

MASTER'S THESIS

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What can Russian literature bring on the question of: Why did the Vikings travel to the East?

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1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the research

In November 2019, a conference named “Vikings in the Mediterranean” was organized in Athens by the Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish Institute. It gathered scholars and students working in various fields to present their research related to the theme of the relationship between the Vikings with Byzantium and the Arab world¹.

During the presentation on the opening night of the conference, the first slide presented was a map of Europe, with arrows pointing towards all the areas the Vikings had traveled. Over the Middle East was an arrow pointing to a big question mark. This question mark is the perfect representation of where the studies of Vikings in the East stand today. A vast geographic area, yet so little information is available about it. When looking at previous research on the Vikings and their travels, almost all of them cover the Western part of Europe. In contrast, only a very few would cover the East, and even then, the name Vikings is carefully used, with the term “Varangian” mainly employed. Not only is the eastern presence of the Vikings understudied, but western scholars primarily write the research that is indeed available. During the Athens conference, this was accurately represented by the fact that out of the 40 researchers attending, only two were from Russia. This underrepresentation of Russian scholars could therefore imply that the information we have today is quite one-sided since Vikings that traveled to Byzantium and the Middle East sailed through the rivers of present-day Russia and Ukraine, yet so few studies are available.

This conference in Athens was the starting point of two central questions: why the East, and what did Russian scholars have to say about the matter?

1.2. Research question

As shortly covered before, the theme of Vikings in the East is a vast area to cover, with an enormous number of questions awaiting to be explored and discovered. I have dwelled on how to properly formulate my question for a long time but found that it was often either

¹ Part of the introduction was used as the introduction for the examination of the class “HIS5000 Planlegging av historieprosjekt” in november 2019.

too general or too detailed. Therefore, I chose to go on a more general approach and to focus on only what Russian scholars had written about the question of:

Why did the Vikings travel to the East?

1.3. Delimitations

Focusing on only Russian research became apparent at the beginning of this research. Involving the ones made from other countries (for example, Ukraine, Belarus, or the Baltic countries) would have made it too wide to study. It would also have only resulted in a catalog of publications or research on the subject rather than bringing something new to the question. This was, however, not a problem as only a small number of published Russian research has been translated into English, German or French.

I had first intended to gather research materials written before and during the Soviet era. But unfortunately, finding digital documentation or any physical books from these periods outside of Russia was nearly impossible. Therefore, I had to focus on the available materials to finish this research, which means the more recent research post-USSR. I initially believed this would have been a problem. Still, after studying the articles presented in this research, I realized that studying articles and books written during the USSR and the periods before would have added little to the question, as they were so highly politically influenced.

Regarding the time frame, only the articles taking place during the period known as the *Viking Age* (793 to 1066) has been considered. I did not see relevant to take in consideration the period after as I am only interested in the reasons for the Vikings in their journey to the East.

1.4. Situation in Russia

Finding relevant literature and research written in Russian was going to be a more challenging task than I first had intended because of the world situation. After the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world in 2020, I was hoping that 2021 would be more favorable for visiting universities and libraries in Russia to access documentation. A trip was planned in December 2021 when the world was finally opening, but unfortunately, the new variant of the virus stopped those plans as traveling abroad was no longer possible. Another issue,

which no one could have predicted only a year ago, is the war between Russia and Ukraine which started in February 2022. This series of events made it therefore impossible for me to travel to Russia and get access to materials relevant to this study.

Therefore, this research is based on articles either accessible digitally or via the University library at Nord University in Bodø. I cannot, therefore, claim that this research will give a complete overview of what the Russian research has to say about the relationship between Vikings and the East. Still, I hope it will provide the reader with an idea of what Russian studies offers to this theme.

1.5. Study organization

When covering such a large subject, I decided early in the analytical process to start with the fundamental concepts surrounding the research question. Even if the Vikings are at the center of the research, other actors are also essential to understanding this analysis. I have chosen to explain the subject background before the methodology used, as I wanted to take the reader into the same process I did. I first read about broader topics before narrowing them down, just like a pyramid. Once I had found the relevant articles. I could then decide which methodology was best to use to analyze them. The articles are regrouped under an own chapter, where their contents are summarized and sorted. They are in addition to that, regrouped by themes. The last chapter will analyze the content of the articles, before eventually discussing what the results from the analysis will bring to the subject of the Vikings in the East.

2. Subject background

2.1. Key concepts

2.1.1. Varangians and Rus'

Several questions remain around the central question of who the Varangian and the Rus' were. Were they the same? Two different groups? Where did they come from? What was their goal? Sverrir Jakobsson writes that "The Vikings who ventured East have usually been called Varangians (...) this term, however, appears relatively late, and the first Vikings in the East were known as the Rus"². Alexandra Arinei³ however suggests that the origin of the term *Varangian* comes from the Nørront *vár*, meaning "faith" or "oath", and refers to Swedish Vikings travelling to the East with one objective, trade, and she does not link the Varangians to the Rus. What most of the articles agree about, is that by the 10th century, the Varangians were called the *Varangian Guard*, a protecting unit to the Byzantine Emperor. But even then, there seems to be different opinions regarding the Varangian Guard. Both Sigfus Blöndal and Georgios Theotokis suggest that there was in fact two different Varangian Guard, one protecting the emperor, and another unit group sent with army forces in the military operations across the Byzantine Empire⁴.

Varangian

in British English


(vəˈrændʒiən )

NOUN

1. one of the Scandinavian peoples who invaded and settled parts of Russia and Ukraine from the 8th to the 11th centuries, and who formed the bodyguard of the Byzantine

Varangian

in American English

(vəˈrændʒiən )

NOUN

- a member of a Scandinavian people that settled in Russia in the 9th cent. and, under Rurik, founded the first Russian dynasty

Figure 1. Definition of the word "Varangian" in the Harper Collins English Dictionary.



I first decided to look at the definition of the term *Varangian* as I wanted to see if there was any difference between an English, French, or Russian dictionary. There is in fact, no need to compare the English definition with another language when the definitions of the term *Varangian* published in the

² Jakobsson, 2020, p.1

³ Arinei, 2015, p.9

⁴ Blöndal, 1978, p.75; Theotokis, 2012, p.135-136

Collins English Dictionary⁵ shows that not only is the disagreements between researchers from the East and the West, but also within the English language itself. Both definitions do show the Scandinavian origin, but with two different purposes: one described as the Varangian Guard, protecting the Byzantine Empire, while the other definition mentions the Varangians as being the founders of the Kievan Rus’.

When looking at who the Rus’ were, most of the historical research made nowadays follows the description available in the *Primary Chronicles*, dating from the 12th century. Like all sources written after the events, there is a question of the legitimacy of what is written in the *Primary Chronicle*, myth or facts, or a mix of both⁶. There is also the question of interpretation between sources. If we compare the Rus’ between Arabic sources, and their description in the *Primary Chronicles*, there is in fact a difference. In Arabic sources, the Rus’ are described as primarily living in an area covering the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea, and from the Caucasus to the Volga Bulgars in the North, while in Byzantine and Latin sources, they are described as living between the Black Sea and the Baltic. Arabic sources do not describe the societal organization of the Kievan Rus’, and rather describe its members as a group engaging in various activities, for example trade or mercenary military activities, while the *Primary Chronicles* describe the Rus’ (or Varangians) as being called from Scandinavia to rule over the Slavs. One common point however on when looking at both sources, is the lack of information concerning the events surrounding the creation of the Kievan Rus’⁷.

2.1.2. Byzantium

Items of Byzantine origins dating as early as the 6th century have been found in Central Sweden and in Gotland. Those items were not a regular item, but belonged to the more luxury type, with gold coins, amethyst beads and silk discovered, and which most probably belonged to the local Scandinavian Elites. During the Viking Age, Byzantium was at the center of the Mediterranean, more occupied by its neighbors from the Steppe regions, the Caucasus, and the Black Sea, rather than Scandinavians in the far North⁸.

⁵ <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/varangian>

⁶ T. Jonsson-Hraundal, 2014, p.66

⁷ T. Jonsson-Hraundal, 2014, p.69-70

⁸ F. Androshchuk, 2016, p.92-93

When the Vikings settled in Staraja Ladoga, their main goal was not Byzantium. Their main interest was the trade of fur in exchange of silver, while Byzantium was on the main market route for the Khazar and the Caliphate⁹.

Despite this trading relation, it did not stop a fleet of Vikings to appear in Constantinople in June 860, having sailed down the Dniepr from Kyiv and from there through the Black Sea to the Bosphorus. The number of ships there varies; Donald Logan mentions 200 boats, while the Primary Chronicles mentions 2000 ships and the events taking place in 865. The city was unprepared for the attack, as most Byzantine forces were away on a campaign against the Arabs¹⁰.

The raiders pillaged the shores and devastated the settlements on the outskirts of Constantinople. Their attack was swift and described as slaughtering everyone they encountered¹¹. The Vikings amassed a considerable wealth from looting the suburbs, and their intervention left a long-lasting impression on the population of Constantinople¹².

2.1.3. The Caliphate

After the death of the prophet Mohammed in 632, it took only a very short time before the Islamic State was extending from Spain to almost India by 711. Trade was probably one of the most important elements in the Muslim conquest. With its capital Baghdad, the Abbasid Caliphate became the center of trade between the Persian Gulf, India and China¹³.

The first century of the Abbasid Caliphate, which started in 750, is often considered as a golden Age, with the development of technology, arts, sciences, and productivity. During this period of Golden age, the trade along the Silk Road also developed.¹⁴ As opposed to the Umayyads, the Abbasids focused on bringing people of different backgrounds together, rather than focusing only on Arab ethnic groups. They also had a different approach regarding the military, and instead on expanding the Caliphate, they focused on defense and rather focused on strengthening and protecting the borders¹⁵.

⁹ Shephard, 2008, p.496

¹⁰ Logan, 2005, p.170

¹¹ Shephard and Franklin, 1996, p.51

¹² Shephard, 2008, p.497-498

¹³ Mikkelsen, 1998, p. 39-40

¹⁴ Mansour, 2018, p.246-247

¹⁵ Mansour, 2018, p.250

2.1.4. *The Khazar*

The Khazar rose to prominence during the seventh century in the North of Caucasus. There is still uncertainty around this rise to power, but what is certain is that by the early 8th century, the Khazar had as equal importance as the Caliphate and Byzantium over the territory of southern Europe¹⁶.

The development of Rus in Northern Russia during the beginning of the 9th century suddenly changed the balance of power in the Western Eurasia area, with the Rus trading along the rivers to the Khazar and further to the Caliphate. This would have caused a threat to the Khazar and pushed them to develop a system of defensive bases, with probably the goal to stop the Rus expansion.¹⁷ This could have been caused by the Rus' imposing themselves on trading water routes originally controlled by the Khazar¹⁸. The capital of the Khazar, Itil, has been described in written sources as a centre of international trade between the Rus', Central Asia and Byzantium. The traded items mostly revolved around three specific goods, the furs and slaves to the Islamic world and the silver dirhams to the North¹⁹. Unfortunately, few information exists regarding the last period of the Khazar before it disappeared²⁰.

¹⁶ Howard-Johnston, 2007, p.163-164

¹⁷ Howard-Johnston, 2007, p.174-175

¹⁸ Petrukhin, 2007, p. 245

¹⁹ Noonan, 2007, p.229-231

²⁰ Howard-Johnston, 2007, p.174-175

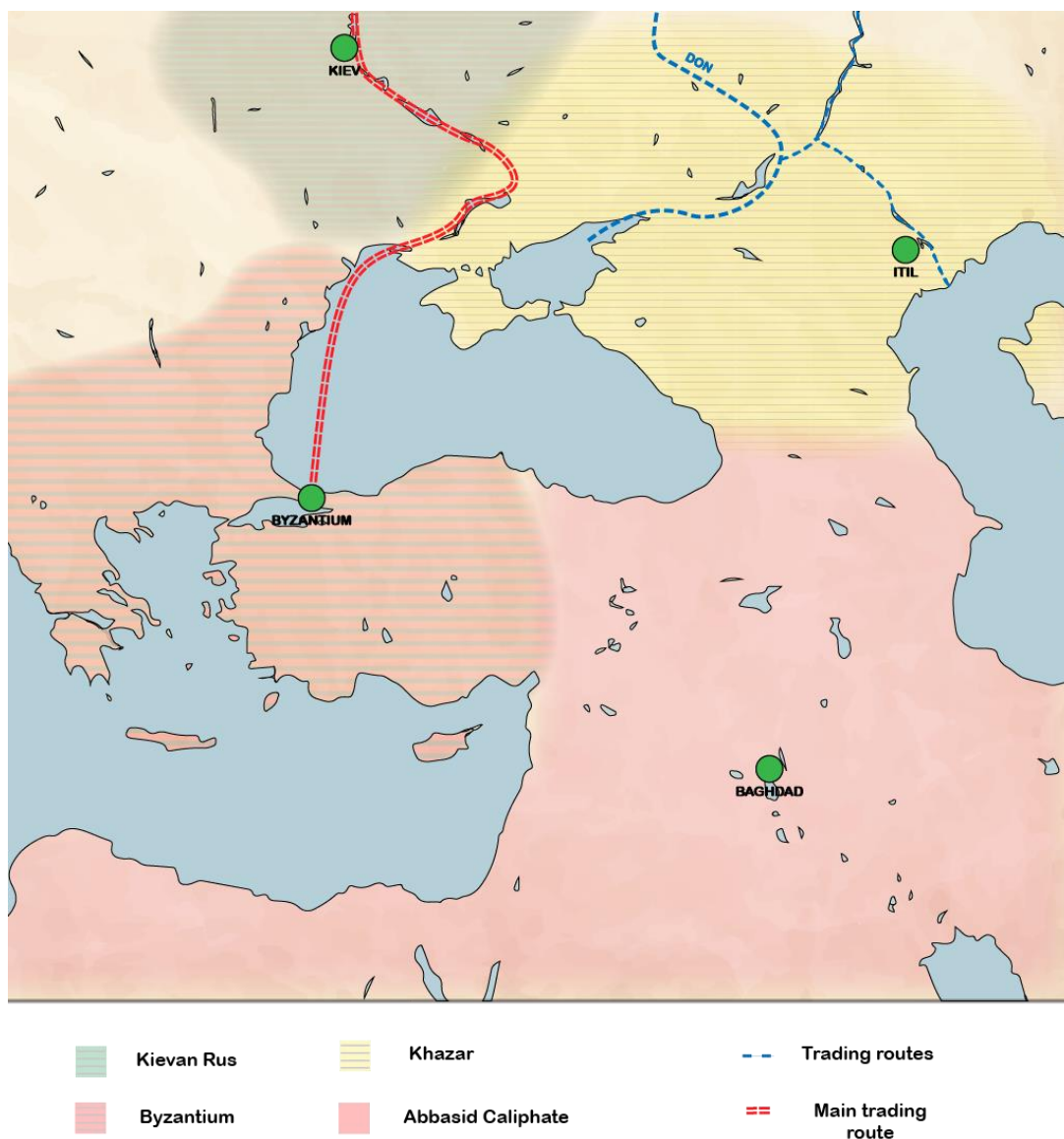


Figure 2. Map of the region of the South Mediterranean

2.1.5. Contacts between Vikings and the East

Vikings traveling to the East mainly originated from Southern Sweden. Over half of the coins found in Scandinavia during the Viking Age were found in the region of Gotland, most of them originating from Byzantium or the Arab world. Gotland was strategically placed to have trade connections to the East via the Baltic Sea²¹. There is, as of today, an ongoing debate about the words Viking, Varangian, and Rus. As Thomas Noonan points out, Viking is a word “shaped mainly by the events in the west”, and the word Scandinavian

²¹ Logan, 2005, p.164

should be used when referring to their travels to the East. Rus' has been, in turn, presumably used by Finns of Northern Russia to refer to Scandinavians appearing in their lands and later used to refer to Scandinavian and Non-Scandinavian rulers of the Kievan Rus'. Varangian has also been used to either refer to Scandinavians traveling to the East and Scandinavians entering the military guard of the Byzantine Emperors²².

