calls for interpretation (with all reservations for future discoveries). It also gives a fresh rise to the previously discussed question of what was on the Gorodishche hill between the 8th and 10th centuries?

Some authors asserted that here, too, people settled comparatively late, not earlier than the turn of the 12th century. The settlement was started by princes driven away from Novgorod. Recent excavations provided new data for making the Gorodishche chronology more precise.

The Rurik Gorodishche existed, undoubtedly, in the mid-9th century and was probably founded even earlier. Two small hoards of Oriental coins, dated to the late 850s and 860s, corroborate this dating. Their stratigraphic context (fillings of ancient constructions) permits dating of the buildings. The settlement also yielded a great number of 8th–9th-century dirhems and two unique finds: a silver *Kwarazm* coin of the late 8th century and a bronze Byzantine coin of Emperor Theophilos (829–842). The lower Gorodishche layers are dated by a bronze Saltovo seal-ring (end of the 8th – first half of the 9th century) and two Scandinavian fibulae of Type 58 according to Petersen (Fig. 3:4, 6) which are dated to not later than the 9th century. The entire set of glass beads from Goro-

dishche is undoubtedly older than the Novgorod one and can be compared with the Ladoga beads from the second half of the 9th and 10th century levels. Dendrochronological dates for household constructions were obtained on a settlement section (the limits of the Gorodishche dendrochronological scale are 820 and 947). The earliest beams are dated to 889, 896 and 897. The constructions which provided the samples were found on the settlement's fringes, in its lower parts settled later than its central part. This is corroborated by a considerable cultural layer pre-dating the construction. In this way the dendrochronological dates relate not to the beginning of settling the hill but, rather, to a later stage. On the whole Gorodishche yielded much earlier layers than Novgorod which lacks layers dated earlier than the 930s–950s and this despite excavations in the key points.

In the second half of the 9th and in 10th century Gorodishche covered an area of 4 hectares. In actual fact it was much bigger since the hill has been partly washed away by the Volkhov and the north-eastern boundary of the site has not yet been established. A settlement of this size in Northern Russia of the end of the first millennium A.D. should be ranked among the biggest known. The location on the island's cape offered it an effective natural defence. Back in 1808, E. Bolkhovitinov, a prominent student of Novgorodian antiquities, noted that "this location was quite suitable for a fortress". The excavations have revealed the fact that one of the hill's sides was scarped. It is possible that further investigations will reveal remnants of the protective wooden fence. In any case the very name "Gorodishche" used by the Novgorodians in the Old Russian time presupposes some fortifications in the earlier period.

In the 9th and 10th centuries Gorodishche was a large trading and handicrafts centre. International trade is testified by Oriental and Byzantine coins, rock crystal and cornelian beads, various glass beads which reached the banks of the Volkhov River mainly through the North European countries, Friesland combs, walnuts and amber artifacts. Archaeologists found a unique sample of Byzantine art of the late 10th-early 11th century. This is a golden cloisonné plate depicting St. George. Small copper weights and parts of scales are frequent finds.

Handicrafts were one of the most important production activities of the inhabitants of Gorodishche. Numerous finds of fragments of crucibles, small spoons employed for pouring out metal, moulds and production waste attest to



Fig. 3. Scandinavian objects: 1 – needle from a ring-like fibula; 2 – a plaque; 3 – Valkyrie figurine; 4, 6 – equal-armed brooches; 5 – tortoise brooch

