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A Viking Period workshop in Staraya Ladoga, excavated in 1997

By Anatoliy N. Kirpichnikov


The proto-urban Viking Period settlement of Staraya Ladoga is located on the river Volkhov 10 km from Lake Ladoga in western Russia. In 1997 a small trench was excavated here and the remains of a burnt-down Viking Period workshop was revealed. Refuse from glass bead production and amber working was found. The author also interprets metal finds from the site as evidence of brass casting. Three pieces of Scandinavian-type jewellery and a Scandinavian-type comb were found. These date from the early 9th century. The building has however been dendro-dated to c. AD 900-905. The author interprets this discrepancy as evidence that Scandinavian artefact types remained longer in production in Russia than in their area of origin.

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The town of Ladoga (Staraya Ladoga from 1704, located in Leningrad Region) emerged no later than AD 753 as an important trading place on the routes from the Baltic Sea via the Volga and Dnepr to southeast Europe. Ladoga was eastern Europe’s centre for craft, administration, trade and transportation. Slavic, Finnish, Scandinavian and other groups lived here. Most of the Arabic silver coinage that reached the shores of the Baltic Sea passed through Ladoga. The town was part of an economic and cultural community of countries and cities in the Baltic region. In 862 the town became the residence of the Scandinavian Rurik, who was invited there by Finnish and Slavic tribes. In other words, Ladoga became the first capital of Rurik’s emerging dominion. In the 12th century the town became part of the realm of Novgorod, and since the 15th century it has been under the rule of Moscow.

The cultural layers and well-preserved building remains of Staraya Ladoga cover 18 hectares and represent continuous habitation from the 8th century onward. Studies of Ladoga have been carried out since 1972 by the Expedition of the Institute for the History of Material Culture of the Russian Academy of Science under the direction of the author.

The excavations of 1997 discussed in the following were directed by the author with O.I. Boguslavskij as deputy director. Among the participants were students and teachers from the historical college of Leningrad Regional University with Dean A.S. Kazennov, students from the historical faculty of Saint Petersburg State University, and archaeology students from

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the University College of Visby. Work was funded by the federal program "State support for the integration of higher education and basic research for 1997–2000" (project N. K-0388) and supported by the Leningrad Region Government, Industry and Construction Bank and the Saint Petersburg department of the Peace Foundation. With gratitude, the expedition accepted financial aid provided by State Duma deputy G.V. Starovojtova.

_Trench #2, horizon B – a workshop_

Trench #2 measured 8 by 12 metres and was located in the northern part of the so-called Earth town, the latter being in the centre of the modern town (fig. 1). Special attention is attracted here by construction horizon B which was excavated between the depths of 4.82 and 6.25 metres, measured from the common datum mark established by the Staraya Ladoga archaeological expedition under the direction of V.I. Ravdonikas.

The log structure revealed here had burned down. Apparently, before new construction was commenced on the site it was levelled, as some logs were found out of position even though they had not burned.

In the southern part of the trench (fig. 2) in
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the squares along the lines nos 32–34, at a depth of 4.82–5.62 m, the remains of a building were found, measuring c. 4 by 5.5 m. It had double walls: some lower logs remained with lengths from 1 to 4 m. These logs were supported by pegs from the western side to prevent them from subsiding. A 3 by 3 m room may be reconstructed in the southern part of the building. Burnt and sooty stones were found along the sides of this room, possibly indicating a large fireplace that had occupied most of it. Along the northern wall were two receptacles dug down into the earth wall, each with a diameter of c. 0.6 m, containing a basket with a rounded bottom covered with clay and a birch bark container with sides at least 5 cm high. It is possible that the wall was interrupted in this place or that its bottom log had been moved due to the dismantling of the fireplace.

A 0.5 m wide entrance was documented on the southern side of the building, forming a separate 1 by 1.8 m space. A threshold with two sockets for the door frame was preserved.

It is difficult to reconstruct the whole building including the entrance, due to its incomplete preservation. It is possible to state, however, that the building served more for craftsmanship than for living, as is proven by the finds (figs 3–11). They were found in the building, strewn across it with no apparent system.

27 opaque glass beads, found in the remains of the building and its surroundings. Most are blue and yellow (find nos 25, 26, 27, 30, 31, 36, 40, 80, 81, 82, 145, 146, 152, 155, 156, 183, 184, 195, 206, 229, 231, 232, 234, 235, 236, 241, 243).

