

ON THE KURGAN

In Vodskaya Piatina (Province of St. Petersburg)

1.

Those who have had occasional contact with the field of archeology, no matter how slight, and who have ventured on at least one excavation, know how fascinating a task this is. The usual raillery aimed at this subject, such as: "Archeology is nothing but dead stuff! A dust-covered science, your archeology! <sup>ghouls</sup> Grave-diggers! Vampires! Prosaic souls! Mummies! - are not particularly clever, I fear.

"Great Mercy", I hear people say, "this does not concern Russia; except perhaps for the steppes. What archeology can there be in our country? It is well and proper to speak of the archeology of Greece, Italy, even of our South and East, if you will, but our local hyperboreans can hardly have left after them anything of great interest! "

"Yet each locality, if at all inhabitable, has its own archeology, be it the province of Kiev, Novgorod or Petersburg....."

"What do you <sup>mean</sup> say? Do you mean that the province of Petersburg contains fabulum for an archeologist? Nonsense! I could understand your speaking of excavations in Pompeii, Asia, in the steppes, even in Novgorod; at least the Varengians were supposed to be there. But to carry on an excavation on the Kurgans in the environs of Petersburg - why, this is simply not done. It sounds like digging for old sardine cans on a junk heap. Do you really believe that something may be found in these mounds? Perhaps some Swedish buttons lost in the times of Peter the Great! "

Thus the antiquities of the province of St. Petersburg or those of the ancient Vodskaya Piatina of Novgorod in general enjoy a rather dubious reputation. Every archeological monument in this vicinity which is quite obviously more than a chance heap of stones or a natural elevation is attributed to the times of the Swedish wars. The ancient crosses of the Novgorod style which are found in abundance in the fields, are all Swedish. The Kurgans are Swedish tombs; the old sites are "Swedish trenches". In a word, everything that is <sup>of</sup> undoubtedly ancient origin is supposed to be Swedish,

although in reality it is not at all.

The Swedish aspect in the epoch of Peter the Great plays the least important part among the antiques found in Vodskaya Piatina (also in the province of St. Petersburg). No one is concerned with Swedish antiques of that period and they do not offer the least interest. There is more than enough material, important and instructive without them. The largest part of local antiquities are monuments dating from the X to the XV century. Details of the ancient Russian funeral rites and an examination of the objects discovered in the burial mounds permit us to attribute these antiques without hesitancy to the frontier Slav<sup>s</sup> of Novgorod. On the North they were encroached upon by the Finnish tribes, Chudj and Izhora, which had settled down on the Neva river and on the shores of Lake Ladoga. Their neighbors to the West were the Finnish Emj (Esthonians), to the North-West the small tribe of Vobj, related to the Esthonians and the Tavasts, after which the entire Piatina has been named. At the present time the Vobj or Vobjalazyet occupy a few villages in the region of the Peterhof district.

The antiquities of the Esthonians are fairly well worked up as they are generally in the Baltic provinces. Only a rare number of monuments of the Izhores are known and no Vobj antiquities have been ascertained as yet. Some explorers <sup>attribute</sup> ~~ascribe~~ all the local antiquities to the Vobj, but in reality the type of the Vobj funeral rites is not as yet ascertained by us and will be afterwards only by further searches. The Vobj is a small tribe which has never played a prominent part in history. (in 1149 a division of a thousand men of the Emj tribe invaded the territory of the Vobj who succeeded in driving them out later only with the assistance of the Novgorodians).

The proximity of the Slavs has always exerted a strong influence on the Finns, and a good influence at that. From the chronicle of Henry the Lett, we know that, when the priest Albrandt was sent with a troop of soldiers and knights into Livonia to invite the people to accept holy Baptism, the Livonian people cast lots and consulted their gods as to which of the two faiths was preferable - that of the Pskovites or the Latins. Evidently the people preferred the Pskov faith, i.e. the Greek Orthodox, and only out of sheer awe, permitted themselves to be baptized by the Western clergy.

In order to be able to draw final conclusions in regard to the province of St. Petersburg it is necessary to make some further archeological

searches, particularly within the limits of the Peterhof district. Although the number of explored ancient tombs in the St. Petersburg province has reached an impressive number - exceeding 6,000 - yet one could not let it remain there. 1)

Among local explorers the foremost place belongs to the late dissector of the War-Medical Academy, L.K.Ivanovski, who carried on excavations from 1872 to his death in 1892.

Of the other excavations in the province of St. Petersburg, the excavation of the Vokhov mounds, carried on by N.E.Brandenburg merits special mention. The Vokhov mounds represent the most ancient tumuli in that territory their period, judging from the objects which were discovered in them, belongs to the ~~IX~~<sup>IX</sup> and VIII centuries. The tallest mounds are 4 - 5 ~~arsen~~<sup>Rozhen</sup> high. Later excavations were carried on in the districts of Luga<sup>S</sup> and Gdovsk by Schmidt, Malmgren, students of the archeological institute and several others.

