Novgorod, Kiev and their Satellites
The City-State Model and the Viking Age Polities of European Russia

NEIL PRICE

For more than a century the nature of the two urban polities established during the Viking Age at Novgorod and Kiev in European Russia[1] has been the subject of intense academic speculation. Before the late 1980s – with some notable exceptions – this debate was almost entirely focused east of the former Iron Curtain, but since the fall of the Soviet Union an increasing number of western scholars have also begun to work on the problem of the early Russian towns and their associated territories. Central to all these discussions – rightly or wrongly – has been the role played by incomers from Scandinavia, and the character of the state that they helped to build.

On several occasions variations of the term "city-state" have been used to describe the power centres based at Novgorod and Kiev (Birnbaum [1981] and [1989]; Blockmans [1994] 227), not least by the present author (Price [1994] 188), but it is important to stress that there has been no attempt to apply such an interpretation in the formal sense as set out by Hansen in his introduction to this volume. This short paper will therefore offer an assessment as to whether the term has any relevance to the Russian settlements, and will consider the available material against the city-state criteria drawn up by the Copenhagen Polis Centre (Hansen [1998] and *supra* 16-19). An introduction to the historical and archaeological framework of Rus' is a necessary starting point.

Scandinavian Contacts with European Russia

Against a complex background of ethnic migrations, by the middle of the eighth century AD the Slavic and Finnish tribal societies of European Russia were well embarked on a process of social and political transformation not dissimilar to that underway in north-western Europe.[2] The East Slavs had developed close mercantile and diplomatic links with their neighbours, which were to be of primary importance for the development of the Rus' state in the Viking period. To the east lay the steppe cultures, dominated by the Volga Bulghars who had themselves migrated from the Urals; to the south-east was the great nomadic empire of the Khazars, who had originated in the Caucasus and in the centuries preceding the Viking Age came to dominate the entire region from there to the Volga-Dnepr corridor; to the south lay Byzantium. These peoples were the frontier with a still larger trade system, looking east and south-west to central Asia, China, India and Persia; in many ways, from a European perspective western Russia thus formed the gateway to one of the most wealthy market regions of the then-known world.

In parallel with these economic developments in the east, new trading sites and emporia were being set up all along the Baltic littoral, in Denmark and across continental Europe in the lands of the Franks.[3] Scandinavian maritime contacts with the tribes of the southern Baltic – occupying the territories of modern Poland and the Baltic States – had been continuous since long before the Iron Age. Undoubtedly there were also connections with European Russia prior to the Viking period, but the first large-scale Scandinavian penetration of the Russian river systems seems to have begun some time in the first half of the eighth century. While there is no sense in which the Vikings should still be seen as "founders" of such communities in the east, there is equally little doubt that they played an important role in their operation: this is clearly implied by the political prominence later acquired by so many individuals of Scandinavian descent. Not least, the name by which these immigrants were called – Rus' – was not only applied to the fledgling state but was later transformed into the very name of Russia itself. However, it cannot be stressed enough that the actions and contributions of the Scandinavians or "Vikings" (who were themselves a far from homogenous group) *must* be seen in the context

Fig. 1. European Russia in the Viking Age, showing sites mentioned in the text (after Noonan [1997]).

of the native Slavic, Baltic and especially Finnish peoples of the region.[4]

The Origins of City-States? Proto-Urban Centres and the Gateway to the South

The initial focus of the Scandinavian presence in European Russia seems to have been the Volkhov river, which they had reached from the Gulf of Finland via the Neva and Lake Ladoga. From here, small boats could be rowed upstream past a series of rapids to Lake Ilmen, from whence they could proceed further south up the Lovat. Via several portages (i.e. points at which the boats were hauled overland) it was then possible to access the great Dnepr system which led south to the Black Sea and the capital of the Byzantine Empire, and still further afield to the eastern trade routes.[5] Initial contacts between the Scandinavians and Byzantines seem to have been violent (Vasiliev [1946]), but from the late ninth century onwards it was the potential for channelling northern trade with the wealth of *Mikligarðr* (the "Great City", as the Vikings called the imperial capital) and the Arab world[6] that provided the impetus for the growth of Rus' power.

The first material stage in the establishment of what would become the Rus' state seems to have been the settlement which sprang up near the mouth of the Volkhov, some 12 kilometres upstream from Lake Ladoga. Staraja (that is, "Old") Ladoga seems to have been founded sometime around the middle of the eighth century and served as the primary "gateway community" for Russian contacts with the Baltic and the west. Staraja Ladoga was probably the point at which boats were loaded and refitted in preparation for the continued journey south to the Dnepr system and the Black Sea. Excavations at Ladoga, known to the Norse as *Aldeigjuborg*, have revealed a busy crafts centre and market, with workshops and small houses clustered in yards; the precise plan of the settlement is

still unclear, though by the tenth century it covered some 10-12 ha. on the west bank of the Volkhov, spanning its conjunction with the Ladozka tributary.[7] On the evidence of the numerous cemeteries which surround the settlement, already from the beginning the population seems to have been ethnically mixed, with Scandinavians – women as well as men, implying more a settled community than simply travelling merchants[8] – together with people from the Sopka Culture (perhaps of East Slavic descent, though the word is problematic in this context), and perhaps Balts and Finns.

There is little in the archaeological material which implies Scandinavian control of the settlement (Jansson [1997] 30), but there are indications that distinctions of ethnicity or other forms of identity were strongly declared in Ladoga. I have earlier argued that the physical landscapes of river systems like the Volkhov, as deliberately shaped through the construction of prominent features such as grave mounds and cemeteries, may in some senses be interpreted as arenas of conflict where competing strategies influencing the socio-political future of the region were articulated in monumental form – in effect that they may be seen as contested landscapes in a colonial zone.[9] This is important because it illuminates the ethnic background and social composition of the settlements which were to develop from Ladoga and the route which its establishment opened up, namely the great cities at Novgorod and Kiev.

As we have seen, Ladoga was founded around 750, not much later than similar Scandinavian settlements at Ribe and Birka,[10] but by 850 a new site had been established further up the Volkhov near its source in Lake Ilmen; situated on fertile soils in a water landscape dotted with small farms, this formed the next stage in the consolidation of the riverine artery to the south. The choice of site at the source of the Volkhov was not accidental, as it was from here that boats could take the river road either south to the Dnepr or east to the Volga – the new trading centre was the first manifestation of what would become the northern political centre of the Rus' state: Novgorod.