14 clear glass beads of different colours and production techniques (117, 121, 130, 146, 158, 169, 190, 196, 220, 226, 227, 233, 249, 258).


5 bottoms of birch baskets (115, 140, 141, 222 and 165, the one dug down into the ground).

3 three iron clinker rivets for ship-building (112, 166, 176).

A knife (162).
A bone handle for a knife? (225).
A bronze ring (128).
A bronze fishing hook (167).
An iron nail, plate and ring (143, 251, 247).
A decorative nail from a box? (170).
2 whetstones, a handle and other wooden objects (101, 123, 201).
5 pieces of amber (135, 151, 153, 185, 194).
An iron chisel (239).
101 pieces of thumbed pottery (including 15 rims, fig. 5).
9 pieces of wheel-thrown pottery (including 1 rim, fig. 7).

The amber fragments are most likely production waste. Judging from them and the fragments of glass beads, the building was used for the production of glass and amber goods. The artisan’s speciality, however, was casting copper alloy objects of Scandinavian types. Such finds were made in the fireplace: a piece of a tortoise brooch with animal art like the ones from Birka grave 655 (131; fig. 8–9), a complete equal-armed brooch of the Välsta type (154; fig. 10), and an unfinished ringed pin (164; fig. 11). These finds are very rare in Scandinavia. Here they demonstrate the stages of casting, from bad specimens to high-quality products. The goods were clearly not imported but produced on the site. In this connection the function of the two receptacles dug down into the floor becomes clear. One contained lumps of clay and the other contained clay paste for making casting moulds.

The products were obviously produced for wealthy people. It is hardly a coincidence that things were found in the workshop that were not produced there, but rather indicate the status of the owner. This refers to a silvered decorative mount with beaded wire trimming and a fine dress pin (111; figs 3 & 11). Summing up the results it may be said that a workshop that produced objects of Scandinavian design was found in Earth town. This is the first time such a workshop has been found in Staraya Ladoga.

As construction horizon B was dismantled outside the workshop several finds were made: 5 opaque glass beads (57, 58, 66, 97, 171), 5
Fig. 3. Finds from the workshop: decorative mount (163), bronze fishing hook (167), decorative nail from a box? (170), glass beads (159, 242), small beads (231, 232, 236), beads (146, 226), rock crystal bead (258). — Fynd från verkstaden.

Fig. 4. Finds from the workshop (80–220) and outside (47–57): glass beads (47, 51) - made from amber, 56, 190, 220, beads (96, 125, 187), small beads (57, 80, 184), piece of amber (185). — Fynd från verkstaden och omgivningen.

Fig. 5. Finds from the workshop. Thumbed potsherds (200, 212), wheel-thrown potsherd (253), cinkerrivet (166), pin (251), knife (162), chisel (239). — Fynd från verkstaden.

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Fig. 6. Finds from the workshop (102, 112, 128, 176, 204) and outside (139, 183). Bronze ring (128), nails (112, 176), arrowhead (139), sheet metal fragment (102), crucible fragment (183), whetstone (104). — Fynd från verkstaden och omgivningen.

Fig. 7. Finds from the workshop (and outside: 192). Thumbed potsherds (177, 208, 210, 245), wheel-thrown potsherds (192, 246). — Fynd från verkstaden och omgivningen.

Fig. 8. Tortoise brooch type Bj 655 (131). — Enskalig oval spännbuckla typ Bj 655.

Fig. 9. Tortoise brooch type Bj 655 (131). Reconstruction drawing. — Enskalig oval spännbuckla typ Bj 655. Rekonstruktionsteckning.

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Fig. 10. Equal-armed brooch type Valsta (154). — Likarmat spänne typ Valsta.

Fig. 11. Finds from the workshop. Bow-shaped object with a hammered disc (164), dress pin (111), wooden sword hilt (162), bone handle (225).
— Fynd från verkstaden.

Fig. 12. Copper alloy wire spiral bead (43).
— Spiralpärla.
clear glass and amber beads of different colours (47, 51, 56, 79, 188), a rhombic arrowhead (139), a clinker rivet (71), an iron fishing hook (182), a piece of a whetstone (138), a crucible (183), 152 thumbed potsherds, 17 wheel-thrown potsherds, an antler comb (33) and a temple ring of the Old Slavic type with a spiral curl (252; fig. 15). In 1998, when squares B-35 and D-34 were cleaned, a copper alloy wire spiral bead (fig. 12) and a piece of copper alloy sheet metal were found which most probably belong with horizon B.