2.1.6. Why the attraction for Russia?

Why would the Vikings travel to Russia? England or France offered already available riches, so why travel to the East? More riches are available in Scandinavia than in northwestern Russia. Moreover, why would the focus be on Staraja Ladoga²³? Scandinavian activities were found in the Baltic already before the Vikings²⁴.

Of course, the Scandinavian presence in Staraja Ladoga could be a following of the Baltic exploration, as archaeological excavations show contacts before 750. Then there is the question of what made some Vikings go south of Ladoga. One of the hypotheses is the discovery of silver from the Islamic dirhams (unfortunately, no sources in Scandinavia or Russia address the reasons for the travels to the East). As silver was not a material available in Scandinavia, it could have triggered an interest in the Vikings when they came across the hoards of Arabic dirhams in Staraja Ladoga. Now the next question is how did the dirhams come to Northern Russia? The possibility of trade seems the most probable²⁵.

Numismatic analysis shows that dirhams first arrived in Russia during the late 8th to early 9th century (786/787 hoard from Old Ladoga seems to be the most trustworthy, but also the first identified hoards that reached Northern Russia). One of the possible explanations could be the fur trade with the South (for example, Byzantium); there is a possibility that the Vikings found their way to the Black Sea while looking for the source of the silver²⁶.

The more we look into the subject of the Vikings (or Scandinavians, according to Noonan) traveling to the East, the more questions we meet along the way. There is no certainty as to

²² Noonan, 1997, p.134-135

²³ One of the settlements in Northern Russia where archaeological excavations show Viking settlers, and one of the trading points on the trading route from Scandinavia to Byzantium. This settlement will be mentioned and developed later in this analysis.

²⁴ Noonan, 1986, p.325

²⁵ Noonan, 1986, p.340

²⁶ Noonan, 1986, p.341-348

why they arrived in Staraja Ladoga in the first place and who traveled in the South via the rivers. Was it traders or mercenaries?

2.2. The Russian point of view

2.2.1. Russian historiography on Kievan Rus'

Stender-Pedersen qualified the Varangian question in Russian historiography as a “jungle of learning and imagination, facts and hypothesis, well-documented historical realities and pure, subjective conjectures”²⁷. The origin of the Kievan Rus' has sparked a debate in Russian Historiography since the end of the 18th century, with historians influenced by nationalism and political motives. Points of views, ideas, and concepts changing according to the political climate and going back and forth on whether the Kievan Rus' could have a Scandinavian origin or not. A combination of romantic movements about the origin of the Russian State and a Pan-Slavic approach led to the anti-Normanist view becoming prominent in the 19th century²⁸. Before the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Normanist and anti-Normanist debate occupied the scene (this debate will be explained further in this chapter). The Revolution enabled a different political aspect more opened to a Normanist aspect. However, the situation changed again in 1949 when the Soviets forbade the idea of a Scandinavian origin of the Russian State²⁹. Grekov, a Soviet-Russian historian, supports, for example, the idea that the Russian State resulted in the dissolution of the Russian Patriarchal tribal community in the 9th century, giving no room for a Scandinavian intervention³⁰.

During the Stalinist period, it was the first time that the Normanist and Anti-Normanist debate became an issue. The racist views from the Nazis were described as extreme Normanist, causing in reaction a strong anti-Normanist stand from the Soviet Union. The total rejection of the Scandinavian aspect can be seen in several of the works from the historians of the time (for example, Grekov). The politic that followed was isolationism, based on the idea of an independent emergence of an Eastern Slav State, followed by the Moscow State and then the Russian Empire. This strengthened the idea that Russia (or USSR) was self-sufficient and was not influenced by any external ideas,

²⁷ Stender-Pedersen, 1953, p.19

²⁸ Melnikova, 2012, p.44

²⁹ Logan, 2005

³⁰ Stender-Pedersen, 1953,

strengthening at the same time the stand against any Normanist views. This tendency is not only seen with Scandinavia but also with the denying of the importance of the Khazar in the history of Russia. Anti-Normanist views are declared official views of the Russian State for the first time. Historians and even archaeologists had to refute the presence of Scandinavians in Eastern Europe. Since the optic was the exclusion of connections and exclusions of the outside world, education in schools and universities followed the same pattern, making the outsider the enemy³¹.

During the mid-1960s, there was a return to a scientific analysis of the Scandinavian impact of the creation of the Rus' movement initiated by Leo Klejn. This led to the reevaluation of historiographical ideas. There seems to be a consensus happening in the 1970s, with the recognition that the Scandinavians did have a role to play in the foundation of the Rus' State. There seem to be an acceptance that the Early Russian Elite was Scandinavian in origin but assimilated into Slavic society. However, there has been a surge in anti-Normanist views since the beginning of 2000. During the 70s, more studies were based on the analysis of written sources, archaeological findings, numismatics, and other field findings that were used to compare the emergence of the Rus' State and compared with activities in Western Europe. No more debate is taking place. Hence the shock of 2000. A presentation made during a conference organized by the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation sparked an interest in the media of the Anti-Normanist view. Why? Because it was politically motivated to solidify Russian rights over the Kaliningrad region. There was an ideological motive as well: after the dissolution of the USSR, there was a need to have an ideological compensation for the loss of State superiority. Since 2010, the need to claim Russian history has become limited to political authorities and has become a marginal trend in Russian historiography³².

Unfortunately, the rejection of a Scandinavian origin and the claim that the Russians are descendants of a Slavic tribe located on the territory of today's Ukraine made once again the news 2021 with an article written by the president of Russia, Vladimir Putin. He claims that "Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians are all descendants of Ancient Rus, which was the largest state in Europe"³³. This very long article reviews the entire history

³¹ Melnikova, 2012, p.46

³² Melnikova, 2012, p.49

³³ <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>

of the region from the Rus' to the dissolution of the USSR. However, the article's goal is to justify the Russian right over the region of Donbas in Ukraine. Unfortunately, many similarities can be drawn with the claim over Kaliningrad in 2002, even though it did not end in a war.

2.2.2. Normanist and Anti-Normanist views

The debate started on the 6th of September 1749 in St. Petersburg, when Gerhard Friedrich Müller, the official Russian imperial historiographer, gave a speech about the origins of Russia and its link to Scandinavia, believing that the name Rus' has an Old Norse origin and Rurik being a descendant of the Varangians. This created an uproar among the historians present in the assembly, particularly Mikhail Lomonosov, a Russian Scientist and historian, who stopped Müller from continuing his speech. As a result, Müller was forced to resign from the academy of science, but the debate continued with both groups drawing up arguments proving the origins of the Russian State³⁴.

An overview of the arguments presented by the two groups shows that the Normanists support the idea that:

- The name Rus' possibly comes from the Finnish word Ruotsi, the name given to the Swedes in the 9th century.
- The names of the Rus' envoys mentioned in treaties with Byzantine have Scandinavian origins.
- The Annales Beriniani mention the Rus' envoys were Swedes.
- Islamic geographers and travelers from the 9th and 10th centuries always made a distinction between Slavs and Rus'.

The Anti-Normanists, on the other hand, come with the counterarguments:

- The name of Rus' is directly connected to Kyiv. Several examples are used here, the names of rivers or a Syrian source compiled in 555 A.D mentioning the name Rus' when talking about the population in the south of Kyiv.
 - There is no mention of Rus' in Scandinavia.
 - Scandinavian names in the Rus' envoys do not prove that Rus' were Swedes.
- However, since they were representatives of the Rus' princes with knowledge of trade and diplomacy, they were considered men of Rus'.

³⁴ Pritsak, 1977, p.249

- The Islamic writer Ibn Khurdadbeh in the 9th century called the Rus' a tribe of Slavs.
- Archaeological evidence shows little sign of Scandinavian presence.

When reviewing the list of these arguments, one must be aware that the historians from each side are mainly focusing on the term Rus', and one must remember the political or patriotic aspect when reviewing those statements³⁵.

The literature is also one-sided. The literature from the West in English strikes as Normanist, while almost all the Anti-Normanist is written in Russian³⁶. There has been an evolution in the Normanist view since the 18th century. The position used to be in Russian historiography that Scandinavia was at the origin of all the significant aspects of Kievan Rus' (social, cultural, economic, judicial, etc.). This is, in fact, quite a definitive conclusion from the Normanist side and lacks proof or documentation to prove it. Compared to this, the modern Normanist look at the foundations of Kyiv from a "broader historical perspective"³⁷.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the question about the Varangians was mainly focused on written sources (Rus' Chronicles and Sagas). Archaeological finds in the next century show new evidence and a more objective point of view³⁸.

Russian scholars would often refer to the Primary Chronicle, compiled by Nestor, a monk in the Kyiv area in the 11th century, to prove their stands on either side of the debate. However, some scholars have stated that the Chronicle is based on an even older chronicle dating back to 985 (Nachalnyi Svod, or the Initial Collection)³⁹.

The origin of the debate is the legend around the invitation of the Varangian Rurik to govern Kyiv, thus becoming the ancestor of the Dynasty of Russian princes and Tsar to the 16th century. Bayer and Müller combined the stories from the Primary Chronicles with "contemporary contexts of state formation to arrive at a simple conclusion: since Rurik was a Norseman, the Russian State was founded by Scandinavians"⁴⁰. The public presentation from Müller's thesis on the origin of Russia was the start of a 250-year-old polemic.

³⁵ Pritsak, 1977, p.253

³⁶ Riasanovsky, 1947, p.97

³⁷ Riasanovsky, 1980, p.265

³⁸ Lebedev, 2005, p.371

³⁹ Dolukhanov, 1996, p.181-182

⁴⁰ Melnikova, 2012, p.43

3. Methodology

3.1. Systematic review

The subject of Vikings in the East is mainly associated with one concept when one looks back at the previously made research: debate. As seen before, the Normanist and Anti-Normanist argumentation has been taking much of the space for almost two hundred years before the political aspect took over during the 20th century. For the sake of this research, I needed to be completely unbiased. Therefore, I conducted a systematic review of the articles, as my goal was to gather information, answers, and facts about specific research questions while remaining objective. Processing this way has allowed me to gather the information that was only relevant to my review questions and stay within the limits of my research question.

I started with building my research protocol at the very beginning of my analysis (the entire research protocol table is available in the appendices) by first listing all the questions I wanted to answer. What did I want to find? Was it all about the subjects of the Vikings in the East? Or more specific themes? Processing this way made it easier for me to delimit the inclusion and exclusion criteria, which key and search words I would use to find my sources, and how I would conduct my analysis. Both were very useful in focusing on which article would be included in the analysis, but also how I would interpret it.

3.2. Analytical process

To keep a complete overview of the articles I was analyzing, and which themes the articles were covering, I registered them into a table as I read through them. The table is available in the appendices. I decided to process this way as I could register the theme each article was covering, the grade of relevance for the research question, the type of source, the period they were covered, if they were biased (If they showed neutrality or seemed to be closer to a Normanist/Anti-Normanist theory), the geographical area they were covering (this did not apply to some of the articles, and was, therefore, left blank in some instances), the type of field they were covering (archaeology, historiography, bibliography, etymology, etc.), and finally, the keywords I would associate the texts with. I also included the original title in Russian and a translated version. Some articles had a small summary written in English where the title had already been translated. In those cases, I used those, but in some,

I translated the title myself. Sorting the articles out by themes seemed the best approach from the beginning, as it would offer various opinions on the same object rather than sort them out by field. This would be very useful when writing the findings and the discussion part, as it would give a much more transparent overview of the various questions.

When going through the articles, I always followed the list of review questions in my research protocol. Some articles may cover only one of the questions, some almost all, but that does not mean they were less relevant for the analysis. Following those questions was also a way to be completely impartial when looking at the information from the articles and within the research limits. I, therefore, did not include any information that did not fit the review questions and the research protocol, and not whether I thought that a piece of information was relevant or not.

4. Findings

4.1. Foundation of the Russian State

4.1.1. Evgenij Nosov

Evgenij Nosov was a Russian historian and archaeologist who published several articles on the Kievan Rus', the Novgorod area, and the Varangians. This article⁴¹ will focus on the roles of the Varangians in the creation of the Russian State. As an introduction, he points out the amount of research which have already been done in the past about the subject and therefore does not want to compare the Normanist and anti-Normanist one more time. What is interesting here is how E.Nosov points out how both points of view are fueled with a patriotic agenda, and none of them include each other but only work to counter the arguments from the other group. E. Nosov is not interested in finding the answer about the role of the Varangians in local and popular history but in how the thought of it has evolved. The question about the Varangian presence in Russia and if they played a role in the creation is, according to E. Nosov, questions from the past, and he intends to look at those questions with a modern eye and double-check all the facts. Ideas were controlled during the Soviet era, and checking the research written then would be useless as everything needed to fit the ideology. E. Nosov cites, for example, the archaeological excavation of the burial ground in Staraja Ladoga in 1945. The remains clearly show Scandinavian results, but no results were published.

The prohibition of science during the Soviet era severed the relationship with Scandinavia, as sharing data and findings were, unfortunately, impossible. However, there was a change in tendency during the 1960s, when more archaeological excavations were made to find a connection between Scandinavia and Russia. Several excavations are mentioned as an example: the excavation of 1964 in Toropets, the finding of a brooch of Scandinavian origin, and the new excavations of 1968 on the Scandinavian burial ground of Plakun. Several excavations also conducted in the Ladoga region have shown the finding of circular weights and other elements showing a Scandinavian presence in the region already in the 8th century. As a result of those excavations, there has been a requestion in the late 1960s for the implication of Scandinavians in the formation of the Russian State.

⁴¹ E. Nosov, 1999, p.112-117

Several new excavations have also been conducted in the Ladoga area since then, and thanks to recent archaeological findings, several new elements have come to light:

- Scandinavians appeared on Russian territory in the middle of the 8th century in the Ladoga region.
- The presence of Scandinavians from the end of the 8th century can be linked to the finding of silver treasure (Arabic dirhams) in the Ladoga region.
- Scandinavian findings dating from the 8th-9th century can be traced to the Volga-Baltic region.
- The Varangians were warriors, merchants, craftsmen, and some seemed to have been living in the Ladoga region permanently (excavations of everyday life artifacts, for example, the circular weights).
- Anthropological findings also support the latest point, for example, burial grounds
- The Russian cities were created on the bases of craft and trade.
- The Eastern route by the river was the primary location of settlement creation and cities.

Following those findings, E. Nosov concludes that Russia in the 8th to the 10th century was the site of pre-settlements bases on trade and craft but developed into cities because of its active participation in international trade. This development also led to a new layer in society: a group of warriors known as the Varangians.

4.1.2 A.Zorin & A.Shpilev

A. Zorin & A. Shpilev⁴² focus on the place of the Khazar in the 9th century and the development of the Russian state. The first part of the article will not be discussed here as it is a summary of the history of the Khazar and therefore out of this research boundary. The Khazar had, at the time, power over the Dnieper and the Volga and received increased pressure from Rus', among which could be found several people originating from several places in Scandinavia. In the 9th century, the Khazar seemed to have been a transit spot for the trade from the Arab world and the flow of dirhams making their way to the rest of Northern Europe. The authors mention raids on the Dnieper by the Vikings in the form of devastating short attacks. The starting point of those attacks was probably not Novgorod, which did not exist at the time, but Scandinavian settlements in the Ladoga region.

⁴² A. Zorin & A. Shpilev, 2009, p.478-493

Archaeological excavations in the Ladoga area show a small group of permanent residents from Scandinavia. The burial mounds in the exact location are similar to those in Jutland. The settlement of Gnezdovo, built in the 9th century, shows signs of a mixed composition of its population: Slavs, Scandinavians, Balts, and Finno-Ugrians. When it comes to trade, the main trading item in the Ladoga region was fur and slaves. There is, however, information that in the last quarter of the 9th century, the flow of dirhams in Eastern Europe and Scandinavia stopped before starting again during the 10th century. The authors do not go into the details as to why the flow stops. They do, however, mention that the Rus' state was created in the 9th century, and it was because of Varangians coming from Scandinavia to take control over the Dnieper and Volga region.