The individual discoveries in the St. Petersburg province have not been very numerous, thus far. A.A.Spitsyn points out some of the most significant: in 1875 near Kniazhnino, a village of the Novo-Ladozhski district three silver coin moulds were discovered together with sassanide, umejad and tabaristan coins of the VI - IX centuries. At the beginning of the present century an enormous treasure of arabic coins was discovered on the shores of Ladoga Lake. Cufic coins belonging to the VII-X centuries were found in the Galerny harbor, at Old and New Ladoga, near Ropsha, and in several other places. A gold Cufic coin of the year 738 was found in the Old Ladoga fortress.

Discoveries belonging to the stone age are likewise not very numerous 2) in the province of St.Petersburg and pertain to the shores of Lake Ladoga, and the valley of the Luga river.

The location of the burial mounds, the exploration of which constitutes the chief portion of the work is, naturally, connected with the location of the old settlements, which was determined by the character of the country punctured by mossy marshes (formerly lakes) altogether uninhabitable.

1) A.A.Spitsyn - "The Kurgans of the St.Petersburg province in the excavations of L.K.Ivanovski", St.P.1896 and my reports to the Imperial Russian Archeological Society-"Recent excavations in the mounds of Vodakaya Platina" (1896). "Excavations in 1897 in the mounds of St.Petersburg province", "New data on the mounds of the province of St.Petersburg" (1898). "On the various types of interment in the province of St.Petersburg" (1898).

2) Inostrantzev, "The pre-historic man of the stone age on the shores of the Lake of Ladoga". St.petersburg 1882.

The main settlement which bequeathed us the rich legacy of stretches upon stretches of tumuli of rather diversified contents, <sup>was</sup> ~~were~~ situated in the smooth and dried river-bed between Tsarskoye Selo and Yamburg. This plateau extends to the valley of the Luga river, touches on the sandy and wooded mouth of the river Oredezha (Siverskaya) and ends at a distance of 10-20 <sup>rent</sup> miles from the shores of the Finnish Bay. This is in the Northern part of the province. The Southern part, which is more elevated and which was inhabited by other peoples besides those of Pskov and Novgorod has quite a number of sites suitable for habitation; these are located around the water-ways <sup>system</sup> of Lakes Verduga, Siaberskoye, Cherevenetzskoye, Chernozerskoye, etc. 3).

The condition and external appearance of the local mounds differ somewhat. Here they cover many acres of tremendous fields, overgrown with many hundreds of small elder trees and hickory, densely crowded together, there small groups ~~of~~ (5-20) or even isolated mounds stand out like light houses in the midst of the tilled soil. Sometimes they give the appearance of having been erected only yesterday, new, strong cones, reaching about 2 sazhen in height, with a tall peak and disclosing a regular, sharply defined edge at the foundation; sometimes, however, the summit of the mound has caved in, the mound itself has sunk, sagged or even appears as an insignificant and irregularly flattened elevation, so that the workers, convinced that this is nothing but a mole-hill, refuse to go on with the work.

In passing the villages, the road frequently leads over almost unnoticeable hills, and only the worn-away stone circle of the foundation indicates the vanished tumuli. Many mounds are covered with trees, (forests) the roots of which have pierced them through. By mere association, one recalls the pines on the mounds near the village of Chornaya in the county of Tsarskoye Selo; the stubby pines with their branching roots lock the mounds in their ardent yet forceful embrace. A legend connected with these pines, relates "that the audacious person who would dare to cut down one of them would be stricken with palsy."

Almost every village has in its environs a more or less extensive group of mounds, yet, notwithstanding their number, it is sometimes a rather

3. A.A. Spitzyn, "Survey of some provinces and territories of Russia with regard to archeology" (Transactions of the Imperial Russian Archeological Society.)

3. The field groups suffer especially during ploughing.

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difficult task to get all the desired information from the peasants of the locality. A familiarity with their favorite expressions is necessary to get something out of them. If you ask them about the Kurgan or mound, instead of saying "the old pile", they won't understand you. Once I asked where the old town was, instead of saying village, and the existence of such a site was immediately denied. Among the local names for tumulus, the following enjoy particular popularity: *sopka*, *kalomishche* (from the Finnish word Kalm, meaning sepulchral hill), old pile, little Swedish tomb, hillock, mountain, colonial cemetery (if there are no elevations on the graves). The Esthonians will point out the tumulus to you if you ask them about vana aut, which means the old tomb.

## II.

In May, after the spring corn has been sown, is the time to begin work. An application for a permit is filed with the Imperial Archeological Commission, in reply to which a *carte blanche* is received. Off comes the uncomfortable city <sup>outfit</sup> ~~clothes~~ and out from the trunk high boots and waterproof overcoats make their appearance; dust and rust are cleaned, the steel shovel is cleaned of dust and mud with the sharp point - the invariable companion of the archeologist.

