

Old Russia and Southern Finland (Finds of Old Russian Origin in Finland)

The scope of the article does not permit a full discussion of this important and scantily explored problem. Here is presented only a review of the artefacts of Old Russian origin found in archaeological sites in Finland. Compiling a catalogue of the finds is the first step in the study of the subject.

It is the objects of Christian cult that are of paramount importance among the finds of Old Russian origin. Bronze crosses with hollow enamel were discovered in the Finnish burial ground of Haimionmäki.¹ It belongs to the crosses of a round-armed double-sided type. One side of the cross centre is divided into four parts by an oblique cross filled with enamel. The obverse side of the cross centre has two decorative concentric circles with a space between them also filled with enamel (Fig. 1).

A large number of such crosses can be found in the sites of Old Russia. Many of them were discovered in the Middle Dnieper region which led V. A. Malm to the conclusion that they were made in Kiev or the towns not far from it.²

From the Kiev-Dnieper region the enamel crosses spread through all the territory of Russia. They were also known outside the country, on the territory of the Lithuanian, Lettish, and Est tribes,³ and some of them penetrated into the Kama region and Gotland.⁴ According to E. S. Mugurevitch, the Lower Western Dvina where several such crosses have been found might be another centre of their manufacture.⁵ The enamel crosses are dated according to Old Russian and Lettish sources to the eleventh-twelfth centuries. The Old Russian origin of these crosses from the burial grounds of Finland is without doubt.

Crosses with equal arms and relief decoration on the obverse side are also of Old Russian origin. Their ends are widened and each has three salient discs, the cross centre being decorated with various patterns (Fig. 2). In Finland similar crosses were found in five burial grounds; Vilusenharju, Virusmäki, Visulahti, Ristimäki, and Taskula.⁶ Three crosses of the same type were discovered in the Karelian burial ground of Kekomäki.⁷

In the early twentieth century A. A. Spitsin called these finds »crosses of Scandinavian type», as they were often found in Scandinavia.⁸ But later scholars noted that an overwhelming number of the objects originated from the settlements and cemeteries of Old Russia and only a small number from Scandinavia. It became obvious that they were produced somewhere in Northern Russia from where they spread through other Russian territories as well as outside Russia.⁹ M. Stenberger suggested that the place of the production of the crosses might be Novgorod or some other town of North-Western Russia. According to E. Kivikoski the crosses are of Byzantine origin and were produced in several places in Russia.¹⁰

In Russia the crosses date back to the eleventh-twelfth centuries. Outside Old Russia they were found, as it has already been mentioned, in Finland, as well as in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania,¹¹ and only in some cases in the Kama region, Sweden and Norway.¹²

