

THE INVITATION TO THE VARANGIANS*

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1. THE SOURCE EVIDENCE

One of the earliest recorded episodes in East European ("Russian"/"Ukrainian") history is the famous invitation to the Baltic Sea "Varangians," allegedly extended by the inhabitants of the Novgorod region, that a prince be sent "to rule over us and give proper justice." In response, according to the usual analysis, a Varangian from a group known as the Rusъ (= Rus') was sent: Rjurik, his two brothers, and "all the Rus'" arrived, and from them the whole land and its inhabitants came to be called *Rus'*. The later rulers of Kiev, Novgorod, and other principalities took great pains to establish their legitimacy by tracing their descent to Rjurik.

Modern scholars have been reluctant to accept such a simple account of the origins of a major state organization. During the last two centuries, investigators have been particularly concerned with the ethnic identity of Rjurik and that of the inviters. Conflicting speculations have engendered lively and sometimes bitter controversy, too often marred by modern nationalistic passions. I will not touch on the history of studies about this episode;¹ instead, I would like to present

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* This article is part of a six-volume study, entitled *The Origins of Rus'*, which is being prepared for publication. Certain statements made here are based on the detailed argumentation presented in volume 5 of that work. It is a pleasant duty to express my gratitude to Professor Horace G. Lunt, my colleague and friend, who skillfully made the textual rearrangements necessary to convert a chapter from a lengthy study into this short independent article, which he also furnished with several philological footnotes. However, all responsibility for the article's hypothesis and proofs remains my own.

¹ The bibliography on this subject is extensive. I will cite only the most informative items: Vladimir A. Mošin, "Varjago-Russkij vopros," *Slavia* 10 (1931): 109-136, 343-379, 501-537; V. A. Mošin, "Načalo Rusi, Normany v Vostočnoj Evrope," *Byzantino-Slavica* 4 (1932): 33-58, 285-307; Henryk Łowmiański, *Zagadnienie roli Normanów w genezie państw słowiańskich* (Warsaw, 1957); Vladimir P. Šušarin, *Sovremennaja*

NOVGOROD FIRST

Въ времена же *Кыева и Щека и Хорива новгородстии людие, рекомиши* Словени, и Кривици и Меря.

Словенѣ свою волость имѣли, а Кривици свою, а Мере свою; кождо своимъ родомъ владаше; а Чюдь своимъ родом; и дань даяху Варягомъ

NURATIAN

1

3 Имаху дань Варязи приходяще изъ заморья на Чюди, и на Словѣнехъ, и на Мѣряхъ и на Всѣхъ [и на] Кривичахъ.

5 *А Козаре имахуть на Полянехъ, и на Сѣверехъ и на Вятичихъ,*

6 имаху по бѣлѣ и вѣверици тако от дыма.

7

а иже бяху у них, то ти насилье дѣяху Словеномъ, Кривичемъ и Мерямъ и Чюди.

И вѣсташа Словенѣ и Кривици и Меря и Чюдь на Варягы,

и изгнаша я за море;

и начаша владѣти сами собѣ и города ставити.

И вѣсташа сами на ся воевати,

LAURENTIAN

6367/859 A. D.

(И)маху дань Варязи изъ заморья

на Чюди, и на Словѣнех, на Мери и на Всѣхъ, [и на] Кривичѣхъ.

А Козари имаху нз Полянхъ, и на Сѣверехъ, и на Вятичехъ,

имаху по бѣлѣ и вѣверицѣ от дыма.

6370/862 A. D.

Изгнаша Варягы за море, и не даша имъ дани,

и почаша сами в собѣ володѣти,

и не бѣ в нихъ правды.