Prior to beginning the excavation, proper investigation must be made in order to ascertain the exact existence of a monument. Not trusting the information collected from various statistics, you go from one village to another, riding the horses of the natives, with their yokes and stirrups fastened by means of bast. You look at every little stone, investigate every suspicious elevation, penetrate into the mediocre archives of village churches. Sometimes, to the delight of all, you become the victim of some mystification. In some places they are suspicious:

"There are no authentic ancient objects in these parts, your Honor. If there were, we would have known about it."

Or - "You can see for yourself, Sir, where would a peasant take antiques from? Nobody has ever heard of antiques around this neighborhood."

Yet, if they take a liking to you, if they consider you a "kind master", "a soul of a person" - then you do not have to force your fellow-converser <sup>naturalist</sup> into frank conversation. Evenings, sitting on the dirt bank around

the house, you will hear the most curious ideas, observations in the realm of natural science, superstitions, naive assumptions. At first, out of pure evasion they will add "this is mere babble", or the "women folk ~~are lying~~ invent this"; later, when they see your serious attitude, there will be easy flowing tales of antiquity, of treasure troves; of daring looters.

But I would not wish it to any one to fall into the hands of the learned village clerk or of the voluble priest; here every worth while information can be bought only at the price of listening to endless and involved tales:

"On the one side of the river fell the slavs - guardsmen, tall people - on the other side - the Mordva and Cheremis tribes. Only recently some of their skulls were found. But at Lokhovo, not so long ago, <sup>paneled steps</sup> ~~the panels~~ were discovered which belonged to the most ancient pagan temple, and in their vicinity they found various objects dug out from an uncovered frame work. At present these steps have been turned into panels, and the frame work has been piled up with stones. Naturally, the people are <sup>stupid</sup> ~~stupid~~!"

"The steppes, the steppes!" exclaims another. "Do you, archeologists, know where these steppes come from? Do you really think that God found it necessary to leave a bald spot on the earth? You see this floor? Here is a cigarette stub, here are crumbs, there is a piece of dirt from a heel, and everywhere is dust. Now I take this broom and sweep the floor once - the stubs and the dirt have vanished. I go over the floor again - the crumbs have disappeared too. A third time, and no more dust is to be seen, perhaps there is some left in the cracks of the floor - like bushes in a ravine. The Huns stamped over this earth. More of them come - the Goths, Vandals! Who knows who they are; Petchenegs, and Polovtzy, and Tartars! They sweep everything off, better than any broom or brush can do; they scrape so well that not even a grain of dust is left, you see no bushes! And whom did Mother Earth not carry! Much as the saying goes, that has not been dreamt of by philosophers! So much is hidden in the womb of the earth; let us take, for instance, the mounds near Zapolye, right in very orchards, which, by the way are quite remarkable; they used to find pieces of ..... what do you call that work, fill...fill?"

"Do you mean filigree of Philistine?"

<sup>precisely</sup>  
"Yes, Yes, exactly."

"Yes, it is a curious thing - the ancient time", says a third one "great fun to speculate about things, to find out everything about them! What in your opinion, is the state of heavenly bliss. How shall I say it - I mean the eternal and unobstructed knowledge and understanding which are not accessible to us in our present bustling life. Some will learn, rejoice, delight, and some others will be satisfied, with what they have learned on this planet. If you wish, I could point out an interesting spot to you. Do you know the site near the Selishchanski village? Well, let me tell you, it is just a mound, quite a large one. Next to it is a little round one, facing the East. In this town in ancient times lived a prince, not a real prince, but a petty prince. He had a young daughter, a beauty, such a beauty as you cannot see any longer nowadays! Of course, who are these people of to-day? Nothing but impotent creatures! In old times they were different, like your <sup>gent</sup> hero, Ilya Murometz. Suddenly this beautiful girl was stricken ill and died on that very spot. She was buried with all ceremony. Even then, the girls liked to dress in style, just as they do to-day. After that the prince did not care to live in this vicinity any longer. This little mound is next to the hill, there is also a brook there by the name of Cherchen..."

Having fished from these tales all that has sense, you begin the actual work.

### III.

The little village looks like a pile of weathered wood and greyish-brown ~~board~~ straw. It is 4 A.M. The Roosters are just beginning to crow. The shepherd is sounding his horn - the cattle are being driven to the pasture. In the hall they are putting on the samovar; someone has just passed by in bare-feet. The Alderman - it is he with whom you are staying - wakes you up. The windows are covered with mist - it is cool outside. Your teeth involuntarily beat out some military rhythm. You shiver as you wash yourself in the cold water. The crowd has already assembled. Crow-bars, spades, shovels, axes & all these necessary excavation utensils are in perfect condition. The hoisy crowd has started toward the mounds, which are spread out not far from the dwellings. There is not the tiniest cloud in the sky. From behind the forest the sun is sparkling. The freshness of the morning is pleasant and bracing.