The settlement established in the ninth century has been known since the 12th century as Gorodišce, a name meaning "deserted fortress" and coined with respect to its successor ("Novgorod" means "new fortress"); since the 19th century it has been called Rjurikovo Gorodišce, linking it to the Scandinavian prince Rurik whom the *Russian Primary Chronicle* cites as the "founder" of Ladoga, Novgorod and ultimately the Rus' state (see note 4 above). It was probably Gorodišce that the Norse referred to as *Hólmgarðr*, the "settlement on the islands". Unlike Ladoga, workshops and dwellings were laid out around a fortified centre from the very beginning of the settlement, strategically positioned to control all river traffic through the area.[11]

On archaeological grounds it seems that Scandinavians of both sexes were present at Gorodišce in considerable numbers from the first, right through to the height of its prosperity in the tenth century; like the other Rus' settlements, there was clearly a strong Slavic presence too. The flood plain of the Verjazha river, which flows into Lake Ilmen south of Novgorod and parallel with the Volkhov, is dotted with apparently "native" settlements, investigated by the Novgorod Hinterland Project during the 1990s. In the general absence of cemeteries from the ninth-tenth centuries it is hard to be certain, but it would seem that the Scandinavian presence at this time was almost entirely limited to Gorodišce – an enclave in a landscape with a substantially different population.

Alongside Ladoga and Gorodišce, there was a third proto-urban settlement established in the late ninth century, on the next stage of the journey south. Some 13km west of modern Smolensk, a large, apparently defended settlement was set up on the Dnepr at Gnëzdovo. Over the next 150 years, Gnëzdovo was to expand to encompass two separate fortified enclosures and three trading communities, all ringed by cemeteries of thousands of burial mounds;[12] on the basis of excavations there, as with its northern neighbours the community seems to have included a significant proportion of Scandinavians, but mixed with a Finnish and Slavic majority population. From its foundation through to the end of the Viking Age, Gnëzdovo formed the critical exchange centre and refitting base on the route from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Its importance was a reflection of its location, at the point where ships and their crews would join the Dnepr system not only from the small rivers and portages south of the Volkhov and Lovat but also from the alternative passages through the Baltic lands to the west.

Way Stations and Trading Posts: Early Settlement beyond the Volkhov-Dnepr System

In addition to the Volkhov-Dnepr route – and perhaps originating from it to some extent – there are signs that Scandinavian merchant-adventurers also estab-

lished themselves alongside more local entrepreneurs in a wide network of trading stations fanning out over the rivers and waterways of the north-west Russian plain.[13] In the Ladoga region, burials with Scandinavian grave-goods have also been found in small numbers around the Finno-Ugric villages on the rivers flowing into the lake from the east; these people were perhaps involved in the fur trade (Radonikas [1930] and Jansson [1997]). A fortified site at Gorodok on the Lovat, on the river route south from Gorodišce to the Dnepr, has also yielded a few Scandinavian finds, and was probably another staging post designed to secure the river passage (Jansson [1997] 37; Gorjunova [1976]). Similar trading enclaves were established in the ninth century to the south-west at Pskov, and to the east at Krutik, later suceeded by Beloozero.[14]

Further east along the routes to the lands of the Khazars and the upper Volga, more such settlements have been found, for example at Sarskoe Gorodišce,[15] near Rostov, and at several sites in the vicinity of Jaroslavl (the cemeteries at Timerëvo, Petrovskoe and Michajlovskoe are the best-known).[16] A second major group of sites has been located further to the south-east, clustering around Vladimir on the Kljazma river.[17] Most of these were initially small sites, probably not much more than stations for re-fitting and resupply, providing an opportunity for exchange and the redistribution of items passing along the river and caravan routes; by the time of the first major expansion of the Rus' state, some of them – such as Sarskoe – developed into major centres of trade.[18]

It was thus on this trading network, and the socio-economic system that went with it, that the foundations for what would become the Rus' state were laid. Created partly through expansion from the proto-urban settlements of the Volkhov and Dnepr, its extent and progress can be plotted not only through the settlements and cemeteries but also through finds of Arabic coins, of which more than 228,000 have been recovered from over a thousand hoards in European Russia and the Baltic region; they serve as a graphic indicator of the commerce which funded and stimulated the increasingly centralised society which began to emerge by the mid-tenth century, the zenith of trade with the east.[19] The two points of greatest strategic importance for the control of the river passages along this trade system were at the source of the Volkhov, as we have seen, and at the start of the final southwards course of the Dnepr where its tributaries converge. It was at these localities that the twin foci of the Rus' would evolve, at Kiev and Novgorod.

Kiev and the Rus' State

In the late ninth century, a number of small settlements that had existed for centuries on a cluster of hills on the middle Dnepr began to expand and converge. According to the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, it was to this place that the Scandinavian prince Helgi (Oleg in the Russian sources) and his followers had come from the Volkhov and Gorodišce, displacing two of Rurik's men and establishing it as a commercial and political base for their operations in the 880s. The truth of this is hard to discern, but there is no doubt that from having been an outpost of the Khazar empire, Kiev prospered during the late ninth and early tenth centuries to become the *de facto* capital for an ever-expanding network of trade, the centre from which merchants set out for the hazardous rapids of the lower Dnepr and the run to the Black Sea.

The first fortified centre of Kiev was situated on the Starokievskaja hill, which also served as the main cemetery for the town. Other buildings spread out over the neighbouring hills, and around their base in the Podol quarter was a distinct district for traders and artisans. The descendants of Oleg, gradually adopting Slavic names as the dynasty continued into the late tenth and early eleventh centuries (Ingvar/Igor and his wife Helga/Olga, Sviatoslav, Sviatopolk, Vladimir and Jaroslav) brought the town to still greater heights of prosperity, with even stronger fortifications such as the famous Golden Gate, and a number of magnificent churches including the great cathedral of St. Sofia. Starokievskaja was remodelled as an administrative centre with residences for court officials, retainers and priests; a garrison was also established.[20]

As with the other settlements, the Vikings seem to have formed a small, focused minority amongst a varied population, but at Kiev it is clear for the first time that we can truly speak of a Scandinavian elite, reflected in high status burials and other finds. However, the extent to which the Rurikid dynasty can really be considered "Scandinavian" is open to question – not least in terms of assimilation – and the upper strata of Kievan society were probably a reflection of the town's population.