- и вѣста рѣдъ имъ рѣдѣмъ,
15 и вѣста родъ на родъ,
16 и быша в нихъ усобицѣ в нихъ.
14 И воевати сами на ся почаша.
15
13
17 И рѣша:
18 поищемъ сами в собѣ князя,
19 иже бы владѣть нами и рядилъ
по ряду, по праву.
20 Идоша за море к Варягомъ
21 к Руси.
*Сиче бо завахуть ты Варягы Русь,
яко се друзии зовутся Свее,
друзии же Урманн, Ангеляне,
инши Готе, тако и си.*
22 Ркоша
23 Русь
*Чюдъ, Словенъ, Кривичи и Вель * :*
24 земля наша велика и обилна,
а наряда въ ней нѣтъ.
25 Да поидете княжит и
владѣть нами.
26 И избраша ся трие брата
с роды своими,
27 и поаша по собѣ всю Русь
и придоша
28 къ Словенномъ плевъе.
- И бысть межн ими рать велика
и усобица,
И вѣсташа град на град,
И не бѣше в нихъ правды.
И рѣша к себѣ :
Князя поищемъ,
иже бы владѣть нами и
рядил ны по праву.
Идоша за море к Варягомъ
- И ркоша :
Земля наша велика и обилна,
а наряда у насъ нѣту,
да поидѣте к намъ княжитъ
и владѣть нами.
Избраща ся 3 брата
с роды своими,
и поаша со собою дружину многу
и приидишу.
И приидоша
къ Новугороду
- и вѣста рѣдъ имъ рѣдѣмъ,
(и) быша в нихъ усобицѣ.
И воевати почаша сами на ся.
(И) рѣша сами в себѣ:
Поищемъ собѣ князя,
иже бы владѣть нами и судилъ
по праву.
Идоша за море к Варягомъ
к Руси.
*Сиче бо ся заваху ты Варязи Русь,
яко се друзии зовутся Свее,
друзии же Урмане, Ангеляне,
друзии Гѣте, тако и си.*
Рѣша
Руси [изъ РА; Лав. Русь]
*Чюдъ, Словѣни, и Кривичи, и Вель * :*
земля наша велика и обилна,
а наряда въ ней нѣтъ.
Да поидѣте княжитъ
и владѣти нами.
И избраща ся 3 брата
с роды своими.
поаша по собѣ всю Русь,
и придоша
[Р:к Словенномъ плевѣе.

* Плат, Лав : вся; РА : вси.

- и срубиша город Ладогу и сѣде в Ладозѣ]
- 29 *И срубиша городъ Ладогу*
- И сѣде старѣиши
- 30 *И сѣде старѣиши*
- в *Новъгородѣ* бѣ имя ему Рюрикъ;
- 31 в Ладозѣ Рюрикъ,
- а другиѣи сѣде на Бѣлѣозерѣ Синеусъ;
- 32 а другиѣи Синеусъ на Бѣлѣозерѣ,
- а третей въ Изборьскѣ, имя ему Труворъ
- 33 а третѣи Труворъ въ Изборьскѣ.
- И от тѣхъ Варягъ,*
- 34 *И от тѣхъ Варягъ*
- находникъ тѣхъ,
- 35
- прозваша ся Русь,*
- 36 *прозва ся Руская земля,*
- и *от тѣхъ словет Руская земля;*
- 37
- и *суть новгородстии людие до днешнего дни от рода варяжьска.*
- 38
- По двою же лѣту умре Синеусъ и брат его Труворъ.
- 39
- И прія власть единъ Рюрикъ, обою брату власть,
- и нача владѣти единъ.
- 40 По двою же лѣту умре Синеусъ и брат его Труворъ.
- 41 И прія Рюрикъ власть всю одинъ.
- 42
- 43 *И пришеде къ Ильмерю и сруби городъ надъ Волховомъ, и прозваша и Новъгородъ, и сѣде ту княжа.*
- и срубиша город Ладогу и сѣде в Ладозѣ]
- старѣиши
- Рюрикъ,
- а другиѣи Синеусъ на Бѣлѣозерѣ,
- а третей Изборьскѣ, Труворъ.
- (И) от тѣхъ (Варягъ [ГРА])
- прозва ся Руская земля,*
- новгородъци [Р Новъгородъ]*
- ти суть людие новгородъци от рода варяжьска,*
- преже бо бѣша Словѣни.*
- По двою же лѣту Синеусъ умре а [ГРА и] братъ его Труворъ.
- И прія власть Рюрикъ [Р всю] [Р одинъ]
- [Р. те саме]

an analysis of the rather scanty source material and attempt a fresh evaluation.²

The “Invitation to the Varangians” is recorded only in the native chronicles of Old Rus’: there is no trace of it in Byzantine, Scandinavian, Islamic, or other written sources. Of the many variants the chronicles offer, only three need be taken into account here—the three which represent the earliest extant stages of Kievan annalistics.³ The Novgorod First Chronicle reflects the earliest compilation, dated about 1071, although the modifications made by a later Novgorod editor must be reckoned with. The Laurentian Chronicle reflects the final version of the compilation known as the *Pověst’ vremennyx lēt* or “Tale of Bygone Years” (ca. 1123), whereas the Hypatian Chronicle is the second variant of the *PVL* (the Mstislav Monomaxovič redaction, ca. 1119). One sign of the differences among these versions is that the story of Rjurik is recorded under the year 6362/854 in the Novgorod First Chronicle, while in the Hypatian and Laurentian it is divided into two entries: 6367/859 and 6370/862.

Since the only research method possible for us is comparison, the texts of these three chronicles are given here. Italicized words and passages are those that seem, on grounds we will discuss, to be insertions.⁴

2. WHO INITIATED THE INVITATION TO THE VARANGIANS?

The Novgorod First Chronicle (NFC) has, on the whole, preserved the oldest stage of the tradition while reflecting knowledge of life in

buržuaznaja istoriografija Drevnej Rusi (Moscow, 1964); Knud Rahbek Schmidt, et al., *Varangian Problems*, Report of the First International Symposium on the Theme “The Eastern Connections of the Nordic Peoples in the Viking Period and Early Middle Ages,” Moesgaard – University of Aarhus, 7-11 October 1968, *Scando-Slavica*, supp. 1 (Copenhagen, 1970).