Everything is full of cheer! ~~(It is cheerful)~~

Many villagers follow us of their own free will - just to look. The vanguard of leaping lads is way ahead of us. I cannot think of anything that stimulates so genuine a curiosity as do excavations and stories of antiquity. Not busy harvest times, nor heat nor thunderstorm - nothing conquers it.

So far we proceed with the uninteresting job of uncovering the upper part of the hill; the talking goes on in an unceasing flow.

"Listen, this is a Swedish cemetery!"

"Why, of course, this is not a Russian one; Russians do not bury their dead like that."

"Uncle Theodore", teases the vivacious girl-digger - "Is this where the colonists are?"

"Wait till I dig a colonist up for you, then thou wilt be right."

"What is this here, an investigation?", you hear an old man lisping, while he is paving his way through the crowd.

"Listen, gran'pa! They found a pot full of gold. Each of the men will get a hundred rubles, but you won't get any."

"We are digging a grave for gran'pa", says the teasing girl, kicking the old man. "Lie down, little gran'father, we will sing a mass for you right then and there".

"Well, well, there will be a time when they will dig us up too. Our bones won't even get a rest!"

"You won't find anything this way", suggests a middle-aged peasant woman. "At Siomkino the army doctor turned over the mounds; but he had quick silver to help him. He used to put it on a tomb; then it would run till it stopped, and on the spot where it stopped, they would begin to dig. And they never dug in vain."

"Yes, but what did they find, foolish woman. Nothing worth while; only one silver chain, that was all!"

There is a low conversation going on, nearby.

"At Krasnaya they found one sitting up; next to him was an iron spoon and knife. At the head was a pot."

"He was just ready to start his supper, when he was caught!"

"On the Khlebnikov estate the bridge was built over the Rusty Marshes; it sunk in a sazhen deep. They say that war was carried on in those places. That would be a nice place to get drowned....."

"But really we almost drowned. One day Vaska Semionov comes to



my house. Listen, he says, I found a little mound near Viazovka, not far from Kniazha Niva. A nice, round little mound and a light flickering all over it. A treasure trove - no doubt about it. Let's organize an artel and dig it up. Just the two of us won't be able to do it; the mound is rather big, about a sazhen tall, besides it is a little fearsome alone. All right, we got our artel together and left for the place. The mound was a regular one and not far from the river. And it was not a simple mound either; it was laid out with stones all around, and on top was sand and earth; then came brush-wood, already decayed. After that there was dirt and rotten growth. Wood, charred and unburned; we looked down, and could already see the ground. Vaska was feeling his way down - there was a sound, that meant wood. He went more to the right - something clattered, that means, we were approaching. In the meantime it was getting dark. And then I saw that water was oozing from the sides and also from the ground below. Vaska and Theodore bent down, feeling their way with their hands; they hit upon wood, tried to pull it up, but it did not move, as though someone held it. They pulled again and there it came - an old board, rotten through and through. And from underneath this board the water gushed up. A spring opened; there was no time to think of the treasure trove, we were happy to get out of the pit. But when we hit the ground with the pick, there was a rattling sound, was it a jug, who knows!"

"So the water did not let you get near"?

"Of course not. <sup>and</sup> ~~my~~ then, don't forget, there is a kind of spell attached to it. Take the golden carriage in the Beriozovsky pond <sup>1)</sup> for instance, and the five golden bars which were dropped into it. Old timers believed that on clear days they still could be seen. But try and get it, Everybody knows about it, but nobody can get it, because of a charm of witchcraft."

"But then Peter of Krasnaya did find a treasure."

"Oh, come on, your Peter is a liar; perhaps he did find something, but even so it was probably just an old iron pot which the shepherds had thrown away...."

"Why do you think so? It is not only he that told us about it, but reliable people say that he actually got it."

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1) The legend about the golden carriage is common to the entire locality. Evidently, the presence of persons of high standing in that place gave grounds for the belief that golden carriages might be found there, just as the legend about the Volga bandits led to theories about buried boats laden with gold.

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"Peter got rich, didn't he! It is only we poor people that have to wear such clothes that our sinful bodies peep through at the elbow. A wealthy one".

"Only it did not do him much good, which means that he did not know the working of the spell."

"Mister, it seems that there is a bone under my spade", one of the diggers is reporting.

"I went down into the pit. There was the smell of freshly upturned soil; it felt cool after the heat - the sun is already high. Indeed, from under the shovel jutted out a brownish-yellow tibial bone of the same color as the surrounding sand of the entire mound, as though it had always been only a bone without any covering.

The position of the skeleton could be wholly defined by this bone. We had to be more cautious in proceeding with the work. The hands, crossed at the loins, were uncovered first. The fore-arm had become oxidized and taken on a greenish color, an indication of the proximity of bronze, which was found in the thin little <sup>Spiral</sup> ~~wound~~ bracelet.

"A bracelet! Look, what a neat little thing! Do you call that an object too?" Such are the expressions of the curious who, pushing each other, headed for the peak of the burial mound.