Dendrochronological analysis of 15 samples, carried out by N.B. Chernykh of the Laboratory of History and Archaeology, Russian Academy of Science in Moscow, has shown that the logs of the workshop were felled about AD 900 and no later than the very beginning of the first decade of the 10th century.

In the following we shall comment on individual finds of particular interest.

Tortoise brooch type Bj 855
Tortoise brooch (131; figs 8–9), brass, incomplete (58 mm long). No patina. About one-third of the brooch is missing. Old damage is seen on the side where a piece is missing. Its original size is possible to establish: length 90–95 mm, width c. 50 mm, height c. 23 mm. Single-shell. A single pin fastening lug is found on the inside. This indicates a Vendel Period date according to I. Jansson. The lug is pierced. Such holes were probably drilled after the casting. The lug is also bent. It was not possible to use the pin in the current position. Therefore, the brooch was not in use when deposited. The artisan probably tried to adapt a miscast brooch to use, but gave up. We express our gratitude to R.S. Minasyan and E.A. Shablavina for consultations concerning the casting of this find.

The surface of the brooch shows plainly that this is a bad product cast in a clay mould. The material is spread unevenly on the inner side and is sometimes very thin with original holes. The body of the brooch is deformed and the metal has a partly porous structure. That this is a waste product is evident. As it was impossible to use, it was retained as scrap metal.

The outside decoration is imperfectly preserved. The surface of the brooch is divided into quadrants by beaded strips. At the intersection of these strips is a circle. At the ends of the strips are semicircles and decorations. The four quadrant panels, two of which are completely preserved, are filled with animal interlace. Heads and legs are clearly seen. The bodies are defined by ribbons but difficult to trace because they are complicated by additional interlace which is not connected to the bodies of the beasts.

Among the 4000 tortoise brooches found in Scandinavia and the about 200 found on Russian territory, this one is unique. It shows some similarity with a pair of brooches found in grave 655 at Birka (Arbman 1943, pp. 229–230, Taf. 58:3–6). Those brooches also have the four-quadrants layout with a circle and four semicircles, but their animal interlace is different from the one seen in Staraya Ladoga (Jansson 1985, pp. 19–22, fig. 5). According to I. Jansson, Bj 655 dates from the transition period, that is, the end of the Vendel Period and the very early Viking Period, or in absolute dates, to the middle and the second half of the 8th century (many thanks to I. Jansson for commenting on the finds).

The three brooches from Bj 655 and Staraya Ladoga are decorated in two different styles: geometrical with a quadrant division enclosing panels with animal interlace. According to H. Arbman (1937, p. 124, Taf. 39:5–6) and I. Jansson (1985, p. 26), the geometrical decoration harks back to insular art and the animal interlace belongs to the Late Vendel Period. Such experiments with different styles were connected, it is supposed, with influence from the British Isles, stimulated by increasing missionary activity. In this context the four-quadrant layout may be seen as a Christian cross. As for the animal interlace, not only Scandinavian artisans worked in this vein.

The tortoise brooch is most likely an attempt at local production on the pattern of a high quality import piece. It reflects the formation of Early Viking Period art, which embraces contrasting artistic traditions from the continental to the insular.
**Ringed pin?**

A brass object, bow-shaped with one widened end and the other cut in antiquity (164; fig. 11). Width between the ends 43 mm. No patina. The middle part of the object is shaped like an irregular disc with five parallel dents, 25 mm long – possibly the marks of hammering on the metal when hot. At the end of one of the dents is fishbone decoration.

