

Volosovo and the Baltic

The first excavations in Volosovo were carried out already in 1877, but the site became generally known in 1914 through V.A. Gorodcov's publication. B.S. Joukov and O.N. Bader called attention to the special features of the ceramic material from the Volosovo dune site in volume IV of *Eurasia Septentrionalis Antiqua*, published in 1929. It was in this connection that Bader coined the term »Volosovo culture«, to which he classified part of the find material from four different sites. Since then the definition has not changed. The pottery is characterized primarily by the use of mussel shells, feathers or grass stalks in the temper. The vessel wall is thicker than in earlier material and the rim is often formed into a list-like protrusion. At least Joukov, but probably also Bader regarded this material as younger than the classic Pit and Comb Ware.

In 1952 A.J. Brjussov wrote a long section on the Volosovo culture in his manual *Očerki po istorii plemen*. In agreement with his predecessors he regarded the culture as being limited in area and as having come about as a local culture mainly along the lower reaches of the Oka River. The number of sites and find locations was 43. Among other features, Brjussov mentions the traits that connect the Volosovo culture to the Trans-Uralic sphere, but he rejects the idea that it represented the remains of a population of eastern origin. On the other hand, he suggested that the strong development of the culture and its obviously large population were the result of agriculture. I.K. Cvetkova's 1953 publication *Volosovskie neolitičeskie plemena* is mainly in agreement with the outlines established by Brjussov. According to her, Volosovo was a regional phenomenon among other Central Russian cultures.

O.N. Bader strongly criticized this view in his article *Kulturen der Bronzezeit in Zentralrussland* (SMYA 59/1958). According to him the Volosovo culture did not come about in the Oka region as a neighbour of other Pit and Comb cultures, but originated in the Volga-Kama area and had come about as the result of strong Trans-Uralic influences. According to Bader, Volosovo ceramics differ distinctly from other Central Russian Neolithic pottery groups and are connected to the Garino phase of the Turbino culture of Kama. Special features according to him are the lack of pits, the widened rim, »wolf's tooth« decoration and the use of additives such as grasses in the temper. The material also includes flint sculptures and longiform arrowheads, hundreds of which have been found at the eponymic site. The dwellings were dug in the ground and sunken passageways may occur between them. In 1957, Bader held the view that the Volosovo culture could have been the creation of a population from the east:

Alles obengesagte gibt ein Bild der ethnischen Verschiebung der alten Stämme der Wolga-Kama-Vorural-Gruppe nach Westen die . . . zur Ablösung der spätneolithischen Stämme im östlichen Teil des oberen Wolga-Gebietes durch die ihnen fremden Volosovo-Stämme führte In den nördlichen Rayons ist diese ethnische Verschiebung weiter nach Westen vorgedrungen offenbar bis nach Baltikum (z.B. Bologoje und Koncanskoje).

Although Bader does not specifically mention the Finno-Ugric problem, it is clearly in the background.

Bader's theory has been subsequently developed by A.Ch. Chalikov, i.a. in a series of lectures given in Helsinki in 1972. This has led to a model or theory of the origin and migrations of the Finno-Ugric peoples from east to west to the shores of the Baltic. Chalikov also has an important role through the publication *Vostočnoj Evropy v volosovsko-turbinskoe vremja*. The Hungarian archaeologist Istvan Fodor gives in his recent book *In Search of a New Homeland* (1982) a thorough account of this model. Its actual basis is the linguistic familytree theory of the interrelationship of the Finno-Ugric languages, adapted to archaeological reality.

However, around 2000 B.C. the Volga-Kama tribes set off with great impetus and migrated westwards. Their route led along the valley of the river Volga. By the end of a few centuries they arrived at the source of the river, while some groups even made their way towards the shores of the White Sea and the Baltic. Their material legacy is known as the Volosovo culture after an important site in the Oka valley. The newcomers conquered the ancient population, drove some of them away and slowly absorbed the rest. (82/83).

Of the many publications on the Volosovo culture we may also mention S.V. Ošibkina's article in *Sovetskaja Arheologija* from 1966, where she links the Modlona site to the Volosovo culture. This area is separated only by a watershed from the waters flowing into the Baltic. Modlona is on the Onega River flowing into the White Sea, which through bifurcations could just as well have flowed in the direction of the Baltic as the Volga.

The latest contribution to the discussion on the Volosovo problem is by Dmitri Aleksandrovič Krajnov in *Sovetskaja Arheologija* from 1981. Having studied the recently discovered Early Neolithic culture of the Upper Volga and the remains of younger culture groups in the same area and partly on the same sites, Krajnov summarizes his views as follows:

Analysing the Lower Neolithic materials representing the Volosovo culture and the Pit Comb Ware cultures the author establishes the fact of their continuity and the simultaneous emergence of the Volosovo culture sites in different regions. It was a result of the intermixing of the Lower Neolithic Cultures with Pit Comb Ware cultures. All the local variants of the Volosovo cultures demonstrate the combination of these two components. From this follows that there were no massive migrations of the Volosovo culture tribes from the eastern part of the Volga and the Kama region. The emergence of the Volosovo culture over a vast territory was a result of complicated intermixing and development of the Upper (Volga) Neolithic tribes.