It was getting dark in the pit. The ashes on which the bones were resting appeared of a deeper blue; the earthen eyes of the skull seemed to have a more austere expression. The lower jaw, extremely developed had sunk to the side weighed down with the earth that had settled on it. On both sides of the skull were temple rings over two inches in diameter.

The clods of earth excavated by the shovellers fly up. Male skeletons alternate with female ones. Dolichocephalous skulls are substituted by brachycephalous ones. Instead of spears, axes, swords, knives, umbones, shields, there come to the surface coins, ear-rings, bracelets, rings, <sup>fibulae</sup> ~~plates~~, colored beads, remains of braids. Complete cremation gives way to interment in seated posture, from tall mounds to small cells (burial in a grave without earth~~work~~). An infinite variety!

It is with a pleasant sensation of anguish that one brings to the surface some antique object, to be the first one to discover it, to communicate directly with an epoch long since passed. The gray, age-old mist is shaken; with every new stroke of the shovel, with every cut of the crow-bar an alluring fairy

kingdom is opened up before your eyes; broader and richer are the ever expanding marvels.

#### IV.

It seems as if the sky was becoming bluer, and the sunspots brighter. More penetrating is the song of the lark above. A vast field. The gigantic forest dominates the horizon with its jagged wall. In its impenetrable strongholds, it has just aroused its beasts - bears, lynxes, moose~~deer~~. In the morning the wide creeks roar beneath the sounds of the birds. The golden eagle spreads out his wings beneath the sky. Flocks of cranes fill the air with their clatter, wild geese float about in formation. The high rivers bear up hollow canoes. On the steep banks, protected by bulwark and hedges, with skulls set on stakes, the settlements roll out before our eyes. Here and there smoke rises from a village. In the valley the Kurgans stand like light-houses. Some of the mounds are already covered with growth, but there are also new ones, evenly and carefully made. Through the fields we see a file of people approaching these.

The men wear fur caps, shirts, thick woolen kaftans with an ingenious <sup>1)</sup> ~~ringed~~ <sup>ringed</sup> ~~sort of a hem~~, perhaps a vatmal. On their feet they wear plaited shoes made of bast or a piece of fur in the shape of a piston. Their belts are of copper; the entire household is attached onto these belts: a comb, grindstone, tinder-box and knife. The knife is not a simple one, it is of exotic craftsmanship; the hilt is made of cast copper, the leather sheathes are embellished with an odd design, also made of copper. Regardless of the peaceful times, some of them wear their swords bartered from some Midnight visitor.<sup>2)</sup> There is a brass buckle on the shirt collar. The flap of the kaftan is also fastened with a buckle on the left shoulder. The rich ones even have their buttons fastened with a buckle clasp.

On the fore-arm once in a while you see a shiny spiral copper bracelet; on the fingers-there are various rings, some of them of very peculiar shape, with an enormous shield covering the entire joint of the finger. The tanned faces are covered with stiff bristling hair, hair that could stand being in the earth for seven or eight centuries. And then their teeth - such firm, even teeth!

The body is in sitting posture on the stretcher, in its best attire, ~~supported~~ by splints. Keeping step with a moderate pace, his stern head nods

1) A fabric in which the Icelanders used to trade in the XII Century.  
2) Of the Scandinavian type.

solemnly, his crossed arms simultaneously jerking. Behind the corpse is brought the log for the pyre and for the sacrificial goat and many fowl. The women wail piteously. They are all dressed to honor the dead; and what have they not put on! They wear a Kokoshnik with little silver wreathes and plaque-like ornaments on their heads. Some of them wear fur or leather head-coverings, with tremendous temple rings sewed on the sides. These are not ear-rings, - they would slash their ears with rings of that size. Around their necks is a coin on a string; some of the fashionable ladies have put on more than one coin, some of them have two and even three together, round and flat ones, copper and silver. The beads on their necklaces, although not numerous, are varied; big-eyed copper beads, carnelian, glass beads of different colors - blue, green, purple and yellow, Amber, crystal and copper strings of all kinds; it would be impossible to ~~ex~~<sup>m</sup>umerate all these objects. There are other lovely pendants worn as necklaces also - half-moons and crosses imported from Tzar-Grad (~~Constantinople~~) and from the Occident.

On the bosom and around the waist are many kinds of trinklets and ornaments; instead of metal plates, coins are sometimes also seen, either oriental ones or those of the period of Canute the Great, of Bishop Bruno, Pendants in the shape of dogs were known to the Chudj, Livonians and Kurs, those in the shape of cats - horrifying ones with their jaws wide open, favorite little ducks, known to many Russian Slavs. The young girls wear these various emblems below their waists<sup>s</sup>, from which they hang by leather tongs, jingling and tinkling with their little bells as the girls move. A holy sign protects the girl.

On the arms they wear one or two different bracelets, narrow, spiral ones, also wide ones with ingeniously designed patterns. The tails of their shirts, and sometimes the collars too are trimmed or embroidered. Some of the women wear a little kaftan over it, a sort of jerkin, only shorter.

