

# Eastern Middle Sweden, Finland and beyond in the Late Vendel and Early Viking periods

In memory of Professor Ella Kivikoski, Helsingfors  
(1901–1990)

By *Johan Callmer*

Callmer, J., 2024. Eastern Middle Sweden, Finland and beyond in the Late Vendel and Early Viking periods. *Fornvännen* 119, Stockholm.

The Scandinavian interest in the Eurasian fur trade started in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century. Contacts between the Baltic Finns and the Permian groups in the Volga-Kama-Vyatka river region was the impetus for these contacts. The trail is seen in distinct Nevolino belt fittings, chain holders with twin horse heads and glass beads emanating from the East. Scandinavian fur traders established close interaction with the Baltic Finns in what is today Finland and probably Northern Estonia increased from AD 700. Scandinavian glass beads and swords were in use in South-Western Finland in the early 8<sup>th</sup> c. Finnish A III pottery emerged in Eastern Middle Sweden already in the late 7<sup>th</sup> c., both as imports proper but also as local products made by Finnish women. In this early phase of interaction personal contacts obviously played a major role. After c. AD 860 these connections changed. The Baltic Finns expressed their cultural identity in a more exposed way. Scandinavian traders turned their attention to the expanding market based on Birka and the Rus'. From c. AD 860 territorial claims in the East were accentuated, leading to the later, bigger Rus'.

Keywords: Fur trade, Baltic Finns, Merovingian Period, Viking Age, Eastern expansion, glass beads, Nevolino belts, Baltic Finnic fine ware, Carinated pottery

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## *Introduction*

Before we start I want to be explicit about the time and the scene of this study. Our discussion is centered on the period before the Viking Period and on the very beginning of it. The scene unfolds in Eastern Middle Sweden and like a broad ribbon proceeds far towards the East. That means that not only the taiga wood lands east of Ladoga, on Beloe Ozero and further on towards the Vyatka and the Kama are in some respects

included. For lack of space the highly relevant history of southern Ostrobothnia will not be discussed. However some data concerning this area appear on the maps.

This contribution is centered on the question why the remnants of material culture traveling between Eastern Middle Sweden, the Åland Islands and Finland and the lands beyond in the east are so much more plentiful

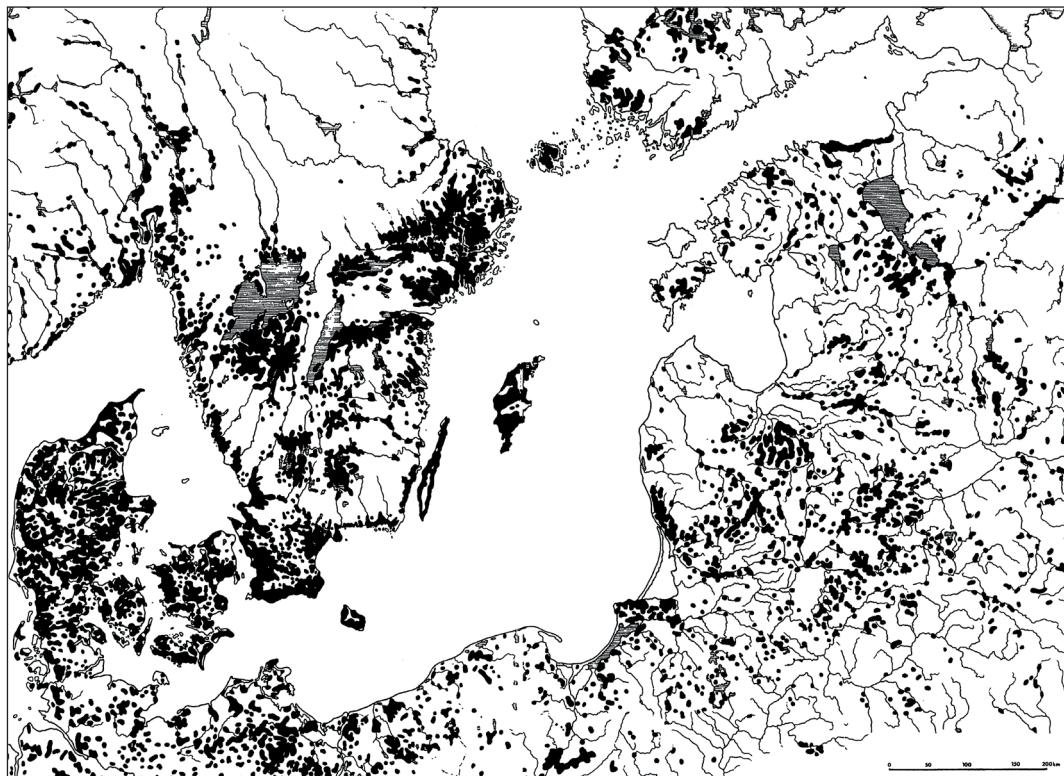


Fig. 1. The sedentary population of the Baltic Region ca. AD 800. Map: Johan Callmer.

during the century before the Viking Period and the Early Viking Period than before. The answer is of course that they indicate increased exchange but the next question is what exchange and why. The answer to these latter questions is no doubt complex. However it is my conviction that the motor behind these patterns of exchange is the fur trade (Henning 1930; Schier 1951; Odner 1981). That means that fur trade is the *sine qua non* of patterns of interaction beginning in the Early Middle Ages in Northern Europe and subsequently moving eastward during the later part of the Middle Ages crossing into western Siberia in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and moving further on through Siberia ending up in Alaska and on the western coast of Canada and the US in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There the Russian trappers met the French and Anglo-Saxon backwoodsmen, who had begun their move towards the west in New England and on the St. Lawrence River in the 16<sup>th</sup> cen-

tury. However it is also obvious that along with the fur trade went a number of more or less closely connected exchange systems. Only later the slave trade became increasingly important in the east. This is in my opinion something culminating in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century its impact had just begun to be discernible in the Baltic Region. We must also remember that slave trade never became important in the vast lands of the Euro-Asian taiga. The enormous distances and the demography never made it profitable in the north (fig. 1). Slave trade was something of the south with much more numerous populations.

It is most likely that a certain demand for high quality furs had developed in Southern Europe and the Orient already in the Late Bronze Age. We will, of course, not dwell on this early history of the fur trade here. Suffice it to say that after a period of strong development in the Late Roman and Early Migration Period

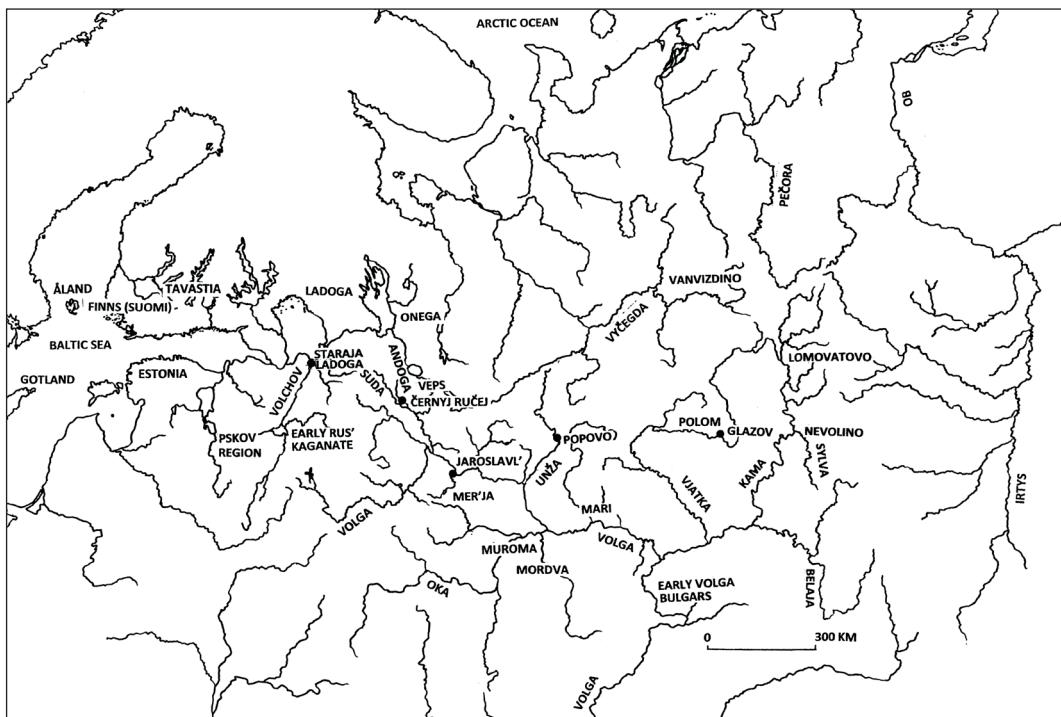


Fig. 2. North-Eastern Europe in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. Map: Johan Callmer.

we must note a certain weakening and slowing down of long distance trade. The reasons for this phenomenon will not be commented on here although this low is contemporary with a general slow-down. We must, however, assume that the fur trade had not ceased altogether but it is not until the later part of the 7<sup>th</sup> century or ca. 700 AD that the fur trade along with other strategies to exploit the taiga slowly begins to play an important role again in the North (Lindholm & Ljungkvist 2016, pp.13, 18–21; Hennius 2021). Most probably the real potential for the hunting of furbearing animals had been extinguished in many of the more easily reached parts of Scandinavia. Fur trapping in Eurasia from early times was practiced in excess. Furbearing animals with the best furs were hunted to extinction or almost extinction. This means that it took a very long time before the overhunted lands could be profitable hunting grounds again, if ever (Kirikov 1960).