At first, Kiev was probably still under the nominal control of the Khazars, but by the middle of the tenth century the trade through the town was reoriented, turning from the east to the south and Byzantium, with whom the Kievan rulers had concluded exchange agreements a few decades earlier. The piecemeal river trade of the late eighth and early ninth centuries had been relaunched as an organised, highly profitable venture with regular flotillas of merchant vessels

plying an established route of patrolled waterways. Contacts were maintained with the way stations and proto-towns like Ladoga, Gorodišce and Gnëzdovo, and local administrators seem to have resided there as semi-independent links to the Rurikids at Kiev. Further such sites were established at places like Polotsk on the upper western Dvina,[21] and Liubech and Chernigov on the northern river approaches to Kiev. This territory expanded enormously under the later rulers like Igor and Sviatoslav, until the Kievan Rus' effectively controlled an area from the Baltic to the Black Sea – focused on the arterial rivers and administered through outposts of military and economic centres located at key points on the trade routes.

Speculation on the detailed structure of the Rus' state has unfortunately primarily concentrated on the ethnic composition of its ruling classes, and in particular the role of the Vikings in this process.[22] The detail of this debate is far beyond the scope of this paper,[23] but in the evaluation of possible city-state and city-state culture criteria the ethnic question is not unimportant, and a basic level of distinction in the settlements of European Russia cannot be denied. However, rather than focusing on simple differences between the various population groups involved (broadly speaking, Scandinavians, Finns, Balts, Slavs, Turkic-speaking peoples and possibly even Sámi) it may be more fruitful to examine how such identities were constituted in themselves, and even whether such categories really have any intrinsic meaning in such a context; such a perspective has profound implications for what these settlements "meant" in political terms (Price [1998]). Most importantly, we can consider the new identity that was created in tandem with the formation of the state – the identity which served for both people and polity: *Rus'*. It is entirely possible that, over and above its "constituent ethnicities", the Rus' identity may have itself provided its own distinct cultural world-view.

The meaning of the word is problematic, but there are strong indications that the *Rús* or *Rhos* of the contemporary sources has its roots in the Finnish term for Swedes, *Ruotsi* (or the Estonian *Rootsi*), which is derived from the Old Norse *róðr* meaning a rowing team (Melnikova & Petrukhin [1990-1991] 203-234). This would be an appropriate derivation for Rus', given the circumstances in which the peoples of European Russia would first have encountered Scandinavians in the trading expeditions of the eighth and ninth centuries; the term has a strong individualistic flavour. As an extension of this argument, there have also been suggestions that the word is connected with the

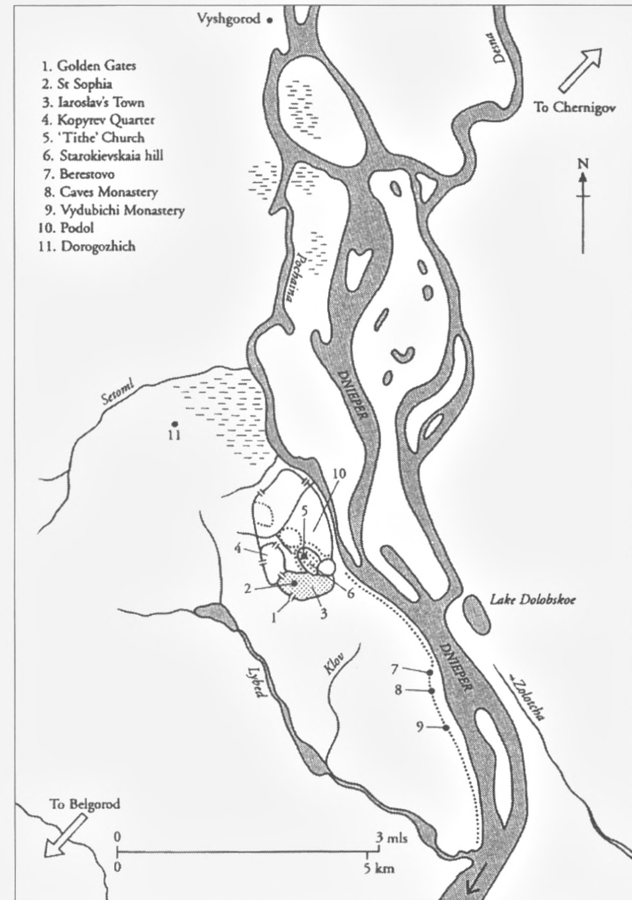

Fig. 2. Kiev and its environs (after Franklin & Shepard [1996]).

Roslagen district of eastern Uppland in Sweden, perhaps the point of origin for many of the Rus' and itself meaning "the rowing districts".[24]

In considering how the Rus' saw themselves, we can by extension examine how they and their territory were viewed by others. The Arab sources on the Rus' mostly consist of records relating to diplomatic missions, sent into Asia to arrange political or economic agreements, or in an effort to further the cause of Islam. Almost all these documents describe the Rus' in individual groups, encountered at various points along the route of the mission – the famous description penned by Ibn Fadlan after his journey of 921-2 is a typical example (Wikander [1978]; Price [1998] 39-42). A similar tone is adopted by the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus in parts of his *De administrando imperio* of c.950, when he describes the Rus traders' progress down the rapids of the Dnepr on their way to the Black Sea.[25] However, this document is primarily concerned with the Rus' as a major power threatening the northern security of the

Empire[26] and his description thus encapsulates both aspects of their presence: as a political entity and as peripatetic individuals encountered on the river systems of the east.

In the Viking homelands, after the rise of Kiev there is no doubt that the Rus' state was seen and understood as a major political force, easily on a par with the Romance cultures of western Europe. This is reflected at numerous levels from diplomatic, arranged marriages (such as that between Jaroslav of Kiev and Ingigerd, the daughter of Olof Skötkonung of Sigtuna[27]) to the employment of Scandinavian mercenaries in Rus' in a similar fashion to the Varangian Guard at Byzantium (a notable example was Haraldr Harðraði, who served with Jaroslav and married his daughter, and later became king of Norway before dying in battle at Stamford Bridge in 1066).