The stretcher is set down. A level spot is chosen, stamped upon and smoothed down, and covered with dry boards. In the center the corpse is set. The head has sunk lifelessly between the shoulders, the hands are crossed over the legs. On the side is a spear and a pot with gruel. The resinous boards rise higher and higher, concealing the dead behind them; on top of them are set brush wood and birch bark - the pyre is perfect. How wide a scope for the play of the fire! It rises up in serpentine ravulets, one can

smell the smoke. Once more the austere, now already sallow face is illumined by flame, once more, for the last time, these half-closed eyes seemed to flash. Suddenly something cracks. The pile groans, sparks fly up thickly and columns of gray smoke stretch skyward. Then the sad, prolonged melodies of the dirge begin. A crow, drawn by the odor of burning flesh, approaches the pile, but now hops away at the mournful sounds. The close relatives of the dead sit down forming a circle, grave and solemn, bowing their gray heads over their staves. Behind them the others crowd together waiting until the pile turns into a heap of coal and ashes, showing only black grease spots in the center. Then the spades begin to work, the earth is thrown into the heap in handfuls carried even in their coat tails. Three or four together roll some heavy granite blocks toward the pile; there are many of these granite blocks around here in the prairie - gray, brown, reddish, of all sizes - the gifts of the Silurian sea. The edges of the <sup>pyre</sup> ~~pyre~~ have been smoothed<sup>no</sup>, so as to form a circle of quite regular shape. Where once were the head and feet of the deceased, who has now joined the blessed ones, are planted stones of particularly large size and odd shape; these are set so as to face sunrise and sunset, for the face of the dead was always turned in the sacred direction, where the eternal and mighty Sun cheerfully begins its day looking over the earth - hence the blessings of warmth and with it those of fertility.

The hill grows rapidly. The mound is made of pure sand or solid clay soil, and is not earth thrown together with roots or weeds. If they want to honor the memory of their relative forever, they shun no work but cover the entire funeral hill with turf. They bring water from a neighboring river, moisten the soil, make it dense and firm, as if they sense that some day strange crow-bars and spades might disturb the ashes of their dear ones. Well, a turf hill can <sup>endure</sup> ~~withstand~~ the fang of ages. The once wide river with its steep banks has now become an insignificant dried shallow gap; the age old grove has disappeared, but the hill still points to the sky with its tall <sup>1)</sup> victorious peak, as if some charm were guarding it.

The earth bank is now ready, about two arshin in height. There they stop. Ashes brought with them from the house are strewn on the hillside, so that the spirit of the deceased should not lose touch with his home hearth.

1) Mounds made of turf have proven of remarkable durability. Every clod of earth has to be taken with an effort, with a strong stroke of the crow-bar. Turf is more frequently encountered in the Volkhov Kurgans. Sub-clay is also quite durable.

More earth is spread on top; then it is smoothed down to a regular cone shape, the blocks at the foundation are straightened out. A last round, a careful look - all is finished!

Again streams of gray smoke rise up into the jagged clouds on the dusky evening sky. The flashing light of the bon-fires glare up. The feast has begun. The kid has been slaughtered, the brass pots hang over the fire. They pay honor to the memory of their Kinsman and shall sit here probably until the moon peers out from behind the forest and rivals the goary flame. The hirsute faces become more strange and rugged, their beards, lips and brawny hands glosey from oil seem more terrifying. Their knives jingle against the bones, there is the clatter of broken pots - now again, through the calm of the night, a dirge streams out into the space.

The setting moon casts its glowing sheen on the hilt of the sword, it glances on the beads and coin necklaces; the white shirts of the guests, now on their way home, look more and more like nebulous white spots in the distance. The good name of the deceased will never die! How could it? His is a large tribe. They will hold such a funeral feast every so often for eternity to come; they will not fail to reinforce the sagging hill. High above in the sky, the sagacious ravens soar in a circle, then silently they descend, brood over the remnants of the bones of the slaughtered kid and celebrate a feast of their own.

## V.

The raven sees everything from below the cloud. It looks over the fence of the little town which projects on the neighboring hill. The swift rivulet flows like a bright ribbon, one of its banks is level covered with sappy green grass and woods, the other - with high, steep slopes, canyons, sandy and loamy cliffs. The cook brook flows down into the river, which is not so small. Merging, they have surrounded the oblong hill, in a tight embrace, the height of which is about four to five sazhen. Seldom has nature created such complete ingenious fortification. On this hill the town was erected. About two hundred feet were measured from the cape, then a ditch was excavated through the hill of which was made a moat and a rampart of earth was erected. On the rampart they built a fence of strong stakes, sharpened the ends and stuck animal skulls, at times even human skulls on them as a warning to their enemies! At the corners they put up lattice work, covered

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with straw and reeds. They built a turret to overlook and watch the forces of the enemy; it was also used for hitching a high pole to which a bundle of burning straw was tied, in warning of approaching danger to the entire locality. The town is only a war settlement and is not inhabited in times of peace. The <sup>also</sup> raven/sees other sights. It was witness when the town stockade was afire and the battle went on within. How they fought and slew each other! How boiling water poured over the invaders! But all was in vain - the town yielded! The raven remembers this well - it provided a full and luscious feast.