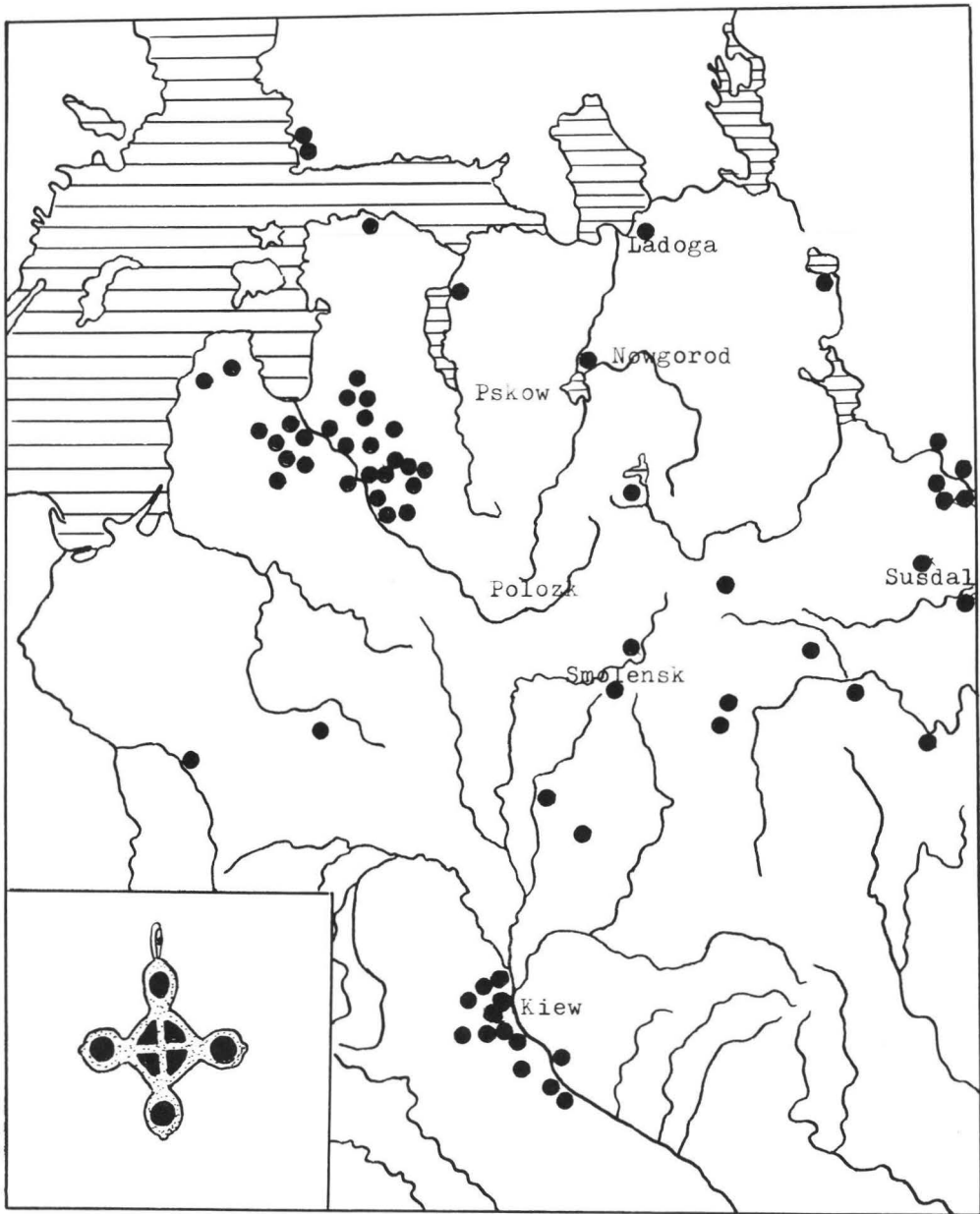


Fig. 1.

The double-sided silver encolpion is from the territory of Häme (the Kevola cemetery¹³). On the front side of it is a relief image of Christ (in niello), on the obverse side there is a figure probably of the Madonna (Fig. 3). The find is doubtlessly of Old Russian origin, similar encolpia were widely spread in Russia including Novgorod, where they date back to the eleventh-twelfth centuries.¹⁴