4.1.3 *S.Tomsinsky*

This archaeological article analyzes the Scandinavian findings in the Uglich Kremlin, located northeast of Moscow⁴³. Right at the beginning of the article, S.V.Tomsinsky states that the Scandinavians have actively participated in the formation of the Russian State. Their intrusion was most certainly made via the Volga, either from the Volkhov region, Kyiv, or the more central regions of the Volga-Oka. The excavations made on the site in 1992 seem to support this idea. All the artifacts were discovered in an area covering around 100 sq.m and are unique for the region. One of the findings was the bronze tip of a sword, showing the design of an animal, and on both sides is the image of a dragon with some braiding designs. This sword tip is particularly interesting because similar tips were found in other locations in central Europe. The first one was found in Hungary and is assumed to have belonged to a warrior participating in a campaign against the Balkans in 967-971. The second one is from Danilovka and belonged to a warrior taking part in the Khazar campaign of Svyatoslav in 965.

When looking more into the settlement where the artifacts were found, the archaeologists discovered a small area of habitable zones on the verge of the Volga, showing items that prove the presence of both men and women in the settlement. S.V. Tomsinsky is skeptical that the artifacts found were lost during everyday activities and suggests that they must have happened under a violent event. Evidence suggests that the

⁴³ S.V.Tomsinsky, 1999, p.169-178

settlement was devastated at the end of the 10th or the first quarter of the 11th century, as signs of fire have been excavated. Several burial grounds seem to have been destroyed, but this could have also been caused by the building of fortifications dating from the 12th century. The artifacts excavated show that the Scandinavians were also attracted to this part of the Volga during the formation of the Russian Statehood. The settlement was at the winter road's intersection, linking the Volga Oka's central regions with the Belozersky territory and further North to the Ladoga and Volkhov regions. There is, however, no information on when the settlement appeared, but certainty is that by the 10th century, it was already there. The settlement seemed to have been unfortified, but the military elements, like the bronze sword tip, show that it held an important place in the creation of the Russian state.

4.1.4 *S.Kuzmin*

Sergei Kuzmin also looks into the Scandinavian presence in a different settlement, located in Staraja Ladoga, progressing the same way as S.V.Tomsinsky by analyzing the archaeological results from the excavations. Russian archaeologists conducted several archaeological excavations in the 20th century⁴⁴. Here too, the settlement shows signs of fire dating from the end of the 10th century and the beginning of the 11th century, but this time, it is supposed to be linked to Viking raids led by Norwegian Jarl Eirik in 997 and Svein around the year 1015). Elements show the Scandinavian presence prior to those events: the location of a house which burned down around the year 830-840 shows signs of reconstruction, but this time shows Scandinavian styles.

The common idea around Staraja Ladoga is that it was a Slavic rural area that eventually evolved into a Russian city. The analysis of the topography of Ladoga shows that it is a different type of settlement compared to the trade and handcraft villages in the rest of Russia and the Baltic during the Viking Age. It is also smaller. There are signs of Scandinavian settlements in the area in the 750s. However, they should not be associated with the trade route from the Baltic to the East but instead, show a continuous colonization movement. It is possible that the Scandinavians were there even before. The evolution of artifacts excavated shows the appearance of a new group of Scandinavians around the 840s:

⁴⁴ Kuzmin, 2000, p.50-69

pieces of wood with runic inscriptions, representation of Thor's hammer, and wooden toy swords differentiate themselves from the rest of the artifacts found earlier on the location.

The archaeology findings show similarities with the information from the written sources. The capture by the Normans in 840 and the fire that destroyed the settlement in 865 fit the description found in the Primary Chronicle. The situation seems to become more stable around 920 with the development of the Russian State and the stabilization around the road famously known as the From the Varangians to the Greeks. S.L.Kuzmin mentions that the struggle for power in Scandinavia could be the reason why for the Viking raids on Staraja Ladoga at the end of the 10th century and the beginning of the 11th century. He also mentions the appointment of Jarl Ragnvald as the leader of Ladoga after the marriage between the Prince Yaroslav Vladimirovich of Kyiv and Ingirerdr of Sweden in the 11th century, showing a shift in history and the apparent importance of the Scandinavians in the Russian State.

4.1.5 *L.Voitovich*

Leonty Voitovich is a historian specializing in the Rurik Dynasty and the history of Ukraine. In his article which will be analyzed now, he looks at when the Scandinavians appeared in the Baltic and the Staraja Ladoga region⁴⁵.

One question addressed at the very beginning of the article is when the Scandinavians appeared with the Eastern Slavs. The first sign of settlements from Scandinavians in Riga seemed to have functioned during the period between 650-850 and was located near the river.

Finnish tribes also inhabited the Ladoga region, and Voitovich claims that Scandinavians arrived by the Neva River as early as the 7th century. He bases this statement on the archaeological excavations made in the region, which showed signs of long houses and traces of active Scandinavian technologies. A Blacksmith workshop dating from 750, with various tools, was also discovered.

Staraja Ladoga was an important place of trade in the 8th century, and Voitovich cites, for example, hoards of dirhams found, the oldest in Eastern Europe dating from 786.

⁴⁵ Voitovich, 2010, p.3-11

During an archaeological excavation in 2002, a ring with an Arabic inscription was found. This could mean that Arabic merchants were also present in the city. Staraja Ladoga was an important transit point in the Volga-Baltic route, where the Arabic silver passed on to Gotland and Birka, so the presence of Arabic merchants would not be abnormal. However, this ring could have also arrived with other merchants from other ethnicities.

The earliest sign of a Slavic settlement in Staraja Ladogga was on the other side of the river dating from the 3rd to 4th century AD. Unfortunately, there seems to have been a conflict between the two groups in 760, and Ladoga was burned down. Nonetheless, both sides continued to coexist.

The Slavic presence rapidly increases after this during the 9th century. From there on, Voitovich has a theory that the Russian State was formed in two stages: the first one happening in the 9th century, with Staraja Ladoga as its capital, and called the Russian Khaganate, which fell to an unknown tribal war. From there, it was replaced by a new group led by Rurik, who established his capital in Novgorod. This is the first time this theory is mentioned in any of the articles studied in this research.

4.1.6 A.A.Romensky

A. A. Romensky reviews in his article the book published in 2015 by a Ukrainian archaeologist, Oleksij Tolochko, regarding the formation of Rus'⁴⁶. The goal of this review is to follow in the steps of recent studies, which are trying to revise the claims from the Normanist and Anti-Normanist sides and focus more on the issue of the source study of the Primary Chronicle.

Tolochko's goal for his book is to show what eastern Europe history could look like if we did not only rely on written sources. For Tolochko, the Scandinavians were slave traders in Russia and became a state due to historical circumstances. According to him, only five written sources are reliable: the Byzantine treaties of 911, 944, and 971, and two treaties from Konstantin Porphyrogenitus. A.A.Romensky is quite critical of this statement, as this overview is quite limited, but it can be explained by the fact that Tolochko only focuses on the Kievan Rus.

⁴⁶A.A. Romensky, 2017, p.541-547

Tolochko assumes that the Primary Chronicle was the first attempt to write Russia's history and is convinced that in the 11th century in Kyiv, people knew little about their predecessor, and what they knew was taken from Byzantine book tradition. A.A. Romensky does come with counterarguments to this statement and points out that it is hard to believe that the Primary Chronicle was created from scratch and did not rely on previously written work. Tolochko marks the exaggerated attention of researchers about the "path from the Varangians to the Greeks". Yaroslav was the last prince to make the journey from Novgorod to Kyiv, and then the route disappeared from the Chronicles. In addition to looking at written sources, Tolochko investigates the archaeological findings of Scandinavian origins in Eastern Europe, looking into the question as to why there are so many artifacts but no Scandinavian name places in Eastern Europe. Could this be explained because the presence of the Scandinavians was mainly because of trade? As the Volga and later the Dnieper were the main trade routes, and the main occupation from the Rus' was the trade of slaves and the transport of goods, this would not seem like a theory too far from reality.

A.A. Romensky concludes the article with a neutral assessment of Tolochko's book. However, one point where he clearly shows his excitement is what the research will bring to the question of the Scandinavians in Russia.

4.1.7 O.Lugowy

Oleg Lugowy is a faculty member at Mechnikov University in Odessa and will be mentioned several times in this chapter. In this article⁴⁷, he focuses on the place of the Varangians in the creation of the Kievan Rus' and their place in the structure of the State. As previously mentioned in other articles, several times in this research, Lugowy points out in his introduction the changes in historiography which happened in the 1960s regarding the origin of the Varangians and the building of the Russian state.

Lugowy reminds us of several claims before he starts his analysis:

- The presence of the Varangians, the Kievan Rus, and the princes does not mean the appearance of a feudal state in Russia.

⁴⁷ Lugowy, 2002, p.47-446

- The ethnic group of a leader does not necessarily show the ethnic group of the rest of the state.
- The Varangians are not Scandinavians. Lugowy refers to the Scandinavian origin of the word *vár*, meaning fidelity or vow, and how it was used in Byzantine to refer to mercenaries fighting for the emperor. Moreover, the Varangians were, according to Lugowy, a mix of Scandinavians and Englishmen.
- The formation of Kyiv is not a single event but a prolonged economic and sociological development, which flourished thanks to trading from the Scandinavian merchants.
- The importance of the Scandinavian presence in the Ladoga region from the 8th century, as I have already discussed in the article written by Sergej Kuzmin (Kuzmin, 2000).
- The archaeological findings of Scandinavian origin do not necessarily mean Varangian.

According to Lugowy, the disappearance of Scandinavians in Eastern Europe during the 11th century is not surprising. They were not living in compact groups but somewhat scattered along the rivers. The Varangians were not an active part of the population but rather a marginal part of it. The burial grounds excavated in the Kievan Rus' include women, as mentioned before in previous articles, showing that there were not only merchants and warriors in Eastern Europe. However, little data is available when looking at the Scandinavian presence in Kyiv.

When looking at the necropolis, no signs of Scandinavians before the 10th century have been found, but there is a theory that tombs, or other artifacts are yet to be excavated. Lugowy has, in addition to this, the idea that the Varangian guard supported the Kievan Prince and helped them develop. This would suggest that the Scandinavians arrived in the Kievan State solely for trade but eventually evolved into part of the Kievan State. This led to the development of the Varangian guard, a group of mercenaries who were not exclusively Scandinavians but were hired by the Byzantine empire and the Kievan Rus'.

4.2 City Formation

4.2.1 *N. Platonova*

Nadezhda Platonova from the Russian academy of science is a Russian archaeologist who has published several archaeological research on the territory of Eastern Europe. In the following article⁴⁸, she investigates the process of urbanization in the Kievan Rus' area. When looking at urbanization in ancient Russian cities, it is a global phenomenon with no regional specifics.

Can urbanization be linked to foreign trade? This theory is the first to be presented by N. Platonova. According to the author, the Kievan Rus was a union of city-states and had nothing to do with feudalism. This theory is also based on written sources from the 9th and 10th centuries about Russian merchants sailing down the Volga, Dniepr, to trade in Byzantium and Baghdad. Another element, this time political, could be at the origin of the creation of the Kievan Rus': the weakening of the Khazar and the appearance of the predatory hordes of Pechenegs (a semi-nomadic tribe from Central Asia) forced the Russians to create an elite army group to defend themselves, the Varangians.

The trade theory took a leading position in Russian historiography in the 1990s and recognized that trade was the main reason behind the urbanization of Russia. The primary income of the Rus' during the 9th and the 10th century was, as we have seen in previous articles, the trade of slaves and fur.

N. Platonova moves on in her analysis to different Kievan Rus settlements. She mentions, for example, Ladoga's settlement, but she claims that there was no Scandinavian present, only Slavs. When looking at the settlement of Novgorod, the place evolved during the 9th century with the building of fortifications. However, the question remains whether this happened under the influence of Rurik or if it was an evolution from a settlement already there. The settlement is often compared to the ones in Ladoga, Gnezdov and the one referred to as Rurik's settlement. However, N. Platonova suggests that looking more into the historical context should help in the process of industrialization. In her opinion, the settlements were there long before the Scandinavians were present on the Kievan territory, and the urbanization process was interrupted by the Vikings.

⁴⁸ N. Platonova, 1999, p.164-168

She goes on further in her analysis to explain that the Normanist idea of the Scandinavian presence in Ladoga is an attempt, just like the Anti-Normanists, to search for national identity.

4.2.2 A.Musin & O.Tarabardina

Aleksandr Musin & Olga Tarabardina focus on the Novgorod settlement and who were the first settlers. They have a different view than N. Platonova and suggest that the Scandinavians were among the founders of Novgorod⁴⁹.

According to archaeological findings, Scandinavians were present in Novgorod during 930-950. The spread of artifacts shows that the Scandinavian settlement was spread across the whole town of Novgorod and was not limited to one area. This would indicate that the Scandinavians were quite implemented in society and enjoyed a higher position.

A.E.Musin and O.A. Tarabardina make the difference between Scandinavians and Rus' (which they associate with the Rurikid) and suggest that the decline of Scandinavian presence was caused by the termination of the Varangian tribute caused by the death of Yaroslav the Wise. This would mean that they consider the Varangians to be Scandinavians.

Another area where they seem to disagree⁵⁰ with the article from N. Platonova⁵⁰, is their understanding of how Russian historiography has been trying to undermine the Scandinavian presence during the origin of Novgorod after the influence of the censorship from the Stalin Era. They review the previous historiography made about the subject to come to such conclusions. The question of the founding of Novgorod is often linked to the ethnicity of the founders. When looking at the Primary Chronicle from the 12th, there seem to be contradicting views, as it is stated that the city was founded twice, first by the Slavs and then by Rurik (824-879); however, the Varangians arrived later.

A.E. Musin and O.A.Tarabardina look into archaeological excavations to prove the early presence of the Scandinavians in Novgorod and list all the elements which would prove their theory right:

- Combs associated with Scandinavian ornamental tradition and craft
- Wooden idols

⁴⁹ A.E.Musin & O.A.Tarabardina, 2019, p.762-785

⁵⁰ N.Platonova, 2019, p.109-125

- Bone piercer shows the same style as Ringerike from the first half of the 11th century.
- Pendant with what looks like Thor's hammer
- Statue of Frey
- Circular weights
- Bronze pendant in the form of a fishtail showing the same characteristics of the culture in Gotland at the end of the 10th century.

What is interesting here is that those artifacts are not limited to one period but are spread across a longer period:

- The period of 930-950: Fragments of circular weights
- The period 980-1000: Scabbard of a sword
- The period from the end of 11th – beginning of 12th: walrus bone with runes

When reviewing the artifacts previously found with the ones excavated in new digs located in a new area in the city, A.E.Musin & O.A.Tarabardina came up with the statement that the amount was so high that it almost doubled the total amount of Scandinavian artifacts found in the Novgorod area. The findings in the South and North show a link to the main streets of Novgorod. The excavations have revealed, in addition to that, several waves of immigration.

The findings show that Scandinavians were part of the first members of Novgorod. Religious items dating from 930 could not have arrived there by trade and show that they followed immigrants, while the rest of the artifacts show similarities with artifacts found in Sweden. There is, however, a decrease happening in the middle of the 11th century, showing a change in ethnic composition and an increase in Christianization.

The excavations in Novgorod show similar findings to the ones in the Baltic, and very few items excavated date from the 11th to 12th century. However, artifacts found during an excavation conducted in 2016 can be dated from the second quarter of the 11th century, with a piece found showing what seems to be a cheekpiece from a helmet, with the representation of a man with a beard and mustache, showing Scandinavian characteristics. The authors have the theory that this belonged to a Varangian warrior. The newly arrived Scandinavians would either join the Varangian army while the rest would settle in the city as free citizens, merchants, and artisans settling under the prince's protection.