#### *The fur trade in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century: the lands between Uppland and the Kama*

Finland had certainly been touched upon in the Roman and Migration periods but probably had a smaller community of hunters and far more extensive hunting grounds (Callmer 1986). The more distant lands further away towards the North and the East had not been tapped at all. However, if we switch our view towards North-Eastern Europe (fig. 2), we can follow a similar development. In the drainage of the big Volga tributaries, the Kama and the Vjatka, and in the taiga to the north of them fur hunting had been important for a long time as well. Probably we have a certain decrease in the activities in the Migration Period but in the 7<sup>th</sup> century exchange with the south rebounds. The contact ways towards the north were from the Caspian along the Volga towards the junctions with the Kama and the Vjatka and from the district of Khwarezm to the south of the Aral Sea following an old

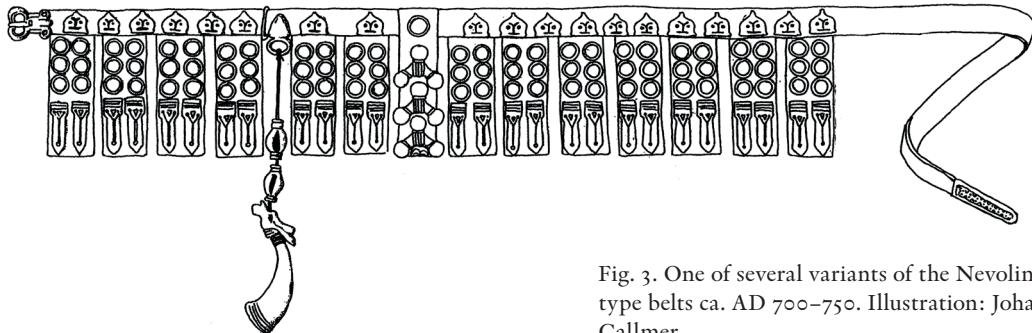


Fig. 3. One of several variants of the Nevolino type belts ca. AD 700–750. Illustration: Johan Callmer.

traditional caravan route across the steppe to the lower Kama River. The four or five key regions of these transactions were on the Kama and its tributaries and on the upper Čepca, a tributary of Vjatka. The local groups here are archaeologically named the Nevolino, the Lomovatovo and the Polom cultures (Goldina 1985; Goldina & Vodolago 1990; Ivanov 1998). However the real hunting was not so much there as in the taiga lands further north. There were long distance winter hunting expeditions setting out for many months in the taiga. For the hunting local groups along the northern rivers were even more important. We know them as the Vanvizdino culture and Proto-Samoyed groups (Česnokova 1983; Savel'eva 1995). Towards the north these exchange activities reached the coast of the Arctic Ocean (Murygin 1992). The exchange links emanating from the settlements on the Kama and the Vjatka rivers not only stretched out towards the north but also towards the east and the west.

For us the successive extension towards the west is of course most interesting. Distinctive cultural attributes from the Kama and the Vjatka turned up on the lower Oka River, a tributary joining the Volga from the southwest east of Moscow, in graves of the Mordovian and Muroma groups (e.g. Grišakov & Zeleneev 1990; e.g. Peterburgskij 2011). For reasons which will soon be obvious we are here primarily interested in finds of mounted belts of the so called Nevolino type (fig. 3). These belts imitate late heraldic Nomad belts and were produced in the Kama region. They date from the time around

AD 700 to ca. AD 750 according to professor Rimma Goldina, the major authority on the Nevolino and Lomovatovo cultures (Goldina 2012). For some time the finds in the Oka region were used to reconstruct a south-western trade link along the middle Volga (Carpelan 2004). Today we must, however, consider another more likely extension of the eastern fur trade network towards the west. Excavations of two key sites in the taiga ca. 600 km directly west of the Čepca settlements (fig. 2) bear ample evidence of close contacts with the east and visits of people coming from that direction. We are here concerned with the two settlements Popovo Gorodišče (Leont'ev 1989) and Unorož (Rjabinin 1992). A further 300 km on towards the west, in the lands of the Veps, settlement sites and cremation cemeteries at Černyj Ručej and Stupolochta yielded a rich material indicating very close and regular contacts not only in general with the east but more exactly with the Kama-Vjatka heartlands (Kudrjašov 2008; 2014). Among the finds there are distinctive Nevolino belts (fig. 3), beads and pottery indicative of the early 8<sup>th</sup> century. With this new *pointe d'appui* we are no more than another 300 km from Lake Ladoga. At Staraja Ladoga just south of the lake there is another, rather old, grave find with a Nevolino belt close by Staraja Ladoga (Brandenburg 1895). This new situation is of course highly interesting with regard to the strong representation of Nevolino belts in western Finland (fig. 4) (Kivikoski 1973, pp. 83–84). The majority of the finds are from Satakunda. The other contemporary eastern imports to Finland will not be treated here for

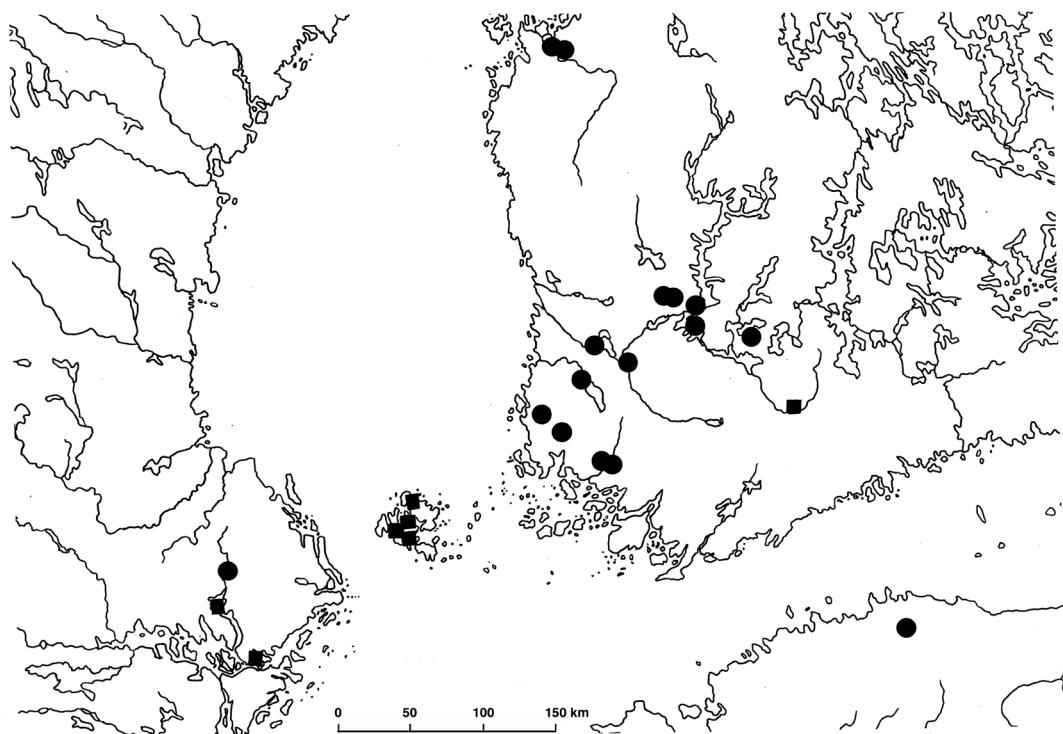


Fig. 4. Finds of Nevolino type belts (dots) and Nevolino beads (squares) in the central Baltic Region ca. AD 700–750. Map: Johan Callmer.

lack of space. Very striking is also a well known old find from the so called Gold Barrow at Gamla Uppsala (Ljungkvist 2013). That there are no other find on the Swedish side may be a coincidence. There are very few really rich finds from men's cremation burials in Eastern Middle Sweden. Quite important is the occurrence of an Eastern belt buckle dating from the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century in one of the graves in the Helgö cemeteries (most probably Late Nevolino) (Melin 2001, p. 24). On the map fig. 4 finds of glass beads of a distinctive Nevolino type with eight raised eyes are also marked. The Swedish finds on the map are only two but from Åland we have four finds. The finds are perhaps not so many but they are definitely there and tell of a more differentiated exchange pattern. It is quite interesting that these two finds on the Swedish side have been found in two micro regions, which remain important for exchange with Finland.

This eastern link obviously fascinated many Finnish scholars. Meinander in a well-known article in the Kivikoski festschrift stressed the changed sexual attribution of the Nevolino belts from female to male among the Western Finns (Meinander 1973, p. 150). The problem may not be that great. Belts with bronze mounts are in general carried by men in major parts of Europe in the Early Medieval period. Already among the Finnish groups on the Oka the female connection is more or less lost. So the Finnish warriors parading the Nevolino belts were after all not laughed at by Eastern guests. We must consider it most likely that the Finns procured many of these belts from Veps groups (e.g. the Černyj Ručej–Stupolochta settlements cf. above), whom they met on long distance hunting expeditions. The appearance of Veps hunters on the Finnish lake plateau cannot either be ruled out. It is quite possible that we had quite a complex cultural situation in inner Finland in the 8<sup>th</sup> century with

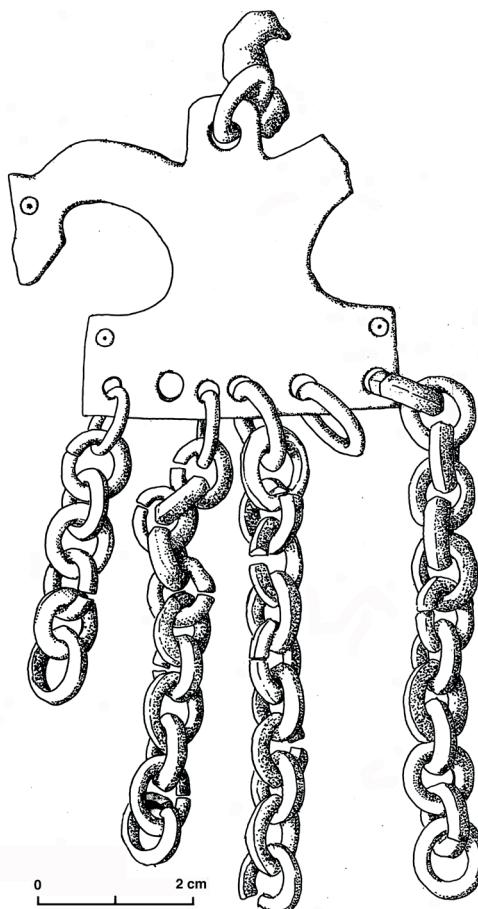


Fig. 5. Chain holder of East-Finnish type produced in Finland ca. AD 700–750. Illustration: Johan Callmer.

Finns of two kinds, Sami and also the Eastern guests.

