

Report on Project Session  
Northern Research Forum  
Veliky Novgorod, Russia  
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### Novgorod as part of Northern Europe: history and political structure

#### ***East - West relations in the Viking Age, and the Vikings in the West.***

**Örnolfur Thorsson, Iceland**

Connections across the area of Northern Europe and North Atlantic were vivid and lively already in the Viking Age. The contacts worked on several levels: trade, cultural exchange and military activity. Practically, Novgorod was part of the Nordic in the period. In Icelandic saga manuscripts from the 13th century onwards, there are several surprisingly accurate descriptions about Novgorod and the Eastern Route.

#### ***Varangians / Vikings in North-West Russia.***

**Dr. Vladimir Konetsky, Novgorod State University, Russia**

Archaeological findings suggest that though Slavs lived in the area of river Volkhov before Nordic peoples appeared there, the first larger settlements in both ends of river Volkhov (Staraja Ladoga and Rurik Gorodiche) were founded by both Slavs and Nordic peoples simultaneously. They had apparently mutual interests in the area and opposed intruders together.

#### ***North European Popular Heroes: Representing the Past?***

**Joonas Ahola, University of Helsinki, Finland**

In heroic traditions of North Russia, Finland and Iceland, there are similarities suggesting close cultural contacts in the Viking Age, as well as correspondences in cultural and social basis.

#### ***Relations between Novgorod and West in the 13th-15th centuries,***

**Prof. Vasily Andreev, Novgorod State University, Russia**

Relations between Novgorodians and Scandinavians cooled down in the 12th century and warfare between Novgorod and Sweden took place several times during the following centuries, mainly in the territory of Finland and Estonia.

#### ***Relations between Novgorod and West in the 16th-17th Centuries,***

**Docent Gennadi Kovalenko, Novgorod State University, Russia**

As subjected to Moscow since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Novgorod still remained as a doorway from Russia to Europe. Novgorodians were aware of their position and leaders of Moscow had to correct them every now and then. In the beginning of the 17th century, Novgorod was under Swedish rule. Still after that, contacts between Russia and the West were mainly through Novgorod, all the way to foundation of St. Petersburg in 1703.

#### ***Modern Interest in the Vikings: How the History of the Vikings Serves Modern Political Realities.***

**Elisabeth Ward, Smithsonian Institution, USA**

History of Vikings is written by others than Vikings themselves, and their image has been utilized for several purposes from 9th century Christian to modern nationalistic ones. Previously, Vikings have started to serve as symbols of globalisation.

***Relevance and the Lessons of the Viking Age for Northern Regions.***

**Dr. Lassi Heininen, University of Lapland, Finland**

The Vikings can serve also as a metaphor for new geopolitics. Interregional and transnational contacts have gained significance since the end of the Cold War and, respectively, unified-state system lost some of its relevance in North Europe. The long period of close interregional contacts since the Viking Age outweigh the few decades long previous period of closed borders between East and West, and should not be forgotten. Mental borders in people's minds are the most important to overcome.

**Conclusions and plans for future**

In order not to forget the Viking Age, there was suggested joint projects to be carried out:

A traveling exhibition about Vikings in the East could be established as a cooperative project. Such an exhibition about Vikings in the West has been previously constructed by the Smithsonian institute in the United States.

Establishing a research network / project under the NRF umbrella on the eastern dimensions of the Viking Age was suggested. Connected to this aim was mentioned the project plan "Finnish Varangians" which is starting at the moment.

The NRF could coordinate cooperation with a now starting project on the history of North Atlantic, started simultaneously with 2nd NRF in Greenland.

There was also articulated the need to continue history sessions still in the 3<sup>rd</sup> open meeting.