The raven also feasted upon the remains of rich celebrations held on the wooded hills, far from habitation, where men came to pray and to offer their sacrifices to the gods. Although they already wore crosses around their necks, they still frequented their old favorite spots. <sup>1)</sup>

And the ravens know the treasure troves too! You cannot find them, if you are not acquainted with the old books and writings dealing with them. These books were written by old people. The treasures are concealed in remote corners. Not only do the ravens know of the treasures, many old people know of them, nevertheless they cannot find these treasures. Most probably there <sup>2)</sup> is a blood spell upon them.

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1) The description of the town is taken from nature. In the county of Tsarakoye Selo there is a town answering exactly the above description. The excavations have brought to the surface the remainders of a burned stockade on the ramparts used for defense. On the site of the town proper, covered with woods, only several crudely built fire-places were uncovered. There were no traces of habitations ~~to~~ to be found. Numerous wooded hills are known to the entire locality; these are usually covered with stones in abundance; at a depth of 1/4 to 1/2 arshin coal and ashes are found in abundance also. But no objects were found in these hills. There is a legend among the people that "There was something", "people gathered here for prayer".

2) Such hints about treasures are really circulated among the people. I was asked by a peasant to buy such a booklet, which he himself had acquired from an old beggar. The manuscript was written in Russian, Polish and Esthonian. The external data are evidently copied from nature.

cont'd.

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The ravens also saw the old oaks with wide, spreading branches; the inhabitants of these vicinities gathered under their shade to execute their communal matters; they gathered here also on festival days, the old people sitting around the mighty roots, the young ones dancing the roundelays. Beyond, far across the neighboring lake you could hear them singing } "Oh <sup>grandfather...</sup> g<sup>o</sup>s rag<sup>o</sup>."

On St. John's Eve the bonfire burns cheerily and the young folk in couples leap clear through it - they are now consecrated by this fire to eternal union. This is an ancient custom. 1)

Legends still circulate about sunken churches, about mud-huts occupied by brigands. It is said that on the churchyard of Gryzov in the county of Tsarskoye Selo, the foundation of the still-existing church was laid by Peter the Great, who after a skirmish with his own hands set up a wooden cross on that spot. Obviously, even the prosaic province of St. Petersburg is also preoccupied with its own antiquity, not to speak of the beautiful monuments of the periods of Catherine and Alexander.

## VI.

Speaking again of the burial mounds, it is impossible not to notice that two periods are especially identifiable. The first one is that of the XI to the XII century; the second that of the XIII and XIV. The first period is characterized by complete cremation or interment of the non-cremated skeleton in sitting posture; the details of this interment we have already described.

In the upper part of the earth bank we subsequently reach layers of ashes, sometimes mixed with bones of sacrificial animals. It has not quite been determined whether these are remains of a funeral rite, demanding the stratification of ashes with the earth during the time of its construction, or whether these are remains of the feast. If these are only traces of the

1) In the county of Tsarskoye Selo sites are pointed out where, according to legend once upon a time there grew an enormous oak, where the people from surrounding settlements used to gather. It is a beautiful high location; not far off is a lake, which, judging by the shore-line was very much larger than now. Excavation brought to the surface the remains of the thick roots of these oaks; at some distance from them heaps of ashes about 1/2 arshin thick were discovered - the remains of ancient bonfires. Among the ashes potsherd was found; although they did not answer the description of those belonging to the XII century, they were still not contemporary. According to statements made by reliable people, an old man who died about twenty years ago, still remembered the remains of this oak and how the people gathered here on holidays to dance their roundelays. If this is really so, then how long did the ancient Slavic custom survive!



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sacrificial feast, then the original height of the Kurgans has increased considerably with time, owing to the fresh layers of earth which were strewn above the ashes. Mounds indicating complete cremation have come down to our age in hemispherical, widely spread elevations with a concentrated foundation of boulder stones. Interments in sitting postures make a rather well sustained mound, but with a sagging peak which gave away with the sinking of the bones.

The second period (XIII and XIV centuries) <sup>5</sup> ~~are~~ characterized by the transfer of the body in the sitting or supine position into a shallow, earthen tomb. In order to preserve the posture of the body in accordance with the then prevailing custom, a small oval hole of such dimensions was dug that the body could be placed in it in a seated posture, or a heap of stones was erected similarly. Sometimes wooden logs served the same purpose. The body was then covered with the earth dug out from the pit together with sand, and afterwards the little elevation thus formed was covered with the remains of the funeral feast and coals; then an earth bank was set up with a stone circle at its foundation, with especially large boulders placed towards the East and West, i.e. at the head and feet of the dead. To this same period certain interments above the surface of the ground and those in a supine position at the level of the earth, in which the ash layer of the foundation was turned into two piles of ashes at either side of the head. On the top of the burial mounds of the type of the second period afore-described frequently four-pointed stone crosses were erected; these were of the so-called Novogord shape.