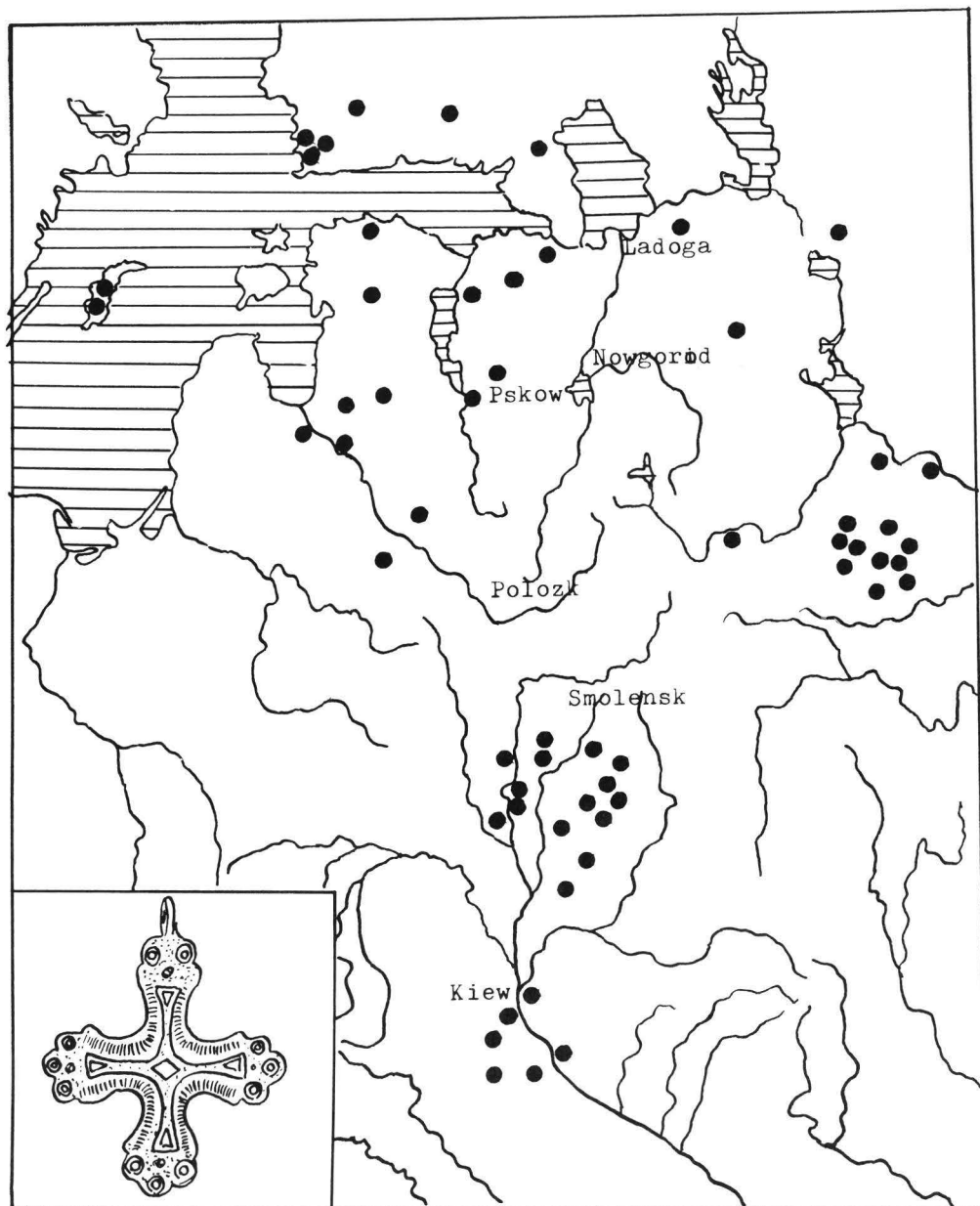


Fig. 2.

Another cross with the relief image of Christ on the front side was found in burial 14 of the Taskula cemetery (Fig. 3). It was found together with a coin of Henry III (1039–1056) on the basis of which the find is believed to date from the second half of the eleventh century.¹⁵ In Russia similar crosses have been found in dozens of burial sites. There are no parallels to them in Scandinavia.