The previous excavations made in the Novgorod region during the Soviet era showed many Scandinavian artifacts were found but were not analyzed by the archaeologists as they did not want to recognize the importance of Scandinavian artifacts.

4.3 Varangians

4.3.1 V.Petrukhin

Vladimir Petrukhin is in this article looking into the calling of the Varangian Prince to the Kievan State⁵¹. He looks into the Primary Chronicles to find information about the calling of the Varangians. When analyzing the previous claims in Russian historiography (especially looking into the theories of V.O. Klyuchevsky), the Varangians are described as mercenaries who were hired but ended up behaving like conquerors. The small Varangian settlements cannot be compared to real cities, which were at the origin of the founding of the future Russian State.

When looking at the aspect of trade, Petrukhin believes that Rus' are Russian merchants trading with the Khazar and the Arab world. He cites, for example, the coins found in the Kievan Rus' territory mainly dating from the 9th and 10th centuries, while some can be traced back to the 7th century.

Petrukhin is quite critical of Klyuchevsky's theories and comes with, instead, the theory that Rus' were merchants at the center of an international trading system from the East to the Baltic. Thanks to the numismatic analysis, most of the early hoards of dirhams were found on the territory of the Khazar. Furthermore, the discovery of Viking artifacts in Gorodishche, the most ancient area of Novgorod, shows that Scandinavians influenced the Russian State formation, which was downsized during the Soviet era. Again, this is not the first time this statement has been suggested in this research.

⁵¹ Petrukhin, 2018, p. 131-142

4.3.2 *O.Lugowy*

Two more articles from Oleg Lugowy will be presented in this sub-chapter: the first focuses on the Varangians as part of the Byzantine army⁵². The term Varangian appeared in Byzantine sources during the 11th century. The Varangians at the service of the Byzantine army were exclusively foot soldiers, and axes were an iconic weapon used in the guard. Here Lugowy refers to the Greeks calling the Varangians *pelekiphors*, meaning ax-bearers. This is another indication that the Varangians were also Vikings, or at least descendants of Vikings, as they were known to use three different types of axes. Lugowy explains that the Varangians were provided with weapons upon their arrival in the guard, for example, shields, helmets, and spears showing a Byzantine origin. Therefore, the Varangians' origin cannot be established by analyzing their weapons, as the conclusion would be of Byzantine origin.

In his second article, Lugowy analyses the Scandinavians and the Rus' at the service of the Varangians, but this time by focusing on the names in the records from the 10th to the 12th century. Rus' and Varangian concepts have always been problematic in Russian historiography. However, Lugowy believes this problem can be solved by looking into the names the Byzantines gave their neighbors in the 10th to 12th centuries⁵³.

According to Byzantine sources, the Rus are people living in Eastern Europe during the 10th century, trading furs with Byzantium and supplying from time-to-time military mercenaries to Byzantium.

On the other hand, the Italian authors from the 9th and 10th centuries called all the northern neighbors of Byzantium Normans. This could have led to misunderstandings and errors in translation.

When referring to the Varangians, the Byzantine sources mention them either as allied troops or as members of the imperial guard.

According to Arab geographers, the *Varangi* lived beyond the seventh climate, the place habited by the Rus, Slavs, Bulgars, Pecheneg, and Others. However, this is what they called the Franks, so there is uncertainty here about the real meaning. Once again, here, we must consider that it could have been an error in translation or a misunderstanding. Lugowy

⁵² Lugowy, 2009, p.472-477

⁵³ Lugowy, 2004, p. 388-394

also compares how the Varangians are described in Sagas as Scandinavians (Norwegians and Icelanders) serving in Miklagard. The word *Væring* was known in Scandinavia in the 11th century but was not used to refer to members of Scandinavian society. It could therefore be a possibility that Varangians were an exception in Scandinavian societies.

The term Varangians associated with the Scandinavians disappeared from the records at the end of the 11th century when they were replaced by Varangians coming from England.

4.3.3 G.M.Velyaminov

G. M. Velyaminov does not focus on the Varangians in general in his article⁵⁴ but is trying to identify a Varangian in particular, Prince Yakun. The previous hypothesis is that Yakun is the Norwegian Jarl Håkon Eriksson, the nephew of the Danish King Knut the Great. The Russian annals from 1024 report that the Prince of Kyiv, Yaroslav the Great, called for help from Scandinavia, a Varangian prince, and his army against his brother, Mstislav. This is interesting because it indicates the relationship between Scandinavia and Russia (a Prince came to the rescue, meaning that the relationship must imply very tight bonds between them). This cry for help could have impacted the formation of states and the development of cross-country relationships.

There are, however, several problems with this theory. Yakun is often referred to as blind in the Primary Chronicle. This could be a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of a typographical error in the original text. It would also be a serious problem (and would seem quite mysterious) to invite a blind Viking warrior to participate in a military operation. There is no mention of a blind Prince in any Scandinavian text and having a blind Prince would have been mentioned somewhere.

What is important to note is that in the Tale of Bygone Years, Yakun is given the title of Prince, meaning some equivalence to Yaroslav. The other interesting element that would suggest Yakun is Håkon is that it is mentioned in the Tale of Bygone Years that Yakun died after returning over the sea, and the same fate happened to Håkon, who died in 1029.

⁵⁴ Velyaminov, 2009, p.26-41

The second part of the article focuses mainly on the royal families in Scandinavia. However, it does mention some interesting elements: there is no proof that the Varangians active in Russia were only Swedes. On the contrary, they were recruited all over the Baltic region and Scandinavia.

The rest of the article will not be discussed as Velyaminov is trying to identify Yakun by analyzing his possible descendants, which would not bring anything to our research. However, he concludes his article with the statement that Yakun is most certainly Håkon.

The two following articles are presented as a transition to the next subchapter. At the same time, it covers the question of the origins of the Varangians but also links it to the Baltic Area. The most interesting part of this analysis, I believe, is that the first article, written by Aleksey Romanchuk, may be one of the articles presented in this research with the strongest opinion. Despite showing signs of belonging to the Anti-Normanist group when in the introduction, Romanchuk claims to have remained neutral in his analysis. What adds to the discussion is that the second article, written by Leo Klejn, is a strong critic of Romanchuk's article, where Klejn goes through every theory of Romanchuk's to try to prove them wrong. In order to not have the same arguments coming up twice, I chose only to write a short summary of the article of Romanchuk, but have a more detailed analysis of Klejn's article⁵⁵, as he nevertheless repeats each of the statements from Romanchuk in order to counter them. It is also important to note that Klejn was one of the supporters of the Normanist debate during the Soviet era.

4.3.4 A.A. Romanchuk

The goal of Romanchuk in his article is to analyze the Rus' and Varangian question and its impact on Russian history⁵⁶.

According to Romanchuk, the Baltic relationship with the Scandinavians played an important part in the creation of Russia, and he uses archaeological evidence to back up his theory. He focuses mainly on ceramics and claims that even anti-Normanist researchers can

⁵⁵ Klejn, 2014, p.335-343

⁵⁶ Romanchuk, 2013, p.283-299

agree on the importance of the presence of Scandinavian ceramics from Sigtuna and Birka. However, it is important to note that most Birka potteries were not produced in Birka.

The Prussians were very active in the propagation of the Varangians to the East, and there is a suggestion that the Rus and Varangians have a South Baltic origin. The amount of Scandinavian pottery found in the Baltic is minimal compared to the ones of South Baltic origin. The presence of metal items from Scandinavia does not prove the presence of Scandinavians. There is a possibility that these items arrived because of trade or because of the circulation of foreign populations,

The Baltic Sea has shown significant Scandinavian influence since the 8th century, and Romanchuk compares the similarities of women's jewelry from the Baltic and Scandinavian origin to show this influence flow.

There is no Scandinavian presence in the Ladoga ceramics, but the presence of long houses, characteristic of Scandinavians, could very much also be German.

Throughout the article, Romanchuk rejects the Scandinavian presence, even though he claims to be completely neutral.

4.3.5 *L.Klejn*

Leo Klejn comes, however, with counterarguments to all Romanchuk's statements and hypotheses⁵⁷ (Klejn, 2014). He discusses in his article the Lekhite Vikings. (Old Russian Name for Polish and representing the group of languages from the Western Slavic tribes). He is basing his analysis on three facts:

- The traces of Lekhite in the language spoken by the inhabitants of Novgorod.
- The findings of ceramics in North-Western Rus territory
- The analysis of the word "Rus".

Klejn objects to the claim that the traces of the Lekhite language could show a south Baltic influence, saying that the language borrowing cannot prove anything, as other languages also show signs of borrowed words.

Ceramics were not made by locals but were produced by the arrival of craftsmen.

Furthermore, finally, studying the etymology of the name Rus' will not prove anything.

The goal of Klejn in his article is to see which arguments can be valid. He is critical of Romanchuk, who claims that archaeological findings can give a new point of view on the

⁵⁷ Klejn, 2014, p.335-343

arguments. According to Klejn, Romanchuk is an Anti-Normanist, and he goes over several of his arguments:

- West Slavic origin of the Varangians
- Ceramics found in North-Western Russia are of South Baltic origin (Klejn adds that West Slavic is Lekhite, but also Germanic).
- Focus on the language; however, Klejn is particularly critical of this as Romanchuk is not a linguist and therefore is not in the position to make any claims regarding languages.
 - o Romanchuk gives an ethnic definition of the artifacts in North-West Russia: few are from Scandinavia, more poor people than rich, and more artifacts belonged to females than males. The artifacts spread to Russia via the South-West Baltic
 - o Scandinavian sagas do not mention a Rurik, there is also no affiliation in the names Rurik or Oleg in Scandinavia, and they should therefore be of Germanic or Slavic origin.
 - o The Scandinavian root of the name “Varangian” is incorrect and could suggest a Germanic name; instead, it was brought by Western Slavs.
 - o When it comes to the Name Russia, it cannot have a Scandinavian origin but most certainly comes from central Europe or southern Russia as the sound of “r”, vowel, and dental consonant is not a characteristic of Scandinavia.

Klejn goes over those claims and tries to counter them. He does not want to participate in whether there is a Normanist or Anti-Normanist debate but wants instead to focus on the facts. (He also points out that Anti-Normanist only exists in Russia and are supported by the Russian government). Klejn is critical of the Anti-Normanists showing that it comes from a complex of humiliation.

However, even if Klejn rejects the ideas from Romanchuk, he does give him credit for presenting his arguments so methodically and not having any populist claims. Unfortunately, however, several inaccuracies are leading him the wrong way. Romanchuk looks at Scandinavia purely geographically (the Baltic Sea to the North Sea), but it is much more than that.

Of the burial mounds found in Russia, a total of 99 is claimed to be Scandinavian, which is, according to Romanchuk, a small number. These 99 burial mounds are only dating from the period of the Varangians. 10% of the burial mounds in Gnezdovo and the Volga

region are Scandinavian. In only the Volga region, the amount is 14%. D.A. Avdusin, an anti-Normanist archaeologist, claims that the number of burial mounds with Scandinavian brooches in them is the same amount as in Birka. This is only in areas around cities; no mounds were found in the rural areas.

About the statements regarding the ceramics: tools are absent in burial mounds because they were warriors, not peasants. The absence of pottery is because the warriors came with their wives who did not make their own pottery and would instead use the local ones.

The amount of Viking swords in Russia differs from Sweden and Norway but is close to that of Denmark. There is a claim that Rurik could come from Denmark and not Sweden. Romanchuk tries here, yet again, to find a link to the Western Slavs.

Relying only on ceramics to have an ethnic indicator does not prove anything; it does not show the mass movement of the population, but it can only show the arrival of craftsmen.

Relying on the language is not proof either. For example, there is no mention of Rurik in Sweden and Denmark, but he is mentioned in the South Baltic sources.

The Name Rurik is scarce in Denmark but close to Rorik, which can be found in Jutland. Oleg is Helgi and Olga is Helga, showing even more of the Danish side.

When looking closely at Varangian, the term means mercenaries brought by an oath of allegiance, but it did not appear in Scandinavian sources until the 11th century. Therefore, several hypotheses think that the Name appeared in Russia, where the Varangians arrived to help Byzantium. Romanchuk, however, believes that the word has German roots, which were brought by Western Slavs. To this, Klejn asks the simple question: why? Why would they call themselves by a German name?

The same questions apply to the word Rus, the Estonians still call Sweden “Rootsi”, so it is, in fact, difficult to link it to a German origin.

Klejn concludes his article with a summary of all the criticisms he has made towards Romanchuk’s article and with the statement that it was, in fact, easy to come up with counterarguments to all his theories.

4.4 Viking presence in the Baltic and Belarus

Three articles will be presented on this topic. All of them are archaeological reports on the findings made on the Baltic territory.

4.4.1 *V.Kulakov*

Vladimir Kulakov is a member of the Institute of Archaeology at the Russian Institute of Science and specialized in the Baltic region during the Iron Age and Middle Ages. In the first article presented⁵⁸, Kulakov focuses on the relationship between the Baltic and the Viking World and tries to identify through the analysis of archaeological findings the nature of this relationship. When looking at the Viking presence, Kulakov suggests that the trade route via the Dniepr, Volga, and Don rivers had been known since the Bronze Age. He refers to some findings on the Caspian Sea in the Tokmak Peninsula, located in Kazakhstan today. He claims that stone docks dating from the Bronze Age show the same characteristics as the ones found in Scandinavia⁵⁹. Since there is so little data available about it, it is not easy to know if it could be a possibility or not. This could also suggest that the Vikings had much more contacts, and much earlier, with their neighbors that first thought.

Kulakov suggests that there is a possibility that the Vikings were interested in the Baltic because of the trade of amber. The archaeological data shows that the relationship between the two was primarily stable, apart from a conflict that seems to have happened at the end of the 9th century, with the excavation of a chest buckle showing parts of Odin's head. By the beginning of the 10th century, archaeological data shows regular contact between the Vikings and the Baltic coast. Kulakov mentions several locations: Kaup, Daugmale, Saaremaa, Novgorod, and Ladoga. The main interest seems to have been trading and military movements, but it was a relatively peaceful relationship as opposed to the Vikings raiding the West at the same period. Here there are no signs of raids or attacks, and Kulakov suggests that the Viking warriors were the guardians of the stability of the trading routes in the East. This relationship with the Baltic lasted beyond the Viking Age.

Kulakov⁶⁰ focuses in another one of his articles on the excavations of trefoil fibula (clove-shaped brooch) in the Baltic, most precisely in the region of Kaliningrad. Rare in

⁵⁸ Kulakov, 1999, p. 148-152

⁵⁹ I have tried to find out more about this location, but I was unsuccessful to it. From what I have understood the location is in Kazakhstan, where the Amur Darya River used to connect in the past with the Caspian Sea. Very little excavations have been made in the area, but the results available show that the location was used for trade.

⁶⁰ Kulakov, 2009, p.243-248

the region, they can, however, be found in Scandinavia during the period from the late 9th century to the early 10th century.

Only 8 of those trefoil fibulas were reported found in Russia by 1967. However, as we have seen in the previous articles, several excavations conducted during the Soviet period do not reflect the actual number of items found. By the year 2000, this number had increased to 15. The Baltic expedition of the Institute of Archaeology of the Russian Academy of Sciences resumed the excavations started in 1979 at a Viking site located in the forest of Kaup in the Kaliningrad region where the fibulas were found. Kulakov does not go into very much detail about the excavation. Only a few pieces of information are relevant to us. I chose not to translate all the archaeological data from the article, I would not know how to interpret them, and I, therefore, chose only to write here the descriptive elements of the fibulas and how they arrived in the region. The first fibula analyzed has been determined to be from a Gotlandic origin and shows signs of fire from a funeral stage. There is no information on the purpose of these fibulas, if they were purely used as decoration or if they served other purposes. One of the fibulas excavated differs from the others as it has a round shape, and Kulakov suggests that they look more like a mini shield. It also shows signs of having been pierced by a knife, possibly during a funeral ritual (Kulakov mentions Ibn Fadlan in the description of funeral rites). Very little information is known about those fibulas, their purposes, and who used them. However, Kulakov suggests that they belonged to most probably warriors because of the nature of where they were found and the design.

