

Gleb Lebedev¹

SLAVS AND FINNS IN NORTHWEST RUSSIA REVISITED

In his article, Dr Ligi underlines that with regard to the problem of Slavic migration into Northwest Russia his position is not far removed from certain ideas expressed "by some Russian scholars 15 years ago". He characterized, however, this conception as a "softer" version of the theory of Slavic colonization (Ligi 1993, 33). As one of these scholars (particularly the author of the chapter on the Northwest which pertains to this problem), I would like to make a few remarks.

Our book (Bulkin et al. 1978) was, and was to remain, marginal in former Soviet archaeology as an attempt to find new approaches different from the "national-romantic" paradigm of Slavic ethnogenesis. This work, however, had its own context of research. The concrete results of recent excavations and hypotheses were also marginal, and were to remain so. This is one of the features of a paradigm crisis, and not only a "national-romantic" one.

At the same time, I published materials from one of the earliest known *sopka* barrows which had been excavated in 1972. It was a typical mound near Rep'y on the Upper Luga River, i.e. on the periphery of the tribal territory of the Slovenes west of Lake Ilmen (Lebedev 1978).

Paradoxically, the earliest assemblages (in cremations) of this "typical *sopka*" contained rich sets of women's ornaments, which are typical of the "long barrows". The chronological position of all these assemblages (not only of these but of the *sopkas* in general) covered the periods from the 7th to the 8th and from the 9th to the 10th centuries, and a series of inhumation graves (ca. 20) shows that this population also used their local cemetery from the 11th to the 14th century (near the *sopka* are typical *zhalnik* graves) (Fig. 1).

Five years later, V. Sedov described this barrow

as "one of the most interesting *sopkas* excavated by G. Lebedev" (Sedov 1982, 61). Despite clear evidence to the contrary, E. Nosov stated that "it is not a *sopka* but a long barrow" (Nosov 1982, 61). However, neither Nosov, Konetski et al. nor Ligi himself take into account this "most interesting *sopka*" with regard to its chronological and cultural connections.

I am aware of the difficulties arising from the interpretation of these and similar facts. At the time, I wrote (Lebedev 1981) of the crisis of this "ethno-cultural" (in Ligi's terms "national-romantic") paradigm not only in its dominant version but also in its "alternative" form. Neither one answers questions arising from the actual finds and assemblages (Fig. 2).

The "opposite hypothesis" is the "new paradigm" (this term was used in the title of a lecture delivered by this author at a conference in 1979). A more complex, but also more complete, scheme was proposed. This includes not only all the varieties of burial monuments (groups of long barrows, *sopkas* and other burial grounds of the "transitional times", as well as the "Old Russian mounds", *zhalniks* and others). It also incorporates various types of settlements (rustic, pre-urban and urban) (Fig. 3).

Ligi is correct in referring to our view that urbanization was the main factor contributing to "Slavic colonization". But it is questionable whether infiltration from these "pre-urban" centres into the agrarian surroundings was necessary for the existence and rise of these centres. The surrounding population was more or less "Slavonized" by language, culture and economy.

The medieval culture of Northwest Russia is termed "Old Russian". It is both Slavic and Finnic, i.e. with Karelian, Ingrian and other components at the periphery of the Novgorod State in the period from the 11th to the 15th century. I suggest that the beginning of this medieval culture was connected

¹ Department of Archaeology, Faculty of History, Mendeleevskaja line V.O., 199034 St. Petersburg, Russia.

