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TO THE PROBLEM OF INTERPRETATION OF HISTORICAL EVIDENCES CONCERNING ANNALISTIC 'NOVGOROD' IN IX – X CENTURIES
(the comments referred to a new publication by E. Nosov)

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Abstract. Author considers the main problems connected with the question about the founding of an ancient city of Kievan Rus – Novgorod on Volkhov River. The reason for the reflections on this topic was the authors critical analisis of Yevgeni Nosov`s new publication. Also the author considers an important question of this city localization in the IX – X centuries. These questions are analyzed on the background of ancient chronicles messages.

Key words: Novgorod, Νεμογαρδάς (Nemogardas), Hólmgarđr (Holmgardr), 'Rurikovo Gorodysche' (Rurik's Hillfort), localization, archaeological dating, foundation of the city, place names, architectural and archaeological research.

1. Introduction

In the collection of scientific articles published in honor of the famous Kyiv archaeologist Gleb Ivakin there was the research of his colleague Yevgeni Nosov about the early history of Novgorod on the Volkhov River [1]. The essence of the considered issue was defined by the author in the subtitle "To the history of the name of the Northern Rus' center". The researcher thus focuses attention on the name (or rather – the names) of the city. However, the examined subject is much broader. The objectives set by the author face at least four significant problems: 1) the problem of chronicle dating of Novgorod beginnings; 2) the problem of archeological dating; 3) the problem of parallel use of place names; 4) the problem of localization of the ancient Novgorod.

2. Wording of the problem

The **first** of these problems is that the several of records about the events of 9–10th centuries mentioning Novgorod in the general chronicles of Rus' are not consistent with the evidence of the local Novgorod Chronicle about founding of the city in 1044 by Prince Volodymyr, son of PrinceYaroslav the Wise: "*В лѣто ꙋsфнв . [6552 (1044)] Ходи Ярослав на литву . на весну же Володимиръ . заложи Новгородъ и здѣла и*" [2]. (*In the summer of 6552 (1044) Yaroslav went to the Lithuanians and in spring Volodymyr founded Novgorod*).

The **second** problem is associated with the unsuccessful attempts to discover the layers of 8–9th centuries on the territory of the Novgorodian "Dytynets" (Citadel) and 'Slavenskyi Kholm' (Slavenskyi Hill). The unearthed remains of the original defensive shaft of the citadel (Dytynets) confirmed its foundation in the 40's of the 11th century. The layers of the 9th century are found only in a fortified settlement located on the Volkhov source, 2 km south of Novgorod Dytynets, known as "Gorodische" (Hillfort) (artificial name – "Rurikovo Gorodische" / Rurik's Hillfort) (Fig. 1). In addition, there are reasons to doubt the veracity of accurate dating of Novgorod cultural layers based on dendrochronology, which allows 20–30 years of a possible error. D. Machynsky drew attention to this problem referring to A. Uryeva's works [3].

The **third** problem is caused by the fact that in the 9th, 10th and 11th centuries Scandinavians do not know the name of 'Novgorod', the city was known only as 'Hólmgarđr' (Holmgardr). The identity of these names is proved by late evidence of Göngu-Hrólfs saga: "*главный стол конунга Гардов находится в Хольмгардаборге, который*"