The strength of this cultural transmission from the east is very considerable and as well complex. This is also clearly indicated through the chain holders with two reversed horse heads known from finds in Finland Proper and on the Åland Islands (fig. 5). It seems they are exactly contemporary with the Nevolino-belts. The motive became popular in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries among the population in the Kama-Vjatka area. The horse became a strongly loaded symbol for positive powers and kept its popularity among many Eastern Finnish groups for centuries (Pav-

lova 2008, pp. 91–103). Somehow the horse succeeded the elk as one of the most important of the holy animals. The horse may have been seen both as a cultural being and as a part of nature and consequently an important mediator. The acceptance of this form among the population of Finland may make us inclined to modify our somewhat negative view of the possibility of encounters not only with Veps but also with Permiaks from further east. Space does not allow us to discuss the earliest neck rings of the Glazov type and their appearance in the west. They, however, also belong in this very special cultural and economic situation (Callmer 2015) as well as some early examples of round bottomed pottery with cord decoration (Hirviliuoto 1986).

#### *Fur hunting and exchange in Finland in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries*

As repeatedly stressed interaction between Finland and Eastern Middle Sweden increased steadily through the 7<sup>th</sup> century and became intensive from ca. AD 700. Since the days of prof. Ella Kivikoski comparatively little research has been carried out on the specific questions of trade relationships and cultural interaction between Eastern Middle Sweden and Finland. Numerous studies have touched on the subject but have not penetrated into the intricate complex of questions related to the interaction between the two regions. Swedish and Finnish scholars carry equal responsibility for this somewhat strange deficit.

The question who were the hunters of furs cannot be answered satisfactorily presently. Members of the Finnish groups especially in inner Satakunda and Tavastia may have taken part but their main interest was probably to profit from the exchange along the route towards the coast. The most important hunters were no doubt the Sami groups of Northern Fennoscandia including major parts of inner Finland. The relationship between the Sami and the sedentary Finnish may be understood in the light of what we know about Norse and Sami coexistence in the Viking Period. Exchange with the Sami and tributes from dependent Sami groups were pre-conditions for the wealth of Norse chieftains (Hansen 1990). This conclusion I have arrived

at according to my idea of how hunting was organized further east. This medieval fur hunting period in Northeastern Europe and Western Siberia is after all well documented (cf. Delort 1979). The problem as we all know is the vague and elusive cultural remains of the Sami culture. More targeted and creative research in Sweden, Finland and Russia is needed.

We have seen that the transfer of Scandinavian metalwork to Finland, both weapons and jewelry, became very considerable in the late Merovingian Period. For some reason import from Gotland has been suggested for several items (Lehtosalo-Hilander 1983; Schauman-Lönnquist 1994). To me the stressing of Gotlanders as important traders in Finnish-Swedish exchange

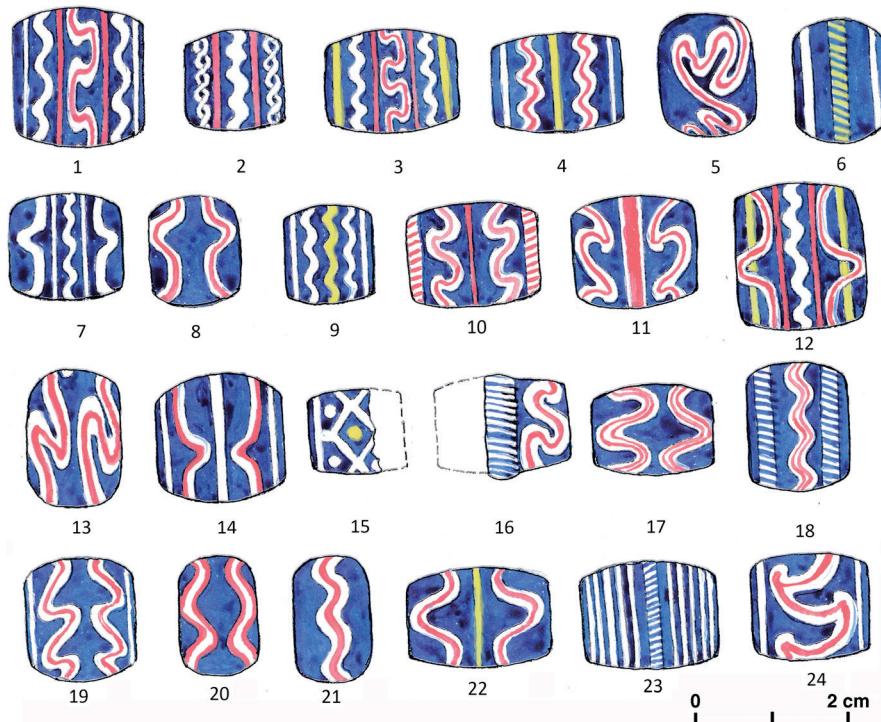


Fig. 6. Scandinavian blue, white and red beads found in Finland ca. AD 710–760. Row 1 from the left: 1) KM 1112 Ostrobothnia, Storkyro (Isokyrö) parish, 2) KM 2548:37 Finland Proper, Letala (Laitila) parish, Kansakoulumäki, 3) KM 2918:1 Satakunda, Kivijärvi parish, Kivijärvi, 4–6) KM 2995: 11 Satakunda, Eura parish, Käräjämäki. Row 2 from the left: 7–8) KM 2995:13 Satakunda, Eura parish, Käräjämäki, 9) KM 2995:11 Satakunda, Eura parish, Käräjämäki, 10–11) KM 2996 Ostrobothnia, Vörä (Vöyri) parish, Gull-dynt, 12) KM 3336:65 Finland Proper, Kaland (Kalanti) parish, Hallu. Row 3 from the left: 13) KM 4162:2 Finland Proper, Sagu (Sauvo) parish, Pappila, 14) KM 4573:12 Satakunda, Karkku parish, Kirkkovainio, 15) KM 5270 Finland Proper, Kaland (Kalanti) parish, 16) KM 5853:94 Satakunda, Karkku parish, Palviala, Tuomisto, 17) KM 6913:33 Finland Proper, S:t Karins (Kaarina) parish, Ristimäki, 18) KM 6913:166 Finland Proper, S:t Karins (Kaarina) parish, Ristimäki. Row 4 from the left: 19) KM 6913:184 Finland Proper, S:t Karins (Kaarina) parish, Ristimäki, 20) KM 8912:840 Finland Proper, Kaland (Kalanti) parish, Kalmumäki, 21) KM 8912:931 Finland Proper, Kaland (Kalanti) parish, Kalmumäki, 22) KM 11063:453 Satakunda, Eura sn, Pappilanmäki, 23) KM 11063:459 Satakunda, Eura sn, Pappilanmäki, 24) KM 11063:458 Satakunda, Eura sn, Pappilanmäki. Illustration: Johan Callmer.

leads in the wrong direction and is poorly supported by the find material when we are interested in the period AD 700–1000. The importance of Gotland in these transactions comes after AD 1000. I have chosen to present a map of the distribution of glass beads of Scandinavian production using mainly blue glass for the body and white and red (and occasionally yellow) for decoration (Callmer 2007) (fig. 6). The distribution of these blue-white and red beads stretches from Eastern Middle Sweden and the Åland Islands over to Finland and reaches the interior (fig. 7). This type of beads we find all over Scandinavia. The excellent thing about these beads is that the production is firmly dated to ca. AD 710–760. Of course, they could turn up a little later as well as antiquities but the record is rather that that seldom is the case. The very interesting second thing about these beads is that they are never found in contemporary graves on Gotland and from settlements they are only known

from the very special coastal site of Paviken on the coast of southwestern Gotland with many non-Gotlandic finds (Lundström 1981). This is of course very strange but the Gotlanders would not use glass beads of the types used in the rest of Scandinavia. They made their own beads from imported glass (Callmer 2006; Råhlander in prep.). The exclusivity of the Gotlandic culture had to be maintained into absurdity. From the 7<sup>th</sup> century onward they also used different special Gotlandic items of bronze in their dress. As far as I can see there are almost no finds at all of Gotlandic origin from the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries found in Finland. Consequently it is my conviction that the importation of things from the Southwest to Finland arrived from Eastern Middle Sweden possibly often via the Åland Islands.

Let us however go back to the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century and the blue, white, red beads (fig. 7). When I now discuss the Finnish finds it is important to state that my knowledge is based

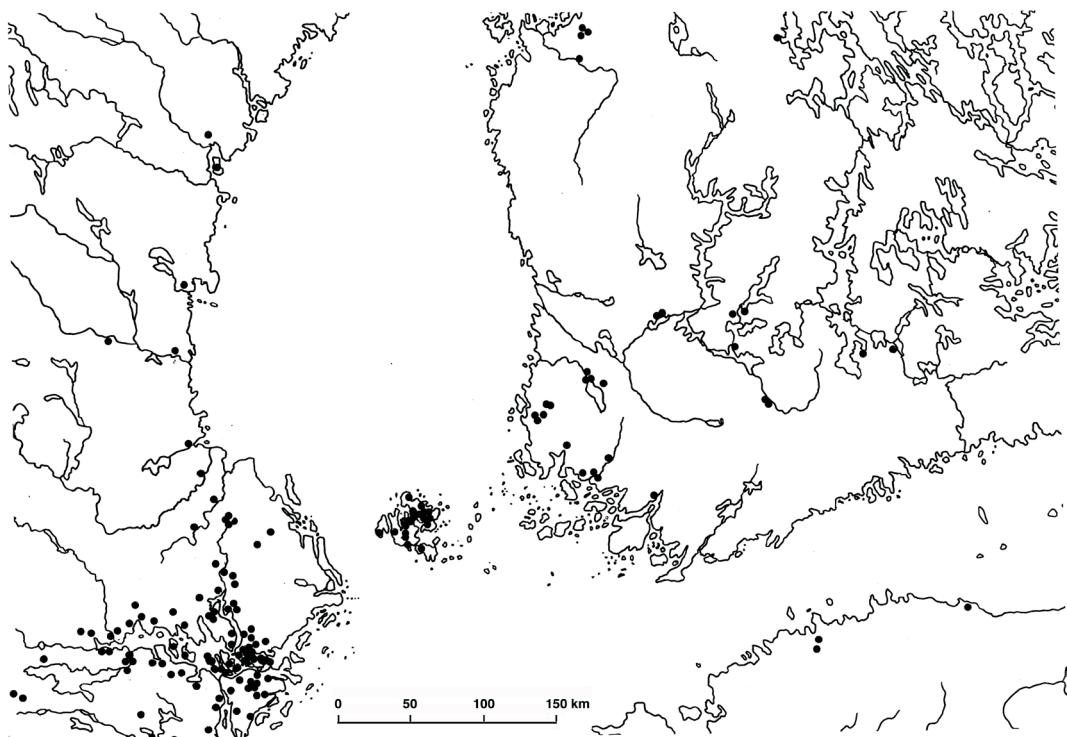


Fig. 7. Finds of Scandinavian blue, white and red beads in the Central Baltic Region ca. AD 710–760. Please note that the easternmost finds are outside the coverage of the map. Map: Johan Callmer.