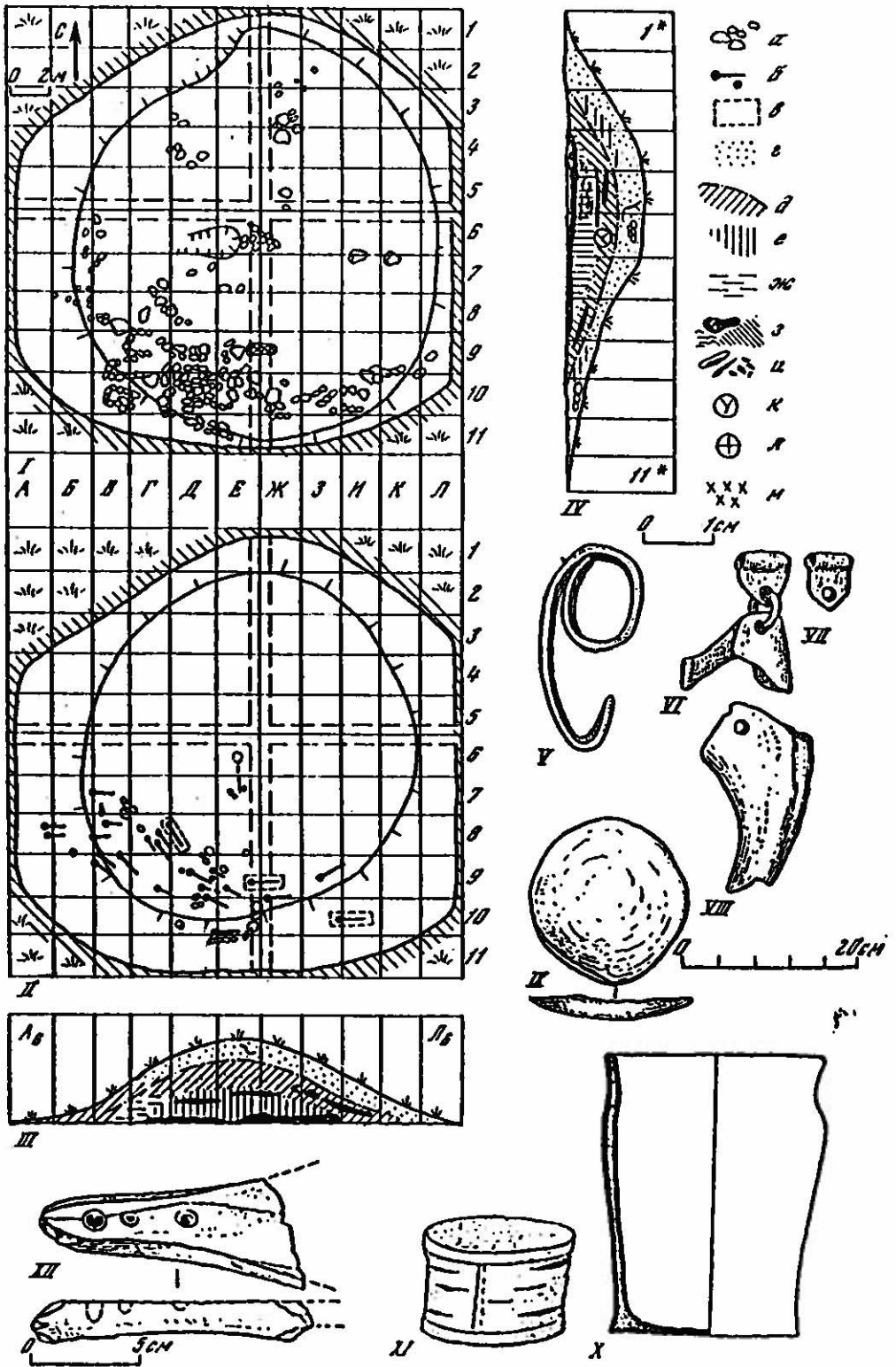


Fig. 1. Sopka, Rep'y. Mound levels and finds assemblages (after Lebedev 1978).