теперь зовется Ногардар” [4]. (*The main throne of konung of Gards is in Holmgardr which is now named Nogardr*). The oldest copy of the saga dates from the second half of the 14th century. In addition, Constantine Porphyrogenitus in his treatise “On the Management of the Empire” dated 948–952 mentions the name ’Nemogardas’ (Νεμογαρδάς) where, according to the emperor, was Sviatoslav (Σφενδοσθλάβος), son of Igor (Ιγγωρ) archon of Rus’. There is no certainty, whether the same settlement is mentioned in different chronological sources under these names.
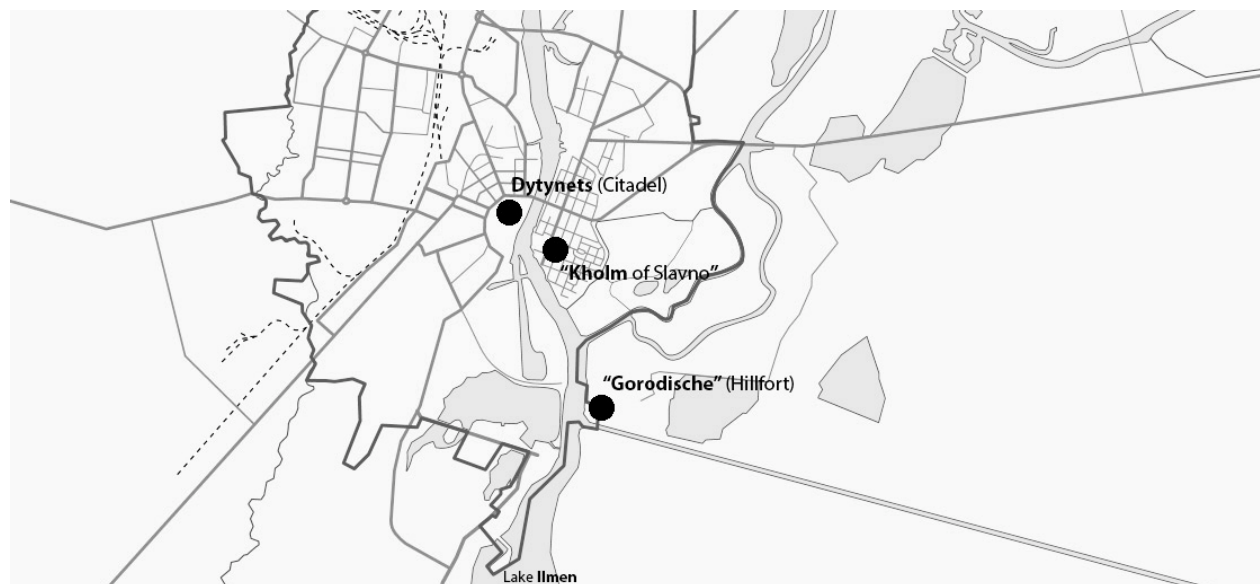
Fig. 1. Dytynets (Citadel), “Kholm of Slavno” and “Gorodische” (Hillfort) on the plan of modern Veliky Novgorod

The **fourth** problem caused by the previous three is associated with Novgorod localization and there is no a clear solution to it. The longstanding attempts to link the annalistic Novgorod with modern Novgorod kremlin (Dytynets) were not confirmed. No local old fortifications were found on the territory of Novgorod. In literature the place name ’Novgorod’ was also associated with “Rurikovo Gorodische” (Rurik’s Hillfort) and ancient Ladoga. E. Nosov once referred to V. Parkhomenko’s scientific concept that challenged the North localization of ’Nemogardas’ [5], and supposed that it could be Novgorod-Siversk on the Desna River, Novgorod-Volynskyi on the Sluch River (Zvyagel according to the chronicles) or Small Novgorod on the Dnieper [6]. However, the scholar didn’t consider the recent research, including the one proving the identity of Novgorod from 9–10th centuries chronicles with the hillfort of Volyn type on the River Luga that was later named as Volodymyr (Yu. Dyba). In addition, L. Voytovych identifies Novgorod / Holmgardr with the archaeological complex in Gnyozdovo near Smolensk.

3. Formulation of the article goals

Our goal is to indicate the main contradictions arising from reading historical sources about Novgorod of the 9–10th centuries in the comparison with the results of archaeological research of this city.

4. Presenting of the main material

The aforementioned problems intertwined in a tight knot of contradictions which E. Nosov tries to reconcile. In a concluding part of the analysed publication the author tries to prove that while mentioning Novgorod of 9–10th centuries the chroniclers had in mind the fortified settlement in Gorodyshche tract. He believes this settlement center in the upper reaches of the Volkhov River was developing in several phases: 1) Sloven oldest settlement was called ’Holm-gorod’ which transformed into ’Hólmgarðr’ in Scandinavian transcoding; 2) in the middle of the 9th century Rurik founded new fortifications on this place, whence has appeared the place name ’Novyi Gorod’ (’New City’) and the adjacent buildings gradually embraced a wider area; 3) in the middle of the 11th century Volodymyr, son of Yaroslav, established the Dytynets (Citadel) 2 km downstream the Volkhov and later it was named ’Novgorod’ while the old abandoned placed got the name ’Gorodyshche’.