on my notes from 1979 with only a few later additions. It must be assumed that the number of finds is bigger today. The finds in Finland show an interesting distribution with the majority of the finds from the inland regions of Satakunda and Tavastia. In fact they reach as far as eastern Tavastia with the striking depot from Mäntylä, Kernaala in Janakkala parish (Schauman 1971, p. 18) (fig. 8). That means that the beads reached

not so far from more the limits of permanently settled country in Finland. From Kivijärvi in northernmost Tavastia comes a stray find of a bead of this type (KM 2918:1). No doubt this is a find far away from settled land. It is also important that these bead finds are contemporary with the Nevolino belts. In the Kernaala find the various cultural influences in the interior of Finland can be demonstrated in a most striking

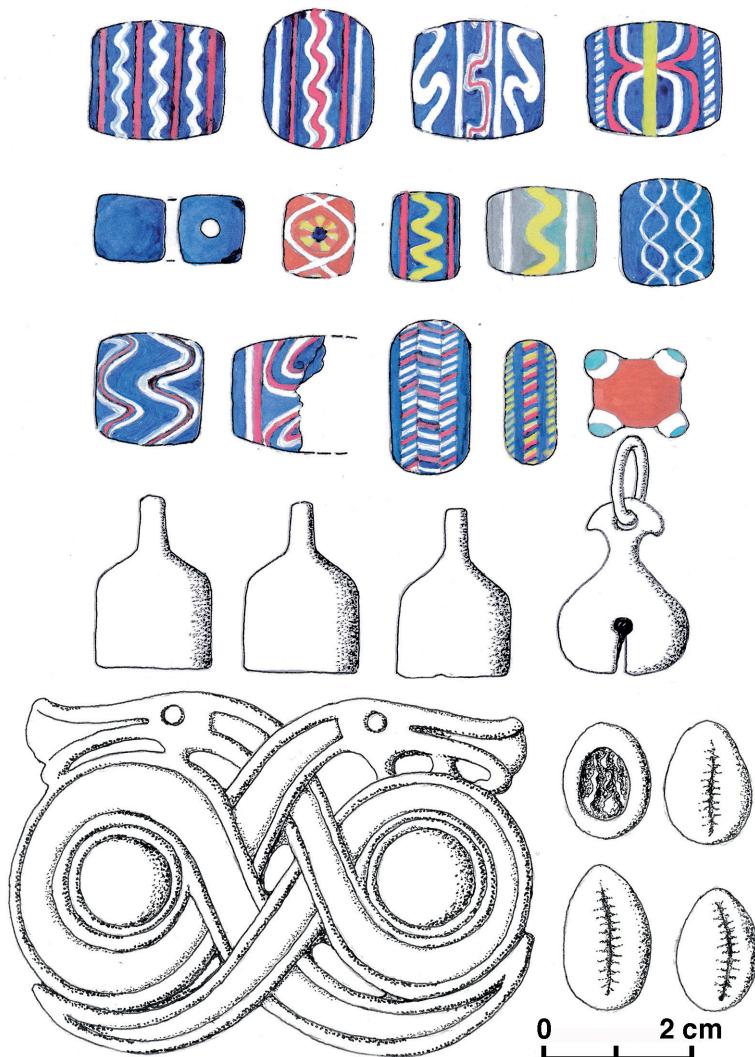


Fig. 8. The depot found at Mäntylä farm, Kernaala, Janakkala parish in eastern Tavastia ca. AD 700–750. A loop-shaped dragon fibula, three bottle-shaped pendants, a jingle bell, 14 glass beads and four cowries. Illustration: Johan Callmer.

and instructive manner and thus merits some detailed comments. The Keernala find is a chance find retrieved when a new byre had to be built at the Mäntylä farm in Kernaala. Most probably this is a depot and not a grave. It belongs to a small group of similar finds deposited in the 8<sup>th</sup> century in innermost Tavastia. The three finds were all made close to the southern end of Lake Päijänne. This is one of the major lakes in Finland, often rather narrow but more than 120 km long and with a south-north extension. It is the given way both in summer and in winter for those who want to penetrate deeper into the taiga zone. The zone in the south where the deposits were interred is, as already noted, in fact the very borderline of Finnish settlement in the interior in the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Further north and further east was most probably Sami territory. Later in the Viking Period Tavast settlement expanded further north. All three deposits comprise magnificent chain sets and in addition copper alloy jewelry and beads which are strong indications of relative wealth among the Finns here. The center piece in the Kernaala depot is the chain set with eight chains and spacers and holders. A very similar chain set is depicted by Kivikoski (1973, p. 70, Tafel 51:469). In addition to the chain set there is a triangular pendant no doubt a Finnish item (Kivikoski 1973, p. 71). Associations with the west and more precisely with the Åland Islands and Eastern Middle Sweden we note for thirteen of the glass beads. Eleven beads are very typical representatives of the already mentioned Scandinavian blue-white-red beads (dating AD 710–760) (Callmer 2007) and another two beads are also no doubt Scandinavian. The fourteenth bead is perhaps the most interesting. This is an elongated reddish brown, opaque bead with four white and turquoise eyes at each end. This type of bead often also turns up with identical eyes but with a black body. This is, as already stated, an eastern bead with no connection with the West. These beads are very characteristic of the Nevolino-culture on the Sylva River, tributary of the Kama, from where the Nevolino belts came (Goldina 2010, pp. 35–36, 55). They are, as I have pointed out, also closely contemporary with the belts. With the exception of a few finds

on the Åland Islands and in Eastern Middle Sweden these beads are never found in other parts of Scandinavia. Seen in a wider perspective these beads turn up among the Mordovians (Peterburgskij 2011, p. 104), on the lower Volga, in the Northern Caucasus and in Northern Iran (Kovalevskaja 2000, pp. 49–52; Fukai 1977, Pl. 47). They must be products of the early Caliphate. Contacts even further away are indicated by four cowries (*Cyprea moneta*) the top of one of which has been sawn off. Cowries of this *Cyprea* species appear in North-European finds in the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Among the early 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century finds the vast majority are from the North (Northern Norway: Vinsrygg 1979, p. 27) and the Northeast (Finland: Kivikoski 1973, p. 73, Estonia: Tvauri 2012, p. 149 and Latvia: Mugurevič 1965, pp. 54–59, Urtans 1970, p. 75). From Birka there are 7 specimens found in the 19<sup>th</sup> century excavations in the Black Earth (Stolpe 1876, p. 626). Their dating is unfortunately uncertain. Cowries are also frequent finds among the Volga Finns (e.g. Peterburgskij 2011, p. 104). From the Late Viking Period we have some finds from Gotland (Thunmark-Nylén 2006, pp. 225–226). The eastern connections are also evident with the appearance of three bottle shaped copper alloy pendants in the Kernaala find (Kivikoski 1973, p. 73). These pendants are part of the Finnish dress style together with numerous other jingling pendants so typical of Finnish women's dress. Bottle shaped pendants are found among the Volga-Finnish and Permian groups. They appear in a few different variants, sometimes even with applied secondary ringing pendants. The variant met with here is plain and rather big. They are most common among the Merja (Leont'ev 1996, pp. 174, 211, 224), Mari and Udmurt groups (Goldina 1985, p. 47). It is worth noting that they are not found among the Nevolino groups on the Sylva mentioned above. The Mordovians have similar pendants but they are a little smaller and more slender (Peterburgskij 2011, p. 105). These bottle shaped pendants look like little bells, but they were carried on thin tresses or on wool cords. When the bearer was in motion they would produce a clinking sound. It is also important that we have a whole set of pendants intended

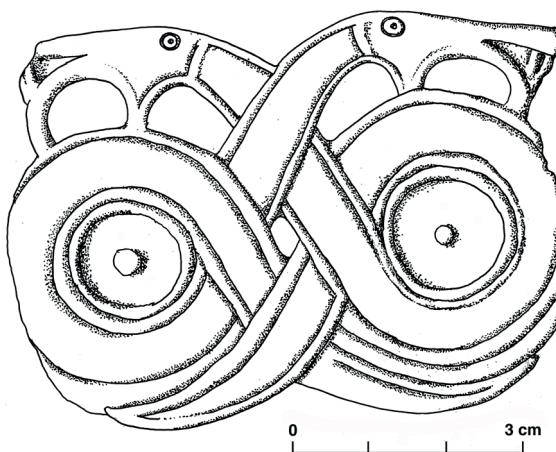


Fig. 9. Loop-shaped dragon fibula ca. AD 700–750. Illustration: Johan Callmer.