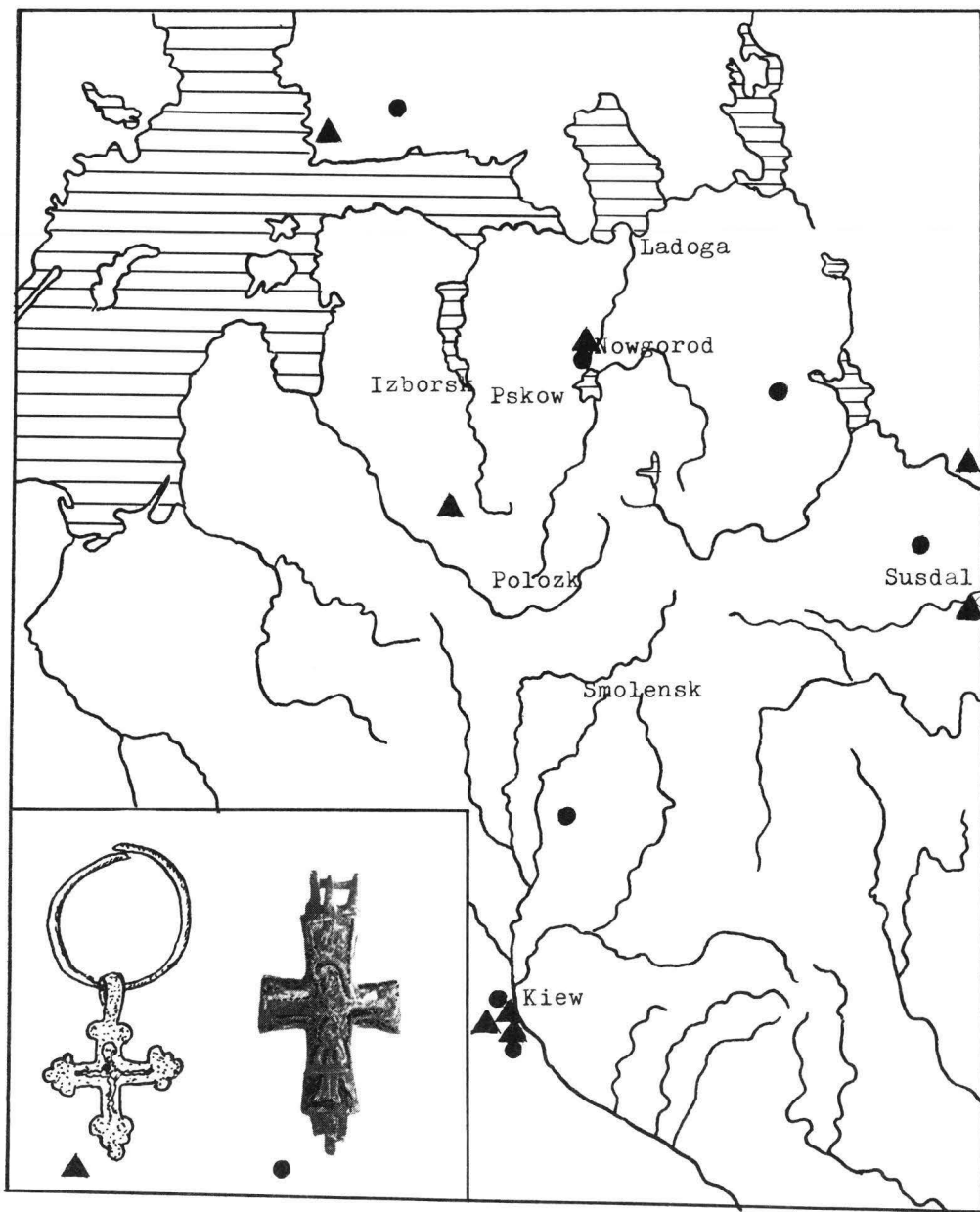


Fig. 3.

The Kappelinmäki find – a small silver cross of Byzantine origin with an octahedral shield in the middle of which there is a cross-shaped figure made in niello – is also from Old Russia.¹⁶

A silver double-sided cross was found in burial 10 of the Taskula cemetery, dating from the eleventh century.¹⁷ On its right side there is a relief image of the crucified