The object is most likely in a state of unfinished re-working. Originally it was a bracelet with widened terminals. Then its middle part was hammered into a disc. At this point something went wrong and the piece was abandoned. In our opinion, the artisan tried to make part of a long ringed pin out of the bracelet. Such pins have a decorated disc on the ring. They are known from the Viking Period in Sweden, Norway and Finland (Arbman 1940, Taf. 42:1; Petersen 1928, fig. 222; Kivikoski 1973, fig. 724). As for the original bracelet, the type is common in Eastern Europe including the south-east Baltic states from the 5th century onward, and on Viking Period Gotland as well (Sedov 1987, fig. 38; Bliujiene 1999, tab. 4:1a:5, fig. 94:10–12; Thunmark-Nylén 1998, Taf. 8 a-b). The closest parallels are found among 8th and 9th century jewellery from the Smolensk area (Shyhau 1992, p. 54, fig. 35:7, 24; Enukov 1990, p. 203, fig. 15:6, 7; close parallels with identical fishbone decoration have been pointed out by O.A. Sheglova). In the late 9th century (the time of horizon B), this bracelet was old-fashioned. This may explain why it was reworked. When the attempt failed the artisan put the piece aside for future use.

**Equal-armed brooch type Valsta**

Equal-armed brooch type Valsta (154; fig. 10). Length 55 mm, width 25 mm, height 11 mm. Completely preserved, without patina. The terminals are of rhombic shape with two horns at each of the three free corners. The surfaces of the terminals are decorated with thin beaded ribs around a little dome. Together they remind one of a human mask. The central bow has a ribbed panel. The decoration is clear and geometric. On the reverse is a pin catch and a single pin fastening lug with a hole, a trait that according to I. Jansson is typical for Vendel Period brooches as stated above. The piece shows no signs of wear and appears never to have been used.

11 Valsta brooches are known: 6 from Sweden, 1 from Norway, 1 from Finland and 1 from Estonia. 2 have been found in Russia: one in the area of the source of the Volkhov (Ambrosiani et al. 1994, pp. 111–112; Ambrosiani & Erikson 1996, p. 28) and the other one in Staraya Ladoga as described here. The type appears to date from c. AD 750–900 (Ambrosiani et al. 1994, pp. 113–114). J. Callmer (1999, p. 204) offers slightly different data. He is aware of 16 Valsta brooches, 2 of them from Russian territory. According to his opinion, they date to c. AD 800–850, rarely later. The date of horizon B does not contradict the chronology of the Valsta type.

The type belongs to a populous group of jewellery with geometric decoration but no animal or vegetable art. It is related to metalwork found between rivers Rhine and Seine. In this region designs of the 6th and 7th centuries are encountered that are direct ancestors to the Valsta type. They are dress fasteners consisting of three parts with simple geometrical ornamentation (Hougen et al. 1993, p. 50, Pl. 25:1-3).

The previously known production sites of Valsta type brooches are Birka and Haithabu, where both casting moulds and finished brooches have been found. This indicates that the type reached Russia by way of Denmark or Sweden. As for the brooch from Staraya Ladoga, considering its pristine appearance and the find context among other cast objects in the workshop, we suggest that it was made on-site in Ladoga, maybe on the pattern of a Scandinavian model by a skilled artisan.

**Alloy composition**

A.N. Egorkov of the Laboratory of the Institute for the History of Material Culture has carried out spectral analysis of the three objects described above, demonstrating that they were all cast from brass (tab. 1), that is, all three alloys contain zinc. Zinc evaporates from the alloy when it is molten. Thus if the zinc content reaches 25–30% then the metal cannot have been remolten many times (Eniosova 1999, p. 7). At
Table 1. Spectral analysis of three brass objects from Staraya Ladoga, Trench #2, horizon B. By A.N. Egorov of the Laboratory of the Institute for the History of Material Culture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tortoise brooch type BJ 655 (131)</th>
<th>Re-worked bracelet (164)</th>
<th>Equal-armed brooch type Valsta (154)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cu</td>
<td>Base</td>
<td>Base</td>
<td>Base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sn</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pb</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zn</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bi</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sb</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ag</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td>0.09%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ni</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
<td>0.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fe</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
<td>0.09%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mn</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26% Zn the tortoise brooch was made from fresh brass. A zinc content of 1—15% indicates the use of scrap metal (ibid.). Brass with average or low zinc content is common on Russian territory. Such alloys are represented by the re-worked bracelet and the Valsta brooch. The spectral analysis shows that they were cast from alloys of different origin and probably not at the same time. As to the source of the brass, it most likely came from the Baltic region where it was used already in the first centuries AD (Enio-sova 1999, p. 8). The artisans probably chose brass because of its similarity to gold when polished.