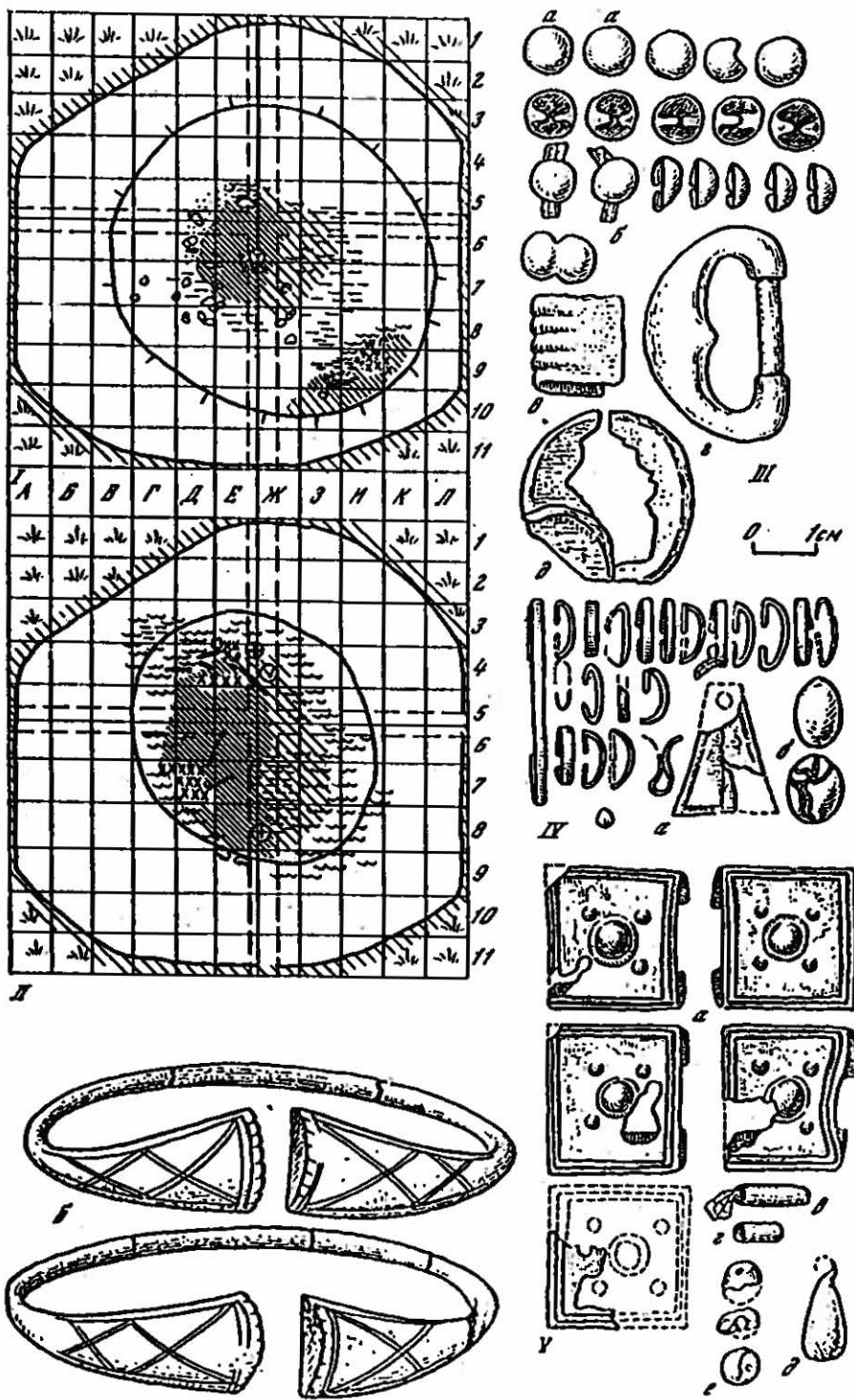


Fig. 1. Cont.

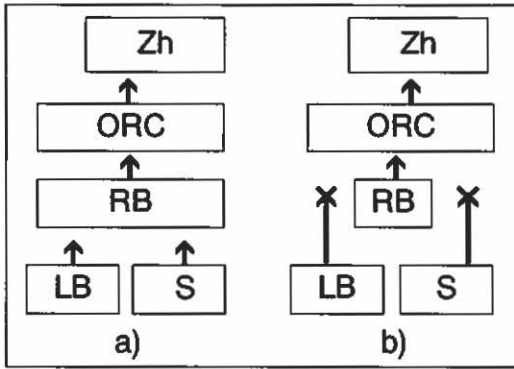


Fig. 2. Dominating (a) and "alternative" (b) versions of the "ethnocultural paradigm". LB - long barrows, S - sopkas, RB - round barrows (with cremations), ORC - "Old Russian culture", ZH - zhalniki (after Lebedev 1981).