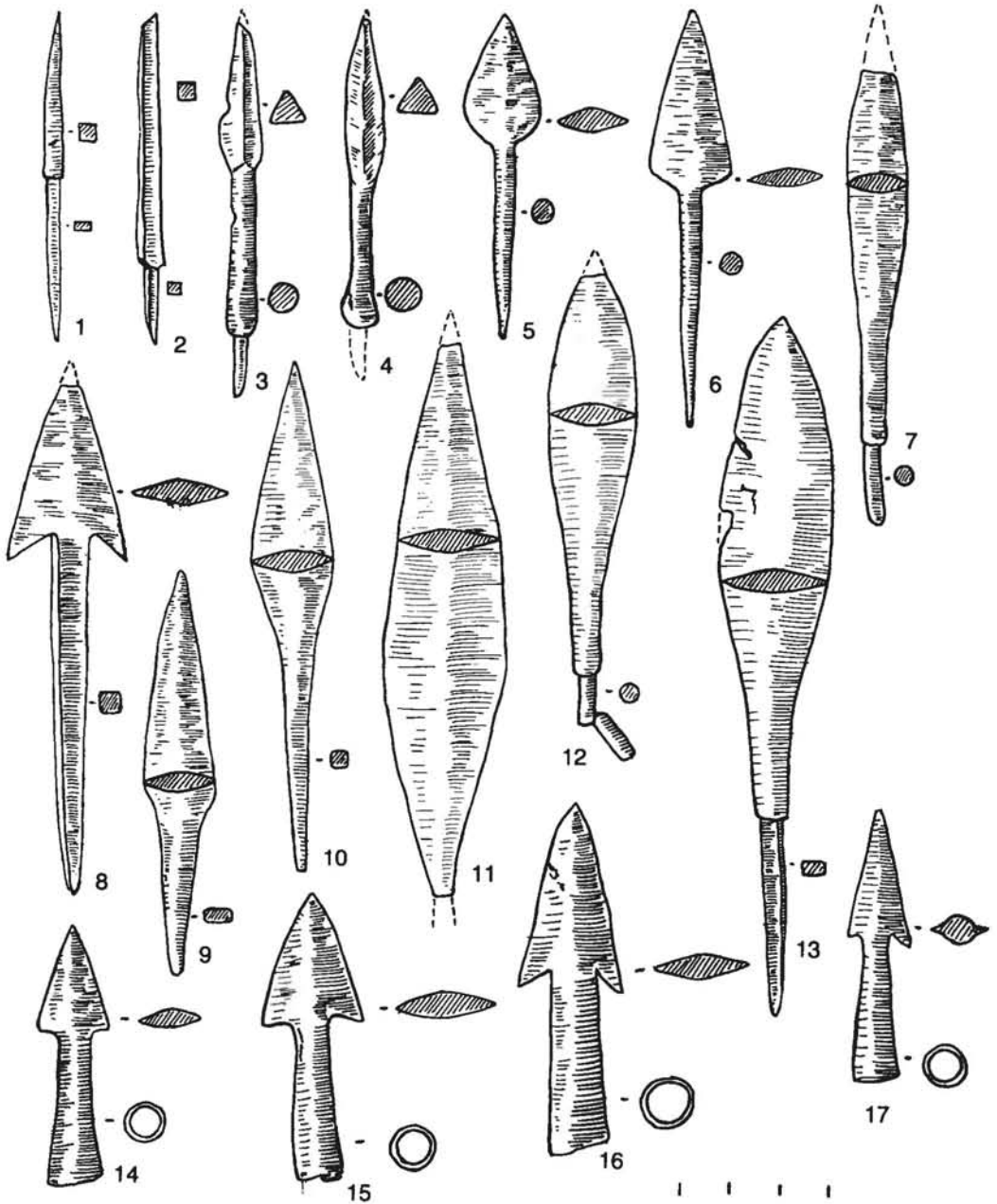


Fig. 4. Iron arrow-heads.

bronze working. Comb blanks, bone and antler plates bear witness to bone working. What is especially interesting for the archaeologists are traces of jewellers' activities who made gold objects (part of thin gold threads, small pieces of gold wire and foil were found). It should be

noted that gold objects are extremely rare in the forest-belt sites dated to the first millennium A.D. Apart from the high skill of local craftsmen they are indications of the social composition of the inhabitants. Trade and handicrafts were combined with agriculture, fishing, hunting

and other occupations known to us from finds of objects of everyday use. But it was precisely imported things and traces of handicrafts that determined the settlement's "image".

An especially striking feature is an enormous number of iron arrowheads of different kinds which points to a considerable stratum of military men in the 9th and 10th centuries (Fig. 4).

The problem of the population's ethnic composition at the early stages of the settlement's history involves some significant components of the material culture.

The most numerous finds are hand-made pottery, mainly profiled pots similar to those found in rural settlements of the central regions near Lake Ilmen and the Volkhov River (Fig. 5). It testifies to the fact that the bulk of the population in the 9th and 10th centuries was related to people living on the heart of the Novgorod land. They were the Ilmen Slovans. Analogous earthenware can be found in Ladoga, Pskov, Izborsk, Gorodok on the Lovat River, near Velikie Luki. This pottery exhibits less similarity with the modelled ceramics of the Western Slavs of the Baltic region. As for the earliest wheel-turned pottery its analogies can be found in the lands of the Western Slavs.

Another thought-provoking feature are detached bread-baking ovens. The sites of Pomorze (Gdansk and Szczecin) exhibit closest analogies while one such oven was discovered in Ladoga in the 10th-century layer. Such ovens can be regarded as an ethnographically distinctive feature of the Slavs and as direct archaeological evidence of the cultural ties between the Pomorze Slavs and people living along the Volkhov River (Nosov 1984:149, fig. 2).