4.4.2 *M.Plavinski*

I will now be continuing the military aspect, but this time on the territory of Belarus. Mikalai Plavinski is an archaeologist who specialized in weapons on the territory of Belarus during the Middle Ages and focuses in the following article⁶¹ on the excavations of Viking swords in Belarus. This area has not been the subject of much research, and Plavinski focuses on the shapes and the locations where the swords were found. Eight swords and fragments of swords have been found on the territory of Belarus. The oldest one dated between 890 and 892 and was found in Brilevkoye. All the swords belong to the same type, which can be found in Eastern Europe simultaneously; therefore, they do not show any

⁶¹ Plavinski, 2009, p.58-70

particularities or elements differentiating them because of their location. All the excavations were made along the main-river routes. Four scabbards were found in addition to the swords on the same territory, one of them representing Odin with either ravens or dragons and is believed to have been made in the South Baltic area during the end of the 10th century. Another scabbard shows a three-leaved palmette with a highly stylized animal figure which is believed to belong to a warrior member of the Varangian group.

A second scabbard associated with the Varangians, showing the design of a bird this time, was found around the same area. It is believed to have been made in either Birka or Gotland during the second half of the 10th century or the beginning of the 11th century. It is also important to mention the excavation of a bronze figurine on a burial ground in Ludchitsy (Bykhovsky district). The figurine, dated no later than the middle of the 11th century, represents a bearded man with a sword hanging from his belt, which could also be associated with the representation of a Varangian warrior.

Out of the information from these three articles, it appears the relationship between the Vikings and the Baltic was already very active from the 9th century. The information from Plavinski's article showing that the sword excavations were made along the main-river routes supports the theory from Kulakov⁶² that the Vikings were protecting the trading routes. However, there is uncertainty about the destination of those trading routes and who was using them. Were the Vikings only protecting the routes, or were they also participating in them?

4.5 Rus & Byzantine contacts

4.5.1 F. Androshchuk

Fedir Androshchuk is an archaeologist who has published numerous articles and books about the subject of the Scandinavian contacts with Byzantium. Most of his work has been published in English, and the article, which will be presented, is one of the few written in Russian. Androshchuk focuses on this article⁶³ on the Rus' and Byzantine contacts with Scandinavia during the 11th to the 14th century. Only part of the article will be discussed here as parts of it are regarding a time frame outside the inclusion criteria. The article is

⁶² Kulakov, 1999, p. 148-152

⁶³ Androshchuk, 2014, p. 199-212

based on the archaeological elements found in Northern Europe and Northern Russia. Androshchuk refers to written and archaeological sources to prove the presence and the trading activity from Novgorod to the Baltic and with Gotland. Androshchuk focuses on Sigtuna to try to find answers as to the nature of the relationship. Russian artifacts are already present from 985, while Byzantine ones are dated from 1000. This raises the question of how they can appear almost simultaneously in Sigtuna. Several hypotheses are suggested:

- Novgorod could have played an intermediary role in the trading of artifacts. The most known item imported was gold glass beads, with an increased amount from 1050 to 1125. There are also traces of black silk and ivory combs discovered in Sigtuna.

- Written sources show that Scandinavians visited Byzantium in the 11th and 12th centuries as mercenaries and pilgrims. Could the artifacts found in Sigtuna have spread because Pilgrims traveled to Byzantium? Since this is part of the 12th century and, therefore, outside of my inclusion criteria, I did not look further into it. However, it could indeed suggest a continuous tradition of contact between Scandinavian and Byzantium.

Out of the elements and facts presented in this article, it would suggest that Novgorod had an intermediary role in spreading Byzantine items in Scandinavia. Moreover, the fact that the artifacts arrived within 15 years leaves little space for coincidence and would suggest that they arrived by the same route. It is, however, still being determined if we are talking about Scandinavian merchants traveling to Novgorod and back, are the other way around.

4.5.2 *E. Melnikova*

Elena Melnikova is a professor of History at the Russian Academy of Science and has published several articles in English and Russian about the relationship between Russia and Scandinavia during Medieval times. In this article⁶⁴, she looks at the Scandinavian merchants and their relationship with the Kievan Rus' on their way to Byzantium.

Scandinavians traveling to Byzantium are often associated as either mercenaries or traders in Russian and foreign literature. Melnikova mentions several times the Sagas in her article and points out how certain aspects of Scandinavian everyday life are not present,

⁶⁴ Melnikova, 2020, p.87-103

for example, trade. There is no mention of traders at any point in the sagas, only mercenaries. When looking into physical elements found in Scandinavia and showing the relationship with the Byzantine Empire, two different types of items can be noted, coins and silk. Byzantine coins arrived in Scandinavia early at the beginning of the 10th century and were usually found with Arabic coins. Compared to the 90 000 Arabic coins found in mainland Sweden, very few are from Byzantine. Melnikova suggests that instead of showing that this shows the relationship with Byzantium was poor or scarce, it could mean that the Byzantine coins were very valued and prestigious.

Silk has been found in about 70 burial sites in Birka, both men and women. As silk was a trade item that Byzantium very regulated, and since there are no traces of a direct transaction between Sweden and Byzantium, we can therefore think that the pieces found in Birka came by transit. This would also support the same hypothesis suggested by Androshchuk. We have already established that the written sources only mention Scandinavian mercenaries in Byzantium and nothing about any trade routes. However, several sources mention trading relations between the Rus' and Byzantium, already from 930. In the Arab world, it was common knowledge that the Rus' were traveling to Byzantium because of trade. Melnikova analyses in her article several written sources from the Arab World, the Byzantine Empire, and Scandinavia and shows that for most of the 9th century, trading from Scandinavia to Byzantine was far from being a regular event and only happened sporadically.

There is also the probability that it included different trading routes, for example, the Dnieper one (as mentioned by Ibn Khordadbeh). For the following 50 years, no Scandinavian presence was noted in Byzantium. Scandinavian merchants had already settled in Eastern Europe and became well known in Byzantium from 911, the date of the first Byzantine treaty. The treaty of 944 cites 26 merchants as a witness; two were of Slavic origin, one was possibly Finnish, and the rest was Scandinavian. This does not mean that they were newly arrived Scandinavians but could possibly mean that they were already living on the Rus' territory and familiar with long-distance trading. Melnikova concludes that the Scandinavian merchants already settled in Kyiv were partially assimilated into the Slav Society through the Byzantine treaties. There is uncertainty, however, if they were invited by Kyiv and were staying there as guests or if they were a part of the Kievan Rus'.

4.6 Byzantine treaties

4.6.1 N. Platonova

N. Platonova, in this article⁶⁵, focuses on the Treaty of 944 between Rus' and Byzantium. The first noticeable difference from what Melnikova mentioned in the previous article is that the Treaty shows an impressive list of Varangian ambassadors together with the name of allies or trustees from Kyiv. However, there is no mention of whether those Varangians were mercenaries or merchants. The other difference is the number of witnesses mentioned. N. Platonova cites 24 princes reported in the Treaty, while Melnikova names 26. Sixteen are reported to be from Scandinavia, while 6 have unclear origins, but 3 of those have a name with a Slavic origin: Svyatoslav, Volodislav, and Predslava. N. Platonova assumes that a prince in this Treaty was either Scandinavian or was a mix between Scandinavian and Slavic. Since the Russian and Byzantine treaties from the 10th centuries are the oldest written sources showing the reality of the Kievan Rus', the mention of Varangians as allies of Kyiv may have been the starting point of the association of the Varangians with the Kievan Rus'. N. Platonova goes very lightly into the Treaty of 971 but the most noticeable difference happening in the period between the treaties in 944 and 971 is the evolution of the Nobility in Russia. The analysis of written sources shows that a whole layer of Russian nobility disappeared from the treaties, but also shows signs that it was blended into the Kievan society.

4.6.2 O. Gubarev

Oleg Gubarev has published several articles in the past about the Kievan Rus' and its relationship with its neighbors. He also looks in his article⁶⁶ at the Byzantine treaties from the 10th century. However, he focuses on the language used and the content rather than looking at the names mentioned as N. Platonova did. His most noticeable discovery is that the oath sworn at the end of the treaties is sworn on pagan deities. No known information is mentioned anywhere else that Russians would do this tradition-wise. However, it was, in fact, widespread in Scandinavia to swear on one or several deities (Thor being named as being one of the most important ones). This is no information as to why

⁶⁵ N. Platonova, 1999, p.164-168

⁶⁶ O. Gubarev, 2013, p.239-245

the Russians would do so. However, it could be the result of influence from the North. It could also mean that Scandinavians blended more into Russian society, just like N. Platonova suggested in the previous article. Another element showing a solid Scandinavian influence is the similarities between the oaths from the treaties and Scandinavian sagas regarding punishment and death (death from one's own weapon is cited as punishment).

Comparing information and facts with Scandinavian sagas always poses the question of what is real and what is fiction. There is no doubt after the two articles mentioned that Varangians/Scandinavians had an important place in Kievan society. However, as always, it comes down to a question of interpretation when it comes to written sources. Melnikova mentions traders; while N. Platonova calls them Princes, yet they are both called Varangians and Scandinavians. The treaties clearly show signs of Scandinavian influence, but there is still doubt about the place of Scandinavian in Kievan society.

4.7 Normanist and Anti-Normanist review

4.7.1 S.Pashkov

Sergey Pashkov, a researcher at the Lipetsk State University in Russia, looks into the Russian and Varangian question and reviews previous work from M.Pogodin and M. Maksimovich dating back to the 19th century⁶⁷. The Normanist theory dominated the scene of Russian historiography for the first part of the 19th century. The primary representative of this movement was Pogodin, but he came to a change of heart and eventually supported the anti-Normanist theory and ended up contradicting his own theory. S. Pashkov is looking, in this article, at what led to this change. Maksimovich was a historian supporter of the anti-Normanist movement contemporary of Pogodin. Pogodin wrote a review of Maksimovich's work and offered him a chance to argue his opinions to give the public both sides of the debate. S. Pashkov gives merit to Pogodin's realizing the importance of having two opposing sides of the debate to create attraction to the subject and for the benefit of science. The claims from Maksimovich were about the Rus': Who gave its name to the Rus', and where did they get their language? Who united them with Russia? He bases his theory on the early history of Russia based on the Primary Chronicle but does not give a direct answer as to the origin of Russia. Pogodin could not come up with a counterargument and

⁶⁷ S: Pashkov, 2014, p.158-162

conclude that finding the origin of the name Russia is insignificant. S. Pashkov details which arguments the two parts presents about the origin of Russia (I wish to leave them out as they are mostly all already listed in the previous chapter about the Normanist and Anti-Normanist point of view).

By going back and forth with their arguments, Pogodin and Maksimovich eventually agree that the Varangians and Scandinavians are the same. Because of this agreement, Maksimovich then argues back to Pogodin that since they agree on this point, they share the same view on the question. Maksimovich challenged Pogodin on several of his statements, and he could not come up with an answer. Conversely, Pogodin agrees that the Rus have a Slavic origin and the Varangians are Scandinavians. However, there is no slight change of position, apart from Maksimovich challenging Pogodin on his statements and using it to prove the weakness of the Normanist theory.

I chose to make this article part of the analysis not so much because of the information it brings to the question but because it shows a change in modern Russian historiography to question what the previous research has been about the subject. This shows a much more neutral approach to the debate around the Rus', Varangian, and Russian State.

4.7.2 *S.Sokolov*

Sergej Sokolov is a Russian historian and member of the Ural Federal University in Ekaterinburg and has published several articles and books about Russian historiography during the 18th and 19th centuries. In the following article, Sokolov refers to several questions, or problems, within Russian historiography⁶⁸:

- The origin of the name Rus'
- The ratio of Rus' compared to the Varangians.
- The role of the Varangians in the formation of the Russian State.

The Rus is used on several occasions to be the origin of the ethnic group of the Varangians, which also brought Rurik. Several theories were made in the 18th century about the origins of the Varangians, but the most used is the one from Lomonosov, claiming that they came from the Black Sea and are, in fact, Slavs. They were called by the people of Novgorod to

⁶⁸ Sokolov, 2012, p.32-35

reign over them in 862. In today's point of view, this would be qualified as very anti-Normanist inclined and strongly biased.

Sokolov published a book in 2015 about the same subject, looking into the origins of Russia and the Normanist/ Anti-Normanist debate in Russian Historiography from the 18th and 19th centuries. Vladimir Petrukhin, one of the most known Russian historians regarding the question of the Varangians, Rus' and Khazar, wrote in the next article a review of the book from Sokolov⁶⁹. Petrukhin goes methodically throughout his article, analyzing Sokolov's book chapter by chapter. The first point is about the name of the Rus'. There is a mention of the possible Finnish origin of the name, with Ruotsi, which has been previously presented in this research as one of the claims made by the Normanists. Petrukhin becomes quickly critical of Sokolov's ideas, claiming that the book does not talk about how the origin of Russia is based on the Primary Chronicle, often considered Folklore. He also points out that Sokolov is, in fact, not critical in his statements throughout his book but mostly brings back the same arguments to historiographical stereotypes and does not bring anything new to the theme.

The last two articles may not seem to bring any information to my research question. However, I wanted to include them to show that there were still tendencies in the Russian research environment of continuity in the movements of Normanist/anti-Normanist, without particular proof to the claims.

⁶⁹ Petrukhin, 2015, p.716-719

5 Analysis

5.1 The Russian State

5.1.1 Staraja Ladoga

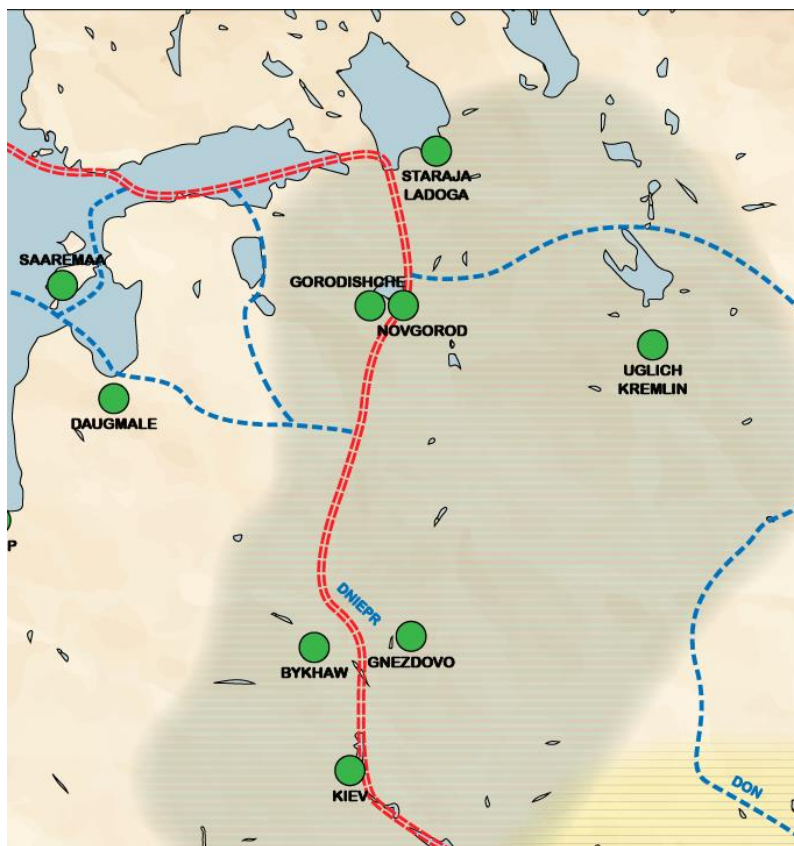


Figure 3. Locations of the settlements. The dark green area shows the Kievan Rus

It is believed that the settlement of Staraja Ladoga appeared around 750 and is considered the earliest Russian trading post. Evidence of the presence of Scandinavians and Balts can be seen on the different layers of the settlement, where several artifacts not only from Scandinavia but also from the Mediterranean and West European were also found, showing that the settlement was a place of transit for trade. Arabic dirhams have also been

found on the site of the settlement, suggesting that this was a transit point for the trade of silver to Scandinavia⁷⁰. The settlement seemed to have gathered traders and craftspeople and was considered one of the most important places for craft. There are, however, uncertainties as to whether they were permanent residents of the settlement, or only there for a definite period of time⁷¹.