Novgorod the Great

The beginnings of Novgorod can be dated archaeologically to the early tenth century (even though the name is used in the *Russian Primary Chronicle* to refer to the ninth-century settlement at Lake Ilmen, it is likely that prior to the 920s it is Gorodišce that is meant). Settlement seems to have shifted gradually from the latter island fortress, which after a century of abandonment was later reoccupied as the seat of the prince of Novgorod. The city itself arose as a combined administrative and ecclesiastical centre in the wake of Vladimir of Kiev's conversion to Christianity, and by the end of the 900s it seems to have superseded the Ladoga-Gorodišce axis as the focus of Rus' power in the north. Similar shifts in the location of settlements, in the context of increasingly centralised forms of both political and religious expression, can be seen elsewhere at this time, for example in the transitions from Gnëzdovo to Smolensk, Timorëvo to Jaroslavl and Sarskoe to Rostov. In the case of Novgorod, the creation of the town should perhaps best be seen against the background of changing economic patterns for European Russia, as the eastern trade with the Arab world was re-focused on the Baltic and the alternative sources of silver in the German and Anglo-Saxon lands.[28]

Novgorod was divided in two by the Volkhov, and by the end of the Viking period seems to have been very carefully organised in spatial and administrative terms. The western, or "Sofia", bank was divided into three districts called "ends", with two more on the eastern, "Merchants", bank; this seems to have developed from an earlier system of three ends. Each end had its own popular assembly or *veche*, broadly similar to the Icelandic *thing*, and it appears likely that the ends were used to regulate manufacturing and mercantile activity in the town, in combination with a primitive form of trade guilds.

The Sofia bank is focused on the *kremlin*, which new excavations suggest may have been fortified with a wooden wall in the early 11th century (Petrov & Troianovsky [1999]), enclosing the cathedral of St. Sofia and the later archbishop's court; on the Merchant bank at the head of the only bridge across the Volkhov, was the so-called Court of Jaroslav, the site of the *veche* assembly. Each bank was divided by an axial road with cross streets; by the end of the Viking Age, a network of churches had been established along the street system. The communal government seems to have had advanced municipal arrangements in place enabling the regular upkeep of roads and buildings, as many superimposed phases of orderly repair can be discerned (Orton, Reynolds & Hather [1999] 31-8).

Excavations in the waterlogged soil have uncovered entire streets of buildings, arranged around courtyards. Excellent organic preservation has enabled finds of leather, textiles and wood to be recovered in extraordinary profusion, giving a unique picture of life in a late Viking Age town: the appearance of the buildings can be reconstructed with great accuracy due to the combination of good manuscript illustrations and the wooden preservation on-site.[29] Novgorod itself had a much more cosmopolitan character than the Volkhov settlements which were its forerunners, and in particular there is a marked lack of Scandinavian material with the exception of occasional finds.[30]

Novgorod was administered by the *veche* councils mentioned above, but ruled by a prince appointed from Kiev. This arrangement granted Novgorod considerable autonomy, and it is unsurprising that relations between the two cities were always tense. In addition to sometimes open hostilities with Byzantium, the Rus' state was riven by periodic civil strife as the various princes and local chieftains (the controllers of provincial towns) fought for control of the Kiev throne. Scandinavians were employed direct from the homelands as mercenaries to swell the retinues of the would-be usurpers (Vladimir, for example, had used Viking troops to fight his way to power in Kiev from his position as prince of Novgorod), though in the long run this did nothing to stabilise an already precarious political balance in the Rus' territories. By the end of the Viking Age, the