An analysis of iron arrowheads deserves special attention. Socketed two-tenoned arrowheads found in Gorodishche (Fig. 4:14-17) amount to a fourth of all finds while at the earlier stages their number as related to that of tanged ones is even greater. Such socketed arrowheads were not typical for the Finno-Ugric and Baltic peoples or the nomads. They are regarded as typically Slavic artefacts, West Slavonic to be more exact. In Western Europe they are found in great numbers while in Russia, excluding its western fringes, they are rare finds. The Rurik Gorodishche which yielded 28 such arrowheads ranks the first among the forest-belt zone. It should be indicated, for the sake of comparison that Izborsk, Novgorod and Be-loozero where archaeological investigations have been conducted on a far grater scale yielded 2, 6 and 0 arrowheads of the type respectively.

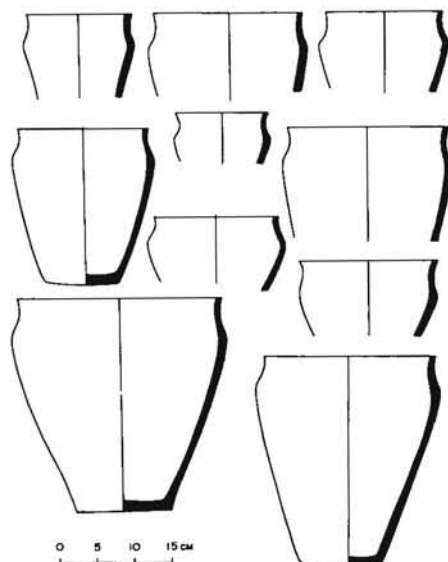


Fig. 5. The dominant type of the hand-made pottery from the Rurik Gorodishche.

The fact that arrowheads typical of the Slavs predominated at the earlier stage of the site's history which was an important military-administrative and trading and handicraft centre situated at the crossing of waterways seems to be significant.

And, finally, one more interesting find deserves mention. It is a slate whorl with several lines and letters. It was found in a level clearly dated to the second quarter of the 10th century (not later than the mid-10th century). According to T. Rozhdestvenskaya, two letters, "H" and "Ж", can be discerned in the upper part of the object. They are two letters of the Cyrillic alphabet, on which the modern Russian writing is based. There is another letter "Ж" written immediately under them in the Glagolitic alphabet, a Slavic alphabet which went out of use in the Early Middle Ages. It is not a chance occurrence that the one and same letter (which is present in Slavonic languages as distinct from the Greek language) was written in the two Old Slavonic alphabets, the two signs being clearly opposed to each other. This find makes it possible to raise the question about the assimilation of a Slavonic alphabet in the heart of Northern Russia as early as the mid-10th century, prior to the christianization of Rus (988).

A set of finds brought to Lake Ilmen from the countries of Northern Europe is quite distinctive. It embraces, in particular, four iron twisted