According to E. Nosov however, the archaeological excavations and the discovery of objects from everyday life, shows that some parts of the population were living permanently⁷², an idea which is also supported in other article based on the archaeological

⁷⁰ Hedenstierna-Jonson, 2009, p.160

⁷¹ Ljunktist, 2008, p.187

⁷² E. Nosov, 1999, p.117

finds from burial grounds⁷³. Despite its seemingly important trading position, Staraja Ladoga had no fortifications until 900⁷⁴. Archaeological excavations do show however, the presence of warriors in the settlement⁷⁵.

Several sources in western research reveal that the settlement was attacked during the 9th century⁷⁶, yet there is no mention of Staraja Ladoga being burned down in 760, as Voitovich suggested⁷⁷. However, there have been reports of a fire occurring in 860 that destroyed the settlement entirely, but the fire's origin is unknown⁷⁸.

S.L. Kuzmin⁷⁹ mentions signs of fire at the settlement happening at the end of the 10th century or the beginning of the 11th century. Yet, he suggests it is from Viking raids led by Norwegian Jarl Eirik in 997 and Svein in 1015 and suggests that the struggle for power in Scandinavia could be the reason of those raids. No other articles mention this theory. What is also important here is the mention of Vikings from Norway, possibly suggesting that the riches of Staraja Ladoga were known in the rest of Scandinavia. S.L. Kuzmin also mentions how the settlement of Staraja Ladoga was a Slavic rural area evolving eventually into a Russian city. Still, at the same time, he does not support the idea of a trading point but more of a colonization movement.

There is no doubt about the Scandinavian presence in Staraja Ladoga, yet S.L.Kuzmin's theory would be asking why the Vikings would be interested in colonizing the region. One hypothesis could be that traders traveled to the Ladoga region, and the enterprise being quite lucrative, it attracted a more sedentary population, explaining why there would be evidence of a more permanent population and the development of Staraja Ladoga into a trading spot.

What is interesting is the position of N. Platonova and Romanchuk on the early Scandinavian origin in the settlement and the Scandinavian presence in general. In her article, N. Platonova⁸⁰ does not support the idea that the Vikings had any legitimacy in the development of the settlement, but rather that a Slavic population was there but that

⁷³ A. Zorin & A. Shpilev, 2009, p.486

⁷⁴ Hedenstierna-Jonson, 2009, p.160

⁷⁵ E. Nosov, 1999, p.117

⁷⁶ Shephard, 2008, p.502

⁷⁷ Voitovich, 2010, p.4

⁷⁸ Duczko, 2004, p.86

⁷⁹ S.L.Kuzmin, 2000, p. 53-54

⁸⁰ N. Platonova, 2019, p.121

development of the settlement was interrupted by the arrival of the Vikings. She joins S.L. Kuzmin on the idea that the settlement was originally Slavic.

Romanchuk, however, goes even further away from the idea of a Scandinavian presence and suggests that the long houses could be Germanic⁸¹. He does not support the concept of a Scandinavia presence, and the presence of long houses could also be Germanic. The fact that Klejn⁸² comes with counterarguments to this hypothesis shows that the Normanist/Anti-Normanist debate is still very much alive. This can also be seen in the conclusion of N. Platonova's⁸³ article where she explains that the Scandinavian presence in Ladoga supports the Normanist idea in the search for national identity.

5.1.2 *Novgorod*

A.E. Musin & O.A. Tarabardina⁸⁴ give much more importance to the Scandinavians and their role in the development of Novgorod. Basing their analysis on archaeological evidence and comparing them with similar ones found in Sweden, they suggest that the Scandinavians were the founders of Novgorod. While the artifacts show that they were present during the 10th century and are not limited to a specific area, there is still uncertainty regarding the identity of the founders of Novgorod. N. Platonova⁸⁵ does not agree with this theory as she points out of the settlement of Novgorod evolved during the 9th century with the construction of fortifications, almost a century before the alleged presence of the Scandinavians. This difference between the two opinions could be also caused by the lack of analysis regarding the Scandinavian artefacts found during the Soviet Era and not taken in consideration because of their origin. Platonova has stated regarding Staraja Ladoga that claiming a Scandinavian identity as the origin of Staraja Ladoga was a Normanist attempt to search for National identity. The question can be asked here if the same statement applies to Novgorod.

It seems as if the origin of the founders of Novgorod is still a question of debate. Still, by the 11th century, there is little doubt, according to Androshchuk's⁸⁶ article, that the settlement had an important place in the trade between Byzantium and the North.

⁸¹ Romanchuk, 2013, p.287

⁸² Klejn, 2014, p. 336

⁸³ N. Platonova, 2019, p.125

⁸⁴ Musin & Tarabardina, 2019, p.765

⁸⁵ N. Platonova, 2019, p.119

⁸⁶ F. Androshchuk, 2014, p.205

5.1.3 *Other settlements*

Opinions also differ when looking into the other settlements on the Rus' territory. The settlement of Gnezdovo shows signs of a mixed population composed of Slavs, Scandinavians, Balts, and Finno-Ugrians⁸⁷. Considering, that the settlement was built in the 9th century, almost a century after the alleged construction of Ladoga, and that the settlement is located further south along the Dniepr, it could be explained by a mixed population because of trading. Of all the burial mounds found in the Volga region, 10% are Scandinavians⁸⁸. A number clearly shows a presence, but not a dominant one.

The Uglich Kremlin's location, outside of Moscow, and further North of Gnezdovo, seem to show a different type of population. The archaeological evidence shows a presence dating from the 10th century, quite a long time after the development of Staraja Ladoga or Gnezdovo, but contemporary to the foundation of Novgorod if we follow the hypothesis from A.E. Musin and O.A. Tarabardina⁸⁹. The excavations from the Uglich Kremlin reveal, however, artifacts showing a different type of activities than the other settlements mentioned previously. These artefacts show a military presence thanks to the excavation of sword tips, everyday life objects, and an active Scandinavian participation in the development of the settlement. The military objects are similar to those found in Central Europe and in the Balkans in the late 10th century. There is no mention of trade items. Still, since the settlement is located at the intersection of the winter's road of the Volga Ola region and the Belozersky region, linking it to the Ladoga region further North, it can be assumed that it might have been linked to trade. What remains uncertain here is if this was a military settlement protecting the trading routes or if this was a trading stop on the way to Ladoga in the North. Just like Staraja Ladoga, there are no signs of fortifications, which could indicate that the threat level was not high and that a military presence might have been sufficient. There are also signs of a violent event, with the settlement devastated at the end of the 10th or beginning of the 11th century, however, there is no information regarding the identity of the attackers⁹⁰. These attacks happened during the same period as the apparent attacks from the Norwegian Vikings in Staraja Ladoga mentioned in Kuzmins

⁸⁷ A. Zorin & A. Shpilev, 2009, p.491

⁸⁸ A.A. Romanchuk, 2013, p.287

⁸⁹ A.E. Musin & O.A. Tarabardina, 2019, p.767

⁹⁰ S.V. Tomsinsky, 1999, p.174

article⁹¹, so there is a question here whether those two events could be linked or if they are two separate events.

There is clearly a Scandinavian presence in the settlements of Staraja Ladoga, Novgorod, Gnezdovo, and the Uglich Kremlin. Still, opinions differ on how important their position was in the development of the settlements. There are clear indications that these locations were linked to trade or possibly military settlements protecting trading posts. Still, the identity of the founders of those settlements remains part of a debate. In some articles, the Normanist and Anti-Normanist question is still very much part of this debate, with the search for national identity a big part of the debate.

5.1.4 Rus' Khaganate and the creation of a Russian state

The origin of the Rus' Khaganate still does not have a definite answer, and its starting point remains obscure. Scandinavians who were settling in Staraja Ladoga were increasing their wealth thanks to the fur trade and the acquisition of silver. Even if it might have started as a few traders traveling to the East during the 8th century, such wealth would have eventually attracted chieftains and people of power to the settlement. With the arrival of these new inhabitants, a new hierarchic order was created, which was then known as the Rus' Khaganate⁹². There is therefore the question here of the importance of the Scandinavians in the creation of this Khaganate, where they an essential part? Was it an agreement with other ethnicities present to avoid conflict?

In his article, Voitovich does not mention how important the Scandinavians were to Staraja Ladoga and the Rus' Khaganate, only that they were a part of it. He does mention, however, that the Slavic tribes arrived at Staraja Ladoga during the 3rd or 4th century, followed by the Scandinavians during the 7th century⁹³. The conflict he mentions in 760 and the cohabitation which followed could possibly be interpreted as a step towards the Khaganate. This is where the article from E. Nosov would shed new light on the position of the Scandinavians in the creation of Staraja Ladoga. E. Nosov mentions that several archaeological excavations took place in 1945 and the 1960s with a significant number of Scandinavian artifacts found, yet no research was published. The results from more recent

⁹¹ S.L. Kuzmin, 2000, p.55

⁹² Duczko, 2004, p.14

⁹³ L.V. Voitovich, 2010, p.4

excavations do show what was already known: when the Scandinavians arrived, the type of population at Staraja Ladoga, and the main purpose of the settlement⁹⁴. Yet, since the results from the previous excavations were not published, it remains uncertain to what extent they would have brought new elements to the question. This is also a phenomenon happening with the excavations from Novgorod, which took place during the Soviet Era⁹⁵.

The creation of the Russian State and its origin is still the center of a lot of questions, and it seems as if every article has a different opinion about it: S.V. Tomsinsky⁹⁶ supports the idea of the active participation of the Scandinavians in the creation of the Russian State, while A. Zorin and A. Shpilev⁹⁷ associate the Varangians as the same as Scandinavians, with the purpose of taking control over the Dniepr and the Volga region in the 9th century (implying therefore that the Varangians would still involve military, but also a more general group than the Varangian Guard). Petrukhin⁹⁸ is also a supporter of this idea and bases his claim on the artifacts of Viking origins in Gorodishche, the oldest part of Novgorod, showing that Scandinavians had an influence right at the beginning of the foundation of Novgorod, but that this idea was downsized during the Soviet Era. S.L. Kuzmin⁹⁹, also supports the idea of a Scandinavian influence, and goes more into details with the concrete example of the appointment of a Scandinavian Jarl as the leader of Ladoga after the marriage of a Swedish princess with a Kievan Prince in the 11th century. However, O. Lugowy¹⁰⁰ has a different point of view about it with the opinion that the ethnic group of a leader does not represent the ethnic group of the rest of the State. He bases his theory on the very little data available regarding the presence of Scandinavians in the city of Kyiv., But it would, however, be strange if a Scandinavian was asked to rule over a group belonging to a different ethnic background. He supports the idea that the formation of the Kievan Rus' is the result of an economic and sociological development thanks to Scandinavian merchants. He is giving therefore a small part of the Scandinavians in the development of the Russian State, but not an essential one, and rather characterizing them as a marginal part of the Kievan society.

⁹⁴ E. Nosov, 1999, p.114

⁹⁵ A.E. Musin & O.A. Tarabardina, 2019, p.767

⁹⁶ S.V. Tomsinsky, 1999, p.174

⁹⁷ A. Zorin & A. Shpilev, 2009, p. 486

⁹⁸ V. Petrukhin, 2018, p.133

⁹⁹ S.L. Kuzmin, 2000, p.67

¹⁰⁰ O. Lugowy, 2002, p.438

N. Platonova¹⁰¹ supports the idea of trade being part of the urbanization of the Kievan Rus', but as previously covered in the subchapter about Novgorod, she disagrees with a Scandinavian influence on the development of the Kievan Rus'. The Kievan Rus' is a group of city-states trading with Byzantium and Baghdad, sailing through the rivers and gaining influence thanks to the weakening of the Khazar. The theory of trade being the main reason behind the urbanization of Russia is a leading theory in Russian historiography from 1990. A.A.Romanchuk¹⁰² is also refuting the Scandinavian influence idea and suggests instead that the trading relationship with the Baltic helped the development of the Kievan Rus', while at the same explaining the reason behind the presence of Scandinavian artefacts on the location of trading settlements in the Kievan Rus'.

5.2 Scandinavians in the Baltic and Belarus

Archaeological findings in the Baltic show regular contacts between the Vikings and the Baltic population at the beginning of the 10th century, mainly due to trade and military movements, reminding us of Romanchuk's claims, yet here with the added military addition¹⁰³. The evidence shows no signs of conflicts, and the military presence could therefore be interpreted as more of a defense of the trading route rather than an actual conflict with the local population. This is supported by the excavations of fibulas showing a Scandinavian origin and possibly belonging to warriors¹⁰⁴. Plavinski¹⁰⁵ supports the military presence already at the end of the 9th century, with swords harboring a bird design found along the riverbanks, perhaps suggesting that the military presence had the objective of protecting the waterways but also the presence of the Varangians.

Western research has shown that findings of Arabic silver hoards in Eastern Baltic from the 10th-century show how the Vikings were involved with trade in the Baltic¹⁰⁶. However, there is also a theory that the Baltic region did not represent any direct interests,

¹⁰¹ N. Platonova, 2019, p.109-110

¹⁰² A.A.Romanchuk, 2013, p.286-287

¹⁰³ V.I.Kulakov, 1999, p.148-152

¹⁰⁴ V.I. Kulakov, 2009, p.245-246

¹⁰⁵ M. Plavinski, 2009, p. 65

¹⁰⁶ Valk, 2008, p.485

but was important only because of its water routes, and the trade of furs in exchange for silver¹⁰⁷.

The results from the analysis of the Russian articles seem to correspond with what we already know from the presence of the Vikings in the Baltic, a peaceful relationship build up on trade.

5.3 Trade

The Russian territory was during the 9th century, crossed by several trade routes leading to the East. The most interesting one for us is the “Road from the Varangians to the Greeks”. The route would begin at the start of the river Neva down at Lake Ilmen; several smaller rivers would then lead the traders south down the Dnieper, through Kyiv, and end up in the Black Sea, which would, in turn, mean access to Constantinople and Crimea. Finally, a different route via the Volga would lead to the Khazar Khaganate, the Caspian Sea, and via the caravan routes, to the Caliphate in Baghdad¹⁰⁸. F. Androshchuk¹⁰⁹ suggests that Novgorod could have played an intermediary role in the trading of artifacts and bases this idea on the artifacts found in Sigtuna, such as golden beads, silks, and ivory comb. However, there is still a question as to whether these were merchants from Sigtuna or Novgorod traveling with them back to Sweden.

Most of the silk fragments found in Scandinavia have been identified to come from Central Asia or produced in the Byzantine Empire, while fragments found in Birka seem to have originated from China. Most of the fragments have been found in graves, in Birka or in Oseberg. According to Vedeler, the silk trade would have taken place during the 9th and 10th century and could have two possible origins, either from traders traveling through the rivers crossing Russia and the Baltic or from trading centers in Western Europe. However, the most plausible explanation seemed to be via the Russian waterways¹¹⁰. There is however, another theory that the silks traveled from the Rus’ territories to Birka, to be distributed further onto the Western European market. Inga Hägg supports the idea that

¹⁰⁷ Mägi, 2019, p.60

¹⁰⁸ Dolukhanov, 1996, p.177-178

¹⁰⁹ F. Androshchuk, 2014, p.201

¹¹⁰ Vedeler, 2015, p.78-81

trade was an important element, but it cannot explain the presence of high-quality silk in graves alone. Silk was a material used in the Imperial court in Europe and especially in Byzantium, where garments would represent hierarchy in society. She suggests that the fragments found in the graves could have been from garments from the Byzantine court¹¹¹.