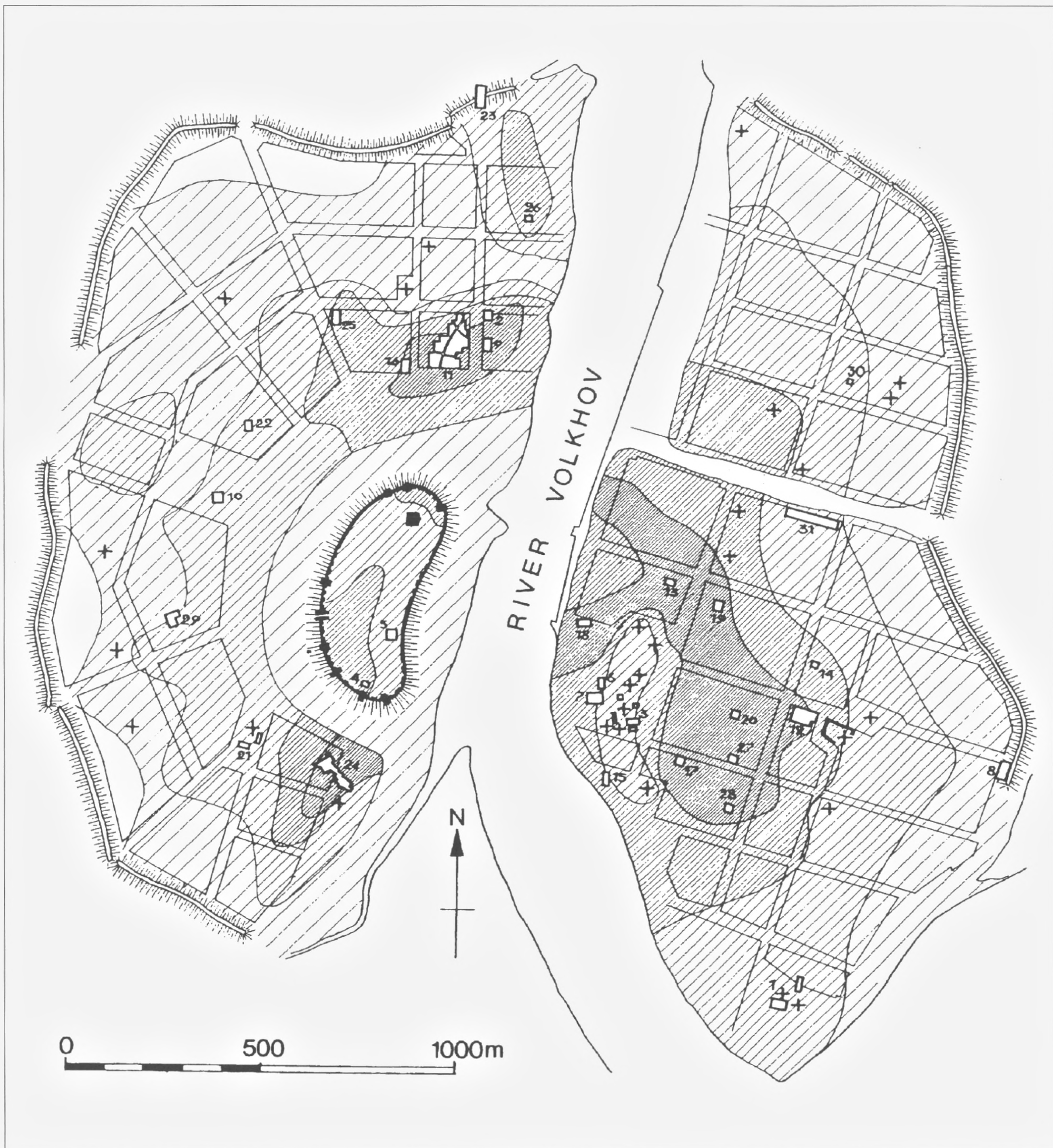

Fig. 3. Novgorod, showing excavation sites and urban features (after Brisbane [1992]). – On the plan the thickness of the cultural layer is indicated with the help of hatching, while numbers are used to indicate the locations of excavations and small crosses those of the churches. 1 – on Slavna (Slavensky Hill) (1932, 1934, 1936, 1937). 2 – on Borkovaya Street (1932). 3 – in Yaroslav's Court (1937, 1938, 1939, 1940). 4 – in the *kremlin* (1938-39). 5 – the Church of St. Boris and St. Gleb in the *kremlin* (1940). 6 – in Yaroslav's Court (1946-47). 7 – in Yaroslav's Court (1947-48). 8 – on the Rampart. 9 – on Kholopya Street (1947). 10 – on Chudintsevaya Street (1947). 11 – Nerevsky excavation (1951-62). 12 – Ilyinsky excavation (1962-67). 13 – Buyany excavation (1967). 14 – Slavensky excavation (1968). 15 – Gotsky excavation (1968-70). 16 – Tikhvinsky excavation (1969). 17 – Mikhailovsky excavation (1970). 18 – Torgovy excavation (1971). 19 – Rogatitsky excavation. 20 – on Kirovskaya excavation. 21 – Varvarinsky excavation (1972). 22 – Lyudogoshchinsky (1972). 23 – on the Rampart (1972). 24 – Troitsky excavation (1973 onwards). 25 – Kosmodemyansky excavation (1974). 26 – Dmitrievsky excavation (1974). 27 – Duboshin (1977-81). 28 – Nutny excavation (1979-81). 29 – on Zhelyabov Street (1990-91). 30 – Molotkovsky excavation (1989). 31 – Fyodorovsky excavation (1991). The density of hatching in this plan (4 variations) reflects the thickness of the cultural layer in various parts of medieval Novgorod: 1 (most dense) – over 6 m. 2 – from 4 to 6 m. 3 – from 2 to 4 m. 4 (least dense) – under 2 m.

Rus' were no longer regarded by themselves or anyone else as Scandinavian, though their heritage counted for something in the homelands. The twin poles of Novgorod and Kiev continued as the axis of Rus' for long into the Middle Ages, and outlived the Viking Age which had seen their creation.[31]

Having presented a brief outline of the Rus' state and its origins, we can now consider this against the city-state criteria drawn up by the Copenhagen Polis Centre.

The Russian Polities as City-States in a City-State Culture

Mogens Herman Hansen in the present volume has presented a number of elements which are seen as integral to the concept of a city-state, and it can be quickly seen that the Rus' towns share many of these. The political identity of the Rus' was certainly distinct from their ethnic affiliations, as we have seen. This is reflected not least in names, especially "Novgorod the Great" which was applied to both the town and its territory; the town was even occasionally personified with a rank as "Lord Novgorod" (Birnbaum [1981]). The internal organisation and economy of the settlements also matches several criteria: a stratified, highly organised population living in spatially-delineated, functional and administrative zones. The *veche* system of communal government in Novgorod is also a perfect example of what Hansen has called "internal sovereignty" (Hansen, *infra* 607) and fulfills the legislative and judicial city-state criteria admirably.[32]

However, there are also numerous city-state criteria with which no concordance can be found in the Rus' settlements: the problems all relate to matters of size and organisation. The size of city-states has been assessed in terms of their intra-mural area, hinterland and population, and at the most basic level the urban areas and population of both Novgorod and Kiev are certainly well within the acceptable range for a city-state; however, a clear problem comes in assessing their territory. The immediate hinterlands of both settlements – i.e. the area from which they drew the supplies necessary for their continued existence – are again within acceptable limits: the island landscape of Lake Ilmen for Novgorod, and the converging