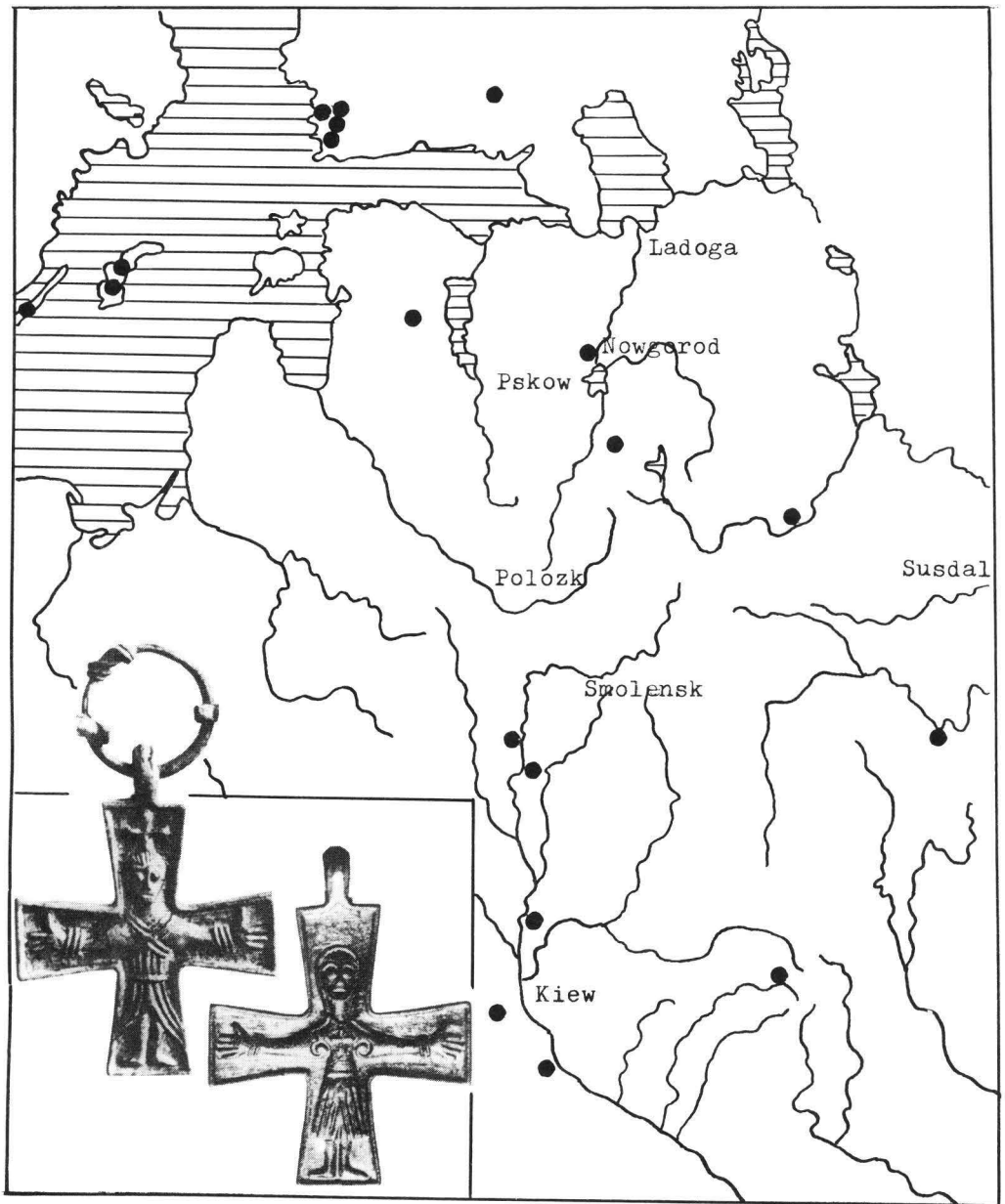


Fig. 4.

Christ dressed in a long tunic with a cross-shaped crossbelt on the breast. The hands are distinct, a little exaggerated, with a spiral pattern on the wrists. On the obverse side there is a full length female figure, probably that of the Madonna.

Similar crosses were found in some other Finnish cemeteries (Fig. 4), such as Virusmäki, Heinikkala, and Juonennurmi.¹⁸ Crosses of the same type were also discovered in two monuments of Gotland, on the island of Öland and in Norway.¹⁹