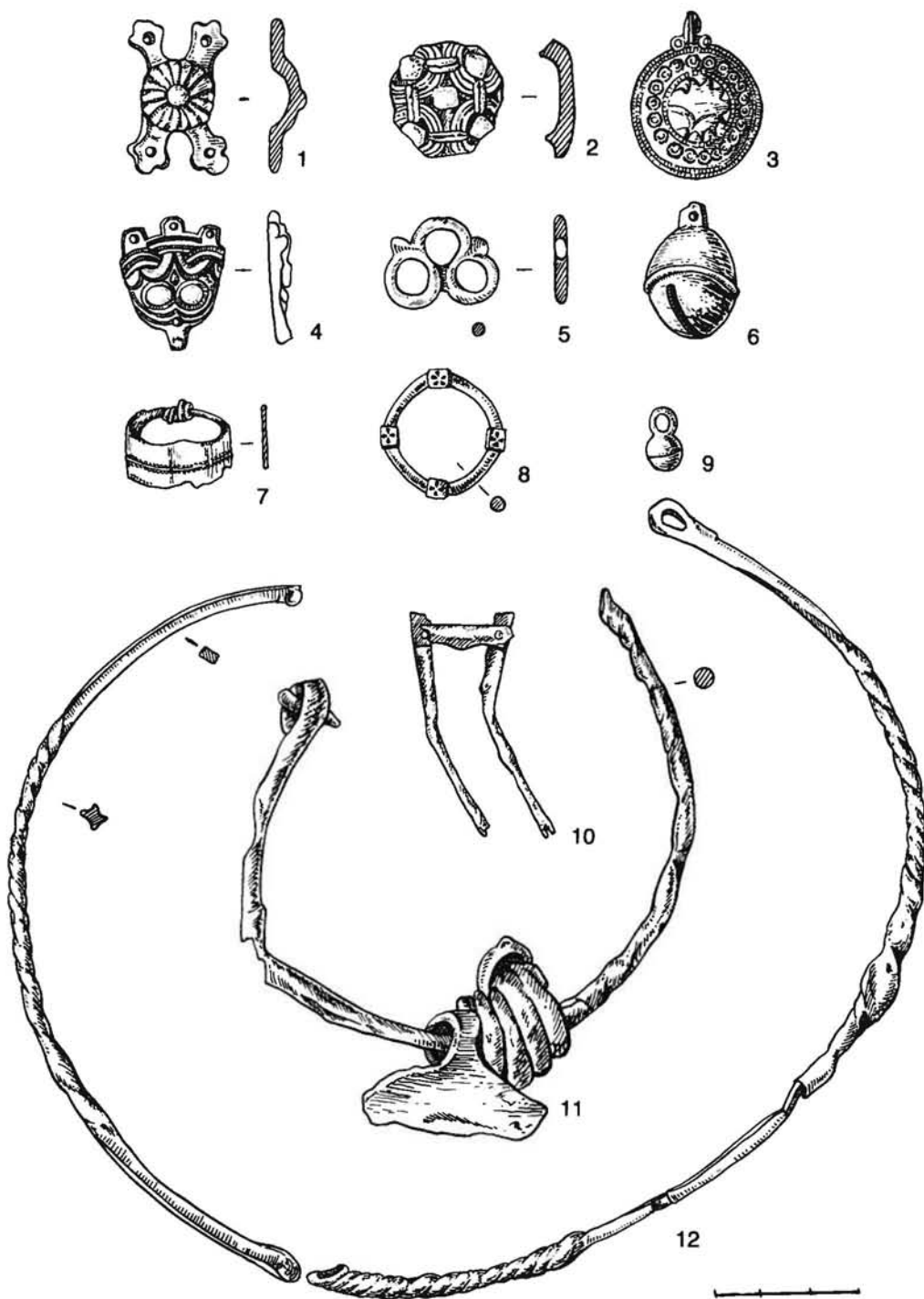


Fig. 6. Finds from 9th–10th centuries AD: 1,2,5 – plaques; 3,4 – pendants; 6 – small bell; 7 – finger-ring, 8 – ring; 9 – button, 10 parts of a balance; 11, 12 – torques; (1,2, 4–6, 8–10 – bronze; 3 – tin-lead alloy with a carnelian inset; 11–12 iron)