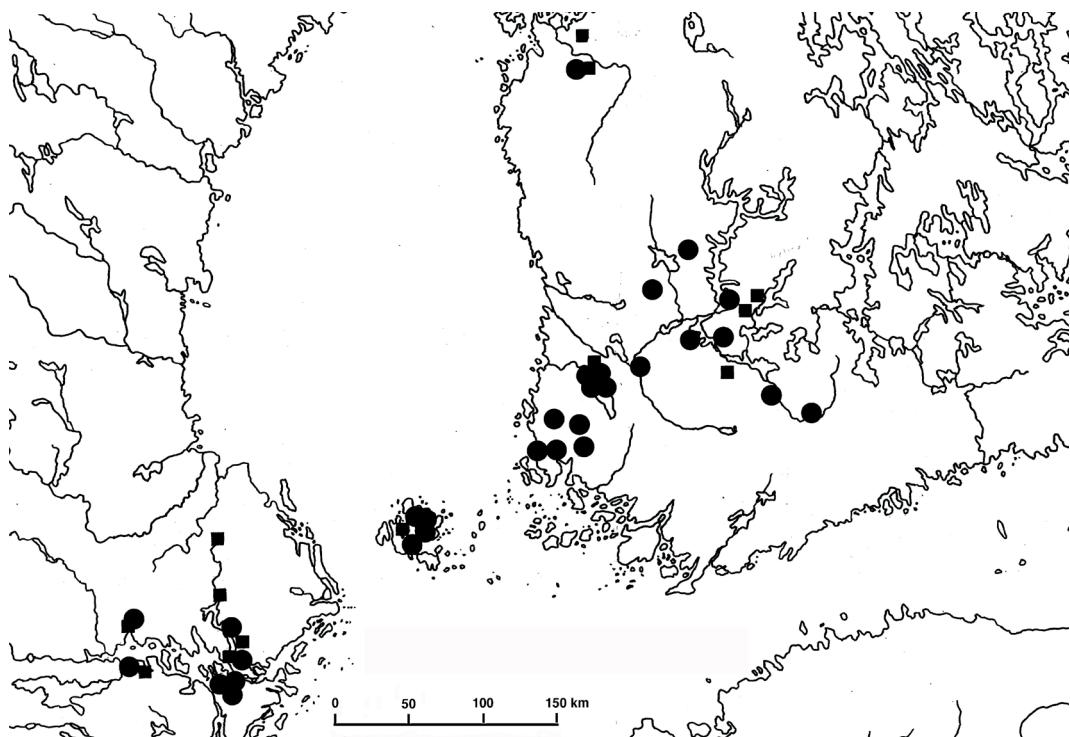


Fig. 10. Finds of loop-shaped dragon fibulae in the Central Baltic Region ca. AD 650–750. The squares indicate early fibulae of smaller size. Map: Johan Callmer.

for their original function in dress. There are other find localities from Finland, one of which is from the Papinsaari (Kuhmoinen parish) depot in Tavastia with a single pendant (Kivikoski 1973, p. 73; Raisio 2010, p. 63). A cemetery in

Western Finland yielded two pendants, but they were not found together, and another find also in the south-west is as well of a single pendant. Beside the pendants there is in this rich depot also an elegantly designed jingle bell which is

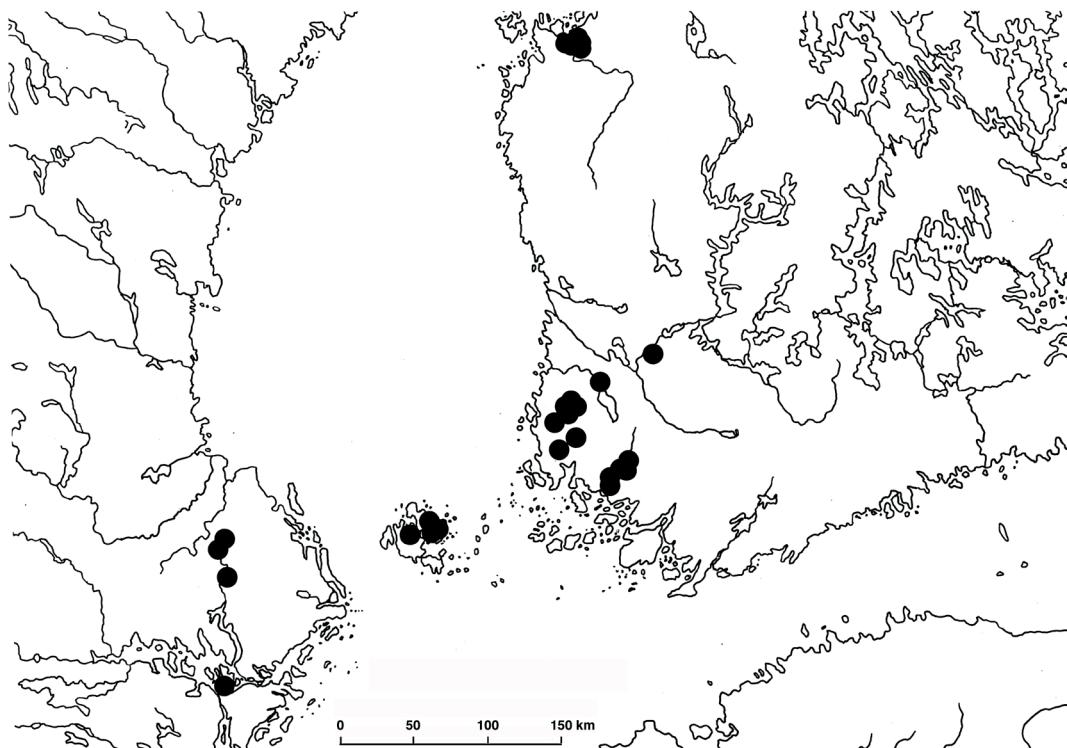


Fig. 11. Finds of high status Scandinavian swords with bronze hilts in the Central Baltic Region ca. AD 700–800. Map: Johan Callmer.

difficult to place in a Finnish cultural milieu (Kivikoski 1973, p. 73). In what direction we should look for parallels is difficult to say. The last find to be mentioned here from the Kernaala depot is a loop-shaped dragon fibula and it actualizes again specifically the questions concerning exchange between Eastern Middle Sweden and Finland.

Let us have a closer look on these rather singular loop-shaped dragon fibulae (fig. 9) (Cleve 1927; Kivikoski 1973, p. 62). This type of fibula is the only one with Germanic animal ornamentation in the Merovingian Period in Finland. From rather smallish forms in the 7<sup>th</sup> century they develop into much bigger fibulae with a single or two animals. The last fibulae of this kind probably were made in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century or ca. AD 800. Both early and late forms occur in Eastern Middle Sweden, on the Åland Islands and in Finland. It is important that a mould for casting this type of fibula was found in build-

ing group 2 on Helgö. The origin of this form of fibula with its striking animal decoration is by all means located on the Swedish side. As Nils Åberg pointed out already more than half a century ago it is not a Gotlandic form (1953). The distribution in Finland is in my opinion somewhat singular (fig. 10). It seems that the find spots together form a rather straight line from the Kaland-Letala region on the coast towards the northeast through central Satakunda into the Finnish Lake Plateau. There are only two finds in Tavastia in addition to the Kernaala find. It is difficult to avoid the impression that this rather linear distribution marks a chain of interaction and communication from Eastern Middle Sweden and Åland on to the Finnish side and into the interior. It seems as if the southern part of Finland Proper was not involved. If these interpretations are correct it follows that individuals and groups all along the chain were aware of the importance of this sign of agree-

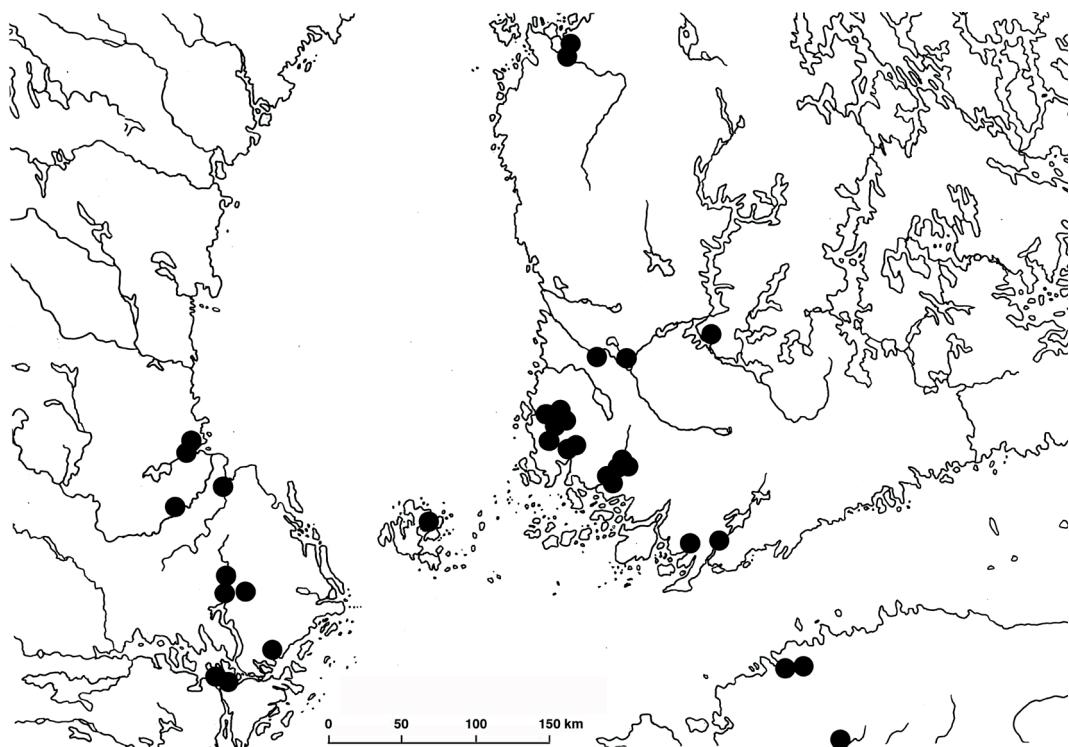


Fig. 12. Finds of type B-swords (Petersen 1919) in the Central Baltic Region ca. AD 760–800.  
Map: Johan Callmer.

ment and trust for the transfer of products and for travel. We can dimly imagine a long social chain with several links and many actors. And last and not least this means that women were quite important to maintain this system.