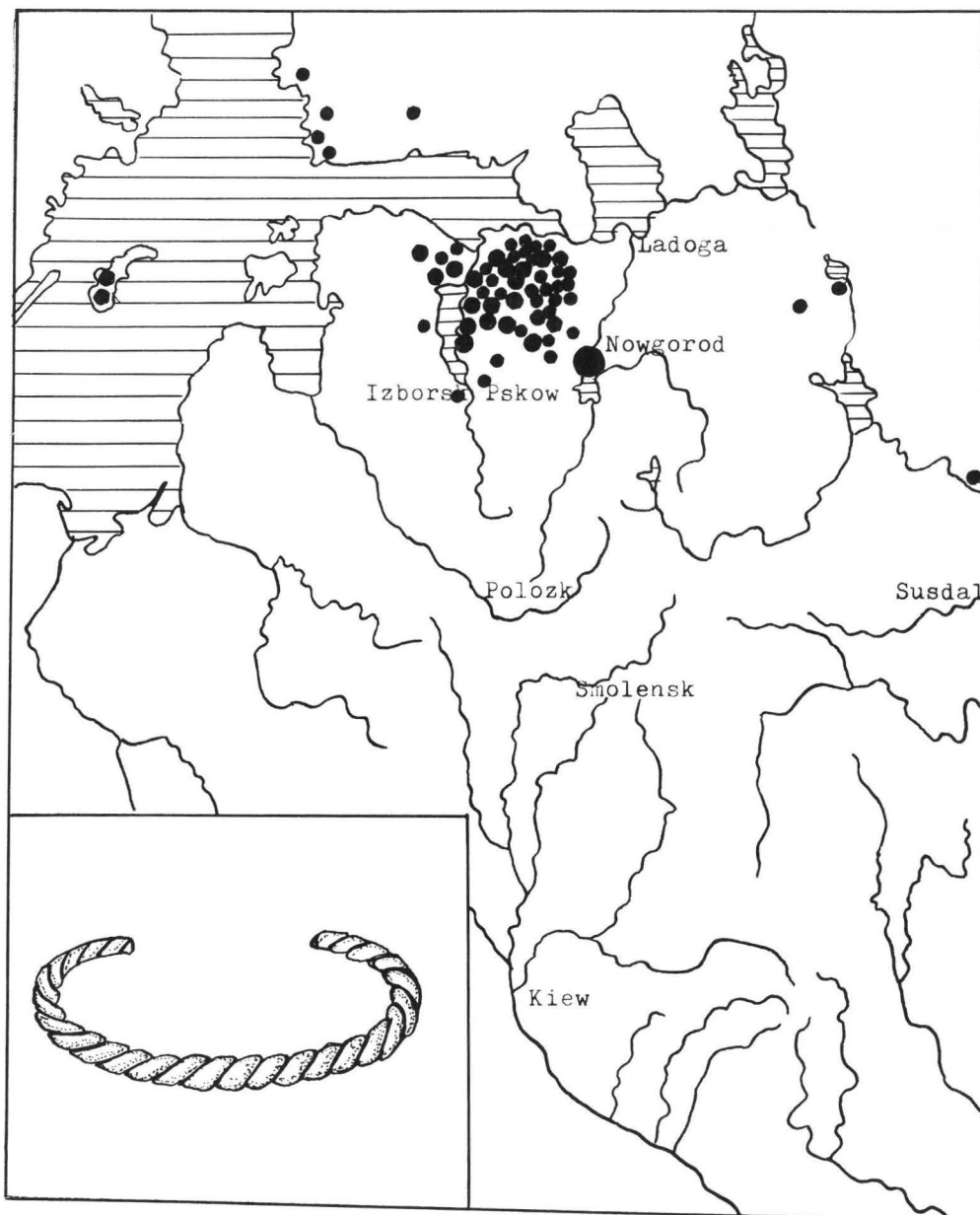


Fig. 5.

Analysing the crosses, B. Salin suggested that the crosses are an imitation of Byzantine encolpia and come from North Europe.²⁰ E. Kivikoski and other scholars support his idea.²¹

The authors are unaware of the numerous finds of similar crosses in the settlements and cemeteries of Old Russia.²² The latter are almost contemporary with North European ones, but there are also earlier finds among them. Thus, during

excavations at Novgorod a cross of similar type dating from the end of the tenth century was discovered.²³ The cross from the town of Zarechie in the Kiev-Dnieper region is likely to date from the same century. A cross, similar both in form and execution to that from Taskula was found in Novgorod in the layers of the fourth and fifth decades of the eleventh century.²⁴

There is every reason to believe that the Old Russian crosses are of Byzantine-Danubian origin. Crosses earlier than the Old Russian ones of the same form and with the similar images of the crucified Christ can be traced along the Middle and Lower Danube, especially in the finds of Great Moravia.²⁵ The crosses are likely to be the prototypes of the Old Russian ones, having spread to Fennoscandia through Old Russia.

The discovery of the objects of Christian cult and of Old Russian origin combined with linguistic studies (the Finnish words *risti* »cross»; *ristiä* »to baptize»; *ikoni* »icon»; *pappi* »priest», *öljy* »oil, olive oil» and some others are loan-words from the Old Russian language) gives grounds for believing that the Finnish aristocracy became acquainted with Christianity from the Eastern Slavs.

Bracelets twisted of two or three wires with blunt and unclosed ends are especially typical of the Novgorod region and chiefly its north-western regions²⁶, where more than 400 specimens have been found a tenth of these were found during excavations at Novgorod and date to the eleventh – early fourteenth centuries. Some specimens of twisted bracelets with blunt ends from the Kostroma and Vladimir cemeteries, are due to the resettling of Novgorodians. A few similar bracelets found in Estonia as well as other types of twisted bracelets are undoubtedly from the Novgorod region.²⁷ Quite a few specimens of twisted bracelets with blunt ends have been found in Gotland and on the Swedish mainland.

The area of the bracelets and their presence in typically Slav decoration allow for their being ethnically attributed to the Novgorod Slavs. A spectrum analysis of the bracelets excavated at Novgorod showed that more than half of them were made by Novgorod craftsmen, the others are the product of rural masters.²⁸

The twisted bracelets with blunt ends are believed to have arrived in Finland from the Novgorod region. These have been discovered in five places (Fig. 5): Virusmäki, Kalvomäki, Lautamäki, Rikala, and Untila.²⁹

The bronze horse pendant found in the burial ground of Tuukkala in Finland is also from the Novgorod region.³⁰ It is a horse figure with a stretched out bent neck decorated with a mane in the shape of rings, a cylindrical muzzle, a zigzag pattern on the body and jingling pendants of large bells on the chain links of number eight shape (Fig. 6). The main area of these pendants is the Novgorod region.³¹ Five such pendants have been found in Novgorod.³² Outside the area, separate pendants of this type can be traced only in the Kama region, which, as it is known, was closely connected with the Novgorod region.

A number of finds in Finland come from North Russia and belong to the decorations connected with the Finno-Ugrian world, such as two hollow duck-shaped pendants (Fig. 6) from the Rukoushuone burial ground in Vesilahti.³³ It is a three-dimensional cast figure of bird with a false rope pattern instead of a zigzag one typical for duck-shaped pendants. Such decorations are known through the vast territory of the North of Eastern Europe and date back to the eleventh-fourteenth centuries.³⁴ They are also typical of the Novgorod region which supplied the Häme area with them.