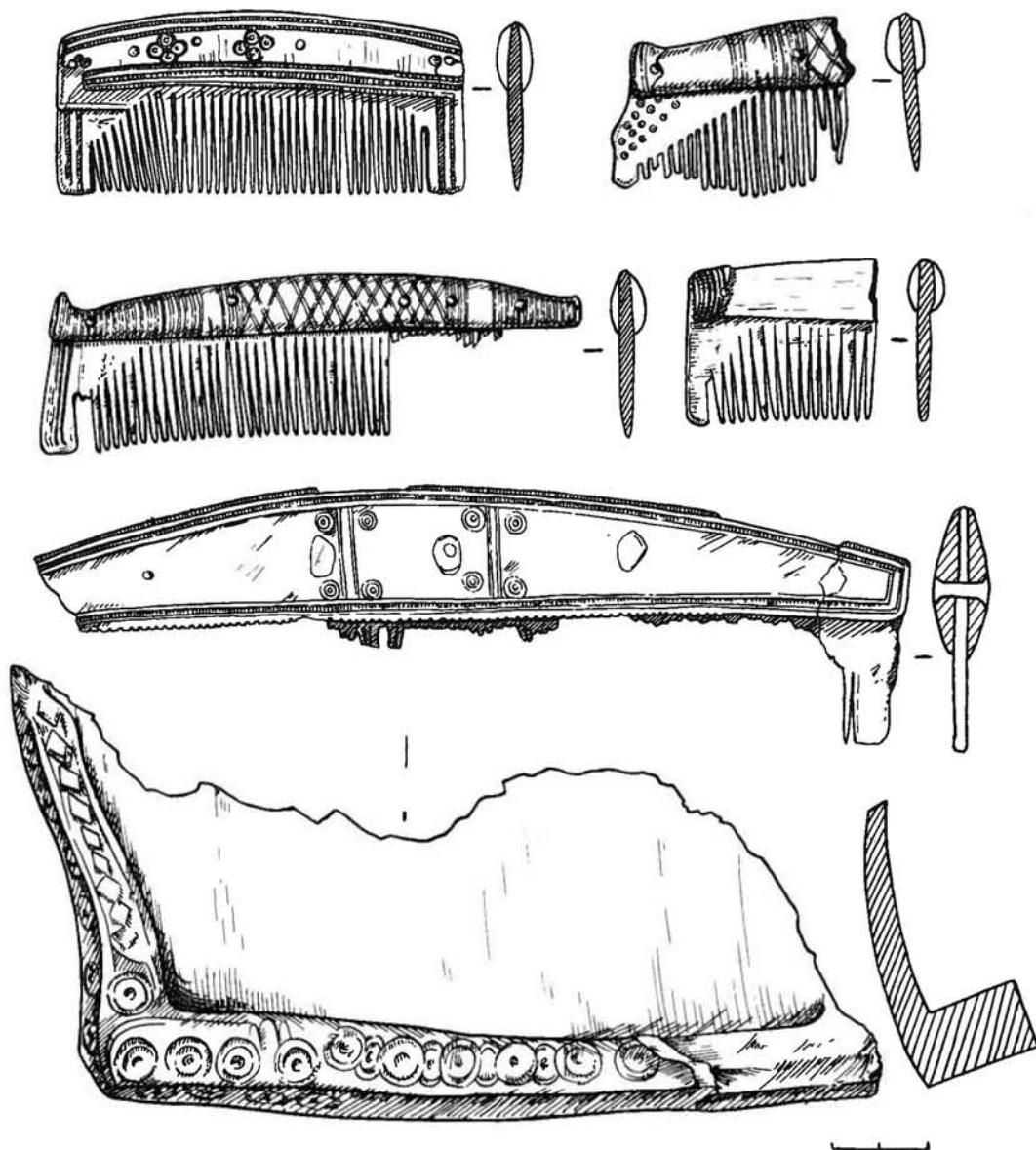


Fig. 7. Bone objects of 9th–10th centuries: 1–5 combs; 6 chess-board cover

torques made of a tetrahedral rod and embellished with pendants, – the so-called Thor's hammers (Fig. 6 : 11, 12) and an amulet in the shape of a miniature torque with a Thor's hammer (Nosov 1984 : 148, fig. 1–3). Archaeologists also found four equalarmed fibulas, (Fig. 3 : 4, 6) a clay and a stone draughts and a fragment of a bone ornamented chess-board cover (Fig. 7 : 6). The draughts were brought to Russia from Scandinavia. All similar finds are

associated with 10th-century sites situated along the water route "from the Varangians to the Greeks" and with burial grounds in large towns where Russian troops and Varangian mercenaries were concentrated. In the 11th century when the custom of inviting Varangians discontinued the draughts disappeared together with them.

Two unique finds were made in 1983: they were bronze plates with holes (amulets) carrying incised Runic inscriptions. Being in all probab-

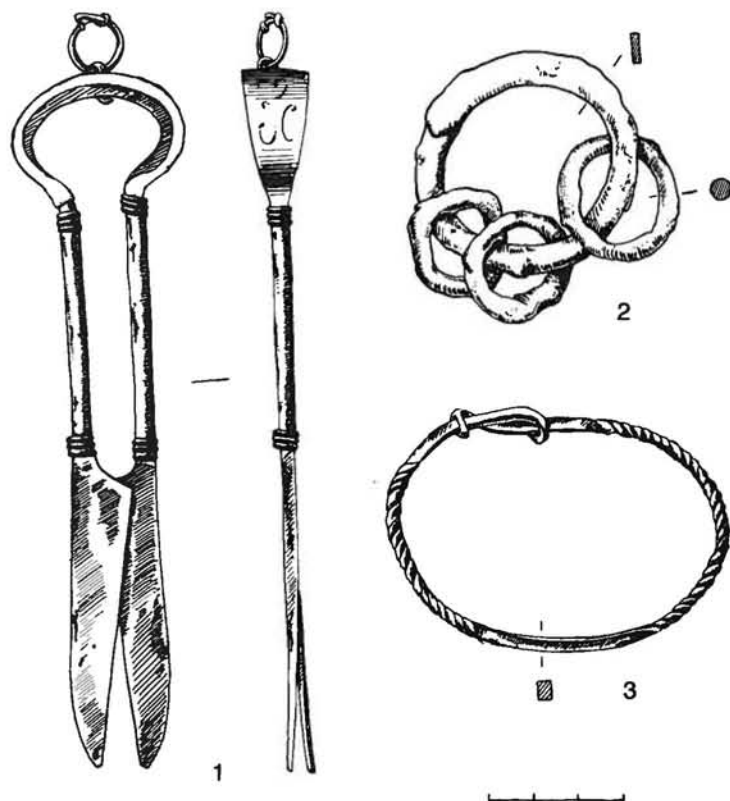


Fig. 8. Finds from 9th-10th centuries AD: 1 - iron scissors with a bronze covered string; 2 - iron belt ring; 3 - iron bracelet.

ity invocations, the inscriptions are identical. They date to the second half of the 10th century. A whorl also has a Runic-like inscription. A silver Valkyrie figurine deserves mention (Fig. 3 : 3). Though quite common in Scandinavia it is the first find of this kind in the USSR.