**Dress pin**

Dress pin with a cubo-octahedric head surmounted by a flat loop holding a brass wire ring (111; fig. 11). Length 7 cm. Ring diameter 1 cm. The dress pin has patina, the ring does not, which indicates different alloys. Judging from wear at the ends, the pin has been used.

Such pins are a widely spread detail of Viking Period female dress. According to I. Jansson, they are commonly found in Swedish cremation burial mounds along with knives, scissors and other domestic equipment. The function of the pins may be understood by considering inhumation graves from Gotland. Here the pins are usually found below the shoulders where the bead sets are also placed. Apparently the pins were fastened to the dress and served as holders for the bead strings (Thunmark-Nylén 1983, p.165; 1995 Abb. 1f). When a single pin is found in a grave it more likely served as fastener for a cloak or shawl (Fanning 1994, p. 110, fig. 92). When the cloak was worn, a string was probably tied from the pin’s loop across the fabric of the cloak to the pinpoint to keep it in place.

**Decorative mount**

Cast disc, probably tin and zinc bronze, 16 mm diameter. The edge is trimmed with beaded wire (163; fig. 3). The surface is partly covered with silver. Two holes are not likely to be original. On the back side are two lugs to hold a string or thin wire for fastening. The piece was probably fastened to fabric or leather as a costume decoration. Parallels are found among finds of the 6th and 7th centuries in the middle Dnepr area (Pekarskaya & Kidd 1994, Taf. 40:1-4; Korzuhkina 1996, figs 46:9, 54:31).

**Brass wire spiral bead**

Brass wire spiral bead (6 revs), barrel-shaped, 8 mm diameter (43; fig. 12). Similar to but smaller than bi-conical silver or bronze wire beads found in mainland Sweden, Gotland and the Åland Isles as well as Staraya Ladoga (mound 7 on the Plakun boundary), Gnézdovo and Timrévo (Kirpichnikov 1980). Datable finds with such beads belong to the 9th century. Beads identical to the one from Staraya Ladoga (even down to the number of revs) are found in Norway. J. Petersen published an object (a fastener?) with 11 such beads made from smooth wire, found in a mound in the Tromsø area. In Norway there are also similar but larger beads that date from the second half of the 9th century.

**Strike-a-light**

In collapsed deposits from the southern wall of the trench an oval strike-a-light (fig. 13) was
found. Its relationship to horizon B is uncertain. It is similar to the kalach type but lacks the internal protuberance. Length 78 mm.

**Bead production waste**

During cleaning of the workshop complex, 58 glass beads were found. 15 of them (26%) had broken during production and one of clear glass was unfinished. The beads are similar to the finds from the upper part of horizon E in Earth town (AD 865–920), both in quality and in typological makeup. Beads with eyes are considered to be the earliest in the assemblage, typical for phases E3 and E2 (AD 750–865), but they are also found in phase E1 as single finds. The latest bead is a cylindrical one of blue glass. Such beads are typical for horizon D of Earth town.

**Discussion and interpretation**

The finds considered above include both broken and complete items of the female costume. They were found in a workshop of the late 9th to early 10th century. There were no casting moulds and as for tools only a chisel was found. The ruins of the burnt-down house had been demolished, as previously mentioned. The recovered finds do not represent a complete picture of the set-up of the workshop, only occasional fragments. The owner of the house stored valuable brass scrap metal and had a complete brooch that had not been used, female jewellery and a sizeable collection of beads, 26% of which were defective. He was thus very likely manufacturing objects from glass, brass and possibly amber. In Ladoga there had long been workshops of all-round craftsmen working in many different materials. The presence of well-developed jewellery production in the town indicates constant demand for such products. They were not only designed for the local noblemen and other inhabitants of Ladoga but also exported abroad to the north-west and in other directions. Production, trade and exchange most likely generated considerable profits for Ladoga’s lords. It did not matter much in what style the products were decorated as long as they could compete regarding quality and prestige with products from abroad. Scandinavian designs with their dynamic geometric and zoomorphic decoration served this purpose well.

A certain archaism with designs of a much earlier period found in the eastern part of the workshop draws our attention. It is doubtful whether these finds were very old when deposited. We should take into account the delay in the influence of Scandinavian styles on Eastern Europe. The Scandinavian influence was not adopted immediately in Russia. There could also be a delay before designs were transmitted further along the routes southward, as well as a long afterlife for foreign fashions. Scandinavian artisans who moved to the Russian area preserved their skills and the type repertoire that they were used to as well as the weaponry and riding gear of their faraway home areas. The discrepant dates may be explained if some types remained in production longer in the Ladoga region than in Scandinavia.