with the last of the great cultural changes that can be observed archaeologically. Previous changes were no less considerable and were of great significance for social and ethnic processes, particularly the process of language consolidation, mixing and replacement. In 1989 we published a collective work on the ethnogenesis of the Slavs (Slaviane 1989), in which I suggested a general scheme of this cultural process with regard to archaeological cultures from the first millennium B.C. to the first millennium AD (Fig. 4). The sopkas, long barrows and other groups of archaeological remains in Northwest Russia belong in principle to the same scheme as a continuation of the same processes in the northern periphery of the forest zone of the Russian Plain.

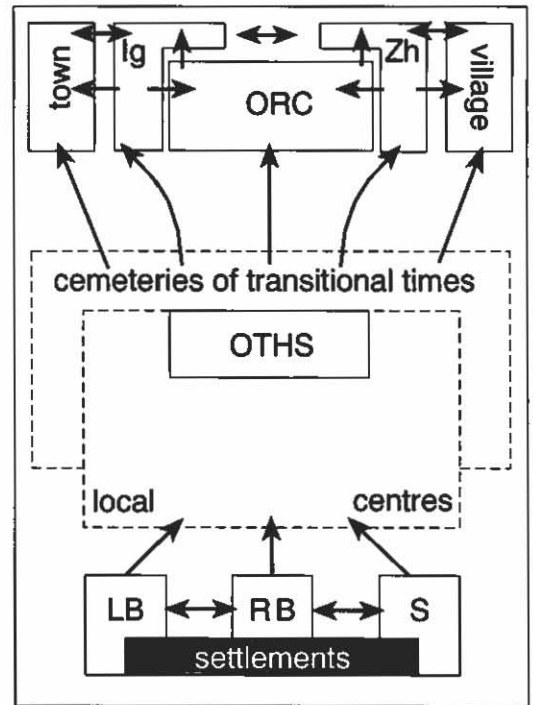


Fig. 3. The "opposite hypothesis" of the peopling of Northwest Russia by the Slavs. The abbreviations are the same as in Fig. 2. OTHs - open trade-handicraft settlements - Ig - burial sites with inhumations of the 11th-12th centuries (after Lebedev 1981)

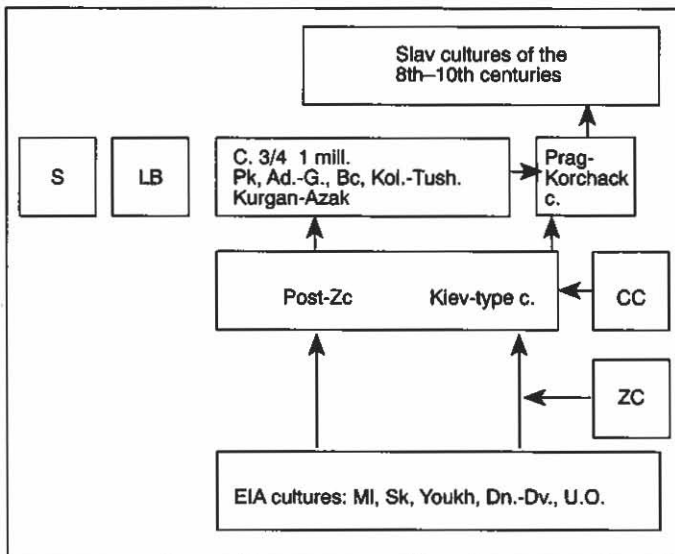


Fig. 4. The general scheme of Slavic ethnogenesis according to archaeological data. EIA - Early Iron Age cultures, MI - Milograd, Sk - Stroked Ware culture, Youkh - Youkhonovo culture, Dn.-Dv. - Dnieper-Dvina culture, U.O. - Upper Oka culture, ZC - Zarubincy culture, CC Cherniakov culture, Post-ZC - post-Zarubincian cultures. C 3/4 1 mill - cultures of the third quarter of the first millennium AD.: Pk - Pen'kovka culture, Ad.-G. - Adamenki-Gaimanovo culture, Bc - Bancerovschina culture, Kol.-Tush. - Kolochin-Tushemia culture (after Lebedev 1989)