Among other objects imported from Northern Europe are a bronze harness cover embellished with a Borre ornament representing a stylised animal head (Fig. 3: 2), various ornamented plaques (Fig. 6: 1, 2, 5), boat-like bracelets, large antler combs with circular ornamentations (Fig. 7), and so on. Sometimes such things were made locally and not imported which is borne out by a find of a faulty fibula. Its style and subject (an animal devouring a man) are close to those of Scandinavian finds.

It is important to indicate that the presence of these objects testifies to the fact that people of Scandinavian origin lived in Gorodishche. Such things as torques with Thor's hammers, a Valkyrie figurine and pendants with Runic inscriptions were devoid of any significance and value

for other people and could not, therefore, be objects of trade.

It points to the conclusion that both Slavs and Scandinavians lived in Gorodishche in the 9th and 10th centuries. All Slavic elements of the material culture, such as pottery, bread-baking ovens and triangular arrowheads, exhibit parallels in the West Slavonic lands along the Baltic coast. The fact that arrowheads of mainly Slavic types were used seems to be extremely important in the context of early Gorodishche, a military-administrative, trading and handicrafts centre situated on the banks of a large river.

Ties between the northern groups of the Eastern Slavs and the Pomorze Slavs manifested in religious beliefs, some customs and rites, geographic names and certain specific features of written monuments and elements of ethnography and material culture have long attracted the attention of scholars (Sedov 1982 : 66). Our materials contribute to the already known facts.

During the entire 10th century Gorodishche remained a considerable settlement which sug-

gests the conclusion that the settlement of the Nerev, Lyudin and Slavensky parts of Novgorod in the 10th century proceeded in a parallel manner. Hence, there are no grounds to speak of a substitution of one settlement by another. This completely refutes the idea especially maintained in pre-revolutionary historiography that Gorodishche was abandoned because the settlement was transferred to Novgorod.

The history of Gorodishche, however, indeed exhibits a gap – coinciding with the first half and the middle of the 11th century. In any case the site did experience some considerable shifts which changed the nature of the settlement, made its economic and cultural life less intensive and its fortifications unnecessary. This was the time when its name (Gorodishche) appeared. In the late 11th century the number and variety of finds reappeared.

The gap can be explained against the background of the history of the princely residence in Novgorod. All researchers share the opinion that in the early 11th century the prince's court was situated on the Torgovaya side of the river, just opposite the Detinets, near the marketplace. It is not so clear however, where it was in the earlier period. The assumption that the Yaroslav Dvorishche was the "original prince's residence" still in the 9th century can hardly be correct since the place lacks layers dated to earlier than the 11th century. The very name of the place associates it with Yaroslav (early 11th century).

There have been repeated assumptions that from the very beginning that the prince and his retinue resided in Detinets and that they moved to the Torgovaya side under Yaroslav (or even later). Indeed, such an idea would seem plausible in the context of the well-known 12th-century events and can be explained by the strengthening of the Novgorodian boyars and limitation of the prince's power. This interpretation would hardly hold if we take into account that in the early 11th century there existed a political alliance between Yaroslav and the Novgorod nobility while Novgorod's dependence upon Kiev decreased. It is indicative that those who side with the idea fail to support it with weighty arguments.

Still in 1913 P. Gusev emphasised that there was no information that the princes resided in Detinets. Archaeological investigations have shown that what was traditionally regarded as the prince's part of the Kremlin, or its southern section, came about in 1116 when the Kremlin territory was extended. Prior to this date the

area was in the fringes of the Lyudin quarter. It came to be associated with the princes by its name not earlier than the late 15th century. Taking these facts into account and also Yanin's observations to the effect that the prince's power was of secondary importance in Novgorod and his institutions held a place of their own in the city's political structure, one should reject the assumption that in the 9th and 10th centuries the Detinets housed the prince's court which was removed in the 11th century.

I believe that the princely court, which, from the very beginning, opposed the New Town, was in Gorodishche in the 9th and 10th centuries, the place where the first written information locates it in the 12th century. In the early 11th century Yaroslav moved it in the town to establish it on the vacant lot in the Slavensky quarter. This version is supported by the archaeological gap corresponding to the first half and the mid-11th century in the materials from Gorodishche and by the fact that the Yaroslav Dvorishche appeared not earlier than the 11th century.