² See the texts on pp. 8-10.

³ Concerning the Old Rus’ chronicles (*lētopisi*) see Aleksej A. Šaxmatov, *Razyskanija o drevnejšix russkix lētopisnyx svodax* (St. Petersburg, 1908); Mixail D. Priselkov, *Istorija russkogo lētopisanija XI-XV vv.* (Leningrad, 1940); Dimitrij S. Lixačev, *Russkie lētopisi i ix kul’turno-istoričeskoe značenie* (Moscow, 1969). See also Mark X. Aleškovskij, *Pověst’ vremennyx let* (Moscow, 1971).

⁴ The texts are quoted here according to the following editions: (NFC) = A. N. Nasonov, ed., *Novgorodskaja pervaja lētopis’* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1950), pp. 106-107; Laurentian Chronicle (Lav) = Evgenij F. Karskij, ed., *Polnoe sobranie russkix lētopisej* (hereafter *PSRL*), vol. 1:1, 2nd ed. (Leningrad, 1926), cols. 19-20; Hypatian Chronicle (Hyp) = A. A. Šaxmatov, ed., *PSRL*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (St. Petersburg, 1908), cols. 13-14. Spelling has been partly normalized. Some insignificant modifications based on related manuscripts are added in square brackets. Numerals are added to provide references to individual passages.

the north. It emphasizes that the invitation concerns the citizens of towns (*gorody/grady*), and not tribes or clans (*rody*):

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| и начаша владѣти сами собѣ | (11) And they began to govern themselves |
| и города ставити... | (12) and to build towns ... |
| И въсташа град на град, | (15) and town rose against town |
| и не бѣше в нихъ правды. | (13) And there was no law among them. |

The Kievan editor of the *PVL*, on the other hand, had no knowledge of the Baltic system of town self-government that we have ample reason to believe existed in Novgorod and other northern towns. He was used to the Polanian-Derevlianian type of tribal-territorial organization based on the *rod*, that is, on the concept of "kin" having the extended meaning of "clan" or "tribe." The editor simply misunderstood his sources. He misinterpreted the judicial term *pravda* 'law' (i.e., a direct and correct mode of action, as opposed to a devious or illegal one) by taking it in the moral sense of "truth" (as opposed to falsehood). The loss of the correct jurisdictional definition entailed a major change in the force of the passage:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| и почаша сами в собѣ
володѣти | (11) And they began to govern among themselves |
| и не бѣ в нихъ правды, | (13) And there was no <i>truth</i> among them, |
| и въста родъ на родъ. | (14) And <i>kin</i> rose against <i>kin</i> . |

The important notion of importing a legal code for the towns was thus lost.⁵

2.1 Both the Laurentian and Hypatian versions of the *PVL* associate the towns with ethnic names that we can assume refer to tribes.⁶ The

⁵ It is a well-known fact that the *Pravda rus'skaja*, the first legal code in Eastern Europe, was produced by the traveling merchants (*frequentantes*) of the city of Great Novgorod, which belonged to what I call the cultural sphere of the *Mare Balticum* (Baltic Sea), a colony of the cultural sphere of the *Mare Nostrum* (Mediterranean Sea). The original code of Novgorod was probably one of the early (Franco-Frisian) redactions (not preserved, unfortunately) of the "Merchant Law of the Island of Birka (*Bjarkeyjar-rétt*)," typical for the Baltic cultural sphere after 800 A.D. and prior to the emergence of the Hanseatic League. More on this important topic is contained in volume 5 of *The Origins of Rus*'.

⁶ It is clear that the larger *plemja* or "tribe" included (or could include) more than one *rod*. The early chronicles do not make the exact relationship clear. In the variants of this particular episode, only the term *rod* occurs (for the NFC, see passage 2).

editor has set up a kind of code that equates the tribal names, which suit the Kievan understanding of the situation, with the names of towns known to the Kievans of about 1100. After noting that the Varangians are newcomers, the above passage then continues (*PVL*, Lav col. 20) :

а перьвиѣ насельници в	But the first settlers in
Новѣгородѣ Словѣне;	Novgorod [were] the Slověne [Slovenians];
(вѣ) Полотьски Кривичи;	in Polock—the Krivičians
в Ростовѣ Меря;	in Rostov—the Merians;
в Бѣлѣ-озерѣ Веси;	in Bělozero—the Ves' [Vepsians];
в Муромѣ Мурома;	in Murom—the Muromians.