The excavated complex is characterised by its fine assortment of Scandinavian-style objects. This must be due to Scandinavians visiting the town, particularly the arrival of Rurik and his successors. Artisans went to Russia together with merchants and continued working according to their specimens and skills. Scandinavian guests settled in Ladoga for long pe-
periods with their families. The efforts of these people were accepted on good grounds. The first centuries of the town’s existence were characterised by an intensive development of production, trade, transportation, social institutions and state institutions. It is thus no wonder that the town’s craft standards in this time equalled those of Scandinavia and other Baltic regions.

At archaeological excavations in Staraya Ladoga, single casting moulds and defective cast objects have been found in contexts of the 8th to 10th centuries indicating production in Scandinavian styles. But the finds of 1997, with their concentration, clear production context and highly skilled design, open new possibilities for the characterisation of the town’s Viking Period and the activities of a skilled artisan (or artisans), who was without doubt a Scandinavian working abroad.

**A comb and a temple ring found outside the workshop**

As a conclusion we shall discuss two significant finds made in horizon B outside the walls of the workshop.

A three-layer composite antler comb (33; fig. 14). The grip ribs originally held 8 tooth plates, each with one rivet. Some tooth plates are now missing. One end of the comb is damaged. Original complete length c. 19 cm. Max. width of grip ribs 25 mm. The grip ribs are decorated with dot circles and double edge lines. The dot circles are irregularly placed and connected by diagonal lines.

The comb is of the Scandinavian frieze type. In O.I. Davidan’s scheme it belongs to type 1b, in K. Ambrosiani’s (1981) scheme to type A2. Nevertheless, the comb has unique decoration. Probably it is a local variation on an imported theme. Combs of this type are dated to the Early Viking Period in Scandinavia. At Birka they are among the oldest specimens. In Russia they are dated to the 9th century.

A copper alloy wire temple ring ending in a spiral (252; fig. 15). Diameter 25 mm. This is the third copper alloy ring of this type found in Staraya Ladoga. One was found in layer E3 (AD 750–830) during excavations in Earth town. One was found during investigations of a stone fortress in the phase of AD 880–940. On was found during investigations of a stone fortress in the phase of AD 880–940.

Such rings are seen as a Slavic ethnic marker. Their distribution marks if not the itinerary then at least the timing of this group’s movement to the lower Volkhov. The oldest rings of this type have been found in Pobuzhje, Smolensk Podneprovje and in the Pskov area. They date from the 6–10th centuries. The type penetrated north of Lake Ladoga with Slavs that moved there in the 7–8th centuries from the Balkans and the Dnepr area. As for 9–10th century contexts, these rings have been found in burial mounds and settlements (excluding Staraya Ladoga) at Lubsha and Novie Dubroviki, in Poluzhje, the Old Russian burial mounds of Gnězdovo, Suzdal Opolje and Kiev.

In later times they are encountered as ornaments without any ethnic significance in parts of Russia, and they enter the Kama river.
basin and the south-eastern Ladoga area. Their geographic and chronological distributions do not permit any allocation to Slavic-Baltic or Lithuanian groups. Members of Balto and Finnish groups did not wear such rings in the Early Middle Ages. They are encountered only in contact areas as Slavic loans. The temple rings were widely spread and may be connected with typically Slavic variations of bracelet-like rings and earlier big wire rings with a twist on the inside. Whether it is possible to equate the initial distribution of this ornament type with the Novgorod Slavs, only future research will show. It is no great leap to state that such rings were traditional for Slavs among the first settlers of the lower Volkhov area in the 8th century. The type is unique in offering the possibility to demonstrate a Slavic component in the Early Medieval polyethnic culture of the lower Volkhov area. They indicate the presence of southern Slavs among the town’s first inhabitants.

References

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Sammanfattning

Sagornas Aldeigjuborg var en protostad i stil med Birka och låg vid floden Volklov, omkring 10 km från dess utlopp i sjön Ladoga i västra Ryssland. Förr hette också den sentida staden på platsen Ladoga, numera Staraja (d.v.s. gamla) Ladoga. Här har utgrävningar pågått sedan 1972 under författarens ledning.