North Russia also supplied Finland with triangular open-work pendants with bells below which were suspended a number eight-shaped links of chains with bells or

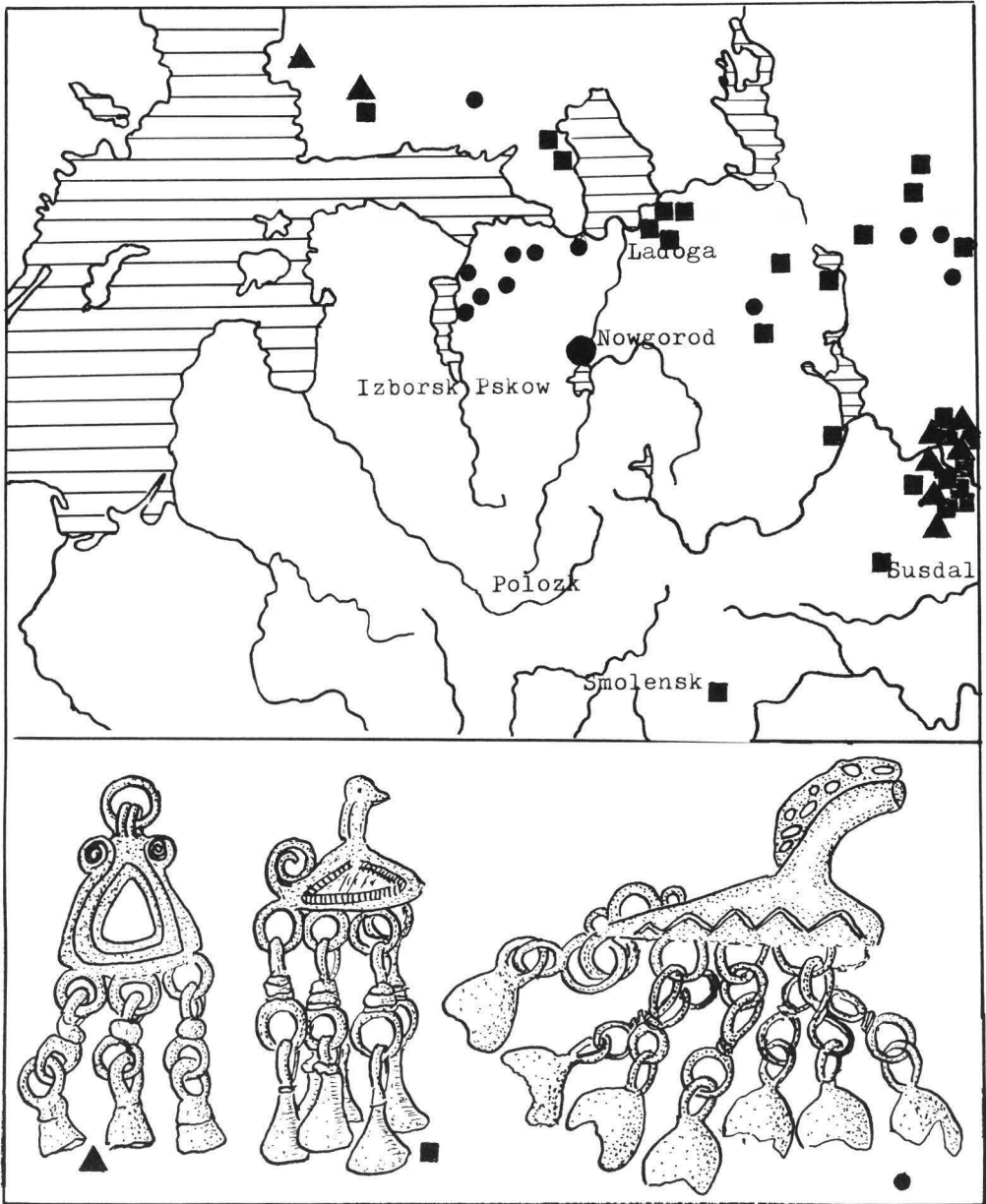


Fig. 6.