2.2 The list of tribes that appears in the invitation itself contains discrepancies, but these can be readily explained. The chief difficulty arose because the group called *Ves'* in the passage given in 2.1 was not clearly known to the Kievan editors of about 1100, and was equally unfamiliar to later scribes. Whether the old name was *ѡѡ* or *ѡѡѡ*, it quickly became confused with the pronoun *ѡѡ* 'all' and possibly with the Slavonic noun *ѡѡ* 'village' (well known from the Gospels and from translations such as those of Hamartolos). Thus, the *PVL* phrase in passage 4 may be normalized to a later *na vsěx Krivičěx* 'on all Kriviči.'⁷ This, in turn, presumably arose from an attempt to "correct" the misunderstood original text: "*na ѡѡsi [Vesi] i na Krivičixъ*." Similarly, in passage 23, the Laurentian text actually reads "*Kriviči·vsja zemlja naša velika*": the expected nominative *ѡѡ* or *ѡѡѡ* has been taken over into the next clause to become a modifier: "all our land." Study of the manuscript tradition enabled scholars to restore the original text in these instances long ago: the *Ves'* disappear from the chronicle after 882.

It is noteworthy that the distant Kievans retained the ethnonym *Ves'* (although it is distorted in four of seven passages), but the Novgorodians, presumably neighbors of the *Ves'*, make no reference to the name at all.⁸

⁷ This perfectly grammatical phrase was copied into most later chronicles. But it should be pointed out that nowhere in the early accounts is there any indication that sub-groups of the Kriviči acted so independently that the annalist would feel it necessary to underline their unity in this particular instance.

⁸ The *Ves'* appear only in lists, never as independent actors. The name occurs: (a) in a long list of the inhabitants of Japheth's allotment of land (Lav col. 4, Hyp col. 4); (b) in another enumeration of who lived where (Lav col. 10, Hyp col. 8); (c) in a list of tribes paying tribute to the Rus' (Lav col. 11, Hyp col. 8); (d, e, f) in the three passages

2.21 The NFC lacks the introduction of the redactions represented by the Laurentian and Hypatian chronicles, where the Ves' are mentioned three times. It also omits the passage cited above in 2.1 and the account of Oleg's campaign of 882. Indeed, our only comparison must be indirect: a juxtaposition of items 4 and 23 in the southern accounts of the invitation to the Varangians with the elements in items 2, 3, 6, and 7 of the Novgorod account.

2.22 In items 4 and 23, the Čud' and the Slověne stand together at the head of the lists, but the Novgorod editor has relegated the Čud' to last place. It may well be that he considered the Novgorodians, including himself, as Slověne. Local pride may have impelled him to give precedence to his own group. On the other hand, it seems obvious that the meaning of the term Čud' had changed.

The earliest sources, whether written or oral, must have had separate names for two closely related groups of Fennic-speaking peoples: Čud' for those to the west and north of Novgorod, ancestors of the Estonians and Vots (later Vod'); and Ves' (or Вѣсь) for those to the east and northeast, presumably the ancestors of the Vepsians. In modern times, the Russians called the Vepsians *čud'* or *čuxari*. Surely this name was established a thousand years ago, at a time when the Slavic newcomers had occupied choice positions in formerly Fennic territory, and after the time when the first Slavic settlers had reason to make careful distinctions among their neighbors.⁹

When the Novgorod editor removed the Čud' from the favored first position, he probably put their name at the end of the list. Later copyists, believing that the term *Ves'* referred to the people now called Čud', simply deleted the name altogether.¹⁰

discussed above; and finally (g) in a list of soldiers Oleg took on an expedition in 882 (Lav col. 22, Hyp col. 16). But, based upon the Oriental and Old Norse sources, one may assume that both the Ves' and the Čud' were important competitors of the Slověne for domination in the North. After the latter's final victory, the ruling strata of the newly created Great Novgorod thoroughly destroyed all vestiges of the former glory of their predecessors. A detailed analysis of the existing data is given in volume 5 of *The Origins of Rus'*.

⁹ The long silence in written sources about the Vepsians and the clear evidence that the group had been in the area continuously since well before 850 has made scholars cautious about identifying the Ves' with modern Vepsians. The term Čud' has been applied over the centuries to various Fennic groups in the northern lake area and especially to the Estonians. See V. V. Pimenov, *Vepsy* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1965), for a detailed discussion.

¹⁰ References to the Čud' in the *PVL* (s.a. 907, 980, 988, 1030, 1071, 1113, 1116) generally refer to the Ests and to the area west and northwest of Novgorod. In the NFC s.a. 989 (p. 161) is another item, noting that Glěb Svjatoslavič "fled beyond Volok;

2.23 In the two Kievan redactions of the *PVL*, the list of tribes paying tribute to the Varangians includes five names. However, when the editor repeats the list with the invitation itself (item 23), the name *Merja* 'Merians' is omitted. I submit that this is not an accidental omission, but that the name was not present in the original text of the invitation.