The novelty of these suggestions is obvious. In 1990 monograph "Rurikovo Gorodyshche" (Rurik's Hillfort) E. Nosov supported the idea that the name 'Novyi Gorod' ('New City') emerged in the mid 11th century as opposed to old settlement Gorodyshche, but in the analyzed article the researcher rejects the possibility that chroniclers attributed the recorded events of 9–10th centuries to a new place name that appeared in the second half of the 11th century (the last date should be considered as misprint, because 1044 is mentioned in the chronicle). Now the scientist strongly emphasizes that the name 'Novgorod' was in use before the constraction of Dytynets (Citadel) and before appearance the place name 'Gorodyshche' (Hillfort) (p. 332). Are there reasonable grounds for such a radical change of views?

Proving that a fortified 'Gorodyshche' is the oldest Novgorod according to the chronicle and at the same time is one of the local names that appeared on the later stage of urban development E. Nosov gives long known facts stated in his own previous works: there are no layers older than the third quarter of 10th century on the territory of Novgorod Dytynets (Citadel) and its entire complex was of particular importance in the urban structure only with the adoption of Christianity (p. 332). However, earlier the same arguments gave reason to the author to formulate much more cautiously: "*не думаю, що сейчас можно однозначно решить вопрос о древнейшем наименовании городища*" (*I do not think that now it is possible to resolve definitely the problem of the oldest name of the ancient settlement*) [7]. In the given case the earlier statement is more confident and trustworthy.

Having presented his new considerations, E. Nosov left aside a number of facts that require furter explanation:

First, assuming that the initial fortified settlement on the site of the 'Gorodyshche' was called 'Kholm-gorod', the researcher didn't explain how this hypothetical name correlates with local parallel place name 'Kholm of Slavno' that was first documented in the records in 1134. It is difficult to agree with the possibility of any parallel existence of two nearly identical place names, as well as to believe that the place name was shifted to the settlement 'Slavno' after Rurik had built a new fortification called 'Novgorod' on the old place of 'Kholm-gorod'. The probability that both place names 'Holmgardr' and 'Novgorod' were moved to a new place is too small. We should consider the chronological gap in a hundred years from the time, when according to E. Nosov old name 'Holm' was functioned on 'Gorodyshche' in 60-70-ies of 9th century, to appearance the emergence of ancient layers of 'Slavno' in late 70's of X century, where fixed the place name 'Holm'.

Second, the author does not provide the compelling reasons that might force the Scandinavians and Rurik to name their rebuilt fortifications as Novgorod and not to save already locally assimilated Scandinavian form 'Hólmgarđr' which reinterpreted the traditional local name 'Holm-gorod' and was often recorded in the various Scandinavian sources, at least until the second half of the 14th century. Moreover, even much bigger urban reconstruction and development as for example in Novgorod Dytynets (Citadel) or in Kyiv at times of Volodymyr or Yaroslav did not lead to a change of a city name. The new name was given only to a newly established settlement (city/gorod of Volodymyr, city/gorod of Yaroslav, etc.). Gorodyshche itself was not outstanding by its size and hypothetical numerous changing names were not backed up of the visible urban transformations. Except the desolation which was affected by its name.

Third, while agreeing that the oldest name 'Холмъ-городъ' / 'Hólmgarđr' was well-assimilated in the Scandinavian environment and used to denote a settlement located on the origins of the Volkhov River. But also the name the name 'Νεμογαρδάς' characterised by E. Nosov as habitual Scandinavian (p. 333). This name must be recognized as such located further south, outside the influence of the Scandinavian residents in river Volkhov basin. It is worth recalling that up to the second half of the 10th century the Scandinavians had little focused on the realities of the Middle Dnieper territory and they do not have specific information even about Kyiv.

Fourth, referring to the chronicled legend about the invitation of the Varangians (p. 335) E. Nosov emphasizes the mention of Rurik's arrival to Lake Ilmen, where he founded the city on the Volkhov River that completely topographically corresponds to the location of the modern fortification in Gorodyshche placed 2 km upstream from the 1044 Dytynets (Citadel). But the author avoided mention about the legendary city Slovensk with no less eloquent analogy: "*градъ на новомъ мѣстѣ отъ стараго Словенска по Волхову яко поприще и болѣ, и нарекоша Новъградъ Великiй*" (*the city founded on the new place from Slovensk down the Volkhov River was named Veliky Novgorod*) [8]. The reason seems to be simple as a critical number of names borrowed from varying sources is concentrated in one place: 'Slovensk' – 'Холмъ-городъ' / 'Hólmgarđr' – 'Novgorod' – 'Νεμογαρδάς', 'Kholm of Slavno', and that fact could jeopardize the hypothesis.