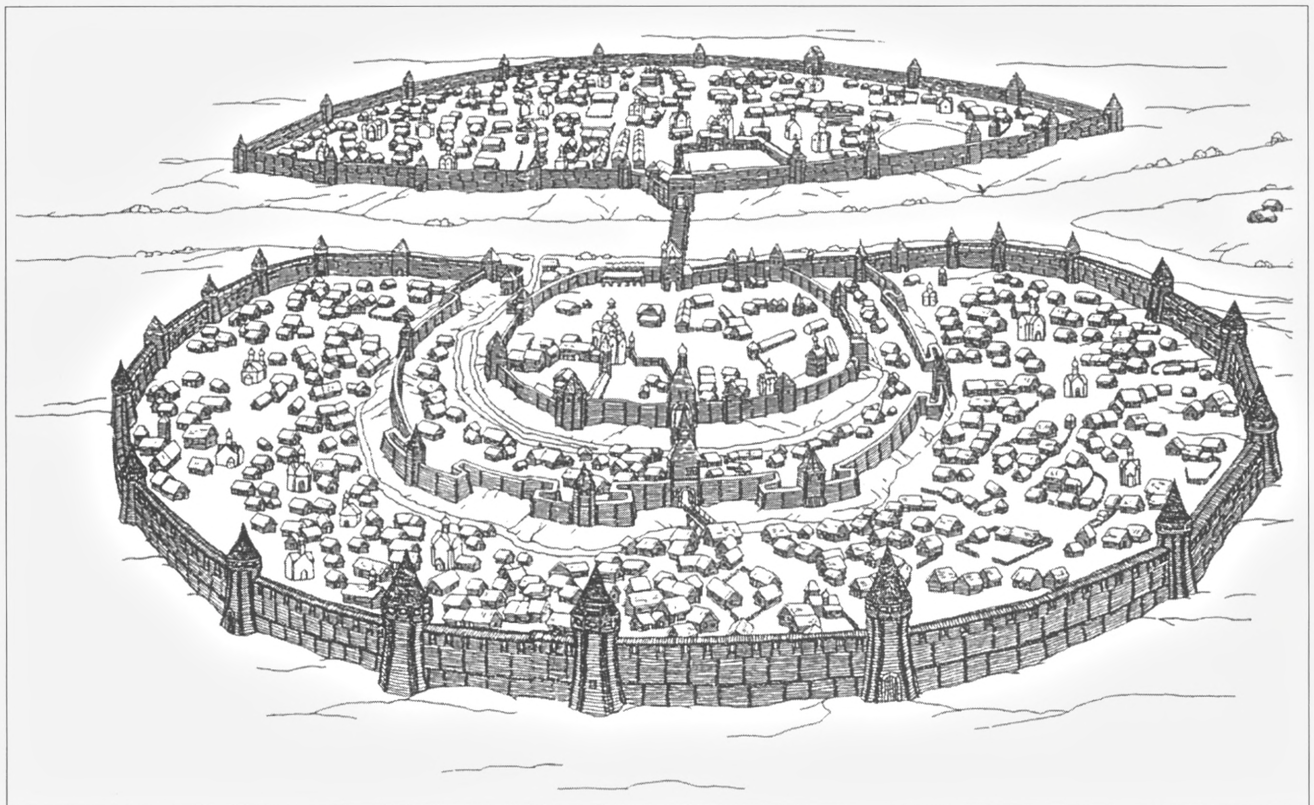

Fig. 4. Reconstruction drawing of early medieval Novgorod, seen from the west, partly based on archaeological evidence (after Noonan 1996). The western part of the city was dominated by the eleventh-century kremlin or citadel and the cathedral of St Sophia. The 'Market Side' was on the east bank of the River Volkhov.

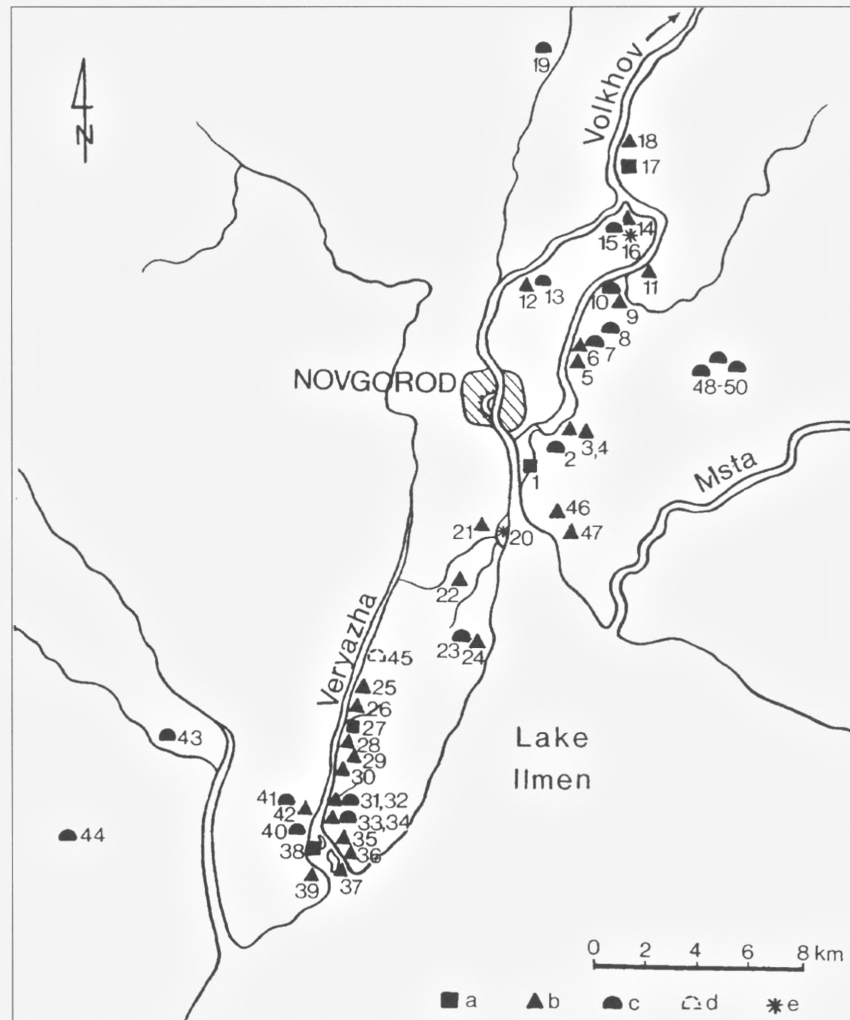

Fig. 5. Hólmgarðr; the settlements on Lake Ilmen at the source of the Volkhov (after Nosov [1992]) – Archaeological sites in Poozerie near Lake Ilmen and the source of the Volkhov at the end of the first millennium AD. a – hillforts; b – settlements; c – *sopki*; d – assumed location of *sopki*; e – pagan shrines; 1 – Ryurik Gorodishche; 2 – Nereditsa; 3-4 – Sitka; 5 – Slutka I; 6-7 – Volotovo; 8 – Usherska; 9-10 – Rodionovo; 11 – Speranksy farmstead; 12-13 – Derevyanitsky; 14-16 – Khutyn; 17 – Kholopii Gorodok; 18 – Slutka II; 19 – Vodskoye; 20 – Peryn; 21 – Prost; 22 – Rakoma; 23-24 – 25-27 – Georgii; 28-30 – Vasilievskoye; 31-32 – Lyuboezha; 33-34 – Goroshkovo; 35 – Zabolotye; 36-37 Yerunov; 38-39 – Sergovo; 40-42 – Zaval; 43 – Akatovo; 44-47 – Shilovka; 48-50 – Mshashka.

waterways of the middle Dnepr basin for Kiev. However, there is no sense in which these hinterlands correspond with the territory which gave the Russian towns their political identity, a vital element in the notion of a city-state: as we have seen, when Kiev and later Novgorod became established as true urban centres they controlled an area spanning from the Baltic to the Black Sea. The settlement pattern of this vast region is obviously in direct contradiction of the city-state criteria relating to the distribution of such a polity's population. Taken together these factors must rule out the description of Novgorod and Kiev as classic city-states.