2.3 If these considerations are accepted, the tradition of the invitation is seen to refer to five towns, disguised by the Kievan chronicler as tribes who participated in the action. The code and equivalent towns are these :

1. Čud' = (Old Ladoga, although the town is not mentioned directly)
2. Slověne = Novgorod
3. Merja = Rostov
4. Ves' = Bělozero
5. Kriviči = Polock.

3. DID FIVE "TRIBES" OR THREE "TOWNS" PARTICIPATE IN THE INVITATION?

An important discrepancy is now apparent: although five tribes are listed as extending the invitation, only three brothers came to be rulers. Why were two groups discriminated against? Let us examine their residences to see what information these provide.

3.1 The oldest brother settled in (Old) Ladoga, as the Hypatian Chronicle rightly states. The fact that the NFC has Rjurik settle in Novgorod is surely a change due to local patriotic sentiment (as was moving the Čud' out of first place in the initial listing in item 2).

Since Ladoga is situated in the old Čud' territory and the leading role in the invitation was played by the Čud'-Ests-Vots, we might expect that

and the Čud' killed him." This presumably refers to the Zavolok Čud' to the northeast of Bělozero, the group Pimenov argues are Vepsians. In any case, Pimenov adduces an impressive body of evidence to indicate that the main territory of the Ves' was west of Bělozero, extending well into Novgorod's domain. In the sixteenth century Novgorodian and Muscovite officials apparently referred to any Fennic population in the Novgorod area as Čud' (Pimenov, p. 183). This usage may well have been established earlier, so that the scribe of the oldest copy of the NFC that contains the beginning of the *PVL* (the *Komissionnyj spisok*, mid-fifteenth century) already considered the special name *Ves'* redundant, for the Čud' were mentioned, too.

Ladoga would be the town named here. This expectation is supported by archaeological evidence. Old Ladoga is the oldest town in the northwestern part of Eastern Europe: archaeologists date its founding to the seventh or early eighth century.¹¹

Ladoga's importance declined, however, and as A. N. Nasonov has demonstrated,¹² the town was integrated into the territory of the Slověne sometime in the 1040s or 1050s, thus becoming a part of the Novgorod principality. Therefore, some decades later the Novgorod chronicler could afford to overlook Ladoga's former position and substitute for it the contemporary Slověne economic and political center—Novgorod.

3.2 The second brother settled in Bělozero, on the territory of the Ves'. Here, too, archaeology is helpful. Excavations of the "Old Town," seventeen kilometers to the east of the present Bělozero [Bělozersk ?] have established the presence of a town population there during the ninth to thirteenth century.¹³

3.3 Relatively little is known about Izborsk, the town of the third brother. However, archaeologists have shown that its political successor, Pļskov or Pskov, had some significance in trade and commerce from the eighth century.¹⁴ Surely, then, it is correct to regard Izborsk and Pskov as the old, pre-Novgorodian centers of the territory of the Slověne "tribe" (Wends).¹⁵

3.31 Novgorod was established some time later: archaeologists date its founding to no earlier than the end of the ninth century.¹⁶

¹¹ See W. J. Raudonikas, *Die Normannen der Wikingerzeit und das Ladogagebiet* (Stockholm, 1930). Cf. also Aleksander L. Mongajt, *Arxeologija v SSSR* (Moscow, 1955), pp. 360-361.

¹² A. N. Nasonov, "Russkaja zemlja" i obrazovanie territorii drevnerusskogo gosudarstva (Moscow, 1951), pp. 73-74.

¹³ See Mongajt, *Arxeologija v SSSR*, p. 362; L. A. Golubeva, "Raskopki v Beloozere," in *Arxeologičeskie otkrytija 1965 goda* (Moscow, 1966), pp. 174-176; L. A. Golubeva, "Amfory i krasnoglinjanye kuvšiny Beloozera," *Kratkie soobščeniya Instituta arxeologii* (hereafter *KS Inst Arx*) 135 (1973): 101-104.

¹⁴ V. V. Sedov, "Izborskaja ekspedicija," in *Arxeologičeskie otkrytija 1972 goda* (Moscow, 1973), pp. 39-40; V. V. Sedov, "Raskopki izborskoj ekspedicii," in *Archeologičeskie otkrytija 1973 goda* (Moscow, 1974), pp. 31-32.

¹⁵ I. K. Labutina, "Oxrannye raskopki v Pskove," in *Arxeologičeskie otkrytija 1972 goda*, pp. 20-21; K. M. Plotkin, "Raskopki gorodišča Kamno pod Pskovom," in *Arxeologičeskie otkrytija 1973 goda*, p. 28. Cf. also A. L. Mongajt, *Arxeologija v SSSR*, p. 362; Mixail I. Tixomirov, *Drevnerusskie goroda*, 2nd ed. (Moscow, 1956), pp. 389-390.