The importance of the Gorodishche materials is thrown into bolder relief by the overall picture of the settlement of the Ilmen area. Investigations of recent years have brought to light the fact that already in the 9th century the region of the Volkhov sources was densely populated by the Slavs (Fig. 2). Ancient settlements and impressive barrows could be seen among the hills of the Volkhov flood-plain. The largest group of barrows is found at the village of Volotovo. It is interesting to note that precisely these barrows were connected with the Novgorodian oral tradition depicting one of them as the burial place of Gostomysl, the legendary Novgorod *posadnik* (the chief official of the Novgorodian administration) of the earliest period and the Volotovo field as the place where the famous warriors of Novgorod were buried.

One should also mention Perun, the main pagan sanctuary of the Ilmen Slavic group. Its location at the sources of the Volkhov just opposite Gorodishche against the background of the lake adds to the grandeur and picturesqueness the site. Legends about the sanctuary lived on in Novgorod for a long time while the custom of dropping a coin while passing it by the river, the so-called "tribute to Perun", survived practically until our time. According to a Novgorodian chronicle there was a wooden statue of Perun in the sanctuary erected in 980 by Dobrynya, a military leader under the Kievan prince Vladimir. In 988 during the christianization of Novgorod it was toppled over into the Volkhov. It

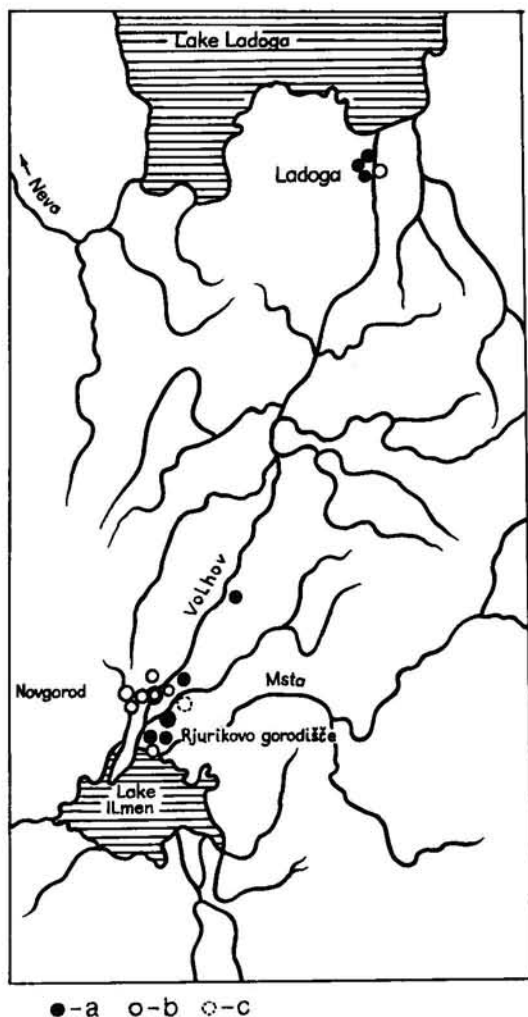


Fig. 9. Hoards of Oriental coins of the 8th–10th centuries AD along the river of Volkhov: a – hoards of 8th–9th centuries; b – hoards of 10th century; c – hoards of unknown age.

does not mean, however, that the sanctuary existed only for nine years. The simple fact that the name of Perun stuck to the place and that it figured in numerous legends rather points to a prolonged existence of a religious centre there. Excavations conducted by Artsikhovskiy and Sedov show us the sanctuary as a circular elevation with a horizontal ground in the centre framed by a moat with eight fire-places. They date the sanctuary's construction to, at least, the 9th century and its active utilisation to the 9th and 10th centuries. This suggests that Dobrynya erected the idol in the already functioning sanctuary.

In the 9th century, people living at the sources of the Volkhov made up the northern part of a considerable settlement area existing in the vicinity of Lake Ilmen in the late first millennium A.D. (Fig. 2). It was a most densely populated and agriculturally advanced region of the Novgorodian land stretching along the lake's northwestern coast. This area is most suitable for the primary agricultural development. A Russian chronicler wrote that "the Slovens settled at Lake Ilmen and were called by their own name". In this way, Lake Ilmen and the Volkhov sources became the centre of the northern Slavic group which had come here to settle.

A glance at a map of Eastern Europe will show that the vast river systems of the Ilmen basin (the Lovat, Pola, Msta, Shelon) meet here and that the route along the Volkhov to the north, towards Lake Ladoga and through the Neva into the Gulf of Finland starts in this area. The Volkhov sources can be likened to a gigantic funnel neck, a most suitable place for controlling river traffic in the East European forest belt.