However, the political structures built up by the Rus' during the Viking Age should certainly be considered in the same social context, so how *are* we to characterise the early Russian state in these terms? This links to Hansen's second set of criteria, for the definition of city-state cultures. Language (variable 1) is problematic, but more in terms of this period as a whole than in relation to Rus' in particular. Clearly the Rus' territories included numerous linguistic groups, but they were linked by a *lingua franca* (or a mix of them) in the same way as the rest of Europe: thus this question cannot really be seen as relevant in this particular context.

The organisation of the Rus' state is a different matter. There is no evidence that either the Novgorod or Kiev polities can be considered as part of an imperial structure, despite the vast scale of the territory under their influence or nominal control. Outside the riverine trade routes there are few indications of garrisons or other forms of organised military presence. One possible avenue of approach here is to consider not the area of land involved, but rather the region served by the water-based comunication networks that were the arteries of Rus' movement: seen in this light, there is a much tighter focus upon the urban centres

themselves, surrounded by radial spokes of communications through territory under a nominal control that perhaps meant comparatively little in practice. This would blend the two categories of Hansen's variable 3 with regard to the organisation of a city-state culture, and thus it may even be possible to view the way-stations and outpost towns of Rus' as elements in a network of "proto city-states", if such a concept is valid – essentially as the fore-runners to a city-state culture which did not develop fully (variable 2).

This raises the question of how the Rus' state developed, connecting to variable 4 of the city-state culture criteria. Three main theories have been put forward for the process of urbanisation in European Russia:[33]

- the towns developed naturally from pre-existing population centres as part of an ongoing internal process of economic and political development (Tichomirov [1959]; Nosov [1993]).
- the urban process was the result of external stimuli, principally in the form of traders from Scandinavia (Bulkin & Lebedev [1974]; Nosov [1993]).
- the towns were an internal development, but took different forms with specific functions, operating together in an overall system (Petrukhin & Pushkina [1979]; Petrukhin [1995]).

In terms of the origins of the two Russian polities, we may observe that all the above can be combined in Hansen's variable 4a, whereby a pre-state period of proto-urban centres gradually gives way to the formation of city-states as part of a combined process of urbanisation and state formation. Similarly, the political tensions between Novgorod and Kiev – their conflicts, alliances and the eventual decline of the former centre – would appear to fit the pattern of variables 5-13 regarding the internal relations of such cultures, though it is naturally rather harder to apply these criteria to a situation with only two key polities (it also seems a matter of debate as to whether Novgorod can be considered a truly independent settlement at all, at least prior to the uprising against the Kiev-appointed prince in 1136 [Birnbaum (1989) 7], though we should also observe that at this time in Europe's history such a settlement form was not found elsewhere – cf. Hansen's variables 14 and 15). The only apparent exceptions were the Irish city-states, a situation even more striking given their obvious Viking connections.[34] There are, in short, quite compelling grounds for regarding the Rus' domain as a *form* of city-state culture, albeit at a very undeveloped stage.

The City-State Concept and the Russian Settlements

In conclusion, the application of the city-state concept to the Russian towns allows us primarily to bring a fresh and alternative perspective to the ethnic discussions that have dominated research in this field, and to examine the social patterning of the settlements in a new and rewarding way – despite concluding that Novgorod and Kiev can only superficially be considered true city-states. An element of the Viking world-view that is consistently neglected by archaeologists, and often historians too, is the sophistication of their political structures, and the acumen exhibited by many Scandinavian rulers in the maintenance of their power bases:[35] the consideration of Novgorod and Kiev in the context of city-state formation also goes some way towards an acknowledgement of this complexity, and can function as a useful springboard for future work. Above all, the uniqueness of the Russian polities – over and above their similarities with the urban centres and early states evolving in contemporary Europe – is seen to emerge more clearly in this new analytical context.

Notes

1. The term "European Russia" is used following Noonan (1997), as the only label which properly conveys the Viking Age sphere of Scandinavian operations in the region from Poland to the Urals, between the arctic and the Black Sea – an area covering several modern states and extending beyond the borders of the Russian Federation.
2. Useful recent summaries of this process are given by Dolukhanov (1996) and Franklin & Shepard (1996). See Sedov (1987) for a survey of north-west Russian ethnicity at this time.
3. The best recent summary of these proto-urban settlements can be found in Clarke & Ambrosiani (2nd ed. 1995).
4. Our sources for the early Russian settlements are fragmentary, and dominated by the 11th-12th century *Russian Primary Chronicle* (Cross & Serbowitz-Wetzor [1953]), composed as the court history of the Kievan Rus' and as such something of a retroactive legitimation of their power; it is this document that claims the development of the Rus' state as a Scandinavian initiative by tracing the history of the Rurikids – the descendants of one Rurik, who first came to Russia in the 850s or 860s. A useful summary of the *Chronicle* is given by T. Noonan (1997) 138-140. Other important Russian texts include legal codes, monastic documents and the *Chronicle of Novgorod* (Michell & Forbes [1914]). Looking eastwards, the problematic Jewish texts mentioning the Rus' may be found in the collection by Glob & Pritzak (1982), *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*. There are also a number of heavily-embroidered accounts in medieval Icelandic sagas, which contain valuable information but must be interpreted with particular care – see,

for example, Pálsson & Edwards (1989), *Vikings in Russia: Yngvar's Saga and Eymund's Saga*; other Scandinavian sources are collected in Pritsak (1981), *The Origin of Rus' 1: Old Scandinavian Sources other than the Sagas* and Glashina & Jackson (1987), *Drevnerusskie Goroda v Drevneskandinavskoe Pismennosti*. In addition there are Islamic reports of diplomatic and missionary expeditions sent into western Asia which occasionally encountered the Rus' on their travels along the Volga; these are summarised in Wikander (1978), *Araber, Vikingar, Väringar* which also contains references to the Arabic editions of the relevant texts. Lastly there are a number of important Byzantine sources such as that by the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio* (Moravcsik & Jenkins [1967]). This was a secret manual for the guidance of imperial foreign policy, prepared around 950 for the use of the emperor's successor. The Kiev power base was a serious threat to the northern border of the Empire, and Constantine here stresses the importance of maintaining buffer states like that of the Pechenegs as a check to Rus' ambitions; it is one of the key sources for our understanding of how the Rus' states were perceived by their neighbours, and for assessing what kinds of polities they actually were; Constantine's political assessment of the Rus' is usefully summarised by Franklin & Shepard (1996) 113ff.