#### *Imported combs and weapons in Finland*

When we again turn to the archaeological record to tell us more about interaction between Eastern Middle Sweden and Finland we have at our disposal a wealth of relevant finds from the cemeteries on the Finnish side. A little known category of Scandinavian craft products brought over to Finland are antler combs. Fragments of Pre-Viking and Viking Period combs are known from Finnish cremation cemeteries. This is however a difficult material to work with and as yet there is no study of them. Pre-Viking and Viking Age combs have been found far to the east even into the basin of the Volga (Sarskoe Gorodishe; Leont'ev 1996, pp. 150–153). We have,

as already pointed out, many finds of imported weapons. In earlier research it has, as already stressed, often been argued that the import of weapons came from Gotland where beautifully ornamented hilts and scabbards were added to Continental sword blades (fig. 11) (Nordman 1931; Salmo 1938; Lehtosalo-Hilander 1983; Schauman-Lönnquist 1994). Later the ornamental details on the swords became less popular and the import is then more or less described as a direct import to Finland from Western Europe. We may have a look at a map of the distribution of the type B swords from the late 8<sup>th</sup> century or ca. AD 800 (fig. 12). Many high quality lance heads came the same way according to the same scholars. In my opinion this view on the importation of weapons during our period of interest is unlikely. The importance of Gotland is, as already pointed out, overstated as far as Finland and, we assume, Estonia as well are concerned. It is likely that Gotlanders

had closer contacts with the Balt peoples in the Gulf of Riga, in Curonia and in Prussia. These lands were rather densely populated which could mean that slave trade became important rather early. Prussia and the Curonian coast were also rich in amber. Amber had a considerable value and was in great demand. The moment for the Gotlanders in the trade on Finland comes, as I have already pointed out above, after AD 1000. The trade route bringing West-European high quality arms entered the Baltic at the crossing in Slesvig and proceeded along the East-Scandinavian coast to Eastern Middle Sweden and then on via the Åland Islands across to Finland. The reasons for this misconception, I think, are several. One important reason is a strongly negative attitude towards display of weapons on the male side in the almost totally dominant cremation rite burials in Eastern Middle Sweden and on the Åland Islands. We do not know if weapon parts were removed from the pyre or if weapons were not represented at all among the grave goods. There is no reason to think that the male population of eastern Middle Sweden was less well provided with weapons than their counterparts in Norway for example. The inhumations in boats at Vendel, Valsgärde and Ulltuna are strange exceptions to this rule. Unfortunately they take much attention among many scholars. The very few sword finds in the cremation graves from the Merovingian Period in Eastern Middle Sweden are mainly from the 7<sup>th</sup> century or from ca. AD 700. There are in fact only two cremation grave complexes with swords to discuss before the inception of the B-swords towards the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. On the Finnish side we have numerous finds of splendid imported weapons. In Finland they eloquently speak for the high status of local potentates in the key areas of coastal Finland and on the major trails towards the interior (Raninen 2005). The most striking example is the sword grave from Pappilanmäki, Eura parish in Lower Satakunda (Salmo 1940). This grave also was equipped with a Permian belt. Near the coast control over economic transactions with people from outside was easy. Only rather few of these weapons reached the hinterland.

Were there no items of material culture in addition to the furs coming across the water

from Finland? It has often been pointed out that small iron fibulae (Moilanen 2013) and penannular brooches of the same material on the Åland Islands and in Eastern Middle Sweden could be imports from Finland. Unfortunately iron fibulae and brooches seem to turn up all over Scandinavia and it could in my opinion as well be the other way round. Consequently we have to try harder to find evidence of exchange directed from Finland to Eastern Middle Sweden and Åland.

#### *Finnish pottery and potters in Eastern Middle Sweden and on the Åland Islands*

With her for that time (1955) excellent and pioneering dissertation on the Viking Period and Early Medieval pottery of Sweden Dagmar Selling opened a new possibility to study long distance exchange. As her category AIII she defined thin shelled pottery of Finnish type. Notwithstanding the very positive impact on research there were three shortcomings with Selling's treatment of her sources. For practical reasons her work was centered on the Birka material with the study of which she had been engaged for so many years. One of the major draw backs of the Birka material was its strong domination of 10<sup>th</sup>-century graves. From the grave inventories at Birka there are thirty one complexes with AIII pottery of which however seven cannot be closely dated. Sixteen graves can be dated to after AD 860. Only eight graves belong to the period before that date. The second problem was the weak control on chronology. There were considerable uncertainty when differentiating between the 8<sup>th</sup>, the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. Selling was of the opinion that the 10<sup>th</sup>-century finds also outside Birka dominated heavily and that the early finds outside Birka were few and did not go back in time before the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century (Selling 1955, p. 147). Unfortunately Selling had only very limited knowledge of the comparative find material in Helsingfors (at that time with many finds from the Åland Islands) and she had not visited the Åland Islands and the museum at Mariehamn. Already in the late sixties I became interested in the Finnish pottery in Sweden and on the Åland Islands. With time the number of Swedish finds outside Birka increased



Fig. 13. Finds of Early Finnish (and Estonian) pottery vessels of type AIII (Selling 1955) in Eastern Middle Sweden and on the Åland Islands ca. AD 700–860. Map: Johan Callmer.

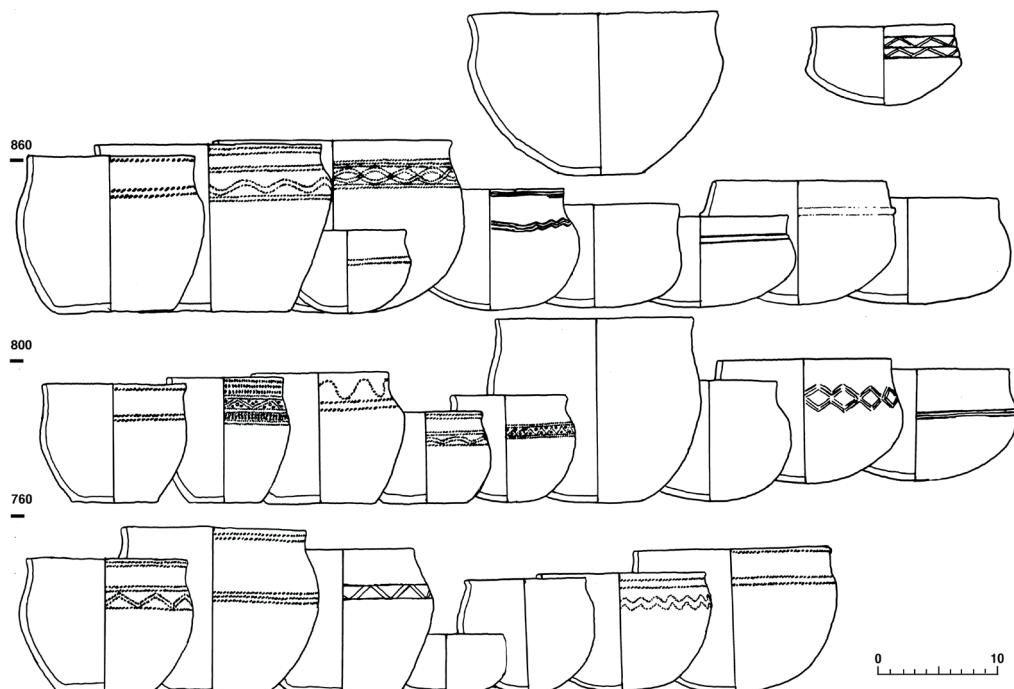


Fig. 14. Early Finnish (and Estonian) pottery vessels of type A III (Selling 1955) in Eastern Middle Sweden ca. AD 700–860 (grave finds). Illustration: Johan Callmer.

substantially (today at least 40 finds from before AD 860). More striking was however the number of finds on the Åland Islands (today 48 finds from before AD 860). Concerning numbers we must remember that only finds with a reliable dating are counted. There was also a number of new data on technology and typology. However the major innovation in research was in fact the obvious chronology. Even the find material available for Selling should have told her that there were several early finds. Today we can state that Finnish fine pottery begins to arrive in Sweden already at the very end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century or ca. AD 700 (Callmer in prep.). The Finnish pottery on the Åland Islands, as we may expect, is equally early and the number of finds is larger than on the Swedish side.

All the parishes on Central Åland (including Eckerö and Lemland) have several finds. In Eastern Middle Sweden the distribution of finds is of more interest (fig. 13). Looking at this dis-

tribution map of the finds of Finnish pottery there we must of course consider the very large number of excavated cemeteries in some key regions of today. The find localities to the North of Stockholm are located in an area with very many excavations. We must also note that the number of excavations of cemeteries in the coastal region of the province of Uppland is very small. This is of course negative since we could expect the coastal population to have been engaged in contacts and water transport. There is no located and excavated coastal site in the region dating to before the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, which of course is another serious deficit. With due regard to these problems we can single out three micro regions with early Finnish pottery (ca. AD 700–860). The Uppsala region is important with regard to the centre there and the recent excavations have brought even more relevant pottery finds to light (they are not considered here). The Southernmost part of the medieval district of

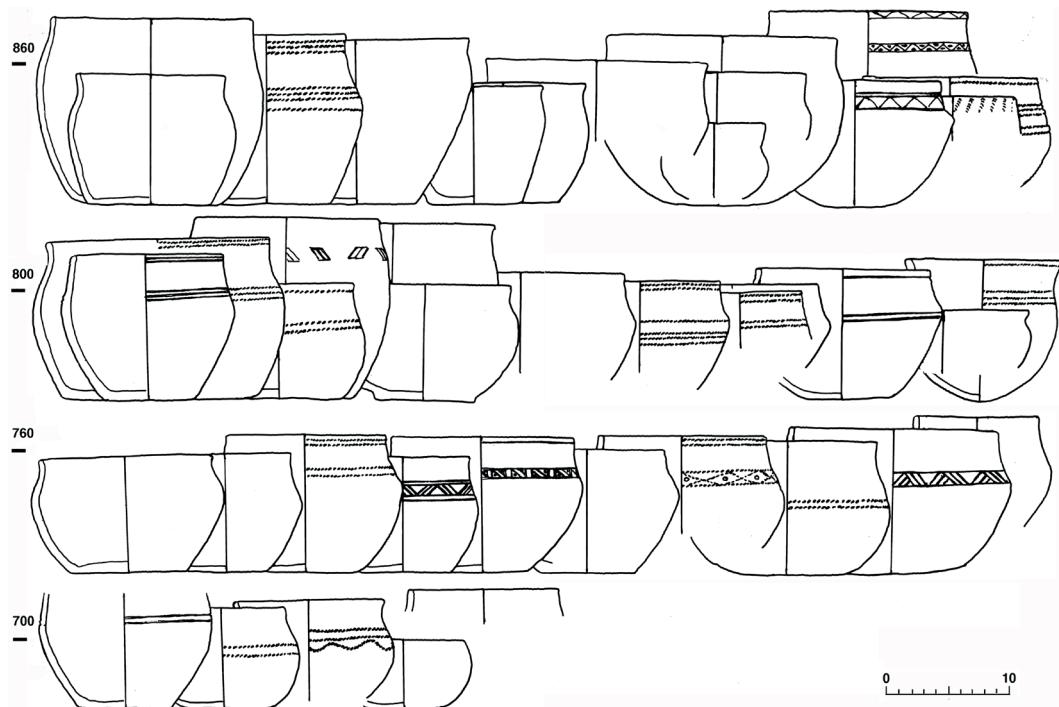


Fig. 15. Early Finnish (and Estonian) pottery vessels of type A III (Selling 1955) on the Åland Islands ca. AD 700–860 (grave finds). Illustration: Johan Callmer.