Bader's theory is in strong disagreement also with Harri Moora, with whom not only Estonian but also many Finnish archaeologists have concurred. According to Moora the Finnic population of Estonia had formed already at the time of the Typical Comb Ceramic, ca. 3000 B.C. according to present datings. No evidence has been found in Estonia of subsequent marked flows of population from the east. As long as Estonia was regarded as the main homeland or »cradle» of the Baltic Finnic tribes or language groups, this thesis meant that the origin of the Proto-Finns was to be searched for in the Typical Comb Ceramic population of Estonia. However, as it is presently accepted that the core area of the Proto-Finns was Finland and Karelia,

Moorra's thesis must be re-examined. Throughout the Stone Age and Bronze Age considerably more active and stronger contacts were maintained from Finland in the direction of the Volga region than from Estonia. For the part of Finland it cannot be claimed that the arrival of a new population from the east after the Typical Comb Ceramic would be an impossible or unlikely conjecture. However, it cannot be definitely established that a new population arrived here in the 3000 year interval from 3500 to 500 B.C. On the other hand, we can demonstrate distinct parallel developments and active contacts between Finland, Karelia and the Upper Volga regions throughout the whole of the period.

The Sperrings group which is dated to the first half of the fourth millennium can be paralleled with the Early Neolithic group of the Upper Volga. The Typical Comb Ceramic group can be compared with Central Russian Pit and Comb Ware of ca. 3000 B.C. In Karelia both pottery groups occur on the same sites and they cannot always be distinguished from each other. There is also pit-ornamented pottery from SE Finland, which Ville Luho defined as Pit and Comb Ware without any reservations. The flint material of both groups is uniform.

The Volosovo culture was compared with the Pyheensilta and Pöljä groups already in 1954. Later it has been compared with the North Finnish Kierikki and Estonian Tamula groups. The »wolf's tooth» motif is a special feature that became common in Volosovo ceramics at the same time it also became common in the Jettböle II ceramics of Åland and the East Swedish Säter IV group. C.J. Becker and many Swedish archaeologists in accordance with him suspected East European roots for the Swedish Pit Ware.

In my view the proper explanation for these similarities, and this applies also to the period of the Volosovo culture, is that the North European hunting-fishing cultures were not closed communities, but on the contrary very open ones, which traded knowledge, inventions, raw materials, gifts and accepted among themselves individuals from over very large areas. It was because of this that no sharply demarcated ethnic cultures came about in the area of the North European hunting-fishing cultures and special features from far-off areas can be observed.

Parallel development between the Baltic sphere and the Upper Volga both required and developed a common means of communication, which we may call Proto-Finnish. The nearest related language to the Baltic Finnic languages among the Volga group is Mordvinian, which is however much further east than area in question. It has been assumed that on the Upper Volga, all the way to the Oka River, languages have been spoken which are closer to the Baltic-Finnic languages than Mordvinian, i.e. early stages of Muroma and Merja.

Parallel development did not end with the Volosovo-Kierikki-Pyheensilta-Pöljä-Tamula-Jettböle period but continued in textile-impressed pottery to the end of the Bronze Age. The Mälars celts of SW Finland and Central Sweden and the Ananino celts of Northern Fennoscandia deserve mention in this connection. These have parallels in the Central Volga and Kama regions. In the Iron Age, contacts continued through the trading of special brooches.

Because parallel development and contacts remained active through the Stone and Bronze Ages, it is difficult, even impossible, to state whether especially massive migrations have occurred at any definite time. In principle it may be improbable that a hunting-fishing population would wander and take over an area from another hunting-fishing people, if the former were not in any technical or structural way superior to the latter. Primitive and especially specialized hunting is to such an

extent dependent on the possibilities afforded by one's own hunting territory and the knowledge of the territory that a group would not have left to conquer new hunting grounds unless they had highly superior means at their disposal. For this reason, it seems unlikely that groups would have left the Central Volga region for Finland to compete with the local population for fish and seal.

Mass migration from one country to another is however possible if population has become scarce in an area or if it offers an ecological niche – in both cases economic room for operating in. The assumed expansion of the Volosovo culture occurred at the same time as the Battle-Axe culture. At least in SW Finland there are few traces of hunting-fishing culture of the period and it can therefore be assumed that the previous hunting-fishing population had disappeared or decisively diminished south-west of the Kokkola-Viipuri line because of the oppression of the Battle-Axe culture. The situation seems to be similar also in Estonia. In the Upper Volga region the Fatyanovo culture may have caused restlessness that set population groups on the move. This led to unused economic space, which could appeal to new hunting-fishing groups from outside the area. Thus, we cannot completely overrule the possibility that at the time of the Volosovo or Pyheensilta or Battle-Axe culture new hunting-fishing groups came to Finland. Of course, this hypothesis requires more thorough testing.

In the Bronze Age textile-impressed ceramics of the so-called Sarsa type occur in the lake regions of the Finnish inland. This group can be regarded as dating to the metal period. The pottery is by no means identical with the older Volga textile-impressed ceramics, but there are, nevertheless, several common features between the groups. Also the Seima type celts found in Finland are of the same period, but there are no cases where textile-impressed ceramics and bronze axes have been found together. In recent years pollen studies have shown that slash-and-burn farming was practised in the area of distribution of the Sarsa pottery during its lifespan. On the basis of these results we may conjecture that new inhabitants came to the inland regions of Finland from the Ladoga area. This population practised slash-and-burn agriculture alongside hunting and fishing, using an ecological niche left unused by the previous population. The production of bronze and bread gave the newcomers the necessary advantage.