Fifth, all the chronicled records about the invitation of the Varangians are still legends despite their vivid literary form. The literature clearly indicates that there is practically no information of the northern lands from hte time captured Kyiv by Oleg (882) to the division of lands between the sons of Svyatoslav (970).
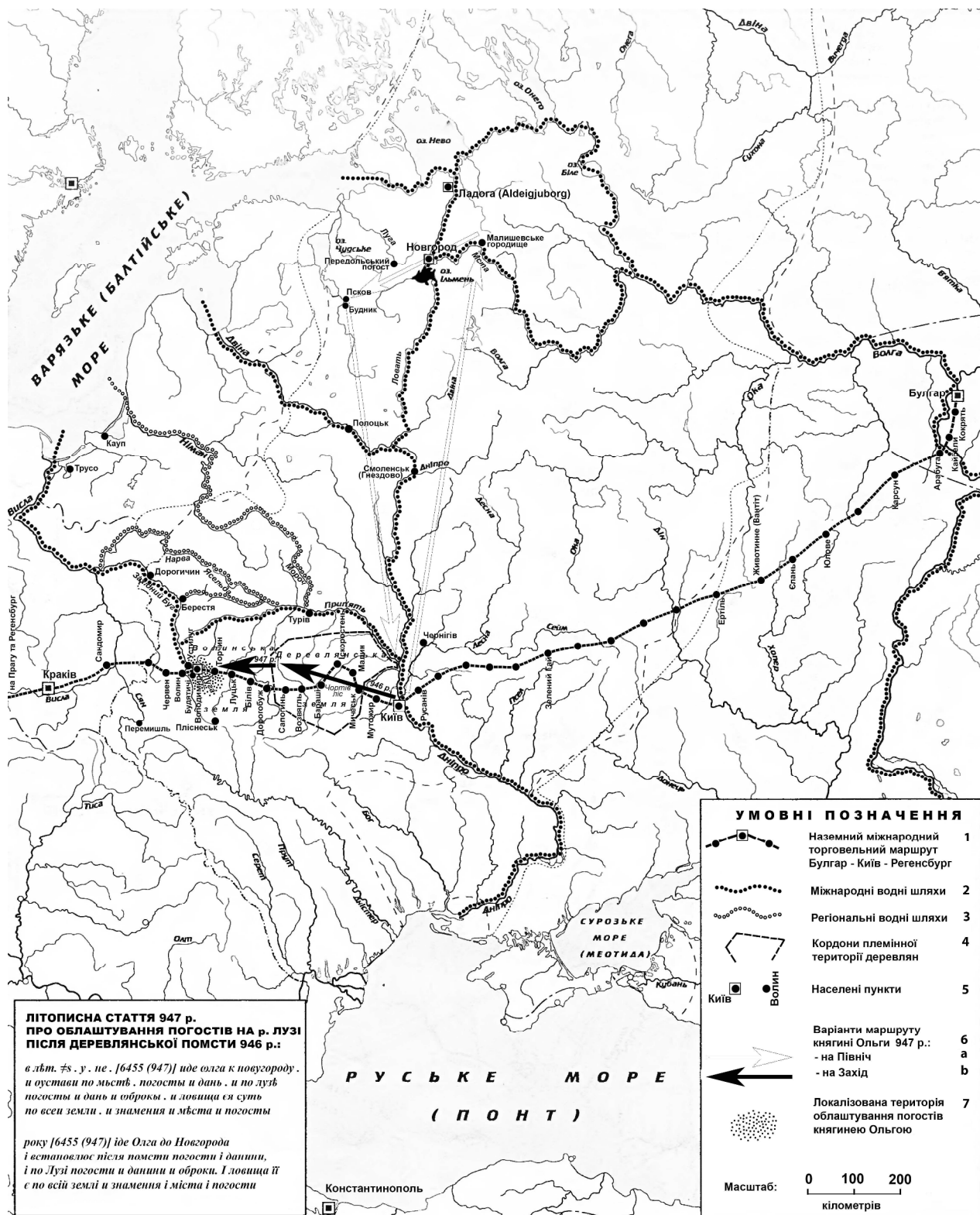
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Fig. 1. Variants of the campaign of Princess Olga to Novgorod 947:
1 – international trade route Bulgar-Kiev-Regensburg; 2 – international waterways;
3 – regional waterways; 4 – the boundaries of the tribal territory of the Derevlyans; 5 – settlements, cities;
6 – the options of itinerary Princess Olga's 947 year (a – to the north; b – to the west);
7 – the territory where Princess Olga founded Pogosts