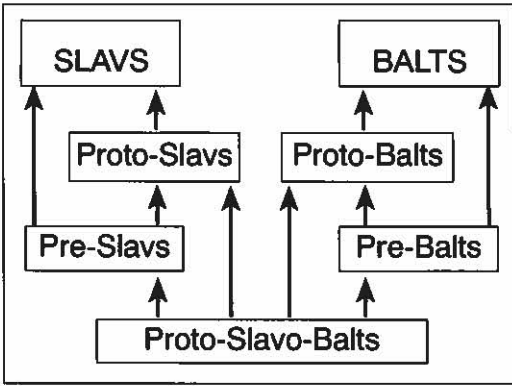


Fig. 5. The scheme of the same process according to linguistic data (after Lebedev 1989).

The problem consists, however, in the association between cultural (archaeological) and linguistic (ethnic) processes. We stressed the fundamental independence of these processes with respect to one another, although the main phases of both (linguistic and archaeological) can coincide (Fig. 5).

We explored these processes in the connections between Slavs, Scandinavians, Finns, Balts and others during the Viking Age (Slaviane i Skandinavny 1986). In 1992 I proposed a general model of these processes (Fig. 6).

The problem remains, however, of how this "model" can be investigated with the means of separate disciplines: archaeology, linguistics, anthropology etc. Together with Professor A. Gerd, a linguist, we suggested a general solution to the problems (Gerd and Lebedev 1991). The first condition is the separate ordering of data in the individual disciplines (Table 1).

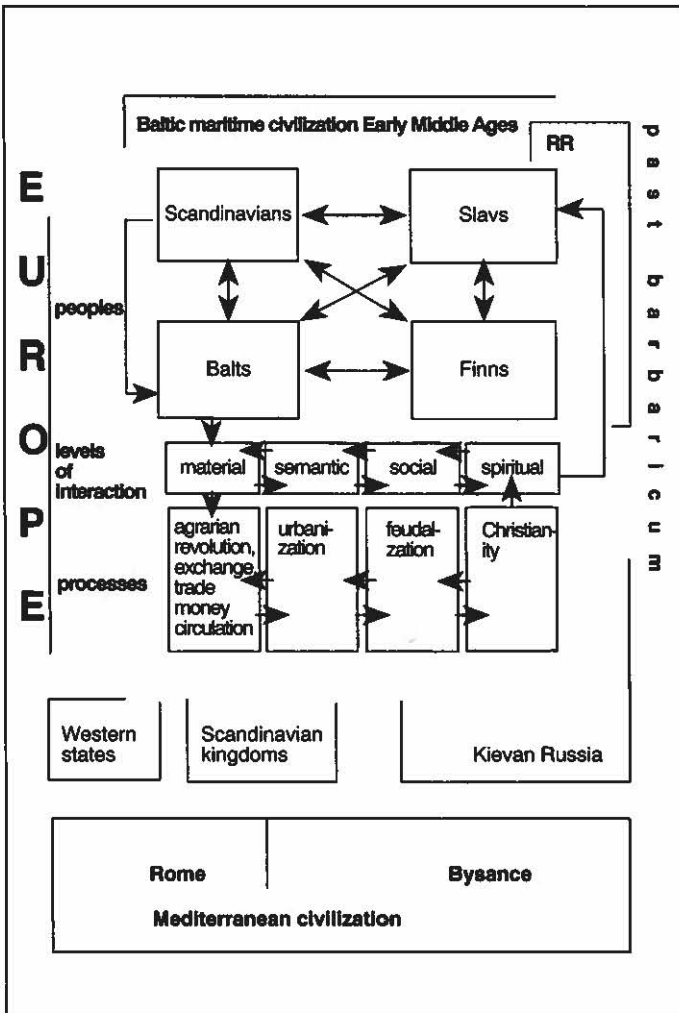


Fig. 6. The common model of the formation of "early medieval Baltic civilization. RR - "Rurik's Rus", i.e. Northwest Russia in the 9th-11th centuries (after Lebedev 1993).