Among the groups of the Kurgans belonging to the XIII and XIV centuries burials sometimes occur in small earthen tombs, not crowned by any banks; in ditches imbedded around the surface with a row of boulders. No doubt, such stone tombs are nothing but transformed mounds.

The given descriptions are only a brief sketch; in reality the variety encountered is truly amazing. The solicitude of the kinsfolk for their dear departed ones can be vividly imagined. Some of them try to mark his grave with particularly large boulders; others imbed the entire surface of the bank with small pebbles; others, in building the mound, seat the body on a block and support it with splints. A vivid picture is obtained in a description given by Ivanovsky, where a female skeleton was found beside a male one, in which the female skull showed a tremendous fracture inflicted by an axe; or as in a case of my own experience, where a male skull covered with old war scars was cut through, and a female skeleton was placed to his right.

How many mysteries! How many wonders! There is eternal life in death itself!

The objects found in the mounds differ only very slightly from those of the neighboring lands, particularly from those of the Baltic, as to technique, shape or variety of types. Nevertheless we can trace a lively barter and determine the existence of various trades.

Besides the objects indicated above, a few more may be mentioned which emphasize the nature of the ancient workaday life of the XI and XII centuries. Buttons occur very seldom and are of the same type - pear-shaped with a loop; flag-stones are made of red slate; their shape and material are identical with those found in the burial mounds of the Dniepr basin. Plumets <sup>2</sup> (are found along a wide area <sup>dating from</sup> ~~beginning with~~ the X century.)

In regard to local comparison, a funeral rite similar to that of the Petersburg province is also found in the provinces of Pskov, Vitebsk, Smolensk, Novgorod and some other provinces. Of the antiquities known in the Northern and Central regions of Russia, the objects found in the mounds of the Vodskaya Pitina are closely related to those discovered in the Kurgans of the provinces of Novgorod, Tver, Kostroma, Yaroslavl and Moscow. It is not astonishing to find an abundance of antiquities of the Esthonians, Livonians, Kura, Ladoga and Finnish Chudj, as well as of oriental and Scandinavian character.

In the Novgorod territory, <sup>the great trade waterway led</sup> along the coast, the shores of the Baltic provinces and upon the Volkhov and Ilmen rivers, ~~to the great trade highway,~~ the highway of the hordes of "Varengians" turning into "Greeks". Bearing in mind the continuous oriental influx from <sup>Tsar Grad</sup> ~~Constantinople~~ and the tide of Scandinavian culture from the North, the variegation of cultural influences among the Slavs of Novgorod becomes quite clear. This diversity here is not inferior to that of the South, so that one cannot very well expect to find homogeneity and a uniform origin among the articles found in the tumuli of the St. Petersburg province, the exploration of which cannot by any means be regarded as completed as yet; there is still much detail work to be done, which will elaborate the entire picture.

## VII.

You go from Kurgan to Kurgan, from one group to the other. The same good-natured crowd everywhere, the same sayings and jests. The boiling sun has given way to a refreshing rain. Gusts of wind sweep by more often, the road

begins to age and swell; the leaves are turning yellow, the clouds lower above in gray topaz masses over the horizon - you sense the autumn. The best time for excavating is the months of May and June up to St. John's Day, up to mowing time, and later, after the sowing (in August has been done) and part of September.

The tubes of paint are thinned, the albums and sketch pads are filled and swollen; the diary is full of copious notes, descriptions of excavations, legends, superstitions, tales. Perhaps even an ancient tune has been jotted down, if it has had the fortune of escaping perversion into one of the ~~distasteful~~ <sup>distasteful</sup> ~~or gaudy~~ songs, military or factory fashion. One can also find here immortalized the pharisaism of some representative of the local authorities with regard to the preservation of antiquities. I have likewise made notes on the destruction of interesting tombs during the construction of roads. There is much material of all sorts; images arise before the inner vision, pictures take on definite form and shape. It is time to turn homeward.

From the fresh outside air you are thrown into a dusty railroad compartment. Acrid smoke creeps in through the window; lamps and ash trays pound out some <sup>tawdry</sup> tune. Nor am I brightened by the sight of a gentleman in a shiny silk hat with a peculiarly ~~washed~~ moustache, nor that of an anemic young lady with a tremendous, ~~original~~ <sup>original</sup> ~~ornate~~ hat, <sup>trimmed with bright-colored</sup> ~~bristles~~ <sup>bristles</sup>.

A sense of boredom overwhelms me.

If there still exist a number of things which permit us for a moment, at least, to escape from the <sup>eddy</sup> ~~pool~~ of daily existence, <sup>and</sup> permit our ~~eyes~~ <sup>vision</sup> to travel beyond palaces and the smoke stacks of gigantic factories - then archeology must have a definite place among these things.

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