¹⁶ See Mongajt, *Arxeologija v SSSR*, p. 362-364; cf. S. N. Orlov, "Arxeologičeskie

This means that Old Ladoga is some two centuries older, and Izborsk and Pskov about one hundred fifty years older than Novgorod.

3.32 All this suggests that at various times the Slověne had different economic-political centers, whose chronology and succession were approximately as follows:

8th-9th centuries	Izborsk
8th-10th centuries	Рѣсков/Pskov
10th century	Novgorod.

3.4 The archeological evidence thus belies the insertions made in the story by Novgorod chroniclers and used in subsequent accounts.

3.5 It seems clear, then, that the invitation was issued at the initiative of the citizens of only three towns, corresponding to the number of brothers. Their relative rank is indicated by the order of listing:

1. Rjurik: (Old) Ladoga = Čud'
2. Sineus: Bělozero = Ves'
3. Truvor: Izborsk = Slověne

3.51 The Slověne apparently played a minor role in the episode. The "invitation" came primarily from the two Fennic towns of Old Ladoga and Bělozero, represented by the "tribes" of the Čud' (Ests/Vots) and the Ves' (Vepsians).

3.52 As for the Krivičians (Polock) and the Merja (Rostov), their names were added to the list later, because the chroniclers interpreted the great conquests subsequently made by the Polock as part of the alleged activities of Rjurik.¹⁷

3.6 These facts and considerations lead us to the following conclusions. The invitation to the Varangians was initiated not by tribal organizations, but by the citizens of two Fennic towns—Old Ladoga (the center

issledovanija na Rjurikovom gorodišče pod Novgorodom," *KS Inst Arx* 135 (1973): 77-79. B. A. Kolčín, who applied the dendrochronological method to the study of the fragments of the wooden structures from the Nerevskij Konec of Novgorod (excavated between 1951 and 1962), dates the oldest stratum to 953 A.D. See his "K itogam rabot Novgorodskoj arxeologičeskoj ekspedicii, 1951-1962," in *Kratkie soobščeniya Instituta material'noj kul'tury* 99 (1964): 3-30; B. A. Kolčín, *Novgorodskie drevnosti: Drevljannye izdelija, Arxeologija SSSR: Svod arxeologičeskix istočnikov*, no. E 1-55 (Moscow, 1968), pp. 10.

¹⁷ See *PVL*, s.a. 6370/862. A chapter in volume 5 of *The Origins of Rus'* deals with the relations between Polock/the Kriviči and Rostov/the Merja.

of the Čud'/Vot') and Bělozero (the center of the Ves'/Vepsians)—together with the citizens of the Slavic town of Izborsk (then the center of the Slověne).

All three centers were interconnected by waterways and belonged to the sphere of the Baltic Sea; each was also situated near a major lake.¹⁸ Old Ladoga, closest to the Baltic Sea, occupied the central position among them and therefore assumed the leading role.

4. WHO WAS INVITED?

4.1 All three accounts of the invitation contain the identical phrase (item 20), “ They went overseas to the Varangians.”¹⁹

4.2 The NFC has preserved the original text, which omitted item 21—the phrase “to the Rus’”—and the list of different Varangian peoples that followed.²⁰

The second list of “tribes,” following the words *rkoša/rěša* ‘they said’ (item 22), must also be viewed as an insertion. The variation *rěša Rusi* ‘they said to the Rus’,’ as opposed to *rěša Rusь* ‘said the Rus’,’ is a later complication that involved speculations on the part of editors in the eleventh to fourteenth century as to whether there were Rus’ among the inviters or not.

4.3 After accepting the invitation, the three brothers took with them (item 27) either “a numerous and most wonderful *družina*,” according to the NFC, or “all the Rus’,” according to the other two versions.

4.4 The term *vsja Rus’* ‘all the Rus’’ clearly refers to Rus’ in the sense of the domain governed by the “great prince of Rus’,” attested to as early as the year 971, when the great prince of Rus’ Svjatoslav (*pri Svjatoslavě velicěm knjazi rustěmь*) concluded a treaty with the Byzantine emperor John I Tzimisces (969-976).²¹

¹⁸ This is typical of the so-called Birka period in the culture of the *Mare Balticum* (about 800-975), as discussed in my *Origins of Rus’*.

¹⁹ “Varangian” in this context refers to the members of a multinational, professional society participating in the maritime activities of the Baltic. It is not a specific ethnic term, but is comparable to a general one like “Cossacks.”

²⁰ This list will be examined below.

²¹ *PVL*, s.a. 6479/971 = Lav, *PSRL*, vol. 1:1, 2nd ed., col. 73.