»crow's feet» at the ends. They were found in the monuments of Lautamäki and Tulonen.³⁵

Similar decorations are characteristic of the Perm Finns and the Merya of the Kostroma Volga region.³⁶

In Kappelinmäki a fragment of a temple ring with a broadening was found.³⁷ It is a fragment of a diamond-shaped shield temple ring of undoubtedly Novgorod origin.³⁸

Several finger-rings found in the territory of Finland belong to a widely spread type of Old Russia. But there is no proof that the finger-rings came to Finland from Old Russia, as the decorations of similar type, though in a smaller number, occurred in the South-Eastern Baltic area.

Old Russian sickles were rather perfect implements for crop gathering. Among these the Novgorod type characterized by a comparatively large size, a steep blade at the beginning and sloping at the end with a toothed edge prevails. The sickle of the Novgorod type was borrowed by the Karelians and it spread out westward to Finland. The medieval sickles of the Novgorod type have not been found though, but their discovery is quite probable. The ethnographic data collected by K. Vilkuna definitely indicate the use of the Novgorod type sickles in Savo and the Bothnian area for many centuries.³⁹ The Finnish word for sickle, »sirppi», is a loan-word from the Old Russian language.

The material finds of Old Russian origin are mainly concentrated in two regions of Finland – the south-western coast and on the Häme region. The first region, inhabited by the Finnish tribe Suomi, thanks to its advantageous geographical position early established links both with Scandinavia and the Slav area. In the tenth-eleventh centuries pottery began to spread. A little earlier links with Eastern Europe providing the arrival of some decorations began to be established.⁴⁰

The Häme region was in some way dependent on Old Russia under the first Russian princes. The chronicle »Povest Vremennikh Let» mentions the Häme among the tribes paying tribute to Russia.⁴¹ Later the tribe aristocracy of the Häme was closely connected with the Novgorod boyars. In the year 1219⁴² the Novgorod chronicle says that Semyon Emin a Häme by birth was elected tisyatsky – head of the armed forces of Great Novgorod. Such a post in Novgorod could be held only by a representative of the ruling class.

¹ A.L. Hirviluoto. Ett bysantinskt korssmycke från Haimionmäki i Lundo. — FM, 1970, s. 17—23.

² В. А. Мальм. Крестики с эмалью. — В кн.: Славяне и Русь. М., 1968, с. 113—117.

³ Э. С. Мугуревич. Восточная Латвия и соседние земли в X—XIII вв. Рига, 1965. с. 63.

⁴ Древности Камской чуди по коллекции Теплоуховых. MAP 26, 1902, табл. VIII. II; Stenberger. Die Schatzfunde Gotlands der Wikingerzeit, I. Stockholm, 1958. S. 178.

⁵ Э. С. Мугуревич. Указ. соч., с. 63.

⁶ E. Kivikoski. Die Eisenzeit in Auralflussgebiet. SMYA. XLIII, 1939, S. 166—168, T. XXXIII; E. Kivikoski. Die Eisenzeit Finnlands. Helsinki, 1973, Abb. 1143; Karhunhammas, 3, 1978, Tf. XXIII, 4.

⁷ Th. Schvindt. Tietoja Karjalan rautakaudesta. SMYA, XIII, 1893, Fig. 225, 226.

⁸ А. А. Спицын. Владимирские курганы. — Известия Археологической комиссии, 15, СПб., 1905, с. 117.

⁹ М. В. Фехнер. Крестовидные привески «скандинавского типа». — В кн.: Славяне и Русь. М., 1968, с. 210-214.

¹⁰ E. Kivikoski. Christliche Einflüsse in dem archäologischen Material der Wikingerzeit und der Kreuzzeit Finnland. — Acta Visbyensia, III, 1969, S. 36.

¹¹ Э. С. Мугуревич. Указ. соч., с. 65, табл. IX, 1—4.

¹² Древности Камской чуди., табл. VIII, 5; M. Stenberger, op. cit., I, 1958, S. 178—180, Abb. 4:4; 32:1; 51:7; II, 1947, Abb. 255:2; 256:1; 260:1.

¹³ E. Kivikoski. Die Eisenzeit Finnlands, S. 141, Abb. 1147.

¹⁴ М. В. Седова. Ювелирные изделия древнего Новгорода (X—XV вв.) — МИА, 65, 1959, с. 235, рис. 4, II.

¹⁵ Kivikoski. Die Eisenzeit im Auralflussgebiet, S. 170, Tf. XXXIII.

¹⁶ SM, 1957, S. 46, Abb. 10.

¹⁷ Kivikoski. Die Eisenzeit im Auralflussgebiet, S. 169, 170, Tf. XXXII.

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- 19 Stenberger, I., Abb. 43: 11, S. 183, Tf. 255:1; Kivikoski. Christliche Einflüsse, s. 37.
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