Roden (i.e. finds to the West of Stockholm and on the big islands in the eastern part of Lake Mälaren. Most striking is the almost complete absence of finds in the eastern and central parts of the province of Södermanland (only one find). The number of excavations there has however also been limited. A little astonishing are the finds quite far away in the western part of the same province. Already Selling's map showed the same main tendencies. In this early phase of intensive interaction between the two sides of the Baltic we can state that there were population groups in some distinct parts that were engaged and other groups which were not or much less so.

Now let us have a look at the AIII fine pottery itself (figs. 13–14). The Finnish fine pottery vessels from Eastern Middle Sweden and the Åland Islands are mainly rather small. The height seldom exceeds twenty centimeters (the smallest is only 5.6 cm high) and the diameter is mostly less than sixteen centimeters (the biggest diameter is 20.3 cm). The volume is between

ca. 30 and ca. 400 centiliters. In fact there are three size groups. Group 1 comprises vessels holding ca. 30–40 centiliters. Much bigger vessels holding 100–150 centiliters form group 2. Group 3 comprises very big vessels holding as much as 200–400 centiliters. The small vessels of group 1 no doubt represent drinking cups. Vessels of groups 2 and 3 could be interpreted as bowls. Seen together these vessels could be understood as pieces in representative drinking sets. A high-ranking household would have a fine set. Drinking-bouts certainly were part among the social practices surrounding the interaction between Eastern Middle Sweden and the Åland Islands on one side and Finland on the other. Already from the beginning flat bottoms and rounded bottoms are equally common. Decoration consists of horizontal cord impressions and more seldom drawn lines. Complex patterns are mostly zigzags. In the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century a few examples with more complex patterns including cord impression and circular dots could be noted. The shape often features a rounded

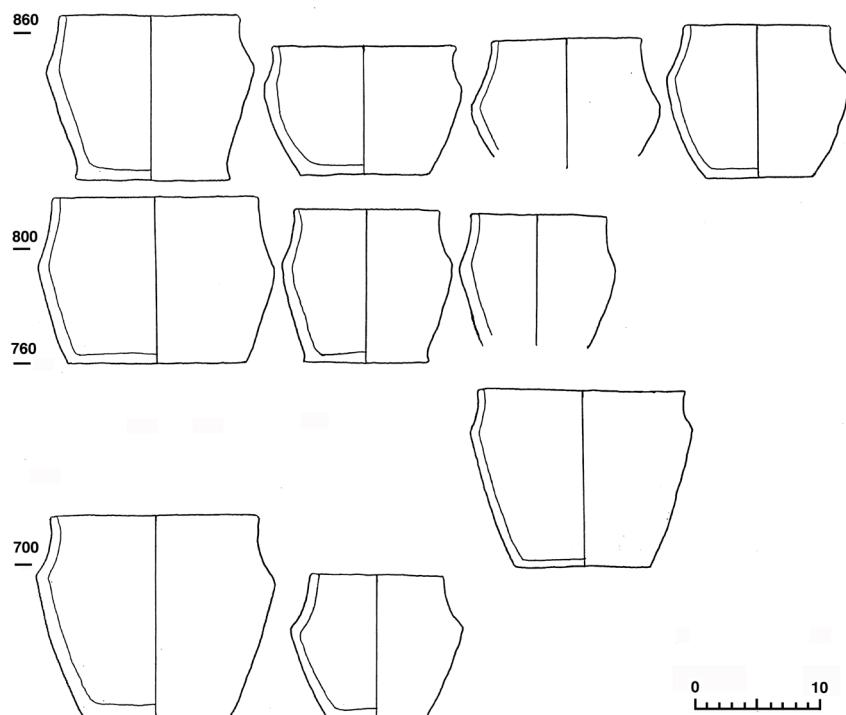


Fig. 16. Finds of carinated pottery in Eastern Middle Sweden ca. AD 680–860 (grave finds). Illustration: Johan Callmer.

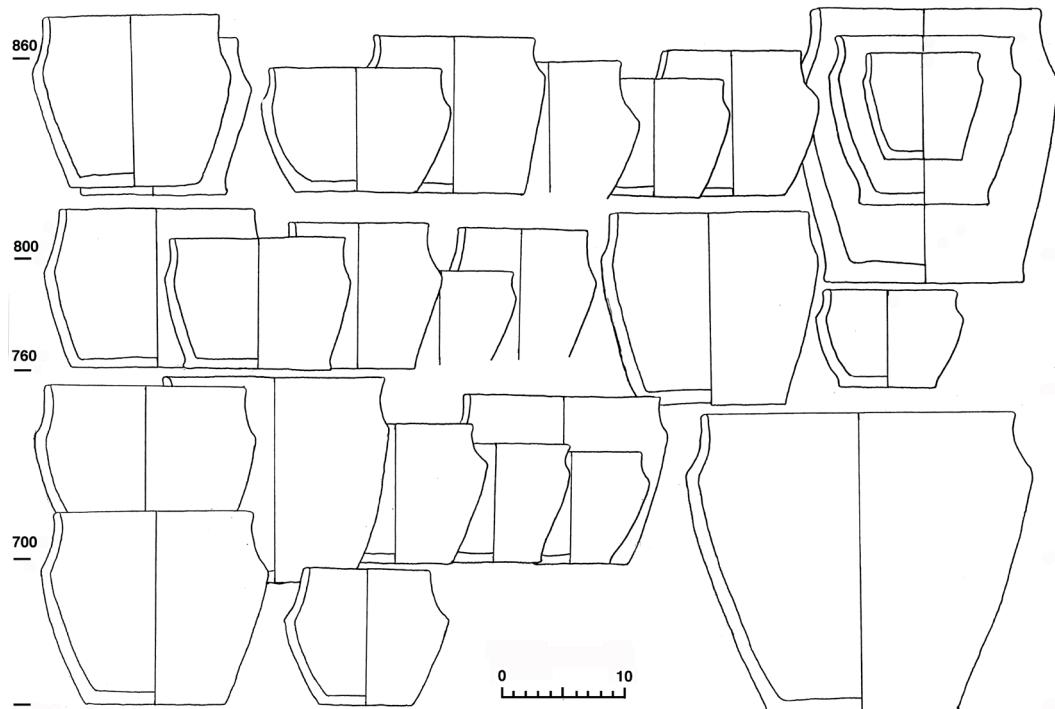


Fig. 17. Finds of carinated pottery on the Åland Islands ca. AD 680–860 (grave finds).  
Illustration: Johan Callmer.

shoulder. Some vessels have a funnel shaped neck. Carinated profiles occur and obviously become more numerous later on. These profiles are often combined with a rounded bottom.

The origin of this pottery is certainly South-western Finland and Northern Estonia. In detail it is not easy to decide if a vessel is Finnish or Estonian. However in a few cases typical Estonian pottery can be noted. It is of course possible and sometimes proven that some pottery has been produced also on the western side of the sea but then by foreign potters (Gustin & Wessman 2021, p. 69). The place of production is perhaps not so important. Of much greater importance is the distinct pottery technology of these producers. The tempering material is in most cases sand or sieved crushed rock and the thickness of the shard ca. five millimeters (much less than normal Swedish domestic pottery with a thickness of ca. one centimeter or just a trifle less). The potters behind these vessels no doubt were

Finnish women brought up in a Finnish cultural milieu. These observations make it very likely that Finnish women played an important role in the exchanges between Finns and Scandinavians. To decide whether these Finnish women were maids or wives is not possible. The very low representation of Finnish women's jewelry in Eastern Middle Sweden in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries may be used as an argument for the latter alternative. Married women would accept the culture and consequently also the dress of a husband's close relatives. From Åland, however, we have a number of graves with a full Finnish women's dress set (e.g. Kivikoski 1963, p. 127). This acceptance of another cultural element is an unusual cultural phenomenon. It has something to say about the extraordinary high status of Finnish wives in the local society.

Today we have an important addition to Sellings's AIII pottery for our studies of East-West relations. Numerous Swedish finds of carinated

pottery were noted by me in the store rooms of Statens Historiska Museum (Stockholm) already in the 1960's (figs. 16–17). Unfortunately my possibilities to study this pottery in the Swedish collections have been more limited than concerning the well-known AIII pottery. To sort out the carinated pottery you have in principle to look through all the "domestic" coarse and better thick-walled pottery from Sweden. The Åland material I have been through completely. However incomplete for Sweden, these notes are of value. In the find material from Eastern Middle Sweden and the Åland Islands the carinated pottery is not unusual in the late Vendel and Viking Periods. The qualitative technological properties of these pottery vessels are highly variable and in general difficult or impossible to differentiate from domestic Scandinavian pottery. The decisive properties of this pottery are the profile with a concave neck part and a distinctive marked (rather sharp) shoulder. The vessels are of very widely varying size. I have noted vessels more than 25 centimeters high and with a diameter of more than 30 centimeters. A majority of the vessels have a medium or coarse tempering and the surface has a partial slip. This pottery has a long tradition in Estonia but according to Lang it goes more or less out of production in Northern Estonia in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century (Lang 1996, p. 89). As far as I can see carinated pottery is also known from Finland (e.g. Vainionmäki, Laitila parish, Satakunda; Purhonen 1996) but I am uncertain about for how long it has been produced. The Estonian data make it probable that the Swedish and Ålandic finds mainly come from Finland and not from Estonia. The carinated pottery is well known also further east as we shall see quite soon below. Of great interest is the long history of carinated pottery imports in Eastern Middle Sweden. There are several finds from the 7<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. SHM 33817 Södermanland, Eskilstuna, Svista RAÄ 519: A 45; SHM 34108 Södermanland, Härad parish, Härad RAÄ 15: A 25:2) and the latest ones date to the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

*A time of change in relations between Eastern Middle Sweden, the Åland Islands and Finland*  
It is obvious that something serious happens to the relations between Eastern Middle Sweden

and Finland in the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. If we look at the number of finds of Finnish pottery of type A III in Sweden, we can see, that finds later than ca. AD 860 are much less than the number of early ones (9 to 41 finds). The decrease is the same on the Åland Islands (12 to 48) where almost all late finds come from the two eastern parishes Saltvik and Sund. We can also note the complete difference from the figures from the Birka cemeteries already commented on. This is by all means a very strong tendency. When we have a look at the Scandinavian bronze brooches (mostly equal armed brooches and oval brooches) imported to Finland we can note a similar rhythm. Using the data of Kivikoski 1973 we can note no less than thirty seven items from ca. AD 860 and earlier and only seven later items. When we turn to Scandinavian armlets, which were very popular in Finland, we find the same picture. Armlets imported to Finland from Scandinavia after ca. AD 860 seem to be next to unknown. Probably this is also the time when the typical Finnish Viking Age female dress set with its basis in the pair of round fibulae with four snakelike animals is created in Finland. This is a most remarkable change which we can, I think, very well compare with the rise of the special Gotlandic dress concept 200 years earlier. What happened on the masculine side is more difficult to say, but there was, we assume, also change.