The Volkhov acquired its significance as a main waterway in the second half of the 8th century, first in connection with a rapidly unfolding trade between the Baltic countries, Rus and the Islamic Orient and later as a section of the route "from the Varangians to the Greeks" which came into existence in the 9th century and gradually became prominent in the life of the Old Russian state. In the lake, at the Volkhov sources, this route split into two, one of them leading to the Pola and Msta and further to the Volga source, the other to the Lovat and the Western Dvina and Dnieper. As S. Yanina wrote, "with the appearance of the Oriental dirhem in the Russian lands the Volkhov sources became an important trading centre". Her words are corroborated by the finds of 12 hoards of Oriental coins, five of them dating to the 9th century, while in the Volkhov lower reaches, at Lake Ladoga and in the closest vicinities only four hoards have been found so far and the entire Ilmen basin yielded eight hoards (only three of them dating to the 9th century). This is also an indirect indication of settlements which had a considerable role to play as early as the 9th century (Fig. 9).

As we see, two basic factors determined the emergence of the North Russian centre at the sources of the Volkhov: the formation by the late first millennium A.D. of a dense Slavic population whose chief sanctuary was in Perun and the key location of the site at the interna-

tional trade and military passages. It attracted here the top strata of the population, military men, merchants and artisans. These facts also account for the presence of Scandinavian newcomers.

Scandinavians in general were well acquainted with the geography of Eastern Europe. Excavations in Ladoga, at the lower Volkhov date their first appearance to the second half of the 8th century. In all probability they reached the upper reaches of the Volkhov at approximately the same time. They were not familiar with the name "Novgorod" and called the Northern Russian capital "Holmgård". It means that there was no Novgorod at the time when they first reached Lake Ilmen but their name for the Russian capital should, by all means, point to definite historical realia. What in actual fact was this enigmatic Holmgård?

Today the word in its plural form is translated more often as "settlements among the islands" or "the land of island settlements" (Melnikova 1977 : 204–209). According to specialists it was the term which designated the locality where the uninterrupted water route from the Gulf of Finland through the Neva and Lake Ladoga to the Volkhov ended and which, due to this circumstance, was of especial importance for Russo-Scandinavian contacts. As a rule the Scandinavians reached the Volkhov sources in spring since travels to far-away countries were synchronised with spring floods which covered rapids, made smaller rivers navigable and portages easy to negotiate. This season presented then with a panorama of a flooded locality with settlements on hill tops looking like islands. The assumption is supported archaeologically. Novgorod which sprang into existence some time later in the locality and was called Holmgård by the Scandinavians received this name.

Summary. In the 9th century Gorodishche was a key to the densely populated region around the Volkhov sources and Lake Ilmen. The first hill one sees when going down the Volkhov, being situated on an island formed by the two branches of the river, offers excellent natural protection. It was used by merchants and artisans for their settlement which at the same time assumed military and administrative functions of controlling the river and its lively traffic. It determined Gorodishche's leading role among other settlements in the region which was supported by the fact that the Novgorodian princes had chosen it as their residence. The princely host, which, undoubtedly, included not a small number of Varangians, was permanently sta-

tioned in Gorodishche near its leader. There were also skilled artisans able to suit various tastes. This accounts for a great number of Scandinavian objects and their greater concentration, as compared with Novgorod.

Gorodishche was by no means the only settlement on the Volkhov flood plain. By the 10th century their significance had increased dramatically. Gorodishche and its environs had become a home for the upper layers of the Slavic society – rich people with their retinue. They were attracted by both the region's economic significance and the presence of administrative power in it. One of the hills among the settlements of the "zemstvo" nobility was taken by the New Fortress – the New Town which opposed itself to the princely settlement at the Volkhov sources. In this way, from the very beginning, the New Town and Gorodishche, the Slovenian boyars, who ruled the region, and the prince whose power was supported by the military might of his host, opposed each other both socio-politically and territorially. For a brief period in the 11th century, under Yaroslav Vladimirovich, the court was moved to Novgorod, but in the last third of the 11th century, a period when the power of the Novgorodian boyars received fresh impetus and the *posadniks* of a new type appeared (they became direct representatives of the boyars' power), the princes were forced to move back to Gorodishche.

REFERENCES:

- Artsikhovskiy, A.V. 1956: A.B. Арциховский. Археологическое изучение Новгорода. – *Материалы и исследования по археологии СССР*, № 55, Москва, с. 7–43.
- Melnikova, E.A. 1977: E.A. Мельникова. Восточнославянские топонимы с корнем *gard* – в древнескандинавской письменности. – *Скандинавский сборник*, № XXII, с. 199–209.
- Nosov, E.N. 1984: Historical Ties between the Population of the Novgorod Land Centre and the Baltic Countries in the 9th–10th Centuries – *Iskos* 4, p. 145–150.
- Sedov, V.V. 1982: В.В. Седов *Восточные славяне в VI–XIII вв.* Москва, 328 с.
- Yanin, V.L. 1977: В.Л. Янин *Очерки комплексного источниковедения*, Москва, 240 с.