5. The details of this and the other river passages to Byzantium have recently been mapped and studied with great success through experimental journeys in replica Viking vessels, published as Nylén (1983) and three reports by Edberg (1994, 1996 and 1998).
6. An accessible summary of Arab contacts with the Rus' can be found in Jansson (1985).
7. For an overview of Ladoga's archaeology, see Sedov (1985); Kirpichnikov (1988) 307-37; Kirpichnikov & Nazarenko (1993). An excellent recent summary can also be found in Jansson (1997).
8. See Stahlsberg's papers (1991a) and (1991b) for a discussion of women's roles as merchants in Russia – this is a vital topic for the illumination of the nature of the mobile Rus' groups at the start of the Viking Age.
9. Price (1998); these ideas relate to those set out by Lebedev (1985) and by extension to parallel research on the Neolithic and Bronze Age of western Europe – see for example Bradley (1993) and (1998), both with extensive references.
10. The latest datings for Ribe can be found in Jensen (1998) and for Birka in Ambrosiani & Eriksson (1996).
11. The archaeology of Gorodišce is discussed in a number of works by its excavator, E.N. Nosov, but see especially Nosov (1990), (1992) and (1993).
12. As with the other sites of its kind, the literature on Gnëzdovo is extensive; Jansson (1997) lists the basic sources, but I would particularly direct the reader to Mühle (1988) and Avdusin (1991). Many of the most spectacular finds are now illustrated for the first time in Egorov (1996).
13. The Scandinavian finds from these and other sites have been reviewed in two papers by Stahlsberg ([1982]; [1988]); for other perspectives see also the papers by Pushkina (1997) and Rozhdestvenskaja (1997).
14. See Fedorov-Davidov (1989) and several papers in Clarke & Simms (1985), together with Goehrke's detailed study of Pskov (1981).
15. This major site, the only settlement from this region (as opposed to cemeteries) to have produced Scandinavian material, has been discussed by Leont'ev (1996) which contains references to his numerous earlier publications on the site; see also Jansson (1997).
16. The Jaroslavl complex has a vast literature, but see Smirnov (1967), together with the papers by Jansson (1997) and Murasheva (1997) which both contain extensive references.
17. See Lapšin & Muchina (1988) for a summary of the Vladimir sites and a discussion of their problematic interpretation, and Jansson (1997).
18. See Noonan (1997) for an overview of these sites, and his earlier paper (1985) for more detail on the Scandinavians' interaction with the Steppe peoples.
19. The study of the monetary flow of Arabic silver through Russia has formed the basis of much of Thomas Noonan's work; this is briefly surveyed by him in his recent overview of the Viking Age in the east (1997) and summarised with references in his fundamental papers (1991) and (1994).
20. The archaeology and history of Kiev has been excellently summarised in a fundamental paper by Callmer (1987) 323-53; see also Tolocko (1988) 344-57 and Ioannisyan (1990) – the paper has an outstanding bibliography – and the recent summaries by Dolukhanov (1996) ch.9 and Franklin & Shepard (1996).
21. Useful recent summaries of Polotsk and its region can be found in Zagorulsky (1996) and Tarasov (1996).
22. See Noonan (1991) for an elegant and concise critique of this problem.
23. An outline of the "Rus' debate" can be derived from the following works, which span both Russian and western perspectives on the problem and contain extensive bibliographies to pursue the discussion further in the literature: Arne (1914); Vernadskij (1959); Schmidt (1970); Lowmianski (1985); Kolchin (1985); Andreev *et al.* (1986); Franklin & Shepard (1996); Larsson (1997). In addition to his works cited in n. 11 above, two papers by Nosov also take up these questions with specific reference to the archaeology of the early towns: (1994) and the electronic text "The Problems of Urbanism in the Baltic Region" *http://www.arkeologi.uu.se/afr/projects/BOOK* 20.07.99.
24. See the discussion in Westerdahl (1995).
25. Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (*supra* n.4).
26. Constantine's political assessment of the Rus is usefully summarised by Franklin & Shepard (1996) 113ff.
27. See the recent biography by Edberg (1997).
28. See Noonan (1997) 150-3 for an assessment of the impact that the re-orientation of late Viking Age trade had on the Rus' economy.
29. See the range of reconstructions in Kolchin (1985).
30. The literature on Novgorod runs to nearly 4,000 works; the monumental task of collating them has been undertaken in two excellent bibliographies by Gaidukhov (1983/1992). An abbreviated version in English can be found, along with other useful papers, in Brisbane (1992). For works in overview, the early excavations in Novgorod are summarised in English by Thompson (1968); other major studies include Kolchin & Janin (1978) and Janin (1988). The Scandinavian finds material is collected in Sedova (1981) and, most recently, Egorov (1996); the best artefact illustrations can be found in Perepelkina (1985) and new finds appear regularly in the series *Materiali po Arkeologii Novgoroda*. The most recent full excavation report is Gaidukhov (1992), while the latest developments on Novgorod's main ongoing excavation (Troitsky) can be followed on the project's website at *http://www.novgorod.ru/city/history/arc/index.htm* as @ 30.07.99.

31. Franklin & Shepard (1996) provide the best recent overview of the post-Viking history of Rus'.
32. The citizens' councils of Novgorod have long played a vital role in the modern political context of the excavations in that city, with far-reaching consequences for the permitted interpretations of the Rus' towns. The *veche* system was seen as a primitive form of Communism, and accordingly occupied a central place in the politically orthodox version of early Russian history for much of the duration of the Soviet Union.
33. Summarised by Jansson (1997) 25-7, but see also the general comments on these approaches by Noonan (1991).
34. Holm, *supra* 251-62; in this context one could perhaps also consider the Anglo-Scandinavian polities established in the English Danelaw in the late ninth century, such as the Five (or Seven) Boroughs and the Kingdom of York.
35. A similar view in a similar context is espoused by Ó Corráin (1998).

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