Table 1

Model of data matrix for the interdisciplinary exposition of the Historical-Cultural Zone (HCZ): East-Novgorodian HCZ.

ORC – Old Russian culture, S – sopkas, LB – long barrows, TWC Textile Ware culture, DC Dyakovo culture (“Western variant”), FC – Fatyanovo culture, PC Pitted Ware culture (after Gerd and Lebedev 1991).

Chronology	Structural types of material				
	archaeological cultures	language of the population	anthropology	ethnography	geography
1 mill. AD	ORC	Slavic			
1 mill. AD	S	West-Finnic			
1 mill. AD	LB	West-Finnic			
1 mill. BC	TWC(DC?)	West-Finnic, Baltic			
1-2 mill. BC	----	West-Finnic, Baltic			
2 mill. BC	FC	West-Finnic			
2-3 mill. BC	UVC	West-Finnic			
3 mill. BC		Finno-Ugrian			
3-4 mill. BC	PC	Finno-Ugrian			
4 mill. BC		Saami			
4-5 mill. BC		Proto-Saami?			

In the case of the “Slavs and Finns”, the situation studied by Ligi, these disciplines, alongside archaeology, can be: numismatics, the study of historical records and toponyms.

Numismatic data show that a common system involving the circulation of Arabian silver was a main factor promoting urbanization, already existing in the period 780-833 on the main routes and in the main centres of the East Slav area (as also among the Eastern Finnic populations between the Volga and the Oka). The West Finnic populations in Estonia, Karelia and elsewhere, as well as the Balts on the Daugava, were distinct from these processes (Nosov 1976; Lebedev 1985; Berga 1980).

Historical sources testify to the emergence of the “Russian” state after 838 (841-852). Through the activities of the Varangian princes it continued its existence in Northwest Russia, particularly in Ladoga and Novgorod around 862-864 (Rurik) and with the consolidation of the Slavic and non-Slavic tribes from the north to the south of the “Old Russian State” after the raid of Prince Oleg in 882. Thus, the consolidation of this elite continued with intensity in the 9th century.

Place-names, particularly those of major water routes (the Volkhov and the Lovat’) and of many small rivers in Northwest Russia are Slavic, with highly archaic linguistic forms in many cases (Sedov 1953). These circumstances point to the absence of contacts between the Slavs and the Finnic

population, or to the absence of an “autochthonous” population in these regions and localities.

I would also point out that the linguistic-ethnic connection between Slavs and Balts (see Fig. 5) and archaeological cultures (Fig. 4) are different in principle with respect to the Slavs and the Finnic population. The Slavic and Baltic (Lettish and Lithuanian) languages belong to the same branch of the Indo-European family of languages and neighbouring populations could understand each other because they spoke closely related dialects.

The population of Northwest Russia spoke the dialects of different language families: Indo-European (Slavs) and Ural-Altai (Finnic peoples). Here, the interrelation of linguistic and cultural processes must be quite different compared with the schemes suggested for the territory of the Slavs and the Balts in 1989.

All these connections, however, require attentive and objective research. Not only the above processes of historical development, but others as well. The formation of the state, Christianity, literature, national independence etc. all proceeded at a slower pace in the “Finnic” countries than in Russia, Poland, Germany or Scandinavia. The objective study of these processes requires attention to the respective roles of all participants and contributors to “early medieval Baltic civilization” (Lebedev 1986), be they Slavs or Scandinavians, Finns or Lapps. The contribution of the latter can be esti-

mated much higher than those of all the others in the development of our common cultural-ecological foundation. All that is required is an attentive respect for each other. In Soviet Russian archaeology, our "opposition school" opposed national-romanticism since it strived for the purification of national and social mentality. In 1989, the Estonian author Jaan Kross remarked that the "modern period" of the renaissance of national mentality in the Baltic countries began from archaeology. Yet this happened not only in these countries but also in the Slavic ones, and this was particularly the case in Russia.

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