By 800, Vikings had reached the East by sailing via the Black and Caspian Sea. There is mention in Arabic sources of how the Rus' merchants from the North brought furs and swords to the Black Sea and lower Volga region, paying a tax to the Byzantine emperor and the Khazar. These merchants were traveling to Baghdad. However, there seems to have been a change in Rus' trade with the Arabic world during the 10th century as they no longer traveled to Baghdad and would instead meet in the Khazar capital with Islamic merchants. Another interesting point is that the dirhams exchanged against the trading goods were now struck in the Samanids mints of Central Asia instead of belonging to the Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad¹¹².

One of the theories of the emergence of the silver trade was the change of power which happened in 750 when the Abbasid Caliphate took over the power from the Umayyads. The capital was moved from Damascus to Baghdad, and the Caliphate began to strike more dirhams¹¹³.

¹¹¹ Hägg, 2016, p.284-285

¹¹² Noonan, 1999, p.506-507

¹¹³ Hedenstierna-Jonson, 2009, p.159



Figure 4. Map of the Caspian Sea region, showing the Tomak Cape.
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caspianseamap.png>

Kulakov¹¹⁴ suggests that the trading route through the Dniepr, Volga, and Don has been known since the Bronze Age. He refers to results in the Caspian Sea near the Tokmak Peninsula, showing docks having Scandinavian characteristics. As mentioned previously, there is no research made about this, and it is, therefore, hard to say if this could be a legitimate probability or not. Kulakov does not explain to which period of the Bronze Age he is referring to. T. Noonan¹¹⁵ has mentioned already

how the Vikings knew the trading routes to the Caspian Sea by 800. Because the Bronze Age ended at 700, it might suggest that the Scandinavians sailed on the Russian waterways much earlier than first assumed. However, since he is the first to talk about this discovery, it is hard to make more hypotheses around it.

Petrukhin¹¹⁶ supports the idea that the Rus' were Russian merchants trading with the Khazar and the Arab world and were at the center of an international trading system from the East to the Baltic. This is not so far from a theory presented by Melanie Michailidis, regarding trade with the Samanids. The Samanids ruled an area going from Uzbekistan to Iran from 874 until 1005. The Samanids were trading silver in exchange for furs, slaves, amber and other goods from Scandinavia. Silver was mentioned earlier as being one of the most interesting goods for the Vikings, but the furs from Scandinavia were equally important to the Samanids. Around 85 000 dirhams have been found in Sweden,

¹¹⁴ V.I. Kulakov, 1999, p.149

¹¹⁵ T.Noonan, 1999, p.506-507

¹¹⁶ V. Petrukhin, 2018, p.134

while a quarter of a million have been found along the Volga, showing how important this trading route was¹¹⁷.

Melnikova¹¹⁸, on the other hand, focuses on trade with the Byzantine Empire. There is no mention of trading relationships with Byzantium in the Sagas, only mercenaries. Another interesting fact is that very few byzantine coins have been found in Sweden, as opposed to the 90 000 Arabic ones found in the same area. Melnikova suggests that the byzantine coins might have had a much higher value than the Arabic ones and therefore, scarcer. Trading during the 9th century from Scandinavia to Byzantium does not seem to have been regular, but the Treaties in 911 mention a trading relationship. The date of 911 is subject to debate, as some sources cite 907 or 912, but according to the *Primary Chronicles*, the treaty was the result of an agreement between the Emperor and the Rus'. After the attack by Oleg, however, this is not mentioned in any Byzantine sources. Other sources, however, would disagree and suggest that these treaties are not only regulating trade, but are also implying a military element, the Varangian Guard¹¹⁹.

5.4 Varangians and Rus'

5.4.1 The Varangian guard

The definition of who was part of the Varangian Guard varies across the presented articles. Lugowy looks at this question in his three articles, looking at the question of the identity of the Varangian Guard from different angles.

The term *Varangian* appeared in Byzantine sources during the 11th century, and its members in the service of the Byzantine army were mainly foot soldiers. The term *Pelekiphors*, meaning ax-bearer, is used to prove the Scandinavian origin of the members of the Guard. However, this can be a question of discussion as the members of the Guard were provided with weapons when entering in service of the Byzantine army (2009).

Lugowy is also in favor of the idea that the Varangian Guard supported the Kievan Prince and helped in the development of the Kievan Rus'. Their origin was, however, linked

¹¹⁷ Michailidis, 2012, p.317, p.322-324, p.332

¹¹⁸ E. Melnikova, 2020, p.87

¹¹⁹ C. Hedenstierna-Jonson, 2009, p.166

to trade before evolving into a different category in society: a group of mercenaries composed of not only Scandinavians but also composed of Englishmen¹²⁰.

The name of *Pelekiphors*, showing directly to the Vikings, might refer to the first members of the Varangian Guard who were originally from Scandinavia, and despite the fact that members from another ethnic group might have joined later, the name remained. If focusing only on the term *Varangian*, the definition of it is, in fact brought by allegiance, meaning that a group of mercenaries were brought together. Yet focusing only on the term will not give us information on the origin of those mercenaries¹²¹.

Lugowy focuses on names presented in Byzantine sources to support this idea of Scandinavian origin. In the Byzantine sources, the Varangians are either referred to as allied troops or as members of the imperial guard. However, only basing this hypothesis on the interpretation of names gives space to misinterpretation: Arab geographers did call the *Varangi* the people living in the North, but this is also a name used to refer to the Franks¹²².

N. Platonova¹²³ once again, refutes the Scandinavian origin in the Varangian Guard, and instead supports the idea that the Guard was, in fact a creation of the Russian State in response to the growing menace from the Pechenegs, a nomadic tribe from Central Asia.

5.4.2 *Definition of a Varangian*

If looking into a more general definition of who the Varangians were, one opinion is that, according to the *Primary Chronicles*, the Scandinavians are both Rus' and Varangians. Yet, they define two different groups in the Scandinavian society: the Varangians being a military unit while the Rus' were a more general part of the society¹²⁴. The idea that the Rus' and Scandinavians are the same is not uncommon and designated the Scandinavians sailing on the river of Eastern Europe. At the same time, the term *Varangian* was not used before the end of the 10th century¹²⁵.

¹²⁰ O. Lugowy, 2002, p.438

¹²¹ L. Klejn, 2014, p.335-336

¹²² O. Lugowy, 2004, p.391

¹²³ N. Platonova, 2019, p.112

¹²⁴ Hedenstierna-Jonson, 2009, p.168

¹²⁵ J. Lind, 2009, p.27

G.M. Velyaminov¹²⁶ focuses on finding one Varangian in particular: Prince Yakun. The Tale of Bygone Years (or Primary Chronicle) tells that Yakun came from across the sea with Vikings to help the Russian State. This would clearly indicate tight bonds between Scandinavia and Russia. Unfortunately for us, this lead cannot be investigated more as The Tale of the battle between Yaroslav and Yakun is unfortunately lost. Velyaminov inspects several hypotheses from several authors when trying to identify who this mysterious Yakun could be. Could Yakun be Jacob, son of Olaf, King of Sweden, the brother-in-law of Yaroslav? This seems like a possibility, but Velyaminov seems more of a supporter of the idea of Norwegian origin. He refers to the historian Omeljan Pritsak and his theory that Yakun is linked to the Eirikson from Norway to strengthen his position. What is important to remember here is not necessarily the identity of the prince, but more the position of G.M Velyaminov on the belief that this prince was in fact, Norwegian, suggesting that Varangians not only originated from Sweden but from all across Scandinavia.

If looking at a more general definition of the Varangians, N. Platonova¹²⁷ focuses on Treaties between the Kievan Rus' and Byzantium to identify some of the members of the Varangian Guard. Those treaties present an extensive list of ambassadors cited as allied to the Kievan Rus'. However, this could raise a question of interpretation. There is an uncertainty whether the names mentioned in the Treaties are in fact, Slavic or Scandinavian, or possibly a mix of both. However, since it is the oldest written sources available referring to the Varangians, which could have been in fact the starting point of the association between the Varangians and the Rus'.

O. Gubarev supports the idea that the Varangians mentioned in those treaties had a Scandinavian origin by focusing on a more religious aspect. The oath they took on the treaties was sworn on pagan deities¹²⁸, which is not a Byzantine tradition, but reminds us of a Scandinavian origin. Following this, there is therefore the question of whether these Varangians were in fact Scandinavians. Therefore, the swearing on pagan deities would make sense, or if they are Russians who have been influenced by Scandinavians, raising therefore the question of a possible cultural transfer and the importance of Scandinavians in Rus' Society. The oath on those Treaties is not the only marker of a strong Scandinavian

¹²⁶ G.M. Velyaminov, 2009, p.26-43

¹²⁷ N. Platonova, 1999, p.164-166

¹²⁸ O. Gubarev, 2013, p.240

influence is punishment and death by one's own weapon. Nevertheless, whether the ones mentioned in the Treaties were in fact Scandinavians or not, it does in fact, prove that they had a sufficient influence in the Kievan Rus' to either gain the status of ally, or to be significant enough to influence the culture in the Kievan society.

All the previous articles in this chapter suggest that the Varangians and the Scandinavians could be from the same origin. Yet, there is few information regarding whether the Rus' and the Scandinavians are the same. A.E. Musin and O.A. Tarabardina¹²⁹ do not support this idea, but it seems that they are more favorable as the Varangians and the Scandinavians being the same. They support the theory that the newly arrived Scandinavians could either just the Varangian army, become a merchant, or be a free citizen.

This would suggest that the most common idea is that the Varangians were originally from Scandinavia, whether this theory is applied to terminology, weapon analysis, or onomastics. There is, however, still a very strong debate as to the link between the Rus' and the Varangians, and no clear answers have come forward.

5.5 Normanist and Anti-Normanist views

Studying the question of the Vikings in the East goes hand in hand with the understanding of the Normanist and Anti-Normanist debate. As seen previously, this debate was strongly linked to the political climate during the period the articles were written, and one might assume that simply because the Soviet era is over, so is the debate. However, the truth is that this debate is still very much alive but used in a different way. One of the most predominant ways this was shown was in the review made by S.Pashkov¹³⁰, when he reviews the previously written work from the 19th century. The idea of looking back at previously important work shows a change in historiography to challenge what was previously known, not so much because of the data they hold, but how the ideological influence might have influenced the reading of those data. Throughout the whole article, S. Pashkov remains neutral when comparing both sides of the debate and tries to find the reasons behind Pogodins change of mind.

¹²⁹ A.E. Musin & O.A. Tarabardina, 2019, p.778-782

¹³⁰ S.Pashkov, 2014

The same can be said with the article written by Sokolov¹³¹, where he looks into the questions that have caused the most trouble within Russian historiography regarding the origin of the Rus' and their link with the Scandinavians, and once again, trying to find the truth in them. However, Sokolov also does point out that almost all the anti-Normanist claims were presented in textbooks meant for students, which could explain the tendency in Russian Historiography. Petrukhin's¹³² review of Sokolov's book from 2015 proves that this tendency to critically assess an article isn't only for studies dating back from the 18th or 19th century, but also for contemporary work. The same can be said for Romensky's review¹³³.

There is clearly a tendency in Russian historiography after the Soviet Era to look back at previous studies and analyze the data without the ideological or political influence which has been dominating the scene since the 18th century. Most of the articles which were studied in this research remained neutral through the analysis of archaeological data or texts. Only a few could show some tendencies which could remind us of either a Normanist or Anti-Normanist position. Several of the articles mentioned as well how Scandinavian artefacts excavated during the Soviet Era were remained hidden to avoid giving importance to the Scandinavians in the Russian State. Unfortunately, there is no information regarding those excavated objects, and there is uncertainty whether they have been lost, or just waiting to be analyzed. But the fact that these excavations were mentioned, show a general interest in finding more regarding the subject of the Vikings in the East.

5.6 Future studies

There is clearly an evolution in the interest of Russian scholars to study the Vikings in the East, not just as part of a debate regarding the establishment of a Russian State but as an acknowledgment of their presence in the region. An exhibition called "Vikings. The way to the East" («Викинги. Путь на Восток») was presented at the State History Museum in Moscow in 2021 and is now being currently presented at the Novgorod State Museum until January 2023. This exhibition presents over 1000 artifacts, some of them excavated in the latest years, covering life, and the travels of the Vikings in their journey to the East, from the period from the 8th to the 11th century. In the description of this exhibition on the website

¹³¹ S.V. Sokolov, 2012

¹³² V. Petrukhin, 2015

¹³³ A.A. Romensky, 2017

of the Novgorod State Museum, it is written that the Vikings travelled across the riverways in the East and became a part of Old Russian Society. As the central image of the exhibition, a ship was placed to show the importance of trade and military campaigns.¹³⁴ As mentioned previously, a trip to Russia was not possible in the world situation, but the State Archaeological Museum has published a guided video of the exhibition¹³⁵. In an interview with the Russian News agency REGNUM¹³⁶, the curator of the exhibition, Veronika Murasheva, explains how the theme of the Vikings in the East has been a victim of the ideological dispute dating from the 18th century, and wants to show with this exhibition, how the activities of the Vikings (or Varangians as she calls them) in the East was completely different than their activities in the West.

The exhibition covers all the themes which have been seen in this research, military, trade with Byzantium and the Caliphate, etc. But the most fascinating here, are some of the artifacts presented. One of them is a women's dress dating from the 10th century and made of Chinese silk, which, according to the article, shows no equivalent in other museums. Another one of the artifacts is the blade of an axe, showing clear Viking designs, and excavated in Bolgar, in Tatarstan, located along the river Volga. One of the last artifacts which will be mentioned here is a pottery, dating from the 10th century and found in Uzbekistan.

M. Michailidis has covered in an article the trade of silk, furs, and silver between the Vikings and the Samanids. She points out that the theme of the Samanids and the Vikings is not a very common one, due to its geographical location. The capital of the Samanids was Bukhara, located in present-day Uzbekistan. Most of the territory which belonged to the Samanids are provinces that were part of the Soviet Union. Very little information is known in Western historiography of the region during the Samanids era because of the lack of literature available in languages other than Russian¹³⁷. There is therefore an uncertainty whether this is a lack of information in general, or if there is in fact, research that are in fact made but not available because of the language.

¹³⁴ <https://novgorodmuseum.ru/visit/sobytiya/vikingi.-put-na-vostok>

¹³⁵ <https://mediashm.ru/?p=29409>

¹³⁶ <https://regnum.ru/news/3286223.html>

¹³⁷ Michailidis, 2012, p.322.

Kulakov mentions in his article¹³⁸ the finding of Scandinavian artifacts made in the Tokmak region in Kazakhstan. No western research mention that Scandinavians might have made it to Central Asia so early, or excavations made on the Caspian Sea on the territory of present-day Kazakhstan. But it does not mean that it is not valid. There might be excavations which were made during the Soviet era, but not published because of the Scandinavian nature of the results, showing therefor similarities from Nosov's article¹³⁹ about the excavations in Staraja Ladoga. There is a possibility that there are articles written either during the Soviet Era or after, regarding the Viking presence in Central Asia. Still, we do not know about them because of the language barrier and the lack of cooperation. The Viking pottery found in Uzbekistan and presented in the exhibition seems to strengthen the idea that there could be much more regarding the Vikings in Central Asia that we do not know about.

There is a need for cooperation between Russian and Western studies to have access to this data and knowledge. There is a growing interest in the field of the Vikings in the East to find more information regarding what Russian research has to offer, and the questioning from Russian scholars of how data was interpreted in the past, could show that this interest goes both ways.