Between these dates Novgorod was mentioned only once in The Tale of Bygone Years in the entry dated 947: "*в лѣ͞т . ҂ѕ . ͞у . ͠не . [6455 (947)] иде Ѡлга к Новүгороду . и оустави по мьстѣ . погосты и дань . и по Лузѣ погосты и дань и ѡброкы*" [9]. (*In the year 6455 (947) Olga went to Novgorod and founded on the Luga the pogosts and imposed rents and tributes*). Cited events are usually explained by the chronicler as the reforms of Kievan Princess Olga on the northern territories that started after the war in Drevlyanian land in 946 which was started by Princess Olga to revenge for her killed husband. Having punished the Drevlyans ("*по мьстѣ*" / after revenge), Olga went westwards to Novgorod and founded the pogosts (administrative units) on the Luga ("*по Лузѣ*") and imposed rents and tributes. Referring to this record the theory of reasonable probability of early identification Novgorod with the settlement on the Luga River founded in 10th century as Dytynets (Citadel) of the future Volodmyr city was grounded in the book "The Homeland of St. Volodymyr" [10] (Fig. 2).

3. Conclusions

The problem formulated by by V. Parkhomenko relating to the South localization of Novgorod in the chronicle of the IX–X centuries should not be ignored. Hopefully Novgorod scientists will consider this problem in spite of all patriotic feelings and contrary to scientific inertia.

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Юрій Диба

ДО ПРОБЛЕМИ ІНТЕРПРЕТАЦІЇ ІСТОРИЧНИХ СВІДЧЕНЬ ПРО ЛІТОПИСНИЙ 'НОВГОРОД' У IX – X СТОЛІТТЯХ
(зауваження з приводу нової публікації Є. Носова)

Анотація. Автор розглядає основні проблеми, пов'язані з вирішенням питання про заснування Новгорода на Волхові. Підставою стала нова публікація Євгенія Носова, присвячена питанню початків Новгорода на р. Волхові. Мета цієї публікації – вказати основні протиріччя, що виникають при читанні історичних джерел про Новгород IX–X століть порівняно з результатами археологічних досліджень цього міста. Висловлюючи нові міркування Є. Носов залишив поза увагою низку фактів, які вимагають пояснення: По-перше, допускаючи, що первісне городищенське укріплене поселення слов'ян мало назву 'Холмъ-городъ' новгородський дослідник не пояснив, яким чином ця гіпотетична назва корелюється із топонімом 'Холм' Славенського кінця, перша задокументована згадка про який датується 1134 р. По-друге, автор не наводить достатньо вагомих причин, які б змушували скандинавів Рюрика назвати перебудоване ними городищенське укріплення Новгородом, а не

зберегти вже вкорінену на місцевому ґрунті скандинавську форму 'Hólmgarðr'. По-третє, погоджуючись з тим, що найстарша назва 'Холмъ-городъ'/'Hólmgarðr' міцно прижилася в скандинавському середовищі й використовувалася на означення населеного пункту розташованого на витоках Волхова, випадало б назву 'Νεμογαρδάς' визнати такою, що стосувалася населеного пункту, розташованого значно південніше, за межами впливу скандинавських колоністів Поволхов'я. По-четверте, Є. Носов акцентує увагу на тому, що згадка про прихід Рюрика до Ільменя, де він зрубав город над Волховом, повністю топографічно відповідає місцю розташування сучасного Городища й розташовується 2 км вгору за течією від дитинця 1044 р. Одначе автор уникає згадки про легендарний Словенськ. По-п'яте, літописні оповіді про прикликання варягів, якими б яскравими вони не видавалися, є легендарними. Порушене свого часу В. Пархоменком питання південної локалізації літописного Новгорода IX–X ст. не слід обходити боком. Сподіваюся, звернуть на цю проблему увагу і новгородські науковці, при всіх патріотичних почуттях та всупереч науковій інерції.