<p>Яко же кляхся ко царемъ гречскимъ и со мною: (1) боляре и (2) Русь вся, да схранимъ правая съвъ- щанья.</p>	<p>As I have sworn to the Greek emperors, and with me : (1) the boyars and (2) all the Rus', let us keep this righteous agreement.</p>
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This passage makes it clear that “all the Rus’” within the governance of the great princes of Rus’ refers to their *družina* or retinue.

4.41 This usage also occurs in a passage of Constantine Porphyrogenitus (948-950), where πάντες οἱ Ῥῶς = вся Русь.²²

4.42 In the eleventh century, the term “all the Rus’” was replaced by that “all the land of Rus’.” Thus the Ecclesiastical Statute of Volodimer (*Cerkovnyi ustav Volodimera*) refers to Volodimer:²³ иже крести всю землю Русьскою; “who christened the whole land of Rus’.” In describing the second translation of the relics of Saints Boris and Glēb in 1115, the NFC states:²⁴

<p>съвокупишася братья Вышегородѣ Володимеръ, Олегъ, Давыдъ и вся Руская земля</p>	<p>In Vyšegorod gathered the brothers [i.e., fellow-princes] Volodimer, Oleg, David and all the land of Rus’.</p>
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In the *PVL*'s description of the oath at Ljubeč in 1097, all the princes meet and agree to peace and cooperation; if anyone breaks the agreement:

<p>Да будетъ на нь хрестъ честный и вся земля Руская²⁵</p>	<p>Let the honorable Cross be against him and <i>all the land of Rus’</i></p>
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²² Ἡνίκα ὁ Νοέμβριος μὴν εισέλθῃ, εὐθέως οἱ αὐτῶν ἐξέρχονται ἄρχοντες μετὰ πάντων τῶν Ῥῶς ἀπὸ τὸν Κίαβον, καὶ ἀπέρχονται εἰς τὰ πολύδια, ὃ λέγεται γύρα, ἤγουν εἰς τὰς Σκλαβηνίας: “When the month of November begins, their chiefs (*bojars*) together with ‘all the Rus’, leave Kiev at once and go off on the *polydia* (*poludie*: tribute, circuits, round) which means [tribute] rounds to the Slavic regions’....” See *De Administrando Imperio*, ed. Gy. Moravcik (Budapest, 1949), p. 62, and the English translation by R. J. H. Jenkins, p. 63.

²³ A. A. Zimin, *Pamjatniki prava Kievskogo gosudarstva*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1952), p. 237 (“pervaja redakcija po spisku Istoričeskogo muzeja XV v.”); cf. *PSRL*, vol. 2, 2nd ed., cols. 383-384.

²⁴ NFC, ed. A. N. Nasonov, p. 20, s.a. 6623/1115.

²⁵ Нур, ed. A. A. Šaxmatov, *PSRL*, vol. 2, 2nd ed., col. 231.

Other examples of this usage of “all the land of Rus’” are found s.a. 1145 and 1154.²⁶

4.43 The phrase *mužě zemlě Ruskoě* ‘men of the land of Rus’ is not as common. However, it does occur in Great Prince Svjatoslav Vsevolodič’s invocation (1185).²⁷

4.5 The editor of the Kievan *PVL* considered Rjurik the founder of the Kievan dynasty: therefore, obviously, Rjurik had to be a “great prince of Rus’.” The old terminology for the retinue of such a prince was “all of the Rus’” (although in the editor’s contemporary parlance it would have been “the whole land of Rus’”). It was thus natural for the *PVL* editor to replace the word *družina* of the older Novgorod text by the term “all the Rus’,” the term that had been correct in Kiev at the court of the great prince of Rus’ ca. 1116-1123.

4.6 Following the list of the residences of the three Varangian brothers there is an obvious editorial insert (items 34-39) which is particularly clumsy in two of the three variants:

NOVGOROD FIRST	HYPATIAN	LAURENTIAN
And from those Varangians, those newcomers, they were named Rus’ and from them is known the land of Rus’ and the people of Novgorod are to this very day of the kin of the Varangians	And from those Varangians was named the land of Rus’	And from those Varangians was named the land of Rus’; Novgorodians, and the people of Novgorod are of the kin of the Varangians; for formerly they were Slověne.

4.61 Novgorod was never called “the Land of Rus’”: this is proved in the texts of the chronicles and in other documents.²⁸ Moreover, as noted above (3.31), Novgorod surely did not exist as a city at the time

²⁶ NFC, ed. A. N. Nasonov, p. 27 (s.a. 1145); Kievan Chronicle in Hyp, ed. A. A. Šaxmatov, *PSRL*, vol. 2, 2nd ed., col. 469 (s.a. 1154); col. 478 (s.a. 1154).