The exhibition about the Vikings and the East from the State Museum in Moscow show that Russian historiography is distancing itself from their previous narratives and acknowledging the role of the Scandinavians in the development of trade and military campaigns, without it meaning to be a Normanist point of view.

¹³⁸ Kulakov, 1999

¹³⁹ Nosov, 1999, p.114

6 Conclusion

Twenty-sixth articles to find why the Vikings traveled to the East could seem like a hopeless and bold enterprise at first. The goal of this research was never to find the ultimate answer behind the motives of the travel but to see if analyzing Russian studies could bring new information to the table. Most of the data that came through via those articles are very similar to the ones we know. The articles ask the same questions, have (mostly) the same hypotheses, and would, at first sight, seem like a pointless idea to look into them. However, the most important part is the change in the mentality of Russian scholars. Russian studies have long been an obscure part of Viking studies because of the strong ideological and political influence behind academic research from the 18th century to the Soviet era. It would be easy to assume that contemporary research would follow the same way and therefore make the interpretation of data questionable. Despite this idea, only a few articles show or could show a Normanist or anti-Normanist influence. Most of the articles question the previous data. Therefore, they questioned their legitimacy to determine if the interpretation was correct or if some of the data were hidden to please the ideology in place at the time. Several articles mentioned how excavations took place on different settlements across the territories of the Kievan Rus' but were not made public because of their Scandinavian origin, showing a willingness from Russian scholars to make it right.

The most important part of the research which came through in the analysis of those articles is that a significant amount of data has not yet been made available. Since there is no information regarding those data, it is hard to say if they would have any influence or change the reasons for the travels from the Vikings to the East. However, the mention of findings in Kazakhstan could show that the lack of information on the Vikings in the East does not only apply to the Arab world but could extend to Central Asia.

The data found in the articles show that the Vikings did have an important part in the trading routes between Scandinavia, Byzantium, the Caliphate, and the Khazar and were most certainly a part of the development of the Kievan Rus. I believe there will always be a debate about the role of Vikings in the creation of the Kievan Rus', if they are the same as Rus', and if Varangians only mean mercenaries. Not only between Western and Russian scholar but also within the Western world. Therefore, comparing results between already made research will only add one more opinion to this debate. However, if one relies on the

archaeological evidence, it shows that the Vikings were, in fact, skilled traders, skilled mercenaries, and warriors. There are no signs of direct contact between Vikings and the Caliphate, only indirect contact. On the contrary, since some of the research has shown that there could be more items found in Central Asia, this leads to an open question of whether these objects were just a continuity of trade from Byzantium and Khazar with the Caliphate or if they arrived in Central Asia via another road.

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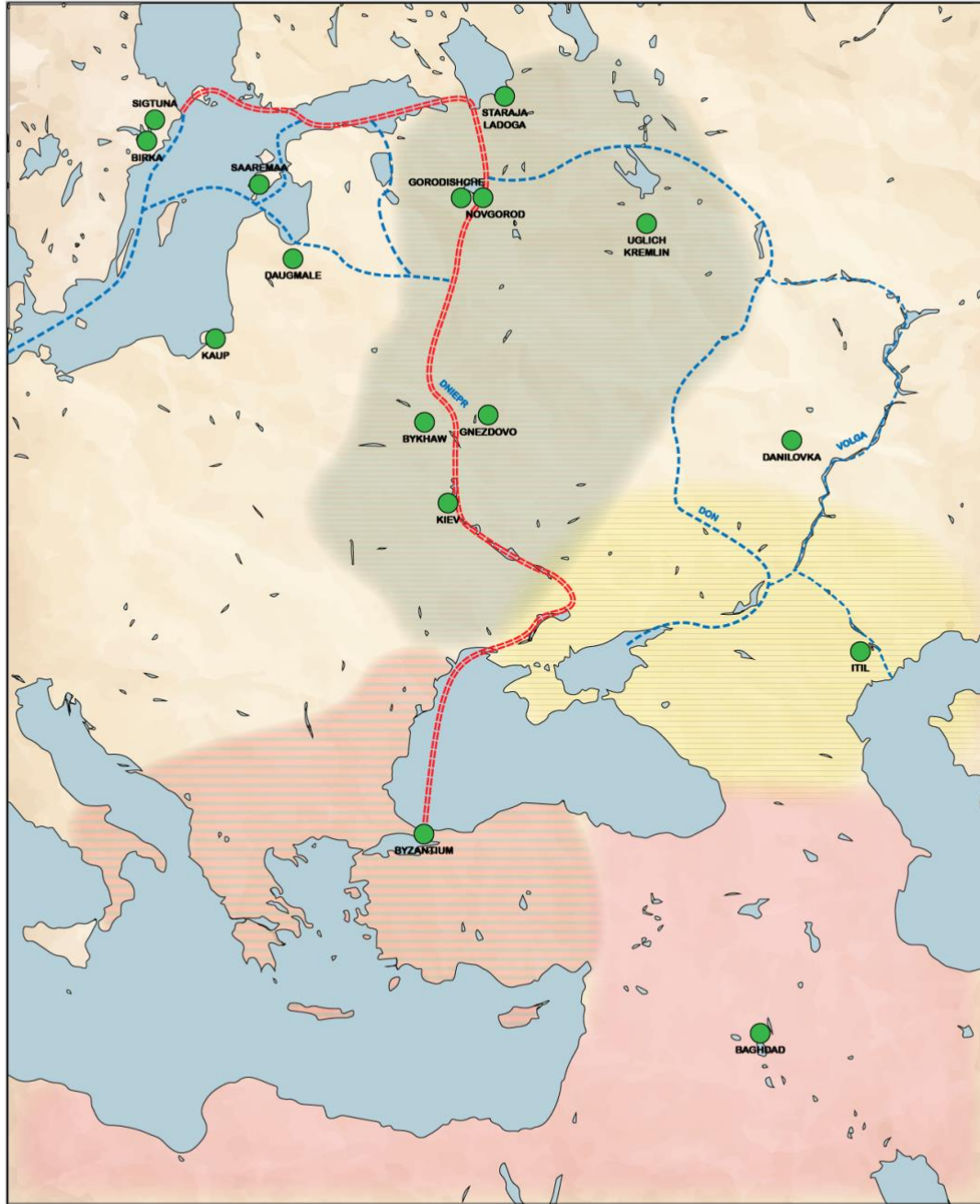
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Appendices

Map of the East



- City
- Kievan Rus
- Khazar
- Trading routes
- Byzantium
- Abbasid Caliphate
- == Main trading route

Research protocol – Systematic Review

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW RESEARCH PROTOCOL	
Review questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Were the Varangians from Scandinavia? - Are Rus', Scandinavians and Varangians the same? - Were the Vikings present in the East because of trade or for other reasons? - What was the nature of the contacts between the Vikings and the Arab world? - Did the Scandinavians play a role in the foundation of the Kievan Rus'? - When did the relationship with the East start?
Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Articles written and published in Russian - Articles published from Russian University - Articles written and published after USSR - Period limitation: 8th to 11th century
Exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Viking travels in the West - Russian articles also published in other languages - Research not including Vikings, Scandinavians, Rus' or Varangians. - Research about a general history or definition of Vikings.
Key search words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Викинг (Viking) - Варяги (Varangians) - Русь (Rus') - Рюрик (Rurik) - Скандинавия (Scandinavia) - Новгород (Novgorod) - Ладога (Ladoga) - Халифат (Caliphate) - Торговля (Trade) - Повесть временных лет (Tale of Bygone years) - Начальная летопись (Primary Chronicle) - Несторова летопись (Nestor chronicle) - Первоначальная летопись (Primary Chronicle)
Database	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online catalogues - Online libraries

Articles overview

Author	Article title in Russian	Translation of title	Type of source	Grade of relevance	Theme	Biased?	Field	Area?	Period?	Key words	Date of publication
O. Gubarev	О клятвах русов и славян	About Oaths of Rus' and Slavs	Article	Low	Byzantine treaties	?	Written sources		10th century	Primary Chronicle, Rus', Varangians	2013
N. Platonova	Договоры Руси и Византии и социальные верхи русского общества X века	Treaties of Russia and Byzantine and the Social upper layer of the Russian society of the 10th century	Article	Medium	Byzantine treaties	No	Written sources	Kievan Rus	10th century	Varangians, Rus',	1999
N. Platonova	ПРОБЛЕМЫ СТАНОВЛЕНИЯ ГОРОДА В СЕВЕРНОЙ РУСИ: ЗАМЕТКИ АРХЕОЛОГА	The problem of urbanization in Northern Rus'	Article	Medium	City Formation	Possible	Archaeology	Kievan Rus, Novgorod	9th century - 10th century	Rus', Varangians, Normanist, Anti-Normanist	2019
A.E. Musin & O.A. Tarabardina	Скандинавы среди первооселенцев Новгорода по данным археологии	The Scandinavians among the first settlers of Novgorod on the Basis of Archaeological Evidence	Article	High	City formation: Novgorod	No	Archaeology	Novgorod	10th century - 11th century	Varangians, Scandinavians, Novgorod	2019
E. Nosov	Современные данные по варяжской проблеме на фоне традиций русской историографии	"Modern Findings related to the Varangian Issue and Russian historiographic traditions"	Review	High	Foundation of the Russian State	No	Historiography		9th century - 10th century	Varangians, Normanist, Anti-Normanist, Vikings	1999
A. Zorin & A. Shpilev	Перед Русью (Восточная Европа в IX столетии: опыт реконструкции)	Before the Rus' (eastern Europe in 9th century: experience of reconstruction)	Article	Medium	Foundation of the Russian State	?	Archaeology, written sources		9th century	Rus', Varangians, Vikings, Scandinavia	2009
S. Pashkov	ДИСКУССИЯ М.П. ПОГОДИНА И М.А. МАКСИМОВИЧА ПО ВАРЯГО-РУССКОМУ ВОПРОСУ	Discussion of M.P. Pogodin and M.A. Maksimovich about Varangian-Russian question	Review	Low	Foundation of the Russian State	?	Historiography		18th century - 19th century	Varangians, Normanist, Anti-Normanist	2014
A.A. Romensky	НАЧАЛЬНАЯ РУСЬ БЕЗ НАЧАЛЬНОЙ ЛЕТОПИСИ: НОВЫЙ ВИТОК СПОРА О РАННЕЙ ИСТОРИИ ВОСТОЧНОЙ ЕВРОПЫ	Primary Rus' without the Primary Chronicle: New round of debate about the early history of Eastern Europe	Book Review	Low	Foundation of the Russian State	No	Written sources		10th century - 11th century	Rus', Primary Chronicle	2017
S.V. Tomsinsky	Скандинавские находки из угличского кремля и легенда об основании Углича	Scandinavian findings from Uglich Kremlin and the Legend of Uglich Foundation	Article	High	Foundation of the Russian State	No	Archaeology	Uglich	10th century - 12th century	Scandinavians, Rus,	1999
S.L. Kuzmin	Стратиграфия и некоторые проблемы истории Староладожского поселения VIII-X вв.	The stratigraphy and some problems on history of the Old Ladoga settlement dated by 8th-10th century	Article	High	Foundation of the Russian State	No	Archaeology	Staraja Ladoga	8th to 10th century	Vikings, Varangians, Scandinavia	2000
S.V. Sokolov	УЧЕБНАЯ ЛИТЕРАТУРА ПО ИСТОРИИ (ВТОРАЯ ПОЛОВИНА XVIII - НАЧАЛО XIX в.)	Problems of historiography and source studies in Russian History	Article	Low	Foundation of the Russian State	No	Historiography	Kievan Rus		Rus', Varangians, Scandinavia	2012
L.V. Voitovich	ВИКИНГИ В ЦЕНТРАЛЬНО-ВОСТОЧНОЙ ЕВРОПЕ: ЗАГАДКИ ЛАДОГИ И ПЛИСНЕКА	Vikings in the Central-Eastern Europe: mysteries of Ladoga and Plisnek	Article	Medium	Foundation of the Russian State	No	Archaeology, written sources	Ladoga	9th century - 11th century	Rus', Varangians,	2010
V. Petrukhin	К полемике о договорных отношениях и начале древнерусской государственности	A contribution to Polemics on treaty relations and the beginning of the Russian state.	Article	Medium	Foundation of the Russian State	Possible	Historiography	Novgorod		Varangians, Rus', Novgorod	2018
O. Lugowiy	Варяжский фактор в структурообразовании Киевского княжества	Varangian factor in the creation of Kievan State structure	Article	Medium	Foundation of the Russian State, Kievan Rus	No	Archaeology, written sources	Kievan Rus	8th century - 11th century	Varangians, Rus', Scandinavia	2002
E. Melnikova	КУПЦЫ-СКАНДИНАВЫ И КИЕВСКАЯ РУСЬ. НА ПУТИ В ВИЗАНТИЮ В X-XI вв.	Scandinavian Merchants and the Kiev Rus' people on the road to Byzantium in the 10th and 11th century AD	Article	High	Rus' and Byzantine contacts		Written sources	Byzantium	10th century - 11th century	Scandinavians, Rus', Byzantium, Varangians	2020
F. Androshchuk	Русь и византийские контакты Скандинавии в XI-XIV вв.	Rus' and Byzantine contacts of Scandinavia in 11th - 14th centuries	Article	Medium	Russian and Byzantine contacts	No	Archaeology	Northern Europe, Novgorod, Sigtuna	11th century - 12th century (text: 11th century - 14th century)	Scandinavia, Rus', Varangians, Byzantine	2014

V. Petrukhin	Концепции происхождения варяжской руси в отечественной историографии XVIII–XIX вв.	Concepts of the origin of Varangian Rus in Russian historiography of the 18th - 19th centuries.	Book review	Low	Varangian	Possible	Historiography		18th century - 19th century	Varangians	2015
G.M. Velyaminov	Загадочный варяг. (к русско-скандинавским связям в XI веке)	Enigmatic Varangian (Russian-Scandinavian ties in the 11th century)	Article	Medium	Varangian	?	Written sources	Novgorod	11th century	Varangians, Vikings, Scandinavia, Primary Chronicle	2009
O. Lugowy	Тактика и вооружение отрядов росов и варангов на византийской службе X–XII вв.	The tactics and armament of Ros' and Varangian detachments at the Byzantine service in 10th -12th centuries	Article	Low	Varangian	No	Archaeology	Byzantium	10th century - 12th century	Varangians, Rus', Scandinavia	2009
A.A.Romanchuk	Варяго-русский вопрос в современной дискуссии: взгляд со стороны	Varangian-Rus' Issue in modern debate: a look from outside	Article	High	Varangian	Possible	Archaeology	Baltic		Varangians, Rus'	2013
L. Klejn	Еще один сказ о лекхитских варягах. Продолжение спора	One more tale on Lekhite Varangians. Discussion continued.	Article	Medium	Varangian	Possible	Written sources	Poland		Vikings, Anti-Normanist, Varangian, Scandinavia, Rus'	2014
O. Lugowy	Руси и скандинавы на византийской службе: эволюция наименований в источниках X– XII вв.	Russes and Scandinavians on Byzantine service: evolution of names in records of 10th-12th century	Article	High	Varangian, Rus	No	Etymology	Byzantium	10th century - 12th century	Rus', Scandinavians, Byzantine, Varangian	2004
V. Kulakov	Трилистная фибула в Пруссии	A trefoil fibula in Prussia	Article	Low - Medium	Viking presence in the Baltic	No	Archaeology	Baltic - Kaliningrad	9th century - 10th century	Vikings, Swedes	2009
V. Kulavok	Балтийский вариант движения викингов	The Baltic Version of Viking's Movement	Article	Medium	Viking presence in the Baltic	No	Archaeology	Baltic - Kaliningrad	9th century-11th century	Vikings, Scandinavians, Varangians	1999
M. Plavinski	Мечи эпохи викингов с территории Беларуси	The swords of the Viking Age on the territory of Belarus	Article	Medium	Viking presence in the Baltic	No	Archaeology	Belarus	9th century - 11th century	Vikings, Varangians, Scandinavia	2009