I am inclined to interpret these changes ca. AD 860 as very important transformations of the exchange system between Eastern Middle Sweden, the Åland Islands and Finland. An older system based on close social contacts managed the transfer of furs from Finland in the beginning mainly towards the west. The system was organized with several links. Somehow (the exact reason we cannot pin point) this system breaks down. More precisely we are concerned with the interaction between the Scandinavians and the Finns somewhere on the Finnish coast. Obviously social groups on the Finnish side find it necessary to stress their cultural and social independence from a more open and mixed cultural pattern with both western and eastern components. The, for the Finns necessary, exchange is increasingly taken over by professional

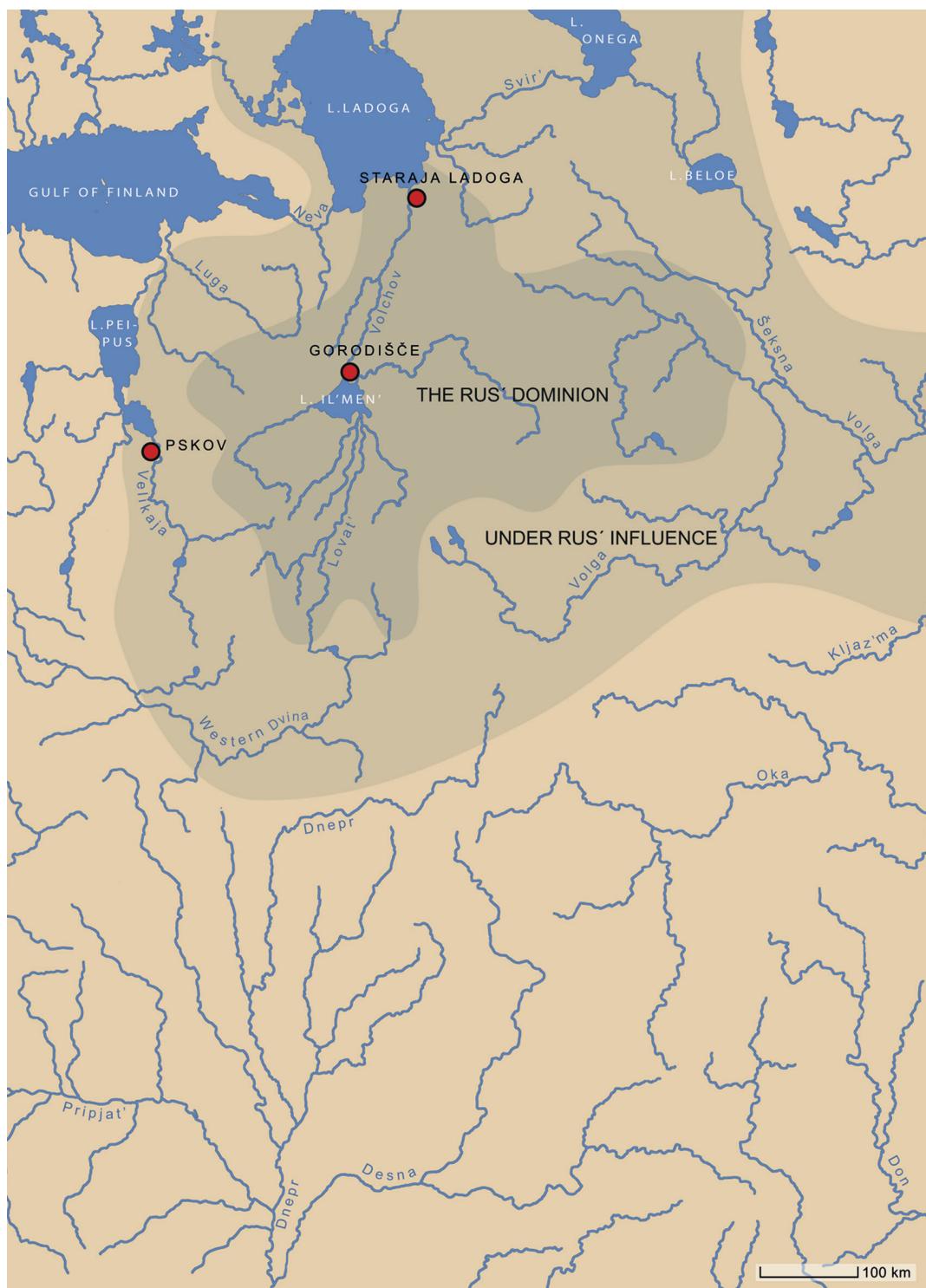


Fig. 18. The core area of the Early Rus' (before ca. AD 860). Map: Staffan Hyll.

traders dominating the trading station at Birka. Probably they are also familiar with and engaged in the trading networks in Russia. The fur trade period in Finland was not over or near at its end yet (this probably comes in the 12<sup>th</sup> century) but the relative importance of Finland decreased already in the 11<sup>th</sup> century (if not earlier).

The center of gravity of the fur trade in Northern Europe had however already much earlier moved on towards the east (fig. 18). The blue, red and white beads dated to AD 710–760 mentioned already have turned up in key regions in Northwestern Russia. We can note finds from Staraja Ladoga (Gorodišče Ljubša) (Rjabinin & Dubašinskij 2002, Ris. 48), from Gorodišče just outside Novgorod (Nosov, Gorjunova, Plochov 2005, Tabl. VIII: 56) and from the left bank settlement at Pskov (Jakovleva, Salmina, Korolëva 2012, Ris. 11:11). The contexts are vague but the evidence cannot be turned down. In the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century more substantial Scandinavian activities are documented at Staraja Ladoga on the lower Volchov (Sindbaek 2017). We are here concerned with the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century smithy at the Zemlianoe Gorodišče in Staraja Ladoga (Rjabinin 1985, pp. 55–64). In the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century Staraja Ladoga turns into a busy center of the fur trade and in the vast basin of Lake Il'men' a strong cultural process is started. It is difficult to characterize the material culture in Northwestern Russia before the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. At that time a special type of pottery begins to be produced there. It is of great interest that this pottery type is a variant of the carinated Finnish pottery well known, as we have seen, both from Estonia and Finland (Callmer 2017, p. 148; cf. also Seničenkova 2014, pp. 356–359). It is not the only type of pottery there but from the very beginning it is the dominating form type. Also a special burial rite is introduced: cremations in immense barrows of the so called sopka-type (Callmer 2017, pp. 141). Several elements of this burial rite are original but others are definitely of Scandinavian origin. Possibly also some local elements could be noted. The complicated burial which also calls for the cooperation of many individuals has had an important integrative role in this new social milieu. There was also a special

type of house integrating both Scandinavian traditions and traditions from house building in the taiga zone (Callmer 2017, p. 145). Possibly there were also some significant dress elements (Callmer 2017, p. 151). From this center the Rus' dominion develops in the late 8<sup>th</sup> and early 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. The social structure is a complex one with a ruling elite which both Arab geographic and ethnographic sources, West European historical and other written sources and later Russian chronicles define as of Scandinavian origin. The economy is primarily based on the fur trade and involves long distance trade through Eastern Europe to Khazar trading sites or even further away.

### Conclusions

The central role of Scandinavian and Finnish interaction in the early phase of these developments which lead on to the creation of the Rus' dominion in Northwestern Russia have been paid little attention to. The archaeological material makes it possible to study several aspects on this phase. However there are questions for which we have still far too little sources. The most urgent is no doubt the life in the hunting grounds of the hunters. They are still very anonymous and difficult to grasp. We are much better informed of the second link in the chain of human relations in the North. In Finland we can identify persons and groups who profited from the transfer towards the south. The routes changed and had alternatives. Most interesting is of course the network which involved agents of trade from far to the east. Both the Nevolino-belts and the chain holders with twin horse heads provide striking proof of this. However these links were more complex than that for which the bottle shaped pendants give information. The beads as well as the cowries also give important information on trade often over great and even immense distances. The patterns of exchange between Scandinavians and Finns can be studied as socially embedded links most probably also involving marriages. When the scene opens up towards the east and the establishment of Rus' hegemony in the lands beyond the Gulf of Finland we are confronted with another major problem. These lands only had a very sparse pop-

ulation before the 8<sup>th</sup> century. In the centuries from the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century to the 10<sup>th</sup> century settled land and more precisely settlements increase immensely in numbers. These dynamics of demographic change are yet very little understood. The Russian North had at the beginning of the second millennium AD in general a Baltic Finnish population. From where these Finns came is difficult to say. It is unlikely that that the majority of them was autochthons. The single hint we can note is the relative scarcity of graves as archaeological indications of settlement in Northern Estonia in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries (Tvauri 2012, pp. 284–285). For this there could however be other explanations. In the course of the Medieval Period parts of the Russian North were Slavicized (Nuorluoto 2006). This means that the influx of Finnish groups already during our period of interest must have been considerable. The number of Scandinavians (most of them certainly from Eastern Middle Sweden and the Åland Islands) was very much smaller. The majority of them was not farmers and they lived in major and minor centers. A Scandinavian farmer colonization in the east was with one conditional exception not a reality. Only in some pockets in the Mesopotamia of the Volga and the Kljazma, far to the east of Moscow, a rural settlement pattern evolved in the 9<sup>th</sup> century (Callmer 2000, pp. 80–82). This is however a later stage in the developments, the beginnings of which, we have dealt with here. Directly or indirectly these settlements were however also in the beginning intimately linked to the fur trade.

#### Acknowledgements

Writing these lines I have often recalled my discussions of many aspects of these questions with professor Ella Kivikoski (1901–1990), Helsinki and I feel inclined to dedicate the paper to her memory. The text is a revised version of a lecture held at Tavastehus, Finland in 2015.

#### Abbreviations

KM = Kansallismuseo, Helsinki, Finland.  
SHM = Statens historiska museum, Stockholm, Sweden.

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