²⁷ Kievan Chronicle in Hyp, ed. A. A. Šaxmatov, *PSRL*, vol. 2, 2nd ed., col. 645 (s.a. 1184): **О любѧ моя братьѧ і сыновѧ и мужѧ землѧ Рускоѧ.**

²⁸ See, e.g., Nasonov, “*Russkaja zemlja*,” pp. 28-50, 69-92, and *passim*.

the invitation to the Varangian brothers was extended, which must have been well before 900 (see below).

Therefore the rendition of Rjurik's activities in the Hypatian Chronicle that ascribes to Rjurik of Ladoga the idea that Novgorod was his residency, created by the Novgorod chronicler, is clearly a later editorial addition.

Furthermore, important traditions that cannot be discussed here ascribe the founding of Novgorod to another man, Gostomysl.²⁹

4.62 Kiev became known as Rus' only after it had been conquered by the great prince Igor (of the Rus' Volga Kaganate), no earlier than the 930s.³⁰

Basically all three chronicles agree thus:³¹

NOVGOROD FIRST, p. 107 HYPATIAN, col. 17 LAURENTIAN, col. 23

И сѣде Игорь княжа в Киевѣ		
и бѣша у него	и бѣша у него	и бѣша у него
Варязи мужи Словенѣ	Словѣни и Варязи	Варязи и Словѣни
и оттолѣ прочии	и прочии [и оттолѣ]	и прочии [и оттолѣ]
прозвашася Русью	прозвашася Русью	прозвашася Русью, i.e.:
s.a. 6362/854		s.a. 6390/882

“Igor settled in Kiev, reigning as prince
There were with him Varangian warriors, Slověne and others,
who from that time were [also] called Rus’.”

Thus, I submit, there can be no doubt that the invitation was extended only to the Varangians. The word *Rus'* that follows the word *Varangians* in the *PVL* (items 21, 27, 36 of the passage) is merely an editorial addition made when the text was revised sometime after 1072.

5. THE DATE OF THE INVITATION

The dates in the early part of the *PVL*, including that of the invitation to the Varangians, are speculations made by the scholarly chroniclers of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries; they are not to be accepted as

²⁹ Concerning Gostomysl see A. A. Šaxmatov, *Razyskanija o drevnejšix Russkix lĕtopisnyx svodax* (St. Petersburg, 1908), pp. 311, 517-518; Nasonov, “*Russkaja zemlja*,” pp. 69, 72, and the relevant chapter in my *Origins of Rus'*, volume 5.

³⁰ See Norman Golb and Omeljan Pritsak, *The Khazar Hebrew Documents* (in press).

³¹ One should take into account that the editor of the *PVL* replaced Igor with Oleg as the conqueror of Kiev, certainly in agreement with his Kievo-centric conception.

valid.³² It is clear from other Rus'ian sources that the invitation must have been extended before Great Prince Oleg of Rus' concluded a treaty with the Greeks in 911. Most likely, the treaty was connected with the extensive piracy of the Vikings in the mid-ninth century, known to us from Western sources.³³

* * *

The invitation to the Varangians was initiated by the citizens of two Fennic towns, Old Ladoga and Bělozero, along with the citizens of the Slavic town of Izborsk, sometime after the mid-ninth century but no later than 910.

The invitation was extended only to the Varangians.

The term *Rus'* in the text of the invitation was added by the *PVL* editor sometime after 1072.

Novgorod could not have played any role in the invitation of the Varangians because at that time it did not exist as a town. The town of Izborsk was then the center of the Slověne.

There is no source basis for the theory, long dominant in scholarship, which claims that *Rus'* came into being because a group of five "Slavic" tribes invited the Rus' clan to Novgorod in 862.

Every part of such an argument is wrong, for :

The inviters were not five tribes, but the citizens of three towns ;

They did not invite the Rus'ians, but the Varangians ;

The chief inviting town was not Novgorod, but Old Ladoga ;

The year 862 as the date of the invitation is fictitious.

The entire conception behind this argument is merely a repetition of the subjective speculations of the Old Rus'ian chroniclers. Therefore it must be corrected rather than accepted as a fact of history.

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³² See, e.g., the study by E. G. Zykov "Izvestija o Bolgarii v Povesti vremennyx let i ix istočnik," *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoj literatury* 24 (1969): 48-57.

³³ It is necessary to stress that contrary to the views of the so-called Normanist school (which postulates the direct importation of a monolithic and monolingualistic higher Scandinavian culture that was still non-existent at the time into the Volga-Dvina-Dnieper area) I regard the "Vikings" as the developing society of the *Mare Balticum* region. The "Swedes," the Rus', the Varjagi, etc., appear as a polyethnic, multilingual and non-territorial community composed of "nomads of the sea" and urban dwellers in partly "Oriental" (i.e., owned and controlled by lords) and partly "polis" type towns and trading settlements. In the professional society of the *Mare Balticum*, as described above, all peoples along its shore were equal participants : Norsemen (Scandinavians), Wends (Slavs), Balts, and Finns.